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Sanford 'Sonny' Miller

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

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**Sanford “Sonny” Miller**  
(Interviewer: Mike Hastings)

**GMOH# 046**  
October 7, 2008

**Mike Hastings:** The following is a recorded interview with the Senator George J. Mitchell Oral History Project, an activity of Bowdoin College. My name is Michael Hastings, I am the interviewer, the interviewee today is Mr. Sanford “Sonny” Miller of Bangor, Maine. The interview is being held at Mr. Miller’s residence, which is on Linden Street – what number is that?

**Sanford Miller:** One twenty-four.

**MH:** One twenty-four Linden Street in Bangor, Maine. The date is October the 7, Tuesday, 2008. Welcome, Mr. Miller. Could we begin please, if you would state your full name and spell your last name.

**SM:** Sanford Miller, M-I-L-L-E-R.

**MH:** And could you give me your date of birth and your place of birth?

**SM:** January 18, 1927, Bangor, Maine.

**MH:** And lastly, can you state your mother’s full name and your father’s full name?

**SM:** Rena Miller and Myer Miller. Neither have a middle name.

**MH:** What was your mother’s maiden name?

**SM:** Pinsky.

**MH:** P-I-N-S-K-Y?

**SM:** Yes.

**MH:** Very good, thank you. Let’s, if we could, could we begin by briefly talking about your mother and father? What was your father’s story? Where did he come from?

**SM:** My father was born in Bangor, Maine, in 1898. I believe he had one sister and six brothers.

**MH:** Six brothers?

**SM:** Yeah, and immigrant father.

**MH:** Where was his father from?

**SM:** Father was from Russia, and he, the reason they came to Bangor was that he had a cousin here who had probably mentioned the fact that he was living here and Bangor would be a great place to come to. And from what I heard, this was in the late 1800s of course, when he arrived here, and when he arrived he looked up his so-called cousin whose name was Max Cohen, a man of means in those days, and when Max found him, his cousin said, "Well, and who are you?" So that meant that Max was all alone here in Bangor struggling. And in the beginning he sold hotdogs, and the funny story about that is, in front of the Merrill Bank, and one day a man came by and said, "Max, can I borrow a dime?" And Max said, "We have a deal," he says, "the bank, they don't sell hotdogs, and I don't loan money." So anyway, maybe that's the beginning of my being a restaurateur.

My father struggled for the family. He left the second grade to go into the workplace, selling newspapers and, because he was the second oldest, his sister was the oldest, and it was quite a struggle for him. And he sold newspapers on the train between Bangor and Calais, and close to the end of WWI, he joined some type of army, the army guard or army reserve or something, and I've seen his honorable discharge; I gave it to one of my kids. And in later years my mother, who also was an immigrant, she was brought in to Baltimore by a brother-in-law, who had brought his wife over, and after they were here a while they brought my mother over with a couple of his children that were still in Russia.

And my mother worked at Johns Hopkins Hospital when she was there. And she had a sister that lived in Bangor, who at the time had two sons, and she had gotten ill and my mother came to Bangor to nurse her. And that's where my father met her.

**MH:** So he just met her right here?

**SM:** Right here. Met her here in Bangor, and from what she says, he persisted and persisted and persisted until she said yes, and they were married, and I was born a year later – they were married in January of '26. At that time, my family had moved to Woodland and, I say my dad's family, and some of the boys went to school in Woodland, and they had a little restaurant, believe it or not, near the mill, which unfortunately didn't turn – I was a year old, they tell me, and I lived there for a year probably -

**MH:** So there was a mill there in 1927?

**SM:** Oh yes.

**MH:** Okay.

**SM:** Yes, that's what made the community –

**MH:** Hmm-hmm.

**SM:** - move, and of course there were a lot of Italian families –

**MH:** Hmm-hmm.

**SM:** - down there, because they brought a lot of immigrants in for construction and what have you. I'm only mentioning that. We're not Italian, we're Jewish.

**MH:** Right.

**SM:** So anyway, my father and the family came back to Bangor and my father washed dishes in a restaurant (I was told) and he eventually had a poolroom, and from that he opened a shoeshine parlor. He had a shoe shine parlor on Exchange Street, across from the *Bangor Daily News*, and even though my dad had left the second grade, he was quite a guy. He was, he would, I can't think of the word right off, but he would tell you what's going to happen in this world, to come, and in those days Russia didn't amount to anything, and China didn't amount to anything, and he'd, and people like Senator Brewster would come in and have his shoes shined, and Fred Jordan, who owned the *Bangor Daily News* would come over, and my dad got along with all those people and -

**MH:** Now where would that be now? Where roughly on Exchange Street would that be?

**SM:** Right now, where Thistle's Restaurant.

**MH:** Thistle's, where Maliseet Gardens is, that area.

**SM:** Right about in that area.

**MH:** Near where the old Penobscot Hotel was.

**SM:** Well that was further down on the left.

**MH:** Okay, right.

**SM:** And at one time Brewster, Senator Brewster, he told me one day, he says, you know, he says, "Would your boy like to go to West Point?" And naturally, West Point, yeah. So – it never happened, but anyway – he said, "I'm going to send your boy to West Point." He must have been just joshing with my father. But anyway, my father predicted a lot of these things that happened, believe it or not. He said Russia was going to become a great threat, and China was

eventually going to become a world power. And a lot of people didn't like it that he, well I don't mean didn't like him; I mean they didn't like what he was saying –

**MH:** Right.

**SM:** - at that time, because it sounded like he was pro-Russia, which he was not, definitely not.

And when I went to high school I shined shoes and helped him out and helped, you know, I have one brother who's a retired pharmacist, lives in Baltimore, and -

**MH:** What's his name?

**SM:** Robert Miller.

**MH:** Robert, okay.

**SM:** Bob Miller. And he has two children, and one of them's a fire chief in Baltimore County, and the other is a CP-, she, is a CPA and works for the State of Maryland. And –

**MH:** What about your mother? What, if you, what would you like people to -?

**SM:** Oh, my mother was a wonderful lady. My mother was of the unique kind, she was a type, lady that didn't talk about anybody, and she got along with everybody. And, well, I don't want to misinterpret this, but she was perhaps the love of my life. She was very kind and caring, and gave me some good advice, good advice. I can remember as a little boy sitting on her lap in a rocking chair and she would tell me all the nice things I should do. And when I was five years old, she and I went on a train to Baltimore to visit with her sister and nieces and nephew.

**MH:** Hmm-hmm.

**SM:** In Baltimore. It must have been, Herbert Hoover was president.

**MH:** Quite –

**SM:** I think it was 'a chicken in every pot and a car in every garage.'

**MH:** Quite a long trip.

**SM:** It was a long trip. We went to Boston, we stayed overnight with a relative, and then packed some sandwiches and we went over to the South -, of course we came in in the North Station, and went out, went to the South Station and left from the South Station to Baltimore. It was a long trip.

**MH:** So what neighborhood did you live in in Bangor?

**SM:** Bangor, Maine, growing up, I lived on York Street in the big –

**MH:** Right, just up from the river, on the -

**SM:** Up from the river.

**MH:** Right, where the synagogue -

**SM:** Where the synagogue, yeah, not too far, across from what used to be the electric station, now there's a brick building on the corner.

**MH:** Right.

**SM:** It's been there forever. That was the electric station.

**MH:** Okay.

**SM:** And today I think it's -

**MH:** A training center or something.

**SM:** Training center, right, and right next door to that was a clinic, a *free* clinic.

**MH:** Really?

**SM:** On Saturdays. You could go over there and Dr. Fellows would check you out, for free, and if you had any whatever, and he was the family doctor anyway. And I do recall back in those early, early days my mother had bought a Blue Cross/Blue Shield policy, and I think the premium back then might have been, oh, it was very reasonable, it was under ten dollars a month I think. And life was, people didn't earn as much but I think the dollar went -

**MH:** So was that, you mentioned that you're Jewish.

**SM:** Yes.

**MH:** And the synagogue is here, was that largely a Jewish neighborhood?

**SM:** At one time, yes. And the reason why it was a Jewish neighborhood, for the orthodox people who did not ride on Saturdays or on holidays, they were able to walk to the synagogue.

**MH:** Hmm-hmm, I see.

**SM:** And it's very interesting, because State Street, we used to joke about it, we used to call it the Mason-Dixon line, one of the Mason-Dixon lines, and of course when you moved over on the, across State Street, you were kind of upgrading. And I remember when my dad bought a house on Fern Street, between State and Garland, and that was really, you know, the beginning of a step up. Although I had an aunt that, my oldest aunt, my aunt, they lived on Blackstone Street, off of Center, and I went to State Street School and there was a police officer by the name of Duddy, and eventually he became Captain Duddy, very nice man, treated all the children terrific, we looked up to him. And it's interesting; a few weeks ago I had the privilege of listening to Ambassador Duddy, who is the ambassador to Venezuela.

**MH:** Right.

**SM:** At least he was 'til, he was one of the last to leave, and I reminisced with him and told him about his uncle and how kind he was and so forth. And as a matter of fact, he lived, the Duddys lived on the same side street that the restaurant was on.

**MH:** Okay.

**SM:** On Larkin.

**MH:** Now which restaurant is this? Is this your father's?

**SM:** No, this is, that's a long, that's a story too.

**MH:** Well let's, give it to me.

**SM:** We got to get into that, I'm just bringing, you wanted to hear some history.

**MH:** I know two Miller's restaurants, so I only go back two. I remember you had one, I remember as a kid, I lived in Belfast.

**SM:** Okay.

**MH:** And we used to come up here, and I remember you being on the river side of the street, and then -

**SM:** That's right, then we had a fire, yeah. But it's interesting - I don't know if you're interviewing me or -

**MH:** No, this is exactly what we want.

**SM:** I'll give you a little bit of history. And my brother, my kid brother, the only brother I have, he's ten years younger than I am, but when I was in high school, I went to the old Bang-, I, wait a minute, I went to State Street School, and we had a tragedy in the family, I had a uncle

that was in his, going to be in his senior year at Cornell.

**MH:** Hmm-hmm.

**SM:** Also he was going to, he was majoring in hotel and restaurant management, and he went up, I had an uncle who was a famous Maine guide, Charlie Miller who, at the University of Maine they've got a lot of his stuff on display there somewhere.

**MH:** Hmm-hmm.

**SM:** And Charlie was friendly with a lot of the, well Ted Williams for one, and Bud Leavitt, who was the writer –

**MH:** Hmm-hmm.

**SM:** - of the sports at *Bangor Daily*. And he had, some of these fighters used to come up to his camps, up in Moosehead, like Primo Carnera, and he had Jack Dempsey here with a fight. He did a little fight promoting, too.

And anyway, my uncle drowned, while he was at my uncle's camp, on a Labor Day weekend, and my aunt was very distraught and so forth and asked us to move in the house with them, which we did for maybe a year, a year-and-a-half, and then I went to Mary Snow School.

**MH:** Hmm-hmm.

**SM:** And then we moved back, we had an apartment on Pine Street, and then we had an apartment on Palm Street and I went to Abraham Lincoln School, and from Abraham Lincoln I went up to Garland which [it] was then, it [wasn't] Cohen School but it was Garland Street School then, and I was in, in the ninth grade there, which was the first ninth grade in that school. And my youngest daughter, Shelly, happened to have been in the last ninth grade at that school.

And then after ninth grade I went to Bangor High, and of course we lived on Fern Street, we lived on Fern Street then, my father had bought the house and we were living there. In those days my father paid, I think, either two thousand or three thousand dollars for that house. And coal, hot air heat, hot water boiler in the kitchen, off the kitchen stove, no showers, we had a bathtub. Back in those days of course, a radio.

**MH:** What was it like being a kid in that [neighborhood], in Bangor in those years? I mean, when you weren't in school, what were you doing?

**SM:** When I wasn't in school?

**MH:** Yeah.

**SM:** Well, I was fortunate. One year I, no, two years, I went to Boy Scout camp one year, another year I went to a Y camp, Camp Character in, over near Augusta, and unfortunately they had a polio breakout in that year and so I had to come home early. But going to camp was not really that expensive, I think the Boy Scout camp might have been six dollars a week, Camp Character I know, I think was ten, it was a little bit more than Camp Jordan. And the reason I went there is because I had this aunt whose husband, they had a greeting card store and he framed pictures, he was a picture framer, he originally came from England and he came from a family of photographers who at that time photographed the entire British fleet, he had the contract to do that, and they had a nephew that worked for one of these newspapers that was more like a look magazine, had a lot of pictures in it.

**MH:** Hmm-hmm.

**SM:** And he had an assignment, he went to Spain – God, at one time I had a lot of great big photographs of, blown up, of the, of things that happened over there in the Spanish Civil War.

**MH:** Hmm-hmm.

**SM:** I've lost them.

**MH:** So summer camps, and at school, you were in Bangor High, and that must have been the old Bangor High School.

**SM:** The old Bangor High School, down on Harlow Street.

**MH:** Right.

**SM:** And it was very interesting, I was late quite a few mornings and on our street, Rachel Connor, who was the dean of girls at Bangor High, had a two-door Chevy back then and she said, because I was very friendly with her brother, and she said, "You know, I'm tired of seeing you get in late," she says, "you be out front at such and such a time, and I'm going to take you to school." So I got a ride to school most mornings.

**MH:** Did you like school?

**SM:** I didn't dislike it. I wanted to be a pharmacist myself, that was really my wish, and second to that was going into business. And I took a college course and I had a problem in math, and the reason why I had a problem in math, was my birthday is in January, and I should have started school in, on my fifth, when I was five and start in September. But my mother convinced them that I should start, if they would let me in, because kindergarten was two years then, and, I think it was, I'm pretty sure it was, but anyway, she got me in, and I did extremely well in first grade. And my teacher's name was Belden, I always remember her name. And I get in the second grade, I didn't do so hot. I started to stumble a little bit, and I do recall I got an F in a subject, but I was smart enough to change the F to a B. I was clever. And I had to erase it when

I brought it back, so I mean, I must have been pretty bright in the second grade.

But in high school I got lucky, I got into the basketball team's algebra class. And Ed Trowel I don't think flunked anybody, including me. And, but I was really lost, I just can't believe how lost I was. And then I said, "Well, maybe I'll go in business when I get out of school, I'll take a commercial course." Which I did, I switched to commercial course, and did well in that. And then of course the war was starting -

**MH:** When did you graduate from high school?

**SM:** Forty-four.

**MH:** Forty-four, so you were right in the, you were going to high school right before the war was going on.

**SM:** Yeah, a bunch of us joined the Navy V-6, it was then called V-6, and my father signed the papers.

**MH:** How old were you?

**SM:** Seventeen.

**MH:** I see, and how did, how'd you do that, you went down to a local recruiter, or?

**SM:** I went down to the, in those days, where the City Hall is in Bangor was the post office.

**MH:** Right, right, right.

**SM:** And you went down there. And I almost didn't pass the physical, my feet were flat, and I kind of scrunched up my feet and the guy put his hand down, "Oh," he says, "you're all right," he says, "you pass." And I was sworn in April 1st, 1944 -

**MH:** Where did you, you were sworn in in Bangor?

**SM:** In Bangor, at the post office. And when we graduated in June, I think it was about two weeks after we graduated, we got the call to meet at the railroad station and we went off to Sampson, which was in New York, up in New York, the state, which later became an Air Force base, training center.

**MH:** Right, so I've heard of Sampson Air Force Base.

**SM:** Yeah, but this was Navy. And the guy that was in charge of that was Commodore Kimmel, and he was -

**MH:** Oh, Husband Kimmel?

**SM:** He was the guy that was at Pearl, and this was a demotion from admiral to commodore.

**MH:** Ah, I see.

**SM:** And there were quite a few Bangor boys there. We weren't all in the same unit, but -

**MH:** Who was, who else was from Bangor?

**SM:** Oh, boy, there were a slug of them. There was, Bobby West was there, Millard Karitsky was there, Ed Ramsey, Hymie Ginn, from Fox & Ginn, that was his nickname, Hymie.

**MH:** So you weren't alone.

**SM:** Oh no, no, we weren't in the same units but we were there. And it was three months in those days.

**MH:** It's a kind of a training?

**SM:** Yeah. Then I got a leave and came home, a boot camp leave, and got back, and when you'd get back they had a list on the board, [on] where you're going to go, and we were assigned to go to California, to Camp Parks. Even though it was Navy, it was called Camp Parks. And Camp Parks was a combination of Seabees and amphibious, and I said, I was on the train, we're going out, and I said, "Where are we going?" – of course, you know, the service in those days, everybody's asking all kinds of questions, and the scuttlebutt's going around and this and that. "Well, probably the amphibs." I said, "What the hell does the amphibs do?" "Well they're the guys that take the landing boats in ahead, and they bring the troops in." I say, in combat, I say, "Geez, I really don't feel I'd like to do that." So I was hoping I'd get in the Seabees, so sure enough I ended up in the Seabees. Well, what the hell do the Seabees do? Well sometimes they go in early too, and some of the Seabees, and I know someone here in Bangor who's a former school teacher, he was stationed in England and he was, he brought troops in on D-Day in an amphibious boat.

**MH:** Hmm-hmm.

**SM:** So hey, that's life. And when we got out there, I found out that we had not only joined the Navy, but we joined the construction battalion and combination Marines, we had to take Marine training out there. And then, I was sort of lucky, I met an uncle who was in the Army who had just come back from, oh, somewhere, I don't remember exactly where, but it was one of our outposts.

**MH:** Hmm-hmm.

**SM:** And we spent New Year's Eve and New Year's Day together in Los Angeles and Hollywood, and we went to the Hollywood canteen and they put us up for the night, and it was really, they really treated service people, it was an awesome experience for, even on the trains, you'd stop at these, on the way back, you'd stop at these stops and people would be out on the platforms with sandwiches and cake and what have you. And this was not coming back from overseas, this was, it's being in the service, it was just a different environment, a lot different than the way we treated people after Korea and Vietnam, and - It was just different.

**MH:** Hmm.

**SM:** Anyway, we shipped out on January the 10th, 1945, on a Liberty ship, and of course in those days you didn't know these things sank on their own some of them and what have you. And I got, funny story, I got down in lower C hold, where the hammocks were ten or eleven tall, and that very first day, and we didn't know where we were going, and that very first day on that, on the door, the hatch going in and out, there was a handle on one side and a wheel on the other. And I said, "How come they got a handle on one and a wheel on the other?" They said, "Well, this hold gets torpedoed, they seal that off." And I said, "Well what about the guys in there?" "Well," he says, "better lose whatever's in there than the rest of the guys in the other holds." "Well," I said, "I'm not sleeping down here." So every night I'd go up on deck, and we had these big cork life jackets, and I'd put one of those on and sleep on an orange crate.

But it just so happened, on this trip we were going to Pearl Harbor, and we were in the first unescorted convoy that ever left Port Hueneme to Pearl Harbor. And that's where I turned eighteen, on board that ship. And speaking of that, my mother was some upset at my father because he signed the papers. Here her little boy [has] gone off to war. And I'm going to tell you this, I got to confess to this, that many a time in boot camp I'd say, "What the heck am I doing here?" You know, "Why did I [] enlist? Why didn't I get drafted?" And, "You enlisted, you can't complain. Can't complain, so take it with a smile." But it all worked out well.

And speaking of, we didn't really know where we were going, but we ended up on an island called Eniwetok, where we anchored there, I think we laid there for a couple weeks anyway, not knowing where we were going, rumored, "We're going here, we're going there," but nobody really knew. But one of the most interesting sights I've ever seen was part of the attack force for Iwo Jima, and honest-to-God, you looked out there and as far as your eye could see were ships, all different size ships, must have been thousands of them. Not hundreds, thousands of these ships out there in that harbor. That was so exciting to see that.

And then we eventually ended up in the Gulf of Leyte.

**MH:** Hmm-hmm.

**SM:** And after sleeping all these nights on deck, we have an air raid warning. "Everybody below deck." And I laughed at myself again. "Here you are, you slept on deck all this time, now there's an air raid warning and now you got to go below deck." Well anyway.

**MH:** So did you spend the remainder of your time in the Pacific theater?

**SM:** In the Philippines, yeah, on a little island.

**MH:** Okay. And what were you doing there?

**SM:** I was a, believe it or not I was, my first job over there was digging a big opening for the head. It's an outhouse, but I mean they got, and the only thing that mystified me – I never swung an axe in my life, but you learned – the thing that used to boggle my mind was, we get this deep enough, how do you get out of here? I mean you're down in that big hole. But one day while I was, and this day I was assigned to do that, or the second day, they called my name, and I had put on my, I put on my resume that I could type, because I'd taken that in high school in my commercial course, and they said, "You are now going to be a storekeeper striker, and you're going to learn how to be a storekeeper." And that was my job. I eventually became a storekeeper second class; I eventually ended up in charge of the operation.

And we took, this outfit I was in was only six hundred people, we were an automotive repair unit, and believe it or not, in the newspaper, in the Navy newspaper, we were written up – I forgot what they used to call it – but we were written up as the youngest outfit in the Seabees. The average age in our outfit was nineteen, and we had a lot of old guys in there, they were maybe fifty, I mean that was old to us youngsters.

**MH:** So you were on land most of the time?

**SM:** I was on land the whole, other than going over or coming back, oh yes.

**MH:** Automotive repair.

**SM:** Yes, automotive –

**MH:** Were these automobiles coming out of other places?

**SM:** No, they weren't automobiles. When they say automotive repair, there were bulldozers and –

**MH:** Oh so it was heavy machinery.

**SM:** Everything, trucks. And speaking of that, this chief, I learned how to become a storekeeper, learned all the – probably it helped me tremendously in the restaurant business when I eventually went in the restaurant business – he taught me a lot. Because we had to, we fed three meals a day for seventy-five cents a day back in those days, and we, actually we fed them for a heck of a lot less because this man was absolutely a brilliant, we were using like – one day, for example, one day we're using Australian flour, which is horrible, and he learned there was

American flour coming in on a ship, and our colors were green, like the Marines, Navy was blue, and he had three trucks painted blue, paint was still wet on them, we drove down to the docks, they dropped the cargo nets with the flour on them, and we scooted, scooted back to the outfit. I mean, this is fun stuff.

And I really, I really don't like to talk about it because there's some real, there are people really that were in the war and they got killed or they got wounded, and really, this is just funny stuff that really, I repeat it with my tongue in my [cheek], I bite my tongue a little bit. For example, why our food costs were so low that he'd, he would make, some of the, like dehydrated onions and dehydrated potatoes and dehydrated milk would come in these five gallon cans, square cans. And he'd take the – not the onion ones, but the potato and milk, have them all washed out, and fill them with ice cream and have the bakers bake up some cheese cakes, and we'd head down to the Naval depot, supply depot and, with some trucks and jeep, and put the ice cream out and the cakes out, and they'd say, "Go ahead, take what you need."

**MH:** So you were learning the restaurant business while you were in the Navy.

**SM:** I think so, I learned a lot. About food cost and things like that.

**MH:** Hmmm.

**SM:** But anyway -

**MH:** So you were discharged from the Philippines?

**SM:** Discharged, no, came back to Boston, to the Fargo Building.

**MH:** Hmm-hmm.

**SM:** Got discharged at the Fargo Building in Boston, came home -

**MH:** When would that have been, in '46, or '45?

**SM:** Nineteen forty-six, I was two days lacking two years in the service.

**MH:** Okay.

**SM:** And I saw something the other day about people coming back to the country that reminded me; when we sailed back, we sailed into California, into San Francisco, and on Mother's Day of 1946, it was a Sunday in May, and what I first, my first glimpse of America and a light was Alcatraz. To me, that was one of the most beautiful sights I think I'd ever seen. And of course, we got off that ship and we got where we were going to go on that base, and first thing most of us headed for was for a milkshake, we hadn't had a glass of milk in a couple of years. It was a real treat.

Got home, and surprised, didn't tell my mother I was coming, or my father and, I didn't want to give her a heart attack, but -

**MH:** Did you go across the country by rail?

**SM:** Yes. Interesting thing, we got a pre-embarkation leave before we left, and we didn't have any money, and God bless the Red Cross, they do a lot of wonderful things, but a lot of us guys hadn't got paid, we didn't have any money. And we went to the Red Cross and asked them if we could borrow ten dollars. I think in those days we were only paid twenty-one a month, whatever, but [they said, no] we couldn't. I lost a lot of respect for them – I shouldn't have but when you're hungry, you're going to be on this train, you're going to be hungry and didn't have any money. But I really, it's not a nice thing to say, but. They do help a lot of people, no question about it.

**MH:** So you're back in Boston, or now back in Maine, you get back to Bangor.

**SM:** No, I got back, we got home.

**MH:** Right.

**SM:** We came, I went from Oakland. There's not a train into San Francisco, we took the train from Oakland and we got back to, changed trains in different places, and Chicago was one of them, and then Boston, you had to go from the South to the North, and got back to Bangor – this was my final, my return – and we were in Bangor maybe a week or two and then a lot of us were going back for discharge.

**MH:** Oh okay.

**SM:** To the Fargo Building, and then back to Bangor again. I got home, and after a while my mother had to go to, my mother always told me to go to school, college. Of course I didn't have enough credits to get into a, because of changing my course in high school. Well, my mother had a problem with, she had a skin problem on her hands, she'd suffered from that for years, and she had an appointment at the Leahy Clinic, and the Leahy Clinic then was in Boston.

**MH:** Hmm-hmm.

**SM:** So she and I took the train to Boston, and that night, early evening, we went out, we had something to eat and we, she said, "Let's go for a walk." And we walked down Boylston Street and, "Oh," she says, "there's Bentley College, let's go in."

So we went in, it was seven o'clock at night, and it just so happened this man's portrait was on the wall, Harry Bentley, and he was coming down the stairs. And he came down and my mother said to him, "You're Mr. Bentley." And he said, "Yes." She said, "Well my son just got out of

the service and he would love to come to your school.” “Well,” he said, “Mrs. Miller,” he says, “we’re really jammed here,” he says, “we’ve got only” – in those days Bentley was a two-year course, and -

**MH:** Right, it was kind of upstairs, wasn’t it, wasn’t it above -?

**SM:** No, there was classrooms down and classrooms up. The second year was up on the second floor. And she says, “My son would really love to come to your college, and he’s just out of the service and it’d be good for him.” “Well,” he says, “you know,” he said, “I like your attitude, I’m going to find a place for him. Now,” he says, “by the way” – I don’t know why he said it – he says, “are you Jewish, by any chance?” And she said, “Yes.” He says, “Well,” he says, “let me tell you,” he said, “they’re not hiring Jews out of this college.” He says, “There’s no jobs for them, the big companies aren’t hiring.” This is 1946. I mean, when they say the company, GE probably, and Telephone, the big people. But that wasn’t necessary; there were a lot of other jobs.

So anyway there was a man in Bangor, Murray Rabin (*sounds like*), who had gone to Bentley prior to going into the army, and he and I roomed together on, right next to the mother church, the Christian Science mother church on -

**MH:** On Huntington Avenue.

**SM:** Huntington Ave., yeah, we had a room there, seven bucks a week, I mean it was-

**MH:** Near the Y.

**SM:** Huh?

**MH:** Near the Y.

**SM:** Well, the Y was a little way, yes, not too far from the Y. But it’s very interesting, in those days, we belonged to the 52/20 Club, government gave us twenty bucks a week for fifty-two weeks, and we got by on twenty dollars a week. Your room was seven bucks, you had, you were able to eat, there were all kinds of cafeterias back in those days, right in the neighborhood.

**MH:** So you did enroll in Bentley?

**SM:** Oh yes, I went to Bentley.

**MH:** Oh yeah, okay.

**SM:** And I did well. I did well. But it’s amazing how you get by. Your laundry was – of course you did a little bit of it in the sink in the room, and what you did send out, you took care of, and your meals, and you still had, on Saturdays, high noon on Saturday you could, they had

these drinks for twenty-five cents, you could go to a bar, nice bar, and have a shot of Canadian Club or something for a quarter. And of course we got out on Saturday night, and I keep saying, it's amazing how we could do that on twenty dollars a week. And we had money to go to a baseball game; we'd walk over to Fenway Park once in a while and go to a game.

*End of CD One.*

*CD Two*

**SM:** It was a very interesting, living in Boston, for me back in those days, because you can get around and - And my uncles used to come down and take me out when they'd come to Boston, which was a big treat, at Jacob Wirth, those knockwursts.

**MH:** Oh right, Jacob Wirth.

**SM:** It's not like that today, I mean in those days it was, the waiters in their white aprons and all kinds, they put all kinds of bread on the table, and real bread, you know, not this imitation stuff. Oh boy. And then, I didn't go back to Bentley. I got a job as a bookkeeper for a used car dealer -

**MH:** So you were there two years?

**SM:** One year.

**MH:** One year.

**SM:** It was a two-year course.

**MH:** One year, okay.

**SM:** I only went one year; I didn't go back. Oh, my mother I think was heartbroken, but I... listen, I - And I went to work for this used car dealer, Hammond Motors, out on Hammond Street, and I worked for him as his bookkeeper for a while, and I learned something there, too. You know how they used to buy and sell and so forth and so on. And then, I had an uncle who had an acquaintance who had been friendly to his family for years and years and years, and he wanted me to go into the jukebox and pinball machine business. So my uncle signed a note for a few thousand dollars, not much, two or three thousand, at Merrill Bank, and I got into the jukebox business and pinball machines. And of course you had to know how to fix them, and I didn't know how to fix them so I had a partner. And we had pinball machines and jukeboxes around, not a lot of them but some -

**MH:** Did you have an establishment, a place of -?

**SM:** No, a route, we had a route.

**MH:** Oh a route, okay.

**SM:** For the road, in filling stations and, oh geez, we traveled to Freedom, Maine, and Machias, Maine.

**MH:** Wow.

**SM:** And up in Lincoln and beyond Lincoln, it was a route, we just, and Jonesport and -

**MH:** That's a big route.

**SM:** It was a big route because Automatic Music had most of the business -

**MH:** What'd you call it, "Autonac?"

**SM:** Automatic Music -

**MH:** Automatic Music, okay.

**SM:** - had the, they were well established, and nice people. And I later, and you know, my father was having a little bit of a problem making a living, and he bought this old building down on Washington Street, across the railroad station, on the corner of Pine and Washington Street.

**MH:** Hmm-hmm.

**SM:** And we borrowed five hundred from this one, and five hundred from that one, and of course I sold my pinball machine business, and I got a \$4000 G.I. loan, and my mother and father took a third mortgage on the house, and that's how we started, down on Washington Street. And I'll tell you, we were right next to Oscar's Restaurant, back then, and that was kind of like the Wild West down -

**MH:** Was that really the first restaurant, Miller Restaurant?

**SM:** Yes, Miller's Luncheonette.

**MH:** Miller's Luncheonette.

**SM:** It wasn't a restaurant, it was a luncheonette, and we, and -

**MH:** What did it look like?

**SM:** What did it look like? Well, it looked like an old wooden house, and I had them put in plate glass windows from the floor to the ceiling, so people could look in, my thinking was, 'Hey, why should they be afraid to come in?' because around the corner on Exchange Street they

had all sorts of places to drink, barrooms and so forth and so on, and the Woodsman -

**MH:** Hmm-hmm, sure. Across from the Bijou.

**SM:** No, not, no-no, further down.

**MH:** Oh, further down.

**SM:** Down toward Washington Street, and that's where the labor agencies were for the hiring the woods people. They were nice people, they'd come down, they'd get drunk, some of them, or a big percentage of them, and spend their money and go back up to the woods again. But they were good people, hard working people, Russians and Finns and – and my mother used to make like cabbage soup and barley soup and they'd love to come in and, a lot of them come in and have that type of thing.

But our specialty was ice cream, ice cream sodas.

**MH:** Hmm-hmm.

**SM:** And banana splits.

**MH:** Hmm-hmm.

**SM:** And, we were really the first innovators, other than the five-and-ten or Newberry's for a banana split or, we fancied it up a little -

**MH:** So you had a counter with stools?

**SM:** Counters and stools, yeah, yeah. And sold hamburgers and, good hamburgers. And then Korea, the war in Korea had broken out, and Dow Field had these people come in from the Midwest, from Iowa and Colorado and Ohio, and their eating habits were different, that's where the thick milkshakes came in, we learned how to make thick milkshakes, and make chili, and it was quite, they were nice people, I want to tell you, those people in that part of the country were unique, they were –

**MH:** The air force base was started during the Second World War, or was it -?

**SM:** It was during the Second World War, yeah, yeah.

**MH:** Okay, so it was, okay. I wasn't sure whether it started after or before, or during.

**SM:** No-no-no, it started prior, I mean right in that time frame.

**MH:** Right.

**SM:** Yeah. A lot of those -

**MH:** So how long did you operate the Washington Street?

**SM:** We operated Washington Street from 1951, for a couple years.

**MH:** Okay.

**SM:** Two or three years, and we sold to the guy next door. He thought we were cutting into his business. I don't know how, but thank God he did, and he bought it. And then I got in trouble. We went down and we bought this house on Main Street, on the corner of Dutton and Main, and behind it now is a motel, it's right next to the Racino.

**MH:** Hmm-hmm, hmm-hmm.

**SM:** And which, where the Racino is, there was a filling station on one corner, and a couple of them actually. But anyway, bought this house down there, and we paid \$18,000 for the house, and this is where I got in trouble.

I suggested to my parents that we pay for it: "Why have a mortgage?" Pay for it. We wouldn't have the interest payments until the lady moved out so we could get started. Well, I say trouble, we went to the savings bank, which we had, my mother and father had great credit there because they'd bought a house and paid the mortgage off and so forth, and they said, "We're awfully sorry, we can't loan you because it's going to be a commercial property."

**MH:** Hmm-hmm.

**SM:** So then we went to Merrill Bank, and, "We can't loan you any money because it's a residential property." I mean it was a complete runaround, it was a horror show, and we bounced back and forth and bounced back and forth.

And then I went to this man that was a, in those days they called him a ten-percenter, for interest. And he said, "Look," he says, "I'm not going to loan you any money, but you go back to the bank, you tell the bank if they don't loan you the money, I'll loan you the money." It wasn't much, I mean it was, it cost fifteen thousand to remodel, to get into the business. And he, the bank did loan us some money. And then I borrowed \$500 from this very fine gentleman, and the family loaned us another \$500. It was, that was big money back in those days, \$1000.

**MH:** Yeah.

**SM:** And we got it open. We got it open. And -

**MH:** So it's essentially where the Racino is today.

**SM:** On the other, yes, on the other corner. But we didn't have much parking - that was a little problem. But it was interesting, Pilot's Grill at that time had to move from their present location to where they ended up being.

**MH:** On Outer Hammond Street.

**SM:** Yeah, and of course they had to close.

**MH:** Their first location was where?

**SM:** Their first location was close to the gate.

**MH:** Okay, the gate on Hammond Street.

**SM:** Of Dow Field, yeah, it was across the street.

**MH:** Yeah. Where all the credit unions are and things now.

**SM:** Probably, yes. And anyway, went back to the bank and tried to borrow money to put a balcony – in other words, we had built the addition onto this house, on the lower level, and the house was, would have been the balcony. And a hell of a job trying to convince them to loan us some money to put this balcony on. All it was was just cut some openings and put a set of stairs in and buy some furniture. It was a horrible experience, but we got the money, we got it open, and we did a heck of a big hamburger and ice cream sodas, banana splits. And I brought pizza into, we were the first, other than the Baltimore, the old Baltimore had a square pizza.

**MH:** Right.

**SM:** And this outfit had a pre-made crust and an oven, you could buy -

**MH:** And the Baltimore was the Baldacci family.

**SM:** Baldacci, yes. And I put in pizza, they were round, and we did a nice business. And then on the day that Glenn orbited, we had a cook that put too many steaks on the grill – I was very, I was ahead of the times, because I'd read different things and – I'm saying 'I this' and 'I that,' but I did it anyway – but reading magazines and traveling a little tiny bit, you could see things. So I put in a grill, a flame grill, glassed in so they could see the cook up there cooking. And unfortunately that day he put too many steaks on the grill, because in those days we used to, I marketed, I was an entrepreneur, and we sold steak at \$1.35, for a steak dinner, I mean they were, so I mean they might have been a little marinated, but they worked. And they cut good.

And like I said, the guy put too many on there, and he, he wasn't smart enough to get a bunch of baking soda and, you know, or flour and dump it on that grill, but it got beyond him. And we

had the Stearns team in there, and we got the Stearns team out, and by the time they -

**MH:** Stearns High School basketball team?

**SM:** Stearns basketball team, yes, and we burned.

**MH:** The whole place burned down?

**SM:** Well not the whole place, there was enough damage there to, as far as the restaurant was concerned, the restaurant was totaled, but the building wasn't.

**MH:** How many employees did you have?

**SM:** Back then, I don't remember. We lived upstairs, my family lived upstairs.

**MH:** I see.

**SM:** We lived upstairs on Washington Street also. We had to sell the house eventually and put that in there. Well, after that, we lost that, like I said, the day that Glenn orbited. I think that was February, the tournaments were on, February. Now -

**MH:** Sixty-two, probably.

**SM:** Yeah, and I've met Glenn a couple times since then.

**MH:** Have you?

**SM:** Yeah, and I would tell him every time I would see him, what happened. He was up the last time when Cohen brought him up to the university. And I think he was in the restaurant once, when he was running for, wasn't he running for president, didn't he run for president?

**MH:** I think he did once, I think so.

**SM:** Yeah, I think so, yeah. And anyway, my dad suggested we buy Aunty Molly's, which was down the street. And we couldn't buy the building at the time, but we bought the restaurant, and we went in there and -

**MH:** Is that also on the river side of the street?

**SM:** No, that's on the other -

**MH:** The other side.

**SM:** That's where the Racino started in town.

**MH:** Hmm-hmm.

**SM:** And we rented there, and it's interesting, we made more money the first year at 427 Main Street, which is at that location, I made the several years we were on, we were at the other place. In other words, you really didn't make any money, you just made a, you scrimped a living out of it. I think I grossed, I think I grossed on Main Street, on the first location on Main Street, might have been, oh, maybe a hundred thousand a year, which was, you know, and hamburgers, I think, were still maybe a quarter, coffee was probably fifteen cents then, or maybe still a dime. But when we moved down to this present location, our first year we did a hundred and fifty thousand. We, you know, we had it down -

**MH:** You had a lot more parking.

**SM:** Yeah, a little more parking. But we had good food, good food and they realized, we had a big breakfast business, and Sunday mornings was a dream when we were lucky to, we got a lot of business from the, from St. Mary's, St. John's, and I kind of was a little upset when they let people go to church on Saturday nights instead of Sundays. Between Howard Johnson and Miller's, I mean we did that; we did the bulk of the Sunday morning breakfast business. And that's before the buffet and that sort of thing, but.

**MH:** Well when did you get, so you're now a major restaurant in Bangor. When did you get interested in public affairs and politics and -?

**SM:** Never got interested in politics.

**MH:** Never got interested. But you had a lot of friends in politics.

**SM:** We had a lot of friends in politics, and very interesting, I was a registered Republican, and they all, the Democrats always thought I was a Democrat, and I was on their mailing list. And I spent more time with Democrats, but Marshall Stern, who I want to say was my best friend, a lot younger than I, but he was really a dear, dear friend, and he would have done anything for me and I would have done anything for him. And he was an avid Democrat.

And back in those days, the ideas were wonderful, I mean helping people, I mean that he tried to indoctrinate me, and he did to a point. I never changed parties, but I never voted a straight Republican ticket. They had some interesting, interesting thoughts.

**MH:** Was it through Marshall that you met George Mitchell?

**SM:** Yes.

**MH:** Can you recall that?

**SM:** Oh, absolutely.

**MH:** Tell me about it.

**SM:** George, Marshall brought George in and introduced him to me in the restaurant. I can't recall exactly the year, but it was about the time George was going to run for governor.

**MH:** That would be 1973.

**SM:** Yeah.

**MH:** He ran, the election was held in 1974.

**SM:** Yes, you're right. And he, whenever George was in Bangor, he would stay at Marshall's apartment. And I knew that George liked milk, and many a time I would come up there with a container of milk for George – it was 'George' then –and he'd always be in his undershorts in there. Don't ask me why. White undershorts. And I'll always remember one night, I brought the milk up, I knocked on the door and he opened the door, and I walked and I said, "Wait a minute," and I dropped my pants. And there I was in my undershorts, holding the milk, and I said, "George, when you become governor, can you and I have milk in the Blaine House in our shorts?"

I want to tell you, there's a man, in my opinion, [who] is an absolute gentleman. Always had a smile on his face, still does. I can't say we socialized a lot, but we socialized some. And he didn't, of course we know he didn't win the gubernatorial election but then -

**MH:** So met him through Marshall.

**SM:** Oh through Marshall.

**MH:** Then, prior to the election.

**SM:** Oh yes, absolutely.

**MH:** The governor's race.

**SM:** And it's a funny thing, I never supported him either, for some reason, and I'll tell you, I did support him eventually. And then he became a, I don't know if he immediately became the federal district attorney or he became the assistant district attorney.

**MH:** No, he actually became the federal attorney.

**SM:** In the beginning.

**MH:** He'd been a, before that Joe Brennan had chosen him to be a county attorney, down in Cumberland.

**SM:** Oh no, okay then.

**MH:** So he did that for a couple of years.

**SM:** Okay, then he moved back, and then he moved to Bangor.

**MH:** In 1976, when President Carter was elected.

**SM:** Yes, he became the federal attorney. And then from there he was appointed federal judge.

**MH:** That's right.

**SM:** And then Joe Brennan, when Ed Muskie became secretary of state –

**MH:** That's right.

**SM:** - he appointed George to be senator in his place. And Marshall and I flew, and Tabenken, Gerald Tabenken -

**MH:** Gerald Tabenken, I know Mr. Tabenken.

**SM:** Marshall used to call him 'Whitey.' He was a character. Anyway, they chartered a little plane, first time I ever [flew], I was a little nervous, we flew to Augusta and we went over for George's swearing in. And it was so funny, Joe Brennan used to come in the restaurant all the time before he became the governor, and Joe Brennan kind of forgot Sonny Miller, which is kind of funny in a way because I met him one day at WABI [Bangor TV station], he was, I don't know what he was doing out there, but I happened to be out there to see about some advertising. And I said, "Excuse me," I said, "am I supposed to call you Joe or Governor Brennan?" I said, "You forgot me," I said, "where have you been?"

Anyway, I'm telling you this part because we got over to Augusta to the swearing in, and Chuck Cianchette is over there. And Chuck was a wonderful man, oh, he was really, he was a real man, he was *real*, and he helped so many people, financially and otherwise, I know that. And he said, "Did you ever get a picture of the governor?" And I said, "No." He says, "Come with me," takes me into the governor's office, and I don't know if Joe had married her yet or not, but she was in there. And Chuck says, "How come Sonny doesn't have a picture from the governor?" "Well," she said, "we really didn't know what to put on it." I said -

**MH:** This is Connie, Connie.

**SM:** Yes. I said, "Well that's easy, put on there 'to a great guy' and have the governor sign it." So anyway. I was a little flip, but anyway. So Marshall says, "You're going to go to Washington to Muskie's swearing-in." I said, "You're kidding me." "No, no, no," he says, "I'll get you cleared, and you're coming down." I said, "Great." So we get plane tickets the next day and we fly down to Washington. And I was a little nervous then, and I'm not a drinker but I had a few, I had a few on the plane, Dewers, and we were flying first class.

And we were concerned we didn't have a place to stay, so Marshall turns to Tabenken and he says, "Whitey," he says, "we need a place to stay down there." And he says, "Well that's no problem, we'll get you a place." And he gets three rooms at the Watergate, okay? That was, so they went upstairs to change. I didn't bring any, I don't know, I mean I'm not that backward, I just didn't bring anything with me. I had the same, I had a suit on and maybe a change of underwear and my toilet articles and so forth. I just wasn't thinking. I was sort of excited, going down there to Washington to the swearing-in of Senator Muskie.

And they went upstairs to change and I said, "Well, I'm going in the dining room and have a shrimp cocktail or a crabmeat cocktail, and I think I'll have another drink." So I ordered, and they had a candle on, little candles, a candle on the table, a little one, a short candle. And I lifted the napkin on the roll basket and accidentally hit the end of the candle. Well, it didn't flame up, it just, and I just took the glass of water and poured it over the thing and put it out, but the waiters all came over.

But they come down from upstairs, they get a cab, and we get in this cab and we had an Afro, I thought he was Afro-American but he must have been, because Tabenken says, "Drive into the Rose Garden." And he says, "Hey man," he said, "I can't do that, I don't have a green card." So anyway, he says, "Go ahead anyway, we'll take care of it, drive right in." So he does, he drives in, and they stop you at the, and they check your names off, "Tabenken, Gerald." "Yes." "Stern, Marshall." "Yes." "Miller, Dr. Robert Miller." Marshall said to him, Marshall, "Yes, that's him." So, and we go in.

So they passed us through, and we're walking through the garden going into the, in there, and there's Bill Cohen talking with one of the attorneys from Watergate. I think he was from Maine.

**MH:** Oh.

**SM:** Or, he was familiar, so me being me, it's like 'Manny being Manny,' Sonny being Sonny, I don't say, "Hi Senator," I said, "Hi Bill," you know, I've known Bill since he was -

**MH:** He probably used to deliver bread, didn't he?

**SM:** Yes, he delivered the rolls and the bread. I says, "Gee whiz, I saw your father this morning, he was delivering the bread." Which was [true], you know, and we chatted for a bit and he says, "What are you doing here?" I said, "Marshall, he brought me." So we go in, and we're starting up the stairs and here's the congressman from Massachusetts, I think, and with

him is – I call him ‘Rostenkowski.’

**MH:** Rostenkowski, from Chicago, Danny Rostenkowski from Chicago.

**SM:** Yes, he was coming down the stairs, and Marshall stopped the guy from Massachusetts, Marshall reminded him about his father-in-law who was running again and, “I want you to meet Sonny Miller,” and whatever and whatever. Then we go upstairs, and Jiminy Crickets, I look around and I thought I was in a real, real – I hate to say it – Disney World. Which isn’t Disney World, but geez, there’s Henry Kissinger, and there’s, oh, all the people that you see on television. And I walk over to Dr. Kissinger and I introduce myself, “I’m Sonny Miller from Bangor, Maine.” And I said, “Well,” he’s shorter than I am but I say, “what an honor it is to meet you.” And I say, “Boy, you’re a lot nicer looking than you are on TV.”

And then just, I mean this is just beyond me. It was awesome. And then Jimmy Carter comes walking in, and eventually I walk over and I say, “Mr. President, it’s nice to meet you,” I said, “I’m Sonny Miller from Bangor, Maine.” I said, “Years ago you were in my restaurant, before you ran for president, and they had a party for you, and all of the congressmen and senators were there, you were there,” and I says, “what an honor it was to have you.” And I said, “By the way,” I said, “what a great choice in Ed.” I would never call Ed Muskie ‘Ed,’ but I said, “What a great choice.” And he gave me that grin and he shook his head and he says, “Yes, it was a great choice,” and whatever.

That was just a unique experience, but the other funny thing was, after the, well, we went out for the swearing-in, (*aside*: Someone’s buzzing me, I don’t care) and I’m standing there, and I’m in, Marshall’s on my left, and I look to my right, I says, and I tap Marshall, I says, “Brzezinski, he’s right next to me, holy mackerel.” And Marshall comes out from around me and he’s telling Brzezinski what a great friend he is of Ed’s, which he is, he went with Ed on his, on the, when Ed ran for –

**MH:** Right.

**SM:** - the presidency. And of course Marshall’s dad and Ed Muskie were, Ed Stern, were very, very close. And Marshall became, telling them the things to watch out with Muskie when he becomes secretary of state. It was kind of funny.

So after the swearing-in, we go into the reception room, and I’m looking around me and I see this very distinguished looking Afro-American and I shake his hand and I said, “I’m Sonny Miller from Bangor, Maine.” He says, “I’m so-and-so from the food catering service in Baltimore.” And a bunch of guys from Maine are there and they teased me about it for a long, long time. It was really a wonderful, unique experience. And then, after that was over, we went to some restaurant in Georgetown, which is owned by a Korean, who was a big lobbyist.

**MH:** Hmm-hmm.

**SM:** God, I don't know what his name was, but he owned this restaurant.

But prior to that, this is also interesting, I'm sitting there in the White House and the Marine band is playing and I'm looking at all the portraits there, and Joe Brennan comes over. And I said to Joe, I said, "Isn't that wonderful to be here in *our* house," I said. "This is the White House but really it's *our* house, it's the American house." "Yes," he says, "it's really beautiful." He says, "You ever been at the Blaine House?" he says, "ever been to dinner at the Blaine House?" I said, "No." He says, "Would you like to come?" I said, "I'd love to."

Well, not only has he invited me I don't know how many times to come over, verbally, but never got the invitation to come. And I thought that, Joe was, Joseph. So anyway, and why I'm saying that is, I go ahead again to, we're in Georgetown at the restaurant and Senator Mitchell now is sitting next to me, talking to me, and I said, "You know, all due respect," I said, "Joe's sitting over there and he did appoint you, maybe you should spend some time..." "No," he says, "I'd rather be with you." But I said, "No but," you know, "I appreciate that."

And that's not the only time George ever said that to me. When he used to call me at the restaurant, ask me if I'd had dinner yet or not and I'd say, "No," I'd say, "Come on, let's have dinner together," and he'd come over and he says, "You know, Sonny, I'd rather be here eating with you than, I could be having dinner with the president tonight." It was quite flattering.

**MH:** I notice you have this picture here in your living room of Marshall Stern, yourself, and the Senator.

**SM:** Yes.

**MH:** Do you remember when that was taken?

**SM:** Oh that was –

**MH:** And what was the –? It looks like you're out on a boat.

**SM:** We're on a boat, down in the harbor.

**MH:** Is that Marshall's boat?

**SM:** No, that one isn't, no. That's one that we went out on for the afternoon. But Marshall did later on rent a Hinckley –

**MH:** Hmm-hmm.

**SM:** - and took several people on the Hinckley with him. And, I don't know, I should call him Senator, but anyway, George, he stripped right down to his bathing suit and jumped in the, in that cold water. He was quite athletic, he was in good shape. That was on another -

**MH:** Now, is that down in Seal Harbor, or?

**SM:** Yes.

**MH:** Nice picture.

**SM:** But Marshall did have his own boat, but smaller than that.

**MH:** Well, did, what, in your view, was the things that George Mitchell should have been proudest of, in terms of his Senate career?

**SM:** To my knowledge, I think George Mitchell was a very honest senator. And to my knowledge, and I've heard a lot, he was not one of those type of people that did things to benefit himself. And of course he had a lot of Muskie's thinking that he wanted to keep going on. And I really was not politically involved and didn't follow, all I know is what Marshall used to tell me.

**MH:** Did you ever have any problems related to your business or the community that you brought to the Senator's attention for assistance?

**SM:** This is one thing, this is one thing, when George was running for senator the first time -

**MH:** Right, in 1982.

**SM:** After he'd been appointed, it was the first time I'd ever given a sizeable contribution, because I wanted to, and Marshall put his hand in my pocket besides.

**MH:** He was very good at that.

**SM:** But after he became senator, the very first time, when he was appointed, I recall distinctly shaking his hand and congratulating him and saying, "You know something? I'm so proud of knowing you, and I hope your friend, and I will never ask you for a favor, politically." And that's the truth.

Now there was an occasion I came pretty close to picking the telephone up, and was with Baldacci, I needed a favor. And several times I went to the telephone, because I have his numbers, some way to find him, and I wouldn't do it. I said to myself, I said, "Years ago you said to him, 'I'll never ask you for a favor, politically.'" And I never did.

**MH:** Have you kept in touch since he left the Senate in '94?

**SM:** Unfortunately, I want to say this, that George has been so busy with his new family and his involvement in legal and all the things he's involved with that I haven't. And I really think

the world of him.

**MH:** You know we have at the university, in the fall of every year we have a lecture on the environment that he -

**SM:** I missed it, I -

**MH:** And we'd certainly love to have you come up next year.

**SM:** Yes but the last one, the last one, it was in a small -

**MH:** Right, Hauck [auditorium], yeah.

**SM:** Yes, the performing center hadn't been opened and it was in – I would have liked to have gone up.

**MH:** If you'd like to go next year, I can certainly arrange that for you.

**SM:** Well thank you.

**MH:** That would be -

**SM:** I did have an invitation, because we are involved at the university, we've got some scholarships up there, my wife and I, and as a matter of fact, we were talking about the restaurant, the restaurant's gone, and when we first opened on Main Street, our slogan was "Meet me at Millers." I had one of the local radio advertisers give me that, and we used to use it in all of our advertising. And my wife and I have arranged that the new café in the performing arts center is going to be Miller's Café.

**MH:** Oh, how nice.

**SM:** And it's going to, well I'm hoping they're going to use "Meet me at Millers" there, so. But the reason we did that is because we enjoyed all the business that we got from the university and from the students over the years that we were in business. And we've done some things for Husson, too, based on that same feeling. But it even goes even further than that, that we have scholarships at Bangor High, we have five of them that are, at the present time are \$2000 apiece for needy students that are [going to the University of Maine, Orono or Husson University].

And I want to say this, and I don't know if George will ever hear this or not, but there was a day in Miller's Restaurant, and the three of us, Marshall and George and I are sitting in a booth, and George turned to Marshall and said, "Marshall" – the Senator called him Marsh – but, "Marshall," he says, "you know, I got a lot of money left over." I opened up – there used to be a thing called 'Sonnyisms' – I opened up with a Sonnyism, and I said, "George, scholarships." Now whether that registered at that particular time or not, but he did do something wonderful,

scholarships for kids. And I think that's so important.

**MH:** Yes, he's very proud of that, and he said that next to his family, that scholarship program is his, is the, is -

**SM:** Yes, but I'm kind of hoping that day, and I remember it, I can even remember the exact booth we were sitting in, and I said, "Scholarships."

**MH:** This has been great, I appreciate this very much. And if you have any, if you'd like to do a second run at this we, think about it and - sometimes people, after they get talking, they think afterwards, "Gee, there's something I wish I'd said for the record." And so I can come back, I'm not far away.

**SM:** I know. You know something, he really truly, and I'm not saying it because I'm being interviewed, but I've always held him in highest, highest esteem. And Bill Cohen is also, he's - oh, here's a point of trivia. My cousin's in Baltimore, I have a cousin in Baltimore, elder cousin, son-in-law is in the same law firm with George, and he's head of the western division.

**MH:** Really?

**SM:** Yes.

**MH:** I wonder if the Senator knows that. What's his, what's your cousin's name?

**SM:** You know something, I don't -

**MH:** Maybe you could get it for me.

**SM:** Oh, who he's married to?

**MH:** Well, your cousin's name.

**SM:** Oh, he's not my cousin; he's married to my cousin's daughter.

**MH:** Oh okay.

**SM:** And he, his dad was in the toy business. I don't know, it was Ideal Toy or whatever, but he's -

**MH:** It's a very large law firm; it's the largest in the world actually.

**SM:** Second largest.

**MH:** Oh, is it?

**SM:** Second largest, yes.

**MH:** Okay.

**SM:** That's what I've read, but I can be wrong, it may be the largest now. But he's head of the western division. So, he lived in Chicago, I know that. And I don't personally know him.

**MH:** Hmm-hmm.

**SM:** But I kind of thought that was interesting. But Bill Cohen, we got invited to Bill's wedding, his last wedding in Washington. He always, you know, I go to, we're invited to all his events at the university, and I knew Bill when.

**MH:** Well thank you very much.

**SM:** You're very welcome.

**MH:** We appreciate it, this has been a lot of fun and I -

**SM:** I hope I didn't talk too much.

**MH:** No, not at all, this has been great, and so we'll end the tape here, and thank you.

End of Interview