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Interview with Jane O'Connor by Brien Williams

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Recommended Citation

O'Connor, Jane F., "Interview with Jane O'Connor by Brien Williams" (2010). *George J. Mitchell Oral History Project*. 54.

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George J. Mitchell Oral History Project

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Jane F. O'Connor
(Interviewer: *Brien Williams*)

GMOH# 217
May 20, 2010

Brien Williams: This is an oral history interview for the George J. Mitchell Oral History Project at Bowdoin College with Jane F. O'Connor. We are in her home in Washington, D.C., today is Thursday, May 20, 2010, and I am Brien Williams. Jane, let's start with you giving me your full name and spelling.

Jane O'Connor: Jane Frances O'Connor, Jane, J-A-N-E, Frances, F-R-A-N-C-E-S, O'Connor, O-apostrophe-capital C-O-N-N-O-R, of Augusta, Maine.

BW: And the date of your birth?

JO: 3/13/60, so this year is my fiftieth birthday.

BW: And your parents' names.

JO: Dr. Frances J. O'Connor, M.D, and Barbara Louise Murray.

BW: Great. I want to make mention here that you were interviewed by Don Nicoll for the Muskie Oral History Project at Bates College, and that covered a lot of your background and your family, and also some of your experiences with Senator Mitchell as well, so that should be cross-referenced. But one thing that I came away from that interview uncertain of was the outcome of Beverly Bustin's race for the Senate, the state Senate in Maine. I think she won.

JO: She won, indeed.

BW: And she described it as a kind of an uphill battle, isn't that right?

JO: That is right. She was a female, and in those days females running for office was very difficult. But as John Martin, who was the speaker of the House at the time, said, don't ever run against a woman because they work harder than any man and they are tough campaigners. So I worked on her campaign, at the same time working as an intern for Senator Mitchell in Waterville, my first internship. And so I got to see her running for office and the way that she ran the campaign, with all the cards and going door-to-door, doing the absentee ballots, and seeing both how a field representative runs a field office as well as working on a senate campaign.

BW: Were you ever tempted to join her staff?

JO: I don't believe the Senate had staffs that large in the State House, and I was, luckily was invited by David Johnson to interview for the position in Washington. And for someone from Augusta, it was quite a great opportunity to work in Washington, so I took that opportunity to work as a receptionist for Senator Mitchell in 1981. And so in June I came down, after I interviewed, I was supposed to interview for a week and I was hired on the third day by David. So I was able to handle all the multiple phone calls that came in and all the guests that came in, then ended up training everybody else for the next six or seven years on answering the phones, and who's who and how the office runs.

BW: Before we get to Washington, I wanted you to describe the sort of ambiance of the Waterville office, field office, what was it like there?

JO: The Waterville field office. I often took the bus, and sometimes drove with Beverly from Augusta to, it was a shop front office, it was on a main street and you had to climb the stairs to get into the field office. We had one ceremonial office for the Senator when he was there, and then two separate desks, one for the field representative, and then we would have one case worker, or two case workers working in the office who were helping constituents with different issues they had with the federal government, you know, food stamp issues, military issues. I remember Sue and Janet both worked in that office.

BW: Sue Gurney and Janet Dennis.

JO: Yes, correct. And I can remember, I believe there was, I do believe there may still have been some of Senator Muskie's stuff in the office, I think there was a fish or something, I do remember, and then of course the Maine Seal in the office, big letters.

BW: And was there a lot of traffic coming in?

JO: I worked in the summer so it would have been, the phones were ringing a lot, we didn't have as many visitors in the office. We handled the phones and took down a lot of constituent concerns and processed those. At the time, Senator Mitchell I don't remember often coming into the office.

BW: Now, that was not the main office.

JO: We had eight field offices in Maine, so Waterville was Senator Muskie's home town and Senator Mitchell's home town, or where Senator Muskie – Senator Muskie was from Rumford but Waterville is where he started his law practice, and so he selected Waterville, and Senator Mitchell's family is from Waterville so that was -

BW: So was that the quote/unquote, 'headquarters' field office?

JO: I believe it might have been for Senator Mitchell, although our larger office in Portland had more staff, so that seemed to get more business, and then we had the Bangor office that Clyde MacDonald ran, and then Tom [Bertocci] in Rockland, we had the Lewiston office, but possibly the Portland office, which Larry Benoit was a field rep for, I think that was probably the busier one. Senator Mitchell would often fly into Portland from Washington, so he spent more time and had a home of course in Portland.

BW: How was information passed from the field office to Washington and vice versa?

JO: Well, during those days we used the fax machine. So we would gather the, one of the jobs of the field staff was to go through the newspaper in the morning and clip out various articles that they would then fax to the Washington office, and then these clips would be Xeroxed so that every one of our LAs [legislative assistants] would have a copy and they could read the Maine news. So that was a big job.

BW: And in terms of constituent service, if a constituent had a problem that could be better handled in Washington, how would that get passed out?

JO: Most of the work was handled in the field, the field staff did a lot of work, a lot of the contacts with like, say, Social Security, there's a problem with someone's Social Security check, all of that work was done by the case workers. And Washington, we handled more of the legislative issues, and so all the policy was written in Washington, but all the real one-on-one handling the constituents of Maine was done by the crack field staff.

BW: And these were all paid staff.

JO: These are all federal employees, and many of them had worked for Senator Muskie previously. I believe Senator Mitchell kept everybody on from Senator Muskie's staff when he was appointed, and so we had really a well seasoned staff on board when Senator Mitchell was appointed.

BW: And you're talking about in state?

JO: The field staff, correct, right. Sue had worked for many years, Janet had worked for many years I think; they all have retired doing this case work job there, very valuable.

BW: And so the transition really from Muskie to Mitchell was quite smooth, you would say.

JO: It was very smooth, very smooth, because as we pointed out, Gayle Cory, who was our 'mother,' our office mother, had worked for Senator Mitchell when Senator Mitchell worked for Senator Muskie, and then went with Senator Muskie to the State Department. And then when Senator Mitchell was appointed the first, when he talked to Gayle, Gayle asked him for a job and he of course kept her on, and he couldn't have had a better person who knew all the contacts, knew everybody in the state, had been doing this, and it was an easy transition, staff wise.

BW: So she came back to Senator Mitchell before Muskie had completed his term?

JO: No-no-no, Muskie completed his term [as secretary of state] and then she came on board.

BW: Now, give me the details of how you came on board?

JO: It was funny. I was elected to the student senate in the University of Southern Maine and served on the student senate. I was in the education division, I was representing the education department, and I told my advisor that I really liked the student senate. And she said, "Well too bad you couldn't work in Washington, my daughter works for Senator Muskie." And that happened to be Dottie Moore, and her daughter is Sandy Moore, and Sandy worked in Washington, and that sort of planted the seed in my head. And so when I went home for the summer from college, I went [to visit] Dan Hickey, I lived in Augusta, two blocks from the capitol, so I walked to Dan Hickey's house, he was our local postman but also our [state] rep, and knocked on the door and Rita, [his wife,] answered the door. And I said, "I'm Janie, I'm home from college, I wanted to talk to Dan because I'd like to volunteer, work in the State House in some capacity and was wondering if he could give me some advice." And she said, "Well you're welcome to come over, we're having a coffee for Beverly Bustin who's running for the Senate, she also is Senator Mitchell's field representative." And so I attended the coffee and I told Beverly, and she said, "Well, you can work for me in Waterville." And that's how that happened.

BW: But then how did you get to Washington?

JO: I worked as an intern for Senator Mitchell, and then there was a job that opened up in Washington in the summer, and it was a staff position, it wasn't an internship, and I was invited to come to Washington. At the time David Johnson was the AA, and I came down for a week, I was working at Howard Johnson's and was waitressing, working on Beverly's campaign [and for the Maine secretary of state], all three at the same time. And so Howard Johnson's gave me [an employee] discount, so I stayed at the Howard Johnson's for that week out at the airport, and on the third day I was hired. So I went back to Maine, packed a trunk, a drafting lamp, and a hair dryer, and moved to Washington.

BW: So David Johnson must have heard about you before you arrived.

JO: Well, I worked with him, I mean I would have answered the phones and he would have known me, and Beverly would have recommended me.

BW: So you came and you were the receptionist.

JO: I was the receptionist for six years for Senator Mitchell. We were directly across the hall from Senator Metzenbaum [] (Ohio), [a] very active office, [they] had two receptionists. And I was thinking, wow, I'm handling the phones for one office, and they have two receptionists. But

it seemed like Ohio had more calls coming in, so I handled the job of greeting all the guests, answering the phones, hand-taking the notes on a piece of carbon paper, pink pad with carbon paper and a copy, and those were handwritten, torn off, and put in – each person's [inbox] sitting on the front desk, so the LA [legislative] staff [] would come in to get the messages, handwritten, this is way before the advent of computers.

BW: What was your welcome like when you came to Washington?

JO: It was very hot, (it was in June) and it was very [busy]. I have to say, Senator Mitchell's, the political office, was my family. And we were a family, we worked very hard and, starting with Beverly Bustin who was my adopted mother, and I continued on when we moved to Washington. David was the boss, he was the AA, Gayle was the mother of the family, and Donna Beck was the disciplinarian, she kept everything in line. And so we were very close knit, and worked hard, and like on all political campaigns, it was a busy office, but very active and very hard working. We all respected Senator Mitchell, in comparison to other senators' offices, who would refer to their boss, like Senator Ford, some of their staff called him Wendell, they had known him for a long time. But he [i.e. Mitchell] was always known as 'the Senator' to all of us on the staff, it was always very respectful of Senator Mitchell.

BW: So you were alone in this front office.

JO: Yes, correct.

BW: Which probably doesn't exist so (*unintelligible*) -

JO: I think now, most of the time when you go on the Senate side, there are usually two desks. And later on there ended up being two desks, one that an intern would sit in, and that would rotate, I'd get lunch, someone would have to cover.

BW: The few of them I've been in recently, there have been at least three people in that front office.

JO: Is that right?

BW: Yes.

JO: It's moving fast.

BW: So just, for someone that doesn't know about Senate offices and whatnot, you were sitting out there in front, with a couch for the guests and whatnot and so forth. What was behind the door?

JO: So the daily life of a staffer is that you would definitely have to be in by nine o'clock, and Donna Beck would make sure of that, and you were not allowed to read your newspaper at

your desk, you were supposed to do that at home, and everyone was presented with the Senator's daily schedule. So we'd review the schedule, see who was scheduled to come in at what appointed time. We would have the TV on, when the Senate was in session we would know what's happening on the floor, and as well over the clocks, you could see if they had called a roll call vote, the whole system of bells and lights would indicate that the Senator had to be on the floor.

But the offices were very busy. There was a rhythm to the office, and a rhythm to the year, certain times of year we would have the various constituents who would come to visit, representing the mortuary group or the 4-H group, or all the school groups during school vacation week, so we had a rhythm to the schedule. In addition, we would have lobbyists talking about various issues for the Senator. If he was on the Finance Committee, they would have tax issues that they, if they were people that are interested in legislation, to try to get Senator Mitchell's input on legislation that was coming up. So it was quite a busy schedule with lots of famous people, lots of other members coming in, lots of constituents, so you never knew on one day to the next who would visit. We would have, let's say [Phil Knight], the CEO of Nike, for example, who was talking about shoes and imports and the shoe industry, he would meet with Senator Mitchell because he served on the Finance Committee. So you got to really meet a lot of unique people, in addition to all of our Maine guests.

The nice thing about the front office was, we tried to have art work from Maine artists displayed. I actually took a map of the state and framed it, without glass, and every time a visitor came in I would have them put a red pin in the map that showed exactly where they were from in Maine. So eventually, after like two or three years, you could see just where the population of where everybody from Maine who would come down and visit. I have a picture taken of myself and Joanie Benoit, who won the Olympics from Maine, the runner, she had come in to visit Senator Mitchell, and there's a picture of her putting a pin on the map. So that was one of the constituency things that we had in the front office.

BW: You talk about an annual rhythm, was there a particular time of year which everyone sort of, I won't say dreaded, but it was, oh yeah, we got to do this again.

JO: Well, there are things like the March on Washington, the Right to Life, they would always have a march in Washington and they would bring a dozen red roses to the office, and we're like, okay, that's, oh, it's the march, you have to be careful, like traffic and everything. We always looked forward to the summer when the ice cream manufacturers had their big ice cream event in the middle of the Russell courtyard, we all loved that, all the young people would go in, and all the senators liked it too, because everybody likes ice cream. So there were all these different events, you could go to a reception every night on the Hill and get your dinner free. As a young, lowly paid staffer, you could snack on all the free hors d'oeuvres.

BW: So what would one encounter if they were lucky enough to get past you and the door opens and you go into the offices, what was that like?

JO: Well most of the time, the way the Senator's office was when we first moved in, you would come in my office and you would go through one office to get to his office, so it was just Gayle's office and then Senator Mitchell's ceremonial office, which was quite beautiful and people loved to have their picture taken. And we were in the Russell Senate Office Building, which is the oldest of the office buildings, beautiful marble fireplace, he had a Celtics basketball signed by all the Celtics on it, that was his pride and joy, with a big mirror over it. So it was a very ceremonial office. There was a bathroom in between, so often he would be in the bathroom, but the most time they'd go in, would have a picture taken, I would take the picture, and then they would sit down and have their meeting with Senator Mitchell. It was just one (*unintelligible*), we'd have reporters that would come in to talk to him as well.

BW: But now, a reporter might go to his personal office, would that be right?

JO: I'm talking only about the personal office right now.

BW: You called it the ceremonial.

JO: Well I called it, I mean his actual physical office was more ceremonial than our offices. We were crammed in. If you looked two offices down where all the LAs were, there were six desks crammed in a room with no walls, and everybody was typing away – yes, we had typewriters then and everybody typed their own speeches. So it was very busy, and you had no privacy whatsoever. The Senator did, though, his was much more formal, he had a full office, carpeted, with lovely furniture, and big solid brown doors, and the clock with the lights on.

BW: So I guess there were about twenty people working for him.

JO: About twenty, and then as we won reelection handily, we added a few more staff. It was a staff with very little turnover. It was very difficult to get a job in our office, Senator Mitchell was somebody that people really learned from and liked working for. There was very little turnover.

BW: Where were you living at the time?

JO: I lived very close to my office, I lived right beside the Veterans of Foreign Wars Building on 2nd and Maryland, so I literally was four hundred steps from my [office] – one bedroom, un-air conditioned, no direct sunlight, 340 square feet apartment –and I lived there for nine years. Then I moved to a condo around the corner on 2nd and D, literally the same block, and took a one-bedroom apartment, with [natural] light and air conditioning, and lived there until 1994. I purchased it in 1989, and then until Senator Mitchell left. And I have a funny story about that, that I can tell you later if it comes up, about him. Because Senator Mitchell lived a block away, he lived on C Street, right across from St. Joseph's Church, which was my church, so that block is where the church is and he lived on C Street, when he bought the house. Prior to that he was over at the Shoreham.

BW: In the Bates interview you spoke with a lot of affection about your community, the Hill. Just describe it a little bit, the Hill in the '80s.

JO: Well, I literally lived in the same block for twenty years, and it's a small community. St. Joseph's Church is right there, that Robert Kennedy went to, it's directly across the street from the Senate Hart Building. You would find it most packed on Ash Wednesday. Eastern Market, very, very common place for people to go on the weekends, it was very exciting, bustling. There weren't too many restaurants; I think the real Senate place to go was the Monocle Restaurant. And Gayle can tell you that in the old days that really was the Senate restaurant, that's where they called and that's where a lot of members used to go for dinner, and the Valanoses still run it, Johnny [Valanos] is still running it today, Connie and Helen's place. It was the place to go, the watering hole during late nights, and for members to get a nice bite outside the Senate.

BW: You talk about the staff as being family; did that extend to after hours and outside the office?

JO: Absolutely, I would spend many times visiting Gayle Cory on the weekends, or Donna Beck on the weekends, these were family for a young woman, to spend time in Washington. We would know what's going on in each other's lives and support each other, and continue to this day, to this day.

BW: Was Senator Mitchell often at the Monocle, or around and about?

JO: You wouldn't find Senator Mitchell [at the Monocle]. Senator Mitchell I rarely saw have a drink, ever, in any of the cocktail receptions, in any of the events. He was very focused, dedicated. And when he ran for governor I was about thirteen years old and I remember seeing his ads on TV, and I found him very stiff. He had the old black glasses, and he seemed very stiff and very formal. And I think through the time that I started working for him, I think he relaxed more around people, and genuinely, people really liked him. But he started out pretty stiff, you know. But he's very focused, very dedicated, very brilliant.

He's not like Senator Wendell Ford, for example. I played on the baseball teams in the summer, and the football teams, and Senator Ford would come out, because I played on Senator Ford's baseball team, he would come out for a beer with us. You would never see Senator Mitchell doing that, he didn't fraternize with the staff after hours, like having a beer with the baseball team. We did have a Mitchell baseball team, but he was business, and I think he tends to be quite shy, frankly. He's cerebral, if you see, he had tons of books, he was a great lawyer, loved to study, loved to read. That's where he was happiest. I think when I read about the justice in New Hampshire that just retired, Justice Souter, seems to be very similar in genteelness and scholarly-ness. But Senator Mitchell has an amazing sense of humor, and I have great stories about that too that I can tell. He's got a great sense of humor, and he's very successful in diplomacy because he is able to read people well.

BW: I noticed in the staff lists, which Bowdoin College made available to me, from '81 to '86

your title was receptionist, and then from '87 to '94 it was special assistant, Senate staff office. So what was that about?

JO: Well, that switched, I moved from answering the phones primarily to working in the press [office], to working more doing special projects for him. I again was his photographer until '89 when he was appointed majority leader, and then I organized all the photographers from there. But I continued to do a lot of the constituent work, all the guests that would come in, all the groups, I became a mini-Capitol historian, I think I conducted about ten thousand tours of the Capitol. So any time any guest would come in to the office that was unannounced or hadn't planned to come in, I pretty much had to schedule that. I would do a tour at ten in the morning and two in the afternoon, so that when we had guests that would come in, I would take them around, show them the Capitol, bring them to the Senate Gallery, they could see the Senate in progress, if Senator Mitchell happened to be there, then we'd have a picture taken off the Senate floor.

Big band group would come, they would be waiting on the Senate steps, I'd run in to the Senate and get Senator Mitchell and come out, introduce him to the group. But I would basically be with a high school group for let's say forty-five minutes, that had a scheduled appointment, on the Senate steps, and would entertain them, give them history, talk about [the Senate], they could ask questions about the Capitol, how the government works, until Senator Mitchell would come out. He'd say hi to the chaperone, a few questions, and *click-click*, run back in. I would then get the list of names of all the students, and we have these pictures blown up and Senator Mitchell would sign one to each family and it would be mailed to them afterwards. So that was a big part of constituent work that we did.

I [also] scheduled [] tours for the families who wrote to us ahead of time, I did flag requests, having flags flown over the Capitol for special occasions and sent those out to the state, handled White House tours, those were all very popular, we got fifteen per week per Senate office. And it was a big horse-trading deal that we would have with other Senate offices, to say hey, I only was able to get three tickets on Wednesday, but I need tickets on Friday, could you trade me, I can trade you two tickets this time. And so I worked with Kennedy's office, I worked with Ford's office, I had all my friends, Senator Warner's office, I would be calling back and forth. And I remember, I would be Janie Mitchell, my first name Janie, and the Senator's last name, like, let's call Janie with Mitchell, let's call Mimi with Metzenbaum, let's call Shannon with Ford, and we'd trade these tickets back and forth to be able to help our constituents get what they needed.

Busiest time of year was February and April, this is when Maine has their school vacation week, and we would be flooded with all the families that would come down from Maine, and they would all want to see Senator Mitchell. So I finally, after we figured out the rhythm of this, we finally ended up doing a nice reception, one day during that week, where Senator Mitchell got to meet with all of them, and they all got to visit the Capitol, all got tours, and scheduled a lot. So, I always felt everybody wanted to see the White House, but we really didn't have control, those fifteen tickets went pretty quickly. And you could get group passes to the White House, but that

was even harder to get through the White House, a group. So we ended up [making] it a policy to at least give a family a Capitol tour.

If we couldn't get them a White House tour, we could take them on the little subway, that's cool, the Whispering Chamber, show them the beautiful rotunda, tell them the history, take them in to the old Senate chambers, the old Supreme Court chambers, show them the Senate reception room with the five great senators' portraits around the wall, you know, the (*unintelligible*) tiles, just a beautiful building. And they just felt like, 'wow, I got something, I called Senator Mitchell, got to see him, got my picture taken with him, then we met this gal Janie, she took us all around the Capitol, and with her ID she took us places we didn't know, we saw the cat paws in the corner.' They were exhausted by the time they were done, and they felt that they had a good experience with Senator Mitchell. And if you get your picture in the mail from the Senator after you come home, you're sure they're going to think about you in six years when your time has come up to be reelected, for sure.

BW: Did Senator Mitchell acknowledge and express appreciation for all of this energy you were putting into this role?

JO: He did, we had a great relationship. And I'll tell you, I have to tell this story because it's one of the funniest ones, and I don't think Senator Mitchell remembers this but he'll get a kick out of this story.

As the only one answering the phones, it can be quite tiresome to answer the phone all the time: Senator Mitchell's office, Senator Mitchell's office, hold please, transfer, Senator Mitchell's office, can you hold please, Senator Mitchell's office, can you hold please, one moment, transferring, to each. So there's one day, I was being quite silly, and I was a young lady at that time, and so I answered the phone, which is not PC [politically correct] nowadays, but I answered the phone and said, with this accent (*speaks Spanish with accent*) "Senator Mitchell's office, may I help you?" And the person on the other end of the line said, "Get me Lynn, please." And I didn't recognize who it was, and I said (*with accent*), "May I tell her who's calling?" And he said, "This is the Senator." And I was, 'Oh, shoot!' and I transferred the phone to her and I said, "Lynn, it's the Senator on line," and I transferred it, and I was like, oh, I am busted, I'm going to be fired, this is the end of my career.

So [I] didn't say anything to anybody. The Senator happened to be on the Senate floor and he was calling from the phone booth in the Cloakroom, and Lynn at the time was his secretary, and this was really early, this was 1981. So he had come back from the floor, went into his office. Then he was heading back to the floor and he stopped in the hallway and he looked and he said, "Janie, that was a very interesting way you answered the phone today." And I said, "Well senator, you can tell it's almost Friday." And then after that he said, "See you later, señorita," and went to the Capitol. Well, that is somebody that, I mean he could appreciate I was probably just wiped out and kidding around. And I learned after that never to do that again. But those are the kind of things that you do when you're twenty-one years old.

BW: So when you, to go to this new role, did you move out of the outer office?

JO: I did, I did. And that was helpful, because I really was most of the time gone when I was doing tours anyway, I'd be gone for a good hour-and-a-half, and then getting someone to cover the phones at that time was hard to do, so it worked out well.

BW: Who replaced you in the front office?

JO: I don't remember, I think a lot of it was, it was a multiple of many hundreds of interns that would come during the year that would take their time. Some were better than others. You do have to be a people person.

BW: It sounds like it.

JO: To work in the front office.

BW: Contrast the state office, which you had experience with, with the Washington office, how were they different?

JO: Very different, because we really didn't have that many visitors in the field office, the field office was mostly phone work, dealing with constituents. And should the Senator be traveling on a schedule for the weekend or planning, he may come in the office, but it was quite rare. You basically were working on the phones and running the show that way. Now, there would be field office hours that I accompanied Beverly to – to field offices, town meetings, excuse me, we'd schedule a town meeting and Beverly would go to a town and she'd be there representing Senator Mitchell, and she would be able to take requests on site, and Senator Mitchell oftentimes would come, make a speech, and then people would get to see him and hear him and ask questions about what's happening in Washington. So that was another role of the field representative.

BW: It's my impression that most weekends the Senator was in the state.

JO: Every weekend.

BW: So did that mean that you all were working over the weekend?

JO: The field rep was. As far as a case worker, they weren't. But you would know that the Senator was coming in town, and the field rep would then be driving the Senator. If he was in the area, the field rep would pick up the Senator and drive him. I've got a funny story – I think Jeff [Porter] was driving the Senator at the time, Jeff in Portland, and he had gone to a town meeting. And one of the ladies said, "Senator Mitchell, I have a great recipe for lesbian bread." And, of course, Senator Mitchell's heritage is Lebanese, and I think she was trying to say Lebanese bread, but it came out 'lesbian bread.'

Another time, someone gave Senator Mitchell a batch of brownies. Well, Jeff had got the brownies from Senator Mitchell, because Senator Mitchell hands them, Jeff gets in the car, he puts them on the roof of the car, gets in the car and forgets they're on the car and they take off and the brownies go flying. Great stories, great stories. I'm sure you've got some great car stories about what Senator Mitchell was like, driving in the car.

BW: Any other stories occur to you?

JO: Well I can remember Senator Muskie stories, about how he would be exploding at certain things that happened and would vent that way. But Senator Mitchell didn't seem to be venting that much, he seemed to have his anger, or frustrations, under control, much more quiet. One time I did pick up Senator Mitchell at the airport, and normally I didn't drive him, usually it was Grace [Reef] who would pick him up, my early times. Well one day I got to drive him, he had a big sort of, I think it was like an Oldsmobile, four-door car, and I went to pick him up in the Senate, at Reagan National, now Reagan. And he saw me and he said, "Move over," and he drove in. He didn't want me driving. I know when Grace was driving, she would just go through the yellow lights, that's what they're for, get there, let's go, you know, hustling, you had to go-go-go.

BW: That seems a little bit, I've heard the story from others that he'd get very frustrated and always be sort of routing the shortest way and whatnot, which is a little bit at variance with his very deliberative, good listener approach. So when he got in the car, was that phenomenon (*unintelligible*).

JO: It could be just more privacy. But even in private, in all the meetings I had and over the thirteen years, Senator Mitchell was very controlled, he just didn't lose his temper that much. And that's his skill as a negotiator, that's his skill, his patience, his unbelievable patience, his unexhausting patience; even with someone that answers the phone (*with accent*) "Senator Meetchel's office...."

BW: So did you notice that there was a public Senator Mitchell and then a private?

JO: There wasn't too much of a difference. He just was very, very consistent. Very consistent.

BW: Am I right that the field staff came to Washington once a year?

JO: I'm sure they did. I don't remember it as being that scheduled, but occasionally they'd come down, yes. I know Larry came down a lot more, Larry Benoit.

BW: I'm going to make reference again to the Bates interview, when you were talking about staff members you said some of them were a little quirky, and particularly in their areas of expertise. And I was wondering what was behind that comment?

JO: I don't remember what I was referencing at the time, I'm not quite sure. We did have experts, I'm trying to think of which quirky one I was referring to.

BW: Well, were people who were working in that office intensely serious, or was there flippancy?

JO: Oh, I do, maybe I was talking about Anita, a speech writer. She was somebody that was like a Tasmanian devil, typing so fast, who could create a speech and was typing so fast, and had high heels, like really high, and she was short and she would walk down the hall and she was just an absolute ball of energy. And brilliant, you know, self-taught, somebody that ended up writing speeches for both Senator Muskie and Senator Mitchell. An immigrant, Senator Mitchell was at her, the party that we had when she became a U.S. citizen, in one of the committee staff rooms. So yes, we did have some unique people, and Anita certainly is one of them. She was very gifted, very talented, but very quirky as well. You didn't interrupt her when she was massively smoking and typing away at the speech that the Senator needed to give on the floor.

BW: You mention smoking.

JO: In those days we had smoking in the Senate. And even though we were across the hall from Wendell Ford, the Kentucky tobacco state, Wendell's chief of staff was Mr. Fleming, and he worked with Wendell when Wendell was governor of Kentucky, and he would be in the hall with his cigar and say, when he'd pass you in the hall he'd say, "Hello, Pal." And you knew we were in good stead with Mr. Fleming when he called you Pal, but he would be smoking a cigar. Senator Mitchell didn't smoke at all, but smoking was allowed in the Russell Office Building before they changed that rule, I think that was after 1989, we'd been smoking in the federal building. But the staff offices, often people would smoke, and I know Anita was a chain smoker.

BW: So there was a lot of smoke in those offices.

JO: There was a lot of smoke in that room, not in mine. I don't really remember people really smoking. We did have an ashtray, but people weren't waiting that long in the reception office, Mitchell was pretty good, he wasn't like a doctor that keeps you waiting, waiting, waiting, unless he's on the floor giving a speech, then that's acceptable.

BW: What would be the words you'd use to describe Senator Mitchell as the boss of this little operation?

JO: Gentle brilliance. Gentle brilliance. Quite serious, I loved to see him smile, he's got a great smile, and of course he always had to smile for the camera and he did a great job. On all the thousands of pictures I took with he and constituents, he could light up, he did that well. But if you look at his face, he's a serious guy with a great sense of humor.

BW: Did you ever see him ruffled?

JO: Very rarely. I do remember early on, in 1981, this was about the time that David Emery was running for the Senate against Senator Mitchell, and there was a poll that came out of the *Bangor Daily News*, and John Day was the reporter for the *Bangor Daily News* and he came into the office to talk to Senator Mitchell about this poll. Senator Mitchell was furious about the poll because it really was not indicative of the support that he had in the state, and he gave him an ear full about the poll. And this was quite important because this was the turning point, it was very close to the election in '82 and he won handily against Dave Emery, as we know. But I do remember he was quite hot about that.

BW: What about out of sorts, did you see him at times -?

JO: Oh yes, as he became Senate majority leader, I was the face of, "Oh, here comes Janie, she's got another picture," oops, got to go, I got another group. And he was deliberative, balancing everybody's ego, trying to get negotiations, and oftentimes he says, 'okay, we got to move this on.' And he would never, that would never be seen by the guests, but I could see it with him when we were working, it's like 'okay, we'll get this one in and out.' You could tell he was trying to move things along. He was very successful at balancing what went on in the Senate, just time management, he was able to do it very gracefully.

BW: Did you ever see him disconsolate?

JO: I don't know what disconsolate means. Like upset?

BW: Yes, and sad or depressed a little bit?

JO: I don't think so, I don't think so. Nothing comes to mind. I'm just thinking about when, like maybe if his dog died or when Senator Muskie died, but Senator Muskie died way after we left the Senate. Nothing comes to mind at the moment.

*End of CD One
CD Two*

BW: I have heard the word frugal used in reference to Senator Mitchell.

JO: Oh yes, extremely frugal. That's the Maine way. Maine Yankee frugality, very tight with the state money, federal money, 'it's our money that runs this office.' He was very, very, very careful with every penny he spent. For example, when his daughter Andrea moved into college, she wanted to get, she needed an iron to iron her clothes. He gave her ten dollars, thinking that's how much the iron was, and I think it was fifteen or whatever. But there are funny things about Senator Mitchell; he really wasn't topical with pop culture, so he didn't know who the latest music was, or TV. I know he always watched the news at night, and when he was working in the Senate he'd turn on the news and watch it in his office, if he didn't have an event to go to. But our staff salary, I'm sure you got a lot of this about the staff saying, jeez, you know, very tight.

I do remember Senator Mitchell telling me, for example, I did all the photographs, and many times constituents would say, or people from other states would collect pictures of senators, so they'd write a letter and we would have to send a portrait of the Senator, the official black and white portrait, and he'd sign it and we'd send it to the constituent and all these autograph collectors. Well, we'd stick it under the auto pen, which is the auto pen machine that actually wrote the Senator's signature. And I remember him saying that, jeez, in Muskie's days we just had a black and white picture that someone took, why do we need a color picture? He was that concerned about every penny, everybody's salary, not wasting, being very careful, and rightly so.

He also, for example, didn't travel with these CODELs, like many members go. The only CODEL I remember him taking was when he went to Russia. Other than that, he did not, and he didn't serve on Foreign Affairs and maybe that – but he just never felt that that was his role. He was home every weekend, he went home every weekend, he was dedicated. It was a hard job.

BW: Do you think anyone ever left his service because they could get paid [better elsewhere]?

JO: Public service is public service, and you work for the public. And Senator Mitchell is the best representative of public service. And often people would come, in general, not our staff, but people would come, work on the Hill for a couple years, and then move down to a firm to make lots more money. Our staff never did that, I stayed for thirteen years, we had staff that, you know, our tax guy came from Senator Ford's office, Bobby Rozen, he stayed on. We had really competent staff that, it was an opportunity of a lifetime for them. And then of course subsequently everybody landed and got good jobs, but yes, I don't think so, we rarely had turnover. The people that could afford to do it did.

Well David Johnson, he was an AA for a couple years, but then he went right to work for the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee [DSCC], running that, raising money, and subsequently in '86 the Senate switched from Republican to Democrat and Senator Mitchell got great kudos for that. He got his deputy president pro tem, which is a position they created for him because of this, I think it was fifty-six senators that we had gotten, and so he was allowed an office in the Capitol. So we had a very small office in the Capitol, right under the dome, looking down at the Washington Monument, which was in the hideaway corridor and that was great. Then he was elected majority leader subsequently, four years later. So David Johnson, as DSCC chair raising money for all the senators, after that position was up, he then ended up creating his own firm with a couple of other guys and was an extremely successful lobbyist, and is now retired but running Senator Mitchell's foundation now, up in Maine. So we all stick with Senator Mitchell, somehow or another. But many people have gone on to make lots of do-re-mi. Not moi, but -

BW: Talk about the transition when he became majority leader. What was that like for those of you who, quote/unquote, 'stayed behind' and so forth?

JO: Well, you do have a separation with the personal office and the leadership office, and

there was some cache to the leadership office because it's an office right in the Capitol, directly across the hall from the Senate. Much larger suite of rooms, quite historic, quite beautiful, Jeffersonian windows that you could step out to a balcony, and you have an outdoor balcony that looked down the Mall, that kind of heavy stuff. His personal office, like I called it, the ceremonial office, had a seal of the state of Maine in the ceiling, they change that every time the majority leader changes. And he had a special phone that was secure that he would talk to the White House when he had special events. He had a middle meeting room which he did most of the meetings. He rarely met in the inner office, his ceremonial office, it was basically at the table in the middle room, and he had an aside.

I think people really wanted to work in that office, but there was really only room for a chief of staff, Pat Sarcone who did all the scheduling, Pat was assisted by Alice [Steward], and I think Lauren [Higgins] worked over there for a period of time, and everybody, if they were staffing the Senator, from the committee staff or the personal staff, they would go over to the Capitol, they'd bring their briefing papers, they'd bring their speech, and they would sit in on the meeting.

So the personal office ended up being more of an adjunct office, because Senator Mitchell most of the time was needed across the floor and on the floor. We had a couple of offices tucked over there that Bobby worked out of, and I was back and forth all the time because I did all the photos, so I had to organize all the photos. So even though I had a little desk in the Russell Building, I spent a lot of time over in the Capitol, going back and forth, getting the pictures, signing the pictures, coming back, delivering stuff, introducing people, doing tours of the Capitol, that kind of stuff. Yes, people really wanted to work in the Capitol office, but there [were] very, very select seats.

BW: Well, did the air sort of go out of the Russell office then?

JO: No, you know, we're a family. Mary Mac was the AA, she knew everybody in Maine, everybody would come down and we'd meet them there and then bring them over to the Capitol, because even though you had meetings in the Capitol, most of the constituents always came to the office.

BW: But in the Russell, you wouldn't see much of the Senator.

JO: No. I was lucky, because I had to do pictures, so I got to see him a lot.

BW: So was it -

JO: Yes, in some ways I guess you could say it was like a little, it wasn't as great because you wouldn't see him that much. It would just be like being in a field office then, because the people in the field office, unless you were a field rep, the case workers rarely saw Senator Mitchell. Maybe once a year, like you said, they would come down.

BW: Some people have mentioned that Senator Mitchell, while he was majority leader, didn't

have much home life because he was not -

JO: Senator Mitchell didn't have any home life the whole time he was in Washington. He lived in the Shoreham Hotel which was, he knew the owners I guess, I think it was the Irish guys, I can't remember their name offhand, but he lived in the Shoreham Hotel at first. Before he was divorced, he lived over with Sally in, I can't think of the place, by Chef Geoff's right now, he had a townhouse there, and then he moved to Capitol Hill, which was a little bit better. Harriet Pressler, Senator Pressler's wife, sold Senator Mitchell the house on C Street, which was a lot closer to the Senate, he wasn't coming from Northwest to the Hill. But he really didn't have a life. We knew his life, we were part of his life, we saw his schedule, during the week and on the weekends. There was no question what he was doing, he was working the whole time.

Rarely, you know, he had a couple buddies that would try to get him out. I think that he was majority leader when one of his buddies got him to be the grand marshal of the NASCAR races. It was just so funny to see Senator Mitchell doing something like that, waving the checkered flag. But in general, he had no life, I mean he was that dedicated and devoted. He got divorced same year Senator Cohen got divorced, so they both were kind of single guys, if you will. But yet, it's not like he, he just had no time to date, he had no life really. You have dinners at night, you have these black tie dinners and these fund raiser dinners that you're invited to, they create some award to give to you so you kind of have to go. I know that he'd prefer, he's a scholar, he reads. He's like Senator Bill Bradley, even though he's a basketball player, they're scholars, you know, he's just kind of a quiet guy.

BW: When did Heather enter the picture?

JO: Heather only entered the picture in the very last year of the Senate. I think they met in May, through Ilie Nastase – is that right? – and he was calling to try to get tennis tickets, and she had worked for a tennis promoter, I believe, and so they met in May and this was in '93, and then they got married – they met in September or something, I don't know. No, they met in September and they got married in May, that makes sense, because of the tennis. And I know Pat went to the wedding and gave me the blow-by-blow description of who was there. It was very beautiful and very elegant, in New York City, Heather is absolutely stunning and wonderful, and Senator Mitchell is thrilled, very different.

And I can't imagine, I really believe that it's very hard to be a Senate wife. I've known a lot of them, and you just have no time, there's no time to spend any time with a spouse. The spouse really has to have another job to be able to keep active while you have twenty, thirty people saying, "Senator, I need this, senator, I need that," you know. But it was perfect timing for him, because he then moved on to a new stage in his life, and a beautiful new family, and at the same time having to go over to Ireland to do all that work and not seeing his wife. There was a lot of sacrifice; I don't think that he's ever given up his public service role.

I know he specifically did not want to be Supreme Court justice. He served for that period of time on the federal bench in Maine, and then Joe Brennan appointed him. But I'm not quite sure

he really liked being a judge, I think he's been able to do so much more not being on the court. And with all the work he's done obviously, we wouldn't have the peace in Northern Ireland, we wouldn't have – we hope peace in the Middle East – we wouldn't have peace in the baseball community, we wouldn't have peace in Disneyworld. But he's been extremely successful since then, and so happy that he has a second family, which he tells me how much he's learning from his kids.

You know, Senator Mitchell never had a computer in his office, so he never touched a computer. Everybody, in the old days it was just pick up the phone and he would hand write stuff and people would type it, so even when the, the very last couple years everybody got computers, and then the telephone messages were sent via e-mail, but I don't think he knew how to use the typewriter or the computer. He was telling me his son was teaching him, he didn't know how to put in a DVD, or it wasn't really working and he needed his son to tell him how to do it. At the time he's like six or five or something.

BW: When Heather entered his life, did he sort of sequester her, or was she brought into the office or into his public life?

JO: When I think back to it, of course it was a big deal that Senator Mitchell *had* someone in his life, and someone as glamorous and someone as beautiful and young as Heather was, and there were some articles that came out in the paper. So I remember asking Jane Muskie, because Jane of course had known for a long time, and she really liked her, so I said, "Okay, that's the stamp right there." And the most important thing is that Senator Mitchell's happy. I mean, like the big joke was, oh, all the old senators, like Hal Heflin, were in the Cloakroom high-fiving, 'well George, you got a really young one there.' But they're very, very happy together.

BW: So talk about your reaction when he announced he was retiring.

JO: Well, we were told that there was a meeting, all-staff meeting in the Capitol. It was March, I do remember it was in the LBJ Room, and there was something just sort of hush-hush about it, and it was frankly shocking; he did not tell anybody. And I think a lot of members were shocked, too, because he was so successful, and he had done a great job. I know he was just worn out, I think he was just tired. He had just done so much, and with a new life ahead of him, he really wanted to do something else. He's always said, 'do the best job at what you're doing right now, and the future will take care of itself, just do the best at what you're doing right now and the future will take care of itself.'

I loved hearing him do commencement speeches, these are the things that he would say in the commencement speeches, you know, work hard, this is the American dream. And his parents were immigrants, and his father was a janitor, I mean he tells these stories, it's like: if I can be where I am, it's a great country.

BW: I was interested in your saying that he might not have really wanted the Supreme Court position. What about the baseball commissioner, what was your -?

JO: Oh, I think everybody on the staff, specifically the boys, would have liked him to be baseball commissioner, because everybody was figuring out an angle on how they could work in New York with him when he became baseball commissioner, they were all angling, hey Senator, can you, you know, how can I fit in to this, how is this going to help me – for those that like baseball.

BW: So if he announces in March, then he really is a lame duck majority leader, and for all of you -

JO: It was a gift. It was a gift that he was able to tell us in March, because that allowed everybody to review their career, review their life, and have the whole year until we closed the office in December of 1994. I was lucky because I spent most of the time archiving a lot of his photographs, I was the archivist of all the photographs from day one to the end of the time. So I was packaging those up and labeling those and was helping out Donna do the administrative part, so that was helpful to me. But a lot of us really spent time, you know, ‘what do you want to do?’ Do you want to stay in the Senate? And I know Donna ended up staying, but very few people, a couple people moved, but we now have to grow up, get a real job.

BW: Was Senator Mitchell helpful in that process?

JO: I think, we were told, and this was basically the policy, Senator Mitchell is not going to get you a job. If you find a job that you’re qualified for, he will then come in and help you, but he’s not going to be the recruiter that goes out and has you figure out what you want to do with your life, so basically you’re responsible for either getting another job in government, and a lot of – like Steve Hart went to the Agriculture Department, he’s still there. So you were pretty much on your own, ‘you’re on your own, kid, I’ll help you, you know, at the very end,’ but we pretty much -

BW: Who conveyed that message to you all?

JO: I’m not quite sure, I think it was pretty much a policy and pretty much known. He would help you if you found a job, but he’s not going to go out and say, ‘hey, I’ve got a great staff.’

BW: And was he still deeply engaged in being majority leader during that period?

JO: I think so. I think he had a new lease on life, because he was kind of like, ‘okay, I have something coming, so I’m going to do the best job to the very end.’ And we were all sad, of course, because I would still be in the Senate today. I loved my job, I loved Senator Mitchell, I was blessed to work for Senator Mitchell; someone who had no scandals in their closet. You weren’t like Senator Packwood that had eight or nine females saying, ‘oh, he groped me,’ you know. Those things happen, and it was like, oh no-no-no, nobody ever had any, there were no skeletons, you weren’t going to be surprised that you read the paper the next day and, wow, this

has been happening. He was hard working.

BW: And his treatment of women was very evenhanded?

JO: Absolutely. He's a gentleman, absolute gentleman, even for someone that answers the phone saying (*with accent*) "Senator Meetchel's office." I have to tell you a funny story, this segues into another story I have to tell you, that very few people on the staff know.

Senator Mitchell was very frugal, as we get back to the frugal comment, and I in 1989 found a condo, and bought a condo. I figured out that instead of paying someone rent, I should be buying a condo, and I found one right across the street from the Senate, and I took all my money out of Senate retirement to put as a down payment. But that still didn't help me make the payments, so I needed a part-time job, and I found one right around the corner in the video store. So I worked in the video store Monday night and on the weekends, Sunday when people are returning them, Monday when they're picking them out, Friday night, and that gave me extra money so I could help pay my condo fee.

And I had just – another thing, and then I'll tell you about Senator Mitchell's graciousness in college – but I was working in the video store, and this is when he was Senate majority leader, a couple years into Senate majority leader, and one day I was working and was checking out, and people give you their cards. And so this woman comes up, she gives me her card, and it says Senator George Mitchell on it. And I said, "Who are you, and why do you have Senator Mitchell's card?" I'm saying to myself, because of course I work for Senator Mitchell and I know Senator Mitchell and pretty much his life.

So this woman checks out some movies. And of course I saw what the titles of the movies were, and they were just R-rated movies, but she took them out and I'm like, 'hmm, that's interesting.' So forgot about it, that was interesting. I happened to be there Monday when the people were returning them, and I'm behind the counter and who comes in but Senator Mitchell to return the videos, and he's shocked to see me behind the counter. And he said, "Janie, what are you doing here?" He said, "Don't I pay you enough?" And I said, "Senator, you're embarrassing me," because I'm like working, obviously I'm not working because I want to, I don't have enough money to make the payments on my condo and pay back my college loans.

So that's all he said. It was busy with people and I said, "You're embarrassing me." So fast forward to the next week, I'm in the Capitol, and Senator Mitchell, I happened to be in the Capitol, we ran into each other, we were on the first floor going up to the majority leader's office. He said, "Janie, how can I get you out of the movie business?" And I said, "Well, I probably need a raise." So I said that to him. And then later on, it was about the time that the staff annually, what happens and what Senator Mitchell told me later on, I ran into him in the leadership office, a private meeting with Senator Mitchell, he has this piece of paper with all the staff's names and all the salaries on them. He said, "Well, John gave me the list of staff salaries," and I think maybe we got a cost of living, which everybody got, so that was considered like a salary, and he said, "I saw yours, and I changed it. It's not what you asked for, but it's

more than the staff was proposing to give you.” And so I kept that quiet and I said, “Thank you, Senator.” And then I didn’t have to work in the movie business any more. So he really did care about that and made that adjustment, and he didn’t have to.

BW: Who was the woman that checked out the tapes?

JO: I think it was someone he happened to be dating at the time. I know a couple of names of people that he was dating, nothing, I don’t think, that long. But I don’t know, because it wasn’t her card.

BW: So that was the apartment story?

JO: Yes, that’s the apartment story, just about how to get me out of the movie business, and I said well, I proposed a salary, and then later on when it was given he made the change.

BW: But he didn’t meet your demand.

JO: Well no-no, it’s all negotiation. I wish it would be that way, but that’s how frugal he is, it’s like, ‘that’s nice.’ And it just goes back to all the constituent service, when Mitchell became Senate majority leader I was, one of the special assistant duties, he gave me the liaison to the Senate, to the Congressional Committee on Inaugural Ceremonies, so luckily I was able to be the liaison for both Bush’s inaugural and Clinton’s first inaugural, both of them, which dealt with three House members and three Senate members, and the tickets on the platform and the tickets for the parade and all that I coordinated for Senator Mitchell.

And during the Clinton inaugural, he had a lot of friends, now that he was Senate majority leader, that wanted tickets and wanted to be here for this big event, family and friends and big donors. And so I can remember, like the tennis coach in Florida had called up and he wanted this and wanted something else, and I remember talking to Senator Mitchell and he said – that I’ll never forget – he said, “Janie, just because he’s asked for it, doesn’t mean he’s going to get it.” So my whole thought was, always help someone, always give someone something. My job was always to help make Senator Mitchell be remembered for someone, that they went to Senator Mitchell, they got what they asked for, they got something at least. So I can remember that statement: just because they ask for it, doesn’t mean they’re going to get it.

So just because I asked for a certain amount of money, didn’t mean I was going to get it, but he made an adjustment higher than I normally was going to get, and I didn’t tell anybody, so I just was thinking about the chief of staff saying like, ‘hmm, Jamie must have done a good job, because Senator Mitchell changed that.’ I don’t think he normally changed them, I mean I think he accepted what the chief of staff had put down and wouldn’t change them, but because he cared that much about me, he made that. Didn’t have to.

BW: So where did you go next, then?

JO: Right after that I went to the National Association for Home Care and was membership director, and then vice president of membership services. The type of job was very transferable from doing constituent services, membership services, handling members. So I was there nine years, and now I'm with Oracle Corporation, and I handle their employee political programs and do the PAC fund-raising, so I'm back dealing with members of Congress, and raising money for their campaigns.

BW: When did you go to the non-profit?

JO: I started right in January, worked for Senator Mitchell through December and then started in January, so right away. Gayle Cory always said, "People love hiring Senate staff because they work day and night, they work until the job is done. It's always great to hire Senate staff." And that was our life. Senator Mitchell and I both, we were within walking distance to our office. I remember counting the steps of my condo, from the door to my desk was 540 steps.

But there is a down side to that, because every time it snowed, something happened, I could always walk to the office, and who had to answer the phones, who had to open the mail, it was always me. So one of these days I was like, oh, I really wish I lived somewhere else so I wouldn't be stuck doing this, I could enjoy the snow, like a Maine kid would.

BW: I asked you before we started today, you still have lots of contacts in Maine.

JO: I do, part of my family is still in Maine. But the family that we grew up with in Senator Mitchell's staff, for example Diane Smith is now working for Congressman Michaud, Mike Michaud, in Lewiston. I'm very close to Diane, she's been helpful to me; everybody that we worked with all still work up in Maine. I went to college in Maine, all my sorority sisters are up there so I'm always up visiting, spending time. Beautiful state, you can't miss it. That's why I'm glad Senator Mitchell bought a beautiful house in Maine and can go there – in the summer especially.

BW: Contrast the Maine of today with the Maine of 1980s and '90s, any differences?

JO: I've been in Washington for twenty-eight years. I go home and I see good development, lots of entrepreneurial spirit, great place to raise a family, beautiful, still pristine environment. But it's very hard to get a job in Maine, and that's why I'm here. You know, my salary is much higher down here. I don't think I'm answering the question because I don't really have a description. I go home so frequently it seems the same to me but that's because I feel like I'm still just in college, like I was the last time I was in Maine, even though I've had all these years of experience I still feel the same, young at heart.

BW: I guess I was thinking that the age of Muskie, the age of Mitchell might be looked back upon as a kind of golden age?

JO: It *was* a golden age, but yet, don't forget, Margaret Chase Smith, she was a golden age,

she was quite an amazing woman, and then we have Senator Cohen. The integrity of these men, the integrity of public service, great honorable statesmen that we have, and states-ladies.

BW: How do you explain two Republican senators and two Democrats in the House?

JO: Maine voters are very independent, they vote for the person, not necessarily the party, and Olympia and Susan Collins have done an amazing job. And they're dedicated as well. Olympia, lord, she's been there for years, from the House side now to the Senate side, she's dedicated. And Maine people, if you do a good job, you're going to get reelected. Maine people are, if you're helpful to your constituents, you're going to get reelected. You really have to mess up by not getting reelected.

BW: Something struck me that hadn't occurred to me until I was preparing for this interview, and that was, in looking at both Snowe and Collins, they had both worked for Senator Cohen.

JO: Yes.

BW: So in a way, they're progeny of Senator Cohen's, but there was no such follow through for Mitchell, the line ended.

JO: Yes, isn't that interesting. Well, we have someone running for governor right now, Rosa Scarcelli, Rosa was Senator Mitchell's first page, first page in the Senate, and she's running for governor now. Has never served in public service other than working for Senator Mitchell, and now she's running for governor, one of the big candidates, and we have the primaries June 8th. So we have Libby Mitchell, who's now seventy, who's from the old school in the Senate, and we have our commissioner of agriculture, Pat McGowan, who also served for a long time, and here's a new generation of leader. I am excited about Rosa and I hope she does well, because we need a new generation to continue this legacy of public service.

Yes, it's interesting. I think Senator Mitchell has a different spin on it; he's been able to affect the lives of so many Maine people by his foundation, the most important thing to him in his life, this foundation. And every single one of those kids in Maine, [one student from each high school, each year gets] a scholarship, and that is the legacy that nobody else has done, and that will make a difference by helping a larger amount of people from Maine, make a difference in public service, than one individual person being elected to Senate. And I think that will be an amazing legacy for him.

BW: How do you think history ought to treat George Mitchell, how should he be remembered?

JO: Well, I would say that next to Mike Mansfield, who was one of the greatest Senate majority leaders in our history, nobody's written that book, my old boss [Robert] wanted to write the book. I just can't say how grateful I am to have worked for somebody who is so gifted and talented and made such a difference. To see what's happening in the Senate now, there's

completely no comparison of the subsequent Democrat majority leaders, in my opinion. It was the ability to compromise, the ability to get all the factions to agree, that was his gift, and what is his skill and his talent. But I think he will be remembered as one of the greatest, because he was able to cut through and actually accomplish things. And we have huge deadlock at the moment, even with a great president.

I find a lot of similarities between Barack Obama and Senator Mitchell; both constitutional scholars, both careful in their delivery and their speeches. It's always said about Senator Mitchell, when he spoke on the floor, and we have the *Congressional Record*, often senators would be speaking extemporaneously and then the teletype would be taken, or the dictation would be taken, and often you can make changes, corrections before the *Congressional Record* is printed. Very few corrections had to be made when Senator Mitchell made a speech, he was very careful and thoughtful in his speech and his sentence structure, and I see the same thing with President Obama, they're very, very similar, it's just that constitutional lawyerly gift that he has.

He used to go on what we called "Beat the Press," but it's *Meet the Press*, and he was always talking about, 'ah, they tried to get me to put words in my mouth,' and I could see him, I can see him sometimes now, I saw him on Fox. Who's the guy, Sean Hannity, and he had Senator Mitchell – well, Sean I think is more conservative Republican and Senator Mitchell of course is a Democrat – it's amazing how Senator Mitchell appears like he's a Republican when he's a Democrat, and I can tell when he's getting, he knows they're trying to twist what he's saying, and he's like, "No, that's not what I said," and he's very clear at correcting, because he knows it's very tricky when you're talking with journalists, how they'll want to spin it, and he's very deliberate in what he needs to say. You listen to what he's saying, it's very well stated, what the situation is and what's going on. So I could see him getting testy during different interviews, you could just tell by the way he's reacting.

BW: Maybe we should end with some other recollections of his sense of humor, do you have some other stories to tell?

JO: Oh yes, well I did tell you about the - Now let me think. I can't think of anything offhand. I wanted to make sure you heard the señorita story and the movie business story, but he has a great sense of humor. He understands people, and you just be honest and straight with him, that's what works.

BW: You continue to have contact with him from time to time.

JO: It's time to time, more on the Hill, he'll come to Washington to talk about the scholarship foundation. I think he spends a good majority of his time up in New York, and then of course he's in the Middle East and a lot of traveling. But of course, with our network of staff, I'm always hearing about how he's doing and where he is. We don't really see each other that frequently, maybe once a year.

BW: Who are the members of the staff that you are seeing?

JO: Well if you look, I mean we're all, it all comes back from our mother, Gayle Cory, and we've created this scholarship in her name, and so a lot of the people that contribute to that scholarship are former staff members, and you can see the whole list of names of those folks. But David Johnson our AA is now on that board, and the board of the Mitchell foundation in Maine, Donna Beck, who's living in Florida, I'm going to be seeing her in November. She was our mother – if anybody was afraid of anybody, it was Donna Beck. She did all the books, she was the disciplinarian, she could say no to the Senator; even the Senator was like, "Okay." She did all the financial disclosure reports, she was the office manager, she was the 'no' man.

BW: And she and Gayle Cory meshed pretty well?

JO: Very well, oh, they got along very well, yes. Donna was married to Frank, who was the senior electrician in the electric shop downstairs, and she left at four every day. So as you know, like the Senate sometimes is late at night, but she was in there at seven, so she was always running a tight ship, you couldn't get away with anything with Donna, she knew exactly what was going on. And Donna was the one you had to call if you were going to be sick or you were going to be late, so she was always answering that phone, like 'oh-oh, got to call Donna.'

BW: How did Martha Pope fit into that mixture?

JO: Martha, I met Martha in Maine when she was a staffer in the Environment and Public Works Committee and she came to Maine for a hearing, I believe. So I met Charlene Sturbitts and Martha Pope in Beverly Bustin's house, and subsequently she served on the Environment and Public Works committee. And then I believe she came on board, was it after David Johnson as chief of staff and then AA? And then when Senator Mitchell became majority leader she was subsequently, she served for a period of time but then she was appointed sergeant-at-arms and secretary of the Senate, historically first woman to serve in both those positions. I remember walking underneath the Capitol with Martha, I was going back to the Leader's Office, when Senator Mitchell had asked Martha to do this. Martha, I don't think, was very happy to take this position but Senator Mitchell basically [said], and she told me, 'Martha, I'm asking you to do this.' And so in other words, you're doing this. She really didn't have a choice. Because they needed someone, someone he trusted, someone to run this, and subsequently we had Larry, and Larry was a great, great person to be the sergeant-at-arms, too, in the Senate, and that helped both of their careers as far as the highest salary.

BW: Larry?

JO: Benoit, right, in our Portland office. Martha was an interesting person. I have to say that she was tough on women, not [as] tough on guys.

BW: Now how did she interface with Gayle Cory and Donna Beck?

JO: Well, Gayle got along with everybody, [] [and no one tangled with Donna Beck].

BW: Any final thoughts?

JO: It's an honor to have worked for Senator Mitchell. I miss it, I miss the Senate, I miss the excitement of working on the Hill, there's no other place like it. You know exactly what's going on before it happens, you're making the news. The opportunity that he gave me to finish my degree while I was working, I finished at Trinity College. When I joined the staff I hadn't completed school, so I worked full time and went back to school part-time and finished at Trinity College, right down on North Capitol Street. So I did it as a weekend program, but I also took classes during the day. So he would have someone cover for me in the morning while I took a ten o'clock class or a nine o'clock class at the university, he was very supportive of that – and that is also a gift that he gave me – and was always supportive of that. He was very generous and always encouraging the staff, particularly someone who hadn't had their undergraduate degree to work for him. So I'm honored, and absolutely adore him, and still do, and he hasn't changed.

When they dedicated his portrait in the Capitol, I went to that event and it was like old home week; it was wonderful. It was wonderful to see him, and I know that he enjoyed being back in the Senate. And he doesn't change; he's still one of the greatest.

BW: Great, let's stop on that note.

JO: Thank you so much.

End of Interview