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Interview with Colleen Quint by Andrea L'Hommedieu

Colleen Quint

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George J. Mitchell Oral History Project

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Colleen Quint

(Interviewer: Andrea L'Hommedieu)

GMOH# 001

March 6, 2008

Andrea L'Hommedieu: This is an interview for the George J. Mitchell Oral History Project at Bowdoin College. The date is March 6, 2008. I'm at the Mitchell Institute in Portland, Maine, with the director Colleen Quint, and this is Andrea L'Hommedieu. Could you start just by giving me your full name and your date of birth?

Colleen Quint: Sure, my name is Colleen Quint. I'm executive director of the Mitchell Institute, and I was born September 22, 1963.

AL: And where did you grow up?

CQ: I grew up right here in Portland.

AL: In what part?

CQ: I grew up in the North Deering section of town, kind of out past the Shaw's Northgate, heading out towards Falmouth on Auburn Street there. So I grew up, I went to Lyseth Elementary, Lyman Moore Junior High it was called then, and then Deering High School.

AL: And so growing up in Portland, what was it like in terms of what it's like today?

CQ: Well the city has really grown a lot since I was growing up here. There's certainly, it's much more diversity, culturally there are a lot more offerings, you know, a lot of different restaurants and activities and things to do. Even things like the advent of the Seadogs, in terms of family entertainment and opportunity, has been pretty terrific. So it's a great little city.

AL: Now where did you go to college?

CQ: I went to Bates.

AL: Oh you did, okay.

CQ: Yes, I did. Actually, both of my parents had gone to Bates, so therefore I was going to go to Bowdoin or Williams. You know how that works. But actually I visited the campus – my dad was a very clever man, he said, "Well why don't you just go to Bates for a practice interview." And I said, "Oh, a practice interview, that sounds like a really good idea." So I went

to Bates for a practice interview, and just completely fell in love with the campus and decided I didn't need to look any further. But, as things go around and come around, it turns out that my son Josh, who's a senior in high school, has just been accepted to Bowdoin and is going to be going there in the fall.

AL: Wow, so what did you study at Bates?

CQ: I was a sociology major. Like any good liberal arts undergrad, I had no clue what I wanted to do and was trying to choose among four or five different majors at the time, and settled on sociology because there was a particular professor I really liked working with and wanted to work on my thesis with him.

AL: So after Bates where did you go?

CQ: The very first job I had out of college was working for Senator Mitchell down in Washington. And again, it was one of those kind of circumstances, or happenstances, where again I didn't really have a clear sense of what I wanted to do. I was pretty sure I wanted to go to law school at some point but really didn't want to go right after my undergraduate experience, and was talking to a friend of mine, Shannon Billings, whose father Leon Billings knew the Senator and had worked for Ed Muskie, and Shannon's comment was, "You're from Maine, why don't you go work for George Mitchell?" And I said, "Okay, that sounds like a good idea." So I got in touch with Leon, who helped me get in touch with Gayle Cory, who was on the Senator's staff down in D.C. at the time, and I went down and had an interview and they offered me an internship in his office that fall of 1985, which is right after I had graduated from Bates.

AL: So you met Gayle Cory?

CQ: I did, yes.

AL: Did you get to know her?

CQ: I did. She was in the office the four or five months that I was there, and she was just a wonderful, wonderful person.

AL: And so what did you do in D.C. when you first went down, what were your duties?

CQ: Well, like a typical intern, I mean I was doing everything from answering phones and sorting through constituent mail and those kinds of things, but I also had some really terrific opportunities when I was there to work on some more substantial pieces. So I actually worked pretty in depth with a guy, Bob Carolla, on the Senator's staff, on a piece of legislation around Samantha Smith, the young woman from Maine who had met with Gorbachev [] and was trying to establish peace relationships between the U.S. and the U.S.S.R., and then she had tragically died in a plane crash. So the Senator was looking to work on some legislation to set up a peace scholarship in her memory, and so I actually worked pretty closely with Bob Carolla on creating,

researching and drafting that legislation, which did ultimately pass.

I also worked a lot with Eddie Hatcher, who was the Senator's press secretary at the time, and ended up doing a lot of drafting of press releases and things like that. So even though I was there for a relatively short amount of time, I actually got to do a lot more hands-on kinds of things that were fairly substantive, at least to me, you know, as a kid fresh out of college and no experience on the Hill before, that were pretty exciting. And, you know, I had my share of picking up the Senator's dry cleaning at the Senate dry cleaning office, and back then of course you had to go pick up airplane tickets, so I got to do that, and learned my way around the buildings and those subterranean passageways up all over Capitol Hill. So that was, even that stuff was really, really fun. Really fun.

AL: So was it just for that one year, '85?

CQ: It was. I had a job lined up in Boston for January of '86, and essentially I needed something to fill that fall period before I began the job in Boston. And that was when my friend Shannon suggested that I pursue something with Senator Mitchell and went down there. I had just a tremendously positive experience and loved it, really loved D.C., certainly admired and respected the Senator, really enjoyed his staff, loved the work that was going on. And in fact, at the end of the internship they offered me a full time position on the staff, which I ended up turning down because I felt like I had made a commitment to the organization in Boston that had a position for me, and that it was not appropriate for me to back out of that commitment. So I ended up leaving the Senator's staff and going to Boston as I had originally planned, but it was quite an honor to be offered a staff position after that brief internship.

AL: So you went to Boston.

CQ: I did.

AL: And what was the organization?

CQ: The *Christian Science Monitor*, the newspaper. I had a job lined up there, simply as a copy clerk, and then that quickly grew into a couple of interim positions, and then I ended up as editor for Western Europe and Great Britain.

AL: Wow.

CQ: Yeah, that was a pretty good job I had at the age of twenty-three, or whatever I was at the time, yeah.

AL: And so how long did you stay in that position?

CQ: At the *Monitor*? I was there about two-and-a-half, three years all told, and then I left there to come back to Maine and go to law school.

AL: UMaine Law School?

CQ: Yes, that's right, yup. I had been thinking for some time about going to law school, and as much as I really enjoyed my experience at the *Monitor*, got a tremendous amount out of it, I wasn't completely drawn to the world of journalism and the timing just seemed right for a number of reasons to make the decision to go to law school and come back to Maine to do that. I knew I wanted to live in Maine, I knew I wanted to practice in Maine, so I applied to and thought about some of the Boston area law schools, but it really made a lot more sense for me to come back here. And I'm glad I did, that was the right choice for me.

AL: So have you practiced law?

CQ: I practiced for about ten years before Senator Mitchell called me about the Mitchell Institute.

AL: In what firm did you -?

CQ: I didn't practice with a firm actually. I had done, you know, through law school I did the typical summer clerkships, different places – one with the U.S. Attorney's office, which was a blast, one with a private law firm, which was good but not the right fit for me. At the end of law school, I was really interested in working for the U.S. Attorney's Office but, you know, they don't hire people right out of law school. I was interested in a position maybe at the Attorney General's Office; they didn't have anything at the time but I ended up applying and getting a clerkship, so I clerked for Tom Delahanty, who was chief of the Superior Court at the time, based in Auburn which was very convenient since I lived in Minot, which is just outside the Lewiston-Auburn area. So I clerked for Judge Delahanty for the year, which was great because I really enjoyed the research and writing quite a bit. And so that was a very positive experience.

I also had just had a child, my first son Josh was born. I actually missed my law school graduation because I was in labor the day of graduation. That's a whole different story unto itself. But anyway, so the clerkship was nice because it was very nine-to-five kind of job. You know, when you had a new baby that was a plus. And I had taken the bar exam when Josh was about eight weeks old, so it was nice to have something relatively straightforward. But it was a terrific, terrific job, I really enjoyed it. I liked the challenge, I liked all the different kinds of things I got a chance to learn about and research while I was there.

And then I had started on a path of doing some, the research and writing and trying to kind of create my own, my own business essentially, doing research and writing for law firms. And so I did that with a couple of, with a firm in Portland on some cases, and also did some work with Bowdoin as they were looking to examine their policy on fraternities. This would have been back in the early nineties I guess it was. And so I did those couple of things side by side for a couple of years and discovered that I really, really liked doing the education law, or practicing law in an education setting. Even though I wasn't litigating, I really felt like I understood that

world very well and I was starting to build my own practice around that. At the same time, the AG's office, the Attorney General's Office here in Maine called me because they did have an opening, it was a part-time position which was frankly just what I was looking for. So I did that for a few years doing health care, anti-trust and consumer protection work, and did a bit of that. And the more that job moved more towards litigation, the less I enjoyed it, and so I ended up switching and going back to this kind of research and writing work around education law and built up, then over the next few years after that, because I kind of did those two things in tandem for a little bit, and then made the choice to head off on my own and did that for about four or five years.

So I worked with schools and colleges all over the country on educational policy issues, internal to the schools. So things like: sexual harassment policies, employee policies of different kinds, did trainings of student judiciary boards, built up an expertise sort of in the area of legal issues in admissions and the transfer of information between high schools and colleges. It was right as the ADA, the Americans with Disabilities Act had just come about, and so there was some real interest in understanding how to navigate those new territories. So all of that was going on for about, a total of about a ten-year period after law school.

And during that time, I continued to stay in touch with the Senator and with some of the folks on his staff – even though I had only been there for a few months, I made some really great connections with people there. Certainly, again, continued to deeply admire the Senator and everything that he was doing.

And there's, actually there's a great story where a couple of years, I think it was, after I had done that fairly brief internship with him, I was in an airport – I'm going to say it was in New York. It was not here in Maine. I think it was at LaGuardia, and I was waiting to get on a connecting flight. And Senator Mitchell was just stepping off a flight and I saw him walking, you know, across the waiting area, and I started to walk over to him saying, you know, I was preparing to re-introduce myself and say, "Senator Mitchell, my name Colleen Quint, I interned for you a couple of years ago down in D.C.." He walked straight over to me, "Colleen, how are you doing? Have you gone to law school yet? What's happening with . . ." "you know, all these kind of things. I mean, I couldn't believe that he recognized me from this four-month internship from a couple of years before, and there was no context for him to know who I was. I hadn't shown up in the office and he had been prompted about who I was. It wasn't even an airport in Maine, I mean it was a completely different venue and he recognized me. Which was just really incredibly impressive, that he would be able to connect those dots like that.

So while I was doing, back in Maine and going to law school and then engaging in my law practice, like I said, I was staying in touch with Senator Mitchell and some of the folks on his staff, from time to time. And at the same time, he appointed my husband, Bill Hiss, who works at Bates, and Bill was the dean of admissions and financial aide for quite a number of years at Bates, and Senator Mitchell had the capacity when he was majority leader to appoint somebody to the Federal Advisory Committee on Student Financial Assistance, or ACSFA I think is the correct acronym, and so he appointed Bill to two terms on that committee. And so Bill would be

in D.C. periodically, and he would typically stop in to see the Senator and keep the Senator apprised of, you know, how I was doing and what I was doing and things like that. So even though I was out of direct touch with him for a while I still kind of, you know, stayed on the radar screen and kept him updated with what we were doing. Which was nice, you know, and I always tell the Mitchell Scholars that I'm the classic example of why you take those low paid internships that you're not sure where they're going to lead, because things have a way of circling back around.

AL: So it was in the late '90s when you – well Bill was involved in the mid-nineties.

CQ: That's right.

AL: With the beginnings of the scholarship.

CQ: That's right. In 1995, Senator Mitchell set up the scholarship program in sort of its first iteration, and that was as a donor advised fund at the Maine Community Foundation. And so he had a couple million dollars in his campaign war chest and he had written to all the folks who had contributed to the campaign and said, "I hate to disappoint you but I've made a difficult decision not to run for reelection. If you'd like your money back, I'm happy of course to send it back to you, to return it to you. If you'd allow me to keep it, what I'd like to do is create a scholarship program for Maine students." And the vast majority of people said 'go ahead and do that.' The people who were really clever said, "Send me back the money" – the political contribution which is not tax deductible – "and I'll make the contribution again to a charity." So those folks were really on the ball.

So anyway, that was kind of the original seed money for the scholarship program, and from 1995 through 1998, so for those four calendar years, there was a group of about, I think it was about a dozen people, maybe fifteen, and Bill was one of them, who served on a scholarship advisory committee for the Senator, so the Maine Community Foundation stewarded the funds, and worked with high schools around the state to solicit applications for the scholarship. And it had been set up in such a way that, what the Senator wanted to ensure was that the same high schools weren't receiving the benefit of the scholarship every year, and so he set it up on an essentially rotating system so that once a given high school had a student selected as a Mitchell Scholar, students from that high school were not eligible to apply again until every high school in the state had had at least one Mitchell Scholar. That was his goal.

So from that '95 through '98 period, the group of folks would review the scholarship applications that came in each year and select about twenty to twenty-five Mitchell Scholars, and those students received a one-time award of \$2500. And during that period of time, Bill was one of those twelve, twelve or fifteen folks involved in that, and that's when I began to reconnect a little bit with the Senator, around the work that he was doing with the scholarship program. And certainly he was in touch with Bill about the design of the program and, you know, wanting to make sure that it achieved the most benefit for the students that it could.

And then in late, it must have been in mid- to late 1998, the Senator started working with some anonymous foundations on the possibility of expanding the scholarship program fairly dramatically. And he was able to, in the late fall of '98, secure a commitment from them to be able to create an entity which was to become the Senator George J. Mitchell Scholarship Research Institute, and that entity would exist to provide a scholarship – at that time it was a \$4,000 scholarship – with students receiving \$1,000 in each of their four years of college – a \$4,000 scholarship for a graduating senior from every public high school in the state every year. And that entity was also going to be conducting research, essentially a longitudinal study, of the Mitchell Scholars to see what their experiences and outcomes were.

And so towards the end, I would say in sort of October-November of '98, the Senator and Bill were talking quite a bit about how to structure that scholarship. What should the amount of the scholarship be, you know, how do we want it, how can we do this in a way where the students will receive the full benefit, should we do the scholarships, all these one time scholarships as we, as had been happening in the earlier model, or do we want to spread it out over four years, you know, how do we want to do that. There were some folks at the time who were encouraging the Senator to select a smaller number of students and have them be significant scholarships, you know, ten and twenty thousand dollar scholarships for a handful of students. But the Senator, my understanding is, the Senator really was very committed to having it be every high school, every year, having a Mitchell Scholar. And so he and Bill worked closely together on kind of coming up with the initial architecture for the scholarship program.

And in the course of talking with the Senator about that, the Senator began to explore who was going to manage this program when it was here in the state of Maine. And he talked with Bill about that some, and then over the course of time he began to talk with me about that. And again, that would have been the very late fall of '98, and when he asked me if I would consider serving as the executive director for the organization I said yes right away. It was a wonderful opportunity, and certainly a tremendous privilege and honor to be able to work for him in this way and to really carry out what I see and what he sees as his legacy to the state of Maine.

So in January of '99, we went through the quick process of creating the structure for the organization, renting office space, creating articles of incorporation, coming up with an initial board of directors, preparing a revised scholarship application. So that, we had a press conference, it was in mid to late January, January 19th sticks out in my mind but that may not be the actual date. But mid- to late January we held a press conference with Senator Mitchell to announce the creation of the Mitchell Institute, and announce the expansion of the scholarship program. And so I had been working over the previous weeks to put together press packets and things like that for it, as well as to prepare application forms and get those out, so that the day of the press conference we sent out application forms to every high school in the state and sort of got the word out, and then spent the next couple of months following up with the schools to make sure that they had received the materials and they knew about the scholarship opportunity.

In the first couple of months in particular there was some confusion by the high schools, because

they were so, at that point they were fairly ingrained on the, you know, only one kid from my high school until you tell me otherwise, until every high school has had somebody. And so we had to really kind of pound the pavement a little bit that first year to make sure we had applications from every high school. But we did that, and I think we had, oh I don't know, three, maybe four hundred applications that first year. Maybe it was only a couple hundred the first year, and three or four hundred the second year. It kind of grew slowly and then after about two or three years into it, the numbers just took off and now we get about eleven hundred to twelve hundred applications per year for the scholarship.

AL: Wow, that's great. So have you had the opportunity to have significant time sitting down with Senator Mitchell and talking about the institute and the initial formation, and then its development over time?

CQ: We talk about it pretty frequently. I mean I certainly keep him apprised of major new projects and directions for the scholarship program. I want to make sure that we don't stray too far from his vision, because we have certainly grown quite a lot and changed in some ways since it was originally set up back in 1999. And I have to say, he has been phenomenal in his commitment to this organization and to the scholarship program, that he has created and carved out so much of his own personal time to support the scholarship program, to meet with people, to advance the interests of the scholarship program.

Just the other day I sent him, actually in the last couple of weeks I sent him four different requests that have come in, two for speaking engagements, where individuals want to be able to provide an honorarium to the scholarship program in honor of Senator Mitchell and are asking him to speak at an event for doing that. And then in the other case, two individuals who are folks that the development staff and I here would very much like the Senator to meet with to talk about the Mitchell Institute. And I mean if I, if it takes twenty-four hours for me to get a response from him, that's unusual. I mean he's that quick to get back to me, to always be working on finding out a way to make it work, even though the demands on his time are just extraordinary in terms of his travel schedule and other commitments. And so I'm deeply, deeply appreciative that he really continues to make this scholarship program a real priority.

AL: And he did an interview with Scott Hood at Bowdoin last week, and he talked about how important the scholars program was, that it was one of his very special things.

CQ: Absolutely. Actually, I just read that on the Bowdoin website earlier today, as a matter of fact. Duke had mentioned it to me and I took a look at it, and he said that at the, at our gala a couple of, two years ago maybe. We have a big fund-raising dinner for the scholarship every fall, and it's an evening for us to celebrate the scholarship program and the Mitchell Scholars, to thank our supporters for everything that they've done and -

AL: And raise funds?

CQ: And raise funds for the scholarship program, that's right. And Senator Mitchell had, a couple years ago, had Mary Robinson, the former president of Northern Ireland, come in and speak to the group. And she was just terrific and, you know, she was talking about the gratitude of the people in Northern Ireland for everything that he had done, and the Republic, for everything that he had done there. And, you know, he made the comment that night that was echoed in that interview with Scott Hood, that people often ask him, what does he think is the most important thing he's ever done, and they're usually expecting him to point to, you know, a piece of legislation or some kind of action he took while he was in the Senate, and he says, "For me the most important thing that I've done is create this scholarship program for Maine students." And, you know, I know that he believes that to be true and feels that commitment very, very deeply.

AL: Now, tell me, what are some of the challenges that you've faced as director of the institute over the years, in terms of keeping it growing, or - ?

CQ: Well part of the challenge, to be honest, has been keeping it from growing too much.

AL: Too much too fast?

CQ: Too much too fast. I mean, you know, next year marks the official tenth anniversary of the Mitchell Institute, so from the 1999 period. And you know, when we select Mitchell Scholars this coming spring, the spring of '08, we will have passed \$6 million committed to Maine students, and more than fifteen hundred Maine students supported by the program, which is a really pretty remarkable milestone, I think. And when we started off back in 1999, we had a modest number of applications initially and really, like I said earlier, had to kind of pound the pavement to generate those. Now we get eleven hundred or twelve hundred applications a year.

The Senator wanted to develop some kind of programming to support the Mitchell Scholars when they were going through college and he, you know, he mentioned to me in the car once when we were going from one event to another, he says, "Colleen, I think we should create some kind of a leadership program for the Mitchell Scholars." And so out of that has developed what we call our MILE program, the Mitchell Institute Leadership Experience, which we created several years ago. It's a weekend retreat with Mitchell Scholars where they do personal and professional development. We've hosted it in different places around the state – the last couple of years we've done it up at the New England Outdoor Center in Millinocket, and we had people come in and work with the students on everything from developing your resumes, ethical decision making, just a whole host of different kinds of topics. We combine that with a kind of a personal push your boundaries kind of experience, like white water rafting, or we've done Outward Bound type ropes courses with the students before, and now we conclude the weekend with a community service project at Baxter State Park.

And so, and that's being underwritten right now by UNUM, which is a big corporate friend of the Mitchell Institute, and so we were able to make that opportunity available for free to the

Mitchell Scholars. And then last year, that grew from the one weekend a year that we do with about thirty or thirty-five of the scholars to now, we're increasingly conscious of the fact that we have more alumni than we have current Mitchell Scholars, and so we're trying to find ways to be connected to those students, to continue to provide service and value to them, a) because we want to be helpful to those students, and b) because we want them to feel a connection to the Mitchell Institute. We want them to hear the Senator's request to them to think about giving back. And these are folks who are going to be in a position to begin helping, mentoring or even hiring, you know, the young Mitchell Scholars who are coming along behind them.

And so now we've developed a Mile Two day that we call, that's a personal and professional development day, sort of a one day drive-in conference for Mitchell Scholars. We have panels of experts across eight or ten different career fields talking about what those industries are like here in the state of Maine, how, you know, what kind of education and training you need, tips on how to get your foot in the door in these industries, and then we also do a series of afternoon breakout sessions on things like personal finance, again for young professionals, to know how to set up a retirement plan, or what it's like when you're going to buy your first house, and how can you consolidate your students loans and all those kinds of things.

So that little thread is a good example of what happens when, you know, I'm driving the Senator from an event back to the airport or something and we're talking, and he'll say, "You know, I think we should do some kind of a leadership program," and so then I just kind of take that idea and run with it and see what we can create. And over time those things kind of become fairly significant. So we've developed those kinds of programs.

We have another program that provides financial support to the students. The scholarships are really focused on helping offset tuition costs, and we go through a process of verifying the students are still enrolled at least half time, and then we send those scholarship checks out in January to apply to their second semester tuition bill. But a lot of students have special projects and things that they want to undertake, or they have a summer internship opportunity that would constitute a financial hardship if they took it.

I mean I'm somebody, you know, as I mentioned earlier, I grew up in Portland, I used to work at the Portland Dairy Queen in the summers. Right, great job, all the free ice cream you could get, but it certainly didn't help me figure out what I wanted to do in this world. [] But I took the job because I needed the cash for college. And so what we're really trying to do is make sure that when our Mitchell Scholars have opportunities for meaningful and career related summer jobs, that they're in a financial position to take those summer internships. And so we've built up a modest fund – it actually has about \$20,000 in it each year – that's available to the Mitchell Scholars who do these kinds of career exploration opportunities.

And sometimes they need \$1500 or \$2000 because, you know, we had a student a number of years who, for example, was doing a full-time volunteer internship at the Volunteer Lawyers Project, and then he was waiting tables at night and on the weekend, and so we provided him

with a stipend of something like \$1500 to help underwrite that and kind of make all the dollars work out. Other times, students just need a couple hundred dollars for gas, because they have a job lined up and it's a paying job but they have to commute from Portland to Augusta, or from, you know, Millinocket to Bangor or whatever it might be, and so we provide them with that stipend.

And so those, again, are the kinds of things, when the Senator has these conversations with me about wanting to make sure that we're doing what we can to help the students, certainly the whole impetus for the program came from a conference that he attended up at UMaine about the shrinking number of Maine students who are going on to college, and about what the economic impact on the state was of having a workforce with less education than our neighboring states, and that was really what got him thinking about doing the scholarship program on a statewide level. And so there's a lot that we've tried to build up, knowing that that's the Senator's desire, is to have students continue to be, to support them, to help them make sure they get all the way through college, to earn a degree, so they persist through. But then also to have them have enough connection and opportunity in the state of Maine that they know that they can live and work here if that's what they want to do, and so we've developed a lot of this programming around that career exploration idea.

And I guess the other piece that I would say is that the, the research program has also grown significantly. Back to your question from a couple of minutes ago about kind of how we've grown, the original conception of the research program was to do this longitudinal study of the Mitchell Scholars and simply track their outcomes and experience and be able to speak to that. And so we've done that to great effect, so we have rich data about the scholars and, you know, what they've done and what kinds of fields they're majoring in and things like that. Increasingly, we're also paying attention to the alumni, and so are they living inside of Maine or outside of Maine, do they have a plan to return or not, you know, what are the factors that influence that. And we also use it as an opportunity, obviously, to test the programs that we're offering to see if they're of value to the scholars. And so that longitudinal study has been a really important one for us, because it keeps us connected with the students, and keeps them connected to us, it's great feedback for us, and it really allows us to speak with tremendous veracity about those experiences and outcomes of the scholars.

A few years ago we had an opportunity through a grant from the Nellie Mae Education Foundation to really broaden our focus and begin looking statewide, not just at the Mitchell Scholars but at all Maine students, and so about six years ago now we got a grant from Nellie Mae to do a statewide study on barriers to college for Maine students. And that was a really significant study for us. It was very, very well received when it came out, it garnered quite a lot of attention and, both in terms of press and policy makers as well, and we ended up using that as a launching pad in some ways for the Mitchell Institute to really position ourselves as an organization that had something to say about it, something to contribute to the conversation about how to remove these barriers. And it was an opportunity for us to position ourselves as being understood as an organization that, while very deeply rooted and connected to the

individual students we serve through the scholarship program, is also deeply committed to the state as a whole and really looking to be part of the solution for the long term vitality of the state in terms of a highly educated citizenry and a highly educated workforce.

So that first barrier study then of course led to a second barrier study, which we released in the summer of '07. And, you know, since those, since we started to do that work, it's really put us in a position where we've been involved in a number of different kinds of initiatives and efforts across the state around aspirations and student readiness for college. It's meant that I've served on a number of commissions and task forces on different kinds of issues related to higher ed access and aspirations and readiness, and has really I think helped cement a broader and deeper understanding of what the Mitchell Institute is hoping to accomplish.

AL: And have your paths crossed with Jamie Merisotis?

CQ: Jamie and I went to Bates together.

AL: Yes, well, and I wonder, he does a lot of education policy, and if his work in any way crossed -

CQ: It has a little bit. I happen to serve right now, my professional association is the National Scholarship Providers Association, NSPA, and I happen to serve right now as president of the board of NSPA, so Jamie is a frequent speaker at the NSPA conferences. He and I have stayed in touch. Certainly we were good friends when we were at Bates, and we have stayed in touch since then. The policy research institute that he ran down in D.C. actually worked with NSPA on a project about private scholarships and understanding their place nationally in the landscape around access, in a major report that he helped us with. And he's now left his organization to go to become president at the Lumina Foundation, which is a big transition. And he actually just took over the reins at Lumina at couple of months ago, and so my hope is that the Lumina Foundation will bring Jamie's expertise to good use, and his interest in using research as a basis for policy.

AL: And what is Lumina?

CQ: Lumina, the Lumina Foundation, it's a much bigger version of what MELMAC and Nellie Mae are, in that it's a conversion foundation, so when – I don't know the original entity – but when the student loans were sold off, essentially the profits from that were used to create an educational foundation. And they have tremendous assets, it's hundreds of millions of dollars. It may even be, you know, I don't know if it's in the billions or not, but it's a huge foundation. And they're work is exclusively around higher ed and higher ed access. And so I'm, let's just say I'm looking forward to chatting with Jamie in his new capacity.

AL: Oh, that's great. Now you said that there were a lot of staff that you met in your short time as an intern that really you formed bonds with and have remained close to. Who were some

of those people, were they regular staffers, and were they from Maine, any of them?

CQ: Yeah, most of them were. I mean folks like Mary McAleney, for example, who was on his staff in D.C. at the time, was a good friend of mine when I was down there and she and I stayed in touch. And she's actually, she served on the board for the Mitchell Institute for a period of time, stepped off due to other commitments, and has in the last couple years come back on the Mitchell Institute board, so it's been nice to be able to continue to be connected with Mary in that way. Gayle Cory was wonderful. As you know, she passed away a few years ago, but she was just, she was lovely.

The Gayle story, the Gayle Cory story that had a particular meaning for me was, in the period of time when I was down in D.C., my father, who was a high school teacher here in Maine, sent a letter to the Senator on some, there was some education bill before Congress, I don't even recall what it was. And Gayle noticed it in the constituent mail that was going out, and she pulled it aside and gave it to the Senator. And so the Senator wrote a note to my dad on the bottom of it that, you know, said, you know, in addition to the kind of the standard answer on whatever the particular policy issue was, just said, you know, you must be very proud of your daughter, she's a very capable young woman and doing a great job here, and most importantly is a very nice person, you should be very proud of her, you know, or something along those lines. It just meant a tremendous amount to my father to kind of get that handwritten note from the Senator, and that was all because Gayle Cory was paying attention to the mail as it was making its way through. So that was just kind of a neat little thing.

AL: Yeah, there are some amazing Gayle Cory stories.

CQ: Oh yeah, yeah, she was a wonderful woman, just very thoughtful, really paid attention to what was going on for sure, so she was really terrific and just a nice. As somebody who was in the big city for the first time, I mean I had lived in Maine my entire life and, you know, it was a big deal for me to be in a place like D.C. , and getting used to the Metro and all the ins and outs of the congressional offices and those kinds of things. And once in a while she'd call me in and give me a special little errand that, you know, she thought would feel important to me or feel kind of neat. And so she was just, she was great, she just made me feel very, very welcome there, and I was very, very fond of Gayle; she was terrific.

Bob Carolla, who was down there, I haven't seen him in a while but -

AL: Is he a Maine person?

CQ: He is not from Maine originally, no. I can't recall where Bob is from, but he actually called me when the Samantha Smith legislation went through, because he thought that I'd be pleased to hear that. That was when I was in law school actually; I remember him calling me to tell me about that.

Janie O'Connor who is here, who is from Maine, was on his staff. M. C. Toker, Mary Catherine Toker -

AL: How do you spell that, Toker?

CQ: T-O-K-E-R, was on the staff. Grace Reef, who I had actually gone to Deering High School with, she was a year ahead of me, maybe two years, I forget now. Grace was on his staff, and she's somebody that I spent quite a bit of time with when I was down there, and got me involved in a really neat community service project while I was down in D.C., so - .

AL: And what was her role on the staff?

CQ: She was the LA [legislative assistant] for – now Bob was the education LA, she was the LA for I'm going to say children and families but that's probably not quite the way to characterize it, but that's sort of what her real interest was. And then she may have had like energy in her portfolio or something, you know, something along those lines. I can't, I can't recall exactly. But Grace was a lot of fun, she was a high energy gal and she was always great. And, you know, she's another Maine person. So he had a good, he had a good core of people who were from Maine who were playing a big role on his staff.

AL: Yeah, and he also had a big core of people on his staff who transferred from Senator Muskie.

CQ: Yes, he did.

AL: Did you ever hear the staff talk about maybe the differences they experienced between the two senators?

CQ: Actually, you know, no, I really didn't, I don't think I could speak to that. I mean I know, I know both David Johnson and Leon Billings quite well, and they had both previously been on the staff, as had Senator Mitchell obviously, but I can't really say that I've had conversations with the staffers about the difference in their styles. There are certainly some pretty good Ed Muskie stories out there, and George Mitchell has a different style than Ed Muskie did.

AL: Did you have a chance to observe Senator Mitchell's style in the office, or in the legislature?

CQ: I did, just the, both in terms of his interaction with staff as well as on some, you know, actually on the floor. And, you know, he was then, as he is now, just an extraordinarily articulate person, very thoughtful. He has the most uncanny ability when speaking, you know, he'll begin a sentence, and he flows without pause or interruption with such deliberateness to how he speaks. He never pauses and rewinds and kind of comes back at it because he didn't quite get it

right the first time, you know what I mean? He just, he has an absolute gift in terms of his oratory, I think. He's really remarkable that way.

A couple of years ago we were here in Maine and we held an event for the Mitchell Institute that we did in concert with Seeds of Peace. And we did a joint symposium with Senator Mitchell and Aaron David Miller, who was the head of Seeds of Peace at the time, some Mitchell Scholars and some Seeds students who were participating in the camp, that's here in Maine, talking about world peace issues and things like that. It was a wonderful, wonderful symposium, and then following that there was a concert to benefit both organizations. And Senator Mitchell spoke that night, and he spoke as he always does, just off the cuff. I mean he'll have me draft things for him, and it's just like, it's an exercise I go through that kind of gives him a little bit of food for thought but he, you know, he just typically just speaks extemporaneously. And he got up that night and spoke, off the cuff, about the scholarship program and his own background and things like that.

And my son Josh was sitting next to me, so when the Senator spoke at the concert that night, you know, there'd be some performances and then Aaron David Miller would get up and say a few words, and then some more performances and then Senator Mitchell got up. And I remember distinctly that I was sitting at the concert and my son Josh was sitting next to me, and he was a freshman, maybe a sophomore in high school at the time, so fourteen, fifteen years old. And Senator Mitchell spoke, and he was so exceptionally eloquent, Josh turned to me, he says, "Mom, I have goose bumps." And I thought to myself, 'now that is something.' When you can speak – I mean I had tears in my eyes, I was choked up – but you know, to speak in such a way that you elicit that reaction in a fourteen-, fifteen-year-old boy, you know, that's a special gift.

And he's really just exceptional, I mean I think that there are so few, there are a lot of people who are good speakers, and people, you know, who can deliver a great speech or whatever, but there is something about George Mitchell and his knowledge and how he draws on that knowledge, how he sees connections between things, his deep understanding of history, and just his delivery that is so, again, so thoughtful, deliberate, articulate.

We were at an event up in Bangor a couple of summers ago, a small fund raiser for the scholarship program, it was a reception and then he took questions from the audience. There were maybe fifty or sixty people who were at the event, maybe a little bit more. And at the time things were, this was when we were just kind of getting ourselves in the middle of things in Iraq, and somebody asked him a question about that. He gave an answer that couldn't have been more than ten minutes long, but which covered an incredible depth and breadth of history in that answer. You know, it was like you pulled a string on the back of his head and he was able to kind of lay out the entire complexities of the Middle East in about seven minutes, and everyone walked away saying, 'oh, that was really helpful, thank you.' I felt they'd just had a graduate level tutorial in, you know, Middle Eastern politics and culture. It was really just amazing.

So just on a personal level, it's just such a privilege to work for a man like George Mitchell, not

only doing this work that I'm personally so passionate about and that I know has great personal meaning to the Senator, but just to work for somebody like him. There are a handful of people like George Mitchell out there, and it's really quite something to be, like I said, to really have the genuine privilege of being able to work for somebody like him.

AL: Is there anything that I haven't asked you that you feel is important to talk about today, a connection that I might not have known to ask about, or an experience or an anecdote?

CQ: I mean, some of the things that come to mine are, you know, every summer we have this brunch for the Mitchell Scholars and it's, that was something he started doing when he had the program in its initial version, which was the twenty or twenty-five students a year, and they used to all gather at Miller's Restaurant in Bangor. And they would have, he would have a brunch and he'd meet the students and their parents and talk with them and things like that. And when we expanded the scholarship program, he really wanted to continue doing the brunch but we quickly realized we were not going to have the capacity at the restaurant to host an event of that size.

So we now hold it on a college campus, typically at UMaine. We're trying to get a central location, because kids come from all over the state for it. And that's one thing that I know has been very important to the Senator, because he wants that opportunity to speak directly to the students and directly with their parents. And it's, again, he has an incredible knack for making connections and knowing people, you know, and remembering them. So a parent will come up who maybe, you know, worked on his campaign for governor back in the '70s, or you know, a grandparent or whatever, and you know, he'll remember them and remember some story about how he interacted with them twenty and thirty years ago. Or if he sees those Mitchell Scholars in a later context, at the gala or at a fund-raising event or, you know, whatever it might be, he'll remember them from that brunch. And the kids are just absolutely blown away by the fact that he would remember who they are, and most of the time he remembers like what college they're going to and things like that. It's really amazing, yeah.

And he's been great, he's really made himself available to the students who have been interested in meeting with him and talking with him about particular things or, you know, as they've wanted to. We have a number of scholars who are interested in pursuing careers in international relations and peace studies and things like that, and he's tried to be as helpful as he's been able to, to those individual students on a one-by-one basis when that's been appropriate.

So he's just, he's so available. I mean, when I mentioned earlier that if I send him an e-mail or put a call in to him about a question that I have about something, it's pretty unusual for more than twenty-four hours to go by, you know, and not hearing something back from him. And I remember a couple of summers ago, or it was the fall I think actually, but at any rate, we were going through a big, there was a big question that we were going through with, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, had approached the state of Maine about making a significant grant, a ten million dollar grant -

(Taping paused - continued on next track)

AL: We are now on Side B, and you were about to talk about the Melinda and Bill Gates -

CQ: That's right, about five or six years ago they were interested in making a significant investment in the state of Maine, looking to make a ten million dollar grant to the state to do high school reform efforts, which would basically be geared towards preparing more kids for college. And they were looking for an intermediary to serve as the fiscal agent for that and to house the project, and they had an internal rule at the time that they did not work with state departments of education, or colleges and universities, because they typically charged a big overhead, and were big complex systems and things got lost in the shuffle, so they really wanted to work with and partner with a modestly sized, nonprofit organization.

And so somebody, Duke Albanese had brought that to the Mitchell Institute for us to consider, and so I was engaged in conversations with the Senator and with the board about that, because that was a significant new undertaking. And even though it would bring in its own staff to work on that, it was a big departure from what we had been doing, which was handing out scholarship checks and developing programs to support those scholars.

And so anyway, the Senator and I were speaking frequently at that time, to try and gather information and see what his questions were and kind of suss out what all that would mean. And I remember he was going to be making a trip to Northern Ireland at the time, because he was going back there periodically following the Good Friday Peace Accords, and he gave me the number of his flat in Belfast and said, you know, "If there are questions that come up or if you need to run something by me, give me a call." And I thought to myself, 'well that's rather extraordinary.' I mean, you know, I understand the importance and the complexity of everything that's happening in Northern Ireland, what his critical role has been to that whole process, and here he is giving me the number for his flat in Belfast if I felt like I needed to, you know, get his input on something. So that's the level of commitment that he has to the scholarship program, of his accessibility, so that's just a, that was just really stunning to me.

This is a very different kind of an anecdote, but I also remember a couple summers ago he was, he had done a small event for us in western Maine, a fund-raising event, and he had another commitment – I mean that often happens, because he's in such demand that he'll be double booked on the same evening and have to move quickly from one of them to the next to be able to kind of meet the requests that have come in, and he does everything he can to accommodate requests that people make on his time.

So I was driving with him from one event in western Maine up to one in Augusta that he was going to be at, and he and I were in the car together. And it happened to be early in the evening in the summer time, and typically when I'm with the Senator when he's in Maine it's, you know, it's in the middle of the day, I'm bringing him from one place to another on Mitchell Institute

business and other things as he may need it. And ninety-five percent of the time, you know, he's on his cell phone back with his office, and they're placing calls literally all over the world for different projects that he's working on and things that people are calling him about.

But this one night he was not on the cell phone, and we're driving along and it occurred to me that there was a Red Sox game likely to be on the radio. And I am a *huge* Red Sox fan, and watch a lot of the games with my kids and listen to them on the radio and all that kind of stuff. And knowing that the Senator is a life-long fan of the sport in general, as well as of the Red Sox in particular, I asked him if he wanted to put the game on and listen to it. And so it was just one of those, it's a silly kind of little thing but, for me, it was personally quite meaningful to be just simply driving through Maine in a summer evening, with a Sox game on the radio, listening to it and commenting on the game back and forth as it went along. You know, mostly we rode in silence just listening to the game, but every once in a while one of us would offer a comment on something that happened, and that was just, that was a nice little moment for me, I have to say.

AL: Well thank you so much for your time, I appreciate it.

CQ: Oh, you're very welcome, good.

End of Interview