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Interview with Pat Sarcone by Brien Williams

Patricia 'Pat' A. Sarcone

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George J. Mitchell Oral History Project

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Patricia A. “Pat” Sarcone
(Interviewer: *Brien Williams*)

GMOH# 143
September 11, 2009

[Significant revisions throughout]

Brien Williams: This is an oral history interview for the George J. Mitchell Oral History Project at Bowdoin College with Patricia A. Sarcone. We are in her office building in Washington, D.C., and today is Friday, September 11th, 2009, and I am Brien Williams. Let me ask you first, Patricia, to give me your full name and spell your last name, please?

Patricia Sarcone: Patricia, middle name Ann, A-N-N, last name Sarcone, S-like Sam-A-R-C-O-N-E.

BW: And Bowdoin College would like to know the date and place of your birth.

PS: [], in Newport, Rhode Island.

BW: And your parents’ names?

PS: James, V. as in Vincent, last name Sarcone, and Jessie, J-E-S-S-I-E Sarcone, maiden name: Jessie I. Presnall; both deceased.

BW: Okay, let’s talk a little bit about your background, where you grew up and your education and so forth.

PS: I grew up in Des Moines, Iowa, in a large extended family of six children, and a community of two hundred and fifty thousand people, very politically active, and a great place to grow up in terms of community, values of faith and family. I attended and was graduated from St. Mary College, now St. Mary University in Leavenworth, Kansas. I was graduated with a B.A. in Business Administration. I returned to Des Moines and worked for a time, and then in 1969 traveled to Washington to look for a job. I joined the staff of Senator Harold Hughes of Iowa, who had been our three-term governor and was now a United States Senator from Iowa. This was a thrilling experience for me because the political arena was one that I loved and enjoyed and had actually been involved in on a local level, and then at the Presidential level in 1968 with the Humphrey-Muskie ticket. So I have a little bit of Maine connection there. My sister Christine was actually one of the 18-yr-old delegates, a Muskie delegate, to the 1982 convention in Miami.

My work with Senator Hughes was very satisfying, very thrilling. It was a time of the Vietnam War, of real bipartisanship in the United States Senate. We had anti-war protestors in and out of our office. Senator Harold Hughes was against the war, he marched against the war. He also ran for president in 1971 but it was a short-lived run. Following Senator Hughes decision to resign, I joined Senator John Culver's staff. He too was from Iowa, had been a ten-year veteran of the U.S. House of Representatives, was actually Senator Kennedy's roommate at Harvard, and was, as Harold Hughes was, a very stand up politician for what he believed in, very principled, very, very smart. And he was defeated in the election of 1980, at which time I went downtown to the law firm of Winston & Strawn to work for Former Vice President Walter F. Mondale during his presidential run. Again, for someone who was interested in politics, it was a very thrilling experience and one of great education.

I went to the convention of 1984 in San Francisco, was working in the suite with Mr. Mondale, was allowed on the podium. It was one of the great thrills of my life. And, of course, to see Geraldine Ferraro nominated as vice president, Governor Mario Cuomo giving the address--- for an Italian kid from Des Moines, and a woman, that was a fantastic experience. And so I spent time during that campaign administering to the members who called, trying to connect them to Mr. Mondale or to other members of the campaign staff as needed, and taking care of the contributory people as well. I was able to come to Iowa to work the caucuses for Mr. Mondale, which he won. Again this was another great experience. I was saddened by his defeat in 1984, and stayed with him until his return to Minnesota. Again, an interesting experience, to go back in time with him as things developed in the new administration.

Following Mr. Mondale's move to Minnesota, I then joined Occidental International and helped run Former First Lady Bird Johnson's Jubilee, which was an honorific event for the First Lady, for her beautification efforts of Washington, with several events in the House, the Senate, the White House, Statuary Hall, lovely events. And then following that effort, I joined Senator Mitchell's staff. I called Martha Pope, who was then his chief of staff, and asked whether there might be something available on the Democratic Policy Committee, because I did need a job She suggested I might come in and help with organizational efforts, which I did. And with my years of experience and knowledge of the downtown business community, I was able to help the staff dig out of a little bit of a message backlog, which is natural when you're moving into the leader's office and you have twice the work load, as well as trying to minister to your constituency in Maine, which for Senator Mitchell or the President was hugely important.

One of the first things he said was that Maine is first, and he really meant it. Whether it was a press person who was on deadline, he was to be interrupted. And so shortly thereafter, Gayle Cory was elevated to the position of postmistress of the Senate, and I then assumed her duties to schedule Senator Mitchell, and that was again a very exciting time.

BW: Let's go back here just a little bit, I have a few questions for you. I'm always curious to know where the starting point is on a Capitol Hill career. When you went to work for Senator Hughes, what were you doing at the start?

PS: Oh, I was a receptionist/legislative secretary, so I was helping two very busy legislative assistants with the mail that we were doing, with the legislative efforts. We also ran large conferences from our office, there was a group in New York called the Fund for New Priorities in America who would come to Washington and do very large conferences with government, academia, the Congress, to highlight particular issues of the day, whether it was the judiciary, whether it was what was happening in the stadium in Chile, a whole raft of issues of the day. And so we had large production efforts with regard to the paper that was to be put out during that time, the press releases, the calls to be made to the members who were coming, the identification of the members as they came into the conference, which was part of my responsibility. And then midway through I was moved in to the inner office to back up the senator's personal secretary and to work for his administrative assistant.

BW: And with the Humphrey-Muskie campaign, any outstanding moments from that experience that would be of interest?

PS: I think just meeting President Hubert Humphrey and Senator Muskie after spending countless numbers of nights after work working tirelessly for their election was special. And probably the 1968 Convention, that to me was thrilling. For some people I guess it was kind of scary because of the activities going on at that time, but for me, it was my first convention, so I walked into that convention hall and I absolutely couldn't believe my eyes. And of course I had joined the Humphrey-Muskie team and Senator Hughes was a McCarthy person, so that was an interesting dynamic in the delegation, and all of what went on at that time of course was a piece of history. Peter, Paul and Mary – those interested in forming a third party came back to my hotel after the convention to discuss that possibility.

BW: And after the nomination of Vice President Mondale, were you then based here in Washington at the headquarters?

PS: I was not in the headquarters, I was at Winston & Strawn with the campaign chairman, James Johnson, but I, also traveled to Maine. I went to New Hampshire on little forays to help there, and I worked with Jim Tierney and Pat Eltman and others in Maine, Chuck Campion in New Hampshire with now Senator Jeanne Shaheen, and then was able to go to Iowa and work in the Iowa caucuses for Mr. Mondale. And after the Convention, I started scheduling, but then a larger contingent of scheduling apparatus ensued after his nomination, so I took care of our congressional members and our contributory people, to ensure that everything was going forward smoothly.

BW: So that was based here.

PS: That was here, which gives me relationships today with the members and business people who were our co-chairs and so forth.

BW: When did you and Martha Pope first have contact?

PS: I think it was somewhere around November, December of '88.

BW: In what circumstance?

PS: Well, actually I knew Martha before because Martha had worked for Senator Culver, on one of his subcommittees, Environmental Subcommittee. I knew her then, and felt comfortable calling her. She responded positively, and I joined the Senator's staff. I had other people who knew Senator Mitchell who approached him on my behalf as well.

BW: And do you recollect the first time you met the senator himself?

PS: I met him actually at the celebratory event for his majority leadership. The Dunfey family from New Hampshire, who are a great Irish political/philanthropic family in the northeast, invited me to join them at the event and introduced me. And I believe that was probably the first time I met him.

BW: And that was an event that occurred here.

PS: In Washington.

BW: And was that before you'd gone on staff, or?

PS: Yes, yes.

BW: Okay, all right. And again, what was your position when you joined the staff?

PS: Well at the outset I was, a staff assistant I guess you'd say, but I was Executive Assistant for Senator Mitchell when I took over Gayle's job after her elevation to Postmistress of the Senate.

BW: And how long after you came on board?

PS: Three months, roughly. And they felt comfortable moving me in there, because I had the experience and the background to do such a job, and I had what I would immodestly say was the political acumen, and the interest and enthusiasm for the job. I know how to take care of people. I think it's really, really important that people feel that you care about them. And if a member is representing a state, a party, a nation, basically, his or her staff need to respond.

BW: So give me a detailed description of what your role was, your responsibilities.

PS: Well I scheduled Senator Mitchell, so I scheduled him for his appointments here and around the country, and I worked with Diane Smith who handled his Maine schedule, to ensure he met his Maine obligations when he went home. We had invitations to speak all over the country, we had invitations to Democratic Party events, and in the Democratic Senatorial

Campaign Committee who needed his attention to go elsewhere around the country for Democratic candidates. We had the Senate schedule, and when you're majority leader you're there and generally on the floor, not all the time, but when there are crucial things happening. At the end of the day, you're around and you're there. You may not be on the floor, but you're close at hand, and so there's that.

And then there were press considerations, because the press want to interview you and are chasing you all over, the Capitol. White House meetings because often you can have your schedule all put together and then all of a sudden there's a White House meeting. When you have huge issues that you're trying to resolve, and so there are many, many meetings, and a lot of times these meetings come at the end of the day, at the end of the evening, in the middle of the morning, and so you just have to scrap your schedule and start over, and then people have to be moved around. And that also means that you need to take care of your constituency, you have to take care of them delicately because the last thing you want is for them to feel that they're sort of second choice, which is not the case because the office of majority leader demands that those obligations are taken care of at the time. This is a big job of judgment and assessing priorities. I also wrote messages for major events he couldn't attend and of congratulations or condolence, which he generally penned a P.S. to for the latter.

BW: Does this sound like a one person job, or did you have support?

PS: I had great help, yes. Wonderfully capable young women and young men in the leader's office were immensely helpful - Alice Aughtry and Laura Connolly, Ross LeJeunesse, Craig Prentiss - so we tried to divide it out as best we could. And then I was called upon in the course of the day by members who would call and want to get messages to Senator Mitchell, by members of the Cabinet. And then the other part of the scheduling is foreign leaders, because most every foreign leader wants to come and meet the majority leader in the Senate and the Speaker of the House and the appropriators and the President of course, the Vice President, Secretary of Defense, so we had to work these leaders in as well.

BW: From a logistics standpoint, how much were you sort of the self-sufficient gatekeeper, and how often did you confer either with the senator himself or someone else and say, should he be doing this, or shouldn't he be doing this—the floor staff or rather secretary to the majority?

PS: Well we had a weekly meeting, generally Monday morning, where we fleshed out the week, where everybody spoke up, the legislative people, the press people, the Secretary of the Senate's office, the floor staff or rather Secretary to the Majority Marty Paone, or Abby Saffold at the outset, who would say, "this is when we're going to need Senator Mitchell," someone else would say, "I think he's going to give a floor speech at this time." Diane Dewhirst would always have ninety-five press people who wanted interviews, and so we had to balance all those needs. And once we put the schedule together, and the Maine schedule as well with Diane Smith, once that was achieved then I had to implement it. And I had a lot of latitude, but I'm a consultative person, and chiefs of staff, Martha Pope at one point, John Hilley at another, they all had to be consulted, and of course I'd always consult Abby and later on Marty, because we needed to

know what was happening in the Senate and what the push-pulls were going to be for the day on the floor of the Senate.

BW: Now at that Monday meeting, the senator was not present.

PS: No, not generally, no, it was staff.

BW: So where would his input in terms of what I want to do this week -?

PS: I would meet with him and if there were additions at the end of the day I would pick one or two things that, really needed to be resolved, and I sat with him probably once a week or so to do invitations. I generally knew when he would be able to accommodate certain invitations. If we had an invitation in the middle of the week to go somewhere out of town, and he had a full schedule, then I knew that I could reject it. I tried to be sensitive to people's needs, particularly in universities or wherever, because they needed to get another speaker and they would prefer having an answer than stringing them out. So he was a full partner in that, and we brought a lot of people into the process, and it was a very bipartisan scheduling operation, and I think that generally people were pretty happy with him around Washington, Maine and the rest of the country.

And the one thing that I think I always knew, and others would perhaps not agree with me, was there were eight or ten or twelve or fifteen people that he was going to see around town, who if they didn't get in would say something to him at an event, he would agree to it and so you might as well just put them on the schedule at the outset. We tried it the other way, and then we'd have to add them on.

BW: On average, how much did your Monday morning schedule that evolved resemble what actually happened when you looked back on Friday at the week?

PS: Well, Mondays were no votes days in a lot of instances, because it was the beginning of the week and a lot of times votes are deferred until later in the day or the next day, so the busy times were generally Tuesdays and Thursdays. Well, sometimes Wednesday as well, the middle part of the week, because everything was packed into that part of the week. There was a party caucus on Tuesday, a policy lunch on Thursday, and so those were kind of the bookends, because they would start at twelve-thirty and generally end at two-ish, followed by a press conference afterwards on caucus day. So we tended to do the meetings with constituents in the sort of 3:30 to six range if we could, sometimes in the mid morning.

BW: Did Gayle Cory help you out sort of get your sea legs here; I mean were you calling her after she left to go to the post -?

PS: She was very helpful, but she had a full-time job. She really helped with the identification of friends, because that was the one missing link for me not knowing the Maine relationships. And with every new member you have to get to know the ten or fifteen or twenty

people that they have closely interacted with over the years and then the relationships with the business community and the Maine delegation as well.

And I think a lot of this job is a judgment call, there are a lot of judgment calls -when do you interrupt, when do you go to the floor to pull him off, because you always have calls from the President of the United States, members of Congress, Cabinet members, and sometimes he's in the middle of a floor debate. By the time we finished the first year or so, I pretty much knew when to interrupt and when not. And the members became comfortable enough to call and say, "Will you tell Senator Mitchell such and such?" And so there has to be a kind of judiciousness about when to interrupt and when to go to the floor, or to interrupt a meeting.

And there are the times to respect members who have served before you. I remember a time when Senator Pell came in, and Senator Pell was the chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee. He was from Rhode Island, and he had Senator John Pastore with him. And of course for me, having been born in Rhode Island and Italian, Senator Pastore was kind of this sweet little idol and a wonderful man, and I remember his fiery speech at the '60 convention. Senator Pell wanted to bring him in to see Senator Mitchell. And Senator Mitchell was in the midst of a meeting with several members from the northeast. I believe Senator Kennedy was in there, Senator Dodd, Senator Moynihan, and so I was probably the only one in the office who knew who Senator Pastore was.

But I went in and just slipped him a note and he said, "Oh, bring John in." Pretty soon there was this great amount of laughter ensuing and it was wonderful for Senator Pell and Senator Pastore I think, to have that moment. And you know, those are the things you *can* do, but you have to be really careful about it.

BW: Was there much carryover on the staff from Byrd's majority office, or were most of the people, in your impression, most of the people were new hires, or coming from Mitchell's own -
?

PS: I think so, I don't recall except perhaps for the floor staff. I think Abby, I'd have to get back to you, I don't honestly know. Kathy would have been there. It was a mix of staff and new hires. Abby was a solid advisor and knew the members so well having managed the floor.

BW: You're talking about the delicacy of when to interrupt him and so forth, were there some times when you made a blunder in that area, or scheduled him to be in two places at the same time or anything?

PS: Oh, I think more of it was things getting too tight. I probably had at times been a little over zealous in scheduling too many people. Then we'd have these moments when we'd all sit down and say, okay we're not going to do x, y, z and then that would slip a little bit too, but by and large I don't think there were any huge blunders.

BW: What about some other high points that you recall?

PS: Well, I think I remember Brent Scowcroft, the National Security advisor calling, I believe it was in the evening, and I felt sure, having followed what was happening in our political dialogue and with the administration, that we were about to go to war, Desert Storm, and I remember writing that on the scheduling book. Senator Mitchell of course would not divulge this, because he wasn't at liberty to do so – well, he may have been, but he would not, and I would not have asked him. But I think when you really pay attention to what goes on around you, those are the kinds of things you can figure out. And I would never have left that office that night until things had gelled and there was a lot of activity swirling around and, rather fascinating.

I think all the budget negotiations that went on, I want to say '94, I'm not sure, I would have to get back to you, in our back room for a while, and then transferred to Andrew's Air Force Base. And I think with the Clean Air Act which we negotiated in our back room, Senator Mitchell's dogged determination to get a resolution of a bill was I think amazing to some people. It would be three o'clock in the morning, and he'd still be going strong, and people would say, "Is he still going on?" And, "Yes." He was very, very focused and very inclusive, and when there were tough decisions to be made and efforts to be hammered out, Senator Mitchell was just such a leader, and he tried so hard to bring everybody into the fold on both sides of the aisle.

And I think it was wonderful to watch him with his delegation. He and Senator Cohen have a particularly warm relationship, Senator Snowe [who was Representative Snowe at the time] and the other members of the delegation. And then the New Hampshire delegation, because of course Portsmouth Naval Shipyard was part of all the discussions and need for attention. And the other thing about him is he was willing to share the credit, and that was especially heart warming, actually, a nice quality about Senator Mitchell.

BW: When he had his late night sessions, was the expectation that the whole staff would remain there, or -?

PS: Whoever was needed. Senator Mitchell was fine if you had a phone and you were accessible, unless you were involved in the absolute writing or rewrite of whatever was going on or there was a huge decision to be made. He was comfortable with allowing people who had families to go home, but to be available. And I think the one thing he insisted upon was that he wanted you there if it was necessary, and he didn't really want to have to find you if you were in the complex.

Staff has a responsibility to be judicious and to know when they need to be around as well, and staff people on Capitol Hill work really, really hard. I think few people understand how very hard they work. And I can remember at one point we had one of the Maine reporters following us around, kind of a day in the life of, he would come at eight o'clock in the morning and we'd be there, and he'd be there however long it took us at the end of the day we'd still be there, sometimes in the a.m. hours at the end of a session, and I think it was an eye opener for him.

I think it was exciting to have the foreign visitors come. It was very thrilling, to have a President Hosni Mubarak from Egypt or Violeta Chamorro from Nicaragua, Corazon Aquino, and the Israelis, Mr. Peres, and Nelson Mandela from South Africa was a particular thrill for all of us.

BW: Were there many Hollywood contingents coming in, like there seem to be quite a bit today.

PS: It's hard for me to separate out the years here, but I do recall Whoopi Goldberg and Ted Danson. I took Whoopi Goldberg to the Senate gallery and she just said, "How do you keep from just like wanting to punch them out?" And Ted Danson, I can remember asking him, he was a big "oceans" guy, and I said, "Why?" And he said, "Because I want my kids to have the same opportunity to enjoy the water and have it to be clean as I [did]."

And we had many nice opportunities to go to the White House, and one of the lovely things that I think was the brainchild of Mary McAleney, Senator Mitchell's Chief of Staff in the Senate office, was that some of the young people who maybe didn't have all the opportunities that some of the rest of us had would have an opportunity to go down to the White House and be around President Clinton, shake hands with him. So our kids at the front desk and some of the young people who worked in our Senate office had the opportunity to go down with him, because there was generally a White House meeting every week, sometimes a couple times a week, and he was okay with this arrangement and they would ride along and be totally thrilled.

BW: So I was going to ask you, what words would you use to describe sort of the ambiance of the majority leader's office, what kind of a place was it?

PS: Warm, warm and friendly. Well it was hectic, always hectic because legislative people, didn't have a floor pass and still needed to be on hand for the legislative efforts of their members would kind of hang out in the leader's office. I had an office in the back which led out to the balcony overlooking the west front of the Capitol, down the Mall, and I had a couch and a couple of chairs and a phone, so many of them wanted to come use those, as did the members. So there were a lot of really lovely relationships that grew out of that as well, because when they were waiting for the leader we'd sit and chat. And the staff people would be out and they'd be phoning, and sometimes there'd be meetings and the members would come into the office and have their staff just in the front room, sitting there meeting.

But it was very exciting in some ways for the Maine people as well, because if they had to wait for Senator Mitchell because something happened in between, then there was all this color going on, whether it was a foreign visitor or whether it was just one of the members whom they idolized, like Senator Kennedy, and it was warm. And we tried to share, I mean a lot of times there were late night pizzas and so forth and we would share with the other staff people who were around and working on legislative efforts. But I think we did a really good job of taking care of people and making people feel welcome, and that the leader's office was not a place where those who were not in leadership couldn't come, everybody was welcome, and this was kind of their office as well.

And in the same way, I think we made a huge effort to, in terms of the Senate staff and the joint leader's staff to integrate, to have events, to bring them in each week so that everybody was included in what was going on in the course of the day, so everybody saw Senator Mitchell. The legislative people who were engaged in a particular effort were the people who came to the meetings, and so everybody was included. And then Senator Mitchell would periodically have lunch with the interns, so they all had an opportunity to visit with him.

BW: Did he spend much time in his personal office or was he -?

PS: Oh yes, oh, in the personal office, not as much. He tried but it's very difficult, because you really have to be on hand because *anything* can happen, a member could be out there blasting you, and you need to be on hand to go out and set the record straight on the floor. So it's just kind of a necessity of being leader.

BW: So was there a kind of rivalry between the two offices, or not?

PS: No, no-no, no-no, I think we all made a very concerted effort to integrate and everybody was important.

BW: When Senator Mitchell headed out to National Airport for the flight home for the weekend, how did the ambience in the office change?

PS: Oh, it was pretty chaotic. Everybody tried, you always try to be organized, and there was always a briefing book, and to the extent possible you did it early, but everybody is updating memos at the last minute when things have happened. So he was a flexible person, so if he wanted the information but if you needed to fax it to Maine, assuming that it would be there on time, he was fine with that.

He was a very quick study. I could go in and he'd be in the most serious of meetings, and there'd be a Maine press release that had to be signed off on, which he wanted to do, and I would come slip him a note that we had a deadline. He'd look at it, he would read it, he would edit it, and go right back to what he was doing. He had such a great mind, just totally focused.

And I think all that judicial experience in his life, the attorney in him was always with him. I had a member tell me that not too long ago, and he said, "I'm a prosecutor, the devil is in the details," and Senator Mitchell was like that. He focused and he [knew] every little thing, and you didn't want to tell him you knew something if you didn't, because he would catch you on it every time because he knew, he just knew.

And he was a loyal, good person. He was a kind person. He loved little children, the little children that would come in, and he had a great sense of humor, and of course when he was around all the wonderful raconteurs in our Senate body, he was even better and would just be hilarious. And he was sympathetic. If someone had died, he wouldn't put off the phone call. He

would make that phone call, he would write that note right away and be just a beautiful person about it. I remember when Governor McKernan's son died suddenly in a sports situation, and he was just extremely empathetic and solicitous of Senator Snowe and the governor. What else can I say about him, he was loyal, he was steady, he had a great respect for the elder members of the body, and for anyone who had gone before him and Governor Brennan who'd appointed him. He continued to be extremely loyal to him.

BW: What about his treatment of women, any thoughts?

PS: Oh, we had women in high positions. When you think about it, we had a chief of staff, press secretary, women in many of our legislative efforts, and as head of our Senate office, scheduling, I mean the floor staff, everywhere, he was tremendous that way.

BW: Was that unusual for the time?

PS: It was coming, it was coming. It's better today than it was then, obviously, because we have many more female senators which changed the dynamic a lot in the Senate, but he certainly was out front in that regard. The other thing, he was extremely close to his family and his daughter, his brothers, his sister. He was particularly solicitous of his sister, but also his brothers. And they were mad sports fans, and whether it was final-four or Superbowl they all wanted to go, and he loved helping get them there. He followed sports constantly. And he loved the arts. He was a lover of the opera.

BW: Did family members come visit him in Washington a lot?

PS: Oh yes, they came, because a lot of times he would go to Florida, because they had an apartment there, and so on the way down the brothers would come and stay here in Washington. And he was extremely close to them. They all would get together, not all the time because he was traveling a lot.

I guess we should also talk about Northern Ireland because he's just revered there as well for his efforts on the peace process, and I think that probably that effort and that in the Middle East as well, with his efforts both in the Clinton administration and now in the Obama administration were important for the country. And he's the perfect person for that, because he knows how to bring people together to resolve a situation. And he does conflict resolution extremely well, as he's patient and tenacious. He was also very close to those on the Task Force for Lebanon, as peace there was important to him because of his Lebanese heritage.

I think the Senate was a good laboratory, if you will, for that. And then of course his efforts in terms of major league baseball, in terms of the Olympics, he's just highly regarded. And if you mention that you've worked for George Mitchell, it's like people idolize him. In the Republican community of course he would be a worthy adversary. And he wasn't afraid to go out and take the hits. Yes, he could be out there alone on the floor if need be. And I think – what else can I say?

And his ethnicity, that was also something that worked into his life. His father was Irish and adopted by Lebanese, and so both of those parts of him, and his mother who was Lebanese, so he worked with the Task Force for Lebanon, he joined in efforts there, and he certainly, his Irish ancestry was manifested in what he did for Northern Ireland.

BW: Seeing fellow members go in and out of his office, who would you say were probably ones that were his pals, or his closest confidantes among the membership?

PS: Oh, he loved, obviously everybody loved Senator Kennedy, and he certainly did, but I think as well Senator Sarbanes and Senator Sasser were close friends whom he often had dinner with at the end of the day. But there were, I'd have to have a list in front of me, but those are the ones that come to mind.

BW: He, I think I'm right on this, he announced his retirement in May of '94, what was that like, and what was it like between May and the following January when he was still functioning as the majority leader?

PS: Well, we were all saddened by that, because he was such a dynamic leader and someone whom we respected and loved, and felt close to, but we understood that he needed to do this personally. There comes a time when I think members decide what their personal happiness is, when to sort of grab on to that star, if you will. And I think he was happily married, was he married at this time?

BW: I'm not quite sure when that date was, but was Heather in and out of the office, I mean did you see much of her?

PS: No, no-no, that was, that was a surprise, I did not know, *I* did not know. But he did tell me before it was out in the papers, and I was extremely happy for him. And I think you also decide when your economic viability is, too, so there's some of that, but that happens in life.

BW: Did the office pace or ambiance change much after his announcement?

PS: No, I think most everybody stayed around till the end. That's what happens on Capitol Hill. Unless there's some unbelievable opportunity, most staff people who are sort of invested in their member and the legislative efforts that have taken place stay, out of just extreme loyalty. I think it is important in many ways, because you had to pack up the office, which is a pretty difficult circumstance, and separate out what other people need for archives and so forth, so that's a hard thing, and it's Christmastime and everybody is like emotional. It was emotional for all of us. When he brought us all together and told us, I think that said a lot about him.

BW: What was the final goodbye like, how was it handled? Or was there one?

PS: Gosh, I think we must have had a party of some sort. I guess I'd have to get back to you.

And the other thing, for those who have autographed pictures, he signed those pictures. He would sit at night after the end of the day and wind up with just a boatload of pictures, and he would sign every one of them.

BW: Now, did you stay around then for the transition to Daschle as -?

PS: I started with Senator Daschle right away, because other members, including Senator Mitchell, had talked to him and he at one point said, "I want you to come and work for me."

BW: So describe what that transition was like.

PS: Well, that was different because then there was another part of the office I was in the Capitol, which was not the fancy leader's office, but in retrospect was fine. I was in and out of the Leader's office all the time. My role eventually developed and I handled nominations for Senator Daschle. This was a very interesting assignment. I had to find people for positions in government, such as the SEC, the FCC, the FTC Commissioner, major agencies of government, and that allowed me then to consult with Senate offices, with committee staff, on behalf of their members, the House staff, and the leader's office, the Speaker's office, the White House, so that was a very satisfying mission. And what Senator Daschle tried to do was to diversify those boards and commissions, and I made every effort to implement his wishes.

And then I was a resource I think for others relative to people around town and around the country, so I tried to help whenever I could there. And then I attended the Democratic Policy lunches every week with a good number of the members, some thirty, forty members, and then we'd always have speakers of some sort, whether it was the president of Starbucks or the ambassadors from the newly minted republics, and I also sat in on the outreach meetings with the constituency groups and the members. So then it gives you an understanding of what's happening downtown around the world as to what the push-pulls are in terms of the legislative efforts.

And Senator Daschle was a wonderful person with whom to work, and of course I had known him actually as a staff person in the early days, because he worked with Senator Abourezk when I was working for Senator Hughes. So, he's a very warm and gifted person, too, so I was thrilled to have the opportunity to work with him as well.

BW: Was it obvious to you that Senator Mitchell was priming Senator Daschle for the leadership role?

PS: Oh, I think he gave him the Policy Committee at one point, so I think he recognized the talent there. But then I think he had to stay out of that race then eventually, because Senator Dodd was also in that race, who was a friend. It worked out the way it was supposed to and they both flourished in their respective Senate roles.

BW: And my recollection was, the expectation was that Senator Sasser was really in line.

PS: Right, he was in there and -

BW: Was defeated.

PS: Yes, in the end it was, that's right, in the end it was Senator Daschle. He knew how to count. It was a one vote win.

BW: Have you had many contacts with Senator Mitchell since -

PS: A few, not a lot. He travels a lot, but I try to keep up with him and send him cards and notes when I run into people. I had seen, Ambassador Christopher Hill, not too long ago, at a New Zealand-American Business Council dinner, and when I was introduced as having worked for Senator Mitchell he said, oh, that he recalled being in White House at one point and being in the same room with Secretary Cohen, well Senator Cohen, and himself and Senator Mitchell, all Bowdoin graduates, which was nice. But I stay in touch with the family, too, I try to call them periodically, because they're lovely people and I've actually traveled up there. At one point, my sister and I went up and down Maine. I decided if I was going to work for this member, I had to know what the state was like, so we went from top to bottom and spent an afternoon at China Lake with Barbara and the family, so that was nice. And he was, I think, particularly warm. His sister had taken care of his mother, I'm sure they all did but sometimes it falls on the women to do, so I think he wanted to give back to her, and did in terms of the inaugurals and so forth, and lovely events to which he was invited he included her. She was also a vibrant person interested in politics and a good partner for the evening.

BW: All right. It strikes me that you may have so many memories of instances of being with him and his saying something or doing something, or as you mentioned, his sense of humor. Anything come to mind in particular? I know that's hard to recapture.

PS: Yes, he always did the Chauncey Depew story, but I couldn't, I certainly recall it. I could think about it, but right now it just doesn't come to mind, they come and go.

BW: Well, anything else that we're going to leave unsaid here?

PS: Let's see, oh, we didn't talk about his relationship with the leader, with Senator Dole, and that was a very warm relationship, and I think a trusting relationship. And he had a phone on his desk and they called back and forth, and Senator Dole would come in and if he didn't have the votes he'd say, ah, "I'm having trouble with this one." And I think they trusted one another, and their chiefs of staff trusted each other. They were both women. And so they would bring in those members who had not committed, made up their minds, so they were extremely good at that, at trying to resolve whatever difficulties they had, and it was a nice bond, I think, between the two of them.

BW: Interesting, because they weren't the same kind of personality, but they meshed well.

PS: They did, they did. And Senator Mitchell was very accommodating, and his word was his bond and there was no sneaking behind the back doing double-dealing. I mean, obviously, he just wasn't that kind of person, and so there was a trust there. And I think that's a really important characteristic. And then we had the baseball interviews, with all the baseball commissioner people coming in, and everybody was getting fluttered about that because I think they thought he might be baseball commissioner. And even the Supreme Court, when President Clinton was there. And the other thing, many of us were invited down to the White House, whether it was to the mess or to the President's birthday party, or the signing ceremony for the budget, the administration was very good to include us, and so that was another kind of perk of the office, and because they cared about him, too, they would include us in the White House Christmas party and the July 4th picnic..

BW: Did that happen in the Bush White House as well as the Clinton, or not?

PS: Not as much. We were invited to birthday parties during the Clinton Administration, or the Fourth of July picnic. We were invited to the Christmas ball. It was thrilling, it really was.

BW: So when you set off from Iowa and heading this way, you hadn't -

PS: No idea that this kid from Iowa was going to have this kind of wondrous experience. And Mr. Mondale was a wonderful human being, too, a great, great guy with whom to work. He was very smart, had a sense of and like for history, was an interactive, good person who really cared, as Senator Mitchell did, about the least of these, and making government work for the people. And I think now, it's a different atmosphere from when I started, and we didn't have the filming in the Senate 24/7 news and cable television, and I think that has made a lot of difference. It's both a positive and a negative. I think it's positive in that people are more knowledgeable about their government and what happens because they can turn on their TV and watch. And then the other part of it is, you can also have contentious things happen. Senator Mitchell was a wonderful, wonderful person, and I cherish the time I had with him and the relationship of trust that we built. I wanted him to succeed in every way, and I hope that I had a hand in that success.

BW: Good, do you want to check your notes there, is there anything else we should add?

PS: No, I think we've done it.

BW: Good, thank you very much, did a wonderful interview, yes, indeed, thank you.

PS: Okay, well I appreciate you too, as well.

End of Interview