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George J. Mitchell Oral History Project

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Sharon A. Sudbay
(Interviewer: *Michael Hastings*)

GMOH# 058
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Michael Hastings: The following is a recorded interview of the George J. Mitchell Oral History Project, an activity of Bowdoin College. This interview is being conducted in Portland, Maine, on January 10, 2009, at 11:15 a.m., and the place of the interview is 108 Monument Street, Munjoy Hill. Sharon Sudbay, are you ready to begin?

SS: Yes.

MH: Please state your full name, and then spell your last name.

SS: Sharon Anne Sudbay, S-U-D-B-A-Y

MH: Is that Anne with an 'e' or without an -?

SS: With an 'e,' yes.

MH: Could you give us your date of birth and your place of birth?

SS: October 10, 1958, Portland, Maine. So I turned fifty this year. In Morocco.

MH: We'll get to that later. Can you tell me your mother's full name?

SS: Rita Madonna Joyce Sudbay.

MH: Say it again.

SS: Rita Madonna Joyce Sudbay.

MH: And your father's full name?

SS: Charles Clifford Sudbay, Jr.

MH: Where did your mother begin her days?

SS: She grew up here, she was born in Portland and grew up on Munjoy Hill, and we grew up in the house right next door to where she grew up.

MH: I see. Were her mother and father from this area as well?

SS: Both of them were from Ireland, from Galway County, but they met here in Portland when they came over. My grandmother came over when she was eighteen, out of, it's hard to tell because of birth certificates, and they kind of fudged them all to come over to the country. Her brother was here already, and my grandfather left Ireland when he was probably seventeen or eighteen. When he left, it was the first time he ever had a pair of shoes, so he never wanted to go back to the country.

MH: Were they from the, were those ancestors from Ireland in the, were they city people or country people?

SS: No, they were country people, the Culchies.

MH: What did you call it?

SS: Culchies.

MH: How do you spell that?

SS: I don't know.

MH: County Galway.

SS: County Galway, right. And my grandmother was from a town called Cornamona, and my grandfather was from a town called Recess, and we've been there since then several times and my grandmother always said my grandfather lived up in the mountains, but really, I mean it's about a twenty minute drive.

MH: I see.

SS: But to them, back then maybe -

MH: So your mother was born here?

SS: Hmm-hmm.

MH: And she lived right in the same neighborhood?

SS: Yes, she did.

MH: Did she ever talk about what life was like living here then?

SS: Life for my mother I think was pretty [good], she was the youngest of [eight]. There were four that we knew, one died in World War II, and then she had two siblings who died younger, but she was the youngest. And there was a gap between [children], my grandmother was forty-five when she had my mother, so I think my mother had a very comfortable life growing up. My grandfather worked the longshore. He worked the longshore with Joe Brennan's family, so life for her was good. My grandmother was devastated when my uncle died, and he was sort of the sainted one in the family.

MH: Did she go to schools here on Munjoy Hill?

SS: She went to, I think Shailer for a little while, which is up at the top of the hill, and then she went to Cathedral, so she went to Catholic school, she went to Cathedral High School, graduated from there. She met my father at a club camp.

MH: What is a club camp?

SS: I think back in the '50s they had club camps. I think it was a social thing, and they were up on a lake, two clubs. She was the Horizons and he was the Dukes. He was at Deering High School, and they met in high school and have been married for fifty-one years now.

MH: And they're still living?

SS: Still living, both of them.

MH: Tell me about your dad, and his family.

SS: My father grew up – we're not as close with my father's family so we don't have quite as much information on them – but my father grew up in Portland. He moved around quite a bit. He was very poor growing up. His mother died when he was thirteen, and that was the first year, he remembers it very clearly because it was the year he got a bicycle for Christmas, because he'd never really gotten any Christmas presents. His father was an alcoholic and so he had a tough life growing up. He has a brother, and he basically raised his brother.

MH: His brother is younger than your father?

SS: Younger. And still lives in Portland.

MH: Your father of Irish descent as well?

SS: He's a mixed bag. Nobody really knows where Sudbay comes from, but he has family that has done a family tree and actually they're from one of the same towns way back that I think my grandmother's from, it's from County Galway, so it's a mixed bag.

MH: What did he do after high school? Did he go to, which high school did he go to?

SS: He went to Deering High School.

MH: Deering High.

SS: And he used to skip school. In the late afternoon one of the ladies in the office liked him and used to give him a slip, and he would skip out of school and meet my mother. He was in the navy for a while, and then he worked at this place called Brighton Avenue Pharmacy where he used to make ice cream, and I remember that when I was young, he used to do that. Then he went into the post office and he worked in the post office until he retired.

MH: Where did he work? Right here in town?

SS: In Portland. Down at the main post office.

MH: Franklin Street?

SS: Down on, across from Deering.

MH: Forest?

SS: Forest, across from Deering Oaks.

MH: That same federal building that the Senator had his office -

SS: Yes, where our office was, yes.

MH: Okay, now tell me about your immediate family, your brothers and sisters.

SS: My brothers and sisters? I'm the oldest of four. My brother is next, and we're all two years apart. And then I have my brother Joseph, and my sister Maureen is two years [younger] and my sister Karen is the baby, the youngest.

MH: And do they all, do they all live nearby?

SS: No. Well, Karen, Maureen, and I all own this house together and share the house. We each have an apartment in it. It's a three-unit. And, right here on Munjoy Hill, and my brother lives down in Washington. When we first bought the house my brother was here; Karen was in Washington. They sort of flipped and she moved back and he moved down.

MH: Would you, how would you describe your family? Your relationship with your brothers and sisters.

SS: We actually are very close, we're all very close. There have been times when we haven't

been, but for the most part we're all very tight, and especially living together, it's perfect for me because I don't cook, so I go upstairs because my sisters do cook.

MH: You make a great cup of tea.

SS: Thank you. It's one of the few things I can cook. As you can see this is one of the burn marks from my cooking experience in my floor.

MH: She's pointing to a little brown spot on a linoleum floor.

SS: So - But we're very, very close.

MH: What was growing up like for you, on Munjoy Hill? What was, you know, give us a typical day when you weren't at school, what were you doing?

SS: We were out in the street playing with all our friends. There used to be loads of kids up here on Munjoy Hill. It's not that way anymore. There were a lot of working families up here. We would ride our bikes all over the hill, ride our bikes out to Higgins Beach, which is a good haul, but we were always outside playing.

MH: How long a bike ride is it?

SS: That's probably, I think it's got to be about six or seven miles. And I remember doing that when I was in like sixth grade, but the kids were always just out playing.

MH: How do you get from here to Higgins Beach?

SS: You have to go, now you have to get on the Interstate, go out to Scarborough, South Portland, that way. It's not an easy haul.

MH: With bikes though, you must have gone down Route 1?

SS: I can't remember how we went. I just know we rode our bikes out there.

MH: It was very complicated.

SS: It was, and we did it, and now you would never let anyone in sixth grade ride their bike that far. But we were always, for me, I had a group of friends who were young women, all girls, who were my age and were all were hanging around together, there were I think four or five of us, and we all palled around. My best friend lived across the street, and as I said, her brother actually lived in this apartment when he was first married; her aunt and uncle owned this house. And then my friends the Myhavers lived down on the promenade.

MH: How do you spell that? Myhaver?

SS: M-Y-H-A-V-E-R. They had one of the houses that's right on the Eastern Promenade, and there was a family of twelve kids, and it's now cut up into like four condos, but at the time it was a one family home. So Munjoy Hill, especially when I was in like junior high school, was considered a tough neighborhood. People wouldn't let their kids come up here. There were a lot of post high school kids who hung out on the hill at the monument, on the Eastern Promenade, and especially when we got more towards high school, there were a lot of drugs up here on the hill. Several of the kids that I went to high school with have overdosed. And the guy next door to me growing up, when I think I was in high school, he OD'd one night. So there were a lot of drugs. So it was considered a tough neighborhood, but we never had any problems, ever, ever.

MH: You went to which schools?

SS: I went to Shailer in elementary school up till fourth grade, which was right around the corner from me, so it was all neighborhood schools, Emerson, and Jack Junior; Jack was a junior high school back then, it's now the new Munjoy Hill School. They've torn Jack down and made it into an elementary school. And then I went to Portland High School, graduated from Portland High School and then went to University of New Hampshire.

MH: Okay, you went to UNH.

SS: UNH.

MH: How far away is Portland High School from here? Is that a bus ride, or?

SS: No, we had to walk. We used to get bus tickets to take the bus for free sometimes from friends, but it's a walk. It's not that far. It's about a ten minute walk.

MH: Is it still a high school?

SS: Yes, it is. It's the second oldest high school in the country that's still in existence.

MH: Wow. Okay, so you go to UNH, and what did you do there?

SS: I was undeclared for two years, and then I was a business major for one year, and then my senior year I switched my major to political science and graduated with a bachelor of arts in political science.

MH: What years would you have been at UNH?

SS: Seventy-six to, and I graduated 1980, so I started my freshman year in 1976.

MH: Why the switch to political science?

SS: I loved it because it encompasses everything. I always have a hard time making up my mind. I'm a Libra, so, that's my excuse, but it just encompassed everything that I was interested in. And I had a fabulous, I loved one of my professors, Professor Craig, he was actually the chair of the Democratic State Party in New Hampshire.

MH: What was his first name, do you remember?

SS: Bob. Bob Craig.

MH: Bob Craig, okay.

SS: Bob Craig, he was a great guy – he died a few years ago – but he was a great. I loved my professors. I always found them fascinating. And so I finally realized that those were the classes that I found more fascinating than the business, and they were so dry.

MH: Did you, when you were going to Portland High did you have teachers that were particularly influential? Or that stand out in your -?

SS: There was one teacher who I just loved because she taught me how to think, Barbara Anderson. She was a history teacher, and I just ran into another teacher recently who had seen her. Her class was more about, it wasn't rote, it wasn't memorizing. And I actually got in trouble because when we switched from her class, I didn't get in trouble but, when we switched from her class to the next class, the teacher, who I won't mention his name, he was all memorization of facts, so I was writing my essays, theoretically, and he wanted to know the dates, times, places, who, what, where.

MH: So [Bob] Craig was influential at UNH?

SS: Bob Craig, yes.

MH: Bob Craig, excuse me, Bob Craig. Did your interest in politics start there?

SS: It must have. Actually, I don't think so, because I remember watching, I think it was in 1972, conventions, I watched them from both parties. I remember watching those conventions, every minute of them. It was a big summer because it was the conventions and the Olympics. So I just remember always being fascinated. I remember when we were younger we went out to the airport to see Ed Muskie come off the plane, and we had signs on our bicycles and we were riding around with them on our bicycles, you know, yelling.

MH: That's here in Portland?

SS: Yes, up on Munjoy Hill, yes.

MH: Yes. Okay.

SS: So it was always there, I think I just started realizing it when I went to UNH.

MH: Now you, the former Governor Brennan, is from Munjoy Hill as well.

SS: Yes, he is.

MH: Did you know him when you were growing up?

SS: I didn't know him growing up. My mother did and my grandparents both knew him, because he worked the longshore with my grandfather, so they knew him. I didn't know Governor Brennan, but I've since come to know him quite well.

MH: Now, when you say worked the longshore, describe to me what you mean.

SS: I don't, all I know is they went to the wharfs and -

MH: Unloaded -

SS: They unloaded the steamers as they came in and, and they were union jobs, because I know this one friend of mine's grandfather used to go down, even though he was in his seventies, just to be there so that a non-union guy wouldn't get the job.

MH: So you graduate in 1980 from the University of New Hampshire. What did you decide to do then?

SS: Well, when I came back to Portland, all through high school and college I worked at the telephone company, I was an operator. When people dialed zero, I would be on the other end.

MH: Really? Where was that? Where you did that?

SS: Forty-five Forest Avenue. It was a cord board back then. And then we moved over to - yes, you had to plug it in. I actually remember -

MH: Flip the switch, the switches, yes.

SS: I remember actually having a person-to-person call one time from George Mitchell; I think he must have been the U.S. attorney at that point.

MH: Okay.

SS: And then we went over, yes, from that point, then it went to computer, which is very sad because there were a lot of women who had been there for years and years and years working as operators on the cord board. And when it came to the computers, oh, they had such a struggle to

learn it, and all that you did was sit there at your terminal and the calls would come in and you just pushed a few buttons and moved on. It was interesting to watch them, but most of them stayed on.

MH: So, how many years did you do this?

SS: I started my junior year in high school, worked all through college, and then when I left college I came back and I worked that summer.

MH: So you say you worked on the cord board through college. You mean you were commuting down to Durham?

SS: No, no, no. I'm sorry. In the summers, and when I came home on Christmas holiday.

MH: Okay.

SS: And it was a job, it was there every summer for me, and it was also a job that paid really well.

MH: Really.

SS: Really well, yes. So when I came back I worked at the phone company, and it was 1980, so I worked at the phone company and then I volunteered on Harold Pachios' campaign for Congress.

MH: But let me go back a bit, what was it like working in the telephone thing?

SS: I hated every minute of it.

MH: Was it all women?

SS: It was all women. It was women supervisors, woman chief operator. It was a miserable time.

MH: Were you all in one room?

SS: The first place was a huge room, and there were two sides to it and there was a bank of, the, what you see on TV. There were two banks of those and they went around the side, and you sat on high chairs and you had your head set on and you plugged in, a call would come, you'd plug in. And the first year I worked there I worked days, and then I realized the trick is to work nights and split shifts, because then you can go to the beach during the day.

MH: I see.

SS: And you also got more money at night, and it was less, six hours per eight-hour day, with a half hour lunch, so it was better. So I learned the tricks.

MH: Did you ever get angry at people that are on the other line?

SS: Oh, yes, it was awful. People would be really mean, and you'd want to be mean, but you had to be careful because you never knew if they were listening in, if they were doing one of your reviews or something.

MH: So you go from the telephone company to working on -

SS: Can I just tell you one of my biggest fears in life?

MH: Yes, oh yes.

SS: Was always, I don't know if you remember this, back at *Portland Press Herald*, my family always makes fun of me, the *Portland Press Herald* used to put in the obituaries, when they died they used to put what your job was. I think somebody said it was Harold Pachios who started that, and I was always afraid that mine was going to say 'telephone operator,' because you always knew that those telephone operators had never married, were leaving all their money to their nieces and nephews. So I was always worried that that's what it was going to say, but they've changed that now. That was always one of my big fears. That when I died, it was going to say: Sharon Sudbay, telephone operator.

MH: 'Telephone operator.'

SS: Yes.

MH: Now, tell me about this first campaign.

SS: The Mitchell campaign in 19 -?

MH: No, no, that you said, Pachios.

SS: Oh, well that I volunteered on Harold Pachios' campaign and Mary Ann Lynch ran the campaign.

MH: And what was he running for?

SS: He was running for Congress against David Emery. And I found Harold to be fascinating. He was so smart, and -

MH: How did you meet him?

SS: I wanted to work on a campaign because I had graduated with a degree in political science, so I called up and asked if they needed volunteers. And I went down and, Mary Ann had me, they needed somebody to do their FEC reports, so that's what she started having me do. And that's how I got involved in politics.

MH: What year was that?

SS: Nineteen eighty.

MH: Nineteen eighty, okay. Mary Ann Lynch.

SS: Mary Ann Lynch. Yes. Do you know Mary Ann?

MH: I don't.

SS: She's back up doing some lobbying in Augusta.

MH: And so your role was, and how much time did you put into that?

SS: I had time because I was working the shifts, and at that point some of them were overnight shifts so besides working at the phone company, that's what I did, was volunteering.

MH: I see. Was it mostly inside the office or?

SS: Yes, it was mostly inside. It was a lot of the FEC reporting, and Harold had somebody who drove him around but that's where I first met Lisa, at the time Lisa Cohen, [now] Lisa Gorman, and Tom Saturley, and Tony Buxton, all those folks, and Harold. And I didn't start till, I think September, but I put in a lot of time from September to November.

MH: Right.

SS: Mary Ann had been working for Joe Brennan and left to run Harold's campaign.

MH: I see.

SS: And she was fabulous. She's a great person.

MH: And so what did you do after that was over?

SS: After that?

MH: Emery beat Harold Pachios.

SS: Emery beat Harold Pachios, and I went back to working at the phone company. And I

was applying, actually, no, what I did was, after that, Mary Ann went back to the governor's office and they needed someone to coordinate a fund raiser for Joe Brennan that Ted Kennedy was coming up to, and it was in March of that next year, in 1981. So Mary Ann asked if I would do it, so that's the point where I really got to meet Governor Brennan, David Redmond, Kirk Studstrup.

MH: Now a judge.

SS: Now a judge. That's when I started to meet the Brennan people.

MH: I see, okay. And how many fund raisers do you think you've organized since then?

SS: Oh man, lets see. Big ones, you know -

MH: That was really more of a rhetorical question.

SS: A lot. A lot.

MH: Wow. You were back working for the phone company, organizing fund raisers -

SS: Actually, at that point I don't think I was working for the phone company, I was working strictly for the Brennan campaign.

MH: I see.

SS: So, yes, because he was, they were getting ready for the 1982 race.

MH: Right.

SS: So I worked on that fund raiser, and it was a fun time, it was, and I met a lot of people.

MH: Was that, tell me about that event, when Kennedy came to Maine.

SS: It was held at, I want to say Verrillo's, and it was a big deal back then, that was right after Ted had run against Jimmy Carter for the presidency, and Joe Brennan had supported Ted, so he came up to do this fund raiser, and it was a big deal. And that's where I started learning, started hearing the names of the people who now I've known for a long time.

MH: Are the, in Portland, there's a Democratic Committee for Portland.

SS: Hmm-hmm.

MH: Have you been involved in that at all?

SS: Some, off and on, not a lot recently, I went to some of their meetings. There's also a Cumberland County Committee meeting, and I was never a member of that but I've been to some of their meetings.

MH: I see. So, the next campaign?

SS: The next campaign in, I got a call from Joe Grandmaison who was helping put together the George Mitchell campaign, and I went and met with him.

MH: Now, he's from New Hampshire.

SS: He's from New Hampshire, he knows Bob Craig, and -

MH: Now, tell, tell -

SS: I have to say exactly how, John Diamond, I had met John Diamond who was a state rep at the time. I met him working on the Brennan event, and I think he knew that I had done all the reports and that's what they were looking, really, for someone to do financial reports. So he called, I think he suggested, he was working for Mitchell at the time and he suggested they call me down here, because they were looking for someone to do the finances.

MH: I see. Tell me, and for the benefit of whoever reads or listens to these recordings, tell me about Joe Grandmaison.

SS: Joe Grandmaison was, as everybody is in politics, a character. He had a lot of experience, it sounded like he did. He was very involved in New Hampshire politics. I'm not sure how he got hooked up with the Mitchell campaign but he was sort of their political thought process, I think at that time. He was giving them advice on how to set up and how to get established. He's the person who hired me to work on the Mitchell campaign, that was I think like the end of August, beginning of September of 1981. But we clicked immediately, because we talked about UNH and all those folks.

MH: Did they have an office?

SS: Did we? We opened an office at the corner of Congress and High Street, which at the time was not a good neighborhood. There were a lot of hookers that hung around, that was where if you wanted -

MH: That's near the museum, right?

SS: It's near the museum, and I can't, was the museum there then?

MH: I don't know.

SS: I can't remember now.

MH: It's now near the museum.

SS: It's now near the museum, but there was a porn movie theater across the street, and there was a building that had a Dunkin' Donuts, and that's where you knew in Portland, if you wanted a hooker that's where you went. So that was the neighborhood that the campaign office was in. So when you told people, I always told people I worked on the corner of Congress and High, because everyone knew what that meant. That was our campaign office.

MH: Oh, dear.

SS: Yes, it was a great building. It was above Pearl Optical. It was a great building.

MH: And did that remain the campaign office for the duration of the -

SS: For the '82 campaign. That was the prime office. That's where Larry ended up working out of.

MH: Larry Benoit.

SS: Larry Benoit, when he came over to work on the campaign. When I joined it was I think John Diamond, David Lemoine, and Mark [Stevens]; I can't remember Mark's last name now. He lives around here, his family lives around here, and they were part of the computer folks out in Falmouth.

MH: Right, I can't recall his name either. But he has been mentioned by -

SS: Yes, and David and Mark were going around the state collecting voter lists. They actually had a photocopier that they had in their car, and they went to each town office, and photocopied the voter list, and then they were entering all those into the computer. That was, I think, probably one of the first computerized elections in the state.

MH: And so you were in the office every day?

SS: I was in the office every day.

MH: Working, and then, were you there, you were there before Larry came?

SS: Before Larry came, yes.

MH: So your, and your job was largely to keep track of any donations.

SS: Finances, right.

MH: I see.

SS: And administrative.

MH: What was that like, I mean, was it a difficult job keeping up with the SCC requirements?

SS: FEC.

MH: FEC, excuse me.

SS: We didn't have to do the SCC.

MH: No, no.

SS: No, it wasn't. Once we started learning and we had all the manuals and stuff, and there were folks down in Washington we could call at the DSCC, but back then we didn't have any computers, it was all done by hand. So we kept all the records, everybody had a sheet of paper, we wrote all the contributions by hand, and then we had to type up the FEC reports. It's all done online, now. I mean, it's amazing. We had to track the primary and the general contributions, but back then I think it was a thousand for the primary, a thousand for the general for individuals, five thousand for PACs.

MH: That was the limit.

SS: Limits, five thousand for PACs.

MH: Did people, did many people give it all in one shot or were there -

SS: There were a few, yes, there were some, yes, there were.

MH: Much contact with George Mitchell during this period? Was he in there much, or?

SS: I think he was mostly in Washington at that point. Not a lot, I don't think, not at that point. When the campaign started heating up in '82 is when he started spending more time up here. The staff started growing, we had offices statewide. And it was also, at the top of the ticket was, Joe Brennan was running for governor, reelection, and then down here there was a big primary that year for Congress, and John Kerry won the primary, and was the congressional nominee for the 1st District, for the Democrats.

MH: So he was running against David Emery in 19-, no -

SS: George Mitchell was running against David Emery.

MH: In, no, in the 1982, but who was Kerry running against?

SS: He ran against Jock McKernan.

MH: Okay.

SS: So there was a big -

MH: For the 1st District seat.

SS: Right.

MH: That Emery would be vacating.

SS: Right, correct, right. And there was a big coordinated effort among those at the top of the ticket, and with the State House.

MH: Did they share the offices with you, or did they have their own office?

SS: They did some of both. The office that I worked out of was just for George Mitchell's campaign, but we had several coordinated offices all around the state. And we had coordinators in those offices, Neal Allen worked coordinating Cumberland County, Frank Wood did York County, John Diamond was in charge of the northern part of the state.

MH: Did your job ever have you driving the Senator, or - ?

SS: I drove him a few times, but for that campaign David Lemoine was the driver and he was the main person who spent, and I think it was a really smart thing to do to have the same person driving because then they become used to what you need, what you want, what you've got to look for.

MH: If at any time you'd like to take a pause.

SS: Okay, and have a sip of tea.

MH: I can pause this machine, but I usually just let it run.

SS: Okay.

MH: Do you have any stories about the 1982 campaign that you'd like to recall, or, and -

SS: I haven't thought about that campaign. It was a fun campaign because we met tons of people, it was everybody working together. The interesting thing though, one of the things about that campaign is there were Brennan people and there were Mitchell people, and that went back

to the 1974 campaign.

MH: When they were opponents.

SS: When they were opponents in the primary -

MH: For governor.

SS: For governor. And, but one of the things I quickly learned is that people knew if you were a Mitchell person or a Brennan person, and that was important. I had kind of gone back both ways because I had worked on the Brennan fund raiser and then I went over to the Mitchell campaign.

MH: Was it, was it suspicion or competition, or was it -

SS: Well, I think it was more you just recognized. I'm sure there was, for some people there was a little rubbing, but it wasn't suspicion, especially because in 1982 is when everyone worked together, because Brennan and Mitchell were on the ticket.

MH: This is not a trick question, but were there similarities between the way that Joe Brennan and George Mitchell dealt with staff, or were there similarities and differences in the way they conducted campaigns?

SS: A lot of it depends on the people who surround you, and I think that's a reflection of the candidates, and so there were similarities and differences, yes.

MH: Okay.

SS: One of my favorite stories from 1982 is when you and me and Bill Anderson, we were doing visibility, do you remember this?

MH: This was out on the walking street bridge?

SS: On Tukey's Bridge.

MH: Tukey's Bridge. Explain where that is, I'd forgotten all about this.

SS: We were all assigned visibility, which is where you hold all your signs up, and Tukey's Bridge is not too far from here, but it's the main drag for people to get from Portland to Augusta, you have to go under this overpass. And our visibility assignment was standing on the overpass, I can't remember if we started the Friday before the election, I know we did it Monday before the election, and I think it was just the three of us, I can't remember, and we were holding our signs and Bill and I would get all excited and start holding our sign with one hand, and you would keep saying, "Two hands on the sign, two hands on the sign."

MH: I was very concerned that we'd have a sign go through somebody's windshield. As I recall, there was a sidewalk on that bridge.

SS: There was a walkway, and cars didn't go over the bridge there, it was just a walkway, so we were standing on the walkway.

MH: Does it still exist?

SS: No, it's gone, when they changed the Interstate.

MH: Okay.

SS: Yes, unfortunately it's gone. But I just always remember, and I'll say to people every now and then, "Two hands on the sign, two hands on the sign." It's one of those phrases that's always stuck in my head, "Two hands on the sign, Sharon." But there were so many, I mean it was a great experience, 1982. And of course they're all blurring together now, I'm sure that happens to, as you get older.

MH: Did you get down, either during the course of the campaign or afterward, after the Senator became an elected senator, did you ever get down to Washington?

SS: I did. I went down when I started working in the, one of the first times I went down was when he was sworn in, Charlie Jacobs and I drove down to Washington and we went to the swearing-in. I stayed at Charlie's.

MH: What was that like?

SS: Oh, the swearing-in? I remember it was exciting, it was sort of overwhelming. I must have driven, I think I drove down and flew back, because I remember Donny Peters being on the plane flying back. He was one of the Senator's [friends].

MH: Who was Donny Peters?

SS: He's one of the Senator's friends. And he was making little rings for the stewardesses, out of dollar bills. He's a really nice guy.

MH: Where did you stay when you went down there?

SS: I stayed with Charlie.

MH: With Charlie.

SS: Yes, because back then, and then I went to, down to the CRS Seminar, Congressional

Research Seminar, went down there a few times.

MH: Now, had, you had been, you had been offered a job on the staff.

SS: Hmm-hmm, up here in Portland.

MH: When did that happen?

SS: Oh, when I first started, I, the Senator, right after he was elected, he held hearings on Social Security and Medicare all around the state, so I coordinated those. We set up locations all over the state and then sent out invitations and that sort of thing. So that's what I did first, and then when that finished up, I went and worked in the Portland office. At that point it was Larry Benoit, Susie Riegel Rancourt, and Bill Berenson, and then Bill Berenson left shortly, not too long after that.

MH: What did your family think about this, this interest in politics and your, were they surprised, or did they, or intrigued, or think you were, what was their reaction?

SS: I think my mother was especially confused. She couldn't understand why I'd want to leave the phone company to go work for someone who might not win, because when I started working for George Mitchell he was thirty-two points down. So, and then he won and it was a huge deal. But my mother, I think she still is having a hard time understanding that jobs have changed now, and she always thought the phone company was the place to be. And when I started, I actually took a management test for the phone company and never heard anything when I'd come out of college, but then when I went to work on the Brennan campaign, or when I said I was going to leave to work on the Mitchell campaign, the president of New England Telephone in Maine called me in to talk about the results of my management test. It wasn't until I was going to work for George Mitchell that they did anything. Dick Jalkut, that was his name, at the time.

MH: Did you consider these hearings that you set up for the Senator on the subject of Social Security to be a success?

SS: I think so. I think it was very smart on his part, just because he wasn't taking for granted that he was in the Senate, and then so the first thing he did is, he went out all over the state and I think it was just really a smart thing for him to do, and I think it meant a lot to the people who are in the state.

MH: So, did you drive him to those hearings?

SS: I can't remember if David did? I think I drove him to a couple, but I think David did, because I was there setting them up and making sure there was a microphone and that sort of thing.

MH: And where were they held?

SS: I remember one being in Belfast, or Newcastle.

MH: In town halls?

SS: Town halls, churches, those sort of places, all over the state.

MH: What was your role when you were in the office?

SS: When I went into the office I did case work.

MH: What kinds?

SS: Folks who had called in with problems with the federal government, Social Security and VA, a lot of it was steering people to the state or the city, took down issues.

MH: How long were you in the office in Portland?

SS: I started there right after the campaign ended, and I finished up when he left office, so I was there until he left.

MH: So that was basically from 1983 -

SS: To 1994, and then I closed down the campaign. But one of the things I did during that time was, I went back and forth to different campaigns. I was working part-time in the Senate [office], a lot of my service wasn't full time, because I would go work part-time on the campaign, especially when the fund-raising started up.

MH: That would have been for his 1988 -

SS: For his '88, yes.

MH: 'Eighty-eight campaign.

SS: Yes. So probably in 1986 I went maybe like part-time, and then I also left to work on the Brennan campaign in 1990.

MH: And who was Joe Brennan running -?

SS: He was running for governor, and Mary McAleney was the campaign chair, he was running for governor against Jock McKernan.

MH: And was your role in those campaign jobs similar to the one you did in 1982, 1984?

SS: Yes, a lot of it was the financial stuff, and then it became events and field work as well. I've done a lot of field work, political field work, organizing folks to organize folks. [I] set up a lot of get-out-the-vote efforts. And then in '94 I actually left and went to work for Jim Mitchell, when George Mitchell announced that he was leaving [office].

MH: Now, who is Jim Mitchell?

SS: Jim Mitchell is George Mitchell's nephew. He was a friend of mine; he had worked with me on the Joe Brennan campaign. We'd become very good friends and I worked on his [congressional primary race], it was six weeks I think between the time Senator Mitchell announced and the time of the primary, because he announced in March, right? April, May, June, and there was a six or seven way primary for the 2nd Congressional District and Jim was one of the candidates, and he lost that [primary] election to John Baldacci. And then I went back to the Senate office, and then closed down the campaign.

MH: What has been your job since 1995?

SS: Ninety-five? I actually went back to work with Jim Mitchell. He owned a public relations and lobbying firm, actually I think at that point he wasn't the owner, he was the president of a company that was, Public Affairs Group, that was owned by Curtis Thaxter. He asked me to come up and work on some projects and I eventually started working there full-time. So since that time I've worked with Jim Mitchell and so for most of my adult life I've been with a Mitchell. And Jim and I still work together. We worked there from '94 until 2000, Jim worked at Public Affairs Group and then he went out and started his own firm. He had built up Public Affairs Group to a very successful lobbying and public relations, community relations firm, and there were, I think, one, two, three, four, five, six of us, six principals at that point, and staff, like six or seven, and then he left and started his own firm, doing it on his own. And he left in like June. And shortly thereafter, in like November, December, I decided to go out on my own, and he and I have, we have our own businesses, but we partner together on a lot of projects.

MH: Where is his firm located?

SS: In Augusta.

MH: And yours?

SS: In Portland, right here in my house.

MH: Okay.

SS: My apartment.

MH: Tell me, tell me about the kind of clients you have.

SS: One of the first clients that we worked on was, and became a big project, was the Maritimes, the Northeast Pipeline, natural gas pipeline. These folks wanted to build a natural gas pipeline that goes from offshore Nova Scotia, crosses over in Baileyville, Maine, in Washington County and then runs down to Massachusetts. And it was a huge project because most of the state doesn't have natural gas, we have it in Portland, and then there's some in Lewiston, and it was a huge infrastructure project. So that became the main focus of what I worked on, and I worked on that project starting in '95, and today I still work on it.

MH: So when you say you worked on it, be a little more specific. I mean what, what is it that you're trying to accomplish?

SS: What we did is we conducted a large public education program to teach people, because this was a natural gas pipeline that was going to come through and it's an underground pipe that was two hundred and some odd miles of pipe that was going to be placed in people's yards, in right of ways, public utility right of ways, so we went out and educated the public on natural gas, because most of the state was unfamiliar with natural gas. We educated them on the pipeline transmission system, we conducted open houses in all these communities, we went to industry trade association meetings, we brought the folks who worked for Maritimes & Northeast Pipeline into these communities and educated them, the state legislators in the communities, the governor's office, all those folks, worked with all of them to get this pipeline. We didn't need local permitting, because it's a federal project, it was overseen by FERC, so I went from FEC to FERC in -

MH: Federal Energy Regulatory Commission.

SS: Federal Energy, exactly. And so we did a lot of public meetings on that and helped with news releases and packet, information packets, and all that sort of thing. It was a huge project.

MH: To what degree did you have to work with the legislature?

SS: Jim did a lot of the lobbying and a lot of the public education with the legislature. I now do that with him on some other clients. And we work with, Ann Mitchell works with Jim now. Ann is Jim's sister.

MH: Ann.

SS: Ann Mitchell, and so the three of us work together.

MH: I see.

SS: Ann started working at Public Affairs Group and then has also come over to work with Jim.

MH: You mentioned that Portland, and to a lesser degree Lewiston, already had natural gas. Other than those two transmission lines, is this the only one in the state?

SS: Maritimes is a big, an interstate transmission line, and from there local distribution companies are set up to deliver them to your houses, or Maritimes will also deliver to huge industrial users, electric generating facilities. There was a plant that was built actually by the parent company of Maritimes up in Veazie, Maine, and we worked on that project. And so, but at the same time Maritimes was coming in from offshore Nova Scotia, there was another pipeline coming down, Portland Natural Gas Transmission System was building their pipeline coming down, sort of along the New Hampshire border, along the western part of the state. That had been an oil pipeline, but PNGTS owned it and they wanted to convert it into a natural gas pipeline. So there were two projects, and what ended up happening is, the two projects met in Westbrook, and became a joint pipeline from there. So the piece that we were most involved with was Portland to Baileyville.

MH: Okay. Other examples of clients that you feel comfortable to tell me about?

SS: I think that's the big one.

MH: That's the big one.

SS: We've worked on projects with them in other places.

MH: You like the work?

SS: I love the work, yes, I love the work. Yes, I love working with Jim and Ann.

MH: Now there's a Jan Mitchell too, right? Is there a Jan? There's one member of the family, I can't -

SS: Janet, is, Janet -

MH: Who represents some of the Indian tribes I think. No? Another cousin maybe? Jim is the son of which of the brothers?

SS: Robbie. Robbie, and Janet is his mother.

MH: Okay.

SS: And we're best friends, and -

MH: So you've gotten to know more of the family through Jim.

SS: Yes. As I was saying earlier, we went to Morocco, that's where I turned fifty.

MH: Yes, tell me about that.

SS: A friend of our's sister was getting married in Morocco, and Jim and Janet, Ann, Joe Mitchell, another brother, and Aunt Barbara, Barbara Atkins, went to Morocco for the wedding. It was really fun, we had a fabulous time. It was in Marrakesh.

MH: When was that?

SS: That was in October. I was there for my birthday, so October 10th we went, yes. Did I say Ann, Ann Mitchell was there too, yes. So I know a lot of the Mitchells.

MH: Do you ever cross paths with Senator Mitchell?

SS: I actually saw him back in November. I'm on the board of the Boys and Girls Clubs of Greater Portland, and his family's always been very involved in the Boys and Girls Clubs in Waterville. He grew up, spent a lot of time there, and he's told this story I'm sure of Robbie, Jim's father, hired him. That was his first job where he learned about labor and management, up in the Waterville club, and so we're celebrating our 100th anniversary, the Boys and Girls Clubs of Greater Portland, Southern Maine now, the Portland club is a hundred years old, and we asked him to just tape a message for us, and he was happy to do that.

And I've seen him at fund raisers and that sort of thing and he came to another event at the Boys and Girls Clubs when we kicked off our capital campaign about six years ago. I got involved actually in the Boys and Girls Clubs through Bev Sherman, who was a volunteer. I met her in 1982 when she came to volunteer on the Mitchell campaign, and she had just moved up to Maine, and she was a big volunteer on Mitchell, and then on Joe Brennan's campaign she was his chief fund raiser. And then she's been involved in the clubs and she's the one who got me involved. So it there's just all these [connections].

MH: Does Bev Sherman live in Portland?

SS: Yes, she lives in Cape Elizabeth.

MH: Cape Elizabeth.

SS: Yes, she's a really nice woman.

MH: Great.

SS: Yes.

MH: You sound like you lead a very busy life.

SS: Well yes, I keep busy.

MH: Do you, do you socialize with a lot of the staff people that you knew in the -

SS: I don't socialize. Every once in a while a group gets together and we, I'll try to make those, but I don't - I talk with Diane Smith every now and then, Mary McAleney I see. It's not a regular [thing].

MH: What do you think of the various activities that George Mitchell's been involved in since he left the Senate?

SS: I'm very proud of him.

MH: Which, in which regard?

SS: Well of course the Ireland thing is huge because of our family connections. We actually have strong relationships with our families and cousins in Ireland, and they all think he's a saint over there.

MH: Really.

SS: Yes, oh yeah. The fact that I worked for him makes me, takes me up a couple of levels too.

MH: That's wonderful.

SS: Yes, they all think very highly of him over there. And so we followed that very closely. And there was, oh, the Olympic thing I had some, one of my best friends from college did a lot of work on the Olympics. Her company was a big sponsor to the Olympics, so she followed that piece of his career too. She works for John Hancock, and he's spoken at a few of their conferences, and he was speaking in Ireland and I actually was going over there anyway, so Debbie and I connected in Ireland, though I didn't see George over there. He did speak there, and then he talked in Puerto Rico. So she always calls me to give me that update, when he speaks at their conferences.

But the funny thing is when he spoke in, when he taped the message for the Boys and Girls Clubs back in November, and we were talking about this earlier, the question was, "Will you drive him to the airport after he does this?" "Of course I will, of course I'll drive him to the

airport, that's our job."

I've got to tell you my favorite George Mitchell story and it involves Ed Muskie because I did, I would drive him around when he came into Maine. There were different points in the campaign, we hired Jeff Porter, in 1988, to drive him around. Jeff had been an intern in our office but there were still occasionally times when we'd have to drive him. I can't remember what year this was, but I think it was between '82 and '88, '83 and '88, I had to pick up George Mitchell and Ed Muskie at the Blessing of the Fleet in Portland and drive them to the airport. And so I got down there, of course I took my parents' car, because I had a little Chevette.

And so I went and picked them up, we got in the car, and they were hungry and they wanted to go to McDonald's, and this was right after Ed Muskie had had his heart attack. And immediately Ed Muskie got in the front seat and George Mitchell got in the back seat (and so that's why, we were talking earlier, once a staff person, always a staff person). So we drove to McDonald's on St. John's Street and we went to the drive-thru, and Ed Muskie wanted a hamburger with a tomato. And I knew they didn't have tomatoes at McDonald's, but I wasn't going to tell Ed Muskie that. So I put in the order, I said, "Hamburger with tomatoes." They said, "No tomatoes." I said, "I'm sorry sir, there are no tomatoes there." And so he says, "Okay, well I'll just have a hamburger."

So we go up to pay and George Mitchell, from the back seat, starts to hand me a fifty dollar bill, and that's the first time he'd ever handed me money. So I said, and I knew it was going to come to about five bucks, I said, "No thanks, I've got this all right, I'm all set." So we go up and we get it. That was right around the time when they were taking Howard Johnson's off the turnpike, and they were putting in Burger Kings, and they were, so George Mitchell and Ed Muskie were talking about that and comparing it to Jeffersonian democracy. So that's one of my favorite stories.

MH: Oh, dear.

SS: And my other favorite story about driving George Mitchell is, I picked him up at the airport, and he needed some stuff at Shaw's and he put together a little list, and the last thing on the list was: "something chocolate."

MH: He loved chocolate.

SS: He loves chocolate, yes.

MH: We were recording this interview on January the 10th, and in ten more days we're going to have an inauguration of a new president. I understand you're thinking about going down.

SS: I'm going down to the inauguration. My parents and I stood for two hours in the snow at the Portland caucus to get inside the building, and then another two hours once we were in there

– it's a miserable experience – in support of Barack Obama, so my parents and I are going down.

MH: Why was it such a miserable experience?

SS: Oh, it was not coordinated well.

MH: I see.

SS: But that's a whole other issue.

MH: But that's, you must -

SS: I'm not going to get into it.

MH: You have a very high standard, having set up all these.

SS: Exactly, I know how it could have been run, and I know how it wasn't, and I know why. So I was not happy. But we stood in line for Barack Obama, so we're going to the inauguration and standing, probably in the cold, to watch him get sworn in. And I thought, when I went to the 1993 inauguration, it was an incredible experience, because of George Mitchell, and my sister at the time was working at the White House, she was starting at the White House. My sister Karen worked at the DNC, and then her boss, Paul Tully, died in the middle of the campaign in August, and she started working for Ron Brown. She went from the DNC, worked on the transition team for Vernon Jordan, and from there somebody asked her to become Mack McLarty, the president's chief of staff, his assistant.

So between George Mitchell and President Clinton, we were feeling pretty good back then, and so it was an exciting time. We all went down, my whole family was there, and friends, and we stood, actually I had seats behind the podium so I was looking down on Clinton as he spoke. Jim Mitchell and Ann, we were talking about this the other night, we were all there, and you know, with the movie stars, and Mitchell had a [] reception.

MH: You were comparing it with the probable seat you're going to have this time.

SS: We went to the Inaugural Ball, yes. So it'll be a different experience, it's going to be a different experience for everyone. And then, because four years later when I went down to the second Clinton swearing-in, and his theme was 'the bridge to the twenty-first century' and I was standing on it in Virginia, watching the ceremony. It was a lot different, you know, you come down fast in this world. But, oh, my sister actually was starting that day in the White House. My parents left the inauguration and took my cousin over to the White House, and they were there on the first day. So it was pretty - You have so many cool experiences in this world. And so we're going down, we're going to stay with my brother, and it's going to be totally different.

MH: Right.

SS: It will be fun.

MH: Well, I hope you have a good time.

SS: Thank you, because I cry every time Barack Obama comes on TV. I just, I'm so happy, so proud of our country.

MH: I think we're winding down here now, and I want to ask you, are there, is there any story or reflection about George Mitchell that you'd like to share that I haven't asked a question for?

SS: Well those are my two favorite stories, were the time with Ed Muskie, and then the 'something chocolate.' I love that one, I just love that, I think that just says George Mitchell.

MH: Right.

SS: Those were my two favorites.

MH: Sometimes people in these interviews, when you get thinking about it, the thinking continues after the interview's over and you come up with some new thing, 'I, gee, wish I'd told that story.' If any, if you do come up with anything like that, let Andrea L'Hommedieu, the manager of the project know.

SS: I will.

MH: Because we can always have a follow up interview, or we could get you to write it down.

SS: Okay. There are so many, and now they're all kind of melting together, you're right, I am going to start thinking about it.

MH: Right, because this is a way, this is a way to establish for the record some of these things that shouldn't get left out.

SS: What I always like to say is, I grew up with George Mitchell. And now it continues with Jim.

MH: Yeah.

SS: So, yes, it's been a great time and I've been blessed by it.

MH: Well, Sharon, thank you for your time.

SS: You're welcome.

MH: This has been great.

SS: You're welcome; it's great to reconnect with you.

MH: Yes, yes, I enjoyed it very much, yeah. Again, this is January the 10th, 2009, the interviewee is Sharon Sudbay, I'm Mike Hastings. And we'll sign off here. Thank you.

End of Interview