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McAleney, Mary oral history interview

Andrea L'Hommedieu

Interview with Mary McAleney by Andrea L'Hommedieu

Summary Sheet and Transcript

Interviewee
McAleney, Mary

Interviewer
L'Hommedieu, Andrea

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Place
Portland, Maine

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Biographical Note

Mary Elizabeth McAleney was born on March 18, 1945 in Tuscaloosa, Alabama. Her parents, Helen Irene Twombly and William Deehan McAleney, were respectively a Works Progress Administration worker and a U.S. Customs officer. McAleney came from a strongly Democratic family and was politically active from a young age. She was sent from her home near Vanceboro to St. Joseph's boarding school in South Portland, and from there she went to Merrimac College. After her graduation, she taught high school, first at St. Joseph's and then at Catherine McAuley High School. After eight years of teaching, she got divorced, quit teaching, and went into political work. She quickly rose through the ranks in Senator Muskie's '76 campaign, and worked afterwards for state majority leader Jim Tierney. Afterwards, she worked with George Mitchell, the Maine State Employee's Association, and other assorted Maine political figures and groups.

Scope and Content Note

Interview includes discussions of: McAleney's family history and political and social views; Kennedy's and Muskie's Catholicism; her boarding school and college experience; Guy Twombly (grandfather); her earliest meeting with Muskie (1954); attitudes towards Catholic politicians in Maine; grandmother (Guy Twombly's wife); beginning of official involvement in

politics; Muskie's '76 campaign; working for Jim Tierney; '78 gubernatorial race; State Employees' Association; Louis Jalbert; George Mitchell; conflicts with State Employees' Association; working for Mitchell; '88 Senate campaign; running Joe Brennan's campaign; Mitchell's positions in the Senate; Mitchell's Senate fights; working for the Small Business Administration; Martha Muskie; driving Senator Muskie around; Marge Hutchinson; Muskie's attitudes towards his staff; and Muskie's influences on Maine.

Indexed Names

Aspen, Les
Benoit, Larry
Benoit, Matt
Brennan, Joseph E.
Brown, Linwood
Byrd, Robert
Clauson, Clinton Amos, 1895-1959
Clinton, Bill, 1946-
Coffin, Frank Morey
Cory, Gayle
Dennis, Janet
Dionne, Paul
Eisenhower, Dwight D. (Dwight David), 1890-1969
Elwell, Eben
Gurney, Sue
Hutchinson, Marjorie
Jacobs, Charlie
Jalbert, Louis
Jordan-Hillier, Ginger
Kennedy, John F. (John Fitzgerald), 1917-1963
Mackey, John
McAleney, Helen I. Twombly
McAleney, William Deehan
McGowan, Georgia
McGowan, Patrick
McKernan, John
Merrill, Phil
Micoleau, Charlie
Mitchell, George J. (George John), 1933-
Murphy, Phyllis
Muskie, Edmund S., 1914-1996
Muskie, Jane Gray
Muskie, Martha
Nadeau, Greg
Nicoll, Don
Oliver, John

Parmelee, Carol
Pope, Marco
Pouilard, Chip
Powell, Mary
Smith, Margaret Chase, 1897-1995
Snowe, Olympia J. (Olympia Jean), 1947-
Stevenson, Adlai E. (Adlai Ewing), 1900-1965
Tierney, James
Twombly, Ann
Twombly, Guy
Twombly, Mary Ellen
Wilfong, James

Transcript

Andrea L'Hommedieu: . . . [We're] here with Mary McAleney on April 12, 1999 at the Resource Hub in Portland, Maine. Mary, would you please state your full name and spell it?

Mary McAleney: My name's Mary Elizabeth McAleney. And it's M-A-R-Y, E, and then McAleney is M-C-capital A-L-E-N-E-Y.

AL: When and where were you born?

MM: I was born in, on April, now wait a minute, March, March 18, 1945 in Tuscaloosa, Alabama. And the reason I was born in Tuscaloosa, Alabama is it was in the middle of, end of World, near the end of World War II. My father was in the Army and served as a guard at a German-Austrian POW camp. It was the largest one in the country, two of the largest in the country were in Alabama.

AL: So how long did you live there before coming back to Maine?

MM: We were there about nine months and my mother and I came back around, a little bit before Christmas and then Dad came back that following spring.

AL: What are the names of your parents?

MM: My mother's name is Helen Irene Twombly, my father's name is William Deehan, D-E-E-H-A-N, McAleney.

AL: And what is your place in the family, how many siblings do you have?

MM: I'm the oldest of two.

AL: And is your, is it a brother or a sister?

MM: I have a brother, yeah, two years younger.

AL: Is he also involved in politics?

MM: No, no. My cousins are. It's my mother's side of the family that was truly more involved. Back generations ago my dad's family was involved, but it's my mum's side of the family and my cousins Mary Ellen and Ann Twombly.

AL: What were your parents' occupations?

MM: My dad was a U.S. Customs officer, we lived on the border. And my mother before she had married had, was a school teacher. And she worked for the WPA, Work Progress Administration, and she was in charge, she did a lot of different projects, a lot of research projects. But her, one of her last jobs was she was in charge of the womens' and professional projects for the state.

AL: What are their religious beliefs?

MM: My father was brought up Roman Catholic, and my mother, they had no particular organized religion. And then my mother converted to Catholicism after she married, after she and Dad got married.

AL: And were you brought up . . .?

MM: Brought up Catholic, yes, yes.

AL: Tell me a little bit about your parents' political and social attitudes.

MM: Well, I guess, my mother always said that my grandmother McAleney would, and this is the side that was not really politically active, believed, could understand why someone could get angry and leave the Catholic Church. But she never could understand how someone could get angry and leave the Democratic Party, because they had done so much for people. My mother's side of the family was the more politically active party. I think, I think what they truly believed, what we were taught, was to be good people, take care of each other, do what you can to help people. That was sort of the overriding belief that we were all given.

AL: Were politics ever discussed at the dinner table?

MM: Oh yes, we used to have wonderful discussions, yes. I mean, I can, some of my earliest, I remember, I remember actually as, it must have been, this must have been 1952, so I was in the second grade. I was the only kid in my class that voted for Adlai Stevenson. Of course there weren't a lot of kids, there was only about eight or nine of us. But, I mean, I knew enough about the election in 1952 to know that I was voting for Adlai Stevenson and I know the rest . . . I remember the discussion clearly because I remember the kids said, "Oh, Dwight Eisenhower will stop the war," this was the Korean War. And I said "Yes, but the Republicans don't care for people, they just care for business." And I can remember this at age, you know, seven or eight or

whatever I was at the time, but.

And I just, my parents would, they would talk a lot about that. They read, they, you know, we always had magazines in the house. And they had, even in Vanceboro they had dear friends who were very politically active and fun, talk a lot. One of my earliest memories of my mother is going, we lived in this big house and there was a, you could see way down the road. And I remember her leaving in the morning with Dad and she would, and this probably only happened once or twice, but she would be all dressed up. She had a big hat on and she'd be very, very happy, she'd be leaving us, you know, get away from these kids for awhile you know? And she would be going, getting on the train and going down to meet her father to go to a Democratic convention. And I also remember that she used to, she would go to the caucuses in Vanceboro, there'd only be like three or four people at the caucus you know because it was a little town of three hundred fifty people. But she and Mary Powell and Linwood Brown, and they would always have their caucus and, you know, do their thing.

So, they did, they talked a lot and they did a lot, they contributed a lot to their community. I think that was their big belief, is to give back. You know, Dad was on the school board, they belonged to the Legion, they had Boy Scouts, they had 4-H, you know. They were always helping kids.

AL: How did your family affect you as you grew up?

MM: Oh, they were the overriding factor in my life, or influence.

AL: Were there other influences as well, anything outside of the family that . . .?

MM: Oh well, the little community I grew up in. That was a fabulous place, just wonderful, wonderful people in that little town. We had good teachers, even though we had like two grades together or, you know, it was just a wonderful place. And people looked after each other, cared for each other, took care of each other.

AL: What was the make up of the community that you lived in, grew up in?

MM: It was on the border, its reasons for existence was that it was on the border. There was a railroad bridge and a car bridge, and still is today. And when I was little it was the second biggest port of entry into the United States over and above New York City. There used to be like forty trains a day that went through there. It had originally been farming and lumbering community, some small factories, canneries and things like that. But the time that we were there it was immigration, customs, some brokerage firms and railroad, the railroad was a big employer. And it was unusual for, there was no farming, it was truly a one-horse town.

But I think it was unusual for a town in Maine during that time, and I'm talking like late '40s and the '50s, through the '50s, in that everybody had a job, (there might have been just one or two people that didn't have a job) and had a good job. Our school had flush toilets; it was relatively new compared to like my cousins who lived in Waldo County. So, that was mostly what people did, and for recreation they, you know, they had boats, we snowshoed, we skied in the winter.

Not skiing like today, but we skated, we snowshoed, we camped. In the summer we played in our boats and we played on the river and played in the lake, and we had a little basketball team. One time my friends and I went around town and made, collected enough money to get cheerleading uniforms. And my mother sent away to somewhere, I don't remember, in Boston for swatches of material. And we bought this material and she and a couple other women made these ten uniforms. And then somebody else's mother made pom-poms for our shoes and we got blouses from Sears & Roebuck. Oh God, they were gorgeous. Somebody else's mother found a deal on megaphones. But that was kind of how things worked there, you know?

Then we left there. In 1960 Dad got transferred so we lived in Orient, Maine for two years and we went to, and he lived in, he and Ma lived in New Brunswick, St. John, in the winter. And I went to high school in Portland, I then transferred to a high school in Portland, to St. Joseph's Academy. And that was in the fall of 1960 when Frank Coffin was running for governor and when John Kennedy was running for president. And the nuns all had a little John Kennedy for president pin under their sleeve. That was very big because we had never had a Catholic President before. And, I mean, I remember when Muskie ran for governor in 1954 that that was a big thing, that we have never had a Catholic as governor. I mean, that was truly, that was bigger than I think anybody ever realizes today or thinks about unless you were around.

AL: Was it big at the time of the campaign and the election, was it in the headlines?

MM: You know, I don't remember. I don't remember. I just know that in my parents' mind it was a big thing, the fact that he was a Catholic. Like "Wow," you know, "if we can really break this." Because there had never been a Catholic governor. And with my grandfather, it was more, he didn't care what religion the guy was. He just thought he was a genius and could actually win and then would actually ultimately do something for the state. But, I mean that was truly, the Republican establishment, I mean, to break that was big. I remember it was hard enough for Margaret Chase Smith, and she was a Republican. But she wasn't kind of from the establishment. So, yeah, that was big, that was big.

AL: Do you feel that you are very much like your parents in social and political attitudes, or very different, or what are the differences?

MM: I think I'm very much like them, I think I'm very much like them. I mean, I believe that government has, it's government's role to push the agenda, to push the social and economic agenda. And, for example Senator Muskie pushed clean water and clean air and believed it could happen, and now we have people making billions of dollars off things that are clean water and clean air. The historic tax credits, people didn't care about saving old buildings until they realized they could make some money from it. It's, you know, it's government's duty to, role to take care of those people who are, as Joe Brennan says, "In the dawn and in the dusk of their lives," and those that can't take care of themselves. And I really believe government can take a, make a big difference in people's lives; it's not the be-all and the end-all but it's their, it's government's job to push the envelope until the private sector catches up.

And they believed that, they believed that particularly with education. Education was very, very important to my parents and they truly believed that the government needed to do something

about that. The Sinclair Act, which was the act that, in the state, to consolidate the high schools, and Eben will probably talk, he'll talk to you about that. But on the local level my father, I remember we had a referendum in Vanceboro and the little towns around about were we going to make this consolidated high school. And my dad worked very, very hard, I mean, in the town, going out. And the plan was to have the school in Topsfield which was about fifteen miles away, it would have been a feeder school. And I remember him coming home that night, it was in the spring, probably May or so, and him saying to Ma, he said, "They voted it down." And she said, "Well now, what are we going to do?" And I remember, it was like I wasn't there, and they didn't usually talk about me like I wasn't there. Maybe I was in the next room or something, but, and then one of them said, "Well what are going to do about her?" meaning me because I was the only (*unintelligible phrase*) boy at the time. And, you know, that was, the discussion was: was I going to go to boarding school or was I going to stay there? And we agreed that I would stay there for a year. And then after the end of that year I went to boarding school in Portland because they just, education was very important to them.

AL: What was it like being on your own at such a young age, kind of on your own?

MM: Well, I was, the first couple weeks I was there I got sick, physically sick, because I was so lonesome and so homesick. But I realized that if I called home, they would have come and gotten me that day because they were so homesick, too, as opposed to some kids who were there who just, because their parents for whatever reason couldn't take care of them or didn't want them or whatever. So I felt I was in pretty good shape. And then my aunt and uncle lived here in South Portland and they would come out either and get me, if I could go out, or they would come visit me. They were truly a second set of parents to me. So I was pretty lucky. And it was good for me. I really think, I've told my folks that probably the two most important things that they ever spent money on were my teeth, getting my teeth straightened and getting me to high school, a place where I knew I had to compete. And I think that's made a big difference in my life.

AL: And did you go on to college?

MM: I did. I went to Merrimac College in North Andover, Massachusetts. I was going to be a mad scientist. And I, one day I looked out, I was in the laboratory and I was working on some god-awful project looking for something I couldn't find, and looked out and saw all my friends hanging around in the flowers and the dandelions reading their history books. And I said, "Oh God, this is ridiculous. I can't do this." So then I decided, well, I was almost through college at the time, I think I was like a junior, and I said, "Okay, well, I've got to do something here." So I took some teaching credits and then I taught. So I graduated and I taught biology and chemistry for about eight years, or actually for eight years.

AL: Where?

MM: I taught at Catherine McAuley High School, St. Joseph's which had been my alma mater, and then Catherine McAuley in Portland.

AL: Can you tell me a little bit about your grandfather, Guy Twombly? Maybe a description

and types of things he did, any recollections?

MM: Well he was a neat guy; he was wonderful, he really was. And we, there were four of us cousins and then my dad's two nephews who were also his, became his grandchildren because they didn't have a grandfather and they needed a grandfather. So he was their grandfather. And he was good not only as, a lot of grandparents I think are good as, when you're a little kid, you know? He was wonderful as a grandfather to sort of a middle-aged kid, an older kid and a teenager. He was wonderful to us when we were teenagers. We were all crazy, as all teenagers are, you know? But, and one of the things I remember my mother said to me was, she said, "If you ever get into trouble or you're worried about something you can't, don't think you can talk to me or Dad, go talk to your grandfather." And he truly, of course he had been crazy when he was a teenager, too, and he still remembered it.

My cousin Mary Ellen lived with him for a while. She lived with him the year he died and she was there with him that year. But we could always go to his house and he and Phyllis Murphy lived together -- Phyllis was our grandmother. And Phyllis, who had been wido-, she was an only child, she was widowed very young. And she and my grandfather fell in love and lived, I should have worn my Phyllis ring today. Anyway, she was fabulous because here was this woman who had never really had children. And she, we would show up there with our parents, she would cook, she would have these big meals. She, when we were teenagers she always, you know, welcomed us, took care of us, fed us, you know, was very, very proud of us.

And so, I guess back to gramps. So anyway, he and Phyllis, they had this, he lived, he moved over to Phyllis' house and my cousins and aunt and uncle moved in to the old house in Monroe. And the house was always warm and there was always a couple of cats, and there was always food, and there was always people coming and going, there was always people coming and going. Particularly, he would, when it was election year he would not go to . . . He used to love to go to Arizona; they would go to Arizona together. And they went for what seemed to me to be a very, very long time, I have no idea. I guess they started going maybe in like '43 and they went until, together, and they went until I'm going to say 1960, '61. But they wouldn't go if it was an election year. They would stay home because, I can remember driving around Waldo County with him with petitions for people, to get people's names on the ballot. And we would drive from here to there and we'd go to these town offices. And one of the other things he used to do was he would collect all of the obits of all of the dead Republicans in the winter. And then in spring he would go around and make sure they got off the voting list, because he said, "You know they'll take a Democrat off in five minutes, but they'll never take off a Republican."

So he used to go around, and we used to ride with him, and we would be, you know, anywhere from like seven to fourteen or fifteen. And as seven-year-olds we had this wonderful time because we'd be going up and down these hills. And he'd like shut the engine off at the top of the hill, and we'd go down the hill and go up and see how far up the next hill we could get. But he would go, you know, he would, petitions, make sure, I can remember going around with him to make sure every town had a caucus. You know, we'd say, "What's a caucus, Gramp?" So he'd tell us kind of what it was and, you know. "What are these petitions for?" you know. "What are you doing?" you know. And so I, it was just being with him.

He, in 1954 when Muskie was running for governor they had a little, they had a chicken dinner. Of course, Waldo County was big into chickens at that time. So they had a chicken dinner at the, I think it's the Odd Fellows Hall in Brooks, it's still there today. And he scheduled it when we would be there. We used to go to St. George's Lake in Liberty. So we would be there, my mother, my father, my brother, me. Of course my cousins lived right there in Munroe and he had, his nieces lived over in Freedom and all their kids. And then when my dad's brother and his family would come from Portland . . . So he knew that he had like a basic crowd, you know, he knew he could almost fill the hall with his relatives. And I think one of the things I learned from him is, you know, you get your crowd by getting your relatives and your friends involved. And he was really big on that.

And I remember that dinner very, very well. And I remember meeting Senator Muskie. And everybody said, "He's going to be the next governor, and this is very big; he will be the first Democratic governor." This was, like, huge in my family. And I was only, this was '54 so I was nine, but I remember it. And I remember that we all got dressed up from camp which must have been a heck of a project because we didn't have showers. We must have taken baths in the lakes, you know. And Ma and Aunt Betty got us all like shined and polished and into the car and over there and on time, you know. And then God only knows what else they did to help, if they helped Phyllis get ready or things like that. I don't remember any of that. But I just remember that night. And, oh, hotter than hell in that grange hall; I still remember it. And it seemed like they talked forever. But the adults were so excited, I mean they were so excited.

And then I remember, must have been maybe the following summer or the year after, or it might have happened two or three different times, I don't remember, going to, over to China Lake, to the cottage over there, to Muskie's cottage over there. And there would be a big, again there would be a big party, big barbeque. See, my family always believed that everybody should have a job, no matter how old or young you are you should have a job. In fact, so my mother, even the two-year-old, he has a job, he has jobs, you know? So our job would be to put bumper stickers on cars. And that meant of course if you put a bumper sticker on your car it like, you had to, you couldn't get it off. So we learned, I mean and our job was to ask people, we'd stand in the parking lot and we'd ask people if they'd like a bumper sticker. And then we, of course if we ever got one that said, "Yes," we would be so excited and put it on with great glee, you know. And then my father would never let us put one on his car, because he was (*unintelligible word*) because he worked for the federal government. But we always managed to get one on my uncle's car which, you know, that kind of started us off.

So, you know, as a kid I can remember doing those things and that was great fun. It was fun and I just remember the excitement of the adults and I remember also the, that they felt that something good was happening. And gramps gave that, he sort of gave that to us as, you know, you want to be good people and you want to give something back and this man is really good. I remember in 1960 I think they had, I have an autograph from John Kennedy because he came to, Don will tell you all of this, he can tell you all of this. But there was a JJ dinner, and I believe it was in Rockland. And it probably was like 1959, and John Kennedy came to that. And again, what excitement there was because by then, (let's see, it must have been, Muskie was senator by then so it had, and, let's see, Clinton Clauson was, he came after, he only lived a year as governor, I think he was Catholic too) but by then it wasn't like a big deal in Maine. But it was a

big deal, like, "Wow, we got a Catholic governor in Maine. Now this guy, you know, we might have a Catholic President, wow." You know? And not so much that they were Catholic, but that a Catholic could become a president or a governor. That was the big thing, not that, "Oh, wow, they're Catholic," but "wow, a Catholic can become that." And I think people forget that; it wasn't that long ago.

AL: Do you have any recollections of your grandmother, Guy's wife?

MM: She died before I was born. She died, let's see, (*unintelligible word*) '43, she died in 1941. And only by stories and, that she, my Aunt Ruth, Mary Ellen and Annie's mother, always said that she was the one that was more politically active than my grandfather. And they were, in their younger years, they were Socialists. And in stories from Mum, which she probably told you and talked to you about . . . And I actually have her nomination papers; she ran for Senate, state Senate in 1921 which, and women got the vote in 1920. So, but she was the Democratic nominee for senator from Waldo County in 1921. Of course she didn't win; it's kind of like you and your husband up there in Presque Isle, you know? Same thing.

But, I also have a picture of her and Ma, and Ma thinks it was probably, it was in the '30s, in Boston at a dem-, New England Democratic Women's event. And she and Ma were there and they're all dressed up and there's a bunch of other women. And actually, in the picture is the mother of a woman I went to high school with, which just shows you how small Maine is, you know? So I don't, I never met her but I just know stories. And our family's big into stories, we tell a lot of stories. I think most people do in America, and particularly in Maine, the stories. So I just know her from stories, that she was always busy, she was very active, you know, I mean she, according to, and looming larger than life, you know. Her house was always perfect and, my mother's always struggled her whole life to have her housekeeping standards live up to her mother's. And we keep saying, "Ma, you've done it, it's okay." But, no, I don't remember her at all, just from stories.

AL: Why don't we talk a little bit about your career, how you got involved in politics as far as work, when you met Muskie, and so on?

MM: Well, I had, I grad-, when I, after, I graduated from college and I came back to teach. And I did, during that time I did, in college I did some stuff in Massachusetts. When I came back to teach, I got married, and I taught school and I did a little bit locally in politics, but not a lot. And in 1975 I quit teaching and I got divorced. And I decided, "Well, I'm going to change my life." So I went, I got a job waiting on tables, and, here in Portland. And my cousin Annie said, "Well, the Muskie campaign is starting up and so you should go volunteer because it will be good for you and you can be helpful." So, I always did what she told me to because she's six months older than I am. So I went and I signed up and that's where I met Ginger Jordan Hillier, and Ginger was the, sort of the in house coordinator of everything. And I started volunteering and I volunteered and I waited on tables.

And, this was 1976. Charlie Jacobs was one of the field coordinators, a man named Jim Wilfong was the other one. And Jim had been, I had known Jim when I lived in Hiram for a while and worked with him when he got elected in 1974. He was the first and only Democrat to get elected

from Stow and Fryeburg area since before and after the Civil War, since, after the Civil War, Jim Wilfong. He would be another interesting person for you to talk to. So this was 1976 and the women, so the women's movement was really after Senator Muskie. He was under the fire, that he didn't like women and he had not promoted women. And so there was one more field spot in the campaign and they said, "You know, we've got Jim Wilfong, we've got Charlie Jacobs, so we have to find a woman."

Well, they needed someone who worked hard, wasn't viewed as a crazy feminist, (that's not quite the right word but I think it's pretty close, okay?) and someone who I think that Senator Muskie would feel comfortable with. And so anyway, I just happened to be there volunteering and they said, "Oh well, maybe you could do this job for a while, you know, volunteer." So I said, "Sure, okay." So I started volunteering and I still waited on tables and did this volunteer, and I ended up getting the job. So in, so that fulfilled the bill they were looking for. I think it's part of me being in the right place at the right time and them being in the right place at the right time, okay? They needed a woman, they needed someone who had organizational abilities and Jim Wilfong said "Yes," I did. There were other people, older people in the party that said, "Oh, yes, I know her family," you know. And in Maine that counts, you know, it counts for a lot. You know, "Oh I know her family, they're hard workers," you know, and so that's how I got started.

Then I worked on that campaign in 1976 and that's where I met Gayle Cory and met Larry Benoit and met Don [Nicoll], and met Senator Muskie and Jane [Muskie] and Carole Parmelee. And that was sort of the beginning of my career as an adult. And so after the campaign, I then went to work for Jim Tierney who was, he was majority leader in the State House at the time. I don't know if you've talked with him, he would be another good guy to talk to. Jim went on from being majority leader in the State House to attorney general for, he was attorney general for ten years. He ran for governor

So I worked for Jim and my job with Jim was to, there had never been, the majority leader in the state House always had a staff person; well Jim split the salary in two and the positions in two so I was, I was sort of, well I guess what they'd call it today, the caucus person. I was in charge of the Democrats, if you can ever be in charge of Democrats, alright? And it was my job to work with them and, like I wrote a newsletter that I used to write every week and, so they could fill in the blanks. I put together an intern program so they could all have, (they didn't have staff, we had no money) so we'd get interns to come from colleges and then they would be, they would help the representative.

And then Phil Merrill was in the state Senate at that time, too, and Phil was running for governor against Brennan and Phil had run Muskie's campaign here in Maine. So after that session was over with I went and worked, I ran Phil's campaign for governor, that was in '78. And then meanwhile I would still run into, you know, I would still run into Gayle and all of those people. And then I went to work for the Maine State Employee's Association and did a lot of political action with them. And it was sometime in that, I'm going to say it was probably about like, I don't know, but any time they'd have like a big project, Larry would call me up and say, "Can you get people here? Can you get bodies? Can you come find some people to help us stuff envelopes?" So I was always doing stuff like that.

And they had this party for Senator Muskie, and I'm going to say it was probably 1979, 1979 or '80, which was his twenty-fifth year, twenty-fifth anniversary. And it was one of these things where everybody had like rented the civic center and all this stuff, but they had forgotten that you had to have a crowd. So Gayle and Larry called me up and we . . . And it was twenty-five dollars a head, which at that time was a lot of money for people, so. But we got a bunch of people there and then we did, we sold a bunch of tickets to state employees at half price. So we got like, we filled the place, you know, everybody working together we filled the place.

So, the I did that for a while, and then, and that was during the time that, before Senator Muskie became Secretary of State, so I was working there at the State Employee's Association. Then Merrill ran again for, ran for Congress. And I had gotten, I get bored after I do something for long, I get bored. So I had left the State Employee's Association because I was, it seemed like I was doing the same thing year after year, so I stopped that. And then I ran Merrill's campaign and then Mitchell was running; that was '82 and Mitchell was running for Muskie's seat. Muskie then had become, he was in private practice by then, so I ran his, I ran his campaign for sort of like the central part of the state, Lewiston and Kennebec County. And Louis Jalbert was still alive. And Charlie Jacobs was the, Charlie had gone to work for Senator Muskie right after the '76 campaign, he went to Washington to work with Senator Muskie. And I had stayed here. And Charlie and I were good, are good friends and we had kept in touch. So anyway, it was between Charlie and Larry Benoit. They made me go to Lewiston, so I went to Lewiston. And, and I mean it was a gr-, again, it was great experience.

AL: How did you enjoy working with Louis Jalbert?

MM: Well, Louis was, by that time Louis was kind of I would say off to the sidelines, but he could still cause damage, alright? And there were a bunch of younger people that were very, very much involved like Paul Dionne and Jim Baggart, Chip Pouliard, Greg Nadeau. And, but Louis, you still had to reckon with Louis and you still had to go pay homage to him. So Charlie said, "You have to go have lunch with Louis, you have to go have a meeting with Louis." So I went and had this meeting with Louis, this great long, you know, listened to Louis harangue, and talked to him about what he could do, and asked for his advice. So, I mean that was how I essentially worked with Louis was, you worked with Louis, by the time I got to know him, was off to the side sort of. Whereas years before . . . I mean Jim Tierney could tell you some good Louis stories, if you're looking for particularly Louis stories, when he was in the legislature. Eben of course could tell you some Louis stories.

But I tell you, Louis was amazing because I can remember in the legislature, in the Appropriations Committee when I worked for the State Employee's Association, that if Louis was against something, you were in trouble, what you wanted, you were in trouble. Even to his last days, you were in deep trouble if Louis was against you. If Louis was for you, you were in good shape. And if you ever actually beat Louis it was very big. And I had been in all three positions; it was better having Louis with you, much better. You had much more energy to do other things if Louis was with you. So even though he wasn't involved in the day-to-day of what was going on in Lewiston politics, and the sort of more, you know, newer people coming in, he was very much a force to be reckoned with, yeah, in the legislature big time. He controlled the

purse strings.

AL: So then you worked with Mitchell?

MM: Okay, so then, oh yes, then I worked with Mitchell at that campaign. And then, that was the fall of '82 and that campaign was over with. And then John Oliver, who I worked with at the Maine State Employee's Association, he was the executive director. And the state employees had just gotten bargaining rights when I first went to work with them. And there were still, (*name*) still represented, I think they still do, they represent the inst-, what they call institutional services workers which was the prison guards, the mental health workers, the, well prison guards and mental health workers. That was kind of the bulk of the people. Whereas state employees represented, we represented the truck drivers and the mechanics, the social workers, the secretaries, the professional people and some low-level managers. So, and we were always at war with each other. So my job was to, the board at the Maine State Employee's Association had appropriated some money to hire an organizer to try to get the institutional services workers to be represented by the Maine State Employee's Association. So I was hired back to do that. And it was supposed to be nine months and it ended up being a year and a half because they never, I guess they never really, they thought it was a real long shot that they would get the cards. You need to have thirty percent, and I got the thirty percent, so. And they said, "Oh my God, what are we going to do?" Well, I had to keep going, you know?

Near the end of that, along about May of that year, (and I think the election was in June, it might have been March or April or something like that) I got a call from Gayle Cory. Meanwhile Charlie Jacobs, that was what happened, Charlie came home to Maine that fall, and this was '83 he came home. And so he wasn't going to do, he was doing the scheduling for Senator Mitchell, he didn't want to do the scheduling any more. He wanted to come home and do something else. So a friend of mine, Joe Mackey, had been talking to Larry Benoit and to Charlie Jacobs. And Joe said to me, he said, "Mary," he said, "Charlie and Larry think that you would be a good person to take Charlie's job, but they don't think you'll move to Washington. Call them up and tell them you'll move to Washington." So I did. I said, "Hey Charlie, I really think I might have your job." So that, that had to be kind of like maybe that fall.

So this election went along. And in May I got this call from Gayle and Gayle said, (and I had forgotten about the conversation because I was busy) Gayle said, "Senator Mitchell wants to know if you want to come to work for him." And I said, "God, Gayle, I don't know. I got this election I'm doing right now and it'll be over in three weeks. I'll call you back." So it got over with and we lost. So I called Gayle back and began to talk with her and I ultimately ended up going to Washington in the fall of '84.

And I started out as, I was, to do the Maine scheduling and I was to do, I was supposed to do the labor issues and housing issues. Because I thought, "Oh, you know, I've been a politician, I've been, you need to get into some big policy and think issues," you know? "That's what I need to get involved in." That was why I was going to Washington, you know. Here I was, I was going to be a big policy person. So, I quickly realized that I couldn't do both. I couldn't do the scheduling in the way it should be done, and I couldn't do the policy stuff the way it should be done. And really my value was as a scheduler because I knew, I had been all over the state in

three or four campaigns as the State Employee's, and had worked for the State Employee's Union all over the state. I mean, I had like, you know, it was like dirt around the state, I'd been everywhere. And because I'd worked in so many different campaigns and worked in the legislature and political action with State Employee's, and I knew a lot of the political players.

So it was Gayle who actually said to me, she said, "Come to my house." And when you got summoned to Gayle's house, you knew it was big. So we're sitting at her kitchen table, I remember, and we had some supper and then the kids went to bed. So we're sitting there, and we're having a drink and we're talking. And she says, "Look," she says, "you can't do both," and she says, "think about it. What do you think George Mitchell really needs? Does he need someone to tell him about labor policy or housing policy? Don't you think he can figure that out himself?" "Yeah, he probably could," you know, "Gayle, yeah, you're right." "Yeah. But can he figure out how he can get to Presque Isle and Calais in the same day and not miss any of the political people and get to the press and do everything else he needs to do?" "No, no." "Okay. Well, where do you think he's going to be more valuable to you Mary, or where you're going to be more valuable to him?" "Well, I guess the scheduling. Huh, Gayle, is that the answer?" "Yeah, yeah." And, but I mean, that was Gayle. That was how she would, you know, she would bring people in, she would move them around and get them to where they were the most useful and best utilized their skills, talents and abilities. And I think that was Gayle, you know. She knew I was never going to be a policy person, couldn't read that deep. So I did the scheduling and . . .

AL: I'm going to pause right here and I'm going to turn the tape over.

End of Side One
Side Two

AL: We are now on side B of the interview with Mary McAleney on April 12, 1999 at the Resource Hub in Portland, Maine.

MM: I was talking about Gayle and I, it was prob- . . . Anyway, in, so I did the scheduling '84 through the spring of '87. And the, at that time Larry Benoit had begun to put Mitchell's campaign together for 1988 and we thought at that time that Olympia [Snowe] was going to run against him. So one day Senator Mitchell came back from Maine and he said, he calls me and he said, "You've got to go home to help Larry because Larry's going to like waste away if you don't go home and help him." So that spring of '87 I went home. And shortly after I had gotten home, Olympia announced she wasn't going to run against Mitchell. So it was like being all ready for the prom and having, stood up, you know, Larry and I sitting there, we're all ready.

But anyway, I stayed home that year and did the scheduling. Senator Mitchell at that time was running for majority leader so he was traveling a lot. So it was a trick to, the deal was to still keep him home enough so that he, you know, people would say, "Oh, he hasn't forgotten Maine." We didn't want that. Because you know back, people got that impression of Senator Muskie. Although it was never true in my mind, just because he wasn't on their doorstep. So we had to, in '74 through '76 the big push was, you know, Ed Muskie truly is on your rocking chair on your porch, you know? So Mitchell had learned that and he didn't want that ever to be

said about him. So during that time he was running for leader he would be going around the state, around the country, campaigning for people, but at the same time he would still be in Maine. And it was, you know, we were flying back and forth, doing all this. Anyway, that was kind of fun.

So then he became majority leader in 1989 and asked me to be his administrative assistant. And Marco (*Pope?? -- name*) who had been his administrative assistant, went over to be the chief of staff in the majority office. And I did that for a year. And then it became 1990 and Joe Brennan was going to run for governor against Jock [John] McKernan. And Joe asked me, and the senator asked me, if I would go home and run Joe's campaign, which I did. And the deal was that if I wanted to come back to Washington to that job, I could come back. And so I ultimately, I ultimately went, you know, the campaign, as you know we didn't win, so. And I wasn't sure if I wanted to go back. It was like, I'd been down there, been in Washington.

And again it was Larry Benoit who pushed me into it, I give Larry credit for pushing me into lots of things, you know, Larry and Gayle, you know? Larry came, I don't know where. I guess we met for coffee over at Victory Deli or something. He says, "Okay," he said, "I talked to Gayle and Donna's FedExing up your papers and we'll sign them today." And I said, "Well, I don't think I want to go back, Larry, I don't know." "Well, it doesn't matter," he says, "just sign the papers anyway, we'll deal with it later." So of course then I was hooked, you know? And I, ultimately I went back. But I remember when . . .

Then I stayed with Senator Mitchell until he left the Senate in the end of '94. And so I worked for him for ten years, it was the longest I've ever worked anywhere. And I look back and I think, his job changed every two years, therefore what I was doing changed every two years. When I first started scheduling him when I first went there, it was a Republican Senate, a Republican President. And he had just taken over, the, to be head of the DSCC, so again he was traveling. But it was again my job to think that, make everybody realize that he was truly there in Maine all the time. Then in '88, '86 the Senate went Democratic, he got, he became head of one of the subcommittees of, for the Finance Committee, on health. Health care became big, it became a big part of his life because he had, was responsible for bringing the Senate democratic, he was even in more demand. The Senate became democratic, so it was a whole new way of working in the Senate.

And then '88 Bush got elected president, Mitchell became majority leader, and again things changed. The staff became bigger and the challenge was, on the staff's part, to keep the focus on Maine. And that was my job. I remember Senator Mitchell said to me, he said, "Now," he said, "I want you to make sure my schedule is," when he asked me to be chief of staff he said, "make sure your schedule is, my schedule is taken care of, that the mail is answered, to Maine, and that I take care of Maine." And it was a pretty, you know, broad mandate.

But I'll tell you, I never went over to the majority office [when], I never called him when, and said, "I need to see you," when he didn't say, "what is it you need?" And of course it would be something to do with Maine, whether it was, and it was usually something specific, usually something, economic development, and that he would do whatever he had to do. He would just say, "Tell me what I need to do." Like when Loring was closed, I mean, he truly did everything

in his power to keep that open. And then once it was closed he did everything in his power to get jobs up there. And we had two people working on that pretty much full-time, just . . . And then once, you get, you know, and, you do staff work, you get to the point where you need the member to get involved and do what they need to do, and he always did that. I mean, to keep Portsmouth open, by then Clinton was in the White House. Who was secretary of defense? Was it Aspen? I think it was Les Aspen at the time. I mean, he went to the Pentagon to see Aspen, talk to him about it, to make his arguments. And it would never be as it was, it would never be, you know, "I want you to keep this open because I'm majority leader." But these are the practical, these are the reasons, these are the public, good public policy reasons consistent with his record, you know. He always would say, you know, "What is good for the people of Maine? What is good for the nation? What is good for the world?" You know, those were sort of the questions.

And I truly believe that he patterned the way he conducted his Senate years after Senator Muskie. You know, the vision, the, I mean he continued to work on Clean Air, took him eleven years to get that bill reauthorized. When he did that he truly, I mean he went up against Bob Byrd, Senator Byrd who was chairman of the Appropriations Committee. And to get that through he spent a lot of political capital, but he got it through. Only by one vote, but hey, one vote counts, you know? We won. The same way with the, you know, the changes in the tax law in '90 and then '93. I mean, he got through that without one Republican vote, kept the Democrats together. And those were some amazing things, amazing things.

So anyway, that's, I stayed there until he left the Senate, and then I came to work for the Small Business Administration. And I got here because Pat [Patrick] McGowan, who had been in the legislature, had run for Congress, was the regional administrator for the Small Business Administration. So he called me up and said, "Hey, want to come to work for me?" And I said, "Sure, it'll get me closer to home." So I think, you know, all the time I was in Washington it was still, I was tied to Maine. And I remember Gayle said to me one time, she said, when she was trying to convince me to come to Washington the first time, she says, "You come to Washington," she said, "and you work in this office, and you'll never be away from Maine, you'll always know what's going on in Maine." And I did. I mean, I would know as much as anybody who was in Maine, because we got the newspapers every day, I was always talking to people in the legislature, you know, talking to the field offices, people coming in and out, you know.

AL: And for reference, Pat McGowan was the gentleman who ran against Olympia Snowe in what, was it 1990?

MM: Yes, '90 and '92, yes, yes. And he's a great guy, wonderful. And he and, Senator Muskie liked him a lot, as did Senator Mitchell. In fact, was it, let me see now, Senator Muskie's been gone three years, so it was four years ago Margaret Chase Smith died. And I had, and also during this time when I was in Washington I used to, Martha Muskie and I became friends and I would, because of Gayle, I started driving Martha back and forth to Maine. Martha and I would travel back and forth to Maine together. Because I was always looking for a free way home, or a way to get home or an excuse, you know? So Martha and I became buddies. And, so then I reconnected with Martha, with Jane and with Senator Muskie. And always, too, in Senator

Mitchell's office we, you know, if Senator Muskie needed anything or if Jane needed anything, we always did it because they were our family. You know, they're all one, you know. You said a lot of people worked for Muskie, then worked for Mitchell; they did. And it's still, it's that continuum, you know, it's that whole family.

So anyway, I used to drive Martha back and forth and got to know Senator Muskie and Jane on a kind of a different level, you know, just these wonderful, wonderful people. And they always would host, every summer they would host a big fund-raiser for whoever was running, at their house in Kennebunk, whether it was Senator or Jim Tierney or Pat McGowan or whoever it was. And so my friend Pat Eltman and I used to usually end up putting it on. And Jane liked us because we managed to get the people to clean up the trash, you know, we never left the trash behind. That was why Jane liked us, I always said, she liked us because we kept, picked the trash up. But, you know, and I think she felt comfortable with us because she knew we weren't going to run over the house and we were going to take care of everything.

And, so I used to take also during that time, sometimes if I was home during the summer and Senator Muskie would be going to, you always had the Muskie lobster bake in the summer time. And so a few times I drove him to that because whatever the connection he was going to make with Senator Mitchell or whoever didn't work because of fog, you know. One of my favorite times was I drove him, we went, and this was in '92 and we rode to Rockland, because I called him up and I said, "The plane thinks they can land, but I will come and get you and we can drive all the way. However you want to do it." And he said, well, he'd lived this long without dying in a plane crash, he didn't, if I didn't mind driving him. And I said, "Sure, it will be fun."

So we drove, and we drove these back roads to Rockland and there was, Senator Mitchell, Pat McGowan and Joe Brennan were down front and Senator Muskie was out back. And there was this big tent, there was probably like five hundred people in the tent. And it rained, oh God, it was raining. It was awful. And I said to him, "Do you want to go sit down front?" And he, I said, "There's a place for you." And he said, "No, that's all right." So I said, "Okay, all right." So he waits, and the guy was a master, they call his name, right? And he gets, he goes down through these five hundred people, you know. And it's like, he was so happy, you know, and they were so happy to see him and everything. And of course he always gave such a wonderful, wonderful speech, just a wonderful speech.

So then on the way home I said, "Well, I got some sandwiches if you want to eat." "Goddamn no, godammit, I hate bread," he says, "I don't want bread," he says, "let's go get some food." I said, "Okay, where would you like to eat?" "Oh, I don't know," he said, "let's just drive for a while." So I says, "Well which way do you want to go?" Because you would never purport to tell him which road to take in Maine. He says, "Well do you have, are you in a hurry?" I said "No, I don't have to be in really until Monday morning, it's only Sunday afternoon." So, "Let's go down Route 1." So we went down Rte. 1.

And he started to tell stories, and he told stories of this campaign and that campaign and we got to, as far as Waldoboro and he said "Let's go to Moody's Diner in Waldoboro." So I said "Okay, we'll go to Moody's Diner." He said, "I haven't been here since . . . ." I'm going to lose the guy's name, the guy that he beat for the Senate was from down around Waldoboro, and I've

just lost the guy's name. Anyway, he said, "I haven't been here since so-and-so's funeral." And, but, he said, "I went to his funeral and," he said, "his wife I think was a little surprised that I showed up at his funeral." He said, "Well, you know," he said, "I beat the guy but I didn't dislike him." And, you know, that day he talked a lot about his early years, when he got home from the service and he was practicing law and how he got into politics, and we just had a wonderful, wonderful, wonderful day. It's one of the days I'll treasure. And then the other day, the following year Senator Smith died and I was working with Pat McGowan in Boston. And Pat and his wife Georgia were living in New York at the time. So I said to Pat, I said . . . And Margaret Chase Smith had, Senator Smith had supported Pat McGowan when he ran in 1992 against Olympia; that was very large. So I said to Patrick, I said, "I'm going to call Carole and see if Senator Muskie and Jane need a ride or anything." And he said, "Oh, I'll drive them," he says, "I'll drive them."

So anyway, I called Carole and, so we arranged it so that Pat and I picked up Senator Muskie and Jane and we took them to Margaret Chase Smith's funeral. And again, it was a trip down . . . it was wonderful. Pat and the Senator sat in front, Jane and I sat in the back, you know. A typical Maine load, boys in front, girls in back. And he and Patrick chatted back and forth and told some, they told stories. And we got to the bottom of the hill. Oh, and on the way up he said, "You know, I haven't been feeling too good but," he said, "I don't want those Republicans," he says, "I would go under any circumstances." He says, "I don't want the press writing that I'm not well, and I don't want those Republicans to think I didn't respect Margaret."

And so we got there and he was like the crown prince there. I mean, truly the long-time old Republicans, because he and Senator Smith had worked together, they were so glad to see him. And it was a beautiful day. The sun was shining, we were in this tent. And then afterwards there was a reception in her home in the library and he stationed himself right inside the door. Everybody that came by he said, "hello" to them. I mean, the guy was the politician to the end, you know? And he truly, when we were on the way back that day we dropped Pat off somewhere and he flew his plane back. And so I drove them back and we stopped somewhere on the interstate to go to the bathroom and walk around. He, I was in the ladies room and a woman said to me, "Is that Senator Muskie out there?" And I said, "Yes," I said, "go say 'hi' to him." So when I came out he was like beaming. He said, I said, "Oh, I see you met a fan." "Yes," he said, "I had, saw three more, two while I was standing here waiting for you."

But he just, he truly loved talking with people and he truly, when he was . . . Gayle told me that after his eightieth birthday we had, see there was a party in Washington and there was a big party here. And then his close friends and his family had a party for him. And he said at that third party that, he said, it made him so happy because he didn't go to bed at night feeling lonely. And you'd think a person who had been and done as much as he did would never think about being lonely. But we're (*Unintelligible word - tape muffled*) all the same.

AL: Tell me a little bit about Marge Hutchinson.

MM: I don't know anything about her. I never met her. Janet Dennis worked with her a lot, and Sue Gurney. Charlie Micoleau, you must have Charlie somewhere on your list, Charlie worked with her. I just know that, I sort of know her, she's kind of in the same category as my

grandmother, alright? She was this person that looms larger than life and was truly the person that kept things going and made things happen. She was always there, you know, the glue, sort of the person that did in the state like Gayle did it in Washington. And she did it for him when he was governor. So I don't, unfortunately I never got to meet her.

AL: Can you tell me in a general sense what it was like working for Muskie?

MM: Well I never, I think I had a different . . . I loved it, I loved it. I mean, I only worked for him, I worked for him in campaigns really. And then I considered that I worked for him when I worked for Senator Mitchell. I just, I considered it an honor. And I was just so excited just to be able to do it, to have that opportunity. I found him, I found him funny, I found him, you know, and a lot of people are going to, would laugh when I said this, but I found him very sensitive and very caring. And I think he was, I really do. I mean, there's all these stories about his temper and everything. But I truly think, people's tempers come from frustration. And it's not frustration at individuals, it's frustration in the circumstances. And if one remembers that, you know.

And I think I, I just, I had a lot of fun, that campaign, I loved it. I loved going around with him. He would always, he taught me a lot, I mean he taught me a lot about . . . I remember one time we were going to the Acton Fair and we got in line to get into the fair and it was a big long line. And I said, "Oh God, we can't wait in this line, we'll just go." He said, "No, no, Mary, you stand in line, stand in line, I don't push myself ahead," you know? And he'd go to something like a fair and you'd have Plan A done and he would always be off on Plan B, you know. He always wanted french fries and vinegar and corn-on-the-cob. And he would meet more people by just kind of wandering around, you know?

He was very fussy about how his clothes looked. I think it was because his father was a tailor and in part he didn't have a lot of clothes when he was young and he took very, very good care of them. And he'd always want his jacket folded just so in the trunk to make sure it just, you know? But I always had a wonderful time with him.

I took, in January, around Christmas in '94, no, '95, because he died in '96, they came up for Christmas, he and Jane and Martha and the kids. And after Christmas my mother and I went down to have lunch with he and Jane and Martha. And he took us over to the Kennebunk Free Library, and he had been chairman, raising money for the library. I think the thing that I admired most about is as a, when he left public service he never stopped giving, never stopped giving. I mean, he did so much for legal aid, he was, he would be there in the Senate testifying for legal aid money. He, you know, was involved here in Maine for that.

He raised, the project that I was about to describe was his project in Kennebunk where he raised the money for this addition to the library. And I remember that day he and my mother, they were in their eighties, and they were down in the children's section. And there were all these children and they had books. But there was this little child reading a book on a computer and the child was showing them how this worked. And they were like, both of them, were so excited. And I remember thinking, "Wow, I wonder how it will be when I'm their age, what it will be like." But he was looking forward to coming back that summer and reading books to the children and

telling them stories. And he said to me, he said, "The name of (this book) the library, is the Kennebunk Free Library. No child would ever have to pay to come and take a book out of here or use this." And I thought, "Wow," you know. That's the way he was. That's, that was his, I think that said a lot about him, that he continued to give.

AL: What do you think his major influences were on Maine?

MM: Oh, God, well he changed state government. I mean, he brought it into the twentieth century just for starters, okay? I mean, he brought us a whole new way of thinking about things and looking at things. I'm not sure if I could be specific about that. I mean he brought Maine, when he went to the Senate he brought Maine onto the map like it had not been brought since the 18th century. I mean, Margaret Chase Smith was there and she was the only woman. And she was very, very good, and because of that she brought attention to Maine and her other qualities. But I mean he truly brought attention as far as leadership in the environment.

And I really think he took, a lot of the things that he started and he could see in Maine, and he took them down there with him to Washington and he'd put them into national policies, or tried to. And I really think that's it. I mean, he truly, I mean the story that I was telling you earlier about the Back Cove and East End Beach? And when I lived in Back Cove in 1967, it was, nobody hardly ever walked around there. When I lived in St. Joseph's Academy on Stevens Avenue from '60 to '63, there would be mornings we couldn't open our windows because it would smell so bad; we literally could not open our windows. East End Beach, you could not swim there, off the Eastern Promenade, you could not swim there. And today, there, the park, the swimming pool that was at East End Beach is paved over and people put their boats there and kids play on the beach. Today Back Cove is that park, that, the jogging path, walking path, wheeling path that probably has three or four thousand people a day on it. And it's just amazing.

And I think that's, that would not have happened had it not been for Senator Muskie and his vision to clean up the waters, to clean up the lakes, to clean the land, to say to the companies, "You can do that and you can still make money." Because they would all say, "Oh, we have to leave, you know, we're going to leave your state, bye bye," you know. Well, they couldn't because they'd have a hard job pulling up the trees. But I think that that is his biggest influence, you know?

AL: You just triggered a question. You've talked; he had a way of getting these things done. What was it about him? How did he go about making so many accomplishments? What, maybe I'm asking what his style was?

MM: See, and I'm not sure, because I didn't ever see him in Washington so I couldn't answer that. I know that one of the things he always used to, one of his quoted statements was that: "He who has the biggest bladder wins." So I think it's probably patience and persistence, okay? And being smart, being smart and being able to see middle ground, I think that's probably it. Because, that, if someone asked me that same question about Mitchell, I would say being prepared, being able to see middle ground, being able to think on your feet. And I think that, I think probably that would be the answer, but you'll find out when you talk to other people.

AL: Have we missed anything important from your experience that you would want others to know about you or your time?

MM: I don't know. I think you've covered everything pretty much. It had been an incredible time to be alive and be involved.

AL: Thank you very much.

End of Interview