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Angus S. King

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George J. Mitchell Oral History Project

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Angus King

(Interviewer: Andrea L'Hommedieu)

GMOH# 166

November 03, 2009

Andrea L'Hommedieu: This is an interview for the George J. Mitchell Oral History Project at Bowdoin College. The date is November 3, 2009, and I'm at the home of Angus King in Brunswick, Maine, and this is Andrea L'Hommedieu. Governor – Former Governor King – could you start just by giving me your full name?

Angus King: Angus Stanley King, Jr., born Alexandria, Virginia, March 31, 1944.

AL: And did you grow up in the Virginia area?

AK: Yes, I grew up in Alexandria, went to high school there, graduated from high school in 1962, public high school, Hammond High School, went to Dartmouth College, and from Dartmouth to the University of Virginia Law School, graduated in 1969 from law school, and came to Maine in the summer of 1969 to work for Pine Tree Legal Assistance in Skowhegan, Maine.

AL: Yes, and that must have been a very different setting for you than where you grew up.

AK: Well, certainly different than the Washington area, although Hanover, New Hampshire, wasn't a very big town, and Charlottesville, Virginia, at least at the time, wasn't a very big town. I had the sudden realization a few years ago that except for two-and-a-half years when I returned to Washington in the '70s to work in the Senate, I [have] basically lived in small towns all my life, other than my first eighteen years.

AL: And so what was your work like at Pine Tree Legal, what did it entail?

AK: It was basically legal services to low income people in a rural area. My office was in Skowhegan, but I rode circuit. I would go up to Dover-Foxcroft, to Milo, to Greenville on a regular basis once or twice a month, talk to clients, meet clients, there'd be a sign in the town office, 'Pine Tree Legal will be here Tuesday at three' or something, and I would meet people and handle all manner of cases. Although when the legal services program was invented in the Lyndon Johnson administration, it was part of Johnson's War on Poverty, in the late 1960s; the assumption was that there would be a lot of exciting sort of landlord/tenant, Civil Rights, big case kind of things.

It turned out we were swamped with divorces. Because of the cost, there was a pent-up demand for divorces among low income people. And there were just hundreds of people, mostly women,

who wanted to get out of bad marriages and hadn't been able to afford it. So, I remember once doing thirteen divorces in one day at the Skowhegan District Court. And actually, after I left, Pine Tree Legal had to cut back, because that was really all our lawyers were doing. And it was an important service, but it wasn't changing the status or the prospects of low income people, it was just rearranging their domestic arrangements.

But I worked on some fairly large cases. I worked in the housing area and the – this is an amazing piece of history – one of the lawyers in the office that I was in, a guy named Mike Gentile, who still practices law in Maine, brought a case called *Desmond v. Hatchey*, which went to the Maine Supreme Court and ended debtors' prison in Maine, which we had until about 1972, where people could actually be sent to jail for nonpayment of bills and kept there until they could pay. But even while they were there, the county charged them rent, so the amount they owed kept going up and up and up. And it [is] unbelievable, looking back on it, it's pretty amazing that this existed in Maine until the 1970s. I wasn't involved [directly] in the case, but it was in the office that I was in, and that was a very important case that basically said: you can't lock up somebody just because they can't pay their bills.

So, it was mostly pretty routine landlord/tenant work, as I mentioned, a lot of divorces, occasionally there'd be a land dispute, but it was civil work, not criminal. Legal Services didn't do criminal work; this was all civil work. So I did that from the summer of 1969 until the end of 1971, about two-and-a-half years, I worked in Pine Tree in Skowhegan.

AL: And I recall that later, maybe in the '80s, Pine Tree Legal came out with a book, *Do Your Own Divorce in Maine*?

AK: Yes, I think that's right.

AL: And I am guessing that probably came out of the high demand that they -

AK: Yes, I think when they decided that they couldn't devote the resources, the divorces were crowding out all other kinds of representation, and I think they decided that that really wasn't practical. So they – I had forgotten that, that was after I left – but they came out with a kind of 'how to do your own uncontested divorce' because ninety-five out of a hundred of these were uncontested, nobody argued about it. Occasionally there were children involved, but it was mostly just people that had been living together and wanted out and hadn't ever been able to [take the legal steps to] do so.

AL: I want to jump back to your growing up in Alexandria and talk, what were your parents' names and what did they do for work?

AK: My father's name was Stanley King, his name was Angus Stanley King (I'm 'Junior'), but he went by Stanley King. He was a small town lawyer in Alexandria, starting in the '30s. He graduated from college in the late '20s and [] went to work as a school teacher, and then went to night law school and graduated from law school in the Depression and worked as a

lawyer. [He] didn't make much money, never made much money, but he was a solo practitioner lawyer in Alexandria at a time when Alexandria wasn't so much a suburb of Washington as it is today. Today, Washington and Alexandria are really almost one city, although I am sure people down there would not agree with me, but in those days Alexandria had a very separate identity, had its own economy, and there weren't as many commuters into Washington. As a kid, we would go into Washington once or twice a year, when it was literally fifteen minutes away, it just seemed like a long way away. So Dad was a small town lawyer.

My mom's name was Ellen Ticer King. Both of them grew up in Alexandria, so I'm a true native of that area, which is unusual. Many people have lived in Washington, but not many people have family [there]. My family went back at least to the Civil War. My mother grew up in Alexandria. Her father was the mayor of Alexandria in the '20s, and she was a school teacher. And both my parents went to William and Mary, at different times. Mom went to William and Mary on a scholarship that required that when she got out of college, she had to teach in Virginia for a year or two for each year of her scholarship. So she [p/o] taught school at Fairfax County, Virginia. My dad [also had been] a school teacher, he taught high school mathematics. They were married in the late '30s, my sister was born in 1939, and my mom at that point became a full time mom and volunteer. She stopped teaching, and in those days you could have a single income earner and get by. Today, that's much more unusual.

Both my parents were Roosevelt Democrats, old line, New Deal – I guess you'd call them liberal Democrats today. And the most important event of my youth was the integration of the schools. *Brown v. Board of Education* occurred in 1954. And in 1959, when I was a freshman in high school, my high school was the first high school in the state of Virginia to be integrated, two black children in a public, white high school of fourteen hundred kids. And Virginia sort of went crazy during that period, very bad leadership. It's a great example of how much difference leadership can make. I'm convinced that we all have within us the capacity to be good and generous and tolerant, and also the capacity to be mean and hateful and intolerant, and a lot depends on which direction we're led. And at that time, the leadership in Virginia, either because they believed it or because they thought it was politically expedient (I think it was probably more of the latter) were racist and determined to block integration, to stop it [at all costs]. And they passed a series of laws under the title 'Massive Resistance,' and one of the laws, the most egregious law, actually said that the moment a black child crossed the threshold of a white school, that school was, at that moment, automatically closed. And there were counties in Virginia that had no public schools for five to ten years under this law.

And it was just, it was incredible, and at that point my father, who was a rather mild-mannered, courtly Southern gentleman kind of guy, couldn't stand it, and he got involved. When they started to talk about closing the schools, that was it for him, and he got active and went to Richmond and lobbied against the law. He wasn't a wild-eyed liberal by any means, but this was too much. To him, the public schools were the heart of democracy and anybody that threatened that was just wrong. I remember him saying once that – we lived on a street called Quaker Lane – he said, "I'm like that turtle that wants to cross Quaker Lane, and in order to get across, you have to first stick your neck out." And that's what he did. And it cost him politically, later in his

life, which I'll mention. So that was a very important influence on me, growing up. To live through that, to see my parents take an active role in that period of the Civil Rights movement. [p/o]

Now another quick story – and I know this is about George Mitchell, and not about me – but it's a very interesting story from that period. As I mentioned, Dad was a small town lawyer. In the early '50s – 1951, '52 – he was in the federal District Court in Arlington, Virginia, which is adjacent to Alexandria, on some kind of routine matter. It was what was called 'motion day,' which is when a lot of lawyers go in and they have little things that the judge rules on, evidence or something; it's not a trial, but these motions. So there may have been, I don't know, eight, ten, twenty lawyers in the courtroom, and in the midst of this proceeding the U.S. Marshals walked in with a man in handcuffs who was a self-confessed Communist, who had been handing out Communist literature at the Pentagon. And the judge examined this guy and determined that he was indigent, and under the federal law at the time was entitled to an attorney. And so the judge looked up at this room full of attorneys and said, "Who will represent this man?" And all of the attorneys sort of [] averted their eyes, because this was the height of McCarthy and the Red Scare, and everybody was afraid to be labeled a Communist or to be seen with a Communist; everybody was under suspicion. It was a very dark period in American history. Margaret Chase Smith once told me, "You had to be careful who you had lunch with in the Capitol Dining Room during this period." And my dad raised his hand and said, "Well, if he needs a lawyer, I'll do it." Very matter of fact, and talked to the guy, and I don't know what happened, he plead him guilty and they paid a hundred dollar fine and that was the end of it.

So about two years later, a position became open in the federal court system, called U.S. commissioner, which was a predecessor of a job called federal magistrate which exists today. It's like a junior varsity federal district judge. They're like judges, but they were part-time and they handled minor cases, minor matters in federal court. A perfect example is parking violations at the Pentagon would be something that the U.S. commissioner would handle. So anyway, this U.S. commissioner job in northern Virginia came open, and the judge who had been in the court that day was actually based in Norfolk, Virginia, and it was his job to appoint this U.S. commissioner. So his clerk came to him and said, "We have a U.S. commissioner position opened up in northern Virginia," and, "who do you want to appoint?" And the judge said, "I can't remember his name, but find that guy who had the guts to take the Communist that day." And my dad became U.S. commissioner. And later, when they upgraded the job to what's now called federal magistrate, he was one of the first, I think, four federal magistrates in the country, all relating back to his willingness to do something, which he probably at the time thought was routine, but what was in retrospect [was] somewhat courageous. And so that was an important story in our family.

AL: Did they talk openly about politics and the current events and things like that?

AK: Yes, [absolutely]. Different families talk about different things at the dinner table. Sometimes it's sports, sometimes it's business, sometimes it's this or that, in our case it was politics. It was Adlai Stevenson and Richard Nixon and Eisenhower and Civil Rights and Harry

Flood Byrd and Kennedy and all of that stuff. I think my dad may have run for city attorney or something at one point before I was born and lost, [but] neither one of them were active in the sense of being candidates for the legislature or anything. But both were very interested in public affairs, and I grew up with a strong sense about public affairs and public service.

And then when I was sixteen, which is an impressionable age, John F. Kennedy was elected president. And Kennedy inspired a whole generation of Americans to public service. I mean it's just no question that my life was changed; Kennedy made it cool to be a public servant, to be in politics, it was something you aspired to, the best and the brightest and all that kind of thing. And this was an idealistic period; all these themes came together during that period of Kennedy, the Civil Rights movement, which was a very big deal in my life. I was at the March on Washington, I heard Martin Luther King deliver the "I Have a Dream" speech in August of 1963. I was nineteen years old and I, of my own volition, went to the march. My parents didn't go, I went, spent the night in a church and marched the next day and heard Peter, Paul and Mary sing *If I Had a Hammer* at the Washington Monument, and heard Dr. King make the speech at the Lincoln Memorial.

AL: It must have been incredibly powerful to have that memory.

AK: Oh, it's one of those things where you learn in life – [that] you go to stuff, like Mary and I went to Obama's inauguration, you just go. [p/o] So all of those things, I was very fortunate in the time of my life and in the people around me and in the parents that I had. My dad was a great student of history, particularly the Civil War. My growing up, I can see him sitting in the living room reading [books on] the Civil War. And an interesting thing about my dad was, I learned very little from him in a direct way. He was a lot older than I was, he was forty-something when I was born, and he was a very shy man, and he wasn't one for giving advice, or for interacting much at all. What I learned from him I learned from example. He was a wonderful guy, I don't mean to imply that he was neglectful or anything, but he wasn't a dad where we had long walks in the woods and talks about philosophy, it just wasn't the way he was. But he certainly taught me a lot by example, and just by absorption in the house when [] he and Mom would talk about [public issues].

So basically it was really absorbing this strong moral sense. Dad was the most honest man I ever met. We were very much involved in the church, went to church every Sunday, church was a very big deal in our family. If my mother had been born thirty or forty years later, she'd have been a bishop, and as it was, she was head of the Women of the Episcopal Church for the Diocese of Virginia, so she [had a] long history, and very strong memories of church and church going, dad was part of that. He used to wear a tailcoat to church on Easter Sunday, a formal, long tuxedo with tails and the tie and everything [].

So that that was sort of my growing up, [which included] a deep sense, a deep interest in politics, but also in public service and in the ability of the government to help people and do the right thing. And then you weave through that civil rights, which was a very heady time, because it was so clear, the right and wrong was so clear. Bob Dylan has a song [*Bob Dylan's Dream*]:

“How easy it was to tell wrong from right, it was as easy as to tell black from white,” and there’s a certain exhilaration to being, to feeling anyway, that you’re on the right side of history, that you’re doing the right thing, and of course being from the South, there was also a bit of excitement that you were departing from the norms. Alexandria wasn’t Mississippi, but it was not Cambridge, Massachusetts, either. I grew up in segregated neighborhoods, [with] segregated schools. There were three public high schools in our town, two white and one black. I did not know one single solitary soul at the black high school. None. They may as well have been on another planet. None, which is really amazing when you think about it, growing up in high school, four years, playing sports and everything; of course the teams never played each other, and that was just life at that time. So being involved in civil rights [just] felt [right], and that was very much a part of my growing up. So you weave all those things together, and I guess that’s part of who I am.

AL: Right. And going to law school, was that from observing your father and his work and having that same - ?

AK: Well it was part of it, but it was really more not knowing what else to do. I graduated from Dartmouth in 1966 and received a Rotary International Fellowship, and I don’t know how many of those were given, I think one per state or something, but it was a really fantastic opportunity. Rotary is an international organization, and the idea was you could go anywhere in the world for a year of study. And I thought it would be interesting, and I don’t remember how I chose it, but I was going to go to the University of Stockholm and study international relations. And [I] was all set to go and in the summer, I had taken the law boards and had applied to law schools, but was going to defer. I don’t remember whether I’d been admitted or whether I just filed the application and said, “Hold on to this for a year.” But anyway, in like June, right after I graduated from college, the draft board at Alexandria informed me they wouldn’t let me leave the country to go to Sweden. Remember, Sweden was where people went to escape the draft. That wasn’t in my head, it was just a coincidence, but they said no, you can’t go.

So all of a sudden I didn’t have a plan, but I had applied to law school. So I called up the law school and said, “Here I am,” and, “can I come this fall instead of next fall?” And they said, “Yes.” Probably they said yes because: a) I’d gone to Dartmouth; and, b) I was from Virginia, so those two things worked in my favor. So anyway, I went to law school without really having a lot of passion about being a lawyer, but I really didn’t know what else to do, and it was what my dad did, and you know how you do those things. And so went to law school, and then after law school ended up joining the National Legal Services Program and I was sent to Maine.

[The program] called me and told me I had three choices: I could go to [] Alexandria, Louisiana, the Rose Bud Sioux Indian Reservation in South Dakota, or Pine Tree Legal Assistance in Maine. And having grown up in the South I [was ready] to get out of that scene, and I didn’t really want to go to Louisiana and I remember saying to the guy, “I don’t speak much Sioux, so I don’t know whether I want to do that.” And [since] I had gone to college in New Hampshire [and] my wife was from Vermont, [p/o] I said, “Okay, I guess it’s Maine.” It was essentially a process of elimination. Interesting side story is that the guy who eventually

ended up in that job, in the same job in South Dakota, ended up governor of South Dakota, which is sort of weird.

So I came to Maine in the summer of 1969 for Pine Tree, and expected to be in Portland – I'd never heard of anything but Portland, [but] they said, "No, you're going to Skowhegan," and [we] drove over from Vermont, and went to Skowhegan and just loved it. Made some good friends there, people I'm still friends with, and [we] were there for two and half years. And then I had this idea that I wanted to work in Washington, I wanted to work in politics; I'd always had this political thing. And I applied to a whole bunch of people (and we're going to get to George Mitchell in about five minutes here, or two minutes). I applied to a whole bunch of people for jobs, all the traditional Democratic senators, Teddy Kennedy and Birch Bayh and Alan Cranston and all these people, and got nowhere. And a fellow that I met, well back up just a minute, one of my characteristics, and I don't know where it comes from, I think it has something to do with being raised in a small town, but I have an exalted sense of what's possible. Maybe it's an exalted sense of the importance of oneself, [but whatever it is], is I'm not shy about putting myself forward. And I had heard that there was a guy living in Maine, this would be in the late '60s, named Richard Goodwin, who had been John F. Kennedy's chief speech writer. He's married to Doris Kearns Goodwin, the historian.

AL: Right.

AK: Doris Kearns Goodwin, Richard Goodwin is her husband. And he's the guy who wrote "Ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country." He was one of Kennedy's most, really one of his best speech writers. Anyway, he had a house up in Kingfield, Maine, [or so] I heard []. So I figured this would be an interesting guy to meet, so I contrived to meet him somehow, and wrote him a letter or something, and my wife ended up doing some secretarial work for him. And I went over to talk to him about going to work for a senator, because I figured he'd know these people. And we went through this long list, and I'll never forget, one of the names on the list was Eugene McCarthy, the guy that ran for president, and I remember saying, I still remember this, I said, "Well I've heard McCarthy's not a very nice guy." And Goodwin said, "Angus, if you're looking for nice guys, you're in the wrong racket." He said, "Forget it, if that's a criteria." I'll never forget that. But we went down all the list, and he was going to give me an entree to some of these offices. Nothing panned out. But, as I was leaving his house he said, "You know, your congressman, Bill Hathaway, is running for the U.S. Senate against Margaret Chase Smith. He doesn't have much of a chance, but why don't you call him up?"

So I stopped at Hathaway's office when I was in Washington; he was then a congressman, he represented northern Maine, the 2nd District of Maine, and left a resume with his – I don't think I met him, I might of, he claims I did, I don't remember it – but anyway, I left a resume. And I put on the resume that my wife was a good secretary and that I could work in the campaign and that they could have the two of us, he could have the two of us for \$150 a week, that was the deal. Years later, I found that resume in the files. And the guy who was Hathaway's chief of staff had – and I'd listed Goodwin as a reference – and the guy who was the chief of staff who

became a close friend, Al Gamache, I found in Al's writing, on my resume, he had clearly called, he said Goodwin [] says: "Doesn't know much about him, but she's a hell of a secretary." And that's how we got the job.

And so in January of 1972 Edie and I and our [] son, one-and-a-half-year-old son (who's now thirty-nine and lives in Portland), moved to Portland from Skowhegan, lived in the Sheraton Eastland Hotel, because the owner of the hotel was a big supporter of Democrats and Hathaway.

AL: Was that the Dunfey family?

AK: The Dunfeys, exactly, Bob Dunfey. And Edie and I became two-thirds of the professional 'Hathaway for Senate' staff. The other third was Al Gamache, who had been the chief of staff and was now the campaign manager, and Al spent practically all of his time raising money, and Edie was the bookkeeper, secretary, office manager, and my first job was driving Hathaway around and being sort of what they call the body man, the guy who's with the candidate and takes notes and sends notes and all that kind of stuff. And it was during that period, I don't remember when it is, George Mitchell would probably deny this, but I remember it, that I first met George Mitchell. This was 1972, and I'm not sure of the timing, but at some point, and it may have been at this period, George was chairman of the Democratic Party in Maine. [p/o] Anyway, part of this campaign, part of my job was to work on whatever needed doing and part of it was, Teddy Kennedy was coming to Biddeford, Maine, on behalf of Hathaway – Teddy came to Maine on behalf of a lot of Democratic candidates, and they always sent him to either Biddeford or Lewiston, where all the Catholics [] were. And Kennedy once joked to Hathaway that he heard that the only two cities in Maine were Biddeford and Lewiston, because that's where he always [went] – they never sent him anywhere else, never sent him to Bangor.

So anyway, Kennedy was coming to Biddeford, and he was going to speak at the Biddeford High School [], and I was the liaison for the Hathaway campaign on the set up for this big deal, and how the stage was going to be and how many seats. And I remember working with Kennedy's advance guy, a guy named Gene Delaya, I don't know why I remember that name forty years later but there it is. Anyway, so one of the questions was: who gets to sit on the stage? This is 1972; Mitchell is planning to run for governor in 1974. He wanted to be on the stage and I wouldn't let him, and he was mad as hell. I'm this twenty-eight year old guy, and I can't believe I would have made that decision by myself, but I think the decision was: we only want Biddeford, we only want local politicians.

(Pause in taping)

AK: I don't think I would have made that decision on my own, but I can't remember, all I remember was that he was mad. And so my first meeting with George Mitchell was not the best, because when you're in a political situation, everything is exaggerated. I'm sure he thought that this was very important; it was an opportunity to appear on the stage with Kennedy and Hathaway. But he wasn't a candidate yet at the time, and I don't even think he was party chair,

he may have been. But my guess is that my instructions were, we only want local people on the stage, or whatever it was, but that's my first memory of George Mitchell, was being the object of his demonstrative unhappiness.

AL: And that was quite a campaign, that you were -

AK: In '72, oh yeah, it was an amazing campaign. And Hathaway is an absolutely wonderful guy, Goodwin was wrong, there are nice people in politics and Hathaway was one of them, as was Ken Curtis, who was the governor of Maine during that period, [as was George Mitchell, of course]. Wonderful, absolutely sensational person. Yes, Hathaway was a congressman, he'd been a congressman since '64, he ran for Congress in '62 and lost, he ran again in '64 and was elected in the Lyndon Johnson landslide [] in 1964. So he'd served in Congress for eight years, from '64 to '72, and decided to run against Margaret Chase Smith and everybody thought he was absolutely crazy. She was an icon, she'd been in Congress since 1938, she was a heroine, she was the Olympia Snowe of that period, even more iconic, if you can imagine. I mean she was a national figure; she was the first woman to be placed into nomination for president by a major party.

AL: And her Declaration.

AK: Declaration of Conscience, I mean she was, just as I say, an icon. And I don't really know [], I ought to sit down and ask [] Hathaway [] what really went through his head when he decided to run. I think basically what went through his head is what goes through the heads of a lot of congressmen, and that is, they hate being in [the House] and they'd like to be in the Senate. He once told me that being in the House of Representatives is the worst job in America, and being in the Senate is the best. Having to run every two years, and you're one of 435, and you can't really get anything done until you've been there thirty years. It's the same reason Tom Allen ran against Susan Collins. He got clobbered, he probably knew in his heart he didn't have much of a chance, but he figured, I'll take the chance because I can't stand what I am doing now. I mean, I'm guessing, I don't know, but that is probably what motivated Hathaway.

But anyway, [Hathaway] decided to run, and he basically ran as sort of a nice guy. And I can't say that this was a deliberate strategy, but at some point we realized that the real issue was her age. She was seventy-six. She was perfectly okay, perfectly with it, but that meant she would have been in her early eighties at the end of her term. And at some point it jumped out us, in the polling, that [] among the people who didn't know her age, she won sixty/fifty. Among people who knew her age, she lost sixty/fifty. So we never did a thing, in fact I was explicitly instructed never, ever, under any circumstances, mention her age. We were told not to ever raise it, because it would backfire. So Hathaway never mentioned it, nobody ever mentioned it.

But two things happened. One was, the press mentioned her age every time they mentioned her. It was like an automatic, "Senator Margaret Chase Smith, comma, seventy-six year old lawmaker, comma." So it was constantly mentioned in any story about the campaign. But the second thing was she decided, and she told me later the reason (I don't know if it's true but I'll

tell you the story about her) but in any case, she decided not to campaign. She did nothing. She didn't come back to Maine, she didn't buy any television ads, she literally didn't spend a dollar on the campaign. [She] basically said, 'the people of Maine know who I am and I don't need to remind them,' or something like that. And it came across in several ways. One, it came across as kind of arrogant; she's taking us for granted. But two, it left the false impression that maybe she really was out of it, by not showing up, by not participating, by not making speeches, it created [the impression]. When you read "seventy-six," and then you read that she wasn't going to be here, she wasn't doing anything, you thought, 'well maybe she's too old.' Wasn't true, but she fed that perception, and Hathaway won. And he won basically because people felt, 'we like Margaret, but she's had her time and she's probably too old and this seems like a nice, young guy.' And he had some wonderful advertisements that were very down-to-earth. He was a very, was and is, a very down-to-earth guy, and easy to like, funny and amiable and smart.

Now, Margaret [had a different] version of [this story]. I got to know her fairly well after I returned to Maine, in the '80s, when I worked for Public Broadcasting. I did a documentary about her, and got to know her in the course of doing that, and then really became friends and Mary and I used to go up every couple of months and have lunch with her, and we've got a wonderful picture of her with our son, Ben, as a tiny baby, and [we] really became friends. As was typical of her, I went up and spent a morning with her to talk about this documentary, and I came home and said to Mary, "I feel awkward about this because I never mentioned that I'd worked for Hathaway in the campaign, and I don't want her to find that out and think I'm flying under false pretenses or something." So I wrote her a letter and I said, "Dear Senator Smith, You should be aware that in 1972, I worked for Senator Hathaway in the campaign against you, and worked in his office after he was elected. And if for that reason you don't want to go ahead with this project, that's all right, I'll understand." Typical Margaret Chase Smith, she wrote back, "Dear Angus King" – she always wrote your full name – "Dear Angus King, it is perfectly all right with me that you once worked for Mr. Hathaway. Sincerely yours, Margaret Chase Smith." That was it.

AL: End of story.

AK: End of story. And so we went ahead and did the program, had a lot of fun and got to know her. And at one point, and this was after the program was filmed, unfortunately, she told me the story of that election. And her version was, that she had decided in '71 or so, to not run again. She was going to retire, she was tired, and she *was* seventy-six. And then, a guy named Bob Monks, who's still around, who at that time was in his thirties or something like that, Bob Monks decided to run against her in a Republican primary. And what she told me, she said, "I wasn't going to run again, but when that boy said he was going to run against me, well, I was just not going to stand for that." And it just made her mad.

(Outside interruption)

AK: Anyway, she said, "When that boy decided to run against me, I just wasn't going to stand for it." So she crushed him in the primary, and then after that she didn't care. She basically said,

“I wanted to teach him a lesson, I didn’t care about winning reelection because I’d already decided to retire.” Now, I think that’s a little revisionist history, I think she expected to win and didn’t think she had to do anything, because the primary, she *had* walked over him in the primary, over Monks, and she didn’t take it seriously. But her version was, it was always, she didn’t come right out and say, “I wanted to lose,” but her version was: I was really only running to beat Monks in the primary and after that I didn’t care. But it’s sort of an interesting little oral history in itself.

So anyway, I worked for Hathaway during that year, it was a huge upset, he won like fifty-three to forty-seven. On election night, over in Auburn, he turned to me and said, “Do you want to go to Washington?” And I hadn’t really thought about it, but I said, “Sure.” And so I went, and worked for him in the Senate for two-and-half years, from January of ‘73, when he was sworn in, to the middle of ‘75, but always with the idea of coming back to Maine. And in the middle of ‘75, decided it was time.

AL: What was your role on his staff?

AK: I was what they called a legislative assistant, or a legislative counsel; I think I was the only lawyer in the office. Even though I hadn’t, except for my Pine Tree experience, hadn’t really practiced much law. But the Democrats were in the majority, he was on the committee on Labor and Public Welfare, and was assigned to a subcommittee called the Subcommittee on Railroad Retirement. Railroad Retirement is a special federal retirement system, separate from Social Security or anything else, it’s a unique animal that was created in the ‘30s, and at that time actually it was somewhat controversial. So he was made chairman of the Subcommittee on Railroad Retirement; it was always the first subcommittee for a new Democrat on the Labor and Public Welfare Committee. And I was the chief counsel to the Subcommittee on Railroad Retirement of the Senate Committee on Labor and Public Welfare. The only prestigious thing about that is that that position had been held about fifteen years before by one Ted Sorensen, when John F. Kennedy was the chairman of the Subcommittee on Railroad Retirement of the Committee on Labor and Public Welfare. Sorensen, who was Kennedy’s guy, that was his official job for a time, so I always felt that I had [some special status because I had this job that once was held by Ted Sorensen].

Basically the way it worked, and it’s pretty typical, you’ll have a senator, and as governor I did the same thing, you have a staff of four or five policy people. I mean you’ve got a big staff, some answer mail and some answer the phone and some do press and all this kind of stuff, but you have a policy group, and basically you divide the universe into segments of policy, and you have one person whose responsibility it is to handle those things. And my job, I had education, labor, and I think transportation, and job training [], and then somebody else had budget and foreign policy. In other words, you take the jurisdiction of the Senate committees, and one staff member will be responsible for three or four, and one will be three or four; so I was a policy staff person on labor, transportation, education and those kinds of things.

So my job was to understand the bills that were coming across, analyze them, send him memos

explaining the issues on the bills that he was interested in, drafting amendments, working with other staff members to try to get amendments accepted in committee or whatever. And most of what I did was things that came before this committee, which at the time was education and labor stuff. So that was my job during that period.

AL: Let me flip the tape real quick.

End of CD One
CD Two

AL: We are now on Side B. And I was interested to know if you observed or had impressions about Senator Hathaway's relationship with the senior senator from Maine, Ed Muskie?

AK: Oh, sure. Their relationship was like two porcupines, which is very common, it's almost universal that if you have two senators from the same party, from the same state, there's a prickliness and a rivalry that always obtains. They were always checking each other's polls, and you would think they'd be natural allies, and actually the opposite is the case. He got along with Muskie, he was a friend of Muskie, he supported Muskie for president in '72 and all of those kinds of things. But they weren't close [], and there was always a kind of subterranean rivalry, just as I believe there is now between our two Republican senators. And that's not in any way unusual; I mean that was pretty universal.

But when the time came, if there was an issue of concern to Maine, they were absolutely in sync, they were together. But if it was other kinds of local politics, and of course it was exacerbated because Muskie at the time was a larger than life character, who was running for president. The year that Hathaway was running for the Senate, Muskie was running for president, so Muskie was sucking up most of the money in Maine for a campaign, and the attention, until Muskie lost in the later primaries. Well actually not the later primaries, in several of the earlier primaries, but through the winter of '72 Muskie was the guy that got all the attention.

And Mitchell was very close to Muskie, as you know [p/o]. I think at the time he was a lawyer in Portland, but was clearly involved in Muskie's campaign. In fact, one of the very first experiences of working for Hathaway was in January of 1972, like within a few days of starting my new job, there was a big dinner for Muskie in the Sheraton Eastland in Portland, and I don't know why I remember this but I remember being at the dinner. And I remember it was literally within the first few days, it was when I first met Charlie Micoleau, who then worked for Muskie, and I remember Mitchell speaking at that dinner. And the thing I remember from the dinner, and I don't remember what he said, but I remember there was a lot of joking going on, and he pulled out from under the podium a disconnected telephone, with the wires loose, that he claimed Muskie had thrown at him at one point, when he was working for him in Washington. Muskie had this incredible temper, and supposedly this was the telephone that he had ripped out of the wall and thrown at Mitchell for some offense or another. I just remember that story, I mean I remember Mitchell, I'm almost sure it was Mitchell who told the story. So anyway, yes, the relationship was complex, but not untypical for that situation.

AL: And so in '73-'74, George Mitchell is in Maine running for governor.

AK: Right.

AL: Did Hathaway's office at all provide support for that campaign?

AK: I'm sure they did, but I wasn't aware of it because it wasn't in my bailiwick. Al Gamache, who unfortunately has died, would be a wonderful source on that, because he was really Hathaway's political guy.

AL: Right.

AK: He was nominally chief of staff, but he was really the guy who was hooked back to Maine. He was from Lewiston, and I'm sure Hathaway supported Mitchell, but how active it was I don't know, I really don't know about their relationship. They've always been cordial and friendly, as far as I know. I don't think there was any rivalry. Again, I don't know of any reason that Hathaway wouldn't have supported Mitchell, but I wasn't aware of the office being involved, other than this was a Democrat who was running for governor and we were all Democrats.

AL: So you stayed there for about two-and-a-half years?

AK: Yes, I left in the mid-summer of 1975 and came back [to Maine]. I do remember vividly election night of 1974, because we were in the office on the phone to Maine, getting results, and two shocking things happened that night. One was Longley's election over Mitchell, as an Independent, and apparently Mitchell was [pretty upset]. I mean, I don't know, I don't have any knowledge of that, although I once talked to Jim Erwin, who was the Republican candidate that year, and he told me some story that I can't really remember about how mad Mitchell was that Longley had won, which I can imagine. And the other big shock was Peter Kyros, who had been the congressman from the 1st District for many years, was defeated by David Emery, and that was a big upset. So those were the two sort of shocking results of that year.

AL: Right. So you came back to Maine.

AK: I came back to Maine in 1975, came here to Brunswick, we had no connection to Brunswick. I think I knew one or two people, literally, one or two people here that I had met during the Hathaway campaign in '72, but we chose Brunswick really as a nice place to live. My wife at the time had grown up in Norwich, Vermont, right across the river from Hanover, New Hampshire, where Dartmouth is, and I think in some ways we were [recreating her hometown]. I basically said, "Look, you've gone with me the last few times, and now you choose." And she [] chose this area because of Bowdoin. In many ways it was what she'd grown up with, a college town, good hospital. And I looked around for jobs, I talked to a couple of law firms in Portland and didn't really get much interest, and ended up sharing space with a guy here in Brunswick,

not as a partnership, but just helping to pay the rent. And then a year later started a small law firm with two other young lawyers, and that's what I did until I went into the energy business in '83. So I practiced law essentially from the summer of '75 to I think the spring of '83, so about eight years, seven-and-a-half, eight years. And during that time is when I got involved with Public Broadcasting, and that's when I crossed paths with George Mitchell again.

I must have known him during the time with Hathaway, run across him, talked to him briefly and stuff, but I don't have any explicit recollection [p/o]. I do remember, during that period when I was practicing law, I had a friend, who turned out to be a very conservative Republican guy, I think he was one the last twenty-two percent that supported Bush. But anyway, I remember him telling me about being on a jury, or a grand jury or something, when Mitchell was U.S. attorney, and how incredibly impressed he'd been by Mitchell, by how smart he was and articulate, and I just remember that little story, my friend [] telling me how impressive this guy Mitchell was. And basically I knew him a little bit.

But my next most clear memory of him during that period involved Public Broadcasting. As you probably know, for fifteen years or so, I was a talk show host on PBS, on Channel 10, we called it Channel 10, now MPBN, and had a weekly public affairs show that was sort of modeled after the *Jim Lehrer News Hour*. It's still on, it's called *MaineWatch*, although at that time, first it was called *Statewide*, and then we were off the air for a year or so and then came back and called it *MaineWatch*. But in any case, sometime during that period, George Mitchell was appointed – this must have been '79 or '80 – was appointed federal district judge in Bangor. He was going to be -

AL: '77, '78.

AK: I thought it was later than that, but -

AL: He was appointed senator in May of '80, so he was -

AK: Yes, he was appointed senator by Brennan, when Muskie left to be secretary of state for the last year of the Carter presidency in '80, early '80, so he was, but he wasn't a judge for more than a year or so, was he?

AL: No, it was only like, no, it was a short time.

AK: Very short time.

AL: Yes.

AK: So anyway, I had known him, I guess, I must have known him. So we were doing this program and somehow I got it in my head that it would be cool to interview Mitchell before he went on the bench, sort of a 'say goodbye to politics interview,' and it would wonderful if that [tape] still existed, but I don't think it does. I don't think Public Broadcasting saves those tapes,

and I don't have them. So I had a half-hour interview with George Mitchell in, it was literally the day before or two days before he was to be sworn in as a judge. And we laughed about it, I mean the explicit, and this is so funny, in light of what all happened, the explicit premise of the program was, this was going to be George Mitchell's last public interview, because he was going to be a judge, and judges don't do interviews. And so it was reflections on his life, and politics and all of that kind of stuff, and we chatted and it was very pleasant, and as far as I can recall, a good program, and then he was going to be sworn in as a judge, like the next day or the day after. So this was going to be – the whole premise of the program was, this is Mitchell's last public statement before becoming a judge. I remember that very well. And then, all of a sudden he's a U.S. senator, and he has [about] ten thousand public interviews.

And then the next contact, I knew him and was in touch with him a bit when he was a senator, I don't remember too many specifics. But the next contact was a TV show, well there must have been a lot of contacts in the '80s that I don't remember, but the one I remember most explicitly was in '90 or '91, at the beginning of the Gulf War, the first Gulf War, under Bush the First. And there was this big climactic vote on giving the president the authority to invade, to go after Saddam. Remember Saddam had invaded Kuwait, and they were going to go back in, and there was this big congressional vote. And it was either hours before or the day before the vote, and we arranged a satellite connection to Washington and I interviewed Mitchell. At that time he was a senator, he wasn't majority leader [*sic* George Mitchell served as majority leader from 1989-1994], he was just a senator from Maine, and I interviewed him about that issue, via satellite; I was in Lewiston and he was in Washington on the screen. And I remember the interview reasonably well, and Mitchell opposed the vote, Mitchell was opposed to giving the president the authority to go into Iraq. And what I remember was that, the reason he was opposed basically was that he didn't feel that economic sanctions had been given adequate time to work, that we didn't need to invade because we were imposing economic sanctions and this was going to squeeze Saddam and he would back off.

And I remember at the time thinking he was wrong, and I remember him saying the Iraqi economy has contracted one percent in the last year, and if we had that happen here, we'd have riots in the streets and the government would be overthrown and this is what's going to happen in Iraq, we don't need to invade. And I remember at the time, and I don't remember to the extent that I pushed him (I don't think I did, I don't think I had the confidence at the time), but I remember at the time thinking that that was a misunderstanding of Saddam, that he didn't give a damn about his economy, and that everybody could be starving in the streets, and if he controlled the secret police and the army, he wasn't going to care.

I thought it was a – I don't like to use the word 'naïve' – but I thought it was a kind of – well, what it was, was, I think, a common problem of American foreign policy, which we are involved in now in Iraq and Afghanistan, of assuming other people think like us. Of assuming other people have our values and consciousness and traditions and everything else. And to Mitchell, who was a quintessential American politician, he couldn't imagine a regime able to withstand a contraction of the economy that would cause widespread dissatisfaction, but he misunderstood, I think, that this guy [Saddam] was an all-powerful dictator and he didn't care about that kind of

thing. But I remember having that thought at the time, that George is wrong about this, that he's assuming that the same kinds of pressures will work on Saddam that would work on him, or on Jimmy Carter or on George Bush, and I don't think that's the case.

And subsequently, as I've lived through Vietnam, and now Iraq and Afghanistan, I think the biggest problem with American foreign policy, the big mistakes come when we assume other countries with other cultures are like us, and they'll react the way we would react, and that they're rational and linear and all that kind of stuff. And often they aren't. And Afghanistan's a perfect example. Do you know the nickname of Afghanistan, the historical nickname, what it's called? The Graveyard of Empires. Nobody, since Alexander the Great, has been able to subdue Afghanistan. Nobody. The Russians, the British, I mean it's got this long history of outside countries trying to invade and do something there, and it's never worked.

It's a kind of cultural arrogance that we think we have the answers and that everybody else will, if we just show them how good democracy is, [just quietly agree]. I mean Bush was the same way [on] Iraq. Ironically, I once heard Mitchell deliver a speech on Iraq that was brilliant, that talked about Iraq's history and culture, and how inappropriate [our invasion] was. This was during the second Gulf War, the Bush invasion, and Mitchell did this, he was up in Augusta and he did this absolutely brilliant analysis of the history of Iraq and how it wasn't really a country, and the British Civil Service drew the line on the map after World War I and brought these, and they never were together, and the Sunis, the Shiites and the Kurds, it was an incredible piece of historical analysis. But by and large, our foreign policy is driven by our world view, and I think this was the case – I've strayed from the topic – but I think this was the case with George, back in '91 or whatever it was.

And then as governor, I had contact with him from time to time. Of course he left the Senate -

AL: He left the Senate at the end of '94.

AK: Yes, so he left the Senate the year I was elected governor, so we really never had that opportunity to work together, because the governor works with the delegation fairly closely, goes to Washington once or twice a year and worked on issues, [but regrettably] he was gone [when I took office]. I was elected in '94, and he left and Olympia [Snowe] was elected to replace him in '94, so she was the senator that I worked with. It was her and [Bill] Cohen at first, and then Cohen left and Susan [Collins] went in, in '96, so I overlapped two years with Cohen and worked with him very closely on the BRAC process and other things.

During the time I was governor, I would see George from time to time and at events, and I have come to think that he is, that George Mitchell is one, if not *the*, one of the two or three most able public officials of his generation. He should have been president. And I can't think of anybody else I would say that about. And I kept trying to get him to run, I would tell him at meetings and say it publicly. I remember being at this meeting in Augusta, the one where he gave this analysis of Iraq, and I raised my hand and said, "Senator, would you please run for president?" And he would have been elected in 2004, if he had run that year, he would have gotten the nomination

against John Kerry and he would have beaten George Bush. If you remember how awful a candidate John Kerry was, and it was still fairly close, Mitchell would have killed Bush. And he would have been [a great president, I'm convinced].

He is one of the smartest people I've ever known, in my whole life, in any circumstance. And he has really good judgment, great experience, patience, a sense of humor, he's a brilliant speaker and I think he would have been a great president. And, I just think the timing wasn't right. He could have run in '04, by the time '08 came around, he was probably on the old side, although I think he's younger than McCain, and he looks and acts younger than McCain. And now the torch has been passed to a new generation. So that's the story of my relationship with Mitchell.

AL: Yeah, and so in '83, you left the practice of law and went into energy management?

AK: Correct. I went into energy; [] one of my clients was a small company that was based in Portland and Boston that did alternative energy, hydro-power mostly, small dams around New England. We did work in New Hampshire, Maine and Massachusetts, and then we developed a large biomass plant that burns wood waste up in Greenville, that's still there. So that was what I did from '83 to '89. At the company Christmas party in 1988, my little company went from forty employees to four. The owners called everyone in during the Christmas party and laid them off, and I was one of them. It was a pretty bizarre experience, as you can imagine. And during the prior year – I don't know how much of this you want, do you want the story of how I got rich and ran for governor? It's kind of a funny story.

AL: I think a little a bit of it is good for the project.

AK: Well, I had had an idea while working for this company about selling conservation in the same way that you sold power. In other words, to sell the utility energy savings on a per kilowatt hour basis, the same way you'd sell them power. The theory being that if you saved them energy, that was power that they didn't have to buy; you see, you get the theory? If your demand is growing, and if you need a hundred million more kilowatt hours next year than you have this year, you've got really two choices. The principle one is, you buy those hundred million kilowatt hours somewhere [or] you build a new plant []. Or, you save a hundred million kilowatt hours somewhere else, and that gives you a hundred million that you already have that you can sell to somebody else, you don't have to build a new plant. That was my idea.

And I went to CMP and said, "You ought to consider this, because it costs half as much to save power than it does to generate power. So instead of paying eight cents a kilowatt hour for new power, you can pay me three cents a kilowatt hour for saved kilowatt hours that you can then resell, and everybody wins." And CMP thought it was an interesting idea, they went to the PUC, the PUC said, "It's an interesting idea, let's try it." And so when I was laid off at this Christmas party, the owners said, "What do you want to do?" And I said "Well, I'd like the ..." – I had a contract for employment, for a year, for another year – and I said, "I'll tell you what, I'll take half my contract and the rights to this crazy idea of selling conservation." And they thought it was a crazy idea and it wasn't worth anything, so they said, "Fine."

And so in January of 1989 I started this little company, Northeast Energy Management. I had been in discussions with CMP anyway, under this other company, and so I signed a contract with them to find, I think it was forty-eight million kilowatt hours a year of savings, for a set price, that they would pay year after year. And nobody had ever done this before, in this way, this was a unique way of structuring an energy conservation program. I shouldn't say it was totally unique, but it had not been done in this exact way before. Anyway, [I] signed a contract, hired a couple of people, and went out and started finding places to save energy, one of which was Bowdoin College, Colby College, Maine Medical Center, a couple of paper mills, I think more than one paper mill, a printing plant. We ended up doing forty-eight different projects.

[I] had a very difficult time finding financing for the business, because it was such a new idea the banks couldn't really understand it. I got turned down by three or four, five banks, finally found a bank that was willing to take a chance, and it worked. It took four years; we did about twelve million dollars worth of construction, about half of which was simply changing light fixtures. But I'll give you a very small example involving Bowdoin.

At Farley Field House, in the pool, up above the pool is a big fan and the fan is there in order to exhaust the moist air so it doesn't get moldy and too wet, and that fan was going all the time. That was the way it was designed, [] the fan went all the time, it was sucking not only moist air but warm air, it was sucking heat out of the place. And so I had engineers that I'd hired, and they designed a system where we didn't change the fan or anything, but we put a little sensor, a little electronic sensor in the ceiling that determines the moisture level, and when the moisture level starts to creep up, it sends a signal and turns the fan on quite slowly, just enough to control it. If it gets really moist, for some reason, it turns the fan faster, and if the humidity is down where it ought to be, it turns the fan off. It saves Bowdoin, I don't know, ten or fifteen thousand dollars a year on their electric bill, and a lot of money on their heat because you can imagine, this giant fan is also sucking the heat out the building. So the fan only operates, in other words, when it's necessary.

That's the kind of thing that we did, all over Maine. And it worked. So what I ended up with at the end of four-and-a-half years was these forty-eight projects, all of which were generating income. I was being paid my little three cents a kilowatt hour by CMP, and so I had an income stream that was good for fifteen years. That was the length of the contract, as long as the project was still in place. In other words, as long as that fan was still doing what it was supposed to do. And we had to check them every year and all that kind of stuff. And I was at a classic place that entrepreneurs often reach, where you either cash out and do something else, or you bet the whole thing and get bigger. You refinance and do it in New Hampshire, or Arizona or some place. And I just decided it was already worth more money than [anybody] in my family had ever had in a thousand years, and I had lived through the eighties where a lot of people in Portland, in Maine, had gotten very wealthy and then they'd gotten greedy and they'd lost it. And I said, "I'm not going to do that." So, I was offered a substantial hunk of dough for this business, and sold it in January of '94 and ran for governor.

So my life was changed really by that idea, which then turned into the business, and then it gave me the wherewithal to run for governor as an independent, and I couldn't have done it without the [money], I funded about half of my campaign. It's an interesting comparison – when Hathaway ran for the Senate in '72, I remember we raised about \$210,000, that was a record for a political campaign in Maine at that time. My campaign for governor, in '94, twenty-two years later, was \$1.6 million. Now it's, who knows, two, three million. But I funded half of it, I wrote checks for about \$800,000 and raised \$800,000. But without the money that I contributed I couldn't have been elected, because I had to achieve name recognition mostly through television. I had nine or ten percent name recognition when I started and Joe Brennan, who was my [Democratic] opponent, had ninety-four percent. And the other, do you know who my Republican opponent was in '94? It's a bit of Maine history.

AL: I don't know if I do.

AK: Susan Collins.

AL: Was she really? I don't think I knew that.

AK: Yes, absolutely, she was who I defeated for governor in '94.

AL: Oh, and she then she ran for the Senate.

AK: Two years later, she ran for the Senate.

AL: Okay.

AK: Yes. And she and I are now good friends, but she was my opponent in '94.

AL: Well, I think people are interested to know, was your decision to run as an Independent strategic or ideological?

AK: You ask exactly the right question, and the answer is both.

AL: Okay.

AK: I grew up as a Democrat, as a fairly liberal Democrat, and was enrolled as a Democrat into the early '90s. But because of my job at Public Broadcasting, which started in 1976 and ran throughout the '80s, I was never an active Democrat. In other words, I was a journalist.

AL: And neutral.

AK: And neutral. And I hosted debates between candidates, so I couldn't be carrying [a partisan] flag and all that kind of stuff []. So I was nominally a Democrat, but wasn't an active Democrat. The decision to run as an Independent really was two-fold, it was part strategic and

part ideological. The ideological part was, I really was somewhat disenchanted about the proclivity of the Democrats to tax and spend. As I'd been in business, I became more conservative, particularly on fiscal matters, and I was just uncomfortable with that.

Plus, and this is where ideology and strategy sort of mix, there are certain groups, or at least there were in the '90s that were, I think of them as the gatekeepers of Democratic politics, and if you don't pass muster with those groups, you're not going to get the nomination. One of them was the teachers' union, one of them is the state employees' union, those are probably the two biggest organized groups, and I could never have passed muster with those groups. I knew it because I believed that we had to reduce the size of the state government, and I believed in accountability in schools, and we have to test and see if we're getting what we are paying for and all those kinds of things. So I knew that I wasn't going to be able to, it was a lost cause, because it wasn't me. I could have said what they wanted to hear, but it wasn't who I was.

And then the strategic part was Joe Brennan was going to be the Democratic nominee. End of sentence. And my clear understanding, impression, belief, which I think was true and proven true, was that Joe Brennan could not lose the Democratic nomination and could not win the general election. So if I wanted to be governor and if I thought I had something to offer and I thought it was important, being an Independent was the only path. I couldn't be a Republican, because I'm very liberal socially, I hope that 'No' wins today on 'One' [a 'People's Veto' Maine referendum on same-sex marriage legislation], I'm pro-choice, the social stuff of the Republicans I just couldn't abide, and so that was not an option. So it was really the only option and it was proven true, because some very good people ran against Joe Brennan in that Democratic primary and were absolutely, monumentally crushed, Tom Allen being one of them. There were two or three other Democratic candidates that year and Brennan got eighty percent of the vote, or seventy or something, in the primary.

That's why I say it was partially ideological but it was – I'm open about it – it was partially strategic. I knew that it was utterly impossible, if I wanted to be governor [it would not be as a Democrat]. [] We sat right in that living room with a group of eight or ten people and talked about it. And some thought I was crazy to run as an Independent, and I remember one was Buzz Fitzgerald, the president of Bath Iron Works, who was a good friend, he sat right there and he thought I was nuts, and later on he told me I was a genius. There's not the slightest question that had I run in the Democratic primary, I wouldn't have had a prayer, no matter how brilliant I'd been or anything else. So it was very much sort of mixed.

AL: And so you were only the second Independent governor that we've had.

AK: That's right, Jim Longley [was the first].

AL: Did that invite people to make comparisons, or did that, was really not the issue?

AK: Well it certainly helped me in the campaign. People in Maine loved Longley. People in Augusta can't stand him. He was not, I don't know if I want to say it that boldly, he was not a –

I will say this, he wasn't a very effective governor, because he had so little tolerance for the political process. He didn't like the legislature, he didn't work with the legislature, virtually all of his vetoes were overridden, he had very little success in that sense. But out in the state, people really liked him, he was feisty and tough and he was, again -

AL: Independent.

AK: He was independent, he was a businessman, and all that kind of thing. So actually, he helped me. I used to go out and campaign and people would say, "Oh yeah, well, you're going to be like Longley, he's one of the best governors we ever had." So it didn't help me with the insiders, but I wasn't going to get them anyway. So in that sense, it was probably an asset. The big reason it was an asset though had nothing to do with Longley, it had everything to do with the fact that we had had an Independent, it was thinkable. The biggest problem an Independent has in running for office in the United States is convincing enough voters that it's for real, that it's credible, that it could happen and that you're not wasting your vote.

In New Jersey today, this guy Daggett, who's running as an Independent, is a very credible candidate, and from what I can gather, he would be a very good governor. But he didn't have the money to compete with these other two guys and I don't think he's going to make it. But boy, a little bit more, he'll probably get fifteen or twenty percent, although I've heard he's been falling lately. But anyway, the fact that we had had an Independent governor before and it hadn't been a disaster, at least as far as the rest of the state was concerned, helped me because it made it thinkable, it wasn't such a completely wacky idea.

AL: Right. I know I've taken a lot of your time, I wonder if there's any last things that maybe I haven't asked you that you think is important to add?

AK: Well, I can't adequately express my admiration for George Mitchell. And it's in part because of his public service, but also in large part because of his service after public service. His service in Ireland, his current service in the Middle East. His synthesis of high intelligence, and when I say high intelligence I mean 'off the scale' high intelligence, [and adherence to principle, is an almost unique phenomenon]. As I say, I think he's just one of the smartest people I know, but he also has this solid grounding in Waterville, Maine, and his experiences as a young man and his not coming from a privileged background, and his values. I think he's of the great people I've ever known. And I think it's one of those things where if things had been slightly different in timing and the way life has its twists and turns, he would have been president, and would have been a great president. And I just feel fortunate to have known him. He's a very special guy.

And I'm just trying to think of other ways to put it. I remember a lecture in college by a guy, I think his name was Webber, and he talked about America, and he said something that has really stuck with me. And a lot of people have spent a lot of time trying to figure out what the secret of America is, and why we've succeeded so dramatically in relation to the rest of the world – whether we'll continue to do so is an open question. But he made an argument that always made

sense to me, and I think Mitchell's a perfect example of it. He said, "The key word, if you want to understand America, is access." The heart of the American experience is access. It's access by anyone to any position, that our society is so fluid and so open that people with talent can really rise and contribute.

And that's not true in many other places in the world. We take it for granted, but in Europe they are still riddled with class consciousness. In India, they still have things like untouchables, although they're trying to suppress that. In most societies there are barriers. In Japan, you can't be a woman and get much of anywhere, or at least you couldn't. I remember being in Japan in the '90s and I went to all these business meetings – no women, zero. Met one woman who had just inherited her husband's business, but that was the only reason that she was there. And so there are barriers most places; there are barriers that basically keep people out of the talent pool. Mitchell's a perfect example. He's a guy, I think he was adopted, wasn't he, was he adopted?

AL: No, his father was.

AK: Oh, his father was adopted. But as we know, from Armenian, I mean I don't know all the circumstances -

AL: Lebanese.

AK: Lebanese immigrants, his father worked in Building and Grounds at Colby, and here's this guy, who I'm sitting here saying would have been a great president, and damn near was, could have been. Barack Obama, single mother, African father, I mean we just saw a movie last night about the Obama campaign, it's going to be on HBO tonight, it's brilliant. And it quotes Axelrod, toward the end of the campaign, and they were asking about how they'd made it and everything, and Axelrod says, "Look, a guy with a black father and a white mother and is named Barack Hussein Obama, how could he miss?" You know, this was easy. But that's what America's all about.

AL: Right.

AK: And in a lot of other societies, George Mitchell would have been doomed to be in the Building and Grounds program at Colby, because that was all – I don't mean to imply that's a bad job, but he couldn't have been what he was. And so I think Mitchell in many ways represents the best of America, the heart of the American experience. And I've always thought it was wonderful, when Muskie resigned, retired from the Senate to become secretary of state, here's what happened. The son of a Polish immigrant tailor resigns from the United States Senate to be appointed to the office of secretary of state, his replacement is appointed by the son of an Irish immigrant longshoreman, the governor of Maine, Joe Brennan, and the person he appoints is the son of a Lebanese immigrant child from Waterville, Maine, George Mitchell. That's America.

AL: Yes.

AK: And the reason it's so important is that it gives us access to all the talent. We are not arbitrarily saying, "The talent is in this box, and all these people out here we don't want," because there are brilliant people out here. And that's the secret of America, that anybody can do it. Now, we've still got barriers of race and gender and all those things, but nothing like the rest of the world. The talent pool is so big, and it gives us an opportunity to experience the wisdom and the contribution of a guy like George Mitchell.

AL: Great. Thank you so much.

AK: Okay.

End of Interview