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George J. Mitchell Oral History Project

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David Lemoine

(Interviewer: *Mike Hastings*)

GMOH# 024

August 5, 2008

Mike Hastings: The following is an interview of the George J. Mitchell Oral History Project, an activity of Bowdoin College. Andrea L'Hommedieu is the project director. This interview is being conducted on August 5, 2008, in the offices of the treasurer of the State of Maine located in the Burton M. Cross State Office Building in Augusta. The time is 3:40 in the afternoon. I'm Michael Hastings, the interviewer. The interviewee is Mr. David Lemoine, treasurer of the State of Maine. Could you please begin by stating your full name, spelling your surname, providing the date and place of your birth, and stating your parents' names.

David Lemoine: Of course. My full name is David George Lemoine, surname is spelled L-E-M-O-I-N-E, date of birth was May 25, 1957, in Waterville, Maine. My mother's full name is Margaret Marden Lemoine, father's full name is George McAleese (*sounds like*) Lemoine.

MH: Thank you. Your folks, were they Waterville natives like yourself, or did they come from somewhere else?

DL: My father grew up in Waterville, and my mother grew up in Freedom, which is a little bit outside of Waterville, came to the city, married a city boy, and have lived there almost all of their lives.

MH: I see. Tell me your mother's story.

DL: Margaret Marden grew up on a potato farm in Freedom, Maine. Her father, Harold, was at one point one of the largest potato farmers in the state, at forty acres, back in the age before machinery. So he was active politically as a town councilor, she grew up there, went to Husson College, came back to Waterville. When my grandfather passed away, my grandmother, Olive Marden, moved in, sold the farm and moved into Waterville, worked there, and my mother came back to live with her while in college and took a job at one of the local banks.

MH: I see. Now what did your mother study at Husson?

DL: It was a business course. And coming out of Husson and working in Waterville, my father was a Waterville High grad, joined the, actually worked for the railroad for Waterville for a number of years, as did his father. Actually, I think his father retired from the railroad. And my father, when he got out of high school worked for a year or two there, joined the Marines, and when he came back from the Marines married my mother and set up shop in Waterville.

MH: Was your dad in the, was he in the war?

DL: Korean War.

MH: Korean War. So you began life in Waterville, Maine.

DL: I did.

MH: And what was it like growing up in Waterville?

DL: I thought we were very fortunate. That would have been in the '60s and early '70s, Waterville was a prosperous place at that point, lots of industry. The railroad, for example, was centered there, it was a major railroad stop for a lot of the state, Keyes Fibre, Scott Paper, the woolen mills were still there, textiles mills, over in Oakland there was a match company. There were a lot of very prosperous companies and people making reasonably good, working class livings there. The high school was in, the school system in Waterville was very strong, partly I think because of the influence of the colleges in town, brought another element to the public debate, and so we had very strong school systems. And I came through at an age, born in '57, I think I was really the peak of the baby boom and so the whole way through we were straining all of the resources at Waterville High in terms of size, just a huge population explosion. And it was true across the state, probably across the nation. But Waterville, it was a great place to grow up, and there was a lot of energy and action.

MH: You went to Waterville High, and can you remember the approximate size of your high school class?

DL: When I graduated we were, I'm going to say about 325 kids in my graduating class. I don't think the entire school is that big today but we were, it was, we were big, I was fortunate enough to play on the football team.

MH: What position?

DL: Offensive guard, I was younger and faster then. But it wasn't my athleticism, but I was in with some very talented kids, we won the state championship my senior year. But we had, I think there were ninety high school boys playing football at that time. And I look at some of the teams that, as my children were growing, some of the teams with forty kids out on the field and it looks like a small army. I don't think I fully appreciated the size of what we were part of.

MH: And what other things did you, what other interests did you have in high school?

DL: Well, I was just a standard kid, a little bit of the sports, tried to get my homework done on time and see what was going on in a responsible social life.

MH: And where did you go to college?

DL: I went right up the hill to Colby College; actually applied only to two schools when I was getting ready to graduate, and so I applied to Orono (University of Maine Orono) and at Colby College. And at the time, I was signed up, I think I'm actually somewhere in a yearbook in Orono as a freshman, because that was my intention, to go to Orono, along with I think there were sixty other 1975 Waterville High grads that were Orono matriculators that year. But then at the end, we were able to get a financial aid package out of Colby that made it actually less expensive to go to Colby for me, and that became an easy transition. So I actually lived up on the campus, which for me was a great experience. And although it was a couple of miles away from the home I grew up in, I think it brought me a lot further away from home than if I'd gone to Orono and had my same cadre of friends that I'd grown up with. So I met a bunch of new people, new ways of thinking, and enjoyed that very much.

MH: And when did your interest in politics begin, or public service begin, was that in high school or in college?

DL: It was in, at least in high school, maybe sooner. As I mentioned earlier, my grandfather Marden was active politically, and my mother brought that tradition into the house as part of what we should do, basic mantras, if you don't vote, you don't count, things like that, that we were, we were not political activists but we were paying attention and it was kind of a responsibility to follow what was going on. And so we got at that very early as a family, and got active in high school just with little things, like the YMCA would have their mock legislature and so that was great fun, I enjoyed doing that, and stayed active throughout school.

MH: Any political interests on the other side of the family?

DL: No.

MH: No.

DL: No, we have political agnostics I think on one side.

MH: So one question before we stop high school and colleges, aside from your parents and you mentioned your grandfather Marden, were there other people that you would particularly point to as being very influential in your life?

DL: Well it's a great question; like in a great segue, because while I was in high school in 1974, George Mitchell ran for the governor's office. And of course the Mitchells were a Waterville family so we, I knew all of his nieces, his niece Mary and I were in the same classes together, Carol was a little bit ahead of us.

MH: Carol and Mary are?

DL: Robbie's kids.

MH: Robbie's kids, okay, all right.

DL: But all of Robbie's children were right in there, as were Swisher's two daughters, so we kind of all came through and there was a lot of energy in the high school for George Mitchell when he was running for governor, people had bumper stickers and the posters up, so that was all very active. But the transition or the segue to your question, answering your question is, I really would have to say, I mean Senator Mitchell was a tremendous influence on my life as an example -

MH: Did you actually meet him when you were in high school? I mean you knew him through these other relatives of his?

DL: I knew him indirectly. I think I met him at one campaign stop, but it was a campaign stop. But we knew the Mitchell family, and they were just all terrific people and so we were happy to associate with them.

MH: Any others that you can think of, particular teachers or?

DL: My favorite high school teacher was a man named Timothy Vachon, V-A-C-H-O-N, and I think he was in his first year of teaching when I was a freshman. He taught Latin, and just retired, I think, last year or the year before; [he] had a long career at Waterville High. But Tim Vachon made class exciting. And I took four years of Latin with him, not because I'm any particularly gifted classic student, but he was able to use the reasons things become classics, I mean the reasons you would want to read *Aeneid* now, Virgil and Cicero, the great orators, the great writings, the meaning that gave them endurance over the ages, to read those, and if you had to translate the Latin to get at it, still, you got at those things. And he would lead great discussions and really made it very interesting. I mean his Latin classes were probably the most popular language classes at Waterville High for, at least the years I was there.

MH: So you go on to Colby. What course of study did you pursue there?

DL: I was a government major at Colby College, and like all liberal art schools there's a certain, quite a few number of prerequisites you have to pursue, but did four years there with a government major. I took one semester off and did an exchange program to a college, Pomona College, which is just outside of Los Angeles.

MH: Tell me about that. Why did you choose it and what did you do and what did you think of it?

DL: Well Colby had pre-existing exchange programs established, and this was one in, it had one, we still have it with Pomona College, It's a similarly sized liberal arts college in southern California. And for me it was and for me it was an opportunity to travel beyond Maine, live

somewhere else, see what different cultures were like. I enjoyed it immensely. It was a long trip; I flew out and drove back.

MH: Did you rent a car, or how'd you, did you buy a car out there?

DL: Well, there were two other Colby students who were out there and one of them had a car and drove back so, and it was a -

MH: This is junior year, I take it.

DL: Junior year, first semester, and got to see the Los Angeles weather, back before smog was taking care of the Santa Ana winds and the, there's been a long time when politics have emanated out of California, they've been on the front edge of a lot of things for a long time. So I really enjoyed being there, but I also was pleased to come back.

MH: What year would that have been?

DL: That would have been '77, I believe, '77, '78.

MH: Was the trip interesting, the trip back?

DL: Not really.

MH: I've never driven across the United States and I'm always curious if it's quite as romantic as everybody suggests.

DL: Well it wasn't with me, I think we made the whole trip in about three, a little over three days, and it was pretty much start the car, gas up when you need to, and just keep rolling, so it's a small country if you do it that way.

MH: So you graduated in?

DL: 'Seventy-nine, from Colby.

MH: And what then?

DL: And then I went down that summer to visit a friend in the Washington area. When I was down there I thought, gee, I should stop in and see what Senator Muskie's office looks like. When I walked in to knock on the door, Leslie Finn, the office manager was there, we struck up a conversation and she said they had an opening for an intern, and I said sure.

MH: Just like that.

DL: Just like that. So went home, got my bags, found an apartment and moved to D.C.,

actually found an apartment with several other Pomona grads who were in the D.C. area and I think we had five of us that were living in a small apartment. First we were on I think C Street, just in northwest D.C., and all of the other roommates I had were mugged, and then we moved to Georgetown and lived there for a little while.

MH: Fewer muggings in Georgetown.

DL: Fewer muggings in Georgetown. But went to work really as a gofer.

MH: Describe what you mean by a gofer, because that term is pretty broad. Tell me the kinds of things that you did for Muskie, and which ones you hated and which ones you really enjoyed.

DL: Senator Muskie, we actually saw him nearly every day because at that point he was pretty regular with, what did he have, a peanut butter sandwich, apple pie dessert, and chocolate milk, and that was his lunch, and so I would walk over to the Senate cafeteria and pick that up and bring back lunch and drop it off with the Senator. Other than that I was doing filing, occasionally I would even deliver things to other Senate offices, and then would pull his car around occasionally so it would be ready for him at the end of the day. Although once or twice I did give him a ride across town to a speaking engagement and my recollection is clear on one. As the kid from Waterville, where at that point I don't know if we had half a dozen streetlights in town, and we had to get over to somewhere on Pennsylvania Avenue. And the Senator of course knew where he was going, and all I could see was a sea of traffic lights, and so he was manipulating us through those lights, really with not much articulation other than the (*unintelligible*) and his index finger as to which lane I should be in, and at that point I think his index finger looked like the size of a baseball bat. It was just, move into the left lane and the center lane and the right lane. Anyway, got him there, dropped him off and got the car back safely, no worse for the wear and tear.

MH: Did he talk to you ever about Waterville?

DL: Not very much, although his niece was part of the Waterville High class that I was in, Cindy Harvey, we were, she and Mary Mitchell and I were in the same class.

MH: And how long did you work for Ed Muskie?

DL: I worked for Senator Muskie until his appointment to become [secretary of state] -

MH: So under a year probably?

DL: Yeah, I can't remember exactly but in a year-ish area.

MH: And did the move to the State Department come as a shock to you?

DL: Not really, but I was, I mean I was at such a low level there, Mike, that the mysterious

workings were, they were all mysterious. And part of it was, gee whiz, of course he ought to be secretary of state, he should have been president, so it wasn't like a misfit to me.

MH: So yours was a full time job for Muskie?

DL: Yes.

MH: And you stayed on after Senator Mitchell became senator.

DL: I did, and actually in between there I was a, under Senator Muskie's sponsorship, I was doorman in the U.S. Senate for a while. So I started with Leslie Finn hiring me on as a gofer.

MH: What are the duties of the doorman?

DL: The doorman in the chamber of the U.S. Senate is, you make sure, really you're a gallery minder, to make sure people aren't leaning over the gallery, that they're being respectful when they're in there.

MH: So you're actually up on the balcony basically.

DL: Yes, yeah. Yeah, I got to listen to a great many of, Senator Byrd out of West Virginia would read a history of the Senate into the record, and so I learned an awful lot about the history of the Senate listening to Senator Byrd, when things were quiet in the gallery. But finishing that, I went back onto Senator Muskie's staff and that's where I was when he resigned and Senator Mitchell was appointed by Governor Brennan.

MH: And for how long did you work for Mitchell in Washington?

DL: Well, that's testing the memory cells here a little bit. It wasn't that long, it might have been, it was less than a year I believe, Mike, I'd say less than a year.

MH: That's when you and I worked together, I do remember that somewhat.

DL: But I left sooner than that and took a leave from the Senate staff as Senator Mitchell was preparing for his election campaign, and got into the process of trying to get a good mailing list.

MH: Right, there's been several references in other interviews to that effort. Can you describe that in as much detail as you can recall?

DL: The voter checklist project, and it was, Larry Benoit was doing the computer end of things, which at that, this is at an age when computers really were fairly new and Larry was just a genius at working what we had available and how to make that happen. Mark Stevens and his family out of Falmouth had a computer shop as well.

MH: Now who is Mark Stevens?

DL: Mark and his father Charlie owned a computer shop, the name I can't recall, but they did a lot of the work for this project. The data input was done on site, and I know occasionally, at least once I remember Mark having to take disks and drive them to Chicago to get some kind of work done and drive back. There was no Internet, I mean all of that had yet to be developed. But there was this location on Route 1 in Falmouth where the Stevens had their computer shop, Larry knew about it, and they were putting, they put the data together there.

But the goal, the basic goal of the voter checklist project was to go to every voting place in the state of Maine, get a copy of the voter checklist, which is from, and that would have been the most recent presidential election we were picking up. So every town has a list of its registered voters, and as those voters come in to vote on Election Day there's a check placed next to the name, so hence a voter check list tells you exactly who voted.

MH: Who turned out, not just who was registered but who actually went and voted.

DL: Who turned out to vote, absolutely right. And so the, clearly the strategic decision had been made that that's a really useful data base to acquire.

MH: And so, you had a vehicle?

DL: So we had a couple of vehicles, and actually Mark Stevens and I tag-teamed that for a while, but I would get on the phone one day and call a circuit of towns and say, can we come by at this point and set up a schedule to visit the town halls, get the voter checklists, copy them, and we brought our own copier with us. We had a K-car, a rented, I think it might have been from Shep Lee, probably was from Shep, a station wagon K-car, and we put the copy machine – and these probably, I was young at the time, but they were, pretty much filled up the back of that station wagon. And we would pull that out, haul it into the town hall that we were visiting, plug it in, take the voter checklist, run off a copy, give the town clerk back her voting checklist, and put our copy in the file, pack the whole machine up, bring it back into the van, run off to the next town, and we did that kind of day after day after day until we had visited really every town in the state of Maine. And we would periodically take those hard copies and deliver them to Larry or to Mr. Stevens, and then that input would take place in Falmouth. From all of that was generated the Senator's mailing list for his first Senate campaign.

MH: Do you remember whose idea this was?

DL: I'm not sure that I was ever privy to know, but I mean it was clear that the guy with the best list had the best chance. I mean that's true, that's Politics 101: who are your voters and how do you reach them? And so clearly somebody had recognized, and it wouldn't surprise me if it were the Senator who said, "This is how we get the best list of active voters and let's find the tools to make that happen."

MH: Did you get resistance from anybody?

DL: The vast majority of folks were not a problem, although it depended on the part of the state that I was calling as to how much of my Maine accent I let go. But we were able to get in, there were just a couple, and it's only one that I recall real resistance from, and who threatened to send us a bill for the electricity we were using to make photocopies. But nevertheless, she let us make those photocopies and to my knowledge no bill ever came. And we saw a lot of the state -

MH: That you'd never seen before, I take it.

DL: Well, my folks, we did a lot of traveling, growing up, and so no, I was pretty well traveled before I did this. But I mean, there was a point when I knew where every town hall in the state of Maine could be found and, with pretty accurate judgment to figure out how long it would take from one place to another; great experience. When we finished that, then I went, came off the campaign and went back to work for the Senator, but that was a great touring experience.

MH: So you go back to the Senate office in D.C. – I remember you and being very impressed by you because you were so discreet about where you were taking the Senator at various times. I remember asking you, “Where'd you take the Senator?” and you refused to tell me. You had obviously either been instructed or had decided that that was really no business of anybody on the staff, and that really impressed me at the time. But you drove him considerably in D.C., did you not?

DL: Really not that much in D.C., I mean a little bit, but I came back to the state of Maine in his field office in Biddeford and worked there, and then eventually when he opened an office in Augusta I opened it there. But it was in Maine that we did the majority of the driving, and so you and I would have talked a lot. But it was, and he never, I never took him anywhere that we couldn't get (*unintelligible*).

MH: No-no-no, I wasn't suggesting that, it's just that I, it always struck me that you were the, you were very, how do I say it, you were very careful about what information you gave out. And looking back on it, it seems to me that one reason the whole operation went smoothly is that people both in the federal office and in the campaign office understood their respective roles and didn't intrude too much on other people's roles.

DL: No, I think that's a very good observation Mike, that we were all part of a team and you do your job as team member and the thing'll work out well.

MH: Tell me about your recollections of the campaign that led up to the 1982 election, any particular stories that you like to recall?

DL: Oh, a smattering here. Let's see, the little basics about campaigning that I had not understood to that point. But if we ever went somewhere to eat, he always met somebody, so

you were meeting the local folks. Never stopped, I think once in all the years I drove him, he was late for an interview and we stopped and got a hamburger at McDonald's, all by himself. But almost always, you're eating with a crowd, you're meeting people, you're exchanging ideas and talking to them. I think that was a key, so we always ate at, in places that were public.

He had a tremendous and ready smile, no matter exhausted I knew he was. He got out of that car door and had a great smile for the world. When we were traveling we got into Robert J. Lurtsema, who was the host for morning classic music on MPBN, right, we listened to an awful lot of Robert J. Lurtsema, and the Senator had a great appreciation – still does, I'm sure – for classical music. And he was always thinking, I mean we never conversed much in the car, I never took it to be my role and if he wanted to share a thought with me I'd be happy to listen to it, but he was working all the time, with the classical music in the background and he just, he would be working things through. And the only real questions I would get were procedural ones, how long before we get there, who is the Maine contact, all these things we'd get lined up before, how many people do we expect, just the details of good advance work. And so once we got that shared, he'd process things a little bit further.

The highlights for him, I'm sure, were the stops in Waterville and, because I would often, I'd end up driving him back to southern Maine I got to stay around for some of these, and he'd stop at his sister Barbara's house. And of course as soon as anybody knew he was coming to town, all of the brothers, Robbie would come over, and Swisher, and his brother-in-law – 'Chief' he called him, Barbara's husband, Eddie Atkins, and they would break out the cards and cribbage boards and the house would just roll with laughter.

MH: So you'd be in the house, or would you make yourself scarce?

DL: If I hung back a little bit they'd, you could watch a cribbage game.

MH: Now whose house were you at?

DL: This was Eddie and Barbara Atkins. But they just had a wonderful, wonderful family get together every time that happened. And they, the Mitchells were, they were competitive with one another, but in a good natured way. And so that was great fun. I'm sure that was a highlight for the Senator of his travels around the state, when he had those moments.

MH: So were you his, were you doing just Kennebec County, or were you doing all over the state at one point?

DL: I would do pretty much from the Waterville area south and maybe a little bit further north than that. And if we got further north or really downeast, Clyde MacDonald out of Bangor would pick up the Senator, and occasionally we would just trade, we'd meet somewhere along the way and the Senator would switch cars.

MH: Do you ever remember any hostile crowds or appointments?

DL: Mike, I don't, because he was fearless in his, in meeting anybody on any terms. I mean he really, you'd go into any crowd – I'm thinking, there was a town meeting in, it was Skowhegan at the time, and he'd walk and people would say, oh, people are really worked up over something-or-other, I can't even remember what it was. He'd walk right in, here's who I am, let me tell you what's going on, these are the facts of this particular matter, and now open it up for questions, and he would field questions in a masterful, well you, we all know that, I mean he was just masterful in his understanding of the issues, and dealt with everybody directly. And if somebody at some point occasionally would disagree, well, reasonable people can reasonably disagree, thank you for your comments, and so I never, never saw him, never saw anybody really angry with him.

MH: Most of these trips were day trips, I take it, there weren't a lot of overnights.

DL: Not many overnights. He did, I should at least put it on the record here, there was a, he had a classic, his stump speech that year. And if it's not on record somewhere, we should figure out how to get that on record. He told this story thousands of times, I mean I've, and I heard it most of the times he told it, I think. It was just wonderful. Every time I heard it, I ended up smiling, it never really got old to me, and he obviously was able to bring energy to it. There was a point, Mike, when I could give it nearly verbatim in a close, or approximate accent.

But it involved, I think somebody, he would phrase rhetorically to himself a question, "Well you were a federal judge, lifetime appointment, you get to decide what's going on in the law and with other people's lives, and why would you give that up for the rough and tumble of political life?" And he would go on to talk about campaigning in Sydney, and this was a point at which we were as a state, at that point there was an effort to try to export eggs to Saudi Arabia and he would build that into his story. He'd say, "I was knocking at doors, met a fellow in Sydney and I'm here, George Mitchell, Senator Mitchell, I'd like to know what you're thinking about policy, and tell me what's going on," he says, "should we be importing more oil?" whatever. And the fellow I guess looked at the Senator and said, "Well, Senator" – this is the punch line which you, if we get the rest of this story together, Mike, it'll build up nicely, but at least this'll seed the record a little bit – the punch line was, the fellow from Sydney said, "Well sonny, I think we should keep the eggs here and send you to Saudi Arabia." And he, and that was a guaranteed laugh line around the state, and it worked, just worked marvelously for him.

MH: Okay, thank you. You mentioned the fact that you had at least been aware of his gubernatorial campaign in '74. Did you have any sense that he'd changed his style at all, between '74 and '82?

DL: Mike, I don't now. I was, I mean in '74 I was a junior in high school, I wasn't, he was Mary's uncle, I didn't know him. But certainly his style when he ran for the Senate the first time was very diligent and professional, and really relentless in the effort he put in, not only to being senator but also to serving the people and to communicating with people. So it was, it really was an extraordinary time.

MH: Recall for a minute the Senate staff that you worked with, who were the personalities that really stand out, and why?

DL: Well, we come back to Maine, I mean I spent a lot of time working with Judy Cadorette of course, out in the Biddeford office, and Judy was just a terrific field staff person, very committed to the people in her area and forceful in her dealings with the bureaucracy to make things happen for folks. And the Senator was absolutely clear regarding, it's a nice question, because the Senator was always very clear that anybody was entitled to call his office, and whoever called was going to be treated respectfully, and whatever they were asking for, if it was reasonable, we would do whatever we could that was appropriate to help. I mean everybody got treated fairly, and there were no exceptions to that. Judy got that, and she knew the area very well obviously, so we had a great, I had a great time working there. It was educational for me, and of course as a staff person some of it was very trying.

MH: Was that after the '82 election?

DL: Yes, yeah. And there's a point when it's, in theory it's fun to say whoever calls, they get to talk to you. But at about the fifth hour of the second day, when somebody's still talking, it does build character. But really, there was no other way around it, and that's what we did. So I loved Judy.

Of course Larry Benoit, Larry, everybody knew Larry, he really was the glue I think for a lot of that operation in the state, because he has a great head on his shoulders and a lot of experience even at that point in how to work a campaign. So, Larry.

But you run down the list, I mean over the years, David Johnson was the administrative director when I was there, and David clearly understood the Washington game very well. Connie Lapointe [Brennan] was there, so Connie, and Jan Marie Toker, so we were in the mail operation, with you, Mike, there for a while. That's before they had the new Senate office building, we were over on – what was the name of that annex?

MH: I remember it well; it was a small dilapidated building across the street, kind of behind the Dirksen Building. And you and I, and as I recall, Robert Flaherty and Eddie Flaherty were in that office intensively for a few, for a couple of months anyway.

DL: That's right. I'm not even sure if I ever recall it being air conditioned, it seemed like it was one of those just, a tough place to work. So anyway.

MH: So you, what did you do after you worked for elected Senator Mitchell?

DL: I decided I wanted to go to law school, and the Senator was kind enough to support that effort with a nice recommendation, and so I moved to Portland and went to the Maine Law School, graduated in '88. [I] went with my brother, actually, who had graduated from Colby a

little bit, three years after I did, four years after I did. But because we'd taken, I'd taken a more circuitous route to law school, we went through at the same time.

MH: You have other siblings?

DL: Just my brother John.

MH: And I know that you eventually set up a law office, well you started out I think in Biddeford or Saco and then you eventually set up a law office with your brother in Old Orchard Beach.

DL: Right. Actually, when I graduated from law school I went, my first job was to go work for Barry Hobbins down in Saco.

MH: Now a state senator? He was a legislator in the '70s or '80s I recall.

DL: He served in, I think it was fourteen years he served as a member of the House from Saco. He wasn't an elected representative when I was there, although he did run for the 1st Congressional District. So anyway, I worked with Barry, and then left to start my own practice with my brother John in Old Orchard. Did that for a few years, and then decided we wanted to expand and joined the firm of, it is now Prescott, Jameson, Murphy and Nelson in Saco, and from there John went on to work for UNUM as corporate counsel. I went on to serve for three terms as a state representative from Old Orchard, and then ran for state treasurer and am now in my second term as state treasurer.

MH: Tell me about your, actually I'd like to take a brief break here and we'll start in again in just a second.

Taping paused.

MH: David, tell me about your interest in the legislature. You say you served three terms, what was the district you represented?

DL: Old Orchard Beach is its own district; just by happy circumstance it is the right size as a municipality to be its own legislative district. It may be the only one in the state that I'm, certainly is the only one I'm aware of. So anyway, I was fortunate enough to be elected there, served my first term, I went in, served on the taxation committee, having seen, because the Senator was on the Finance Committee, and I had this idea that that was a place of influence, certainly it appeared to be for him, and hadn't realized what a headache it was when I signed up for it. But I did that. My second term, I was chair of the Marine Resources Committee, which was also interesting. Of course I, we did some work on fisheries with the Senator, and you've actually made a little bit of a career since then in that area. And in my third term, I came back and chaired the taxation committee and pretty much expended what I had for energy in that effort.

MH: What were the big legislative battles that involved you as the chair of that committee?

DL: Well, we were there at, well, one of the peaks in the mountain range of tax reform, and I don't know if it, I guess it'll be years before we know where that stood, but we were, I was the chair the year we really, I think, succeeded in bringing an understanding that the school funding formula and property taxes are interrelated, and we built a formula that bring the two together. That was our success. Our failure was the ability to get what anybody considered to be major tax reform done. And it was an interesting time, Mike, I mean every day I would drive up thinking, 'okay, this is how we put the pieces together,' and by nine or ten o'clock those pieces would have fallen apart and you're trying to assemble something new, and you'd go home at the end of the day saying, 'Well that didn't work, what else might happen?' And you did that just day after day after day, and it's, the tax policy in general is extraordinarily difficult, and it certainly wasn't easy as chair to try to bring those pieces together.

MH: Had that been a focus of your legal education, tax policy?

DL: Not, I don't have a master's in law on tax or anything like that, but it's anybody, if you're practicing law, the tax code is an overlay for almost everything that you do. Any business transaction, any real estate transaction, any estate planning, any family law or divorce action, it all has to take place within the context of tax code. So I, practicing for, at that point it had probably been a dozen years or so, I mean I was moderately familiar with the tax code, and certainly sensitive to its impact on individuals' lives. So that's why I thought I would ask to serve there.

MH: So you served how many years in the legislature before you took the treasurer's position?

DL: A total of six years. We're of course term limited after four terms. I never hit that bar. But the Treasurer's Office had been occupied by Dale McCormick before, and she was termed out after eight years and so the office opened up.

MH: Did you say, Dale McCormick, right?

DL: Dale McCormick, yeah, D-A-L-E.

MH: Now the, as I understand it, the position of treasurer in our state of Maine is actually a, is it a position that's actually in the constitution of the state?

DL: It is one of the constitutional officers, it is -

MH: What does that mean?

DL: It means it's set forth in the Constitution, and it's really part of the wisdom of the

founding fathers of the State. There are some executive functions that are retained in part under the control of the legislature, so for banking there's, the banking issues, generally speaking, have been held back and those are under the control of a treasurer who is elected by the legislature. The law enforcement issues, those are held back and under the control of the attorney general, elected by the legislature, and the record keeping and management of elections was held back and that's managed by the secretary of state. Those three core functions, I think the wisdom of the founders was that they should not all be under the control of the executive, even though they are executive in what they do.

MH: How does one run for treasurer?

DL: Well, the election is, every legislature gets to choose its own constitutional officers, it's what they do on the first day that they formerly convene, usually early December. The Senate and House convene together, and by majority vote of secret ballot, a nominee is chosen, or an officer is chosen.

MH: And so you say you're in your second term.

DL: In my second term, yeah.

MH: When does the second term end?

DL: It will go through early January, but the -

MH: Of 2009?

DL: Of 2009, there'll be another election that will happen early December of this year, and whoever prevails there will be sworn in, in early January.

MH: I see. In this job, what are the biggest challenges?

DL: They come by the fistful. But it's been, these have been difficult financial times, by and large, for the state, and so the challenges have been, from a management end, how do we do our job with fewer and fewer resources. We've actually been fairly successful at that, we've actually reduced staff about twenty percent since I came on, really through attrition and the increased use of computers. We've also done some major process redesigns, so that we have a lot more that's done automatically than used to be done by hand. That goes on, but we're at the moment in a major economic turmoil nationwide as the whole credit markets have imploded, and continue to have trouble, with what was once unthought-of is the federal government explicitly backing Freddie Mac and Fannie Mae, so we continue to try to manage those things. I also make it a part of my job, I like to try to assist the legislature in accomplishing its policy goals, which means if they're looking at a bond issue, or even the governor's office, to help them understand, well this is likely what it would cost, this would be the debt service, this is how we think it would be structured, how does that cause us to compare to other states. So pretty much everywhere we

look we have a challenge, Mike.

MH: In terms of resources at your disposal to do your job, you have people who work as State employees, I assume. It certainly appears that to be the case from the size of this office. Are you also able to contract out for advice, in terms of investments and things of that sort?

DL: Right, we have sixteen people on staff here, which is not enough to do all of the tasks of Treasury, so we contracted, we have a banking contract, so that a lot of the banking, actual banking is taken care of through our vendor. For our investments we have an independent advisor who advises us on what our investments should and shouldn't be. When we go out for bonds, we have independent legal counsel, bond counsel, to help us understand the legalities, the taxable nature of anything we may put out, make sure that our indenture is accurate and our official statements are all full.

MH: When you say indenture, what do you mean?

DL: Well, the right to borrow, the basic, the underlying document for the debt. So we have a lot of assistance.

MH: Now, you appear before the legislature from time to time. Which committees ask for your presence?

DL: The State and Local Government Committee has official jurisdiction over all of State agencies, and so we appear there, but I would say the majority of time is in front of the Appropriations and Financial Affairs Committee as they are trying to put together a budget and need to have some understanding of what numbers work.

MH: Are you part of the, I've read in the newspapers about, I think it's called a revenue forecasting committee?

DL: I am not part of that. There is a Revenue Forecasting Committee that is a non-partisan group that sets forth what they think the revenues will be for the State of Maine, and that is the starting point for putting a budget together.

MH: In this job, are there any, do you find yourself looking back at your time with George Mitchell and drawing lessons from that, for challenges that face you in this job?

DL: The short answer is yes. I mean the long answer is, the Senator was influential in so many ways, and his legacy is not just with me but you can see it in the state, and it is an approach to the job, that this is a privilege to serve, and an honor, and it requires you to put forth the best that you have to the job in front of you. He would often say that the best way to get ahead is to do the best you can at the job you have, and I think he applied that in an exemplary way in the U.S. Senate. But I think that's true, I mean I take that every day to work here, is what are we doing, why are we doing it, and how can we do it better, and that's the, that's a question I ask of

staff almost every day. And it means, what we do, we try to be accountable to the public, transparent to the public, able to explain what we do, whether or not people agree with it. This is a, there's always room for debate, but we have a rationale and an explanation for what we're doing. And we try to do it to the benefit of the public and not of particular interests. Those kind of overriding values that I took from watching the Senator practice for so long really animate what we do here.

MH: I take it that after you left his staff, you kept in touch with him, followed his career. Do you have any thoughts about his career path, and what it's meant for Maine and for you?

DL: Mike, I'm going to answer that in a roundabout way. There is an entity known as the National Association of State Treasurers, and obviously as state treasurer I get to be a member. They have an annual meeting, and I pushed for and was able to bring that annual meeting to Rockport, Maine, this summer, in actually about two weeks from now we will be convening. And once I had secured that, that convention, first thing I did was to see if Senator Mitchell would be available to speak. Not because I think we'll see him as an expert in public finance, but he is an expert in public service, and his career, before he came to the Senate, as a prosecutor, what he did in the Senate, and what he's done since in the Mideast, and somebody was reminding me, I think it's, this year was the tenth anniversary of the Good Friday Accord in Ireland, that what he has done for the public good has been enormous, and continuing. And many-faceted, I mean the baseball investigation, there's nobody else in the world who could have conducted that with the credibility and diligence, and brought forth the momentum that Senator Mitchell did. And so what I'm asking him to do is to come to speak to other treasurers and to share a life of public service and making a difference.

MH: That's great. I'm going to – I don't usually do this in an interview thing – but is there any possibility that that will be videoed, his speech?

DL: Not that I know of, but there's no reason why it couldn't be.

MH: If I could arrange it, would it be possible?

DL: Absolutely.

MH: You're, I take it you're running the, I mean you're the (*unintelligible*). The only reason I ask that is that about a month, well, about two months ago the World Affairs Council of Maine gave the Senator its first humanitarian public service award for international, and he gave a, I attended the dinner in Portland and it was a, it was a wonderful speech as we've come to expect from him. I mean, and I think that his speeches keep getting better, which is what's really I find very inspiring. And I tried to get a video of the speech afterwards, I thought it was being taped, and lo and behold, no one captured it. And so I will certainly see if it's possible to capture this. If you could give me, after the interview, if you could give me the dates and times when that might be the case, I'll talk with Mitchell Archives.

DL: That would be wonderful.

MH: We're at about an hour now, David, and one of the things we do is to, we realize that we don't think of all the questions that we could think of, and are there questions that I haven't asked that you'd like to answer, or any reflections on the Senator and on your career that you'd like to -

DL: That's a nice open-ended question, Mike. I think the last piece you got, I was honored and privileged to work with him, and brought those values forward to what I'm doing now. And I'm not sure if anybody can live up to that standard, but he set great standards for himself, and the rest of us do well by aspiring to them, so, in terms of commitment and competence and public interest, publicly that's where I'm trying to go. Privately, he just was a very, very warm, caring family man, and those times when he was with his family, it was just a joy to watch.

MH: I'll let that be the last word, thank you David Lemoine.

End of Interview