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Interview with Eliot Cutler by Mike Hastings

Eliot R. Cutler

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Recommended Citation

Cutler, Eliot R., "Interview with Eliot Cutler by Mike Hastings" (2009). *George J. Mitchell Oral History Project*. 157.

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George J. Mitchell Oral History Project

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Eliot Cutler

(Interviewer: Michael Hastings)

GMOH# 141

September 11, 2009

Mike Hastings: The following is a recorded interview of the Senator George J. Mitchell Oral History Project, an activity of Bowdoin College. The date is September 11, 2009, I'm in Portland at the Cumberland Club, it's nine o'clock, I'm Mike Hastings, the subject of the interview is Eliot R. Cutler. A couple of questions to identify yourself, Mr. Cutler, could you, for identification purposes, could you state your full name and spell your surname?

Eliot Cutler: Eliot R. Cutler, C-U-T-L-E-R.

MH: And your date of birth and place of birth.

EC: July 29, 1946, Bangor, Maine.

MH: Father's full name and mother's full name.

EC: Lawrence M. Cutler, and Catherine E. Cutler.

MH: And first question is, well we can start by saying, normally these interviews are a hybrid of your background and your connections with the subject, who in this case is Senator Mitchell. However, you were interviewed three times for the Edmund [S.] Muskie Oral History Project, twice in 2002 and then a follow up interview in early 2003, so much of your story is in those interviews and I'm not going to repeat those, there's no sense in that.

EC: Good, it doesn't bear retelling.

MH: I do have a question. Did your grandfather really walk back and forth from Calais to Bangor?

EC: He really did, every week, he started in Bangor and he walked to Calais peddling. He'd come to America when he was twelve years old, by himself, alone, his family had sent him to escape the conscription into the czar's army, they lived in what is now Belarus. And he arrived at Bangor, Bangor because there had been other Jews from that shtetl, that area Vilna Gubernia, who had come to Bangor and so there were at least names that he had, but he didn't really know anyone. And he was taken in actually by a family who was not Jewish, who was not from Vilna Gubernia.

MH: Can you say that again, the name of the town?

EC: Vilna Gubernia, it's not a town, it was an area, really an area near Vilna, and it was an area of *shtetls*, Jewish settlements.

MH: Could you spell Gubernia, how would that be spelled?

EC: Well, in English it would be Gubernja or -nia. And they taught him English, but from the get-go he was a peddler and he walked, whether or not he made it up to Calais and back on Route 9 in a week, I don't know – I'm told he did, but it strikes me as pretty fast walking. But he peddled thread and needles and notions, as we'd call them. And then he ultimately settled in Bangor and was married and raised a family, he became a wholesale distributor for New England Confectionary Company. I mean, it was a remarkable story. And he had three daughters, and each of them graduated from college, and two of them, my mother and her sister, married two brothers who had grown up in Old Town and who had both become doctors, and after the war they came back to Maine where they lived and they have three sons.

MH: I recall from the 1960s a clothing store in Old Town.

EC: That was it.

MH: Named Cutler's. Can you explain what the connection was to the clothing store?

EC: Yes, that was, the clothing store on Main Street in Old Town, Cutler's Men, Women's and Children's Store I think it was called, covered the waterfront. Cutler's was owned by my father's father, my grandfather, whose name was Edwin Cutler. And he and his wife and the two oldest of their children had emigrated to Maine from somewhere in the Russian pale also in the late nineteenth century, sometime around the 1880s, maybe the 1870s – no, it had to be the 1880s – and they settled in Old Town and he operated this store.

And he and she, Edwin and Rachel Cutler, had five children, of whom my father was the middle child, or one of the two middle children, and the store was operated after my grandfather's death by two of my uncles, the two who had, or one of the two who had come over – the two who had come over with him and then one other brother.

MH: Now, the grandfather who did the walk to Calais, and I was interested that it was, Calais was the end point. There's been a book written about the Jewish families in Calais, did you have any relatives there?

EC: The Unofskys (*sounds like*), the Unofsky family is related. But there are relationships among a lot of Jewish families in Maine, distant relationships, but we're related to the Rudmans and we're related to the Shiros, we're related to the Unofskys. I am not a genealogist and I can't tell you what all the relationships were or are, and I wish I could. And of course, we all bemoan the fact that we never asked people who knew when they were still alive.

MH: A bit about growing up in Bangor, and again, I will try not to cover things that you've already talked about in the Muskie -

EC: I thought this was about George.

MH: Well, it's about everybody. I've been doing a number of these interviews and some of them are from people in Bangor who are roughly the same age as you are, and I am amazed at how many, how much political interest there was, on the part of these people who are now in their sixties, in politics. Do you have any idea why we would have so many people out of Bangor? And I think you probably know who I'm talking about.

EC: Well Bangor, to me, in my view at least, Bangor is a remarkable city; it's a very unusual city, not only for Maine but for anywhere. It's a very small city; the population of Bangor is about thirty thousand. It mushroomed during the heyday of Dow Air Force Base into, there may be an additional ten thousand people there, but it's a very small city. Yet, it is, for such a small city, an extraordinarily cosmopolitan city, and I think that has to do with the fact that the University of Maine is there, I think it has to do with the fact that historically it was a world port, it was the largest lumber port in the world for a couple of decades in the late nineteenth century, and because of the Air Force Base, which brought an awful lot of people into Maine from away, for temporary stays but who brought to Bangor a broader world view obviously because a lot of these people had been all over the world. And so growing up in Bangor – and Bangor has always had a very strong school system.

MH: Still one of the best in the state.

EC: Still one of the best in the state. And so growing up in Bangor, you didn't have the feeling that you were growing up in an isolated town in the middle of the woods somewhere, you had a feeling that you were growing up very much in a part of the world. Well, one of the things that it breeds I think is a lot of interest in politics, and there have been, from Bangor, an awful lot of very successful elected leaders in Maine, historically. They go back all the way to Hannibal Hamlin, which was of course before Dow Air Force Base. But there is a history in Bangor that somehow breeds this kind of involvement and interest.

MH: You mentioned the University of Maine, in one of the Muskie interviews you credit your father with playing a, if not the leading role, but certainly one of the leading roles in creating the University of Maine system. Can you -

EC: There's an irony there.

MH: Can you describe the challenge that faced him and how they met it.

EC: Sure, to some degree. He was president of the board of trustees of the University of Maine for many, many years, served on the board for a while and then became president and was

president of the board for I don't know how long but it was a long time. And there was at the time the University of Maine in Orono, and then there were state colleges, which had been the 'normal' schools so-called in Portland, at Gorham, in Fort Kent and Machias and Presque Isle – I think there was already one in Presque Isle, my historical foundation here is hazy [and Farmington].

Maine wanted to broaden the capabilities of what were then really teachers colleges and to create more access to tertiary education, post secondary education in Maine, in fields beyond what were essentially elementary and secondary school teaching, which was really all you could, if you went to one of the normal schools, state teachers colleges, that was pretty much the limit of the educational opportunity that was available to you.

And this was about the same time that a lot of states in America began creating systems of state colleges, and in Maine we did that in a different way than most places. We ended up with a state college system by first creating the vocational and technical education institutions, and then converting them into the community colleges. What we did with the normal schools for the state colleges was, we made them universities. The University of Maine system became a system where the University of Maine had campuses, had universities, in Farmington and Machias and all these other places, locations, where there had been state teachers colleges.

Dad, I know, was worried at the time about the possibility that this would be untenable, that it would become an untenable system in a state this small, with as few people as we have in Maine and with the limited financial resources that we had in Maine even then. And I think he did his best to mitigate that prospect, but I think his fears have largely been borne out. And the irony today, I suppose, is that I find myself talking a lot in my own political campaign, and before it began, about the kinds of changes and reforms that I think we need to make in our tertiary education system in Maine, and I find myself talking about a lot of the same problems that my father I think foresaw in the '60s.

MH: I should point out that this interviewing is occurring after you have declared that you're running for governor, and when did you make that declaration?

EC: Well at the time of this interview today, I filed papers with the Secretary of State's, with the Ethics Commission in Maine, which are for what's called an exploratory committee, it's really, it's sort of like a website under construction. But you don't do this unless you have a pretty firm notion that you're going to run, which I do.

MH: And it's been reported that you're interested.

EC: Well I am running, I don't like being coy about it, I'm running and I'm running as an Independent.

MH: How many campaigns have you been involved in, in your life? I mean in an employee kind of sense?

EC: Involved is a broad word, but a dozen, I mean five presidential campaigns, a couple of Senate campaigns, U.S. Senate campaigns, a couple of governor's races, there have been close to a dozen, maybe less, ten.

MH: How many of those involved Maine, that were directly involved contests in Maine?

EC: At least three. The rest were national presidential.

MH: And I assume those were for Muskie, the -

EC: Well there were, two were for Muskie, two were for Carter, and one was for Mondale.

MH: Senator Collins is seen as being fortunate because she started out in Caribou, lived for a while in Standish, now resides in Bangor, so she's kind of got the state covered. It sounds like you are somewhat similar; you have connections to both Bangor and Portland.

EC: I have connections to Bangor and Portland, but I didn't plan it that way. I don't think she did either. But in my view, and I say this to people, one of our problems in Maine is that we don't think of ourselves as one community, and we are one community, we're one very small community. There are fifty cities in China that have more people than the state of Maine, and there are soon going to be eighty cities in China that will have more people than the state of Maine.

And when I'm away from Maine and people ask me where I'm from, I don't say I'm from Bangor or Cape Elizabeth or Portland or Hancock, places I've had homes, or have a home, I say I'm from Maine, because that's the way I think about it. And if I have to fly into Logan Airport in Boston late at night and drive home, as soon as I cross the bridge in Kittery I feel like I'm home. Or if I'm coming back from Canada through Calais, when I cross the bridge I'm home, and if I'm coming back from Quebec and I come through Coburn Gore at Madawaska, I'm home. And I think of Susan Collins as being from Maine, I don't think of her as being from Bangor or Caribou or Standish or anyplace. Nor do I think about her as not being from Maine because she lived out of state for a while.

Once you're from Maine, you're from Maine, as far as I'm concerned, and you're not from just one part of Maine, you're from this one community with Maine. And I think we'd find it a lot easier to solve a lot of our problems if we all began thinking about ourselves and our state and our community that way.

MH: You just mentioned China and the number of cities that have populations larger than the state of Maine. What's your connection to China?

EC: My connection to China is that I lived there for two-and-a-half years, I went to China to open an office for my law firm, and I built it to a successful practice and then came back to the

U.S., and I feel like I came to know China reasonably well, I represent a lot of Chinese companies. China's going to be the largest economy in the world within the next ten or twenty years, China and the United States together within two decades are going to account for more than half of the world's entire GDP, just two countries. So the relationship that we have with China, and China's influence around the world, including right here in the state of Maine, has been and is going to be extraordinary.

MH: In the Muskie interviews, it became clear that much of your legal career, up to that point anyway, up to 2003, had to do with environmental law.

EC: It did.

MH: Did that continue when you were in China?

EC: I gave several lectures in China on environmental law, wrote several articles about environmental policy in China, because it, as you point out, it was a huge part of my own career. It was my career for decades, and it remains a passion and an interest of mine, and so I talked a lot about it in China and tried to help the Chinese resolve some of their institutional problems with respect to environmental quality. But it wasn't the focus of my law practice in China, the focus of my practice in China was representing, building up clientele among Chinese companies who are investing overseas, and particularly who are investing in the United States.

MH: Did you do any representation of clients in the United States, or had -

EC: Yes.

MH: Had facilities in China as well?

EC: Yes, yes, both.

MH: And did you, I mean China's a big place, were you operating primarily out of Beijing?

EC: Mostly out of Beijing, I mean my office was in Beijing, Melanie and I lived in Beijing, she practiced child and adolescent psychiatry in Beijing, she was the only Western trained psychiatrist practicing in China.

MH: Didn't you say though she had a law degree?

EC: She was a lawyer before she became, she was an anti-trust litigator before she went to medical school and became a psychiatrist. She's had a much more interesting life than mine.

MH: What, I mean I want to get back, we're going to get around, cycle around to your connections with George Mitchell, but before -

EC: We should do that before the interview's over, Mike.

MH: Yes, how much time do you have, by the way, how does it look?

EC: I have to be in Windham by eleven thirty, so you've got plenty of time.

MH: I mean, part of what I'm trying to do here is to try to catch us up on the eight years since you had the other interviews, and so I'm interested in the things you've been doing since 2003, and I'm interested in why you've come back to Maine to go back into politics.

EC: Well I came back to Maine in 1999. When Melanie graduated from medical school, we had tried to come back to Maine in 1974, Melanie was a lawyer, I was a lawyer, there were three principle women applicants for jobs in Portland in 1974, lawyers. I don't know if I told this story, but there were three, and one was Melanie who had been on a law review at Georgetown Law School and had graduated before that from Smith College, and another was Meg Mills, who was Peter Mills' first wife and was the daughter-in-law of the then sitting U.S. attorney in Maine, and she had been the editor of the University of Maine Law Review, and the third woman applicant was L.D. Atchison, who had actually been a friend of mine in college, she'd gone to Wellesley College, she was the editor of the Boston University Law School Law Review. She was Dean Atchison's granddaughter and namesake, and she was Judge Edward Gignoux's first woman law clerk, later became associate attorney general under President Clinton, associate attorney general of the United States. So these were three very qualified women applicants.

This was in 1974, and not one of them was offered a job by a law firm in the city of Portland. Today, thirty-five years later, that's stunning. Half the lawyers in Portland are now women. One of the things that concerned the law firms in Portland at that time about Melanie and me was, how could you have married lawyers working in the same city, because they were afraid of 'pillow talk.' Now, they were afraid that we'd breach client confidences at night in bed.

Well, times have changed and that's no longer a problem, but in any event, we had to go to New York, because we couldn't come back to Maine, so we went to New York and we went to Washington and I became associate director of the Office of Management and Budget under Jimmy Carter, White House energy czar, and Melanie became one of the foremost anti-trust litigators of her generation of young lawyers. She ran the energy section of the anti-trust division at the U.S. Justice Department under both Carter and Reagan.

And then she decided she really never liked being a lawyer, she'd always wanted to be a doctor. And so after taking a couple or three years off, she went to pre-med, she took a bunch of pre-med courses and then went to medical school at George Washington University. So by 1999, when she graduated from medical school, she was offered a residency at the Maine Medical Center, and I'd always wanted to come back to Maine, always. And this was our opportunity, and we came back to Maine. I was merging my law firm into a much bigger law firm at the time, the law firm into which we were merging agreed that I could commute to wherever I needed to be from Portland, which I did for years, until we moved to Beijing for a couple of years, and then

moved back and here we are today.

MH: So you've had Senate experience dealing with environmental issues largely, you were dealing with energy issues when you were at O&B, in China you were really working on behalf of corporate clients, both Chinese and American. Sounds like a pretty good resume for running for governor of Maine.

EC: Well, that's for the people of Maine to decide. I'm not sure you can make, or want to make judgments about leaders based on their resumes. I think in large part people have to make a judgment based upon the character of the people who are running, and a lot of that judgment is intuitive, about whether someone fits the bill for what a state or a country needs at any given time. And I think that I'm well prepared to be the kind of governor Maine needs over the next decade, certainly over the next four years. But we're not going to make that judgment here today.

MH: In preparing for this interview, I learned that you have a connection, and have had for some number of years, with the Muskie School.

EC: I've been chairman of the board of visitors for about ten years, at the Muskie School at the University of Southern Maine.

MH: What does the Muskie School do, and what's your role in terms of, what does the board do?

EC: Well let's take the second part of the question, first the board advises really the dean of the Muskie School on how to make the school better, simply put, and we do our best to help him do that. The Muskie School of Public Policy is one of the really top graduate schools of public policy in the United States, and it's a real jewel in the crown at the University of Southern Maine, it's one of the strongest schools in the entire University of Maine system, it brings in more outside funded research into the state of Maine, into the system, than any other unit of the system, and certainly it's the most successful unit of the University of Southern Maine in terms of outside funded research that, we bring in somewhere in the neighborhood of thirty million or so every year.

It's a school that combines scholarship and applied research, so that the Institute for Health and Family Policy at the University of Southern Maine is an institute that focuses on community, family and community, health and well being, and they do research all over the country. They're fabulously successful. And the Muskie School is really a remarkable place, and it's a remarkable legacy for Ed Muskie who viewed it as the principle element of his legacy.

MH: I want to go back again a little bit in time. When you were at O&B dealing with energy issues, it was shortly after, it was under the Carter administration, is that right, and it was shortly after the so-called energy crisis -

EC: We were in the middle of the energy crisis, in the mid-'70s.

MH: What similarities do you see with that period and with our current increased awareness with energy issues today?

EC: Well, our principle policy objective in the period between 1977 and 1980 when I was the associate director at O&B, and I was the energy policy chief in the White House, our principle objective was to try to wean America off its dependence on foreign oil. And to do that, we deregulated oil and natural gas pricing, that is, we got rid of the price controls that had been put into place in the Nixon administration which were distorting market choices. It was a bloody battle, which we won. I really began channeling what were then extraordinarily greater investments, government investments, into both basic and applied research and commercialization of alternative energy technologies, solar, wind, conservation, and some advanced generation technologies as well.

Of course the irony is that that was more than thirty years ago, and we find ourselves today dealing with essentially the same issues but in much, much greater dimension because, to be blunt, for most of the thirty years between then and now, after Carter left office and until now, we've done almost nothing. All of those programs just never, no president in the intervening years kept the pressure on, and so as a consequence we find ourselves today with a set of energy *and* environmental problems that are more complex, more serious, more difficult to solve, by far, than they were then.

MH: Turn now, if you will, to your connection with George Mitchell.

EC: It's much more fun talking about me.

MH: Well, we can go back to that if you want.

EC: Let's talk about George.

MH: When did you first meet him, or become aware of him, any recollection of that?

EC: I first met him, I'll tell you, I first met him in 1967 when I was working as an intern, summer intern, in Muskie's office. It was a brief meeting. I heard his name a lot, because he had just left, he had just left Muskie's office I think maybe a year or two before to come back to, well I can't remember whether he came back, I think he came right back to Maine and went to work for Jensen Baird [law firm]. And so everybody in the office of course knew him, most of them had worked with him, and I heard his name a lot, and he was in Washington one day that summer and we met, it was brief.

Then a year later, when Muskie was nominated for vice president and I became the deputy press secretary in the presidential campaign and traveled on the campaign plane with Muskie, George was helping to run the vice presidential campaign office in Washington. And he'd come out

sometimes to travel with us, and we got to know each other then better. The late Peter Kyros, Jr., was a very, very close friend of mine, became a very close friend of mine, was on the plane as the - Well no, he wasn't on the plane, he was in Washington, sorry. Marshall Stern was on the plane, Marshall Stern was the baggage master, and both Marshall and Peter are dead, which is sad.

George was about, I don't know how much older he was, twelve years older than I am maybe, so he was about ten years older, eight, nine, ten years older than Marshall, thirteen, fourteen years older than Peter, so for Marshall and Peter and me, George was sort of our older brother. He wasn't old enough to be our father, but he was certainly old enough to be our mentor, and we became buddies, we became his sort of 'posse,' I suppose. And so after that campaign and then the intervening time, both after that campaign and again after the '72 campaign, I used to spend a lot of time with George and with Harold Pachios and Peter and so forth here in Portland, and with Marshall in Bangor.

So I got to know him in '68, got to know him better in the intervening years before the '72 campaign, which of course he helped run, and he was the political director of the '72 campaign, for lack of a better word I think it's deputy campaign manager, but he was really one of the principal strategists, and I was the head of schedule and advance, and we spent a great deal of time together. One of my favorite photographs from those days is a photograph of Muskie and George and me sitting in Muskie's living room, in the front room in the cottage in Kennebunk, working out the schedule for the, probably was for 1971 or '2, '71.

MH: The official biography, or litany, of George Mitchell is that he's a protégé of Muskie, but how did his operating style differ?

EC: He was really my protégé. No.

MH: How was his operating style different than Muskie's?

EC: Oh, jeezers, it couldn't be more different. There was a big difference between Muskie's public image and his modus operandi in fact, outside the public view. He came across to the public as someone that you wished was your grandfather, open, accessible, warm, sort of an Abraham Lincolnesque, which was the [word] that was most generally used to describe him of course, was Lincolnesque, and that was because he was both tall and craggy, but also because he was judicious and wise and often profound, and he was.

In private, he was distant, intimidating, could be brutal, had a volcanic temper, was smarter than anyone who worked with him or for him, including George – I say that with a smile on my face – and an extraordinary tactician, strategist and tactician, strategist really, and a prodigious worker, but worked alone, worked by reading. His intake, Ed's intake was solitary. And when you gave him advice orally, if you were sitting with him, most of the time you felt like you were probably telling him something he already knew, and he usually did.

George – and I’ve never worked with George except in politics so I have no experience with him as you do in his role as a senator or as a judge or as a problem solver and so forth – but George’s approach was much warmer, much more inclusive, much more collegial. George took in, and I presume still takes in a lot more information through his ears than Muskie did. I wouldn’t say George is naturally gregarious but he learned to be gregarious much more skillfully than Muskie ever did. And they were very different people. That doesn’t mean that Muskie wasn’t George’s mentor, I think I’m as different from Ed Muskie as night can be from day, but I consider him to have been my mentor. And the relationship I think all of us had who worked for Ed, whether it was George or Leon Billings or me or any number of us, was probably the kind of relationship that Socrates had with his pupils. It was very, very much an acolytic relationship.

MH: Were you at the convention in ‘68?

EC: No, I wasn’t, I was waiting in Washington.

MH: Did you feel left out? That was quite -

EC: A little bit. I felt, as I think any, I wanted to be there, I was deeply engaged obviously in politics, but it wasn’t that I wanted to be there because I had some confidence that Muskie was going to be nominated, I thought it was possible that Humphrey would pick him. But it didn’t last long, I was thrust into it right away. I’m not sure exactly why I became the deputy – I think I know why I became the deputy press secretary -

MH: Was it your writing skill?

EC: I think that was part of it. I think another part of it was that I was young, and a lot of the reporters who were going to be covering the campaign were young. I had some journalism experience, not a lot but some, and I think it was the writing skill mostly. If you ask Don Nicoll why he did it, that’s probably what he’d say.

MH: Could you get a press release out quickly?

EC: I could do that very fast.

MH: What reporters are we talking about in ‘68.

EC: We’re talking about, and I’m just remembering the ones off the top of my head. Bob Maynard, who was an African American reporter for the *Washington Post*, he’d just joined the *Washington Post* from the *York Gazette*, he had been a Nieman Fellow, he later became the first African American to own a major newspaper in the United States, the *Oakland Tribune*, died prematurely, young. He and I became after that campaign very, very close friends, he was a remarkable guy.

John Stacks, who was a reporter at the time for *Time* magazine, later became the deputy

managing editor of *Time*. Chuck Quinn, who was a reporter for NBC, of course Don Hansen from the Portland papers, Theo Lippman from the *Baltimore Sun* -

MH: Who wrote Muskie's biography.

EC: Yes. A fellow who just recently died, Doug Kneeland from the *New York Times*, terrific guy, a Mainer, retired to Lincoln, Maine, lived in Lincoln until he died.

MH: Did George Mitchell have much contact with the press, or did he leave that up to you and the press secretary? The press secretary was Dick Spencer?

EC: No, Bob Shepherd.

MH: Bob, excuse me.

EC: Bob Shepherd, he now lives in Brunswick. But no, George was back and forth between, in '68, between the campaign and the headquarters in Washington, he was not on the plane all that much. People on the plane were Dick Dubord, Don Nicoll, Charlie Lander, Susie Nicholas, myself, Jane Fenderson [Cabot], Bob Shepherd, Gayle Cory – probably forgetting some people.

MH: Did you all stay kind of in contact after the '68, in preparation for what you thought was going to be a race in '72?

EC: Oh, sure, a lot of us worked for Muskie after 1968.

MH: Right, right. When they, when you went back on the plane in '72, was it like a reunion?

EC: Well, it was different, because it was a much, much different campaign. I mean '68 was, we had to put it together, Don had to put it together in a week, it was small, it was largely run by the Humphrey. The air and water was coming from Humphrey, and we were a little band of brothers and sisters – it was a very intuitive, seat-of-the-pants, 'what are we doing today' kind of thing. And it caught on, Muskie was, it was very exciting because Muskie became the flavor of the month, flavor of the season, it was extraordinary impact. As negative as Sarah Palin was for John McCain this time, this last election, and as she came out of nowhere and was a bomb, to be blunt. And Ed Muskie came out of nowhere and was an extraordinary success; it was like 'wow,' it was a national reaction of 'wow.' And so to be part of that was very exciting.

The '72 campaign was a very different kettle of fish; it was bigger, it was broader, it was ours, it was a whole different kind of thing. And the people, much, much, much broader scale of people involved in it.

MH: Where did the money come from in '68 to pay for the plane, the staff, the -?

EC: It came from Humphrey's campaign; it came from the DNC -

MH: It cascaded down through the primary candidate. So I take it that George Mitchell probably was a lot more involved in fund-raising in '72 than he was in '68.

EC: Yes, although I don't think he was that involved. The people principally involved in fund-raising, I may be wrong in my recollection, but I don't recall George being deeply engaged in the fund-raising operation in '72, I think that was largely led by Berl Bernhard and by a fellow named Arnold Picker and a group of other financial committee people. George was associated with part of it, so was I, but I wasn't to any significant degree and George I don't think was to a much greater degree. George's focus, my recollection is, is that his focus in '72 was much more around the politics.

MH: Did you depend a lot on polls, and did you have your own polls, or did you use the party's polling structure?

EC: In '72? We had our own polling operation.

MH: It sounded like it was a very frustrating campaign, toward the end. I mean it was -

EC: Yes, it was, it was frustrating, but it was also, to me it's also very understandable. It was frustrating, but I don't look back on it and say to myself we were robbed, or I don't understand what happened. Because we weren't robbed, and I do understand what happened. I mean yes, we were robbed, in fact, by the plumbers and so forth, but I don't think that the dirty tricks caused our demise, and I do understand I think what happened, why it happened, and I think it had a lot to do with Muskie's own strengths and weaknesses.

I don't think Ed Muskie had run against another Democrat in his life before he ran in the primaries, and that's a whole different kind of candidacy than when you're running in a general election. Muskie had been a great general election candidate in 1968, he'd been a great general election candidate in Maine, he was a great general election candidate in Maine after '72, but he was a lousy primary candidate. For him, running against another Democrat and trying to slice the differences as narrowly as you have to do to create the kinds of distinctions that you need to create in primary campaigns, was not part of his DNA, it just wasn't. He'd spent his whole career in Maine politics in building a big tent, building a big tent.

And, none of us, not one – I shouldn't say none of us –there was no real grass roots organizing going on for Muskie. It was very, Muskie was a putative president, and you can't take that for granted and he did.

MH: What was your role in '72?

EC: I was head of scheduling and advance.

MH: So you were out of the press operation at that point.

EC: Yes.

MH: And what was your strategy in terms of scheduling and were you going everywhere, or were you trying to focus on a certain target population?

EC: We were trying to go, our strategy fundamentally was to run through the entire primary and caucus states, and outlast everybody and pick up majorities everywhere. And in retrospect we did not put enough resources into New Hampshire in order to come out of New Hampshire with kind of, we won New Hampshire but we didn't win by enough, we only won it by nine points or whatever it was. We fell short of expectations. And we hadn't organized in New Hampshire as well as we should have, in part because we didn't put the resources in New Hampshire we should have put into New Hampshire because we were thinking too far ahead. And the lesson that everybody, I think, properly learned from what we did in New Hampshire, or the mistakes we made in '72, is that you can run a national campaign, yes, but you'd better run it serially.

MH: Did you keep up with George Mitchell after the '72 campaign? I mean was there a lot of contact?

EC: Yes, there was quite a bit of contact actually. I used to come back to Maine a lot, I'd see George a lot, I'd see Peter, we used to sit around in Portland, George's house over near Willard Beach. I'd say probably the most contact I had with George and our friendship developed most in the period between '72 and probably '77 when I went back as a lawyer.

MH: Were you already in place at O&B when he was appointed to be U.S. attorney?

EC: Yes.

MH: Okay, as I recall he, I think he didn't get appointed until early '70s, I mean he wasn't among the first round of appointees, so he didn't get down to U.S. attorney's at that point. What do you think of him as a U.S. attorney?

EC: I have no experience or knowledge, but I'm sure he was very good. But I wouldn't know, I absolute don't know.

MH: Did it surprise you when he ended up as a federal judge?

EC: No, no, I mean he was a pretty obvious choice. And I always thought he would have made a great judge, and I think for the little time he served he probably was a good judge. Never appeared before him.

MH: You have any thoughts on his period as senator and majority leader?

EC: None that are, I think none that are particularly insightful. While George was doing that, I was off building a law practice, building a law firm, and I was doing local politics all over America on behalf of clients building airports, stopping airports, building highways, stopping highways, and I had a young family. And we stayed in touch, but it wasn't -

MH: You're not a tennis player.

EC: I am a tennis player.

MH: Did you ever play against George?

EC: Oh yeah, oh yes.

MH: What's his tennis game like?

EC: His tennis game, this was years ago, his tennis game was good, not great, but he's a good athlete. And my recollection is that his quick coverage was very good, and placement was good. Not a lot of power. But Jesus, he would contest every call. He could hit the ball five yards out of bounds and he'd claim it was in, he'd sort of start there. George is a terrific negotiator. No, he is, I mean I say that -

MH: You're the first person who's ever connected his tennis game to his negotiating ability.

EC: Well, he negotiates everything. And I say that not as a critical comment, he's a, and I think probably, and I think I'm a pretty good negotiator and I think we probably, I think both of us probably learned this as much as anything from Ed Muskie.

MH: What tools did Ed Muskie bring to negotiation process?

EC: Patience, intimidation, knowledge, he knew the facts better than anybody else; an ability to forge compromise, to figure out what the other person needed, and to figure out a way to give it to him or her without dramatically compromising his own objectives. And I think George learned a lot of that, I think we both did. You couldn't spend as much time with Ed Muskie as we did and not come away with an understanding of how to negotiate. And when I say negotiate I don't mean negotiating to a win-lose outcome, I mean negotiating to a win-win outcome, and they're very different. And it's the ability to negotiate to a win-win, the ability to forge an outcome that works and that can be sustained over time.

You know, this is what you learned with Muskie. You didn't learn from Muskie how to defeat someone through negotiation, you learned how to bridge differences and make an outcome possible that could be sustained. And I did that as a lawyer for thirty years, the Denver airport wouldn't exist today if I hadn't been able to do that. I can show you highways all over America that wouldn't exist today if I hadn't been able to do that, and I learned how to do that from Ed Muskie.

MH: I enjoyed your, at one point during your Muskie interviews you talked about Muskie using the intimidation tool against Birch Bayh to get him to, and I can't remember, it was -

EC: It was the hurricane Camille, it was the Disaster Relief Act.

MH: Right, the hearings I guess, but in an area that, I mean he wanted to hold hearings and Bayh didn't.

EC: Right, Muskie, this was an interesting situation because this was the one time in my career with Muskie when he really let me run, he basically handed me the ball and said, "Run with it and I will be there when you need me," and he was. And I needed him to tell Birch Bayh that if Birch didn't hold those hearings, he would. And he did it, and Birch agreed, and I don't think Birch regretted it; it led to a Disaster Relief Act of which Birch was the principal author. So, but no, he knew when to do stuff like that. And you can only do it every so often, when you give someone essentially no choice, because if you do that too often, then nobody will deal with you.

MH: Did you follow the Ireland negotiations that Mitchell conducted?

EC: Like everyone else did, sure. I mean of course it -

MH: What do you think of his current assignment in the Middle East?

EC: I pray to God he succeeds, I mean I admire him for taking it on and I'm, like all of us, I hope he succeeds at it.

MH: It seems like, I mean Ireland seemed like a monumental task, but this seems so much greater.

EC: Well this is, Ireland was only eight hundred years of strife, this is thousands.

MH: Any, I always ask this before we conclude an interview, but is there any particular story that I haven't given you an opening to tell?

EC: Yes, but I won't tell it. No, it's very hard for me, and George will understand this, it's very hard for me to think about George without thinking about Peter Kyros.

MH: Bubba.

EC: Bubba, and we spent some wonderful times together. George would invite us over to his house in South Portland, he'd say, "Come on over, we'll get some pizza." And we'd say, "All right, we'll see you at seven." And about six thirty George would call one of us, "Why don't you and Bubba stop and get some pizzas and bring it over." I mean it was, you know, George's -

MH: Another negotiation.

EC: No, it's not negotiating. George is very good at getting other people to do things, as you know. No, there are no real stories. I'm fond of him, I think he's an extraordinary human being. And what's amazing about Maine is how many, not how many George Mitchells we've produced, but how many really quite extraordinary political leaders we've produced for a state this big, it's amazing.

MH: Before we close, you mentioned a couple of times Marshall Stern, can you talk a little bit about him, he was a -

EC: Marshall's one of my best friends. We've talked a lot about two of my best friends, both of whom are dead. Marshall was, what, six years older than I am maybe, five, six, I got to know Marshall, I knew Marshall when I was growing up but he was a lot older. And then we became very good friends I guess when I was working for Ed, and certainly before I was married. Marshall and I used to hang around together in Bangor during the summers, this was when I was in college and afterwards, Marshall was a lawyer by then, he was living in Bangor, he had a criminal practice, and we used to go out at night all the time, looking for things to do. In Bangor, it was hard, nothing to do, both single. And we were both interested in politics, and Marshall's father had been a Democratic Party leader in Bangor, Ed Stern.

And then Marshall came on board in '68 and was the baggage master in the '68 campaign. And so Marshall and I and these young reporters used to carouse every night, wherever we were, all over America, and just had a fabulous time and Marshall and I became very close friends then. Two years later I was married, I was in Washington, Marshall was shortly thereafter married, and he then struck up and maintained over time a much closer relationship with George than I did and he, this was a long time ago, but I have real fondness for Marshall. He was great to my mother after my father died, too. He was a great guy.

MH: Your mother's not still living, is she?

EC: No.

MH: She died four years ago, five? You referenced her in the other interviews and I wondered if she was still alive.

EC: No.

MH: Well, this has been very nice, thank you.

EC: Good, I think we talked less about George than -

MH: Well, and that's -

EC: That's okay, we're filling in -

MH: You get it from different angles, and there's a bigger story here that you can't see from one interview.

EC: No, you know, there's a big story here someone ought to tell somehow, sometime, there's a big story here, as I was suggesting, about what kinds of leaders that Maine somehow produces over time. It's remarkable.

MH: I always thought that it was, people have this idea of Maine producing these kind of crusty, Yankee Republicans, and when I worked in Capitol Hill, we had Senator Cohen, whose father was a Russian Jew and his mother was an Irish Protestant, and we had George Mitchell whose father was an Irish Catholic and who spoke Arabic, and whose mother was a Lebanese Maronite, and you know, it didn't seem to fit the traditional view of what comes out of Maine.

EC: No, but what does come out of Maine is independence. And I don't mean independents, d-e-n-t-s, I mean d-e-n-c-e. Mainers tend to think for themselves, and people who think for themselves become leaders. There's not a lot of 'herd' thinking in Maine, never has been.

MH: Last word, thank you.

EC: Good, Mike, pleasure.

End of Interview