

George J. Mitchell Oral History Project

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Thomas A. “Tom” Daffron
(Interviewer: *Brien Williams*)

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Brien Williams: This is an oral history interview for the George J. Mitchell Oral History Project at Bowdoin College with Thomas Daffron. We are in his office, Jefferson Consulting Group in Washington, D.C., where he serves as chief operating officer. Today is Monday, October 5, 2009, and I am Brien Williams. Let me ask you first to give me your full name and spelling, please?

Thomas Daffron: First name Thomas, T-H-O-M-A-S, middle initial A, last name Daffron, D-A-F-F-R-O-N.

BW: And your date and place of birth?

TD: January 23, 1949, New York City.

BW: And your parents' names.

TD: Thomas A. Daffron, Jr., I'm actually the third, although I don't use it, and Katherine M. Daffron, K-A-T-H-E-R-I-N-E. They're both deceased.

BW: Tell me a little bit about your own family background and your education.

TD: I have a bachelor's degree from Brown University, a master's in journalism from Columbia. I was a newspaper reporter for several years prior to coming to Washington. I came to Washington on a nine-month fellowship to learn about Congress, and that was many years ago, I was offered a job by a U.S. senator and I stayed in Washington. And although I had a couple of periods where I left, once to spend a year in Maine working for International Paper, and four years in Baltimore working for a baseball team, the Baltimore Orioles, the rest of the time I've been here.

And I've been generally in politics and government, but I've been back and forth. I worked for four different senators. The longest stint was with Senator Cohen but I started with Senator Percy from Illinois, and then I went with Congressman Cohen, who subsequently became Senator Cohen, and I left for awhile. I came back with Fred Thompson from Tennessee, and left for a longer period of time, and my last stint was with Lisa Murkowski, who's a senator from Alaska. And I was chief of staff in every instance except with Percy, where I was essentially a speech writer – that wasn't my title, but that's what I did.

I've also worked in two or three government relations jobs here in Washington, and I had the baseball job – every red-blooded American boy's dream is to work for a baseball team, and I was lucky enough to have it happen to me.

BW: What period were you -?

TD: I was at the Orioles from 1990 to 1994. I met a gentleman named Eli Jacobs through Bill Cohen and we got to know each other, because I did various things to prepare for his various campaigns. And one day we were down at the Jefferson Hotel, just exchanging idle chatter, and he said, "I just was approved by the American League to buy the Orioles." And I said well, "I'm a baseball fanatic, if you ever need any help, let me know." But I thought the same sort of likelihood is that, if somebody says, 'if you're ever in Bangkok, stop by and see me.' But he did call me back, and I did get a job, and it was a very interesting four-year period, and Eli eventually sold the Orioles and I went back into government work. But it was an interesting experience, I enjoyed it. Not one I would have anticipated.

BW: Was that before the Edward Bennett Williams time, or after?

TD: Actually Jacobs bought the team from the Williams estate, from Agnes Williams, and it was sold, the next owner is Peter Angelos, who owns it to this day.

BW: Right. So I take it then, your career has been sort of in and out of politics.

TD: Yes, when I started as a newspaper reporter I covered a lot of politics. I came down here – something called the American Political Science Association runs a congressional fellowship program and I was assigned to, you get four months, you get a little orientation, then get four months in the House and four in the Senate, and I spent four months with Mo Udall, the congressman from Arizona, and four months with Chuck Percy. I wanted to see Republicans and Democrats in the House and the Senate, and when it was over Senator Percy offered me a job. And I had three small children at the time and it was for [what seemed like] an outlandish sum of money at the time, [compared to what I was paid] for [] writing editorials. You can imagine how much they paid me writing editorials if a government job looked like an economic bonanza.

But I liked Washington and I decided to stay, and three years after that I was offered a job by then-Congressman Cohen, who was relatively new, and I stayed with him for five years in the House and ten or eleven, seventeen altogether so it must have been twelve, five in the House and five plus, eleven plus in the Senate. And I had two stints with him, I left Bill briefly in 1988-89, and came back when my [first] successor [retired] []. My second successor was Bob Tyrer, who succeeded handsomely and has been with Bill for most of his adult life. In fact, except for six months as a newspaper reporter, Bob's always worked for Bill.

And Bob came to our office as a seventeen-year-old intern. He was a student at George

Washington University, and said he'd heard Bill speak at some Unitarian church out in Michigan and said he wanted a job. And I said, "We don't have any jobs." And so he wrote me a letter and said – and I'd put a P.S. on it saying, 'if you want to volunteer, it doesn't pay anything, let me know,' so he volunteered and that's the start of history. That was in 1975, we're now in 2009, what's that, thirty-four years, he's been gone six months, so Bob has been with Bill – I always thought I would have the record, but no, Bob was with Bill a lot longer than I was.

BW: Do you come from a political family?

TD: No, my father was a newspaperman, and I was not going to do that. I was going to go to law school, [but] I just couldn't bear the thought of three years in law school and left after a few weeks. My mother and father, well my mother was a very active Democrat; my father was a newspaperman so he was sort of nonpartisan. And we lived in suburban New York, which was then very Republican, and they were one of the few Democratic families in the community. But no, neither one of them were terribly active in politics.

I always was interested in it. I earlier had had some association with people in politics and it all seemed very seductive, and then was in the newspaper business, I covered it, it seemed exciting and glamorous and so forth. And I enjoyed it, but I had no plans to do this. In fact, like so many people who have graduated from college, I had no idea what I was going to do, and this was sort of all happenstance.

BW: Talk a little bit about Percy and his brand of Republicanism.

TD: Well I am a moderate Republican. Most, with the exception of Thompson, almost all of the people I've worked with, I've been Susan Collins' consultant for fifteen years, and she used to work for me in Bill's office, and with Bill and Chuck, they were all moderate Republicans, when there were very many more [moderates]. And there really was not a lot of difference between the center right Democrats, I mean the difference between Udall and Percy from an ideological standpoint was very small, but there was also a lot more of them. When I went to work with Percy there were, I don't know, fifteen or twenty moderate Republicans. And one of the most conservative guys in the caucus at that time was Bob Dole, and Bob Dole, by the time he left, was one of the most, considered a moderate to liberal Republican.

But no, Percy's politics, Percy was anti-war, he was very much for social spending, he was in many ways the sort of centrist that tends to be very successful electorally. I never heard Percy do anything for expedient political reasons, and I don't mean in a crass sense, but he'd just make up his mind to do something – the thing that was interesting about him was, he never looked back. He'd consult with everybody and he was a very successful man, he was a chairman of Bell & Howell at the age of twenty-nine – he would get everybody together and he'd make a decision, but once he made it he'd never look back. And that's I think something that he learned in his business training, whereas lawyers, God love them all, but they second guess themselves forever [p/o].

[p/o] [I worked] for three trial lawyers in a row, the guy who ran the Orioles, plus Thompson and Cohen, and – [in] words [or] substance – I’ve heard all of them say, ‘the only case I ever lost was the one where I didn’t do everything myself.’ Lawyers are not notorious delegators, and you got fifty, seventy-five, a hundred people working for you, you have to let go of something. And I think that’s a hard skill to learn, and I think Bill finally learned it quite well. He eventually knew by the time we were running for reelection, [] [that he] just had to trust that we had some idea of what we were doing and that we were working in his interest.

But I think that it’s hard to let go of the fact that you’re not entirely the master of every nuance of your fate and Bill, in many ways, didn’t pay a lot of attention to administrative stuff, didn’t care about it, and so forth and so on. Whereas there are a lot of other people who are, I think he was much more of a fatalist, whereas a lot of people, they plan their careers and they plan their lives, and I think Bill did not do that.

But to answer your question about Percy, he was a moderate Republican who I think fit his constituency for a long period of time. When he finally did lose, I think it was because he just hadn’t been home enough, he hadn’t paid enough attention to the home state, and that happens to a lot of them, they drift away. And he also was on the Appropriations Committee, he switched to Foreign Relations, which a lot of the home [state] people, they see it as sort of a debating society, they don’t really see it as something that does the state much good. And I think, well, those were practical decisions which anybody who’d been in politics for fifteen minutes could have told him, politically, that’s a loser, do what you want, sir.

[p/o] I did his ‘72 campaign where, we are proud to say, we won all hundred and two counties in Illinois, for the first time in Illinois history, [] but we were pleased with this. And then he got a scare in 1978, just [luckily] had a bad opponent, and we thought he would have learned something by ‘84. Simon beat him [then], but Chuck had a good career.

He’s still alive. He’s got Alzheimer’s, but he just turned ninety years old, and he’s still a remarkable physical specimen. He was a poor boy who used to, I mean he used to tell us stories about, his mother was on welfare, and she’d get flour and molasses, and Percy took that stuff and made it into cookies which he sold to his fellow students at the University of Chicago, becoming a capitalist, and Percy made about ten thousands bucks in the late ‘30s, when that was a fortune.

Robert Maynard Hutchins, the president of the University of Chicago, was reputed to have said to him, “You’re just the kind of student we don’t want here, Mr. Percy,” because they wanted, I guess, scholars. But he is a fascinating man because he had a whole lot of different accomplishments, and he became, as I say, the chairman of Bell & Howell at the age of twenty-nine. And then what I think is irony was, when I do my little speeches with high school and college kids, is that I always use this as an example, is about the timing, timing is everything, the year that you run.

In 1964, as a captain of American industry, he ran for governor, an executive job which you’d think he’d win, and he lost to Otto Kerner, who subsequently died in jail. And two years later,

never having even been on a city council, he runs against Paul Douglas, arguably one of the five or six best senators ever to serve in that place, and beats him. So sometimes it's impossible to explain why the public does what it does, except for the times. In 1966 the campaign was all about the war, and Percy was strongly anti-war.

BW: Did you, while you worked with him, or did he ever say or sense that his brand of moderate Republicanism was on the way out?

TD: I think probably that was a little early. Hugh Scott was a Republican leader then who was a moderate, Bob Griffin, who was relatively moderate, was number two, Howard Baker was around. When I was working there and Percy, at one point we thought he had a chance of running for president, and ultimately the campaign turned out to be Jimmy Carter, a peanut farmer nobody ever heard of from Georgia against Gerry Ford, who was the Republican leader in the House.

But Percy was looking out there. We were thoroughly convinced Teddy Kennedy was going to be the nominee in 1976, and Percy was the only guy who beat him. And wasn't that wonderful. Well basically what happens is, Agnew goes and Nixon goes, Nelson Rockefeller, to whom he's related by marriage, becomes vice president, Gerry Ford becomes president. It just shows that Percy was an optimistic guy about everything [p/o], he's a Christian Scientist and he was a very positive man.

And again, he left in '84, and there were still a fair number of moderates around. The big exodus was in '96, which is the year there were fifteen of them, I counted once, eight, seven Republicans or Democrats, one or the other, but all of the people in the middle. Paul Simon left and David Pryor left and Bill Cohen left and Al Simpson left and Mark Hatfield left, and Nancy Kassebaum left, and you can take all these people, they were sort of the glue, and all of a sudden you turned around and there were four moderate Republicans and three moderate Democrats, instead of being eighteen or twenty who you could get together. So I think Percy was gone by '84, so by the time Percy left, I think he didn't have any reason to believe that the party was going to be so heavily controlled by the very conservative.

BW: Your transition then to Cohen. That was prompted by Percy's non-reelection?

TD: Oh no, no-no, Percy had just been reelected, and Percy was going to run for president. For reasons that really don't matter, I just decided that was not an enterprise I particularly wanted to be involved in. I knew a guy up in Delaware, from my days in the newspaper business, who had been Bill Cohen's consultant. And he called me up and said, "We got a big debt. Can you come up to Augusta and can Percy come up and do a dinner for Bill?" And I said, "Well sure, but I got these leftover people from my campaign and they need jobs, so will you look at some of them for Cohen?" because, you know, your standard quid pro quo.

So one of my guys got hired as Bill's first legislative director, and the guy who started up Cohen's office, his name was Michael Harkins, and he was a political consultant and he wanted

to go back to his business, and he did, and he needed somebody to replace himself. And at that time I had a friend in the House, because it was one of my former employees, and then also I knew Mike, and so I went over to interview with Bill, I wanted to run an office, I always like to manage things and I generally have done that, and I had written enough speeches to last me a long time, and I was offered the job with Cohen. And it was interesting, Mike had two clients, Paul Cronin and Bill Cohen, Paul Cronin from Massachusetts lasted one term and lost, Bill Cohen served for twenty-four years.

I met him and I liked him, he was very shy in those days, but it was sort of serendipitous. He was thirty-two years old, a very young lawyer, and people laughed at me, people in Percy's office said, "You're going to work for a guy that represents a bunch of trees?" Nobody ever heard of him. That was in the fall of 1973, and [by the] summer of 1974 we're busily impeaching the president of the United States, there are [hundreds] of media around, we're getting tens of thousands of letters every day. But again, this is always unpredictable, and it was our first reelection, we were very nervous about what was going to happen, and we were, 'oh Jesus, he votes to impeach Nixon, he's going to be in a lot of trouble in Maine,' being the contrarians that they are.

So on election night we were [really] worried about how we're going to do. And so we call up and, in Maine they got still a lot of paper ballots – did then, still do – and so about halfway through the evening they stopped counting ours, they said, "Well, you won, you're going to get seventy-some odd percent." And they had these two other races, they had this Independent named Longley who got himself elected governor, and Congressman Dave Emery, who in the Watergate year knocks off an incumbent Democrat. Maine is just different from everywhere else. And they said, so ours became, rather than [a] focus of great national attention, the third most interesting race in the state of Maine.

And then, so we had another term with Bill, and I ran his campaign for the Senate against Bill Hathaway, and also his '84 campaign, which was probably our best, everything worked. And then in 1990 when Mr. Tyrer was then the chief of staff, I was Bill's consultant. I was working for the Orioles and I had to do his television spots. It was fairly demanding, but we got that one done, and then Bill didn't run again after 1996, he stepped down.

BW: So you didn't join him until after he won his first reelection.

TD: No, I was not in the '72 campaign, I was working for Percy in '72.

BW: When I interviewed Senator Cohen, or Secretary Cohen, I was not aware of his walking across his district, campaign style and whatnot. Did he continue to do that later in his career?

TD: Yes, we did it always. Dan Walker, who was from Illinois, where I had been, was elected I think maybe a couple of years [earlier], but he was the first guy, and Lawton Chiles also did it, but Bill did it relatively [early]. Bill did this walk, and it was a good thing, and he's in great physical shape and he liked it, and he'd grumble about it, but then it became sort of a

trademark. But instead of going all the way from Harrison to Washington County he'd go, eventually, by the time we got near the end of [his career], we'd basically walk through Aroostook County, he'd walk from Van Buren to Madawaska, and then he'd drive for a few miles, then he'd walk in. So we still did it but it was more symbolism.

But I remember in the '78 campaign, we had lots of video of him walking, and it was a trademark and then a lot of other people did it. [p/o] The problem is it eventually becomes sort of hackneyed. But I don't think anybody but Lawton Chiles and Dan Walker did it before Bill did.

BW: Talk a little bit about the Maine delegation, while you were serving with Bill Cohen in the House.

TD: Well, it was Muskie and Hathaway in the Senate, and Bill and, well first Peter Kyros in the first term and then Dave Emery for the rest of it. As a general proposition, the Maine delegation, there are only four of us, worked together fairly - It was a fairly collegial group. And there was a rumor that Bill was going to run against Muskie in 1976, and we came to our senses and decided not to do that and waited until '78. But even with those kinds of potential for people running against each other, my memory is the delegation [always] worked quite cooperatively.

I knew a lot of Muskie's people, I know Charlie Micoleau quite well, and Bob Rose []. I don't remember Madeleine Albright, who has since become famous, but I didn't do a lot with the legislative people. And Al Gamache in Hathaway's office, we all got along pretty well. And we tried to [act jointly], rather than having four people call up the AP and tell them we got this new grant, and I can't remember exactly what we did, so we worked out this sort of esoteric system that the delegation chairman would be, in the odd numbered year would always be a House member, because they weren't running, theoretically, in the even numbered years it would be a senator, unless that senator was up, in which case you would, and that way we felt it would be [fair]. And then the chairman of the delegation would say, "Chairman Muskie couldn't be more pleased that we got this sort of grant for the good people of Maine," and so forth and so on.

We did try to cooperate, and we didn't try and compete, and it was partly I think - It wouldn't be wrong to call it an incumbent [protective] association, but it was [also because competition was] sort of unseemly. If you only have four members and you're fighting with each other, and I'm not saying that everybody loved everybody else and took vacations together and so forth, but there was a pretty good level of cooperation, and it was not a terribly partisan group.

And the more time they spent together, the better they get to know each other. Cohen and Hathaway ran against each other, they used to live in the same neighborhood out in McLean and commute occasionally. I've seen several pictures on Bill's wall, there's a wonderful picture of him and Muskie at the, I don't know, it must have been Muskie's thirtieth Lewiston Fourth of July parade. And I remember the inscription, I can still see it, it says, "Bill, I see we're in step with each other, if not with the drummer." But Muskie was a big deal in those days, and he was

certainly the most formidable of all of us. But again, his office was easy to work with.

And George was there for a while, not as Senator Mitchell, I'm just not remembering exactly what he was doing. I remember once talking to Bob Rose who said that Mitchell was under consideration for – and I guess he was back up in Maine practicing law at that point – but they were about ready to announce the appointment of the United States attorney. I remember calling up Rose and I said, “Well, is this as much of a slam dunk as it looks?” He said, and I still remember some of these lines because they were so good, Bob said, “The fact that George worked for Ed is not going to be disqualifying.” And of course he's a very able lawyer and it was certainly a good choice, and then he moved on to the judgeship and so forth.

It's funny, Bill Frederick, who worked for Bill Hathaway, was Bill Hathaway's press guy in the '78 campaign, and he was again the press guy for Libby Mitchell's campaign in 1984. A lot of these people recycle and we all kind of, it's a small state, we all got to know each other. Greg Nadeau, who was Libby Mitchell's campaign manager, he went to work for Angus King. I remember while I was out in the lobbying world I wanted something up in Maine, I called Greg up. And again, part of that's a sense that you've all been through the same sort of crucible, and when it's all over you shake hands.

I considered Al Gamache and Charlie Micoleau and various people to be friends, and I remember more than anything else, I remember when I was struck by the fact that Maine people are basically nice people, they don't want you to be hostile. If you're from Maine, [you're family]. Governor McKernan's son died very tragically and he was a very young man, and I remember going to the funeral up in Bangor, and every single political figure in the state in either party was there, every single one. Jim Tierney was Jock's opponent, all the Democrats, all the Republicans, all the people, and I thought, it's basically sort of like it was kind of one of our own. []

I also have another theory which I believe to be true. [p/o] [It's that Maine people know their elected officials, or think they do.] Well the answer is, Maine people think they know their elected leaders, which they always refer to by their first names. I mean, they met them three times. Ed Muskie, I mean the Honorable Edmund S. Muskie, but for people in Maine he's Ed, and I think they like that.

Cohen once said to me once, I came in one morning, and I don't know what [] he'd done but we were irritated with him for some reason, and I said, “What do you want, Senator?” And he said, “Are you mad at me?” And I said, “Why?” He said, “You only call me Senator when you're mad at me.” He wanted to be called Bill, and I think there's an informality of it which sort of made it seem like a family thing.

And I also think you got a sort of pride in what you've been involved with, but that's a remarkable crop of talent to come out of a little state with 1.1 million people, it really is. You look at the, you know, you got a secretary of defense, a majority leader, the first woman to run for president, a guy who did run for vice president, the last two remaining moderates in the

Senate. You [] take a state [many] times as big, California can't match that, can't even come close. So I've always been impressed with the caliber of public servants we turned out. And they were real people too. Cohen's father was a baker, Muskie's father was a tailor, I think Mitchell's father was a janitor, I mean you look at these people, [] Olympia was an orphan. These people really understood real life in Maine, these are not the children of the privileged.

BW: Was it difficult then for Cohen to challenge Hathaway for the Senate?

TD: Yes, I think so. I think he had some concerns. We actually had some numbers in '75 and '76 which showed us actually slightly ahead of Muskie. I do think, however, we thought that, given the residual goodwill that it would not have been a wise endeavor and we backed off from it. But if you're going to run for the Senate you've got two chances, and we decided in '78 that, Bill toyed with running for governor and then decided he just didn't want to do it, and there was sort of an "up or out" situation and we decided to go ahead and do it. It was not an unpleasant campaign, plus there were three other candidates, this was a five-way, and we had a liquor dealer named John Jannace. Also one of my personal favorites in Maine politics, Plato Truman: "Two great names, one great man," isn't that a wonderful slogan? And then the fifth guy was a guy named Hayes Gahagan, who was a former state senator.

And those were the days when everybody had to compete in everything, it was a great Maine exercise in democracy. If you represented some party with three members, you come in on the debates. So these things became screaming matches. I think it was hard for Bill to do this, but I think as a practical matter, if he wanted to run for Senate, he eventually was going to have to do it in one place or the other. I suppose if he'd just waited around, he eventually might have run against Mitchell, who knows, but I think it seemed to us the logical thing for him to do if he was going to run.

But yes, sure, I think it's always hard when you're running against somebody in the delegation, because the rumors start. In '84 the rumor was that Governor Brennan was going to run against us, and we sat around and agonized for a year or so, and Governor Brennan called, again, Joe, because he's been successful, he called Bill up and said a couple of days after the New Year [that] he wasn't going to do it. But it's a small state and it's very difficult to not hear these kinds of rumors. We used to say there were twenty of us who talked to each other, and the rumors that would start, you'd hear them and they'd get back and forth. It's a big state, but there's not very many people.

BW: So Senator Muskie goes to the State Department, and you were probably watching carefully to see what was going to happen in terms of who was going to succeed him. What was the reaction in Cohen's office when George Mitchell was selected?

TD: Oh, I think everybody thought that, I think we all knew he was a very able guy, and he was a judge, and I guess we were surprised that he gave up a lifetime appointment after nine months, but I think he was probably bored. And we knew he was very close to Senator Muskie; when he got there it became fairly obvious fairly soon that he had the capacity. And he kept a lot

of Muskie's people for a while. And I look back on it, I don't profess to be an intimate of Senator Mitchell's, but the thing that always impressed me was how he planned things so well, none of this is, and I say this, all of this with admiration, but the timing of the appointment which gave him enough time to get his act together so that he could get himself elected. He was a very, very good politician, but because he spoke softly, people didn't realize he's a certifiable political genius, he ran the [DSCC], he's the guy Donald Segretti sent the pizzas to.

George is not just a statesman, he's a real competent pol, and again, from me that's a very high compliment. He's handed the heads to a lot of people politically. [] We elected that whole huge class of [Senators], the Republicans in 1980, and it was fairly clear to anybody, but particularly to George Mitchell, that an awful lot of these guys weren't going to make it in 1986. And so in 1986 when Mitchell went over to the Senate Committee and elected all these Democrats and won back the Senate. Nothing builds more goodwill than to get somebody elected. And so when the time came when he ran for leader, he had a cadre of supporters for a relatively junior guy. He'd only been in the Senate for what, six years, from '80 to '86, when he ran the Senate Committee [DSCC].

And that was true of a lot of things. One election, I think in '88, I think Mitchell lost four jurisdictions, I can't remember, but one of them I remember was the Wallagrass Plantation, and it has I don't know how many people, there may be twenty-five, I don't know. But the next morning after the election, where was George Mitchell? At the Wallagrass Plantation. And he planned it, and I think that's the reason he became majority leader. He was a very good vote counter, he obviously is a very smart guy, very able guy and all that kind of stuff, but there's a lot of those. I always thought he didn't leave a lot of things to chance, he planned it, and he planned well, and I think that's one of the reasons why he's been so successful.

[] [But] the guy [also] took some kind of a risk, I mean you got a lifetime slot as a judge, most people would say, 'hey, I'm all set for life.' And he abandoned it, and there was no guarantee that he was going to win the seat, and he obviously made what was a very prudent decision on his part, and then it worked out very well for him. When it was President George Bush he used to, they're both from Maine, and he used to complain all the time about how good Mitchell was at tying up all of his projects in the Senate and so forth and so on. He really was, and he did it in a way that people would, and I think not kind of a blind, screaming partisan, like some of the people you see today, but he spoke softly. He was just a very good legislative tactician and so forth.

BW: Any recollections of his integration into the Maine delegation?

TD: Yes, I was there for ten years when he was there, and I remember David Johnson some, and Rich Arenberg and some of the people that I used to work with. I remember that he got involved, we had a campaign in '82 in which he ran against Emery and that was, that caused a certain amount of hoorah, but once he was back and was elected, he and Bill I remember, I have a lot of recollections that he and Bill chatted with each other a lot. And I don't think, and never talked to each other about votes. One of the times [] we did a little study, it was kind of you

against all the other senators, and which group are you closer with and which ones are you a million miles apart from, and we would expect to have been with Jack Danforth and Dave Durenberger and Chuck Percy and all these guys who were essentially moderates, and that was true for most of them.

But there was one that stuck in, which was George Mitchell, which meant that, and I think it's also true with the Democratic votes, but Mitchell and Cohen's voting records are a lot closer than you might think, particularly when so much of the stuff impinged on Maine directly. And if Maine's two senators were fighting with each other, the chances of Maine getting what it needs, and then as several political friends of mine told me, it's very difficult to criticize a Cohen vote if Mitchell voted the same way, or a Mitchell vote if Cohen voted that way. [p/o] I think it's [] true that, I know Bill had a very high regard for Mitchell's intellect and he would ask him questions on lots of different things, and I think vice versa. You'd see them over on the floor talking to each other all the time. And that doesn't mean that they were best friends, but they got along very well, and as you know, with this business arrangement here with Piper and the Cohen Group and all, they see a lot more of each other. But I know Bill thought very highly of George, and the delegation all thought he was quite able. I don't think anybody was surprised when he beat Emery, even though he was way behind at the beginning, he's just a very able guy.

Some of the early times when we set the rules for the delegation, I remember dealing with Muskie's people. When George came in it was just a continuation of what had gone on before. And it was a little different because we had different House members, we then had Olympia and Dave for a while, and then after Dave left – I'm trying to remember the sequence – the House delegation was, after '82, Olympia was elected in '78, I was trying to remember who was elected to the House when Emery left and I'm drawing a blank here, but it was, not Andrews, it may have been Andrews. I was trying to remember, because Olympia beat Andrews, but he'd only been there six years. Well anyway, I'm drawing a small blank here, but Olympia was elected in 1978 so the delegation was, for the first couple of years, until the '82 election, was Emery and Snowe in the House, and Mitchell and Cohen in the Senate, and Mitchell and Cohen were in the Senate until they both retired. I think we were surprised when Mitchell left in '94, and I think everybody was surprised when Bill left in '96. And I don't think there's any question that they could have been elected as long as they wanted to be.

BW: Let's talk a little bit about the '82 election. Were you one of the Cohen people that went up to work with Emery on that campaign?

TD: Yes, Bob and I went up there in August I think, or September, and he [Emery] was already behind, and he'd taken a huge lead and squandered it in a variety of different unfortunate incidents, one of which was there was some mail piece that misrepresented Mitchell's record, and that caused a certain amount of tension. I think if I had it to do all over, it probably was not a smart thing to do in terms of intramural – and I didn't have any illusions on whether or not we were going to win, I just kind of felt we ought to give the guy his best shot. And as I told a national newspaper reporter and this was not necessarily a good reason, that I had a child that wanted to go to college and it was fairly difficult to do on a federal wage.

And so we did go up there. I don't think Bill was very happy about it – I know he wasn't – and I think if I had it to do over, I probably would have stayed out of any intramural delegation stuff, although other than when I was working for Bill, I obviously did Bill versus Hathaway, but we went up there for three or four months. Tyrer was a young, exuberant fellow, thought we had a chance to pull this thing off. I'd seen enough numbers so I knew that the thing had, Mitchell passed Emery in the middle of the summer and the margin got wider.

We made some noise and we jumped up and down and we won a few press battles, but the game was really over, I mean Mitchell, people had made a decision. Once Maine people make up their mind it's - I remember the Collins-Brennan race, it was five points on primary day, it was five points on Election Day. And so yes, we did work on it, it's as I told people, the one time I've had my head handed to me was by George Mitchell, and I used to think I was pretty good at this stuff.

But everything we did, Mitchell would rebut. Mitchell never let something sit out there for more than five minutes, he rebuts everything, every letter to the editor, everything. So if you get to the point where you're ahead, you don't have to win, you only have to tie. And he let nothing sit out there. And it was a good Democratic year. The unemployment rate was ten percent, and it was Reagan's second [year in office], and the Democrats won a lot of the close races and most of the contested ones, and Mitchell won comfortably, and probably deservedly so, he ran a better campaign. I think it lent for a certain amount of tension when we got back. I've seen enough of Mitchell over the years so that I hope he's over this a long time ago, he's done fine with his life, and the same thing's true for Bob, he sees Bob all the time. And I was the inside guy, Bob was the outside guy. Bob's no shrinking violet, as I'm sure you noticed, and he was on television three or four times a week and having press conferences in Bangor and so forth and so on, and we had fun, we always had fun on those campaigns up in Maine, and we won most of them, but that one we [didn't].

And we got into that after it was essentially gone. And I think really the key decision there was really Mitchell's ability to get that election from '80 to '82. I cannot conceive how he could have won in 1980. First of all, it was a huge Republican year, and secondly, he would have only had six months in the Senate, and that's really not enough to get yourself known. By '82 he had a record, and he'd done pretty well, and he certainly moved the needle. And Emery made some fairly serious mistakes, ranging from – I know there was a big mail piece about some vote on veterans that Mitchell had apparently cast, this was before I got there, and Mitchell hadn't even been in the Senate when this vote was cast, so it wasn't just wrong, it was flagrantly wrong. And there were other things that happened but Mitchell's a very good politician.

BW: That's interesting, because somewhere I came up with the impression at least that that VF, Veterans of Foreign Wars claim was something that you and Bob Tyrer had dreamt up and were responsible for.

TD: No, that's wrong. Believe me, I didn't go up there until August; that happened in spring

or something. We did a little bit of television, which we had to do on the cheap since they didn't have any money, I did [the] television, Bob did a lot of press conferences. By the time we got there, I remember once that Emery had some kind of a, there was a Kennebec River race, the thing that I remember was, kind of a symbol of that campaign was, Emery ran a boat in this race and it sank. But no, I didn't do mail, I think the mail was done by his staff, [p/o] but it wasn't me, because that was long before we ever got there. In fact, I don't think we ever did a single piece of direct mail. Then we were just basically trying to keep our heads above water. There were two of us, and we had a lot of dispirited staff to try and charge up and try and create the impression that everything was going to be okay, and those are in many ways more complicated.

I've had one other campaign like that, and it was the '94 gubernatorial race. Now Senator Collins, when she won an eight-way primary to be nominated for governor and got murdered in the general election by Brennan and King. The key there was King, and one thing we didn't know was that Angus had made several million dollars in the alternative energy business which he was prepared to throw in the campaign. We thought, Independents are going to be broke, he isn't going to be a problem. But when you run in a multi-candidate primary and you've never run for anything before but the condo board – so she got a lot of bad breaks, she worked very hard. And then when Bill retired, she had a lot of good will from having run a credible campaign, [] rather than making it negative.

But no, I can tell you with moral certainty, we had nothing to do with that mail piece, because I remember reading about it in the newspaper.

BW: So just as a footnote here, when did you leave Cohen's office?

TD: When did I leave it to go do something else? The first time I left was in 1988, I went to work for International Paper. And I went there for nine or ten months, and we had a big issue up there, big fight on decertifying the union and all that kind of stuff, there were all kinds of strikes going on and it was nasty business. I worked up there for a little less than a year. And then, the guy who replaced me with Cohen retired. Bill called me up and asked me to come back []. And if I'd stayed with International Paper, I'm sure I would have been better off economically, but I probably would have gone to Memphis or Dallas, so on and so forth. And this is '88 and I had a kid in prep school and one in college, and so I decided to come back here, and I worked with Bill from the beginning of '89 until February of 1990, when I went to work for the Orioles. And then I did some work for him through the 1990 campaign.

But Bob replaced me in, I think February or March of 1990, although his biography says '89, in fact that's not so, because I was gone and came back, and while I was gone he was not the chief of staff, in fact that was when he was in Kentucky writing these newspaper articles. I recruited him to bring him back when I knew I was going to go to the Orioles. He was around for all of the campaigns, [and] Bob has a lot of talent. I left Cohen twice, and I had an eleven-, twelve-, thirteen-month hiatus, it was somewhere around a year, and then I came back for another fifteen months, then I really did leave.

BW: When you say up there, where were you with International Paper?

TD: Augusta, that's where the [Maine] office was. I was interested in what's happened to the Maine economy, but when I was up in Maine there was International Paper, Georgia Pacific, Boise Cascade, Champion, Great Northern, Scott – they're all gone. It's really a shame. But I lived in Freeport and worked in Augusta, and I had some idea that after the 1990 election I was going to go up to Maine and hang out a shingle and live happily ever after, which the Orioles came and intervened, and I was probably better off, because the economy went into the tank right after that. That was at the height of the real estate boom where there was supposed to be an inexhaustible supply of dentists in Boston who wanted to buy Maine condos. It turned out not to be true.

End of CD One
CD Two

BW: So somewhere between '86 and Mitchell's success with the Democratic Senate Campaign Committee and '88, you must have gotten the impression that this guy was on the move, up the leadership.

TD: Yes, I don't remember how many – when did he become leader, '88?

BW: Hmm-hmm.

TD: And he had a campaign in '88, when he was essentially unopposed, it was Jack Wyman, and he had clearly the people from '86. And I can't remember, I thought he had two opponents, but I may be wrong. Danny Inouye ran, and who was the other one?

BW: Bennett Johnston.

TD: That's right. I think one-to-one it would have been hard because they tend to vote for the 'old bull,' but those guys, I don't know. [p/o] But I remember it occurred to me, when you had two of them in there, that George could sneak right up the middle, because he had his '86 guys, and he had a few people who wanted a younger guy, and he also had a lot of friends from Democratic politics outside, before he ever got to the Senate. He was a National Committeeman and he went all the way back to Nixon. He'd been a fixture in Democratic politics for long before he held public office.

So yes, I don't think we were astonished that he won, but those leadership fights are very hard to handicap. And I've watched two or three of them myself and I remember when Bob Griffin beat Howard Baker, on the end of his career, poor guy, isn't it a shame, beat him by one vote. And then of course Griffin loses to Levin, and [] Howard Baker's, he's the leader, he's not just the assistant leader. So it's difficult to figure, but yes, and once Mitchell became leader we saw a lot less of him, he was over on the floor all day, and you have a leadership office, and you deal with the guys who are dealing with the more mundane Maine related stuff, but the leader tends to stay

over in his leadership office.

I certainly wasn't surprised, because I just knew what a good vote counter he was and stipulate that he had all the ability in the world, but after that I think he also was very good at planning. And you could see it in his campaigns, you could see it in whatever he did, you could see it in the decision he made to go do the Senate Committee as a logical step forward for him. It wasn't just 'I like politics,' this is a good chance to pick up a lot of seats. And now, whether his focus was on becoming leader or not, I do not know, but I don't think any of us were surprised, especially when there were two guys who'd been around for a while who were, you got the Southerners versus the sort of everybody else, plus the new breed. I don't remember the outcome, but Inouye was very well regarded among members of the Senate, but he's not a pol, he doesn't pal around with people, he's not everybody's drinking buddy and all that sort of thing. He's in the Appropriations Committee and he's a reserved sort of guy, and Johnston's a little bit different, but that's Louisiana.

So I think Mitchell was a, a lot of Democrats felt that the southern Democrats weren't necessarily mainstream Democrats, and and that you needed to – all of this was regional stuff. But frankly the interesting thing to me that I remember was that guy who thought he was going to be leader [when Mitchell left] was Jim Sasser, who unfortunately didn't bother to get himself reelected, he got beat by Frist, and it's funny when those kinds of things happen. When you look past that next election, you get yourself in a whole lot of trouble.

I went to work for Thompson right after that election, but that was a big Republican sweep down in Tennessee and people would say, 'Oh, Sasser's planning his takeover.' And he was kind of the insider's favorite before the election, then when he lost it changed the equation dramatically.

BW: Was there any indication that Cohen was a little bit envious of his Maine colleague's meteoric rise?

TD: I don't think so. Bill is amazingly, I'm trying to think of the right word, not envious, I think he said, 'well, that's nice, good for George.' Bill was never a guy who's likely to have been in the Republican leadership, just because he was on the left end of the spectrum. And George is a mainstream Democrat; Bill was not a mainstream Republican.

I had a conversation with Cohen some years later, after the start of the Clinton administration, saying, with the greatest respect, "Boss, I don't think you're likely to get a job in any Republican administration, and if you want to do something else you might want to at least take a look at the 'Clintonistas.' You're their kind of Republican." And it is rumored, and I can't prove it but I have some reason to believe that, had Clinton not set that arbitrary deadline of Christmas [for filling out his Cabinet in 1992, Bill] was very much on the shortlist for CIA director in the first Clinton administration.

Now, when he finally did become secretary of defense – this too is a story which may be apocryphal but I've always thought was interesting – the names that were being floated at that

time, and this is 1997, for secretary of state, included a whole laundry list of people, including George Mitchell, as secretary of state, and I think Sam Nunn and three or four other people, and Madeleine Albright. And then there was a list for Defense, which didn't include Cohen, didn't include any of these people. But we thought Cohen had maybe missed his chance in '93 because Clinton picked somebody else, Tony Lake or whoever he picked, and then we read two newspaper stories in a row in which unnamed sources said, "Don't take Madeleine Albright seriously, she's just on that list to mollify Hillary."

Well, rumor has it that Hillary got kind of sore about that, and I can't, nobody can prove this, but all of a sudden Madeleine Albright's secretary of state. Well obviously, if George Mitchell becomes secretary of state, Bill Cohen will never become secretary of defense, you can't take two senators from Maine. [] One of Bill Cohen's patrons was Al Gore, because they worked together on an arms control project called the Build-Down; I also think that the Clinton people always wanted to put a Republican in the administration and never got around to it. They were going to use Tom Kean in education, never happened. And Defense wasn't their favorite place, and so if you're going to stick a Republican somewhere, put him someplace where he can take a lot of incoming fire. [p/o] I think if he'd just left the Senate, I don't know what he would have done, but you add the secretary of defense thing on top of it and [Bill and Bob] both had [] [very] successful careers.

To go back to your original question, I cannot remember Bill saying he was envious of George. I think George has, Senator Mitchell has a lot of administrative skills and he's a manager, he plans, all that stuff. That's not Bill's schtick, he's sort of an evangelist, he likes to go out and make a speech, get on the floor, get in committee, ask a lot of tough questions. I think the idea of sitting there and trying to hold the Senate at bay all day with these people, that's a hard job, so I don't think he was envious of the nature of the work.

But I also think he liked Mitchell, I think he was happy for him. I don't ever remember him saying 'why him and not me' or anything like that. And Bill didn't go around, I've always thought Cohen was enormously talented, but I don't think he had a big ego, he didn't run around and say, 'look, I'm smarter than this guy, why don't I have this job.' There's a becoming sense of modesty in all of them. I don't remember any of them that are particularly arrogant about what they do; I think if you're going to survive in Maine politics, you really can't. Maine people are pretty quick to spot a phony, they really are, and these guys come from backgrounds where most of them had to work for whatever they got. So, short answer to your question is no, I never saw any evidence from Bill that he was envious of his success, although it was obviously substantial, and it has continued, the peace thing in Ireland and on and on.

BW: During the two years that you were still working with Senator Cohen and Mitchell was leader, are there any particular recollections you have of strong points or incidents or things that happened?

TD: I do remember the tensions with the Bush administration. And what I did there, I ran the office, I did political stuff in that I'd look at those issues where I thought had some ramifications.

[p/o].

I don't remember anything terribly specific, I don't remember any particular accomplishments during that particular period, but I remember a lot of the things that Bush wanted to do. Mitchell did a pretty good job of hanging up in the Senate and forcing compromises, and I remember him as being, I mean you hear a lot from the White House congressional liaison guys on the other end, and I think they were very respectful of Mitchell's skills. I'm trying to remember, in '88, yes, the Democrats still had the majority, so they could do what they wanted to do and it was difficult for Bush to get much of anything done. [p/o]

Maybe it's been a long time, but I don't have any particularly vivid memories of something that happened between '88 and '90 that definitely sticks in my mind. Now remember, in April of 1988 I went to work for International Paper, and I came back, Mitchell was elected at the beginning of '89.

BW: Right at the very end of '88.

TD: At the end of '88, so I would have been there, so the time I would have overlapped with him would have been maybe for a year, and I was in the process of going to the Orioles, we were worried about our own campaign in 1990, so most of what I remember of Mitchell's time from leader was after I was gone. I was up in Baltimore and we didn't pay a lot of attention to, I mean I was worried about baseball.

BW: So were you around when the Clean Air Act amendments were passed?

TD: What was the date on it? I remember that that is always cited as one of his signal accomplishments, is the extension of the Clean Air Act amendments, and the Muskie legacy and so forth. I don't remember the specifics of it, so I suspect I wasn't there, because if I was I would probably remember it. I only had about a year of overlap when he was leader. I remember he was elected, I was gone, and I heard he was going to run. I was up in Maine when he was elected, when he beat Jack Wyman, and then I came back and I was there for a year, and I don't remember the timing on that. I can look it up, but I don't remember anymore.

BW: And nothing on the budget reconciliation, the "Read my lips," George Bush.

TD: "No more taxes" – I remember it from Bush's end. And as I say, I remember that there was a fair degree of hostility between Bush and Mitchell on a lot of this kind of stuff, and it ultimately did him in, eventually, a one-term president, and I certainly remember that. And I can't remember what year that was, when was that?

BW: That's '90.

TD: Was that '90? I certainly remember it. I guess I must have been in the Senate and I certainly remember that, and I remember Mitchell's role as using his Democratic votes to

prevent lots of things from happening that Bush wanted to happen. But in terms of what he did affirmatively, if you ask me to name one of the things that he achieved, it probably would be the Clean Air Act extension, and I can't think of much else. That doesn't mean he wasn't a good leader, it just means that the leader's name is not usually on most legislation as a facilitator.

BW: You said earlier that you were somewhat surprised that George Mitchell decided to retire from the Senate in '95.

TD: Yes, I thought he obviously was a successful leader, he could have stayed as long as he wanted. I can't remember, he was born in what, '33, '34, so he would have been sixty-two then or something, is that right? I think one thing that Mitchell did, Cohen did, and Fred Thompson did, is they all retired while they had a chance to go do another career. A friend of mine who's up there now, he believes that if you're sixty-three, sixty-four, sixty-five and run again, you're going to be a senator for life, you really can't have another career. Both Fred and Bill, Fred quit when he was sixty, Bill was fifty-seven, Mitchell was sixty-two, they had time to do other things. And I think in every case they've demonstrated that they can have a second act.

And I think after a certain time, Mitchell was in the Senate for what, fourteen years, and of course he was around it a lot before that. It's a grind getting the money together for it, I think a lot of these people want to do other things. The bigger danger is staying too long rather than – although I think term limits are artificial and so forth, I think it was a wise decision for both of them. I just kind of assume, when you're at the pinnacle of success, you'd stick around. But in both cases, when people are that successful, they probably want to go on, move on, be successful at other things.

BW: Now, you came back with Thompson and then Murkowski, and that's really not part of the Mitchell era but -

TD: Well Thompson was '94 to '98, so no, you're right, that was after the fact.

BW: Right. Were there commonalities among these people that you worked for?

TD: Yes, all of them are, I always use the term 'smart enough to do the work,' but I didn't agree with every one of them on every issue, but they all had ability. And as I've spent more and more time in the Senate and then spent a little time on the outside, I think you can respect any point of view as long as it's legitimate and as long as it adds to the debate. And I think that when I was young and idealistic I thought everybody ought to be a hundred percent liberal all the time and so forth and so on, and I think I'm now beginning to see that there's a role for all kinds of different points of view, as long as it's honest.

And Thompson, he was not as conservative as a senator as he's become since then, but he certainly was a smart guy and an able guy and made a contribution as a committee chairman. I think Bill's as talented as anybody I've ever run across, he's just got an amazing amount of ability; he doesn't even seem to have to work at it. And in terms of, Lisa was a little different,

because I'd been away a long time and she just had an office situation she wanted fixed, I only stayed there a year-and-a-half. She had been appointed and then had gotten herself elected, and she had a difficult office situation that required some remedying.

BW: How did she know about you?

TD: Well, two of the people who were her campaign consultants, the pollster and the media guy are good friends of mine, and they're both the guys that did the Collins campaign, so have done both Collins and Murkowski. She was looking for help, she said she wanted somebody from Alaska who knew energy. And I said, "I know neither, but if you want me to come in and chat with you about" – and I basically gave her my little spiel about how this is really a small business and you need to have it managed and you need to let senators be senators and let somebody else run the shop, and don't get yourself involved in this. And she seemed to think what I said made some sense, and so she had me come in, and we both knew it was a relatively short gig, just to get the thing functioning the way it should have, and she's done fine since then.

I've had other opportunities to work in the Senate even since I've been here, and part of the problem I have is that, because when I left Thompson I took the federal retirement, you basically, you get that subtracted from your federal wage. Well the federal wage is not terribly enticing to start with, but you subtract half of it and it becomes – when I was with Lisa I had the distinction of being the lowest paid chief of staff in the Senate, simply because I was also getting a federal pension, and you add them together, they can't be above the maximum. So I think that's one of the reasons that it's difficult to go back and do this.

I love the Senate, I loved the time I spent there. And I've had [some role in the development of some very able people]: Bob Tyrer, he was the chief of staff at the Pentagon; Susan Collins, who was an intern in my office, is now a U.S. Senator; Dick Fallon teaches constitutional law at Harvard. I've been lucky to have found a lot of smart kids and to at least be smart enough to recognize they were good people and [what] they could do, and I got a big kick out of that, making all the pieces fit together. And what the people I've worked for had in common is, they were able people, decent people, contributors, in a lot of different ways.

I spent so much more time with Cohen than all the rest of them, he was a baby when I started, and he was not a senior citizen but he was a more senior member of the Senate by the time I left; I was with him a long time. And I still consider him to be a good friend, and he is a good guy who's been very successful in his private sector stuff, as has Mitchell. And I'll tell you, I'm one of those people who believes, God bless them, you go out and kill yourself and you worry about whether or not you can pay your kids' tuition bills and stuff like that, and you're doing it in public service, somewhere down the stream, if you're very successful and make a lot of money, I think that that's just fine. I really do.

BW: Now with Susan Collins, did you run her first campaign, or did you come into reelection?

TD: I didn't run any of them; I was her consultant on all of them. Steve Abbott, who is her chief of staff now, ran the first one, [was] on the periphery of the second one, ran the third and ran the fourth. I've been a consultant from the beginning when we had no money. I made all the television commercials and all that kind of stuff in the first couple, but basically what I did was devise the strategy and deal with the consultants.

She, like Bob, came to Bill's office as an intern, and we had so many ambitious young people. Two others who worked for me ran for the House and both won, one lost the primary, one won the primary and lost the general election. One of them, he beat Linda Bean by, we were outspent six hundred thousand to sixty and won the primary, we were outspent ten to one, so I always felt pretty good about that, but by the time we got to the general election against Joe Brennan there wasn't much left in the tank. There were a lot of these kids who worked for me wanting to run for office, and I'm sure there'll be more as time goes by. Susan's turned out to be a very good senator, and so has Olympia. And it's, again, I think a remarkable crop for a state that even now only has a million or [a few] more [people].

BW: So your perspective is really from the Percy days to right now, in terms of your involvement in -

TD: Yes, I've been involved in the Senate since, for almost forty years, thirty-five.

BW: And what words would you use to describe the changes that have occurred over that period?

TD: Oh, I think it's become much more partisan, and I think that's a function of the extremes on both sides, whether it's MoveOn[.org] or these various right-wing coalitions, they put a lot of pressure on people in the caucuses to toe the party, to toe the ideological line. It's too bad, because I think the center is what generally builds the coalitions that make things work.

It's very hard for people in either caucus to, it used to be when there was a lot of tolerance of the fact that you [ought to] vote your own constituency. I can remember being with Bill [many] times when Bob Dole said, "Really like to have your vote if you can do it for us, if you can." And Bill said, "Well if you really need it, you got it." But there never was any suggestion [that] you should vote against the interests of your own constituency. And obviously, a senator from Maine is not the same as a senator from Oklahoma, and they have different [supporters].

There's a little bit of a swing back to the Democrats [now], and for this I give Chuck Schumer some credit, in the last two cycles, found candidates who fit the constituency, and I think that's why they were successful. You can't take a cookie cutter candidate and say, 'this guy is going to be terrific in California,' and then turn around and run him in South Carolina, it isn't going to happen, it doesn't work. And that's why those of us who are kind of big believers in the big tent, a certain amount of tolerance, that you can't govern if you don't have enough people. And one of these worthies up there said, "I'd rather have thirty really conservative senators than sixty people who are not true-blue." Well first of all it's preposterous, you can't govern that way, and

this isn't a debating society.

I also think the civility level sort of diminished. I mean there's more ad hominem arguments. I think there's more stuff done to gain political points than because it's honest. I can remember, again, this was before I was here, but I can remember Dirksen and Johnson and the Civil Rights Act, I can remember lots of this stuff, and people forget that a lot of this, Clean Water and Clean Air stuff happened under Nixon. You look at this and somebody had to be making a deal to make this stuff work.

And I also had this theory, and I think it's correct, that people want to see government do something. [p/o] You've got to have an alternative. If you're not for X, then what are you for? You can't just stand for nothing. [p/o] Now, Olympia's trying to do something to make it better, but I think you got to take what you got and fix it. If something's going to pass, you want it to work.

You've also got to give people the benefit of the doubt on motives, and there's no hidden agenda in why Susan and Olympia voted for the stimulus, they voted for the stimulus because – I can't speak for Olympia, but I know that whether you like or don't like deficit financing, we were on the verge of a depression, and to some extent, you may not like this, but to save the economy you got to do it. And I think they, I consider it, to this day, it was the right vote. If the Obama people hadn't bitten off health care, they'd be getting a lot of credit now for reviving the economy – and it's not [] back, unemployment numbers are still terrible [].

I just think generally in Washington, it's a function of a lot of these groups, the MoveOns and the right wing equivalent, the bloggers, every guy in an undershirt in his basement, is eating a bag of chips and his stuff is given credibility. And I think that Balkanizes things a bit, it means no matter what you do, you're criticized, and then the deterioration of the legitimate journalism. The newspaper business is on the verge of collapse, and there's eight million bloggers out there, and no one knows whether they know what they're talking about. But you get this information on cable, and you get it twenty-four hours a day, and everything has to be built into a huge story, so you start to get desensitized, you begin to [believe it] when something really isn't happening.

We got five days on Michael Jackson dying, too bad, but is that worth five days? So I think what you've got is a lot of diffusion of information, a much more partisanship than there used to be, and no particular premium placed on collegiality.

Now Maine is a little different, those [] who have been successful in Maine politics, and by that I mean the Cohens, the Mitchells, and particularly Susan and Olympia, they brag on the fact that they're bipartisan. The first ten spots we did in the last campaign against Allen, every single one talked about bipartisanship. There's not a single Democrat, well maybe one or two or three, but there are damned few where Susan hasn't done a bill with one of them. You know, did this bill with this guy, this bill with this guy, this bill with Carl Levin, this bill with Joe Lieberman, this bill with Ron Wyden. And to some extent, Maine people like independence, they like bipartisanship, and I think it's been a very successful formula. But I think we're beginning to

become an outpost, a remote outpost in a sea of strong partisanship. And I think it just poisons the debate.

I looked at those health care debates this summer. They weren't debates, they're just rabble-rousers. And it was almost, like nobody was there to be informed, you're mind was already made up. And I don't know what the answer is to this. I think that is reflected sometimes in the, the debate in the Senate is stronger, more sharply worded. People are not given credit for good motives, you don't get credit for honest disagreement. And I think there's also a certain amount of, the Democrats did it when Republicans were in power, and the Republicans are doing it now that Democrats are in power. They blocked all these Republican judges, and we turn it around, the Republicans are now blocking a lot of their stuff.

[p/o] We used to feel that with Senator Collins and with Senator Cohen, if you could put together a coalition that got something done, that was good. I'm not so sure that there's a sense of that within the body like there used to be. And so, these things go in cycles. It may change, but I hope so because, again, you govern from the center, you have to.

BW: Just a couple of other things, one, you've made mention of being the chief of staff, and I'd be curious to know, just for the record, what your perception of that role is, what makes a good chief of staff for a senator?

TD: You have to remember that you weren't elected to anything, that it's his bat, ball, and glove. I think you have to have a good enough relationship with the member that you can go in and be honest and frank. They don't usually send you in to see the boss to tell him the good news, you know, 'you were great today.' You have to bring the bad news in, and you have to tell him that we've had a problem with x or y. Somebody asked me about this recently, I was talking to him about it, I think a good chief of staff has to know the Senate itself, the senator, know him well and have a very high comfort level, and a lot of this is chemistry, and you have to know the home state.

My argument has always been, if you do two out of three, you can learn the third. I knew nothing about Maine when I went to work for Cohen. But I think also you have to hire good people, and you have to give them as much access and freedom as you can. You can't be one of these paranoids that every single piece of paper has to go through me. Give them what their payoff is, it's access to the boss. When Susan was twenty-six years old, we made her a staff director, and she had all this access to Bill and it was a real growth experience for her. Bob was a Senate press secretary at twenty-four. And that's the way people grow. They're going to make some mistakes, but if you find the right people [you're fine]. Dick Fallon was his press secretary during the impeachment, he was still at Yale, he [hadn't] even graduated.

And I think that it's finding good people, finding people that get along, rooting out trouble makers quickly, because it doesn't take very many poison apples in an environment like that. And the skill sets you're looking for, a good chief of staff has to be a good personnel person, and what you're looking for is not someone who would sit in a corner and reflect on the perfect crime

bill, but somebody who can juggle six or eight things at once. You have to be ready to give answers to the boss; you have to be able to juggle four or five things at once. And if you're a chief of staff, I think you have to know what all parts of the operation do. Ideally the chief of staff has the second most information in the office about all of these different things, and you have to know what everybody's doing.

I used to talk about management by walking around, you walk around, you talk to everybody, and I used to tell these guys, I'm only going to check every fifth one of your expense accounts, but you're never going to know which one it is. And I think those kinds of things, they have to feel that you're paying attention, and that you're not only criticizing them when they do wrong, but that you're giving them credit when they do well. And that's having a sense that, yes, this guy knows what's going on in this place, and the most important thing you have to have is credibility with the boss.

In 1978, to have an example, I went up to Maine in August to take over the campaign, and the first six calls that came in from Cohen were all to me. People said, hmm, you must be in charge, but they could have done the other way around. He could have called [] any one of several other people. Whatever authority you have is conferred by the boss, and if you can't speak for him and not have it undone, then you're not successful.

So all these guys [i.e. senators] need, too, somebody to let their hair down with. They perform all day, politics is about discipline, and you got to come in and have a chance where you can moan and groan and scream and rant and rave and behave badly, and know that it's not going to reflect on somebody's point of view. I think it requires a personal relationship of trust, and they have to believe that you have no agenda other than them. They're all a little teeny-tiny bit paranoid. And they have to believe that you're not doing it for your own self aggrandizement, you're doing it, whatever you're doing, right or wrong, you're doing it with their interests [in mind].

And I think somebody who's good at it, you know, there are all kinds of different models. Some of these guys see themselves as sort of surrogate senators, if the senator doesn't go, I go, and I have these minions who handle the things like getting the mail out and all this stuff. But I believe that if you do good constituent service, and you get the mail done, you make sure the constituents are well treated and all those things, particularly in small to medium size states, the principal has almost complete flexibility to do whatever he wants legislatively, because unless you decide in Maine to confiscate people's guns, or you decide in Tennessee that you're going to - I can't think of a good example - but if you're in Florida you're going to go out and drill along the Florida coastline, I mean you're going to - And they're all smart enough to have gotten elected in the first place so they have some sense of what their constituents are looking for, they have pretty much freedom to take on whatever issues they want, as long as they can make plausible sense of their position. Even if a lot of people don't agree with them.

A good chief of staff really has, it's hard work, and I think you have to be, and it's not anonymous, you can't be a publicity hog, you're not supposed to be, I don't think you ought to

be in the newspaper much at all, and I think you have to have a fairly strong grant of authority from the boss, and you have to keep them away from the nuts and bolts of this stuff. I can remember telling one of them, the longer you keep responding to these Blackberries that come in from the state about how you're being mistreated by x, y, or z, you're just reinforcing it, it's like a crying child. If you just say, 'go talk to Tom,' it won't happen again. And I think they all tend to be curious and they want to know what's going on [p/o].

I remember, I had an office manager, whom I love dearly, but she comes in to me one day and says, "The senator" – she's talking about Cohen – "The senator wants a console on his desk with all thirty-five phone lines on it." I said, "What are you [crazy]?" I said, "The guy can't answer his own phone, don't do that." "Well, the senator wants it." I said, "Well yes, I know the senator wants it, but that's just not a good idea." But you have to kind of think, now, if they insist [p/o] - We used to call it the third notice rule, they come back three times and say, "I told you this is what I want to do." "Okay, fine." But sometimes they say things in the heat of the moment that they realize probably wasn't a good idea and I think, after all, they count on you to protect them from this sort of stuff. [p/o]

But it's a complex job, and it's one I always liked because it changes every single day, and it's infinitely stimulating, and it involves a lot of juggling. I have a short attention span, so if like to have a lot of things going on at once, it was always fun for me.

BW: Differentiate chief of staff from the LD role.

TD: LD's job is to supervise the legislative assistants, all of them, the energy guy and the health care guy and the foreign policy guy, and make sure that the material they're supposed to produce for the boss before a vote or for a meeting gets done, and that they may confer with the chief of staff on issues that have either some political ramifications, or where they just want a third opinion, or they want an opinion of a non-expert. Sometimes the legislative people get so deep into the nuances of their esoteric specialty that they kind of lose sight of the larger picture. But the LD is the chief legislative assistant, it's usually the person that a senator will call from the floor. Not always, he might call the chief of staff, but usually they'll call and say, "What's this amendment on x, y or z?" They have to get him the paper or the verbal recommendation, and they're all different in what they want, on the floor votes, they need to know what the parliamentary procedure is, they need to know procedure. Because when you get into motions to table, and in the Senate if you want to get a motion to reconsider, you got to be on the losing side, so you may vote against your own amendment just so you can get it reconsidered, but those are the kinds of things.

I won't identify this particular person, but one senator, who shall remain nameless, very early in his tenure, did not realize that a vote to table meant to kill it, and had to go back and change a couple of votes. Because in the House you vote up or down, in the Senate you almost always vote to table. Why, you may ask, since it takes about ten minutes to figure these things out, but it's hard. A friend of mine had a good thing for the boss, he said, "Table and thus kill, table and thus kill," because in all of this stuff, the Senate is much harder than the House, because the

House is planned. The House, you've got an open rule and one amendment, one hour debate, or you have a closed rule which means you got nothing, you know the vote's going to be at three fifteen, you can catch the four o'clock plane, you're all set. In the Senate you got thirty-five votes, and you got [no warning].

And the LAs [require] different skill sets, they've got to be ready on their issue. If you're doing health care, you better know damn well about this amendment that comes up in the Finance Committee that you never even thought about yesterday. You've got to have a good gut instinct for the issues. The short answer is, is the LD has a good grounding in a lot of issues, [p/o] should know the capacity of all of the legislative people that work for him, should make sure that they produce what they're supposed to produce, and it's his division, his piece of the office, he doesn't worry about the case workers or the schedulers or people up in the state or all of that, he just worries about the legislative operation.

BW: And does a legislative director report to the chief of staff?

TD: Yes, that's the pecking order. The Senate pecking order is pretty clear cut. The House, the titles don't mean as much. But yes, the chief of staff is the number one job, but almost all LDs have direct access to the senator, just because most of the chiefs of staff have no particular interest in having you come in and say, "Hey, this is the emergency Katrina aid coming up." "Thanks, but I don't need to see all the memos, just go talk to the boss when you know what we're going to do."

BW: As history looks back on George Mitchell, how do you think he should be remembered?

TD: I think he should be remembered as an enormously talented man who did a pretty good job in shaping his own future. I don't know if he actually knew he was going to run for leader in 1988, but he knew that if he did these two things it would open up a lot of options for him. He's one of a large collection of enormously talented and high quality senators we've had in Maine. It's difficult to say he's the best senator, because when you got a state that had Ed Muskie and a lot of these other people. And he's certainly, and I don't remember who the previous leader we had, who was it, James G. Blaine? I can't remember if we've had anybody who's been a Senate leader before that, or House, you got to back to the Speaker, but it's been a long time.

I think he's going to be listed in everybody's list of the four or five ablest people to serve Maine in Congress, and probably is one of the five or six most effective leaders. Whether you like Mitchell or you don't, nobody would argue he wasn't an effective leader.

BW: One thing we didn't talk about was Iran-Contra, do you have any thoughts on that? Did you see it -?

TD: Bill and George were both on the committee, which was sort of unusual. And yes, I remember it, and again, having been through impeachment, it struck me as a, I don't know whether the hearings weren't as good, but it struck me as substantially less dramatic. From all

reports, they both acquitted themselves fine on the committee. We have a good friend named Tim Woodcock, who was Bill's staff guy on the committee, and my memory is that they talked to each other fairly regularly about what was going on, and the hearings had some impact but not nearly as much as obviously impeachment had on Nixon, I mean Reagan survived and prospered.

My memory is that they were in the summer, these things tend to happen in the summer, and that Maine's two senators did well. But the way this thing was structured, I remember the lawyers asking a lot of the questions, it was not set up to burnish the reputations of the members who were on it. It struck me as a fairly bureaucratic sort of operation, and also it seems to me that every member got to hire his own lawyer, which meant there was very little cohesion among the team. There was a core group, but it was not like an impeachment, John Doar had everybody, they were all his people [p/o].

And I remember when I first read about the Iran-Contra thing, I was in China with Cohen and we were reading this thing in the paper in November. And then the hearings happened, and I remember being surprised that both Maine senators were appointed to it. Ollie North put on a pretty good show, and Brendan Sullivan put on a good show, and the potted plant and all that stuff. I do remember a lot of the members telling me in private conversations that the structure of this thing, you had Sam Dash on one side, is that the counsels got a lot of attention because of the way things were set up, with separate lawyers for everybody and a big enough committee so that you just didn't get to ask a lot of questions. I don't remember any particular member who shone. It's not to say that Maine senators didn't do fine, they did. But it didn't provide you with the same sort of platform and the same sort of drama as a lot of these other things. A lot like the campaign finance hearings, they just never really panned out in the same way.

BW: Did Senator Cohen ever share frustrations with you during that time?

TD: Generally, or specifically, about that, about Iran-Contra?

BW: Hmm-hmm.

TD: Yes, I'm sure we talked about it, but I can't cite a specific instance. The person who did most of the work for him on Iran-Contra was a guy named Tim Woodcock, who I've known a long time and we brought back for these hearings. I remember him telling me a couple of times that he, I can't give you a specific example, but I remember him being generally grumpy about this, and the impression he gave me is, and I certainly can't speak for Mitchell. [p/o] Now, I'm not talking about, some of the staff had a good time, it was a nice kind of short-term gig, but because of the fact that everybody got to appoint a lawyer, and because a lot of the lead questioning was done by the counsels on both sides, and I can't remember who the Republican guy was, that it was not a very good platform for the members themselves.

Now, I don't know if that squares with what other people have told you, but it certainly was my view. I think it was an honor for Maine to get both senators on, nobody ever accused either one of these guys of not having the ability to do good work, but I don't remember any great

breakthroughs by either one of them. Now again, it's been what, twenty-two years, so, I probably have a better memory of impeachment, which was fifteen years before that. But that at the time was brand new, and I guess I was a little bit surprised, to be honest with you, as I think back, that the thing did not seem to have more impact than it did. Part of it is people couldn't understand a lot of what it was about, paying off the Contras and all that kind of stuff, and running this little operation in the basement, and you either loved Ollie North or you didn't.

But in terms of the members, there were just too many layers of bureaucracy there. [p/o] But I didn't have a sense that the Iran-Contra Committee was structured so that the really good Senate lawyers, like Mitchell and Cohen certainly are, could get together and do something like that. It was just, you have your ten minutes, and five minutes is making a speech, and you ask a couple of questions and then it moves on. It seemed to me the committee was relatively large and it was, like the Watergate Committee in the Senate only had seven members, four and three. Well, that gives you a lot more flexibility.

BW: Good. Anything we've left unsaid here, do you think?

TD: No, I don't think so. I was duly impressed, as everybody was, with the tenacity that Senator Mitchell showed in that Irish thing, that's a remarkable achievement, and I think he's probably finding it kind of a slow go in the Middle East right now, but I have enormous regard for him, I have, I think he was an excellent senator. He has an unbelievable memory; I used to think Senator Mitchell knew everybody in the state. He not only knows your name, he knows your kids' names. I saw him up on the Hill one day, I went into the little Korean market with Susan [] and there he was, he was in there and he came over and, "Hello, how's everybody going?" He just, I mean that's a great trait of a politician. And he's a very enormously able man who will I think be very favorably remembered by his constituents, and most of the people here in Washington.

BW: Good, thank you very much.

TD: You're welcome, it was fun. I hope I did you some good.

End of Interview