

## ***George J. Mitchell Oral History Project***

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**Sarah B. Sewall**  
(Interviewer: *Michael Hastings*)

**GMOH# 091**  
April 24, 2009

**Mike Hastings:** The following is a recorded interview of the Senator George J. Mitchell Oral History Project, an activity of Bowdoin College. The interviewee today is Sarah Sewall of Wayland, Massachusetts, we are having the interview on Small Point outside of Bath, [Maine], in Phippsburg, the time is 1:45 p.m., the date is April 24, Friday the 24th, [2009]. We begin rather formally; I'm going to ask you to state your full name and to spell your surname.

**Sarah Sewall:** Sarah, with an H, Bulkeley, Sewall, and my last name is spelled S-E-W-A-L-L.

**MH:** And Bulkeley, how is that spelled?

**SS:** B-U-L-K-E-L-E-Y.

**MH:** What is your date of birth, and your place of birth?

**SS:** 8/21/61, so August 21, 1961, Boston, Massachusetts.

**MH:** And what is your father's full name, and your mother's full name?

**SS:** Loyall Farragut Sewall, Jr. is my father, and Susan Duncan Thomas is my mother.

**MH:** I'd like to begin by asking about your parents, can you tell me a little bit about your father?

**SS:** Well, my father actually figures not insignificantly in the story of my relationship with Senator Mitchell. My father is from a family that has been in Maine for a very long time, and been involved in politics for a very long time, and while there have been periods in which my family has been involved in Democratic politics, including a great-great – I'm going to get the generations wrong – grandfather, who ran for vice president with William Jennings Bryan -

**MH:** Sumner Sewall? No.

**SS:** I can't remember, he's Arthur, it's Arthur.

**MH:** There's a Sumner in there somewhere, isn't there?

**SS:** Oh yes, and there were a bunch of governors from Maine, and Joe Sewall's been in the Maine senate for forever.

**MH:** Okay, we were talking about your relatives in politics.

**SS:** And my father. And so he was one of those endangered species, the moderate conservative, the Ripon Society type.

**MH:** Wednesday Group Republicans, yeah.

**SS:** I remember as a kid going to greet Nelson Rockefeller at the airport in Portland, Maine, and waving little flags and singing Rockefeller, Rockefeller so - But dad didn't talk much about politics with us, but we knew politics was a big piece of his identity. And around about the time that I returned from graduate school and wanted to work for Senator Mitchell, he was chairman of the Republican Party in Maine, and so that created an interesting dynamic.

Growing up, I think the general practice when there was a close race in Maine was to have a recount conducted by George Mitchell on the Democratic side, and Loyall Sewall on the Republican side, so they knew each other quite well and had worked together amicably in the traditions of moderates for some time. So, that was my dad.

**MH:** And what did he do for business, I mean was he a -?

**SS:** Well, dad, he started out as a lawyer. I don't think his heart was ever in the law. He worked in Augusta as a lobbyist; at one point he was called, I think by the *Maine Times*, something like the most influential lobbyist in Maine. It was only later that I learned that the pride with which I had cut out the front cover of the *Maine Times* and pinned it somewhere was a bit misplaced, because he was representing Pittston Oil and Scott Paper and all the polluters and the big business, and I was blissfully unaware of that at the time.

So he was an attorney and he lobbied, and then eventually he left legal practice and took over the lobster business of his second wife, Charlotte Zahn, who was also a politician - I don't know if she was state senator or state rep, but a Republican, and not quite as kind a variety of Republican.

**MH:** What firm was he with?

**SS:** Verrill Dana.

**MH:** And your mother, tell me about her.

**SS:** Well my mother came from out of state (in the parochial way we Mainers have of defining things), and I technically don't even count because of course I was born in Boston, even though I didn't live there for very long, I think three or six months or something. My mom put

my father through law school, and did all the dutiful wifely things that was expected of her generation, and was rather unceremoniously divorced, because my father was a terrific alcoholic. And [she] was among the first of her generation to take that kind of an independent step and was penalized for it roundly, in a very small and insular state of Maine, where one person is sort of from here and the other isn't. So that was a very damaging chapter of my life.

But my mom carved a career out of nothing, she started working for the school I went to, Waynflete School in Portland, and she started doing fund-raising for them, and she turned that into a very successful nonprofit institution, fund-raising career, of which I am so proud of her. She really did it the hard way, and taught us a lot about independence and the need to be self-sufficient, and she was a role model in a lot of ways.

**MH:** So when did your parents divorce?

**SS:** I think technically I was about thirteen, but I believe they were separated by the time I was eleven.

**MH:** I see, and did you live in Bath, or did you live, where were you living?

**SS:** When my dad worked in Portland we lived in Falmouth, on the inside, not the Foreside along the coast, but on a farm, a guy basically farmed turnips down in the field and we had a wonderful railroad that went through periodically off of the Falmouth Road and -

**MH:** Near Blackstrap Road?

**SS:** Not too near Blackstrap, we were off the Falmouth Road, 321 Falmouth Road. I remember the great sadness with which we saw elms get chopped down, and we lived near a wonderful old bottle dump that my brother and sister and I would go explore, over all of the objections and admonitions of our parents, and I got to ride the tractor at some completely irresponsible age and things like that.

**MH:** And so you are what, your brother and sister -

**SS:** I'm the oldest, and I have a younger sister, Rebecca, and a younger brother, also Loyall, the third. And when my parents divorced, we moved to Portland with my mom and actually lived a couple doors down from Tom Allen, for whom I babysat. And Tom, in the small world of Maine, Tom was on my Rhodes Scholar committee and obviously went on to have his own political career, so it's all fun.

**MH:** Public schools, before you went to Waynflete?

**SS:** I went to public school I think through second grade, and then I think I went to Waynflete starting in third grade.

**MH:** I'd forgotten, Waynflete does begin its full -

**SS:** I don't know when it begins, but there were people in grades younger than me when I was there in third grade.

**MH:** So you graduate from Waynflete when?

**SS:** I didn't graduate from there. My class was really teeny and I had been there for a lot of years – I think we had probably fifteen kids in our class that I'd been in school with since third grade. So, my friend Amy Morton decided to go away to boarding school for the tail end of high school, so I thought that sounded like a pretty good idea and I asked to go. And there we go in the small world way, Peter Chandler, who had gone to Groton, who was at the time that I was thinking about this living with my dad while he was going to law school. I don't know if he suggested Groton or if Groton was just on the hit list because it was a short ride away, but anyway I ended up going to Groton and graduating from Groton.

**MH:** Groton, how long had Groton been coeducational?

**SS:** The year before I got there.

**MH:** I was going to say, that's fairly early.

**SS:** Yes, I definitely had my bumps at Groton, ran into a lot of teachers that were not quite ready for the institutional change that the school had embarked upon.

**MH:** Groton still had the (*unintelligible*) around, right? I mean the influence of Bishop [Endicott] Peabody was very much in evidence, I suspect.

**SS:** Yes, he wasn't the problem, though.

**MH:** So how many years at Groton?

**SS:** Three, and I loved it.

**MH:** And what were your interests there?

**SS:** Theater, although the person that I had the big blowup with was the theater director, because I don't really like to, I still can't in retrospect, I wasn't willing to become part of a particular way of looking at things. And Groton had a very fine theater program but only did, when I was there, really one play and then expanded to do two plays a year, so you didn't have a lot of opportunities. My first year I was cast as Joan of Arc, and that was a very intense experience for me, and a very rewarding one. And one would have thought that that would have been sort of defining in terms of the theater program, but because I really didn't feel comfortable with this particular director and the clique that he cultivated around him, it was very awkward. I

did not get a role in the next play that was cast. So, my early ambivalence with authority....

**MH:** Had you been an actor in Waynflete, or community theater in Portland?

**SS:** Oh yes, from early on. The first role I remember playing was St. George in some community theater program in Portland. The other thing I remember about that experience was the one day my mother didn't come to pick me up until quite a bit later, and I spent all my money on Boston cream donuts at the Dunkin' Donuts. And I apparently had so many that my stomach couldn't take it and I just threw up; my first memory of an after school program, it was very compelling. Yes, and I had done a lot of theater at Waynflete before, sort of Snoopy and the Hessian Corporal, a broad range; loved theater.

**MH:** If you were in the second class of women at Groton there must, how many were you? That's always difficult, the -

**SS:** We were, no, the school did it beautifully. The first class was tricky, and the older classes were unnaturally small and therefore I think difficult. Our class was maybe not quite half, but close to half, and we had also one of those fortuitous occurrences in any institution effort, we just had a class that was a wonderful class, and a very close class. And for me, at the time, with my parents having been divorced, and really having outgrown the school setting that I had grown up in, it was so important for me, the continuity was so important for me, the community was so important for me. It was a wonderful, wonderful experience, I really loved it.

**MH:** What else at Groton, what other interests?

**SS:** Sports. In the olden days at Groton they made everyone play a sport every semester, and I was the exception to the rule when I was Joan of Arc because I was exempted from winter sports, which was with some relief because I really wasn't very good at basketball, and when I did go back to winter sports it was cross-country skiing. But lacrosse and field hockey were both sports that I really enjoyed and went on to play in college.

**MH:** Debate, did you do debate or anything like -?

**SS:** You know, I didn't do debate. I don't know why I didn't do debate, but I didn't do debate.

**MH:** And any particular professors, masters, school masters that were pretty influential?

**SS:** No, other than the guy I fought with and I thought was really not up to snuff.

**MH:** Did this fight occur in your first year there, or your last?

**SS:** My first year there, and I remember talking, in my Harvard interview I remember talking about how painful it had been, and I remember being quite angry at the school actually for not

standing up for me. It was a time, and then I had a repeat experience with Michael Howard when I went to Oxford and wanted to study war and was sort of told on the q.t., he doesn't study with women. I have had these institutional experiences of real, feeling like being betrayed by the commitment that they'd made. But my overall experience there was really wonderful, and the thing about Groton is they make you do everything, so you are doing community service and dishwashing, I remember tutoring in Lowell. I remember trying to restart the Maru-a-Pula Club, because we had a sister school in Botswana which I just thought was completely incongruous and wonderful and I wanted to restore the ties with that sister school. Very close friendships, I mean lots of time to talk about life with other really special people. And you worked hard, and you had to do a little bit of everything. I somehow escaped the Latin requirement, I'm still not sure how I did that, but it was wonderful.

**MH:** So when you were a senior, what were you looking for, to continue a Groton-like experience, or to get something different?

**SS:** I don't suppose I thought about it in such a self-conscious way.

**MH:** What did you end up doing?

**SS:** I ended up looking at a gazillion colleges and being utterly confused. I ended up applying to two early, and I ended up going to Harvard basically because, being accepted at Harvard, it was sort of easy to go that way, my father had gone there, it was close. And I enjoyed Harvard; I had a good time there. I might have been happier at Brown, but I enjoyed Harvard.

**MH:** And what did you study there?

**SS:** Oh, well, see, for people like me who can't possibly decide on any one thing, the perfect major exists at Harvard. I didn't know this when I applied, but it turns out to have been perfect; it's called social studies. My father would always say, \$30,000 a year and you're studying social studies? But of course it was a little bit different than high school civics, or even elementary school civics at Waynflete with Mr. Brooks where we recreated pow-wows and, I can't remember what they're, potlatches. So it was economics, it was social theory, it was Marx, Weber, Durkheim, Freud, de Tocqueville, Mill. It was good stuff, very conceptual, very theoretical, and then within that I got interested in international affairs, and I'm not sure quite how. That was really when, apart from another unfortunate experience where I wrote a whole long term paper about naval warfare, and spelled it like the belly button, other than that, it was largely a very successful experience, and very engaged by my teacher, who was named Michael Smith, who went on to teach at Virginia and who's a wonderful, wonderful professor.

**MH:** Other professors that are noteworthy, from your point of view?

**SS:** No, no.

**MH:** No? Michael Smith.

**SS:** Michael Smith.

**MH:** Okay.

**SS:** No, he was the one that -

**MH:** Where's he now, is he retired, or - ?

**SS:** I think he's still at Virginia, and I reconnected with him not too very long ago, because my interest early on into ethics and the use of force sort of happened there, and it's been the theme throughout my entire career.

**MH:** Now, was there a Kennedy School or -?

**SS:** There was, I took classes at the Kennedy School.

**MH:** It was called the Kennedy School at that point?

**SS:** Yes.

**MH:** Wasn't there, there was a Littauer School, wasn't there, at some -

**SS:** I don't know.

**MH:** An earlier -

**SS:** There is a Littauer Building, so -

**MH:** Okay, I think it was, that's what it was called earlier. Okay, so -

**SS:** But I remember taking classes with Joe Nye and Graham Allison, who I now teach with.

**MH:** Four years straight, or did you take some time away?

**SS:** Oh, no, I took time. I went to Washington to do an internship in the summer of my junior year, and I had missed most of the deadlines and I ended up applying with another friend of mine to work at the Institute for Policy Studies, because one of our friends' fathers worked there and so he agreed that he would help us find internships, even though we'd of course missed all the deadlines.

**MH:** Was Bob Borosage there then still, Lee Webb?

**SS:** He was there still. The person I worked for was Marcus Raskin. So I went there for the summer, and Marc Raskin told me to go off and write a paper that examined the parallels between the abolition movement to abolish slavery, and the nuclear abolition movement, and that was a wonderful Oxford-like assignment that completely flummoxed me. I would go to the Library of Congress, sit in the beautiful dome, studying, wonder what on earth I should read to try to answer this question. But it was a great summer, and it got me completely hooked on Washington and politics and this nexus of political activism and normative questions about international stuff.

**MH:** Did you make a lot of friends there?

**SS:** Well, I went with my friend in this internship, and we stayed with a friend of hers out in Virginia, so we had a small cadre unto ourselves, and stayed pretty much within that.

**MH:** So were you in the library most of the time, or were you, as I recall, IPS was over off of Dupont Circle, off of Connecticut Avenue, on 18th Street or something.

**SS:** It was, yes. Mostly I spent my time in the library, but I must have done plenty else because I really got hooked. And so then I decided, I remember the mother of the woman with whom we stayed, a wonderful woman, Mrs. Chavdze, we called her Mummy Chav, I remember two different ways in which she had a huge impact on my life. One, she was one of the first people in the State Department to have Human Rights in her title, you know, give it to the girls, so she had had a very interesting and somewhat iconoclastic career at State and worked very hard, was a single parent, and we'd find her asleep with her head in her plate, I mean she was a trouper. But I remember saying to her, sort of sitting at her knee one day, "Do tell me Mummy Chav, how is it that you can go and make a difference in the world? I really want to change the world and make it better, tell me, based on all of your experience and everything that you've done at the State Department and working for human rights, what should you do?" She looked at me with a straight face and she said, "Make money."

So of course I completely ignored that advice, but she did give me some advice which I took which was, I remember sitting at the edge of the bed at the end of the summer and I was half packed to go home, and I remember being very unhappy and not wanting to go back to school, and expressing this. And she said, "You don't have to go back, you do not *have* to go back." And so I didn't. And I ended up getting an internship at the Center for Defense Information.

**MH:** Admiral -

**SS:** Admiral [Gene] LaRocque, who for some reason, he was mean to absolutely everyone except me. I once used the word 'adumbrate,' which he thought was just so phenomenal, and he always talked about it whenever he saw me afterwards, that I was the person who used this word 'adumbrate.' Crazy organization - I loved [Eugene F.] Gene Carroll, Admiral Carroll who was there. But anyway, the only reason I got that internship, because I had of course no experience - oh, so what had happened was - no, no, that's not where I went. I decided to stay, and I wanted

to work on the Hill, so I wanted to do a Hill internship, so I ended up working for Olympia Snowe. Olympia Snowe, okay, moderate Republican from Maine.

**MH:** That would have been around when? I'm just trying to think.

**SS:** That would have been '83, '83, in the fall then of '83, through the winter.

**MH:** That was when I was doing Mitchell's foreign policy.

**SS:** And loved that experience, learned a ton. Because this is about Mitchell, I won't say anything more about that experience. And then when I was working there, I read a *New York Times* article about anti-satellite weapons development and thought that this notion that the U.S. and then the Soviet Union would knock out each other's eyes and ears that were so important for strategic stability was really insane, I was just perplexed by how could this be. And so I applied to go work as an intern at the Center for Defense Information to work on space weaponry.

**MH:** Okay, and Reagan was really pushing for -

**SS:** No, no, nobody cared about this at this point. This would have been in, I would have applied in the winter of '82, I guess. Yes, it would have been fall '82, and I would have applied in the winter of '82, and I was wait-listed for the internship and I was like number fourteen or something on the wait list, so I thought there was no way and I thought I was going to have to go back halfway through my senior year, but it turned out that lots of people turned them down, so I sort of sneaked in.

And so I'd had this experience trying to write this really abstract paper from the perspective of the left, and then I had this very hands-on experience from a moderate centrist view within the Congress. Here I was trying to understand a policy issue, how do I understand technical aspects of policy: what are the reasons that we rely on strategic satellites? What is the state of technology development of anti-satellite weaponry? How do we know what we think we know about the U.S.S.R., or the U.S.? Sort of dealing with secrecy issues and access to information issues in a very technical budgetary sense, and got my head around this, and March 23, 1983, Reagan gives his Star Wars speech, it becomes a big issue.

So I had been fortunate to be captivated by something before it went mainstream. And that was really exciting, because there were a group of people that I had met in the nerdly Washington way who were also interested in this and so geeks who are interested in space weapons before it's worthwhile to do so is an unusual crowd, and I'm still very close to them all and they're wonderful people: Paul Stares, John Pike, Dan Deudney – I don't see him anymore, but - And that was a very passionate and engaging time.

**MH:** Were you involved at all with John Isaacs at the Council for a Livable World?

**SS:** Well, I would become involved with John Isaacs when I worked for Mitchell, but at that

time space weapons weren't even on the agenda of the Arms Control Committee, I mean they really were nowhere.

So I stayed there, I wrote my first published piece, which was on anti-satellite arms control. I remember having a letter published in the *New York Times* saying something to the effect of, we really ought to think about arms control, it's not out of the question. People had just assumed it was out of the question, and so feeling as though if you really were willing to dig and learn and become expert in something and reason it through, and you could apply larger constructs, whether they were political constructs or normative constructs or legal constructs or whatever you wanted to that work, but that you could then engage in the political process, you could engage it on the pages of a major newspaper. [I] had that sense of empowerment that this was work that was real and it could be done, and that you could take idealism with hard analysis and you could somehow translate it into the debate and (*unintelligible—two people speaking at once*).

**MH:** Did you find that the people who were engaging in those debates were willing to let a woman participate, or was it like Groton and the theater director?

**SS:** Well this group of friends, I was the junior person by far, but this group of friends, they just wanted to know what you'd found through a FOIA request, or what you'd uncovered in this particular authorization bill. And if you brought information of value to the table, there was no discrimination; it was very much a merit based thing. It was a little odd being female at the time at CDI, I don't think there were a lot of women working there.

**MH:** The reason I asked the question is that from my own experience in '79 to '84, working on the Hill, that the bulk of the defense analysts, so-called, were men.

**SS:** Oh, absolutely.

**MH:** There were very, very few -

**SS:** And that would be a common issue later.

**MH:** There were very few women.

**SS:** But remember, this was a fringe issue now, so being fringe on the fringe issue is not as hard as being fringe on the mainstream. But later, yes, I would run into that all over the place. I still run into that all over the place, that's been a constant theme in the work that I've done, especially, yes, absolutely. But it hadn't, I was blissfully ignorant of it at that point.

**MH:** So did you want to finish your degree in -?

**SS:** No, I didn't want to ever go back.

**MH:** No, but I mean did you want to finish it in Washington instead of going back to Cambridge?

**SS:** I didn't want to go back. I have always had an ambivalent relationship with school. I feel like life is school, and school seems rather beside the point in a lot of ways, and that's something that I still wrestle with. But I was convinced by people there that I couldn't just spend another year fruitfully at CDI, that I should just go back and then I could come back to Washington. And that is what I wanted to do, and I ended up writing my social studies thesis, it was a major that you had to apply to and you were required to write, so it was selective and you were required to write a thesis, so it was known as a nerdy major. And I ended up writing my thesis on anti-satellite weapons, arms and arms control, so it was wonderful because I was able to take the research that I had done at CDI and then I struggled, I mean this is my ambivalence about school, I struggled to find a theoretical, the context of (*unintelligible*). What are they going to say about space weapons?

So I struggled for a framework and ended up with a bureaucratic politics lens on the issue. But, of course, there was nobody at the college who could teach me that, or certainly nobody in the social studies, so I sort of fumbled my way through this thesis, but it was fun for me to be able to try to integrate it into schoolwork.

And then the one thing I'll say about my thesis advisor, whose background was in community organizing and he didn't even know anything about international affairs, let alone military issues, let alone space weapons or (*unintelligible*) politics theory. The one thing I will say about this advisor, who was my thesis quote/unquote 'advisor,' is that he urged me to apply for a Rhodes Scholarship, and I did it the night before it was due and having to white-out my application, but I ended up getting the Rhodes Scholarship and ended up going to Oxford in part because, I think, of my unusual interest in sort of real life and an academic record that would support it.

**MH:** Was that immediately after Harvard?

**SS:** Well that's the problem, I should have deferred it, and everyone said you couldn't defer it, but I was like a horse at the gate, I wanted to get in the race, and I didn't want to be in school. So I did not have a particularly great experience at Oxford. But still, an honor and a privilege and blah-blah-blah, but my heart had already been sort of lodged in D.C.

**MH:** Let's cycle back to your Washington time, did you have any connections with the Mitchell office when you were working as an intern for Snowe or in Defense Information?

**SS:** No.

**MH:** No contact whatever.

**SS:** No.

**MH:** Okay, your year, did you apply only for the Rhodes, or did you go for, did you apply for the Marshall as well?

**SS:** Just the Rhodes.

**MH:** The Rhodes, okay, and were there, how many of you from Harvard that year?

**SS:** My buddy Jay McCloud, who was a skier and a crazy man, John (*unintelligible*), I think there was one more, no, there were, well no, I can't answer that question. I think there were a bunch from Harvard, I think there were maybe seven or eight from Harvard. In my group, because I competed in New England, there were four people chosen, three of those four were from Harvard.

**MH:** Now, was the screening process in Maine, or was it in -

**SS:** Yes, they screen at the state level, and then you have to go to the regional.

**MH:** That's right, so how did that go, anything memorable?

**SS:** Not really, except that I remember Tom Allen was on that committee.

**MH:** So which college at Oxford were you placed in?

**SS:** Well, that was another unfortunate thing. I followed the advice of the people who I talked to on my committee, who were very kind but very different from me and recommended, in the way that people do, the experience that worked really well for them. And it was exactly the wrong experience for me. It was a very young college, it was a very male college, it was a very snooty college. Ugh.

**MH:** And so, I understand that the method of education at those, Oxford-Cambridge, allows a lot of time for travel between the three periods.

**SS:** Indeed it does, it's the predominant value in my book.

**MH:** What did you do while you were, when you weren't on campus, or weren't at the college.

**SS:** Well, that's actually a great question, because those are in many ways the things that I remember most fondly. I remember in the first winter going on a group tour to Russia, because it was still the Soviet Union, and going with a group of friends and planning, from the very beginning, with two guys who would later become very well-established journalists, Peter Slevin who is with the *Washington Post*, and Bart Gellman who's with the *New York Times*, the three of us plotted and planned to go interview Refuseniks in the Soviet Union. So we basically had this wonderful adventure when we went there, riding on trains at night, trying to find people in

anonymous apartment buildings, being ushered into an experience within an experience, so the Refusenik experience within the Soviet experience, that was more educational than anything you could possibly learn in a library. I mean, it was just phenomenal.

I went at one point to Burma and traveled through Burma, one of my favorite trips ever – again had that feeling of utter discovery, a bit of *verboden*, just transported into a very different experience. And what I tend to do when I travel is, I meet people and I make friends with them, and I've often wondered whether the people that I met when I was there are even still alive, because the chances that they were part of a pro-democracy movement are really high because they were clearly able to connect, they spoke English, they were educated, and they connected with foreigners, or were drawn in some way to foreigners. So, travel was terrific, it was great.

**MH:** Had you done much foreign travel prior to that point.

**SS:** No.

**MH:** I mean when you were in high school, or?

**SS:** No, well I shouldn't say none. I went with Groton to Europe for about three weeks the first year, this is when my break with the director came because the people who had been in the theater program took a sort of collection of poems and songs to Europe for a couple of weeks, that was my first trip abroad, and it was on that summer that I was just like, this guy's creepy, and this is too weird, and made it very clear that I needed to be independent of that.

Then in college, I fell in love with this Greek man – briefly, as it turns out – but visited him in Greece and had a wonderful time, and then traveled on my own back through Europe. So I had had a smattering of exposure, but I hadn't had anything where you were exchanging money in the black market, where you could have been picked up by the authorities and disappeared, where you couldn't really communicate with people because you didn't even have bad French to work with, it was really a language you couldn't even decipher. And that was the stuff that was so fun.

*End of CD One*  
*CD Two*

**MH:** So did, as this developing interest in other places and international issues occurs, did you start beefing up your languages, or were you already fluent?

**SS:** Oh, sadly no, I had working French, and that was all I had, but I didn't have one area of the world that I was in love with either, so again, it would have been this problem of what do you choose, where do you go. And languages are hard for me, I have to really work at them. My husband can, he lived in Thailand for four or five years and he speaks everything, Thai, Khmer, Lao, Vietnamese, I mean I don't have that talent.

**MH:** So did you take a degree at Oxford, or were you in one of those programs that -

**SS:** I did international relations.

**MH:** You're not required to, as I recall.

**SS:** And I just, I did no work. And I again had a wonderful advisor to start with, but then the person who was running my IR pro-, well I told you, I wanted to study with Michael Howard, I was told I couldn't study with Michael Howard, that was number one crash, and then I ended up with Adam Roberts as my advisor. He was a wonderful man, but Hedley Bull, who was running the entire IR program died, so Adam had to take over all of Hedley Bull's D.Phil. students, so he said, "You'll be fine, go off, you'll be fine on your own." And I ended up again with a thesis advisor who didn't know anything even about international affairs. I ended up with a thesis advisor, I don't even remember what he did, medieval something, it was just ridiculous. So I was just completely on my own, and not motivated and really wanting to be elsewhere, Washington, somewhere exotic.

**MH:** So what happens next?

**SS:** So I went to Africa after I graduated, with my best female friend and friends of hers, and had a couple of months tooling through Kenya and Uganda and Rwanda, and again, just a fabulous adventure, amazing adventure, fell in love with Africa. [I] went back to Oxford and applied to the CIA, applied to the Peace Corps, applied to a couple of development organizations in the U.K. to do African development work -

**MH:** Action Aid?

**SS:** I don't remember, I think Oxfam, but I had no skills so nobody would hire me. Well there's a surprise, right? So I ended up coming back to the States, I toyed with getting another M.A. in African Studies, and at one point I think even wrote a letter asking the Rhodes people whether I could do that, but then I don't really remember what happened. I think my dad was in a bad way, and I went back and I ended up withdrawing my application on the Peace Corps, too.

My dad, his health wasn't well, his mental health wasn't well. The woman to whom he was married, it was very difficult for my brother and sister. I just had a sense that I should be around and not be off. Oh, actually no, I know exactly what happened, I applied for the International Rescue Committee, I interviewed, I was accepted to take a job at Khao-I-Dang Refugee Camp along the Thai border, and I went home and realized that things were that iffy, and ended up, much to my embarrassment, asking the IRC if I could break my contract, because it didn't seem to make sense for me to come.

So then after that I went to D.C. and I looked up an old friend of mine who was one of these space weapons nerds, who gave me a part-time job in the basement of the Federation for American Scientists, where I spent hours sitting at a computer looking at this – now my eyes are

so bad I wouldn't be able to read it, but – this little spreadsheet and entering in perigee and apogee data for satellite rotations, because what John was trying to do was figure out which were the spy satellites and which were the communication satellites.

**MH:** This was John Pike.

**SS:** Yes, and so this is what I did when I went back to Washington. So I stayed in the basement entering data into a computer, obscure data into a computer, and I looked for a job. I guess the summer in between my two years of graduate school I had worked for a foundation that was trying to get up off the ground, trying to help them think through how they should be giving away their money. And I had met through it, a guy who I had also looked up when I came back to Washington, who sat down with me and basically said, "What are the things you believe in? What are the kinds of things you want to do? Who are the people who believe those things?" And it was through that discussion in a very structured way that I would have been incapable of doing on my own, but I came to something that I probably would have defaulted to on my own anyway, but the answer was: George Mitchell.

**MH:** Really?

**SS:** Yes, because the default on my own was George Mitchell because at this point it was very clear that I was a Democrat and not a Republican, even though I'd been a registered Republican for a while, because I had wanted to vote for my stepmother. And he was from Maine and I knew of him, because I had followed him of course. But it was also looking at politics, looking at where people were in their careers, looking at where I thought I could help them, looking at who else was with them, that this guy said, "This would be a logical place." I was like, but George Mitchell, I think the world of George Mitchell; 'I've always wanted to work for George Mitchell' sort of a thing, where it was just like clearly I should work for George Mitchell, so I'd try to work for George Mitchell.

Well, George Mitchell didn't have a foreign affairs LA at that point, he had I think a State Department fellow who would come in and work with him on and off, but it wasn't his field or area, but I knew it needed to be.

**MH:** Was he majority leader by this time?

**SS:** No, he had just started, and so he had just, I guess his first year had, when was he first in office?

**MH:** It was, he had me from '80 to '84.

**SS:** Yes, but you were the first, right?

**MH:** I was.

**SS:** Yes, so he had been, by the time I was looking for work, he had been there for one, this was his first term still.

**MH:** It would be, yes; I left two years into his first term, so you must have started in '85?

**SS:** I think I started in end of '84, but I'm not sure.

**MH:** So it was right after I left, even days. I left in October, in October of -

**SS:** Okay, and did you have foreign affairs in your portfolio?

**MH:** Yes, I did foreign affairs and defense, and fishing.

**SS:** Yes, so that must have, wait, didn't Bob Carolla do fishing, or did Bob come on after you?

**MH:** He took my place, he took my place.

**SS:** Okay, so I think what happened, this is my guess in retrospect, what happened is, is that his profile and his engagement had changed such that when you left, you had to be two jobs, right? That's always the greatest compliment; you did a job of two people! So, but it turned out – here's the small world Maine piece, right? – so it turned out that my father had known Gayle Cory from way back. Gayle's from Bath, Buzz is from Bath, Dad grew up, his family home was turned into the Bath Marine Museum, right, so small world, he told me to look up Gayle.

And I went, and I met Gayle, and you remember Gayle, I mean just a phenomenal person, and so I just basically said, "I want to work for George Mitchell, that's what I want to do." She's like, "Sarah, he's not hiring, but if it ever changes I'll let you know, and you can just keep on coming back." So I would just go back periodically, "How's it going, Gayle? What's going on, is he hiring yet?" And then one day, I'll be danged if Gayle didn't call me and say, "You know what, he's going to hire a foreign affairs LA, you should come in and interview." So I went in and interviewed, and the awkward part was not that I knew Gayle or that I was from Maine, it was that my father was chairman of the Maine Republican Party.

**MH:** Actually, in Mitchell's case, that's not all that awkward.

**SS:** It was awkward; for his staff, it was awkward. I was on my knees saying, you can offend Republicans around me, you can say mean things, I won't take it personally, I won't rat, I won't tape record you. It was awkward, I had to really explain to the people before I met Mitchell that – and I'm not even sure I ever interviewed with Mitchell actually when I was hired.

**MH:** Had you ever met him, prior to being hired?

**SS:** I don't think I ever had, no.

**MH:** With whom did you work in the office most closely?

**SS:** Well, I ended up working with him, because there was no, I mean there's the AA, right.

**MH:** Rich Arenberg at the time.

**SS:** Was Rich the AA, because I remember Martha [Pope] being the AA for most of my time there, but that may not -

**MH:** Rich was when you started.

**SS:** Rich was when I started. I didn't work much with Rich, I worked more with Martha. His profile had really changed by the time I left, but yes, so I ended up getting this job that was exactly what I wanted to do. I just felt like the luckiest person on the planet, I couldn't believe it. And the learning curve initially in those jobs, as you well remember, is just exponential, it is better than school. You just absorb process, you absorb politics, you absorb substance, you absorb people, it is just a firehouse, I was just so happy, I just loved it.

And I still think of my time working for him, particularly after he became majority leader, when everything was much easier, more complex but much easier in a lot of ways in terms of getting things done and having impact and results. I think of the privilege of working for that person, and I think of the time at which I worked, and I don't imagine that I will ever have a job that was just more both fun and rewarding; it was just a phenomenal experience.

**MH:** I realize this is a long time ago and it's hard to get things in order, but do you remember any issues, the early issues that you handled for him, I mean special projects for him in your area, and were they of his devising or of your own?

**SS:** Well the issues that hit us pretty much right off the bat were big issues, war powers issues. He had just finished the Iran-Contra hearings, and was riding a very high reputation based on that experience. And I had nothing to do with that experience, but I came in afterwards. And one of the issues that we had to deal with was, and I think it was the Persian Gulf reflagging issue. That had happened before working for him too, because I worked very briefly at the Democratic Study Group before I got the job with the Senator.

**MH:** On the House side, the DSG on the House side.

**SS:** Yes, did defense issues for them.

**MH:** Which was run, I think, by an old Muskie staff person, Al From, was he there then?

**SS:** No.

**MH:** But please, tell me about the reflagging.

**SS:** Well I can't remember if it was reflagging or if we had another issue, but it was a war powers issue basically, where the question before the body was whether to authorize – maybe it was reflagging – whether to authorize the deployment of forces into hostile circumstances. And Mitchell was, and I assume still is, a supporter of strong executive power, and was not comfortable with the War Powers resolution for some very good reasons. But I was concerned because the law being the law, an authorization, an up or down was required, and whatever it was that was at issue temporally, clearly in my mind fit the bill of the requirements of law.

So I went in to him and I said, in a very deferential way basically said, you just lectured Ollie North that nobody's above the law, and now you're faced with a vote where, if you vote this way, you could be perceived as acting as the (*unintelligible*). And he's not. And I can see the problems with this law, but I think there's a real consistency issue here, and a real issue of principle here. So he told me to go off and research more, and I ended up writing some enormously long analysis of the issue, and I'm not a lawyer, I wasn't a lawyer, I've now at least taken some law school, but at the time I knew nothing, I just was coming as a layman for this guy who really knows the law, and gave it to him, and then went in and talked to him about it again and we batted it back and forth. And we both basically agreed that the law was problematic, it was really a dysfunctional law in a lot of ways, but that the situation triggered the law.

**MH:** But is it not the case that, from the time that the War Powers Act was enacted, that no president had ever -

**SS:** The issue isn't declaring war, the issue is whether the Congress should give an authorization for the deployment of forces pursuant to the law, which is what the Congress, in passing that law, claimed that it wanted to be able to do, is vote, cut off the funds or give it the clock and cut off the funds, or authorize it. So he ended saying, "You know what? I want you to write two statements." So I ended up writing two statements, one for and one against, and I really didn't know where he was going to go.

**MH:** How much time did you have to do that?

**SS:** I don't remember.

**MH:** This is a recurrent -

**SS:** Theme?

**MH:** Tactic that he had, because he, I guess he was, well I shouldn't cast judgments on it, but I think most of his staff people seem to have been very passionate about their work, and they usually had a point of view on most of these issues, and he kind of pulled you back and made you more rational, by making you write the other side as well, but a number of people have

mentioned this.

**SS:** Did everyone else have that similar sense of, 'oh my gosh, I really don't know what this man is going to do?' It was fascinating to me. And he ended up supporting it, but what we ended up doing was teaming up with Senator Byrd and Sam Nunn, who were not his normal political bedfellows, but I had developed relationships with the staff and had been talking to them about the -

**MH:** Do you remember who those staff people were?

**SS:** I think so, I know that Dick D'Amato was Byrd's guy, and it was probably Rick DeBobes for Nunn, although he may have come later, but he was the general counsel for Armed Services so I suspect would have, oh no, no, you know who it was, it was Bob Bell. So it was Bob Bell and Dick D'Amato and I, decided that we would craft for our principals a reform bill. So that became a really wonderful issue to work on, with these two very old, respected hands. I mean they weren't very old in terms of their age, but they had been around the Hill forever and they knew everything. And I think Dick was a lawyer, not that he always acted like one, but I think he was trained as one.

And so we wrote up a reform bill, and that became a piece of legislation that was jointly introduced by those three, and I think it was important for him and his profile in a lot of ways. One, because he had shown suppleness in applying but then seeking to change a law, and I think that was both a consistent position but a position of principle. Two, in proposing this new legislation, he claimed some expertise in an area that was not one for which he had been known, sort of national security, and he had collaborated with the Senate majority leader and the chairman of the Armed Services Committee, both much more conservative than he, on a significant initiative, and it got some press attention and stuff.

That was a really interesting issue to work on, in terms of process with him and in terms of the substance of it, and in terms of process vis-à-vis the Senate and reform. So I was laughing when, whenever it was, a year ago, there was some big hyper commission that came up with some new recommendation to change the War Powers Resolution, because I read it closely, I thought our bill was better.

**MH:** Other issues that stand out in your mind from your time there?

**SS:** Well, yes, in many ways, watching Senator Mitchell try to thread the needle during the first Gulf War, for a similar set of issues, the War Powers authorization was an absolutely fascinating process. He was majority leader by that time, and he had a president who clearly was going to war, and he had a rank and file membership within the party that was confused and uncomfortable. And so we tried to do a couple of different things, and when I say we, I mean the leadership piece, it was Senator Mitchell and me working on his behalf, we tried to find out as much as we could so we arranged a ton of briefings. One of the things that I don't think many people appreciated at the time is that there were real splits in, well, and it wasn't even split, there

was real concern within the (*unintelligible*) community at the time. I think I can say this carefully enough to not break any rules, but there was great concern about the viability of the operation, about the costs, (*unintelligible*) costs in life and (*unintelligible*) of the operation. It was perceived as far more risky in anticipation of the invasion than it proved to be in retrospect. So we were all very sobered by the views of the intelligence agencies and the area experts that we had consulted with.

But as a political matter it was very tricky because the party is broad and there was a real split of opinion as to, I remember Al Gore actually went the other way, but there was a real split of opinion as to what to do, there were real questions about: a) what was the right thing from a policy perspective; and b) how, as a political matter, did you take a corporate body of Democrats, capital D, and find a position that would be comfortable for them all. And at the end of the day, I drafted the sanctions resolution, the alternative that was offered.

Watching the process of individual consultations with members, the one-on-ones, the group meetings, watching Senator Mitchell in the brilliant way that he does listen to inchoate comments and read between the lines, between argument and emotion, or argument and politics, and watching him process everything, and I really did not know, as his staffer on this issue, what his personal views were about the war. And I did not know, I could not have predicted --

**MH:** How did he vote in the end?

**SS:** In the end, he led the vast majority of Democrats to vote for the sanctions resolution against the use of force authorization. And there were only a handful of, quote/unquote, 'defectors' who, in retrospect, fared better for having defected. That was a fascinating process, going through that.

Another issue that I remember distinctly, I mean setting up the scholarships for him was really fun, the George Mitchell, there was some scholarship program to Russia that we set up, that was fun because that -

**MH:** Really, tell me about that, I haven't heard about that.

**SS:** Well, I'm not sure I can remember all of the facts, but at some point in time, I mean one of the most wonderful things working for Senator Mitchell was getting to travel with him when he went abroad. And the trip that always will stand out in my mind was the trip to the Soviet Union with Gorbachev, when we met with Gorbachev, well the Senator met with Gorbachev, I was in the room, and just how completely and utterly fascinating that was. And then, when the Wall fell and we went and we were part of that whole gestalt, there was a desire to do things, to create programs, to create exchanges, to begin to open up in a concrete way, one of the things that had occurred to me to do was to create a scholarship program to bring, I think at that point, Russians. I don't remember if it was members of the entire former Soviet Union. Probably, because my guess is they hadn't even sorted out all the pieces yet but, over to the States, and send people over there on a George Mitchell scholarship program. I don't know if it still exists,

but it was fun to do at the time.

There were a bunch of very significant issues that in my opinion had a significant impact on American foreign policy that he was involved in, that I don't think many people associate him with, but I certainly do, because I worked on the issues. And one was his role in cutting off assistance to non-communist resistance in Cambodia. The U.S. was basically turning a blind eye to the Khmer Rouge and funding people who were, in one form or another, not unfavorably disposed toward the Khmer Rouge and were alleged to have been dropping arms caches for their use, American weapons and basically material. Very nasty, Communist government in Cambodia, not a good guy, Hun Sen, but the U.S. policy was basically allied with the genocidal regime, and the U.S. had been doing that covertly for a long period of time.

Senator Mitchell joined up with I think probably people who can't be named, but who worked through the Senate Intelligence Committee to end that funding. And I remember as clear as yesterday when James Baker, who was then secretary of state, called Senator Mitchell. I don't know if he knew about Senator Mitchell's role behind the scenes in terms of the staff work to make this all happen, but we had done something in a public bill, or we had not changed something when it came to the public bill, such that it was a Rules issue in effect, that the majority leader controlled, that would have ratified the changes that had been made in committee.

And so I wasn't on the call, I was listening, Senator Mitchell was sitting, very uncharacteristically sitting on a desk in his front office, in the majority leader's office suite and it was like eleven o'clock at night, and I'd gotten wind that Baker was going to call him, and so I'd prepped him and he was ready for the call. And Baker's sort of de facto plea was, 'this is going to cut off our program, don't cut off our program.' And I remember the smile on Senator Mitchell's face; it was just like the Cheshire Cat, because he knew he had him. He knew he had him, he had the votes, he had the bill, it was basically a done deal, and I remember him very patiently explaining to the secretary of state why, not only was he aware of the importance of this, but he disagreed with him about why it was important, and these were the reasons why it was important. And it was just an extremely satisfying moment where, you know, I was subsequently to go work in the executive branch, but this was a moment where I was so proud of our political system and the leadership within it, I was so proud to work for Mitchell, I was so proud that the Congress was actually exercising its oversight role and taking a stand different from the executive branch to change things.

And I firmly believe that in the indirect way that the stone and ripples happens, that action was responsible ultimately for the [U.N.] peace process in Cambodia, because we ended the U.S. option of continuing the war by proxy, we forced the U.S. option of continuing the war by proxy, (I think I said U.N., I didn't mean that). We forced the U.S. to try to find an alternative way to deal with resolving the conflict, it pushed the U.S. to work with the U.N., and the pieces all ultimately fell into place. But if U.S. policy hadn't changed, the U.S. relationship to the U.N. process would not have changed and we wouldn't have had the outcome that we've had, which has been imperfect, but so much better than continued war.

**MH:** Have you ever had an opportunity to write anything about this?

**SS:** No, no, but it was remarkable, it was really remarkable.

**MH:** Because it's an interesting story, that I'm not aware of at least in the -

**SS:** Well, it was all very, you know - [p/o]

**MH:** I want to ask you, you started out on the personal staff, the Senator's personal staff. When did you move over to the majority leader's staff?

**SS:** Oh, I was so sad to move over to the Policy Committee, didn't want to go.

**MH:** So you (*unintelligible*).

**SS:** Yes, Senator Mitchell inherited Majority Leader Byrd's staff at the Democratic Policy Committee. Now, as I said before, Byrd and Mitchell had very different politics, and so it's no surprise that the Byrd staff were very different in character and temperament and political outlook than the Mitchell staff. And I had had the privilege of being sort of the sole source foreign policy and national security person for him, I knew how he thought, our styles worked very well together, I wrote very much like he thought. It was a very simpatico staff relationship, again, one of those rare things that you really treasure in retrospect.

And so I treasured that exclusivity of the relationship, I also treasured being part of the Mitchell staff, right, they were all my friends. You know what that's like, these are lifelong friends. And so I didn't want to go over to the Democratic Policy Committee way over in the Hart Building, having a different staff director than his AA, like why would you do that?

**MH:** Did you get some help yourself when you went over there? Did you get some people to work with you?

**SS:** Well no, here's what happened, the honest-to-God truth about what happened is that, these people who were paid twice as much as I was, and in my humble opinion had a very different set of talents and very different set of opinions, were now senior staff at the Democratic Policy Committee, and I'm the newbie coming in to their established network. There were, I can't even remember, two or three of them, and it was very difficult for me. It was very difficult for me to work in an environment where I was compensated so much less, and I was doing so much more work. And where I had to constantly battle with my peers on issues, where they were staffing him but I knew they weren't staffing him the way he would want to be staffed. So that was a very hard adjustment period, never a completely easy adjustment period. I don't think he was aware of how hard that was; it really felt like being kind of kicked out and then having to work twice as hard to get even something approaching a result.

**MH:** I assume that by that point his schedule, daily schedule, was getting more and more crowded too, at that point.

**SS:** Oh, yes, oh absolutely. Well, and just bigger, he has a bigger empire, he has a bigger set of responsibilities, he's got to go corporate. But the problem was, I was very young, and I was female, and I went into an environment with all these fifty- and sixty-year-old men who'd been staffing Senate Majority Leader Byrd for forever and they knew what they were doing, thank you very much, and I didn't have the seniority, I didn't have the status end of the title to make it really Mitchell's shop. So it was a tough transition.

**MH:** Now, how long were you there?

**SS:** Well, when did he become majority leader?

**MH:** You know, I don't know that date.

**SS:** I left, in the spring of '93 was when I left.

**MH:** So he must, he became majority leader shortly after his second election I think, '88? I think it was right after that.

**SS:** So, because I worked for him for at least a year before he became majority leader, so.

**MH:** You went to the White House.

**SS:** After working for Mitchell?

**MH:** Yeah.

**SS:** Oh, no, but I want to tell you another thing that I'm really proud of him for.

**MH:** Yes, okay, oh, please do. They tell me that I'm not supposed to be afraid of pauses, I'm supposed to just let you pause and, but it's not your way to pause very often, so -

**SS:** No, it's true. Well, I've forgotten, of course, but the other thing that I think he doesn't get enough credit for, and he absolutely deserves it, is the nuclear testing moratorium, which again, in the 'ripple in the pond' way, I think had significant international repercussions. He had a very progressive view on arms control issues generally, he was good guy, John Isaacs, the whole Council for a Livable World thing, but pretty predictable liberal positions, and so I had a very strong sense of where he was generally there. And I had a friend who worked for Senator Hatfield, and a friend who worked for Jim Exon, a conservative Democrat, and we were kicking around policy issues one day. I can't remember what the precipitating external events would have been, but there must have been something that made us wonder if one way to get toward the non-proliferation regime and get the treaty back on its feet, or on its feet, was to halt nuclear

testing, whether there was a way to halt nuclear testing. And we walked through the politics of it and came back to, 'well what if we just start with baby steps,' which is the way you often get things done, 'and we just try a pause on nuclear testing.' So what if we cut off funding for a year's worth of nuclear testing, and just do it as a temporary moratorium, and we start as a precedent, we prove that we don't get attacked by the Soviet Union and the world doesn't stop, and that maybe more labs will figure out another way to continue testing without actually exploding things.

And so we, working through our bosses, managed to build a whole coalition – again, this is what I understand is so different about the Hill now – and it was just such a joy to work there when it worked this way, but you could get these coalitions of the willing, essentially, and odd bedfellows, and really make something happen. So between Hatfield and Exon and Mitchell, we built a coalition of people that ultimately – and I can't remember how it worked, because I know the administration opposed it vehemently, and I don't know if we had the votes to override the veto or if we had it tucked into something that *had* to go and so they couldn't veto it. I can't remember how we did it initially, but it was a very long, very closely fought, but it was something that the principals really invested themselves in, and it passed.

And I remember when Senator Mitchell gave his speech about what it meant and why it was important, just having that extraordinary thrill of believing that, not dissimilar to that early first thrill of Washington, that a passionate normative belief, strong analytic and empirical work, and savvy politics could really make a difference, and I was just joyous. And so he got an award from the Council for a Livable World for the job -

**MH:** Oh, did he, did he?

**SS:** I just gave it to him, yes.

**MH:** Okay, so you go on to the White House.

**SS:** Yes.

**MH:** And what was your position there?

**SS:** I was the first person ever to be deputy assistant secretary of defense for Peacekeeping, it was a new office.

**MH:** Deputy assistant secretary of defense for Peacekeeping, and which assistant secretary did you work for?

**SS:** Ah, there's the rub. I was supposed to report to one Morton Halperin, whose nomination became very controversial and who was basically stalled in abeyance for about a year before he withdrew.

**MH:** Because of his connections with the National Security Council and wiretapping and all that, I (*unintelligible*).

**SS:** Well, because of his brave defense of civil liberties and the truth, in the context of a really nasty war that should never have been fought, that one, so Helms basically had it out for him. And there were a bunch of things that made that particular experience very difficult; I was young, I was female, I was just filling an appointee, this was a new office, it didn't exist before, there was no staff, right, so I had nobody to help me. I had to actually go find them and train them, I had to make it completely up. It was also an issue that nobody had ever done, right? I mean, we'd done peacekeeping sort of 'a la Middle East' style where people literally watched through binoculars, we'd never done it in the kinds of environments we were thinking about. So it wasn't just that I had to teach people how to do it and set up an office to do it, it was that really we didn't know how to do it, and there was no one who did it.

**MH:** Who prevailed upon the Department of Defense to establish the position?

**SS:** Well, this was a Clinton campaign view that Les Aspin wanted to realize in the form of a new arrangement within OSD. And when I started I inherited, I remember the first meeting that I went to on Somalia, Colin Powell was chairing it, for reasons I don't understand now in retrospect, but it was clear that already Somalia was a mess. We'd been handed a hot potato without, once again, a half-baked policy that was very difficult to find good options out of. So we had Somalia, we had Haiti, we had Bosnia, boom-boom, right off the bat. We were trying to rewrite a presidential decision memorandum on peacekeeping policy that became very controversial on the Hill. People like Byrd and Gingrich made it a big focus of efforts. So it was a very challenging environment for a lot of reasons.

**MH:** Who was, this is a bit different kind of question, but who were the people who were sitting on the other side of the table from you on these issues? Were there people that were kind of constant faces that you were looking at, trying to negotiate with?

**SS:** On the Hill?

**MH:** Yes, both when you were in the Democratic Policy, your last Hill position, and then when you were at Defense, I mean were there kind of counterparts on the Republican side or on the conservative Democrat side that you constantly found yourself interacting with and jousting with?

**SS:** Well, I told you about doing the War Powers reformat with Dick D'Amato and Byrd, and Dick and I worked on a lot of things together. We also fought on a lot of things together, and peacekeeping was one of them. The whole center of the Armed Services Committee was just generally speaking much more conservative, and very skeptical of peacekeeping, very skeptical of anything approaching contingency operations, and partly because of War Powers issues, all these issues were the fabric. So, Judy Ansley, who thankfully I had traveled with in the Middle East, with Tony Cordesman and a bunch of other people, but she stayed at Armed

Services and she was on the Republican side. Rick DeBobes, who worked for Nunn, who is a great guy, we just didn't always see eye to eye. By the time I was in the executive branch, younger folks had come up too, so it wasn't always the same olds, you know, people like Bob Bell went into the executive branch. So there was some continuity, but some change.

**MH:** How long were you at Defense?

**SS:** Well, I got pregnant with triplets, so that kind of did it for me, and my husband was in Boston, so the answer is, I was there for three years.

**MH:** I see, your first pregnancy was triplets?

**SS:** Well, the plan had been to try to have one child, tuck it under the arm, keep going. But God had different plans.

**MH:** Triplets, lovely young ladies.

**SS:** They're great, they're wonderful.

**MH:** So you retired from the Defense Department in what year?

**SS:** Summer of '96.

**MH:** I see, and when did you kind of rejoin the work force?

**SS:** Well, let's put it this way. I left my house and went to a quiet office and fell asleep at a computer terminal, not too long after my children were born. It was a Council on Foreign Relations Fellowship that I carried out at the Program on Negotiation at Harvard, where my research task, if you will, was peace operations. But I was pretty fried, yes, I was nursing three kids, I was taking care of them non-stop when I was home, and it was hard to be really productive. I started working at the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, helping to run their Committee on International Security Studies probably a year-and-a-half after my kids were born.

**MH:** So that's back in Boston, was that -?

**SS:** Yes, Cambridge.

**MH:** And you're now at the Kennedy School, and can you tell me a little bit about the center that you're in there and what you're doing now.

**SS:** Sure, happily. I teach at the Kennedy School, I'm a lecturer in public policy, so I teach classes on warfare and foreign policy. I for three years ran the Carr Center for Human Rights Policy, I recently stepped down from that. I'm still running two of the major research projects

there, but I'm not running the Center. The research projects, one has been my baby for a very long time. It is called, the Project on the Means of Intervention, for anachronistic reasons. It's basically a project that looks at the use of force from a humanitarian perspective, and early on I spent a lot of time trying to acculturate the human rights community and the defense community. It evolved from that into more of a sort of case-by-case collaboration with institutions, and it was out of that that my work with General [David H.] Petraeus on the *Counterinsurgency Field Manual* emerged.

And counterinsurgency remains a major interest of mine. I went to Afghanistan in June of last year, I was in Colombia last month. And the whole counterinsurgency was a fascination of mine; it's actually what I wrote my Oxford M.Phil on. And so that continues to be a passion, and I am hopefully going to write, over the course of the next year, a book that looks at the way in which the military has thought about the civilian in war, from the Gulf [War] forward. So that has been a big and enduring chunk of my work since I've been at Harvard.

The other research project that I started last year is one in which, it's called the Mass Atrocities Response Operations Project, it's basically about building up the tools and the culture and the relationships among militaries, American and foreign, to be prepared to intervene in mass atrocities, genocide, mass violence. The theory being that conceptually there's something very different about those types of interventions, and the mode being to create a concept of operations, a planning guide, table-top training exercises, and ultimately a dialogue on a bilateral basis between governments about this work. So that's something that will continue on into the future.

My goal there is to teach people to fish or to not continue to do that, but that brings together some of the searing experience of Rwanda with the work that I've been doing closely with military forces in the last decade or so in a research capacity, and one of the things that I'm really proud of just this year is Unified Quest, I've been working with the army on their annual war game for some time. We're probably going to be able to do a mass atrocity scenario inject into the war game. And that's the kind of thing that I can't, I'm not in Washington right now, but trying to do things that are real and that affect real things, like shaping a counterinsurgency field manual or trying to work on helping militaries think differently about intervention in mass atrocities is really what gets me excited.

**MH:** Where does your support come for these projects, do you get them from foundations, or do they come from the government itself, or - ?

**SS:** I have never taken any direct money from the government. I have cosponsored conferences with the government where we've split costs, but the money for the work that I do has come from two foundations principally: one, the Carnegie Corporation of New York, although that grant is about to end; and Humanity United, which is a very new and innovative foundation out of California.

**MH:** So it's not internal Harvard funds, it's an organic -

**SS:** Lord, no, no, we're supposed to make money for that university.

**MH:** I understand that completely. Let me ask you, just in, as Senator Mitchell has taken on international assignments, Ireland, now the Middle East, have you had any interest in somehow getting involved?

**SS:** Oh, sure, absolutely. Periodically, I'm very bad at staying in touch with him, and it is a huge regret of mine, and I don't suspect he'll ever listen to these tapes, so I suppose I can just say that here. But periodically, I'll just call and check in, once every three or four years, literally. Just because it was important to me, and you always hope he's going to say, "Well I have this great new project, I'm going to bring democracy to Burma, come do it with me." But it hasn't happened yet.

**MH:** Hasn't happened. Is there anything you'd like to say? We always give, at the end of the interviews people an opportunity to answer the question that wasn't asked. Is there any particular comment you'd like to say about your relationship with George Mitchell?

**SS:** Well no, you've made me want to go listen to Senator Mitchell talk about Senator Muskie; you've made me want to go do that, because the interesting thing about Senator Mitchell to me was how warm his public persona was, but in many ways how cool his private interactions with his staff were. Not that he didn't have warmth, but he clearly perceived his role as a senator as requiring a degree of distance. And it's interesting, because even with his colleagues, there were degrees of that. So his buddies from Maine, his long time whatever they were, chess or checkers or card playing buddies are in a different category from his close Senate colleagues at the time, different category from his Democratic colleagues, different category from the Republicans he really didn't like, right? And as a staff person, you feel very close to the person that you represent, particularly if you do the kind of writing that I did for him, because it's your job to be in their head and to understand how they think. So you become very affiliated both professionally intellectually, and to some degree emotionally, with the person for whom you work.

But the distance that you have, and I always joke because, and I have told the Senator this, he knew my dad growing up, they were colleagues, even though they were on different sides of the aisle, when my dad died relatively early at age sixty, Senator Mitchell was sort of the closest figure that I had in my life to filling that slot, so I think that's for me why the distance was always a little bit hard, because you'd see him treat other staff very familiarly and you always wonder, well I wonder, 'If I didn't work for him, would he treat me like that?'

But the formality did have an edge of discipline to it that I think was helpful. And what I suspect is that in listening to him talk about Muskie, I would hear the reasons why he adopted the persona that he adopted as a senator, because I suspect that they lie in his relationship with Muskie.

**MH:** Thank you, Sarah Sewall.

**SS:** You're very welcome.

End of Interview