

George J. Mitchell Oral History Project

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Andrea C. Maker

(Interviewer: Andrea L'Hommedieu)

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Andrea L'Hommedieu: This is an interview for the George J. Mitchell Oral History Project at Bowdoin College. The date is March 11, 2010, and I am at Martin's Point in Portland, Maine, with Andrea Maker, and this is Andrea L'Hommedieu. Could you start just by giving me your full name?

Andrea Maker: My full name is Andrea Cianchette Maker.

AL: And how do you spell Cianchette?

AM: C-I-A-N-C-H-E-T-T-E.

AL: And where and when were you born?

AM: I was born in 1956 in Waterville, Maine.

AL: And did you grow up in Waterville, or somewhere outside?

AM: About twenty miles north of Waterville in a town called Pittsfield, Maine. There were about four to five thousand people in Pittsfield, Maine.

AL: And that's where you did all your growing up.

AM: I lived in the same house until I went to college, I lived on 9 Libby Street, Pittsfield, Maine.

AL: And what was Pittsfield like then, rural I suppose?

AM: It had a little village center to it, it had a manufacturing enterprise on the river that runs through Pittsfield, and what it manufactured varied over the years, but for a long time they did something with fire alarms, smoke detectors – it produced different things over the time period. It has a saw mill processing plant in it now, though that wasn't there in my early days. A big part of Pittsfield is Maine Central Institute, which is a private high school. Public students actually go to that private high school; the town pays tuition for the public students to attend there. And Cianbro, which back when I was a child was called Cianchette Brothers, which was a construction company, is a big part of the center of Pittsfield.

AL: And that was owned by your family.

AM: That was begun by my father and two of his brothers. My father was Alton E. “Chuck” Cianchette, and his brother Ival (nicknamed “Bud”), and Kenneth (nicknamed “Lunk”) were the three brothers who built a construction company over the years from shovels and wheelbarrows to a five-thousand-employee up and down the eastern seaboard, heavy construction company building bridges, underwater pipes, dams, sewage treatment facilities, and now the company is an employee owned company and still operates very well to this day.

AL: Yes, that’s a huge enterprise. And does the family still have part ownership in it as employees?

AM: A few of my family members are employees, so through that process they have some ownership, but they have their ownership due to their tenure and position at the company, not to any family relationship.

AL: So what was it like growing up in Pittsfield, and your family owned one of the largest businesses?

AM: Over the years it changed a bit. Like I said, we lived in the same house the whole time. My father worked very, very long hours – I saw him on Sundays when I was a child. He would leave early Monday morning to go to whatever job site and come home Saturday night, so my mom carried a heavy load with four children. But my other aunts lived around the town as well, and there were thirty-two Cianchettes in my generation, and there was at least one in every grade in the school system for years and years – I’m smack dab in the middle of the thirty-two. Not all of my cousins’ parents worked for Cianbro, but they all had good businesses that they did own. So it was tight knit from a family perspective, we had a big family reunion every summer.

The town was a very safe place to grow up. I was on my bicycle, around the neighborhood, going to see friends, walking everywhere. I didn’t ever take a bus to school. And what I noticed over the years for my family was that we had more means over time, you know, swimming pools showed up in our back yards. And my Uncle Bud got into a hobby of race horses, so they purchased a farm on the outskirts of town, which we called The Farm, and some of my cousins and I had horses for riding horses and going to riding camp and going to horse shows, and that was lovely. It was a lot of fun and kept us very busy, and taught us actually a lot of responsibility as young children, to take care of those animals.

There was an airport in Pittsfield, and my father had his private pilot’s license from before I was born, I’m sure, and every winter would fly us in a small plane down to Florida to visit our grandparents and great-grandparents who were wintering down there. So we got out of town quite a bit, to see different cities, and we’d do the trip to Florida, and then maybe go to the Bahamas or go to some city on the way back up the coast to explore New York. So that was a real privilege and pleasure to be able to do that.

So what I noticed also over the years is, as my father and his brothers became more successful, they worked in the office more than on the job sites, and were in town more. My father in particular had - I think they all had very strong civic interests, and they got that from their father who came here from Italy and who really appreciated the freedom of living in this country, and bestowed upon all of his children (there were seven of them in my dad's family) an ethic of giving back to the community. They certainly lived that way in many different ways, and my dad in particular was the one I watched. He started to get involved in the town board of selectmen, he'd serve on the board of selectmen, he became a philanthropist, he got involved with the Boy Scouts, first at the state level, Pine Tree level, and then at the national level became a board member of the Pine Tree State Council, and then the Boy Scout Council of America. He was involved with a pilots' association in Maine to feed that hobby that he had.

And then another aspect of him and his life was that people would come to our house constantly, looking for advice and counsel, and financial assistance from my father, and he delivered every time, and to this day my mother is still coming across people who benefitted from my dad's generosity and support. Recently she had a service person up to her house to help her with something and he wouldn't charge her, he said, "I was going under and I came to Chuck and he gave me money and kept my business alive, and he never let me pay him back so please let me do this for you." And that's not an unusual story for her. So he was very giving and community oriented.

When I was in high school in the '70s, he ran for public office, he ran for the state legislature and served in the state Senate for two terms. I guess I'd back up and say, when I was maybe in junior high school, or maybe it was high school, I remember going to a dinner at the only big local restaurant in Pittsfield at the time, the Carriage House, and John Martin came in, and at that time John Martin was, I believe, speaker of the House.

AL: He was for many years, yes.

AM: [This was] in his early years of being speaker, and he came through and Dad made a big point to bring him over to our table and introduce him to each of us, and I just knew I was meeting somebody important in the political world - I didn't really understand what and who he was. And my father used to go to Democratic political events a lot, it was nothing my mother had much interest in attending, and oftentimes I'd go with him. So I went to Jefferson-Jackson dinners with him, and sometimes to some State Committee meetings, different fund raisers, I'd go along and hear the speaker. So I always appreciated that he and I had that connection, and I liked doing it with him.

He did serve in the Senate for those four years when I was in college, considering what I was going to do after that. He actually scheduled me to meet with George Mitchell, who was then the U.S. attorney.

AL: This was like in '77?

AM: Just about '77, '78, I graduated college in '79. And so before I graduated college, I spent the day with then-U.S. Attorney George Mitchell to learn what that life was about, which was really nice of Senator Mitchell to spend the day with this shadower for the day.

AL: And so what sorts of things do you remember, what that day was like?

AM: Well, it's interesting, I remember meeting Paula Silsby, who was an assistant there, and being struck that this woman was a lawyer. So more than talking to George Mitchell, I remembered Paula as a role model. My dad never went to college, so he was trying to find me some role models to see what could happen if you did go to college and law school. And what I remember George Mitchell saying to me was how important it was to be able to deal with people, and that is a skill that's an important one if you're going to be a lawyer. Beyond that, I don't have much recollection, but that was the impression that I came away with, was this was a people skills career.

AL: Which isn't what you'd necessarily think, not having been to law school.

AM: Right, I thought lawyers would spend the days and nights in libraries and putting cases together, and then being good public speakers in a courtroom, trying to be tricky with the judge or getting in the right evidence. I don't know, I didn't have the right impression of it I guess.

AL: Did it influence your next step education wise?

AM: Well, I don't know if it influenced my next step, I think that was already set in stone that I was going to law school. I think maybe Dad was trying to help me see different ways I could use it. He also sent me to New York City to spend the day, well not the full day, but to meet midday with a woman attorney at the New York Times Company, who my father had gotten to meet through the process of Cianbro and E.C. Jordan Engineering Firm and the New York Times Company negotiating to build the Madison paper mill, and he actually invited me to attend a couple of days of those negotiations, which was a nice insight to have. And this woman lawyer was involved in that matter for the New York Times Company, so he sent me down to talk to her as a role model as well. So I did go to law school, and not surprisingly was drawn into the political world more than the legal and courtroom world.

AL: In what ways?

AM: I became a lobbyist, and I have over the course of my career represented different clients in mostly the Maine legislature, on different matters. But what I also want to say is, I entered law school here in Maine, did my first two years here, and then my third year of law school I went to Washington, D.C., and attended American University, and those credits came back here so I'm a graduate of the University of Maine School of Law. But of course then George Mitchell was the U.S. senator, and I applied to work in his office as a part-time job, and was hired to work in the mailroom in his office. I had interned in then-Congressman Bill Cohen's office when I

was in college, which was also a great experience, and probably a deeper experience than working in a mailroom. But in the mailroom, what I did for Senator Mitchell's office was responded to mail asking questions that didn't have a standard answer, because it wasn't a typical question. So I would get the atypical questions and do research and consider what I thought the Senator might say in response, and I would draft a letter from him to respond to the constituent. He always read and signed the letters, so sometimes they were edited before they went, because I didn't really know how he thought, but it was a fun experience.

AL: Were there others you worked with in the mailroom that you recall?

AM: Well Christine Williams was my supervisor, so I worked for Chris, and I'm not sure – Gary was there, but I don't -

AL: Gary Myrick?

AM: He lives in Cumberland now. I don't think he was in the mailroom. Of course Janie O'Connor was his assistant, she was in the front office, and Janie O'Connor was like the, just the best receptionist one could ask for. Cheery, bubbly, intelligent, always said the right thing, always knew what to say, just a real delight, and set a nice tone and atmosphere for his office. That was nice.

AL: Was Gayle there?

AM: Gayle Cory was there, she was there, and she was a wonderful woman. His office where I worked was not in the regular Senate office building, it was an outbuilding, so I didn't interact on a daily basis with his staff, just with Chris Williams. One time when I was there, in law school, my mother was coming to visit, and I thought it would be nice to invite Senator Mitchell over for dinner, because I thought he lived down there alone, he might like to enjoy getting out and having a home cooked meal. And he graciously accepted the invitation and he came over and had dinner with my mother and me, and we made a – I could tell you were -

AL: Yes, I was going to ask you, what did you eat? What did you serve George Mitchell?

AM: We served Chinese sweet and sour pork crepes on rice. It was a recipe I'd sort of perfected at the time, it was really good, I still make that, without the crepes, for my family. And he and my mother talked a lot; I was tongue-tied, and still remain tongue-tied in front of George Mitchell. There are very few people that I shut down in front of, and he's one of them. I'm just so in awe of him and all that he's done, and feel like I couldn't begin to hold a candle to him in any meaningful conversation.

AL: And so your mother knew him from years back, so it was more a Maine connection, Maine politics connection, closer in generations?

AM: My father spent a fair amount of time with George Mitchell. I believe he flew him

around the state when Senator Mitchell was campaigning, Dad would fly him around the state in his small plane. Dad would go down to swearing-ins in D.C., to George Mitchell's swearing-ins.

AL: Oh, so he was really in that small circle.

AM: Yes, he was in one of those inner circles, not the smallest inner circle, but if you went out a layer or two, my father would have been in there. He was a big financial supporter of George Mitchell, would give advice if asked, maybe even if not asked on certain things. But they were two men who, I think, had a high amount of regard for each other, high level of respect and mutual admiration. I think because my father's company was a construction company that did not have a union in it, what's called an open shop company, and because Senator Mitchell was a Democrat who did a lot of work with unions, it was probably a source of tension for them, of how Senator Mitchell could reconcile my father's views and union views on certain issues.

Unions [] oftentimes back then would attack Cianbro, or attack my father when he was in politics, and I believe they were doing it to make points that by and large my father agreed with. I think my father and his brothers treated their employees in a way that the employees were never motivated to become organized, they could take their issues and concerns to the boss, to the owner, and have them dealt with fairly and honestly, and transparently. So the company never got to a place where it needed to be organized. There were attempts made to organize them, but of course none of them succeeded. It's a fine line for politicians sometimes, to walk between different interest groups, but they all do it, and probably Senator Mitchell does it better than most.

AL: Did your father ever talk about, on the personal side, things that they shared in common, interests they shared maybe outside of politics? I know that a lot of people talk about Senator Mitchell's love of baseball.

AM: That wouldn't be something they shared, no. I mean, the love of politics would be, doing what's right for Maine would be something that they shared. I think they enjoyed going out socializing together, being with groups of people, they both loved crowds of people and were energized by that, and by each other in that setting, so they had a lot of fun together, going out and about. My dad didn't have sports as a hobby and he wasn't an athlete, he wasn't a tennis player, so I don't think they shared that. But they would get together with other friends, Scott Hutchinson and Ken Curtis, the Mitchells, that group would go, Bob Dunfey, that group would go out and have fun socializing. Maybe getting together at someone's place in Florida or here somewhere in Maine, or at a convention, they would do that.

AL: Do you remember if your dad had any funny stories about traveling together on campaigns?

AM: I don't remember, I don't remember.

AL: And you said your uncles were also politically active and involved.

AM: My uncle was civically engaged. I had one uncle who in the '60s served in the Maine House of Representatives and was on Ken Curtis's governor's advisory counsel, Executive Council they called it, he was on his Executive Council.

AL: Which uncle was that?

AM: That was Uncle Carl Cianchette; he's the one who started the Cianchette Concrete and Paving business that eventually merged into Cianbro. So Carl was politically active early on in the House of Representatives, and then on the Governor's Council. My uncle Bud, Ival "Bud," became active in the National Associated General Contractors of America, association of contractors around the country, and this was the turning point for him. He became the president of the National Associated General Contractors of America in 1980 or '81, 1980, and that event occurred, he became president at their convention in Hawaii, so a lot of us got the pleasure of going to Hawaii to celebrate this honor and see him ushered in as president of AGC. Ronald Reagan was the president of our country at the time, and as president of AGC Bud would spend time with President Reagan, clearly lobbying on behalf of contractors, and he became quite enamored of President Reagan, and he became a Republican at that time. So that began the political split in our family.

My Uncle Norris, who had Main Line Fence Company, down here in southern Maine, was a Democrat, and I believe remained a Democrat until his death, although they all became quite independent minded in their older age, and Kenneth Cianchette, I believe, was a Democrat – I know he was a Democrat early on, I don't know that he stayed a Democrat. But then along came my cousin Peter Cianchette, who is Bud's son, and Peter ran for the House of Representatives in Maine and served as a Republican from South Portland. So when his father went Republican with President Reagan, Peter went with him and ran as a Republican candidate for governor, ultimately. So to this day I run into people who assume I became a Republican, because Peter ran as a Republican. I don't think they understand the size of our family, and I guess we're all quite independent. So we have lots of both parties in my family today.

AL: Your Uncle Bud, that knew Reagan, yes, that's correct, right?

AM: Yes.

AL: There's so many uncles. Did he ever talk to you about his impressions of President Reagan? I mean we all know that charisma was really a lot of his pull.

AM: No, I never had conversations with him about that. I was in law school, and then out working after that, I didn't see a lot of him, for that kind of conversation.

AL: And so your time working on Senator Mitchell's staff in the mail room, was that during the summer, was it a short period?

AM: No, I worked on Senator Mitchell's mail room staff from the fall of 1981 through the spring of '82, which was the school year of my third year of law school, when I was at school down there. I probably ended working for him when school let out, because then I moved into studying for the bar exam full time, and I studied in D.C. for a month but then moved back to Maine to take the course here, the refresher course here on Maine law, because I took the Maine bar exam.

AL: And can you talk a little bit about what it was like to work in Senator Cohen's office, and maybe a little comparison, if you have one? But just a sense of what it was like to work in -

AM: Well, I can start by saying when I was an intern in Bill Cohen's office, he was in the House of Representatives at the time. I was in college, it was the fall of '78 I believe. And I actually had been offered an internship through Senator Muskie's office - he was on the Budget Committee and they were going to offer me an internship doing filing in the Budget office. I really wasn't too enamored of that idea, so I pursued an internship in Bill Cohen's office thinking that's not going to happen, I'm a Democrat, and I'm in college in New Hampshire and I thought his internships were only for students in Maine colleges. But I applied, and he actually, to his credit or his staff's credit, whoever it was who agreed, they let me in, and I was thrilled and honored for that to happen.

So I went down there in the fall, brand new to the city of Washington, D.C., and went to work. And at that time Bob Tyrer was the front office person, Bob Tyrer is still with Bill Cohen today, he is just this phenomenally nice and funny and personable man who, I don't see him anymore, but he was a real favorite of mine at the time, he kind of took me under his wing. Bob told me that for the first month of my time in that office, I didn't smile once. And I think I went in there really self-aware of the political partisan difference between us, but in reality it wasn't that important to anybody working in that office.

His office ran extremely smoothly, and they offered me a very rich internship where I worked for a different person each day of the week, and I actually worked for Susan Collins, who was on his staff at the time, two days a week, and she really was my first real boss that I'd had in a job. I am still grateful to her for that, and she was very fair, and a boss who gave clear expectations, gave me assignments, let me go do them, I'd bring them back, she'd edit. It was research based oftentimes. I did casework for a woman named Sally, whose last name escapes me now, but Sally was the one who takes constituent problems with Social Security or any government agency and tries to help them solve their problem. I found that very difficult work, every problem was different, and every person had different needs, and I was much more comfortable in the policy arena doing research on something, for better or for worse, that's just who I was.

Mike Hastings was in there doing tax work, and I worked for him one day a week. So it was a very rich experience of just being exposed to all the different topics and concepts, and I'm not sure I contributed a lot of value to anything that they were doing. My big research piece was on whether or not the United States should give the Panama Canal to Panama, and I wrote a memo and said I thought they should, and Congressman Cohen voted that they should not, so I don't

know how much good my research did. But the Democrats voted to give it to them; that kind of confirmed for me that I am a Democrat, but it was a great experience. And I in my job here at Martin's Point now, I'm going to Washington, D.C., about every six weeks, and I'm just so happy to be down there. I love that city.

AL: And I have to note that you interned on Congressman Cohen's staff, and then later worked in the mail room for Senator Mitchell, and Mike Hastings actually switched from one to the other, so that he was probably there at the time you were in the mail room.

AM: He was. Mike Hastings was on Senator Mitchell's staff when I went over there, that's right, it was an old friend in there.

AL: Yes, you saw him at least occasionally?

AM: I did, I did, and met some other really cool people. David Ray was on Senator Mitchell's staff at the time, Jeff Nathanson was on his staff at the time, and he became a very dear friend for a number of years. I didn't see the Senator much.

AL: And of course at that time he was getting ready to try to be elected in his own right to the Senate seat, I believe, that was in '81-'82.

AM: So his election was when?

AL: In '82, so he was flying home for two- and three-day weekends to campaign in Maine, so that might have been another -

AM: Well, and my position wasn't one that would have put me before him.

AL: So have you ever had contact with him in later years, after the Senate, have there been opportunities to touch base with him, or run into him?

AM: Yes, certainly, I'm trying to think if I ever reached out to him for anything, and it seems as though I did, I'm trying to think what that might have been. It's not coming to me. But I have come across him on occasion here in Maine. He would come to the Maine Bar Association events and I would see him there, met his wife, met his children one year, and he will sometimes show up at events - I'm trying to think. There's the Bar Association, he had a friend in Bangor, a dear friend, Marshall Stern, who was a good friend of my husband as well, so we saw the Senator when Marshall died, around that service. Certainly when my father died he, I know he called and spoke to my mother.

AL: If you look at Senator Mitchell's career over his lifetime, and it's still going on, I should make note, you've been an educated and interested observer from Maine, what do you see in Senator Mitchell?

AM: Senator Mitchell has several traits, the combination of which has created this incredibly effective person. So clearly he has a very strong underlying intelligence that has served him very well. He has a mind that is analytical and he is able to articulate his thoughts in a way that comes across as coherent, cohesive, and it creates the opportunity for great followership, because you know what you're following. And what he's working on is of high importance, and for him to be able to explain to a group of people what he's doing in terms that they can really understand it, me being one of them, it's easy to follow him.

We love having statesmen in our state of Maine, just like any state would, and he is clearly one of the top statesmen of my lifetime in the state of Maine. I feel really proud that he's who he is and doing what he's doing in the world, and honored that I've had the privilege of knowing him. Clearly his integrity is what has allowed him to withstand all the political storms that have to have buffeted around him as he moved from one position to another to another. I mean it's pretty incredible, the life that he's led. And I think many times it felt thankless and wearing on him, but he's operating out of a set of personal values and convictions that keeps him motivated. He's not doing it necessarily to please the people around him, he's doing it because it's what he thinks he can do for himself, and it's really admirable and we're extremely fortunate to have him.

AL: Is there anything that I haven't asked you that you think is important to add, anything I didn't know to ask?

AM: I feel like he's done things for me that I'm not, I know he wrote me a note when my dad passed, which was really thoughtful of him. I feel like I'm missing something big, but I can't recall.

AL: If you think of it, I'll always run back here and we can put it on tape. Thank you very much.

AM: Thank you.

End of Interview