

A Short Biography of George J. Mitchell

George J. Mitchell of Maine, attorney, judge, senator, special envoy, fact-finder, and philanthropist, was born in 1933 and grew up in Waterville, Maine in a family of Irish and Lebanese descent. His dad was a janitor and his mom a seamstress. College was out of reach for him, until a benefactor paved the way for him to attend Bowdoin College. Thereafter, he served in Berlin, Germany, as an officer in the US Army Counter-Intelligence Corps from 1954 to 1956. In 1961, he earned his J.D. from Georgetown Law School, then served as a trial attorney in the Antitrust Division of the U.S. Department of Justice before joining the staff of Senator Edward Muskie in the U.S. Senate. A dozen years in private practice in Maine followed, then Mitchell was appointed U.S. Attorney for Maine in 1977.¹

In 1979, Mitchell was nominated by President Carter to the U.S. District Court. He was then appointed to Muskie's senate seat after Muskie was appointed Secretary of State. Mitchell was highly respected and was elected as Senate Majority leader in 1989. While in this role, Mitchell was instrumental in the reauthorization of the Clean Air Act, passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act and the North American Free Trade Agreement, and the formation of the World Trade Organization.

In 1994, he declined an overture from President Clinton to become a Supreme Court justice, choosing instead to stay in the Senate to work on major legislation. After serving for over 15 years, he retired from the Senate in 1995. Soon thereafter, Mitchell was appointed U.S. Special Envoy to Northern Ireland. He was instrumental in negotiating the Northern Ireland *Good Friday Agreement*, ending 40 years of "The Troubles." He was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom, nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize, and awarded both the Liberty Medal and United Nations (UNESCO) Peace Prize. He also served a 10-year appointment as Chancellor of Queen's University of Northern Ireland.

Presidents Bush, Clinton, and Obama all appointed Mitchell as Special Envoy for Middle East peace talks. Also, at the request of Israel's Ehud Barak and PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat, Mitchell served as Chairman of an International Fact-Finding Committee on violence in the Middle East. The Committee's recommendations in *The Mitchell Report* had broad international support. While peace could not be achieved, he brought the Israelis and Palestinians to the table, eye-to-eye, for the first time in decades. His book, *A Path to Peace*, summarizes his work and explains the overwhelming issues to be resolved.²

Mitchell also agreed to lead the fact-finding during Major League Baseball's era of steroid use, making recommendations that would impact collective bargaining with respect to drug testing in baseball for years to come.³ He also led the investigation into alleged improprieties of the Olympic Games bidding process.

While Mitchell's diplomatic, fact-finding, and business⁴ achievements are recognized internationally, his greatest satisfaction has been his ability to provide financial aid through the Mitchell Scholarship program, helping to send hundreds of Maine high school students to college annually, just as his benefactor did for him.

Mitchell is a neutral's neutral. His life's work provides inspiration to all of us who strive to work toward peace and justice. His writing and interviews provide a road map for how to achieve it.⁵

¹ Much of this biography reflects his autobiography in *The Negotiator: A Memoir* (May 2015) ISBN 978-1451691399

² *A Path to Peace: A Brief History of Israeli-Palestinian Negotiations and a Way Forward in the Middle East*, (with Alon Sachar, co-author) (November 2016) ISBN 978-1501153914

³ Report to the Commissioner of Baseball of an Independent Investigation into the Illegal Use of Steroids and Other Performance Enhancing Substances by Players in Major League Baseball, George J. Mitchell, December 13, 2007

⁴ Boards: Chairman, Boston Red Sox; Chairman, Walt Disney Company; FedEx; Xerox; Unilever; Staples, Inc.; Starwood

⁵ Other Publications by George J. Mitchell: *World on Fire: Saving an Endangered Earth* (January 1991) ISBN 978-0684192314; *Not For America Alone: The Triumph of Democracy and The Fall of Communism* (May 1997) ISBN 978-1568360836; *Making Peace* (April 1999 – 1st Edition, July 2000 – Updated) ISBN 978-0434007554 ISBN 978-1501153914