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Interview with Margie Mitchell

Margie Mitchell
SC Mother of the Year Committee

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Winthrop University
South Carolina Mother of the Year Award Oral History Archives

Interview Transcript

Margie Mitchell

Dr. Disney: Good afternoon.

Margie Mitchell: Good afternoon.

Dr. Disney: My name is Dr. Jennifer Leigh Disney and I am honored to be here today interviewing Margie Mitchell, a member of the South Carolina Mother of the Year award selection committee as well as the daughter of the 2003 South Carolina Mother of the Year award winner Ms. Marjorie Mitchell. So Margie, thank you so much for being here with us today.

Margie Mitchell: Thank you for having me.

Dr. Disney: We're going to ask you a series of questions because we want to hear you talk about your mom and your mom's life history, life experience, the impact she had on you, and on everyone to be able to get this kind of award. So let's just start with – why don't you tell us when and where your mother was born and raised?

Margie Mitchell: My mother was born in 1928 in Jasper County and born in a very small town called Pineland. She was born on Rivers Hill, which just happened to be her maiden name. She was born April 14th, 1928.

Dr. Disney: Tell us about her family and anything you want to share about her early childhood experience.

Margie Mitchell: My mother was the oldest daughter. She had other brothers and sisters. At the time, she tells the story that her mother was a midwife. So my grandmother was Susie Lots (?) and when grandma when to deliver a baby, my mother said that her primary role was to make sure that her younger brothers and sisters behaved. She said that at an early age she started taking care of children – her brothers and sisters – and making sure they were responsible enough to behave until their mother came home. Looking back at the last fifty, sixty years of her life, she started out as a young child always taking care of children. And we remarked on that, that she had spent a lifetime doing that. She always said it wasn't work, it was just a love. But we know that that's where she got her love of taking care of children, was from her brothers and sisters.

Dr. Disney: Wow, that's a great story. Tell us what you know about your mom's education and her dreams, goals, and aspirations as a young adult woman.

Margie Mitchell: My mother, born in the twenties, did not have as many opportunities to attend school. Of course, working in the small town of Pineland and Rivers Hill, there were not a lot of job opportunities. She only got to the eighth grade because in that small rural town, going to school required a long distance for a walk, and then getting back and doing homework when there were so many other chores to do. Being an uneducated woman, and at the time not having

as many opportunities to finish high school and then go on to a college education, she always thought her life was limited, but she and my dad were determined that we all get a college education. So with her being hampered in a way, with not getting that higher education, she was determined that her children would get it. But something that we learned from Mom was just because she didn't have that education or degree, it didn't stop her from learning and growing and being part of the community and being able to help her family grow. We were always pleased with that, but she always felt that if she could get that education, she would have done more. But looking back at the last fifty years of her life, we think, "Wow! What more could she have done?" So, we're pleased with that.

Dr. Disney: Why don't you tell us about some of the activities, some of the many things your mom was involved with inside the home, outside the home, in the community, with the church – any and all activities she was involved in?

Margie Mitchell: I like to boil it down to the three C's for my mother – she loved to cook; she was a big factor in the community; and she loved her church. So the first of the three – cooking, the first C is cooking – my mother prided herself in being the best cook in Beaufort County. We agreed. But what she would do is – she would pride herself in making a big pot of stew or a big pot of chicken and what she would do – she would feed the family, but then she would feed the neighborhood. You always had a group of people in the neighborhood that were less fortunate than you. They had the same opportunities, but just sometimes less fortunate and not able to provide all that they needed. My mother was always prideful of saying, "Come by my house, I've got some extra for you." Now, Dr. Disney, growing up, we thought growing up with six children, there was never any extra. But my mother always seemed to have extra for the person that was out of a home or out of a job. She always had an extra plate for them. Sometimes we thought there sure was a lot of ham on that roast or the ham because she sliced enough for the family, sliced enough for the neighbors, and continued to give and give. When we think about that, her cooking skills were enough to make sure that we were provided for, but also outside in the community.

So still, with the second one, for community, my mother wanted to make sure that the children were provided for. With my mother having her daycare center for fifty years – she had Mitchell's Daycare. So remember she always took care of her brothers and sisters growing up, so her first professional job was taking care of more children. So for community, my mother always felt it was important that the children be taken care of. With her daycare center, one thing she would do was, on a Friday afternoon, parents would come to pick up their children and it would be a football game that evening and the parents would maybe want to attend the football game. So my mother would say, "No need to take the child home and bring them back, just let them stay." We lived not far from Robert Smalls High School, so my mother kept children whose parents were teachers – a lot of educators. My mother would ask the parents to just let them stay. Now, mindful that there were six of us and if two stayed overnight, then that would be eight. It was always – she would provide them with a meal and provide them with all the love and the attention. At the end of the day, the parents would come back after a football game at ten o'clock at night and my mother would meet them at the door and say, "Surely, you're not going to get that child out of bed. Come back in the morning." We had two bedrooms in the house and one was called the "Girls" bedroom and one was called the "Boys" bedroom. We would make it fun because there were not enough beds, but we would have tents on the floor. We would have

sleepovers in the living room. Whatever it took. It was always amazing that on Saturday morning, we would wake up, ate breakfast around a table for six, and there would be ten people around the table. My father would just look up and he'd say to my mother, "You got somebody else's kids for the night, didn't you?" And my mother said, "Yes, they needed my love." She always felt, for the community, she needed to help out. There was no need to take the child out of a loving home, she called it, and take them somewhere else. For the community and her children, she always felt that she had to do even more. Just another short story: my father was in law enforcement. My father had to do his job. One day my father came home on a Saturday and he said he'd experienced an incident where he had to arrest someone and the neighbor's child was there. They'd had to take the child, then, to custody. My mother was upset and she said to my dad, "Why didn't you just put them in the front seat of the sheriff's patrol car and bring them home to me?" My dad explained to her that it was his job to take the child to a well loving, protective home while he arrested the bad guy. My mother never understood it, so she went to the home of protective custody to pick up the child because she said the child needs to be in a loving home. Community and children – my mother always combined those two together.

The third C is church. My mother attended Wesley United Methodist Church in Beaufort for a number of years – all of her life – and that's where we were raised and baptized. My mother felt that the single most important day was church on a Sunday. We would have all sorts of excuses at eight, nine, and ten years old as to why we couldn't go to church on Sunday and my mother would just look at us and go, "Ten o'clock, Sunday morning. You need to be in church." On Saturday, my mother would start preparing for church on Sunday. She prepared the altar for communion, so it was the whole week making sure that those white linen cloths were starched and crisp – they had to be perfect – because it represented her church. But on Saturday, she would start her Sunday meal. On Saturday afternoon, you had to make sure you had your outfit laid out. At nine o'clock on Sunday morning, my mother would say, "It's time." My dad would say to her in a real casual voice, with a cup of coffee, "Dear, it's only nine o'clock and church doesn't start until ten." My mother's answer, always, would be, "I don't want to be late." Church from our house and from our house to church, it took – with waving at a few neighbors down the street – about four minutes. But my mom always said, at nine o'clock, "I don't want to be late." So at 9:15, we were in the car. If you weren't in the car, you would just have to walk. But she always said that we'd gone through the week with so many blessings and you look back at it and think, "What blessings?" We went to school, we played outside, we had a safe environment, and we went to the beach on a Saturday. She said Sunday, at ten o'clock; we needed to be in church serving the Lord. My mother was a strict advocate of going to church. At Wesley United Methodist Church, my mother was always concerned that there were always educators there: my principals, all of my teachers. We were in a community, that it was a prominent place for African American families to go to church. So at Wesley church, there were always PhD candidates there, masters, bachelors, all types of degrees. My mother shared with us, in that quiet, Saturday afternoon moment, she always said she wished she had an education. She decided that she needed a title. Motherhood was good, but she needed a title. As always in the church, we had a fundraiser and the fundraiser was to raise enough money that would all go back to the church and whoever was the winner would be crowned "Miss Wesley." My mother decided and said to me, "Margie, I'm going to win that title this year. I'm going to ask for some donations, but I'm going to win that title." I said, "Mom is it that important to you?" She said, "It's that important to me." So she saved a little bit, she didn't make a lot, but she saved a little bit, as always. I remember, it was back in the eighties, the contest came up and my mother and I, we sat on the bed and

counted all of the money up and she said, “Do you think that’s going to be enough?” She said, “Ms. Henrietta said she was going to win, but I think I’m going to out beat her.” So we counted it up and she said, “I think I’ll put twenty more dollars in there.” On that day, the results were read and “Miss Wesley” was Mrs. Marjorie Rivers Mitchell. She stood up and she said, “Me?” as if she were surprised. And then she walked up, but we’d already practiced the day before how she was going to wave. We talked about the queen and how the queen waves and she said, “I think I want to wave like the queen.” So my mother won the title and the next year the contest went on because there was another fundraiser. My mother won again. My mother won for approximately twelve years in a row. She was determined that nobody else was going to get that title of “Miss Wesley” and it was after twelve years that she said, “I think I’m going to let someone else in next year. I’m going to pass the title on.” So she did. Her love of cooking, children and the community, and her love of church – those were three things that shaped my mother’s life.

Dr. Disney: Wow, Margie that is unbelievable. How your mom did all that she did – raising six children and taking care of all the community children; and twelve years as “Miss Wesley,” raising the most money for the church. Unbelievable!

Margie Mitchell: She always said, the money she raised – it all went back to the church. She didn’t keep any of it, but where someone had a title of doctor, she said, “Now I’ve got my title.” She was so proud of that.

Dr. Disney: Thank you for sharing that with us. There’s so much I want to ask you about your mom, giving all that you’ve said. Let me go back and ask about your younger years. So let’s start with how did your mother meet your father?

Margie Mitchell: Mom and Dad met – mom was the maid for a family in Beaufort, the Black family, and my dad worked for a family in Beaufort called the Gregory’s. There are two different versions of this story. My mom’s version was that she was walking to her job as the maid and my dad stopped her and asked her where she was going and if she needed a ride in his new car. Mom says she said, “No thank you, I’ll continue to walk.” My dad’s version of the story is that she was headed to work, but she got in the car and he took her to work. But after seventy years, the debate still continues with my dad as to what really happened. They were both going to work and he stopped to take her for a ride in the car to get her to work faster. But it was in Beaufort in 1949, I believe, that they met. They married in August of 1950.

Dr. Disney: Tell us what you know about the early years of their marriage and the birth of their six children.

Margie Mitchell: Mom and Dad married and lived in a small house in Beaufort. We saw it before it got torn down. A granddaughter remarked, she said, “Granddaddy, that’s the size of our garage.” And he remarked, “Well, that was my and your grand mom’s house.” In the early years when they were married, they had a child, I believe after the first year they were married. And of course, like all couples without a well-paying job, they struggled. The second child came two years later, but what Mom and Dad told me was, it was having the second child, they wanted to buy a house. Dad had inquired about buying a house and being credit worthy in the fifties was still tough, but he and mom, they decided that they were going to buy a house. It was a house where we still own now. It’s on Baggett Street. He went to a lady that owned the property and

inquired about the property. She remarked to him that he couldn't afford it. And said, "Okay," and he left and he said he went back home to Mom and they talked about it. My mother always had – we call them sayings – she always had a remark back. Her saying was, "If there's a will, there's a way." They went back to the property owner. They had saved up enough money, and he went to her and he said, "I'm now ready to buy the property from you. We've got the money." Before the banks, and before in house financing, he presented were with the money and said, "I have enough to buy the property." And it was on that property, on Baggett Street, that my father still has the house. There was another phrase that my mother used. She told me, "In the backyard, we buried something." And I said, "What did you bury Mom and Dad?" And she said, "We buried the word 'can't.' C-A-N-T. We buried that word. It's in the backyard of the house. If ever you think you can't do something, go in the backyard, that's where we buried can't. There's no such thing. Your father and I proved that years ago when the lady told us we can't afford it, we did. So when you say 'I can't pass that math test. I don't have enough money; I can't go to college.' Just go in the backyard, that's where we buried can't."

Dr. Disney: That was unbelievably beautiful. I think you and I have similar moms. I think that's the best lesson you can give your child is that you bury the word "can't" in the backyard.

Margie Mitchell: She said, so you can look at it every day. Just go back there. Yep it's buried.

Dr. Disney: There's already so much wisdom that you've shared that your mother is going to teach future generations of Winthrop University students who will go to the archives and see this interview and learn about your mother. Talk to us a little bit about what motherhood meant to your mother.

Margie Mitchell: Motherhood, to my mom, was the crux of life. It was the one essential thing that a mother could do to pass on to her children. She felt it was so important that everything she did was for the children, and just like other mothers. But I think what mom did especially was she gave us real life examples. She reflected back on her life, but she gave us examples of now. For her, motherhood was that one thing she could pass down to her children that would help us learn and grow. Sometimes I see mothers, and they want to be their friends for their children. And I think that's great, but I think motherhood comes with a stronger responsibility that you have to ensure that your child has enough wisdom and knowledge so that when they are going out into the community, they are able to be that carbon copy of their mother. When your mother sets a good example, you don't want to do anything to tarnish that reputation. For me, speaking for her, motherhood was one of the essential parts in life of being that role model and example that other young children can take on for their families and children.

Dr. Disney: That's beautiful. How was your mother able to balance – I mean she raised six of her own kids; she was raising half the communities' kids; she was running a daycare center – Mitchell's Daycare; she was doing all that she was doing with the church. So with so many activities inside the home and outside the home, how do you think she was able to balance all of that?

Margie Mitchell: Mother always said that being the owner of her daycare center, it wasn't work. She said, "Margie, you've got to get up, get in the car, deal with traffic, deal with a boss, and come back." And she said, "I just open up my door and open up my arms and I get love all day long. We read stories; we do lessons; we have lunch; we have naptime. It's basically love." In

looking at how she balanced it, those eight to ten hours a day, it was never work for her. It was always love. I do think, going back to her childhood in Rivers Hill and in Pineland, she knew she needed to give back in a small way. Remember, those teachers could give back to those students, what way could my mother give back? The one way that she could give back was to be that example. When she went out in the community and cooked for locals, she was giving back. She was cooking for her family already, so what's another ten more pounds of rice, she said? What's another ten more pounds of potatoes? If I've already got a home that's open to my children, why can't five more come and play with them? It was always a joy that she never had to work at it, it was just love. I always called our house the "Kool-Aid" house, where everybody came in. Balancing her job, the community, the church – it was just one big extension of a home that was open, a heart that was full of love, and just a desire to always be willing to give back. I feel that, for her children, we've got that sense of community and dedication that we need to volunteer and give back. But again, she said, "For fifty years, I never worked a day. I just always opened up my door and my heart and I just had children that love on me all day long. There's no work in that, Margie."

Dr. Disney: She sounds like the most generous person in the world with the biggest heart. She just loved and cared for her own and everyone's children. Why don't you tell us about her children – you and your siblings – and tell us some of what you all are doing so we kind of see that legacy and that model living on in terms of your work, volunteerism, anything you want to share?

Margie Mitchell: There were six children – five girls, one boy. The girls – we were all two years apart and my brother came seven years later, Tony. My dad said that he had to have a boy to carry on the name. One thing about the family was we're all college educated. Remember, my mother said, that was our job. She buried "can't" in the backyard, so our job was to get an education. We all got that college education. One thing we're all proud of is that we want to make sure that my nieces and nephews all get that same opportunity to make sure they're able to go to school and go to college. For volunteer work, one sister has worked at Paris Island for about thirty years. The second sister, Mary, she's been a teacher for forty years. She says she's going to retire, but she loves grading papers. The third sister works in retail and she's been doing so for about thirty years. The fourth sister, Jackie, she works for the state in the Department of Human Services. Me, I've been in banking for about thirty years. My brother, Tony, he is a personal photographer – video – for the city of Atlanta and he has been in his private business for about ten years. We all work, have a profession, but we all make sure we volunteer. One thing I love to do is that I'm a member of Union United Methodist Church. I did not pick up that trait of being a good cook like my mother, so I had to make sure I had something else as a resemblance of my mother. So I love to crochet. I started thirty years ago, so I crochet hats and scarves and I've done several hats and scarves for the Oliver Gospel Mission, for Epworth's Children Home. I've made hats, and scarves, and blankets for the children, the grandchildren, and the great-grandparents – my grandnieces and nephews. It was after my sister told me that the dog did not need another blanket that I had to find another project. I decided to start to make candle holders. So I'm making those for some of the nursing homes around the Columbia area. Community service is good and the other sisters and brother, we all do our part volunteering because we know being dedicated and being recognized out in the community is important as mom making sure that the altar at Wesley church was perfect on Sunday morning. So taking that pride with us in whatever we do for volunteering work helps us all.

Dr. Disney: Your mom and dad must have been and must be so proud of their six children and all the grands and great-grands for all the success and all that you guys have done to carry on their legacy, their commitment to education and community and volunteerism and children and church. What did it mean to your mother and what did it mean to your family when your mother was named the South Carolina Mother of the Year in 2003?

Margie Mitchell: On January 1st, 2003, there was a message on my answering machine. It said, “Margie Mitchell, this is Peggy Kinney. I’m a representative of South Carolina Mother of the Year. Your mother has just been selected as the 2003 South Carolina Mother of the Year. We just spoke to your mother, I don’t think she believed me, so Margie if you would call me back and call your mother because we have a lot of activities planned.” Well I called my mother, and I said, “Mom, did Miss Peggy Kinney call you?” She said, “Yes she did Margie and she said I had won the mother of the year. Margie, I’ve already got the title of “Miss Wesley.” I said, “Well mom, we were working on this for you to write your story down and collect it and we submitted it and you’ve been selected,” and she said, “Do you think it’s true?” I said, “I think it’s true, Mom.” She said, “What do we do now?” and I said, “Well, I think we’re going to call her back and tell her that we are excited.” She said, “Margie I am so nervous, call her back and tell her thank you.”

So I called Peggy Kinney back and I accepted on my mother’s behalf. It was that day I called the family together. Four of us live in Columbia, the brother that lived in Atlanta, and a sister that lived in Beaufort, South Carolina. So I needed to tell the family that mom had been selected. I didn’t want to call one without calling the other; I said we were going to have a family meeting at five o’clock at my house. My brother would be on speaker and my sister would be on speaker and I would announce it. Well the anticipation was, “What is it Margie, what is it?” and I told them Mom’s fine and Dad’s fine, we’ve just got an announcement. So we stood at my house on January 1st and I made the announcement: “Peggy Kinney had called, mom had been selected as 2003 South Carolina Mother of the Year.” There were four there, the brother-in-law’s, two on each phone and with ten people standing around, the next word was... Silence! Nobody said anything! And then I said, “Guys what do you think?” and then they said, “Oh my gosh, what do we do now?” So we called mom back and we were excited. That was one of the most memorable days. It is now 2015 and the message that Peggy Kinney left on my answering machine – I still have it.

We had to have an announcement, so we all went down to Beaufort at our church – Wesley United Methodist Church, they sponsored us there – and we had the announcement. When you’re being honored in this way, you have to have the right outfit; any woman knows that. My mother decided she had to go shopping and find the right outfit and the right shoes. To my dad, she said, “Just wear your blue suit, you’ll be fine.” We went that day and several committee members were there and they read the proclamation that she’d been selected. My mother was never a woman of few words, hence the same for me, but it was on that day in January when she received the proclamation that she said, “Thank you,” and nothing else. Just thank you. But with the family and friends there, with the church members and other members of the community there, there were probably about 200 people there. We had the whole afternoon of celebration, well-wishers thanking her, and she said when we got home, this was a highlight. It was a memorable day and I do remember the pin that she received for South Carolina Mother of the Year. When she passed the next year in 2004, we thought, “What will we do with this

pin?” And then we decided that surely, she’ll need to take it to heaven to show God that, “Look, I’ve got another title with me,” so she did.

Dr. Disney: Do you remember anything else about that amazing year, 2003? Was there a tea at the Governor’s Mansion? Tell us more about that wonderful year. It’s hard to imagine that that wonderful day could be topped. Anything else you want to share about that year, we’d love to hear.

Margie Mitchell: In 2003, we sent out the announcements, and Governor Mark Sanford with Jenny Sanford invited us for a tea. We had a limited number of people that we could invite and that was hard, but we went to the Governor’s Mansion that day. Mom chose me to go to the luncheon with her, just one person. So I went to the luncheon with her and I sat at the Palmetto Club, and she told me later that she was much too nervous to eat, but it was after we left the Palmetto Club. We were escorted from the Palmetto Club to the Statehouse, where she would receive the proclamation from Governor Mark Sanford. We were in the van and we went under the tunnel and we walked up. We introduced ourselves to the receptionist there – “Marjorie Mitchell” – and she said, “Mrs. Mitchell, the Governor is waiting for you.” It was at that point when she turned to me and said, “Margie, today I’m important.” I said, “Yes ma’am you are.” She said, “I have walked from the cotton fields of Pineland to the Governor’s office and I don’t have to wait.” I said, “That’s because you’re important,” and she said “Yes, I’m important.” So we went to the Governor’s office and we met Governor Sanford and she got the proclamation and we all took a group photo, which was a highlight. While we were all in the Governor’s Mansion, my father and Mark Sanford were talking about the property they owned in Beaufort County, because he’s there, and so they had that conversation. We went to the Governor’s Mansion for the tea and the committee members were there, we had family and friends there, and Jenny Sanford, the Governor’s wife, invited us in and we had a lovely tea. What I remembered about that day were so many well-wishers. It was at that point that they would recognize mom for all of the achievements that she’d done. At that point, we knew what an impact she’d made on so many other lives. Later on in November, there was a parade in Beaufort County and she was in the parade as South Carolina Mother of the Year. She, again, said, “I’m just going to wave like the queen.” We took a lot of photos of her in the parade, but it was a highlight for her – going to some of the Rotary clubs, going to some of the other churches in the community. There was another spot where South Carolina ETV called, and I still have that on my answering machine. She called and she said, “Margie, ETV is coming to visit me today; I really am important,” and I said, “Yes ma’am, you really are important.” It was a fun-filled year with all the recognition that she’d received. So many of the children that she’d kept during the last 50 years sent cards, wrote letters, called to remember her, but it was a great year. It was 2004, four months after her reign as mother of the year, my mother passed. We all say that we were grateful that we could record the history for the children and the grandchildren, but also make sure that we all recognized that she left a legacy for everybody that she touched. Another saying my mother used was – I’ve heard this somewhere before, and I’m sure she paraphrased it from someone else – “What you do for yourself will die with you. What you do for other will always live on.” My mother’s legacy continues to live on.

Dr. Disney: With you sitting here with us, you’re helping us record that history and that legacy for countless other future generations of people who did not have the blessing of direct contact with your mother. There are fifty years of families in that community that were touched by your

mother and we are so honored to have you sharing her story with us for the Louise Pettus Archives. I'm sure you've saved everything connected to this and when you're finished, the Louise Pettus Archives would love to have any and all of those letters and cards and notes and speeches. You keep them as long as you want to keep them in your family, but if there comes a point when you're not sure what to do with them, think of Louise Pettus Archives at Winthrop University. We want to cherish, and record, and sustain this legacy and this history and these memories.

Margie Mitchell: What a wonderful idea, thank you.

Dr. Disney: You have had an additional blessing and that is to serve on the South Carolina Mother of the Year award selection committee. Tell us a little about that experience and how that's impacted you; maybe some of the women you've interacted with, what that experience has been like selecting mothers of the year.

Margie Mitchell: Whenever Janet Cotter calls you; you never have an opportunity to say no. Janet Cotter called several years ago and said, "Margie, we would love for you to be on the committee." You immediately start with; "Well, my plate is full, I have a lot to do," but I remembered who was on the other end, Janet, and I said, "Of course." Being on the committee has been a great experience, but it is tough. You get a history of these wonderful women in South Carolina who have done remarkable things. Reading over their bio and trying to select the one who would best represent South Carolina – it's tough. It's so rewarding to know that that tradition is still going to continue. There are mothers out here who have probably never been recognized and known except amongst their family. Being on this committee gives me an opportunity to recognize these women, to spotlight these women, to showcase what they've done under perhaps adverse circumstances for them to be honored. It's been tough picking the last few winners but it has been a joy knowing that on January first, someone will get that call, a mother will get that call, and it will be one of the life changing events in their lives. Giving birth to children, I know, is monumental, but being recognized as a mother for the state is huge. That's been a joy for me, being on this committee, to recognize these women and to showcase their talents. It's been a herculean task, but I've enjoyed it.

Dr. Disney: Do you think our society does enough to recognize the work and the roles of women as mothers?

Margie Mitchell: No. I think there's some mothers who will have a child, who will do all they can to get that child through school – that mother needs to be recognized. When that mother puts a child through school who gets their PhD, that mother needs to be recognized. When a mother has a child and that child finishes kindergarten, that mother needs to be recognized. When a mother can feed her child for a year without that child going hungry, that mother needs to be recognized. Everything a mother does for the well-being of her child needs to be recognized. For me, every mother needs to be recognized every day of the year. For me, Mother's Day is a great day, but it's the little things like when a mother takes her child to the playground and you hear that child going down the slide and he says, "Wheeeee!" that mother needs to be recognized. Every step of the way, everyday a mother needs to be recognized. I would like to see more of that. To be recognized by the state, it was a great honor for my mother and it is still an opportunity for the bigger group of South Carolina to recognize mothers who have exceeded exceptionally in other situations.

Dr. Disney: That was beautiful and so well said. You have shared so much with us about womanhood, motherhood, family, care, love, which was what your mother represented to her family and to her community. I think that the legacy that every mother who cares for her children deserves to be recognized. To me, that legacy of love is the legacy that your interview and your mother's interview will carry on to everyone who sees and hears this. Is there anything else that you want to share with future generations of women who will watch this interview and who want to learn more about Marjorie Mitchell, mother of the year in 2003 or what it was like to be the daughter of the 2003 South Carolina Mother of the Year?

Margie Mitchell: One thing to pass on to other women is to think about that house in Beaufort that still has the word "can't" buried in the backyard. There is nothing that we can't do. We just have to put our mind to it. It may be small steps at a time, but it's achievable. With my mother and her limited education, she made sure that we were educated. But for the mothers, start off with small steps; start off with having a career; start off with planning your children; start off with being there for them. Whenever a child has a baseball game or ballet recital, that mother needs to be there to show their love and commitment to them. For my mother and her legacy, for women to put that can-do attitude toward them behind but also to make sure when they are taking these small steps, they are doing what's right for the child. For my mother, which I've learned, it's always having that faith behind them. Growing up, I've always felt we needed something besides mom and dad out there working and that's where our faith came in from the church. I feel that if young people and young mothers now get behind a faith, something else that's bigger than you and stronger than you, that will provide you with a faith that will get you through those tough times. Mom always said that her life wasn't easy, but it sure was happy. For women to just do those small steps I think that would be something that everyone can obtain.

Dr. Disney: I can't think about a better way to conclude. Are there any questions that you have for us or anything else you'd like to share?

Margie Mitchell: I will share this with you: April 10th, 2004, it was the last day that I would see my mother alive. We had Easter dinner. Easter Sunday – we had the full spread; family, friends, a house full of people. Remember the "Kool-Aid" house, everybody was there. Mom never said the prayer. She never said the prayer. It was always someone else's job to say the prayer. She always said, "I did the cooking, I want someone else to bless the food." We did the blessing of the food and Mom always wanted to count. She always wanted to know how many people were there. Sometimes you have a dinner table with fourteen people around there, well at our dinner table, some were in the living room, and some were in the dining room, and she always wanted to do a count. That Easter Sunday, we finished the prayer and mom said we've got to count! Of course, she was always number one. For years, we always said, "Why can't I be number one?" and she said, "I'm the mother; I have to be number one." We would do a count around for the total number of people that we had for dinner. We did the count and after that, mom said, "I want to say something." Now that was strange. We were ready to eat; to socialize. We were still standing there after the blessing and Mom says, "We're all holding hands. I want you to look around the room. As family, we hold hands. One day the chain will be broken and when that chain is broken, one person will step out of that chain, but I want you to all join hands and you stick together as a family." "Yes ma'am." "Promise?" "Yes ma'am, we promise." We ate dinner that day and I left Beaufort to come back to Columbia and that was the last time I saw my mother. I think about that day sometimes when we're having family discussions, family dinner,

Christmas dinner, and Easter dinner. We do the blessing and then we have to count. Well, mom is always number one, Dad is still number two. So we'll go around the room and do a total count and at that point we look at each other and we say, "We're still holding hands, and we're still together, and that's what family is."