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Interview #4: The "Good Old Days" Were Not

(August 19, 1987)

Interviewed by Donald A. Ritchie

Ritchie: You said you'd like to begin with the concept of the "good old days" in the Senate.

Shuman: Well, there's a lot of talk now about the "good old days" in the Senate or Congress, when it was said a President could deal with [Rayburn](#), and [Johnson](#), and a few committee people, strike a deal and allegedly watch the leaders deliver. First of all I don't think it was true to a very great degree. Senators who were in the Senate then paid a very heavy price for the "good old days," in the sense that the Senate was run by a small hierarchy composed of the bipartisan coalition I've talked about, but principally by the committee chairmen, who were very powerful. Of course, the junior members were to be seen and not heard. The idea that the president could talk to Johnson, and he in turn could talk to Russell and deliver, in general was not true. They could only deliver on things the Southerners agreed to. They couldn't deliver a Civil Rights bill. They couldn't or wouldn't deliver a tax bill, if a tax increase or decrease were needed to dampen down or stimulate the economy. They could deliver only in the small area of relatively conservative policy with which they agreed. That's as far as it went.

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The "good old days" also were when neither Rayburn nor Johnson could control Judge [Howard Smith](#), chairman of the Rules Committee, who at the end of the session went back to his farm in Virginia and took with him all the bills that he didn't want passed. He just put them in his pocket.

The "good old days" were days when bills were marked up in secret executive sessions. The "good old days" were when Bobby Baker ran free like a loose gun on a wooden deck, when the Truth in Lending bill, my old boss [Douglas'](#) bill, which [Proxmire](#) finally got passed, was bottled up for seven years in a subcommittee of the Banking Committee, because the chairman of that committee, [\[A. Willis\] Robertson](#) was an agent of the banks. He went to work for them when he left the Senate as did his staff director. The "good old days" were when the power-oriented senators held sway over the issue-oriented senators.

The "good old days" were the days when the press did not report the drunks, or the crooks, or the womanizers. [Gary Hart](#) would have had a field day if the "good old days" still existed! The "good old days" were when the press which covered

the Senate, principally the *New York Times* man, William White, and the *Washington Post* reporters, and the wire service reporters were in fact a part of the Senate establishment. [Jack] Bell was head of the A.P. in the Senate gallery. I remember one evening he came out of the press gallery as I was going in, and he said, in a loud

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voice, announcing it: "We have adjourned. We are coming in at noon tomorrow." He was just as much a part of the Club as any Southern senator. The "good old days" were when the Dixiecrats held 10 of the 16 Standing Committee chairmanships, including all but one of the big ones, and whose sycophants ruled almost all of the others.

There was a period of about a year when everybody knew that Bobby Baker had been fiddling with campaign funds, and it was unreported. It finally got reported by accident when a lawsuit was filed. One of the things I look back on with some pride is the fact that for a year before Bobby Baker was fired, he wouldn't speak to me. He wouldn't speak to me because of Jim McCartney of the *Chicago Daily News*, now of the Knight-Ridder chain, and my friend for over thirty years. McCartney did stories then that were not quite front-page stories but wonderful, interesting stories which everyone else missed. He was the one who broke the story about Mrs. Kennedy's new house in the Virginia countryside. And he did stories on Bobby Baker before anyone else did. He heard Bobby Baker, the secretary to the majority, say one summer, speaking to a group of interns, that he had ten senators' votes in his pocket at anytime. And Jim also wrote an article about the Senate establishment, the Club, and he put Baker in the Club as the hundred and first senator, as he called him, but he left [Mansfield](#) out, which made Mansfield very unhappy. Mansfield

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ticked off McCartney at that time, but later apologized to him. Bobby, it was said, also had power because his wife was the secretary for the Internal Security Subcommittee of the Senate Judiciary Committee which kept dosiers not only on alleged security risks but on senators and their families as well. The staff director was a man named Sourwine. But in any case, McCartney wrote the stories about Bobby, and Bobby had seen me having lunch with Jim McCartney in the Family Dining Room [in the Capitol] and thought that I had put him up to it. Well, I hadn't. I wish I had, but I hadn't.

There was a time that year, this would have been after '62 and before '64, when we were meeting in Majority Leader Mansfield's office with [John Sparkman](#), Mansfield, and Douglas, who were handling a major housing bill. I was there as a

staff person, and Bobby was there, just the five of us, and for more than an hour Bobby wouldn't speak to me because he thought I was McCartney's source.

Well, in the end he went to jail because of an incident that happened in the Finance Committee. Mr. Douglas for years had proposed that the stock savings and loans be taxed at a higher rate than the mutuals, on the grounds that the stocks were out to make money, but the mutuals shared their profits with their members. Mr. Douglas pushed this, but without any success. One day I got a call from Grover Ensley, who had been the staff

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director of the Joint Economic Committee and now worked for the mutual savings banks in New York. About noon he called me from New York and said, "Great! Congratulations! Douglas had a great success in the Finance Committee today. The stocks are going to be taxed more than the mutuals." I said, "Grover, there must be some mistake. Mr. Douglas wasn't at the meeting today."

It turned out that [\[Robert\] Kerr](#) had put the amendment through and had voted a number of proxies for it. In the next two or three weeks, almost every stock savings and loan in the country came down to Washington to try to do something about that. This was at a time when Bobby Baker and Kerr were in charge of the Senate Democratic Campaign Committee. After Johnson had gone to the White House there was a vacuum into which Kerr and Bobby stepped. They literally shook down the savings and loans for campaign contributions during that two or three week period, and then Kerr withdrew his amendment. That is what in the state legislatures is called a "fetcher" amendment: a member says he's going to do something that's going to hurt a group's interest and then he gets them to pay through the nose for it not happening.

Bobby had turned over something like eighty thousand dollars to Kerr, and the cash was found in Kerr's lockbox after he died, suddenly, I think on New Year's day of 1963. He died just as there appeared on the newsstand a copy of the *Saturday Evening Post* with Kerr's picture on the cover. It referred to him as "the

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king of the Senate." Mr. Douglas coined the phrase and first called Kerr the king of the Senate. At the very instant that it appeared -- here was this all-powerful person who had stepped into the vacuum that Johnson left -- Kerr died of a sudden heart attack, sitting on the edge of his hospital bed. When Bobby went to trial, his defense was that it was Kerr's money, that he had given it to Kerr, and that he Bobby, hadn't kept it. He said he gave it all to Kerr. Some used to think he gave ten percent to Kerr and kept ninety, but Bobby claimed he gave it all to Kerr. And the judge's charge to the jury was that if you do think that Bobby passed all

the money along to Kerr, then Bobby is technically innocent. Personally I thought he was "technically" innocent. I think he was morally guilty but probably technically innocent. But the prosecution said: what would this millionaire Kerr want with the money? The question I would have put is: how do they think Kerr got all his money in the first place? He had the biggest Sunday School class in Oklahoma. He didn't smoke and he didn't drink, but as he said, "I never approved of a deal I wasn't in on." He was a modern buccaneer.

That was the Senate in the "good old days." I was called to the Senate floor one time just after the Senate Campaign Committee delivered to Mr. Douglas, in a white envelope, sealed, five thousand dollars in cash as his part of their campaign contribution. I think it was for 1960. He called me over to the

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Senate, gave it to me unopened. Mr. Douglas was ashen. I went back to the office and I got our office boy, who was then a high school student, and he and I walked together over to the bank on east Pennsylvania Avenue, where I converted the cash into a cashier's check, and sent it off to our campaign to be recorded. But if someone had hit me over the head going down the steps in the Old Senate Office Building, with five thousand bucks, people would have been very suspicious of what I was up to. That is the way things worked in the "good old days." I converted that money into something I could see, feel, or touch immediately. I made it accountable.

So there are lots of good things about the present day, when senators can actually go to the floor, offer an amendment, and have some hope that if it has some merit it can actually be passed. That was not true in the "good old days." Johnson had to give his approval before the 55 votes of the coalition would vote for your amendment. Committee assignments were handed out on a preferential basis, rather than on a fair basis, even with the Johnson rule, which was a good change. So I don't think so much of the "good old days." They have been vastly exaggerated. They are largely a myth.

I heard Henry Kissinger say not too long ago that, when he was Secretary of State in the [Nixon](#) and [Ford](#) administrations, the "good old days" still existed in the sense that he could go up and

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talk to three or four people and get his foreign policy position accepted. That's rubbish. In the period from '69 until '76 that did not occur in the Senate for Kissinger or anybody else. That was a period when the "good old days" did not exist at all. Those were the days when turmoil ruled.

There is one other point I want to make. In 1958 there was a recession and Mr. Douglas was a strong advocate of a quick tax cut, I think he proposed a tax cut of about six billion to stimulate the economy and to help end the recession. Eisenhower didn't want to do it. If he had done it, and conditions had improved, the Senate might very well not have gone Democratic to the degree it did in 1958, when I think sixteen new Democratic senators came in, four from the two new states and twelve from former Republican seats. But Eisenhower resisted the tax cut. Johnson was talking to Mr. Douglas then, and Douglas had convinced him that it should be done. But Johnson told Douglas, when I was with them on the Senate floor, that Rayburn had gone down to the White House and that Eisenhower said no, that he thought it would be wrong to cut taxes, and that Rayburn had stood there and saluted Eisenhower as commander-in-chief and said: yes sir, we won't have a tax cut. It was one thing to treat the president as commander-in-chief on a matter of foreign policy, or military policy, national security policy, but quite another to do that on a domestic political and economic issue. But according to Johnson

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Rayburn did that, and even Johnson couldn't change the fact that Rayburn had done it. I've since been told by Rayburn's biographer that this may not have been true. It may have been Johnson's way of letting Douglas down easily.

I think there have been a lot of changes for the better in the Senate. And there are three principal ones, which I think changed the nature of the Senate. The first major change was the decline of the South and the death or retirement of the Southern barons or poohbahs. That occurred through the middle and late sixties and into the early seventies. Most of the Dixiecrats died or left. They were replaced by relatively conservative Democrats, but in most cases the Dixiecrats were replaced by national Democrats from the South. A man like [\[Lawton\] Chiles](#), who is relatively conservative, is certainly not a Dixiecrat such as [Spessard Holland](#), whom he replaced. So the decline of the South was a major change in the Senate. The South's grip on the committees and on the Steering Committee and the appointments to positions ended.

The second change was the rise in power of the class of '58 Northern Democrats, whose influence lasted really until 1980. They became either chairmen or ranking members of the committees. They brought a tremendous change in the nature of the Senate, and made it possible for Johnson as President to get his Great Society program through. It is ironic that those who gave Johnson his

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great legislative victories as President were those who had been scorned by Johnson and his power base when he was [Leader](#) in the Senate.

The third change was in the nature of the Republicans. When I first came to work in the Senate there were, with some notable exceptions, basically two kinds of Republicans. There were the time-servers or there were the wild men. The wild men were [McCarthy](#), [\[William\] Jenner](#), and the man from Idaho.

Ritchie: [Herman Welker](#).

Shuman: Welker died of a brain tumor. I saw him go nuts on the floor one day. He absolutely went wild. He would make John McEnroe look angelic. With notable exceptions such as [Bob Taft](#), many of the Republican senators were nonentities, and there was a reason for that. An able conservative in that period became president of a bank, head of General Motors, or chairman of a large corporation, and in turn hired his politicians. So most of the Republicans in the Senate were hired politicians. The exceptions were a few patricians from New England. Very few of the Republicans would argue substance or policy. They wouldn't debate. They just sat there. The senator from Iowa, [Tom Martin](#), was a beautiful example of an absolute nonentity. But there were lots of them. Now, that changed dramatically -- starting in 1956 with [Javits](#) of New York -- a whole group of Republicans came in

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who had standing in their own right. The two Oregon senators [\[Robert\] Packwood](#) and [\[Mark\] Hatfield](#), and [\[Edward\] Brooke](#) of Massachusetts. [\[Richard\] Lugar](#) is an example of that, as is the leader of the Republicans, [\[Robert\] Dole](#). There are a large number of Republicans who have great ability and personality who got there on their own hook and were and are not time servers. That was a decisive change in the Senate. The election of 1980, when a whole group of Republicans won whom no one expected to win, and therefore not much care had been taken in their selection as candidates, almost brought the cycle full circle again. But many of these were defeated six years later at the end of their first term.

Those were the fundamental changes, as well as the changes people talk about, such as the open meetings of the Senate committees, the rise of subcommittee government, greater freedom for freshmen, greater diffusion of power throughout the Senate in the committees, and so forth. It got to the stage that when my old boss, Proxmire, became chairman of the Banking Committee, there wasn't much power left in the chairmanship. He was really first among equals. The only way he could function was to convince a majority of the members of the committee to vote with him. He had to round up the votes. They were not automatic. He could not rule autocratically as did many predecessor committee chairman in the Senate.

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I think, contrary to what people say, that on the whole it is now a better place. I don't think it's as interesting a place. I don't think the figures loom as large as Johnson, and Kerr, and Douglas, and [Morse](#). Maybe I think that because of age. Perhaps twenty years from now people will say, "Gee, there was Bob Dole back there, what a big figure he was. And think of what a big figure [Bob Byrd](#) was as the leader!" I don't quite think that will be the case, so I'm not making that point, but I am saying that the general level of intelligence is now probably higher. The general level of education is higher. I think that on the whole senators are now more ethical. There are fewer crooks. There are fewer drunks. Very few of them smoke. They are healthier. In a wide variety of ways, even with the PACs and the big money that are now involved in campaigns, as a group they probably operate on a higher ethical plane than when I first came there. End of speech!

Ritchie: To go back, you brought up Bobby Baker, and I did have some questions I wanted to ask you about him. He was the Democratic Secretary for much of the period that you were on the floor.

Shuman: All the period, from '55 until '62 or '63, whenever it was that he lost his job, after Mansfield became leader.

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Ritchie: Were there times that you felt you could work with him, or was it always an adversarial relationship?

Shuman: No, Bobby was never with us. Bobby would use information that he got from us against us. He did have ten senators in his pocket. He constantly claimed that our side couldn't count. I made the point about how the Senate is gerrymandered and how the smallest seventeen states with thirty-four senators represent only seven percent of the population. It's a rigged deck, and Bobby took advantage of that. It was true that on almost any vote, Johnson had ten extra senators in his pocket, and he and Bobby would beat us and say, "You can't count." But we could count. We were just playing with a stacked deck. No, he was not with us.

Ritchie: Was he primarily Johnson's tool?

Shuman: My theory of it is that yes, he was Johnson's agent, but that while Johnson was leader he kept Bobby under wraps. Bobby was on a short leash. It was only after Johnson left the Senate that Bobby became creative in the ways that finally put him in jail. I don't think that Bobby dared to be a crook while Johnson was there. He might have done some unethical things, but I don't think he did crooked things while Johnson was there. To give Johnson credit -- which I haven't done very much -- I must say that on the whole Johnson's presidency is one in which

relatively few people went sour. He had a very honest administration. I think it was true that Bobby went sour after Johnson left the Senate, when Bobby and Kerr got together in the vacuum that was created by Johnson's leaving.

Ritchie: Do you think Kerr corrupted him?

Shuman: Well, they probably corrupted each other. I'll put it that way. Bobby had too much power. He thought he was omnipotent.

Ritchie: Also Bobby Baker was involved in Democratic campaign funding. You mentioned that one point the envelope arrived with five thousand dollars.

Shuman: I don't know who gave it to Mr. Douglas. It may have been Bobby. I'm not sure who gave it to him. But Bobby and Kerr ran the Senate Campaign Committee.

Ritchie: I was wondering if that kind of money was tied to a person's support for the establishment in the Senate?

Shuman: Well, it was and it wasn't. In the case of Mr. Douglas it was not. He was not a member of the Club. In 1960 the election in Illinois was for a senator from the biggest state in which a senator was up, eleven million people. He got five thousand dollars from the Campaign Committee most of which he had raised on his own from people who gave to the

campaign committee at his request. So he got from the Campaign Committee an amount which he had raised from his supporters. What we didn't understand was why the Senate Campaign Committee gave it in cash. On the other hand, [\[Allen Frear\]](#) from Delaware, one of the smallest states in the Union, who was also up, I think got four or five times as much. In that sense, the friends of the Club were rewarded. But Mr. Douglas got the minimum amount promised to every Democratic Senator running that year.

I'd like to tell here about how the Senate hierarchy kept him off the Finance Committee for seven years. Mr. Douglas was on the Labor Committee and had tried to get on the Finance Committee for any number of years and was always unsuccessful. He was probably the most qualified of any senator to go on that committee. He had helped write the original social security law. He was an expert on unemployment compensation and welfare. As President of the American Economic Association he was an expert on revenue and taxes. He had organized a large group of American economists against the Smoot-Hawley tariff bill and

wrote books on tariffs, all subjects over which the Finance Committee had jurisdiction. But he was an opponent of tax loopholes. When he first went to the Senate in '49, he had the same seniority as Bob Kerr, who was elected the same year. Kerr went to the Finance Committee as a freshman. There was an opening, and they then put on Frear of

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Delaware. The Finance Committee almost always, historically, has had one senator from Delaware. Delaware is to corporations what Florida is to the aged. Most corporate headquarters are in Delaware, and there are all kinds of offices in Wilmington where there is nothing but the name of the corporation on a one-room office, as its national headquarters. But anyway, there is always one senator from Delaware on that committee, and for a long time both [\[John\] Williams](#) and Frear from Delaware were on the committee. But Frear, who had the same seniority as Mr. Douglas, went on the committee.

When the next opening came, [\[Russell\] Long](#) and [\[George\] Smathers](#) went on; I'm not certain who went on first. Long did have seniority over Mr. Douglas. Smathers was two years Mr. Douglas' junior. But those two went on the committee. Then an opening came, and Mr. Douglas applied again. The establishment wanted to keep him off because of his position on oil and gas. At that time there wasn't a single member of the Finance Committee who was not a supporter of the oil depletion allowance. It was required. They couldn't find anyone who had more seniority to keep him off at that stage so what happened was that Lyndon Johnson as leader took the spot, because it was a rule that the leader could have any committee he wanted. So Johnson went to the committee to keep Douglas off. Then there was a vacancy, but [Alben Barkley](#) had come back to the Senate. Barkley had been Vice

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President, Majority Leader, and a former member of the committee. You remember he resigned in the '40s I think.

Ritchie: 1948, to become Vice President.

Shuman: No, no, earlier when he resigned as Majority Leader when Roosevelt vetoed a tax bill that Barkley had gotten through.

Ritchie: Oh, yes, in 1944.

Shuman: Roosevelt vetoed the bill, and Barkley resigned from the Majority Leadership in protest. But Barkley was now in the Senate. He came back in the '54 election. Mr. Douglas was asked to step aside, and he agreed to step aside for

Barkley. Then there was another vacancy, and Douglas was in line again. The rule was that the first person who had applied got the position, so a lot of people applied for the committee they ultimately wanted the day they came to the Senate, so they could say: "I've had my application in for six years." Douglas' request had been in for several years. Anyway, another vacancy occurred, and the Steering Committee and the oil and gas interests tried to keep Douglas off, and they were successful again. Their ploy was to put up [Clint Anderson](#) from New Mexico, who was a very good senator, but who because of New Mexico interests was an oil and gas senator. They couldn't think of any reason why he should go on ahead of Mr. Douglas. The two had equal seniority, and Douglas

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had applied earlier, but the reason they gave was that Anderson's name began with A and Douglas began with D, so that in this equal seniority situation Anderson got first choice, even though Douglas had applied many times before.

Then Barkley died, and finally Mr. Douglas got on the committee. Kerr was sitting number two, Douglas was the last, lowest one on the Democratic side. It points up the fact that in the "good old days," while seniority was said to exist, like George Orwell's pigs, some senators were more senior than others. In the case of the Finance Committee, the Democratic hierarchy kept a senator off if there was any chance at all that he would be in favor of the depletion allowance. Later [Albert Gore, Sr.](#), of Tennessee, an absolutely public interest senator, got a seat, and the two of them and John Williams of Delaware fought many battles together.

Ritchie: One of the things that's always claimed for Johnson, one of the reforms that he instituted, was to give freshmen senators a chance to get on first-rank committees, rather than put them automatically on the District of Columbia committee. Could that also be interpreted as a way of giving him and his supporters more control over who got on the committees? In other words, if you took it away from strictly seniority assignment, you could keep a liberal troublemaker off of the Finance Committee and put a junior senator on in his place.

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Shuman: Well, you could and you couldn't. The Johnson rule was that there were classes of committees. Foreign Relations, Appropriations, Finance, Armed Services, and Judiciary, I think were the big five. No senator could go to one of those committees as a second committee, if the senator were already on one of those committees. But also Johnson had a grandfather rule: those who were there stayed. So the rule started off with a great many senior senators who were on say Armed Services and Appropriations, or Finance and Appropriations, and they got

to stay. They didn't get kicked off. But when there was an opening, a junior senator got to go on one of those big five committees, in preference to a senior senator who was already on one of them. That was the Johnson rule, and on the whole it was a pretty good rule. But I don't think it operated in the way you mentioned. Of course, one could always manipulate it. In 1959, some people like [\[Gale\] McGee](#) of Wyoming and Bob Byrd went to Appropriations as freshmen. That was unheard of until then. But they had voted right on the filibuster rule.

Ritchie: It just struck me that what got some people onto a committee, also worked to keep some people off of a committee.

Shuman: Certainly. It's still true. The Interior Committee was controlled by the West. Their issues were handled by it, so they had a monopoly on that committee. The Armed Services Committee on the whole was composed of people who had

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lots of military installations in their states. During World War II, I used to think the reason there were so many bases in the South was so that people could be trained in the winter and wouldn't have to train in the snow. But the war was fought in northern Europe, such as the battle of the Bulge where it was freezing cold, and it finally dawned on me the reason the bases were in the South was because of seniority and the position of the Southerners in the hierarchy.

Ritchie: I've also heard it said that the Labor committee was a corral for liberals.

Shuman: Yes, The Labor committee was packed with liberals. That was their committee. They were given that committee. Mr. Douglas had moved up to the second spot on that committee. He was behind [Lister Hill](#). Hill never would chair the Labor subcommittee of the Labor Committee. He didn't want to have anything to do with Taft-Hartley and the unions because of the conservative forces in his state. He did the health side of the committee. And Hill was a good example of what I call the double whammy. He was a) in charge of the authorizing legislation for health issues and established the National Institutes of Health (NIH), and b) he was chairman of the Appropriations subcommittee that funded them. He stuffed money into the National Institutes of Health. They had more money than they could use, and no one dared vote against cancer or heart attacks, so Hill was in a

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pretty powerful position. He was of course named for Lord Lister, not of Listerine fame, but of antiseptic fame. He was a very decent senator. Hill and [John] Sparkman, I think, were the two most progressives of the Southern senators.

Ritchie: A couple of times you've mentioned the 1958 election, when a great number of new Democrats came into the Senate. How did that change the Senate?

Shuman: It changed it very much. The Southern hierarchy was very unhappy. What they wanted was just enough Democrats so they could be chairmen of the committees, but not so many that they would vote to put through programs that the Southerners were opposed to. Of course, it took time for the 1958 group to work its way up, which it finally did. But it did change the Senate. The 1958 class had enough seniority in '64 that it provided the margins by which Johnson put through the Great Society, and by which the Civil Rights bills were passed. The 1958 election was very, very important.

Ritchie: I assume they also gave an immediate boost to the liberal faction, that they added a lot more numbers to the liberal ranks.

Shuman: Certainly, the nature of the Senate changed because of their election. With their votes the liberals had a majority and could out-vote the Dixiecrat -- conservative

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Republican coalition which had ruled since 1938. But as I say, it did take time. Because these were still the days when people didn't speak too early, too often. Perhaps I could illustrate the way people got ahead by [\[Edmund\] Muskie's](#) example. I remember Muskie was very quiet for a long time in the Senate. I think he was on the Government Operations Committee. But in any case he finally managed a relatively minor bill from his committee about which he had great expertise. This was cited many times as the model of how a freshman senator should get ahead. He shouldn't speak at all on any issue other than an issue over which he had jurisdiction, where he had become the expert, where he had handled the bill. And Muskie managed it in a very able fashion.

Ritchie: Do you still think that's the way it should be done?

Shuman: No. Although Muskie managed it well, I don't think that's the way it should be done. What that system does is to say that some senators are less equal than others. My view is that if a person is elected to the Senate, that person should have equal rights with every other senator. Otherwise his or her people are short changed. Just because a senator has been there three terms should not give that senator more rights than any other senator. Why should a senior senator have two or three times more influence than the freshman senator has? It's an absolutely unjustifiable

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position. A new senator has a right and a duty to speak up for the people he or she represents from the day the senator is sworn in.

Seniority is useful to prevent all kinds of internecine fights, so that things are predictable, but no more. What I once suggested was that seniority be kept, but that chairmen keep their jobs for only one Congress. They could work themselves up the ladder by seniority, spend two years as chairman, and then either go back to the bottom or go to another committee, so that seniority would be kept but there wouldn't be the situation in which a senator got to the chairmanship when he was eighty and in his dotage, as [\[Theodore\] Green](#) was, for example, and be unable to function. The one thing wrong with my proposal, I think, was that it would give too much control to the staff. The staff would stay on, and the staff would probably run the committees, rather than the senators. And I don't believe in that at all. The staff is not elected and should not have that much power. But on the other hand, I thought it was a constructive suggestion. I think I proposed it in an article in *The New Republic*, in the mid-fifties. I'm not certain I would still stick with it. I think the present situation, in which the party caucuses can now oust an arbitrary or aging or incompetent chairman, is a better solution.



Senator Theodore Green (D-RI), far right, confers with Senators Richard B. Russell (D-GA) and Senator John Foster Dulles (R-NY).
Senate Historical Office Photo

Ritchie: Around the time of that 1958 election, a number of new liberal senators, like Proxmire, and [Joseph Clark](#), started

attacking Johnson on his control of the party caucus, and his dictatorial powers as [Majority Leader](#). I've never read too much about Douglas' role in all of that. Was he in the background, and did he prefer Clark and Proxmire to take the lead, or were they all independent actions?

Shuman: Well, Proxmire came to the Senate in '57, after [Joseph] McCarthy's death. It was about this time of the year, in August. He was unhappy with the way Johnson ran the Senate. He had come from the Wisconsin legislature where there were regular caucuses. They had votes in the caucus. What the caucus decided to do was what got done. Johnson, of course, never held a meeting of the Democratic caucus, except at the beginning of each session, and that was perfunctory. Proxmire watched this in '58 and '59, and I think it was on Washington's birthday in '59, a year and a half after he came, that he decided to speak out against this system. He talked to Mr. Douglas about it. Mr. Douglas suggested that he make his speech in Wisconsin, not on the Senate floor, that he would be better served to do it that way. He could get publicity, he could say what he wanted to, but Douglas advised him not to speak on the floor. Proxmire was determined to speak on the floor, and he picked Washington's birthday to do it.

On Washington's birthday some senator reads Washington's Farewell Address, and it was said on that day that it was not only Washington's Farewell Address, but Proxmire's Farewell Address.

Johnson made certain that no one came to hear the speech. He sent the message to clear the floor. He would sometimes provide a crowd for a senator, such as for [Price Daniel](#) of Texas, who made the opening speech for the gas bill in '56. Johnson had the chamber full of his lackies. They all came like schoolboys to hear Price Daniel speak. But when Proxmire made that speech, Johnson cleared the chamber. Mr. Douglas, having suggested that Proxmire not make it in the Senate, nonetheless came to the floor and sat by him. Douglas thought that even though he had made that suggestion that he nonetheless should stand by Proxmire in his decision to speak. And in the end it turned out to be a pretty good thing. People who didn't dare say a word themselves quietly and silently came up and congratulated Proxmire.

So Mr. Douglas was involved, yes. And he did some other things. After the Class of '58 got their appointments to committees, Mr. Douglas made a really major speech which showed in some detail on the Senate floor how the rewards went to those who had supported the filibuster rule and the Southerners, and how those who didn't support them were not given good committee seats. He said that this could not have happened by accident. And of course we knew that freshmen

senators would come in, go to see the [Secretary of the Senate](#) or Bobby Baker, and would ask, "What about my committee assignments?" And Bobby would say to them, "I think you should go over and have a talk with Dick Russell." And the

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new senator would follow that advice because Dick Russell really commanded the Steering Committee, the committee on committees. Russell would say to them, "Well, senator, what committee are you interested in?" The new senator would tell him, and then Russell would say, "What is your position on the filibuster fight which is coming up?" He would probably not say you must vote with us to get the committee assignment you prefer, but that was inferred. At least I don't think Russell said it. I've never heard anybody say that he directly said to a new senator, vote with us or you don't get your choice. But it was very clear what a new senator had to do.

Ritchie: I've always thought it was curious that Johnson avoided holding party conferences. He seemed to be in such control of the party, and he seemed to have the votes, so why not give them a chance to stand up and spout off, and let off some steam? Why keep it so suppressed? Did you have any feeling like that?

Shuman: Well, Johnson wasn't a very good speaker. He never persuaded people very much by getting up and making a speech either on the floor or in the caucus or anywhere else. He was a cloakroom operator. So it may well have been that he much preferred the cloakroom operations and the one-on-one ability to play people off, because he had more knowledge than anyone else, about where every person stood. I never plumbed the inner recesses of

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his mind on that issue, but I think basically that's the reason. It was his modus operandi. He loved the cloakroom and the telephone.

Ritchie: And there was the famous Johnson Treatment, when he would latch onto somebody and convince them.

Shuman: Yes, the best pictures of which, taken by [George Tames](#), are his giving the treatment to Theodore Francis Green, which appears in [Roger] Davidson and [Walter] Oleszek's marvelous book on the Congress [*Congress and Its Members* (Washington, 1985)].

Ritchie: Yes, I know those pictures, they're very impressive. Green is being manipulated, physically, by Johnson.

Shuman: Well, you wrote up the business about Theodore Francis Green being pushed out as head of the Foreign Relations Committee. Does your article also tell about how Theodore Francis Green came back to the committee even after he was out of the Senate, as chairman emeritus? What difficulty they had trying to keep him away because he insisted on coming back! There was another story about Theodore Francis. He was a millionaire and very tight-fisted with his money. Apparently he never carried any money to speak of. In the days when he was a senator, in the Senate dining room, there was always cornbread on the table, and there was cream for the coffee. I'm told on very good authority

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that Theodore Francis would come in in the morning for breakfast and ask for a bowl, put the cornbread in the bowl, pour the cream over the cornbread, and eat it for his breakfast, free.

Ritchie: There did seem to be a lot of Senate types, both senators and staff, who lived their whole lives in the Senate, from breakfast to dinner, and you wondered if they lived anywhere else.

Shuman: [Richard Russell](#) was another whose life was the Senate. Rayburn's life, of course, was the House. Theodore Francis was another. I can't think of many others, but those three were certainly two of them. I should add [Robert Byrd](#).

Ritchie: Progressing chronologically, in 1960 Douglas was up for reelection. That was the first election he ran in after you joined his staff. What was your role in that reelection campaign?

Shuman: I was in the state of Illinois from the week before Labor Day until the week after the election. I campaigned with the senator. We had a station wagon, which I think was provided by the United Auto Workers. They leased it to the campaign, and then took it back afterwards. A Chicago policeman by the name of Joe Tierney, an Irishman, and a Chicago detective, was the driver of the station wagon and the bodyguard. Joe was no intellectual, but he was very clever, very sharp. I rode in the back seat, and I did at least one press release a day and often a major speech as

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we traveled downstate. And Mr. Douglas would make the release good by reading from it from a street corner so that the papers could say that he said this in Galesburg today.

The way of campaigning in Illinois was interesting. We started out from Chicago and went downstate for the month of September. Downstate is any place outside

Chicago. We would start on Labor Day. Mr. Douglas would march in two or three parades. As a method of campaigning, we always wanted him to ride in the station wagon, because his name was on the side. Believe it or not, if he walked in the parade, even though famous in the state, a lot of people didn't recognize who he was. Proxmire got around this by wearing a signboard with his name on the front and the back when he marched in parades. But we tried to get Mr. Douglas to ride in the station wagon so that people would know who he was. There were times when he marched in parades and I rode in the front seat of the car with Tierney, and people would think I was the senator, because they really didn't know what the senator looked like.

We started the official campaign in towns and cities like Elgin and Aurora, just outside of Chicago. Then we went off to Rockford. We would stay about three days, and during that time Mr. Douglas would campaign at the factory gates in the early morning. He would campaign downtown Main Street at lunch, with our sound system, speaking while the rest of us passed out

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literature. Then there would be an evening rally. This was followed by a televised interview. During the day his wife, Emily, would go out to satellite counties and meet with women's groups, and he would also make forays out into the surrounding terrain. So we essentially spent three days in Rockford as the hub of our activities, and then we moved on to Rock Island, Moline, the Tri-cities, and then moved downstate to Galesburg, Peoria, and Springfield. We spent only part of a day in Galesburg, and couple of days in Peoria, and a couple of days in Springfield following the same formula. Then we moved down to Southern Illinois.

Now, south of Springfield is where the glaciers stopped. The glaciers came down and receded leaving Southern Illinois two characteristics: first, as the glaciers receded they left very deep, black dirt, so that from Springfield north is now very rich and fertile land, and from Springfield south, or south of what is called the Taylorville moraine, it is very poor. The poor area is Democratic. We would move into Southern Illinois, East St. Louis, which was more Democratic than Chicago, plus the small towns in the southern third of the state. So we campaigned downstate to our strength: the large industrial cities plus Southern Illinois. During the six years before that, the senator would visit almost every county in the state every year, but during the campaign he played to his strength. The second characteristic was that

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Southern Illinois was settled by the migration from Virginia and Kentucky, the Daniel Boone migration. They were Democrats. Northern Illinois had been

settled by New Englanders and New Yorkers who had migrated directly west, and who were very Republican.

When we left Southern Illinois, we'd work our way up through Champaign, and Danville, and Bloomington, and so on. These were very Republican areas. The senator would hold street corner rallies, and court house rallies, and he would tell the faithful but lonely Democrats who came out to those rallies not to be discouraged. It wasn't their fault that they were in the minority in this area, he would say, they were fighting the glaciers. He described how the glaciers came down and left the deep, rich mud, and he would say that this rich, deep mud left by the glaciers made the very fertile soil, and the fertile soil made the very prosperous farmers, and very prosperous farmers were conservatives, and conservatives were Republican. So these lonely Democrats should take heart. They were really fighting against the glaciers who were the cause of their difficulties. He had a lot of fun with that.

I think you told me how the great American historian, Frederick Jackson Turner, had prepared three maps which when placed on top of each other showed contiguous areas. The southward glacier movement, the New England migration, and the

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Republican areas were identical. And the Daniel Boone or Kentucky migration, the poor land south of the glaciers, and the Democratic areas of the country were identical.

Then we moved into Chicago and the Cook County suburbs and townships in the last month of the campaign. Mr. Douglas would then go to every ward, fifty of them in the city, and to the ward meetings. He held meetings in most of the ethnic group areas. He went to the Greeks, and the Lithuanians, and the Latvians, and the Polish, and the Germans who were on the North Side, and into the black areas of the city, into the Negro churches, which were the natural political headquarters in the black community. He did this very extensively, and then from time to time in the last month of the campaign he might make a foray to Springfield, fly down and back for an evening rally. We had a rule, however, that one just didn't pick up and go to a rally all of a sudden. Any number of times a call would come in from somebody downstate saying, "We're having a big rally here tomorrow evening, thousands of people are going to be here. You must come. It's going to be a great place for you to meet people and have them see you." Then the senator would go, but sure enough almost no one turned up. There was no way, generally speaking, that a crowd of thousands of Democrats would come out in that way. We had a rule. We didn't go unless it had been planned for and we were sure that it would come off because county chairmen almost always exaggerated the

crowd. But the basic thing was the senator went to where the people were. So the business of going to factory gates, to shopping centers, and where the people were, was the modern way one campaigned.

In downstate Illinois, the Bible belt, Mr. Douglas took on the religious issue, which was [Kennedy](#)'s nemesis. He gave speech after speech about it but he did so from an historical perspective and quoted numerous Papal encyclicals. Between speeches our Irish driver, Joe Tierney would say to him, "Paul, those speeches aren't going over."

The Senator changed his speech and repeated time and again the story of Kennedy's PT boat being rammed by a Japanese destroyer in the Pacific. He mentioned how Kennedy rescued one of his crew, how he swam up to the man, gave him his life jacket, put the buckle in his teeth, and swam several miles to a nearby island, and saved the man's life. The punch line was "And when Kennedy swam up to that man and gave him his life jacket, put the buckle in his teeth, and saved his life he didn't ask him, 'What is your religion?'" That worked.

Two things happened. Once the Senator said in front of a courthouse crowd that the Japanese destroyer shot Kennedy's PT boat down from out of the air. The second thing was that near the end of the campaign, after he'd used the story for weeks,

we met the man Kennedy saved. He was an Irishman and a Catholic. No wonder Kennedy didn't ask him his religion. We laughed until our sides ached when we met him.

The Chicago organization under [Richard] Daley would not let Kennedy into Chicago to campaign until the Friday night before election, which was very stupid, I thought. The idea behind it was that the precinct committeemen within the city, and the ward committeemen, should be out canvassing their precincts, finding out where the votes were, making certain that people were registered, making certain that they were going to vote, and that they were going to vote for the ticket. That was their fundamental job. Daley believed if Kennedy came into the city before that job was finished it would merely divert the campaign resources from that fundamental job into producing a crowd for Kennedy. So Daley wouldn't let him come in. I guess he couldn't have kept Kennedy out, but if the mayor said don't come in, the candidate was stupid to do so.

I remained on the Senate payroll in 1960, and Mr. Douglas without question was one of the most ethical senators in the Senate. No one at that time ever made any

criticism of a senator's staff taking part in the campaign. That's now changed. When I worked with Proxmire, one year I went out to campaign, and I took annual leave. I paid for myself. But earlier that wasn't true.

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There was never any criticism. It was quite well known. Now there is such a large staff that an incumbent would have a great advantage over his opponent if he used his staff for campaigning. Except for that fact, I don't really see very much wrong with it. The reason is that the things one does in the Senate on national issues every day of every year are just as political as campaigning, if not more so. I don't see the distinction myself. But in those days, one was not criticized for campaigning, and I did it in 1960 and 1966. In 1976 I took no part at all in Proxmire's campaign. I got a call from a Wisconsin reporter who was trying to find some exception to our position. I told him we had stopped our newsletters, no staff went to the State, the Senator raised no money, etc. Finally, the reporter finding no way to criticize us said to me, "How come you're talking to me (on Senate time) about this?" I replied, "Because you called me." Here we were being about as perfect as one could be and the reporter was nit picking about it.

In the Illinois campaigns in 1960, 1964, and 1966 I worked seven days a week. I worked very hard. Sometimes those of us campaigning didn't know which county we were in, what town we were in, or what day it was. We were absolutely groggy and hardly able to keep on our feet!

Ritchie: What was the relationship between Douglas' senatorial campaign that year and Kennedy's presidential campaign?

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Shuman: It was very close. Mr. Douglas did virtually nothing but campaign for Kennedy in 1960. He hardly campaigned for himself. His speeches were in support of Kennedy. He did that throughout the state. We traveled with Kennedy to some considerable degree.

Because Daley didn't want him to come into Chicago, Kennedy campaigned in what one would call "exurbia." He was out in the counties surrounding Cook County, DuPage, Kane, Lake and Will and the cities of Joliet, Aurora, Lake Forest, Wheaton, and Elgin. These of course were the biggest Republican areas of the state. But we took great pleasure in campaigning with him in those areas. I remember one incident when the senator was in Joliet, a steel town and a very Republican town. It was an organized Republican town, and had questionable elements. Joliet was not known for its high ethical standards. It is Robert Novak's home town. When we got into that town, Mr. Douglas was campaigning on Main Street, with his sound system, in mid-afternoon. I was with him when the local

police arrested him for disturbing the peace. Of course, I immediately got on the phone to the wire services and told them about it. It was absolutely unheard of. I thought it was a big political mistake by the Republicans, and we made a major incident out of it. Kennedy was due to come to Joliet in a week or so. Mr. Douglas was determined to come back to Joliet and introduce Kennedy the night there was a big parade and court house rally for

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Kennedy. Douglas did that, and he had a lot of fun reminding the Joliet city fathers of their actions only a few days before.

I was misled in that election by the overt public support for Kennedy and the size of his crowds. Even in those Republican exurbia towns, the crowds were phenomenal. I didn't really understand what had happened until after the election. The Catholics were so proud of the fact that there was a Catholic candidate that all the parochial schools let their kids out, high school students and grade school students, when Kennedy was coming through. We called them the "jumpers," teenage girls who would jump up and down and scream. The intensity of their support was misleading. I thought Kennedy would win Illinois by a hundred thousand votes. We all anticipated such a vote, so we were amazed when he won by only about ten thousand. Of course, [Nixon](#) and the Republicans claimed that the vote was stolen in Illinois. That's absolutely not true, and there is not a scintilla of evidence that it was. They claimed ahead of time that the election would be stolen, all kinds of stuff in the papers that the Democrats were going to steal a hundred thousand votes in Illinois. Then when Kennedy won by about six thousand after the initial count, it was charged that a hundred thousand votes had been stolen. The person primarily making the charge was the Republican candidate for Cook County attorney, Benjamin Adamowski, whom the Cook County Democrats very much wanted to beat and did beat. Their campaign was as much

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against him as it was for Kennedy and the rest of the ticket. But Adamowski made that charge ahead of time, and when he lost he continued the charge. Then the Republicans brought out their National Committee people, who without any evidence merely mouthed the charge, and the Republican papers, the *Tribune*, and *Chicago Daily News*, and the *Chicago Sun-Times*, which was a Republican paper although people didn't know it, did likewise. A later generation of the family that owned it originally, became Republicans.

Ritchie: The Fields?

Shuman: Yes, the Marshall Field family. Marshall Field the third (or the fourth or whatever) was a Republican, although his grandfather had been a very strong Democrat when he started the paper. The *Sun-Times* played it up. Well, there was a recount in the city of Chicago, and the recount gave Nixon a net gain of 312 votes out of a total of 1,718,000 in Chicago. The voting there was by machine, machines that were very hard to tamper with. Then the Republicans asked that the recount go to the Cook County suburbs, which were controlled by the Republicans and which were paper ballot precincts. People voted by pencil on a long paper ballot, where one could do more to change the ballots than in voting machine precincts. What happened was that in those Cook County townships, Kennedy picked up about twenty five hundred votes. At that stage the Republicans dropped the call for a

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recount. They had planned to recount the rest of the state, but when Kennedy picked up twenty eight hundred votes or so and got to a majority of 8,858 instead of six thousand, the Republicans threw in the towel.

Two men from the political science department at the University of Chicago did a study of the charges made in that election. One of the members was C. Herman Pritchett, who now teaches at the University of California, Santa Barbara. He's an emeritus professor. He was then the president of the American Political Science Association. Herman Pritchett and the other political scientist, Herman Finer, found there was absolutely no evidence of fraud. There were two main charges: one, there was an area in Chicago which at the time registration closed, thirty days before the election, was an urban renewal area in which the homes of the registered voters were bulldozed before the election. People had to move out. In that precinct, the registered voters came back and voted. The cry was raised that they were "ghost voters" who padded the rolls, but their votes were shown to be quite legal and quite correct. There was one other incident when the boxes of ballots in one precinct went to the wrong warehouse. There were boxes of good ballots and spoiled ballots, and after the election the boxes with the good ballots were put in the warehouse for the bad ballots and the boxes with the bad ballots were put with the good ballots. In one precinct they were mixed

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up, and a great to-do was made about that, but the boxes were found and counted, and the count was correct. So that charge fell through. Those were the only substantive issues ever raised. All smoke. No fire.

In the end, the board that certified the election, made up of four Republicans, including the governor, and one Democrat, certified without question Kennedy's victory. But even today one keeps hearing that the election was stolen in Illinois.

Nixon on television about four years ago claimed this, and then he, in pure Nixonian style, rose above it and said, "Well, the reason I didn't challenge the election was I didn't want to upset our friends and allies abroad." But let me tell you, if there had been any evidence to challenge that election, he and his friends would certainly have done so. But they had no evidence. It's a myth that that election was stolen. I wrote an article about it entitled "Horse Feathers, Mr. Nixon" which was published in the *Washington Post* Outlook section.

What I did see in that election was something that happened in Louisiana in the 1986 senatorial election. There was a group of essentially suburban, upper-middle class, Junior Chamber of Commerce types in Illinois in 1960. On election day in 1960, I visited, with Mr. Douglas, thirty or forty precincts, voting places, on the South Side of Chicago, which were mostly black voting precincts. Outside these precinct voting places were

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upper-middle class suburban whites dressed in business suits, white shirts, and snap-brimmed hats, whose purpose there was to intimidate the black voters. They looked like FBI agents. We saw them all over the city. You will remember, I think, that Justice [William] Rhenquist was charged with and was among those who took part in such events in Phoenix. That same concept was dusted off in the election in Louisiana in 1986, when [\[John\] Breaux](#) was the candidate. There it backfired on the Republicans because it was an attempt to intimidate black voters.

The cry, which had big overtones of racism, was made that the election was stolen in 1960. The unwritten charge was that it was stolen in the black precincts of Chicago. Well, I was in those precincts, and they looked like precincts I've seen in white neighborhoods all over Illinois. There was no difference. People came in one by one, quite slowly, quite orderly, checked their names off, all done quite properly. So the charge that the election was stolen is falacious. It's not true. It's a myth. But it's a myth that is perpetuated. If 80% of the blacks on the South side of Chicago voted Democratic, it was alleged the election was stolen. But if 90% of the whites in Kenilworth voted Republican, they were just voting as good citizens.

Ritchie: How do you account for the fact that Douglas won by 400,000 votes and Kennedy only by 10,000 in Illinois that year?

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Shuman: Well, there's no question that the religious issue was the key reason for that. Of course, Nixon started out being better known. We were in a little town in very deep Southern Illinois, by the name of Murphysboro, at the time of the first debate. We watched that debate on the second floor of the courthouse of that

county. The next day, the crowds we got, when Mr. Douglas was campaigning, tripled, quadrupled. I mean, all of a sudden, out of the woodwork came all kinds of people who hadn't shown up during the weeks before the first debate. Before that first debate, Democrats really didn't think they had very much chance. Kennedy was unknown. People thought Nixon would win. But after that first debate, the whole scene changed.

But a crucial event affecting the election had to do, I think, with the Puerto Rican Catholic bishops. First of all, most of the American bishops were against Kennedy, essentially because a) they were pretty conservative people, but b) some of them remembered 1928 and didn't want to go through another election with a Catholic candidate where all the ridiculous old issues of whether the Pope would tunnel under the English Channel and so on were brought to the surface again. They preferred that Kennedy not be the candidate. Some of them went out of their way to hurt him. The New York Cardinal was a Nixon cheerleader. There was a statement issued by some Catholic bishops I think in Puerto Rico, only ten days or a week before the election, raising

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all the kind of issues that the Bible-Belt Protestants had stereotyped the Catholics for doing or being. And this statement hurt Kennedy very, very much. In addition, there was a very concerted effort by the Republicans at the last minute in the Bible-Belt, an anti-Catholic campaign, to beat Kennedy. So I think that the religious issue was the difference. I'm sure it was the difference.

Mr. Douglas had a good candidate running against him. He used to say that at each succeeding election the candidate against him was a better and a stronger candidate. The candidate who ran, Samuel Witwer, was a Chicago lawyer, and a relatively progressive type. He wasn't a jerk or a boob. He was well-heeled, and a very presentable candidate. But what happened that year was that the Kennedy-Nixon election was on, the senatorial election was on, and there was also a big governor's race in the state. So it was very difficult for Witwer to become known. He just couldn't get off the ground. Nobody had heard his name. So that accounts too for the extent of the Douglas victory as compared with the Kennedy victory.

I don't think Kennedy would have won Illinois without Mr. Douglas' intense support, county by county, city by city, ward by ward. A lot of people got credit, most of it deserved such as [Johnson](#) helping with Texas and the South, and the superb campaign staff of Kennedy. But I think Mr. Douglas never got the credit he

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deserved for bringing in Illinois. In the months I was with him he devoted more than half the substance of his speeches to boosting Kennedy for President.

Ritchie: Before we get away from Illinois politics, I wanted to ask also about Douglas' relations with Richard Daley. How did they get along, and what did Douglas think about Daley?

Shuman: Well, they got along pretty well, except that in 1954, when Douglas was running for his second term in the Senate, there was a movement by the Daley forces to defeat him in the primary, to keep him from running. I've forgotten exactly why that was true, but finally Mr. Douglas stood up to them, and he was nominated and won overwhelmingly. Then in the next year, there was a battle for mayor. The son of a University of Chicago, long-time personal, professorial friend, Bob Merriam was the Republican candidate. He switched parties. He later went to the Bureau of the Budget under Eisenhower. But what happened was that Mr. Douglas endorsed Daley in the Democratic primary and made statements on his behalf, but he begged off in the general election on grounds that it would be very difficult for him to actively oppose this family friend. What he did was to tell Daley that he would not object to Daley using the statements Douglas made in favor of Daley in the primary during the general election, that he wouldn't complain about that, because those statements were for Daley but not against

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Merriam. Anyway, Douglas sat out the election, and that created some friction between Douglas and Daley. But in time they made up.

Daley treated Mr. Douglas very, very well. He never asked him to do an improper thing, in all the time I worked with Mr. Douglas. Daley supported Mr. Douglas quite strongly in the '60 election, and supported him in the '66 election -- although in the '66 election I think Daley's advice was not very good. It was like the advice on Kennedy not coming into the city. Daley was parochial. He was the product of an Irish ghetto but a very effective mayor. His view of both state and national elections was limited. Daley didn't want Mr. Douglas to debate Percy, and Mr. Douglas wanted to debate Percy in the worst way. But the general theory is that the incumbent doesn't debate. Well, in this case it would have been better for Mr. Douglas to have debated Percy. I think he would have bettered Percy in any debate. It would have been to Douglas' advantage. But Daley kept advising no. Then, after Percy's daughter was murdered -- and up until that time we were even or a little ahead of Percy in the polls -- the polls took a terrific nosedive. The reason was very simple. Percy had been put up by the Republicans in order to get rid of him. They didn't like Percy very much. He had run for governor two years before. The rumors were that he did not thank his workers in 1964, which I don't think were

true, but people believed that about him. It was believable that he didn't thank his workers.

There is another story about him which may also be apochryphal which illustrates this. It was said that he set up an editorial interview with a very strong Republican paper in Central Illinois during the '66 campaign. Percy came through, and had in tow a *Life* magazine photographer who was with him for the day. The editorial staff of the paper had been waiting to have a meeting with Percy, and he was to spend a couple of hours with them. Percy came in, got a picture taken by the *Life* photographer, and then left. It was said the newspaper editors were livid. Percy had offended all kinds of potential supporters in this fashion many times. These stories about him were believed. So Percy was not very well liked, and he was thought to be a very cold person. But the murder of his daughter changed that overnight. He became human, and there was great sympathy for him.

We had been campaigning in East St. Louis. [Humphrey](#) had been in there to help. I flew back to Chicago on a Saturday while Mr. Douglas stayed in East St. Louis. I was out quite late Saturday night, until one or two in the morning, and at six o'clock on Sunday morning, it might even have been earlier than six o'clock, I was awakened by a long-distance call. It was Mr. Douglas calling from East St. Louis. He said to me, "You know that Percy's daughter has been murdered." I said, "No, I didn't

know that at all." He went on about it. I said, "Senator, you had better check to make certain that's true." He said "What do you think of this statement I'm going to make." I said, "You'd better check that out. Have you checked with the wire services?" He said, "Yes, I've checked with the wire services; we've checked everywhere. This is true. This has happened. And here's the statement." He read it to me.

I've always been proud that I objected to that statement. I was half-asleep, but I was quick enough on my feet to object to it. Because what he said in the statement, after giving commiserations, was that he, Douglas, was going to stop campaigning until Percy started to campaign again. I said, "Senator don't say that. Percy may be so devastated by this he will never campaign again, never start again, and then you're tied to your promise that you won't start campaigning until he begins." I said, "Just say that you're going to stop campaigning," which he did. He took my advice. What happened was that we had a press secretary who was traveling with us, and he had given the proposed statement to the *Chicago*

Tribune before it had been cleared. The *Tribune* then made a great to-do about how Douglas had changed his mind on this, so we got a minor blackeye about it.

That evening, our inner-campaign group of about twelve or fifteen people met with Mr. Douglas in a hotel suite at O'Hare Airport. He was determined that in no way were we to take

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advantage of the death of Percy's daughter, and ordered us not to take advantage of it, not to start any rumors, not to be a part of giving statements, or suggestions, or answering queries about what had happened. We were absolutely to stay out of it, which we did, and he did. And to this day no one knows who did it, why it happened, who the murderer was. It remains a mystery. But it was the end of our campaign, and we all knew it. We would meet every day and say, "What can we do today to win the election?" But to no avail. Mr. Douglas knew more about the murder than any one of us did. At first the Cook county police were involved. But after a day or so they were removed, and the Kenilworth police, who were little more than domestic servants of the relatively few people with large estates who lived in Kenilworth, were put in charge. That ended the investigation. Mr. Douglas knew more about the early investigation than he ever told us. I regret that in the decade that followed I never pressed him for the facts. Mr. Douglas was bitter about Percy's campaign tactics in the final stages of the campaign because in large part he felt his own conduct about the murder had not been reciprocated by Percy. On the Saturday before the election Percy smeared Mr. Douglas by charging us with smearing him, probably the oldest trick in political campaigning. He made some speeches to Jewish synagogues complaining about the education bill which allowed chemistry and physics textbooks to be given to students in parochial schools but not to the schools themselves in order to meet the religious

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establishment clause of the Constitution. It was a delicate matter which had been worked out very carefully and we were very proud of the solution. When Percy denounced it we criticized him. The *Chicago Tribune* reporter verified his statements.

In his Saturday before election press conference he charged us with smearing him by calling him anti-Catholic, which we had not done and which we went to considerable lengths to avoid doing. I wrote the statement and I know what we said.

Then Percy said he was sending his charges by telegram to the Fair Campaign Committee in Washington. We sent Abner Mikva to Washington Sunday night to

rebut the charges. But Abner found on Monday that Percy had not sent such charges to them and by the time we rebutted this it was Tuesday morning, election day, and it was too late. This was the second time in the campaign he smeared us by yelling smear.

Percy in general said what he thought the immediate audience would most like to hear. The result was that he had been on both sides of many issues from time to time because he forgot the press would report to a wider audience what he had to say.

There was another thing that happened in that campaign, and it has to do with polls. There are people who say that the results of polls make no difference, that polls do not influence results. The result of the *Chicago Sun-Times* poll made a terrific

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difference in our campaign. The *Sun-Times* poll runs I think, about the last month of the campaign, and the poll historically had been quite accurate. There's now a fellow who was editor of *The New Republic* and then went to *Newsweek*.

Ritchie: Oh, Kondracke.

Shuman: Morton Kondracke was in charge of the poll. I talked to him a lot in this period and complained bitterly to him at the time. What the *Sun-Times* did was to start polling in the most Republican areas in the counties surrounding Cook County. They went out to areas like LaGrange and Aurora, which are two and three to one Republican. And they kept publishing the results, day after day. This was after the murder, and of course we weren't doing as well as we had been doing. To see these results coming out, with Percy ahead two to one, which wasn't the whole picture, because of the places the polls were taken, had the effect of absolutely destroying the enthusiasm of our supporters. My complaints to Morton had no effect. Perhaps he had no control over that but his editors did. I've been on programs with pollsters who say, "The polls really don't change public opinion," but in that case the poll did change things. It hurt us very much to have the early results in the heavily Republican areas of that poll reported. It was a partisan, political effort.

Ritchie: You felt the *Sun-Times* was doing it deliberately?

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Shuman: No question about it. Morton Kondracke didn't do it but his publishers and editors did. It was a major Republican paper. It went all the way for Percy and was his strongest supporter. Yes, because of young Marshall Field. And a lot

of people didn't know it. They still thought it was a Democratic paper, which it was not. The son of the chief political writer for that paper was a key Percy staff member. The *Tribune*, on the other hand, didn't endorse Percy until the very last minute and then in a back-handed manner. They allowed the *Chicago American*, which they owned, to endorse Douglas. There were two instances in that campaign when Percy smeared us by charging that Mr. Douglas had smeared him. Absolutely outrageous! It made us sick to our stomach especially on election night when Percy got up and said what a great man Mr. Douglas was when on the previous Saturday he had smeared him by yelling smear. So there was a certain bitterness about that campaign, after we'd played it so straight, too, with the murder. I can provide additional chapters and verses.

Ritchie: Well, as a result of the 1960 election, not only was Kennedy in the White House, but Johnson was no longer Majority Leader. How did the Senate as a whole change with the new leadership?

Shuman: It changed dramatically. It changed from the benevolent dictatorship of Lyndon Johnson to a form of anarchy under [Mansfield](#). The anarchy was much more pleasant, so it became

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a very, very much more pleasant place to work, and for senators to work in. Senators could actually go to the floor, offer their amendments, and have some reasonable certainty that they could get them passed, if they had merit. It was a fairer Senate. Mansfield also determined that we were no longer going to have round-the-clock sessions to break filibusters, which was correct in my view. So all in all, it was a more decent place.

Kennedy started off his presidency very cautiously because of the narrowness of the election. He put off Civil Rights legislation for the first two years. He did a lot by executive order. He did things like making the housing agency a department and putting [Robert] Weaver in charge. So he did a lot of symbolic things. He supported, with his brother and Nick Katzenbach and others of the Justice Department, the desegregation of schools, all of which was very good. But he didn't propose legislation until late in the second year. I thought that both his Civil Rights legislation, and his domestic program, and his tax program, were on the eve of being passed when he was murdered. Johnson took advantage, correctly, of Kennedy's death, and used the legislation as a memorial to Kennedy. Very ably he did that. I think that most of the legislation would have passed, but not with such large majorities. Some people voted for much of it as a remembrance of Kennedy.

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Ritchie: Do you think there was resentment on the part of senior senators that a backbencher was suddenly President of the United States?

Shuman: Yes, I think that was true of some. Although once he became the candidate, and especially when he became president, there was a lot of "Yes, sir, Mr. President," "You're right, Mr. President." One of the dangers of the presidency is that no one, or very few are able and willing to tell a president the truth. People fawn over a president. [Fulbright](#) didn't fawn over him on the Bay of Pigs, and Fulbright was absolutely correct. But I think a great many people fawned over him and were unwilling to tell him the truth, or didn't give him their best judgment just because he was president. It is true of all presidents.

Ritchie: On the other hand, the senators didn't blink about turning him down on Medicare and some other embarrassing defeats they gave him.

Shuman: Well, that's true, but that's a function of whoever was in the Senate. Even when the Democrats controlled the Senate marginally, it didn't mean that there was a majority of senators in favor of the Democratic program. The party really had to have about sixty Democrats, maybe even more, in order to have a majority for the national Democratic party program. The 1958

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election helped immensely. But the 1964 election brought in enough votes to make the victories decisive.

Ritchie: In that period, Hubert Humphrey became the [Democratic Whip](#). Did he begin to assert some more authority? You've been somewhat ambiguous in your comments about Humphrey.

Shuman: I have been ambiguous, because we've talked almost entirely about Humphrey and the Civil Rights debates in the '50s. Humphrey was torn, because Johnson had his number. I mean, Humphrey almost never failed to vote with us and support us on the crucial issues, but he was not as strong in his negotiating situation as we would have liked. Johnson was obviously dangling the vice presidency before him in this period. But basically, Humphrey was extraordinarily good. He had the quickest combination of tongue and mind of almost anyone I've ever seen or met. He had all kinds of good ideas. He was an originator of the Peace Corps. He certainly was way out ahead of people on arms control and on tax reform. He was out in front on the tax fight, when he and Mr. Douglas were trying to close the loopholes in 1954. People like Joe Pechman, the great tax expert, would brief Humphrey and Douglas on the most technical aspects of the tax code, and Hubert would listen, and within minutes absorb the information, and then give it back, restate it in simple terms, and illustrate it with two or three easy to understand examples. The man had a genius for taking extraordinarily complex issues and

simplifying them, and selling them. He was amazing and he had a warm heart and loved ordinary people. He called them "the folks." Mr. Douglas used to say about him that he made fewer concessions than anyone who had gotten as far. On the understanding that in order to get to be president or vice president one has to make a lot of concessions, Hubert made fewer of them than anyone else. That was true. He was a very decent fellow. One of his great virtues was his lack of vindictiveness. In this respect he was almost saintly. I think that if Humphrey had won in 1968 this would have been a very different and a much better country than it has been.

Ritchie: So you give him good marks as Whip?

Shuman: I certainly do. I give him lots of good marks as the Whip and as a progressive, innovative, effective, senator who combined a quick mind and a quick tongue unlike any other senator I saw in action.



Hubert Humphrey and Everett Dirksen (seated) with Senate colleagues. Standing, left to right: Thomas J. Dodd (D-CT), Thomas H. Kuchel (R-CA), Paul H. Douglas (D-IL), Kenneth B. Keating (R-NY), Clifford Case (R-NJ), Jacob Javits (R-NY), Leverett Saltonstall (R-MA), John Pastore (D-RI), Warren Magnuson (D-WA), Hugh Scott (R-PA), Philip Hart (D-MI), Mike Mansfield (D-MT), and George Aiken (R-VT).

Senate Historical Office Photo

Ritchie: Was Johnson in much evidence at all when he was vice president?

Shuman: No. I saw him two or three times, but he was very humble when he came up to the Senate. I remember one time meeting him as he came in through the Senate door, on the Senate side on the ground level, running into him in front

of the banks of elevators. He seemed to welcome anyone who recognized him. I was

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with a newspaper friend of mine, Bill McGaffin, from the *Chicago Daily News*. Bill had his son with him, and I stopped and introduced McGaffin's son to Johnson the Vice President. Johnson was a different person than I had ever seen him before. He was very contrite, very humble, not very talkative. He seemed like a fish out of water. He was the Uriah Heep Johnson, a very, very different Johnson from the Johnson who commanded the quarterdeck of the Senate when he was leader.

Ritchie: Do you think that incident, when the Democratic caucus objected to his presiding, took some of the wind out of his sails?

Shuman: Yes, certainly. In dozens of ways he found out that as Vice President he didn't have the same influence in the Senate he had had as leader.

I think you asked me last time why I thought Johnson accepted the vice presidency. I think he realized after losing in the convention that the only way he could ever be president was to do so through the vice presidency. I think his key supporters realized that as well. If he stayed in the Senate, it would be eight years probably before he'd have another crack at the Presidency, at which time he'd probably be too old or too ill. His chances of retaining power that long were not all that substantial, so it was either then or never. I think that was the basis on which he

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accepted the vice presidency. And if one looks at the history of the country, roughly, one in four I think, vice presidents have succeeded to the presidency. If I were to make a bet about who would be the next president, I would say that it's [\[George\] Bush](#) against the field. Not that Bush necessarily will be nominated and win the next election, but that between now and the next election he might well succeed to the presidency. The odds of doing that, with a president as old as Reagan is now, must be pretty high. Higher than the chance of Bush or anyone else a) getting the Republican nomination, going through the primaries and so on, and b) actually defeating the Democratic candidate. Bush might do that. Of course, it didn't work for Hubert. It hasn't worked for a sitting President since [Martin Van Buren](#) in 1836. I think Hubert hoped he would be president, either by succession or by winning it in his own right, which he almost did.

Ritchie: It's certainly true, as Senator Douglas found in 1966, that a candidate can't anticipate all the events in an election.

Shuman: No.

Ritchie: That events happen that have no relation to ideology or partisanship or anything else. Life and death issues can affect the outcome.

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Shuman: In the 1966 campaign, John Bartlow Martin, who was a very famous writer, journalist, and who became ambassador to the Dominican Republic under Kennedy, and I were the Douglas speech writers. He was also a speech writer for both Stevenson and Kennedy. After I did a speech we would say, "Give it to John to put the jewelry work on." He wrote a book which I thought should have been the title of our campaign, about his ambassadorship in the Dominican Republic. The title of the book was *Overtaken by Events*, which was the perfect explanation of our defeat.

Ritchie: We seem also to have been overtaken by the tape, which has run out.

End Interview #4

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