

F. Nordy Hoffmann

Senate Sergeant at Arms, 1975-1981

Interview #5

The Senate's Sergeant at Arms

(Thursday, August 30, 1988)

Interviewed by Donald A. Ritchie

RITCHIE: We ended last time with your working with the Senate Democratic Campaign Committee, and how in 1975 you were unexpectedly called to be Sergeant at Arms. How did it come about that you became Sergeant at Arms?

HOFFMANN: I really don't know how it came about as far as the Senate was concerned. I had been working as a commissioner of the Maryland Economic Development Commission, had been appointed by Governor Tawes. It was a non-paying job, but I really enjoyed it, because we were trying to get more industry into Maryland. I had been the first man from labor ever appointed to that kind of a job. We were having a meeting in Annapolis, and suddenly I got a telephone message. It said call right away to the Senate. So I called up to the Senate. I don't remember who I got on the phone, but they said: "We suggest that you get back here right away, you've just been nominated to be Sergeant at Arms of the Senate." I said, "I wasn't even running for it. I don't know anything about it." It was a complete surprise.

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I guess what happened is that Senator Mansfield, who was then the leader, decided that maybe I could do a good job in that position. I think he said something to Ed Muskie and some of the other people. But I came back up to Washington right away. Bob Huff was running against me, and he came over that afternoon to say that he was withdrawing, because he couldn't fight this. He said that Senator [Gale] McGee who had nominated Bobby Huff had said that he would have to take his nomination down because I was a very close friend of his and he thought that I would be a very good Sergeant at Arms. So Bobby Huff got out of it, and that's how I became Sergeant at Arms of the Senate.

The Democratic majority had a meeting, and I was elected by them. And because they were in control I went before the whole Senate and the Senate unanimously gave me the job, which I really, totally enjoyed. It was to me a real challenge. You don't realize what it means to you until later on, but you become an elected member of the Senate hierarchy. It took me a little while to realize how important that was. But it gave me a chance to do some things that I always wanted to do. At the point that you are made Sergeant at Arms of the United States Senate, you are no longer a political appointee. You are elected by the total Senate, which means you are non-partisan from that time on. It's a very difficult thing for somebody to be a partisan as I was for so long and then to be non-partisan, but I

was very, very successful in doing it. I had the cooperation of all of the senators. They were unbelievably nice to me. When you go back over the period of time that this took place, we had had very great success in the campaign committee, and I think that was largely what probably motivated the fact that I might be the Sergeant at Arms.

It handed me a bill of particulars which I had to meticulously follow by being absolutely non-partisan. The fact of the matter is: shortly after the Senate got into operation, I called a meeting of all the AAs [Administrative Assistants] of the Democratic Senators, and I scheduled at the same time a meeting of all the AAs of the Republican Senators. I was told that that was the first time it had ever been done. I didn't understand that. Whether that was true or not, I never researched it to find out, but nevertheless it was a kind of motivation for doing some things which would give me an entree to both the Democrats and the Republicans, which I'd never had the privilege to do before.

We're sitting in this building right here [400 North Capitol Street]. One of the first things I was supposed to do was to buy this building, which was for sale. I'm glad I didn't, because I probably wouldn't have an office here today. But nevertheless, we got on the floor of the Senate and two of the senators were opposed to buying this particular property. But it worked out very well, they decided not to buy this, but they did allow me to

lease space for the computer center, which was billeted in a former hotel, where there was water leaking from the roof and everything. So we got the space we needed, and the computer center is still here in this building. Most people really don't understand it, but you've got to have a tremendous amount of air conditioning and heat and even temperatures for this kind of an operation to have it be successful. So we didn't buy the building, but we did get space. On the same night the Senate floor turned down buying the building, they said, go ahead and get space for the computer center.

Another thing that I had always wanted to do, and this has no reflection on the Senate--we in America are probably the greatest transgressors of this there is--we don't spend enough time listening. All we want to do is talk (like I'm doing now, all I'm doing is talking). We had made arrangements with one of the large corporations in America who had a man in Minneapolis. He came down and conducted a three hour session on how to listen for the AAs. Every AA was in that meeting, and only two got up and left. Those two who left, their senators lost the next election. I don't know that that had anything to do with it, but at least I got a kick out of it! This was the first time anything like this had ever been tried on the Senate, not on the senators, but on the AAs, so that they could influence their senators on listening. But that was one of the first things I tried.

Of course, the other problem that we had at that time was the fact that we were new in the computer field. Most of the Senators, and most of the staff, not all of the staff but a lot of the staff, had a feeling that the computers were going to replace the people who were working in the offices. Well, that was never what was intended. It was just to be an aid to help them do a better job and do it quicker. It took a long time to get this across. I remember I went around personally to all the one hundred senators' offices. I walked in and asked them to show me where their computer was. I would say ninety percent of the people that took me back there, I had to climb over boxes to get where it was. It was hidden. They weren't using it. I had people in my own office who didn't want to use it, because they were fearful that it was going to take their job.

It took us, oh, I guess a year and a half to get people accustomed to what we wanted to try to do with the computers. I thought it was bringing us into the twentieth century, a little late, but nevertheless better late than never. I appointed someone who did nothing but bring these people up to date with computers. Before we got through, the computers were being used as they were supposed to be used, and the taxpayers money was not wasted.

RITCHIE: Just from the little bit that you've given me, it sounds like the Sergeant at Arms job covers a multitude of activities. You mentioned buildings, and computers, and seminars for AAs. What was it like becoming Sergeant at Arms? How did you find out what the lay of the land was, and what you were supposed to do?

HOFFMANN: Well, that's a good question, because most of it you learned by the seat of your pants. I didn't really understand the total complexity of that office for at least six months. Every time I'd ask a question they'd refer me to somebody else. As a result of that, it was difficult, but when somebody would push me on to somebody else, then there's something wrong with that. Why can't they answer the question? It was a seek-and-find kind of an operation. I remember one time, this was early on, I asked Senator Mansfield: "On patronage, on jobs and things like that, where do you send the people that you're recommending?"

He said, "I send them to you."

I said, "It's strange. I've never gotten them, Mike."

He said, "Well, I send them up to. . . ." and he named this young lady.

I said, "Well, I'm going to go back to her."

So I asked her, "Where do the people come for the jobs we have here?"

She said, "Well, I take care of that."

I said, "Were you elected Sergeant at Arms?" and she said no. I said, "From now on, that comes directly to me. I'm going to worry about it, not you." So it was a situation where they wouldn't turn the information over. They wanted to keep it, because they had a tight hold on it. That was just one small thing.

Then I found out that in the Sergeant at Arms office we had people sitting up front who were actually accountants looking over the bills. Well, people came into the Sergeant at Arms office all the times for various things, and these accountants would be going down columns of figures, and didn't want to help these people who had come into the office. I noticed this, so I said, "We've got to change this." We moved those accountants downstairs into another office, and put people who were more receptive to the general public out front.

It was a very difficult job. You ask me how did I learn it? I learned it the hard way. There was no previous Sergeant at Arms who was here, so I had no one to ask. I had a lot of help from the senators. Some of the senators whom I'd been very close to kept asking me if I had any problems. I remember one time

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Russell Long said, "If you've got any problems, come and see me." Well, I did have some problems and I went over to see Senator Long, and he was very, very helpful to me. Everybody else was helpful, except those people who thought that their job was being downgraded by my interruptions.

I think one of the most unique things that happened was when I was in there about four or five months--I'm a Westerner, I come from the Far West as you know, and we're kind of an outgoing people out West, we take everybody at their word. I thought it would be a great idea if we put a sign on the door of the office, on the third floor, right across from the Senate galleries, "Welcome." It was the first time anything like that had ever been done. People came and thought it was a great idea.

We later on organized VIP tours, and I still think they are going on. That was never done before. We had somebody who was there just to do that. If the senators or people from downtown in the Administration wanted special tours for special people, we were able to provide that for them. It became a marvelous thing. The woman that I had doing that was just great. She did a terrific job. She did a lot of researching. People came back and said it was the most wonderful tour they ever had. Well, that was another service that we offered.

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But then there were other, bigger things which we had to cross. I think we were the people who were charged with the operation of the Senate, to see that it operated. I say that because we handled all the telephones, all the offices of senators all over the United States, all those things came under me directly. Also

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the Police Department came under the Sergeant at Arms. We had a trial board on which we had the Sergeant at Arms of the House, George White, the Architect of the Capitol, and myself. We had judgments we had to make on this. It was a good thing because there were checks and balances, which I've always been very fond of. Checks and balances are so necessary.

The other thing was something I learned in college. We had a man who was teaching us ethics in law. I'll always remember, he said, "You never confuse YOM with OPM--your own money with other people's money. We were spending other people's money, so therefore you had to be very careful where you spent it. These were taxpayers paying this thing, and you had to keep that in check. If it were not in check, then you were going to be in real trouble. I think that by and large I went by that rule most of the time that I was in there. I don't think I ever transgressed on it. It was an idea of saving money. We saved money in many ways, with the telephone company, with lighting.

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When I was there, the rooms on the West Front of the Capitol, the northwest side, I guess you'd call it, were always kind of cold in the winter. I said, "Why do we have fireplaces if we're not using them?" Somebody said, "Well, you can't use them, you've got wires up there." I said, "Wires for what?" So we talked to the electrician of the Senate, and he said, those wires can all be taken and put someplace else. I said, "Take them out." So we opened every fireplace on the northwest side of the Capitol. This made it very nice. We had trees that were downed, and we'd use that wood. It made a very warm and homey place for the people. They were really surprised when we opened up all of these fireplaces all over the Senate.

We spent an awful lot of time studying better ways to service senators and their constituencies. That's what bothered me more than anything else. Mail service--if you list all of things that the Sergeant at Arms was charged with, you've got a big book, because this was like running a big business. The Senators were very watchful. We had to go before the Appropriations Committee and prove why we needed the money, and where it was to go, and how we were spending it. This was no bowl of cherries. They were very, very accurate at going right to the meat of it, so you had to be well prepared. I was very lucky, I had a great staff while I was up there. I had a young fellow by the name of [Ron] Martinson, who was my AA. I had Mel Fish, who was my Deputy

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Sergeant at Arms. Mel Fish and I had been in the Navy together, so we had a long friendship. Mel had been a teacher and an educator, and he was a great help to me. I had so many good people who came up and gave me a hand.

I remember one time on the floor of the Senate, we had made a little identification card for the Senators. While I was sitting up in the chair where I'm

supposed to sit in the Senate, Russell Long came up to me and said, "Nurdy, these cards are too big to fit in your wallet." I said, "I never thought about that," and I took my wallet out and I tried to get the card in. I said, "You're right, we'll change it." By nightfall we had new cards issued to all the Senators that could go in their wallets. Now, that doesn't seem like a big thing, but they had to have this card for identification, and it wouldn't fit in their wallets so they could flip their wallets out and show it. Those were things that Senators saw that we didn't see, but we tried to envision what was needed.

One of the things we did for Senators' offices--they called me "Digger Hoffmann" for a while, because I think we buried eight Senators while I was up there--was running their funerals. The funerals were run in cooperation with people all over Washington, the FBI, the Secret Service, and the military. Most of the time I tried to listen, but once I didn't listen. I was motivated to do this thing the way I thought it ought to be done, and I was so

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wrong that I admit I was wrong, totally. We went to John McClellan's funeral in Arkansas, and I said that every Senator ought to have his own car. Well, about forty or fifty Senators went to that funeral. That means forty separate cars in a long line, and it was raining something awful. Most of the Senators didn't get to the grave in time because they were backed up on the highway. Then I thought how stupid I was.

The next time we went to a funeral, we had a bus for all the Senators--except the leadership on both sides--we provided them with cars. We found out after the second funeral that on the third funeral the leadership wanted to ride in the bus with everybody else. So we dispensed with all these cars. That was an expense. We weren't looking at it as an expensive thing, but it was a lot cheaper to ride in a bus than to rent forty cars with drivers to take them where they had to go. You learn those kind of things. It was a learning experience. Nobody gave me this in a chart to tell me where to go. After we left, we had all these things documented, and people could read how they work the funerals.

The largest funeral we had was for Senator Humphrey, the former Vice President. He died in Minneapolis, right after Christmas, I think it was over New Years, because some of the Senators we had to get back from the Superbowl, and that was being played in New Orleans at the time. We had to bring them into

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Minneapolis. It was our responsibility to get all the Senators back there who wanted to go to the funeral. I had talked to the White House from home, when President Carter was there, we talked to his lead people up there about transportation. They wanted to know if I wanted to use Air Force One. I said, "Yes, I would like to use Air Force One, and I'll give you the reason. In the back of

Air Force One you have a rear door, and you don't have one in any other plane in your fleet. We could take those four seats out of there and put the coffin in the same level as the passengers." They agreed with that.

Another thing that came out of the experience I told you about, lousing up the funeral for McClellan, it was suggested to me that maybe I should have a little luncheon for all the people who were involved in these funerals. So we did. We got some ham and things, they made their own sandwiches, and we had this meeting for all the key people involved in funerals, and we got to know them by their first names. As a result of that, when Humphrey died, as I recall on a Friday night, I called Patty McNally who was then my secretary, and said, "Patty, would you see if you can get all of these people,"--because we had their home phone numbers; this was about ten o'clock--"and ask them if they can come to a meeting at one a.m. in the Sergeant at Arms Office." Strangely enough, everybody was there. It was the greatest thing. I felt that this was real cooperation. Air Force

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One took off from here around five thirty or six o'clock to get the body and bring it back, along with Mrs. Humphrey. We brought it back and everything went off beautifully--it was just one of those things that doesn't happen too often. I remember when we went back to Minnesota for the funeral, one of the things that I've always kept in my mind, I was standing at the airport and Senator Mansfield had just come in from Japan. He was not a Senator, he was our Ambassador to Japan at the time. He flew back and he arrived at the airport when we did. A reporter went up to him, and I was standing just waiting to talk to Senator Mansfield, and the reporter said to him: "Isn't this a long way to come for a funeral?" Senator Mansfield's reply will always remain in my mind. He said, "No place is too far to come for a friend." I thought that was indicative of what the Senate really means to the people that belong to the Senate. It verifies that the people who take public office, and find out the kind of rapport you have, that democracy must be a very strong thing. That's basically what the Senate is all about.

One of the other things that happened in 1976, we had the Magna Carta come over with the Queen of England. This was quite an occasion. She was just a marvelous lady--I was very much impressed with her. Of course, as Sergeant at Arms and protocol officer of the Senate you've got to be there all the time. On the final day I took her down the center steps on the east side of the

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Capitol, and took her over to her car. I said, "Your Highness, we're so happy that you came." She said, "Thank you," and got in her car. The next thing I know, I turn around and she's back out of her car. She said, "Mr. Hoffmann, I have never had a welcome like this anyplace I've ever been. Thank you." I didn't even know she knew my name! I was amazed. But that really meant that we were doing the

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kind of a job which would make everybody who was paying taxes to keep us there very, very happy people. That's basically what it was.

That probably tells you many of the things that the Sergeant at Arms office was required to do. Any problems came up on the [Senate] floor, we were there. Any problems that came up in the Capitol, we were there. One night, shortly after I came into the job, somebody with one of those spray paint cans was spraying black paint on our paintings in the Capitol. I got half way home and I got a call on the phone in my car, they said, "You've got to come back." I said, "It's eleven o'clock, why do I have to come back?" They said, "They just caught somebody spraying the paintings." I said, "Oh, brother." So I got back there and we got hold of some art restorers downtown and asked them to come up and take a look at the paintings. They came up and took the paintings down, and because the paint was still not dry they were able to remove the whole thing, and they had them back to us in about a week. That was one of the little things that happened.

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As Sergeant at Arms, you were the protocol officer of the Senate, so you had to greet all the people who came in. You were also the man who had to call for law and order with the Capitol Police on the Hill. You also had to answer to the state offices of all the Senators. There are two Senators from every state, so they have two home offices, at least. Maybe they've got a big state, so they have more than two offices. You were required to see that they had everything that they needed to operate those offices. One of the things I tried to do when I was in the Senate, and I felt that if I could it would be great, and I was encouraged by some of the Senators, particularly Fritz Hollings, was to take the garage that had not been completed at Union Station, have it completed, and then park all the cars for the staff and the senators off of the main part of the Capitol Plaza, and park them in that garage and run a shuttle which would bring them over to where they had to go. I still think it was a great idea. But I was unable to get that through the Senate, so we have cars all over the streets.

Of course, I didn't foresee what we're up against today, and I suppose it makes a difference, but I thought it would be nice if visitors who came up here could drive up here and park on the Plaza--taxpayers--that is. Today, of course, we couldn't do it, because we have terrorists, which we didn't have at the time I was up there. Terrorists were not as forceful as they are today. But

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that was an idea which I felt would have merit, and would have eliminated a lot of problems as far as Senators were concerned. But that didn't work--another one of the things that went haywire, but that's the way it goes.

If you are successful in doing these jobs that you are elected to, it carries with you all the rest of your life. I have the privileges of the Senate anytime I want them. I

don't abuse them. For instance, people don't know this, but I can go on the floor for the rest of my life. That's something that nobody else can do except a Senator, because you are an elected officer of the Senate. I feel that those of us who are charged with that kind of responsibility take it very, very seriously, and still watch the pennies that have to be spent in order to do it; it makes a difference to the people who are paying the bills, and that's the average person in America. I got a kick out of it. I think it was one of the finest experiences I have ever had in my whole life. I enjoyed it, although I could have done without the all-night sessions we had. By and large the real problem that faced us was the keep the law and order there as a presence, but not be over-present. Not overbearing, but treating the people that come in as if it's their own property. We had very, very good police operations. They were very courteous to the public. They had to be very careful. During my term we had to put in the metal detectors, like the ones

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you have to go through in the airports--which caused us a lot of problems at first. But we caught some people going into the Senate galleries with knives. Some of the little old ladies that come here from other places had revolvers, which is a felony. The other thing we did was to provide space in the Capitol, facing the Senate floor, for people in wheelchairs. We took one area of the galleries and put them up there.

The governing body for the Sergeant at Arms is the Rules Committee, and the main person you report to is the President Pro Tem. You come under their jurisdiction. But basically, running it from day to day, it's the Rules Committee who tell you what you can do and what you can't do. Those are the things you have to find out as quickly as possible. If you don't find them out, they'll tell you really quickly that you're overstepping your assignment.

RITCHIE: Did you find that you had good cooperation from the Rules Committee in those days?

HOFFMANN: No question about it, absolutely. I had great cooperation. I had great cooperation from everybody. I can't say anybody ever gave me a bad time, all the time I was up there. I loved that job. I really and truly did, and I tried to give something back to it that would make it better. I'll tell you, even today, and this is 1988 and I left in January, 1981, I go up

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there and Senators tell me, "You were the greatest man we ever had up here." I love to hear it! It may be bull, but I think that people really mean it, because they're awfully glad to see you. So you can't be doing it all wrong. That's the answer, you have a great spirit of cooperation from all the people that work up there.

As I started to say before, you select your staff, and you're going to be only as good as you select. Those people are the people who have to do the job all the time. I used to get a kick out of Mel Fish. Mel was a junior officer with me in the Navy. When I put Mel on the staff, people came to me and said, "Why did you put him on? He mumbles, I can't understand him." I said, "That's exactly why I put him on. You ask him a question and you don't understand the answer, you're not sure where you're going to go!" But Mel was great. He did a hell of a job for us. Everybody liked Mel, he was a real nice guy. I had wonderful cooperation. I had brought my own secretary from the campaign committee to begin with, Barbara Towles. Unfortunately, she got cancer and died shortly after I took office. She was a black girl, a fine, fine woman. I still see her two kids, two boys that both finished school, graduated from college. I went down to the hospital to see Barbara about a week before she died. She said, "By the way, I picked my replacement." I said, "What are worrying about that

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for?" She said, "I know you." She said, "Patty McNally should be taking my job." I said, "Why?" She said, "She's the only one up there who's got guts enough to tell you no." Which I think was true. In other words, this is the kind of person you need up there, not somebody who's going to say yes to everything.

So I was lucky. I had a great staff, they contributed a tremendous amount. Everybody in the Senate, everybody, I don't care who it was, cooperated with me. One of the things that I did find out when I first got up there, that I didn't like, and I changed was the telephone answering. When the staff would get a telephone call in there, and would be asked a question about where to find something, or how to go about doing something, they would say, "Well, call so and so." But they wouldn't tell them what the number was, or who it was, they'd just say call somebody's office. I said, "Don't ever do that. Take their question, and get their name, and then you find out what to do. You call them back and say, this is the person who can answer your question." That had never been done. I think it made a lot of people feel a lot easier, that they weren't getting the runaround when they made a call up there. Before they would get put on hold, and it wasn't temporary hold--it was perpetual hold. But we got staff who were able to handle the people and calls that came in. There was a good spirit up there.

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There's a dining room connected with the Sergeant at Arms' office. I found out that a lot of people in our office had never been back in that dining room. Never. So I said, "That's not going to be the way I do it. We'll have lunch back there." So we used to have lunch with the staff back there. If they wanted to have lunch back there, they could go in there. But it made an openness that we didn't have before. One of the things that almost got me in trouble with my own staff was when they put WATTS lines into the Senate for the United States Senators. WATTS lines were cheaper. I watched this operation, and I asked the telephone company was

this the way to do it? They said it was one way to do it. I said, "How much is the cost?" And they gave me the number. I said, "One hundred United States Senators cannot be talking on the phone all the time." Why can't we make this an operation where we share lines. If we need more lines we can get more lines. But why charge us for twenty-four hours for WATTS lines if we're not going to be using it?" Well, I had a little trouble with the phone company on that one, because that was going to be a good thing for them. But they said, "Okay, we'll do it." And I asked them what we were saving, and I hate to tell you the amount of money we were saving after just one month, but it was in excess of eighty-five thousand dollars. As a result of that, I said, "Well, I want only WATTS line in the Sergeant at Arms office. It will be in my

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office. If anybody in my office has to use the WATTS line, they've got to come in here to use it. We're not making calls to every Tom, Dick and Harry out there." As a result of that, we were very successful. We found that some people were misusing the prefix to get into it. We made a check on them and found out where the calls were coming from. We finally came up with a system whereby the Senator was the only one in the office who would have that number. If he gave it to somebody, that was his problem, not mine. We didn't have any problem with the system and I think it's working fine today.

ITCHIE: You came to that job from a very partisan position, electing Democrats and defeating Republicans; now you were working for all one hundred Senators. How did you go about establishing yourself with the minority members of the Senate?

HOFFMANN: Most of the minority members I had known before, but I took it on myself when I went in that office to go to each Republican Senator and say, "I am the new Sergeant at Arms, I'm here to help you. I want you to know that it's a non-partisan job, I understand that, so from that standpoint, from now on, whatever you want, Senator, we'll be able to get for you." I think that helped me move across that line. I never had a complaint about it.

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I remember I went over to see Senator John Tower. I walked into his office and I said, "Senator, I am the new Sergeant at Arms." He said, "I know." I gave him the spiel on it. He said, "Nurdy, don't worry about it. You don't ever have to come to get me, I'll come, because you're too big!" But I got along beautifully with all the Republicans.

I remember one night, I guess it was eleven or twelve o'clock at night, we were going through a money bill, as I recall, and the Republican Senators were staying off the floor. We couldn't get a quorum. We had to pass this money bill. The Senate was about to tell me to go out and arrest the Senators and bring them in.

But I knew where Senator Cliff Hanson of Wyoming was in his hide-away. I went to get him, and I said, "Senator, I don't like to have to come and get you. Why don't you come in so we can break this. After all, I'm a new man on the block. It makes the Senate look bad and it makes me look bad." He said, "You talked me into it." He came in and we were able to get the vote and we didn't have to arrest anybody. I thought this was great.

RITCHIE: You mentioned arresting Senators. I guess people think of the Sergeant at Arms as the sheriff of the Senate, and that is a big function, protecting the Senate and making sure that

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people perform the way they're supposed to, and are where they are supposed to be. Just thinking about these Senators, who are very important figures in themselves, how do you deal with them in that role of marshall?

HOFFMANN: I think it goes back to the axiom, "speak softly but carry a big stick." They knew that you had the club, but if you didn't have to use it you were much better off. I never had a problem with them on this at all. I was more concerned about them and their safety, and they knew that. I remember I went around to most of the senators at one time and asked them to take their vanity license plates off: "Senator Number One" from whatever state. They would park their cars at Washington National Airport. Now, there's a man in the lot, but they don't watch all those cars. I said, "Somebody could come under there and slip a bomb under your car, and nobody would notice it. You're a sitting target for that sort of thing." The next thing I knew, one of the Senators said, "You know, you make a lot of sense." Some of the Senators--not all of them--took those plates off and put regular plates on. So you don't park something where you're going to leave it there all day, like at an airport, with a "Number One" license plate, because it's a target. I was fearful of that.

One of the things we also had to do, was give a course on defensive driving to those men who were driving special Senators around. There's all kinds of things that we did, that I just

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don't want to go into in this, but they were meaningful things. We had a close working relationship with the Secret Service, with the FBI, with the downtown Washington police department, with the mayor and everybody else. I remember when the farmers came into town to march on us. They came in with their tractors and everything else and they gave us a real problem. We had to have the cooperation of everybody to keep them off the Hill, I mean with their tractors and stuff. They were just up here to destroy things. But we had the cooperation of all the law enforcement agencies in the area, and so we had no problem.

RITCHIE: That's right, they sort of trapped the tractors on the Mall, with a ring of city buses around them.

HOFFMANN: Exactly what we did. I was involved in a lot of those things, as an officer of the Senate, by and large, I had no problem with the Senators. They knew that I was there, and I was trying to give them the best service I could possibly give them. They've got to understand this. I think one of the things that helped me with this was when I invited the AAs together, and I had the AAs of both parties. Everything that happened was that sort of a bipartisan operation. That's where any problem that you might have had with Senators was dissipated, at that early date.

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RITCHIE: The Capitol Building has always been one of the most open public buildings, unlike most of the executive buildings where you can't get in the lobby, citizens can walk almost anywhere in the Capitol Building, and citizens feel they have the right to protest at the Capitol, on the steps and on the lawn. How did you draw the line between citizens' right to protest, and right to access, and protecting the members of the Senate? That seems to be a much more difficult task in the legislative branch than in the executive branch.

HOFFMANN: Yes, you've got more people, obviously. The problem is, if they're going to protest, they're going to protest at the Capitol. There are designated places for them to do this. That is by law. They can protest on the front-- whichever side you want to call the front, whether it's the East Front or the West Front--they can make their protest out there. They cannot carry signs or anything like that inside the office buildings. I had no problem with that when I was there. There were a lot of protests, but not protests of that nature. Chief Powell, who was chief of police at that time, was being sued by some people who came up here on the House side. I can't recall all the facts about it today, but I think he was sued personally, and had a suit laying over his head which was never acted upon.

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We had rules about access to the Capitol. You can go in the Capitol Rotunda, but you have to go through metal detectors. Even today, people who work in the Senate, if they've got bags or something like that, the police look in their bags. At first, people resented it, and then they began to understand what it was all about. It was for their own protection. It wasn't something that we just want to harass people about. I was reading in the morning paper that some football player who said something about bombs and guns when they were checking his bags at the airport, was arrested. Of course, that's a federal offense. They let him go, but he was mad. We tried not to do that if possible. We tried to reason with these people as much as possible, saying "Look, this Building doesn't belong just to you, it doesn't belong to us, it belongs to America. Where you get people who are rational, and most people are rational, we were able to at least communicate that to them.

During the Shah of Iran's reign, we had problems with people who came over here to protest against him, who wore masks. We didn't know who they were. And we had two demonstrations at one time. We had the pro-Shah people on the East Front, and at the same time the anti-Shah people asked for permission to also be over there. So they came to me and said, "What are you going to do with them?" I said, "We'll put them over by the Taft Memorial." They said, "By the Taft Memorial?" I said, "Yes, on

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the other side of Constitution Avenue. That's where they're going to go. Just let me handle it." At least that way they had a place on the Hill where they could protest. I didn't want the two mixing together, because I thought we'd have a real riot. It worked, I'll tell you, it worked very well.

Those problems do arise, but basically we do not allow protesters walking through the office buildings. I mean, they can't get in there, that's all there is to it. You can't carry any signs inside, because that is an office building. We have the same thing all over the United States, wouldn't make any difference where it is. For instance, supposing the protesters came over and decided they were going to protest in the subway, which brings the senators in from three buildings to the Capitol. They could block the subways and force the Senators to walk outside. So you've got to keep them out of there. You have to have freedom of access to the Senators' offices and also to the Senate Chamber. This is a government, and we can really make it tough on anybody who breaks the rules. We never had much problem, basically, because we would not allow them in to begin with. If they don't get in, they can't do much about it. On the outside they can march, they can do anything they want to. That's fine and dandy, because they're not denying a Senator access to the Senate floor. That's what we concerned ourselves with. But in my time we did not reach that particular height of protest.

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RITCHIE: Now, you had Doorkeepers who worked directly for the Sergeant at Arms, who patrolled people coming and going in the galleries, and then you also had uniformed Capitol Police officers. How did you coordinate between these various functions?

HOFFMANN: There's no real problem in doing that. We also have plain clothes police who are close to the floor and can come at any minute. We don't make much noise about that. But we have no problems coordinating between them. See, how do you have problems when you've got the Police Department and you've got Doorkeepers, and I employ both of them? They work for us. They work for the Sergeant at Arms, and you just direct them as to what they're supposed to do. There's no problem with the police on this, at any rate. But you've got two or three plain clothes policemen who are around the Senate floor. If you need somebody in a hurry you've got them. That's the way it has to be. We have no

problems with the Doorkeepers. The Doorkeepers are told exactly what they're supposed to do, and what they need to do, and they're there for that one purpose.

RITCHIE: So it's like layers of security.

HOFFMANN: Exactly right. You don't have any designated area; these things overlap. As long as you are the employer of both of them, you don't have much problem. You can just direct them. You've got to understand that you can't do this job

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alone. You've got to have people who understand the job and can help. If you've got that you have no real problem at all. You've got to get decent people, who have a pride in America, to work up there. Most of them could get better jobs, I suppose, but some of them just like to work up there, they're very proud of it. I think the idea of it is that this is their place and they're going to take care of it. They're not going to fight with each other about who's going to take care of it, because you're going to see to it that they don't overlap or run into each other. I don't see any problem with that at all. I never have.

RITCHIE: How did you coordinate things with the House Sergeant at Arms? Was there need to work together on security?

HOFFMANN: Oh, sure. We worked together on all this security. As I said, we had the Police Board, and it was made up of the Sergeant at Arms of the House, the Sergeant at Arms of the Senate, and George White, who is the Architect. The three of us were the Police Board, and we met weekly on all this stuff. Whenever we had protests or anything like that, we all worked together on it. We were all singing out of the same hymn book. We had good operations.

RITCHIE: I remember when the Senate Historical Office was created up in the attic of the Capitol Building, and they were taking down bookcases, and putting up walls, and putting in

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carpeting, and we were trying to find out who to call to get things done. Somebody told us, "Anything from the floor board up you got to the Sergeant at Arms, anything from the floor board down you go to the Architect of the Capitol." I thought that's an interesting way to divide jurisdictions!

HOFFMANN: Probably true, too. Very true. See we've got many, many offices in the Senate. Basically, the Sergeant at Arms has not only the Capitol but the office buildings to oversee. But ninety percent of the time you don't get involved. You've got the police in each building, and they're available on each entrance floor. That's the way it works, and I think it's the best way.

RITCHIE: But you never had too many jurisdictional problems?

HOFFMANN: None. Not a bit. No, you sit down and talk about it. It's a communication problem. If you've got communication which is open, and you sit down and talk about these things, you have no problem whatsoever. When the President comes up to make his joint address to the Congress, you have to lead the Senate people over to the jurisdiction of the House. When you get in there, the House is meeting in concurrence with you. You meet the Sergeant at Arms and then we escort them in together. The Architect doesn't get involved in that very much, because that's not his bag. But if we

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have any problems at all we work them out between ourselves. But that's going over to their jurisdiction. They on the other hand don't come over too many times, except when a bill comes over, or something like that. But they don't march over to our side. It's basically us going to them, because they have more room in the House than in the Senate.

RITCHIE: You mentioned also about protocol. As Sergeant at Arms you had to greet presidents and kings.

HOFFMANN: Everybody. Anyone who came officially to the Capitol.

RITCHIE: How did you find protocol functions? They would seem somewhat intimidating to have to greet the Queen of England or the President of the United States. How was that part of the job?

HOFFMANN: Obviously they're leaders of their countries, and you treat them with the kind of respect that you'd want your own leaders to be treated. I was never overly impressed with anybody. That didn't bother me. All I knew was I had a job to do to see that they got where they were going, and that they got safe passage. It was not a difficult problem as far as I was concerned.

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I've got a picture of myself greeting the then to-be-President Reagan, in 1980. He hadn't been sworn in, yet, so you didn't know how to greet him. We were standing out in front of the Capitol--I can see the picture on my wall out there--Senator Baker and Howard Liebengood, who was going to take my place. Howard turned to Senator Baker and he said, "How do you greet these people?" Senator Baker said, "Well, watch Nordy, he knows." So the President-to-be's limousine pulled up, the Secret Service opened the door and he got out. He stuck his hand out, and I said, "Hiya, Gipper." Liebengood said, "I couldn't do that!" Well, I said, he wasn't President, it wasn't an insult. He liked to be called the Gipper. So I said, "How are ya, Gipper," and that ended that. You just knew what title they had, and where they were going, and all you did was accompany them there and then accompany them back out of the building when they were going out.

The same with the Queen. There's a procedure which has been going on in the Senate for many, many years, as to how to handle this particular operation. You just go by what is known as protocol. We did the same thing with our the Secretary of State, the Secretary of Defense, any Cabinet people when they came up. We took them where they were supposed to go, and stayed with them until they left the Hill. Outside people from other countries, I've got all kinds of pictures at home. When these people came

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up, we took them exactly where they were supposed to go. Most people who came were very considerate of your job. They were very nice and very pleasant. You only found two or three of them who got a little uppity if you tried to tell them anything. We'd get too many people on an elevator, and they would say, "Well, you stay out." I'd say, "No, this is our territory, we go." But that was a rare exception. We didn't have any problem with that at all. I think, again it's a communications problem.

You remember we went through the bringing in of the Panama Canal Treaty. At that time the State Department didn't give us advance notice of who was coming in for this thing. We didn't know. We were meeting these cars and we didn't know who was getting out of the cars, and we had to escort them into the Building. That was a very difficult problem, that's a lack of communication. That's our own problem, not their's. But it was probably one of the worst days I ever had, meeting all these cars coming up, because I didn't know who was in what car. We took them into the Russell Caucus Room. Then you've also got to find out if there's anybody in the party who's in a wheelchair, because you had to take special care to make sure they got there. You might be taking one up one entrance and one going in another entrance, and they'd wonder why are we doing this. You had to have that explained to them by the State Department before they got up here. But that didn't occur too many times either.

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You just had to play the game and do it by what you thought was best. I never had anybody complain, in the whole time I was there, or have one single thing go the way it shouldn't have gone. That wasn't because of me, that was because of the help I had. You're only as strong as the people you've got around you. Whatever your business is, if you've got weak people, you're going to have a weak force. If you have strong people, you're going to have a strong force. Fortunately for me, I was lucky to have the kind of people who really knew what they were doing. They were dedicated, and they're still here.

ITCHIE: Speaking of staff in the Sergeant at Arms's office, it was tradition--I remember Mark Trice saying that the Sergeant at Arms was elected by the majority but there was always somebody from the minority in the office. Does that practice continue?

HOFFMANN: Not too much, although we did have that at the time, because my AA was Ron Martinson, who was a Republican. That just happened to be so. They don't have the Assistant Sergeant at Arms from the other party anymore. That was what they had at one time, but I don't think they do that anymore. They've had quite a few Sergeants at Arms since I left there, but I don't think they

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have anybody that I know of that's representing the Republicans. They could, but I don't know who it would be. I don't think they still do that, because why is it necessary if the Sergeant at Arms is non-partisan?

RITCHIE: Also in terms of the staff, the 1970s when you served was a time when the staff on Capitol Hill really exploded. The number of staff members for committees and senators increased by the thousands. I remember one staff member said that the two things that counted the most on Capitol Hill were office space and parking space. How did you cope with both of those problems as the numbers of people and demands were increasing?

HOFFMANN: Well, the office space was handled by the Rules Committee. That didn't come under us. We didn't assign the office space, we took care of it after they got it. We had a parking operation which was very, very difficult. We had a guy in there who really knew what he was doing. He tried to get people to carpool. He set up a way where people who lived in the same area could ride in the same car, which helped us out for a while. We've got parking lots now where you leave your key in the car, if they're overparked, and they move the car for you. Parking space is still a problem, but it isn't as great a problem as they thought it would be, with all the incoming staff. I think the other answer can be seen if you want to take a walk some morning, about eight thirty, just walk down near where the subway

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lets out, and watch where the people are coming. There are an awful lot of people that are riding the subway, which takes you within two blocks of the Senate office buildings. Why not take the subway? I'd love to be taking the subway every day rather than riding, but we don't have subway where I am. If you live by the subway it's the fastest way in and the fastest way home. Trains run very rapidly. I think it's a great system. That has helped us, whether we want to admit it or not, it helped us alleviate the parking problem. A lot of people don't want to ride their cars to work. Some days you get stuck at a traffic light. I did last week--it took two hours to get in.

We didn't have a problem with the parking. What we did is to bring in some young people who were going to school, and we used them for car jockeys, as we called them, parking assistants. They were there every morning to park the cars, and if it got overloaded you moved them to another lot. That was the method that saved us. The parking problem was ours, and it still is.

RITCHIE: Given the fact that office space was always tight, and they still hadn't opened the Hart Building at the time you were Sergeant at Arms, why was there so much resistance to buying outside space, like this building?

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HOFFMANN: They really should have bought this building. They could have bought it for thirty-one million dollars at the time. This building's worth about a hundred forty or a hundred and fifty million dollars now. There was a feeling among some Senators--who shall go unnamed--that there was a deal made with some Senators' people. I ran an investigation by the Rules Committee and everybody downtown, and they found it to be absolutely rightly priced and everything else. But these few senators felt that this was a deal that might help somebody else in the Senate, for whatever reason or how, I don't know. It was never there. We did not leave a stone unturned to find out that this was the kind of a building that we could utilize and utilize quickly. So these two senators fought it, and they won. Fritz Hollings was the first one who told me that this was a building we ought to be buying, because the access is here, it's just a walk across the street to the Senate office buildings.

RITCHIE: And they've probably paid thirty-one million in rent over the last ten years.

HOFFMANN: I would think they have, but that's a question I'm not going to follow up on. I'm sure they've paid more than that since 1975, when it first came up. That's thirteen years they've been renting this space, thirty-five thousand square feet of space.

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RITCHIE: Mostly for computers.

HOFFMANN: It's all computers. That's all that's down there.

RITCHIE: How is it that the Sergeant at Arms' office became the computer center for the Senate?

HOFFMANN: I don't really know. That was where they put it, although they have a special group of people who oversee the actual work of the computers. They were put in to help operate the Senate more efficiently. We had some run-ins, but I took the position that anybody who came to me looking for a job, and they wanted to go to computers, they'd better have some experience. I just made a rule, when I was there, that anybody who wanted to get into the computer center had to go through the computer center and let them determine whether or not the person was the kind of person who could really deliver what he said he could do. This was a tough time, because I had some Senators who really wanted to put some people down there. I explained it to them. I said, "Look, I've got to make a rule. All I'm saying is that they have to clear them. Now, if the guy's

cleared and there's a job open, I'm sure he's going to get the job. But you can't tell me to put somebody down there and then have this kind of a rule." I never had a soul fight that. They said, "That's fine. If that's the way you want to do it, that's good enough for me." And that's how it went. The computers were put under the Service Department.

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Everything else is under us, so anything they couldn't find a place to put, they put under the Sergeant at Arms. Let him handle it--which is all right.

It was a big job, and a lot of hard work to understand it, but you had to keep going around to see that this thing operated. You don't just sit up in that office, I'll guarantee you. Nobody ever knew when I was coming around. I never told anybody except my secretary where I was going, and she wouldn't tell anybody. I was going around, making the rounds, and you'd be surprised what I found. I woke up people. They found out this guy's serious about this job, and I was. That's why I liked it.

RITCHIE: The other elected official of the Senate is the Secretary of the Senate. What's the relationship between the Sergeant at Arms and the Secretary?

HOFFMANN: It depends upon the people, I suppose. I had a great rapport with the Secretary of the Senate. Stan Kimmitt was Secretary and he and I were great friends before we started, so there was no problem as far as that was concerned. We cooperated in every way. We had no problems whatsoever.

RITCHIE: Were there areas where you overlapped, or were you pretty much separate?

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HOFFMANN: Pretty much separate. If they needed something that I had, or I needed something they had, there was no problem, just a question of communication between the two offices. I didn't assign that to anybody, I just took that myself. If something had to do with the Secretary of the Senate, I went down to see him, or he came up to see me. We had no problems. We got along. You know, you're not working for yourself or the company, you're working for the people of America. A lot of people forget that, but that's who you're working for. It made a very great difference.

But as I said, it depends upon who the two people are. There have been times in past history when the Sergeant at Arms and the Secretary of the Senate didn't speak, but that was because of idiosyncracies that probably both of them had. But that never happened with me.

RITCHIE: I could never figure out why, for instance, they had the Stationary Store work under the Secretary, and the Computer Center under the Sergeant at Arms. The shuffling of offices seems very strange.

HOFFMANN: It was. It was assignment. But if you had a problem you went to the Rules Committee and let the Rules Committee decide what they were going to do. I remember one time one of the Senators said, "You know, you keep this building so

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beautiful"--over in the Senate wing--"the floors are so gorgeous. Why don't you take over the office buildings?" I said, "Well, it doesn't come under us. We're not supposed to be handling that. That maintenance goes under the Architect." I would say, "Look Senator, if you want to change the rules, fine and dandy. You change them and I'll do it, but I'm not going to go over there and do that because I'm out of my jurisdiction." So it would usually drop there, and he'd get over it, whatever it was. But we tried to keep the buildings looking well. I think the fireplaces did more than anything else. It was a little job taking all the wires out of those chimneys, which the electricians used for shortcut, which they didn't really need to do. There was no problem with that with the Architect. He said, "Fine and dandy, we'll do it.

RITCHIE: You also had the pages under your jurisdiction.

HOFFMANN: Yes.

RITCHIE: Did they give you any trouble?

HOFFMANN: They did at one time, yes. We had some problems with the pages. We had a place where they could go down and have their lunch, near the subway. We had some vociferous pages, we'll say. We fixed it up real nice for them, painted it and everything, and one day I was on the Senate floor and one of the people who will go unnamed came to me and said, "Would you go down

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and look at the page place?" I went down, and it was a rat hole, awful! So after the session, I said, "We will have a meeting of the pages." I said, "Gentlemen, you have broken some things down here that we fixed up. You broke some chairs. You've been very careless about throwing food around. So we are going to fine each one of you enough money to pay for new chairs, and a new table, and a new closet--those things have all been broken--and it will come out of your next pay. I don't care whether you used it or you didn't use it, you're a page. We're not going to say who's guilty and who's not guilty. You're going to do it, and you'd better keep it clean." I want to tell you, from that time on, you could have eaten off the floor. That's all it took.

The pages are a problem. We tried to get a building over here when I was Sergeant at Arms so that we could house these kids. You see, it's a difficult problem, because these pages come in basically on the patronage of the Senator. Once they get here, the Senator doesn't want to assume any responsibility for

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them, which is right, he's got his own things to do. So it then falls on us to be the godfather and godmother of those kids, who are from thirteen to seventeen years of age. That's a very difficult problem. I don't want that responsibility if I don't have to have it. So you've got to address yourself to that. We tried to get the pages to understand, and we had some problems, housing them, and whatever else was going on. I don't think it's been worked

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out to anybody's satisfaction even yet. They have to have better supervision. They ought to have a place for them to stay when they're here working, but then the taxpayer's going to be raising the devil, because "why are you paying for these kids to come in and my kid can't get in there?" You're damned if you do and damned if you don't, but you've got to try to do it. I had great cooperation from the House Sergeant at Arms, and from Jim Molloy, and other people like that. We did it as best we could. Congressman Frank Annunzio over the House, an old friend of mine, helped me with this also. It was a problem.

RITCHIE: I would think adolescents in general are difficult to deal with, especially when you've got as many as you did there.

HOFFMANN: Yes, right.

RITCHIE: Of course, the page scandal happened after you left the Senate.

HOFFMANN: Well, we knew that was coming. That was just as obvious as hell because there was not enough supervision. When you've got a lot of people you're going to get a bad apple there once in a while, and there's nothing you can do about it. It was a difficult problem, and we knew that this was coming. We foresaw this. People talked to me about having a page come in. I said, "Look, you want a page to come in, let them come in during the summer, stay with some friends, but don't bring him in here in the

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winter where we've got to house them. It's very difficult for a kid fifteen, sixteen years old. You can get into all kinds of trouble. And who's going to supervise them? If you're going to take them in, you've got to supervise them. I don't care what anybody says. Anybody that's a mother or father knows that, that's got to happen. Most of the kids we got were pretty decent, but that problem was coming on long before I left there. We recognized it, Jim Molloy and I had discussions on that. We were worried about it. I think we faced up to it as well as we could. We couldn't get them the housing that they needed. I'm sorry to say, but that's one of the problems that's still there.

But you don't realize that the Sergeant at Arms has got to go to all these offices around the country, if there's a complaint. But I remember at one point in time I

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won a prize and was going to Hawaii. I went into the offices of Senators Matsunaga and Inouye, and then came back through California and went to Cranston's office on the way back, and checked on the Republican's office. But I was doing that on my own, I was paying my own way. I should have gone out under the Senate, but I didn't do that. You know, you've got to go to all the funerals and everything else. That all comes under your office, and there's a lot of things to do. You've got to have an advance team. You've got to know exactly

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what they're doing. They've got to know who to contact, all the law enforcement people wherever the funeral's going to be, there's a lot of work to be done to get those things running like clockwork, and that's the way you want it run.

RITCHIE: If you had to give advice to a future Sergeant at Arms, what's the best advice you could give from your experience?

HOFFMANN: The best advice? Don't take yourself too seriously.

RITCHIE: What do you mean by that?

HOFFMANN: It means the Senate giveth and the Senate taketh away. So be yourself and just do the best thing you can, and use common sense.

RITCHIE: That's a good rule of thumb.

HOFFMANN: I think it is, too. I tried to do it that way.

RITCHIE: You were Sergeant at Arms from 1975 to 1981. In November, 1980 the Republicans won the Senate for the first time in twenty-six years. Did that come as a shock to you?

HOFFMANN: Well, having been the man who kept them from coming in for a long time, all during Nixon's administration, as Executive Director of the Campaign Committee we never the lost the Senate, it came as a shock. Although if you could count, you knew

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why we were going to lose it. I knew we were going to lose it. Nobody likes to lose. I didn't really want to leave the Senate. Hell, I'd have stayed there forever, as far as I was concerned, because I enjoyed what I was doing. To me, I was making a contribution. If I can't make a contribution, you don't want me, because I'm not going to pay any attention to what we're doing. If it's a contribution I can make, and assess properly, I have no problem with it, but this was a job which really was right up my alley. It was dealing with people, and it changed every day. It never was the same. That's probably what keeps you interested, because it really grabs

you. You never know when that phone's going to ring and something's wrong. You're the first guy they're going to call, and you'd better be there, and be ready to ride. Otherwise it's going to be tough. I enjoyed it because I was dedicated to do that kind of a job.

RITCHIE: Well, how did you chart your future after you left the Sergeant at Arms' office?

HOFFMANN: I didn't chart it, it was charted for me. Some of my friends called me up and said, "What are you going to do?" I said, "Well, I'm thinking about opening an office." Four of them said, "Well, give me a call, and when you open the office, you're on our payroll to represent us." Before I ever left the Senate office I had everything ready, and I never lifted a finger to ask anybody. It was just that kind of an operation. So I must have

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been doing something right with these people over the years. I was just very impressed that they gave me the opportunity to come down here. I'm doing the same thing I was doing. I'm not the Sergeant at Arms, I represent five or six corporations, very, very interesting. It isn't overbearing, as far as the work is concerned. Sometimes it's very hectic, and other times it's not hectic. That's the way the cookie crumbles.

RITCHIE: How does the Senate look from the outside? You've got a view of the building from here.

HOFFMANN: It looks nice.

RITCHIE: Is it different working with the Senate when you're an outside consultant as opposed to being on the inside?

HOFFMANN: No, it really isn't. No. You know, you've got access to the Senators, you have access that nobody else has in most cases, because in my case where you elected a lot of them, and where you worked with them for six years, it makes it great. They're always glad to see you. I just saw Senator [Ted] Stevens here the other day. He was coming across the parking lot. He said, "How are you doing?" I said, "Fine, how about you?" I said, "Gosh, you look good." He said, "You won't believe it, the last time we had a recess I went up to Alaska and I caught a fifty-four pound salmon!" I said, "You didn't!" He said, "Yes, and as soon as we get out of the Republican convention I'm going

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back up there and fish some more. It's the greatest fishing season we ever had." That's the way it goes. You're talking about a lot of things that interest you.

All these guys are interesting to me. I love to see Pat Leahy getting his picture in the paper more than he ever had in his life, a wonderful guy. [James] Exon, all those guys. They're just terrific. I miss Howard Baker, because he was a great guy. He was the minority leader, and he was wonderful to work with. Of course, I worked for Bob Byrd for many years. He's just one of the outstanding men of the Senate. He's done more for the history of the Senate than anybody I ever knew. He knows how it really runs and how it really works. He's a very dedicated man. You watch those people and you get very impressed with them. Bob Dole's another one who works very hard at doing what he's doing. You get to see these people very often. I always looked at it this way--this is a very strange thing, but somebody asked me, "How do you look at the Senators?" I said, "Like I look at myself." "What do you mean?" I said, "I get one leg in my pants at a time, and so do they. They're not firemen, so they don't jump in both legs at the same time. That's the way I look at them. There isn't much difference."

RITCHIE: One Senator with whom you've had special dealings is Ernest Hollings. Didn't you manage his campaign for president in 1984?

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HOFFMANN: Well, I was part of the management, yes.

RITCHIE: What was it about Fritz Hollings that attracted you to him?

HOFFMANN: I always liked Fritz since he came up here. He's always been a good friend. Fritz is probably one of the best read Senators I have known. I worked for Muskie for a time, and for Humphrey and the rest of them, but Fritz is a vivacious sort of a guy who never speaks unless he knows what he's talking about. He's a tough man, he's a tough taskmaster but he's fair, very fair. I always found him to be an excellent United States Senator. He's impressed me ever since I've known him because he's so dynamic about what he's doing. He's so well read. He knows exactly what he's talking about, and he can answer your questions. We have a kind of mutual admiration society that goes way back. I really love Fritz. I see him all the time.

RITCHIE: Why do you think he didn't get farther in his quest for the presidency?

HOFFMANN: Well, having been in politics most of my life, we got down to the point where we weren't going very fast. We just had a meeting one week and said, "Look, you are not so over-debt now that we can't get out of it. But if you keep on going, the debt's going to get bigger, and you're going to have to pay it off. I don't like deficit financing--and Fritz, you never did

like deficit financing--so let's not do it. He talked to three or four people, not just myself, Berl Bernard and everybody else who'd had something to do with it. He just said, "Well, let's throw in the towel. There's no use in going after it. We're just going to spend good money." He just didn't catch on. It's not his fault. I think he would have been a great president, he would have been a great guy to work for, he always was. But that wasn't the problem. The problem was that the voters didn't see him to be the guy they wanted.

RITCHIE: But the expenses of the campaign had increased to drive him out.

HOFFMANN: Oh, it was tough, the way it goes up. I looked at it for a long time, and it started getting up there, and we had a meeting downtown. I said, "Look, I don't think this is fair to the guy. He's going to have to run again for the Senate. Is he going to run with a big debt? Let's make up our minds, either feast or famine, but don't do it both ways. So everybody, Berl and myself and the rest of them, thought that we were at the end of the rope, and we were just throwing money away. We spent whatever money that he had raised, and he didn't have a debt. Didn't have a debt when he was running for the Senate. So that's the answer.

RITCHIE: You first came to the Capitol back in the 1940s, for the union.

HOFFMANN: 1947.

RITCHIE: Right, so it's been over forty years. Looking over that period of time, how has the Congress changed over the years? What are the most noticeable ways that you've seen it change?

HOFFMANN: Well, I think the most noticeable way, which everybody would understand, is the incoming and acceptance of C-SPAN, to portray their goings-on over television stations at home. I think that's the biggest change. Before that the only thing they could get was on paper, the written word. Now they can see it on television, and see it immediately. So the reaction time is so much less than it was in the old days when they had to wait for the papers to write it up, and then they had to read it. This way they just look at it and make up their minds right now. I think that's the biggest change in a democratic government, they're going to get an immediate reaction to either right or wrong, if people watch the speeches. That's an opportunity which the country had never had before. It was a long time coming, but I think it's for the best. I could say that that's the biggest thing that has happened to it since I've been here, since 1947, media-wise.

RITCHIE: You were in fact in charge of the media galleries, too, as Sergeant at Arms. Did the growth of the media in that period give you much trouble, their needs in the Capitol building?

HOFFMANN: No, no. We found space for them. They were all great people to work with. We worked very closely with them, and I had no problems with them whatsoever. We might have had an argument back and forth about something, but by and large no. Their growth was very fast, but I think the rapid growth was not in the print media but in the visual media.

RITCHIE: There were a lot of Senators who were skeptical about putting television in the Senate chamber. Do you think that as an experiment it's worked?

HOFFMANN: I think it has. I really do think it has. I think a lot of people were afraid that they were going to see the empty floor, not understand why the floor was empty. But in most cases, if you listen you'll find out why people aren't there. They bring up the fact that they have these committee meetings which conflict. Most of the time, if people don't understand it, somebody will say "We give special permission to x,y,z committee to meet while we're meeting in here." It means that they at least have a better concept of it than you had before. People come in from the outside and they look at the Senate, and there's two or three Senators on the floor. Where are they? Well, they're

obviously meeting in committees. I think that the growth of the Senate has given them more committee work to do than they ever had before. That growth has made it harder for them to come to grips with what they have to do on the floor. Because floor time is no time to do any preparation, they have to do it right there, stand up and talk about it.

Let's put it this way: I think that the television has made them do their homework. I remember what we said when we were coming into this age of television, when I was with the campaign committee. We said, "If you get off an airplane and somebody is at that airplane with a microphone, and a television camera, you are going to reach a tremendous amount of people. If you are going to a meeting of the Rotary Club or something, you're probably going to get a hundred people, where you'll get ten thousand people who'll see you on television. So be prepared when you get off to say the right things into that television camera." Take a look at it. In the old days, the Senators used to talk to that body, they'd be in the Record, the Record would be prepared, media would take out whatever they wanted, but they had to write it, then they had to send it to the editor, and the editor had to approve it. So you've got to go through all of these steps. Now, the Senator gets up and says what he says, and the voter is down

there looking at him. He knows right now, he doesn't have to have somebody write for him, because he can listen to the candidate himself. I think that's a big improvement, I really do.

RITCHIE: Well, how would you compare the Senators of today to the Senators of the past, in terms of stature and ability?

HOFFMANN: Again, remember that we're not talking about immediate reaction, because you would get delayed reaction, you found that in the days of the filibusters, for instance, when someone would hold the floor for two days and two nights, you didn't realize what a real task this was. You had to be a real statesman in order to do something like this. I think that some of the men in that day, probably would not have done as well on television as some of the people who are on today. So you can't really make a comparison there. It's altogether different. I think that the stature of the people in the older days was great because they were looked to be outstanding. By the time the written word got down and was editorialized all the way down to where it came to you as a voter, everybody had taken every bad word out. The Senator could take his words and change them. You can't do that on television. When you say something today on television, on the floor of the Senate, that's the way it's going to be printed. So you don't have a chance to correct the text of the statement that you presented on the floor, so all those editorial changes cannot be made. You get an immediate reaction.

They may have looked better in those days, and there were some great Senators, but today, with television, the Senator has to be pretty well prepared. So I would say that these people are much better prepared than they were in the old days, when they were reading anything at all to keep their filibuster going. I think that the media has changed the operation of the Senate and the House. I think that people are much more interested today in how accurate the Senators and Representatives are in making their statements on the floor, and I think that that goes back to the voter. I really think it's a great boon for democracy. I think it helps democracy, because it is more democratic than it's ever been before--small "d." That's how I feel.

RITCHIE: You certainly had a vantage for forty years that's hard to rival, of experience with the Senate. You've really seen it all over that period.

HOFFMANN: I have been a very lucky man, I'll tell you that. Life has been very, very good to me, and I appreciate all the opportunities that I've had. I just hope that I've made the best of them, because not many people get these opportunities in their lifetime. You see how quickly a lifetime passes and what changes have been made. I remember when television came into the campaigns, and I remember what that did to the campaigns. It's like changing over from the old

days when you used to ride a street car, and then you started to ride the bus, and then all of

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a sudden you started to ride a car, and the next thing you're riding in an airplane. All of those things have changed, and everything has changed with them. Some of us like to look back and say, "Well, it was better in those days." I don't think it was better. I think it's better today.

The only criticism I have is that we are now taking too much for granted. I remember when I grew up as a kid, we didn't have television, we had very little radio and we weren't sitting there listening to the television or the radio, we were paring off to make up games to play among each other. We took time to listen to each other in those days. Today we don't. We watch, we don't listen. We don't like it, we turn it off. We had more communication with each other in the days that I grew up than they have today. The time seems much more limited today than it was when I grew up. It took you longer to get somewhere, and therefore you had time to communicate while you were getting there.

I remember when we first got a car, my grandfather and grandmother used to take us east to the mountains, to a place called Soap Lake, on the other side of the Columbia River, on the way to Spokane. My grandmother used to put hollow stick candy in lemons, and we would suck the juice out of the lemons, and it would make lemonade by the time it got up to our mouths. This was a long time ago. People say, "Oh, that's crazy." It wasn't

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crazy, it was great. We had lemonade. Now we don't have time for that stuff anymore. We don't have time for the picnics we used to have, where the family all went out together and everybody brought a picnic basket. You had so much food you didn't know what to do with it.

A lot of things like that we've lost, yes, but we have transferred that to where we can educate ourselves better, we can understand what's going on in the world. I think that people today are much better educated voters than they were before. I think people have a great realization of their responsibility to participate in a democracy. Maybe we're not getting all the people out to vote. But let's shut the televisions off and see if they go to vote anyway. I think I said that in the labor union if we found an issue that had basic appeal, not only to the labor union but to everybody else, we usually won. If it was a social issue, we didn't lose it, we won it. I think the same thing is true today. Take a look at Social Security, one of the greatest changes we ever made. Where would we be today without Social Security? Even now we have trouble making ends meet with Social Security. If we didn't have that, we'd be in real trouble. A nation which is in debt as we are, we'd be in real trouble.

I think I've seen the changes, yes, but most of the changes have been for the better.

RITCHIE: And you've contributed to them as well.

HOFFMANN: No, I don't know whether I've made a contribution, but I hope to God I left a little something, and learned something on the way.

RITCHIE: Well, I thank you for giving us this oral history as a contribution to the Senate's history. I appreciate the opportunity to come and talk with you.

HOFFMANN: I'll tell you, it's been my pleasure dealing with you. You're a great guy to work with. You get the questions out.

RITCHIE: It's the answers that count! Thanks very much.

[End of Interview #5]