

Republican Party Secretary

October 22, 2010

Interview #2

[This interview was conducted via Skype. Both the narrator and interviewer used webcams for video and audio delivery. Scott used a digital voice recorder to record audio from the computer speakers. Letchworth was in her home office in Florida and Scott was in her office at 201 Hart Senate Office Building.]

Scott: Welcome. It's good to see you from afar. Happy that you are able to do this even from long distance.

Letchworth: This is interesting and I'm enjoying it.

Scott: Good, I am too. I'm learning a lot.

I thought we could just start off today by asking if there is anything that we didn't cover last time that you'd like to mention?

Letchworth: I don't think so. I was going through what we talked about the last time. As I said I am probably three-fourths, two-thirds of the way through. I don't think so. I think we chronologically did it pretty well and leading up to semi-modern times. I don't think so, but thank you though for offering.

Scott: Ok good. Let's just start with—One of the things I noticed as I did a little research leading up to your position as party secretary is that your predecessor Howard Greene and the current Republican party secretary David Schiappa, the three of you all followed virtually the same path in the Senate, which I thought was interesting. A little bit of time as either a page or cloakroom assistant, then becoming floor assistant, and then becoming party secretary. I wonder if you could say something about how that works? It appears to be a kind of apprentice system and I wonder if that's intentional, or if that is just the way things work out?

Letchworth: I guess you can't say exactly that it's intentional, but it's the nature of the job. If you look at the Democrats' [party secretary] Marty Paone, he started out I want to say, with the parking office and then went to the cloakroom. Lula was the same thing. Lula was the secretary in the Democratic Policy Committee and then moved her way up. Because of the nature of the job, because it's not a job where you can learn from reading books or going to classes, it is the epitome of on-the-job training. It is the epitome of learning on the job. If you start out especially in the lower positions—of

course, a page is the lowest position—but even a low position like the cloakroom, you learn almost all the aspects of it. Literally from what the staff is looking for when they are calling the cloakroom, what members of the Senate are looking for when they are calling the cloakroom, and how to best serve them to how the whole process works. So it makes sense. I guess what I'm saying is a good party secretary needs to have come from the bottom up. That's not always true with a lot of jobs but very true in my view with that job.

Scott: What about the role that relationship building can play in that process? Is it important that you are someone that people have seen around on the Senate floor for a period of time?

Letchworth: Absolutely. That's very important. One of the most important reasons that is so key is because if you think about it, the party secretary is the majority or minority leader's eyes and ears on the floor. When members of Congress, when members of the Senate especially, are speaking to the party secretary they know they are speaking to their leader for all intents and purposes. So they have to be able to trust this person. They can be telling you a very personal story, something about an illness in the family and they are not going to be there for a week and "I know you need to know this for planning of vote," but of course they don't want that out in the paper. Maybe it's a cancer screening that he or she is doing. You can imagine how confidential that can be. When they are speaking to you, they know they are basically speaking to the leader because this is going to get funneled to the leader on a need to know basis. In the case of somebody talking about some cancer tests and maybe he or she is in a close election and of course you don't want that out. I wouldn't necessarily go busting down the hallway and bust into the office and say, "Guess what? So and so might have cancer." It would be when we talked about when we are going to schedule votes. "Oh by the way, we are going to be missing Senator So and so for this period of time and this is what is going on. You might want to call them and tell them you are thinking of 'em," kind of thing.

Having said all of that, you're right, it is a whole process of feeling comfortable telling you that. The more you know, the more the leader knows, the better he can serve the party as a whole and the better he schedules things, the more accurately he schedules things, and gets things done. The worst you can do for a leader and I always felt I didn't do a very good job that particular day is when a leader got completely blindsided. That's a function of the person wanting to blindside the leader in some cases or just not having that good rapport, just not having a good rapport with that particular member or group of members and they don't feel comfortable enough to let you know in advance and that doesn't serve anybody very well in my view.

Yes, the relationships are very important and of course you build them in the cloakroom.

Scott: As the legislative scheduler you were doing a lot of the things that you just mentioned were the responsibility of the party secretary?

Letchworth: Sure.

Scott: As the floor assistant for the legislative scheduling office you were doing a lot of those things. What is the ... Where is the dividing line between that legislative scheduling role and the party secretary as it applied to you in your job?

Letchworth: I think it still applies, as far as I know it still applies. The assistant secretary and the other people that work in the legislative scheduling office are also the eyes and ears for the party secretary. Remember, the eyes and ears of the party secretary are there for the leader. It's almost like if two or three members of the Senate want to let the leader know something, obviously he's tied up. What if the party secretary is tied up? Then you go to the assistant knowing that, me as the assistant, will get it to the party secretary and the party secretary will be in the meeting when the information is needed. It's sort of all rungs of the same thing, all communication to the leader, basically.

Scott: Howard Greene was the party secretary from 1981 up until you took the position in 1995?

Letchworth: That's correct.

Scott: Did you learn a lot from him in that position? You would have been dealing with him all the time.

Letchworth: Ok, when you say we spent a lot of time together and we learned, you knew we were married?

Scott: I did.

Letchworth: Yes, to answer your question you do learn a lot from each other. Obviously you learn work habits, you have to adjust to people's various work habits. You have to—you want somebody under you to be very detailed. Someone that will remember a lot of detail and also someone that doesn't shoot from the hip. To me that's one of the most dangerous things anybody can do when reporting this kind of detail in the fashion that you have to for the leader. You can't make it up, you can't assume, you can't

presume. It's literally, you have to know for fact and not say, "Well, I think they are going to be back." No, it's not "I don't think." What time will they be back? Absolutely, you do learn. At all levels of this you are learning the process.

Scott: You said you don't want to be with someone who is shooting from the hip. How did you in your job assure that you knew the answer to the question?

Letchworth: Basically, ask it until you got a firm answer. Members of Congress typically like to be vague. That is the nature of the beast. It's hard to pin down a senator and it's hard to pin down a House member. In this job you have to be very respectful but you do need to pin them down especially when you are doing vote counts. Members of Congress don't want to be pinned down but the leader needs to know, am I eight votes short or two votes short? You can't give one of these "I don't know" answers. You have to give them the best concrete answer you can. That all comes, also, from relationship building. They have to be able to trust you, know that whatever they would tell me wouldn't be exaggerated or used in a bad way, obviously. All of that, again, goes into the relationships that you build to get the proper answers for the information for the leader.

Scott: Okay. Howard Baker, the leader who established your office, retired at the end of the 98th Congress. How did your job change under Senator [Robert] Dole's leadership, if at all?

Letchworth: It did. Obviously, their leadership styles were completely different.

Scott: Maybe you can talk about that. How were they different?

Letchworth: Senator Baker, he was very hands-on. He wanted to know—for example, I can remember working on a very complex crime bill agreement. When I say crime bill agreement, it was multi-pages, 20 or 30 amendments were going to be in order. Describing what each one of them was and how much time they were getting. He wanted to know, I can remember particularly, almost a daily report from me specifically on how that agreement was going and who was giving me fits or who was working well or who wasn't working well. It wasn't at all unusual for him to say, "Elizabeth is there anybody that I can talk to?" You didn't really have that with Senator Dole. He was more, "Work it out." That was his saying. Work it out. He expected you to work it out. That isn't to, I'm not going say that if you went to him and said, "Sir, I've reached a wall. I can't get past two or three different senators for various reasons." When you reached out to him for that, typically what he did is, "Elizabeth, I'll set up a meeting." And then he would kick off the meeting and maybe leave. But at least he would be facilitating.

The difference in the leadership skills, if you take that same scenario, Senator Baker not only would have set the meeting up, he would have arbitrated or moderated the meeting. It's a really different style, that's all it is. Senator Dole would more likely have three of those going in his office at the same time and pop in all of them. Senator Baker more than likely [would] have them one at a time and he wanted to be the moderator. He would want a report afterwards, sometimes, as to how the meeting went, a decompression of sorts. Different. Senator Dole would just move on to the next meeting. You might not talk to him about what you thought the results were for another day. It's just different. Different ways to legislate.

As far as the office changing, I think the function of the office basically was the same. The hands-on as far as the various leaders helping with [things] when you got in binds, with presiding officers or something, that was completely different. Senator Baker was more amenable to making that plug in the policy committees or urging members, explaining to them, "This is really important that you guys sit in the chair. We really can't struggle to find presiding officers." Senator Dole hated that kind of stuff. If I think about it, I think it was more because he felt he was wasting a favor or wasting a chit on something. We knew right away that you don't go to the leader for that. You only go to the leader when literally that's the last resort. You had exhausted all other ideas before that. Whereas Senator Baker was much more open about, as I said, almost doing some of the recruiting himself. Because his class, the 1980 class that came in, there were so many of them and they were so new and they weren't career legislators, it really did take some coaxing to get them to do it. Maybe that's why Senator Baker was better at it because he had to start out being better at it because he had this brand new young group. Whereas, by the time Senator Dole became leader I'm sure his thought was, "What's wrong with these guys? Just get in the chair. It can't be that big of a deal, why do I have to beg you?" That kind of thing. I guess in that respect there were certain things you knew that one leader was more apt to do and the other leader wasn't.

Scott: Did you know Senator Dole quite well before he became leader? Had you worked with him much?

Letchworth: Yes. He was chairman of the Finance Committee. He was a cloakroom rat. He hung out in the cloakroom a lot. There are certain members that are cloakroom rats and there are certain ones that aren't. That's a term of endearment, believe me. They like to make the phone calls in the cloakroom. They'll do a lot of their work in the cloakroom. Some of them just breeze in and it's just not their thing. It's not a good thing or a bad thing, it's just some of them like that sort of camaraderie that comes with the cloakroom. Senator Dole was one of those.

[Phone rings in Scott's office].

Scott: Sorry.

Letchworth: Do you need to grab that?

Scott: No, no.

Letchworth: So, yes. The cloakroom in general knew him very well. That's always nice when the new leader that gets elected is somebody that the cloakroom—you breathe this sigh of relief that there isn't going to be this upheaval. You obviously knew he was comfortable with you before or he wouldn't have hung out in the cloakroom. Yes, we all knew him very well. How he ran a main office we weren't as familiar with because, of course, the Finance Committee was over in Dirksen [Senate Office Building]. It's not like he had been in the leadership before and we knew what he was like as the whip. That was a little intimidating at times, especially at the beginning. You really have to learn things, how long does he like memos? You know, is a memo a page long? You want to learn the cheating crib notes, he won't read anything past a page.

Scott: Well, how do you learn those things?

Letchworth: You do learn them. You learn them by giving him a three-page memo and he gives it back to you and tells you "I—[audio break]

[Recording ends]

Scott: One page memo—

Letchworth: And tells you, "I only read a page." Or if you are lucky one of the staffers will tell you in advance. I can remember when Senator [Trent] Lott became leader I did try to find out just basic stuff like that and I remember asking him basic questions: do you liked to be briefed in the morning? Do you like decompressing at the end of the day? Just to get his mood. Senator Dole liked decompressing at the end of the day. He would sit down with the staff and talk about how the day went. Senator Baker, not so much. [They] just [had] different styles.

Scott: How did those different styles differ on the floor in terms of scheduling? Doing things on the floor, being down there as a floor assistant. Did it change much for you?

Letchworth: It really didn't other than—again two different styles. Senator Baker, you were able to get him to do more on the floor without really having to push him. I'm not saying that very well. I can remember going to the leader, Senator Baker at the time, when there were issues with a consent agreement he was going to propound and being able to tell him, on the side, "You might have to move this around, you might have to change it." And he was fine with that. Senator Dole wanted it all spelled out in advance, almost go over it. Didn't like the surprises. Who was quicker on their feet with it, it has nothing to do with the capability of being able to talk on your feet. It's just the ability to sort of puzzle through what was going on on the floor. Senator Baker got that pretty quickly, and Senator Dole too, but just in a different way.

Scott: We had one person recount in their oral history interview that Leader Dole would often be found in the cloakroom with a yellow legal pad scratching out a compromise. Even after he became leader he was still often in the cloakroom working.

Letchworth: Again, he was a cloakroom rat. He liked the cloakroom. And he knew that's where a lot of the negotiations could take place, would take place. You're right. It would not be at all unusual in the middle of a bill, where let's say, we got stuck in the mud because we had two or three issues that were just jammed up. He would pop in the cloakroom and say "How's this going? What's going on here? How can we un-lodge this, how can we get this moving?" And be the force that would reenergize a dead meeting. He was also good with the jokes. Especially with a meeting that was getting tense, and you can imagine that many of them would, he could break the ice pretty nicely with a joke that would get everybody to pause, rethink, and get back to the drawing board. It was always wonderful to have him, when he would pop in in situations like that.

Scott: You mentioned in our last interview the desire of the Senate when the majority also has the White House that the White House and the Senate want to sing from the same sheet, so to speak. I did want to follow up and ask you when your party is in the White House and has a majority in the Senate, does it increase the pressure to move legislation through more rapidly? Did that complicate your job in any way as a legislative scheduler?

Letchworth: Absolutely. I wouldn't say that it made the leadership have to move it more rapidly. . . [audio break]

. . . because the White House literally was pressuring you, daily, or at least weekly and sometimes hourly. So, yeah, there was a lot more pressure especially if there was a big agenda item, if the president was making this the theme of the week, the theme of the

month, sure. In a lot of ways we tried to downplay that because we knew that Democrats in certain cases would be stuck . . .

. . . [audio break] on a bill and say “You know what, if we don’t finish it it’s not that big of a deal, we can go on to something else,” and almost downplay that. Although behind the scenes the pressure was incredible to get things done. Sometimes publicly we wouldn’t acknowledge the pressure as much because we wouldn’t want the Democrats to use that pressure against you.

Scott: That makes sense. Are there any bills in particular, you can think of, where there was a lot of pressure?

Letchworth: I’ll have to really think about that. Yes, I’m sure. I can picture them, I can feel the pressure but I can’t think of the names of them.

Scott: You can cover that in another interview, maybe, when we’ve had a chance to think about it.

What was the most challenging part of your job in the legislative scheduling office? When you worked as a floor assistant, what do you think one of the most challenging parts of your job was?

Letchworth: I think probably keeping all the information straight and accurate. When I say that, if you remember we talked about the mark calendar. Basically one of the roles of one of the assistants typically was to keep the mark calendar accurate so that at any given moment the leader or any senator, Republican senator, wanted to know the status of a bill you could regurgitate it. And regurgitate it well and accurately. That meant taking accurate notes. That meant keeping the calendar up to date at all times and committing it—not quite committing it to memory, but almost. You really felt like at any time if someone asked you something about a calendar item, that you could almost, probably, recite all the problems it was going to have or would have.

Also in part because you are constantly working on those bills. You have to remember that a staff director that just reported out a NASA authorization bill, for example. They start working with you immediately to try to figure out how can they get it pending, how do they get it on the floor? They start asking you the issues, “Who has problems with it, who has notified the leader they have problems with it, where can I start negotiating?” If it gets to the level where the leader wants to call it up, he’ll ask, “What is the status of that bill?” I guess that was the constant pressure was to be as accurate as

possible and obviously not forget a hold, not forget somebody offering an amendment. That's an awful feeling.

We created, the legislative scheduling office created, its own checks and balances and it literally was checks—red checks on pieces of paper versus black checks on pieces of paper—to make sure that this note got transferred to this calendar. When a hold got removed, it got removed. We created sort of forms, if you will, they were literally forms that we created so that if somebody [who] answered the phone in legislative scheduling took a hold or took an amendment request, you had forms that they filled out and then whoever put it on the calendar had to initial that it got put on the calendar. That got filed. There was a file for every single bill on the calendar that included all the correspondence from the senators wanting to hold it, to offer amendments to speak on it. It also included the report requirement. If you remember, all bills that have reports, the reports have to be available for a certain period of time before the leader has the ability to call it up. So we had to log in, one of the functions of the legislative scheduling office is to log in the times and the dates of all those reports coming in. So every bill had a file . . .

. . . [audio break] when the ultimate question was asked by a senator or the leader “What is the status of a bill?” I could give them the best most accurate information.

Scott: Ok. I guess that must create a whole new problem, which is that you are inundated with paperwork all the time. Did you have a big file system in your office?

Letchworth: Yes, it was. [audio break] . . . calendar, business calendar. I basically carried around a notebook that had the calendar in it. The long form of what the calendar had on it is in the file cabinet. The letter to the leader may say: “Dear leader, I want to put a hold on the bill because . . .” And it may be six paragraphs long. The only thing that would get translated to the mark calendar was a hold by so and so and I might put something, one or two words to make me remember what it is. The mark calendar was the cheat sheet for the whole file cabinet, if you will.

Scott: Did you also on your mark calendar note something that you brought up last session which was how serious that hold was? Did you keep track of that or was that more of a mental note?

Letchworth: It was both. I had a way of writing the holds on the calendar in my own cheat-sheet kind of way to give me an indication that this person was serious. He was going to lay his body in front of the train so to speak as opposed to a lesser one that really only wanted to be in the process. Just included in all the meetings and all of that versus somebody who was going to do everything he or she could to stop it. I had certain

ways that I wrote those holds differently so that I could then translate that to the majority leader in the most accurate way possible.

Scott: Did you keep more than one mark calendar? You mentioned [in the] last interview something like somebody was asking you to look at calendar five. Did you have more than one version?

Letchworth: No. We had the one version. Remember—We kept a duplicate mark calendar after the incident—remember when we talked about Senator Baker took the mark calendar home?

Scott: Right.

Letchworth: Right after that, within a week, we instituted a Xerox of the mark calendar. An intern or somebody every morning would take the mark calendar and Xerox it so that there was another one somewhere in somebody's desk somewhere. Otherwise the one that was being updated constantly was the one that stayed on the floor, usually in my hands or somewhere in the desk or around the desk. A lot of this communication happens during votes for example. Senators will come into the chamber to vote and all—

. . . [audio break] fine with it, take my hold off. That document was changing all the time.

Scott: How often were you keeping the legislative scheduling office apprised of the changes that you were making? Was that at the end of each day?

Letchworth: It depended. Sometimes in the middle of the day, sometimes at the end of the day. We had forms, almost pad-like forms—

[Phone rings in Letchworth's office]

Let me grab that and get rid of it. Actually, I'm not, I'm just going ...

We had forms that we would fill out, releasing the hold, putting the hold on, that we kept in two to three places in and around the chamber so that if we got spoken to in the middle of a vote, a pad was either in reach or you would write yourself a note and within 20 or 30 minutes, ideally, you would write the note and have it taken down to the page, have a page take it down to the office, and then they would file it. The ideal system was that the file cabinet file of that bill reflected exactly what was on the calendar, just in longer detail.

Scott: This is all new, right? You instituted these programs with the advent of the office, that wasn't a procedure that they used before?

Letchworth: That's correct. That was not the procedure. If you remember, Dompierre one day handed me the calendar and went to an extended lunch and that became the norm. It all got [audio break] ever changing now as it needs.

Scott: Do you need to answer something?

Letchworth: No, no I'm fine.

Scott: Senator Baker retires at the end of the 98th Congress. Senator Dole is the majority leader for the 99th. With the 100th congress the Democrats gain the majority. I wonder how your position as a floor assistant, which was new to this Republican majority, how that changed when you became the party of the minority? Did it change?

Letchworth: It did. We've talked about this a little bit. The difference between the minority and the majority in these positions is huge as far as the amount of work you do.

Think about it. Let's just take scheduling a bill. You being the majority, first of all the majority has to give you the time slot. Then you've got to figure out can the chairman be there? You know there is going to be three or four amendments. You call those three or four amendment people and make sure they can all be there. Because as the majority you are not only going through the motions, you are making this whole play, if you want to call it that, or movie, occur. You have to bring the players along. You have to make sure that the movie moves along with the amendment people offering all of that. You can imagine that just to get a bill scheduled for a Monday, any given Monday, that could take several hours on the phone with people calling you back, and this, that, and the other. Let's say that you were successful in getting a particular bill scheduled for Monday at noon. You give the request to the Democrats that basically says I ask consent that Monday at noon the Senate turn to the NASA bill and all he or she has to do is find one big no, they make one phone call, they get a no, she puts a big X on it and gives it back to you and says, "No, it's not going to happen."

The workload is completely different. Your mindset is completely different. For the most part you are stopping everything whereas the year before you were driving everything. The role reversal is astounding when you have basically the same function. It

looks like the same function, the job looks the same, but actually you are doing the exact opposite of what you did in the majority.

Scott: One thing that often fascinates and confuses people at the same time when they look at the Senate is the filibuster. I want to ask you about your experiences with it. As a legislative scheduler and as party secretary, how does the filibuster look to someone in the positions you've served in?

Letchworth: To me it always made sense because to me it always said that the Senate was designed not to pass things by bare minimums. You needed bipartisanship and the parties that do the best are the ones that do have bipartisanship. I can remember Senator Dole had a lot of friends on the Democratic side by virtue of him being the chairman of the Finance Committee for so many years. He just made a lot of friends through being the chairman and member of the Finance Committee. Senator Lott crossed the aisle very easily, for example talking with Senator [John] Breaux a lot and obviously they are friends because they now have a business together. You need that. You need to be able to reach across the other aisle and at least take the pulse of the other aisle even if you can't get the votes. Senator Breaux was always very good at doing that for Senator Lott. If we were confused as to whether something was going to go nowhere or how far it might go, Senator Breaux was pretty honest in talking to the leader and saying, "You know, if you did this it might go a little further," or "If you didn't do this it might help." Leaders that tend not to do that at all are going to struggle.

I think the filibuster represents that. If you choose not to do that and jam it through, 60 votes is a lot of votes to get. It is a lot of votes. If you think of welfare reform, that was 70-something to the 20s. The Medicare prescription drug thing, I'm thinking of the last big things that they did, they're all [audio break] so the filibuster to me has always been a good thing. What it says to people, what it says to members that have bills and legislation, we always used to tell them, you are smart to try to get a couple of Democratic co-sponsors. If it looks too Republican, then obviously you are going to have trouble ever getting that 60 if ever you have to go to that level. We always told members just assume that everything you do it going to need 60 votes. Look at it from that point of view when you are constructing it, when you are considering what it is going to include, when you are considering having a hearing, all of the steps, consider that this vote is going to need 60 every step of the way. How do I do that without compromising the issue, whatever the bottom line issue is?

Scott: How do you, as a legislative scheduler, how do you deal with a filibuster? If there is one, what do you do?

Letchworth: I guess it depends on if you are in the majority or minority. Obviously if you are in the majority you try to overcome it assuming that the legislation is something that you are pushing. Overcome it means to try to figure out what is the biggest problem with the bill? Is there a way to change certain provisions to get a couple more votes here or there? Drill that down. In the minority you might want to continue to sustain the filibuster and in that case you make sure that nobody is drifting over to the other side. It depends. But the roles are completely different. One is preserving and one is to strengthen it.

Scott: As a legislative scheduler what would have been your role in, let's say when you are in the majority, trying to overcome the filibuster? I don't imagine you'd be speaking directly with Democratic senators. Would you be speaking with the Democratic Party secretary, how would that work?

Letchworth: The party secretary to a certain extent. It depended. You might have the chairman of the committee talk to them and say, "Where do you think we could pull a couple of Democrats?" Whatever the case may be. A lot of times the chairman or the bill manager will have a good idea. The staff director, who is the eyes and the ears of the bill manager, a lot of times he will know because he is getting ideas from the Democratic staff director who is working the bill on the other side of the aisle. A combination of all three or four of those positions if they get together and talk, more than likely they will figure out that there are one or two provisions that would bring one or two more senators or whatever you are working on. If you want to bring them over to the right side or if you want to make sure they don't go there. That's how you figure it out because they are the core of what is going on with the bill.

Scott: Would you be in on those meetings or would that information just come to you after the meeting had occurred?

Letchworth: [Audio break] . . . more to it than you a lot of times send somebody like the assistant secretary or in my position in legislative scheduling, somebody to get the feel of it because then you want to be able to report that back to the party secretary so the leader says, "How's it going?" And the party secretary has the best idea saying, "It's going well. The meeting went well," or "It didn't go good at all." You also find out in the leadership that the chairman or the bill manager typically tells you what you want to hear and that gets confusing to a leader. The reason that a bill manager or a chairman typically will tell a leader what they want to hear because—the leader has a certain time slot for example, for a certain bill. If he comes to the chairman and says, "How's it going," and the chairman honestly tells him, "I'm stuck in the mud and I'm never going to get this bill done in five days like you wanted," the leader is going to consider doing something else.

The more logical thing for a bill manager to say would be that it is going well, "I'm doing well, we're chugging along." The leader more than likely will find the party secretary and ask, "How is it really going?" And the party secretary would tell you, "It's going horrible. We may have to figure out what you want to do for plan B." This is all in an effort, not to discredit the chairman, but you also don't want the leader blindsided in five days, he hasn't done anything and he promised somebody else something in five days. There is a lot of that going on. The more meetings that a party secretary can go to or somebody from the floor staff can go to and get the real scoop because the chairman is going to tend to tell the leader more what he wants to hear than what sometimes the truth.

Scott: One big change that occurs in the Senate during the period that you are in the legislative scheduling office is the introduction of television into the Senate Chamber. We usually ask people about this as part of our interviews because there was a lot of controversy at the time when it was proposed, about the impact that it may have on the Senate proceedings, collegiality, and things like that. From your perspective as someone who had been there before the introduction of television and someone who was there long after, what do you think of it? Did you notice a lot of changes as you were moving about on the floor? Did it create new scheduling challenges for you for example, because members wanted to have so much time during a certain period of the day when they could get up and talk?

Letchworth: The scheduling conflicts didn't seem to be that different. There didn't seem to be a lot of time differences as far as floor time. The quality of the speeches—I remember a lot of debates, especially in the cloakroom, about people worrying about the quality of the speeches. That they would go down or that they would change. Initially, I thought—I didn't think that either would happen.

In hindsight, looking at it, the whole quality of the Senate changed to a certain extent. It changed in a real simple way. A quick story. It used to be that you could sit on the floor and learn just about anything you wanted to learn about a specific state if you listened to enough of the morning business speeches. You would learn about the Boy Scout group from this little town or something from this little town. You got the flavor of all 50 states. Slowly that stopped happening. I think it was because staffs, in part, press secretaries, staffers, decided that if members of Congress were only seen as the small town guy that only talked about the Boy Scout group, that he couldn't be taken seriously. They had to latch onto bigger national issues because a bigger national issue got you on the news. If you stood up on the floor and started talking about the Russians doing something, you would probably end up on the news. If you stood up on the floor and talked about your Girl Scout group, you probably aren't going to end up on the news. It didn't take long for staffs to encourage members, "Don't talk so much about the Girl

Scout group. Why don't you start talking about Russia more?" Obviously, we're making that up. You did lose the flavor of the real member of Congress to a certain extent.

From there you ended up having spin machines created. If a senator realized he got some big press with a speech he made on the floor, then he's going to tend to do that more. Before he knows it, he's going to forget that he had a Girl Scout group in his home town. Now his sights are bigger. It did that. Whether that was the intention or not, clearly that wasn't the intention. The intention was to move into the 20th century, but that was the fallout. I don't know how you could have avoided that unless we restructured the day so that there could be a certain amount of time where it was okay to talk about the Girl Scout group, that's what you were expected to do. But we didn't do that. Morning business was morning business and the ones that made fire and brimstone speeches are the ones that got on the news. Therefore, those speeches started showing up and you lost the quality of the speeches.

Scott: There were many more props too, on the Senate floor, with the introduction of television?

Letchworth: Absolutely. The chart wars and all of that became a whole underground business, making the charts. Again, that also created the spin machines that now existed in offices that didn't use to. You have professional press, PR, media people that work in these offices now. They wouldn't have spent five minutes in a senator's office back in the day. There was no need for them [and] now their staffs are stacked heavily that way. That is all due to TV. I don't know how you could have avoided that. And then you add on to that the 24-hour news cycle and just about any member of Congress knows that at any given time if he gets on the floor and wants to say something outlandish, he'll make the news.

Scott: Oh yes, for sure.

Letchworth: It's almost like TV and Congress has become the prop for them to a certain extent. They learned how to manipulate it.

Scott: Do you think it has been a good thing overall? What's your take on it?

Letchworth: I think basically it's been a good thing. I think it would have been nice to foresee some of the issues like the one we just talked about. What happened, in my view, when members of Congress stopped talking and stopped reporting on the little town stuff, we as the American people started to feel [unintelligible], we started to feel a little, "Well, he doesn't care anymore because he used to talk about the Girl Scout group,

and he used to do this. But he doesn't do that anymore, he doesn't care." That started this disconnect, which I think is so huge now.

So if we could have addressed, and again, you know how the House has their one minutes? Their one minutes are always at the end of the day, nobody pays any attention to them, but that's typically where you can learn about a Cub Scout group or a Little League baseball team. I almost wish the Senate would have done something like that so that we didn't lose that disconnect. You could become a hero of sorts if you participated in those nightly. Instead, now, if you were to come over every night and talk about your Little League team, at some point people would start laughing at you. That's a shame. But they really would. I wish we could have created something like that, a period in time—I don't know what you would have called it—where that would have been its sole focus. Maybe folks would have tuned in earlier and been more encouraged about members of Congress. Actually that's not something you couldn't institute now [unintelligible] to bring that disconnect back. It used to be that members of Congress went home and the way you knew them was through town fairs and parades and all of that. Now you know them on TV and you feel like you don't know them at all because they don't talk about the little stuff anymore.

Yes, it's been a good thing. It was something that had to happen especially, you know, the European Parliament was about to do the same thing, so it had to happen. I just wish we could have—you know, hindsight is always 20-20 but I wish that we could have thought of a few things like that—the disconnect wouldn't have occurred in such big leaps and bounds, in my view.

Scott: There was a trial period before it went live. It was closed circuit right here in the Senate. That's when Senator Dole was the majority leader. Was there any talk in the cloakroom, or anything, were people really concerned? How did people feel about what was happening? Was there a lot of talk about it, or did people just feel like it is inevitable?

Letchworth: Everyone had pretty much decided it needed to happen. The biggest concern was, will it be done fairly? There was a lot of concern, will the cameras zoom into my bald spot? Will they show an empty chamber when somebody's talking? Obviously the camera has the ability to paint whatever picture the cameraman wants to paint. It needed to be as nonpartisan, as apolitical as possible. An awful lot of the debate was on that.

An awful lot of—or some of the debate was about how is it going to look? What does the backdrop look like? It was, I can't remember how many years later, they

changed the backdrop. It used to be just yellow walls and then it became something with some pattern because it looked like they were standing in front of a prison, somebody said at one point. There was a lot of talk about that. But not really, "I don't think this should happen. This is going to be the ruin of the Senate." That really wasn't the theme. I don't remember that necessarily happening at all. Everybody just assumed.

Scott: Senator Dole supported it. He thought it was a good idea.

Letchworth: Yes. I think most people realized it was what needed to happen. Let's just make sure we do it right and we do it correctly. And really, for not having much guideline, I think they did a fantastic job. Because C-SPAN has been pretty right on from day one with how it's all been handled and how it's all been displayed. Every once in a while you would have a senator or two call into the cloakroom and complain about the camera angle or complain about this. And we'd have to call down—the cloakroom had a direct line down to the recording studio at one point, I don't know if they still do. We would call down and say, "They are saying that you shouldn't ..." or whatever. But that actually lessened pretty quick. There was a little bit of a flare up every now and then but basically that didn't happen very often. I was very impressed that they did it right from the very beginning. As far as I can tell it's been pretty much right ever since then.

Scott: Abby Saffold talks about, in her oral history interview, she talks about the fact that once people started watching C-SPAN it created this whole new audience of people who were avid C-SPAN watchers. They would often get calls in the cloakroom: "What are you guys doing? I thought you were bringing this bill up, when's my bill coming up?" Some of them were concerned citizens, some of them were lobbyists, people who had interest in the things that were coming to the floor. Did you notice that type of uptake in interest and in calls to the cloakroom?

Letchworth: Absolutely. You knew—it was almost like it was the birth of the political junkies, only it wasn't the birth of them, it was the awakening of them. Now they could watch it in action. They wanted to know what was going to happen, too. They wanted some education. They wanted some Senate 101 or House 101. There was a lot more of that pretty quick. That, of course, also evened out. But initially, yeah, there was a lot of that. It was interesting, it was really interesting, especially when you find out that this little old lady had been doing what she could to follow Congress all these years and now she loves it and she's in Oklahoma. It's just interesting to see how much the legislative process is very interesting to so many people that you just never would have guessed.

Scott: And it created a whole new host of challenges for some Senate offices because they had to try to explain this process to people who were watching it on TV and uncertain about how some things work. Like the filibuster, for example.

Letchworth: Exactly. And defending, I mean, it's a lot of defending it. If you didn't do it correctly you could leave a disgruntled constituent even more disgruntled. A lot of offices tended to flick those kind of things to the cloakroom. I don't know if that's because they thought we had all the answers, necessarily, other than they knew that we answered them often and we had a better pat answer than they would. A lot of offices got in the habit of sending those type of questions to the cloakroom. Also the caller felt like he or she was—this was a big deal. "I'm Miss Big Britches because I got to talk to the floor." I can remember hanging up from a couple times thinking, I bet that is going to be their dinner conversation. "You're not going to believe who I got to talk to today." So it was kind of neat in that respect.

Scott: That is really cool. It's a real connection with people.

Letchworth: Exactly.

Scott: What are the circumstances that led you to become party secretary? What happened in 1995?

Letchworth: I think I know. I could ask Senator Dole, I guess, but I think I have a pretty good idea. The Brady bill was one of the defining moments in his mind about me. There were a couple of other instances like that where the Senate was really stuck in the mud. We were stuck in the mud over one particular thing or the other and we were just not getting anywhere. I gave him an answer that he liked or gave him an avenue that got him out of the problem. I can remember him specifically talking to me afterwards, especially on the Brady bill, for example. In another example, we created what is now done a lot, a correcting resolution because a bill that we wanted to get done had some problems in it and we couldn't pass it the way that it was. But it was a conference report and you couldn't amend it and how could we get past that so that we could declare the victory by passing the conference report but clearly there needed to be changes. I came up with "Why don't we do a correcting resolution." We—

Scott: What is that?

Letchworth: That would be a resolution—it's a concurrent resolution which is the little bit of the challenge of it. It basically corrects the enrollment of the bill. So you pass a Senate concurrent resolution that says in a particular bill we are going to change

the first five lines to mean this and you pass it. You wait for the House to pass it and therefore the enrolling clerk has changed the bill. Now you pass the bill in the way it needed to be changed. That was one of my brain chills that I think put me a little more on Senator Dole's radar screen for this position. There were a couple of instances like that over the years. It wasn't anything that happened at one particular time. I think it was several instances like that over the years. When it came time for him to appoint and choose a party secretary, I was lucky and blessed that he called and chose me.

Scott: Did you have to think about it at all?

Letchworth: I did. He called the house and I didn't believe him. I shouldn't say I didn't believe him. Basically I almost said, "I don't believe this, you'll have to tell me this in person." He said "Come in the office the next day." I did. I came in the office the next day and he formally offered it to me. Now it wasn't quite that harsh, but I basically said I want to see it come from the horse's mouth. So I did. I came in the next day and we had a meeting and he laughed and said, "I didn't think I had to tell you in person but I guess I had to tell you in person!" It was a little comical.

Scott: You had been working together for some time at that point. You had really gotten to know one another.

Letchworth: Exactly. It was almost in jest but I really did want to hear it from the horse's mouth. That's what happened and it was a wonderful experience.

Scott: Maybe you can say something about the challenges of the Brady bill.

Letchworth: I'm going to have to go back and do a little research on that because I can't remember the provision that stuck us so badly. There was a particular—and if I'm not mistaken. I will go back and research this. It had something to do with registration, the timeline of the registration.

Scott: Maybe we can talk about this next time.

Letchworth: Ok, that sounds like a plan.

Scott: He asked you to be party secretary. Then you're elected by the rest of the party caucus.

Letchworth: During the leadership elections, which are occurring this year on the 16th, typically they occur in the middle of November. After they go through the

leadership election, they go through the party secretary nomination process. Typically it's whoever the leader wants. He'll make a brief statement as to why he thinks this person is good and it's almost like a pro forma vote. And then, of course, the full Senate votes on it. But again, it's almost a pro forma of sorts. You do have a resolution passed electing you. But I don't remember any scenario where there has been a party secretary elected that the leader didn't want. Nor was there ever really a challenge. It's really sort of a *fait accompli* once the leader appoints you or asks you, then the rest of the Senate follows suit.

Scott: Right. But it's a great honor, particularly because you are the first female Republican Party secretary.

Letchworth: That's correct. It is a great honor. To me it was a huge honor having been the first woman. It was a big deal being the first woman in the cloakroom, although that didn't make any waves with anybody. It was a big deal for the cloakroom to handle that at the time. This was not as big of a deal for the whole Senate to handle because Abby had been a party secretary and there were more female senators, but it was a big deal. I felt it to be a real honor, especially for Senator Dole to have asked me. I really felt like that was a huge honor.

Scott: How would you describe the role of party secretary?

Letchworth: I have to say that it's probably one of the most unique insider jobs that nobody knows anything about. You fly so underneath the radar and it needs to. It really needs to for the obvious reason, and we talked about this earlier, that personalities that you would have to deal with but with the responsibility but also your relationships. You need to have very secure relationships with as many members as possible. And as many as you can across the aisle, which is always helpful in the Senate in general. If you appear to be somebody that is in the news all the time or appears in press releases then the obvious leap or thought process for a member of Congress is: "I better not tell Elizabeth because it might end up in the press."

I always had a very strict rule that I didn't talk to the press, at all. Not even about what the schedule of the Senate would be. I didn't ever want to be quoted, even something as mundane as, "The Senate is going to be in at two o'clock on Monday. That's what the Party Secretary Elizabeth Letchworth said." I didn't want my name attached to something as simple as that or as basic as that because I was afraid members of Congress would think, "She is getting pretty comfortable talking to the press." And then make that leap that whatever they would tell me might end up in the press and therefore they couldn't share that with me. The less they told me, the less the leader knew

and the less the leader was educated and could be blindsided and that didn't seem like a good thing for the leader or for the [unintelligible]. It's probably the least known job in Washington with the responsibility that it carries.

Scott: I agree. The most famous example is Bobby Baker, Lyndon Johnson's party secretary, and he only became famous when certain things came out about his activities. It is one of those roles that has incredible responsibility in terms of moving things through the Senate. And yet, you're right, few people know anything about it.

Letchworth: Right. Again, it's the nature of the job that it stays that way. I would worry if you got a party secretary that did end up on news programs on Sunday. I would think that party secretary would not be a good one, would end up not being effective at all, for all those reasons we just talked about. They need to be as anonymous and as behind the scenes as—I think we talked about it in the first interview—the guy that turns on the light in the refrigerator. You never know who it is but you rely on it that it always comes on. That's what I see the party secretary as being. It always gets done, you don't know how, it just gets done. Of course the leader is the how and the leader is the face. You do have incredible responsibility and there's a lot of reward to it. There's a tremendous amount of reward but it's a personal reward. Obviously you don't go out and celebrate with the bills that are being passed. Rarely are you invited to that kind of thing, and you understand it, in part because once a bill is passed and there might be a celebration party in such and such office, you're back on the floor moving the next bill. It just keeps going for you. It just keeps going and going.

I thought it was a wonderful job. I think the position is incredible. Even though it has changed and evolved and morphed, it basically is still the same [unintelligible] that it was designed to do when it was designed 50, 60 years ago.

Scott: I think a theme through our conversation so far has been the demanding nature of the jobs that you've held. You are there first thing in the morning and you often don't get to go home until the very last person leaves. This brings up the question: How do you manage, how do you schedule a personal life outside of the Senate when you have such an unpredictable work schedule?

Letchworth: It is very hard. Basically, it's next to impossible. You need a very, very understanding spouse. If you've got children you need very, very understanding children because you are going to miss just about everything that could possibly occur in a child's life. Obviously the Senate hours are so crazy. It's very difficult. You tend to live for the recesses. You tend to try to go back to some normalcy during the recesses. Which is why when Senator Baker instituted the three weeks on, one week off, that was so

welcome. You at least had something to look forward to. If you think about it, too, if you work on the floor and you are confined to the floor hours, doctors' appointments can't even be made. The washer and dryer can't break. You know what I'm saying? They literally can't. So all of that gets crammed into the recess time. That is where you reconnect with the world, with your family.

Scott: I thought it was interesting that both you and Abby Saffold, the first two female party secretaries, your spouses were also Senate staff. I wondered if that helps in some way because at least they understand the schedule and the demands of the institution.

Letchworth: It does. To me it helps a tremendous amount. If you have children involved, then you've got orphan children. That wouldn't be a very good thing. Seriously though, it is very helpful. Also the recesses are different. If you think about it, a lot of the recesses are around holidays but some of them are around nothing. Who gets a week off for Columbus Day? Not the average person. But if the husband and wife do then you can take a pretty nice vacation. You know if you say Veteran's Day, nobody gets a week off for Veteran's Day but the Senate would typically. You see what I'm saying? So it's helpful for that reason too.

Scott: But even in that way, would you really, as party secretary, be able to take and enjoy a weeks' vacation like that? I would think that you have things going on that you are attending to.

Letchworth: You do, but you'd be surprised how slow the job is once the Senate goes out. All the players go away. If all the players go away, it depends on the leader. With Senator Dole he didn't tend to travel as much. He tended to be around a lot during recesses and tended to call meetings. Senator Baker not as much. Your recess was your recess for him, to a large extent. Senator Lott, a little different. It just depended. You could easily take several days off and it would be completely understandable. You have to understand that you were always a phone call away from anybody. That was ongoing all the time, especially as you got closer to recesses and as you got closer to coming back the phone would be ringing more at night: "Do I have to come back the first day? Can I steal an extra day? What if I try to—?" You started to get all of those kinds of things. As long as you could take the phone calls and get the answers, nobody seemed to have a problem if you took two or three days off, or took a week off.

Scott: Okay. How do your responsibilities change when you become the party secretary? It seems like you've been doing a lot of these things already in the different

positions you've held. Is it just times 100 when you become the party secretary? What changes?

Letchworth: It is times 100 and all the responsibility is on you. It is definitely times 100 and then the responsibility and all the blame all comes on you. You may still run around and get a presiding officer because the staff can't find somebody. You may end up pulling somebody out of the dining room. But the responsibility of having that chair filled is now completely yours. The leader is not going to go find your third assistant. The leader's going to find you and scream at you if there's nobody in the chair. The person in the chair is saying, "I'm going to walk out" and you need to adjourn. It's something as simple as that. The party secretary also has an added responsibility that the other staffs typically don't do. They may help in a small role, but really it falls on the secretary and that's the committee on committee assignments.

Scott: Good, let's talk about this. This is interesting.

Letchworth: That, again, is a whole function of communication between members of the party, your party, and all to the leader. It's a letter function where the party secretary sends out a letter with a time sensitive time frame attached to it that basically says you need to let the leadership know, this office know, by a certain date and certain time what committees you want, if you want to keep the status quo, if you want to move around. Those are all timed in the office. Again, another book of sorts is put together with all that data. So that when the leader says, "How many people want the Ag slot?" you know. The letters sometimes can be detailed: "I need it because I've been a five generation farmer." Or, "I ran on it my whole campaign." Again, the majority leader or minority leader can't keep up with all the campaigns so he can't possibly know that might have been your theme. Another way is to put it in this letter and then when the majority leader or minority leader asks the party secretary, "What's the story?" you have—again, it's all about data, it's all about information. For him to put people on the best committees to serve them the best, to serve him the best.

Of course a lot of it is done by seniority anyway which is just plug in the slots with the members. You start from the very beginning, you start from the most senior member and you have to ask him, get from him or her, "Are you okay with your current committee assignments? Do you want to move?" Usually they are fine, but every once in a while you might get someone: "I don't know, what do you have open? I'm kind of sick of where I've been for the last 15 years. What's open?" It's all a function of that. That really falls on the party secretary. I don't remember doing hardly any of that work for any of the party secretaries that I worked for other than just secretarial work. I might have logged in some letters, or sent out the letters. I can remember constructing the letter and

sending it out, but otherwise, no, all that data is really kept by the party secretary and that's ongoing meetings between the majority leader, the committee on committee chairman, the party secretary, until you fill all the holes, fill all the slots.

Scott: There are certain committees that everybody wants to be on and certain committees that are harder to fill, right? There are going to be broken hearts along the way. How do you deal with someone who doesn't get that assignment that they are pretty eager to have?

Letchworth: That's another whole category that I used to keep track of: people who got turned down. How bad did their assignments end up? I would try to make sure the leader knew towards the end of the process, especially if there are a couple decent B committee assignments which are the lesser committee assignments, but yet some of them are pretty nice. If you were a small business person, you would want to be on the small business committee. But then there are a lot of people that wouldn't care at all and would have no interest in being on that. I would try to keep track of members that especially didn't get any of their first pick, second pick, third picks. They just didn't get—nothing went right for them for a whole host of reasons and let the leader know: "You know, so and so just didn't get anything he needed. Is there any way you can give him something extra?"

The leader also thinks about the committee assignments as to the agenda too. If the leader is forward thinking, and all the ones that I've worked for have been forward thinking, you think about well, if we are going to have the first six months of this Congress deal with education, let's say, then let's make sure the education and labor committee, or HELP [Health, Education, Labor and Pensions] committee, put a lot of senior members on there that know what they are doing. You think along those lines, too, and that's, again, another bigger picture than just plugging in names. Although it is data information, just putting together a bunch of data and information for the leader, there is a lot of that thought process before you just plug names in.

Scott: How long does this process take? When do you start and when would you more or less be finished in a typical congress?

Letchworth: I can remember it taking 'til Easter.

Scott: Wow.

Letchworth: Yes. You also need to know that this resolution is a resolution, so it is debatable. In theory it is amendable. In theory you need 60 votes because it is filibuster-able. Now, that typically doesn't happen, but it could happen.

I can remember the ratios have to be decided first and that is between the two leaders. Typically the two party secretaries will do memos to the two leaders as to what former Congresses ratios were when it was a 55-45, or 56-44, or whatever. Those two leaders are now armed with past data. They then meet and decide basically between the two of them what the ratios will be. That is just a pure numbers game. When you figure out the ratios, then you have to figure out, then you have to do the same ratios for each committee. If it's a two-seat margin, then it's got to be a two-seat margin for all the committees. Occasionally you will have a leader that needs more than a two-seat margin. He needs more seats, he needs the committee increased, especially if he has a big class and a third of the new class all campaigned that they were going to be on the Finance Committee. The leader hates that because now he has to fulfill this campaign dream and it really puts the leader in a real pickle because he has to go to the other leader and basically give up something to get these slots. I can remember being able to cash in on a couple of really sweet deals for the Republicans because the Democrats were in such a pickle and they needed extra slots. In other words, they mathematically didn't deserve them. So in order for them to get them they had to give us something that we mathematically didn't deserve.

Scott: Would that usually be about committee ratios, too, you would trade up on one committee for another?

Letchworth: Yes. At that point, when that kind of thing starts happening, you have to go to the chairman and you have go to the ranking and clue them in on this whole scenario and say, "This is what they want us to do. Do you think you can live with this?" And then of course the chairman has got to figure out what he or she was going to do in the committee the next two years. "Well, I was going to do these bills, that bill, that would work great for those bills," or "No, that would kill me if I tried to do" If this person thought they were going to have three Supreme Court nominees and it was Judiciary why would they stack it? That kind of thought process needs to go along. Once you figure those numbers out, then you start plugging in the names. Typically it starts between Thanksgiving and Christmas. I can remember working literally Christmas Eve on it. I can remember working well into January on it. I do remember one time that it took almost to Easter. That's because the two leaders couldn't agree on ratios. They were struggling with ratios. If you get the ratio scenario worked out early and without many problems, the other part of it, as we've talked about, is basically in a large part just plugging in names and numbers. Names and assignments.

The 50-50 congress was a whole different scenario. Maybe we should talk about that on a different day.

Scott: Yes, I was hoping we could cover that next time because there is just, I think, so much to talk about.

Letchworth: There really is.

Scott: I wanted to ask you, though, about when the decisions had been made and you make the members aware of their committee assignments, what kind of response do you have, if any?

Letchworth: Again, you can get disappointed members. You clearly can have disappointed members. You've got to remember when you have a large class you have a lot of members that are of the same seniority. So they start out literally drawing a number out of a hat to figure out what their seniority is. If you think of some guy that draws the last number, he's going to get the last pick of everything. That guy has basically had a pretty bad day all the way around. But there's nothing you can do about it. They take their lumps as they can get them. If you really feel like somebody just got a raw deal on so many levels, or just—there's nothing you can do about the circumstances, it's just the way the cards fell that day, I tried to let the leader know so that he can do something and reward them in some way. I can remember Senator Dole tried to create a position or two for one or two of these. That is an ad hoc leadership type position for them because they just got the raw end of so many things. There are things like that the leader do[es] to try to make it up to them. You don't want to start off a brand new congress with a completely disgruntled member. You'll be disgruntled for the next two years with him or her, if that happened. Clearly try to iron all those things out as best you can, as early as you can.

Scott: Because you kept notes about how these assignments went and people who may not have been happy or who may have got a bit of a raw deal because of the way they drew their name or whatever, then maybe for the next Congress you would take those things into consideration when you are doing these assignments again?

Letchworth: Yes, exactly. I would keep notes from one Congress to the next especially for that reason. And it wasn't that unusual for a leader to say, "Remind me next time..." so that they could do something, or maybe not do something for them. "Remind me that he got everything that he wanted." I can remember having that kind of

statement made to me so that I had to make a mental note this person got everything he wanted so he doesn't need to do so well next time around. You do typically do that.

Scott: Did you hear from senators who were pleased with the assignments they received?

Letchworth: Yes, you do. You get an "atta boy" or a thank you. Yes, you do. They understand it is a process. It is not a personal vendetta. It's very hard to manipulate the system. You really can't for the most part. You still got a lot of praise when they got good assignments. Sure.

Scott: You were party secretary for Senator Dole for a relatively short period of time because he resigned his position in order to run for the presidency. Senator Trent Lott becomes the majority leader. What was it like to work with him? Did you know him already? Had you worked with him already?

Letchworth: I had and we had a pretty good relationship because he had been in the leadership and worked as the whip. He and I had become personally friendly through a series of things, one of which was the page program. He ended up wanting to have several pages and one of them was a very dear friend of his—son of a very dear—

Anyway, yes we ended up working very well. That was definitely a trial period. I can't say that he actually said this would be a trial period but we kind of understood that this was going to be a trial period. Obviously it worked out well. I loved working for him. But it was definitely scary initially because I had only been the party secretary for a short period of time. I learned when the rest of the world learned that Senator Dole was resigning.

Scott: Oh, really?

Letchworth: Oh yes. There were only two people that knew in advance. It was the best kept secret in town. It was a real shock for all of us to learn that, needless to say. But it worked out well. The learning curve between myself and Senator Lott was quick. He was very honest with me right up front as to what he expected and how he expected it. We got those rough periods over with right away. For example, a rough period for me was that I had a difficult commute because I lived very far away. I had the challenges of the 395, 95 traffic every day. I was very up front with him. "That's an issue with me." Senator Dole understood that and he didn't see me until 9:15. That was okay with him. "You need to know that that is probably going to be the way it is because I can't move, I'm not moving." He understood that. We ended up having wonderful morning calls. I'd

be in the car and the first thing he would say is, "How far out are you?" And then we'd start our day. We got through all of those things that could have been speed bumps for any kind of working relationship. We got through those very quickly. I appreciated that from Senator Lott and I think he appreciated me being very open with him from the very beginning.

Scott: Where were you commuting from?

Letchworth: Manassas. Actually, a little south of Manassas. It was 395 the whole way and northern Virginia commuters understand what that means.

Scott: Yes, that's not pretty. You said there was perhaps not a formal trial period but there was an understanding that Senator Dole had asked you to be the party secretary and now there was a new leader, that maybe things wouldn't work out.

Letchworth: Right, right. I can't say those words were actually said but there were conversations like, "So, let's see if we can make this work." Those kinds of statements, several times. I knew that. It was very understandable. I wasn't a Lott person, but yet I wasn't a Dole person, I wasn't a Baker person. I was a Senate person and Senator Lott needed to learn that about me and he learned it very quickly. But if you don't know that initially, you are going to assume, well, she was a Dole person, or she was a Anyway, he did learn that very quickly and everything ran wonderfully. But there was definitely a trial period for both of us.

Scott: What was his leadership style like, as compared with the other two that you had worked for?

Letchworth: He liked to be very involved. He liked to know all the idiosyncrasies. He was probably more detailed than the other two leaders as far as wanting to know all of the detail. He liked all of the nitty-gritty. He liked all of the personalities. He liked the personality struggles. He would get right down in the middle of it. He really enjoyed that. He liked the one-on-one personality issues and would try to solve them. He was very good at asking advice for how to solve them. Not that I was the end all and be all of knowledge, but he knew by virtue of what I did that I did know more of the personality of the whole issue. Not because I was the smartest person on the block but by virtue of the positions that I [held]. He didn't have a bit of problem saying, "Elizabeth what do you think, how do you think this is going to end up? Where do you think I'm going to end up?" If I told him where to end up, he used his own negotiating skill to know where to start to know where he would end up. I thought we worked well

together doing that kind of role. Obviously he must have thought so too. So things worked out pretty well.

Scott: What was a typical day like for you with Senator Lott as majority leader?

Letchworth: He liked to start the morning with “What is my day going to look like?” Again, a lot of that happened on the phone. I was either stuck on a bridge or almost there. So he accepted getting that by phone. But if I were there I would try to go down and bring him the opening script and talk about—He would read it and then he would say, “What is the day really going to look like? How bad is it going to be? How many amendments? There are six amendments on this list. Are we going to have to go through all—”

Scott: Elizabeth, can you hear me? I just lost you. I’m going to hang up.