

F. Nordy Hoffmann

Senate Sergeant at Arms, 1975-1981

Preface

by Donald A. Ritchie

On April 7, 1789, the Senate elected its first Door-Keeper, to guard the doors to its chamber where it met for its first five years in closed session. By 1798 it adopted the title "Sergeant at Arms," which was combined with that of Door-Keeper, and which continues to supervise the work of the now many Doorkeepers around the chamber and its galleries. Over the years the Senate steadily added new responsibilities to the post of Sergeant at Arms, assigning it control over wagon masters, pages, telecommunications and computer services. The Sergeant at Arms also supervises Senate protocol and security.

During the time that F. Nordy Hoffmann served as Sergeant at Arms, from 1975 to 1981, he directed 537 police officers, 185 computer specialists, 155 service department employees, 108 managers, 65 janitors, 52 postal workers, 30 parking attendants, 16 recording specialists, nine carpenters, seven barbers, and assorted other staff totaling more than 1200 people, with a \$49 million payroll.

A big man who could fill a big job, Nordy Hoffmann was one Sergeant at Arms who looked like a Sergeant at Arms, observed Democratic Majority Leader Robert C. Byrd. "Nordy stands at 6 foot 3 and weighs close to 300 pounds. He is big enough to arrest and bring to the Senate Chamber any Senator now living." Republican Senator Malcolm Wallop described him as "compelling in stature, obviously, but compelling too in personality and efficiency. During my entire acquaintance with Nordy Hoffmann I never saw a flicker of partisan bias." Nordy Hoffmann was born on December 19, 1909, in Seattle, Washington. He attended high school at St. Martin's, and in 1927 enrolled in Notre Dame University. There during his freshman term he encountered the legendary football coach Knute Rockne, who sized him up on the spot and invited him to try out for his team. Hoffmann played during Rockne's last two seasons, and served as an assistant coach while working on his law degree. (Years later, he was elected to the National Football Foundation's Hall of Fame after being nominated by all 100 senators, Presidents Jimmy Carter and Gerald Ford, and Vice President Walter Mondale.)

During the late 1930s, Hoffmann became an aide to Philip Murray, president of the United Steelworkers of America, and head of the Congress of Industrial Organizations. After service in the navy during the Second World War, he returned to work for Murray, who sent him to Washington to organize lobbying efforts for the Steelworkers. Hoffmann's activities as a lobbyist and his fund raising for Democratic congressional candidates led to his appointment to the staff of the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee in 1967. "He served there 8 years, with exceptional effectiveness" said Republican Leader Howard Baker,

"as all of us on this side of the aisle were made painfully aware at the time." As a result of the friendships and associations he made during those years, Nordy Hoffmann was elected Senate Sergeant at Arms in 1975, and held the post until the Republicans won control of the Senate in 1980.

"If there is any story I can think of that characterizes Nordy's years with the Senate, it is this," said Senator Byrd: "When Nordy first came into office, a welcome sign suddenly appeared on the door of the Sergeant at Arms's suite. A welcome sign that meant everyone--Senators, staff, tourists, and other citizens--would be warmly received by the Office of the Sergeant at Arms. Nordy Hoffmann has always accommodated people, whether they were Senators or other citizens. Through his courtesy and 'can-do' spirit, he has earned a solid reputation as everybody's friend."

Nordy Hoffman died in Washington, D.C., on April 5, 1996, at the age of eighty-six.

About the Interviewer:--Donald A. Ritchie is associate historian of the Senate Historical Office. A graduate of C.C.N.Y., he received his Ph.D. in history from the University of Maryland. He has published several articles on American political history and oral history, including "Oral History in the Federal Government," which appeared in the *Journal of American History*. His books include *James M. Landis: Dean of the Regulators* (Harvard Press, 1980); *Heritage of Freedom: History of the United States* (Macmillan, 1985); *The Senate* (Chelsea House, 1988); and *The U.S. Constitution* (Chelsea House, 1989); *Press Gallery: Congress and the Washington Correspondents* (Harvard University Press, 1991); and is editor of *Minutes of the U.S. Senate Democratic Conference, 1903-1964*, recently published (Government Printing Office, 1999) and available online in Text and PDF format. He also edits the *Executive Sessions of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee* (Historical Series) (Government Printing Office, 1978-). A former president of the Oral History Association and Oral History in the Mid-Atlantic Region (OHMAR), he received OHMAR's Forrest Pogue Award for distinguished contributions to the field of oral history.

F. Nordy Hoffmann

Senate Sergeant at Arms, 1975-1981

Interview #1

Knute Rockne and Notre Dame

(Tuesday, June 28, 1988)

Interviewed by Donald A. Ritchie

RITCHIE: We have been doing these oral histories in a biographical framework, and have been asking people about their lives before they came to the Senate. In your case, I really wanted to start with your name. Where did the name "Nordy" come from? Was it a family name or a nickname?

HOFFMANN: It was a family name. My grandfather's name was Nordhoff, that was my mother's name. So when I was born they gave me the name Francis Nordhoff Hoffmann. Well, you're "fuff-fuffing" all the way through. Somebody in my family, it could have been my sister, called me "Nornie," and that moved along until it became "Nordie," and then it became "Nordy." How all that changed, I don't know, except it was easier for someone to write, and that's where the name Nordy came from. It came from Nordhoff, which is an old family name in Seattle.

RITCHIE: And you were born in Seattle?

HOFFMANN: I was born and raised in Seattle.

page 1

RITCHIE: In the Queen Anne area?

HOFFMANN: Queen Anne Hill, yes.

RITCHIE: What kind of a neighborhood is that?

HOFFMANN: Well, Queen Anne Hill is a middle-class neighborhood, very, very fine. It's a beautiful place to be. You're on top of a hill, but Seattle is like Rome, it has seven hills. Queen Anne Hill on the West overlooks Puget Sound and the Olympic Mountains. On the East it overlooks the Cascades, Lake Washington and Lake Union. It's up on top of a hill, and that's where I was born. I lived there practically my whole early life, but I went away to boarding school when I was in the fifth or sixth grade, to what was called St. Martin's College in Lacey, Washington. I was there until the eighth grade, then came back to Seattle and went to Cathedral School, which was on First Hill. I graduated from there in the eighth grade, and then went back to St. Martin's and graduated from there in 1927. From there I went to Notre Dame.

The first time I ever went to a co-ed school was at the Cathedral School, in the eighth grade. At Cathedral they were very strict about writing, learning how to write, and I was given a penmanship test, and I got a note saying that I didn't have to go to the penmanship class, which was great. That's basically

page 2

where I got a lot of free time, so I played baseball. But I was often by myself, so I wasn't too much interested in missing this class, it was right after the noon lunch break and I had nobody to play with.

But my basic background was there. We were a family that owned part of the Bon Marche, which is a big store in Seattle. My grandfather was the Vice President, and we were all raised in the store. Now, this comes from a German family, and a lot of people don't understand this, but in those days when a German family owned a business, you worked in the business. As a kid I carried packages, I worked in every department in the store. Eventually, I guess, they thought that I would go into the store, and I would have, because I was very close to my grandfather. He designed a new store, which is there now, a beautiful store, but they sold it during the Depression in the 1930s. So I gave that up. That never materialized. I was born and raised in that business, but it was not to be for many reasons, including the Depression. I am a child of the Depression. I saw it first hand, and I wish to God I never had to see it because it was so difficult for so many people.

I was lucky. My grandfather had some money. I went to college. I went to Notre Dame--I was going to go to Stanford, and then my cousin, who was in the business, said, "Why don't you go East?" In those days you only had trains, no airplanes, so I went

page 3

to the University of Notre Dame and graduated from Law School there, but it was a combined course of commerce and law, a six year course. Obviously I was going to go into the business. It was a marvelous experience, having gone there. I think that one of the anecdotes that people might be interested in was the fact that I was walking across the campus one day and I ran into a fellow by the name of Knute Rockne. Well, I was a freshman, and I don't think anybody understands this, but talking to Knute Rockne in those days was like talking to God. He looked at my size and invited me to try out for his team. This was my induction into football. Later I was made an All-American and then inducted into the Hall of Fame. And that's the greatest claim to fame that I have, because here I had never played the game, and then I learned the game from him and played for a university that never lost a game in two years, in two different seasons.

RITCHIE: Did they not have football at St. Martin's?

HOFFMANN: No, they had football, but they brought in the people from lumber camps to play, so we didn't have a chance. I was thin until I got to Notre Dame and began to sprout out. I had a desire to play, obviously that's what motivated me. I had learned to run when I was in high school. I played basketball. I

page 4

wasn't that good a basketball player, but the first thing I knew they had me playing football!

I graduated during the Depression. You got out of school, and I graduated from law school in '33, and nobody was looking for lawyers. You were lucky to find any kind of a job, and I did every kind of a job for a long time to keep body and soul together. It was a difficult, uphill fight. I never lost the fact that I could do things, and wanted to do things. That was motivation that I had, and that my folks and grandfolks had given to me, motivation to do better. Rockne had a lot to do with that too.

RITCHIE: Could we go back a little bit? Could you tell me about your parents, and about your grandfather who obviously had a strong influence on you?

HOFFMANN: Yes. Let's start with my grandparents. My grandparents had a business in Buffalo, New York. They had a department store. My grandfather's brother had married a McDermott, and they owned the "Bon Marche" in Seattle at First and Cedar Street. When he became ill, they called and got my grandfather to sell his department store in Buffalo and come out West and take over with my Aunt Josephine. When my grandfather's brother died, my grandfather stayed with Aunt Josephine. They moved that store from First and Cedar to between First and Second,

page 5

and Pike Street, which was more centrally located near the market. They were in that store until 1927 or '28 when they went into the new store, which is between Fourth and Fifth, and Fifth Avenue. My whole life, as I said, was working in the store. That was what I was taught to do as a young kid.

As I grew up, I began driving my grandfather where he wanted to go in cars, and I even conned him into buying me a new '29 Ford when I got to Notre Dame. He said, "It's got to have a rumble seat, and we've got to go out and look at the logging roads. He was just a wonderful, wonderful man. I loved him very much, and also my grandmother. They were so good to me, I can't tell you, they gave me every advantage that a kid could possibly have. I don't know whether I showed appreciation, but I think I did, because we were a very close family.

My mother was born in Buffalo, New York. They moved out to Seattle and my mother was married to my dad. He came from New York City. He was in Denver for a while, and went to Seattle. I mean, I can't tell you exactly what happened, but they got married, and I'm one of the kids from the marriage.

RITCHIE: How many kids were there?

HOFFMANN: Well, we only had a small family: nine. I've got a brother who is the caboose, and I am the engine. In the middle are all girls, except one brother that died during the war

page 6

from spinal meningitis. That was one of the things that I never forgot. Dad worked for a while during the war at Skinner & Eddy Shipyard, during the First World War. He was there during the whole war. Afterwards, my grandfather owned a brickyard, so he made my dad the head of the Lake Union Brick and Fireproofing Company. It was right on Lake Union. He took that over and ran it. Unfortunately, Dad died of a heart attack. One of the reasons for the heart attack was that he used to walk home from work, and there were two hundred and fifty stairs that he'd climb every night after work. He'd climb these stairs to get up the top of Queen Anne Hill from down at Lake Union.

My father was a very quiet sort of a fellow. My mother was very gregarious. She had a beautiful voice, she sang. I guess we were all musically inclined because of my mother. But she ran a great family, a typical German family. I was telling somebody about this the other night. I can remember so vividly that every time we would have noodle soup there would be noodles hung over all the radiators drying out. Someone said, "You don't do that!" I said, "Well, we did in those days."

They were transplanted people. In fact, when my mother was a little girl in Seattle--I have pictures of this somewhere--she had the first electric Christmas tree in Seattle. And that's many,

page 7

many years ago. They lived below Queen Anne Hill, but then they all moved up on Queen Anne Hill, and that's where the family lived. My mother came from Buffalo; my father from New York City; my grandfather and grandmother were both immigrants to this country from Germany and did very well. My grandfather, I have to say, was one of the finest men I ever knew in my life. He really was just a terrific man. He was a stern disciplinarian, but he had a soft-spot, and I knew where that soft-spot was, so we had a great time.

They were a family of hard-working people. Everybody in the family was expected to work, I mean the kids. We all had chores to do. When you raise a big family like that, you put dinner on the table, everybody has to have a part in it, including the boys. They had to wash the dishes and dry the dishes and do all the sort of things that have to happen. I guess we learned that at a tender, early age, which has never been a bad way to go. I think that that made a lot of sense.

We were taught at that time that there were a lot of people less fortunate--we were fairly well-off in those days--and we should spend time trying to help others. That just clicked in my mind, and when I got into football and out of football, hell we've been doing the same thing. We just got through working for the eighteenth year on the Vince Lombardi Golf and Tennis Tournament here in town, which has raised, at our last count, in excess of

page 8

three and a half million dollars for the Lombardi Cancer Center at Georgetown University. That's some of the things that I learned as a kid. We had a wonderful place across the Sound. We were there all summer, at a place called Eglon, which is on the peninsula across from Seattle on the Puget Sound. We were raised out there and learned how to live off the land. I remember digging clams on Friday, because we were Catholics and we had to eat fish. I taught my father how to fish; he didn't know how to fish and how to dig angle worms, or sea worms, salt water worms. I learned a lot of things about the Sound and its operations. I remember so vividly--you know, you go back. I couldn't understand why I would see porpoises coming in, going up to the end of the Sound, and all of a sudden the fish would stop biting. This intrigued me: why had they quit biting all of a sudden? There was a fellow by the name of John Johnson, who was an old Norwegian, I think. I asked him one day, "Mr. Johnson, you go out in your boat to fish. Why is it you come in when the porpoises come in?" He said, "Young man, the porpoises are telling you there's a storm coming, and they will not bite until they go back out." So that saved me a lot of rowing, because I learned from that man.

That's the way we were raised. We were raised with the Norwegians, the Finns, we had people raising chickens for us, they raised eggs for us, we got milk and cream from Finnish people.

page 9

They got all those provisions which my mother bought and provided for them, then they raised them and she paid them whatever it was. It was a very, very small community. The boat went out in the morning and came back at night, that was the transportation in and back to Seattle. So you were there by yourself and you learned a lot of things. I remember my mother one time, she was up baking in the outside kitchen like the dickens, which she always did on Fridays and Saturdays, and the preacher from the church walked by on the road below. He looked up at her and said, "Prepare, sister, for tomorrow is the Sabbath." And my mother said, "I know, but we're not allowed to go to church." He said, "Well, it's only for Christians, not Catholics." I'll always remember that. I got the biggest kick out of that.

You learned a lot of things on Eglon. You learned about boats; you learned about caulking boats; you learned how to fish; you learned about the water; you learned

about the elements. There were so many things that we would not have learned had we stayed right in the city. It was just a great way, and that's what my mother and dad did for us every summer, for all the times I can ever remember. Being a boy, the oldest boy, out there with my sisters, they were always trying to do everything with my hair. They wanted to bleach it, they wanted to use curling irons, and I'd say, "Get away from me, don't do that to me." I had a girls' softball team with my sisters. I played and my brother

page 10

played when he got a little older, and we borrowed one of the girls from out there to make a ball club. We had a great time. It was living like you ought to live in this world when you're growing up as a kid. Just the most wonderful, wonderful way to grow up that I could ever think of. That's what Seattle meant to me.

RITCHIE: How was it you happened to go to St. Martin's school?

HOFFMANN: I was in Coe School, and I had made the first three grades in one year. I had gone to Kindergarten. God, I even remember her name, the Kindergarten teacher's name was Mrs. Holbrook. Now, I am going to be eighty, and I can remember that long ago what her name was. She made a tremendous impression. She had taught us so well that I passed the first three grades, and my mother and father thought that I would be better off--and so did my grandfather and grandmother--if I went to this all-boys' school, St. Martin's. It was grade school and high school, and strangely enough they cut the grades off as I moved up to another grade. I was so young that in the sixth grade they kept me there two years, because I would have gone to college when I was sixteen if it hadn't been for that. Basically, that's why I went to St. Martin's. It was a Benedictine school. They thought that the discipline and everything that went on with it, the orientation of

page 11

making you do things at certain hours every day, would be better to train you. That was my grandfather's idea, and they were right, absolutely. It was just a marvelous place to go to school. It was four miles from Olympia, the capital of the state of Washington.

RITCHIE: And you were there right on through high school except for that one break?

HOFFMANN: Yes, except for the one year. I graduated from there in 1927.
/Reaches into desk drawer/ Think I don't save things?

RITCHIE: Oh, my, the yearbook of St. Martin's College, 1927.

HOFFMANN: But it was a great place to go. I got a little band together and we called it the Mad Martians, and we played for dances and card parties and all

sorts of things like that. I was the vocalist. They've got a picture of us in there somewhere. Here it is right here. Nordhoff Hoffmann "Nordie." See that spelling. "Sing away sorrow, cast away care." That was me.

RITCHIE: Right in the center by the drums.

HOFFMANN: This was the guy who had the band, but that was our band. We played jazz and all that sort of thing.

page 12

RITCHIE: /Reading/ "Jazzy syncopating orchestra."

HOFFMANN: I did all the singing. But it was fun.

It was a good place to go to school. It was a boarding school. You went on a half a day on Saturday and a half a day on Wednesday. I took four years of Latin, four years of math. In those days you wound up taking trigonometry in high school, so when you went to college you were well grounded in what you should have. That was what they were really aiming at, that kind of an education was what they'd give you. So that's why I went there, basically.

RITCHIE: Was there anybody there who was particularly influential for you?

HOFFMANN: While I was at St. Martin's? Not particularly. Let me tell you one story about that. We were kids, and we went to St. Martin's by the train. At one time Tommy Sullivan, who God rest his soul is dead, had some cigarettes, and he asked me to carry the cigarettes back for him. When I got to St. Martin's, one of the priests searched my place and found the cigarettes. I didn't smoke, and they knew that. They grilled me for two days to find out who the cigarettes were for, and I wouldn't tell. Finally, the prefect of discipline, whoever was the head man there, he took me down and he tried to beat the hell out of me, to

page 13

get me to tell. I never did tell. Chased him around the room and everything until I tired him out, he couldn't catch me. But he never did know.

That was one of the things that I always remember about that school: they were very, very strong on discipline. It was a very religious school. You went to church every morning and you had novenas. You were eating unbelievably good food. Fresh milk all the time. There were nuns there that cooked for you. They had a fellow by the name of Keifer, who was the baker, and he baked all the fresh bread. It was all the good things that you're supposed to have when you're growing up. It was a good place to go to school. Probably I didn't think so at the time, but I did after I got out of there. I hear from them all the time, they still get in contact. But that was where I had my high school days.

RITCHIE: And you thought for a little while about going to Stanford.

HOFFMANN: Yes, I had really registered at Stanford, and my cousin said, "Why don't you go East?" He had just come back from Wharton School at Penn (University of Pennsylvania), and he said, "Don't go there, it's downtown. Get a place where there's a campus." My grandfather knew a man who was teaching at Notre Dame in the law school. He asked me, "Would you like to go there?" I said, "I don't care." I wasn't crazy about the football thing,

page 14

because I didn't understand enough about it then. But I said, "I'd like to go." They looked it up and found out that it was rated highly for education, and I wound up by my grandfather and grandmother taking me back on the train. And here is a picture of Notre Dame, what it looked like in those days. /Points to aerial photograph on the wall/ I stayed right here in the freshman hall. It's no longer on the campus. There was sophomore hall. That was the University of Notre Dame in 1927-'28. That's the old stadium that burnt down, and they built a new stadium. In 1929 we were traveling. But that was the University that I went to. It has two lakes, and St. Mary's is over there. It doesn't look the same now.

RITCHIE: And shortly after you got there you met Knute Rockne, just by accident.

HOFFMANN: Yes, I was a freshman. I was walking across to get lunch. And I can tell you exactly where I met him. I was walking from here /freshman dormitory/ over to the dining hall, which was over here. Right about here, I was going around this building, and he came out of the main building, came across there, and met me. He said, "How are you, young man?"

I said, "Fine."

He said, "Where are you from?"

page 15

I said, "Seattle, Washington."

He said, "Oh, the pink-faced salmon kid."

I said, "Yes, sir."

He said, "You're out for football."

I said, "No, sir."

He said, "With hands like that?"

I said, "No, sir, I never played high school football."

He said, "Fine, come on out. Nobody could have taught you wrong."

I've said that I'm going to put a statue there one day to mark where I met Knute Rockne.

RITCHIE: So you went to try out for football?

HOFFMANN: I did, but I didn't go out until my sophomore year. What I went out for was track first. The reason I did was because I was a manager, and I was asked to roll the shot-put back to the shot-putters, Joe Repetti and another guy who were putting the shot out. I watched them for about a week, and I thought it was silly to roll it back, so I put the shot back--having watched them back--and I put it at least six feet farther than they were doing it. The coach found out about this, and the next thing I

page 16

had a uniform on. Well, they taught me how to run, they taught me how to put the shot. So I was out for track and made my letters, three letters in track. I made two letters in football. But the point was that I had learned how to run by the time I played football.

First I was a tackle, and then they transferred me to guard in 1931, before Rockne was killed. Having learned to run, and all those things that led up to it, probably gave me a step up over other people who hadn't had that kind of training. And motivation. The whole thing in life is motivation. If you're motivated, you're going to do it. This was new to me. Ted Toomey, who used to be one of our great tackles, was talking about this one time when I was making a speech. He said, "I want to tell you about this guy; this young man, when you looked in his eyes, he had the most piercing eyes to watch everything you did, and then he would come back and do it." He said, "That's how he became motivated." That's what his whole theory was, and I think that whatever success I had was not me, it was the people who were teaching me.

I remember, my father came back to see my play one time, just once, the only time he was back there. He came from Seattle and he was going to New York, and on the way back from New York he stopped. We played somebody, and I intercepted a pass. I thought, "Oh, boy, and my dad saw me." I returned the pass, oh,

page 17

maybe twelve or fourteen yards, I didn't get a touchdown or anything like that. Afterwards, we went out to dinner and I said, "Dad, did you see me intercept that pass?" He said, "Yeah." I said, "What did you think about it." He said, "You remind me of a cow pulling his foot out of the mud." /Laughs/ Which was true, I suppose, from his perspective. That brought me down a peg or two. But it was a great education to have been privileged to play for Notre Dame and for Rockne, and Hunk Anderson and the rest of the guys who were there. It lives with you forever. We meet every two years, the '29-'30 team, Rock's last team, we go out to the campus every two years to meet. In the old days we used to booze it up, now all of us are taking pills we don't booze it up, but we have a great time because we have a rapport. Everybody said, "I never saw anything like you guys. You guys are absolutely nuts about each other." We are. We have a tremendous

respect for each other. I get letters from these guys all over the country, I write to them--and some of them don't write back, but most of them do. It was part of a growing thing that went through my life, having that kind of people around you. They were all good people that worked hard, they were decent people.

I was back a couple of years ago, and a fellow came up to me in the Morris Inn and said, "You're Nordy Hoffmann." I said, "Yeah." He said, "You've always been my hero." I looked at him

page 18

and said, "You've got to be sick. I'm you're hero? What did I ever do?" He said, "When you were a freshman, you and Moon Mullins got arrested for keeping the Ku Klux Klan from going out in front of the campus." I said, "Are you serious?" He said, "Yes, isn't it true?" I said, "Yeah, it's true. Moon and I did get arrested." We were arrested for keeping the Ku Klux Klan from walking on our campus. They came up in masks, they were just walking right up Notre Dame Avenue. We met them and we took their masks off and everything else. I mean, we were playing for keeps. We were arrested and taken down to jail, and I remember we were down there a little while and went before Judge Hosinsky, who said, "Guilty or not guilty." We said, "Not guilty." He said, "Dismissed. By the way," he said, "erase that arrest from their records." This fellow said, "I was a freshman here, and I was never so impressed in my life. You had a lot of guts." I said, "Either that or I was a little bit nutty." /Laughs/ Probably both.

It was a great place to go to school, I'll tell you that. And my daughter just graduated from there this year. She put in her four years. Lived in the same residence hall where I used to live. Of course, it's changed a little bit, the girls are there. It's a good thing they weren't there when I was there! But the story that goes with it is to have your child go to that

page 19

same school--and they didn't have girls until about twelve years ago. She wouldn't go to any other school. She wanted to go to Notre Dame. I've had a great life. Doggone, the Lord has been good to me. I've had nothing but good. That's all from my background as a kid. I left home to go to Notre Dame and I didn't go back except to see my father and mother. Before my grandfather died I went into the war, and that's kind of a story that tells you what there was between he and I. My grandmother had died earlier. But my grandfather was alive when we came back into Seattle from Honolulu with casualties and people who had to go to hospitals from Hawaii. We had taken troops out and came back with these ambulatories, as we called them. We got into Seattle, oh I guess it was about two o'clock, tied up at the pier, and I took a cab and went up to see my grandfather. He was ninety-six or ninety-seven, and he was lying there on the couch. He had just had his lunch. I went up there, and unless you're German you probably won't understand this, but he got my hand and held my hand--we

always did that, we were great hand-holders. He held my hand and said, "Oh, it's so good to see you back." I said, "Well, it's over now, everything's going to be all right." He said, "Oh, I worried so much about you, all the time it was going on." But he said, "I'm glad to see you back."

page 20

Well, lo and behold, I went back to the ship, because I had to do some checking, and I came back about seven o'clock, and I got back and he had died. The nurse said, "He said, 'Just tell Nordy I'm happy and everything is peaceful', and he just went to sleep." Everybody said the only reason he kept on going was because I had not come home, and he wanted to see that I was all right. That's the kind of a thing that sticks with you, and gives you an idea of what kind of a family it was. We had a real great family, they were really terrific, cousins and aunts and uncles. When I think of those things, and think how lucky I was to have that kind of chance to get raised with that kind of people around me all the time, you've got to do some good in the world, you can't be all bad, because they were all good.

RITCHIE: Well, can you tell me also about Knute Rockne, who was such a legend. What was he to you?

HOFFMANN: Rockne was one of the special people in my life. Rockne was a motivator. He was a man who was teaching you, although he was teaching you football, he was teaching you that football is an experience in which you are now progressing beyond college and are walking into life. He was the other man who drummed into us, day after day, that those people who are here and are less fortunate, you ought to stop and listen. He said, "Never walk away from somebody who tries to tell you something, because he might be asking for help." I'll never forget that. I've

page 21

thought that all my life. About two years ago, you know what's happened here since they fixed that place up for the people who don't have homes, Mitch Snyder's thing [shelter sponsored by the Community for Creative Non-Violence]. We have a lot of people who come up here and they're asking for hand-outs. God bless them, they're having a tough time.

There was a lady across the street, and I was across the street, but I was in a hurry because I had to get downtown for a meeting. She tried to stop me and I just brushed her off and got in a cab, and then I said, "Oh my god, what have I done." I said to the cab driver, "Go around the block." She was still standing there. I said, "Lady, I'm sorry, I walked away from you and you were trying to say something, what was it?" She said, "I'm hungry." So I gave her some money and said to the cab driver, "We're all right now." She said, "You mean you came all the way back? God will always bless you," and waved. Now that was what Rockne taught me. You ask me what he taught me, he taught me to always listen when somebody is in real trouble. You may walk away from somebody who's going to jump out of a

building, and if you'd have stopped to talk to them maybe it would have made a difference.

Rockne was a teacher that didn't embarrass you in front of anybody else. Whatever he took up with you, he took up with you. One example of that was at one point in time we had played a

page 22

game on Saturday and Tom Conley, and Marty Brill, and I think Johnny O'Brien and I had gone to a speakeasy to have some beer. It was right at Notre Dame Avenue, and there was a drugstore right at that particular point, where Rockne's car was parked when we came out and raced to get the streetcar, so we'd get back in time for dinner. Everybody said, "Oh, he saw us." I said, "Hey, he didn't see us, no problem."

The next day, when everybody who had played the day before was supposed to take it easy, he told everybody not to wear pads except four people, and he named the four of us. He never said a word to us, but he scrimmaged us on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday. The four of us scrimmaged for four days before another game, and we were tired. That night he said, "I'd like the four of you to stay here." So the four of us stayed there. He said, "Gentlemen, I hope that that beer is sufficiently worked out of your system." That's all that was ever said, but he taught us a lesson. We never went back for beer the rest of the time we were in there! That's the way he taught you. He taught you individually, and he didn't make it general public information.

He was a perfectionist, and he wanted you to be a perfectionist. I think the best story of that was told by my father, and by Rockne the night before he left. He came back from Seattle and he'd seen my father. My father told me this story

page 23

too. He said that Rockne was out there to speak for the Studebaker Corporation, and all the dealers west of Denver were in the hotel in Seattle. My father went up to the head table afterwards and he said, "Mr. Rockne, I'm Nordy Hoffmann's father." So Rockne reached in his pocket and gave him his key and said "Go up to my room, I'll see you in a little while." After he got through he came up and said, "Oh, it's so good to see you." And they talked and yakked. And he said, "Have you got a problem, Mr. Hoffmann?" He said, "Yes, I have. I think my son is becoming conceited." Rockne looked at him and said, "Mr. Hoffmann, don't worry about that. He is not conceited. He is justifiably proud that he can do that job better than anybody else, and let me tell you, Mr. Hoffmann, he can. And he knows it. But that is not conceit. We knock conceit out of them in one play." My father told me this story and Rockne told me this story, so I know it jives, it wasn't something he just made up. That's typical of Rockne. Rockne was as proud of whatever I could do as if I had been his own son. He was that kind of a man.

He wanted to help you be a better person when you got out of school. He was teaching you all these little things, which probably most people wouldn't even look at. We had a guy by the name of Dick Donahue, who's still alive. Dick was always late for practice. There was a big clock up on the tower there and at a quarter after four you were supposed to be there. One day we were

page 24

out there and Donahue hadn't come out yet. We were all getting in a big round circle for calisthenics, that's the way we started to practice. Lo and behold, the gate opens on Cartier Field, and in comes Dick Donahue, and he lumbers across. Rockne waited until he got right up there and he said, "Thank you, Mr. Donahue, for coming for practice. We can begin now that you're here." Donahue was never late again for practice. That was his way of teaching somebody.

He would go out of his way to help people. He said that if the people had the desire to do it, he could give them the tools, which he could. He gave it to us, there's just no question about it. What the hell did I know about football? I'd never played it. And to go to play at a place like Notre Dame? Why, it had to be somebody, and it wasn't me, I'm telling you that. He drilled motivation in, and he wanted to prepare you for life. This was only a stopgap as far as you were concerned, but it was something that would make a contribution into making you a better or a whole person when you got out of school. I don't know what more I can say about the man, except that he was just one of the most wonderful men I ever knew. He had a tremendous effect--he still has an effect on us.

I just recently went to South Bend when they had the Rockne Hundredth birthday stamp unveiling, and I was asked by President Reagan to go out with him on Air Force One, so I did. It was a

page 25

big day as far as I was concerned, because this memorialized a man whom I felt was really worthy of it. Going back and thinking about what he had done for me as a kid, not that I ever became anything great, but I mean, his greatness in being able to diagnose what turns you on and off, to me that is the greatest thing in the world. But that's the way he was. He was always, always a gentleman. Rockne said in 1929 we were the ramblers, because we had no stadium and so we traveled. All our games were on the road.

RITCHIE: The stadium had burned down at that stage?

HOFFMANN: Yes, the stadium burned down and they were building the new stadium, which is there now. He said, "You are playing for a great university and you ought to look the part." He said, "The traveling squad will not wear sweaters, they will not wear tee-shirts, they will come out with a tie and coat (he called it a jacket), and you'll be dressed that way when you're going anyplace representing

the Notre Dame football team." We went to go out of Plymouth one time, I think we were going to play the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia, and three guys came down in sweaters. Now, these were three starters, whose names I would not reveal to you or anybody else, and these three starters Rockne took a look at them before the train got in

page 26

and said, "Manager, would you take these gentlemen back to the campus and get their jackets and their ties. Now, if you can't make it back here in ten minutes, don't bother coming back." They never made the trip. That's how he taught people a lesson. He felt that if you were going to be good enough to play for Notre Dame, you were representing a great university and ought to look like it. That's what he made you do.

RITCHIE: That says a lot about him. I guess more people are familiar with him from the movie with Pat O'Brien. You must have seen that movie many times. How accurate a portrayal is that?

HOFFMANN: It's pretty accurate from the standpoint of George Gipp, and O'Brien did a good job in that movie also. It was realistic, there's no question about it. There was a lot of stuff they threw in that probably didn't belong, but by and large it was accurate. It was a good movie and it told something about him.

RITCHIE: I remember the locker room pep talks.

HOFFMANN: Right. Oh, those were great. He gave those. I'll never forget Southern Cal. We were playing Southern Cal in 1930. Southern Cal was undefeated and we were undefeated. We were going to the coast and we were kind of a beaten up team. We had a lot of injuries. He looked at us. There was a training table and I was sitting right at the bottom of the training table

page 27

and he was standing over there looking at us. He said, "Gentlemen, I salute you. You've done everything. You've won for the university, you've won for Our Lady, you've done everything you possibly can. It's just too much to ask you to go out and win another one. Just go out and play like men and don't worry about anything because in my book you're the greatest bunch of men I have ever seen." Then he stopped and he said, "There is one thing I would ask of you. Moon Mullins" (who was a full-back) "comes from Alhambra" (which is out in Los Angeles). And he said, "If you would get fourteen points in the first half, I would let Moon start the second half, because there's thirty thousand people from Alhambra in here just to see him play."

Well, we tore off the locker room door going out of that place. We went out and scored twenty-eight points--and they called two touchdowns back in the first half.

We were just alive, and he started Mully in the second half, as he said he would. He had us so high we could have walked on top of that stadium without even touching the ground. We were ready to go because here was a guy we loved, we'd played with him, and Rock said we ought to do one for Mully. And Mullins was a very popular guy. Moon went out and started the second half, and somebody hit him too hard, and Bert Metzger took him to task out on the field, didn't cause any problems, but that's the way he motivated us. How he got our team back up is a longer story. It started in

page 28

Tucson, Arizona, when we were playing there. I might as well tell you this, because it gives you an idea of the man. We were at the University of Tucson and we went to work out. Tom Conley and Marty Brill--I always say these guys together because we were always together, we were just buddies--we went out to the field and one of us tried the dressing room door (there were big doors on both ends where we were supposed to dress). I don't know whether it was Tom or it was Marty who tried the door and said, "The door's not open." I said, "Well, how far is it from those mountains down to here?" Well, Tom was the captain. First thing, the guys didn't even look at the door, they came out and watched us. Rockne comes out, and we were supposed to be dressed and on the field at ten o'clock, it's now ten-twenty and we're not even dressed because the door wouldn't open. Rockne came in the dressing room and the door's open--it was just stuck. He said, "Get dressed." We got out on the field and he said, "Gentlemen, I've called you together to tell you: I have phlebitis and I think I'm going to get the evening train and go back to Chicago. You don't need me, you're not listening to me." As a result of this, everybody just hung their heads.

Well, I think we had seven defenses against Southern Cal, and we had our offenses, and so Marty spoke up and he said, "Mr. Rockne,"--we always called him Mr. Rockne--"give us another

page 29

chance." He said, "That was tough that that door stuck, but why should I give you another chance? I'm not going to get another chance with phlebitis." We said, "Please give us one more chance." He said, "All right, I'll give you one more chance. We will be back out on the field at one o'clock. Go back to the hotel, get your lunch, and be back out here at one. I will question ever member of the offensive and defensive teams" (we had to play offense and defense, we didn't have two ways to go then) "and anybody misses a question, I'm going to get on that train."

I tell you, we went back and we studied every defense and every offense. He questioned every single guy on that traveling squad, and nobody missed a thing. He said, "Okay, I'll go to California with you." That's where the football game was won, just on a stuck door. This is what it was. It wasn't planted, because we didn't

know the door was stuck, but that's how he turned that around to make it the most important thing there was. That was his ability to do. That's the way he was.

RITCHIE: And he'd get you thinking like a team, pulling together.

HOFFMANN: You'd better believe we were thinking like a team, because if anybody had missed the assignment, the rest of the guys would have killed him. So everybody went back and studied.

page 30

Nobody ate lunch. They just studied. Boy, I can remember that day, even though it's been a long time.

RITCHIE: Did he really tell stories about "the Gipper?"

HOFFMANN: He did not when I was there. He was sick one game and Tom Lieb took us to play Northwestern. He was assistant coach at the time, and Bonnie, his wife, sent a wire to us to do good. Lieb got the telegram and got all welled up and said, "I can't read it, I'm crying." Moynihan was the center, and Moynihan said, "Give it to me, I can read English." So he read it, and it was the thing that turned the football game around.

RITCHIE: What was the telegram?

HOFFMANN: The telegram said: "Please do your best for Rock." He did have a lot of stories that he gave you. Most of the stories were true stories. He knew how to motivate people, like the thing at California. You know, you've done everything you could and we don't want you to think you have to go out there and win again, and we were dying to win because we wanted the championship. But he wanted to see if that would just kind of eat at us a little bit, and then he gives us this bouquet of roses, Moon Mullins, to go on. Then he gives you the thing about learning all the plays offensively and defensively.

page 31

Some of the guys had not been doing too well in that, and it was lousing up our formations, so he made everybody go back and study them. And he knew that we would kill the guy that didn't know, because Rock would have done back. I mean, that's the way he did. It was just remarkable the way he could sense what was in your minds. He just did it so beautifully.

RITCHIE: And you were undefeated both those seasons.

HOFFMANN: Yes, '29 and '30. Ran though both seasons. And he was killed March 31, 1931, after we had completed those two seasons. I played one year afterwards.

RITCHIE: That must have been a terrible blow for you when he died.

HOFFMANN: Probably the worst blow I'd ever had, up to that point, because the man was so close to all of us. I tell you, you couldn't believe walking across that campus at noon when we found out that he had been killed in that airplane crash. It was just an unbelievable thing, in Bizar, Kansas. It was a very, very sad day for all of us, and it stayed sad for a long time. It was one of the biggest funerals I'd ever seen. Well, the Lord knew why he wanted him. He had just become a Catholic not too long before that. He had a rosary bead in his hand, and he was going to California to talk about "The Spirit of Notre Dame," they were

page 32

going to make the movie. And that's where he got lost. It was a very sad day for all of us.

He had greatness in himself and he transmitted to you the fact that you ought to be proud that you were there, and proud that you were playing for Notre Dame. That all worked on our minds, it was a very, very difficult problem that we had to handle. We did handle it, and we came out very well after it was over, because I think most of us felt that's the way Rock wanted us to go. Rockne always will be a legend, and a strange part of it is that all those young men that were on that football team, we never called him anything but "Mr. Rockne." Not coach, not Rockne, not anything, only Mr. Rockne. We had that kind of respect for him. Now for kids the ages we were, I was about eighteen or nineteen, and some were younger and some were older, we all had that same respect for him. That is a lot to say about the man.

RITCHIE: So your program was really a six year program at Notre Dame and you stayed for law school.

HOFFMANN: I wasn't finished until '33.

RITCHIE: And for a period you stopped playing and you coached, didn't you?

page 33

HOFFMANN: I coached two years, as an assistant coach. I don't think I was very good, but then that's neither here nor there. We coached two years and then they let us all go, and Elmer Layden came in and took over. But that was the university. It was so tough when we got out of school. Nobody wanted to talk about anything but football. They didn't want to talk about putting you to work, or a job, and that's what we wanted. And it was tough, I'll tell you. I lived through the Depression. I hope it never, ever happens again. But it taught us a lot of things that we learned to do for ourselves that we wouldn't do before.

I think we were maybe taking too much for granted. That's what this thing is telling us now, this horrible drought we're having out West. I lived in Kansas

during that time, and I know what the drought was. I saw the dust storms. I was coaching out there at the University of Wichita, and it was tough, it was really very, very rugged. I suppose it was to teach us a lesson, I don't know, but those things, what they do to those poor farmers, it's just unbelievable. And then three or four more years you've got the caterpillars coming out eating the corn. All those things teach you to get your act together, as they say.

RITCHIE: Did you think of yourself as becoming a coach?

page 34

HOFFMANN: No, I did not. But I was asked to coach, by Hunk Anderson, coach the line, guards and tackles. He thought I could do it, so I did. Moose Krause says the only reason he wasn't a great player was because I coached him! We're very close friends and we just kid each other about it. But I coached there, and it was tough going through law school, because I had to do a lot of scouting, and I was out of town a lot. But we made it. You just put your nose to the books and got going, when you had the time to do it. It was an interesting experience coaching. I coached a little bit after I got out. I left there and then went to work at the White Motor Company, and then went back to coaching at the University of Wichita. I didn't like coaching there. Coaching was fun for me to do, but I didn't like the University of Wichita because it was a city university. Everybody could call you up and tell you how bad you were doing, and what you were doing wrong as a coach. I said, "I don't need this!" So I quit, resigned and went out to Seattle. I lived in Seattle for a while, lived in Bremerton, Washington, for a while, and tried to get things together. Then I came back East and went to work for the Curtiss-Wright Corporation in Pittsburgh.

RITCHIE: What kind of a business was that?

HOFFMANN: They were making hollow steel propeller blades. I worked there and became interested in the union. The Tool and Dye Makers kept saying to me, "You're a college graduate. You played

page 35

football. You ought to get involved in the labor movement." And I didn't like the labor movement, because I didn't particularly like one particular thing, which shall go unmentioned because I'm still in this city. But I really and truly didn't like it too much, but I had a great respect for the Tool and Dye Makers, because they were a unique people who could create. Finally, I went in to Pittsburgh and saw Clint Golden, who was a vice president of the Steelworkers, and he took me in to see Phil Murray, and Dave McDonald. They offered me a job to go to work for them. I still wasn't convinced, and I was working the night shift at Curtiss-Wright, on Neville Island. They [the management?] sent a messenger to tell me that if I needed any money to fight the union, they would make it available. Well, that made me mad. I said, I'm going to go into the union, because I don't like this.

United States Senate Historical Office -- Oral History Project

www.senate.gov

This stinks. So I did, I became involved in the trade union movement, went up to work in Pittsburgh, and settled some strikes. Wherever Phil Murray assigned me, I went to do those kind of duties. I think it was very, very interesting that it would be at that time in my career that I would do this, because there was a lot of unrest in the labor movement at that particular time.

RITCHIE: This was about 1937 or so?

HOFFMANN: This was about 1939. So I went to work for him, and whatever assignments he gave me I did. Finally, I guess in

page 36

1943 I enlisted in the Navy. When I got out of the Navy in 1946, Phil Murray said to me, "Where do you want to go?"--going back to my job. In the days before I left I was doing research for the International Union in Pittsburgh, and I was also doing a lot of comparing notes and redoing things in plants so that people would understand, setting up benchmarks and studying the various manuals which they had to go through. This was in '46. I said, "Where do you want me to go?" He said, "Well, we have an opening in Philadelphia as a director. You can go up there for a while. You can go to Cleveland. Or you can go to Washington." And Washington to me in those days was not one of the things I wanted. I said, "Where could I best serve you?" He said, "You could best serve me in Washington." I said, "Well, I don't know anything about it." He said, "Yes, but you can learn, and you're a quick learner."

So, in 1947, I came to Washington, not knowing anything about the legislative process. Nothing. I knew nothing about it. I later became the legislative director for the Steelworkers Union. Strangely enough, the man who had more influence on me in that day and age was a man who in 1948, during the summer when Congress went home, didn't go home. The chairman of the House Rules Committee, his name was Al [Adolph] Sabath. He took me to his office every morning during the week, five days a week, from

page 37

nine until twelve. He taught me everything I could possibly know about the legislative process. He took me under his hand. I knew nothing about it, and this man was so remarkable. He would go over it, and he had such great patience with me. I said, "Mr. Chairman, you must think I'm stupid, but I don't understand how you can do some of these things." He said, "Well, that's the legislative process. That's what you're learning." He told me the committee process. He told me everything.

I was then the legislative director of the Steelworkers, and we had an office at 718 Jackson Place, the old CIO Building. I learned from that man, Al Sabath. He was chairman of the Rules Committee and did a marvelous job. I've got to tell you one story: the Steelworkers had a bill up, going through the Rules Committee. I went

up there that morning and I said, "Mr. Chairman, you don't have enough votes to get this through." He said, "You take care of the Steelworkers, I'll take care of the Congress." I said, "Okay, but I'm worried." "Don't worry," he said, "I'll take care of it." Well, they went into session and we were all outside, couldn't go in. All of a sudden the doors flew open and someone said, "The chairman's had an attack!" I went in and he was laying on one of those black rubber couches with all the buttons on it that were so prevalent around here in those days. He was lying on the couch, and I thought, oh, my God! I said, "Mr. Chairman." He opened his eye and he said, "I told

page 38

you they wouldn't get a vote!" [Laughs] So I learned that there were a lot of ways not to get a vote. But he taught me everything I could know about the committee procedures, about what it was to get a bill through the Senate, and all those sorts of things, before I got involved in this thing.

We formed a committee, which was known as the legislative committee of the Steelworkers Union. One of those guys is a Congressman now, Frank Annunzio, he was on that committee with me. Frank and I are old friends who go way back. What I was trying to build in those days was a second echelon, in other words, when the district directors became old, I wanted to have somebody to go in there and take over, without pushing him out of the way on the way. I had these conversations with these people. That's what I was building. Phil agreed that that was a great way to do it. And we did build one hell of an operation, all over the country.

We went into summer institutes at land grant colleges. We brought in the local unions. I had a blackboard, and I'll never forget it. It was a flip over blackboard. One unit would come in and I'd say, "All right, what's wrong with your International Union?" And I'd write it all down. I had two gals in there who were taking down shorthand, everything was taken down. The next class came in and I flipped the board over without erasing it. And invariably, practically everything was on there. As a result

page 39

of that, we wrote a manual, called the Legislative Education Manual. From that, we got a picture made in 1958, a movie on pollution and that sort of that thing. As [I.W.] Abel used to say: "Nordey, the only problem with you, you were ten years ahead of your time." That pollution thing hadn't come up, but we used this as an example.

I remember one time President Kennedy said to me, "Nordey, I have never gone to a city in the United States where the Steelworkers weren't out there to greet me." So we were building a good organization. One thing we did, we tried to make it foolproof so that you were not running against the director or something like

that. If somebody took a slice out of it, the committee just took action, said: "Look, get out of there, you're not going to do that." It worked very well, as long as Phil was there. It dissipated a little bit later on, but I'm, not going to go into the details of that. The men are dead, so I just don't think it does any good to raise those kind of things today. But we were building it. Some people were for it, some people were against it. As Kennedy said, we were there at the front lines, and we got him votes all over the United States. We had them organized. What we did there, and I think this is important, I learned this because somebody came to me one time in Cleveland and said, "Nurdy, why are we opposed to Bill XYZ?" I said, "I don't know,

page 40

why?" He said, "Well, we got this letter from you guys saying we're opposed to this bill. You can maybe tell me why, because I don't see why." I looked at him, and I said, "Frankly, I've never seen the bill, and I don't know why, but let me find out about it." Instead of going back to Washington, I went back to Pittsburgh. I said, "Phil, I think I found a key of what we're doing wrong." He said, "What?" And I told him the story. I said, "What we've got to do is bring these people in from the local unions and let them tell us what we ought to be doing, like I did in the institute. I said, "I think it would be very, very helpful to you if we were able to do this." He said, "Go with it." So we began doing that, we began listening to what *they* said, rather than us dictating to them what *we* said. That changed the whole sphere, and it was a practical reaction.

Well, I stayed with the Steelworkers until 1967, when Mike Mansfield and Ed Muskie asked me if I would head up the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee. I got permission from I.W. Abel and the rest of them to take an early retirement and went to work in the Campaign Committee. That's the picture you saw of those people who worked for me then, they're all doing successfully. Again, it was a question of how you get these kids to do stuff. These were young people. You had to motivate them. Go back to Rockne, go back to Notre Dame, motivation. I said to them, "Look, the Democratic National Committee is supposed to make the Fact

page 41

Book. They aren't going to make the Fact Book. We've got to make the Fact Book. How are we going to make this Fact Book? Are you guys stupid enough that you don't know how to do this?" They said, "Give us this task," so I did. The Fact Book came out every four years, so in '67, '71, these guys did the Fact Book, these young kids whose picture you saw. They worked hard, overnight, they were motivated to do it. It was teaching them the same thing that Rock had taught me. These kids were so dedicated, they worked so hard. I tell you, I'd never have gotten anyplace if it hadn't been for those kids. It was the people who were there who were doing the real job.

It was so impressive, because all the time that Nixon was around, we never lost the Senate. I always take great pride in feeling that we did *not* lose the Senate. At one time, it was very close, and I coined the expression "SOSS": Save Our Seven Senators. That's what it took, and that's what we were able to do. This was done not because of me but because of these dedicated young people who really and truly worked hard. I was reminded reading this book [Warren Featherstone Reid Oral History], I was right across from [Warren Magnuson] Maggie's office. Maggie used to kid me and say, "Boy, you've got the youngest kids on your staff." I'd say, "You've got a lot of young people working for you too, Maggie." He'd say, "Yeah, they're smart too."

page 42

But we were trying to build something. We brought in all the guys who were exhibitors of new media, or radio, of anything that was new in campaigns. We took pictures of the stuff that they used, and we ran a movie projector and showed them how somebody else had done it. We were able to stay right with it through the whole thing. It was fun. I loved it. I mean, that's the kind of test I love anyway. I like to be busy and right into it. We brought these people in, they'd come in for a Saturday and we'd have everybody over in the Dirksen Building Auditorium over there. These guys would just show their wares and answer questions, so that we were a better equipped bunch of candidates than had been up to that point. I'm not knocking anybody who was before us, but that was the changing time when the TV was coming in and costing a lot of money. We brought a fellow by the name of Schwartz, who was the greatest radio guy I ever saw, from New York, and he did one hell of a job for us, I'll tell you. These were the kinds of things that were interesting to me because they were new, on-going. We did not have not lots of money, but we had enough money to get by. I would go out and raise the money to pay the staff. It was not easy, but I've got some friends who I knew over the years, and I would call them and say--we need some money." "How much do you need?" I'd say, "I need about fifty thousand dollars. I've got to pay the staff and so on and so forth." Give them a list of

page 43

things. The first thing I'd know, about an hour later I'd get a call saying, "Your fifty thousand is on the way." That's the way we paid the staff and how we were able to do it. It was a very difficult problem to do, but these kids were so dedicated. This picture is a party we just held this year. They come down here every year. One of them came from Denver, one of them came from Seattle, just to come back to have lunch together with this group of people. Now, that says a lot for kids that have been out of it for a long time. That was 1967 to '75.

Then one day I was working for Maryland Economic Development, the governor had appointed me, it was a free job. I was a commissioner, and I got a call down there. They said, "You've just been nominated to be Sergeant at Arms of the Senate." I said, "Hell, I wasn't even running for it." So I got back up here, and that

night they told me, "Yeah, you're going to be the Sergeant at Arms," and that was in 1975. So I became Sergeant at Arms of the Senate, and the rest will go on from there.

RITCHIE: Could we go back a little bit? You mentioned that Phil Murray hired you. He's a towering figure in labor history. What kind of a person was he to work for?

HOFFMANN: Phil was one of those geniuses who come along once in a lifetime. Scotch-Irish. He lived in Pittsburgh. He headed up the old CIO and the Steelworkers. I worked for him directly,

page 44

and was very close to Phil. When he'd go to Florida they used to send me down just to see that he got to go where he was going. I learned about the labor movement through him. Talks about the old coal mining days and things which were very interesting to me, to go back over that history, which was unbelievable. Phil was a very quiet man. I think he probably wouldn't have taken the job of President of the Steelworkers Union except they wanted him to take it. But he was the most loved guy that I ever knew in the labor movement. Everybody loved Phil Murray. He was a great family man. He was a builder. He had a vision of things that he wanted to do.

He was not against things, but you've got to remember he was a coal miner, and coal miners--one of the things they didn't believe in was anybody with a college education working for a trade union. I had a college education. He and Clint Golden were very close in this thing, and Phil just gave me assignments. Some of the assignments he gave me I thought about later, and I thought, "Why did he do that to me?" He sent me up one time to Clareton, the coke works, to settle a strike, most difficult thing I ever did in my life. We were having real trouble up there, and I was explaining what we were going to do, and how we had to control production, and with controlled production it's pretty hard to give them an incentive. We were going to try to

page 45

manufacture this incentive with the help of the corporation. This guy yelled some obscenity from the floor about me. So I just got off the platform and said, "Stand up, you bastard, whoever said that. I want to see who you are." The guy wouldn't do it. I said, "Gentlemen, all in favor of this, say aye." Everybody said aye. The strike was over. That's how you did it! [Laughs] I remember Rockne used to do those things, get them while they're hot. But Phil was that kind of a man, he wanted you to do well.

I got to know him so well because he did not like to take the train to Pittsburgh. In those days you did not have too many planes to start with, and he didn't like the airplanes anyway. So I used to drive him from here to Pittsburgh when he wanted to go home, and then I'd come back. But that was a privilege for me

because I could talk to the man all the way up and listen to him. He was a needler.

One time I was in Pittsburgh, bringing him back down this way, and he said, "Well, let's take this other way. Instead of going through Breezewood, let's go to the next place down, then we'll drive through this little town." So I said fine and dandy and we drove through this little town, and I don't know this, but he does. I go through this town and the first thing I get about two blocks and a siren comes up. He said, "Don't worry, I'll take care of this for you." The cop comes up, and he says, "You were

page 46

going x number of miles in this speed limit." Phil said, "I'll take care of this." The cop said, "Follow me."

So we followed the policeman down to the magistrate's office, we go in there, and Phil's going to plead my case. We go in there, and Phil says, "I've been trying to tell this big guy to slow down, but he won't slow down, he insists on going faster!" This magistrate looks at me and says "Twenty-five dollars and costs." I paid thirty-two fifty, or something like that, which was about all the money I had in my pocket. And Phil is laughing all the way. He came back here, he told everybody this story, how he got me arrested and saved me from getting thrown into jail. [Laughs] This is typical of what he would do.

He was a man who built a new structure as far as the Steelworkers were concerned, and I think even greater than that--he was the man who wanted to drive the Communists out of the Steelworkers and the CIO. He did. I was one of the guys who had to do this. I know what I'm talking about. He was motivated to do this. He did not like to hurt anybody, but he said it had to be done in a justifiable way. One time, many years ago, we had a director in one of the cities, and I was told that this guy was a Commie, and had been leaning towards the Communists. They had a meeting of the inner circle in Chicago. This guy's picture is taken going into this place. He comes back, and I get a copy of this picture. I said to Phil, "This guy is a Commie, and he's on

page 47

your payroll, and your allowing him to go to these meetings, inner circles. He said, "You got proof?" I said, "Here's his picture." So we called the guy and brought him in to Pittsburgh, and he said, "I'm not a Commie." Phil said, "What do you mean you're not a Commie. You went to their meetings." "I never went to their meetings." In the meantime, I'd gone to John Cunnif and I said, "Prepare this for Phil." Phil called the guy and said, "Mr. Cunnif, bring me in this piece of paper." So he went in, and here is his expense sheet, Cincinnati to Chicago and back. There was no meeting, no reason for him

to go, and there was his picture. So Phil said, "Here are the facts." The guy said, "I resign." He said, "You're fired." That's what Phil did.

Phil worked very hard to rid the old CIO of Communists. There were people who were in top positions, and people like that, who we knew had to get out. My job was basically to clean them out. Not totally, but I mean I had to look at it from that standpoint. I think we did a pretty good job. We kept our head above water and we didn't have to worry too much about it. But that's the kind of a man Phil was. Phil was a very dedicated, wonderful, family man. Loved his family, loved his union, and he really and truly worked very, very hard to do what could be done. I'll always remember that. I remember when he died in San Francisco. We had had a late supper together. He had gone to a banquet but he never ate there. He'd gone up to bed with his

page 48

wife, and they called me about three o'clock in the morning and said Phil Murray had just died. I had to get him back to Pittsburgh. It was another low point in my life.

But I think all these things about these great men had a great, wholesome effect on me. When you look at what they did, and how they did it. They took time to smell the daisies on the way, and that I think is one of the problems we may have overlooked. But Phil Murray was a great man in his particular field, and the field was labor. He had somebody on the other side of him who had an ego that wouldn't stop, in John L. Lewis, but Phil took this job with the Steelworkers, and he built the CIO, and then brought it into the AFL-CIO, he was a builder. A fine, fine man, just a great man.

RITCHIE: I'd like to continue these discussions, but it might be good to call a halt at this stage. It's fascinating information, and your character studies are particularly strong. This has been great, thank you very much.

HOFFMANN: I don't know if I helped anything.

RITCHIE: Oh, yes. We really set the groundwork, and I'd like to go into more depth in each of these areas.

HOFFMANN: Whatever you want to do. Because I've been a lucky man.

page 49

RITCHIE: You have, and there have been some fascinating people that you've worked with.

HOFFMANN: There's no question about it. It's been marvelous.

[End of Interview #1]

F. Nordy Hoffmann

Senate Sergeant at Arms, 1975-1981

Interview #2

Phil Murray and the CIO

(Thursday, July 7, 1988)

Interviewed by Donald A. Ritchie

RITCHIE: It struck me while I was reading the transcript of your first interview that your family's background was business and management, and here you spent most of your career in the organized labor movement. Did you ever think that was incongruous, perhaps, from your early years?

HOFFMANN: I have thought of that very often. But even when I was with my family in the Bon Marche they did something which really went against my grain, and I said to my grandfather: "I don't think this is right." It was a very simple thing. They used to have what they called "the picnic." Well, the picnic was to take the family--the family of people who worked for the store, that's the whole family, it's a family store--to a place called Faraway, which was the McDermott's summer home, over close to McNeil Island on the other side of Tacoma. They would give them the day off and provide the boats and the food and all that stuff, and everybody had to go, whether they wanted to or not. I resented that, and I told my grandfather, "I don't think it's right to do that." I said, "I think they ought to make the

page 51

choice, do they want this or don't they want this." He looked at me and he said, "You're really a rebel." I said, "No, I'm not, I'm just giving you an expression of how I feel about it." That was the only part that I ever had as far as labor unions were concerned.

I do, however, think that there is one other thing that should go into the record. That was when I was at Notre Dame. I was president of the Monogram Club, which is all athletes in various sports, I'd been elected to that. This was in 1931. And at the end of 1931 there was a fellow whose name shall go unmentioned, who was locally from Washington, D.C., which is kind of interesting, and he was let go from the university six weeks before he was to graduate. The Monogram Club took this up. Now, you've got to remember that I had just been hired as an assistant coach for '32 and '33, but I was also the president of the Monogram Club, and they took the position that the penalty was too severe to let him go from the university and not let him graduate. The Club took a definite, hard-line position that being that the penalty of expulsion from the University was too severe. I met with Father Steiner, who was one of the old heads there and talked to him because he was our advisor, and said, "What shall I do?" He said, "You can only do one thing. You're president of the Monogram Club, you have to take this and do with it the way you think."

I felt that the man who had been accused had been over zealous about what he was doing. We took our position up with the university president and the vice president, and they tried to tell us to go away, don't do this. The Monogram Club at that point was something like eighty-four or eighty-five people who were athletes. Not all football players, there were tennis players, there were soccer players, there were golf players. The president said no, they were not going to relent. This was the way it was going to go. We then took it upon ourselves to say, "Fine, if that's the ultimatum, we, the Monogram Club members, will be over there Saturday noon, on the main steps of the administration building for our final meeting, and we will be packed and ready to go home." I could just see my whole career going out the window, but I knew that if I didn't do this, these guys would look at me as a coward. I would be no leader, I would be a follower. So I just said, "No, I'm not going to do that. We're going to stay with it."

Father Steiner had told me to stay with my guns. I was right and I ought to stay with them. So we went up on the porch, and there were eighty-five athletes from the Monogram Club at the bottom of the steps, with their bags packed. They were ready to leave. This was in May. I met with the president of the university and the vice president. The vice president advised me that he had just signed a contract with me and this was a pretty

bad way to accept a contract. I retorted quickly to him and said, "I'm of little help to the university if I walk away from a job that I was elected to carry out as a leader, and expect these people to follow me when I'm a coach." And that's how I felt. Well, as a result of that we had the negotiations, and they finally said to us, "Okay, we will campus him--or give him a minor penalty--but he won't be able to compete in athletics." He was a baseball pitcher; we had a double-header with Michigan State that day, and he was to pitch the second game. I said, "Well, there's one caveat. That cannot carry over on this Saturday's game. He's got to pitch the second game." The president of the university said, "No, no." I said, "That's the deal. We're here and we're ready to make a deal with you, but that's what it's going to be." Finally he condescended and said, "Okay, we'll do it that way."

Well, it might be interesting to note that in that time--and Notre Dame was national champion for two years in a row--there wasn't one line in print about this happening. We saw to that. We were not trying to disgrace Notre Dame. All we were trying to do was to get justice for this fellow who had fulfilled three and three-quarters years of his residency, to complete his studies and get a degree. As a result of that, you say I came from a management side--I think that I had something in my background which must have been there, because we did win. We did it

quietly, everybody went back to their rooms, and everybody competed, and we had no more problem with it, and they didn't fire me because I had done it. Basically, it gives you a concept of what was in me, because there were two examples, first in the store, and then at Notre Dame.

When I left coaching and went back to Seattle I worked in a Shell Service Station. We had a fight or disagreement with the Teamsters who were trying to organize us. We went down and had a vote on it. I did not particularly care the way that was handled as far as they were concerned. They probably didn't care the way it was handled as far as we were concerned, but nevertheless it was over. I left there and came back to Pittsburgh, to take a job with Curtiss-Wright. At that point in time, I think I told you that I became interested in the union, and followed through on that interest because of the Tool and Dye workers, for whom I had a great deal of respect for. They were artisans as far as I was concerned. They insisted that because of my educational background that I should have an interest in the union. I then later had some things happen in the plant which gave me a feeling that I should join the union and help it, and I did.

When I left Curtiss-Wright I went to work for the Steelworkers Union, Phil Murray and Clint Golden and I worked in the national office at various things. I was given various assignments. We were doing time-and-motion studies for a lot of

people all through our contracts. We were also assessing the type of plants. I remember I was sent to look at a Steel and Wire plant in Worcester, Massachusetts. The plant was so obsolete that I can't tell you. Joe Scanlon and I looked at this, studied it, and came back with a recommendation that that plant should be torn down. They ought to build a new one if we're going to stay in competition. Some twenty years later they did tear that plant down and built an up-to-date wire company. But basically that was the type of thing that I was sent out to do. Where there was a real problem within a staff or something, they sent me in to mediate it and get it back on track. Whatever he sent me to do, that was what I did. Some of it was very, very difficult.

You've got to remember that in those days we were fighting the Commies. They were in our hair all the time. We had to know where they were going, and how they were going. I got a lot of help to know where they were going to come into our meetings and try to break up our meetings, or as they did a great deal they would come into a meeting and when the guys would get tired of the yakking going on they would leave, except the Commies. They would stay and then try to pass some pieces of legislation which would be devastating. So we had to get people who would stay with us for the rest of the time and outvote them. This was all a practical experience that I had with the trade union movement.

I absolutely felt so strongly about Phil Murray, and about Clint Golden, that those two people had a tremendous influence on me--particularly Phil Murray. I would go anyplace with Phil Murray where I could sit and talk to him and try to find out what happened to the labor movement before. What happened in the mine workers, in the big strikes out in the West, the bad strikes in Illinois, what caused those, and why were they brought about? He recapped all these things to me in conversations where we would be sitting on his front porch, or something like that. It was a great education that I got, and I just couldn't get enough to find out what was going on in the labor movement, why it was. We began to move in this labor movement, which I felt was strongly for the working man and woman, and we really did, I think, make an excellent contribution.

Those were the days when the membership had gone through the steel strikes Bethlehem Steel and the rest of them, and now we were trying to bring together the total union membership. I was then doing what they called PAC-work [Political Action Committee] which was collecting money for supporting candidates of their choice. We redid a lot of the things inside the union, which gave the membership--rightfully so--the right to make their own decisions. Then they would come to us and say, "Here's what we have decided, and we want to carry out this course." We had legislative education committees from all over the country, they

would come in here, we would teach them how a bill became law, what the legislative operation was, how you went in to see a senator, how you went in to see a congressman, what you did when you got back home--all little tiny things that probably nobody would be interested in.

We were saying to them that when you come in to do this, and you go into a senator's office, you're probably not going to get to see a senator, but you're going to get to see somebody. The first thing you do is remember who the woman was that you talked to, the first woman you talked to in that office. And when you got home you sat down and wrote her a letter and thanked her for being so nice. One of the guys said, "Why are we doing this?" I said, "Because any letter you may want to send from your local will go over this woman's desk, and she'll always remember that you took the time to thank her for being so nice to you. So you've introduced yourself, and this is how you really influence people, you start right at the bottom and influence them on up." I went through a thousand of those little things that meant so much to me and had been taught to me by my great friend from Chicago, Congressman Al Sabath, the chairman of the Rules Committee. He taught me about these things, and told me how important they were.

I tried very hard to bring the trade union movement into a position--and I had some of the best help in the world in some of the people who were working with me, they were all very dedicated people. And I suppose there's another thing that made them dedicated. I felt strongly about something, I always have, and this goes back to my family, that if you are going to stay permanently in some place you ought not to be renting. You ought to be buying a house. At that point in time, I went to Phil Murray with this. He thought I was some kind of a nut when I came up with this. I said, "It's my feeling, and I'm just going to express it to you, and you can turn it down if you want to, but I think that the union treasury will not be raided because you could loan these people enough money for a down payment on a house. It would come out of their salary, so you're not going to lose any money--you can charge them interest if you want to--and let them go out and buy a house so they are a permanent member of that community, they're not just a fly-by-night who's coming in and going out."

I think I had roughly eight or nine people in the office in Washington, and Phil agreed to it, and these people all owned their own homes. They were building a nest egg for the future. In fact, some of them bought two homes, one down at the beach. This was my feeling of the way you strengthened the loyalty of the people to the trade union movement. You're not buying them, it's

their money. It's their dues. What you're doing is giving them a chance to make a real contribution to a community, so that you can say these people are not renters, they're not fly-by-nights, they're here to stay. I think it worked in our favor.

President John Kennedy, after he was elected, told me that he felt that the Steelworkers were as good a trade union movement as he had seen anywhere in his life, and that they were doing the kind of work that had to be done. But that took from 1953 to 1960 to build that, so it wasn't done overnight. It was about seven years that we just poured everything we had into that kind of an operation. Phil agreed to that, and Phil thought it was a great idea. Then of course he died, and David McDonald took over. McDonald did not have the same vision--and it's nothing against him, he's dead and I wouldn't speak anything except good about him--he didn't have the vision that Phil had. Phil came from the trade union movement, which thought that you couldn't trust anybody who had a college education. Phil did not have that feeling, he felt that they would be the first people to try to help you. I think that afterwards, it began to be a political operation, for McDonald, and I was opposed to it. I fought it, and of course we came to a parting of the ways. He didn't want this thing to continue because he didn't like it.

RITCHIE: Didn't want what to continue?

HOFFMANN: Didn't want the Legislative Education Committee to continue the way it was operating. It slowly deteriorated. Then McDonald lost and Abel came in. Abel believed the Legislative Education Committee in this thing, because he came out of the guys who I had helping me when we first started it. So it was kind of reinstated. But most of the people in the trade union movement felt that we did have something going, because we had moved it toward the local union people and away from a national office, which is sometimes the death of those people. If they don't have a part of it, they're not going to be doing anything for you. You better understand that you've got to give them something to do to make them part of this whole thing, and give them the credit, which is what we did. We'd have them come down here and the Navy would take them down to look at Dam's Neck, or someplace like that, and none of us who were part of this would have our names in the papers. They'd get their names in the local papers as having gone to this thing. That made them look good in the community, and they should have. Therefore they became a part of the community that people would go to--people outside the labor movement--and say "I read your name in the paper and I'm kind of interested in what you're doing. I'm glad that you're doing this for us." This was basically my theory, and I think it worked very well. Not that I was alone in this. I had a lot of people who were helping me, and they were damn good people, they really were. They were dedicated trade unionists.

RITCHIE: You've described being in the Steelworkers in the late '30s and '40s, which was part of the CIO. On the outside, people looking at the CIO and the Steelworkers thought of them as a radical, militant labor group. You describe a more cautious and moderate group, who are concerned about home ownership and Communist influences, and trying to work out accommodations. How is it that their public image was so much more radical than your description?

HOFFMANN: Well, I think I can put it this way. I think it applies to me because it's funny. I have a younger brother, the youngest in the family is brother Michael. Michael had wanted to go the Harvard School of Business, and he applied and didn't get in. So my mother called me one day. Of course, my brother and I had never seen eye to eye on anything, really. I'm the old one and he's the young one, and he had to listen. I don't blame him, it's something that grew. I was probably obnoxious as hell myself in those days. But he really resented me, and I said, "Fine and dandy, I'm going my way." But my mother called me and said, "Michael would like to go to the Harvard School of Business and he's not going to get in. Can you do anything?" I said, "Yeah, I know somebody up there." I'd been up there to teach a couple of times at the place. She said, "Well, do me one favor, don't tell him. Don't let him know you've got anything to do with this. Let him think it's on his own." I said okay. So I got a hold of my

friend up at Harvard and I said, "Is there any chance of getting him in?" He said, "Let me see." So he got him in. I said, "Now, do not tell him that I had anything to do with this." He guaranteed me he wouldn't--he was one of the professors. Mike went in there, and he was in a course with this man who had been good enough to get him in for me. He said, "Does anybody in this classroom have any relatives who are with the Communist Party or Fellow Travelers," or something like that. My brother put his hand up. This guy was really chagrined. He said, "Yes, my brother is a Fellow Traveler. He works for the CIO." This guy just was abashed. He called me that night and said, "I have to break this agreement. Michael just does not understand what this is all about. I've got to tell him that it was you, because you've been here, who helped him get into Harvard." I said, "Okay, if you want to." He said, "I want you to do something else. I want you to put him to work this summer in the auditing department of the Steelworkers." I said, "Okay, I'll do it." So I called Phil, and Phil said, "Yes, no problem." Well, Michael came down to see me. He apologized. He said, "I didn't know all these things." I said, "I know you didn't, and nobody's saying that there's anything wrong, except that you ought to know that I'm not a Fellow Traveler." He said, "I found out that you're one of the biggest Commie fighters in the country." I said, "Well, I don't advertise it on billboards, but that's how I

feel." As a result of that, he came in and found out how the Steelworkers handled their money, in the auditing department, and then later on became president of a paper company. He said the greatest education he ever had was working for the Steelworkers in the auditing department that summer vacation, because he found out what trade unions were all about. He was a much better president of a company than he would have been had that not happened to him. But that gives you a rough idea, in trying to answer your question, how this came home to roost with me. People believed the media, even my brother.

RITCHIE: Some people have said that the Communists were good organizers, especially in areas that other unions wouldn't touch; tougher areas, like the Southern textile workers and others who weren't being unionized, that they tended to be the first ones to go in.

HOFFMANN: That could have been, I don't know about that. I don't have first hand information. All I know is that they tried to infiltrate us, into the local unions up around McKeesport and places like that, out in South Chicago, in the Gary mills and places like that. They were there and they were a presence. But we knew where they were going, and I think they wanted to get into us, but they were having an awful time because we were fighting them. I'm not going to tell you how we were fighting, because we were fighting them legally, and I knew when they were going to

show up at a meeting. I had some information coming back to me, and we would just see that when they came to that meeting we would have enough guys to outvote any of them, if they wanted to stay there all night, we didn't care. So they were never able to really infiltrate into the Steelworkers. We fought them. We did it with legitimate means, and we had information which would tip us off if something was going on.

They were very difficult. We had them in conventions, and we had problems with them at conventions, but we were never to the point where we were fearful of them. We respected the fact that they did know how to organize--and they really did. They were devoted people to what they believed in, except that they ran into devoted people who didn't believe what they believed, and they had a hell of time trying to move us. So I would say, Father Coughlin and all these guys who were talking about the Communists, little did they know what was going on. They were vicious, they tried anything. I'll guarantee you that on a couple of occasions they almost got me, but they just missed me. They tried everything. It was an unbelievable experience, but you can take a look at the records. They never got into the Steelworkers Union. They were into the CIO, we cleaned that out, but they never got into the Steelworkers Union. We kept them out. There were some percentage of them in East Chicago and places like that, but we always outvoted them.

RITCHIE: I've read that Phil Murray was staunchly anti-Communist.

HOFFMANN: That's who I was working for, and he just absolutely did not believe that they could make any contribution to the men and women of the working force of America, and he fought them. It was his bag, and that's why I was working on it.

RITCHIE: One of the accounts I read said that because he was such a strongly religious person that that influenced his opposition to the Communists.

HOFFMANN: I think that it probably did. I don't think there's anything wrong about it. He liked the free enterprise system, and he felt that the Communists were going to be dominated by a group of people telling them exactly what to do, and we were striking for freedom. Why did we organize if it weren't for the rights of the people who were working the mill? The Communists weren't going to give them any rights, they were going to take their rights away. But they didn't know that. We had to be sure that they didn't make the in-roads that they tried to do. You go back and look at the history of labor, and you go back to World War I with the IWW, they were in Seattle, that's where they started. Industrial Workers of the World--we called them "I Won't Work." But that was in Seattle, it's again taking me back to my early days where I was raised in that damn thing, so I knew a

little bit about it. I fought them because I had a total disbelief in the Communist idea of how a country ought to be run. I had somebody who I was working for who felt strongly about this, and he was just terrific as far as I was concerned to work for, because he felt more strongly than I did. He was the motivator. He was the leader. He was the man who kept us going. He came up with the ideas, and he kept up with everything that was going on. He wanted to know. He just would not take anything for granted.

RITCHIE: There was an advisor he had by the name of Father Charles Rice.

HOFFMANN: Yes.

RITCHIE: Did you ever meet him?

HOFFMANN: Charles Owen Rice. Yes, in Pittsburgh.

RITCHIE: I've heard about his connection with the labor movement. What kind of person was he?

HOFFMANN: Hell of a nice guy, and he fought the Commies, I'll guarantee you. See there was the UE, and the IUE, and some of the other unions who were closely aligned with these guys, some of the maritime unions in those days were closely aligned. Rice

was a priest up in the Northside of Pittsburgh, and he was a dedicated man. Charles Owen Rice was one of the finest guys I ever knew. He really fought the Commies.

RITCHIE: And he worked with the union?

HOFFMANN: He didn't work for us. He was a priest and had his own parish, but he was always available if you needed somebody to be a speaker, or something like that. It's strange, some of the things you do. Thinking about the Northside now, I went up there one night, and we were talking about the idea of owning your own home. I began talking, and all of a sudden I looked out at this audience of men and women in this local union, and they were paying no attention to me at all. I was talking about housing, we ought to have housing laws and all that, and I said, "How many in here own their own home?" Everybody put their hand up. I said, "How many here own a second home?" And half of them put their hand up. I said, "Well, excuse me for talking about something that you have no interest in whatsoever." They had no interest in public housing, because everybody up there owned their own home. If you want to take a look at the most frugal people in the world, they owned their own homes, they were paying, they never lost their home, and they always tried to buy something else. They were

trying to better themselves. That's one night that I turned off the speech that I had practiced and worked on for weeks, found

page 68

out that I was absolutely talking to the wrong audience. But I had the presence of asking them, and to stop, because they'd all have gone to sleep in another fifteen minutes, I'm sure of that.

We had a lot of people in the United States, in universities, who felt as strongly as we did about the organization, like Charles Owen Rice did, and we ran into them as professors, people at Penn State, places like that, where we have a lot of our records, as far as the Steelworkers are concerned. But by and large I was put in to do wage operations, check the wage rate, check the various studies of wages, how the wages got to be that way, what changes there were. Joe Scanlon and I went up and down that Butler-Mon Valley, going through these plants, one after another, doing time and motion studies, and going through all that. This was a new phase of trade unionism.

I was on the negotiating team with the Curtiss-Wright Corporation on the first contract we ever got with them out there. We came down to the War Labor Board in Washington at that particular time, and we could make the answers, but the Curtiss-Wright people couldn't. We finally said to the board, "Look, we can make an answer, why can't they make an answer? They have to go out and get permission from the corporation. Can't they be forced to come in here and negotiate like we are?" And they did. We were trying to get a decent wage and an incentive. It's a very difficult thing to try to figure out an incentive for a

page 69

welder, one welder on the trailing edge side or the lead edge side, to find out if they're doing the same kind of work. Or to go into a coke mill. A coke mill which pushes eighty-four ovens one day and eighty-five the next day is a controlled production, and yet they had to have some kind of an operation where they could get an incentive which would keep them working, and I had to go up there to Clareton to do this. It was one of the most difficult things I ever did, because how the hell can you set an incentive on a controlled production? Fortunately, I worked with some damn good people with the corporation and we came up with some answers.

It applied to a lot of things, and I'll just give you a for instance. Part of that whole incentive thing, the Homestead Works had a plant in Charleston, West Virginia. This was a big plant that made guns and stuff like that. So we went down there on the train--that's the only way you could go--with the people from the steel corporation, and Earl Moore said to me after the second day down there, "How long is this going to go on?" I said, "I feel the same thing, I don't want to stay down here either." He said, "They're charging me a dollar for orange juice. I can't

be doing that sort of a thing." This was on Veterans' Day. He said, "Well, let's go up and honor the veterans." We went up and

page 70

watched the parade. He said, "What's it going to take to get this done?" I said, "Ten percent incentive, the same as we got at Homestead." He said, "Done." So we went back down and told the guy.

Well, he goes and gets on the train and goes back up, but I've got to talk to the local union on three shifts and tell them what we did. When I went to the local union hall, which was just outside of the main gate in Charleston, I can still see that place, a guy pulled up in one of those open cars with isinglass covers on the side of it in those days. I saw him go into the back of the car and he took out a double-barreled shotgun, and he was coming into the hall. I said, "Where the hell are you going with that thing?" He said, "Is your name Hoffmann?" I said, "Yeah." He said, "This is for you, if I don't like the contract." I said, "You're kidding!" He said, "No, I'm not kidding." I said, "All right, I'll make a deal with you. Put the gun back in your car. If you don't like the contract I'll come out in the street, because at least the city will have to clean up the mess instead of the local union." Well, he laughed, he thought that was funny. But he put the gun back. Fortunately, the contract was what he wanted, so I didn't have the problem. But that was the way you went in and negotiated with your local unions in those days. They were tough. Those people were rugged, and they still are up in the West Virginia hills. They came out

page 71

of the coal mines, and if you look at the early history you'll find that the coal mines were the absolute backbone of the labor movement.

RITCHIE: I guess it helped you a lot that you were built like a football player.

HOFFMANN: Yeah, it got me in and out, I'll tell you that. I was very happy on many occasions. But getting back to Phil, Phil was a wonderful man to work for, but he had quirks. We had a fellow who worked for us who was married and had about ten kids, and he was running around with somebody else, that Phil knew. Phil called me up, he was in a hospital in Pittsburgh, he had something wrong with him. He said, "What are you doing?" I said, "Nothing much." He said, "Why don't you come on up." So I drove up to Pittsburgh and went to his room. He said, "You know, this guy bothers me. He's running around with this girl, and he's got ten kids." I looked at him and I said, "Does he do a good day's work?" He said, "No problem, he's real great." Well, I said, "You can't be his God too. If he's doing a good job, that's all you've got to worry about, but now you're getting into his private life. Is that what you're going to take over?" Phil looked over and he said, "Ah, it's nice of you to come up and see me, thank you very much." Never again did he mention this incidence, because I hit a chord which I guess a lot of people wouldn't have said to Phil, but I did.

Phil was like that. I remember in New York we were negotiating something, I can't remember what it was, but we were going out to dinner that night, and I usually made all the reservations and that sort of thing for Phil. He had about eight guys in there and he was mad at somebody in the trade union movement. So he began with the first guy and said, "What do you think of this guy?" Well, everybody came down the line saying he was a no-good so-and-so. Everybody agreed that he was no good. I agreed too, but I didn't want to get into that kind of a trap. I knew it was going to come to me, and I was hoping that somebody would call him, but nobody did. He said, "All right, Nordy, what do you think about it?" I said, "Well, Phil, probably a little different than anybody else that's spoken. I felt that since I've been in the trade union movement and doing what I've been doing that you were the guy that brought this man in, you taught him everything he knew. So to criticize him would be to criticize you, and I'm not about to do that." He said, "Let's all go to dinner." That was the end of that. That was the way Phil took it. But Phil was funny. He'd much rather have you tell what you really felt. He was not a man who liked to have eulogies made of him in public. If you had something to say, say what you had to say, and say it to his face. That's the way he was.

RITCHIE: He seems to have taken a paternal attitude towards the people who worked for him.

HOFFMANN: He did. He did in a way, but I don't think that was wrong. Phil was such a good man. He was a very religious man. He practiced his religion. He didn't wear it on his coat sleeve or anything like that, but he was a good man. He lived a good, hard, clean life, and worked very, very hard.

RITCHIE: How would you compare him to his predecessor in the CIO, John L. Lewis.

HOFFMANN: Oh, they were different men, totally. John L. Lewis was much more egotistical. He had an unbelievable command of the various things, but he believed in himself totally, and not somebody else who might be working for him. Phil was just the opposite. Phil went with the people who were working for him. I remember many times at the convention, we were in Los Angeles and we had a dues increase before the floor of the convention. I was always on the stage close to Phil. If he wanted something, all he had to do was move his hands and I generally, by that time, knew what the hell he wanted. This discussion had gone on for quite a while, and it was getting a little out of hand, I thought. He didn't, and he was right. I said to him, "Why don't you cut this off?" He said, "They'll cut it off, don't worry about it, just stay loose." I said okay, and about fifteen minutes later a guy made a motion: "Let's get this thing over, let's vote on it." By that time everybody was ready, and they voted Phil's way, which was what he knew. But he let them talk, he let them go until they

really drowned themselves out with all that stuff. That's the way he was, that's the way he operated. He didn't dictate, he went with what they wanted him to say, and they had unbelievable respect for him, they really did.

I didn't know John Lewis that much, but I know that this guy, Phil Murray, was loved a hell of a lot greater by the trade union movement that we worked with, with steelworkers, than he John Lewis was there. But I think John Lewis was a necessity at that time, because you had to be a hardball player to be able to do what he had to do with the trade union movement in West Virginia, in hard coal, soft coal, it was a different category. But Phil was the guy who built this whole thing in the steelworkers, and everybody loved Phil--that's my own personal opinion--and respected him as a leader. He was a leader, there's no question about it.

RITCHIE: John L. Lewis thought that the movement was going to follow him when he broke with Roosevelt in 1940.

HOFFMANN: Right.

RITCHIE: But they didn't at all.

HOFFMANN: No way, no way. No, John Lewis had a lot of people, but he was more of a muscle-type operation. The Steelworkers were not a muscle-type. In some instances they may

have been, part of it, but in general no, it was not that way. Phil wasn't the kind of guy that they give you in the history books as the labor leader. He was a tough negotiator, but he was not a hard man, and wasn't out beating people into line and stuff like that. That was not what he did. Some of the trade unionists at that time did, but he didn't.

RITCHIE: Another major labor leader in the CIO at that time was Walter Reuther. How would you compare Murray and Reuther?

HOFFMANN: Well, I think they're absolutely different operations. See, Phil was never a guy who sought recognition, Walter was. Walter fed on it. That's my opinion, now maybe somebody else might not have the same thing. Phil didn't care who got the limelight. What he wanted to see was a strong union, and he wanted to see that we were servicing that union membership all over the United States in a way they ought to be serviced. He provided for that, and he let us go to create better services to the union.

I don't know whether I told you this, but at one point in time we were using the land grant colleges in the summer, all over the United States, to have meetings. I

wanted to find out what we were doing wrong, not what we were doing right but what we were doing wrong. I went in this class at four o'clock every afternoon and I had a blackboard which flipped over. I'd say, "All right,

page 76

let's fill this blackboard." And I had a gal who would put on it what they said. Why were the Steelworkers not doing it the way it should be done? Then we'd flip the board and not erase it, and the next class would come in. You'd be surprised how many things were repetitious in the second meeting. We took that and we made it eventually into a manual into how to do things. We took that back to Phil and to the officers of the union, the board of directors, and said, "Here's what the members have said about why we're not doing what we should be doing, and we ought to be doing it better." That was his way of determining how we were providing our membership with the biggest effort we could possibly do. I don't know that Walter did that. I really don't, because I have been told by people in the Auto Workers, when they came to Washington, that they wanted to emulate what we were doing, because they felt we were on the right track, that is, utilizing the membership to give you the most out of what they wanted done, to let them provide you with the various achievements which we ought to be, and maybe not were coming to.

Walter had a different problem because he had that auto industry, and the question is: do you strike them all or do you strike one at a time? This is a different kind of a bargaining. We didn't have that bargaining. We had the Big Steel and the Little Steel. The Big Steel contract came in and we did a lot of negotiating. They didn't do that, they had to pick one and then

page 77

go after that one, and then hope to God that it would stick with the others. But if you'll check the log you'll find that that didn't always happen. They had to strike the whole damn industry before they got through with it. We had to strike the industry too. Not all things are so tough, but I remember one time we had a great plan in New York, we were having a big steel strike and we were in New York at the Roosevelt Hotel. We'd been there--I get so goofy with the Roosevelt Hotel, I could tell you it by heart--and we were going to put this big ad in the paper about the steel strike, and we get it all ready and it goes to press, and that night the Andrea Dorea got sunk right off of New York. You might have just as well printed it on toilet paper because nobody ever read it! Those things you can't tell, that's a negotiating turn that will hit you right between the eyes. You just don't know that until it happens. But we just laughed it off and said, well, we've got to go on from here.

Walter was a brilliant guy. He was a dedicated man. But there's a difference of egos. Basically, that's what I would put it. I think that you've got to remember that Phil came out of the coal miners to begin with. They were a much more

reactionary group than were the new group of the Reuther brothers. Their facets of relationships within their corporations were different than it was with the steelworkers. The steelworkers were pretty much tried and true, and they knew what they had to do, and of

page 78

course in those days that was a big industry. Make no mistake about it, they controlled a lot of things in this country. So I think that by and large the two men were absolutely different in their approaches to things. I'm not saying that Walter was right or Phil was right. Both had different memberships to adjust to. I know that many times people would come down to talk to Phil and have Phil talk to Walter. But that's basically what it was.

RITCHIE: What did Murray think about Reuther? Did they get along?

HOFFMANN: Oh, yes, they got along. He liked Walter. He thought Walter went a little bit long on some things, and he was concerned about it, but by and large he was willing to help Walter any way that he asked for. And he did, he helped him in many ways. But that was Phil's way of doing business. When Reuther came along, Phil was then a full-fledged leader. They looked at Phil with a great deal of affection. He was head of the CIO, and they had tremendous respect for him. Phil looked at Walter as a new labor leader, and he was, and he gave him every yard that he needed to move his operations around, cooperated with him in every way that I can think of. I don't know of anything that we didn't try to help do. He always had an admiration for Walter.

RITCHIE: On the other side was Bill Green and the AFL. How were relations at that stage?

page 79

HOFFMANN: They were pretty strained. We looked like the new kid on the block when we started, and we were. They wanted no part of us. It wasn't until way down that they finally decided that it might be a good idea to get together. They thought that the CIO wouldn't go anyplace because they [the AFL] had staid negotiations which had been going on for many, many years, a century almost in this country, and we were coming in as an hourly-rate group. We were the new kid on the block, and they looked at us and said, "Oh, it'll go away." But we didn't go away. We were staying there. See, they had what was called in the old days "Labor's Non-Partisan League," that is, the AFL did. We began with a new kind of an operation, and a new look in how you approach getting your membership activized. The old AFL people wanted to keep it "in the temple," as we called their headquarters the temple. They wanted to do it. When they got new blood like me who came in, see I didn't want to do it that way. The Steelworkers wanted to do it by having the membership tell *us* what we ought to be doing instead of us telling *them* what we ought to be doing. That made them participate, and made it so

more useful than it had been before. I think we were the first trade union that began this kind of a practice. I could be wrong, but at least we were one of the first that began to do this.

page 80

We never worried about the AF of L, whatever the hell they did. They were doing it without us. We ran into some arguments from time to time with the machinists and people like that. We were busy as hell organizing unorganized plants that the AFL would never have touched. They never touched the steel industry. It had always been there, but they never touched it. They never tried to organize it. Why, I don't know, but they never did. Then we came along and we organized it, and we organized all the other plants that went with it: the Aluminum Corporation and all the other plants that had some kind of a trade union function that we thought should have been organized, but they were not--how would I put that? Well, we were organizing the people and they were organizing the typical operation of a machinist, of a tool and dye maker, of somebody like that. That's what they were doing.

Now, to go back to what I told you before. The Tool and Dye Makers were the people who really got me into the union. But they came out of the old AF of L. They felt that in order to organize these hundreds of thousands of people who were unorganized all these years was the way to go. Now, they were Tool and Dye Makers, and they were AFL people. Those were the guys who got me to do what I did, whatever the hell contribution it was. So I had a great deal of respect for some of those people. But I felt that they had ignored the rank and file in a big plant. They might

page 81

pick out a tool and dye shop and organize that within a plant, and the rest of the guys would be unorganized. So the resentment then began to build. Phil came in and put all this stuff together. I don't know why they hadn't. They were more a trade operation, they worked on building trades, all that sort of thing. We didn't; we worked on the masses, and got the masses into the union. So there was no working agreement with the AFL at that time. It was later when that happened.

RITCHIE: Did you get involved in many jurisdictional disputes with AFL unions?

HOFFMANN: Not too often. Maybe with the machinists. That's the only one I know that we'd get involved with from time to time. And then we had the electrical workers, the IBEW and the UE, they were in jurisdictional disputes with CIO unions. But in steel we didn't have too much of that. They were not interested in the kind of people we had. Eventually the rivalry got smaller, and smaller, and smaller, and then they thought: why don't we both go together? And

Bill Green and Phil and rest of the guys got together and did some exchanging of ideas. Those were the days of the old trade union movement.

The trade union movement, if you trace its history, they were never interested--that is, the AFL--in anything else but the trades, building trade, whatever trade it was that they were

page 82

involved in. Obviously, to prove the point, they were never interested in the Teamsters. They weren't into truck drivers and things like that, so they stayed away from it. Again, it was trades that they were interested in. That's where I think the whole thing started, why they call it the trade union movement. It was the trades which perpetuated the old AFL. Then when they came into the CIO, it worked out very well. I think it worked to everybody's advantage. I don't think everybody accepted it right away, but I think once that they saw it could work it was a much better operation. I think that they could service what the hell they were in business for--they were to service the people and not themselves. And that was a difficult problem that they sometimes didn't understand.

RITCHIE: You also mentioned earlier that you were involved with the PAC in raising money. The CIO really pioneered the whole idea of a political action committee.

HOFFMANN: They did, yes.

RITCHIE: What was the idea behind that? How did they operate that?

HOFFMANN: Well, I think what it did was to fight management's collection of money for all these candidates. The CIO decided that if they were going to support candidates they'd better have some money to give them to run elections, or to get

page 83

out the vote, or whatever it was. Involved in all of that was the basic concept of a democracy, that you've got to help support a democracy both financially and with your voting power. They began to feel that this was one of the ways to do it. I remember when we started that, and boy, that was one of the things they put me into early. I was going around all over the United States. I drove my car every place to go and get people involved in what we were doing. It was a very, very difficult problem in those days to get them to give a buck. They'd give you a buck, give them a receipt, and then put the money into a pot, and try to spread it out so that it was divided into the places where it was given by the local unions. If you had a candidate who was supporting you, you tried to give him some money, tried to help him out with getting out the vote. This was a new concept in America. It had not been worked on except as I said through Labor's Nonpartisan League. They collected money, but not to the degree we did. We were new at this, and we had obviously a hell of a lot more people.

We would go in and collect these moneys. We would give prizes, we would do everything in the world to get our people activized. We felt that if they gave a buck, they would vote, that was the theory. It was a pretty good theory because it did work out that way. So we began this thing way back--oh, golly, I don't know how far back it was, but it seemed to me that we were

page 84

doing this around '47, '48, '49 in that area. And it began to get bigger, because we had to find a better way to do it than we were doing it. And we finally got check-off, which we checked off--money for PAC--and the companies fought it like hell--the dues for PAC, which really goaded the companies because they had to give us the money after we got the guys to sign up (and they could get out of the thing anytime they wanted to). But by and large, once they got into it it was true, they voted and they held strong. This made a contribution--a lot of people might think this was a bad contribution. I frankly think it was a stronghold for our democratic form of government.

Now, if you take a look at it, if you want to go back and study someplace, if you want to do some research, you take a look at when the CIO began their PAC operations. From that point on, when it became apparent that the CIO was going in this direction, you'll find out that on the other side of the picture, where the Commies had been on the ascendancy, once this started, the Commies dropped off. Now, just check that for your own information. I have thought this for a long time. I don't think that I have ever worked it out where I can give you the proof, but I think that at that point in time they became less active, and less forceful, because the people began to put money into what they believed was their democracy, and democracy was not Communism. And I think

page 85

that's one of our great contributions, although I don't think the labor movement's ever going to get credit for it, I do think that this had something to do with it in the long run.

When you're testing the AFL's old Labor's Nonpartisan League, that was just a nomenclature for what they were doing. They were not collecting that kind of money. But when the CIO came in and they began collecting money, that worried the hell out of the AFL, because we had a tremendous membership to do this sort of thing. Small unions in the maritime industry would give their eyeteeth to give some money to help a candidate. That began the deterioration of the period from the 1940s to the 1950s when Communism had been on the ascendancy. Once the CIO came into effect and began using their political strength by collecting money and helping candidates, you find that the old Communist idea was on the way down. There were other reasons, but that was one of the contributing reasons, at least I believe it.

RITCHIE: You mentioned about the AFL's Nonpartisan League. The AFL really did have a neutral concept of politics. Even though they tended to lean towards the Democratic party, there were a lot of Republicans in the AFL.

HOFFMANN: Oh, yes.

RITCHIE: But the CIO seemed really strongly connected to the Democrats.

page 86

HOFFMANN: There's no question about it.

RITCHIE: Did that work on the local level as well?

HOFFMANN: In the beginning it didn't, because in the beginning the headquarters gave out the orders, but as I told you before, when we changed this--don't hold me to this, but I think it was around 1952 we began changing this--we found that the local people were making the bullets for us to shoot, where before we had been making the bullets for the local union people to shoot. They didn't understand it, and it was an educational process which took money and time, but the basic part of that time had been that the same people who were utilizing the idea of PAC contributions were now making the legislative education committees. Those same people worked together all over the United States, and they were the people who had originally made contributions. Now we said to them: "Okay, you made your contribution. What do you think we ought to be doing? It's your money." And don't think that didn't have an effect. It had an effect with a lot of locals, and I think that made a change, I really do. I think that ours was a much more open operation than the old Labor's Nonpartisan League. We were Democratic. We were voting for people who would support us.

page 87

Just take a look at what happened yesterday in the Senate [vote on bill requiring 30-days notification of workers before plant closings]. Look at that vote [72-27]. Now that 27 Republicans, or whatever the hell it was, voting for this plant closing thing, that's the most unbelievable thing in the world. Now, if you don't think that the AFL-CIO had made a contribution toward the culmination of that vote--the elections are coming up. Now, years ago, they wouldn't have worried anything about it, but they know damn well that they are organized, and they have done a good job, and people are going to look at that. In other words, I don't care whether a guy belongs to a union or doesn't. If he's working in a plant and suddenly this plant closes and tomorrow you're gone, with no notice, the guy's going to say, "What the hell kind of an operation is this?" They look back to the Congress--take a look at the loan they made to Chrysler, kept Chrysler in business. They know that makes good sense, and they were watching what these guys were going to do on this plant closing, because a lot of these runaway plants

have closed and sold out to the Japanese, and we've lost the thing forever. A lot of people may say that doesn't have anything to do with it, but it does have a lot to do with it. If you look at that vote yesterday, seventy something to twenty something, and they picked up an awful lot of Republicans--it has an effect. I had a long-range effect, and I just think we shouldn't write it off as if it doesn't exist.

page 88

RITCHIE: So it was the beginning for you of a combination of labor and the Democratic party, starting with the PACs back in the '30s and the '40s.

HOFFMANN: Well, starting in the '40s. See we didn't start collecting money that early. I don't think it was until about '47 or '48 that we began really doing a job on PACs. From that point in time, yes, I was collecting money. I'm still collecting money for the Democrats. By and large, I don't think there were too many Republicans that they supported, although there were a couple who were very, very good people, and the people in the labor movement would speak out and say: "Look, these people have supported us, and we've got to support them." And they did support them. But the decision was made where it belongs: on the local level, with the rank and file. That's what has to happen.

RITCHIE: You also told me that it was in '47 or '48 that you came down here to set up the labor lobbying effort for the Steelworkers.

HOFFMANN: Nineteen forty-seven.

RITCHIE: Was that after the Taft-Hartley Act had passed or before?

HOFFMANN: That was during that time. It passed about that time.

page 89

RITCHIE: And the sentiment in Congress was very anti-labor.

HOFFMANN: Oh, there's no question about it. But labor had their fit in this sort of thing. I remember that it started out as the Kennedy-Ives bill in the Senate, and it had to go over to the House. We had a meeting at the AFL-CIO, I remember George Meany was up there that time. Joe Keenan was sitting right behind me in this meeting, and I spoke up and I said, "If we're going to take the Kennedy-Ives bill over to the House, anything is germane, and God help us when we get over there." And Meany told me to sit down and shut up. I did, because Joe Keenan pulled me down. We had a break right after that, and we went outside and he and a couple of other guys got together and said, "You're absolutely right, but don't push it any farther because he's mad." I said, "I know

he's mad, but what's going to happen? We're going to get clobbered," and we got Taft-Hartley.

RITCHIE: Landrum-Griffin came out of Kennedy-Ives.

HOFFMANN: I mean Landrum-Griffin. We got Landrum-Griffin because of that. I've never brought it up, but Joe Keenan has brought it up on many occasions, saying "I'm glad you spoke up, because you were absolutely right, and those of us who work on the Hill knew it." It was a question then, because having learned, as I told you, from my friend from Chicago who taught me all these things, how to operate this thing. I suppose that brought about

page 90

what was later our Legislative Education Committee, which commissioned a picture to be made. At first the PAC Committee and Labor Education were one, but later on they were separated.

One of the things we did there, which I felt in the beginning was excellent, that money had to be controlled very carefully. Going back to law school, I was taught that there were two kinds of money: YOM and OPM. "Your own money," and "other people's money." And don't confuse the two of them. So we took that, put it away, let the director in the district decide. We would go to him and say, "So and so needs some money," so that we wouldn't be the money people. We would say to him, "He needs some money, it's up to you to make the decision." He would make the decision, request out of the international office the amount of money--five thousand, two thousand, whatever they were going to give him--and he would deliver the check from the local unions in that very area. He would probably have two or three local union presidents with him when he did this thing. That's what we did to make it a stronger operation.

You see, a lot of people talk about having an organization, but they don't really have an organization. We used to have meetings. The first meeting would be after the reorganization. I'd have the president, and the vice president, and the secretary-treasurer come down to Washington, and I would make all these meetings with Congressmen just to say: hello; how are you; we're

page 91

the Steelworkers; we don't want anything; we just want you to know who we are. Then the second meeting would be by district directors in groups over the United States, this is our echelon in the Steelworkers. Then the third meeting would be the Legislative Education Committee, in which we would bring a group of people in, and they would go visit all these people, so we really got three people who were coming in within a period of six months, just to say hello. Not asking for a thing, which kind of shocked everybody, because that was a kind of lobbying nobody ever heard of before. But then when they had something coming up they turned on the heat. Then you could turn it on from the top, from the second

United States Senate Historical Office -- Oral History Project

www.senate.gov

echelon, and from the rank and file. You're turning it on three ways, and these guys understand that kind of heat. So that's the way we worked it out. We built that thing with a lot of thought, a lot of concern, and I had some unbelievable good people, who had unbelievably good judgment on how to operate this thing. People who knew the legislative process. I had one guy who worked for me who was an educator, who understood the education principles to go back to the local union. I had others who would be able to design small business operations and how they could be involved in it, what their reaction to it is from a standpoint--you'll think this is crazy, but this is how well we did it--we organized this thing to understand that in order for you to get a set-aside contract out

page 92

of the government, which is one of the things we did for some our small plants, we had to be prepared to go in and do the same kind of a job with the companies. So this was a joint venture. We arranged to have this sort of thing done. It was funny to see these company representatives, because they didn't know their fanny from third base when it came to understanding the operations of the government in buying or procuring (I shouldn't even say that word today with all the stuff that's going on), but we did this. We got a lot of set-aside contracts in which no dimes ever changed hands.

I've got to tell you this: at one point in time we had a steelmill in Illinois that needed some new electric furnaces. They guy who ran this company was the most anti-union guy in the world when he started. And when we got all this stuff done he wanted to name the plant after me, because I had gotten him five millions dollars from the Congress so he could put these electric furnaces in. He was so thrilled that he came down to Washington. We were in the old CIO Building, at 718 Jackson Place. My office was on the mezzanine, and he came in there and laid five thousand dollars down on my desk, for me. I said, "What's this for?" He said, "For what you did. You got this for us." I said, "I don't take your money. I'm well paid by the Steelworkers. I don't need your money. That's not why I did it. I did for those people that are working for you." He said,

page 93

"You're serious." I said, "I'm dead serious. I don't want your money." So I gave him his money back. That's probably the best thing I ever did in my life. He told everybody about that. He couldn't believe this. He said, "What can I do for you?" I said, "Give me a union shop." He said, "I would go through the roof if this were not you asking this." He said, "You know, I'm not the greatest union lover." I said, "I know that, I've been dealing with you. But I've been trying to show you what I can do for you. It won't cost you one penny, because I believe in this. He said, "I'll give it to you." He gave us a union shop contract in his plant, and it was a damn good plant, and still operating in the Midwest.

But to answer your question, what we were trying to do was to keep plants operating. Now, the way they're doing it today, they're buying off these people, which I think stinks. You don't need to buy them off, you need to keep people working. It's not just today, it's been going on for so many years it isn't funny, but that was not the way we operated in the trade union movement. We tried to be as honest--now, I know there were people who took money, and all that sort of thing. That's fine and dandy. That's their business. But they've got to get up and look at themselves in the mirror every morning, and that's a pretty damn difficult thing to do if you know damn well you're a thief, and you're taking money under false pretenses to begin with. But

page 94

if you can provide jobs for people over a long length of time, isn't that reward enough? I think it is. Maybe I'm crazy, maybe I'm just working under the wrong theory. But that's what I've always believed.

RITCHIE: You were telling me also about Adolph Sabath who gave you training on the legislative process. . . .

HOFFMANN: Chairman of the Rules Committee.

RITCHIE: On a regular basis for a couple of months.

HOFFMANN: He did, during the summer.

RITCHIE: What do you think spurred him on to become your teacher?

HOFFMANN: I really don't know. I've never known, except he took a liking to me for some reason. Why, I don't know. But he took a liking to me and did that. I guess he didn't want me to go down the wrong road. He spent that time, God rest his soul, he was a fine, fine man. I loved that man, because he took that time. It was probably the best training anybody could have ever gotten, coming down to Washington and not knowing where to go. I didn't know what door to open, or what to knock on. And he told me how to do this, and he told me what to do. He told me how important it was.

page 95

I think he believed basically in the trade union movement and felt that I was at least on the right track. I came with hat in hand and said, "I don't know a damn thing about it and I've got to find somebody to help me." Somebody, and I'm not sure who it was, introduced me to this man. We had lunch, and he asked me about the Steelworkers. He had a lot of Steelworkers out in Illinois. I'm not sure, but one of the guys who probably intervened with him was a fellow who I worked with in the Steelworkers, who was subdistrict director in Chicago, Johnny Doherty. And I think Johnny Doherty probably knew Al Sabath very well, and

asked him to help me. That's the way I think it went, although nobody has ever told me that. That's just my supposition. Johnny Doherty was a great friend of mine. I loved John. He's dead a long time ago. He was close to Phil. John must have said, "We've got a new guy down there, can you give him a hand?" I think John was the one who told me to go and see him. I went to see him, and he just religiously kept me every single day, five days a week until the end of the summer when they weren't in session.

He taught me who the good ones were, who the bad ones were. I'll never forget this--he said, "Don't worry about the guys who are going to go for you, worry about the guys that don't. Try to convince them that you've got something going." He was a man who was meticulous about the little details that go into the legislative process, that make it work. I think that's one of the

page 96

reasons why I listened to him so intently. I really did. I paid attention to everything. I made a lot of notes; I don't know what I did with those notes today, but every day I would write some stuff down. As soon as I'd get through with a session, I would go and put it all together. I kept it for a long time, but like a lot of other things I chucked it. Probably never should have, I should have kept some of those things, because they were so interesting. Little anecdotes of how to do it. I was only a kid, I didn't know too much. I knew nothing about it. Never been here before. I didn't know what lobbying was all about.

RITCHIE: Were there many unions that had lobbyists at that time?

HOFFMANN: Most of them did. Most of them did, in the CIO, that was in the old days. We used to meet every week, and we'd work together. The CIO had people who headed it up, and we had meetings to discuss things, and at that time some of these unions were Commie-dominated. We knew that. Little by little we edged them out, one way or another. But by and large that was the way we got to know. I remember one time, one of the guys from the UAW came over to me and he said, "You've got to get involved over in the House on this wheat for Pakistan." I looked at him and I said, "Wheat for Pakistan? I don't have any locals over in

page 97

Pakistan!" He said, "No, but we need this." I said, "No way." And I never did get involved in it. So he went to Phil Murray and talked to Phil about the fact that I didn't do anything about wheat for Pakistan. And Phil said to him, "What did he say to you." "He said 'we don't have any locals in Pakistan.'" Phil looked at him, and said, "You know, we really don't." /Laughs/ So he was defending me. But that was basically how dumb I was. I didn't realize what he was trying to put together. We had to help those people, and he was trying to tell me that. The only people I was interested in helping were the Steelworkers who were paying my salary.

RITCHIE: Well, it always helps to know your own constituency. In 1948 labor got a big boost from the election. Truman won, and you brought in people like Hubert Humphrey, and Estes Kefauver, and Lyndon Johnson. There was a large number of Democrats who were elected and many of them with labor support.

HOFFMANN: Right.

RITCHIE: Did the climate change considerably after the 1948 election?

HOFFMANN: Oh, yes, it really did. It changed tremendously. Strange that you would ask about that election. I was on the PAC, and in 1948 I called Phil from Chicago, and I said, "Mr. Murray, Truman's going to win this election. I just

page 98

bet ten bucks in a bar." He said, "I knew you were in a bar. You must be drunk. What do you mean Truman's going to win?" I said, "He's going to win this election." Lo and behold, Truman won the election. The next time we came around, Eisenhower was running. I was just south of San Francisco, and I called him again. I said, "Mr. Murray, we're going to get clobbered by Eisenhower." He said, "You been drinking again?" I said, "No sir." He said, "I don't think you're right." I said, "Well, I do." Suffice to say, the next day we got swamped. That Saturday, Phil came to San Francisco, we had a meeting. I met him at the train and we went up to the hotel. He had to go to a dinner. At lunch he had Johnny Doherty and a bunch of guys there. He said, "I'll never doubt this guy again." He came to me and told me Truman was going to win, and Truman won. He told me that we were going to get clobbered by Eisenhower, and we did." He went to this dinner, and afterwards we went across the street and had a sandwich--he never ate at a banquet. He and his wife were there, and he went up to bed, and I got a call five o'clock in the morning. Phil had died in his sleep, and that was the end of that.

RITCHIE: That's also the end of the tape, actually.

HOFFMANN: Yeah! [Laughs.]

[End of Interview #2]

page 99

F. Nordy Hoffmann

Senate Sergeant at Arms, 1975-1981

Interview #3

Phil Murray and the CIO

(Thursday, August 4, 1988)

Interviewed by Donald A. Ritchie

RITCHIE: Since you have just come back from a political convention, I thought today we could talk about the conventions you have attended, starting with the most recent one. What was your role at the 1988 Democratic Convention?

HOFFMANN: Well, as it has been since 1960, I've been on security, basically to the VVIP area, where they are seated. This probably was the most difficult of all that we've had, because of lack of space. When you look at this convention, obviously it was like a tv studio, and that's it. There was very little space. We had to enter through portal 32, where there were VVIPs in two sections. There were about one hundred and ninety seats in both of them, but it became so crowded we had to take the chairs out of there and they had to stand up.

On the way into this portal, on the left side, was a place for the concessionaires. They kept coming and going. There was also a tv studio on the left, and a radio booth on the right, and they kept coming in and out. You had to get to know them by face,

page 100

otherwise you had a complete backlog. They were very cooperative, very wonderful people to do business with. There were people there who had lists, and we had to try to accommodate those people who were not on the list and should have been. It goes without saying, it was a very difficult problem.

We had to shut the doors for three nights, because we were overpopulated, over thirteen thousand people. The fire marshals shut the doors. A lot of people were a little bit disturbed because they were shut, but you can only squeeze so many people into a place like this. It was for their protection that the fire marshal decided to shut it down. Basically, the people who were running the convention had done an excellent job with the limited space that they did have. From a standpoint of security, I think we probably had the best security we've had at a convention so far. There were less eruptions. However, some of the problems were caused by people who didn't want to permit people to come into some place, where they should have been allowed to come in anyway, because of who they were, because people did not recognize them. It was very difficult. I tried to bail them out as much as possible. We became a little bit hostile at times, but it all worked out. I think it was a very, very well run convention, except for the fact that it was too darn small a facility to accommodate all that wanted to go in.

RITCHIE: What type of people go into the VVIP section?

HOFFMANN: Like Mrs. Dukakis, Mrs. Bentsen, Coretta Scott King, some of Jesse Jackson's family, some senators, congressmen, former leaders of the party. Those were the people we tried to take care of. It was a very small place to do it, but we were, I think, fairly successful. We didn't get too many noses out of joint.

RITCHIE: I was going to say, with VIP you're dealing with some big egos.

HOFFMANN: There's no question about it.

RITCHIE: Did some of them give you a hard time?

HOFFMANN: Not this time, no they didn't. One of them did come in and start to give me a hard time. The fellow who ran the radio booth happened to be standing there, and he turned around to this fellow and said, "You're on the wrong track. This is the most professional man I've dealt with in a long time." He said, "He knows what he's doing, so listen to what he tells you." The man was saying, "They don't dare shut the convention down." I said, "They will shut it down before nine o'clock, or my name ain't Nordy Hoffmann. He came back later and said, "Your name's Nordy Hoffmann, they shut it down before nine o'clock."

RITCHIE: What were they doing, shutting the doors?

HOFFMANN: They shut the doors so nobody else could come in. And it was closed. It had to be. You get thirteen thousand people in a place that can only accommodate approximately eleven thousand, it gets very, very jammed. When you look down on the floor at the convention, you could see it was just absolute bedlam, because nobody could move one way or the other. It was difficult.

RITCHIE: What are some of your tricks of the trade in dealing with VIPs? How do you approach that kind of a job?

HOFFMANN: Number one, you have to have knowledge of the person who is the VIP. I think that in most instances, even though some of them have an unbelievable ego, they love to be kidded. If they've gotten to know you over the years, it really doesn't become a problem. "Well, I can't get you a seat right now," I'd say, "How about going up to the cocktail lounge for a few minutes and I'll come up and get you." "Oh, would you?" I'd say, "Sure." And in a few minutes I'd go up and get them and bring them down. It's a kind of a personal service. You put your own neck on the line with these people, and they do appreciate it. You don't have much of a problem with real VIPs, pseudo-VIPs you have a real problem with. They think they should be some place and they shouldn't be there

to begin with. But by and large, I think basically it's knowledge of who they are, and what they are, and what they mean as far as the party is concerned, or

page 103

what they mean in the Congressional area, as senators and congressmen, or the people who are contributors to the Democratic party. It's that kind of a knowledge that you don't get in twenty-four hours. Having had some experience in the past with these people, I really don't have too much trouble. There's no quick way to do this.

One man was so mad that he couldn't see, and rightfully so--because he happened to be a VIP, and they wouldn't let him in. So I took him to the side, and took him up and bought him a drink. I said, "I'm sorry, I can't get you in, but hold out for a little bit more."

He said, "Listen, you've done everything you can. I appreciate it. How long have you been doing this?"

I said, "Since 1960."

He said, "Why don't they let somebody with experience do this, instead of these kids?"

That was his reaction, but sooner or later he got over it. That's all it is. It's a question of knowledge of people. I remember at the convention in San Francisco [in 1972], we had much more space there. I asked my wife to help me. She knew them, because she worked for Senator Muskie at one time. She was up at the top of the stairs, and the people at the bottom of the stairs

page 104

wouldn't let this person in. I saw her go flying down the stairs and right out into the audience. The first thing I knew she had John Kennedy, Jr. He was supposed to be up there, and they were turning him away. Strangely enough, this year, the Kennedy's had me thank my wife for what she did for them at the San Francisco. It did make an impression, obviously. That's what it's all about. We've got more egos up there on the Hill than we've got anyplace else in the world. And if you can handle those, you can handle anybody.

RITCHIE: Aside from how crowded it was, what was the atmosphere at this convention? How did it compare to the other conventions you've been to?

HOFFMANN: I don't think there was that much difference, except that it was, as I said, in a television studio. Of all the conventions I've been to, this is the only television studio we've ever worked with. I think really and truly, it would have been better if they had a few more seats for people, because a lot of people didn't get in that wanted to get in. I think the convention had some great speeches. The problem was working the convention, and I think this is something that people

don't understand. When you're on security, you have a meeting in the morning, and it starts at 7:45. You go from that meeting into the office, which was in the CNN Building, in the south tower, and you begin to move laterally from some of things you just did at the

page 105

meeting, so that some of those things don't reoccur the next day. You're pretty busy, and normally we were starting somewhere between five and six o'clock in the afternoon. We had to be at our stations three hours before that happened. Then you're on the convention floor doing what you have to do until it ends, which most of the time was between midnight and twelve thirty, which means you've had a long day! And that was every day.

People don't understand that that goes on. They think that conventions just happen. It doesn't just happen; there is a tremendous amount of work that goes on behind the scenes, that nobody sees, and very few people care about, except "Where's my seat?" That's the number one question. "How do I get in here?" Or "How do I get in there?" "What do you have to do?" By and large, it's a matter of selectivity as far as the convention is concerned. It's long, hard work behind the scenes getting it ready, so that you have very few problems.

We recognized early that we were going to be oversold. We did not have to close the convention. That's the fire marshal's problem. When that building gets overcrowded it's to their own protection that he closes the building. They closed it, and they left some VIPs on the outside, but that's the way the cookie crumbles. They're supposed to be in there when the gavel goes down, not when it's over. So if they didn't get in, that's their problem.

page 106

RITCHIE: Did you have to notify people, some of the VIPs, that they'd better get down there quickly?

HOFFMANN: No, but the first time they closed the building they caught a lot of people short. Once they closed the building, people were getting into that convention, and into their seats, a lot earlier the next two nights. We still had to close the doors two nights. But that was because of the limited space that there was inside.

RITCHIE: Does the Democratic National Committee manage the convention?

HOFFMANN: Basically, yes.

RITCHIE: So you were working for them?

HOFFMANN: No, this is a volunteer operation that I've been doing for a long time. Pay my own way, and everything else. This isn't something that I do for money. I do it because I like to do it, and because I think I'm making a contribution. That's inherent, as far as I'm concerned, and the rest of it doesn't mean much.

RITCHIE: How did you get started, back in 1960, doing this?

HOFFMANN: Well, I guess it really had started earlier than that, but basically that's when I really remember. I was asked by

page 107

the then Sergeant at Arms, who asked if I would help him at the convention. I said yes, and from that time on I was on security. Then once you find somebody you keep them. It's like Dick Murphy, who's been doing this for a long time. I really worked for Dick Murphy and the security people. Dick was concerned, because he said, "Boy, you're going to be up against a real tough one this time, because we don't have the space." When you began to analyze it, you knew it was true. You'd go in and put chairs in place and find out how many chairs you can get in, and then you'd know it's not going to be enough. So when you get a big crowd you've got to get all those chairs out and stack them someplace. You've got to know where you're going to put those chairs to get them out of there. Then people start standing. I remember the second morning, we had this meeting, and were going around the room asking everybody, and Murphy came to me and said, "Do you have anything to say?"

I said, "Yeah, I want you to know that that's a well-built stand out there."

He said, "What do you mean?"

I said, "We had to pull all the chairs out because we had so many people in they were standing. We had twice as many people as we should have had. But the stand didn't cave in, so we're all right." It was true, that was exactly what happened.

page 108

For me, it's a labor of love, and I've been doing them ever since Los Angeles. I look forward to it, except it's probably the toughest two weeks I ever put in in my life. Particularly on Eastern Time, because on Eastern Time you've got to go in there at six o'clock, because your prime time comes around nine or ten, and you're going full tilt then. By the time you wind down it's after twelve thirty. When do you eat? Where do you get time to eat? I cannot eat late at night, because I won't sleep. I think I took off about fifteen pounds while I was down there, just because I stayed away from pushing myself to the table. By and large, I don't think I left the hotel--I was staying at the Omni Hotel right there in the plaza group, where the convention center was, and the office was in the CNN tower--I don't think I left there but one night in the two weeks I was there, to go

out for dinner. And that was on the Saturday night before the convention. Once the convention starts, that's all I know, and I just do it that way.

RITCHIE: It seems as if each convention has had it's own unique problems, especially with the galleries. I was thinking about 1960 when you started, that was the convention where the Stevenson delegates packed the galleries.

page 109

HOFFMANN: Yes.

RITCHIE: They managed to round up every ticket they could.

HOFFMANN: They did.

RITCHIE: Did you get involved in that controversy?

HOFFMANN: No, I didn't. That was not my assignment. But I was there for the whole thing. We had problems on the outside of the gallery. It was not as tough as people say. I think that convention was milk toast compared to some of the others. The one in Atlantic City [in 1964] was very difficult, because we had the Mississippi delegation, which gave us a real problem. But I think the San Francisco convention was probably as well run as any of them.

You've got to worry about it, because you've got not just security here, but you've got the local constabulary of the police department of the city, you've got the county police, you've got the state police, you've got the Secret Service, you've got the FBI. You've got a lot of different services that have to bring this thing together, communicate together, so that everybody's singing out of the same hymn book. As I just said, the fire marshal shut it down. Okay, the fire marshal is part of these meetings. He's got to be in all these meetings. The communication between all these various areas comes together at a

page 110

meeting you have every single morning. That's where you run into the problems. If you've got problems you bring them up at that meeting, and then you go back to your offices and try to work them the most reasonable way you can, to make it look good. Everybody says to me, "God, that was the best convention I ever saw. It really ran good." Little do they know! There were an awful lot of headaches on the outside of it, because it was a very difficult problem because of the limited space. Limited space is the worst problem.

RITCHIE: What was the story with the Mississippi delegation back in '64?

HOFFMANN: Well, this was about blacks and whites. They made the decision and we had to ask them out of there, because they wouldn't let other delegates come in there. It was kind of touch and go for a while, but we were able to do it. It

was a little touchy for a few minutes on that floor, and people got a little bit hostile.

RITCHIE: That was when the black Freedom delegation came and took the seats of the white delegation, even though they weren't the official delegates.

page 111

HOFFMANN: Right. That was the problem we had to work out. We did work it out. Bob Dunphy and I--Bob was in the Sergeant at Arms office--worked it out together. Jim Powell, who was the chief of [Capitol] police also was down there and helped up in this particular situation. Again, it was important that you don't push and shove. You try to reasonably talk to somebody and say, "Here's what the situation is. Would you please step aside so that certain things can happen." Sometimes you get a guy who's adamant as hell and won't do it, then you have to use a little muscle. But I don't like to use the muscle angle. I think that if you can sit down with people and take a little time, if you recognize that this problem is coming down the road, and you spend that time, maybe for four or five days before the convention, trying to get people to agree to certain things, you don't have the confrontation. Basically, that's what we tried to do. And I have to say, I was young at the business, but I thought we were very successful in doing it.

RITCHIE: How did you finally work out that difficulty?

HOFFMANN: They were removed. We gave them additional space someplace, and there were some other things we did, but it worked out very well.

RITCHIE: Didn't Walter Reuther have something to do with that? Wasn't he called in to try to defuse the situation?

page 112

HOFFMANN: Well, he was. Yes, he was called in on the top to try to see what could be done, and was very, very helpful in having people sit down and listen, instead of getting all hot and bothered, without picking up your axes and going to get them.

RITCHIE: Atlanta was a pretty well run meeting from all accounts. Lyndon Johnson kept tight control over everything that was going on. But '68 on the other hand was a real donnybrook.

HOFFMANN: That was the worst convention I've ever been to. It was terrible. That Conrad Hilton [hotel] was--believe me, they had awful smelling stuff they were putting in radiators and everything else going through the hotel. They were coming in and dropping these things in cushions in the lobby of the hotel. It was a street mess to begin with. I was also at that particular time working with Ed Muskie, because he was running with Humphrey. To get Ed Muskie out of that

hotel, and get him out to the place where the convention was held, out there in the stockyards, was a thing that I've always remembered. When the Secret Service came in, once it had been announced that he had been chosen, we went down in the bowels of the Conrad Hilton and went underground for two blocks and came up into a garage that I

page 113

never knew was there, and there were the cars. We pulled out of there, and nobody even knew we came out of the hotel. That's the way we got him out of that hotel, because it was a hell of a note, people were really upset to see that we didn't have a convention. That's what they were trying to do, but they didn't make it. That was a very difficult convention, this one was a piece of cake compared to that convention. I think that maybe the Democrats have grown up some too. And the laws of the land have changed. The fact that you look at Mississippi now and you've got a tremendous amount of blacks who are in public office. There were none in those days. So we have moved, although blacks don't think they've moved fast enough, I think they've moved damn well, and that the accommodation has been theirs. It takes two to tango. So I think that we've made a lot of progress. Obviously, the way conventions are run--for instance, in San Francisco at one point in time we knew that were having gays marching, labor unions marching, and some church people marching. This looked like it was going to be a holocaust in San Francisco. It wasn't. It was just absolutely fine. We got one parade through, and the other parade came through, everything was fine. There wasn't anything that went wrong. No arrests. They had a place where if they wanted to make known their dislike for the Democrats, or candidates, there was a place for them to do

page 114

it. So they did have a chance to make their protests known and be recognized. I think that was the answer to it. Everybody thought we were going to have a real donnybrook in San Francisco, and I think it was the smoothest convention we've had in a long time.

RITCHIE: Especially following right after the '68 convention.

HOFFMANN: No question about it. That was still in everybody's mind. Think about that. Boy, it was tough.

RITCHIE: So it was a matter of instead of fighting against dissident voices, letting dissident voices have their say.

HOFFMANN: Absolutely, and give them a place to have their say. Give them a place where the television cameras can get them. Let them march on Market Street, whatever they wanted to do. We had a place for them right outside the convention hall where they could make their protests. This took away any problem. The police, again, this is a thing that people don't think about--the number of police departments in a city, in a state, is unbelievable. State police,

county police, city police, FBI, Secret Service, and some other security forces that they have. We've been very, very successful in making sure that people don't bring arms into the convention hall. That's the big thing we've been able to hold to. Dick Murphy's done a hell of a job in working this thing out. We have worked it out, there's just no

page 115

question about it. There were a lot things that we had to do, to get around this thing, to get to it, but I think we've got it made now.

RITCHIE: Basically, would you say the conventions have been run primarily for television?

HOFFMANN: Well, this one was. It was a television station. All you had to do was look at it. Every place around were these big booths for television and radio. You've got to realize, it looked like a high school basketball court, straight up seats, way up, looking right down to what used to be a hockey rink. That's not a national convention for a Democratic party, or a Republican party, it's not enough room. The space is so necessary. Like New York [in 1976] was a great place to have it. We had plenty of space up there, because we used Madison Square Garden, which was terrific. So it's a question of where you've got space. If you can put the people into a place, it's fine and dandy. If you've got a place for people who do not believe in the democratic process, but want to protest against it, if you give them some place to protest, where they can get on television cameras, they're going to be very, very happy to do what you want them to do. It's a question of crowd control. Some of the police that are involved in it, in places like New York or Miami, have done a marvelous job on that particular thing.

page 116

RITCHIE: Do you ever get any pressure from a candidate's staff to try to get their people in, or anything else?

HOFFMANN: I don't get any. That's not my bag. All I'm doing is I'm given an assignment to take care of the VVIPs. That in itself is enough assignment, I don't need any help from anybody else. Sure, I get people who say, "Well, can you get me in?" That's not my bag. You've got a ticket, you've got a credentials committee, if your credentials are in there, fine and dandy, we'll let you in, but you've got to be credentialed in there, and that is not my job. I don't go out looking for trouble. So the answer is no.

RITCHIE: Had you attended any conventions before the 1960 convention?

HOFFMANN: Oh, yeah, I went to conventions in the '50s. I remember one, I think [Estes] Kefauver ran at the convention in Chicago.

RITCHIE: Was that '56 when the ticket was Stevenson and Kefauver?

United States Senate Historical Office -- Oral History Project

www.senate.gov

HOFFMANN: Right. But I had been at other conventions before that. So this was like old home week, coming home to do the job.

RITCHIE: How active a role has labor taken in the Democratic conventions over the years?

page 117

HOFFMANN: Over the years, it's not been constant. Sometimes they're more active than they were before. I remember one time when I was working for the labor unions we tried to get as many of our people as delegates as we could, so that they would have floor exposure. I don't know what they're doing today, because I'm not that close to their operations. But they have always been a force for good. I haven't seen anything that the labor unions have ever done that created any problems as far as the conventions were concerned. They've been very good. But they have been a force in the conventions. I remember in the old days when I worked for the Steelworkers, I went to both the Democratic and the Republican conventions, at the request of my principals. I remember I was staying in San Francisco when they were at the Cow Palace [in 1964], and I was staying at the Palace Hotel, and that was [Nelson] Rockefeller's hotel. I went out every day to the Cow Palace, which was a long ways from downtown San Francisco.

RITCHIE: What were your responsibilities?

HOFFMANN: Basically, at that point in time, I was really just there to take care of our delegates and things of that kind. We had a room for them where they could come and have a drink or have a sandwich, the same thing that was done in 1960 in Los Angeles.

page 118

RITCHIE: How different is the atmosphere at Republican conventions from Democratic conventions?

HOFFMANN: See, I worked on the inside of the Democrats, I worked on the outside of the Republicans. I couldn't tell you, except they were very, very decent as far as I was concerned. They were looking for any support they could get from labor. So I was always well taken care of. I wasn't in the same category that I was with the Democrats. They have a very well run convention, and they know exactly what they're doing. With the Democrats, I've got to worry about getting tickets for my delegates, so that was a little bit different.

RITCHIE: Did you mostly try to make contact with the members of Congress whom you knew?

HOFFMANN: Absolutely. The fact of the matter is, basically right now in the VVIPs, members of Congress come in, and they may not be on the list. I've got to see that they get in. I recognize them by face. That's what the problem is: when

people don't recognize them, they're going to get shunted aside. And that's when they get a little bit hostile. So I stand right by that door. If I see them, I just pull them and take them in. Maybe the people will say, "But he's not on the list." I'd say,

page 119

"I don't care whether he's on the list or not, he's got to go in. He's a member of the United States Senate or he's a member of the United States House." So you don't have any problem that way.

RITCHIE: In the days when you were with the labor unions, did you get involved in anyone's presidential campaign?

HOFFMANN: Kennedy, up to my ears.

RITCHIE: In what ways?

HOFFMANN: Kennedy once said afterwards--I remember Arthur Goldberg and I went to the White House when Arthur was being sworn in as the Secretary of Labor at that particular time, Jack Kennedy said to me, "I ought to have something for you. I never went to a city in the United States that the Steelworkers weren't out there to meet me at the airport. I know that's your doing, and I appreciate it."

I said, "Mr. President, all I can say to you is this: you'd better leave some of us in the field so that we can help you where you need some help." And that was what it was.

Yes, I was really up to my ears in that campaign. It depended upon what the Steelworkers had done, what their executive board had decided to do, how strongly we became involved with a candidate. But yes we did, we supported him very heavily.

page 120

RITCHIE: Were you for Kennedy before he got the nomination?

HOFFMANN: Oh, yeah. A long time ago, it went way back.

RITCHIE: I just read a little piece that Senator Moynihan has written, in which he recalls swimming in the pool at the Biltmore Hotel in Los Angeles, in 1960, right after Kennedy had offered the vice presidential nomination to Lyndon Johnson. He said that on the edge of the pool were Arthur Goldberg and George Meany, in bathing trunks, and all he could hear Goldberg saying was, "Now, George; now, George," and trying to explain to him the Johnson nomination. I gather that Kennedy's labor supporters were very unhappy with the Johnson nomination.

HOFFMANN: Yes, most of us were supporting Scoop Jackson. [Opens desk drawer and removes a card encased in glass]. Here, this was when Scoop ran in '72.

RITCHIE: "Jackson for President." And autographed.

HOFFMANN: Scoop was considered to be the vice presidential candidate, and they came up with Lyndon Johnson. That was a complete surprise. Nobody asked us about it, but that's the way it worked. And if it hadn't been for that, I doubt that Kennedy would have been elected. So I think it was a smart move.

page 121

We were up there in the Biltmore hotel, and we had a suite up there in which we had food and booze and everything you'd need. We had a lot of delegates. I remember that Jack Kennedy was on the floor above us, and he came down to our suite. He and I had been friends for a while. He said, "Nurdy, do me a favor, will you? Will you let a couple of these waiters go so I can lunch up in my room?" I said, "Sure, glad to." Yeah, we did a lot of work in the political field at that time. Much more, I think, than they are doing today. But I don't know if that's true or not, I'm not that close to them now.

RITCHIE: Back in the 1950s, when Kennedy and Johnson were both still in the Senate, did you have much dealing with Kennedy as a senator?

HOFFMANN: Oh, yes. I dealt with him quite often, because he was on the Labor Committee, and that's where I was particularly interested in what was going on. We did have a lot of accommodations there. I also knew Lyndon, because Lyndon was the Majority Leader, and a very dynamic sort of a guy. He was a power, there's just no question about it, he was a real power in the Senate. And he used the power to do the things that he felt ought to be done. I think a lot of people criticized him for this, and I don't think it was fair, because if you can remember the thing they really wanted was a civil rights bill--and when it came down to getting a civil rights bill, there was nobody who

page 122

should get more credit than Lyndon Johnson did, because he did get them a civil rights bill. I think that a lot of the criticize that went to Lyndon was just unfair as hell. He was a great legislator, whether you agreed with him or not. He did some things that maybe you and I may not agree with, but I want to tell you something: when it came down to getting things done on that Senate floor, he did it. And he did it by maneuvering, and having people in the right spots and the right time. He was a great legislator, and I think he's been abused. A lot of people say, "He wasn't this, he wasn't that." The hell he wasn't, he was a power. Take a look at the people who were around him.

I can remember back in 1958, when we had the big onslaught, and brought all the new Democratic senators in, that was a big sweep we made that year. We were doing a good job of motivating people, not to run but to get out to vote. I was in his office, which later became my office as Sergeant at Arms. I was in there one day, and he was congratulating me on the terrific job the Steelworkers had done to give them this kind of majority, and the door opened, and the great senator from Oklahoma came in.

RITCHIE: Monroney?

HOFFMANN: No, the other one who owned all the oil.

RITCHIE: Oh, Robert Kerr.

page 123

HOFFMANN: Bob Kerr came in, and he heard him say this to me. He said, "What are you congratulating him for?"

Lyndon said, "For the job he did with his Steelworkers in getting out the vote and giving us this kind of majority."

He looked at Lyndon and said, "Who can make any deals with this kind of a majority?" [Laughs] That was typical of him. I shouldn't say that.

RITCHIE: But that sounds so appropriate for Kerr. Someone once told me that the only deal Bob Kerr didn't like was one he didn't have a part of.

HOFFMANN: That's exactly right! I believe that. I remember, I had to testify before him at one point in time. I was berating him for the fact that they hadn't been treating the Indians in Oklahoma in a way I thought they ought to be treated. He looked at me across the table and said, "Young man, you take care of the Steelworkers, I'll take care of my Indians." Which is terrific, I got the message.

RITCHIE: Well, how strong were labor's relations with Johnson when he was Majority Leader?

HOFFMANN: I represented labor, and I want to tell you, we had a very, very strong relationship with him. He made statements, in fact I remember we had one dinner down at the

page 124

Carlton [hotel] and he was there as vice president. He singled me out, and he said, "There sits a man who's done more for the Democratic party than anybody I know. And he's done it in a quiet way. And he's been very successful." He said, "Stand up and take a bow, you ought to." Which I did. I was embarrassed as the devil, but what are you going to do? He was the vice president. So our relationship with him was very good. We didn't always agree with some of the

things he did, but I don't think that anybody that's in this business figures that total agreement is the way to go. I think you've got to make allowances, number one for where that particular senator comes from, what his state really wants him to do, and then if he can, you'll move him over. But he was, in my book, a real operating legislator. I liked Lyndon Johnson. There were a lot of things I might not have agreed about, but I'll tell you one thing about him: I always knew where I stood. That's one of the things that is so helpful to a guy who's got to work in this factory. I don't like people who tell you one thing and then do another. That makes your life very difficult.

RITCHIE: Did Johnson make himself accessible. . .

HOFFMANN: Oh, yes.

page 125

RITCHIE: Or was he a hard man to get to see?

HOFFMANN: No, he wasn't hard to see, at least for me. I don't know about anybody else. All I can say is that my own experience with him was one that he was always receptive. He did not always agree with you, but he was receptive to listen to what you had to say, and then he might say, "I can't go along with you." All right, fine, I understand that. Nobody is going to go along with you one hundred percent. If he said no, and wanted to tell you why, find and dandy. If he didn't want to tell you why, it was still all right with me, because I think that it's a basic concept that people have to give on some issues, and can't be a hundred percent in your favor, because there are other people in the United States besides the labor unions. I recognized that. I think that that was one of the successes I had with Lyndon.

RITCHIE: What about Kennedy as a senator, how effective was he?

HOFFMANN: He was effective when it came to matters which concerned us, as far as the labor movement was concerned. I could go up and give him the cause-effect of a piece of legislation, he would take it under consideration. I would talk usually to one or two of his aides at the same time, and we would go over it. He would say, "Well, I think this is going to be a very difficult thing to get done, but we'll give it a try." I'd say, "Fine,

page 126

that's all you have to do is just give it a try," and he did. So from my standpoint on the labor issues, I had no problems with him at all. I thought he did very well as far as we were concerned. One thing about him, he had one of the best staffs I'd ever dealt with. He had people who were knowledgeable, who could give him answers, and give him right answers. They'd argue with me and tell me I was nuts, which I couldn't disagree with. I probably was trying too hard, but that's the way it went.

RITCHIE: Did you work with him when he was on the Labor Racketeering Committee?

HOFFMANN: Yes. I worked with Bobby [Kennedy] an awful lot on the McClellan hearings. We were having problems with the McClellan operation. People wanted to bring the Steelworkers in and get them brought before the committee, and I was trying to keep us from getting before the committee. Fortunately for us, I think, and I don't take all the credit for that, we were able to stay away from being called before the committee. We were never called before the committee. I didn't want that to happen, because I thought that put a stigma on you, even if you were absolutely innocent. There were a lot of things that happened behind the scenes that I can laugh at now. I certainly would not disclose them today. It was the most unbelievable thing in the world how that entwined. Every time I see somebody walking around with this book of [Roy] Cohn's, I think of what a real miserable

page 128

guy he really was to deal with. He was deceitful as hell. We found out from various ways that everybody was watching us, telephones were tapped. You couldn't do anything. I knew, I went through all this.

At one point in time I went to Senator McClellan and asked him to pose a question to somebody who was really trying to take us to the cleaners. He looked at me and said, "Why do you want me to do that?" I said, "Because I don't think he'll do this. He will digress to some other way and not take an oath." So that morning, in the committee, McClellan said, "I want you to take an oath before you testify." And this guy said, "I refuse to take an oath." He said, "Well, I refuse to hear you," and dismissed him. That's exactly what I wanted done. It was a very fair question. If you're going to say these things, you've got to be under oath, and he didn't want to. This witnesses didn't want to take the oath. I knew he didn't, because McClellan's next question was going to be: Whose payroll are you on? And that would have blown the whole thing wide open for him, so he declined. Yeah, we had a lot of problems during those days. Those were rough days.

RITCHIE: What was your impression of McClellan? Was he playing fair or was he pretty much anti-labor?

page 128

HOFFMANN: It's strange that you would ask that question, because it came back later on. Fritz Hollings said this: he said, "The thing I always liked about him"--he was talking about me--"was that when he became executive director of the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee, he held no grudges against those who had been against labor," which was McClellan. The fact of the matter is, when McClellan was running for election, he came down to my office, which was right across from Maggie's [Warren Magnuson], and sat there one day while

United States Senate Historical Office -- Oral History Project

www.senate.gov

I showed him some television spots. I said to him, "Senator, don't get yourself overheated in this primary, because if you get the people to come out for you in the delta basin, you're going to win in a walk."

He said, "Why do you say so?"

I said, "Well, because some of the people in labor are going to say some things which you can use in the delta." And that's exactly what happened. Some of the people did make some statements, and it went back to the delta, and the delta turned out in the next election, and he was home free. Fritz Hollings never forgot that. He said, "Here's a guy, when he took a job, regardless of anything in his background he was not going to down the road with that one," and that's what happened.

page 129

McClellan wasn't our friend, as far as labor was concerned, but I always found that when I went to Senator McClellan he was a very fair man. As I just told you, he did ask this question of this guy who was the most anti-labor guy I ever knew, and the guy wouldn't take it. But you've got to go back in that history and understand, there were many forces in this operation. It wasn't just labor and McClellan. [David] Schine, and Cohn, and those guys were Machiavellian bastards, excuse the word but that's exactly what they were. They gave us a real hard way to go. They would have crucified us if they had a chance, and they were trying. But you utilize all the talent you had to produce people who could help you.

One of the biggest helps I ever had in my life during those days was from a guy who is now the ambassador to Italy, Maxwell Raab, who came down here with [Henry Cabot] Lodge. I knew Maxwell very well, and we've been friends ever since. I would go to him for advice on how to maneuver this stuff. We found him to be very, very helpful, because Maxwell could tell me things that I ought to do, or not do, and I listened to him. Because he knew what was going on up there. The committee was tough. I think that McCarthy was out to get anybody, and McClellan was going to carry it on. Except, once McClellan found out that these people were not coming into court with clean hands, shall we say, he took the legal way and said, "Okay, you're going on to testify, we

page 130

expect you to take an oath." I just sat there and started to smile because this guy just picked up his books and closed them and away he went.

RITCHIE: You mentioned Joseph McCarthy. What was your impression of Joe McCarthy?

HOFFMANN: Bad news. I'd rather not talk about McCarthy, because I know too much about him, all of which has been burned, and he's dead.

RITCHIE: On the other hand, he's probably the one senator who's had more interest for historians, there have been more books written about him, and he's more controversial--you either line up for him or against him. So any of your reactions to him would be interesting.

HOFFMANN: Well, I think that my reaction to McCarthy--he came from Wisconsin, and most of the things I knew about McCarthy I burned when he died, so it's senseless for me to talk about it, because there is no proof. But I had proof at the time about some of things that McCarthy had done in Wisconsin, because at that point in time the Communist party was very strong up around Milwaukee, and my fight has always been against the Communists in the trade union movement. So I knew some of the things because of the investigations. And when he made that statement about the State Department and all the people who were un-American, or he

page 131

put it a little stronger than that, I was just absolutely beside myself, because I had all of this material, and I wanted to go with it. Then I sat down by myself and said, "Is it really worth it?"

I knew he had a problem with booze, I had known that for a long time. I didn't know it was as bad as it was, but I did know he had a problem. So all I was saying was that McCarthy shot from the hip, and he didn't really have the things to back it up. He didn't have anything to back up what he said about people in that West Virginia speech. I knew that, and I had proof on things about him, that we could have disclosed and blown him right out of the water. I had it in black and white, but as I said I burned it when he died, because I didn't think there was any sense in carrying it on after he was gone, it's not going to prove anything right or wrong. It's not going to make him look better or it's not going to make me look like a hero if I use it.

It's just like I disagree with people who work on the Hill and then write a book about what's going on on the Hill. They've been after me for a long time, and I said no way am I ever going to do that. Because I have a very strong love and respect for the Hill, and I just think that the only thing these people want is garbage, which you would throw out. Well, I didn't throw his garbage out, I burned it.

page 132

I was not ever a McCarthy fan. I thought McCarthy tried to do us in. I still think that. He was unsuccessful, but he had cohorts who were feeding him the kind of information--because he'd never have gotten the kind of information that way. It was Cohn and Schine. That's the real fact. McCarthy was not a senator who was brilliant enough to think these things up by himself, he had to have somebody feeding him this stuff. When he thought it was pressable, he took out. When he went too far, he came up against an attorney who made him look awful bad. I've never forgotten that day, I thought that was one of the finest days that have come

to be. Later, when he got sick, I had all of that stuff under file, lock and key, and I had material too, but I just burned it. And that's the end of that.

RITCHIE: The Steelworkers made a concerted effort to get the Communists out of their organization. . .

HOFFMANN: No question about it.

RITCHIE: And here was a senator who was making a career out of supposedly getting Communists out of the government, but you really felt he was working at cross-purposes from what you were doing?

HOFFMANN: I knew it. I had proof. But I didn't do it. Go off of this thing for a moment. [Discussion off the tape.] That ain't going to help anything.

page 133

RITCHIE: Interestingly, Bob Kennedy worked for both the McCarthy Committee and then the McClellan Committee. What was your impression of Robert Kennedy?

HOFFMANN: He was tough. I liked Robert Kennedy. He was very tough. I got to know him so well at 1960 at the convention, because of the delegates we had. Many nights I spent down in his room in the Biltmore. When we had to talk about something we'd go in the bathroom and turn on all the water faucets, so if we were being tapped they weren't going to be able to tell what we were talking about. He was a good guy to work with. I liked him because he was a no-nonsense guy. He was kind of fun to be around, but he was searching to do the same things I was searching to do, and that was get rid of the Commies, and we did. Not because of his help, I mean, he didn't do anything about that, but he was going in a lateral position the way were going. I found him to be a very trusting guy, and I worked with him on many occasions, because I had to have somebody on the committee who was going to be my friend. And obviously it wasn't Cohn or it wasn't Schine, so it had to be somebody else, and it was Bobby. Also involved in that whole thing, Arthur Goldberg was very close to me, and I was very close to Arthur. So I had a counsel to go to, to find out whether we were on the right track. Arthur never told me wrong. He at that point was counsel to the Steelworkers, so I was close to him on that basis. But that's the way it worked.

page 134

RITCHIE: Kennedy could not get along with the Teamsters, on the other hand, they were his great nemesis.

HOFFMANN: Oh, yes, that was true. There was just no question about it. And he didn't have a blind side on this thing. He knew that there were deals being made, and he felt that they controlled by the racketeers. I'm not so sure he wasn't right. I don't know it, I don't have it on first-hand information, but I know that

there were people who we were concerned about in the Steelworkers, particularly when Phil Murray was alive. Phil was very much concerned about this, and we were following it up.

I found Bob to be very, very helpful as far as I was concerned. He had some blind spots on some of the people who worked for him. I told him that he had some people who had questionable credentials. He asked me who, and I told him, and he said, "I don't think you're right." I said, "Time will tell." Time did tell, and he came back to me and said, "You were absolutely right. I don't know where the hell you get your information, but you were right about so and so." I said, "Well Bob, it's a big town, and a lot of people come here for various reasons. I just felt that this guy was wrong, and I know he's been in your inner circle, and I thought you were getting duped." He agreed, he came back and said, "You're right."

page 135

I'll tell you, that part of my history in this city was probably the most interesting. I didn't understand all these things, I was a novice. When I found out about wiretaps, when I found out about who was doing what to who, I couldn't believe some of these things, because these people were not coming across in that direction. I was trying to make up my own mind. I remember I went back several times to friends of mine on the Hill, who were very close, Pat McNamara from Michigan, and Ed Muskie, and some of those people. I would sit there at lunch and talk to them about this, and say, "Am I doing this the right way?" See McNamara came from labor, way back. Ed Muskie didn't, but Ed Muskie in my book had a brilliant mind, and would be willing to listen, and would then--probably not immediately--would come back to you with a conjecture later on about whether you were going in the right direction or not, which I always held as a strictly confidential thing. I always had a very close, warm relationship with Ed, as I did with a lot of the senators. With Pat McNamara, with Phil Hart, and people like that, whom I had great confidence in and didn't mind going to talk with. Mansfield was another one, who was the same way. I have a real high long-range respect for the United States Senate and the House of Representatives. That's why I would never do anything that would in any way hurt or be critical of the way things operate there, because I know how it

page 136

has to go. You have to have a knowledge of this place up here, a knowledge of the people, you've got to know everything about it. It's just not that easy to learn how this operates. Once you learn how this operates, they may make a lot of mistakes, and there may be a lot of things that may not go down good, but by and large, they are the basis of a democracy and you've got to have respect for it. If you believe in a democracy, those are the people who make the rules, and that's where you go. I've always had that, I make no bones about it.

RITCHIE: On the other hand, some of those people were out to get organized labor. There were some very strong anti-labor members.

HOFFMANN: Oh, no question about it.

RITCHIE: You mentioned McCarthy, and McClellan, and other members of the McClellan Committee who were very opposed to what you were trying to accomplish.

HOFFMANN: Absolutely. We knew that. But forewarned is forearmed, and that's what we were. That's what I was trying to do, get the best knowledge I could to feed back to my principals and say, "Here's a problem that you've got to deal with." Worked out very well.

page 137

RITCHIE: How closely did you work with the AFL-CIO during all that?

HOFFMANN: Well, at first we were the CIO and they were the AF of L, and then it came together. By and large, once we came together, we worked very closely together. We hadn't up until that point, because I don't think they wanted any part of us. They thought we were going to go away quietly, or something. But by and large we felt that together we could do a better job. So from that time on we worked very closely together, with Meany and the rest of them. McDonald was head of the Steelworkers at that time. But even in a united effort, we did it a different way. We went back to our membership and asked them to tell us what we ought to be doing here, rather than we telling them, and that made a difference, as far as we were concerned. We continued to do that even after we went into the AFL-CIO. They had a different way, they had Labor's Non-Partisan League, and we were the guys who were out there collecting money to defeat these people who were against us. We didn't do it, but we made an indentation. I learned an awful lot. I found out that in some of the instances where you were trying to help the steel industry, they were very hard to help. They didn't want help. They wanted to run it their own way. It made it very difficult. They were bringing imports into this country something awful, and we wanted to do something about it. I had meetings with these people who

page 138

had plants all over the country. We met down at the Statler Hotel in those days. We set up another meeting for two weeks away, and half the guys didn't come back.

RITCHIE: You were talking about the differences between the Steelworkers and the AFL in funding candidates. The Steelworkers were much more active in PACs. Back in those days, before all the modern federal campaign laws, how did it work when you provided money to a senator or congressman? Did they solicit it, or did you offer it? How did it work?

HOFFMANN: In ninety percent of the time, they asked for money. What we did, and I developed this at least partially, I felt that for me to distribute the money was a mistake. The money ought to be distributed from the place where they collected it. We had districts all over the United States. So when the senator would say that he needed some money, or we found out that he needed money for reelection, we would then go back to the director of that particular state where he came from, and say this senator would like to have some money if possible. He-- meaning the director--would go to the International office and say that they would like to have it. They would write him a check, and he, the director, would present that to that particular senator. So that would take me out of the money end of it, because the senator

page 139

ought to know where the money is coming from. So when the senator got mail from somebody, he knew why he got the mail. If I gave it to him, it was not going to have the same impact.

That's the way we built the process in our own union. I don't know that anybody else did, but that's the way we did it. They would write to that senator, or his [campaign] committee, and that director would present it to him. I thought it was a pretty safe way to go. We weren't building any dynasties in here, that's what I didn't want to have happen.

RITCHIE: In the 1950s a lot of liberal senators complained that the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee was favoring senators who went along rather than the independent types. Bobby Baker, I guess, was the one who was handing out the envelopes.

HOFFMANN: Yes.

RITCHIE: And much more went to a senator like Allen Frear of Delaware.

HOFFMANN: I knew him.

RITCHIE: Who was cooperative, than to a Paul Douglas.

HOFFMANN: Or to a Kerr of Oklahoma, who didn't really need it.

page 140

RITCHIE: So did the Steelworkers then try to help the senators who weren't getting funding from the party?

HOFFMANN: No, I don't think it was done on that basis. We didn't have that kind of big money. It came on the need. Obviously, a man like Paul Douglas would be right at the top of the list because of what he did. I don't think that they ever took the tack that would give to people who were not getting it from that

particular source. Basically, this opened the door for the director or his associates, who were the local union people, to come and see the senator. That's what we built on the legislative education committee. We built it on that basis. It was very, very successful, I'll tell you that. Most of the unions felt that we were way out ahead in lots of places in doing it in that manner. Then this didn't leave any stigma that I was going to be picking my friends to give money to. This had to be approved by the executive board, and the board then gave the secretary-treasurer the right to write these checks against this particular account to that particular committee that he had, and he would then give it to the director, who was in charge of the areas that supported him in that state. I think that was a protective thing. I'll never think we did wrong on that.

RITCHIE: And that opened the door of that congressman to the local labor people.

page 141

HOFFMANN: Absolutely. That was the theory behind the whole thing. It started because I was going down the street in Cleveland one day and one of the local union people just ran into me and said, "Nurdy, why are we against Bill XYZ?" I looked at him and I said, "I don't know." Well, he said, "You sent a letter?" I said, "I did?" He said, "Yeah." So I went back to Phil Murray and I said, "Phil, this is wrong. We're crazy. Why don't we do it the other way?" So we used the land grant colleges and everything to educate our people about the legislative process, and we brought them into Washington, so that they then were motivated to collect the money because they knew the money was going to be spent from their own areas, the director would make the checks out and he would think it wasn't me. I tried to stay out of all the pictures, to give these guys credit for it. They would go into their neighborhoods and be politicians in their neighborhoods. That's the way it began.

We built that thing from about 1953 on, and by 1960, as Kennedy said, we had a real political organization going. I think it was run very well, I really do. The International office did a marvelous job. We never had any criticism about it. There was no mishandling of funds or anything like that. It wasn't going into places where it wasn't supposed to go. These were what I called built-in protections. In other words, I wasn't going to do it. The guy who was the director ought to do it, so we wouldn't take

page 142

it away from him. He would be responsible to his people in his own district. That would give the senator or congressman an opening to come in and see the people who supported him. The whole thing worked not just theoretically but actually, it was very, very helpful. Proxmire said that, Gaylord Nelson said that, all the senators. I can go down a whole list of senators who just felt we were doing it the right way. Now, that's the difference between the old AF of L and the CIO. We had this thing going before we came in.

RITCHIE: When the ALF and CIO merged, did the CIO philosophy prevail, or did the AFL philosophy prevail?

HOFFMANN: I think some of both did, but because we had a hell of a lot of members in the old CIO--we were going for the people who worked in the plant, not just artisans--that made a difference as far as the total operation was concerned. They picked up some of the things we had been doing. We didn't have any problem. Once we had that we created a legislative committee that had both AFL and CIO people on it. I think [Andrew] Biemiller ran it for a while. We would meet every week to talk about these things. At least the communication was there. They picked up some of the things we had been doing very well, and vice versa. Al Barkin came over there and took over the place for the AFL-CIO and Al came out of the old CIO. So the answer to your question is yes.

page 143

RITCHIE: You mentioned Andy Biemiller. I've heard about him from a lot of other people, he was very well known on Capitol Hill. What were your relations with him?

HOFFMANN: Well, I helped elect Andy from Milwaukee when he was a Congressman, and worked with Andy for a long time. When he finally left Congress he took this job with the AFL-CIO as a legislative agent, and built the structure into it. Much of the stuff that he built in was CIO stuff, because he had had more closeness to the CIO than to the old AFL. But he did a marvelous job for the AFL-CIO. He worked very hard. He believed in the committee system, and he had many guys from the old CIO and the old AFL on that committee, and adjudicated whatever had to be done to get the job done as well as possible.

RITCHIE: Was he a good lobbyist?

HOFFMANN: Yes, he was. He really was a good lobbyist. He really knew what he was doing. I didn't agree with him all the time, but that is neither here nor there. I'm no genius at it either. But he did a good job, and a job that satisfied the people who hired him, which was Meany and the rest of those people, and he worked very closely with them. He did basically what he was told to do, and tried to get whatever he had through

page 144

this committee. We had some pretty good arguments on the committee about how we would do it, but nevertheless it did work out, and I think he made a good contribution.

RITCHIE: You mentioned the last time the controversy over the Kennedy-Ives bill and getting Landrum-Griffin. Kennedy-Ives was the reaction to the whole

McClellan Labor Racketeering Committee, and was drafted by people like Kennedy who were sympathetic to labor.

HOFFMANN: Right, exactly.

RITCHIE: What happened? Why did you come with the much tougher Landrum-Griffin bill?

HOFFMANN: Well, the problem was us. I mean, the labor movement itself. As I told you, I think, Meany had made this statement, and I said that we were opening a Pandora's box if we were going to go over to the House, and we came out with Landrum-Griffin, which was exactly what we didn't want. But if you just counted the votes over there you'd know you were going to get this kind of a problem. Meany didn't stand still for it, he wouldn't listen, so as a result we cooked our own goose.

RITCHIE: Do you think that Kennedy wasn't strong enough as a proponent of that legislation? Was it a failure on his part?

page 145

HOFFMANN: That's pretty hard to say. I don't think that--see, we were divided, and a house divided against itself, someone smart said, is going to fall. And we fell. We got Landrum-Griffin, which was what some of us had predicted, but they wouldn't listen. I was told to sit down and shut up, which I did. Old Joe Keenan behind me said, "You're right, but be quiet!" Old Joe was a good friend of mine, and we agreed that this was the wrong way to go. But that's the way they wanted to go, and there was nothing we could do about it.

RITCHIE: I've heard that both Meany and Biemiller could be pretty stubborn when they thought they were right.

HOFFMANN: That is the mildest understatement I've ever heard you make! They were very stubborn. Meany was almost brutal about it. And Biemiller, the more he was associated with Meany, because the same way. He was an alter-ego for Meany. He felt that he was in the power seat, which he was, and sometimes ignored some of us peons. But then we got Landrum-Griffin!

RITCHIE: Stuart McClure on the Labor Committee said that labor was always the most effective lobbyist on Capitol Hill for any social or economic issue, but necessarily for any labor issue.

HOFFMANN: That's right.

page 146

RITCHIE: He said that they could always pull together reformers behind a health bill. . .

HOFFMANN: Right.

RITCHIE: Or an education bill, but when to a labor bill they couldn't get the same coalition behind them.

HOFFMANN: That's true, that's absolutely true.

RITCHIE: Why do you think that was true?

HOFFMANN: Oh, I think that all the labor bills were self-serving, social issues were not self-serving. They were talking about the total group, not just a labor union. Then you've got to remember you had people who came from states which are called "right-to-work" states, and they are not going to go along, nor are the people who would go along with something other than a labor bill, because it's the law of their particular state, and made it very difficult. I think that those labor issues had to be looked at very carefully from the standpoint of labor unions because of the right-to-work bills, and they were spending an awful lot of money doing this, and they were seeking a lot of publicity. That's where you found the division. You wouldn't find the division coming on something that's going to help the farmer, or to help the poor, because they're needy. They would take that kind of an attack. But when it came to labor unions

page 147

they would say, "Well, I can't go along with that because we've got a right-to-work state. I've got to get reelected." And he had an out. You've probably never heard that before, but that's true.

RITCHIE: So you had to deal with the reality of each issue.

HOFFMANN: Exactly, you have to. Everyone stands on its own. I'll tell you a story: one time, it was in the House, and we were working very closely with the UAW, Bill Dodd and those guys. They came to me one day while I was over in the House, and he said, "You've got to get the votes to go for wheat for Pakistan." I looked at him and I said, "I don't have a local in Pakistan." He almost went nuts! He told everybody about that. Phil Murray said, "He's right, we don't have any locals over there." But you see, we got so frayed over other issues, that when we came to an issue that concerned ourselves, we had spent most of our ammunition before we got there. If we had stayed within the confines of what we were supposed to be doing, instead of going all over the world, to change the whole wide world, and taken our own issues strongly, I think we could have done a lot better. Because we just made ourselves look like a sieve. We'd go for anything that looked like some fancy-dan that would make somebody look good. Wheat for Pakistan! Why would I worry about wheat for Pakistan? I never did go for it, and it lost.

RITCHIE: On the other hand, you were one of the earliest supporters of clean water legislation. . . .

HOFFMANN: No question about it.

RITCHIE: And environmental issues. You produced that film.

HOFFMANN: Exactly right.

RITCHIE: What was the motivation behind labor pushing clean water issues in the 1950s, as opposed to strictly a labor issue?

HOFFMANN: Well, clean water was one of those issues which was not only related to labor but to everybody else. Anybody that was a fisherman, anybody who wanted to use the waters, wanted clean water. I think we were right. When you look at what happens today, we were about fifty years ahead of our time. But now you've got all of the people who have gotten away from it. The guy who really was the father of that clean water legislation, believe it or not, was Wayne Morse. You go back and look at Wayne's record. He kept saying, "Keep fighting for clean water." He kept at me. This was an issue that was acceptable to every household. You couldn't find anybody who didn't want clean water. Hell, they wanted to turn on their tap and get clean water. This was not a labor issue, but it was an issue that we solidified a lot of people to follow labor. If we made it all

right with clean water, they'd say, "Well, hell, they're not all wrong." That was getting your foot in the door, as we called it.

We were always for clean water, but we had an awful lot of guys who were fishermen who worked for the Steelworkers, and we wanted the rivers and lakes clean, if we could get them. We didn't even worry about the ocean in those days. Nobody even thought about that, now look at it today. It's strange that you would bring that up, I was half the night awake trying to figure out how the hell can we can get rid of this garbage that's coming out of the hospitals and being dumped into the oceans. That should never have been allowed! I think this is the worst stupidity that we've ever brought upon ourselves. We've got to do something about stopping it. All these things are floating up on the beaches, and don't tell me that it was somebody who took some stuff out and dumped it. That didn't happen. These were hospitals that did this sort of thing, and the sooner they find out who they were the better.

The question then comes back: how do you get rid of this stuff? I kept dreaming about it. It kept going through my mind all night: how do you get rid of these syringes? How do you get rid of all this contamination that's coming out of hospitals. We're still going to have contamination in hospitals, because you've got

people with diseases. But how do we do it? I was thinking, could you burn it? No, because then it would go into

page 150

the atmosphere, that wouldn't be the right way. You can't dump it, because it will eventually break away and rot and go into your water system. You can't bury it, because the same thing comes when you get heavy rains. I'm giving all the things you can't do, and then I wake up this morning and say, "Why, you dumb cluck, why didn't you figure out something that we could do?" I still can't figure it out. How do we get rid of it. I don't know. I wish I did. I wish Wayne Morse were still alive, maybe he'd have an answer to it.

RITCHIE: Well, back when you were pushing clean water, the steel companies were helping to pollute the rivers.

HOFFMANN: They were polluting the streams, that was exactly what we were talking about.

RITCHIE: Didn't this put the workers against the companies?

HOFFMANN: It did, but we didn't care. The guys that were working in the plant felt it was wrong to be dumping that stuff in the streams. Look at the rivers! Take the Allegheny and the Ohio, and the Monongahelia, all were dumped in by steel mills or by coal mines. They were polluting those rivers way, way back, and we were trying to get away from it. We didn't make it, but I think everybody now sees--well, look at the money we've spent trying to clean up the Potomac. Where was that pollution coming from? Upstream, they were dumping into that river.

page 151

RITCHIE: Well, I've been here for an hour and a half now and need to wrap it up, but I wanted to ask you, in your years as a lobbyist for labor, what gave you the most satisfaction? Was there a particular incident or victory that you cherish?

HOFFMANN: I know that the night we got beat in the House on the labor bill, I drove all night that night, I was so disturbed. I drove all the way out to Charleston and drove back by myself, trying to figure out: what had I done wrong? Why didn't we make it?

On the other side of the ledger, I think one of the big things that I felt--and I felt strongly about this--was the Social Security bill. Social Security meant something to me, not that I needed it, but others did need it. I'll always remember, because I went home afterwards, and we were sitting at the dining room table. We had a big family, and when I came home mother cooked a dinner and everybody came for the free meal, I guess, it wasn't to see me I'm sure. But anyway, we were sitting there and somebody was criticizing it. I'm one of the few Democrats in my family,

most of them are Republicans. They were saying about Social Security, "Oh, that's a crazy thing, why do they need Social Security?" My father spoke up, and he said, "I want you to know, I need Social Security. I feel that I'm going to be a lot better off now that we have this, and I want to thank him for doing this, because he's worked so hard at it."

page 152

Now, I was a young man at that time. The point that I was making was there people who could not retire, or if they did retire did not have enough to live on. I thought that was a mistake. They had earned the right to retire, and I felt this was the way they could do it without somebody giving them a hand-out. I felt that that was one bill which was meaningful not only to steel, to labor, because you see at that point we had just determined in our negotiations that any moneys that came from Social Security could not be counted against the amount of pensions that they got in steel, so we had that pretty well blocked. I remember when this happened, because we were in Cleveland, Ohio, meeting at the Statler hotel. I called Phil and said, "Phil, I think this is one of the great days of our history, to have this kind of an protection." He said, "I think that's true." I said, "It's growing up."

The other bill which I felt was good, and which we had worked hard to do in steel--we had not done it through legislation--was when I worked for the Steelworkers, there was a twenty cent differential between the North and South. I felt that that was bad, it was bad for everything. It was bad for the economy. There was no reason for it. I have always felt that a job is a job. You describe the job, you tell what it is, and if you're performing those things you ought to get the same rate no matter where the hell you live. We were able to bite that a little bit

page 153

at a time. I think we came down to fifteen cents, then we came down to ten, then we came to seven, then we came down and wiped it out. I think in about five years we wiped the differential out. That was another thing that I felt was so important as far as we were concerned, to be able to do that.

Those are two of the things that I recall that I felt strongly that we had made a service, not only to our union, but to the general public as well. And I still think that it was one of the great things that we have done. You remember, this was the fifties, and now we're up in '88. Fifty years ago we did Social Security, and it has survived, and think of all the people that it has helped. That thing is blinking at you.

RITCHIE: Yes, we've run to the end of the tape.

HOFFMANN: Isn't that great, now you don't have to worry about stopping me!
[End of Interview #3]

F. Nordy Hoffmann

Senate Sergeant at Arms, 1975-1981

Interview #4

Senate Democratic Campaign Committee

(Thursday, August 16, 1988)

Interviewed by Donald A. Ritchie

RITCHIE: We talked previously about your work on the Kennedy campaign in 1960, and his election. I wanted to talk today about the 1960s, when Kennedy and Johnson were in the White House. You were a labor lobbyist in the 1950s when Eisenhower was President, now you were working under a Democratic administration. Did your tactics change when Kennedy became President? Did the strategies perhaps change?

HOFFMANN: We had a more open door policy than we had before. Not all of us, because we did have some contacts earlier, going back to the time of Truman. We built some bridges--I use the word bridges as a conveyance, to get across--with Hill people who then went into the Eisenhower Administration and did a job for us in the White House. Maxwell Raab was one of them. He was a very, very great friend. He was Lodge's Administrative Assistant, and he and I had become very great friends over the years. Maxwell is now Ambassador to Rome.

page 155

But there was more openness as far as the Kennedy Administration was concerned. Even though we had these other keys before, it was like the door wasn't lock now and we could walk through on occasions. I think, by and large, that was the picture. At least we had a chance to submit the things we were seeking, and to argue our case. I think it was much better than it was before.

RITCHIE: The counsel to your union was now Secretary of Labor.

HOFFMANN: That's right, Arthur Goldberg.

RITCHIE: That's a sign of your closeness to the Administration.

HOFFMANN: That's right.

RITCHIE: But in that period from 1961 to 1963, Kennedy's legislative program really didn't get off the ground.

HOFFMANN: No, it didn't.

RITCHIE: Do you have any feelings about why things didn't take off?

HOFFMANN: It's pretty hard to make a specific call on that. As I remember now, we were taking a fairly positive way of trying to move the legislation through that we were particularly interested in. I don't think we lost any ground in this, but I do think that it took time for the new Administration to put its feet on the ground and be recognized in what they were trying to do. In most of those things that particularly concerned us, I went back to an old friend any time I had to, Bobby Kennedy, and got his ear, and tried to find out what we could do, because he and I had worked together on many things over the years. So I do think we were moving it. I don't think it moved as fast, but why it didn't move as fast, I don't know, because Kennedy had the greatest tactician in the world in Lyndon Johnson, as far as the Hill was concerned.

However, you've got to remember that all that glitters is not gold. There were some meaningful disaffections within the Administration itself, without naming any names. I think truthfully that was one of the things that made it drag along. I know it didn't move as fast as Bobby wanted to move, and I'm damn sure it didn't move as fast as the President wanted to move. Lyndon came into prominence when it came to moving things on the Hill, because he knew the Hill better than anybody in the world. He had moved the Hill before. So we worked greatly with him as a person to at least advise us on what direction they were going to

go, so that we wouldn't get caught off base. And we didn't, thanks to him. But it was a slow process, a very slow process. In fact, the process speeded up unbelievably when Lyndon Johnson became President.

RITCHIE: In the Kennedy period, the event that stands out isn't a piece of legislation so much as it's Kennedy's clash with the Steel Industry in '62. The President had been active in keeping unions from asking for wage increases, and then trying to keep the companies from seeking price increases. Were you involved in that?

HOFFMANN: Oh, yes, we were involved in the whole thing, all the way down. This was the legislative arm down here, and we were doing exactly what the leadership felt we ought to be doing. Obviously, we had friends in there; Arthur Goldberg was a particular friend, and he had been in on the negotiations of all these things so far as we were concerned. We had some real tough examinations of conscience when it came to dealing with the White House on steel and holding the line on prices. They wanted us to hold the line on wages, and then they wanted to go ahead and raise their prices. It didn't work, at least ostensibly it didn't work, it may have worked in some small cases, but not totally. We were

probably more well-informed than we had been before as to what course they were going to take. He was very open about the questions that were raised with him, as far as the labor unions were concerned.

RITCHIE: I never could figure out what motivated the steel industry to push for a price increase at that time.

HOFFMANN: I don't know. I don't have any real insight into that, because that was coming from the other side of the field. We thought it was very strange that they would try to do it. I don't know whether they thought they could get to Kennedy through the Kennedy family, in some way, to talk to him about this, but it wasn't going to work, because it was pretty obvious to the President that the people who had really been behind his getting elected had been the rank and file of the Steelworkers. He was not going to deny them their day in the sun and give it to the Steel Industry, who certainly had opposed Kennedy in his election.

RITCHIE: In retrospect, the Steel Industry has been on the decline ever since then.

HOFFMANN: Yes, it has.

RITCHIE: That was almost its high water mark at that point.

HOFFMANN: That's right. Well, if you really want to examine that, a lot of that was due to the Steel Industry's failure to plow back into the industry the necessary changes in plant operations. In other words, bring them up to the twentieth century. They felt it was going to go along just as it was. We were giving a lot of our information away to foreign countries, on how to make a steel industry. They were going out and building brand-new plants. We were using plants that had been through the mill for a long time. It was pretty difficult to understand how we thought we could compete with them with their modern plants, and our plants had not been modernized. That was the real problem. That was the beginning of why the Steel Industry went down--the lack of modernization in the steel plants themselves.

We were using old methods, and we were giving to the "enemy" outside the United States the best operation that we could think of as to how to run a steel mill. And it just didn't work that way. We were in second place. You can't give somebody a brand new mill and try to compete with them, I don't care who you are. Just nobody is that smart. Therefore it began to decline, and we recognized that. Today, look at the steel mill. I hate to even think of it. It isn't anything like it was in the days when we began. A lot of it was due to the fact that they had decided that they were not going to modernize their plants, which was a mistake.

We tried, Joe Scanlon and I tried, we went all over the United States. We were down in Alabama, we were up in Pennsylvania. The only new plant that was built at that time was a Fairless Works, right out of Philadelphia, in Fairless, PA. Fairless Works was one of the bright spots, but if you build a plant in one area and the rest of the mills are deteriorating, the deterioration is going to cause you to lay off people. It's going to cause unemployment. Then there is no idea of buying--and the building industry was not doing as well right then as it had been before. So yes, it was deteriorating, and it was due basically to lack of capital put in to modernize our own steel mills.

RITCHIE: Another incident in the Kennedy era that you had a long interest in was the Clean Water Act. Ed Muskie chaired the subcommittee hearings on that bill. Was that one of your main priorities at that stage?

HOFFMANN: It wasn't the main priority, because we were concerned about the deterioration of the steel industry. But clean water was an off-shoot of it. We began to see the rivers and tributaries all being blocked with junk out of coal mines, or steel mills, or chemical plants, and we wanted to do something to stop that. At that particular time I went up to the Army War College in Carlisle, and while I was there, three or four of us went out to look at the stream which goes through Carlisle--I'm not sure what the name of it was--and there were huge amounts of

phosphorous, it looked like foam, coming to the head of these streams. It was from illegal dumping into those streams. That was a long time ago, and now we're paying for it.

Look what we're doing today: we're dumping in the ocean. I never heard of anybody dumping in the ocean, or Puget Sound, or any place else. That was verboten when I was raised as a kid. I don't know why they suddenly think they can get away with it, but they are certainly causing us real problems. I think now they are going to find that these people who have invested a lot of money in beach areas are going to start carrying the load to clean this up and cut it out. I don't understand the philosophy of dumping a hundred miles out when the tides are coming in. That's stupid. It just gives it a good wash all the way in.

We were worried about streams. We had a lot of people who worked in the steel mills who were fishermen, and they brought it to our attention. Why aren't we doing something about this? Why can't we get our streams cleared up, so that the fishing, and the lakes and the streams would be much better off? You take a look at a place like Minnesota, figure out how many lakes you've got in Minnesota, and in Wisconsin, and here's a big part of the steel mills. We're getting all our iron ore out of Minnesota, and putting it on barges and ships and taking it over and

dumping it in Cleveland and running it on trains to Pittsburgh, or Philadelphia, or where else you want it. By and large, those

page 162

people up in that area, who didn't have all the amenities that we have in these big cities, were very much interested in the land, in the environment, and how to keep it. Slowly you could find out that these fish were dying in the river. So we began to do a real job on that.

We started that, really, in the late '50s. I think it was 1958 when we really began to work on this, and we made a film which we used to bring this to the attention of, not only our membership, but everybody else we could get to look at this picture. President I.W. Abel said one time, "The only trouble was you were twenty years ahead of your time." That may have been, but at least we had tried to start it. But you've got to remember when you talk about the improvement of the water, one of the first men that I remember who concerned himself about this was the Senator from Oregon, Wayne Morse, who said "We are wasting water." He began it, and Ed Muskie, coming from Maine, had the same problems up there that we were having in areas of Minnesota. It began to be just like a snowball, it got bigger as it rolled down the pike.

I think that many of the senators who were concerned about clean and pure water probably had a lot more foresight than we gave them credit for at the time. People said, "Oh, they're just environmentalists," you know, "do-gooders." Well, that wasn't really true. They were saying that we've got millions of people

page 163

in this land and they depend on water to survive. The first thing we'll know we're not going to have any water, and we will have no survival, we will have no nation, period, that's the way it's going to go. Anyway, that's why we took a very strong position about it, in the Steelworkers Union.

I went around to most of the district meetings in that time, and this was a main topic. If you made a speech, the questions that came at that particular time were so overwhelmingly on clean air and clean water, it was unbelievable. That was brought up more than anything else. We used to keep track of it then, and it was by far one of the biggest issues we had.

RITCHIE: Well, it certainly pushed Muskie to the forefront.

HOFFMANN: No question about it.

RITCHIE: He was a junior senator in his first term, chairing a subcommittee, and taking on this major issue, and accomplishing something.

HOFFMANN: And it was a major issue. A lot of people were saying "Do gooder," "do gooder," well that wasn't it. He was concerned about it just as much as anybody else. He was also a

page 164

fisherman, and he saw what was happening in his own State of Maine. Then he began getting people like myself and others who were saying to him: "Look, Ed, this is a big topic. There's an awful lot of people who are interested in this, nationwide." He said, "Well, we've got to do something about it." So he began to do a very, very constructive job, and he made a great contribution. Except that those contributions had to be followed by something, and other people did not follow in the same latitude that he did.

RITCHIE: What type of person was Muskie to work with?

HOFFMANN: Well, I think really the best person in the world to talk about Muskie is sitting out in my front office, my wife. She came down from Maine with Muskie when he came down in '59. She was the first one in the office. She always spoke very highly of him, that he was a good man to work for. They were very close friends; we still are close friends with the Muskies. Joanne found that working with Muskie, he was a perfectionist, and he exacted perfection out of people that he worked with.

We became very close, Muskie and I, largely due to the fact that when he came down here he opposed some of the things that Lyndon Johnson wanted, which therefore made it very, very difficult for him to get much space in the Senate. He was being kind of hogtied. Joanne used to call me and say, "Ed needs to go

page 165

to lunch." So Ed Muskie, and Pat McNamara and I would have lunch in the Senate dining room, maybe two or three times a month, just to talk. He was a man who was seeking information. He wanted to know how things worked, and where they were working.

He was particularly interested in what was happening in the labor movement nationally. But he had certain things like clean air and clean water, and later, as you know, he became interested in the budget--to constrain the budget. He took those positions; he was not forced into them; he believed that we ought to address ourselves to those conditions because they were going to cause us problems. Did they cause us problems? What is the budget today? Where are we? Aren't we dealing with borrowed money all the time? That's what he was concerned about back in 1959. He was right then, and he's still right. The budgetary process, although it slowed down, suddenly went to pot when Reagan came in and it went crazy, and we were overspending everything that we did. Not like Reagan says, by the Congress, but what he did in the military and other

United States Senate Historical Office -- Oral History Project

www.senate.gov

budgets, and giving help to other nations, which we don't question maybe needed the help, but nevertheless which cut in and cost us more money as we went along. We were not living within our income, and that bothered Muskie. He was a very fine guy to work for. A very honest man, very direct. He made no haphazard decisions. Mansfield told me one time that he was one of the most thoughtful senators on the Senate

page 166

floor. He thought very carefully before he spoke on anything, and he researched it before he spoke on it. So you always knew that he wasn't grabbing something that was flying by on the tail of the kite, but something which had good meaning and a good possibility of changing something way down the road. He had a lot of unbelievable ideals, which he always kept. I found him to be one of the great guys to work with. He was an outgoing sort of a fellow, if you knew him. But if you didn't know him, he was a Maine person. Not a mean person, but a Maine person. A Maine person is one who keeps his own counsel and is not very outgoing. But Muskie was, he had an outgoing personality. He knew the Senate, and he worked hard at it.

So looking in perspective, this was a great crew of people who came in '58, a lot of good guys. Ronald Reagan at that time was a Democrat. He now is a Republican and now condemns all of these people because they are liberals. Well, history will tell whether he's right or whether he's wrong. He puts the tag on them, but it seems to me that you'll find out that he was the guy who negotiated the contracts for the Screen Actors' Guild in those days, and he was fairly liberal himself. Of course, now he's to the right of Attila the Hun. We must bear with it until he exoduses from the White House.

page 167

RITCHIE: When we're discussing Muskie, it's hard to remember now that when he came to the Senate in 1959, he took an anti-Johnson position, and instead of going along bucked the system, and instead of getting Foreign Relations got Public Works and the District of Columbia. What kind of advice did you give to him then? How did you try to help him deal with all this?

HOFFMANN: On these things, you couldn't advise him. On these things he felt very deeply. He felt that it was the wrong way to go just to go along. He took that hard line. Joanne used to kid, she'd say, "Poor Ed, he needs somebody to talk to." It was tough, very tough. He's a man of principle, always has been, far above anything else. If that's the way they took after him, fine and dandy, that's the way it would be. In the long run he felt he could work it out, and did. But it was tough, I want to tell you. When he first took the opposition to the leadership when he came in here, it was no holds barred, because those were the days when the leader was the controller, and if you didn't go along with the controller you didn't eat at the breakfast table, period.

RITCHIE: He reminds me a little of Hubert Humphrey when he first came. Humphrey started out as an outsider in the Senate, shunned by the establishment and shunted aside, but eventually became a real insider in the Senate. Muskie got that treatment as well. Did the men change, or did the institution change?

page 168

HOFFMANN: The institution, I think, changed a lot. I really do. It changed gradually. If you were there you could see it changing, but people on the outside didn't see it change. They felt it was just somebody going along. Well, it wasn't going along. You trace Hubert and his actions then, when LBJ was the majority leader, and let's go down when Hubert was running for the presidency. Did LBJ come out and help him? The answer is no. I don't know whether that went back to that particular thing, but I don't think that history will ever say that LBJ got over a grudge very easily. It took a lot of nurturing to get him over there. I think that that was in the back of his mind when he didn't help Humphrey any more than he did. But of course there were others that didn't help him either. There was Gene McCarthy, who was supposed to be his great friend, but he didn't help him. He walked away. The only guy who really stuck with Hubert was Big Ed, and Ed believed that Hubert was right. There you see the character that was in the two men, and they tried hard. They might have made a change in the country if they had won, but it was not to be, therefore we had to go along with what we were given by the voters, which is the right way to go, I can't argue with that.

RITCHIE: One other person in that period I wanted to ask you about was Mike Mansfield, who took over from Johnson in 1961, but a very different character as majority leader.

page 169

HOFFMANN: He was. He was a let-the-Senate-do-it-if-they-want-to man. I always remember him, and this goes way back to when he was in the House. His wife and my sister went to St. Mary's, across from Notre Dame. I went in to see Mike one time when he was in the House of Representatives and I was representing the Steelworkers. I said, "Congressman, I'm here in behalf of the Steelworkers, and I'd appreciate it if you would say a word or two about what we're trying to do." He looked at me and he said, "I will neither talk for you or against you, but I will always vote with you." That was his motto. He was a man of very few words, as you know. Anybody who knew Mike, knew Mike was not a guy who would make a lot of noise. He loved the Senate, he really did. He worked hard at it. He, again, was close to Muskie, and he was close to Humphrey. That was particularly interesting if you're going to go back and look at the historical significance of that time in the Senate. He was close to those people. He liked Humphrey. He liked Ed Muskie. I mean, he admired both of them, and encouraged them to talk to him and advise him on things. Ed was very, very fond of Mike, and still is. Hubert was also. He liked Mike Mansfield and felt he was a good leader.

Mike Mansfield's idea of leading was exactly the opposite of Lyndon Johnson's. Lyndon Johnson was a forceful guy who pushed for what he thought he wanted to do. Mike Mansfield said, "If this is what we're going to do, I'm going to present it to the

page 170

senators and they're going to make up their own minds." That's the way he governed it. I think that's why it looked like he wasn't doing anything, because he followed a guy who was so forceful. His idea was not being cute, it was that these men were all elected in the various parts of the country, and to try to push them someplace was the wrong way to do it. He's a Westerner, and they don't believe in doing that in the West. What he did was say okay, here's the problem, you make your decisions and that's the way we'll go. It was an attempt, I think by the majority leader, to move by acclamation rather than by direction.

RITCHIE: Did you think that some of that style, however, was responsible for the slowness of the pace in the Senate. . . .

HOFFMANN: Oh, yes, no question about it.

RITCHIE: And the reason why things weren't getting done at that stage.

HOFFMANN: There was no question about it, absolutely. It was a slowness, but that was Mike Mansfield. Mike Mansfield was not a pusher. Mike Mansfield was a persuader. People had to think about it themselves. Where Lyndon was a pusher. He just said, this is what it's going to be, and he lined up the votes and that's what it was. It's a different style. Maybe the Senate suffered from that style, but not too long. What happened later on? When Lyndon became Vice President he went right back to

page 171

saying, "Mike, you run the Senate." And what did he do? He then began to push for civil rights and the things he could do. He helped Mike put through the Civil Rights Act, which I thought was a major turning point for a guy from the South, and a very great thing that Lyndon Johnson did.

I remember the day after Kennedy was nominated, and we had a meeting the day after, at the convention. I went to Lyndon and said, "Who is going to be the majority leader?" He said, "There's only one: Mike Mansfield. He will be a great majority leader." That was his own quote to me. You can make the comparisons, but they're so obvious to make. Here's a guy who tries to persuade, and here's a guy who's going to push and not persuade. "This is what it's going to be, and there ain't going to be any changes" versus "This is what we'd like to have it be, but how do you feel about it?"

RITCHIE: Still, I think it must have been difficult to go back and to tell someone like I.W. Abel or George Meany that things were just going very slowly and that legislation they were hoping to pass, everything from Medicare to Right to Work, was still sitting in committee, and things weren't generating. Wasn't there some sort of frustration on the part of labor now that they had gotten a Democratic administration in, and wanted to get things done, and here's the Senate going at this slow pace?

page 172

HOFFMANN: No, I don't think so. At least I never felt that. I never had that kind of pressure from Abe and those people. They wanted to get things done, and it was difficult, but we understood why, because there was a different temperament of men. I.W. Abel was a great leader, but he wasn't a Phil Murray. Mansfield was a great leader, but he wasn't a Lyndon Johnson. Those comparisons go back whether you're in the labor movement or whether you're in government or industry, it doesn't make any difference. Every leader has his own way, or his own stamp of approval of how he thinks it ought to be done. Generally that's what you're going to find, people are going to go along with that stamp of approval.

By and large I think that if you go back and look at that history, when Ed Muskie and Hubert and the rest of them were in there, they were really trying to do a job, but they didn't have all the votes they needed in some of these committees. Therefore it was slow--it was a very slow process. When a slow process performed itself under the eyes of Lyndon Johnson, he cut the tape and said, "Let's go, this is the way it's going to go, whether you want to or not." And he had enough leaders on the floor to do it. Mike Mansfield never pushed that way, and therefore he never had the kind leadership that did it. I think that's really the answer.

page 173

RITCHIE: Well, you mentioned a couple of times that things changed dramatically after 1963. Do you think that the reasons why the legislative pace picked up and bills were successful was because Johnson was President and was more skillful as a legislative leader, or because of the shock over Kennedy's assassination?

HOFFMANN: I don't the assassination was the thing. Here again, you take a majority leader like Lyndon Johnson who is a pusher, and you put him into the presidency, and he knows how to push the legislation. That's really what took place. I don't think it was a reaction to Kennedy's death. I think the nation was shocked for a long time, and it was a very difficult time, but I think that Lyndon began in his own way: these are my reigns, I'm going to drive this horse. If you ever had the opportunity to go riding with Lyndon down at the ranch, well, I'll tell you, you go riding out in his car and go over these bumps, you don't know

whether you're coming down in one piece or not. Just hang on, that's all you can do. We're going to a certain place and we're going to get there, that's the way he did it. He operated the presidency the same way. But when he was in the presidency he knew how to operate the Hill.

That's the difference between what you've got in Reagan and in Lyndon Johnson. Both very forceful people, but Lyndon understood this place up here, and others did not. It became very

page 174

apparent that he wanted certain things to be done, and he did them. Take a look at his record. He had one hell of a record when he was President of the United States. I think the biggest shock that I ever got was the night when he announced that he wasn't going to run. I couldn't believe it when I listened to that, because here was an inveterate political person saying "I've had all I wanted and I'm getting out." It was very difficult, the war had a lot to do with that, I don't think there's any question about it. A lot of people don't give him credit for it, but I think it worried him more than anything else.

I knew him pretty well, and he was a tough taskmaster. But he was an honest guy, as far as when you sat down and talked to him about something, he would give you his opinion. Now, you might not like his opinion, but he was going to give you his opinion. Again it comes from knowing the operation. Take a look at what happened to Carter. Carter came in and didn't know anything about the Hill. He didn't hire anybody who knew anything about it. What happened? He went down the tubes. I mean as far as the cohesion between the two branches of government, and I don't think you can run a democracy that way. I think it takes time to understand. You can't just come up and say, "I'm going to disregard everything in Washington. They're not going to sell me. I'm going to do it the way we did it wherever I came from." It just doesn't work that way. It just is not going to work.

page 175

But that's the way it goes, and that's what it was after those three years, in '63, when Lyndon became the President of the United States. He began to assert the power that he used when he was in the Senate. And if you want to look at the power he used in the Senate, he transferred that right to the White House and began moving from that direction. He knew how to shake the peaches so they wouldn't break when they hit the ground. He put a blanket under them.

RITCHIE: That's an interesting analogy!

HOFFMANN: But it's true, he put a blanket under the peaches. He knew how to operate with people, he applied to their egos, he applied to anything else. He applied to their patriotism. Oh, he pulled out every stop. And once he did that, then it looked like the whole thing moved fast. It didn't move fast, it was just there was nobody there to motivate it before, and that's the way it was.

RITCHIE: Did you get down to the White House much when Johnson was President?

HOFFMANN: I was there two or three times. I liked him. I was very fond of him.

RITCHIE: I was wondering, did he take personal charge of the lobbying of some of these bills? How did it work?

page 176

HOFFMANN: No, I think he had his own people doing it, although he directed them as to what he was going to do, and he made the telephone calls. He called the key guys up here, that's the way it was done.

RITCHIE: In '65 and '66 there was an amazing rush of legislation. Bills that had been waiting for years. . . .

HOFFMANN: That's my point.

RITCHIE: But the one thing that he failed on was right-to-work legislation.

HOFFMANN: Right. Well, he couldn't do it. There was just no way to do it. Because you had right-to-work states and you had key guys who were up in the Senate who wouldn't move, and couldn't move. They couldn't take a position against that when their state already had a right-to-work bill. [George] Smathers in Florida, those were the kind of guys they had to work with. It was impossible for him to move ahead. Johnson did not like right-to-work; I mean, personally, that was not one of his bags. But he couldn't get the necessary pegs in the holes that had to do the operation, because they already had right-to-work states, all over. It wasn't his fault, it was a very difficult problem to try to devise any kind of strategy on.

page 177

RITCHIE: The other divisive issue that came up, that you mentioned earlier, was the war in Vietnam. What kind of tensions did that create among the senators that you were working with, in particular the liberal Democratic senators?

HOFFMANN: Well, there were a lot of senators who were totally against this confrontation in Vietnam, and that caused a problem. I think that Lyndon was in a field in which--God forbid that I ever say this--he didn't know too much about. He was being advised by people who were grinding an axe one way or another, whether it was more troops, more planes, more whatever the hell it was. I don't think he realized that there had been another nation involved in that same place for many, many years, and could never solve any problems between North and

South Vietnam. I think once he got in it he was a bull, he was going to stay and this was the way it was going to go. You couldn't get him to dissent on any of this, because he didn't have enough of his cronies up here who were for maintaining a war presence in Vietnam, they wanted to get out. A lot of people up here thought we ought to have gotten out a lot earlier.

Lyndon was a strategist who understood how to count. He knew how to count the votes. He knew where they were. He knew where the strength was in the leadership, where the weaknesses were. But he was very much alone in this thing. I think in all the

page 178

times that he was in the leadership in the Senate he always had a tremendous amount of guys around him who were helping him. On Vietnam it was divided, and it was divided so strongly that you couldn't put it back together. These people were getting tremendous pressures from home, for whatever reason, for sons or husbands or whoever had gone overseas to fight this catastrophic war that we weren't going to win.

He was such a bulldog that he wouldn't let it go. He just stuck there like a bulldog shaking an animal after he's captured it. He just stayed with it, and stayed with it. There was nobody who could talk him out of this thing. It was an unfortunate thing. I don't blame him for being there, because I don't think he was to blame. We were there before he got there. But by and large he felt that he was on the right track, and he was advised by some of his cohorts that we were on the right track. I don't think we were, but that's neither here nor there.

I never had any occasion to talk about it at all for the few minutes I saw him every once in a while. That never came up. He was more interested in talking about how things were going in the labor movement, and what we were doing. He kept saying to me: "You always say that the labor movement is doing all right but that management is not putting anything in the plants." I said, "That's right, but you give them a tax break every time you get a chance, and they're not using that tax break to reinvest in their

page 179

properties." That was a going concern between he and I. But I think there was such division on Vietnam that he couldn't win it. He knew he couldn't win it, but he wasn't going to let go.

RITCHIE: It was about that time that you left the Steelworkers.

HOFFMANN: 1967.

RITCHIE: What was it, after all those years, that made you decide to leave?

HOFFMANN: I'd been with them I think twenty-three years at that point. I think that I felt that I had reached as high as I could go in that particular

United States Senate Historical Office -- Oral History Project

www.senate.gov

endeavor. I was very close to Abel. I was close to McDonald. I was close as hell to Phil Murray. I loved the Steelworkers, and I loved the job I was doing. But I felt that I was about as far as I could go. I didn't go out to seek the [Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee]. This came through Ed Muskie and Mike Mansfield. Would I take an early retirement from the Steelworkers? I had never even thought about it before. I did some thinking about it, and talked to Abe about it. I said, "I've got a chance to do something which I think I can make a contribution to." That's one of the things that motivates me. I took a look at this thing.

page 180

I went in and had a long talk with Abel. I'll never forget it, Abe was in New York, I went up to see him and we had lunch together. I said, "You and I have been friends for a long time. I just think that I might take a chance at this thing, and I might do some good. I might help the Steelworkers at the same time." He said, "I believe you. I think you're absolutely right." He said, "You know you don't have to leave." I said, "I know that, that's not bothering me." But here was a chance to do a little bit better, and the same kind of work I'd been doing all the time anyway. So we made a pact. Mansfield and Muskie asked me to do it, and Abe said go. So that's how I changed after all those years. But I was really not changing anything. I was just doing the same thing I'd been doing, except on a different basis. From being on the outside, I was now on the inside. I began to see how things worked on the inside, which was a big help as far as I was concerned.

But I think the thing that was uppermost in my mind was that I got a free hand to do what I wanted to do. I remember one of the things that I wanted to do more than anything else was bring a young lady who had been working with me at the Steelworkers. Her name was Barbara Towles. She was a black girl, marvelous girl. When she was in the Steelworkers she was just a clerk, and she

page 181

wanted to be a secretary. I said, "You go and take your courses and come back here and we'll make you a secretary." Well, we did. When I went up there, I said to Ed Muskie: "Can I take whoever I want to build this thing, because I've got to do a lot of building in this thing." You gotta know where it was at the time when I took it over! They wanted me to change a lot of things, Ed and Mike. They said, "Why?" I said, "I've got a black girl I want to bring in." At that point in time, in 1967, take a look at the records, there were no black girls in major positions in the United States Senate, none. She was the first one. She was my executive assistant. She handled all the money, she did everything. She was just a tremendous girl. Mike and Ed said, "Go ahead, do it."

Then I wanted to get young people involved in this thing. I wanted them to be dedicated to do it. Now this was 1967 to 1975. We held the Senate under all the Republican presidents. We never the lost the Senate. That was due basically to

United States Senate Historical Office -- Oral History Project

www.senate.gov

the effectiveness of these young people I brought on board. They had their own rights. If they disagreed they could tell me, and we would fight it out. There were no set ways because we were really chartering waters that nobody had chartered before. It was no reflection on anybody who went before, but we were doing things that had not been done. I remember one of the first things we got to do was the Fact Book. The Fact Book had always been done by

page 182

the Democratic National Committee and they were pulling their horns back, so we had to do it. I gave that job to these guys. We had a meeting one night and I said, "Do you think you can do this?" They said, "Yeah, we think we can." I said, "Well, it's going to take a lot of research." They did a marvelous job. Whatever success I had there was due to those young people who were so damn dedicated. We began to bring in people who did television shows and radio shows, on how to promote a candidate. We had dog and pony shows on Saturday mornings over in the old Dirksen auditorium, and we'd bring these people in and they'd answer questions for two days. It gave them a chance to get to a candidate, to sell their wares to the candidate, so it was a two-way street. We were getting their advice, but they had a chance to make themselves available. I think that was a very, very helpful operation. I was in there under five or six different senators [as Chairmen of the Campaign Committee]. They all just said, "Go ahead, we're not going to touch it because you're evidently doing very well with what you have right now." We didn't have a lot of money. We were just people who were trying things that had never been tried before. They would come up with an idea, and we'd sit down and hash it over. I'd say, "Well, does it have merit, real merit?" And they'd say, "Yeah, we think so." We put teams together to go around to non-incumbents

page 183

who were going to run. We'd take our teams out to tell them how to spend their money, how to get their media, all that stuff. We traveled all over the country. It was a very, very good operation, I think it was one of the best operations that I ever knew at that point in time. A lot of others have followed up and done some of that since then, but hell there was a guy like Marty Franks, who was with me, Bob Thompson, Sam Kinzer, Bob Thompson's sister. There were say ten or twelve kids that we had in there, they were all going to school. Coley O'Brien was another one. They were all going to school, and got time to do their work, and yet they all graduated with honors from their universities, and most of them became lawyers, and are very successful, which makes me feel good. They would have been successful with or without me, but it feeds my ego to say at least I had a chance to be with these kids.

We put this on a different basis than it had ever been before. We knew nothing. There were no records which we could go back to and refer to, like we have a record now. We didn't have any records. We had to play by the seat of our pants. I

think the convention we went to was '68. If I remember that was in Miami--don't hold me to that.

RITCHIE: '68 was Chicago.

page 184

HOFFMANN: Chicago. Yes, Chicago, and that was the lesson that we learned, and it was a very tough lesson. But these kids worked so hard to get all this done. I remember two years later--two years? Four years later.

RITCHIE: You had mid-term party conference.

HOFFMANN: We went down to Miami. They took my station wagon and filled it with all the stuff we needed to take. Oh, these kids just worked so hard. They really knew what they were doing. I think this was a turning point. I became so interested in this because it was a success. Number one we had candidates. We provided TV stuff. I had my own 16mm projector in there and they would come down to the office and look at the pictures of somebody else's campaign. We made those things available to all candidates to look at and see what had been done. A lot of those things were small and didn't look very meaningful, but in some cases, hell a guy like John McClellan came down to look at the stuff and couldn't get over how well we were prepared to try to help him. That was a real turning point as far as my life. I'm getting up there in years. I was in that job from '67 to '75, when they suddenly came to me and said, "They want you to be the Sergeant at Arms of the Senate." I said, "You've got to be kidding, I wasn't even running for it." Anyway, that's another story. But by and

page 185

large the people that were there made this thing work, it wasn't me. They were working and they had the right to do what they wanted to do. They never quit working. I never saw kids work harder than those kids did, every one of them.

RITCHIE: In every election you would have thirty-three or thirty-four candidates. Did you have resources to cover them all, or did you have to make decisions as to whom you would support?

HOFFMANN: We had limited money we could give each one. Each one got something. Not like today. Television alone is just unbelievably expensive. But we did have a chance to see these people operate, and we did give them money. We gave the incumbents money and the non-incumbents money. Oh, there was an uproar about that one time. Incumbents said, "We're raising the money, we ought to get the big share." I said, "If we're going to win the Senate we've got to take a gamble on something else." By and large it worked out pretty good. We didn't have too much fall-out from it. In some instances you might have had some, but not that much. The senators did everything they could for us. We had fund-

raisers, and they participated. In those days I think five thousand dollars we gave a senator, something like that. Maybe ten in some cases, if the race was close and we had the money. We did the same thing for non-incumbents.

page 186

RITCHIE: Were there any times when you wrote somebody off because they were in such a hopeless race it was a waste to give them money?

HOFFMANN: Yes, in one case, there was a fellow in Delaware by the name of [Jacob] Zimmerman, who was going to run for the Senate [in 1970]. I didn't believe that he really had a chance. What we did was pay for a poll to find out what kind of a man they were looking for in Delaware. It wasn't Zimmerman. But we had to go along with it. I didn't deny him any money. I gave him as much money as I could give to him. But the next time it came around--you see you never know when you're doing the right thing--a young man came into my office two years later. He came in with his brother and he sat at my desk. He said, "I'm going to run for the Senate in Delaware." I had this poll. I knew a lot about this young man, but I wanted to find out if he had guts. So I really taunted him for the first fifteen minutes: "What makes you think you can run?" "Why should you be chosen?" "This costs money to do this?" "We don't have all the money in the world, and I'm sure you don't have it." I did this for about twelve minutes. Finally, he looked at me and said, "I don't have to take this crap from you." I said, "Senator, we are going to go for you. That's what I wanted to know." He said, "What?" I said, "I wanted to see if you had any guts." He said, "You were just

page 187

telling me off?" I said, "That's exactly what I wanted to prove, and now here's why I said it," and I showed him this poll. He couldn't believe it. That was Joe Biden. He came through with flying colors. But he was going to tell me he wouldn't take my money and the hell with me, but I only wanted to know one thing: I wanted to know if he had the guts to turn me down, because I'm the guy with the money. He did, he told me he didn't have to take that. But outside of that, I don't think there was another senator--no, we never turned anybody down.

RITCHIE: How about in the other direction. Suppose you had a candidate whom you thought had a good shot. Would you go out and raise extra money, as you mentioned about Biden?

HOFFMANN: Oh, sure, I would, yes. We did that on several occasions. In fact, one of the men who is now sitting, the new senator from Nevada.

RITCHIE: Harry Reid.

HOFFMANN: He was one the guys we were trying to get in, and we were trying to tell him how to do it. When he got sworn in this last time, he came over to me and said, "Nurdy, if I had only listened to you I'd have been here years earlier!" Which is true, but that's neither here nor there. Sometimes that's the way the ball bounces. But we went out and raised money. I'd go to people

page 188

and say, "Look, I think this guy's got a good shot. Take a look at him, and if you can, help him." We had a lot of ways to help people, that wasn't directly money coming from us, but basically from them putting it into the campaigns. It didn't have to go through the campaign committee. See, they wanted all of that money to be going through the campaign committee. I didn't believe in that. I felt that if these guys wanted to put some money in, they ought to have a rapport with the candidate, and that's the way it worked. I was pleased that it did work that way. I had no problems on that at all.

In the old days they used to be able to give money like this: a fellow came in one time and he said he had ten thousand dollars he wanted to give to Senator X. I said, "Why don't you give it to Senator X?" He said, "We want to run it through the campaign committee." I said, "Ten thousand dollars, what is that, cash?" He said, "Yeah." I said, "I'll give you a receipt." He said, "I don't want a receipt." "Well," I said, "that's the only way we're going to take it." He said no way, and I said, "I am not going to take your money. We're trying to do it legally and above ground." So I called the senator and said, "This man's here and he wants me to take ten thousand dollars for you, and I'm not going to take it. Do you want to meet him?" He said, "Run him out, I don't want any part of him."

page 189

Well, that's the way you learn the game. We were very, very careful. We never exchanged money or anything like that.

We were called before the grand jury over in Baltimore at one point in time, and we had a set of books, which I kept from the first day on. We took the books over there, and the grand jury said they were the best books they had ever seen. We did not have any problems and they didn't bring us in for anything else but to find out information. We had that kind of information. That's what Mike wanted, and that's what Muskie wanted. They wanted us to set it up in that kind of an operation. It was legal and it was done above board. I think it would have fallen by its own weight if I hadn't done it that way. But with the young kids who were there, they were all idealists, and they were watching me like I was watching them. I still meet with these young kids, adults now. They were here for my birthday this year. Bob came in from Denver, and Sam came in from Seattle, they all came in and we had lunch. That's a lot of years, but every one of them is doing very well.

RITCHIE: You had taken over that job just a couple of years after Bobby Baker was doing it.

HOFFMANN: Yes.

RITCHIE: Did you get some feedback about the problems that existed before, and the need to reform that system?

page 190

HOFFMANN: Yes, I got feedback. But I was given a free hand. Nobody argued with Mike, nobody argued with Muskie, and I was given free reign to put this thing on a legal, honest basis, which I did. Not that there was anything dishonest before, but records were very, very poorly kept. The first thing I did was go out and get Max Boyarsky and Company, auditors, to come in and set up books, and the whole works. We were absolutely meticulous about that sort of thing. I think it helped us in the long run, because there was no digging in deep drawers for money. You just laid it out there, and you put in every dime you took in. We were pretty tough on spending, because we didn't have that kind of money. The more money we spent on salaries, the less we could spend on campaigns. In those days I got people whom I had known all over the country who would give me contributions to help pay the salaries for these kids who were working for me, and it didn't come out of the money we were collecting in fund-raisers. I suppose that was a new thing too. But, yeah, I came in after the Bobby Baker days, and that's one of the things that Mike wanted cleaned up.

RITCHIE: Well, tell me, how do you go about raising money? Do you have a list of people you go to automatically when you've got a candidate?

page 191

HOFFMANN: Let me show you how it works. I've got a picture on my wall out there of people I call my hall of fame. A couple of them are dead now. One of them was a friend of mine in New York, we had become friends over the years, a very wealthy man. He felt that he wanted to see me do this thing and do it right. I would call my friend and say, "I need money to make a payroll." He'd say, "Fine, how much do you need?" I'd tell him and he would call five or six of his friends, and they would send money--this was perfectly legal--send money down that would make the payroll. That's payroll to run your daily office.

When you wanted to raise money for campaigns you had people put on a party, and had people like Mansfield, and Muskie, and Russell Long, people of that nature, who went to the particular party wherever it was held, and that brought out other people. They'd pay whatever money they were charging them to come to this thing, and then the money would be handed to me and we would put it in the bank. The bookkeeping was all legal and everything was done exactly the way

it should be done. We would raise money that way. We also had the annual Congressional dinner which raised money.

If it were a candidate in the state, we would go out to the state and talk to anybody we knew out there that felt likely to support this candidate with money. That's the way we raised the money.

page 192

RITCHIE: Did you start with labor organizations?

HOFFMANN: Not totally, but labor organizations were one of the first ones we would go to, because they had a good operation. Because having come from there I knew exactly where to go. It worked out very well, we didn't have any problem at all. We went to most labor organizations, not all of them, but most of them.

RITCHIE: And then you had sympathetic businesses, I suppose.

HOFFMANN: Oh, yeah, you had a lot of those. You had large supporters all over the country.

RITCHIE: I remember during Watergate it came out that some contributors were covering their bets by putting money on both candidates.

HOFFMANN: Oh, yes.

RITCHIE: Did you find that as well?

HOFFMANN: Not necessarily. If they did, I didn't know about it. There was no way that I could tell that they were giving to both sides. I think there was maybe one that I remember that did that, but I didn't have any proof of it. I just felt that he got himself in trouble doing that, he got caught later on doing that.

page 193

RITCHIE: The federal elections were enacted shortly after Watergate, did they create more difficulties for you?

HOFFMANN: Oh, yes, because we had to be more careful. We had to make more reports. I had one young man, Bob Thompson, who was an expert on this operation. He would go to all the places we went to tell the candidates: these are the things you've got to be careful about; these are the things you've got to file. That was all part of the thing when we were bringing them in to run, these were the things you had to look at. In fact, Mike Berman, who helped me a lot in this whole operation, had great ideas, and of course Mike just felt that every candidate ought to have absolutely clean hands on anything he did.

These were the things that we were instructing the candidates when we met with them. We would each take a part of it, and it was divided so that one guy wouldn't be doing all the talking. One was on finances, one was on fund raising, one was on research, one was on the fact book, whatever. We had about five or six guys who went on these trips all over the country. I think that was one of the things that kept us from losing the Senate. One year we had "Save Our Seven Senators," SOSS, because we were seven from going down, but we won handily. It was due to the dedication of these young people. They just never quit trying.

RITCHIE: Now, you had a counterpart organization on the Republican side who were doing the same things to elect their candidates. Did you try to keep up with what they were doing?

HOFFMANN: No.

RITCHIE: Did you ever get feedback about their operations?

HOFFMANN: Oh, I knew what they were doing. Yes, we had information coming back. But we didn't have any cloak and dagger operation or anything like that, no. We found out. I knew the guy very well who was running the Republican campaign committee.

RITCHIE: The Republicans had a reputation for being very high tech. Did you get any pressure to computerize and follow the things that they were doing?

HOFFMANN: Oh, sure, we were doing the same thing. But they didn't know we were doing it. We were not high tech because we didn't have that kind of money, but as I said, if we wanted to find out something, we'd have a poll done. We'd get Peter Hart or some of those people to do it. We had all the top guys who were advising us, some of them are not in the business anymore, but in those days there were an awful lot of them that were in that particular phase. We utilized the best talent we could find to help these senators, and then we had our own team which would go out into the finite ideas of protecting them from the new laws

page 195

which were taking effect. We had Bob, who was a lawyer, and then we had another lawyer who's now working for the campaign committee. He's been there for a long time, he was one of my guys. He told them how to keep their records and what they had to do. We'd have seminars in which we'd bring a lot of these people in, and they would address themselves to any of the questions that the candidates had.

Ed Muskie said that one of the reasons he got reelected was because he listened to what we were trying to tell him. You're running so long and the people that elected you are either dying or they're not interested anymore, so you've got to get young people. We had Young People for Muskie, and they went all over the state

of Maine, and they were ready. This guy [Robert] Monks spent millions of dollars on television, but these guys were already in every household in the whole area where this television would come in, so we had him beat before he got started. We didn't have the money that they did, but we had people who were out there, dedicated, working people. Lots of times this was the difference between day and night.

For instance, when Joe Biden started, they didn't have a lot of money. Of course, Delaware is not a big state. In order to do what they wanted to do, they would run mimeograph machines and

page 196

they'd mimeograph all this stuff, and then they would take it by car to whatever areas they were going around the state, and these people would hand deliver it to every house. That saved mailing costs and everything else. This was all done by dedicated young workers. The only thing it cost was for the gas and money for paper. We would borrow or steal a mimeograph machine from somebody, and that's the way we prepared the information. That was probably one of the best operations I had ever seen, that Joe Biden had up in Delaware. But imagine, the state's small, so you produce this document which says whatever you want it to say, and it's all produced in Wilmington and then the cars take it out and deliver it over the weekends. No mailing costs. That's the only way we could keep up with them. Of course, there's diminishing returns on that. Sooner or later it's going to catch up with you. But by and large the people seemed to think that this was the way to go.

RITCHIE: During the Nixon years--and most of the time you were on the campaign committee, Nixon was in the White House--they were known for playing hard ball politics. Did you find cases of dirty tricks and unfair tactics being thrown against your candidates?

HOFFMANN: Well, see, I didn't spend any time worrying about that, I really didn't. They did what they wanted to do, and I knew that they had more money than we did, and they knew a lot of

page 197

things. But all we did was prepare our people as well as we could with whatever amounts of money we had, and the devil take the hindmost. That's exactly the theory I used all the time, and our workers did the same thing. They sensed that that was the only chance we had. Yes, there were a lot of places where I knew that was going on, but there was nothing I could do about that. I only worry about things that I've got some control over. I don't worry about things I have no control over. I had no control over that. We just did our own, clean job as well as we could do it.

We would find little things. One race I think was in Iowa. The sitting senator was on the senior citizen's subcommittees, dealing with retirees. Some of our guys went to check and found out that he'd only been to two committee meetings the whole year. It happens that Iowa is one of the big retiree places in the country, whether you believe that or not. We utilized that, and our guy beat him. Just from our guys finding that this senator had not gone to the meetings. We checked the records and we utilized that, put out special things for senior citizens and retirees in Iowa, and that was a very effective campaign. Just a little thing, but little things are what trip up a campaign. It's not the big things, it's the little things. If you've got the little things under control, that's the best way to run a campaign.

page 198

You run a campaign, really, from the seat of your pants when you're a Democrat, because you don't have all the fancy things that the Republicans have. More power to them, but the other thing it does, it makes the Democrats work a little harder.

RITCHIE: Well, you had a remarkable track record, considering that Nixon won in '68, and won in a landslide in '72, but in every election that you were with the campaign committee you carried the Senate.

HOFFMANN: We never lost the Senate.

RITCHIE: And you never had quite as bad a defeat as you had in '66--you didn't lose the Senate, but most of the new senators coming in were Republicans, like Howard Baker, Charles Percy, and Mark Hatfield. To what do you attribute your string of successes?

HOFFMANN: Probably dumb luck. But also things like the case I gave you about finding out that the guy was on the retirees subcommittee and didn't come to but two meetings. There's not a lot of money involved in something like that. But we were able to do that because we had a lot of dedicated people over there, and staff people who were helping us also. We did that kind of research, and when we came up with something like that we were able to make it burst at the top point of an election. I think it was the fact that we stayed with this as long as we could, realizing that you don't have the kind of money that you'd like to

page 199

have, but you have the kind of dedicated people who are smart enough to find out these little things that make a difference as far as the election is concerned. Just like the thing with Biden. We did the poll, found out that Zimmerman wasn't the guy, but the next time we found that Biden was the guy. We paid for the poll in the Zimmerman election, and that was the thing that gave us Joe Biden.

It was the same thing with guys like Pat Leahy. Pat Leahy says the reason I got him to come to the Senate was because I wanted to keep my control of the Senate and he was the easiest one to get in. Well, that was not true, and he knows it. But we got Pat Leahy the same way. We went up there with this team--I keep referring to this team because they were just unbelievable--in just a short period of time we could do the whole thing, and we'd minimize it. We were running some of our things out of the airport in Kansas City, because we were helping [John] Culver in Iowa, we were going down to Oklahoma, we were going into Kansas, we were going into Missouri. So we did the whole thing from right out there. Instead of coming back here and going out, we'd stay there and move the team for one day into one of these places. That saved us an awful lot of money, transportation-wise.

That's the way it really worked. That I think was what our success was all about, being on the ground floor, trying to do the kind of things we had to do. We had to go back to some places

page 200

twice, but we did it. Everybody helped--you don't do any of this alone. When they began to believe we had put the right package together, then they supported us, and did a good job of it.

RITCHIE: Did you have any heart-breakers, candidates that you really thought had a good shot at it but didn't make it? Any particular disappointments?

HOFFMANN: I don't remember any, because we didn't lose the Senate. See, if I had lost the Senate by one or two, I'd have probably have had that feeling. But inasmuch as we didn't ever lose the Senate, I thought we were in pretty damn good shape. Therefore that didn't concern me too much. I'm not one of these guys who looks back. I'm looking forward. Whatever happened yesterday, that's fine and dandy, but that belongs to somebody else, not me. I want to find out what's going to happen tomorrow.

[End of Interview #4]

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.

page 202

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

page 208

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.

page 209

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

United States Senate Historical Office -- Oral History Project

www.senate.gov

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.

page 210

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

page 211

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

page 212

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

page 213

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

page 214

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

page 215

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

United States Senate Historical Office -- Oral History Project

www.senate.gov

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.

page 216

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

page 217

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

page 218

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

page 219

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

page 220

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.

page 221

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

page 222

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.

page 223

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

page 224

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

page 225

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.

page 226

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.

page 227

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

page 228

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.

page 229

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

page 230

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

page 231

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

page 232

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.

page 233

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

page 234

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.

page 235

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

page 236

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

page 237

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?

page 238

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.

page 239

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.

page 240

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?

page 241

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

page 242

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

page 243

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

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

page 244

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

page 245

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

United States Senate Historical Office -- Oral History Project

www.senate.gov

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

page 246

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

page 247

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

page 248

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

page 249

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?

page 250

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

page 257

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

page 258

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]

F. Nordy Hoffmann

Senate Sergeant at Arms, 1975-1981

Index

A

Abel, I.W 40-41, 61, 163, 173, 180-181
AFL-CIO 49, 88, 138-139, 143-144
American Federation of Labor (AFL) 79-83, 86-87, 139
Annunzio, Frank 39
Appropriations Committee (Senate) 211
Architect of the Capitol 210, 231-232, 243

B

Baker, Bobby 140, 190-191
Baker, Howard (R-TN) 234, 250
Barkin, Al 143
Berman, Mike 194
Bernard, Berl 252
Biden, Joseph (D-DE) 187-188, 196-197, 200
Biemiller, Andrew 143-144, 146
Byrd, Robert C. (D-WV) 250

C

Carter, Jimmy 175, 214
Chrysler Loan 88
Civil Rights 110-115, 122-123, 172
Clean Water Act 40, 149-151, 161-165
Cohn, Roy 127, 130, 133
Communism 47-48, 62-69, 85-86, 97, 131-134
Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) 44, 47, 49, 62-63, 65, 79-87, 97, 143-144
Coughlin, Father Charles 65
Culver, John (D-IA) 200
Cunniff, John 48

D

Democratic Party 86-89, 100-129, 140-143, 152, 167, 180-201
Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee 41-44, 129, 140, 180-201, 247
Dodd, Bill 148
Doherty, Johnny 96, 99
Dole, Robert (R-KS) 250
Douglas, Paul (D-IL) 140-141
Dunphy, Robert 112

E

Eisenhower, Dwight D 99, 155
Exon, James (D-NB) 250

F

Fish, Mel 211-212, 220
Franks, Marty 184
Frear, Allen (D-DE) 140
Freedom Democratic Party (Mississippi) 110-115
Funerals, Senate 212-215, 246-247

G

Goldberg, Arthur 120-121, 134, 156, 158
Golden, Clint 36, 45, 55, 57
Green, William 79-83

H

Hanson, Clifford (R-WY) 224
Hart, Peter 195
Hart, Philip A. (D-MI) 136
Hoffmann, Joanne 165, 168
Hollings, Ernest (Fritz) (D-SC) 129, 217, 239, 250-252
Huff, Bobby 203
Humphrey, Hubert H. (D-MN) 113, 168-170, 213-215, 251
Humphrey, Muriel (D-MN) 215

I

Inouye, Daniel (D-HI) 246
International Workers of the World (IWW) 66

J

Jackson, Henry M (D-WA) 121
Johnson, Lyndon B 121-126, 157-158, 165, 168-174, 176-180

K

Keenan, Joe 90
Kefauver, Estes (D-TN) 117
Kennedy, John F 40, 60, 120-122, 126-127, 145-146, 155-161, 174
Kennedy, John F., Jr 105
Kennedy, Robert F 127, 134-135, 157
Kennedy-Ives Bill 90
Kerr, Robert S. (D-OK) 123-124, 140
Kimmitt, J. Stanley 241
Kinzer, Sam 184
Ku Klux Klan 18-19

L

Labor's Non-Partisan League 80, 84, 86-87, 138
Labor Racketeering Committee (Senate Select Committee on Improper Activities in the Labor and Management Field) 127-130
Landrum-Griffin Act 90, 145-146
Leahy, Pat (D-VT) 200
Legislative Education Committees 87, 91-92
Lewis, John L 49, 74-75
Liebengood, Howard 234
Lobbying 37-41, 57-61, 91-93, 141-154, 155-158, 248-249
Lodge, Henry Cabot (R-MA) 130, 155
Long, Russell (D-LA) 192, 209, 212

M

McCarthy, Eugene (D-MN) 169
McCarthy, Joseph R. (R-WI) 130-134
McClellan, John (D-AR) 127-130, 137, 185, 213-214
McClure, Stewart 146-147
McDonald, David 36, 60-61, 180
McGee, Gale (D-WY) 203
McNally, Patty 214, 221
McNamara, Pat (D-MI) 136, 166
Magnuson, Warren (D-WA) 42
Mansfield, Mike (D-MT) 41, 136, 166, 169-173, 180-182, 191-192, 207, 215
Martinson, Ron 211, 236
Matsunaga, Spark (D-HI) 246
Meany, George 90, 121, 144-146
Morse, Wayne (D-OR) 149, 163
Murphy, Dick 108, 115
Murray, Philip 36-39, 41, 44-49, 55, 57, 59-60, 66-67, 72-76, 78-79, 98-99, 153, 173, 180
Muskie, Edmund (D-ME) 41, 104, 113, 136, 161, 164-170, 180-182, 191-192, 196, 251

N

Nixon, Richard M. 197-199, 247
Notre Dame University 2-6, 14-34, 41-42, 52-55

P

Pages 243-246
Panama Canal Treaty 235
Patronage 207-208, 236-237
Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations (Senate) 127-130
Plant Closings Act 88
Police, Capitol 210, 217-219, 227-231
Political Action Committee (PAC) 57-58, 85-86, 89, 91, 98, 139-144
Powell, Jim 112, 227

President Pro Tempore 219
Protocol 215-217, 233-236

R

Raab, Maxwell 130, 155
Radio 43
Reagan, Ronald 25, 166-167, 234
Reid, Harry (D-NV) 188
Republican Party 86-89, 118-119, 167, 195, 223-224
Reuther, Walter 76-79, 112-113
Rice, Father Charles Owen 67-69
Right-to-Work Laws 147-148, 177
Rockefeller, Nelson 118
Rockne, Knute 4-5, 15-18, 21-33, 41-42, 46
Roosevelt, Franklin D 75
Rules Committee (House) 37-38, 58, 95
Rules Committee (Senate) 219, 237, 242

S

Sabath, Adolph 37-38, 58, 95-97
St. Martin's College 2, 4, 11-14
Scanlon, Joe 56, 69, 161
Schine, David 130, 133
Secretary of the Senate 241-242
Sergeant at Arms (Senate) 44, 123, 185, 202-260
Social Security 152, 154, 259
Stevens, Ted (R-AL) 249
Stevenson, Adlai 109-110, 117

T

Teamsters 83
Television 43, 105, 116, 185-186, 253-258
Thompson, Bob 184, 194, 196
Tower, John (D-TX) 224
Towles, Barbara 181-182, 220-221
Truman, Harry S. 98-99, 155

U

United Autoworkers of America 77, 148
United Steelworkers of America 36-41, 44-49, 55-99, 118, 120, 124, 127, 134, 138-139,
153, 158-161, 170, 180-181

V

Vietnam War 178-180

W

War Labor Board 69

White, George 210, 231

Z

Zimmerman, Jacob 187, 200