

The Senate Disbursing Office

Interview #2

Monday, February 22, 1982

RITCHIE: I understand that the Ridgely family has been in Maryland for quite some time. Have you looked back into the history of your family?

RIDGELY: Not as much as I should, but it's my understanding that the Ridgely family were part of the original settlers in Maryland. What I have been told, and know about right now, is that one brother came over in 1634 and then two other brothers came over in 1636. One stayed in southern Maryland, one went to the Eastern Shore, and the other went up to the Howard County-Towson area. So the family does date back to the original settlers of Maryland, although I don't believe they were of the gentry class. Some of them made their mark, I think, in the history of Maryland. From my understanding, the one that stayed in southern Maryland and the one that went to the Eastern Shore were farmers; from the brother that went up to the north Baltimore area came the professional and industrial part of the family. That part of the family, I understand, became quite wealthy.

It was also from that branch of the family, and I haven't done any research on this, that Governor Ridgely of Maryland came. As a

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matter of fact, the wife of Governor Ridgely, Eliza Ridgely, is portrayed in a painting in the National Gallery of Art. That was done by Sully, and Jim Ketchum [Senate Curator] told me that it's considered to be one of the finest paintings of a woman of that period. It shows her standing in a long dress; it's a very pretty picture.

When my mother died, I got a letter from the grandson of Dr. Samuel Mudd. He had been working for so many years to clear his grandfather's name in connection with the Lincoln assassination. He wrote me a letter and asked me about the Ridgely family because there was a Ridgely in Baltimore who was an attorney and who had represented his grandfather. He was inquiring of the Ridgely clan. So there is a long history of the family in Maryland.

I was born in Upper Marlboro, in Prince George's County, and lived there until I went into the military service in World War II.

RITCHIE: Isn't there a Ridgely Mansion in Towson?

RIDGELY: Yes. The Hampton House. It's on the National Historical Register. It's a very beautiful place and every once in a while you see an article about it. It's considered to be one of the finer old Maryland homes. I have an article from the *Washington Post*

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and *Maryland Magazine* that goes into it considerably.* The Ridgely who started that apparently was considerably wealthy because he wound up, as the article says, with something like 10,000 acres in that area. That part of the family appears to have done quite well.

RITCHIE: You grew up in Upper Marlboro. Did you go to school there?

RIDGELY: Yes. I went to St. Mary's Catholic School down there--eight grades of elementary school and two grades of high school. Then I finished my high school at St. Anthony's in Northeast Washington, in the Brookland area near Catholic University.

RITCHIE: That's where I live.

RIDGELY: Is that right? Then I left high school and went to work, like most people did then. Back then, college was not the thing that it is today. Everybody was willing to get out and get themselves a job, and that's what I did.

RITCHIE: You worked for the Internal Revenue Service. How did you happen to get a job there?

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RIDGELY: Well, while I was working somewhere else, Mr. Hampton Magruder (which is another old Maryland family), who was an attorney and was the Collector of Internal Revenue at the time in Baltimore, had some openings up there and so, I suppose, he figured he'd give some of the local people jobs. One day he called my home and asked me to come by and see him, and so I went down to see him. He asked me if I'd like a job with Internal Revenue in Baltimore. I said, "Fine, great." So I went to

work there.

RITCHIE: What had you been doing up to then?

RIDGELY: Oh, I had worked in a filling station, worked in a restaurant, I worked for a beer distributor, and I worked for a theater, doing different jobs. Some of them I worked two at a time. When I got out of school in June of 1939 I worked at these odd jobs until January 1941, when I went to work for Internal Revenue, so it was only about a year and a half that I worked at these other jobs.

RITCHIE: I guess that the IRS was expanding at that point because they were trying to raise additional revenue for the military.

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RIDGELY: That could very well be. We had started the draft in 1940, wasn't it? So the military was expanding. There were additional people being put on and there was some activity, but the people who had been there would have noticed it more than I would know about it.

RITCHIE: Wasn't it in 1942 that they instituted the first withholding tax?

RIDGELY: Nineteen forty-three. See, I worked there for one year before I enlisted in the military service, and then went back there after the war, after I got discharged. Then I went into night accounting school, while I was working in Internal Revenue, and I completed that education, and at that point in time I evaluated my situation in Internal Revenue and decided that there had to be greener pastures elsewhere; because what I had to wait for as a young man was for somebody to retire or to die. I was in the cashier's division and I had seniority over everybody because my military service gave me that much edge over some of the other people who had come to work during the war. But I guess I was not willing to wait as long as it may have taken.

RITCHIE: What were your functions with the IRS?

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RIDGELY: When I first went to work there I was a clerk checking out delinquencies. I did that for

that one year. Then when I came back I was put into the cashier's division. When I left I was handling all of the revenue stamps, those little strip stamps that go over liquor bottles, and everything that the distilleries needed as far as Internal Revenue stamps are concerned; all of the stamps that doctors needed for prescribing medications that contained opium and other drugs; all of the beer and wine stamps that establishments needed; and at that time there was an Internal Revenue tax on gaming devices, pinball machines, one armed bandits and all of that. I was in charge of that section and handled all of that. It kept us very busy, because we had several distilleries in Baltimore and they all were working strong.

RITCHIE: Wasn't Maryland famous for slot machines and pinball machines back then?

RIDGELY: Oh, yes. Slot machines were a big thing, particularly in the resort areas. As a matter of fact, before the war they not only had the one armed bandits, but they had the regular pinball machines that also paid off in cash. It cut quite a bit out when they outlawed it.

RITCHIE: In 1942 you enlisted in the Army Air Corps. Was there any problem about being drafted at that point?

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RIDGELY: I wasn't old enough to register for the draft at the time. I went ahead and enlisted. The funny thing is, as it happened, I've never registered with a draft board, I've never had a draft number. When I got my discharge I went into the inactive reserve, and I was told that as long as I was in the reserve I didn't have to do anything about the draft. The war was over and everything was of course being tuned down.

RITCHIE: What led you to join the Army Air Corps as a branch of the service?

RIDGELY: I really don't know. I can't recall that there was any particular thing. The only military background I had was that my Dad was in World War I, and he was in the Army. That was not a factor and I frankly don't know why I went in the Air Corps, but that's where I wound up.

RITCHIE: What duties did they assign you to?

RIDGELY: I went to aerial radio school at Scott Field, Illinois aerial radio operators school; and then went down to Harlingen, Texas to aerial gunnery school, and was eventually assigned to flying on B-25s. I wound up in Alaska, in the Aleutian Islands. That's where I spent my duty outside the

Continental United States.

RITCHIE: So you flew as a radio operator?

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RIDGELY: Radio operator and gunner, yes. The way things happened up in Alaska, the Japanese came in there and they took some of the Aleutian Islands. They came up as far as Dutch Harbor and did some damage, but they did not land on the mainland of Alaska, they stayed on the islands. Of course, the effort up there was to drive them out of the islands. We had other squadrons, we had the fighters and B-26 medium bombers up there. When we went up there we replaced the B-26 medium bombers with the B-25s. It was just a matter of keeping at them until they were out of there.

RITCHIE: How do you look back on your experiences in the war?

RIDGELY: A real education, it really was. I mean, Upper Marlboro at the time I was a boy was a small town, a country town really. Washington, of course, was not developed to the tune it is today. And going into the Air Corps, the almost four years that I spent in there, the people that I met from different parts of the country, young fellows from all walks of life--it was a great education and a great experience. Although it was not the best conditions, it was nonetheless a great experience.

RITCHIE: So you served until 1945 and left the service as a staff sergeant and you went back to the IRS, and at that same period you were taking night classes.

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RIDGELY: Yes, let's see, I went back to work I think within thirty days after my discharge. I went back and told them I was out and ready to go back to work. I talked to the personnel director and he asked me what I wanted to do. I told him I would like to get in the Field Division, because I knew that the Field Division was a little better paying area, there was more activity in it, and you could round yourself out a little better out there in field work. He said, "Well, do you have any accounting?" I said, "No, I only have a high school education." He said, "Well, you need accounting to get in the field." So he suggested I take the Internal Revenue correspondence accounting course. I said fine. I applied for that and by the time I got the first three lessons, I took them home and started to work on them, and my

wife said to me: "Bill, you know, if you really want an education, why don't you consider going to night school." That was very interesting, she bringing that up. I said fine.

So I looked into it and signed up for night school under the GI Bill and spent almost four years in night school in accounting, and graduated. Then I looked at my situation in Internal Revenue and started sending out applications and answering ads and just looking for a better job. I went so far as to answer an ad of the Continental Oil Company for a job as assistant controller down in South America. It would have been a two-year stay. My wife and I sat down and we figured out: well, OK, if I get that job, I'll go to South

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America for two years and she'll take the baby and go out to her parents' home in Wyoming. I figured, Continental Oil, big outfit, go down there for two years, come back here and maybe have a good in-road with the company. But of course that never transpired. I really answered many ads, both in Baltimore, where we were living at the time, and different parts of the country.

Then one day I got a telephone call. Somebody said there was a vacancy in the Disbursing Office over here in Washington. They said they wanted the application in long hand; they didn't want it typed, they wanted it in long hand. So I sat down and wrote a letter of introduction and background to Oco Thompson, who was the Financial Clerk at the time. Then later on I got a call, they wanted me to come over for an interview, which I did. I got the job, and that's where it started. I started to work here in the Senate, June 1, 1949. Then I spent twenty-eight years in the Disbursing Office before I left there.

RITCHIE: I guess they wanted it in long hand so they could check your penmanship.

RIDGELY: Oh, yes, that was definitely it, because when I came to work there, all of the checks were written in long hand, all of the ledgers were maintained in long hand, all of the pay records-everything. And of course I had taken penmanship when I was in school and I developed pretty nice handwriting. So that's the job I

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got when I got in there. I was writing all the checks, keeping all the ledgers in long hand, pen and ink.

RITCHIE: What was the Disbursing Office like when you first got there? I imagine it must have been different in those days than it is today, a smaller operation.

RIDGELY: Yes, it was because when I went to work there were ten people working in the Disbursing Office, ten people including the Financial Clerk, Assistant Financial Clerk, and Chief Bookkeeper. Back in those days it was a time when the Senate did not meet year round as they are doing now. They worked short office hours, because people did leave Washington more so than they do now; the activity was not nearly as great. When they put on office hours, 10 to 3, that's the hours you worked. It was far less active than it is now, but I think too, you have to remember that the only payroll deduction you had then was income tax that was mandatory. Coming under retirement was optional then as it is now, but not too many people signed up for it. You didn't have much payroll work except keeping track of the monthly payments.

RITCHIE: The Disbursing Office was located across from the old Senate chamber, wasn't it, in that room they just recently left?

RIDGELY: Yes. They located there in 1935.

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RITCHIE: It looked like a little bank in there--it had the counter that went across the front. They did have some banking services, didn't they?

RIDGELY: Oh, yes.

RITCHIE: Travelers checks and those sorts of things?

RIDGELY: Well, not when I went to work there they didn't have travelers checks. The only thing they had there at the time that I went there was cashing checks for senators. It was practically limited to members of the Senate only then. It began to grow as the Senate grew and the need for more services grew. It was while Bob Brenkworth was Financial Clerk that we put in travelers checks--worked out a way to save people money on travelers checks and accommodate them. The accommodation was the biggest thing, rather than worrying about the charge that they had to pay on them, but as it worked out it did save the people money who were working in the Senate.

RITCHIE: In those days, also, salaries were paid in cash.

RIDGELY: Yes.

RITCHIE: Was that twice a month or once a month?

RIDGELY: Twice a month.

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RITCHIE: So would everybody in the Senate staff then come in and line up?

RIDGELY: Everybody, yes.

RITCHIE: On the same day? Or did they have it staggered?

RIDGELY: No. The payday when I first went to work was the 15th and the last working day of the month. Most of the people came in on that day, or they could come in any day after that and pick up their money. They did pay a few people by check, but that was once a month, and so we had maybe--oh, I bet if we had twenty-five on that list it was a big list for checks. But by and large the rest of them got paid by cash twice a month.

RITCHIE: They would just come and line up?

RIDGELY: Come and line up, identify themselves. We had two people at the counter: one who took the envelopes out of the drawer and the other one who handled the receipt that had to be signed by each person and checked the names and signatures on them. Those of us who were at the counter, I dare say we would know just about everybody. We'd recognize them by name, by face, and office, we'd know them. We could move people through there. As a matter of fact, I timed it one day and we moved five hundred and fifty people through there in one hour. So it did move the line along pretty well.

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RITCHIE: You know, a number of people I've talked to, the one thing they always remember is the fact that they could walk into the Disbursing Office and people would have their envelope ready for them when they came in.

RIDGELY: Oh, yes. I used to pull a trick on some of the people that worked there. It would just happen every once in a while. The line would be there, and you're looking down the line pulling envelopes so that you didn't have to wait for people to come up to the counter and then you pull it. I'd maybe have ten or twelve envelopes laying on the counter. Nobody could see them because it was a two-tiered counter. I'd have them there and just slide them over to my associate, who was getting the signatures. But every once in a while you'd have an opportunity--you'd look down the line and you'd see somebody you recognized and they're chatting with somebody you've never seen before. So you'd look in that group, and the envelopes were arranged in the pay drawer by offices, and you'd see only two envelopes in there, and you'd take a chance and pull both of those: one of them the person you knew, the other the other one.

I remember one time a young lady got up to the counter and the person in front of her I knew, and I pulled both envelopes. She gave me her name and I said, "Yes, I know, I have your envelope right here." And she looked at me so strangely and said, "How did you know?" I said, "Well, I really don't want to tell you my trade

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secret." You could do that just every once in a while, you couldn't do it all the time. But we had a lot of fun paying people off, it was a lot of fun knowing that one of the things they liked more than anything was the fact that you recognized them when they came in.

RITCHIE: Well, the Senate staff was smaller at that point.

RIDGELY: Oh, yes.

RITCHIE: And there was more of a sense of community, I gather.

RIDGELY: Yes, there was. Looking back to 1949, I'm sure that there were less than 2,000 people working here in the Senate at that time. I really don't know the count on it, but if I were to really give a guess I would talk maybe in terms of 1,600. That would include the committees and the senator's offices, the same as it is now. Where now it is running probably 6,500 to 7,000 people, about tripled I would guess, maybe better.

RITCHIE: Did the senators have to line up to get their pay?

RIDGELY: Oh, no.

RITCHIE: Did some one from their offices come down and pick it up?

RIDGELY: No, for the senators we either mailed their check to a bank in their home state, or we delivered to a Washington bank, or it

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was hand delivered to their office. I think we handled that in the same way most people did for the senators. With the hundred senators you can do almost any thing for that number, but you can't do it for the greater number. Knowing the senators, that they're busy, we can accommodate them a little bit differently than you can accommodate the entire Senate payroll. So that's how we would handle it.

RITCHIE: What was it like to come to work for the Senate in 1949? It must have been quite a change for you, coming in from Baltimore.

RIDGELY: Well, I remember one of the women over in Internal Revenue, when I said that I was leaving and I was going to work in the Senate, she said, "Oh!" and then made some remark as to "hey, what a place to go!" But my own recollection is that I was a little bewildered when I first came to work here, to go to work in the Capitol. But I will say this: there has never been a day in my life that I have ever gotten up and said I wished I didn't have to go to work today. I've always lived in Prince George's County--not because I was born there but it was because I was able to find a place to live out there--but always coming in from the east I always marveled at that beautiful building every time I came in here. I even do it now, for that matter. It's been very rewarding for me, everything, all the work that has had to be done, and the people that I've met and known. I think it became nicer as my time with the Senate grew.

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RITCHIE: It's nice to be able to look back over a career and feel that.

RIDGELY: Yes, there have been some wonderful people here, and some people of renown that you get to know and become associated with.

RITCHIE: Well, starting at the beginning, you said you worked for Oco Thompson. How was he to

work for?

RIDGELY: Oco, he was, well let me put it this way: some time after I had been there I raised a question about how come something wasn't done. I guess I was a young whipper snapper, you know, and I said something to someone about it. And they told me very politely that Oco Thompson believed in the old saying: "If it works, don't fix it." But that's the way it was, he was not open to any suggestions. It was a low keyed operations to begin with. The Disbursing Office was non-political and non-patronage. It had an autonomy of its own, you see, because many years ago they took it out of the realm of patronage. The Financial Clerk was privileged in determining who was to go to work there, and he made the recommendation to the Secretary of the Senate who appointed the employees. He had control over the people who worked there; he didn't hire anybody on account of politics.

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It was a low keyed shop, and Oco kept it that way. He sat in the back and did what he had to do as chief of the office, and so things went along. Really there was not very much detail that caused problems. It was a very simple type of operation. The difference in what was being done there as far as the accounting for the money was concerned, you had to get your money by appropriation, you got that, and you kept your records. Except that then, of course, with the way the Treasury was working at the time, we got bank statements just like you and I get them from our banks now. I had to reconcile the statements with Treasury just as I did with any bank account. Then with the evolution of a better accounting system, all of that went by the wayside as being unnecessary and unneeded. Oco oversaw everything. He took care of the senators when they came in with their problems or needs. His brother George was the Assistant Financial Clerk, and Joe Ellis was the Chief Bookkeeper. Those were the three top positions, and they were out front--in the front office, the one you said looked like a bank. They took care of cashing checks for the members, new appointments, and other papers that came in and were processed back through the office.

RITCHIE: I think of the Senate as a place that really honors its traditions. They still have the spittoons and snuffboxes. Basically, would you say that the Disbursing Office is an old-fashioned operation that continued on doing things because they'd been done that way for years--at least when you first came there in 1949?

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RIDGELY: Yes, and in accordance with the standards of the government at that time too. You know, I guess the government in a way really hadn't started its modernization yet, even though there was an Accounting Act of 1921 that set the standards for everybody. That first year that I came to work in the Senate, the total appropriation for the Senate was only around ten million dollars. Now it's close to three hundred million dollars. There's a lot that has caused that, of course, not only more people, higher salaries, more expenses otherwise. The Senate appropriation is, I'm going to say, seventy-five to eighty percent salary money, so you can see that there wasn't a lot of accounting. Vouchers for other payments were very low and processing and getting them paid wasn't difficult. I think of 1949-1950 and compare it to the year I left there, which was 1977. When I left there we were processing anywhere from 25,000 to 30,000 vouchers a year, compared to maybe a couple hundred back then a month.

RITCHIE: Vouchers would be for travel expenses . . .

RIDGELY: Travel, payment of other expenses, committee expenses, Sergeant-at-Arms, Secretary and these other functions, newspaper subscriptions, magazines, reporting services, and all other things.

RITCHIE: Did you have a series of rules and regulations as to what was legitimate for committee expenses?

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RIDGELY: Our Committee on Rules and Administration always set the ground rules for expenses. That is because there is a law on the books that says that no payments may be paid from the Contingent Fund of the Senate without the sanction of the Committee on Rules and Administration. So that means before any payments can be made they have to be approved by the Rules Committee. They are the ones who set the rules. Take travel expenses, for instance, we had no guidelines for anybody to hand out or anyone else to say "now these are the travel regulations for the Senate." Back when Bob Brenkworth was Financial Clerk, he talked to Rules Committee and asked about doing such a thing; so three of us from the Disbursing Office, got a hold of the travel regulations from downtown and we used that as a guideline to write the Senate's travel regulations.

RITCHIE: By downtown you mean the Executive Branch?

RIDGELY: The Executive Branch, yes, because they did have something set down. So we used that and we adjusted it for the purposes of the Senate. Then it was presented to the Rules Committee and they approved it, and then we printed up little booklets that we could give to people so that they would

know what they could or couldn't get reimbursed for.

RITCHIE: That must have become more important as committees began to send out investigators.

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RIDGELY: Yes, it did. That's really the thing, because our voucher work, processing travel vouchers and the questions and the problems we were having in connection with this was growing. A lot of people were coming in from outside of government, and some of them, there was no question about it, were used to working for firms who gave them a "blank check" for their travel expenses. They'd get a little bit unhappy about the fact that the Senate was so restrictive in what they could get reimbursed for. We ran into problems like that and it finally came to where we thought maybe it might be well to have some guidelines, have something documented for people to follow. Then if there are exceptions the Rules Committee could handle it, and they did take care of any exceptional things that would come along. It's all in the evolution of the Senate, the demands on the Senate and the Congress going from a part year to a full year institution.

RITCHIE: You mentioned the Contingency Fund. Could you define what that is?

RIDGELY: Well, the Contingent Fund of the Senate contains, or did at one time, about ten appropriations. I can name a few of them, it was for the Majority and Minority Policy Committees, it was for automobiles and maintenance, it was for folding documents, which was for hourly people over in the Service Department when they needed extra people, miscellaneous items which I used to refer to, and

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others did too, as our "housekeeping account," and that figure was composed of a number of items. But all of these things were under the control of the Rules Committee. The other appropriations we had were the salaries of senators and the expense allowance of the Vice President, salary of the Vice President, and we had salaries of officers and employees. Now these were not under the Contingent Fund, so Rules Committee had no authority over them. That was something that the Legislative Branch Appropriations Subcommittee would handle, because that composed the money for the positions for all the different offices and the allowance for the Senators' offices and for the committees. So the

Appropriations Committee kept control of that. But the Contingent Fund was nothing more than a place where certain appropriations would be placed to be under the control of the Rules Committee.

RITCHIE: In the sense of "contingent," does that mean that a certain amount of money is set aside and then it's distributed in the way that the Secretary of the Senate or the Financial Clerk sees fit? How do they draw from the Contingent Fund?

RIDGELY: The allocations really were already made in the Appropriations bill, except for one, which was miscellaneous items. This had money in it for different items which had allocated amounts. They were specified for the different offices, Secretary, Sergeant at Arms, or whatever. All of these were controlled from the records in

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the Disbursing Office. We kept individual accounts on each one of these appropriations. We kept memorandum accounts on a lot of the others, like under the miscellaneous items we had to maintain memorandum accounts. We had an appropriation of X number of dollars for this, but it may have been divided into ten or twelve different allocations, so we would have to monitor those individually. The Contingent Fund really began--I think at one time there was only one appropriation, that was for the "Contingent Expenses of the Senate." They would appropriate so many dollars for it, and they'd pay for all these things that were not taken care of otherwise. Then it came to pass where this amount apparently started growing to a point where they felt they wanted to break it down. So they had a heading, "Contingent Expenses of the Senate," and then the subheadings, the line items, and that's what we have today.

RITCHIE: So in effect, the appropriation is a general appropriation rather than for specific items.

RIDGELY: Yes, although budgets have to be submitted for each one of these.

RITCHIE: But it does give some discretion to the administrators.

RIDGELY: Oh, yes, it does, and of necessity too.

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RITCHIE: Now take, for instance, when you first came the Kefauver Committee was investigating crime. They would have a specific legislative appropriation for that special investigation? Or would they be under a larger Contingent Fund?

RIDGELY: Well, under the Contingent Fund there was a line item for "Inquiries and Investigations." This money was appropriated and was for the use of Senate committees when they were authorized. You mentioned the Kefauver Committee, by Senate resolution that committee was created and it was authorized to expend a certain amount of money over a certain period of time. Usually these special committees or ad hoc committees were authorized for one year periods each time. They had to renew their authority and funds for the next year if they wanted it continued. Then it was from this appropriation of "Inquiries and Investigations" where this money was drawn from.

RITCHIE: Now the Kefauver Committee, for instance, had investigators all over the country. So they would send things in through the committee and then would the committee present you with all the bills?

RIDGELY: Oh, yes. A committee that was as active as the Kefauver Committee at that time would have a clerk that was probably dedicated to doing nothing but preparing vouchers and checking out the travel expenses of people that came in, prepare the vouchers, the

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traveler had to sign them, the chairman had to sign them, and they'd come to us for audit and over to the Rules Committee for approval.

RITCHIE: What would happen if a committee like that exceeded their allotment?

RIDGELY: They wouldn't.

RITCHIE: They wouldn't?

RIDGELY: No, because we couldn't pay them. We couldn't pay the vouchers. Our records were maintained on a checks issued basis, which means a balance at any time was based on the vouchers paid at that time, as vouchers came in. You see, the clerks of the committees were responsible for maintaining an account of their own. Their's was on an accrual basis. They would register their vouchers as they were sent to Disbursing. They knew whether or not they were running short before we did. But many times we would run into situations where the committee would get down too low and we'd have vouchers to pay and we couldn't. Then the committee would have to go in for a supplemental amount.

There was nothing else they could do there.

RITCHIE: Are printing costs, at the end when they print up their thirty volumes of hearings and so on, is that all part of their budget?

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RIDGELY: No, that goes to the GPO [Government Printing Office] and is charged to the appropriation for Congressional Printing and Binding. That's a separate appropriation that is neither under the Senate nor the House. It's in our Legislative bill, but not appropriated to either the Senate or the House.

RITCHIE: You mentioned Bob Brenkworth a couple of times. In 1951 he became the Chief Bookkeeper, and he eventually became the Financial Clerk, was that in 1953?

RIDGELY: He was Chief Bookkeeper and then he was Assistant Financial Clerk. Oco Thompson retired and George, his brother, was appointed as Financial Clerk. Then George had a heart attack and had to retire. Then Joe Ellis became Financial Clerk, Bob Brenkworth became Assistant Financial Clerk, and I became Chief Bookkeeper. I don't recall that date.

RITCHIE: It was 1953 when you became Chief Bookkeeper.

RIDGELY: Yes, but I don't remember when in 1953. It was about a year or so and then the tragedy of Joe Ellis' suicide occurred in August 1954. Bob Brenkworth became Financial Clerk then.

RITCHIE: Was Ellis having personal problems?

RIDGELY: I don't know.

RITCHIE: It was nothing connected with his job, I assume.

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RIDGELY: No, not that I know of It was just a tragedy,

really.

RITCHIE: What type of person was Ellis?

RIDGELY: Very easy going. Although I found out he had quite a temper. I was out at his house on election night in 1952. He had invited a group out. And boy when that election started tilting in favor of Eisenhower, when it was all over Joe was just livid. He was so unhappy it wasn't funny. Apparently he had quite a temper when it got generated. But as far as his tragedy is concerned, I don't know, I don't know.

RITCHIE: So you had a series of sudden shifts from Oco to George to Ellis to Brenkworth in a relatively short time. Did that change the operation of the Disbursing Office at all?

RIDGELY: Not right at first. You have to bear in mind that when Bob became Financial Clerk he'd only been there six years; and when I became Assistant Financial Clerk, I'd only been there five years. But we took over and we kept things moving right along, right at the same pace. We're talking about 1954. The war ended in 1945, you figure that was nine years and the activities started to build.

It was after Bob became Financial Clerk that a few changes started to be made. For instance, we had gotten away from writing the checks by hand--we obtained a book keeping machine that would

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write our checks. We got at least to a point of the records being posted mechanically. That was a change. All the changes that occurred really were done because the volume had started to move and things had to change. You had to pick up the slack, because the staff was limited, even though it grew some. The space was more limited than the staff, you might say. There was no way to move on either side. We were really land locked in. On one side of us was the Minority Leader and on the other side were senators offices. It took a number of years before there were some retirements from the Senate and we were able to pick up another room, and that eased the situation. But all of these things were because of the volume, staff started to grow, vouchers started to grow, the record keeping started to grow.

In September 1954, life insurance came into being. It wasn't long after that that health insurance come into being. Then came State withholding tax, which I was responsible for. I had made a commitment to our Appropriations Committee on that. This happened when we automated our system. So we went from withholding only Federal income tax and optional retirement to adding on the life insurance, which

was optional, to health insurance, which was optional too, and during the open season they could make changes, so you had a lot of activity in there. In open season there's nothing like getting five or six hundred changes in health insurance. All of these things created a lot of extra paper work.

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RITCHIE: Who would initiate changes like this? Like deciding that you could provide life and health insurance options?

RIDGELY: Well, the fact that when a law came into being on life insurance, whether it included the Senate was what dictated what we had to do. And in cases like this they would not exclude the Senate. We always say we're not under Civil Service, but we have the privilege of participating in all the programs other government employees do. But it's all on an optional basis. You can waive life insurance and you can decline health insurance, and you don't have to sign up for retirement. Of course, retirement has become a much bigger thing too. More people are signed up for retirement now on a percentage basis than when I first went to work here. If I said when I first came to work here that maybe half of the people were signed up for retirement I'd be generous in that. Right now it would run way above that.

RITCHIE: How did your responsibilities change when you became Chief Bookkeeper and Assistant Financial Clerk?

RIDGELY: As Chief Bookkeeper I was in charge of what we call the "back office." I had to see that all the accounting got done, all of the payroll work got done, and everything else was done. I was overseeing all of the staff that was back there at the time, which would have been maybe seven or eight people. We operated the payroll and took care of the retirement records. It was my job to

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see that everything back there got done. For instance, when I was Chief Bookkeeper, Joe Ellis was Financial Clerk, Bob Brenkworth was Assistant Financial Clerk. They were out front taking care of the business as it always had been done. So it was up to me to see that everything in the back got taken care of without worrying them. If there were any problems I would talk to them about it.

Then when I became Assistant Financial Clerk, of course, I moved out front with Bob Brenkworth and he took care of all the business out there, and our Chief Bookkeeper, Bob Malstrom, did the same in the back. And during all this time things were growing. The staff was getting larger, and of course every person that came on the payroll impacted the Disbursing Office. We did everything in that office that in the Executive Branch they may have three or four offices to handle, and we were giving the Senate that service. As things needed to be changed, Bob as Financial Clerk would make the determination. If we'd do it administratively, held touch bases with the Secretary of the Senate, who is by law the Disbursing Officer of the Senate--we always kept the Secretary apprized of everything that was going on in the Disbursing Office. If something had to be done and you had to get authority to do it, then of course the Secretary would be apprized of it, go to Appropriations Committee, and provision would be put into the Legislative bill to take care of it. Or sometimes you could go to Rules Committee and get authority to do it, if it affected the Contingent Fund. Rules Committee more

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than likely could take care of it, although sometimes you'd need legislative authority even in their case.

RITCHIE: How active was a Secretary say like Felton Johnson in watching over what was happening in the Disbursing Office?

RIDGELY: Well, he had a lot of confidence in Bob Brenkworth; and without being egotistical, myself also. He knew that Bob and I were working hand-in-hand to see that that office functioned as it always had, that the service didn't diminish in any way. He had a high regard for both of us, which both of us appreciated. So "Skeeter" really left it up to Bob. Bob kept him apprized of everything, he had no problems with that, and so he let Bob go ahead and run the shop. As I say, we were maintaining that autonomy, because even whether it was a Democratic Secretary or a Republican Secretary they maintained the shop that way. They kept that autonomy of it being non-patronage and non-political. But "Skeeter" was interested in everything that went along. He didn't interfere with it. He could have gone around there and directed traffic any time he wanted to, but he didn't do that. I suppose he felt that Bob was capable of doing the job and was doing the job, and that was it.

RITCHIE: Does the Disbursing Office prepare the Secretary's annual report on the expenses of the Senate?

RIDGELY: Yes.

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RITCHIE: I guess that is a major function of the office.

RIDGELY: Oh, yes. It's less now than it was, because when I first went to work there, in order to get the copy down to the Printing Office (everything was set in hot lead at the time), all of these vouchers had to be trimmed and edited and sent down to the Printing Office. You got the galleys back and all of it had to be proof read. It was a horrendous job, it really was. But it's better now because it's semi-automated. It was when I was Financial Clerk that we automated the payroll and personnel system. We cranked the Secretary's Report into this.

My goal was to knock down that huge peak that was created at the end of every six-month period to get the Secretary's Report out, and spread it out over the whole six months. We developed it to the point that as vouchers were paid they were put into the computer just as they would be printed out; and at the end of six months they would print that out, go down to the Printing Office and it would be photographed and printed. The vouchers were paid today, entered tomorrow, proof read the following day. We'd get a print out every day of what was put in yesterday and proof read it and make corrections. So we didn't have to go back and do any proof reading from the Printing Office, because they took pictures of our original copy.

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One of the other things we cranked in was as we put vouchers with the dollar amounts that were paid, it added up those figures to a total, so when we came to the end of the six months it came off with a dollar figure that could be checked against our official records of the appropriations account. If they hit we were guaranteed that the figures were right. They were probably more accurate than they were when we were proof reading it. It developed very nicely and it did do just what it was supposed to. There's always extra work to be done on the Secretary's Report, but not to the extent that we used to have--because that report was running 800 to 900 pages every six months. And there's no way to get rid of it.

RITCHIE: It's been going since the nineteenth century.

RIDGELY: Since Year One, if I may use that phrase, because I've seen some of the old ones. It's very interesting to see the things that they purchased and paid for back in the early years.

RITCHIE: Is every expense of the Senate included in the Secretary's report?

RIDGELY: Every official expense, yes. It accounts for all of the money that the Senate receives and all that it spends, yes.

RITCHIE: Is the Secretary's report required by law?

RIDGELY: Yes.

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RITCHIE: And the Clerk of the House has a comparable report?

RIDGELY: Yes, they do their's differently. They do not include their payrolls because they make their payrolls available over-the-counter. They'll summarize it in the Clerk's report. But we I ve never had the space nor the manpower to be able to have the general public and the press be able to come in there and peruse different payrolls.

RITCHIE: Is the press ever interested in coming in to do that?

RIDGELY: Oh, yes. They come in many times wanting to see the payrolls. They would say: "It's going to be in the Secretary's report isn't it?" I would say, "Yes." "Then why can't you show it to me?" I said, "Because the law says that this [the Secretary's report] is the way to make it known to you, rather than me give it to you."

RITCHIE: So they have to wait until it's published.

RIDGELY: Oh, yes. And there's quite a clamor for it. I remember one senator came in one day and said something about the "Green Hate Book." I don't know whether he was referring to himself or some other member but he said that there were two girls on the Senate payroll that lived together but worked in different offices. As soon as that book came out, one of them looked and saw what the other one was getting paid and went back to her senator and asked for

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a raise, because apparently they were doing similar work. That's how it apparently got the nickname the "Green Hate Book." I don't know whether it's used any more like the story I just mentioned.

RITCHIE: A senator gets a lump sum for staff salaries, and can divvy it up among his staff, is that right?

RIDGELY: That's right, except he has some limitations on what he can pay and how many he can pay at the higher levels.

RITCHIE: But basically there is no set salary for any particular job description?

RIDGELY: No, because that's always been left to the individual member, I think recognizing that the members have to run their offices as if they were private businesses, according to their own needs. I've often said that you could have two senators from one state that could have offices in the same building in the same city on the same floor, across the hall from each other, and yet their constituent needs would be entirely different--and they could be of the same party. I think this is really the way it works. It's based on the population of the states, so the two senators from the same state get the same amount to operate their offices. Sometimes you will see where one maybe doesn't use all of his money and maybe the other one does. It all depends.

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RITCHIE: Now if they don't use all of their money, what happens?

RIDGELY: It goes back to the Treasury.

RITCHIE: A few senators make a big publicity thing out of turning back their check at the end of the year.

RIDGELY: Oh, yes, they do.

RITCHIE: Senator William Scott of Virginia every year turned back a large percentage of his staff salaries.

RIDGELY: A lot of them put it in the *Record* and some would even get it in the newspapers.

RITCHIE: But stationery allotments they're allowed to keep what's left?

RIDGELY: Oh, no, not any more. That went by the board many years ago. As a matter of fact, that went out of the picture even before the consolidated office expense allowance came into being. You know commutation of the stationery allowance always got its due notice in the papers too, so it was stopped. A lot of the members wouldn't take it toward the end, they declined it. So eventually it was stopped entirely.

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RITCHIE: This raises the question of abuses of funds. It seems to me you would be in a funny position, even though you were a non-patronage office, you did work for the Senate. What did you do if you had a Senator's office that seemed to be abusing or improperly handling the financial accounts?

RIDGELY: Well, you say abusing . . . in their office allowance accounts they have certain categories of expenses which they may use this money for, right now, under the present set-up. They can spend any amount, not limited. It used to be they had six or seven individual allowances. There was long distance telephone, telegraph, stationery, air mail, special delivery stamps, home state office expense, rental of the home state office, and newspapers and subscriptions, that is seven. We used to have to maintain individual accounts on each one of these for a hundred members, to see that they didn't exceed these particular amounts. When the consolidated allowance came along, what they did by law was to take all of these seven allowances and put them into one lump sum.

There had been some complaints, members saying "Western Union has gotten so bad I don't use that any more, but I could use some extra money for telephone calls or stationery." So the Appropriations Committee considered a proposition of consolidating the allowances. They took the same dollars for the senators and put them together as a lump sum, and said "OK, you now have a lump sum

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allowance you may spend it for these seven categories in any way you see fit, but you may not exceed this total dollar figure." I think it was at that same time too, when they had the individual allowances, they had an allowance for travel--there were eight allowances, I forgot travel money. Each senator got a different amount, because it was based on the mileage to his home city and state. So when it first became a consolidated allowance, we had one hundred different allowances.

Then, I think it was through us in the Disbursing Office, it was after Bob Brenkworth left--as a matter of fact, it was when I was Financial Clerk that the consolidated allowance came into being. We had a hundred accounts, which meant that the two senators from each state had different amounts. The only time they'd have the same amount would be if by chance they came from the same city. So then I recommended to the Appropriations Committee to consider making this rather than a "Senatorial" allowance, to make it a State allowance. We developed a formula to change the office allowance from the one hundred individual allowances to fifty figures. Both senators from the state got the same amount. We developed a formula that made sure that nobody lost any money on it. The Appropriations Committee did this, and then they fixed up an item for their allocation of home state office space requirements, and so forth, and worked all that out.

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As I say, it's a matter of what was happening and all of the growth that was going on that these changes were coming about. It was helping the accounting end of it and the processing of all work, it simplified things. It's like when I was Financial Clerk, I made a recommendation to the Rules Committee. All of our committees and subcommittees had to prepare vouchers every month, big payroll vouchers, submit them to us, and we had to get them before the 15th of the month, because we were paying off on the 20th. We had to correct them, any changes, terminations, appointments, we had to add them on. All of these had to go to the Rules Committee and be approved before we could finally pay them. So I came up with the idea of working this on a basis of processing a six-month print out for Rules Committee to approve, and I worked out all of the procedures and presented it for approval. And boy, after it was approved I think I could have gotten a hug and kiss from all of the committee clerks because the monthly payroll really was a hair shirt, for them and for us too.

It was more work for us than it was for the committee clerks. They had to get the chairman's signature before they sent it over to us, and if it happened to be a time when the chairman was away, we'd have to get the copies and work with copies until they got the original, signed. So when we worked this out, it worked like a dream and

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was a big help to everyone. It saved the committee clerks a lot of work, but the fact is, it really saved the Disbursing Office more work than it did anybody else.

RITCHIE: Well, what would you do in a case where you had problems with a senator's office accounts? Would you take it to the senator's office, or to the Rules Committee? Who buffered for the Disbursing Office?

RIDGELY: Well, the Financial Clerk would take care of these matters. Usually we would have a contact in an office, with each senator's office or each committee. When we had a problem we'd talk to whoever was responsible and handle it that way. But it would be very difficult to say if it was an abuse. If he was buying stationery or stamps, or paying for telephone calls, all of these are authorized. But we have had vouchers come through for things that we would have to bounce. We'd just call up whoever was handling the vouchers, not only for a senator's office but for committees, and tell them we couldn't pay the expense. A question of course would follow: "Well, how can we pay for it?" "Well, there is nothing to permit it, and the only ones that can do it is the Rules Committee." So then they would have to go to Rules Committee. If Rules Committee wanted to make an exception, that was up to them. If it was Contingent Fund money they could do it.

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The Disbursing Office and Rules Committee always worked very closely together on this. Rules Committee would always look to the Financial Clerk for advice and counsel on this, and the practical aspect of whether or not they should do it. Would it create a precedent? Would it become a problem in the future? What would happen to it? They tried to analyze the real practical approach to making an exception to something. In many cases they did this, when the circumstances were legitimate.

For instance, registration fees for conventions: it seems to me, if I recall correctly, the first time that this came up was when someone put a registration fee on their voucher. They were authorized to attend a seminar. We bounced it. Appeal was made to Rules Committee, and Rules Committee at the time came up and said "OK, we will pay it, but the rule hereafter is that the traveler must request the person that invites him to either reduce or abate the fee since they were a Senate employee going there on official business." If the traveler could then substantiate that it could neither be reduced nor abated, then they would pay it. This, of course, is something that's a standard thing. It used to be you could attend these meetings, ect., for nothing in most cases, but now they have registration fees just about for everything. So that's an example of one thing that wasn't paid at one time, they made an exception, and it's become part of the routine.

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RITCHIE: So the two committees that the Disbursing Office would most directly deal with would be the Rules Committee and the Legislative Appropriations Subcommittee. One to appropriate the money and one to define how the money could be legitimately spent. Was there any kind of auditing process by either of those committees or by any other institution?

RIDGELY: The auditing of the vouchers before payment was done by Disbursing. They went to Rules Committee for approval. Once all of the accounting is done, all of these vouchers go to the General Accounting Office. While on the contingent fund items the law stipulates that once a voucher is approved by the Committee on Rules and Administration, it is binding and conclusive on all officers of the government- -which means that the General Accounting Office can look at it but can't do much about it. I've said that we could even pay for something illegally and GAO couldn't do much about it, except the moral and ethical approach to this. I know Bob and I worked with GAO particularly on travel.

One time GAO was checking the public transportation systems as to whether or not they were over charging government for travel on airlines and railroads. I know that the person that was assigned to the Senate from GAO came up to the office one day with some vouchers that had to do with rail and air transportation, and was asking Bob about them. Bob kind of coyly pointed to the vouchers and said "You

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see that signature on there, don't you?" He said, "Yes." Bob said, "You know what it means, don't you?" He said, "Yes." But Bob didn't blackjack him with the fact that Rules had approved it. We did check it out for him. We thought it was right to do that. We would audit those things with a fine tooth comb to begin with. If they give you a stub of an air flight or something with an amount on it, and it matches up on a voucher, there's no reason for us to question it. But GAO was looking a little beyond that point, which is fine and dandy. Bob just figured, well, sure we'll cooperate with and develop whatever background information we can, because if GAO is going to get some of these people for over charging, fine and dandy, But by and large they know that we handle and run a pretty tight audit on these.

It's even better now because the Rules Committee has an assistant chief clerk for auditing, and he has an assistant. We, the Disbursing Office, have an audit section of four or five people, editing vouchers, checking them out, and then they go to Rules Committee, and they are gone over also over there. Any

vouchers that the Disbursing Office has any question on, you may have four or five items on a travel voucher, with transportation, per diem, and other travel items that are legitimate, and you might have one maybe say "taxi fares" that might look a little high. We might just pin a little note on that and say, "cab fares a little high?", coordinating and communicating the audit process between Rules Committee and

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Disbursing. We maintained that working relationship and it did a good job. They get a double-barreled shot at this on the audit.

Disbursing, of course, is the only place that certain parts of the audit can be performed, that is: is the person on the payroll, in the office in which the expense voucher is being processed, and during the period of time in which they traveled or incurred the expense. Nobody else can check that. They then go on and check the rest of it: signatures, and all the other things; and it goes to Rules as a group, ready for approval by Rules Committee. They look all right to us, but those two people over in the Rules Committee now look them over extensively, particularly where there is special authorization by Rules Committee. They've always gotten a good audit here. I'm not going to say that something didn't get by, because with the volume that it eventually got to, what was moving through there in 1977 let's say, something may have slipped by. We've caught our own mistakes, though; several times we've caught items where we erred. People always are receptive to that too, even if it meant in some cases that somebody was underpaid, or in some cases overpaid.

RITCHIE: I know in our office, if there's the slightest mistake in any of our vouchers we get a telephone call from Disbursing right away: please correct what you've done. And I would assume that in most offices it's relatively routine and that it's to people's advantage and credibility not to abuse these privileges. But every once

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in a while you get flamboyant characters, and I wondered how the Disbursing Office dealt with them? I understand, for instance, that Joe McCarthy was famous for sending telegrams in huge numbers; and I've heard about Lyndon Johnson building his "Taj Mahal," his hide away office in the Capitol. How would the Disbursing Office deal with that sort of senator?

RIDGELY: Well, speaking of the telegrams of Joe McCarthy, back in that time they had a telegraph allowance which the Sergeant at Arms controlled. If he exceeded his allowance, what the Sergeant at Arms would do would be to return the charges to Western Union and tell them that the senator had exceeded his allowance and he's to be billed directly. At the same time, the senator got a memorandum from the Sergeant - at-Arms on this also. They did this on long distance telephone calls at the time too. Then there was direct billing, after a certain point, right to the senator. As far as Lyndon Johnson is concerned, talking about his private office, the expenses of refurbishing, renovating comes under the Architect of the Capitol. We would not have known anything about it.

RITCHIE: Under the Architect's contingent fund?

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RIDGELY: Yes. The only things that we paid for were carpeting and drapes and those kinds of things, but as far as the structural end of it, changing an office around, maybe redoing walls, that was the Architect's. The Sergeant-at-Arms had funds appropriated to take care of carpeting and drapes and so forth.

RITCHIE: Everyone I've talked to who worked here in the 150s always has stories about Lyndon Johnson, about how he was a great one for getting things done . . .

RIDGELY: Oh, yes.

RITCHIE: And being very insistent upon things getting done. Did you deal at all with him when he was a senator?

RIDGELY: Oh, yes. One thing I always said to myself, and I think Bob Brenkworth probably would have agreed with me: Any time Lyndon Johnson calls you up, never question him why, do it! Just get it done for him. He called up one time and he was in his car--he was a great one for calling up and saying "This is Lyndon Johnson." He wouldn't say "Senator Johnson." That kind of thing always caught you off guard, because your response is to swing right back with the first name. He called up this one day from the mobile telephone in his car. He said he wanted something and he'd like to have it by the time he got to the Capitol, and let me know how soon he would be there! It was some figures on his payroll which we could get without

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too much problem. I said, "It'll be there." But he was that kind of a fellow. He got a heck of a lot done. He apparently had enough IOUs in his hip pocket to take care of things.

RITCHIE: I understand that he could be as complementary and as nice as possible on one occasion and chew you out on the next.

RIDGELY: Oh, yes. He was a long hour worker; he worked a long day. I remember people complaining about that. As a matter of fact, one fellow who worked on our Armed Services Committee went down to the White House when Johnson became President. After he left there he came up here and I was talking to him. He told me: "You just can't believe it, he [Johnson] was unbelievable as to the hours he would work. He would call you up anytime." He said, "I'm going to tell you something. I got sick and was hospitalized, and Johnson had a special telephone installed beside my bed while I was hospitalized!" He was known for that up here too. But he got things done.

RITCHIE: We talked a little about Bob Brenkworth. I never met him, but I've heard a lot about him from other people, and he sounds like he could be quite a character too.

RIDGELY: Bob was a good supervisor, if you want to put it that way. He ran a tight ship in the Disbursing Office. There was an understanding that he had, I certainly had it, that there were services that the Disbursing Office provided the Senate, and they were

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expected by the Senate. I think one of the nicest things that I could attach to the Disbursing Office, and I learned this not too long after I went to work there, was that the Disbursing Office had an enviable record of doing things for people, almost to the point that if the people couldn't find something out anywhere else they'd come to the Disbursing Office and knew that they would get an answer, and if they got an answer it was going to be correct. If the Disbursing Office didn't know the answer they'd find somebody who could give you the answer and they wouldn't be battered from pillar to post locating somebody knowledgeable. We had a reputation for that.

People would come in there and talk to the Financial Clerk about things that were not related to Disbursing Office matters. I know when I was Financial Clerk they did this. One day we had a request in the Disbursing Office and I handed it to one of the people in the office to do and they asked me, "Why are we doing this?" I said, "Because they can't get it anywhere else; they don't know where else

to get it. We have the information; we can give it to them without giving away any trade secrets." I said, "As far as I'm concerned, this is part of our bread and butter here in the Disbursing Office, helping people when they can't get help anywhere else." It did have that reputation, but, going back to Bob, he ran a tight ship and he expected everything to be done. He was kind of rough on some people,

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but Bob had a lot of savvy. He was practical, and he knew what the Senate needed, wanted, and he tried to meet it. He did the job very well. He was a good Financial Clerk.

RITCHIE: Now the Financial Clerk reports directly to the Secretary of the Senate, but it is important for him to have contacts or allies among the senators, say the chairman of the Appropriations Committee?

RIDGELY: Oh, yes. Our dealings in the Disbursing Office, more so when Bob was Financial Clerk, and when I was Financial Clerk, the contacts with senators was far greater than it is now, I think. There is always contact between senators and the Financial Clerk. A senator will call up and like anybody else when he wants to talk to someone he wants to talk to the head man in the office. They come by to see him and talk about things. I know it happened to me any number of times. They'd come in and talk about the financial matters of their office and maybe even some personal matters. We go back to the business of the Disbursing Office being non-political, non-patronage, and you're dealing with senators who are in a political arena. You have to know when they ask a question if something can be done or be ready to say no to them. It's not the easiest thing to do, but you do have to say that. Tell them: "I can't do it."

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RITCHIE: It seems to me that when it comes to money in the Senate the chairman of the Appropriations Committee is sort of the end of the line. Is it important to have the confidence of the chairman of the committee?

RIDGELY: Of the Legislative Subcommittee particularly, and the committee chairmen, yes. I know that we had a good relationship when Senator [Carl] Hayden was chairman of the Appropriations Committee, a good working relationship with him and other members of the Legislative Subcommittee.

Not only the chairmen, but also the ranking minority members. If you had something that you wanted to get done, you really looked for their blessing also, not only of the Legislative Subcommittee, but also the chairman and ranking minority members of the committee, that they were well versed, because they're the leaders of the committee. I used to keep a rapport with the chairman and the ranking minority member on things.

RITCHIE: I've heard that Brenkworth had a good relationship with Allen Ellender . . .

RIDGELY: Oh, yes.

RITCHIE: As Hayden got quite old there towards the end. And what about Hayden's chief clerks, Smith and Scott?

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RIDGELY: Everard Smith was chief clerk of Appropriations when I first came to work, and he was still chief clerk when Bob became Financial Clerk. Since the Financial Clerk was the budget officer for the Senate too, they had that working relationship getting the budget for the Senate moving. Tommy Scott was Everard's assistant, and he eventually became the chief clerk of the committee, and Bob and I both worked very closely with both of them in developing the Senate budget and getting it all ready. Both of them were very fine men. Bob and I used to help them put the legislative bill together in all aspects. It was just one of those working relationships that developed that was no real problem for Bob and I to take some of our time and work with them to get the budget of the Senate together and get it ready for report.

RITCHIE: It seems like there was a long continuity of staff there, particularly in the 1950s and '60s, the same people were there for years. Apparently you were able to build up long-term relationships with people.

RIDGELY: Yes, definitely.

RITCHIE: There wasn't a lot of turnover.

RIDGELY: That's right. One of the things back in the '50s and '60s, Everard as chief clerk and Tommy as assistant chief clerk and eventually chief clerk, they handled the legislative bill, but then

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when Tommy retired, they assigned one of the professional staff members of the committee to work on the legislative bill, and the chief clerk did not do that any more. That change took place in the '70s, because when I became Financial Clerk, Tommy was still there, and I was still Financial Clerk when the change took place and one of the professional staff members took over the bill.

RITCHIE: Well, I think we should stop at this point, before the period in which you became Financial Clerk, we can begin with that in our last session. I have a lot more questions, but we've been talking for over an hour and a half. This has been very educational for me.

RIDGELY: I'm sure there are a lot of little things that come into the picture, once you start talking there is a lot of backing and filling that occurs. For instance, after I came to work here I heard that Oco Thompson had locked horns with Senator Eugene Milliken of Colorado, who was chairman of the Finance Committee, and that the situation was so hot they recommended Oco take some leave. That's hearsay but you do hear things like that. You think of the things you've heard about, and I'm sure that there may be others that as we talk about them my memory will be refreshed. I've never kept a diary or anything. Somebody said you should have kept a diary.

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One time when I remembered the Secretary's report, that was always a bone of contention with the members. I referred to it as the "Green Hate Book," and it probably had many other titles too that couldn't be written down! But the press used to drive some of the members crazy on this. I can remember one day that Styles Bridges, Kenneth Wherry of Nebraska, and William Knowland of California, Leverett Saltonstall of Massachusetts, four or five of the Republican senators came in to talk to Oco. This was during the Republican Congress too, by the way, the 83rd Congress. They wanted him to do something about the Secretary's Report. They did not want the names and individual amounts of salaries printed in the book. That came about and it happened one year that they printed the list of staff people but only the total amount expended for the office, no salary figures or anything. Apparently they had been getting a very bad time on this, and they tried to find a way that they could comply with the law, making the reports of expenditures, and still avoid this kind of thing.

RITCHIE: But it didn't last?

RIDGELY: No, it only happened one year, that I can recall. But the press is always giving them a bad time, always.

RITCHIE: Have you ever had any problem with leaks in your office?

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RIDGELY: No.

RITCHIE: Then you're probably the only office in town that's ever been able to control it!

RIDGELY: No. I think all the employees were well informed as to all of this. We told them that when they came to work here it was a non-political and non-patronage office, that we were working for a hundred senators, regardless of their political affiliation. We have knowledge that maybe somebody would like to know about in another office, and I said "That's one of the reasons the Senate apparently doesn't want this on a political basis. Because if somebody is in here from the Republican side and they see something on a Democratic member, or vice versa, this is what they don't want." And I said, "This is the last place that that kind of information should come from. If it should come from anybody, it should come from the senator himself. If he wants it known, he can tell them." And that's the way it ought to be.

I think this is probably one of the things that put the office, as I call it, in an autonomous position, non-political within a political arena. Our employees knew that if anything like that ever happened they wouldn't be there five minutes. The Secretary of the Senate was always confident enough in the decisions of the Financial Clerk to sign off on his requests. We promised people a decent job, and a permanent job, and this was part of the employment policy. But

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it's all worked very nicely as far as I'm concerned. I know of no leaks, even during the Bobby Baker era. Reporters called and they wanted all kinds of information.

RITCHIE: About Bobby Baker?

"William A. Ridgely, Senate Financial Clerk and Assistant Secretary of the Senate," Oral History Interviews, Senate Historical Office, Washington, D.C.

RIDGELY: Yes, and anybody that worked for him, anybody close to him, I guess you might say. It was quite a time.

RITCHIE: This has been a first-rate session. You've turned to the cold flow charts and made it all very real and understandable.

End of Interview #2

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