

## **Preface**

A military career took Joseph Stanley Kimmitt through the Second World War and the Korean War, and eventually brought him to Capitol Hill, where he became Secretary for the Majority during the Vietnam War. In uniform and as a civilian, he served his nation in the halls of the Senate and helped bring some order to a notoriously intractable institution. Kimmitt's progress from Army liaison officer to Secretary for the Majority was facilitated by a Senate majority leader from his home state, Mike Mansfield, but he won the post of Secretary of the Senate in 1976 on his own. He held that post for four years during the majority leadership of Robert C. Byrd and the presidency of Jimmy Carter. When the Republican victory in the election of 1980 ended the Democrats' 26-year majority in the Senate, it also brought an end to his term as Secretary. In the following decades, Stan Kimmitt remained a prominent figure on Capitol Hill as Washington representative for major defense industries.

Born on April 5, 1918 in Lewistown, Montana, he attended grade school in Great Falls and the University of Montana before being drafted into the U.S. Army in June 1941. He served in the Mule Pack Artillery at Fort Lewis, Washington and then attended Officers Candidate School and the Naval War College. Commissioned a second lieutenant, he commanded the 155<sup>th</sup> battery in Europe, and later commanded a 405 battalion in Korea. He received the Silver Star and Bronze Star. In 1946, he accepted a regular Army commission and over the years rose to the rank of Colonel. He attended Utah State University, where he received a B.S. in political science, did graduate studies in international relations at George Washington University, and also attended the Command and General Staff College. He married Eunice Wegener, a Red Cross nurse he met in Berlin; they had seven children.

In 1955, Kimmitt became liaison officer to the Senate for the Secretary of the Army. He did three tours as liaison officer, from 1955 to 1958, 1959 to 1960, and 1964 to 1965. In 1965 he left the Army at the request of Senator Mike Mansfield (within whom he had once taken a course on Far Eastern history at the University of Montana) and initially served as Mansfield's administrative assistant. In 1966, Democrats elected him Secretary for the Majority. In that post he served as the principal floor assistant to the Majority Leader and was responsible for facilitating the work of Democratic senators, keeping them informed of the floor schedule and anticipated

votes, and reporting to the leadership on the prospects of important votes. He served a party whose membership ranged widely from Hubert Humphrey on the political left to James Eastland on the right, during the rush of Great Society legislation and the divisive debate over the Vietnam War. The Majority Secretary's office became a neutral meeting place for senators from both parties to relax at the end of the day and at times to conduct legislative business informally.

When Senator Mansfield retired from the Senate in 1976, Kimmitt challenged the incumbent Secretary of the Senate, Francis R. Valeo, and was elected by the Democratic Conference to replace him. At the same time, Senator Robert C. Byrd was elected as Majority Leader, and Senator Howard Baker was elected Minority Leader. Over the next four years, Kimmitt was the Senate's chief administrative officer, supervising the staff on the Senate floor, including the parliamentarians, legislative clerks, executive clerks, and reporters of debate. As the Senate's chief financial officer, he was responsible for a budget which in fiscal year 1980 topped \$218 million, including the salaries of all senators and staff. He supervised a myriad of other offices ranging from the Stationery Store to the Senate Library. He worked closely with the leadership and senators of both parties, and his office remained a familiar off-hours meeting place for senior senators.

The Republican victory in the 1980 elections ended Stan Kimmitt's term as Secretary of the Senate. Senators rose in a bipartisan tribute before he left. Senate Democratic leader Robert C. Byrd said that he had served with "distinction, integrity, and dedication," while Republican leader Howard Baker called him "the embodiment of dedication and untiring service." The conservative Virginia Senator Harry Byrd, Jr. recalled that Kimmitt had "consistently displayed an unfailing courtesy, a great talent for organization and a total dedication to duty," and the liberal Californian Alan Cranston gave him credit for "keeping the Senate running smoothly and efficiently." Wisconsin Senator Gaylord Nelson described him as an institution man: "He knows and understands the history and traditions of the Senate as few people do."

Afterwards, Kimmitt became vice president for government affairs of Hughes Helicopters, Inc and a Washington representative for McDonald-Douglas, Boeing and other defense-related industries. His interviews therefore offer observations from both inside and outside the Senate, and focus especially on the Senate Armed Services Committee under the chairmanships of Richard Russell, John Stennis, John Tower, Barry Goldwater, and Sam Nunn.

*About the Interviewer:* Donald A. Ritchie is associate historian of the Senate Historical Office. A graduate of the City College of New York, he received his Ph.D. in history from the University of Maryland. His books include *James M. Landis: Dean of the Regulators* (Harvard Press, 1980), *Press Gallery: Congress and the Washington Correspondents* (Harvard Press, 1991), and *The Oxford Guide to the United States Government* (Oxford, 2001). He served as president of the Oral History Association and of Oral History in the Mid-Atlantic Region (OHMAR), and received OHMAR's Forrest C. Pogue Award for distinguished contributions to the field of oral history.