THE MANSFIELD LEADERSHIP

Interview #4

Monday, September 16, 2002

RITCHIE: I want to go back again to the days when you were Democratic Secretary. You talked briefly in passing about the Democratic Policy Committee and Charlie Ferris. I wondered if you could tell me, what is the relationship between the Democratic Floor Secretary and the Policy Committee?

KIMMITT: Well, I will try. Keep in mind it all could have changed in the last twenty years. But, as I observe the current Secretary for the Majority, he seems to be much more involved with the Majority Leader in planning floor actions than I ever was with Mansfield. Mansfield, I can speak with knowledge in that arena, almost had a troika in that he had Frank Valeo who was then Secretary of the Senate as his in- house speech writer. Even though he was Secretary of the Senate, he was far more focused on Mansfield personally than I ever was later, and for reasons I will go into in a few moments, and even as Hildenbrand was or Mark Trice or any of the former secretaries of the party. Because as I related to you the last time, when Bobby Baker blew out and Mansfield put Valeo in that position it soon became obvious that Valeo was not synergistic, not politically minded, he was a foreign relations student, expert. So Mansfield put him in one point of the troika. His function was primarily to be Secretary of the Senate, but even there when he became that, he had very little direct control in the Secretary's office. As I mentioned last time, perhaps unfairly, I am confident he didn't even know many of the people who worked for him. He never got out and cruised around the offices. He signed papers that were put in front of him. He did the "pro forma" work of the Secretary, but his focus was on Mansfield as the leader and as the foreign relations guru particularly with reference to Asia.

It later got Frank in trouble and it had quite a bit to do with my winning the race [for Secretary of the Senate]. As the procedures and rules and all changed, members such as [Howard] Metzenbaum, [Dee] Huddleston, and maybe one or two others were accused, probably wrongfully, with campaign chicanery or actions. Now in the one case that got him in trouble an allegation was made against a senator that his campaign tactics in his state violated the FEC rules or something. Frank had a man working for him then in the Secretary's office. He was very bright,

very capable, mature. He was handling these cases. The procedures correctly said it had to be referred to Justice, which Frank did. No question it was legal; no question it was required; but he never told the senator before he referred it to Justice. The first the senator ever knew of it was when Justice came to him with the allegation which had been transmitted to them by the Secretary of the Senate. Well since the Secretary works for all senators, or should, that obviously was a faux pas on Frank's part. But we will set Valeo aside now other than to say he was the foreign policy, speech writing, etc. adviser for Mansfield.

Now coming directly to your question, under Mansfield the Policy Committee staff headed first by Harry McPherson, who went to the White House, and later by Charlie Ferris. Charlie came up through the Kennedy Administration having come down from Massachusetts and into the Justice Department with Bobby Kennedy and being very close to the Kennedy scene. He was very liberal and very much involved in civil rights. Charlie was brought up here on loan to Hubert Humphrey and the civil rights advocates to staff the '64 Civil Rights Act and did a wonderful job. Then he stayed as Democratic Policy Committee staff director.

They would handle the calendar. They would handle the scheduling of legislation on the floor. They would recommend when to pigeonhole a bill, when to move it, the same things that go on all the time now. It was very obvious to conservatives and moderates that Charlie was tilted towards the liberal wing of the Democratic Party of which there were more then than there are now, and a more active, domineering group than there are now. He was, and his staffing was, very careful to protect information from the conservatives or from anybody that didn't fit the ultra-liberal mold and his own mold. Charlie is a friend of mine. I am saying this just as a matter of history, not as a matter of complaint.

Dick Russell knew this, Bob Byrd knew it, Stennis knew it. Again, out of respect for Mansfield they didn't raise the issue of Charlie. So, in effect, Charlie was in charge of all legislative actions on the floor of the Senate by recommending to the Majority Leader the schedule, and other legislative procedures. Mansfield, being the type of person that he was, was a very broad-viewed person and he didn't like to get into details. He trusted his people to prepare the details and make a recommendation. It was a very successful operation.

Therefore, Charlie was the second point of the troika, the triangle. Then there was the

office of the Secretary for the Majority which I held, which was the third corner. My functions were only, as I probably described them to you before, to see that the Chamber was ready for operations; see that the presiding officers were there; that the pages were well-trained and disciplined; that the members were well-informed, if they wanted to be, without reference to ideology or philosophy. I advised them, as I told you the last time at the back door, if asked, what the issue was (who was for, who was against); taking the rare poll that Mansfield would have me take and extremely rarely, giving information as to the leadership position, because Senator Mansfield did not want leadership positions to be known, because it smacked of pressure and arm-twisting. He did not do that. I have probably not explained this well, but I have tried to describe that era.

Now, we switch to today. And I might add that when Bill Hildenbrand took over from I think Mark Trice, he performed the same functions as I did for Hugh Scott and then Baker, as Minority Leader. But Bill was enough of a politician at heart that he would get involved, not by being delegated, but just by involving himself in discussions and policy matters. But he had a different world. He was in the minority, at least in the period we are talking about. The minority didn't control any legislation. The minority didn't do any scheduling. The minority didn't have the problems of moving bills. That was all a decision of the majority. So Bill's duties were primarily as Secretary for the Minority as mine were on his side, but he would also lap over on his side with the residual policy matters that pertain to the minority.

Then we skip to the Leader Bob Byrd. If you check directly, once Mansfield left and once Byrd was scheduled to take over, Charlie Ferris immediately found other pastures, specifically the office of the Speaker Tip O'Neill on the House side. The handwriting was on the wall, not so much by Byrd, but instinctively by Charlie. He knew that because he was withholding from Byrd and the rest of them, too. He was doing his job as he saw it, but it was irritating and frustrating to them. So, Charlie Ferris and Byrd never would have been able to work together and he knew that so he went over with Tip O'Neill.

Then, who did it for Byrd? The first Secretary for the Majority when Byrd became Majority Leader was Jimmy Duffy from Rhode Island, who had worked on the Rules Committee for [Theodore Francis] Green, bright, attractive, smiling, and coming from the Rules Committee, knew the rules. So Byrd put him in there. During the interim while I remained as Secretary for

the Majority, but having been elected for Secretary of the Senate, Byrd had then selected his own Secretary for the Majority, Duffy, who would not take office until I left, but he had him in the Majority Leader's office, strangely enough at two desks, not even side by side, facing each other. Byrd was on one side and Jimmy was on the other. It appeared to be a marriage made in heaven, because they appeared to be so close.

But it turned out that Jimmy was a sipper. He was addicted to alcohol during the day and that was an anathema to Byrd. Of all people to tip Senator Byrd off that Jimmy was drinking, it was Jim Eastland who was, if nothing else, certainly an authority on the subject. So he left and I think then he put in Terry Sauvain who I think was a staffer on the Appropriations Committee and suddenly he became Secretary for the Majority.

In the background, of course, was Joe Stewart who is also on his staff. But Joe, most of this is my opinion, because of his close relationship with Bobby Baker during the Baker era, did not want to be identified as Secretary for the Majority or Bobby's successor, for good and sufficient reasons, it may have raised the press speculation. So Joe very wisely at that time stayed out of the limelight. Then Terry, who is now staff director of the Appropriations Committee, I guess all of this is relatively confidential for now, he started traveling overseas with delegations. 'Lo and beyond, if Terry didn't start having a little more wine than usual and made a few little mistakes. Again, alienating Byrd, not so much that he got rid of him, but just but just to take him out of that office. (The chronology of Secretary of the Majority sequence needs to be researched and noted.) Finally, Joe Stewart took the job. After he left, I've forgotten who took over.

RITCHIE: In the 80's Abby Saffold held that position.

KIMMITT: Well, Abby came later.

RITCHIE: Pat Griffin?

KIMMITT: Pat Griffin, right. And Pat did a great job. I guess the Republicans were in the majority, and Pat left. Then when the Democrats came back in the majority, Joe Stewart took the position of Secretary of the Senate and Abby Saffold was Secretary for the Majority.

That is really a tangled, rambling answer to the question you asked which was very simple, which was "What is the relationship and duties between the Secretary for the Majority and the Policy Committee." I don't even know off the top of my head, although it might have been that Pat Griffin was heading Byrd's Policy Committee before he made him Secretary for the Majority or Minority. He used the Policy staff very similar to the way Mansfield did. I don't know how [Howard] Baker handled his. He had his own style. But I don't even know if [Tom] Daschle has a Policy Committee staff of any size. I know Byrd expanded that staff considerably.

But Marty [Paone, Secretary for the Majority] seems to be more personally involved with Daschle in and out of his Leader's office. When I observe him in the cloakroom (I go in and out of there occasionally), he seems to be far more aware of the minute by minute, hour by hour legislative pace than I was. It didn't bother me. I didn't want it. I was not in that ball game and I didn't get in their ball game. Therefore, I didn't care what bill was coming up or not, or what amendments. But Marty is very much involved. So I don't know how they are relating to it now.

RITCHIE: The interesting difference between the Republicans and the Democrats is that the Republicans have compartmentalized their leadership. They have a separate Policy Committee chairman, separate Conference chair, separate floor leader, who all have their own separate staffs and seem to work at their own purposes. Whereas the Democrats have usually had everything under the Majority Leader.

KIMMITT: It started with Lyndon Johnson, I think, continued under Mansfield that the Majority Leader was chairman of everything. I think Byrd spread it out a little by designating the Whip as Assistant Majority Leader. But then he started naming the assistant whips. But he never gave up the total control of chairmanships of the sinews of the party. It would have been unthinkable that a Democratic senator other than the leader be chairman of the Policy Committee. It may have changed by now, Daschle may have a different chairman of the Policy Committee, I don't know, but it would be unthinkable for the chairman of the Policy Committee to challenge the Majority Leader or not follow the Majority Leader's dictum and the steering committee and everything else. Daschle may have, and [George] Mitchell even before that may have given up the sole chairmanship and appointed other senators to be titular heads of those committees, but again the leaders are the ones who control them.

The Republicans used to have disagreements and tensions within their own party because of this. I remember [Carl] Curtis was the head of one their senior committees and he and either Dirksen or Baker would often get into disagreements. They were not nearly as homogenous as the Democrats.

RITCHIE: I wonder, if since you were all working for Mansfield, did that blur some of the lines as to the distinctions between the different offices, like Policy Committee, Majority Leader, where you were essentially all working together on policy?

KIMMITT: In Mansfield's mind, and in his actions, he was bending all of the procedures. If you check the record, Mansfield had very few caucuses. There was a flurry of Democratic caucuses at the organization of a new Congress because you have a lot of things to do. Then he would just let caucuses fade away. Only if a very important issue came up. There was no such thing as a weekly Democratic luncheon for all members. There was no such thing as a scheduled caucus. It was all in his hip pocket and he would call a caucus meeting when he felt there was a need for it. He didn't like them because it was always risky that somebody might bring something up that would rock the boat. He liked his boat to be on a calm lake most of the time.

But now, every Wednesday both the Democrats and the Republican have their caucus meetings. As I think I have told you and you have seen it yourself in looking over the old minutes of the Democratic Caucuses, they actually legislated. There was no such thing as continued lengthy debates on the floor, except on rare occasions. There were, no doubt, issues and occasions where there were serious lengthy debates, but they wouldn't be over little bills like we do now. They would take that vote in caucus and rubberstamp it on the floor. So that is a change from the old days.

Now, I don't know what they do. Some of the things that go on now puzzle me. One thing that puzzles me—and I admire him for it—is how Daschle is able to keep his people solid on a vote. Now, certainly with the one-vote difference that enhances the appeal by the Majority Leader that "I want you all to stick with me on this, we've got stick together, because if one of you leaves, the Republicans win." Now that's sort of like crazy glue that does work.

But in Mansfield's time and even in Byrd's time, it was rare, in my memory, that you would

get an absolutely solid partisan vote. On a procedural issue, yes. On election of the Secretary of the Senate or the Sergeant at Arms, yes. The minority would put up a candidate and they would propose him and there would be a vote on the floor of the Senate, but the majority always voted entirely together. That was done more on procedurals. But on issues if was different. Right now, for example, if you look ahead to the Iraq issue, it's not going to be a solid vote on that one. If you go back to the tax bill of Bush that many are trying to criticize now, there were Democrats that defected there. If you watch this man from Georgia now–

RITCHIE: Zell Miller.

KIMMITT: Zell Miller. He stays conservative and is comfortable with staying there, but if he's not, it doesn't bother him to jump ship on an issue. Then, of course, take the prime example, the Jeffords move. And even Bob Smith. Now Smith got his comeuppance and if Republicans take the Senate back, which could happen in a couple of months, I am not saying they are going to, Jeffords is going to be a very low man on a separate totem pole.

But I do admire the way Daschle has been able to hold them together. It still puzzles me, how they can do it. Because all of those men have a constituency that they are representing and all constituencies don't agree. The constituents in North Carolina generally do not concur with the constituents in New York. And yet, Daschle is able to coalesce the North Carolina and the New York senators on these issues. So it is a puzzling thing.

RITCHIE: There's one other figure in this leadership equation who is somewhat outside the circle and that's the Democratic Whip. Mansfield never actually officially endorsed the Whip. You pointed out that he probably was leaning towards Kennedy and maybe voted for him, but he always allowed the conference to elect the three different whips while he was the Majority Leader. How did the whip fit into the scheme of things? Did the whip actually have a function on the floor? Did you consult with the whips on any kind of regular basis?

KIMMITT: Well, there are whips and there are whips. And there are leaders and there are leaders. Let's take the beginning of the Mansfield ascendency to the Majority Leader.

One: when Lyndon Johnson was Majority Leader, his whip Earle Clements was defeated

for reelection, which left the job of whip open. There was a move, and again it was related to me, not in these words, but in words by Senator Russell, to make George Smathers the whip. That's whom Johnson wanted to be his whip, and Smathers was coming out of Florida. Russell took the position that no, they're not going to have two Southerners. It wouldn't work to have two Southerners there. Then they kicked a number of names around and finally settled on Mansfield from Montana, which was about as neutral a position as they could have.

Certainly it appeared that he would be the most adaptable to Lyndon Johnson's style. Mansfield, quiet, patient, would sit on the floor for hours and hours, never show any movement toward ambition or wanting to go forward. As a matter of fact, he would normally try to avoid promotion and never would there be self-promotion. Once he was promoted, however, he was tenacious in hanging onto that. He was not going to be the man who let the position fall into disrepute when he had it.

Well, then Johnson went to the White House. Here again, it's the influence of the Southerners and they elected Russell Long as whip. I related to you the last time that Mansfield had an antipathy toward Southern chairmen as a group and the club as a group. Russell Long was considered, even though he wasn't chairman of the Finance Committee then, old Harry Byrd was, he was considered part of that group. So, Mansfield delegated very little to Long. Plus Russell Long, at that time, was drinking during the day and he was bombastic, he was fun-loving, he was humorous, he was this, that and the other, but he was not in the Mansfield mold. As a result, Mansfield gave Long relatively few opportunities to act, not only as Assistant Majority Leader or leadership or whip or anything else. He just let him have the title, but kept him out of the influential posturing on the floor.

This irritated Long, of course, so they drifted farther apart. Under that circumstance, I think that was probably the lowest point of influence for a whip because there was no empathy between the leader and the whip. There was no empathy in the philosophy between the two of them. There was little to bring them together. While they spoke civilly, Long was never brought into the inner circle.

Well, then along comes the famous challenge by [Ted] Kennedy. Kennedy beats Long as whip, still under Mansfield. That was a new game for Mansfield. He let Kennedy pretty much

have his way, acting as the whip and appearing to climb the ladder. But Kennedy, for whatever reason, wasn't wise enough, in my opinion, to recognize the opportunity. He wasn't wise enough to stay on the floor when Mansfield wasn't on the floor and run the legislation. He, like Kennedy are of course, took the title, took the position, took the perks, took the office, took everything else and then delegated to whom but the Secretary of the Conference who was Robert C. Byrd of West Virginia.

Now you see the picture. Whereas Mike Mansfield before would stay on the floor practically the whole day, he wasn't going to do that if Kennedy was the whip, because that would deprive Kennedy of the opportunity to share in the limelight. So Mansfield as a general rule would stay in his office. But always back on the second or third tier was Robert C. Byrd of West Virginia.

If Mansfield would leave his chair to go to his office and Kennedy wasn't on the floor, Byrd was the next in line and he would take the duty, long, tortuous, time-consuming duty of being on the floor, covering for the Majority Leader and actually for the whip. He never complained about this. As a matter of fact, he saw the opportunity of being apparent on the floor, running the procedures and putting in the quorum calls and scheduling speakers and doing all the things that either the Majority Leader or the whip or the secretary or whoever does when there is not an active issue on the floor.

But while he never complained, there was one procedure that just irritated him no end, in that Kennedy would come on the floor for the opening of the session with Mansfield and they would hold what used to call it, the "dugout chatter," where the press come in about ten minutes before the session and answer questions from the leadership, just a routine thing, which gave Kennedy his opportunity to be part of the leadership. Then Mansfield would leave and Kennedy would leave the floor and Byrd would take over.

Hypothetically, now it is 10:00 in the morning when this takes place. Hypothetically, it is 5:30 at night before things wrap up. Byrd is still on the floor. He has been plowing the furrow all day long. He has been running things. I saw this happen a couple of times—just as it came time to close the Senate, a young man named Wayne Owens would approach Byrd. He was from Utah, later ran for Congress and was elected and later ran for the Senate and was beaten, I think by the

astronaut.

RITCHIE: Jake Garn.

KIMMITT: Garn. Wallace Bennett, the father of Robert Bennett, stepped down and left that seat open and had been Wallace Bennett and Moss for a long time. I think when Wallace Bennett stepped down, I think that's when Garn and Owens ran against each other. Anyway, he blew out and didn't get into the Senate. But reverting to when he was a staffer for Kennedy just when everything is supposed to be wrapped up, Wayne Owens would go up to Senator Byrd and say "Senator, would you put in a quorum call? Senator Kennedy would like to make a statement." Okay, Byrd would put in a quorum call. That quorum may go on for about ten minutes while Byrd is there. Then in would come Ted Kennedy and walk up in front and do nothing more than adjourn the Senate.

This gives the appearance of the lord and the serf. That went on time and time again. Then time rolls on, as you remember, Don, and 'lo and behold Chappaquiddick comes along, bad times for Kennedy come along, and Byrd announces that he was going to challenge Kennedy for the whip job, which he did and which he won. That blew Kennedy into the back benches again, out of a position of leadership. Then, of course, Byrd catapulted from that to Majority Leader, which Kennedy could have done except for two things: one was Chappaquiddick and the other was his imperial manner about being anointed. It was a very hard job to beat Russell Long. It was a lot tougher job not to be beaten by Bob Byrd.

Now that's a screwed up answer to where did the whip fit in all these things. If one could diagram or define or write a job description which would be followed, you could teach political science in college stating the whip is the number two and does this, that and the other thing. But it is meaningless unless you know the characters, the relationships, the attitudes, the abilities. When you know those, it fits.

On the other side, of course, you had Howard Baker who was the whip for a long time. He was an affable whip and so on, but Hugh Scott and before him under Dirksen–I am trying to think who Dirksen's whip was–

RITCHIE: Leverett Saltonstall at first and then Hugh Scott.

KIMMITT: I guess it was Scott. But they spent a lot of time on the floor because Dirksen would stay in his office. He was a master in that on an important debate on any given subject and it would go on, not as a filibuster, but as a contentious, unlimited debate under the normal circumstances. He'd stay in his office. Mansfield would sit in his chair and the debate would go on and on. Mansfield would seldom ever enter into the issue between two opposing views, not partisan position, but bipartisan opposition and advocacy. He usually would stay out of that unless they dealt with something important to Montana or civil rights or foreign affairs.

Dirksen would stay back in his office. After a couple of days or so, if it appeared like they were not getting anywhere, late in the afternoon he would come on the floor in that typical Dirksen style and would start in those mellifluous tones of speaking and orating. He was orating in a stylistic manner, but with a purpose. He was trying to bring the two sides together. Then they would pass the legislation.

There is no doubt that there would not have been a Civil Rights Bill in '64 if it hadn't been for Dirksen—Democratic liberals couldn't have done it alone. Mansfield on several occasions mentioned this. They never could have achieved that bill at that time in that form if ever Dirksen hadn't brought his own small band, but first of all his own personal support. I think that was brought about because of Lyndon Johnson as the President communicating directly with Dirksen. They had served together. Even though Dirksen knew it was the right thing to do in his mind, it was not the political thing to do for Republicans. So I am sure he resisted. But I think Lyndon Johnson finally convinced him that it was the right thing to do and that it was important. So Dirksen more than anyone else, certainly as much as anyone else, must be credited with passing the Civil Rights Bill of '64.

RITCHIE: Speaking of Lyndon Johnson, it strikes me that he was also part of Senate Democratic Leadership in the 1960's even after he was no longer Majority Leader or Vice President but was down at the White House. I don't think there has been any other President who has been that much involved in what was going on in Congress. Did you have any direct dealings with Johnson when he was President and you were a Democratic Majority Secretary?

KIMMITT: I think the answer has to be yes and no. On the floor in my duties, my work around here, no. But I would be invited, strangely enough, by him and with a small group of senators, usually conservatives and moderates, down at the White House up on the second floor to have a kind of little stag dinner and a general bull session. He and I were never close in any way and I never professed to be close to him, but he was generous enough to include me in a lot of things a normal staffer would not be. Now why, I don't know, except that he knew that Dick Russell considered me a good friend of his. He knew that a lot of his old timers that I had developed a rapport with and, I don't know if anybody else had ever suggested, but in that sense socially and/or in a very private social circle of members he would often include me.

But I would never get a call from him on, to do anything, although he had, of course Mike Manatos, who was his liaison then. Mike would come up often in my office, but he would first go to the Leader's office, where he had a carte blanche invitation to do his job. I would, at Mike Manatos' request on behalf of the President, be doing things that they wanted to have done and it worked very well. Manatos was an old hand up here. He knew the Senate very well. I am sure I told you the Lester Hunt story when he was there and I don't want to get into that. I have told you that Bill Darden story and I don't want to get into that. But to answer your question, no.

If you listen to the Johnson tapes now, and I hear them occasionally during morning broadcasts. It is very apparent that he was acutely sensitive to and aware of who was doing what in the Senate. He was finely attuned to who was on his team and who was not up here. It is also very apparent by his words, I have heard him on a couple of broadcasts not consecutively, "Well, I can't do anything with Mike Mansfield. You are going to have to talk to him." Mansfield kept his independence very clear.

There is a classic anecdote which I am sure is true, one that I will repeat now. This one had to do with Mansfield being in the Oval Office on an issue that was important to Johnson and Mansfield indicated that he couldn't go along with it. When he got up to leave, Johnson was highly irritated and said something to the effect, "Well, I thought I could at least count on my Majority Leader." Mansfield stopped and turned around and said, "Mr. President, I am not your Majority Leader. I am the Senate's Majority Leader," and walked out.

The other anecdote was observed several times by members who would tell me that when

Mansfield would go to the White House with other members of the leadership. This particularly applied during the Vietnam years, he would either have been forewarned or fore-informed what the meeting was going to be about. He would have Valeo prepare a statement on the issue. He would fold it and put it in his pocket. On at least a couple of occasions, I am told, he would sit there while Johnson was working the crowd and Mansfield wouldn't say anything. Before the meeting was over, the President would turn to Mansfield and say "Well, Mike, what do you have to say?" Mike would reach in and pull out his prepared statement. I am told that Johnson would just get red in the face and turn his chair around and look out the window, because he knew that whatever the hell Mansfield was going to say, it was not going to be supportive and that Mansfield was doing it for the record and it would be in the record, and "God damn," it would just make him furious.

We talked before about the fact that he wanted to be chairman of the caucus even as Vice President and they shot him out of that one. Although I think it was in Caro's book, somewhere it says that Mansfield initially supported that, but got so much fire back from the members that he changed.

But there were always people that Johnson could count on in that Senate. Some of them were near the end of their tolerance, but still loyal, Russell being one. Russell and Lyndon Johnson were very close when Johnson was here in the Senate. In his early days as Vice President, he was very close to most of the Southerners. But two things, Johnson's turn on civil rights and initiation of his Great Society didn't totally alienate Russell, but it certainly moved him out on the periphery in his admiration and his respect for Johnson.

Then Vietnam came along and the situation there drove them farther apart. That's when I told you before about when Manatos came to me and we came up with the idea of putting Bill Darden on the Military Court of Appeals. Even beyond that Dick Russell and Johnson had drifted apart, but Russell in the typical old style of Southern gentleman, never broke the string. It was always there, and he would take the calls, and have the dialogue. But he was–in my opinion only–no longer on Johnson's first team. There were others like that. As I said about Stennis, it wouldn't make any difference who was President, his reverence for the office of the presidency caused him to support the President, including Nixon in his worst times. Not because of the man, unless malfeasance could be proved, but because he did not want to weaken the office of the

President by any of his actions. Then there were the constant supporters like Russell Long. If you go back to the Tom Dodd case, years before that, it was Russell Long who defended Dodd. As a matter of fact, I think it was from Russell Long that I first heard the phrase which is descriptive of what I am trying to explain and the phrase goes: "If I have a friend, I have a friend. I will stick with him until hell freezes over and then stay around to fight on the ice." That's the way Russell Long was with Tom Dodd, and I think with Lyndon Johnson and I think with everyone else. If he believed in somebody he just stuck with them until hell froze over and then stayed around to fight on the ice, which cost him in many ways.

RITCHIE: Vietnam had to be the single most divisive issue in the 1960's when you were Democratic Secretary. You had a big party. There were sixty-eight Democrats at one point, but obviously Vietnam was beginning to create a wedge in the party.

KIMMITT: It was.

RITCHIE: Were you involved in trying to keep the party together? Or did you tend side with those who–

KIMMITT: No, that was considerably above my pay grade. But having spent twenty-five years in the military, having a son over there in Nam and two others in the military, I think I can be excused for my bias toward winning the goddamned thing and getting it over with. Therefore, I should be excused my anguish at the actions in Washington of trying to micro-manage the war from here instead of letting the troops in the field do their job.

So I was in a obviously precarious position with people like Gene McCarthy. He even stated once to me in the cloakroom with other members around that everybody knew I was a spy for the Pentagon, which a typical Eugene McCarthy thing. But I never got involved in those things, couldn't get involved because I knew where Mansfield stood and if I had made even the slightest pro-military comment, it would certainly be considered in his mind an act of disloyalty, and it probably would have been. I didn't want that to happen. No, I didn't get involved.

But I observed how these factions split up. As I explained earlier in the first interview or two, it was particularly interested in watching the transformation of Stu Symington the ultra hawk,

Secretary of the Air Force in the [James] Forrestal days, versus his anti-Vietnam concept towards the end. Everything changed. I guess [Ernest] Gruening and Nelson put in the resolution cutting off the funds which really was the finale. I don't know, I get fuzzy there. But the [Democratic Conference] minutes will tell the story. Thank God, as I said before, that by that time I was able to get permission to accurately transcribe the minutes and they are in existence now for you people. When they are released and available they will show the severe tensions between Symington, Stennis and Scoop Jackson and others in the Democratic party. Now you can get the rest of it from the Record as public knowledge on the floor of the Senate.

There were significant debates in the caucus, there had to be, because of Vietnam. It was tearing the country apart. You had things like Kent State and then you get into the lack of appreciation on the part of the American people for any troops that were coming back, getting off the plane after they had served in Vietnam, have people calling them "baby killers" and spitting on them. It was the antithesis of what happened in World War II. In World War II we all came home to a wonderful homecoming. Korea we came home but it was as if we were failures. But the frenzy hadn't started yet, the anti-military frenzy, it hadn't really gotten into the psyche of the American people to where it became so overt. Keep in mind about Korea, there weren't many National Guard outfits or reservists, they were all regular army, so the hometowns weren't affected as much. We came home from there and you got the feeling that you couldn't wait to get your uniform off because people no longer seemed to respect it. But then the poor bastards that came home from Viet Nam were ridiculed from the moment they got off the boat until they got home. That continued for a long time.

My oldest son graduated from West Point in '69. Of course, Nam had been going on for some time by then. In his last year at West Point during a home leave, being a senior they could wear civilian clothes. This was almost at the height of the student rebellion. He got a plane in New York and a young coed also going home for Christmas from one of the Ivy League girl schools, Smith or something, sat down alongside of him. They chatted a little bit. He asked her where she went to school. She told him and she said "Where do you go." He said "I'm at West Point." She got up and moved. There was an example of the intensity of emotions at that time which are hard to understand now.

Now we're flipping back again. People coming home from Afghanistan are heroes.

People that come home from Yugoslavia, Bosnia, they're heroes. I don't know what the hell is going to happen in Iraq. At the moment there is a fervent patriotic attitude. But that's a precarious attitude because there are no body bags yet. I don't know. I think the President has got himself in very, very tight winch here and I don't know how it's going to come out. In answer to your question: No, I did not get involved in any overt actions vis-a-vis Vietnam.

RITCHIE: When Vietnam started, the Senate was all in favor of the war and they voted in favor of the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution with just the two negative votes. You can see the opposition increase steadily along the way. There was that point in the later '60s when you brought stenographers into the caucus. Up to that point, there had just been the minutes, which were a general outline. Now you had the Reporters of Debate in there. Was that because the debate was becoming so furious?

KIMMITT: Yes, I think that was primarily my motivation. Plus the feeling in my heart that I could not do justice to this scene. Writing in long hand after you leave the meeting and go upstairs and try to recall, it just got beyond what I felt was adequate. I am no historian, but I had a sense of this situation was such that it should be reported better than I was able to report it. Maybe there was a little laziness there, too, in not having to write the damn things, but at least we got it done. Before that, as you say, there were just fragmentary notes of what went on. Senator so-and-so discussed his opposition to Vietnam, period. But that didn't capture the thing.

RITCHIE: Well, you mentioned that people were really getting angry, that people were changing positions, like Symington, that there was a lot of tension. Did that affect the relationships between the senators? Did it break up friendships?

KIMMITT: Yes, to a degree. I can't specifically give examples of it. But I think on the part of the old timers who had been through the World War II and Korean periods, there probably was a residual attitude of patriotism to support the flag, support the troops, support the President. When the others, I can't name them for sure, Symington, maybe [James] Abourezk, and others, Gene McCarthy and people like that, started pressing their position, it changed. I think there was a feeling on the part of the older and the more patriotic members that the others were becoming even more than less patriotic. I am certainly not going to use the word "traitor," but in this time of severe stress that it was unpatriotic of them to be raising these issues and blaming the

military.

Times have changed so much. I remember when Russell was chairman of the Armed Services Committee. If there would be hearing and a four-star general would appear, for example, there would be some public in the back, some members already seated and the generals would be at the other end of the table. Russell would invariably walk down to the end of the table and shake hands with him and say, in effect, how much he appreciated his coming over and doing his duty. Then he would go back, and then there would be a civilized hearing with questions being answered. As contrasted with later, and I won't name the members, but you can imagine who they were. They would come in, grab the gavel and coldly state: "Everybody will come to order. We have general so-and-so with us today. All right, general, we will take your statement." It was two different worlds. These men, regardless of what you think of the military per se, they don't get to be four-star generals like George Marshall and Eisenhower and [Omar] Bradley and all the rest of them without having character and ability. They didn't deserve to be treated like some of these members treated them, particularly when the members who are treating them that way are obviously not as experienced or knowledgeable as the witnesses. Members of Congress are totally political in their approach, it is a political maneuver, it is a political opportunity to berate a witness and attract media attention. I am probably overstating it, of course, but times and procedures have changed in that regard.

RITCHIE: One difference is that back in the 1960s about 70% of the Senate actually served in uniform. Now it has been far less than a majority. In the future it will be even fewer.

KIMMITT: Yes, and much younger. Many of them are so much younger. Same thing in the House. I don't know, but I think in the House of Representatives less than 30% percent have had any military service.

RITCHIE: For a brief time the House dropped the term Armed Services Committee and turned it into the National Security—they have since gone back to Armed Services—but it was suggested that the reason was because so few members had served in uniform.

KIMMITT: Well, have you had enough?

RITCHIE: Well, thank you. Can you come back next week?

KIMMITT: I'll come back some time. By coincidence, this weekend, on Friday I drove to Pittsburgh for a reunion, 57 years after I started commanding a battery in World War II. A division at that time was about 12,000 men. All of us now are certainly over 75 and most of us over 80. We had about 360 actual members and their wives, and of my little battery of 98 men and four officers, I still had sixteen men there. A lot from the unit have died. Every two years we get together and tell our usual lies. But it was a nice experience.

End of the Fourth Interview