

Floyd M. Riddick

Senate Parliamentarian, 1964-1974

Interview #2

The Daily Digest

(June 26, 1978; July 12, 1978)

Interviewed by Donald A. Ritchie

Ritchie: I noticed that you were editor of the *Congressional Daily* and then the *Legislative Daily*, and I wondered if each of these was a sort of an evolution toward the "Daily Digest"?

Riddick: That's correct. I began to realize that there was a need for some kind of a capsule of information that could be distributed which busy people could glance at and keep abreast of what was going on in Congress, if they were to follow legislation at all. I stayed with the Chamber five years as editor of the publications for the department of governmental affairs. This publication was distributed to every member of Congress for several years after it got good standing, and it was frequently quoted in the *Record* either by senators or representatives. Then they began to consider the 1946 Legislative Reorganization Act, and that's when I saw an opportunity. I thought the *Record* was so thick and

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unusable that we might be able to do something to make that accessible to the public by the use of a little digest in the back of the *Record*. So I interceded with George Galloway, who was the staff director of the Special Committee on the Legislative Reorganization, who was a good friend of mine, and I began to work with him, and lo and behold we were able to get into Public Law 601, the Legislative Reorganization Act, a provision to set up a digest in the back of the *Congressional Record*. As soon as it passed he interceded to get me to come up and talk with [Les Biffle](#), then the Secretary of the Senate, to set up the digest in the back of the *Record*. That was in '47, and when the Republicans won, Les Biffle went out of office in January. But before the election Mr. Biffle sent me over to talk with Senator [Carl Hayden](#).

Carl Hayden was a fellow who moved to the point in a hurry. He immediately called the Bureau of the Budget and said he was sending me down and he wanted

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them to work up a cost of running the digest and get all set because he wanted it put into effect in January. Well, then the political tides changed, and the Republicans took over, so Les Biffle turned me over to [Carl Loeffler](#), the new

Secretary of the Senate. And Carl Loeffler, not being interested in those details, turned me over to George H. E. Smith, who'd been brought down here from Yale. He was professor in the graduate school at Yale, and Senator [\[Robert\] Taft](#) had brought him down. George H. E. Smith was then the staff director of the policy committee for the Republican Party. So Carl Loeffler sent me over to pick up where I'd left off with Les Biffle, and George had me set to work to make up the formats and get ready to start publication in January the next year. It was as late as March 17, however, 1947, before we printed the first issue of the "Daily Digest."

Ritchie: And it's still in publication.

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Riddick: It's still going. A lot of people around here now will tell you that they didn't see how they ever did without it beforehand.

Ritchie: Let me backtrack just a little bit. I'm interested in this group, the Congressional Intelligence, Inc. Was there any one person who was the founder of this? Was it a large or small group?

Riddick: A man named Erhart, and Ed Cooper, who was around here many years -- he's down with the moving picture industry now; he went down as an assistant of Eric Johnston, who was tied up with the moving picture industry. I think Cooper's main interest now is closely related with TV programs. Mr. Cooper and Erhart started it; and the *Congressional Quarterly* sort of picked up what they'd started. They didn't have the money; and this man who was with the newspaper down in Florida, Nelson Poynter, had money and started the *Congressional Quarterly*. That's how it eventually replaced the

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Congressional Intelligence, which, as far as I know now, is now defunct.

Ritchie: Was the Congressional Intelligence the first of its kind? Had there been any other operations like it before?

Riddick: No, the funny thing is, if you go back in the '20's, David Lawrence put out a newspaper that was published daily, I forget the title of it, but that went defunct. That was a newspaper as opposed to the Congressional Intelligence publications. For a long time it was a very important newspaper. They went broke, and then David Lawrence started in the special reporting services until he established the *U.S. News and World Report*.

Ritchie: You said that for a while you almost thought about going with him. Did you have much contact with him and his organization?

Riddick: I was working with two or three other men who were particularly concerned with their daily services during World War II, the WPB and OPA orders and so on

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and so forth, but I knew Dave Lawrence and met with him on not many occasions, but a number of times, in little groups that we developed out in my neck of the woods called "Off the Record Club." Twelve or fifteen of us met once a month and Dave Lawrence came over several times; we'd have dinner and a program that would run from 6:30 until 10:00. At 10:00 o'clock we'd cut it off, but during that time we discussed some pending issue, and some particular speaker would make the pitch and then we'd hold general discussion, ask questions and get his point of view.

Ritchie: Were these mostly scholars, or were they reporters?

Riddick: We tried to pick somebody from nearly each walk of life. I would say half of them were lawyers, and I don't mean practicing law. A man named Kopp was with the Federal Security Agency. One was in the state legislature. One was a former candidate for governor of Virginia. They were public

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interested citizens. We didn't want anyone who didn't have an interest in discussing some current problem. We covered the waterfront: for international affairs, we'd get persons from the various embassies here in Washington; we'd get heads of the divisions of the government; we'd get public citizens to come discuss particular topics.

Ritchie: Now, at that same time you were also interested in a group that was involved with the coming of World War II.

Riddick: No, this was previous to that.

Ritchie: What was this group?

Riddick: This was a self-appointed group up at Columbia. They'd acquired a foundation to make a study. Allan Nevins, the historian, was interested in it, but the immediate group that stayed with it throughout included Charles A. Beard,

the historian, Lindsay Rogers, Schuyler Wallace, and Arthur Macmahon. I would do research down here during the week; I was at the same time holding a job with Congressional Intelligence

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which didn't pay very much (I took it primarily for learning), and this gave me an opportunity to get remunerated fairly well -- a right good honorarium. In addition to my job with Congressional Intelligence, which fitted right in with what I was doing, I would compile my data and have them all ready to take up with me on weekends to Columbia. We would start conferences Friday night and go through until Sunday afternoon -- discuss various possibilities of what could be done, how the government should be streamlined, to do away with agencies that would not be essential if World War II broke (but you don't liquidate many government agencies, regardless of what your interests and concerns are).

Ritchie: Did these people then assist the government during the initial war plans?

Riddick: Most of them in one capacity or another did. Lindsay Rogers had been very active with Roosevelt preceding the war. He was very close to the guy that was sent over to torpedo Hull's economic conference in

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England, Ray Moley. They were all close to Ray Moley. It was quite a group of people that I got to work with, and I don't know how I'd ever met them otherwise.

Ritchie: What type of person was Lindsay Rogers. His name is still associated closely with the Senate.

Riddick: He had interests in just about everything. He was very dynamic, made terrific speeches, and was as competent a man as I ever worked for. I would stay in his apartment overlooking the Hudson during the weekends in New York and we would go into his study, which was a very large room, and he would get ready to prepare a report or an article, and he knew the right place of every book he had, and as if he were teaching a class he'd keep talking, reach up and grab this book down and read a paragraph from that, and then we were supposed to reduce that into some readable information. He had a terrific mind and I enjoyed working with him very much.

Ritchie: His books have a particular ring to them -- of a very opinionated person.

Riddick: Oh, he had his own ideas, absolutely!

Ritchie: Particularly on the Senate, his notion about free speech and unlimited debate as the absolutely essential quality, which he made the great differentiation between the Senate and the House.

Riddick: Made it the institution it was. Professor Ernst Frankel, who has taught in this country, but has been very closely related with the University of Berlin in East Germany, held the same idea. I was invited as a guest of the German government while I was parliamentarian, and while I was there in Berlin they arranged for me to have a luncheon with this professor and two or three other professors from the University, and his statement to me during that luncheon was: "If you have any influence on the cloture rule, don't ever let it be changed. Be cause if we'd had freedom of debate in the Reichstag when Hitler came to power, he'd have never been able to take over."

Of course he was set in that particular vein of things. I assured him I had no influence on what the rules of the Senate were going to be, I just interpreted what we had.

Ritchie: I wondered if your association with Rogers helped to change your perspective from the House to the Senate, and your interest in Senate rules as opposed to House rules.

Riddick: No, I think it grew out of the "Digest". I handled the Senate side of the "Digest" completely, and the House and Senate couldn't agree on unifying and making the "Digest" a single, solitary document, for both houses -- make it a joint proposition. The best accord that we could get for the "Digest" was to have all of the employees from both sides in one office. It was set up accordingly, and two or three times the Senate passed laws to even publish it separate from the *Record*, to distribute, it for sale for \$3.00 a year, or some nominal fee, all over the country so that it would be available for people who

couldn't afford to purchase the *Record*. But the House would kill it each time. There was always a difference of opinion.

Ritchie: What was the reason for the House objections?

Riddick: I don't know. I could not accuse anybody of any motive or reason why the two Houses couldn't get together. They always have been independent bodies and unless there was some force at the top to pull them together it's hard to get them together. It's always been impossible to get joint hearings, they've tried it at different times and every time it breaks up to no avail.

So I stayed with the Senate side of the "Digest", and when the office of the assistant parliamentarian of the Senate was established, my predecessor, Mr. [Charles] Watkins (who came here is 1903, I believe it was, and who started working out at the desk about 1927, and who was the first official parliamentarian of the Senate; he was parliamentarian when I came up here to work with the "Digest",

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and a few months or maybe six months before I joined his staff as assistant parliamentarian, the Senate had created the office of assistant parliamentarian) invited me to that post, to become a member of his staff. And that's how I got interested in being Parliamentarian of the Senate. That's when I began to try to forget everything that I learned in the House. The funny part is, I've often said, I did all of my research in graduate school on the House procedure and I felt I knew it pretty well, because I had spent, I'm sure, five hundred hours with Lewis Deschler, talking in much detail about House procedure, and with Major Roy, who was the assistant to Deschler when I was doing my research. I spent many hours, many weekends, all day Saturday and sometimes Sunday, with them talking about procedure. But then I find myself never working a day for the House but starting my career in the Senate, and I then had to try to forget all I had learned in the House, for fear I'd get mixed up.

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Ritchie: Did you find the rules significantly different?

Riddick: Oh, gracious, there's as much difference in the rules of the Senate and House as there is between the House of Representatives and the House of Commons in England.

Ritchie: Just a different history, I guess.

Riddick: Completely. Large body, small body. But now, the Senate is nearer to House procedures since during the last two or three decades more and more members from the House get elected to the Senate. In the years gone by, more governors came to the Senate and fewer members from the House, or some outstanding industrialists, or some outstanding state citizens, who had never served in the House. But in the last two or three decades it's sort of a springboard from the House to the Senate. These people, many of them have been in the House for a long period of time, and obviously they bring their knowledge of House procedure to the Senate. When I first came

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to the Senate, a motion to reconsider and then table was used maybe once or twice in a session. Now it's used on practically every bill. So they're bringing in House procedure into the Senate. We haven't changed our basic procedure rules, but just the practice.

Ritchie: You talked about Lewis Deschler, the House Parliamentarian seems like much more of an instrument of the Speaker rather than an unbiased observer or assistant on procedure. Is that true?

Riddick: Well, he is closest, I'd say, to the Speaker, but he is an advisor to all of the presiding officers. They don't have the informality in the House that we do in the Senate. As you know, during debates in the Senate, with the long speeches permitted, it's not uncommon for all senators at one time or another to come to the desk and talk to the parliamentarian, or go down to the parliamentarian's office to talk over his problems. The parliamentarian of the Senate supposedly is closest to the direction of the Vice

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President, but in practice,, I would say, he works closer to the Majority and Minority leaders, and then with the members at large. Because, as you know, the Vice President doesn't show often. The Parliamentarian assists the Vice President when he shows. Vice President [\[Alben\] Barkley](#) was the last Vice President who stayed in the chair anywhere from fifty to ninety percent of the time. Now they only come in for crises, or when they expect a tie vote.

Ritchie: Also, we mentioned earlier your working with the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. I just wanted to clarify one thing. You edited something called "Governmental Affairs" at that time.

Riddick: No, the Chamber's activities are broken up into departments and the department that I was in was Governmental Affairs; I was editor of publications.

Ritchie: I see.

Riddick: Now they issued publications of different types -- all under Governmental Affairs; we issued an administrative bulletin, they

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called it "Administrative Number," and the *Legislative Daily*, and then there was a periodic publication that they first called "Special Numbers," which took a particular bill and briefed the bill as it was then pending in the House or the Senate as the case might be, and gave the arguments pro and con, and where the bill was being considered so that if the local Chambers of Commerce wanted to contact the committee, they could. This was done so that the Chambers of Commerce throughout the United States would have access to the best information available in Washington. That eventually developed into what they called the "Legislative Outlook." But I was the editor of all of the publications for several years in the Department of Governmental Affairs.

Ritchie: That was a pretty prolific outpouring, including your articles for the *American Political Science Review*.

Riddick: I've done a lot of writing, and compilation of information.

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Ritchie: How did you do the research? Did you continue going to the Congress to observe?

Riddick: Well, the Chamber had two men, one for the House and one for the Senate, who covered both sides of the Capitol completely -- the committees and all -- and each called in many times every afternoon to keep us abreast of the times so we could do our writing and be ready to "go to bed" by the time the Congress adjourned.

Ritchie: Did you ever do any personal research in the Congress while at the Chamber?

Riddick: No, I didn't have time then. My gosh, I had so many publications to get ready each day that I had to stay at the desk most all day. Once in a while I would come up with the head of the Governmental Affairs department, but I never did

any lobbying myself. Occasionally, he would get in conference with some senator with whom he wanted to talk about the position of the Chamber on particular legislation and he would insist that I join him and alert him or keep him abreast of the

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best questions to ask and the best strategies that he should take into consideration in talking with the said senator or with whomever he was talking.

Ritchie: So, by the time you came to the "Daily Digest" you had basically studied just about every aspect of both the Senate and the House.

Riddick: I had been pretty well immersed in the waters of Congress.

Ritchie: And you patterned the digest after the same operation you had been doing at the Chamber.

Riddick: It was a matter of perfecting it. In other words, basically, my assignment was to cover both houses and the committees of both houses. So it was a problem of how you were going to arrange this information to make it most effective, most presentable and readable, and the best format possible.

Ritchie: Did you have any trouble gathering information from the various parties?

Riddick: When I came up to edit the "Daily Digest"? Oh, it was very difficult. It took a lot

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of know-how to be able to elicit information. The committee clerks didn't want to be bothered. They'd have to keep notes; but my staff couldn't sit in all of the hearings. We only had one person covering the Senate Chamber, and a person covering the committees. And when you have twenty or twenty-five committees meeting you can't be at them all; you had to count on the clerk, or somebody designated by the clerk, to look out for you, to give you the information. At first they just didn't want to be bothered. It was very difficult, very difficult. Of course, now, with the last reorganization of committees we've got a proviso in the rule that eventually will go into effect with computers that will require all of the clerks to call into the computers; it will all be computerized. It will be a much simpler job. But it was hard to get started!

Ritchie: The Senate and the House are becoming more systematized, in fact you were forcing them to become more systematized.

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Riddick: That's correct.

Ritchie: I guess a lot of the old-timers resented having to give up some of their more lax ways of doing business.

Riddick: Very much so.

Ritchie: There seems to be a whole period of modernization in that World War II era, culminating in the Legislative Reorganization Act of 1946, making the two bodies become more careful and systematic about the way they functioned. The "Daily Digest" seems to fit very closely into all of that.

Riddick: That pattern, yes. Well, there's no question, everything is moving in that direction and you just can't stand still. If you do, you'll be working, in darkness with a lack of information.

Ritchie: Was the "Daily Digest" in any way connected with the Legislative Reorganization Act?

Riddick: Oh yes, as a proviso in the law itself. You'd be interested in knowing, when I first came up to establish this, the members of the Senate with whom I had to work to get it established, didn't even know the provision was in the law.

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I had to cite it to them and read them the paragraph before they were aware of the fact of what they had done. The "Digest" was authorized in the law; it was proposed by the committee that handled the Legislative Reorganization Act. I still think it was a great contribution, one of the greatest I've ever made.

Ritchie: That was in a large part George Galloway's operation, wasn't it?

Riddick: Well, he was the staff director. Congress had passed a concurrent resolution to set up a committee on two different occasions, I believe, before Congress finally got the thing moving the way it wanted.

Ritchie: And [La Follette](#) and [Monroney](#) were the two leading sponsors.

Riddick: That's right.

Ritchie: But Galloway seemed to have been lobbying for something like this for a number of years.

Riddick: That's correct. The whole Political Science Association had. As a matter of fact, even this group that I worked

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with at Columbia was concerned that something in this regard be done. So I was in on the know-how, and was even approached about the possibility of becoming staff director myself, but I couldn't financially afford to cut loose from my job with the U.S. Chamber. That was only going to be a short-time thing, and I didn't know what the outcome would be and I couldn't gamble.

Ritchie: Did you work with Galloway at all during the reorganization process?

Riddick: Oh yes, I imagine I had a thousand calls from him during that interim - to talk over details, to get acquainted. He had not worked as closely with the detail operation of Congress as I had.

Ritchie: Did the eventual reorganization come to his liking? I know there were some compromises.

Riddick: Oh yes, well, he got the best he could, like everyone else. Same thing that I went through with S. Res. 4 in the 95th Congress. There were several proposals that I suggested that they took in part,

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but didn't take all together. Some the Committee would buy. So you get the best you can, and feel lucky that you got that much.

Ritchie: Did this cause any trouble with the new 80th Congress coming in, having to be the first ones to deal with this massive reorganization?

Riddick: No, they moved over pretty smoothly. Of course, a number of committees were reduced considerably, and the reduced numbers had the overall jurisdiction that covered the whole waterfront, so that it was just a matter of instead of sending them to many committees, they'd send much to one committee. Then, too, the old-hands, like the parliamentarian and the legislative counsel, and all of the people who participate in making the machine run, were

able to steer it with out too much of a break. You hardly could tell the difference, as far as running into any roadblocks. Obviously, it took time for the new clerks to get trained on their new responsibilities,

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that is the clerks of the different standing committees. They held a tight rule for a number of years, without letting any special committees be created, but just keep the fifteen committees they had created. But it seems the floodgate broke again after a while.

Ritchie: I suppose there's always that tendency to maneuver around it.

Riddick: Get an exception to placate a certain group of people. The pressure gets terrific.

Ritchie: Well, we've taken you up to the time when you came to work with the Senate, with the "Daily Digest", and you continued then until 1951. Did the "Daily Digest" evolve at all during that period, or was it a matter of perfecting it?

Riddick: There haven't been many changes made. Very few. Having worked with these other publications and having covered Congress so long, I was able to anticipate about everything that we'd run up against. There were some type sizes changed, and a little of this and that but nothing fundamental.

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Ritchie: Did you deal through the Joint Committee on Printing?

Riddick: Oh yes, as a matter of fact the first office they gave us was on the House side right next to the Joint Committee on Printing. Because it was anticipated that we would be closely tied with the Joint Committee on Printing. But now that it's been established and there are no more problems with the Government Printing Office as to the size of type and breaking the old boiler plate verbage that the Government Printing Office uses, there's not much need for close relationship between the two.

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Ritchie: Is there anything further you wanted to add about the "Daily Digest"?

Riddick: I think it would be a good idea to mention how the "Digest" was created. The Public Law 601 of the 79th Congress carried a very brief proviso, which was section 221 of that act, stating that the Joint Committee on Printing "is

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authorized and directed to provide for printing in the daily record the legislative program for the day together with a list of congressional committees, meetings and hearings, and the place of meeting and subject matter, and to cause a brief resume of congressional activities for the previous day to be incorporated in the record together with index of its content." That was the prescription that was put in the law to set up the digest.

I at that time was working with the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, having been closely related with the activities of the committee on legislative reorganization, and as soon as the law had passed I was invited by George Galloway to come up to the Hill and talk with Leslie Biffle, or "Les" Biffle as they called him, Secretary of the Senate, about how it should be set up and what could be done before the new Congress convened, because they were going to try to put it into effect by January of the coming year. They

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wanted to get everything established and be ready to go when the new Congress came in. However, it was way late, March the 17th, I believe, of 1947 before they were really able to put it into effect. Notwithstanding that fact, I talked with the officials of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and told them that I talked with both George Galloway, who had been the staff director of the committee on legislative reorganization, and Leslie Biffle, the Secretary of the Senate, about coming up, and would it be possible for me to take a leave, or be excused each day to go up to the Hill to set it up. They gave me permission to go, along about October or November, and I worked out the format and all of the details which were approved before the new Congress came into session. Then instead of going back to the U.S. Chamber, in my association with these people, even though the political parties changed and the Republicans came in, they turned me over to the new Secretary of

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the Senate under the Republicans, Carl Loeffler, to assume the responsibility of setting up the Digest.

Ritchie: I suppose that the Chamber was disappointed that you didn't come back.

Riddick: Well, they offered me a raise, over what I was going to get up here, but I felt that once having cast my dye I should come on up here to the Hill as I was invited to do.

Ritchie: But I'm sure that a lot of agencies like the Chamber, and other organizations that were concerned with the daily work of the Congress, were very happy that the Congress was finally taking on the responsibility of providing that information.

Riddick: Yes, I think so. Professor Ernest Griffith, of the American University, who had hired me first at American University, in a speech down at the old Willard Hotel, after I'd come up and set up the "Digest," made a statement in introducing me to a meeting of administrators at which I was going to speak, that I was perhaps one man who had put more people out of a job in Washington

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than any other person he knew. Because all of the agencies had had to have larger staffs to keep their particular departments or agencies abreast of what was happening in Congress, and now with the new "Digest" that we had set up, we gave them all this information in a capsule, and one person could do what a number had been doing.

Ritchie: I'm sure that was true of senators' offices as well. I'm sure that they had a lot of trouble keeping up with just what the routine of Congress was going to be, before the "Daily Digest" was begun.

Riddick: I think that's true, but as I alluded to previously, a lot of the clerks and staff directors of committees didn't want it, because it threw an additional burden on them to keep us posted. So a lot of them were not interested, but I think it was a very short time after we got it started before we were getting regular congratulatory communications for having gotten the thing operating successfully.

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Ritchie: You wonder how they could have ever operated without it.

Riddick: I've wondered, and I've heard a lot of senators and representatives make that very statement, that they wondered how they got along until 1947 without some kind of a resume in the *Record*.

[end of interview #2]