

# William F. Hildenbrand

Secretary of the Senate, 1981-1985

Secretary to the Minority, 1974-1981

Administration Assistant to Senator Hugh Scott, 1969-1974

Assistant to Senator J. Caleb Boggs, 1961-1969

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## Interview #4: Vietnam and China

(Monday, April 15, 1985)

Interviewed by Donald A. Ritchie

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**Ritchie:** After we talked last week about your relations with the [Nixon](#) White House, and with Haldeman and Ehrlichman, I went back to reread some of the memoirs of the participants to see their points of view, and it sounded exactly like what you were saying. Ehrlichman's tone, in particular -- he had no use for either [Gerald Ford](#) or [Hugh Scott](#), and let it be known as such. I think he dismisses Scott as a machine politician.

**Hildenbrand:** Exactly. While Haldeman had the reputation initially, and everybody thought he was more rigid, more Teutonic, Ehrlichman, as it turned out, really was more adamant in his opposition to Congress as a branch of government than even Haldeman was. I think part of that comes out of the fact that Haldeman did mostly administrative, advising types of things, whereas Ehrlichman, as chief of the Domestic Council, got involved in the legislative thing, trying to make things happen, and ran into all sorts of trouble with the likes of Hugh Scott and Gerry Ford. But I'm sure that Hugh Scott would be very happy to have that kind of thing said about him, because there's no question he was a consummate politician. Despite everything else that he was he also was a consummate politician.

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**Ritchie:** Ehrlichman describes a scene in his book [*Witness to Power*], he says it's the only time he ever saw Nixon dress anyone down. A bill had passed the House and been defeated by the Senate. Nixon called in Ford and Scott and praised Ford for his leadership and then dressed Scott down. Ehrlichman said it was the only time he saw Nixon perform that way as president. Did you ever hear that story?

**Hildenbrand:** No. Scott was not the kind of a person that would have come back and made a big to-do about it. Although he was the type of a person who had very good connections with the media, and I think if they had wanted something like that known it would have gotten out. It never did, that I know of. It well could have happened. Scott was not their chosen person. If they had had their druthers they would rather have had someone else as leader. He never was very close to them in any way, shape or form.

**Ritchie:** I got the feeling from these readings that the only use they saw for the leadership in Congress was to carry out orders.

**Hildenbrand:** Oh, yes, they very much felt that way. That was part of the Nixon White House. And that was true in both the Senate as well as the House. They had very little use for the Congress. It was there because the Constitution required that they have that branch of government, but they did not want it. They wanted to just

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give the orders. Don't think; you just do whatever we tell you to do. Ford and certainly Scott were far cries from being yes-men. Both of them had had so much service in the Congress of the United States that there was no way that these upstarts were going to come in and tell them what to do and what not to do. But until Watergate, they persisted in trying to run the legislative branch of the government as well as the executive branch.

**Ritchie:** Evans and Novak have an account, in *Nixon in the White House* of the ABM fight. They pose the difference between Nixon's "Hill Staff" and his "Downtown Staff." Bryce Harlow versus Haldeman and Erhlichman. They said that the Downtown Staff were constantly making wrong decisions and going around the Hill Staff.

**Hildenbrand:** There was no love lost between the so-called Hill Staff and the Erhlichmans and the Haldemans, simply because -- and I've said publicly that the problem with both Erhlichman and Haldeman was that they probably flunked ninth grade civics. They didn't understand government and how it operates. When they took over it was almost as if it was de novo. They were going to start from scratch.

**Ritchie:** It seems so strange, because Nixon of all people ought to have known how it worked. Or do you think they were really a reflection of his views?

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**Hildenbrand:** I think so. You know, his term in the Congress was not that long. He was there, four years maybe?

**Ritchie:** Four in the House and two in the Senate.

**Hildenbrand:** He couldn't have been there much longer than that before he became vice president. He really didn't have the time to become inculcated with the Congress of the United States, or indoctrinated into the ways of the Congress of the United States. He was certainly not a traditionalist. I guess that's part of

the problem. They reflected his views, because those were his views, I think. I don't think he had much more use for Scott and Ford, even though he picked Ford as the vice president. My guess is, if the truth be known, and he may at some time say it, he probably chose Ford because it was simple to get him confirmed, without any big problem. Because there must have been somewhere in the United States someone who would have been more eminently qualified to be Vice President of the United States, and possible President of the United States, than Gerry Ford.

**Ritchie:** What was your opinion of Ford when he was Republican leader in the House? You had to work with him on a number of occasions.

**Hildenbrand:** Yes, he was a little more conservative, of course, than we were, coming from Grand Rapids and that part of the country. His views were much more conservative than were Hugh Scott's, but

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they got along quite well. And I got along with him, and we became pretty good friends during those years when we was leader, and then when he was vice president, until he became president. I enjoyed him. I think he did a better job as vice president than a lot of people really thought that he would do, and certainly did a much better job as president than an awful lot of people thought that he would do. He had the maturity and he had whatever it took to grow into the job. And he was such a different type of a personality than Nixon, particularly in his treatment with the Congress, which is again one of the reasons why it made it easy for him to quiet down this country after Watergate, because he had the respect of the [Tip O'Neills](#) of the world, and the [Carl Alberts](#) and [Mike Mansfields](#) and the Democrats. They helped a great deal in making his path that much easier to calm the fears of this country after Watergate. This country survives simply because the right people happen to be in given positions at the right time. Through no fault of anybody, they just happen. You could not have found a better person to be president in those traumatic days than a Gerry Ford. He was very down home, very quiet, not flamboyant, was exactly what the country needed.

**Ritchie:** But you would never have picked him as a president when you were working with him?

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**Hildenbrand:** No, anymore than I would have picked Hugh Scott, although he had a flair that Ford did not have. But I'm not so sure that from a substance standpoint that there would have been that much difference. Policywise, of course, Scott would have done things differently than Gerry Ford would, simply because philosophically they were different. I don't know that Hugh Scott, had he

been picked as vice president when Ford was picked would have been able to bring to the country the same calming effect that a Gerry Ford did. I don't know.

**Ritchie:** How closely does the Republican leadership in the House and the Senate work together?

**Hildenbrand:** It's all up, really, to the two leaders. We made a calculated decision when we became leader that we would open up the lines of communication between Ford and Scott. [Dirksen](#) and [Halleck](#) had the "Ev and Charlie Show." Then when Ford became leader why they stopped that -- I don't know whether they had an "Ev and Jerry Show."

**Ritchie:** For a little while.

**Hildenbrand:** Yes, but it wasn't the same. That sort of dwindled to nothing. Then when we became leader, Scott said we ought to meet once a week with the House leader. We set it up on a regular basis: we went to Ford's office one Monday and the next Monday he would come to our office, just to exchange things. How things were

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going, what was happening, and get some advance notice of things to look for. We thought it worked out exceptionally well. When Baker became leader, I recommended that he do the same thing with [\[Robert\] Michel](#). They did that for a while, and then both of them became so busy that they stopped the regular meetings and only met when they thought they had something that they could contribute to each other. Although they did talk a lot on the phone. When Baker became majority leader they even talked more, almost daily when we were in session.

**Ritchie:** When Scott and Ford met together, was there a sense of "us against them" with regard to the White House?

**Hildenbrand:** Yes, to some degree, after we really figured out that these people were serious about trying to do away with the Congress, we developed a siege mentality. It was an "us against them" kind of a thing. They didn't have that problem with Dirksen, for example, even though he was only there nine months of their term. They treated him differently than they treated certainly Scott, and my guess is that had Dirksen stayed that he would not have put up with what eventually began to transpire. I think Nixon would have quieted down the Haldemans and the Erhlichmans. Because Dirksen would have just gone to him and raised hell and that would have been the end of it. But Scott and Ford were different people.

**Ritchie:** Even Dirksen differed from Nixon. He led the opposition to John Knowles as the health chief, which in some respects was comparable to Scott's defection on Haynsworth.

**Hildenbrand:** Yes, although they never did much about Dirksen's opposition to Knowles.

**Ritchie:** Dirksen was just too established in the party, I guess.

**Hildenbrand:** I think that's right. And he was the darling of the conservatives. They weren't about to take him on. They needed him desperately.



*Left to Right: Kenneth Keating (R-NY), Hubert Humphrey (D-MN), Jacob Javits (R-NY), Everett Dirksen (R-IL), Thomas Kuchel (R-CA), Warren Magnuson (D-WA), and Philip Hart (D-MI)  
Senate Historical Office*

**Ritchie:** You indicated at one time that you thought that the White House probably played a role in 1971, when [Howard Baker](#) made his second run against Scott. Why did they think that Senator Baker would have been a more acceptable leader?

**Hildenbrand:** Well, he was the son-in-law of Dirksen. He had conservative credentials. Scott was not one of them. They were not about to make him one of them. I think they might have thought that Howard Baker was something that they could have molded to do whatever it is they wanted him to do. As they found out in the Watergate hearings, that would not have been the case, had they been able to get him to successfully defeat Hugh Scott. He probably was and is as independent as Hugh Scott ever was. They would not have had a great

choice. And if they had looked back further to the first days, as I pointed out, that he became a senator, the first thing he did was take on his father-in-law. So they should have known right then and there that this isn't somebody for them to mess with. But they didn't like Scott. They weren't comfortable with him, and they wanted somebody that they thought they could be comfortable with. Baker fitted that. Plus the fact that he was a new face.

**Ritchie:** Well, I wanted to ask a couple of questions about foreign policy at that time, and Vietnam was the foreign policy question of the period. Just about the time that Scott became the Republican leader, the moratorium took place. I wondered if you recall your reaction to the moratorium, and what its impact was on Capitol Hill?

**Hildenbrand:** Those were difficult days for everybody. The position that Hugh Scott had taken was that he was going with the president. The flag had been committed and we were going to do whatever it was. He supported the president. It was difficult for members. At one time a group of these moratorium people came in and laid down between the Ohio Clock and the entrance to the Chamber. It wasn't just ten or fifteen, it was maybe seventy-five or a hundred of them all laid prone on that marble floor, so that it was almost impossible to get from our office to the Chamber. You had to step over bodies in order to get there. Then they were all over the

place. They sat in in our own office, about six or eight of them I guess, sat in the little tiny reception room that's part of S-230. Finally, about 7:00 o'clock in the evening I was forced to call the police and have them evicted, because we were trying to close and there was no way that we could close while they were there. But they were orderly and they created no problems other than the inconvenience of having them in your office. There was no way in talking to them that I could convince them that their position was not a proper one, anymore than they could convince me that our position was not proper. So it was a stalemate.

It was difficult times for members, many who were not quite as strong at that particular time as Scott was, or were in the position that Scott was, were really torn between what was right and what wasn't right. I remember when we were selected to go to China, as the opening group that went into the People's Republic of China in 1972, two months after Nixon had been there, [Mansfield](#) and Scott were the only two members that went. We were on our way, and we got to Honolulu, and they had just bombed Haiphong Harbor. Congressman [John McCain](#)'s father, at that time Admiral McCain, came out to meet us at Hickham Field, and told us of the bombing. Mansfield was convinced that the Chinese

would withdraw their invitation, and almost turned us around and brought us back. But as it turned out they welcomed us with open arms and treated us exceptionally well. While we talked about Vietnam, they sort of understood our position as well.

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But it was a difficult time for everybody. It was unlike anything that this country was used to, waging a war which we weren't trying to win. For those people with military backgrounds, it was very difficult to understand how this could go on. Then throughout that whole period, [Wayne Morse](#) and [Ernest Gruening](#) and [George McGovern](#), from '64, '65, '66, kept up a daily, steady drumbeat on the floor of anti-Vietnam speeches. Morse loved to call it "McNamara's War," Bob McNamara was then Secretary of Defense, and he continually referred to it as "McNamara's War." In fact, one of the funny stories of the Senate took place when Morse was making one of his daily speeches, which he made at night. He never made them during the day. We have since changed the method of operation, because every night we had to keep everybody there while Wayne Morse made his speech on Vietnam.

[Danny Brewster](#), who was then the senator from Maryland, junior senator, I guess [\[Joseph\] Tydings](#) was senior senator, was in the chair. Morse was making his speech, and it got to be 7:00 o'clock, and Brewster had a very important meeting downtown, and there was nobody to relieve him. The Democrats, who had control of the chair, had failed to find somebody to take his place, and he had to go. He caught Morse between paragraphs, or sentences, or taking a drink of water, or something, but Morse had stopped talking, and Danny Brewster just banged the gavel and said "The Senate stands in recess till noon tomorrow," and walked out the door. Here was Wayne Morse,

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sputtering on the floor, trying to get the Senate back in session so he could finish his speech. Of course, having adjourned it, there was no way you could get it back.

When we met at noon the next day, why Mansfield cleared the galleries and they had a knock-down-drag-out on the floor, among themselves, about what had happened, and how it had happened, and senatorial courtesy, and all those other things. Then we changed over to the point that we created Special Orders in the beginning of the day. We just felt it was easier to come in at 8:00 o'clock in the morning to do two hours of Special Orders than it was to stay till 10:00 o'clock at night. So Mansfield and Scott changed the practice, and it's still in effect now. But that's why they did it.

**Ritchie:** That's a classic story.

**Hildenbrand:** Yes. But it was difficult times. I wondered how much that steady drumbeat of anti-Vietnam really led to the situation that we found ourselves in. I wonder whether the people of the United States would have reacted as they did if respected members of the Senate, such as the three that we've mentioned, and certainly some others, had not taken the position that they took and really continued day after day after day to call it a war without honor, and any number of things. Maybe somebody will determine at some point what impact that had on people. But it was unlike anything that we had ever been through. It was unlike Americans. Once you committed

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the flag, America always did whatever was necessary to do to go ahead and win a conflict, but this was not the case in this situation.

**Ritchie:** Scott supported Nixon right down the wire on foreign policy and Vietnam, but did he have any private anguish over this? Or was it largely because of his position as leader . . . .

**Hildenbrand:** Well, it was that, as well as the fact that he had also been steeped in military, he had been a Naval Commander, Navy Lieutenant, whatever his rank was, during the Second World War. He had that on which to base a decision relative to this. But also because he was leader. I guess you'd have to ask him, but during the days that I worked with him, I believe that he certainly had some mental anguish over the situation that we found ourselves in. But he was a good soldier, and it never came out. He was pulled by a lot of his advisors, his personal staff of his Pennsylvania office desperately wanted him to break with Nixon and go on his own and castigate the war. But he never did. He used to get extremely angry with them for continuing to try to push him into that kind of a situation, because he had made a decision: he was going to stay with the president, and he did.

**Ritchie:** Did the fact that certain members of the party took very strong opposite positions, like [Mark Hatfield](#), and [Charles Goodell](#), and [John Sherman Cooper](#), did that create any personal problems?

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**Hildenbrand:** No. No. No. We were sort of used to that. We were a fragmented party anyway, and there was always a group of senators who were on the other side of some issue that was a party issue. This was just another one of those issues that split the party. The [Javits](#), and the [Cases](#), and the [Brookes](#), and the



Sherman Coopers were always at loggerheads most of the time with the mainstream of the Republican party. This was just another case of that

**Ritchie:** On foreign policy and defense issues, did Scott's office work with people from the State Department and Defense Department?

**Hildenbrand:** Yes, although the Defense worked very, very closely with the Armed Services Committee. Whenever major legislation of a defense category came up, we had a room set aside where the people from the Defense Department would be holed up, to give advice, to be available for members who needed to talk to them about weapons systems or whatever it was. They dealt with the [John Towers](#) and the [Strom Thurmonds](#) and the [Barry Goldwaters](#) more so than the State Department. The State Department did not deal that much with the Foreign Relations Committee. They dealt a lot with the leadership.

**Ritchie:** Why was that?

**Hildenbrand:** The issues were just different. It's easy to look at a weapons system and make a decision whether you want to build it

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or not build it. Foreign policy issues were different. They were more difficult, and I think they felt that the leadership needed to be much more involved. While they dealt with the Foreign Relations Committee, they sort of dealt with them in conjunction with the leadership. Whereas, with the Armed Services Committee pretty much our mandate came from them, which was not the case in foreign policy. That was a case where the leadership in conjunction with the Foreign Relations Committee made decisions from a policy standpoint. And also the president is more directly involved, really with the foreign policy of the country. Even though he's Commander in Chief of the armies, nevertheless you think of him in terms of setting the foreign policy, and Defense sort of carries out that policy, whatever it happens to be.

**Ritchie:** I came across a very critical statement Scott made about the Foreign Relations Committee, about 1970, about the hearings they were holding on Vietnam.

**Hildenbrand:** That was [Fulbright](#)'s era, who was of course a dove, and certainly anti-Vietnam. That again was consistent with Scott's position as it related to Vietnam and as it related to the president, and our involvement in Vietnam. He was not necessarily always happy with the Foreign Relations Committee and the positions that it took. He would have been the kind of a person who would have supported the position that partisanship stops at the water's edge.

I don't think that he felt that they were being in the public interest, or the public good was being served by the kind of hearings that Bill Fulbright and the committee were undertaking. Mansfield was there, [Muskie](#) was there, there was a lot of anti-Vietnam sentiment on that committee.

**Ritchie:** Did he see it as a partisan issue?

**Hildenbrand:** Yes, we always looked at it -- even though we had guys of our own that were out there -- we always felt that it was a party issue. The Democrats were a lot more dovish than certainly we were, as regards to Vietnam. And I think he also felt that if there had been somebody else in the White House it might have been different. Because Johnson didn't have the problems, although he had some from some very vocal members, and to some degree he decided not to run because of Vietnam, but it gave the Democrats as much problem as Nixon's role in Vietnam gave us on the Republican side. It's very hard to be against your president, as they found out. Each party looked at it as a party issue, even though I'm not so sure that by that time it was. I think the country by that time was determining that it was a country issue, and it didn't make any difference what party was there. They just had to get out. You know, [Aiken](#)'s line that's been quoted over and over again: Tell them we won, and leave. Maybe we should have done that.

**Ritchie:** It was about that time, around '70 or '71, that [Robert Griffin](#) got on the Foreign Relations Committee and made a concerted effort to establish a minority staff. Up to that point the staff was supposedly serving both sides of the aisle. Was that an outgrowth of the Republican dissatisfaction with the committee?

**Hildenbrand:** No, I don't think so. I think what Bob was trying to do really was to establish minority representation on committees as a whole. While we had some in all instances, they were sort of token. I think that he was trying to do that, and in the back of his mind, as you pointed out, was the fact that he did not feel that the committee was being bipartisan in its feelings toward the Vietnam War, and therefore Republicans such as himself and others had no place to go to get help, to take the other positions, which was in support of the Vietnam War. So he went out and tried to get some minority staffing to do that.

**Ritchie:** That set in motion the whole movement to establish minority staffs across the board.

**Hildenbrand:** Yes.

**Ritchie:** How do you think that's worked out?

**Hildenbrand:** Well, it's better than it was. In some cases it worked out exceptionally well. In some others it didn't work out as well. A lot depended on the relationship between the chairman and

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the ranking member. But then when [Adlai Stevenson](#) and [Bill Brock](#) came along with the Stevenson-Brock things then they decided that in addition to the minority staffing they would also provide for a legislative assistant for each committee on which you served. So they added to that. I think, with that in place, the committees now have a tendency to become a little more professional. Rather than having it so split as it was in those days, there are splitting at the top, but the others are professional and they serve both Democrats and Republicans.

**Ritchie:** You mentioned the trip to China, which really was an important one for Mansfield and for Scott. By coincidence, in reading through your records of that trip, I realized that today is the thirteenth anniversary of the day you left on that trip.

**Hildenbrand:** April 15, 1972.

**Ritchie:** Could you tell me about the background about how that trip came about?

**Hildenbrand:** It came about, I think, because Nixon when he went over there indicated his desire to open up avenues. One of the easiest ways would be of course for another branch of government, the legislative branch, to also go to China and to meet with the People's Congress and representatives of the People's Congress. I think he also, in the back of his mind, realized that he himself needed help

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if he were going to open up the lines of communication between these two countries after twenty-five years of having no communication. The way to do that was to get the leaders of the House and Senate involved, and get them to China, and let them see these people and talk to these people and understand what these people were all about. Because, you must remember, for twenty-five years we didn't have any idea, these people could have had two heads and we'd have no idea who they were or what they were. We didn't know. They'd been cut off from us. It was with a lot of trepidation that we went to China, in terms of not knowing exactly where we were going or what we were getting ourselves into. We had no idea.

It was a very small group. It was Mansfield and Scott and the two wives, and eight staff. Mansfield took Frank Valeo, who was then the Secretary of the Senate, and a fellow who now works for [Chris Dodd](#), who was on the Foreign Relations Committee staff [Robert Dockery], and Salpee Sahagian, who was Mansfield's personal secretary. Scott took myself and Martin Hamburger, his administrative assistant in the Pennsylvania office. We took an interpreter, and a friend of Mansfield's who was the manager of the whole trip. That was pretty much the staff, and pretty much the size of the delegation.

We went to Hawaii and overnighed there, and then went into Guam and overnighed in Guam. Mansfield did that because he wanted to be

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completely rested when he first went into China. We got into Shanghai about 3:00 o'clock, the 18th I guess it would have been by that time. We were met in Shanghai by members of the People's Republic, and were transported then in an airplane, which stayed with us, a Chinese, People's Republic airplane. It stayed with us the entire time of our trip, the same crew, and the same people were with us the whole time that we were there. Our plane went someplace, and we never saw it again until Hong Kong.

**Ritchie:** So the basic purpose of the trip was just to get acquainted and to talk, rather than any agenda?

**Hildenbrand:** We had no agenda. We were totally at the mercy of the People's Republic. We had no idea what we were going to do. We had no idea where we were going to go. We had no idea who we were going to see. We just got off the airplane and they took over and we went wherever they told us to go. We went into the airport and had tea, which was standard. They have that all the time. And soft drinks, and hot towels -- in this case we had cold towels because it was the beginning of the warm season. Then the Revolutionary Committee member of Shanghai told us it was time to get on the plane and go to Beijing. So we went to Beijing, and were met in Beijing again by the Revolutionary Committee members. It was then, oh, 6:00 o'clock maybe, 6:15. We were transported in town into a compound, which had been the residency of the East German delegation, when they were

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there. They had moved out. It was a walled area, with a number of buildings. Mansfield and Scott were in one building where we had the dining facilities, and the rest of us were scattered in some of the other buildings.

As I pointed out in the memoirs that I wrote relative to the trip, we had our first meal in China alone, with no Chinese in attendance. They wanted it that way. They felt that we should be by ourselves the first night. So they fed us whatever it was they fed us, we had no idea what it was we were eating, but they gave us a meal. Then Scott decided that we ought to take a walk. We walked down to the gates, only to find that they were locked and that there were guards on duty. At that particular time, we really were very much concerned. We really didn't know what we had gotten ourselves into. We realized that we were in this foreign country that no one had been in twenty-five years, and that we were locked in a compound and had no way of knowing what to do, or anything else. We were just sort of alone.

**Ritchie:** There was no American embassy to call.

**Hildenbrand:** No, there was no one. I don't know that we were exactly frightened, but I think we were a little concerned about what this was all about. We went back to our respective places and went to bed. The Chinese have so many fine customs. They wake you up at 6:00 o'clock. In this particular instance, the Chinese people are

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all awakened at 6:00 o'clock anyway, because they have martial music that's played in the streets on those big speakers. So everybody gets up anyway. But they come and wake you up. They have an orange drink, and hot tea, and hot coffee when you get up. When you leave, you leave your dirty clothes on the bed, and when you come back at night your laundry has been done and it's laid back on the bed for you.

We went to breakfast, and then they tell you: this morning we're going to do this. They only do it in blocks of time, they don't go the whole day. They came to us and said that the deputy foreign minister, Chiao Kuan-hua, was going to meet with us that morning. Frank and Bob Dockery, Hugh Scott, Mansfield and myself were the ones who met with Chiao Kuan-hua. The rest of the delegation went to a hospital and some arts and crafts stores and some things like that. We met with them, and then we came back at noontime and had lunch, and then went to another arts and crafts factory or visited -- let me see, that would have been Wednesday -- we might have done the Summer Palace or something like that. Then Thursday we went back and had meetings again. By that time we'd met for five hours, I guess.

That late afternoon they came to us and said that the Premier wishes to meet with you after the state dinner. So that was the first time we knew that we were going to get a chance to meet with

Chou En-lai. We all went to the Great Hall. We were ushered into this corridor and down the corridor came this very imposing figure of Chou En-lai. Not imposing in terms of stature, because he wasn't a very big person, but certainly by reputation he was imposing. Everybody had their picture taken, and a group photograph, and then we went into dinner. First we went -- they always meet ahead of time before dinner and have conversation with everybody, and during that conversation he said that he wished to meet with the same group that had been meeting with the deputy foreign minister.

After the dinner, the rest of the people went back and we stayed until about a quarter of ten. I guess we were there for an hour and a half almost. Then he said that he understood that we were going the next day to the Great Wall and that we needed to get home and get some sleep because it was an hour's drive or so to the Great Wall. However, he said, you have met for five hours with the deputy foreign minister and he said "I do not want you to meet less with me than with him, so we will meet again." We had no more idea when that was going to be or not. So we went to the Great Wall and the Summer Palace. That night we went to the opera. They only had two in those days. One was the one that Nixon saw, and we went to one called "The White Haired Girl." Then Saturday we went and did something else, and Saturday afternoon we were informed that we were to stand by, that the Premier may wish to see us again. About 6:00 o'clock, I guess, they came to us and said to us that we were to get in the

cars. You could always tell when you were going to go someplace, because the cars would suddenly show up. We got in the cars and went to the Great Hall, and we met for another two and a half hours, until about 8:30 or so on Saturday night. Then we did some more sightseeing on Sunday, and I think Monday we left Beijing. We were there for five days.

Then we visited four more cities in China. We were there sixteen days, and wound up in Canton. We took the train from Canton to the border and then walked across the border through that gate that had been created. That, I think, was probably one of the most moving things that I had done, I don't know about some of the others. Having been in that country, my first time in a Communist country, and in a country that for twenty-five years we had not had any relations with, and then to be able to walk across that bridge and into Hong Kong, and to be met by the American ambassador and all the other Americans was quite a touching time for us. Then we stayed in Hong Kong for about two days and got adjusted to being back in free society again, and then came home.

**Ritchie:** Were you surprised at the reception, the way they addressed issues? Was there anything about the trip that was unanticipated?

**Hildenbrand:** We didn't know what to anticipate, so it's hard to say we didn't think it would be like this, because we didn't know

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what it was going to be like. We had no idea what to expect. We had nothing on which we could compare or relate it to. You know, people now who talk to the Russians say they've softened their position or they've harden their position. We didn't have any of that on which to base anything. We were the first ones, and we didn't know what to expect.

**Ritchie:** For twenty-five years it had been the "yellow peril" and the "Red Chinese menace." The Chinese were conceived of as the world villains.

**Hildenbrand:** Yes, and another reason I think Nixon selected these two people to go is that both of them were Chinese experts. Mansfield had been there during the Second World War, as had Valeo. They had served in China during the Second World War. Scott was a student of Chinese art. It's interesting that when we went to the Great Hall the first time, and met with Chou En-lai, when we sat down just before dinner, one of the first things that he said to Scott was: "Did you bring me a copy of your book?" Because he had written a book called *The Golden Age of Chinese Art*, which was the Tang Dynasty as far as he was concerned. They knew that he had written that book, and the first thing Chou En-lai asked was: "Did you bring me a copy of your book?" As it turned out, Scott had not. It had never dawned on him that they would even know that he had written the book. But when we got into Hong Kong, he went to a bookstore,

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and God, there on the shelf was the book, *The Golden Age of Chinese Art*, which he bought and had immediately sent back to China to Chou En-lai.

Their grasp of America was so complete, compared to our total lack of knowledge of China. They knew so much about us, and about Mansfield and about Scott, from a personal standpoint. They knew that Mansfield had served in China, and they knew that Scott had written this book. They didn't understand our system, but they knew about it. They knew how it worked, but they didn't quite understand how it worked. We had the same people with us the whole time, we had a cadre of Chinese who were our hosts from the Foreign Policy Institute. They stayed with us for the whole sixteen days, until we got to Canton. It was interesting, there were a lot of tears that were shed when we boarded that train in Canton, particularly the women who had had lovely Chinese girls as their

interpreters and as their guides. There was a lot of exchanging of gifts and a lot of crying among the ladies, who had gotten very deep feelings in that brief period of time for each other.

**Ritchie:** I was interested that the Chinese had deliberately invited both the Republican and the Democratic leader at the same time, knowing it was an election year. That showed a certain amount of political finesse on their part.

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**Hildenbrand:** Oh, yes. They knew much more about our methods of politics than we knew about theirs.

**Ritchie:** And there was a note from Hugh Scott in your report that Americans ought to be trained before they go to China on how to behave, and what the customs are.

**Hildenbrand:** In those days, here again, we were total neophytes. We had not been there in twenty-five years. We had no idea how to act. We were awfully, awfully cautious. We didn't know what to say. We knew little things about how to say "Hello, how are you?" and "Thank you" and "Good-bye," and "Till we meet again."

**Ritchie:** And "Enough, enough!"

**Hildenbrand:** Well, I didn't know about that until I had been there sixteen days. I should have known it when I first got there. It would have been much more of help to me than it was sixteen days later. We really didn't know what to expect. We had some briefings from the people who had been on the trip with Nixon, about taking toilet paper and not drinking the water, and about "Gombai," which is a down-the-hatch saying like we have in the United States. The Chinese love to catch you with a drink that they call Mai-Tai, which is 130 proof alcohol. It's served at every meal except breakfast. They love to catch you with a glass in your hand, because then they'll say "Gombai," and then it's impolite if you don't drink it

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all down and turn your glass up. So we were very, very careful. And also, you cannot take a drink alone. You can't just reach over and pick up your glass and take it. You must toast someone at the table. You must always propose a toast. You can't just sip a drink, you're not permitted to do that. Those are little things which we had to learn which were not easy.



Of course, we were eating food that we had no idea what it was, and we were afraid to ask. I spent sixteen days there and never saw a dog the whole time I was there, or a cat. I've been there five times since, and I've never seen one yet. So we probably had a pretty good idea what some of the things we were eating were. But there was never any sickness. Oh, Salpee felt bad one time, and Mrs. Scott I think felt bad one time, but by and large no one got sick the entire time of the trip. I became, and some of the others, terribly sick on the trip home. I think a lot of it was that we flew direct in from Hong Kong without stopping, and the other part of it was that we had suddenly just totally relaxed. We had been under such pressure while we had been in China that our systems just relaxed and with it came all sorts of problems.

But it was an experience that you'll never live through again. Nothing will ever be like it. And I was fortunate in that having been there, I was there before I ever went to Russia. In '75 when I made my first trip to Russia it was so obvious for me to see the

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difference in the societies. Even though they are both Communist societies, the difference in those two societies is almost as much as our society and their society is different.

**Ritchie:** In what ways could you see the differences?

**Hildenbrand:** Well, the people, fundamentally. The Chinese are a happy people. Their lot in life, which is less than what the Russians have, they were happy with it. Maybe they didn't know any better and that's fine, but regardless they were happy, smiling. Children were laughing and playing. They really enjoy life. The Russians on the other hand are very dour, like a Russian winter. Their faces reflect the hard times of that kind of thing. They don't speak. They hardly talk to you. They won't talk to you on the street. They're just not very friendly. It's a vast difference in those two societies.

**Ritchie:** What impact do you think that the trip had on Mansfield and Scott?

**Hildenbrand:** I think that they were greatly taken by the Chinese. I think they thought that what a tragedy it is that this society has been cut off from the rest of the world for this period of time. They evidenced concern over what do we do with them now that we've become friendly with them? How far do we go? What do we do about our friends on Taiwan, who have been loyal friends for so

long? But they both believed that it was certainly in the best interest of the United States that we had opened the dialogue that Nixon did, and that it certainly should continue. Two months after we went, [Hale Boggs](#) and [Gerry Ford](#) went, representing the House. Then the visits became more and more frequent. The White House took a number, Tom Korologos took a number of members over.

Part of the problem with the Chinese was that they were simply not geared up to have wholesale people descend on them like locusts. They weren't used to tourists. The only tourists that ever showed up were the people who came from the Eastern bloc countries, and they showed up in relatively small numbers. They had no other doors open to anybody on the outside world. They had no hotels of any consequence. They had no place to put people. Now Beijing has four new modern hotels. A lot of them are joint venture hotels with the Sheraton Corporation. I. M. Pei has just designed one that is just being completed, the Great Wall. So they're getting more and more used to having tourists, and there are now periodic trips. You read in the travel magazines where people in San Francisco are getting a trip up that's going to China for eight days or ten days or whatever it is.

They have a lot of guest houses. The Chinese are big for guest houses. The times that we've been there we've stayed mostly in hotels, except on the [Howard Baker](#) trip. Because of who he was,

majority leader, they put him in a guest house. And in that compound we saw buses of American tourists who were visiting in China.

**Ritchie:** Since you've made five or six trips altogether, how much has China changed?

**Hildenbrand:** It's like day and night, from now and the way it was then. That was a very structured society that was controlled strictly by Mao and by Cho En-lai. As I pointed out in the documents that I wrote, I believed at the time that they were going to run into some difficulty within their own society, because in discussing China with the people that were there as our guides and our hosts, they always kept referring back to how bad things were prior to the Revolution, which would have been the late '40s, when they threw Chiang Kai-shek out.

Speaking of Chiang Kai-shek, and I'll deviate for just a moment, we went to Chang-sha, which was a place where he had a summer home, and they had salt baths. That was where the Communists caught up with Chiang Kai-shek in 1936 and ran him out of the house and up into the hills. He escaped, but they

preserved the house, and the bullet holes are there, and his false teeth, which were in a glass, are still in the glass. Or they were then, I don't know whether they still are now.

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Anyway, because they had built the society on remembering when, I believed that when they reached a certain point where the age of the people at thirty did not remember when, they were then going to have a problem, because then they could no longer say "Look how good you have it, considering how you have had it." And the guy would say, "I don't remember how bad I had it." That's eventually what happened. After Chou died and Mao died, they no longer could present to the people the business of "look how good it is now compared to what it was." People would say, "it's bad now and we better do something about it." That's when they began to change.

They became Westernized. In the days when we first went in '72, everybody wore the same clothes. You had a choice of blue or gray, but you wore the same clothes. Women, children, everybody wore Mao suits. There was no other dress. When the counter-revolution came in, now you go over and they wear mini-skirts and halter-tops and are completely Western. In the days of Mao and Chou En-lai you were not permitted to show any affection in public. Kissing, holding hands were taboo, you were not permitted. Now they're just like Americans, they sit in the park and neck. It's been a drastic change in their society, and it will continue, I think, to change. They have now recently inaugurated private enterprise, such as you'll have private enterprise in a Communist country, but they've permitted someone to have a business of their own and do things on their own.

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When we were there, there were two automobiles, both made in the China: the Shanghai and the Red Flag. Red Flag was a large, black touring sedan, and the Shanghai was a small car, somewhat like an MG. Now they have Hondas and Toyotas and all sorts of imports from all over the world. So the whole society is changing. They're getting more imports. Before they did nothing but export, now they're getting imports into the country. Of course, their balance of trade is still way out of whack, and they're getting much more out than they're getting in. But as delegations go over and talk to them, they create -- there are so many companies that now have offices in Shanghai or Beijing. They come in from Hong Kong on a daily basis.

They've just opened up the China Sea for oil exploration, and our own companies were the major bidders. Huan Su, who is going to be the ambassador at the end of this month -- he had been here as deputy chief of mission when they first opened relations -- but he went back in the Foreign Affairs Department turned out to be

the determining person as to who would get the contracts. He told me at a dinner over there one time before they awarded them, there were forty-eight companies bidding on off-shore leases, and I think forty-five of the forty-eight were American companies. And an American company got it. But they're really opening up their country. It may create more problems for them when they begin to get toasters and see what people do. It'll be quite a cultural shock.

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**Ritchie:** I thought it was very telling that when Mansfield and Scott were arranging for other senators to go to China, the first they wanted to be invited were the chairman and ranking member of the Commerce Committee.

**Hildenbrand:** Yes, that was really to open up their markets. They had so much to offer us that we could see, and they were very proud of the things that they do. They did so much by hand. We sat and watched a man carve an elephant from a piece of ivory. It was almost primitive. He held the block of ivory by a strap, which came from the table around the piece of ivory down under his chair leg, and he held it by sitting on that chair. That's how he held that piece of ivory as he worked on it with his own hands. They did not have things very mechanical, but they're getting more and more mechanical now. But their work was just exquisite in its detail. It was obvious, what Mansfield was saying was: they've got a market here, once you open it up. So he was looking for that trading.

**Ritchie:** It must have been an incredible trip for Hugh Scott, who was a connoisseur of Chinese art.

**Hildenbrand:** One of the things that was good about having Scott was that we went to a lot of places to buy things. Friendship store was the only place you could go in those days, that was all they had were Friendship Stores. But they had a lot of antique jade. Of course, he knew jade backwards and forwards, so if you saw something

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you liked, he immediately could tell you whether you were buying yourself a \$15,000 piece of jade for \$400, or whether you were buying a piece of \$10 jade for \$400. He knew exactly what the jade was all about, and we managed to bring nice pieces of jade back, because he was there. He couldn't wait to go shopping so that he could see all of these things that they had manufactured.

**Ritchie:** You've traveled extensively with members of the Senate over the years, and there is a sort of stereotype of congressional traveling as junketing, but I get the sense that most people who go on them see them as worthwhile trips. What's your sense about the purpose and results of overseas traveling?

**Hildenbrand:** I think they got a bad name early on, and I think that there was back twenty years ago a lot of travel that should not have been, and a lot of "junketing." But I think that the Panama Canal treaty would not have been adopted by the Congress had members not been permitted to visit in Panama and talk to Torrijos and talk to the Americans down there, and understand that issue. I do not think that the relationships between the People's Republic of China and this country would be as solid as they are now, had it not been possible for members of Congress to visit, and members of the executive branch. I think that's true in any country.

We went to Australia in 1976. We had been the first delegation in ten years to have visited Australia -- and this is a keystone of our

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defense in that part of the world, and yet nobody had ever been down there in ten years. That's sad, in a way, that we would permit ourselves to be pushed into a corner where we would not visit foreign lands because we'd get bad stories in the papers of junkets and whatever it is. The Indians have an old saying that you never know a person until you've walked a thousand miles in his shoes. That's the way this is. You don't know what these people are like until you've had a chance to visit with them in their country. I could not say enough about foreign travel in terms of members going on these things. Oh, sure, there may be some junkets still, but fundamentally, basically they're good for members of Congress to go to these places and visit. The moneys that are spent come back more than double in the value to this country that those trips have, both from their standpoint as well as from ours.

**Ritchie:** You've been along on the International Parliamentary Union trips and on other trips as well, is there any type of traveling that you find works better than others?

**Hildenbrand:** Well, I never did the IPU trips.

**Ritchie:** Oh, you didn't?

**Hildenbrand:** That was of my own choosing, because I don't think that that's a worthwhile organization. I've never thought that it is. It's made up of all of the countries of the world, none of whom

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have a government that's anywhere close to ours. So what we ever expect to gain in going to those things for two weeks has always been beyond me. So I never went. I have no problems with them wanting to continue them, but I don't see

any value that can be served by those particular trips. Now the Canadians and the Mexicans are the only two that we have bilateral visits with, we don't have any other countries. All of the countries of the world, almost, have asked us to enter into those kinds of things. We have resisted it. Mansfield resisted it, Scott, Baker. What the new leadership will do, I don't have any idea. But if you do as many as they want you to do -- Japan has always wanted us to do one, as has Germany -- you'll have one with every country, and the members will be someplace everyday. That's very difficult to do.

Small groups, six members at the most, are about all that I would want to take, and about all that I did take. The Russian trip in '75, we had thirteen members, that's the biggest trip that I ever went on. It's difficult to handle that many. You're looking at a plane load of forty-eight or forty-nine people; logistically it's hard to move that many people around in a foreign country. So the smaller the group is, the more you get out of those kind of trips. I would not take -- unless I was forced to -- more than twenty-one or twenty-two people total in a group, because then it becomes very difficult to manage.

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But I'm a firm believer in travel. I think we have learned so much that it's stood us in such good stead by being able to visit Anwar Sadat, for example. A fantastic person, but you don't know that until you've been able to sit across the table or in a meeting room with him and listen to him, and realize that his views are not necessarily that much different than your own. He's got a different problem, he's in a different part of the world, but he's as rational as you are, and he wants the same things that you do -- and that's peace in the world. Anybody who doesn't go on a trip loses something. We've had some members who have said, "No, I don't want to go," who have gone, and have been amazed at what they have learned, and then can't wait to go again.

**Ritchie:** Just recently a delegation of senators pulled out of going to the Soviet Union because the Soviets wouldn't allow one of the Senate staff members to go.

**Hildenbrand:** John Ritch.

**Ritchie:** Did you ever have any troubles like that?

**Hildenbrand:** No.

**Ritchie:** That's a really rare occasion.

**Hildenbrand:** Yes, and Russia would be the only country by and large that would do something like that. We've had a few experiences

within countries. Mrs. Boren ran into some trouble in Saudi Arabia, in Jedda, because they have some strange customs relative to women, and women's dress. Bare legs are a no-no, and she tried to go into a store in Jedda with bare legs, and the shopkeeper would not allow her. There was nothing that the embassy people could do. It was their custom. But by and large you do not have difficulty in foreign lands. We've never had incidents such as John not being permitted to go on a delegation. It's a little unusual for any country to impose that kind of a restriction, but the Russians are a kind of a people that would do something like that. Most of the others would ignore it and not worry about it.

**Ritchie:** Well, at least now he knows they've been reading his reports.

**Hildenbrand:** That's right. That's exactly right. He'll be glad of that!

**Ritchie:** Do you generally have briefings for the members and their families about what kinds of cultural experiences to expect?

**Hildenbrand:** Yes, we prepare -- or I did prepare, I should say, when I was with the Secretary's office, my Office of Interparliamentary Services prepares papers, which we get from the State Department, and which we also prepare on our own, of temperatures and

weather conditions and any customs that there might be that they need to know. Things to wear and not to wear. Things to say and not to say. Places to shop and places to visit, things like that. The State Department's very good about that. They have a booklet for every country in the world which tells you pretty much about the country and its history, and who its government is, and things like that. Then we also have briefings for the members with the State Department before they go, and then we also have a briefing of the delegation itself, with the wives and everybody, so they know who's all going, and get familiar. Then the staff of my Interparliamentary Services and myself and the military that's going to be the guides on the trip, we get together and plan the agenda, and plan the places the timetables and the menus and things like that.

**Ritchie:** Did you ever worry that something could go wrong?

**Hildenbrand:** No. I've never had one go wrong. I guess maybe if I had, I'd worry. But I never had one go wrong. Most people are very, very good about things. The people on the Interparliamentary Services staff are experienced, and the military escorts are experienced. My predecessor trained me very well on trips that I took with him -- Stan Kimmitt. Most of the problems that we have

really are with our own embassy people, because each delegation that comes in is a different delegation, and they act differently. Sometimes we came in and wanted certain things done a certain way and they were just

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amazed that that's what we wanted, when somebody else had come in and wanted all sorts of things. We never permitted automobiles to be rented, for example, for members. Other delegations, every member had his own car. We many years ago said that's not the way we're going to do things, we're not going to be criticized anymore than we already are by helping them. So we always drove in minibuses and things like that. The embassy usually would provide a car for the chairman, but we didn't have one for every member, because it cost money to rent those cars and we just didn't do it.

**Ritchie:** Gave you a little more control over the circumstances if you had them all in the same bus.

**Hildenbrand:** Oh, yes, exactly. And, if you needed to tell them tomorrow morning's schedule had changed, it was any easy place to have them under one roof, to be able to tell them that.

**Ritchie:** Well, I'm amazed that we've spent an hour and a half already, and I haven't asked about half the questions that I planned.

**Hildenbrand:** Well, I'll come back.

**Ritchie:** I think this would be a good stop. By the way, I looked through your files on the Chinese trip and I really enjoyed reading them.

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**Hildenbrand:** Oh, that's right, I sent them over, didn't I? I forgot that I had sent them over. I guess I sent over the day-by-day thing, and then I sent a report over that we did. I remember I had them and I didn't know what to do with them, so Dick Baker said he'd like to have them. He said they sort of partly belonged to the Senate, and I guess they really do in a way.

**Ritchie:** You had a comment in there that if it had crawled, walked, or flown that you had eaten it while you were in China.

**Hildenbrand:** I think that's probably right. I'm almost convinced that that's an accurate statement. We ate bird's nest soup -- we ate about everything there was to eat.



End of Interview #4

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