

## JOINING CARL HAYDEN'S STAFF

### Interview #1

Friday, April 27, 1990

**ELSON:** I remember the first assignment I was given personally by Carl Hayden, to do some legislative research for him. It involved the Grand Canyon National Park. He established the Grand Canyon National Park, I mean he passed the legislation back in the late teens. Then there was apparently an amendment to it in 1927, and he couldn't remember, or figure out, how it got in there, the way it got in there and how it was all done. I don't know what the significance was, why he wanted to know, but he wanted to know. So, I went to work on it, figuring I could research this in nothing flat.

To Carl Hayden, if you couldn't put it in a one-page memorandum, you didn't understand the problem. He liked everything in short, one-page memorandums. Well, I started looking and I couldn't find the answer to how this provision got in there. Finally I asked the National Park Service, then I asked the Legislative Reference Service. I had everyone looking. I hate to think about how many thousands of man-hours went into this. I spent two hours practically every day on it. The great thing about Carl Hayden was that he had a fabulous memory, of who he told to do what. He'd come by every so often and ask: "How're you comin' on the project?" I'd say, "Senator, this is a little more difficult than I thought." Finally, after weeks, maybe a couple of months, I got it down to two pages and a quarter page on the third page. I gave it to his then AA at the time, Paul Eaton, and said, "Paul, this is the best I can do." And I told him all that I had done. He looked at it and said, "Well, it's your project. Take it in to the senator."

He was in there, and I took in the memo. He was sitting behind his desk smoking that corn cob pipe. I gave it to him, and I was sort of standing at attention. He said, "Relax." He looked at it, and went through it, read one page, turned to the next page. Finally he finished it and said, "[Expletive]! Sit down young man, I'll tell you how it happened." And all we had done with all this research was to remind him of a conversation that took place between him, the then majority leader, and the minority

leader, in the Republican cloakroom in 1927. He said, "We just had a verbal agreement and we put it in." That's the way it was done.

I learned a great lesson from that experience, so when I took over as his acting AA, and then as his AA, I don't know how many thousands of hours of other people doing research we saved. When we had a real problem, I would ask a staff member to do some hasty research, do dates and all this, and give me a little one-page. And then I would sneak it in every Monday morning and say, "Senator, would you take a look at this." And this would remind him of something, and he'd save all these man-hours of research because so many of these things you would never find. I learned from that incident that you could search all the records and all the papers you wanted for a thousand years and in many instances you would never find out unless someone had done an oral history, or unless someone had been present, you would never know how it happened because so much happened in the cloakroom or discussions between a member took place on the telephone, or something like that. Over the next ten years I must have saved us and the taxpayer a lot of money just by asking him, because he had this fabulous memory for times and dates and details, who did what, and how agreements were made. And as Darrell [St. Claire] pointed out in his oral history, so many of the committee records, the minutes of those, are sort of sparse and there's not much there. Anyhow, I learned a good lesson from that, and followed it.

To this day I still regret not having gotten more of his life on tape. But in those days all they had were those wire tape recorders, and they were bulky, you couldn't carry them around, and he didn't like equipment like that, and balked at it. Then when I wanted to do it, the guy that I put in charge of it turned out to be an alcoholic and I had to fire him. And, in those days they weren't doing many oral histories, or didn't see the value of it like they do today, which I think is probably richer than any written history.

**RITCHIE:** Well, the written history has gotten poorer, unfortunately, so the oral history has become a necessity. What always impresses me is all the chance and circumstance that's involved in history, when you assume that everything follows logically and then you find out that it was just an accident.

**ELSON:** Yes, just a little quirk. [laughs] So I have always told everyone you can never know much really about Carl Hayden unless you've talked with some of the people who were around him, members and others. Mainly because, though his files are quite interesting, and historically very good files, but so much of his strength rested in his great abilities in conference, in laying the groundwork for things, and doing the hard work that went into making the system work. He had a great sense of time, where he'd rather take the half-step rather than the giant step and fall on his face. He was always laying slowing the groundwork, thinking he'd be around forever, I guess.

**RITCHIE:** He almost was.

**ELSON:** Yeah! [laughs]

**RITCHIE:** Of course, Hayden presents a tremendous problem for historians, because if you read the *Congressional Record* it's almost as if he wasn't there.

**ELSON:** Well, no, that's not quite true. Now, something that you might be interested in, and I saw that Darrell gave you some historic stuff, I had the Senate Library, or the Library of Congress, go through everything regarding Carl Hayden, and single-space we came up with a legal-size thing about that thick of references, either committee reports, speeches, legislative actions, things that he had done. It's a lot larger than you would think. I know I have it, I think it's out in storage, but I never turned it over to the library because I only had the one copy, when we turned over his papers, because I wanted to go through that, thinking I would do something with it. I think I still have it out there, which I intend to give to whoever wants it, because it would save a lot of time in doing the research in looking in the *Congressional Record* and committee reports and all that. But it was a lot bigger than I ever realized, because he always had this reputation of not saying very much.

**RITCHIE:** I just read the other day a story about a member of the House who rarely spoke for more than once a session. In August he stood up and made a speech, at the end of which he said, "I want to take this occasion to wish my colleagues a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year."

Well, I'd like to start these interviews with a focus on you, and what you did before you came to the Senate, as well as what you did while you were with the Senate. I noted that you were the youngest of nine children.

**ELSON:** Yeah.

**RITCHIE:** That sounds like quite a family. Can you tell me about the Elson family.

**ELSON:** Well, I was the last of nine. As you know, my oldest brother, Edward, was chaplain of the Senate for twelve years. He came to the Senate just when I left in '69. One of my first lobbying jobs was to get the Catholics to vote for him in the Democratic caucus, Kennedy and some of the others. But we were all born in Pennsylvania. My oldest brother and my oldest sister were born in Monongahela, and the other seven of us were all born in a little railroad town called Elrama, about eight miles down the river. All born at home, no one out of a hospital. I was the second heaviest baby, I was told that. My brother Edward weighed twelve pounds, and I weighed eleven and three-quarters. All the boys, there were six boys and three girls, and all the boys weighed over ten-and-a-half pounds, and all the girls over eight. So we were big, and our mother was very slight. She was a beautiful woman, but she wasn't very big, and I guess every time she delivered one of these monsters, it about killed her.

I grew up, my early years, there in Elrama. But my oldest brother, my oldest sister, a lot of them had already left. In fact, my brother was an ordained minister before I was born. There was about twenty-five years' difference in our ages, so that's the spread. Same mother, though. I have vivid memories, because I was a Depression baby—I was born in 1930—and the first thing I can remember was that my mother was always dying. She was very frail and had tuberculosis. Then I remember all those depression days, because my father always had a good job, he was a railroader. In fact, back before the turn of the century he was a fireman at seventeen and an engineer at eighteen and was one of the founding members of the International Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen and Engineers, and was an engineer on those big steam locomotives that were going through those Pennsylvania mountains and all that way back before the turn of the century. He always had a job during the Depression, so we

were feeding lots of family members, other than our immediate family. I had an uncle stay with us, and his kid, and it seemed like there was always a lot of people at the table. But I remember those years rather vividly.

I went to the first grade in this little town of Elrama where they had a four-room school. It went through the eighth grade, and there were two classes to each room. My second year, my mother didn't like the teacher at this little country school, so I went with my brothers and sisters to Clairton. My two sisters and one brother, we would ride the train down to Clairton every morning, and come home in the evening, walk this mile hill up to school. So I went to the second grade in Clairton.

Then my mother, whom I said had tuberculosis, in those days they recommended you go to a dry climate, so they selected Tucson in Arizona for my mother. So we went out on the train. This would be—I think this was probably '38 rather than '37, because I remember '37. Yeah, it would be '38. 1937 I can still remember the steel mill strikes, and the Pinkerton gangs and all that down at the big steel works in Clairton and Wilson, Pennsylvania, the fires and real violence, union organizing and all that. So we moved to Tucson and went out with one brother and two of my sisters and spent all that year in Tucson, which was a town in those days around thirty thousand, maybe thirty-three, but it was small. Getting used to the desert after coming out of the green valleys of Pennsylvania was something. We spent that first year there, and my mother got well. But I went all through the third grade there in Tucson. My sisters went to high school, and my other brother, he stayed with us for awhile and then went back to Pennsylvania. Then we returned to Pennsylvania the following year, and I went to the fourth and fifth grade again in this little school in Elrama. It was just a little country school, but a good school, I thought.

Then my mother got sick again, except this time, because the heat in Arizona in those days—the summers were really brutal, and all you had were those old-fashioned air-coolers with the excelsior and the water dripping down and a little fan, and unless you had a good adobe house that had thick walls, the fans worked but it was still damn hot and it took a toll on my mother. So this time we went to what was then a little town in Southern California called Santa Ana. I went to the sixth grade there. This would be 1941 we went out there. My father, who had worked for the Pennsylvania Railroad for over fifty years was going to retire. The war—we were in Santa Ana when

World War II and Pearl Harbor can—I remember that Sunday morning pretty well. My father had stayed in Pennsylvania—there was only my sister, and myself, and my mother in California at the time, another sister came out to go to nurse's training school. In March of '42 my father was going to retire and come out and join us in California. Well, instead one day—in those days they sent death messages by wire, and my mother got a phone call that there was a Western Union message for her. We thought it was giving a time of arrival for my father, but instead it was a wire from my brother indicating that our father had been killed in an automobile accident on his way to work. A young kid and his date, half crooked, on the way to a dance in Pittsburgh had hit my father, going about ninety miles an hour as he was crossing this road.

All of a sudden that changed the plans, so we all went back for the funeral. Then my sister and I, who were in school, we returned to California and my mother stayed to close up things, take care of my father's affairs. While she was back there, and we were back in California, my mother fell down the steps in her house and punctured her lung, broke seven ribs, and got pneumonia. As a result, the TB came back again. So, when she came back to California, after she got well enough to travel, we then moved back to Arizona. We moved that summer back to Tucson. From then on, I went to a series of different schools in Tucson. My mother got well again, but she ended up eventually dying there, alone with me—it seems like everyone dies alone with me, and rest goes on, but anyhow that's how I ended up getting to Arizona permanently.

I went through the seventh grade at Mansfield Junior High School. The eighth and ninth at Roskrige Junior High and then I went to Tucson High, and then I went to the University of Arizona. And how I got to the University of Arizona—this was right after WW II—I was in the high school class of '48. We didn't have any money. You either went on active duty and tried to get the GI Bill, spend your two years in and hope you didn't get shot or something, or a lot of kids who could afford it went on to the University of Arizona. It was a state school and it wasn't that expensive, but still if you didn't have anything it was. But I had gotten an academic scholarship, so I got to go to the university. And of course in those days you were going with all these veterans who had come back from World War II, so the competition was keen, because they were serious. Most of them were really serious about getting an education, and hell, I didn't know what I wanted to do.

But I went on to the University of Arizona—and I always had to work—even though I joined a fraternity, but I managed the fraternity house and got my room and board for free. My mother died my freshman year. I was really the only one in the family that called Arizona home, and stayed there. My sister, a surgical nurse, went off to California, but subsequently returned for the last year before my mother died. My other sister had gotten married, and everyone else was gone. So I stayed on and was house manager of this fraternity house for two years and got my room and board that way. Then I always had odd jobs, like a candy concession, a laundry concession, a flower concession. I always had money, because I'd take from one to pay the other. The cash flow was there until the end of the year, and then I had to come up with the balance.

I stayed on at the university, although I could never make up my mind what I wanted to major in. When I started out I thought I wanted to be a geologist. I liked the outdoors and all of that. Then I always liked politics, mainly because I grew up in a family that was politically active. I had an uncle who was a great fan of [Franklin] Roosevelt's, and the only people that mattered were Democrats. He used to tell me all these stories. As a little boy I remember handing out things at the polling places in 1936 and '40, when Roosevelt ran against [Wendell] Willkie. I was doing that as a young kid, and the whole family was always involved in some sort of social work. My oldest sister was head of home service for the Red Cross in Toledo, Ohio. My brother was a minister. The other brothers, one brother was in the F.B.I., he had been in the military, and the other brother was in personnel, and the other two sisters were nurses. So we were all sort of oriented toward service-type careers. Finally, I decided I was going to stat in political science, so I changed my major to that, and I was minoring in history and philosophy. Then I decided I wanted to be a shrink, so I switched to psychology, and eventually got my degree in psychology, though I was still taking all these political science courses. I recently noted, however, from an alumni listing that I received my degree in philosophy. Which is all right with me.

I always had plenty of hours, but sometimes I didn't have the right hours, so when 1952 came I went back to finish up eight hours to get my [bachelor's] degree. And I was taking ten towards graduate credit. So I went back that fall to finish up and do some graduate work. Well, when the mid-terms came that fall, right before Thanksgiving, I was working also about a hundred hours a week. I was working at this

deaf and blind school, and also seven days a week from midnight to eight o'clock in the morning at the county hospital on the switchboard, and keeping track of records of patients, and that sort of thing. It was a big old switchboard with the old stick-in wires. Then I was riding my bicycle all these places, from the university to the deaf and blind school and back out to the county hospital, which was on the other side of town. And one night I passed out at the hospital. I started taking amphetamines in those days, because my sister was back in town and she was a nurse, so I got all these pills, mainly to stay awake, so I could do all these things. I don't know whether it was a combination of that and no sleep—I was only averaging maybe six or eight hours of sleep a week—but I passed out. I remember waking up and here's this switchboard all lit up anyhow!

I decided that morning, right then and there, that I was quitting. I either had to give up work or school, and I had my ROTC commission as a second lieutenant, because all you had to do was complete the program, you didn't need your degree. I was in the last class that had a contract that way. I said: Well, I'll either go on active duty, or keep my job, because I needed the money. So I decided to give up school, because I knew I was killing myself and I couldn't keep this pace up. Well, when I went around to sign-on, because I had done marvelously on my mid-terms everywhere, they couldn't understand why I wanted to leave. I said, "Just sign the papers." But when I went in to see Neil Houghton, who was head of the political science department at the University of Arizona, he said, "You can't do this!" I said, "Yeah, I can. Just sign them." He said, "You can't do that—besides I just recommended you for a position on Carl Hayden's staff back in Washington, D.C. Do you want to be interviewed?" I said, "Yeah, I'd like to be interviewed."

In those days, Carl Hayden used to go back to this man and to the University of Arizona principally to get staff members. Those that wanted to continue their education, and someone who was interested in politics, to come back. He would start them out as low-man-on-the-totem-pole in his office and train them the way he wanted to. This was just before Thanksgiving, and the guy arrived in town—his AA at the time was Paul Eaton, and he was out there interviewing. I actually had to go and borrow money to buy a pair of slacks and a sport coat, and a shirt and a tie, to have the interview, because all I wore were Levis and tee shirts and boots. I went to the interview, and I don't know how many Paul interviewed at that time, but maybe ten



or twelve, practically all of them from the University of Arizona, and he said he'd let me know. So, just before Thanksgiving I got a wire from Carl Hayden offering me a job and asking: Can you be in Washington by December 1? It went on to say respond by telegram, or something like that. So I sent back a one-word answer: Yes.

Then it was a race to get back here. A friend of mine who was the president of the fraternity at the time I was house manager of the fraternity I belonged to, he had been married, and I went to him and they loaned me the money not only to get back here but to go buy some clothes. It took me a while to pay them back, years later, but I went and bought a couple of suits, and even bought a hat, not a Western hat but I was told what you should wear back East. I then flew back to Washington, and I wired my oldest brother, who was in 1946 had become pastor of the National Presbyterian Church here in Washington. I just sent him a short wire saying I was arriving in Washington to go to work for Senator Carl Hayden and would he meet me, didn't tell him anything else. Well, we hadn't seen each other in years, so when I got off the airplane I had a suit and tie on, and a hat, and deliberately—because he didn't recognize me—I walked right by him, and then finally came up behind him and said, "Here I am!" That was December 1, 1952.

The Korean War was going on and actually I thought I had a deferment, because I had met with the ROTC people and the military advisor out there. I thought I had a deferment because I was going to enroll in school back here in January. So I started on the senator's payroll at \$5200 a year, as his assistant secretary. There were seven people in the office: two other men, his AA, his secretary, and me, and four secretaries. We had a total staff of seven. The way he started you out in his office was you'd open all the mail, match it up with the files, take it in and distribute it, and at the end of the day you'd get the files back, you would be responsible for filing them. The reason he did that is so you would get to not only read everything but see how things worked and the way it was all set up. Then I would get assignments like veterans cases, or social security cases, individual constituent problems at first. And then after awhile, as I mentioned, like that Grand Canyon question, you'd get other things assigned to you.

Part of the additional duty at that time was driving Mrs. Hayden, taking her for rides. She had a stroke, I think in '48 or '50, but she loved to ride through the park and go to the see the zoo and the botanical gardens. So after lunch you'd take the

limousine and take her for a drive. It was interesting, and she was a lovely, lovely lady. She smoked all the time. She had a cigarette holder, and because of the stroke she drooled a lot, and so her face was getting a little distorted. But she had a great sense of humor. I know others before me had done the same thing. I mean, they drove her. Bob Koch was the secretary, and he had done that before. It became something of a chore, and it sort of interfered with getting work done, but it was fun, and I got to know her quite well, and she liked me.

Anyhow, back to this early period. When [Dwight] Eisenhower had beaten [Adlai] Stevenson, I remember it was the first inaugural I had gone to. Carl Hayden was on the inaugural committee, so we had all sorts of tickets. I remember giving them out to all these people, because I handled part of that. I don't know, we must have had hundreds, and I was really impressed that the senator had that much clout when a Republican was coming in. It was my first inaugural and I stayed out all night partying and going to parties. It was very exciting. I walked in the next morning, because I always the first one in because I wanted to get to opening the mail early. I was in there probably at seven or eight in the morning. First thing I opened was addressed to me, and it was orders calling me to active duty. I said: This can't be! Then I thought: Man, is that fast work, the Republicans are in one day and I get called up! Exaggerating my importance a little bit. So that started a whole long process of appealing. I didn't want to go on active duty. I thought I had an exemption since I had enrolled at American University and was taking courses out there. I finally lost my appeal. I went over to the Pentagon and appeared before a board, and finally I just decided I'd better go rather than fight this.

I got new orders issued and I got called to active duty. I left here in June of 1953. So I was only here for about seven months, working for the Senate at that time. I flew out of there and went west to see a lady that I had dated in college. While out there we decided to elope and get married, and we did. And on my way to report to active duty in New York, at Mitchell air force base, to a troop carrier outfit—this was the Air Force—we got married in Yuma, Arizona. In those days you didn't have to wait very long, in fact, we went into one of these drive-in chapels and as part of the ceremony they'd wash your car for free. So that's the way that marriage started. It ended up in a divorce a few years later because—well, lots of reasons.

Anyhow, those first seven months back here I remember so vividly because when I was in school I was sort of an activist politically. I remember being back here in Washington in the later '40s and early '50s, remember Owen Latimore and Judith Copland, and I went to her trial, and I'd read all of Latimore's stuff and I thought he was pretty damn good myself. I don't know what I would have called myself, I was certainly a Democrat, probably with socialistic tendencies.

**RITCHIE:** You went to these while you were on Hayden's staff?

**ELSON:** No, no. Let's see, when was the Copland trial? I think I was back here on something else. That was 1950, wasn't it? But it also started the era of McCarthyism, and I remember coming back here after always mouthing off in college and around groups and talking politics all the time, and then getting back here I was really shocked and it left a deep mark on me those first seven months here at the height of McCarthyism, because people wouldn't talk. There was this silence. There was only one building here then and that was the old Senate Office Building, and you'd walk down the corridors, and where I was used to being friendly and talking and arguing, man, there was a silence that was frightening. This guy had really scared people. There was something going on, you could feel the undercurrent, at least I sensed it and I hadn't been here that long. I got to know Roy Cohn and Dave Schine over at the Carroll Arms, in fact, we used to drink together over there when they first got here. Roy Cohn scared the holy hell out of me, because first of all he was extremely bright, just brighter than hell, but sort of an amoral person, ruthless, you could just sense that about him. Schine, on the other hand, seemed like a decent sort of person. Later remind me sometime about seeing Roy Cohn in New York at a fund raiser just a few years ago with [George] Steinbrunner at Yankee Stadium, at a fund raiser for Peter Rodino. Roy Cohn showed up at that and we had a conversation about those early years at the Carroll Arms.

It was a frightening time to me and just scared the hell out of me. When I left I didn't want to come back, because I said, if this is what's it all about. . . . But there were a number of reasons why I didn't want to come back. I didn't think I was ready for Washington. It wasn't until just before I left to report to active duty, I knew I wasn't any brilliant person but I knew I was reasonably bright, but I really got intimidated because when I started getting assignments and doing more substantive

work I'd call down to like an assistant secretary at the Department of the Interior. I may have talked to him before and then I'm calling back to get more information and these guys would have total recall. They'd remember everything. I thought, Jesus Christ, they have lots of bright people back here, I'm not ready for this! Then, later on, after this had happened a few times, I was talking to, of all people, Darrell St. Claire. Darrell had sort of taken a liking to me, I think, and was giving me some fatherly advice, and I said, "Darrell, I don't think I'm ready for this. I'm just not up to it. I thought I was pretty bright, and I'm obviously not." I told him why I felt this way. He said, "Roy, don't you understand what goes on? What happens when anyone from the Hill calls down there, automatically the guy pushes a little switch on his desk and the secretary is listening in and taking down in shorthand everything you say, and writing a memorandum for the file. So when you call back the next time, you notice that they don't get on the line right away, they'll either call you back or there's a waiting period while they read the memorandum, so they knew exactly what you said. Now, if you did that with every call you make, you'd get nothing done." That taught me a good lesson even before I left.

After that, anytime I'd have conversations like that with someone, and particularly if I'd gotten to know them—this was after I had come back—I'd say, "Say, Jim, was that you I saw going down Virginia Avenue heading into Rock Creek Park? Who was that good-looking blond you were with? Was that your wife or was that someone else?" And then I say, "Well, did you get into her pants," or something like that, and all of a sudden there would be a line surge. [laughs] I could just see them typing that up and saying, "Ha, ha, joke," yeah, well, it doesn't come out that way when you put it on hard copy. It doesn't sound quite the same. From that, I also learned that I just anticipated that there wasn't a conversation in this town of any import that someone wasn't listening to, and that opinion had not changed in all these years. In fact, more so than ever. I can relate lots of stories about that. But as I said, it changed my whole attitude and I felt a lot better after Darrell alerted me to the real world at that time, and I never forgot it. It was one of the better pieces of advice that I got from Darrell.

Anyhow, I fought the Korean War very valiantly over in Germany and France. While at the U of A I went to advance ROTC and was offered a regular commission, which I didn't accept, but I never went to summer camp. You were supposed to go summer camp, but when Korea broke out in 1950 they canceled all those summer

programs. So when I reported for active duty the only military training that I had was what you got at the university in ROTC, meeting once a week and doing drills. I didn't go through Lackland, I didn't go through any processing, I went right into this tactical unit, which turned out to be a troop carrier unit. They were flying 119s. I went in as the adjutant. Well, I didn't know morning reports or any of that stuff. It was a real shocker, and I ended up with a "Queeg" for a commander. First, I went into the hospital for thirty days with mononucleosis and slept—of course, I'd just gotten married, so that really helped a lot.

Then we got ordered overseas. We moved down to Donaldson air force base from Mitchell to get prepared for overseas. By December of that year we were on our way overseas. This was the first airlift where a unit was flown with all its equipment, spare engines and all—we had fifty-seven aircraft—and you took all your personnel records and all your men. It was the first airlift over the Atlantic, and one of our squadrons, the squadron I was with, went into Wiesbaden. The other went down to Munich, and the other one went into a place called Toul Rossiere, which was in eastern France near Nancy. Our group headquarters went there, and that's where we all eventually ended up later the following year. We flew these fifty-seven airplanes, and 119s, as you know, were two-engine aircraft. That's, as far as I'm concerned, a four-engine ocean. Anyhow, we finally got all the airplanes over there safely.

I spent practically my whole military duty in Par—I started to say Paris, I spent a lot of time there—but in Germany and France. At the end of my tour, I was in correspondence with the senator's office and the senator. I did not want to come back to Washington. In fact, I had enrolled in the Sorbonne, the London School of Economics, and [laughs] the American School of Photography in Mexico City. I had gotten an interest in photography, and I thought, gee that would be fun, and I like Mexico. But I had to return to the United States to get separated. Mainly because I knew I was going to go through a divorce, because my wife didn't want to come to Europe. It got to be a big mess. Though we're still great friends, I guess we were in heat and probably shouldn't have gotten married in the first place. But we were young, and in love, and impetuous. So I knew I had to come back.

In the meantime, I had corresponded with the senator and he wrote me a letter—or Paul or whoever wrote it, but the senator supposedly—and said, "Before you make up

your mind what you're going to do, come through Washington and let's talk about it." So when I came back, and got off the boat in New York, I came down and met my wife, and we worked out that I would file for the divorce when I went out to Arizona. But on the way to Arizona I came through Washington and I saw the senator and his AA. The senator said, "What are you going to do?" I said, "Well, I want to go back to school." He said, "Why don't you come back and stay here, come back on the staff, and you can go to school. If you don't want to stay, the only commitment I want is for you to stay through the '56 campaign." And here it is May or June of '55. "Then if you want to leave, or whatever you can do it after the campaign."

I said, "Let me go get separated and I'll call you from there." He said, "You really don't have anything better to do, why don't you come back." So I took a month off, after I got separated from the service, and drove around the west, and San Francisco, and saw people, and finally said, "Yeah, I'd like to come back." So I came back to the same position I had occupied before, though he had brought in another man, the first man I think he had hired from Arizona State University, a guy by the name of Frank Baniceovich. So we had four males on the staff. But I came back in my old position, so I was really the number three person in the office.

We were getting ready for the '56 campaign, so all the other people went to Arizona during the campaign and I ran this office, the Washington office, and then fed all the stuff from here out there for his reelection campaign. I went through the '56 campaign running this office while Paul and Bob went to Arizona with the senator. After the '56 campaign, I had enrolled and was taking some graduate courses at the time. I had also met this lady who was teaching air force dependent children at the last place I was stationed in France. She was from North Carolina and she had taught previously air force dependent children in Japan. So we were dating all that fall, because she had come and was teaching here in the Washington area. Well, after the campaign was over, early in '57, Bob Koch, the senator's then secretary was finishing his doctorate. He decided he wanted to go back to Arizona and become a stock broker. I was trying to decide what to do, and I was asked if I'd take Bob's job and become the senator's number two person.

Whoever was the secretary had the best of all jobs, because Paul Eaton was a workaholic and he liked to do most of the heavy stuff for the senator. Then there was

the person in my position and the one Frank was in, they had to do a lot of the legwork, research, and other stuff. So the guy who was the secretary would work on special projects, like Bob Koch worked on the Bricker Amendment, he became the specialist. That was his field, international affairs, he had his Master's in it. It was an ideal place, and I was told, "You could stay here, you could go to school and finish up." And I was then thinking of going on to law school, so this was going to work beautifully, and I was also thinking of marrying this lady. So Bob Koch left that year and I became the senator's secretary.

In those days there were only two [staff] titles listed in the *Congressional Directory*, the AA [Administrative Assistant] and the secretary. "Secretary" meant something different to each office. Some were really secretaries, personal secretaries, and the others like in Carl Hayden's office, that was the number two man in the office. And they were all men in Carl Hayden's office. So I became his secretary, but as it turned out, Paul started giving me—whether it was because he liked my work, or the senator liked it, or whatever—I didn't find I had all this free time, although I started to go to law school, and I did get married that year to a lovely lady. I'm divorced from her now, but she was a wonderful lady and the mother of my two children. I think that fall of '57 I started law school at night, down at American University, when it was downtown at G and 20th.

Paul started giving me a lot of heavy stuff, reclamation projects, military stuff, so we were working pretty well together. We shared the same office, but I was really doing substantive stuff, and busier than hell. In '57, of course, is when I took over as an additional duty the patronage books for the Senate Democratic Patronage Committee, which consisted of Carl Hayden and I don't know to this day who the other members of the committee were. I got it from Darrell St. Claire, who wanted to move over to the Foreign Relations Committee, and he couldn't move unless he got someone to take care of the patronage books, as he had handled them for years. So Darrell sweet-talked me into taking over the patronage books and patronage, which turned out to be a whole separate item.

It really didn't take that much time, but I would meet every Saturday with Joe Duke, who was sergeant at arms, or Skeeter [Felton] Johnson, who was then the secretary of the Senate, but mainly with Joe because there was more patronage under

him than there was under Skeeter. We deliberately, when vacancies came up over there [in the office of the Secretary of the Senate] because you needed to have that continuity on the floor, and in those office you needed some trained people and professionals, so we pretty much over the years got everything out from under political appointments. But each Democratic member, when we divided up the patronage between the Republicans and the Democrats, there was a formula depending on how big the majority was, but Carl Hayden would always assign every member so many slots. They would normally have an elevator operator, police private, a mail carrier, or a doorman, or something like that, and a page. The senior members would get a page, I think there were only sixteen or nineteen pages at the time. Of course, they were all male. But we always had enough room in the patronage area to take care of emergencies, if a senator had a particular problem, and if a senator didn't fill his we had lots of room to do temporary things. But most of them fell under Joe Duke, the policemen, the mail carriers, and the elevator operators—well, those were pretty separate—but there was a lot of patronage.

I had that additional duty up until Carl Hayden left. He was always chairman—from 1933 until January 1969 he was chairman of the Democratic senatorial patronage committee, until I turned over the books to Mike Mansfield in the fall of '68. I was the clerk from '57 until the senator retired and I left here in January '69.

Back to '57, though, the McCarthy period had come to a head and then things were a little more relaxed. It was all during the Eisenhower administration. In '58, I think, Paul Eaton, the AA at the time, had a cerebral hemorrhage, he had an aneurysm, and nearly died. I'm still just twenty-seven years old, and all of a sudden I'm thrust into acting AA at that age. I think at that time I was probably the youngest AA in the history of the Senate. When I finally took over full time I was still under thirty, when Paul finally moved over to the Appropriations Committee. But at that time I effectively became Carl Hayden's AA. Well, that was pretty heady stuff!

I remember that I knew that I wasn't ready for all this, because everything was going on. Besides the work, and all the excitement of the times, the Cold War, and everything that was going on, taking it over, and then the politics of Arizona. Though I had known a lot about it, but a lot of these people were names without faces, sort of bloody statistics. You knew the names but had never met the people, and trying to find



out who were the real friends of the senator, and who counted most, and all that. So I really worked my tail off, even though I was still going to law school at night. I was averaging about three, four hours sleep a night, and was back taking amphetamines and that sort of stuff, just because of the load, but it was an exciting time.

I think the senator, for a long time—not a long time, but for awhile there—he was testing me a lot. He had a way of doing it. For instance, how he kept track—I'm sort of meandering here—but he had a way of keeping track of what was going on in the office, because he lived in the Methodist Building [across the street from the Capitol and Senate Office Building], he was in the office seven days a week, and in those days I first lived out on Porter Street, near the zoo. Then after I got married after about a year I moved up here on Capitol Hill. So I was coming in the office six days a week, and you'd come in on Saturday and think you'd only be there until noon. Well, you'd end up being there most of the day, because he was there most of the day. He'd just walk over.

What he'd do on the weekends, he'd come in and of course they delivered mail every day. So he would pick out of the mail certain letters coming from certain agencies at random, pick out some mail coming from Arizona. And he was always picking up the junk mail—he liked to go through newsletters and junk like that—and he was always getting the Arizona papers. He always read the two Phoenix papers every day, the *Christian Science Monitor*, the *Wall Street Journal*, and of course the Washington papers. He'd take those home. So first thing Monday morning, when he came in, he'd want to see those files that he had selected and see how you were handling them. You'd have a little session, say the letter was a new one from home, he'd want to know what you were going to do with it. Or if it was in response to something we had sent, then he'd want to see the file. Sometimes it would be on a project, and he'd pull it out. So you never knew what he was going to ask you on Monday morning. It was almost like taking an exam!

Of course, in those days our mail wasn't that heavy. It started getting heavy in '56 and '57 for some reason, I have an opinion on it, but I'm not sure it's accurate, but anyhow, he had a rule that we had to have a response or an acknowledgment out of that office within twenty-four hours to anyone from Arizona. Had to. And be working on the case, either sent an inquiry to the agency or something like that. And of course,

all the secretaries that we had were all superb secretaries. They all had short hand and great typing skills. He would not let a letter go out of there, nor would the AA, that had even a type-over. I mean any blemish on it at all. Now, that meant an original and a copy, with a little stamp on it saying: return this with your response—when we sent it to a federal agency or any governmental agency—and there would be two file copies, a yellow and blue. One went into our "tickler" system and one was on the file. These had to be clean of any errors. So they were great, the secretaries. We didn't have such things as xeroxes or copy machines or anything like that. But you had to get this response out. This is how he kept track, though, of what was going on in his office. He'd do it over in the Appropriations Committee too.

He was a wise old man. Hell, when I came back with him, he was seventy-five years old. In fact, I'm digressing again, when I was interviewed in '52, I remember talking to Dr. Houghton, and I said, "Jesus, is the guy really alive?" Because, you know, he was a legend then, and no one saw him, he never put out press releases. But we knew we had this great member of the United States Senate back here, and he was a legend even then. I knew more than most people about him. Arizonans really didn't know that much about him, because he didn't go out of his way to publicize himself. But anyhow, back to taking over.

When Paul came back, he was out for almost a year, but he fully recovered. They operated on him, they were able to surgically put a clamp around there. I got him out to the hospital, Walter Reed, where this surgeon during the Korean War must have done a couple of hundred of these a year, compared to most neurosurgeons who are lucky to do a half a dozen. When he came back, he knew that he couldn't keep that pace, and didn't. At that time a vacancy came up for the person who would handle the Interior Department appropriation bill and related agencies, so he moved over to the Appropriations Committee.

It was the first time I took a real strong stand, because I had told Paul: "If you're going, though I've been acting AA, I want the job, or I'm leaving too." I knew if I left, he couldn't move, because I didn't think that the senator would make Frank, the other guy who was there, the AA. I said, "I want the job, and I want everything that goes with it. I want the top salary and all this." Of course, Carl Hayden was very conservative in his paying policy. He always returned to the Treasury about a third

of his payroll every year. Paul was getting the top salary, and I said, "I want it." He said, "Oh, no problem, everything is fine. Yes you're going to be the AA in title and everything." So I get it and Paul moves over to the Appropriations Committee.

When the first pay period came around, I had a small raise. I said, "Well, this isn't quite right," but I waited until the next pay period thinking maybe he's doing it in increments or something like that. Again, in those days, I don't know whether you're familiar with the payrolls, you can never quite figure them out unless you had the codes and worked with the Disbursing Office. You could never figure out what exactly the take-home pay was because they had these formulas. The next pay period came and it was the same increment. So I went in and saw the senator. I said, "Senator, I've got a problem here," and told him that it was my understanding when I took over that I'd get this salary, and that I wanted this salary, or if he didn't have any confidence in me, I know I'm young and haven't been here this long, get someone else. But I'm leaving. You've given me the responsibility, despite my age, and I want the money that goes with it. Christ, I forget what it was then, about eighteen thousand dollars, it really wasn't very much. I don't think anyone had ever talked to him that way before. He said, "I'll take care of it."

Next pay period came, and here's another increment, but it didn't figure out to be the top. So I waited another pay period, and it came again. Finally I had to go back in again. I said, "Senator, to me it's very simple. You've given me the job, you've given me all the responsibilities. I think I'm doing the job. If I'm not doing the job get someone in. I'll even help you find someone. Get rid of me. But if I've got it, I want to be with all my compatriots, the people who are in the same position that I am, that are getting it. And I think I'm entitled, unless you don't have any confidence in me." He said, "I thought I took care of that." I said, "You didn't. This is what it's supposed to be." He took care of it that afternoon. Again, I think I was the only person that really went in and sort of yelled at him. You could talk that way to him. You could really express your opinion. So finally after a few months after having gotten the title and the responsibility, I finally got the money to go with it.

**RITCHIE:** Was it strictly Hayden, or was it the Disbursing Office as well?

**ELSON:** No, it was the senator. He just thought I was a little too young to get that much salary. So I sort of changed all that when I became his AA. We increased his staff, mainly because of the pick-up in the mail and the type of things that were happening after that new class of nineteen new senators came in 1958, things changed. The advent of jet travel, and then lobbying activities were beginning to get more organized, and your mail was coming in heavy.

During most of the '50s, because Arizona was so far away from everything, 90, 95 percent of the time when someone came to Washington on a problem, we had either corresponded with them, and most of the time we had seen them in the state, because the senator always went back when the session was over, and we'd travel around the state. When we'd get back in January we never had a surprise, something coming up that we had not foreseen, or had already met with the people and knew the problem and actually started working on. So when people came back here, we'd probably made their hotel reservation, set up their appointments, all that, in at least ninety percent of the time. We were rarely surprised. As a result of doing work in the office, you could set aside, for instance, both Paul and I used to dictate—not at the same time, because we were sharing the same office—but he'd dictate say around ten o'clock in the morning, and then I would try dictating from eleven to twelve or right after lunch. But you had time to do that without interruption. You just wouldn't answer phones or see anyone, you weren't interrupted that much.

But then starting in about 1958, I think with the advent of jet travel, boy that soon reversed itself. After a while it ended up the other way around, where by the early '60s only 10 percent of the people would have had contact with us beforehand. And then we getting all these big surprises, people walking in with major problems, particularly as the sessions grew longer during the '60s, and the state was growing so much. I'm trying to give you a rough idea of how things were when I went with the senator.

In about '60, everyone thought that Carl Hayden probably wouldn't run again. And of course everyone kept expecting him to die or something like that, all his political opponents were waiting in the bush, and he outlived most of them. I was one of the few—well, you could see the rats beginning to flee the ship—they thought he isn't going to run. Particularly when Mrs. Hayden died in '61, they were sure he wouldn't run again, or he wouldn't last six months because of how close they were—and they were.

I was one of the few, I think, that really believed that you don't understand this man, he's something else. Mrs. Hayden's death wasn't the end, he's got too much left to do. We were anticipating the Supreme Court ruling in California versus Arizona, and all these other things. I think it was sometime in '61 that I prepared a fifteen-page memorandum for him on all the things, because I had done a political survey earlier in the year, that showed that about forty percent of the people in Arizona didn't even know who Carl Hayden was. I said, "If you are going to run again. . . ." I outlined a program of things we had to do for him to get reelected. When I gave it to him, I only made a couple of copies of it. He took it home to the Methodist Building to think about it. Finally I said to him, "You've got to make up your mind," because it's going to take this long. I wanted to get the press secretary to start putting stuff in cans, doing TV, all the things that he had never had to do before. Raising money. This was early in '61. We started talking about it in late '60, but this was early '61. I don't think Mrs. Hayden had died yet, I'm trying to remember. She died in '61 as I recall. Yeah, she was still alive.

But I made him make a decision, and the decision was: okay, go ahead and do it. And I made him initial that memorandum, because I said, "I'm going to do these things." So I started quietly doing them. For instance, one of the things on fund raising, we set up a fiftieth anniversary dinner for him, that no one said I could put together because doing a hundred-dollar-a-plate dinner in Arizona was unheard of, no one would come, and all this and that. Senator [Warren] Magnuson's AA at that time was a guy by the name of Irv Hoff. Maggie's office was right next to ours, down the hall there. This would be about August of '61, and Maggie was up for reelection and they were going to put on a dinner for him, which was his silver anniversary.

One day over at the Carroll Arms, Irv and I were talking about how we were having problems, we wanted [John F.] Kennedy to come out, and Kenny O'Donnell and the rest of them were saying, "Well, he doesn't want to get involved in all this." So Irv and I decided, why don't we each pick a date back-to-back. Then we went through and checked every Senate member and every House member's service, and there wasn't anyone coming up for another couple of years who had both a silver and a golden anniversary in Congress. I said, "Why don't we put them back-to-back, and we get Kennedy to come out." If anyone else asks him, he can say, "When you have your silver or your golden anniversary, I'll come." He didn't have to worry about it, because he

didn't want to get involved in his first year in the presidency in a lot of fundraisers and stuff like that.

Irv Hoff and I went down, this would be in late August, I think, because we didn't have much time. They had already arranged for their dinner and I hadn't even set one up. So we went down and saw Kenny O'Donnell at the White House. I loved Kenny O'Donnell, mainly because he'd make a decision and no [expletive]. He'd give you an answer, yes, no, and that was pretty much it. And he said, "Yep, we'll be there." So Maggie scheduled his first, and then the next night we'd have it in Phoenix. I remember so well running back that day, Irv and I when we were coming back from the White House were just tickled. We agreed we wouldn't tell anyone until we had this all set up. When I came back, the senator had just come back from the floor, and I said, "Senator, the president, barring some international crisis, is coming to your dinner." His eyes sort of twinkled. And I said, "You know what I'd like you to do now, if you would, is go grab Lyndon the next time you see him, but don't tell him the president's coming, but tell him that your friends are putting on this anniversary dinner for you, and we want you to come." And the senator, I could just see his mind working, so sure enough, I think it was the next day he comes back and calls me in his office, and says, "Well, I just saw Lyndon and explained to him you're setting up this dinner, and Lyndon says, 'Carl, unless there's a global holocaust, I'll be there. I wouldn't miss this. I will be there. I can't think of anything that would prevent me from being there.'"

So we started to put on this dinner, and I went out to Arizona between late August, and our dinner was on I think November 17, and Maggie had his on the 16th. I averaged a trip from August through that dinner every three and a half to four days to Phoenix back and forth, oh God, became a zombie. At this time you may remember that [Sam] Rayburn found he had cancer and he wasn't well. We were worried that he would die and that would screw up everything—Irv and I were worried about it. But it finally got out that President Kennedy was coming to our dinner, and I remember the first call I got from Walter Jenkins, who was with Lyndon as his number one man. Walter said, "Roy, there may be a problem about Lyndon attending the senator's dinner, there's this international conference." I said, "Walter, you'd better have the vice president talk to Carl Hayden. There's no point in talking to me, because as I understand it the vice president made a personal commitment that barring war or some

natural catastrophe, or his death or something, that he would be at Carl Hayden's dinner." This happened I don't know how many times. Finally, as this dinner approached, Sam Rayburn did die.

Well, at this dinner for Carl Hayden in Arizona, the way it had worked out, I had made Lyndon master of ceremonies, which I thought was a little bold. [laughs] Then the president would make his little spiel, and we must have had all the leadership of the Senate and some of the House members on both sides. We had ranking Republicans, I don't know how many, but quite a few. My problem was, I had oversold the dinner, had a dinner committee that did a lot of work, but we oversold it here and we had all these members and we couldn't even put them on one dais. We had to put some down at the front tables and things like that. Pissed off a few of the junior senators, but that's the way it happened.

I'll never forget this. We're out in Arizona, just before the dinner. Sam has died, that same week, and Walter calls me again, saying that because of how close the vice president was to Sam, he's sort of like his son, that he's in such grief. I said, "Walter, look, they're going to go to Maggie's dinner, they're coming back here, the president's going, and everyone's going to leave from here and go to the funeral in Bonham. It seems to me . . . but I think you'd better have Lyndon call Carl Hayden, because I'm not the one that can relieve him of his obligation." So I said to the senator, "I think you had better call him." I'll never forget this conversation, as long as I live. I'm on the other line, the senator reaches Johnson down at his ranch. Lyndon gets on the line. He starts with, "You know how close we were, and Lady Bird's all shook up, and gee, Carl, I just don't see how we can come up," and he goes on about Sam and how close they were. And the senator doesn't say a word. Finally, he says, "Lyndon, I came to the House of Representatives of February of 1912. Sam came to the House in March of 1913. We became friends at that time and have been friends up until the day he died. I believe you were probably only three years old at that time. And if I know Sam Rayburn, I think he would expect you at my dinner." And you could have heard a pin drop! Finally, Lyndon spoke and said, "Carl, I'll be there. I don't think Lady Bird can come, but I'll be there." And he showed up.

And when we had the dinner, and Lyndon was going to make all the introductions and comments about all the members, and Justice [Hugo] Black was there, we had a

couple of members of the Supreme Court, it was quite an affair. The only time someone's made me cry was when the place was packed and Lyndon called me up. I was there with Liz Carpenter in the back of the dais with this silly smile, and people were eating and everything. And he says [clenches teeth]: "You [expletive], you'd better have these right and these better be in order," and just chewed me a new [expletive]. I had to leave the auditorium, went out, went into the bathroom and just wept, I was so [expletive] mad. But I must say, he performed like a trooper, did it well. Actually, Carl Hayden stole his own show, but Kennedy did a beautiful twelve minute little thing that was just funnier than hell, just charming.

I don't know that you want things like this in here, about arranging for a place for president to have an assignation?

**RITCHIE:** Sure.

**ELSON:** Well, I think we'd better stop here. [laughs] I've got to go to a luncheon, if it's all right to stop at this junction.

**RITCHIE:** Well, we'll pick it up at that point and go from there. [laughs] This has been fascinating, and I have lots of questions to go back over.

**ELSON:** Well, I start rambling, free association, just looking at a little bit of Darrell's oral history reminded me of so many things too. I just don't know what you want.

**RITCHIE:** In the beginning, I want to know what is important to you, and later on we can go back and fill in some of the questions that I have as well. But it's all part of the whole picture, and it's fascinating stuff.

**ELSON:** Well, it's fun for me.

**End of Interview #1**