

## ON THE STAFF OF GUY GILLETTE

### Interview #1

Wednesday, December 8, 1982

**RITCHIE:** I know you were born in Omaha, Nebraska. I was wondering if you could tell me a little about your background and some of your early education.

**McCLURE:** Yes, briefly--that isn't what you're really interested in.

**RITCHIE:** Well, we'd like to know about your development, up to the days when you started working for the Senate.

**McCLURE:** All right. I was born on March 11, 1913 in Omaha, Nebraska. My father was the cashier of the United States National Bank, and later rose to be a vice president. My mother was a graduate of Wellesley, the first girl admitted to that great college from west of the Mississippi, in 1904. In fact, she was quite well prepared, but not well enough. She had to take a year's prep school to be admitted. But then she flew through with flying colors, and married my father in 1912. I was the first issue. My sister, Jane, was born four years later. So, I grew up in Omaha and went to public schools and to the public high school, Omaha Central High School, which was an extremely good school and still is rated among the top fifty in the country. Good faculty, an intelligently run school, and

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very good for college preparatory work. I had four years of Latin, and four years of math, three or four years of history, some French and Spanish, and biology, chemistry, and physics--it was a powerful dose, but it admitted me to Amherst College without any College Board or any other form of tests.

**RITCHIE:** I noticed that you went to Amherst and I was going to ask you what it was that drew you there.

**McCLURE:** Well, my mother had developed a great respect for it when she was going to Wellesley, and we knew a few graduates of Amherst living in Omaha. We were thinking of a small college, and a good one. God knows that it was good, and hard. Most of the guys were trained in prep schools, Groton, Exeter, Deerfield, and others. I came up against some pretty stiff competition. I mean, they could speak French, I could just read it. There was that difference in type of training. So I spent two and a half years there and ran out of money in early 1934. My father's health gave out and he was retired from the bank with no pension or anything. In those days bankers were a ruthless band of cutthroats. They spent their time foreclosing mortgages of farmers, mainly in Iowa and Nebraska. Well, our income dropped to nothing, practically, so I couldn't go on. It wasn't as expensive as today, but it

was more than we could afford.

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I worked a year in New York, in Macy's and as a runner for the Bankers Trust on Wall Street. Then in January 1934, I received a telegram from lawyers in Milwaukee saying that my last great aunt on my father's side had died, that I was the residuary legatee, and would I please acknowledge the wire and they would send me a check for four thousand dollars. This was 1934! That was a lot of money. Even today it's not to be sneezed at. So I marched into my boss in the bank and showed him the telegram. I said, "I'm going to catch the next subway to Columbia University, if you'll give me the afternoon off." He said, "Oh, go right ahead." I went up and enrolled in Kings College, now called Columbia College, from which I graduated in due course in 1936. Well, on the campus was the School of Journalism. A friend of mine from Amherst, who was by then a year ahead of me, had gone there and I had met the people and the professors and said, "Why not?" So I applied to the School of Journalism and managed to get a scholarship that paid the tuition. With my "millions" in the bank I wasn't under too great a stress at the time. In 1937 I graduated with the magnificent degree of a Master of Science in Journalism. How preposterous!

**RITCHIE:** Did they ever explain what the science of journalism was?

**McCLURE:** It's the most unscientific activity known to man. Then, after that, of course it was the middle of the 1937

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recession. I wrote all of the newspapers in the country and most of the magazines and never even got answers. There were no jobs. In fact, I never worked on a newspaper. I worked around the edges in public relations and press-release writing and all that stuff, but I never worked on a paper.

**RITCHIE:** Did you have any particular aspirations for journalism?

**McCLURE:** Well, yes, I was early on convinced that I would be a writer of some sort. My high school English teacher thought I had some talent. My mother was sure I had. I did well with words, and I thought this was a possibility. Sure, I had a desire to be a journalist, a newspaperman, but I never satisfied it. Then in the '30s in New York--which was a fun place to live, God knows--there were thousands of us poor kids from the West and Middle West. It was sort of a frontier for young people in those days. You couldn't find a job in Omaha of any kind, but there were jobs in New York, if not in the newspaper business.

I thrashed around in various jobs. One of the early ones was as a cruise director on a ship, the *Oriente* that sailed from New York to Havana and back every week. Well, that was a cushy job, of course, lots of fun. I had everything paid for, plus a small salary. I did that off and on, and with other companies, for about two years, until I realized that staying at sea was a form of

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addiction and one would never amount to anything--having a lot of fun on board and on shore--but it wasn't really any career, certainly not as a cruise director. So I went to work for Prentice-Hall, which was at that time a small publishing house mainly in tax publications, but they had a trade book section, too. I did proof-reading and editing and sales.

Then I fell in love and decided I needed more money than \$17.00 a week. I went to work for an insurance company, a dreadful job, the Home Insurance Company down on Johns Street. But I got \$25.00 a week there. I was being trained to be a special agent. I didn't know exactly what that was, but I spent nine months learning the insurance business. Hated it all. Learned it unwillingly. Then I was shipped after graduation to Philadelphia, and learned that the special agent, at least in that company, was the guy who kept the brokers happy so they'd throw the business to the company, which meant three martini lunches and golf. Well, I didn't mind the martinis, but I hated golf--I couldn't play it anyway. A month of that, and I decided "this is worse than being on a ship! I'm at a dead end forever here!"

Another break, a small inheritance, just enough to release me from there. I fled south and spent about six months in Cuba on a bicycle with the hope of writing a travel book about the interior, which nobody ever sees, and it's beautiful. I came back from that with tons of notes, and I was immediately diverted. A friend of mine

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was the daughter of one of the mistresses of Bernard Baruch. She used to see Baruch from time to time. She was a very good looking girl, an actress, and he had her serving more or less as his hostess. So she would meet all these great people at dinner, senators and theater people, and so-forth. He was looking around for a secretary, a male amanuensis, assistant, and somebody who could write. She proposed me, and I had a wonderful summer with Bernard Baruch. But we didn't hit it off.

**RITCHIE:** This was the summer of 1939?

**McCLURE:** The summer of '40. The fall of France had just occurred, and I remember Baruch saying:

"They'll not leave those Frenchmen the eyes with which to weep!" He had some English nobility refugees staying with him in his Fifth Avenue house. I did work with him on a paper which appeared in the Yale Review on mobilization. You may recall he was the head of the War Industries Board in World War I and he very much wanted to be named by [Franklin] Roosevelt to do the job in World War II, when it came. He never did, of course. Roosevelt was very leery of Bernard Baruch who was, after all, the principal agent of American finance capitalism. That's really what he was. Well, I learned a lot from him. Then a bright young man from Harvard, who was smarter than I, had written his thesis on "Bernard Baruch and the War Industries Board." Well, I hadn't

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written that, so I was let out, and the smart young guy got the job. I didn't regret it.

**RITCHIE:** Have you read the new biography that's out now?

**McCLURE:** No, I haven't.

**RITCHIE:** The Speculator.

**McCLURE:** Well, he was an extremely interesting man, able financier. He had a lot of qualities. Arrogant, of course, and self-centered, and so-forth. But anyway, I had this three month stint, which was fun. Then he thought, since he was getting rid of me, that he might find me a job. He called up Henry Luce. Well, Luce had just started a committee called something for Democracy, which seemed to me an unlikely committee for Mr. Luce to be running, but anyway, I checked in with them. I couldn't see myself functioning with that crowd. They were being put in there by business people to run a propagandist thing to cook us into the war. I wasn't opposed to that, but I didn't want to work for those people.

By good fortune, one evening I was going to the Tavern-on-the-Green with the young lady who had introduced me to Baruch. We stopped at Columbus Circle, which in those days was the Hyde Park Corner of New York. You had to have a ladder, a flag, and a permit, and they you got up and said whatever you wanted, anything: Fascists, Communists, Trotskyites, Socialists, anything, snake-oil

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salesmen. There were constant fights among the cliques that gathered around these ladders. Well, we were getting pretty fed up with all of this, when we heard a guy talking about the Bill of Rights of the Constitution. He was the only man in the whole place who was defending anything about the United

States. So we listened to him, and he was lucid, and made a good speech.

When he climbed on down I said: "Who are you? Where do you come from?" He said: "I'm a speaker for the New York City Coordinating Committee for Democratic Action." I had never heard of that. Then Jane said, "Well, why don't you find out more about it, Mac? Maybe there's something you can do there. Democratic action, that sounds good," So I said, "Where's your office?" He said, "It's on 43rd and Fifth Avenue. Go see the director of it, his name is Maurice Rosenblatt." I said, "All right, I will." That was a Saturday. So the next Monday I drifted in there. I don't think Maurice was too confident of me, at first. Here was this rather well-dressed guy who had this funny background, cruise director, and Baruch, and Amherst, and all sorts of things. But he checked me out and took me on for very little money as a research man.

This outfit had been created by about twenty-five neighborhood groups, which in turn had been stimulated into action by the Christian Front. This was a proto-fascist organization directed by Father Coughlin. They were anti-Semitic and pro-Nazi, and were

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brutal and vicious. Their job was to try to bring about a kind of pogrom in New York City, to take the streets away from the Jews, to control the streets, in fact. So these local groups had sprung up and were trying to combat this, at least to the extent of having a counter-speaker across the street or nearby or the next night. We proceeded to work there until the war.

We put out a newsletter covering this peculiar street activity that the newspapers really weren't paying any attention to. And the police had been pretty badly infiltrated. These mostly were Irish-Catholics. Hated Britain basically. They were really more anti-British than pro-Hitler, but the two came together as the war proceeded. The police wouldn't do anything, and [Mayor Fiorello] LaGuardia couldn't seem to control his own police in this respect. It was a vicious business. Each month the rallies got bigger. Finally they took over Madison Square Garden one night. They blended into the America First movement. They were the shock troops, really. I don't think the people running America First knew who their troops were. They were a bunch of filthy thugs.

Well, in due course I was drafted, and Maurice was, too, and that broke up the committee. We met again after the war. I returned from France with a French wife and two adopted children, looking for a job, of course. Ran into Maurice; he had a job with an outfit called the American League for a Free Palestine. Now this was an

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American organization answering to the Hebrew Committee for National Liberation, which, without getting into the internal complexities of Zionism, was an off-shoot of the Revisionist Zionist group. They had a different view of what a home in Israel, or Palestine, should be from that of the official Zionists. They were much more activists, and they in effect were connected with the Irgun Zvai Leumi, the so-called terrorist group of which the current prime minister of Israel [Menachem Begin] was the head. I never met him. We were raising money, which would be shipped off to Europe, probably to buy arms, presumably to buy bandages and so-forth. It was a very exciting job.

I was the sort of public relations person, did pamphlets and speeches, including speeches for the honorary president, whose name was Guy M. Gillette, former senator from Iowa who'd been defeated in 1944 by Bourke Hickenlooper. Well, I didn't meet Gillette at the time, but I did a lot of speech work for him. So Israel became a country and the American League disbanded. I took a job with the International Rescue Committee for six months or so. Same kind of thing, fund-raising and letter writing and publicity.

But before that, after the closing of the American League, Maurice and I and a man named Harry Louis Selden, who had put a lot of money in the American League, decided that there were a number of men who were running for office who were good people and had helped the cause during the struggle for Israel's establishment.

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[Harry] Truman was going to lose, we knew that, [Thomas E.] Dewey was going to be president, and we had to have some strength in the Senate at least to hold back the tides of evil and reaction. So we cooked up a committee called the National Committee for an Effective Congress, which still exists. We didn't have much time; we got it set up in August; the election was in November. We managed to get James Roosevelt as chairman. Elliot Roosevelt helped pull some other people together.

We decided--there was an organizing committee--to support Guy Gillette, raise money for him, Paul Douglas, who was a professor at Chicago and was running for the Senate, Hubert Humphrey, who was then mayor of Minneapolis, Estes Kefauver, who was in the House and running for the Senate, Jim Murray in Montana, who was running again for the Senate, and lastly Matthew Neely in West Virginia. All of these people if they were in the Congress had been helpful to the cause of a free Palestine or Israel, and those who weren't members of Congress had been supportive in other ways, such as Humphrey and Douglas. Well, they all won, and so did Truman, of course. The greatest night of the political history of this century, I think, the election night of '48. We stayed up all night. Every one of our candidates came in. We'd been able to raise about \$50 or \$60 thousand in two months; in those days that was a hell of a lot of money. We'd spent a lot raising it, too. We had to, we didn't have time for careful mailings. We sent telegrams!

**RITCHIE:** Did you ever get any money from Baruch?

**McCLURE:** Didn't even ask him, I'm sure. No. No, you see, we used the American League lists and liberal lists of various sorts that we got a hold of. The National Committee for an Effective Congress was not disbanded, it just went into mothballs 'til the next election. But we'd seen what it could do, and with greater planning and more organization and stability and so-forth we could maybe become a permanent force or element in the political picture.

Well, I never had a chance to see that happen, because come May 14, 1949, Maurice called from Washington and said, "I'm down here and I've just been talking with Guy Gillette. It seems that when he was out of office between 1944 and 1948 Congress had passed a new Legislative Reorganization Act and created a job called an administrative assistant. Each senator is entitled to one. Well, Gillette doesn't know what to do with one, he's never needed one; he has a good executive secretary and a small staff. "But," Maurice said, "I've persuaded him he needs an idea man, and held like to talk to you about it." I thought, Jesus, I mean, really Don, it was unbelievable.

I had been in Washington once before and had been in a Senate office once before, in fact it was the office of Senator [Warren] Magnuson, I now recall, and had met his administrative assistant, a chap named Bill Golden, who preceded Mr. [Featherstone] Reid by some

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years I think. I had come out of there thinking "God, that guy must have the best job in the world." Beautiful big office. National issues, international issues, legislation, public matters. None of this commercial profit-making business. This, I thought, must be the greatest place to work in the world.

Here I was, May 15, 1949, in the office of Guy Gillette, which was just above the office that Magnuson had, 229 in the Russell Building, the Old Senate Office Building. Crystal chandelier, marble fireplace, a desk that seemed eight feet long, a view down the Hill to the National Gallery and Washington Monument. I had come down with my suitcase loaded with everything I had ever written, all kinds of stuff showing what I could do. This big, beautiful man stepped around the desk. He had white hair, huge hands. He was probably one of the best looking men who ever served in this body. He had a big head, broad mouth, carried himself like an admiral. He grabbed my hand. In the summer he always wore a white suit. In winter he wore blue. He had two suits, that's right, he had two suits. And he was often on the ten-best-dressed Americans list, because he looked so damn good in his clothes. I just thought, "My God, this is the most beautiful human being I've ever met."

He said, "Well, Mac, Maurice has been telling me about you, and I guess he's told you about this position as administrative assistant. What do you think?" I said, "Oh, I think it sounds absolutely

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fabulous, Senator, I'd love to try it." He said, "Well, how soon can you come down?" I thought quickly and said, "Will two weeks be enough?" So back to New York to uproot the family and come down here, and I started.

I swear to you, no administrative assistant, and probably few other types of employees of this place, knew less than I about the Senate, how it worked, what committees did, what a senator's office did, about the mail and constituent problems. None of this had ever filtered through to me, oh, except in the civics books sense, of course. I knew about the two houses of Congress and that, but the actual functioning of it I really didn't know anything about, certainly nothing about parliamentary procedure or committee procedure, or anything. I was wet behind the ears. I used to say it took me six months to find the men's room, which wasn't quite true, but I really was useless to him. I didn't earn my pay. But he didn't know what he wanted me to do either, so I was sort of in a happy position of finding my way and learning as I went.

He had a small office, as everybody did in those days. The staff of a senator from Iowa in 1949 consisted of an executive secretary, four or five girls, and then me. Well, where to put me? The first place he put me (he was on the Senate Agriculture Committee) was in an anteroom of the Agriculture Committee, which was on the third floor just above us, on the courtside. The room angles around

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the court and the far door opens into the Caucus Room; if you could open it (but you couldn't), you could hear what was going on through the door when there was a big hearing. The other door led into the committee room.

So I sat there reading the *Congressional Record*, and then I'd go over and sit on the floor. In those days they permitted staff to do that even if you had no business. I just absorbed it, sat there and listened to the debates and caught on more or less to what was happening and who was who and how it was done, and so-on. A marvelous learning experience. Part of my learning was in another direction. Sitting in this little anteroom were a couple of clerks and then there was a man who seemed to be on the phone all the time. During executive sessions he'd go in and then he'd come out and grab the phone. In due course, I found out that he was playing the commodity markets for the chairman, who was then Elmer Thomas from Oklahoma. The committee would decide to do something about wheat, held call the wheat pit. I think that all caught up with Elmer, I think [Mike] Monroney knocked him off in part because of these financial goings-on that had nothing to do with being a senator. Well, I learned about that kind of Senate business, too, very quickly. There wasn't as much of it, I must say, as people think,



but that was certainly a clear one.

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Then I was moved downstairs to a little cubicle just off the main entrance on the second floor, and was beginning to work up speeches. This was beautiful. I had a phone but no visitors, no interruptions. I could sit there and spin my speeches without being hampered by distractions. And Gillette began to develop some confidence in me and I began to feel I knew what it was all about, and would attend committee hearings and would begin to follow things.

He was on Rules and Agriculture. In due course in 1951 he moved from Agriculture to Foreign Relations, which was his true love. He had been a member of the Foreign Relations Committee in his first term. In fact, he had been rather an isolationist before the war, at least so categorized. I don't think that was it, I think he was more of an anti-imperialist than a pacifist. He'd been in the military, he'd been a captain of infantry in World War I, and held been in the Spanish-American War, though he never got to Cuba, and he once volunteered during the Boer War to go fight on the side of the Boers, but they wouldn't let him in. So he wasn't really a pacifist; he didn't like the British empire, or any empire. Plus the fact Iowa was very isolationist and felt the Europeans should stew in their own juice. Those things concurred with his own feelings, so he was rather isolationist--but he was never an America Firster, never got involved in any of that dubious footsy with the Germans and so-on, as happened here with [Burton] Wheeler, and [Gerald] Nye, and that crowd.

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By the time we were in the war he had adjusted to it and decided that the thing to be doing was to set up a successor to the League of Nations, which had failed, to try and preserve peace once it had been regained. He was one of the early men working on what became the United Nations. I think the committee ultimately reported out something called the Connally Resolution, which was the basis on which Roosevelt proceeded to negotiate with the assurance the Senate would back him up. But in the process Gillette had resolutions of his own, I'm pretty sure, I wasn't here for it. But I do know he was very deeply involved there, and not just in the international organization part. Of course the war was on, he was involved in whatever the diplomatic and other types of relationships we had with our allies and neutrals, treaties, and so-forth. Anyway, he loved it and got great satisfaction from it, so he worked his way back onto it, though he was way down the bottom again.

**RITCHIE:** Do you know how he got onto the Palestine issue, by the way?

**McCLURE:** Yes, I do. We have to go back to wartime. I believe while he was still a member of the

Senate he was approached by the American representative for the Hebrew Committee for National Liberation, a man named Peter Bergson, Palestine born. His father was Hillel Kook, the Rabbi of Jerusalem. Gillette had married a Jewish lady whose name was Rose; she was a school teacher. They had had no

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children, they adopted one. Probably through the fact that she was Jewish these people were able to arrange to meet him. I'm not sure that's true, but it seems likely. They were looking for a spokesman in Congress. They had several, of course. Well, Gillette was defeated in 1944. Truman made him head of the Surplus Property Board, which he stood for six months and then he saw it was going to be such a corrupt operation which he couldn't control. Divestment of surplus was a gigantic racket. So he quit after six months, before he was spattered with mud.

At that point, Bergson and his associates had formed the American League for a Free Palestine and asked him to be the head of it. He became its honorary president. He'd been involved with them and talking with them, and I think he'd even introduced resolutions while he was still a senator to do something about the refugees from Hitler; some of them had been able to get out of Europe and they were trying to get into the United States. While nobody knew too much about the murder camps, something was known, and he was busy trying to do something about that. Smuggling them out through Rumania, there were all kinds of stories about that period. But that's the way he got involved. When he went on the Foreign Relations Committee, every member had a subcommittee and he ended up with the Near East Subcommittee, which included everything from the east end of the Mediterranean to India. Near East and South Asia, I think it was called. So that was again a linkage with Israel and other countries.

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But in the process of shifting he did lose out on ever becoming chairman of Rules, which was a much smaller committee. There were only four Democrats I think. Carl Hayden was chairman and he went on to be chairman of Appropriations, anyway Gillette would have probably inherited it early on, or within a couple of years. But while he was on the Rules Committee-I'd like to put in here, if you ever have anything to do with the printing of the biographies of senators I urge that their committee assignments be indicated. What do senators do? They don't just get elected and then retire. There's not a thing in those paragraphs [in the *Biographical Directory*] that tell what committees the man was on, and subcommittees, nothing about his performance, or even his duties, whether he performed them or not. I do urge that; it annoyed me for years.

But in his service on the Rules Committee he was named chairman of the worst subcommittee you can be on in this place, Privileges and Elections. Well, there are no privileges, plenty of headaches. This was in the early days of the rise of Joseph McCarthy. There was an election in Maryland in 1950. John Marshall Butler was seeking to unseat Millard Tydings, which he did, in one of the dirtier campaigns of recent memory. You may recall it involved a composite photograph of Earl Browder, head of the Communist party, presumably shaking hands with Tydings, who had never seen him. But this photograph was splattered into the rural districts and was very damaging to Tydings. He raised hell after his defeat. The Privileges and

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Elections Subcommittee was called into investigate the election. Butler finally was seated; he was a drip. Tydings, whatever you think of his politics, was a man of great parts--old line, old Senate bull, a man of enormous breadth of knowledge and experience, and here was this twerp. It happens so often. Joe McCarthy replaced Robert La Follette! And that undertaker from Nebraska, [Kenneth] Wherry replaced George Norris. Really, you can't do worse. They not only knock off a great man but put in a zero.

Anyway, there were other campaigns that the subcommittee looked into, and it occurred to members that there isn't any set of rules of what is good, fair campaigning, what should be outlawed or frowned upon. They set about to try and develop a statutory code of ethics for campaigning. There was a draft or two sent around, but when the older boys in the Senate heard about this, they said, no way, you can't legislate this kind of thing, and further more the implication could be that those of us who were elected before the code had used unfair tactics to get here. On the basis of that, Gillette said, "Well, let's do it the American way, have a private committee do it." I was assigned to draft a code of practices, and I consulted with a lot of people on this, and we worked up a code.

Meanwhile, Harry Louis Selden, who had been so effective in setting up both the American League for a Free Palestine and the National Committee for an Effective Congress, went to work and pulled

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together an eminent list of sponsors for this committee, which was called the Fair Campaign Practices Committee. They adopted the code as theirs and went into business and I think did a magnificent job. I think really other than the type of television ads that we're worrying about now, national campaigns are so much cleaner than they were in the '50s and even early '60s. This was a self-policing thing. The committee had no power, it couldn't charge anybody with anything or investigate them. It just was there, and if a candidate thought he was being treated unfairly he could complain. The committee would

then refer his complaint to his opponent, and say "work it out." And frequently the candidate didn't even know what was happening and apologized and stopped it. In the few cases where there was a dispute, the American Arbitration Association would send in arbitrators, preferably before election day, and they'd make a judgment. So it did, I think, materially improve the climate of campaigns for the House and Senate. Every ex-president became a member of the committee, [Dwight] Eisenhower, Truman, [Lyndon] Johnson. So that was an offshoot of Gillette's enterprise, and it still exists in a moribund state. I'm the executive director, and it's not now financially able to do anything.

At the height of McCarthy's shennanigans, in 1952 and '53 and '54, Senator William Benton of Connecticut introduced a resolution to expel McCarthy from the Senate. It was a poorly done operation, because instead of getting the Senate to approve the resolution right

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away, at least to start the investigation, it was automatically referred to Rules and then to Gillette's subcommittee. So here was Gillette alone, with a couple of subcommittee members, appearing to be persecuting this great anti-Communist leader, and boy, McCarthy took every advantage he could. He'd shoot off telegrams to Gillette, which he would send to the papers long before, accusing him of working for the Democratic National Committee and all sorts of stuff like that. We finally couldn't get the investigation off the ground, nobody wanted to touch it. Gillette was paralyzed. The subcommittee didn't know how to proceed. They didn't have any money, they didn't have any staff. They didn't have anything except this damn resolution on which a hearing was held. It was done bass ackward, I would say, the whole thing.

To get out of this, Hayden, then still Rules chairman, moved in the Senate to discharge the resolution from the committee. Well, of course he got an almost unanimous vote to not do that, which was in effect a bass ackward way of authorizing the committee to proceed. You can see it could have all been done much more simply, as they did in the case of [Thomas] Dodd and other cases since. The Senate gave prior approval to proceed and the investigation went ahead. Well, once that was done we did hire investigators and they did dig up a tremendous lot of stuff, which was later turned over to the Watkins committee, and in due course Mr. McCarthy was censured, and then drank himself to death. But he was finished once the Senate decided

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to take steps they should have taken two years before and slapped him down. He was through, and he knew it, and the whole thing just disappeared. His minions, most of them, were defeated--his pals [Herman] Welker and [James] Kem and the goons who had come in in '46.

But I'm afraid that the hangover of this McCarthy affair had a very serious effect on Gillette's attempted reelection in '54. It's always hard to determine what is the main factor--he was old, in his '70s. His opponent was a nobody named Thomas Martin, a House member who spent two years in Iowa campaigning, and never was in his House seat. And Iowa is basically Republican, used to be and still is. Plus the fact that the Democratic party's strength mainly lies in the river cities, Burlington and Davenport and Dubuque, Sioux City and Council Bluffs. They're mostly Irish-Catholic, the bulk of them, and McCarthy's impact on those voters was quite substantial. Some of the good fathers were supporting him, too, so the flock would go along. We had terrific defections, which was enough to defeat us, by about 35,000 votes. It was a terrible time. I had never been through a campaign before, actually. I had a lot to do with it, so I felt responsible, and we lost.

I'll never forget the morning after. When we knew we were beaten we had all gotten drunk, the whole staff. I staggered in at nine in the morning with a hell of a hangover. We had an office in a little building in Cherokee, his home town, high ceilings, on the

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third floor. I had to climb up, panting. I was sitting at my desk and in came Gillette. He walked right by me into his office and slammed the door, with a look of utter despondency and despair on his face. It was awful! Well, he got over it, and so did I, but it was a bad morning. So I jumped in my car and drove all the way back to Washington without a stop.

Later, since he'd not been in the Senate long enough to develop any decent retirement, he came back. Olin Johnston of South Carolina, who was chairman of Civil Service and Post Office, hired him as a counsel for one of the subcommittees. Then Olin also moved him to a subcommittee on Judiciary, where he stayed about eight years after his defeat and built up his retirement. Then he went back to Cherokee, where he had a farm. Then not too many years later he had a stroke. He was about 87, so it was some years later. Anyway, he went into a nursing home, paralyzed on his left side. He was a lefty--he wrote with his left hand. And at 87 he trained himself to write with his right hand. It's interesting that the script was identical, exactly the same. I don't know what that says, but he had trained his left lobe to run his right hand so he could write a few notes.

The last letter I had from him was an absolutely extraordinary document. He must have had his left paw on the page, he was writing in bed. It starts out "Dear Mac," and then there's a full line, and

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then it begins to get shorter and shorter as it goes down and around, and it ends up down at the bottom

with two words. This curious shape. I showed it to a professor of psychology who was interested in brain damage and he was fascinated with it, he'd never seen anything like it. It hadn't either. He lived about five years more, but he was bed-ridden.

**RITCHIE:** He died at 94.

**McCLURE:** Yes. Lovely, lovely man. I just adored him.

**RITCHIE:** He's always been a puzzle to me, in looking over political history. In the New Deal accounts Gillette is portrayed as an anti-Roosevelt conservative Democrat from Iowa who was always voting against things like the NRA, and the AAA, and the Supreme Court packing fight. He's thrown in with the isolationists and all that. And then the Gillette who you read about in the 1940s and '50s is fighting McCarthy and he's on the internationalists' side. It's almost as if there are two different senators.

**McCLURE:** Two different epochs, too; two different periods.

**RITCHIE:** Well, what type of person was he really? What motivated Gillette, the farmer turned politician?

**McCLURE:** He didn't just turn politician. While he was a farmer he was county attorney in Cherokee County, too. County meant

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prosecuting attorney--minor infractions of the law. I don't think he handled murder cases or anything exciting. Then he was in the state senate for a long time, and came to the House with Roosevelt in '32. He was in the House for four years. He retained his farm and hired a man to run it for him. Well, he didn't go to college. He got a law degree from Drake and practiced law in Cherokee, while farming. He was a great singer, he loved to sing, and he ran the church choir, and he taught Sunday school. I don't know what denomination, I never bothered to find out. He didn't wear it around on his sleeve; he was no prayer breakfast politician.

He was a great lover of literature and poetry and history, a great reader of everything, and remembered it. He was something like Truman in that respect, he had a great knowledge of American history, the Constitution, and important Supreme Court decisions affecting the constitution, and so-on. I know nothing about his parents. His brother, Claude, became an admiral, and ended up running the Navy yard up in Bath, Maine, building war ships. They were very close, in fact, Gillette was on the Naval Affairs Committee in the House, at some point.

**RITCHIE:** I don't know whether you've seen this cartoon, but I came across it in the files. It was done, I think, for his 1944 reelection campaign. The Democrats had a cartoonist on staff who used to make things up for weekly newspapers.

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**McCLURE:** Yes. It says Naval Affairs Committee, that's right. Councils on post-war legislation, peace organization. Well, they've got all that. That ought to in your record somehow. Well, he was an extremely generous man, warm hearted and he loved all kinds of people. He never said anything against anybody, even people he couldn't stand. He just didn't do it, because in the first place he knew that being a senator anything he said would get back to the man he said it about anyway. Even to me, I could tell what he thought, but he never said anything, except once. We were riding over on the train to the Capitol, and John Foster Dulles--who had been appointed by Dewey to replace [Robert] Wagner--came aboard the train and sat ahead of us. Gillette turned to me and said: "That man will never make a senator." Which was true, in fact he was defeated by [Herbert] Lehman.

Bringing up Dulles reminds me of a story when Gillette was on Foreign Relations. Dulles came before them as the Secretary of State designated by Dwight Eisenhower for his confirmation hearing in the Caucus Room. I asked Gillette if he wanted any documents or anything to use, and he said, "No, I've got all that." So I went up to watch this, and the senators were as usual humble and polite and asked the leading questions that he could answer beautifully. All of the, Democrats and Republicans, it was sickening! Till they came to Gillette. The senator had collected statements Dulles had made during the '52 campaign, accusing the Democrats of being soft on Communism, and allowing the Russians to run away with the world, the

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usual stuff. He collected all these, really vicious stuff, it wasn't quite McCarthyism but was a gentlemanly form of it. So he read these to Dulles and said, "Did you make this statement? Do you ascribe to this position?" What could Dulles say? Obviously he had. Well, this went on for quite a long time.

Then Gillette referred to Dulles' opening statement, which was all about international peace and order, his usual church speech, and read some of that, and said, "Now, you are going to be Secretary of State; of course you will be confirmed by the Senate. How do you reconcile this type of vicious campaign statement with these hightoned principled remarks of your opening statement? How as Secretary of State are you going to live with both these positions?" And Dulles said: "Senator, I'm a lawyer, and as a lawyer I represent my client. During the campaign the Republican party was my client. Today, Dwight D. Eisenhower is my client." Oh, Gillette never forgave him for that. And it really made

a big hit with the senators who had not dared open their traps, and the papers played it up, too. He was the only senator who could challenge him! Oh, well, so it goes.

He was very courageous. He was a man of very high principle. I've heard him say, "Oh, I'm going to resign if they do that. I just will not serve here if this is what's going to happen." Frequently--he scared me to death! He probably even meant it, too. He was a

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very sensitive man, too, I don't mean in the sense of being prickly or being fearsome of people saying nasty things about him, but he was very sensitive to other people's feelings and needs. A very gentle man. If he ever wanted to fire me he never let me know, and so I managed to stay on. He never fired anybody. Oh, what else to say? I think it will come out more in our talking. I've tried to give you a thumbnail sketch of a very complex man.

**RITCHIE:** He was defeated in 1944 by Bourke Hickenlooper.

**McCLURE:** That's correct.

**RITCHIE:** Then they wound up serving together on the Foreign Relations Committee.

**McCLURE:** Yes. Traveled at one time to India together.

**RITCHIE:** Oh, they did?

**McCLURE:** Yes. Well, not together but in separate airplanes. But they were there together.

**RITCHIE:** Was there any friction between them as a result of that '44 election?

**McCLURE:** If there was, they didn't show it. Senators didn't used to show things like that. Whatever they felt about "my able and distinguished friend," it was always "my able and distinguished

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friend." Whether Hickenlooper felt bad about it, there he was, a United States senator again, after a brief interlude. I don't think so.

**RITCHIE:** How did Gillette fit into the Senate structure? Those were the days of the "Inner Club" and



the Southern senators who really ran the show for a long time.

**McCLURE:** Indeed they did.

**RITCHIE:** He had sort of an independent reputation. Did he fit in or was he an outsider?

**McCLURE:** Well, I'll tell you the story he told me of his early days in the Senate. At that time in 1937 there was what was called the "Cherokee Strip" in the Senate. There were so many Democrats that some of them had to sit on the Republican side of the aisle in the back row. He was sitting behind Hiram Johnson of California, Republican, and they got to be deskmates, you know, as those things happen. Gillette came one day with some notes; he was obviously preparing to make a statement on something. Johnson saw this and turned around and said: "Senator, I'll tell you when to speak. This is not the time." All right said Senator Gillette. He was then 54-yearsold, he was no child. But Hiram was an old bull and Gillette knew who he was. So, a month or so later a farm bill, an appropriations bill dealing with farmers, was coming up, and Johnson turned around

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and said, "Now, this is the one you speak on. Prepare yourself to speak on this amendment. This will be your maiden speech." Which, of course, was exactly right and appropriate for a senator from Iowa, and that's the way he started.

But he had already been taken in, in a sense, under the wing of the Old Boys. Harry Byrd and he were very close friends--personally, I don't mean politically. He didn't get along with [Pat] McCarran or [Kenneth] McKeller particularly well, but [Richard] Russell, [Lister] Hill, the Old Boys, [Pat] Harrison, of course that's before the war, [Alben] Barkley. (Barkley asked him to be his campaign manager in '52.) They all were very close friends with him and he was a member of the "Club," he certainly was, without having really the seniority that most of them had. He had a total in both terms of only fourteen years, '36 to '44, '49 to '54.

Well, of course his voting record is not that of a New Deal Democrat, no doubt about that. Nor was the state of Iowa a strong Democratic, liberal community. He represented his people, and I think his thinking reflected them and he agreed with them, by and large. If he felt they were off-base, he went ahead anyway. He wasn't stopped by unpopularity, either here or in his state. But by and large he was a senator from Iowa and there was no point in pretending he was from Illinois or New York or Indiana or Michigan or someplace else.

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He supported the New Deal in the House, I think. I'm not sure about voting against the NRA or AAA, I don't know that; you say he did, he may have. But his real break with Roosevelt came over the Court. This is where his constitutional religion, so to speak, was involved. He just thought it was an unholy act. While he recognized that [Burton] Wheeler was using this issue as a presidential gambit, and that many of those who were fighting it were not completely in favor of the Court or the Constitution or anything, it was a political war--the first time they had a chance to beat this "fiend" Roosevelt. But he didn't go along with that. He went along for his own reasons and didn't join that cabal at all. But he was strong on the subject. Then, thereafter, I think he felt that Roosevelt could abuse his powers if he wasn't checked by the Senate. In many cases I think his votes reflected that. He was fearful of the Imperial White House before anybody felt there was anything like that.

On the other hand, he got along well with Roosevelt. Senator [Jennings] Randolph told me a story, which I asked him to put in his statement to the Senate after Gillette died. It's in the Record, I won't bother going into it. But he went down to the White House at Randolph's suggestion to head up a whole delegation of people who were worried about their little airports which were being wiped out in the war effort just as they were getting started. Roosevelt listened to them and turned it around. So, I mean he didn't have any war with Roosevelt. I don't think he voted for him every time.

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**RITCHIE:** I know he refused to go to the Democratic convention in 1944 because he didn't believe any one should have four terms.

**McCLURE:** Well, that's another one of his constitutional stands, traditional, and again his worrying about Roosevelt becoming a king. I didn't remember that he didn't go to that. You know more about it than I.

**RITCHIE:** You also mentioned before when the Committee for Effective Congress had their first slate of candidates, all of them were pretty liberal Democrats, with the exception of Gillette, who was much more conservative than the rest of them.

**McCLURE:** That's right.

**RITCHIE:** How did he get along with those liberal Democrats from the "Class of '48," people like Estes Kefauver, Paul Douglas, Hubert Humphrey and others?

**McCLURE:** Well, he didn't have a chance much to get along, because he came right back into the "Club," in his old shoes. His friends were Hayden and Russell and Barkley. I don't think he developed any close relationships with any of those, except for Murray, who had been here a long time, and

Neely, who had been around for God knows how long. They knew each other from the time back. I think he liked Humphrey, I think he thought he was a fool when he started out, but he did learn fast. He and Kefauver worked together on efforts to

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get a resolution through on the effort to get an Atlantic Union, but I don't know that that made them very close. They were just close on that issue. About Douglas, I don't think I ever heard him say anything.

But when Eisenhower had been in a while, the Tidelands Oil business was cooking. You may recall that issue, it was a big thing in the early part of the Eisenhower administration. It looked like a pay-off to the oil companies, a proposal to hand over to the states most of the off-shore land under water, which meant that the oil companies would more easily control the state legislature, the Texas Railroad Commission and so on. They would then have control over these vast subsurface oil deposits off the coast. Gillette was a strong conservationist and he didn't like the big oil companies. They were not nice to farmers either, as you recall. For many reasons he was hostile to monopoly, he would have been--if they had been around--to multinational corporations and oligopolies and whatnot.

When the liberals started an effort to stop this tidelands giveaway, as they called it, oddly enough the principal leader of it was Lister Hill. But he stayed in the background and arranged to have Herbert Lehman as the front spokesman for the group. Ultimately there were about twenty-five senators, all Democrats, who would meet once a week over here in a hotel on the Plaza, where the SEC is now. They'd meet one night a week and discuss strategy and lay out

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action they wanted taken. Lehman's administrative assistant, [Julius] Edelstein, was the secretary to the senators and the chairman of the administrative assistant group, which met the next night, when we got our assignments. It worked well.

We had really the first liberal caucus ever formed. It was easy because it was on a single issue. It broke up later when they tried to keep it on with other issues, but it worked and we also ran the first liberal filibuster. Lister Hill taught them how to do that, you know, watch the floor, have somebody present, this, that, and the other thing, until the proponents had to give in and draw back to the three mile limit, except in the case of Louisiana and Texas, which under certain historical arrangements had always had a twelve mile limit. Control of the outer continental shelf went to the federal government. The royalties and rents paid by oil drilling companies go to the treasury, and they're way over a billion or more now,

I'm sure, I don't know how many billion. A big piece of change, and growing surely.

The way it was done was that Lister Hill introduced what was called the "Oil for Education" amendment. The idea was that these revenues would be allocated to federal aid to education, because we couldn't get a bill for federal aid to education. The Chamber of Commerce was the main opposition to it, and they would raise either the Communist issue, the religious issue, or the race issue. The

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"three Rs": reds, religion, and race. They just played it like an organ, and some group would break away on each of those. But the thought was that this "Oil for Education" amendment wouldn't be a tax on people, it would come out of segregated funds. Anyway, that provided a way to recruit the lobbying efforts of all sorts of groups who didn't give a damn about oil one way or the other: unions, educational groups, all kinds of public interest groups. They were helpful to us in drumming up other support from other senators other than this group of twenty-five which wasn't enough to win. So we won a half battle and the other guys lost a half battle.

It was a great fight, and Gillette was very active in that, and encouraged me to be active. In fact, I handled much of the newspaper publicity and public releases and stuff like that. The press was either bought or blind, because when the bill got to the floor even the *New York Times* didn't have a word about it, and the big debate had begun. So we cooked up a telegram for Gillette and Douglas and [Clinton] Anderson, I think, and sent it to Arthur Krock, inquiring if this wasn't part of all of the news that's fit to print. From then on the *Times* covered it. But in a lot of the states the papers didn't cover it. The wire services paid no attention to it. It was as if there was a plot to suppress any mention of it. Maybe it was just regarded as too technical and difficult a subject. In any event, people weren't aware of what was going on. So we cooked up a f I ank attack. We found a recording shop down here that made discs

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for very little money, and we got some union to pay the cost. (Radio stations were obliged to offer a certain amount of public interest time in those days--I'm not sure they will any more.) We'd record speeches of our senators, and then mail them to the radio stations. These were punchy, short speeches that told the people what was going on. And people began to write their paper asking "why don't you print something about this?" And in due course we forced the whole thing open. Well, of course, it got more interesting, too, as time went on. A filibuster guarantees page one anywhere, but we had done a good job of bypassing this silence blanket. Gillette was very hot on that one.

In fact, even before then he was hot on the natural gas bill that Bob Kerr had come forth with, to deregulate gas, in effect, and make millions for companies like Kerr-McGee and others. Just a blatant grab. Gillette was horrified. This was another Elmer Thomas kind of thing to him, using your public office to line your pocket, which was utterly obnoxious and sickening to him. Well, he took on-one of the first who ever dared--this oil senator from Oklahoma. Bob Kerr was a powerful man, big guy with a huge voice, and utterly unprincipled in debate. He used to just destroy senators. Kerr used to bait poor Homer Capehart of Indiana till he collapsed in incoherence. Anything could go. Misrepresentation and lies and phoney facts and bullying. He broke in when Gillette first opened his mouth. Gillette had been there longer than Kerr and said, "I'll be

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happy to yield when I finish my remarks, senator," politely. Kerr kept coming in every ten minutes, trying to make the Record all mixed up, you know. "Will the senator yield? Will the senator yield?" Of course, Gillette had to stop and get rid of him. Well, he finished his speech, he was absolutely furious, because you just don't do that kind of thing, unless you are being a jackal. So on things like that he was as liberal as you could find. On anything to do with conservation--he would have been a tremendous environmentalist, if there had been an environmental movement he would have been in the thick of it, no question about it. He was also the first consumerist up here.

**RITCHIE:** In what way?

**McCLURE:** He introduced a resolution as early as '53 or so to create a committee on consumer interests, which died in the Rules Committee. It was much too early on to try that. Then we tried to get other committees to set up subcommittees on consumer interests. Charlie Tobey of . . .

**RITCHIE:** New Hampshire.

**McCLURE:** . . . New Hampshire, who was chairman of Commerce, did set up one. Actually it was a good place for it. In fact, Magnuson made a great thing out of it later. But Tobey, a Republican, set up the only one back in the 83rd Congress. Anyway, then while he was

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still on the Agriculture Committee, Gillette was made chairman of a subcommittee on the utilization of farm crops, which was, I believe, a recreation of something that had existed under his chairmanship during the war. At that time he went to work to see, since there was a shortage of petroleum and rubber, especially rubber, if this could be made from alcohol, chemically made from alcohol made from

corn; now we've got gasahol. This was an attempt way, way back in the early '40s to use large supplies of wheat and corn, and maybe soybeans, I don't know if they work or not, to produce industrial alcohol fuel.

So he had this subcommittee reestablished when he came back to the Senate. He changed its purpose, its purpose then became to study the famous gap between what the farmer receives and what the consumer pays. Where does all that money go? We still are trying to find out. Packaging, shipment, and advertising, and processing, and so-forth. He ran a hell of a series of hearings on that, front page all over the place. Witnesses coming in with a tag taken off the A & P shelf at the moment the clerk was putting a higher price on the same goods, which was very dramatic stuff. We belabored the meat packing industry, which was a very popular thing to do with our beef producers, who were always getting screwed by the packing plants. And tried to find out how much it cost to make a leg of lamb, or a pork chop. Their bookkeeping was so muddled, and purposely so, and still

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is--you can't find out anything, where the costs of production and processing really are.

That's what led him into this further concern with the general consumer problem, which he was very naive about, as we all were at the time. He didn't really know what he was getting into. There was, for example, a large cartel headed by Brazil which ran the coffee prices up very high. The subcommittee went into that quite deeply with lots of headlines and publicity, and made certain Brazilians very angry.

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End of Interview #1

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