

## Automating the Senate's Finances

### Interview #3

Thursday, October 28, 1982

**RITCHIE:** We've discussed your years as Assistant Financial Clerk of the Senate. Then when Bob Brenkworth left you moved up to become Financial Clerk. In going back through the reports of the Secretary of the Senate, I've come across material about Brenkworth becoming "Comptroller" of the Senate. On November 1, 1969 he was appointed Comptroller. That was the first time, and as far as I can figure the only time, that the Senate ever had someone with the title

**RIDGELY:** That's true, it was.

**RITCHIE:** What was the reason for creating that post at that time?

**RIDGELY:** Well, at the time, if my memory serves me, this was something that the Appropriations Committee was interested in, and Bob of course with all the time that he had put in in Disbursing as the Financial Clerk and Budget Officer of the Senate, working with the Appropriations Committee and everything, I sometimes wondered if their thinking was the possibility of maybe the Disbursing Office coming from under the Secretary of the Senate. As it is, you know, the Secretary by law is the Disbursing Officer of the Senate. And then, of course, the operation of the office is handled by the

page 91

---

Financial Clerk and the Secretary just gives him, you might say, carte blanche authority to take care of these things. And it might have been that particular thing at the time, because the Disbursing Office had, in its activities and size, grown considerably with all the things that had transpired over the years, and with what they had to do, and with the quantity of work that had to be done by the office, its activities with the Appropriations Committee, with the Rules Committee. I don't know what they would have called the office if they had done such a thing, but when they first created it, it was created as a position under the Secretary of the Senate.

So Bob was transferred from the job of Financial Clerk to the Comptroller's position. He maintained the same status, running the Disbursing Office, that was under the Secretary. And then, later on, a year or more, I don't know exactly the time frame, they changed it so that the Comptroller came under the office of the President Pro Tem of the Senate. Bob then, in 1970, was transferred to that position,

appointed by the President Pro Tem, and set up his office to do certain things. It specified in the law what he was to do. Then I was put in the position as Financial Clerk. He was then outside of the Disbursing Office with certain duties prescribed by the law that created it, and I was there running the Disbursing Office which was still under the jurisdiction of the Secretary of the Senate. You know, the committee reports on that might give you some background on that, or the hearings. If you need to look at that, the Disbursing

page 92

---

Office has that in their files, because some explanation was always required for these things. I think that's really what they were thinking about at the time.

**RITCHIE:** At that time, Allen Ellender was chairman of the Appropriations Committee and President Pro Tempore, wasn't he?

**RIDGELY:** Yes.

**RITCHIE:** So was that the reason for bringing the Comptroller under the President Pro Tem? You said the Appropriations Committee was particularly interested in this.

**RIDGELY:** Well, I think it was to take that position out from under the Secretary of the Senate. I guess you might say they had a choice--they had a choice of setting it up as an elected officer of the Senate, such as the Sergeant at Arms, etc., or putting it in as an appointed position under the jurisdiction of somebody. This was the first instance that the President Pro Tem had something like that. The Office of Legislative Counsel is under the President Pro Tem, and always has been, but this was the only other time that anything like this was created under the President Pro Tem.

**RITCHIE:** Well, was there some difficulty between Senator Ellender and the Secretary of the Senate, Frank Valeo?

page 93

---

**RIDGELY:** No. But there was a problem between Bob [Brenkworth] and the Secretary. Definite personality differences there.

**RITCHIE:** So when they created the position of Comptroller, he in effect had all the same responsibilities at first that he had when he was Financial Clerk?

**RIDGELY:** That's right, while this position was under the jurisdiction of the Secretary, yes.

**RITCHIE:** But then when he was switched to the President Pro Tem, the job changed?

**RIDGELY:** The duties changed, yes, because he could no longer, and did not any longer have access to Disbursing Office files and records. And he was required to do some auditing and other work as the Comptroller. There was the Comptroller and the position of secretary was established for the office, so there were only two people doing this work.

**RITCHIE:** So he was sort of an auditor then?

**RIDGELY:** Yes, but you have to recognize the fact that in auditing the vouchers in the Disbursing Office there is no other place in the Senate that can audit them to the extent the Disbursing Office can, because there are certain basic things that must be checked and verified before that voucher can move. For a person

page 94

---

submitting a voucher for reimbursement or for payment of an expense incurred, they have to be checked to see that they indeed were on the payroll at the time they incurred this expense and they worked in the office for which they incurred that expense. Those two basic things, nobody else can verify that from official records, because as you know the official payroll records are only in the Disbursing Office. But what happened was that we continued to do that work, and the vouchers then were sent to Bob Brenkworth, and he checked them over and then they went to the Rules Committee.

**RITCHIE:** It was adding an extra layer, in effect.

**RIDGELY:** Yes, it really did happen that way.

**RITCHIE:** Now, at first, when he was still under the Secretary, you remained as the Assistant Financial Clerk, but then when he moved to the President Pro Tem you became the Financial Clerk in 1970.

**RIDGELY:** That's right, because the Secretary didn't need two heads of the office, and rightfully so.

**RITCHIE:** Did all of this change over create any difficulties for you?

**RIDGELY:** For me?

**RITCHIE:** Yes, in dealing on one hand with the Secretary and on the other with the Comptroller and the President Pro Tem?

page 95

---

**RIDGELY:** Well, first of all, the one thing that I had to do, when the Secretary put me in the position of Financial Clerk, I had to let him know, in no uncertain terms you might say, that I was working for him and not for anybody else. If I say there was bad blood between the Secretary and Bob, I guess that's one way of putting it, it was really a personality difference. Of course, he knew that Bob and I had been associated for so long, at least twenty years, working together--more than working together, we just ran the thing and he and I were in consort on just about everything. So with this difference that came up, I had to just let the Secretary know in whatever way I could, or whatever fashion, that I was the Financial Clerk under the Secretary of the Senate and that I would pursue my job in the way that it had always been pursued, and that no one was going to interfere with that. And I had my opportunity to do that on a couple of occasions, to assure the Secretary that this was the way it was.

As a matter of fact, I got my back up once and I just had to let him know where I stood, and from that point on Frank and I got along very well. As a matter of fact, I developed a working relationship with Frank Valeo as good as it could have been with any Secretary. Because I think once he felt comfortable with me, then of course we go from there, and that's the way it worked out. I know I helped him

page 96

---

on a lot of things that the Financial Clerk and Budget Officer would normally do for the Secretary, and there were no problems once this was all settled.

**RITCHIE:** I only worked with Mr. Valeo briefly, but I had the opinion at the time that he was the type of person who once he had confidence in you delegated responsibility to you.

**RIDGELY:** Oh, yes.

**RITCHIE:** And pretty much let his staff work on their own.

**RIDGELY:** Right, he did, and as I say this is exactly what happened in this case. On the budgeting and other matters there were no problems. In other things, when problems would come up, he was calling me around for whatever I could give him, advice, counsel, or whatever it is, a direction of some kind where he was not aware of it. But it worked out to a good relationship.

**RITCHIE:** Now, when you say that Valeo and Brenkworth disagreed, did they disagree on policy matters, or was it strictly a personality difference?

**RIDGELY:** I think it was more personality. Both of them were very strong. Bob, of course, did an excellent job as Financial Clerk--I mean he worked for the Senate and watched out and protected the Senate in whatever way he could from where he was located. He

page 97

---

ran a good office; he ran a tight ship too. But he was fair to everybody, and held be the first one to champion his employees. So those kind of things, it was just a personality clash between him and Frank. That actually occurred, I think, before Frank became Secretary.

**RITCHIE:** So this had been going on for some time. Valeo became Secretary in 1966, so this had been going on for several years then, until 1969.

**RIDGELY:** Yes.

**RITCHIE:** Felton Johnson left in 1965, then Emery Frazier stepped in and Frank became Secretary in 1966.

**RIDGELY:** Yes.

**RITCHIE:** At the time you became Financial Clerk in 1970, someone named Orlando Potter did a study of the Disbursing Office. Who was Potter and what was the whole nature of that study?

**RIDGELY:** Orlando worked for the Senator from Rhode Island, Mr. [Claiborne] Pell, and then Frank brought him in as administrative director, if my recollection serves me. This was the kind of thing he did.

He studied the Stationery Room, he studied the Disbursing Office, and I think the Document Room, these kinds of things he was

page 98

---

doing, making a study of them. He left there and went down and became director of the Federal Elections Commission after a bit. But this is what he did.

**RITCHIE:** Now, in looking over the report that he filed at that time, he listed several areas where he thought that the Disbursing Office had assumed functions that were not necessarily their functions. The ones that I found were: "intrusion into Stationery Room receipts, processing of election certificates, briefing new senators, and appearing before the Appropriations Committee to testify and handle matters for the Secretary."

**RIDGELY:** This was an intrusion of the office?

**RITCHIE:** This is what he cited as intrusions in his report.

**RIDGELY:** Well, first of all, we were involved in the Stationery Room because in not only selling their merchandise to the office on official accounts, or selling it over the counter as they do, and have always done, the Secretary is the Disbursing Officer and he is responsible for that money. So it was the Secretary who brought the Disbursing Office into the picture. Skeeter Johnson, I think was responsible for that, because he wanted to make sure that the Stationery Room was clean. There were inventory practices that were developed, other things that were done, and the Secretary brought us into that. What was the second one on there?

page 99

---

**RITCHIE:** Processing election certificates.

**RIDGELY:** Processing of election certificates?

**RITCHIE:** Maybe he meant the oath books.

**RIDGELY:** Well, yes, if you talk about the official oath books, yes. The reason we have them, as far as I knew, was that they considered it such a valuable thing that they had no other safe keeping place but the Disbursing Office safe.

**RITCHIE:** It had something to do with when a person went on the payroll, didn't it? When they signed the oath book?

**RIDGELY:** Not individuals, only members [of the Senate]. The oath book is limited to the Members, the Vice President, and the oath of the Secretary goes in there.

**RITCHIE:** Does the Vice President sign an oath?

**RIDGELY:** Oh, yes. His is not one of the pages in the book. He signs the oath and then we put it into the book and it is kept.

**RITCHIE:** Oh, I see. Then the other two were briefing new senators and appearing before the Appropriations Committee to testify and handle matters for the Secretary.

page 100

---

**RIDGELY:** Well, briefing new senators, of course, was a very integral and important facet of the Disbursing Office because when new senators came in we would make appointments to have them come in before they took office, so we'd have some dedicated time to them. We would have representatives from the Sergeant at Arms, the Secretary's Office, the Rules Committee, and the Secretary for the Majority and Minority, depending on whether they were Democratic or Republican senators. Also included was the Stationery Room and the Printing Clerk. The Secretary would be there, kind of chairing the meeting, and held take them one-by-one, always leaving the Financial Clerk for last because the Financial Clerk needed as much time as all the rest of them, because we had to go over his salary and his personal items, plus his payroll allowance, what he could do with it, and all of his other office expense items, and it did take time. How he can say we intruded on that, I just don't know. I'm sure I read that report, but I didn't remember reading that.

**RITCHIE:** When I read the report, it struck me that they were probably all functions that had evolved rather than been specifically assigned at any one point, and I wondered if that's what it might have been.

**RIDGELY:** We weren't intruding, we were invited! We were invited to these things. You know, they'd call us up and we had a working arrangement with the Secretary's office because as soon as

page 101

---

someone was newly elected to an office, right after election day as quickly as we could get their address and know that the election was firm we'd get them information. We were the first and the Secretary's office was probably right behind us getting information to them as quickly as possible. We had a working arrangement with the Secretary's office. If a new senator called them and arranged an appointment they would let us know, and vice versa we did the same thing with them. We had a good working relationship. I don't know how you could call that an intrusion.

**RITCHIE:** So, in other words, all those functions continued on after 1970 as well as before?

**RIDGELY:** Oh, absolutely, yes. I would say that it even became more important after that because of the changes that were being made. It used to be that the operation of the offices was relatively simple compared to let's say what it is today in the way that the allowances are set up and things that they are able to do, as compared to then. I would consider it something that if you didn't do it you were being negligent really, it would be a disservice. And appearing before the Appropriations Committee--the Financial Clerk is the Budget Officer of the Senate! I don't know whether he was indicating that possibly someone else should do that, but the Disbursing Office is there, they are handling all of the appropriations, paying all of the expenses of the Senate, maintaining the official

page 102

---

record and ledgers of all of these expenses. Who else really knows better than the Financial Clerk, the Budget Officer? Of course, you could give somebody else this. But the Secretary went down at times and testified, but it was on his behalf.

The testimony of the Financial Clerk was as Budget Officer. He prepared the budget, submitted it to OMB, and it came back up here in the Budget Document, and then when the Subcommittee had its hearings it was expected that the Financial Clerk be there and go over the whole thing, and explain the increases that appeared in there, or changes, whatever the changes were. But on new positions, or salary changes, each individual person had to go down, the committee called them in. If the Secretary wanted to create a new position or two, or wanted to up the maximum rate on an existing position, he goes down and justifies that, not the Budget Officer. The Sergeant at Arms is the same. If senators' offices want more money, then they have to come in. Of course, letters of explanation would come in



on that. It was up to the Committee who they called in on these things. This was the way it worked.

But the primary role that the Financial Clerk played in this was going through that whole list, all of the items of the Senate, with an explanation--not a justification but an explanation--of what's in there. The only thing the Financial Clerk would justify was the cost of living increases that were granted and had to be cranked into the

page 103

---

following year. That was well recognized. And that was being done before I even came to work here. I remember Oco Thompson used to do it, so it was nothing new, it was something that always had been done.

**RITCHIE:** Another thing that the Potter report indicated was that there was no use of computers in the Disbursing Office before 1970.

**RIDGELY:** That's true.

**RITCHIE:** And there was a feeling that since the budget had gotten up to \$60 million and with some 5,000 people on the staff that the time had come for computers. Why was it that the Financial Clerk's office hadn't adopted computers by that time?

**RIDGELY:** Well, first of all, even back then you have to recognize that computerization of payrolls and everything was not necessarily something that was tremendously tried and true. I think we were leading up to that all along, because we had gotten in a bookkeeping machine that did a lot of our work that had to be done manually, as I referred to earlier. When I went to work there everything was done with pen and ink, everything. There was no mechanized operation at all at that time. Then it developed and we wound up, when Bob Brenkworth was Financial Clerk that we got in this

page 104

---

bookkeeping machine and started using that on our ledgers. Then that was updated later on to take care of the expense allowance accounts of senators.

Then, after I became Financial Clerk--I can't speak for Bob as to whether he would actually have gone into computers per se, if he had still been Financial Clerk--but I got a call one day and they asked me if I would be interested in talking to someone about automating the payroll. I said, "Hell yes." I said, "I'm not going to make any commitment but I'll talk to anybody who will help us out in something that will improve it, and if we can afford it." So they sent around two young fellows from a company. They started talking to me, they had a presentation of course, and they gave me a copy, and I sat and talked to them for hours. My prime response to them, if we did consider to automate or computerize the payroll, was that the system we brought in would have to be as good or better than what we were doing manually. I would use the word manually because we weren't automated.

I gave them a prime example while they were sitting there. I said, "Now if a senator walked into the office and asked me for a list of his staff, and what their salaries were, what his unused balance was," I said, "I can get that to him in a minute." Well, they were taken aback. They didn't believe it could be done. So I went out, I said, "110K, just hold on a minute," I walked out into the

page 105

---

front office, picked a list with what I considered a large staff at that time, and within a minute and a half I was back and I said: "OK, now if you'd been Senator V--and I didn't show them any names or anything--and came in this is what I'd give you." Well, they thought that was quite good. But we had developed ourselves a nice little system manually. So I said to them again, "Now this you have to match or do better on."

They kept saying, "Well the computer can do anything. If the logic is put in correctly it can do anything." And so we went from there and got to talking further on that. Then, of course, to get automated we had the Rules Committee and the Appropriations Committee involved: Rules to authorize it, the Appropriations Committee to give us the money for it. Of course, the Secretary was involved in this in terms of giving the green light on it. So we started into it. The Rules Committee was involved to the extent of putting out, I forget what they called it, like a prospectus, and farmed it out to companies to make bids on the software part of it. They held hearings, they interviewed all of the people from the companies, and then they awarded the contracts, and then we went from there.

From that point on, I suppose that I put in a solid three years before we had it to a point where we said, "OK, we'll no longer run the parallel setup. The only thing I could think of in this whole thing was: it's got to be right before we do it, because all we have

page 106

to do is foul up the thing that is dearest to everybody in the Senate, or in the world for that matter, and that's their paycheck. That was the one thing that was foremost in my mind. So with all the work that was done on it, and all the hassling that we went through, I spent days and weeks at a time with these people from this company, sitting down, documenting all of the procedures and the way things are done and the way they had to be done.

One of the first things they said to me was, "Well, the Social Security number will be the primary identification." I said, "Just a minute, now, we don't work that way around here. The first way we identify people around here is by their name, the second thing we identify them by is their payroll number because that is our control. Now, whatever you do with the Social Security number after that, that's OK with me." But I said, "If you want to put it in there, we must be able to have the ability if someone walks in and asks for information about their deductions to be able to get them by name, or if they show us their payroll number from a slip, we can use that, or the Social Security number." I said to them, "How would you like to be standing at that counter and a United States senator walked in and he said he would like to know something about his deductions and you say, "Well, sir, I must have your Social Security number before I can do that." And they caught on real quick. And, of course, it was done this way.

page 107

---

As I said, there was a lot of work involved, there was hassle, there was backing and filling, and finally we wound up, by the time we turned this over completely on the automated system, we had what I considered at the time a highly sophisticated payroll personnel system. It was doing a lot of things automatically that we had to do as a separate step, when it came to the allowances, the salary allowances for the offices and everything. We ran that thing parallel for one year by keeping the manual system and running it on the automated system and checking the automated system to the manual system. The second year, before we turned over, we ran it on the automated system, and verified that with the manual pay records. We had a guarantee that it was going to be right when it rolled over. But it was a very interesting experience. I didn't know anything about computers, I can really say I don't know anything today on it. But I got a liberal education about automation!

**RITCHIE:** Well, I suppose as the Senate was growing in size the need for something like this was becoming increasingly obvious.

**RIDGELY:** Oh, yes. It's true, no question about that, because it wasn't just the payroll that was increasing, and the number of people coming on the staff, but other things were growing too. Our staff was limited because if we needed to hire a couple extra people we had no place to put them. The space was limited, everybody knows

page 108

---

that space has been terribly critical here in the Senate. So we were suffering through that like everybody else. It's true, we were. So, that's the way she started.

**RITCHIE:** Beginning August 1, 1970 you were the Financial Clerk of the Senate?

**RIDGELY:** Yes.

**RITCHIE:** And you served in that position until 1977. When you became Financial Clerk, did Mr. Valeo suggest things that he wanted done in that office? Was he interested in what was going on and set any priorities? Or was it basically continue as the office had been?

**RIDGELY:** Continue as the office had been.

**RITCHIE:** And he gave you pretty much free rein?

**RIDGELY:** Oh, yes. He didn't have anybody looking over my shoulder, no, he didn't have. I suppose that with that not happening, having someone look over my shoulder, he was probably satisfied to see how things were developed. Of course, it meant not only what I did to develop a relationship but also meant that he had to come around, because--I repeat myself--the association of Bob Brenkworth and myself for so many years naturally may give him pause.

page 109

---

**RITCHIE:** As Financial Clerk, I assume you probably worked most closely with the Rules Committee and the Appropriations Committees, and presumably with the chairmen of those committees. Were there any other senators whom you worked closely with? The Majority Leader?

**RIDGELY:** Oh, yes.

**RITCHIE:** Who does the Financial Clerk deal with, other than the Secretary?

**RIDGELY:** Oh, with the Leadership, yes, they were involved. All of the senators, whether it was through committees or otherwise. And there were other committees that we would get involved in. Occasionally Government Operations, when it came to--well, go back before Government Operations, when Post Office and Civil Service Committee was still in existence. We were very close to them, because it involved not only the salary structures but the benefits, retirement, life and health insurance for employees. So we worked with them, and I would have to say that we were close to that committee also at the time. Then when that committee was dissolved and placed under Government Operations, we worked with them then. Another committee was the Committee on Finance, because taxes were one thing involved in that. We had some relationship working with them. But I would say by and large we had some dealings with all of the committee chairmen at one time or another. But Rules and Appropriations were the two primary ones, as far as that part is concerned.

page 110

---

**RITCHIE:** Did you feel that the working relationship was a good one with those committees?

**RIDGELY:** Oh, yes, definitely. We had a good working relationship with all the offices. Every once in a while, you know, somebody would get their nose bent out of joint, but this is a normal thing. They would incur an expense that maybe we couldn't pay, and if they wanted to pursue it they'd have to go to the Rules Committee. And, you know, busy offices, they didn't want to have to go through all of this, call it red tape or whatever it is, but that's just the way it had to be done, that's all there is to it. But I would say that the working relationship would be classed at the highest part of ten, if you put it on that scale. Yes, we did, because we were there for service and we did things for them that they needed to have done.

**RITCHIE:** How did the Disbursing Office work when you were Financial Clerk? I mean, what was the structure of the office? I know Bob Malstrom was your assistant clerk; how were responsibilities divided up?

**RIDGELY:** Well, first of all, the Financial Clerk and Assistant Financial Clerk were out there in the front office chiefly. That was until Bob Brenkworth was able to get a little office built within our office for the Financial Clerk. Then the Assistant Financial Clerk was out front with one other staff person to help him out, and that was rotating so more than one in the office knew that front office

page 111

---

operations. So Bob was there running the office, working up the budget and everything, as a first step. The Assistant Financial Clerk was backup. When Bob was Financial Clerk I was Assistant Financial Clerk, held work up the budget, I would take it and go through it and check it out, very independently of what he did, because that's what he wanted me to do. If I didn't see anything that looked right I was to say something, and I did. We made sure we had a good one. It may not have been a perfect budget, but it was a correct version of what the Senate needed.

That was one of my jobs, the other job of course was maintaining the front office and seeing that the people who came into the office got their needs taken care of. And of course, overseeing the office when the Financial Clerk wasn't there, or even doing that while he was there sometimes, for that matter. Then we had the chief bookkeeper, who was in the back office, and he was overseeing all the rest of the operation. We had the payroll section, the audit section or voucher section, we had the accounting section, and the benefit section, and there was a supervisor or head of each one of those sections. The chief bookkeeper was overseeing them. Of course, his responsibility was to the Assistant Financial Clerk and to the Financial Clerk.

page 112

---

**RITCHIE:** When you became Financial Clerk your relationship with Bob Malstrom was the same; in other words he did the same functions as you had done as Assistant Financial Clerk?

**RIDGELY:** Yes.

**RITCHIE:** And the positions stayed pretty much the same?

**RIDGELY:** Yes.

**RITCHIE:** But I suppose the Financial Clerk was the one who dealt more directly with the senators.

**RIDGELY:** Yes, I think in most instances when someone in a position like a senator comes in they will want to talk to the head man in the office. But of course, a lot of times they did come in and deal with others, Bob Malstrom and some of the other people in the office.

**RITCHIE:** What types of services would a senator look for? Why would a senator come into the Disbursing Office?

**RIDGELY:** Well, first of all he would come in there and maybe review his payroll. Now most of them would designate somebody in their office to handle their payroll and other matters. But some of them did not and they would come into the office and they would want to see the list of their staff and would sit down and review it and maybe ask you, for instance maybe somebody they were considering

page 113

---

giving a raise to, "When's the last time this person got a raise?" We'd give him that right there on the spot. Then he'd make up his letter of authority to us, right then and there, and we'd have the secretary type it up, and he'd sign it and be on his way.

Retirement was a big thing, you know, knowing the circumstances of retirement, service that is creditable, and all of this. Their health insurance, they would come in and talk to us about their needs, particularly anytime when there was a change, when they'd first come on, and when the open seasons would come along, they would want to take a review and see what our thoughts were, because they knew we kept pretty close to these things. Life insurance was pretty cut and dry. The only thing to check on that was who they had designated as beneficiaries. These things they would check on, but their office allowances and their expense allowance, all of these things they would come into the office periodically and address.

**RITCHIE:** You mentioned that during your time as Financial Clerk, the office computerized, that was probably the biggest change. Were there any other changes? Were there any other things you tried to do to change the procedures?

**RIDGELY:** Well, in terms of automating the payroll system, we followed it up with a couple of other things. The one thing that was a problem--it was just one heck of a job--was the Secretary's Report. All these vouchers flowing through, and in quantities of 24,000 to

page 114

---

30,000 a year, we were accumulating copies of all of these vouchers. At the end of every six months

we had to send them down to the Printing Office, the GPO, and they set it all in hot lead. It would come back to us in galley. We would have to proof read it and then send it down for corrections and get the page proofs. And we had to proof read that because we couldn't trust them: the figures had to be right, or else there was no way you could accept it. This was a burdensome job because the Secretary had sixty days after the close of each six month period to have that printed and available to the general public. So this was one thing.

I said to myself: if we could only knock that big peak down! I got to thinking about automating that. This was at a point in time when our Senate Computer Center had grown to the extent where they were capable of handling something like this. So I got to talking to them and gave them all of the background, all the things they needed to know to make an evaluation. They came back and said, "yes, it can be done." We developed that in such a fashion that each day as vouchers were paid, they were put into the computer, word for word, just as they were going to be printed in the Secretary's Report. We'd get a print out the next day and it was proof read that day, and corrections put into the computer. That was locked in and was there. No more proof reading to do. This went on for six months.

page 115

---

What we did, we knocked that semi-annual horrendous peak down to where it was leveled off to a six month job that we could do throughout the six months. At the end of the six months we got a print out from the Computer Center. It was sent to the GPO, they shot pictures of it, and that was it. Not only that, as we entered vouchers into this computer system, it added the amounts and at the end of the six months we got a report that we checked against our official ledgers as proof. As I said, it's been more accurate since we did that than before because we never did any adding, we read figures. But that did work out.

**ITCHIE:** Previously you referred to that as the "Green Hate Book," that some of the senators used to call it that. In the mid-1970s there was a group that went through the Secretary's Report and tallied up all of the women's positions in the Senate, how much they earned, and what jobs they held, and published a report that got in all the newspapers, showing that women earned less money than men did on the Senate staff. Did that cause any problems for you at the time?

**RIDGELY:** No. It really didn't, because the only way they could get it was by doing that kind of a job on it. It's like somebody called me up once about something that was in the Secretary's Report and asked me to do it. I said, "I can't do that for you. This is a research project." I don't know whether it was a newspaper person or



page 116

---

whoever it was, but it was a research project. I said, "You know, if I sat down and did this it would take my time and it's the same job you can do just as easily as I can--maybe more easily because you might have more time than I have to do it. That particular thing, no, it did not. The only place they could get that was from the Secretary's Report.

Of course, that was always a hair shirt for people because there was always a lag. For instance, the Secretary's Report as of June 30 of a given year is due by August 30, sixty days later. Well, by the time somebody gets started and does research of any kind, and particularly if it's one like you said about all of the women and taking their salaries, they are talking about past salaries. They are past October 1 in their research project and they are going to be talking about salaries in the first six months of the year and the salaries have already changed in October and which, of course, wouldn't be out until the end of February the next year. So that time lag there was always a problem for people who wanted to do research from it. The document that they used was factual for the time. I wouldn't try myself to tally that kind of thing, that's quite a research job. To do it manually would be a considerable task to label offices and salaries, because every salary in there they'd have to multiply by two to get an annual rate of salary.

page 117

---

**RITCHIE:** All the salaries of senators staff were all set by the senators themselves, is that right?

**RIDGELY:** That is correct.

**RITCHIE:** They had an office budget and could divide it up as they saw fit?

**RIDGELY:** An office would have a lump sum allowance that was geared to the population of the state. This lump sum allowance had no restrictions as to the number of people they could employ, but it did have some restrictions as to salary limitations at the top level. He would have maybe three or four limitations for the top staff, and then all others may not be paid at a rate not to exceed a certain level, and that would be a stipulated amount. So from that point on he could pay anything that was within that allowance, to as many people as he could get out of it.

**RITCHIE:** So someone doing work for one senator might not necessarily be paid the same amount of

money as someone doing the exact same type of work for another senator?

**RIDGELY:** Correct. Yes, and that 's been known to be so. They just paid differently, depending on the philosophy of each office, each member.

**RITCHIE:** Is that still continued?

page 118

---

**RIDGELY:** I'm sure it is. I do not believe the basic structure of that allowance has been changed. I don't know what else you could do to that, except take all limitations off and say OK, you can pay anybody up to X number of dollars a year, which would be the maximum for anybody. The only other thing you could do . . . well, you could do many things with it, but it certainly wouldn't in my opinion serve the purpose that it's serving. He's got free rein now. As you were talking about a situation where there might be one person in one office and another in another office and both of them doing the same job but getting paid different salaries, that's the same way as senators from states with the same population, one may use all of his money, the other one may not use his allotment. There were several states in one category of under three million population, and they all got the same allowance, yet the use of that money varied so much. Some would need it to serve their constituency, others maybe with not so demanding a constituency, wouldn't need so much staff, and they would be able to save some money, which many of them did.

**RITCHIE:** Earlier we talked about special committees, like the Kefauver Committee and other investigations. When you were Financial Clerk the most important investigation was the Watergate hearings in 1973 and 1974. I know that was a big committee, they had their own computer operation and special needs, did they create any special headaches for you as Financial Clerk?

page 119

---

**RIDGELY:** No, no headaches. All it did was to impact the volume of work. A committee with the staff the size they had, and of course with all that was going on and expenses incurred, more vouchers, the impact it had on us really was limited to the administrative end of it. The rest of it there was no problem. But it just creates more activity, because whenever one additional employee is put on the staff, the Disbursing Office is affected.

**RITCHIE:** But with a special committee like that, everyone's there for only a limited period of time, and there is a lot of coming and going.

**RIDGELY:** Oh, yes, you do experience in the administrative part of it, where we were located, taking care of the payroll and processing the vouchers for payment of witnesses and employees traveling and other expenses incurred by the committee, it does create more work, no question about it. The impact is felt.

**RITCHIE:** Well, looking back on your years as Financial Clerk, what would you say was the most memorable event, or the most interesting work that you did?

**RIDGELY:** I think there were several things that took place that had a definite impact and improvement as far as the Disbursing Office is concerned and as far as the Senate is concerned. In automating the payroll it certainly saved time and saved money, because if we

page 120

---

had continued a manual payroll system we would have had to have more, and while we had a large initial outlay to automate, dollars to go out, over the years I just can't tell you . . . I guess if I thought it out, I might be able to give an estimated figure of what I would consider the savings.

One of the things that happened, in addition to automating the payroll, the Secretary's Report, and other things along with our computerized system, was when we went from paying cash twice a month to check twice a month. Even I couldn't believe it when I estimated the time saving to the Senate that occurred by this one, small thing--it was bigger than small--because I estimated that other than the Disbursing Office itself it saved the Senate in excess of 18,000 man days a year. Just by figuring one hour twice a month for each employee that had to be paid and multiplying that factor, I came up with a figure in excess of 18,000 man-days. I couldn't believe it. I had somebody check my figures on that. But I think that that had a very rewarding feeling about it. That didn't even include the time that it saved us, the hours that it saved us in the Disbursing Office. It gave us that much more time to take care of other things.

But I think the computerization of the payroll and the Secretary's Report and changing over to the check system, also starting state income tax deductions for the people. I committed the Disbursing Office to state withholding once we got the payroll

page 121

automated. We cranked that all in as we developed the automated system. So when we got to the end of it we went to the Appropriations Committee and got a provision of law put in authorizing the Secretary to do this. Then we went from there and it worked beautifully.

We cranked in that first year and the first month 3,300 employees, if I remember correctly, and didn't have anything happen. There was just a beautiful take up in that whole thing. It worked beautifully, it really did. It's a good feeling when that happens. There was enough blood, sweat, and tears in getting this automated system working, I'll tell you. But to have this work the way it did it was really neat.

**RITCHIE:** I suppose you were waiting for that first angry employee who didn't get his check.

**RIDGELY:** Well, it was not so much for the first angry employee, it was waiting for that first payroll to come out with that in there and see what happens. It was very nice. It worked so beautifully. You get a good feeling when it does happen that way. And if something had gone wrong, we would have just had to reckon with it, that was all there was to it. We worked hard to have it come out that way. Well, I suppose those were the major things that happened.

page 122

---

Oh, one other thing happened when I was Financial Clerk, that I developed along with the Rules Committee was eliminating the monthly payroll vouchers of all of our subcommittees. Before we got to the system that was developed, the committee clerks had to submit a payroll voucher, a large sheet with all the names of the employees, their salary, and the breakdown for the month. It had to be signed by the chairman before we could do anything with it. And we had to get this in by the tenth of each month. Well, by the time we got it in, we'd gotten letters maybe terminating people, maybe appointments putting new people on, so when we get it we have to update it. This has to go to Rules Committee before we can pay it, once we get the chairman's signature on it. So I developed a proposition which I presented to the Rules Committee, and that was to bring off the automated system a six month payroll that would be sent to Rules Committee for approval rather than going back to the monthly vouchers (each one of them had to be approved by the Rules Committee before we could pay). We were paying on the 20th of the month, you see. Then all the changes that took place between the time when we received it on the 10th of the month and the end of the month there were sometimes a great number of changes. A busy committee, you had many changes. And it really got to be a problem. Our committees

were growing.

So I came up with this idea and presented it to the Rules Committee. I checked with GAO, and everybody, to find out if there

page 123

---

was anything to prohibit us doing this. They said no, so I made the presentation to the Rules Committee, got the provisional law changed, so that this could be implemented. Boy, I'm telling you, I've never had a happier bunch of committee clerks in all my life when that happened. They were just tickled to death. It saved them a lot of time and a lot of effort. But the big thing was that it saved the Disbursing Office even more work and effort. Individually it saved the committee clerks, but collectively this is where the big savings was. That was a good change too, because the effect was felt by everybody on this. Those are the changes that took place that I think really moved us along and got us on the track of using the automated system. When I left the office there were still some things that could have been done, they may have been done already, but by and large we had all of the basic things in there and working as it should be.

**RITCHIE:** It sounds like the Financial Office became a modern office, having gone from the days of the handwritten ledgers.

**RIDGELY:** I have often referred to it by saying that during my time there we went full circle from the Bob Cratchitt in "A Christmas Carol" by Charles Dickens, style of bookkeeping to a sophisticated, modern record keeping system. When I went to the Disbursing Office we used to have--if you can visualize Bob Cratchitt in the story, at his desk with the green visor and his armband--a similar type of

page 124

---

bookkeeping desk there. There was a safe under it where we kept all of the books that were done in pen and ink. I always kidded about me at the desk sitting on a high stool, like a bar stool, with my little visor hat on, and bands on my sleeves keeping the records of the United States Senate. I used to kid about that. But it was true, we did. We went a long ways in bringing it around, but it had to be done. Otherwise, I told the Appropriations Committee that if we had not automated the way we did, that I would have guessed that the Disbursing Office staff would have had to double.

**RITCHIE:** Did you ever find any resistance from the Appropriations Committee or the Rules Committee against such modernization?

**RIDGELY:** Oh, no. No, I will have to say, and I don't mean to pat myself on the back, but our presentation with them was a good presentation. We tried to check everything out so that when we presented it to them they had the story there and could explain to them all of the things that we wanted them to consider and approve for us. We succeeded in all of those things.

**RITCHIE:** In 1977 you retired as Financial Clerk. Was there any particular reason why you decided to leave at that time?

**RIDGELY:** Yes, I had reached age 55. I had gone past thirty years of service. And I looked at everything, particularly the Disbursing Office: there were five employees there, senior employees,

page 125

---

who were all on the threshold of retirement within a certain number of years, including myself. And I said to myself: If I stay here another three, or four, or five years--and there was no pressure from any quarter for me to leave there--I said when I leave here and two, three, or four of them follow me, all of the experience in the office is going to be coming with me, because as long as I stayed there everything stayed in place, unless one of them retired before I did. So I figured, if I retired, people would move up and it would give the younger employees in the office three years minimum to start learning more about the office. Continuity was what I was thinking of, because unless somebody changed it that would continue as it always had. That's really the reason I left then.

**RITCHIE:** But you stayed on then as a consultant to the Senate. I remember you had the office across from Dr. Floyd Riddick just off the Rotunda in the Russell Building. What were you doing as a consultant?

**RIDGELY:** Well, first of all, when I decided to leave the Disbursing Office I had no job offers and no commitments to anybody. I really hadn't even looked. I will have to say, though, that at the time, Stan Kimmitt was Secretary and he asked me if I would be interested in a position that, let me say, would be in terms of "Assistant Secretary for Financial Operations," or something similar to that. He asked me to think about that, and I did. I went back to

page 126

---

Stan and told him that I appreciated the offer but that I felt that if he was satisfied with the people who were running the Disbursing Office and the Stationery Room, and they were doing a good job, neither one of them needed anybody breathing down their neck or looking over their shoulders. So I declined.

Then I was asked if I would come on the payroll as a consultant and so some work for the Secretary and the Sergeant at Arms. Two of the things that I worked on was the revision of the longevity system, I improved that, and I also developed the merit compensation program. That was limited to the Secretary and Sergeant at Arms offices. And I did some work for the Rules Committee at the same time. I also did some things for the Appropriations Committee during that time, and that was for a year and a half. Then of course, coming along in February of 1979 we had that real heavy snow storm. Art Kuhl was the Assistant Secretary and, as you may recall, in walking from his home over here on 8th Street, N.E., to the Capitol, he had a heart attack and died in that snow storm. Then Stan asked me if I would consider the Assistant Secretary's job. So I did. I came off the retired rolls and into the Assistant Secretary's job.

**RITCHIE:** Did you have any hesitation about taking it?

**RIDGELY:** No.

page 127

---

**RITCHIE:** It was an interesting job that you looked forward to?

**RIDGELY:** Well, yes, because in the Disbursing Office, being the Financial Clerk and Budget Officer, that is a mainstream of one sort, *one* sort let's say. And while it was an administrative office, it was a service office, and got involved in many things, you know so many things not really related to Disbursing Office activities, but you just helped people in whatever they came and asked you. Looking at the job of Assistant Secretary, it was a different mainstream, more of an administrator's job, as I've referred to it. It involved work on the floor. Of course, as Financial Clerk I always had privileges to the floor and did have to go down there, particularly when the Appropriations Committee was working, I was expected to be there. So I was familiar with the floor, but as the Assistant Secretary it would be different entirely than what I had been in. I learned a lot, too, during the couple of years I was Assistant Secretary, a heck of a lot more about the Senate, particularly in the legislative end of it. I was pretty familiar with that anyway, being around here so long and working with the Appropriations and Rules Committees and learning about the process of bills and what happened to them, and you know you get

a good feeling for that. But as the Assistant Secretary I got a little bit closer to that.

**RITCHIE:** What are the Assistant Secretary's responsibilities on the floor?

page 128

---

**RIDGELY:** Well, first of all, as you remember, in days gone by that position was Chief Clerk of the Senate--and I've heard many people say they think that that is a more appropriate title than Assistant Secretary of the Senate. But the Chief Clerk of the Senate is really the number one man at that desk in the Senate Chamber. This chair is still designated for the Assistant Secretary and is the first chair. You know the set-up at the desk. When Emery Frazier was Chief Clerk he did all the work that our Legislative Clerks do now, Bill Farmer and Scott Bates. He was there, he was calling the rolls, he was reading the titles of the bills and everything else. The Assistant Secretary's position now has come back into more administrative work, insofar as the office of the Secretary is concerned, for all the departments that he has under him.

When I was Assistant Secretary, if something would come up in one of the offices, Stan would ask me to check it out. He'd give it to me, and really, that's the way it ought to be. The Secretary shouldn't have to check into every nitty gritty thing that goes on there. I guess he had a feeling that if I found something he should be aware of, he'd know about it. Well, whether it was little or not, I would always keep him updated on it, tell him everything is taken care of and in good shape, if nothing more than that. And he should know this. The job of Assistant Secretary changed to this, I guess I can say this occurred after Emery Frazier left. Darrell St. Claire came into it, and then Art Kuhl, and then myself. Of course, the

page 129

---

change had taken place long before I got in there. I continued doing what the Assistant Secretary had been doing. It was at that point that I got involved in the IPU, as Assistant Secretary.

**RITCHIE:** In the office you would be handling the administrative details for the Secretary?

**RIDGELY:** Yes.

**RITCHIE:** Worries over personnel, hirings, and salaries . . .



**RIDGELY:** Problems of the department heads and so forth, yes.

**RITCHIE:** But what was your relationship to the Senate floor itself? What would call you onto the floor to deal with the senators?

**RIDGELY:** Well, as you know, each day when the Senate opens the Secretary escorts the presiding officer and the chaplain to the dais. That was the job, as far as the floor was concerned, and the need for me to be there, that was my job when the Secretary was not there. I did it many times. It's just impossible for any one person to be there every day, day in and day out. But I made it a practice to be there at the opening of every Senate session that I could. It was not a matter of exposure, I was personally interested in this, in seeing and knowing what was going to happen during the day, when the Majority Leader, first [Robert] Byrd and then [Howard] Baker would

page 130

---

address the Senate in opening remarks every day. I would spend maybe fifteen or twenty minutes there, and sometimes during the day, depending on the legislation, I'd go out there and sit at the desk and pay attention to what was going on, and did indeed learn something.

**RITCHIE:** Did you keep an eye on the other clerks who worked there?

**RIDGELY:** Yes, but they're pretty much on their own. They know what they have to do and they do a very good job. They take care of things in a good way, yes, they do very well. The Legislative Clerks, the Journal Clerk, the Parliamentarian, those are the four that man the desk there. Then there are the other people, like the Enrolling Clerk, the Bill Clerks, they are there and moving around keeping tabs on things. They do a good job.

**RITCHIE:** Would senators come to you as Assistant Secretary with problems?

**RIDGELY:** Not so much then. They would come to me and ask me about things that well, once again related to something I was no longer involved with.

**RITCHIE:** Financial matters?

page 131

---

**RIDGELY:** Yes, oh yes. Retirement. They'd see me, they would have remembered talking to me about retirement, and if they saw me on the floor they would call me into the cloakroom or into the lobby and sit down and talk about things like that, yes. But that's about the extent of that kind of thing. That kind of thing diminished as time went on, but I still have some of that, in the hallway I get stopped two or three times going to and from the Capitol. People stop to talk and ask a question. Most often I really have to refer them to Disbursing because it's been five years since I've been in Disbursing and there have been some changes in some of these things. They have to go over there to get the right answers. Basic information I can answer and save them some time and some steps.

**RITCHIE:** Well, what types of problems would you have dealt with when you were Assistant Secretary? Were there some major issues that you tried to straighten out for the Secretary?

**RIDGELY:** I guess the biggest thing that I got involved in was changing the Stationery Room over, in developing that into a more modern and more efficient operation. And Stan did get me involved in that, and I worked very closely with the Stationery Room and the Architect in the design of that sales room, just to make it work better. To give people better service and to put the goods right in front of them. It was another thing that if you didn't do something like this it was going to cost you more manpower. Because when you

page 132

---

have a counter and as the people on the other side of the counter coming in increases, to maintain the service you'll have to have more people to run the store.

**RITCHIE:** I remember the old system: you took a number and stood at the glass counter until a clerk could wait on you and bring your order; before it became self-service.

**RIDGELY:** Well, the Stationery Room was really a stepchild. I don't know why. But Stan took a definite interest in that, and he deserves credit for moving ahead on it and getting done what was done, because it really improved it a great deal. And it turned out nice. That was the biggest thing; other things you'd get involved in would be, as I say, problems, there's the Library, The Document Room, and the Stationery Room, you've got the Printing Clerk, and the Public Records Office, all of this under the Secretary. Problems would come up and they'd come and talk to me, and if there was something that needed to be done, maybe needed a policy decision right from the top, I'd take it in to the Secretary, or I'd take the person talking to me in to the Secretary. We'd sit down and talk about it, iron it out and get

it taken care of. It was an administrator's type of operation.

**RITCHIE:** So the Assistant Secretary is sort of the nuts and bolts type of person who handles the day-to-day operations and tries to relieve the Secretary.

page 133

---

**RIDGELY:** It really should be that. The Secretary should have that because he is involved in a lot of other things with the members of the Senate. He should not have to be hog-tied with a lot of these nitty gritty things that somebody else can take care of for him.

**RITCHIE:** Did you as Assistant Secretary have much dealing with the Majority and Minority leaders, and the party Whips?

**RIDGELY:** Not too much, no. Except for whatever I'd get involved with on the floor, and that was not that much.

**RITCHIE:** Were you there at all times the Senate was in session? Was that part of your responsibility? For instance, if they were in late sessions at night and on weekends, did you need to be there?

**RIDGELY:** No. Stan always felt that he should be there. I stayed sometimes, but most often he'd say, "No sense in both of us staying, you go on home." Some nights it might be 5:30, 6:00, 6:30, 7:00 o'clock before you could really tell what was going to happen. There was a number of times that he would let me know that he had a commitment somewhere, and if they're in late, you've got it. I'd say, "I got it." And I would stay. It was worked out that way and there were no problems at all.

page 134

---

**RITCHIE:** You inherited then the International Parliamentary Union responsibilities from Art Kuhl when you became Assistant Secretary, and that had become a function of that office.

**RIDGELY:** Right. That involvement, when I became the Assistant Secretary on March 1, 1979 happened to be the first time that the House was to take care of the financial and all other arrangements

of the United States delegation. As a matter of fact, Stan asked me before I even became Assistant Secretary if I would audit the records of the IPU that Art had taken care of, the bank account and everything, and get it ready to turn over to the House, which I did. I did this while I was a consultant. I got it all set, the records that they should get with the checkbook and everything, and I turned it over to the Clerk's office. From that point on I was involved in taking care of things for the Secretary, rather than him doing it.

**RITCHIE:** The IPU always seems to be one of the more interesting parts of that job, would you say that?

**RIDGELY:** Oh, yes, because you have to remember at that particular time I had worked thirty-eight, thirty-nine years, including my military service, and during that time there was no need for me to travel for the government. So after all this time I stepped into this role, not only having to handle the financial arrangements but to make the arrangements for the transportation and to travel with the group each time. It was something very new and very different.

page 135

---

**RITCHIE:** It was obviously a benefit that you knew finances so well, since such a large part of the job was overseeing the finances; but did you find that taking over the travel arrangements and hotel reservations and all that created great troubles at first?

**RIDGELY:** Strangely, no. What I did was to go through the most recent trip that had been completed and just boned up on it. I got a fairly good idea of what went on. But we have to go back, before I did it myself you have to bear in mind that the House did it for two years. They got it cold turkey, because they had never done it before. They would have had difficulties even if I had started right there, because at least I had records. They had no records or anything. As it has developed, they did that, and I'm sure--I'll say this and they probably wouldn't deny it--they probably had to struggle that first trip to get everything in place. But they had a lot of help. They had some of the members over there on the House side who had traveled on a number of trips before and had at least a working knowledge of it. I'm sure the Clerk's office got a lot of help from that standpoint. That trip went off good, and the other trips they handled also came off good.

Before it came back to the Senate in 1981 we had developed a real good working relationship between the Senate and House, the Clerk's office and the Secretary's office. Cables that they would send out or get in connection with a trip, they gave us a copy so we

page 136

---

could follow everything. Information that would come in from IPU headquarters, we started doing then and we still do it, I'd check with the Clerk's office and ask them if they got it. If they get it, they call me to make sure that each of us are getting all of this information. For some unknown reason the IPU headquarters in Geneva has both the Secretary and the Clerk's office listed over there, but we never know to which one of them they're going to send something. Sometimes they'll send it to one, or the other, and then other times they'll send it to both. So we had to develop this, because when they send this information about the meetings that are coming up we have to make sure the members are informed. We know which members are interested and will get them a copy of the information.

The first trip was strange in a way. First of all, I had never traveled with a congressional delegation, as a matter of fact, I hadn't traveled for the government at all. Of course we had a military escort, we used a military aircraft. Everything is taken care of for you. The embassies do a big job for you on this, and they do a good job. They get things all in place, they get your transportation needs. You have to authorize everything; they won't do anything unless you authorize them in a cable to do it. But they find out what the schedule is and wire that information to us, and we can develop what we need to pass on to the members and other people who are going. We have a nice procedure to follow to do this. IPU meetings are pretty much rote. That makes it easier, really.

page 137

---

**RITCHIE:** But that first trip you worried about?

**RIDGELY:** I won't say worried, it was just that I didn't know exactly what role I'd be playing in it. Well, as it was, Ted Henshaw, who was the Clerk of the House, was on the trip. He knew that I had been involved in the finances of the Senate, and Ted has never been involved with that. He's the Clerk, and the payroll of the House comes under the Clerk's office, but he didn't get involved in it any more than the Secretary of the Senate does, but he knew I'd been in the Disbursing Office for many years, and he knew that I had done that on the Senate side. I don't know if he recognized the fact that this was my first trip, but he at least knew that I was familiar with it and had a working knowledge of it. He, I won't say leaned on me, but he and I worked together real good on that trip. He'd ask me what I thought we should do and things like that. He learned, and I learned. We complemented each other in that way, and everything worked fine.

**RITCHIE:** Has there ever been any trip of the IPU that has given you more problems than others?

**RIDGELY:** Cuba. All of them have been easy compared to that one. That was unique in itself, in that we couldn't use the military aircraft, and we didn't have a military escort. A military escort is good because they take care of so many things for us. We always have help on the other end. The embassy will have a truck there for us,

page 138

---

and some people to help getting the baggage to the hotels. We always get the room numbers before we go so they put tags on the bags with the room numbers here, before we even put them on the airplane, so when we get there it makes it an easy distribution for them. With Cuba we had to charter airplanes to go down there, we had to charter airplanes to bring us back; and all the things the military did we had to do ourselves.

Well, it was more difficult because we don't have an embassy down there. We have personnel down there. We have a U.S. interest section working out of the Swiss embassy, but they don't have the status of an embassy and cannot get things done as an embassy can do it where we have diplomatic relations. Not having diplomatic relations with Cuba, of course, caused problems. There were things that caused us grief, yes, no question about that. More so than any of the other trips. I can't think of any other problems that we had that were anything like the Cuban trip. But by and large, except for the extra things we had to do, and our supplies and everything, where an embassy can provide us with certain things in the country that we're going to, it just wasn't available on that trip. The problems that we encountered on the trip to Cuba were different. They were problems that we do not incur in other places.

page 139

---

**RITCHIE:** I just talked to someone who came back from a trip to Italy. When they arrived in Rome and went to their hotel it was surrounded by Italian police with machine guns. They inquired at the desk what was going on and were told "the International Parliamentary Union is meeting in Rome and the American delegation is staying in this hotel." So it sounded like you got very good service and protection while you were over there.

**RIDGELY:** Oh, yes. As you know, they've been having some problems over there. They were concerned about the Red Brigade. There are probably embers still burning with that, and they have other problems over there, and I'm sure they didn't want anything to happen. It was just like when we went to the Philippines. We had round-the-clock guards in the hotel there, because they have terrorist groups down there too. Not on the island that Manilla is located, but on the outlying islands. When we went to Caracas we had the same thing, because when the IPU met in Caracas it was only a month or so after that American businessman had been found, after being a captive of terrorists for three and a half years. So that place was alive with police and military. They were very careful in Rome, yes, to make sure that everything was taken care of.

page 140

---

**RITCHIE:** In the election of 1980, for the first time in twenty-six years, the Republicans took control of the Senate from the Democrats. Stan Kimmitt stepped down as Secretary and Bill Hildenbrand was elected. You stayed on for a few months to handle the transition. Were there any particular problems of transition when one party succeeds another party after such a long period of being out of the majority?

**RIDGELY:** No. I didn't see any particular problems. You knew changes were going to come about. The first thing that happened with me was that people learned that I was here and was working here when it happened in the 83rd Congress, when that Congress went Republican. So they were coming to me and asking me what's going to happen? What was it like then? Well, the big thing that I told people was that people were concerned about their jobs, and rightfully so, and the only thing I could tell them was that with the change in the leadership and the control of the Senate, everybody, no matter where they were situated, had to have some thoughts that they could lose their jobs. Every one of us is here at the will of the Senate.

I said: "The only thing I could suggest is that you go back to your job, keep your nose clean, and wait and see." I said: "I don't expect to see any wholesale changes taking place" Looking at this change, I said: "You have to think back to the 83rd Congress when I recall that just about everything changed." The whole police force

page 141

---

was patronage, believe it or not. The whole force changed, not a hundred percent but in terms of the

police force you could almost say it was the whole force. Even the clerks at the desk in the Senate changed. My recollection was that they didn't call them minority and majority clerks then, but they'd be Democrats and Republicans.

Let me give you an example, suppose they had in the 83rd Congress a Legislative Clerk and an Assistant Legislative Clerk. Well, in the 82nd Congress the Legislative Clerk would have been a Democrat and the Assistant would be a Republican. In the 83rd Congress the Legislative Clerk would have been the Republican and they switched back and forth. There was patronage in the Secretary's office like that. But in the twenty-six intervening years, with the activities of the Senate going from a part year institution to a full year institution, all of these jobs that had been patronage came off the patronage list and were made permanent positions. The people had to be there all the time.

You might say that no longer could the Senate afford this kind of thing in certain positions. I said, "But you have to remember, too, that these positions came off the patronage list while the Senate was under the control of the Democrats, and I would dare say that they could go back on the patronage list just as quick as they came off." But I said, "Myself, I don't see that happening." I told them, "I don't think that the changes will be wholesale. Whatever

page 142

---

changes happen they're going to be slow. Some things will happen right away, others will happen later on as they get the feel for it." I said, "I think the change over is just as traumatic for the Republicans as it was for the Democrats." It was probably the biggest surprise of this century in the Senate. Well, I really don't know that it was that big a surprise, but it took everybody by surprise.

**RITCHIE:** I remember Senator [Howard] Baker saying on the floor that he'd been taken by surprise. He couldn't get used to the title of Majority Leader at first.

**RIDGELY:** Someone was telling me the other day, he said: "Stan Kimmitt couldn't believe it when it happened." Bill Hildenbrand walked into the office the third of November, the day after the election, and he was just stunned. He said, "No way would I have ever believed that this was going to happen." And it did happen.

**RITCHIE:** Well, did Hildenbrand ask your advice when he was setting up his office?

**RIDGELY:** Well, yes and no. He and Stan not only were good associates as far as the operation of the Senate but they were good friends too. Stan got together with Bill and I think all that Bill got, Stan passed on to him. Of course, I was there if he needed me. He had asked me what my plans were. Well,



my plans were that I

page 143

---

was going to stay in the Assistant Secretary's job for two years. I hadn't told Stan that I would take it for any particular period, but in my own mind I had set a date. It was going to be March 1, 1981.

Then when Bill took over he asked me what my plans were, and I said, "Well, you know, I'd retired from the Senate once and I can still retire, and plan on doing that." I said, "I had planned on doing it before this." He said, "I'd like for you to stay on at least to take care of this next IPU trip." I'd already started the planning. In fact, that was the first trip that I handled, that was the first trip after it came back from the House side. He knew I'd been on the trips and was experienced in them, so he asked me to stay on as Assistant Secretary and take care of that trip for him. Because he'd never been on one. I said, "OK, but one thing we have to crank into this is that there are certain things that have to be done after the trip to get cleaned up and everything." He said, "OK, that's fine. You determine what you need in time and let me know what the date is." So I cleaned up things after that trip and set a date of June fifth. Then I went off the payroll.

Then Marilyn Courtot was appointed Assistant Secretary. She had never been on IPU trips, and was never involved in it. So Bill came to me one day before I left and said that Senator /Robert/ Stafford would like me to handle the arrangements for the IPU trips during this Congress while he was president of the U.S. group; because he

page 144

---

had already been elected. I thought about it, and I said, "Let me think about that." I had no other commitments, I had no other offers, and really was interested. Then I went home and talked to my wife and she said, "Well, how much time will it take.?" I sat down and figured out how many days would be involved and came up with the figure, and she said, "Well, OK." And I said, "It will not be full time except when I travel with the group," or maybe a week or so when everything is coming down to the departure. As it is, with the involvement and all I've been doing, I really underestimated my time, not by too much but it has worked out very well. I'm delighted that I could do what I did for the Senate on this. What I'd learned of the trips, while the House was doing it, paid its dividends when I handled it during this Congress for the group.

**RITCHIE:** Now that you've completed it, it's gone back to the House, and will give Marilyn two years to catch on to it.

**RIDGELY:** Yes. She has traveled twice with the group and seen some of the things, and I presume that she will be in on some of the things like I was involved in with the House, creating a working liaison. I think the important thing that all of them have to remember is that this is a Congressional delegation. It's not a House or a Senate delegation but a joint delegation. You have to work with members on both sides. As it is, they have been excellent groups.

page 145

---

**RITCHIE:** All in all, you've spent some thirty years working for the United States Senate. You talked about how the Disbursing Office changed from the green visor to the age of the computer, how would you say that the Senate as a whole has changed during the period you worked for it?

**RIDGELY:** Well, first I'd say that it's gone from a part time institution to a full time institution. But I think the biggest change is that--and I guess this is a personal thing--I can recall back during the time that I was Assistant Financial Clerk, I suppose that Bob Brenkworth and I when we were handling the front counter, we knew *everybody* who worked in the Senate. We could identify them by name, face, and office. You take that number compared to the number we have today, there is no way you could do it anymore.

The big change from paying cash twice a month to mailing their checks to the bank or to their home. They don't come in there twice a month. The only time they come in the Disbursing Office is when they have something to take care of as far as the payroll or other things are concerned, maybe how to make a voucher out, or things like this. You have to remember, we were a real family type of place when we were paying by cash, because everybody had to come to the Disbursing Office and get paid. You got to see them. You really made friends with everyone and you got to know them by their first names. This is a big change. You lost this. You know, there are people

page 146

---

working here today, I would say the majority of people working here today I don't know. They're all new. That doesn't shake me up or anything, I know it's there, but it just makes it very different.

I sometimes wonder, and maybe I'm being a little critical, but I think of the dedication of today's employee of the Senate compared to the dedication of the people who worked here say thirty years ago. There's so many things that enter into it, our societal changes of course have changed a lot of things, the way people think. But the Senate is different. It's certainly more active. There are more people, more legislation, more of everything. It's been a big change over thirty years that all of this have happened.

Back in 1949, you might have a handful of senators who were national figures. Today you've got a hundred of them that are national figures, and rightfully so, too. You might say, right now with the things that have to be taken care of, they're not just taking care of matters for a particular state, they're involved in the nation. But that's our society that has changed. The demands on the Congress itself by the people themselves has created a big change.

**RITCHIE:** Also looking back over those thirty years, who would you say were the most memorable people that you dealt with?

page 147

---

**RIDGELY:** Well, going back to the early years, where I was involved in a particular thing, personally involved position wise and otherwise, Senator [Carl] Hayden and Styles Bridges. I point to them back as far as 1954, those two members of the Senate. I think they both were grand people. Senator Hayden, he was the "work horse" and not the "show horse." I just read a little article about him the other day. In the first fifty years of his service in the Congress he gave one press conference. He and Styles Bridges, because they were on the Patronage Committees at the time. This is where my involvement came into it. I think both of them were grand people, rare people.

**RITCHIE:** It's interesting you mentioned them. Carl Hayden is one of those people whom people who worked for the Senate had a great regard for, and yet people outside the Senate really knew very little about. What was it about him that made him so admired?

**RIDGELY:** He was the kind of person that you felt very comfortable with. If you needed to see him you'd go to him, you didn't feel intimidated. I'm not saying that any of the senators really intimidate you, but you do run into persons every once in a while that you get that feeling of intimidation, but Senator Hayden would never make you feel uncomfortable. He would listen to you. If

page 148

---

you needed something that he could help you with, held listen to you. He never made a big noise about anything, but held get it done for you. He was that kind of person.

**RITCHIE:** Now, Styles Bridges I think of as a more partisan figure, but I really don't have a very sharp image of him. What type of person was he?

**RIDGELY:** Well, of course, my involvement with him was back in '54. It involved a position in the Disbursing Office, and he was on the Patronage Committee, chairman of the Republican Patronage Committee and my position was involved with that at that time. My recollection and attitude as far as he was concerned was that he was a very fair person, and knowledgeable about the situation, well versed in what had to be done. The decision was one that he and Carl Hayden made together.

**RITCHIE:** The Disbursing Office was considered to be a non-patronage office.

**RIDGELY:** Right.

**RITCHIE:** Was there an effort to bring someone in under patronage?

page 149

---

**RIDGELY:** Yes, there was. And it was because of the tragic events that happened. You have to remember that the Disbursing Office moved to that location in the Capitol in 1935. The Financial Clerk then was--I forget his name--but Colonel [Edwin] Halsey was the Secretary of the Senate. The Financial Clerk, this is what I was told, went down to Haynes Point and jumped off. He didn't drown but died of pneumonia as a result of that. Tragedy number one. Oco Thompson succeeded him, and Oco had a heart attack during his term as Financial Clerk. He retired and his brother George succeeded him. He had a heart attack during his term as Financial Clerk. Joe Ellis succeeded him, and Joe Ellis took his own life. I guess this bothered some of the people, who said "Hey, what's wrong with that position?"

Bob Brenkworth had already been appointed as Financial Clerk, so it was the second position, Assistant Financial Clerk, they were looking at. The senator from Idaho, Herman Welker, was the one pushing to bring in somebody from the outside, an accountant. Well, Bob Brenkworth's contention was, "I've got accountants coming out of my ears, graduate accountants." There was myself, Bob Malstrom, Jerry Northern, Jack Duncan. Four of us were graduate accountants. Bob said, "I don't need any

accountants." Of course, he pushed the fact that to bring anybody from the outside would be to make the office political. Now, my own thinking in this was this was probably what Senator Hayden and Senator Bridges were thinking about when they

page 150

---

decided no. That's really what they said: No, promote from within. I was moved into that position from Chief Bookkeeper at the time. So this is where I came in.

Of course, I had some other dealings with Senator Bridges because he was on our Appropriations Subcommittee, the Legislative Subcommittee, and I used to go down to the hearings with Bob to assist him however I could. I got to know him and I respected the man very much. His first impression made a good impression on me, even though I was a young fellow at the time and he was older and certainly more in tune with the political arena that is here in the Senate. He impressed me in the decision that was made then. For me, I say it was good, but I think for the Senate it was good. It did keep the office in a non-partisan, non-patronage situation. And that's the way it ought to be.

**RITCHIE:** Well, you pointed out that the Financial Clerks had a string of tragedies, but it seems to me that you spent a long career there and came out doing pretty well. Whatever the curse of the others was you seem to have broken it.

**RIDGELY:** I don't know what it is, but I have to say that I've never had any yen to die with my boots on. I've always said that I walked out of there in sound mind and good health, and I'm grateful.

**RITCHIE:** Well, I think that's a real tribute to you.

page 151

---

**RIDGELY:** It was just a tremendous experience, from the first day that I came to work here to the day I left. It's always been interesting because never do you get one day that is a shadow of another day. They just don't work that way. It always kept the job that interesting.

End of Interview #3

page 152

---