

Oral History Interview
with
DARRELL ST. CLAIRE

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By Donald A. Ritchie

for the United States Senate
Historical Office

RITCHIE: I think that probably a good way to start off would be to ask you about your back-ground in Arizona and what it was that eventually led you to Washington.

ST. CLAIRE: Well, I was born in the territory of Arizona, in Phoenix, Arizona, and educated in the public schools there, and went to the University of Arizona in 1924. For one year I was an undergraduate student at the University of Missouri, ostensibly to take a journalism course which I ultimately did not get because I did not have the basic requirements that the University required for a journalistic major. I returned to the University of Arizona, where I graduated in 1929. I

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went on to the *Arizona Republic*, where I was a cub reporter, police reporter, real estate editor, sports reporter, and did some desk work and other specialized work.

I found myself out of a job because of the declining revenues of that newspaper in June 1932. I had become a friend, however, of a man who had built the first tall building, Valley National Bank, in Phoenix. When Carl Hayden came home with thirty days left to run for renomination in 1932, my friend, knowing I was unemployed, recommended me to Carl Hayden. I was literally taken out of bed, I suppose, by the knock of opportunity, because I was at that time living by myself in my parents' home, my parents being in Long Beach, California, for their summer vacation. I heard this rap on the door; it woke me up, and I walked through the living room just in time to see the former city manager of Phoenix stepping in his car. I said to him, "Do you want to see me?" He said, "Are you Darrell St. Claire?" And I said, "Yes." He said, "Do you have a job?" I said, "No." He said, "Well, I've got one for you, with Carl Hayden."

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I went downtown to the Hotel Adams where Hayden was, and he asked me if I were

married, and I told him no. He said, "Those travel fastest who travel alone." He took me on for \$25 a week to drive his car, to devise his advertising, to do publicity, and in general, to be his companion in what was to be a fast coverage of the state of Arizona for his renomination and reelection in 1932.

Afterwards he asked me if I were willing to come back to Washington. I said I was, and I've been here ever since. I came on as the bill clerk of the Senate for a time, and then they made me assistant printing clerk, and then I became assistant enrolling clerk. In fact, I'm sitting in the same room where I began in 1933.

RITCHIE: What type of a person was Carl Hayden back then. I'm only familiar with him when he was very elderly.

ST. CLAIRE: He was one of the early youths of Arizona. His father had come to Arizona as a straight-out pioneer in a wagon train that was fired upon in the Chiricahua Mountains by the

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Apaches, probably under Cochise. Hayden's father came to the Salt River Valley and founded a flour mill that was then known as Hayden's Ferry. The Salt River actually had water in it in those days, and there was enough water for a ferry and also for a ford in times of dry weather.

Later on it was renamed Tempe, after the Vale of Tempe in Greece. It's well known that the names Tempe and Phoenix were selected by an English "remittance man" by the name of Darrell Duppa, who actually was called "Lord" Duppa by local residents. He was something of a saloon character, but he also had a classical education and was called upon to make judgment on many of the saloon bets in Phoenix in the early days. When the time came for the founding of Tempe and Phoenix they called upon him to suggest their names.

Carl Hayden was born in a town that his father had helped found. He grew up there, was quite tall, and very rugged physically. He was reputed to control all of the young "lords" who lived in

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Tempe, particularly those of Mexican ancestry. One of his forefingers, I think it was the left forefinger, was half missing. It was gone at the knuckle of his finger. You never quite were aware of it, because he was successful in covering it up. He never told anyone how he got this half finger, but it was said that one of the Mexican-American youths had found this dynamite

cap, and Carl Hayden took it away from him, and blew half his finger off picking at it.

He went on from there to Stanford University, where he was a center on the football team. He was in possession of the axe at the time that the Stanford students were jumped by the student body of California and the axe was taken from his arms and afterward disappeared for years. He was always famous for having lost the axe to the University of California; and also, for having lost the student body presidency of Stanford University to Herbert Hoover's brother by one or two votes.

Hayden's father became quite ill while he was at Stanford, and he came

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home and took over the flour business. From there he went into politics. Before coming to the Congress as our first representative he was sheriff of Maricopa County. There used to be a picture on his apartment wall in Washington showing him in those days. He was a "Marlboro character," very handsome, quite Western in a broad hat. He stood over six feet, was very well liked always made and sought out friends. He never permitted himself the luxury of enemies. If he had any enemies he turned them around to make them his friends. Even political enemies were modest in their pretensions against him. I found him to be kind, and very quick and perceptive about what he did.

He was not particularly a good speaker; in fact he was known for not saying almost anything on the floor. He was what you might call a cloakroom or Senate Office Building Senator insofar as he was able to command response, and get what he wanted by his grin and his arguments. He had a way of dealing with adamant personalities who stood

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in his way for what he thought was the best for his state and also for the Senate. Certainly, he did a great deal for his state. He also was very good to a great number of people.

I was fortunate, as a young man, since he and his wife had no children of their own, that they practically adopted me when I turned up in Washington, D.C. to go to work for him the first time. There was a very warm relationship between the two of us. I've always been proud that I was able to help him, and more than that, he was able to help me, that he picked me up by the scruff and threw me into the opportunities of Washington.

I would say that as a Senator, you will find that his accomplishments are in the law; they are not in the *Congressional Record*; they are not in the speeches or addresses to the Senate. They are primarily to be found in the appropriated process of the Senate. His acts pulled this country along and pushed the West, in particular, to the forefront of much of what it thereafter

enjoyed.

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Hayden saw to the West's largess and development, and as it prospered, so did Arizona.

RITCHIE: Did you ever consider working in his office?

ST. CLAIRE: I started out in his office, as a matter of fact. I came back with some shorthand ability because Hayden, in the early days, would employ no women secretaries. His secretary, a man, had been a court reporter. There were no administrative assistants then. We were to take his dictation and do all the typing in the office. As I didn't have enough facility in shorthand, he ultimately put me over into the Secretary's office where he had two patronage jobs. I took one of them. I continued to do, however, all of his publicity. In those days it was quite easy because there was no television and only the rudiments of radio. All the publicity amounted to government-paid telegrams sent to the editors of newspapers in the different counties and cities of the state.

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He also made me the secretary to the Patronage Committee. The Democrats had taken control of the Senate in 1933 for the first time in many years. In those days practically all the clerical, police, and service jobs were emptied and refilled upon a change in control of the Senate. "Uncle Joe" [Joseph T.] Robinson, the Senator from Arkansas who was the Democratic Leader, went to Carl Hayden and said he wanted Hayden to handle the Democratic patronage. Hayden, in turn, handed it to me. We had a Patronage Committee composed of Carl Hayden, Chairman, and Alben T. Barkley; I can't think of the original third name. Ultimately, it was J. W. Fulbright who became the third one.

It sounds strange these days, but all the police jobs, the elevator jobs, the door jobs, and even my own clerical job were acceded to the Democrats for the purposes of appointment. We took all the available jobs, after deciding those career employees that we wanted to retain. Principal among these were the Chief Clerk,

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Journal Clerk, Printing and Executive Clerks, Deputy Sergeant at Arms, and the like. The rest

were assigned on a pro rata basis to the Democratic majority Senators. After that we ran it as the circumstances demanded. It did give me an opportunity to become acquainted, as a young man, immediately with a number of Democratic Senators. They were quite interested, those being Depression days, with finding employment for some of their people.

RITCHIE: There weren't that many jobs on Capitol Hill at that time, were there?

ST. CLAIRE: I wouldn't think so. I can't remember what the exact number was, but it doesn't seem to me that there were too many. Shall we say two hundred?

RITCHIE: A Senator's staff was pretty small.

ST. CLAIRE: Yes, in truth, I think that Hayden's staff when I first got there was no more than four or five persons. The secretary, as I recall, was paid a statutory amount of about five thousand dollars. If you were chairman of a committee, however, you got a clerk of that committee who made more than that. You always appointed your

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top political officer, or top political supporter and political manager in your state to that particular committee function. It was quite common in those days. You didn't go out and solicit around, looking for somebody who would have had competent training to take on the substantive work of that committee.

In fact these committees, I would say that except for the Appropriations Committee, Military Affairs, the Naval Affairs Committee, and the Committee on the Judiciary, almost never met. And those that I'm talking about met for the purposes of passing on nominations, and even then the committee members were polled week after week after week on legislation. They about never went into a committee room. Committee rooms were used primarily by the committee chairman for his in-office and his state-office affairs. It was only the Appropriations Committee, to my knowledge, that held regular full sessions to pass on supply bills.

In those days, when I attended any number of mark-up sessions of the

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Appropriations Committee, I have seen the chairman wait until one member of the opposite party showed up, and then the two of them would begin to mark up and report out bills in millions of dollars, just on their own. If there was ratification of their options by the full committee, it was

done by proxy, or by polling the committee. It was not uncommon for two or three appropriation bills to pass in an afternoon. You did most all your work, actually, in conference. The other committees almost never met.

After I became clerk of the Foreign Relations Committee I received any number of calls from researchers who wanted to get what records there were of the Key Pittman days on the Foreign Relations Committee, and I told them they didn't exist. We had checked the Archives and found they had nothing. Then one day we pulled away a cabinet from the wall to put in another file and there were the records. They were just a bundle of papers that had fallen down between the wall and the cabinet. All there were

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were notes, in the Clerk's handwriting, some poll slips, and proxy statements. That was it. That, essentially, was the way they ran their committees. They did almost everything under the chairman's hat.

RITCHIE: So the chairmen back then were much more powerful than they are today?

ST. CLAIRE: I would think they were, because they had the power to call committee meetings. Today, under the rules, there's much more opportunity for Senate members to assemble the committee for the purposes of legislative matters. In those days, if the chairman wanted to stuff something in his pocket, he did. If he wanted to keep the committee from meeting, he could. Of course, the pressures of the Depression, and afterward the pressures of the oncoming war in Europe, forced committee members and committee chairmen into doing much more legislatively on the floor and in the committees than they had done previously.

RITCHIE: That first year you arrived must have been a particularly hectic one.

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ST. CLAIRE: It's a strange thing, I think they call it "One Hundred Days" but at the time it didn't seem to be too crucial; it didn't seem to be much of a crisis period. I can recall that for many many weeks in that "Hundred Days" we adjourned from Thursday to Monday, notwithstanding the condition of the country. I stood outside the Capitol steps when Roosevelt made his Inaugural Address, and watched him as he came down the ramp off the speaker's platform into his car. We went back into the Senate, where Joe Byrnes and Joe T. Robinson and some of the others were rather vocal about getting things done. But, as time went on and more

and more of the Roosevelt legislation came up or was initiated in Congress, it seems to me that it was accepted without much discussion. There was a common, silent consent that something had to be done quickly, and the best way to do it was to follow the leader.

You must remember that they didn't speak as long as they do now, they didn't read as many speeches. They didn't have

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nearly the preponderance and volume of amendments, or amendatory legislation as is suggested on the floor these days. They put much more faith in their leadership, much more faith in their committee chairmen, if the committee chairmen could be enticed to come forward and take the leadership as in the early days of Roosevelt.

Until the last war it was almost impossible to get a ye and nay vote, notwithstanding the constitutional provisions for a show of hands, unless the leader put up his arm. If he didn't, you didn't. Further than that, they decided many votes in those days, which they don't now, by voice votes and divisions.

A close voice vote usually resulted in a call for a division. And a close division could result in a ye and nay vote. But it was the leaders who called for the yeas and nays, who first raised their arms on the demand, not the Senators at large. If you were a Senator you looked over to see your leader's arm, generally, before you raised yours.

There was not, in any sense, the questioning in debate or the amendatory

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process which is so prevalent today on the floor. It was uncommon to amend an appropriation measure from the floor. The Appropriations Committee had spoken, and that was it. If any other committee reported something, as the Commerce Committee perhaps, that really was it.

RITCHIE: I've been reading about Joseph Robinson. Many writers credit him with being one of the strongest majority leaders in this century.

ST. CLAIRE: He was one of the greatest men I think I ever saw. He was a tremendous, commanding person, with a terrifying, open-air voice. He could visibly shake the chamber when he wanted to. He seldom spoke, but when he did he spoke vigorously. He never used a note, never used a paper. He had a Scotch temper that would brook almost no opposition. He was a Senator, as leaders in those days did, who sat afternoon after afternoon on the floor, waiting, cajoling, counseling, not saying a great deal, but just by his very presence commanding people to

keep still and get on with it.

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His one anathema was Huey Long. He bore him grudgingly. In his final year, Long had to make an hour speech every day to the galleries. It was a very good speech, a convincing speech, but it was the same speech. It would have had its affect on the 1936 election, I'm confident, if Long had survived the assassination. But after a while, Joe T. Robinson could not abide the man. Long was, in return, sour and bitter about the Roosevelt administration, which of course was his personal enemy.

I don't know what they were quarreling about, but one afternoon Long was seated on the far seat, front row, closest to the door. ([Thomas L.] Blanton of Texas said he always wanted to be closest to the door in the House if anyone threw a bomb.) Robinson, of course, occupied the front desk on the middle aisle. Robinson rose to denounce Huey Long and the entire row between Robinson and Long was vacant. I can see Joe Robinson now going all the way down that empty row to Long, talking at the top of his voice about Huey Long,

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and putting his fist under Long's face as he stood over him. It was a dramatic bit, to stand over somebody and look down at him and lecture to him vigorously within inches. Robinson was shaking his fist under Long's chin, roaring out his words. Long, seated, looked meanwhile, at the ceiling as if he heard nothing, as if he had no idea anyone was anywhere around. But Long was that way. He was a professional.

RITCHIE: Was Long just a clown, or was there anything more to him?

ST. CLAIRE: No, no. He was probably one of the most extraordinary minds that was ever on the floor. A man who could speak almost on anything after a minimum of preparation, because he had an extraordinarily receptive and retentive mind. Who also could speak to the horizon, you could hear him anywhere in the chamber. He spoke rapidly, almost without gesture, using what I would say was the vernacular of the South, but in perfect grammatical form. His sentences, I was told, always parsed. He never said anything that wasn't connected, wasn't argumentatively sound.

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In fact, he seemed to be a joy to [Arthur H.] Vandenberg, who to my mind was someone who never spoke a cliché in his life. He had been a writer and as a consequence, he had great respect for the English language. Vandenberg understood descriptive phrases, descriptive expressions. Vandenberg, when Long was speaking, would sit there listening to him with a grin on his face, because he knew he was listening to a master of English. Certainly American. He said as much at the time. This man Long was a great orator. You remember also that he lived at the same time as other great orators, Churchill, Hitler, Roosevelt. He was a fine lawyer and not a clown.

He probably had no respect for politics. Essentially, he might have thought that politics was a profession, but he didn't practice it as a profession, but more or less as a way of life, a day to day occupation, and as something that had no meaning beyond what could be done expertly and cleverly. In those days there was a recess in the wall of the Senate, which has now been covered by a

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false wall, where he kept a Biblical Concordance or a Shakespearean Concordance by his desk. If he got into an argument, or sensed one, he would turn to the Concordance immediately to look up something, and then throw a Biblical phrase or a Shakespearean phrase into the debate.

The only man who could probably do anything to him was J. Hamilton Lewis. Very few could ever understand what J. Hamilton Lewis was talking about anyway. He was a man who just kept talking, quietly, rather disconnectedly, because I think he felt that if he kept on saying something people would think he was saying something, when in actual fact, all he was doing was reaching for words. Long found him to be quite a delight, because Ham would stand up and point to Long with his gloved fingers and lecture the Senator from Louisiana on his manners. If Long actually enjoyed Ham Lewis, most of the others he had very little respect for. He might have been afraid of some of them, but I doubt very much that he had any respect for them.

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If he had stayed in the profession of law he would have been probably one of the finest trial lawyers, possibly even one of the finest trial judges that ever lived in the United States. He sensed power that came to him as a young man when he was able to convince housewives of his goods, of people in the street of his purposes, and the voters of his promises. Early in his life he developed what in the old days of his salesmanship would be called the "gift of gab" that made him an attractive personality. Out of that his political personality grew, but he remained essentially a hawker.

Probably the finest modern political work in the United States, to my mind, is his *Every Man a King*. I have talked to some senators about that, and I find that most of them have read it. It's an extraordinary textbook on what you might call Bayou politics. It's good, it's funny, and it's all Long.

RITCHIE: Was he in any way effective as a senator, or was he outside the pale?

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ST. CLAIRE: No, he was not effective as a Senator. In fact he didn't want the responsibilities that would come with committee membership. He gave up, in the latter part of his career, his committee memberships, because he said they were useless, but I think they were of no value to him. I had a friend who used to watch him when he went into the Committee on the Judiciary, which is now part of the Appropriations Committee rooms. This friend of mine was the clerk of the Judiciary Committee. He told me that Long very seldom participated in any of the Judiciary hearings, or in any of the committee work. He simply sat there and looked at the cupids on the ceiling, one after another. He'd look at one cupid, then he'd look at another cupid, of course, he was thinking all of that time.

He had a different drum. He was not a working Senator, he was a speaking Senator, he was a state-side Senator. He did not, to my mind, ever argue too much in depth. He had a favorite political maneuver, which I think someone later described: When you're attacked at home,

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respond nationally; when you're attacked on the national plane, counter with home affairs. I noticed that if he were challenged on any of his facts, while on arguing national affairs with his colleagues he would often say, "Well, I don't know how it is here in Washington, but in New Orleans . . .", and go on from there. Of course, he had an extraordinary command of Louisiana politics and Louisiana politicians and personalities.

His addresses and public appearances were all pitched on a very competent plane to a particular auditor or particular people with certain convictions, principally those who had suffered childhood privation, or who had not gathered too much after attaining adulthood. What you might call the lower middle class, and even those above them. Of course, I realize that that's snobbery. But he knew where his consensus lay, where his power was, and he knew where his responses would be. It was in those people, and those were the tourists who would come to the galleries every day, to look on the Senate. In them Long had a new

audience every day for his speech, "Every Man a King," which, as we know, generally proposed the redistribution of wealth in the United States. It was an extraordinary speech. It varied in some measure, but it was essentially the same speech day after day. It's well worth reading now, because it shows you what a man of his persuasion, his competency, his talents, could possibly do in the open honest forum of American politics. And he almost got away with it, almost.

RITCHIE: One of the people he seems to have befriended in the chamber was Hattie Caraway; that seems like a very unlikely combination.

ST. CLAIRE: Well, it was unlikely to the point that he was able to club Joe T. Robinson over her head. He was able to club Robinson with Hattie Caraway by going into Arkansas and insuring her election there against the political powers of the state of Arkansas, who were of course headed up by Robinson. There was more to it than that, but we at the time also thought that what he was trying to do was expand his regency from Louisiana into adjoining Southern

states. Arkansas was the first. I believe he also told Pat Harrison of Mississippi that he was going into Mississippi, an adjoining state, and defeat him. He threatened Josiah Bailey of North Carolina, politically. Bailey had opposed and lectured him on the floor. I feel Long wanted to build himself into a political power by transmutation of his oratory to the Southern states. I doubt very much if that procedure would have succeeded anywhere further up. But he was successful as far as he went.

Another thing is, and this is an assumption, the Democrats were split in Arkansas at the time, and [Thaddeus] Caraway had been quite a dominative Senator himself. Mrs. Caraway may have represented a compromise such as sometimes is not uncommon, of picking women while the local politicians meet again to decide who they are actually going to back while they let her hold the interim office. But she was a near loss. She dressed in black, actually read newspapers at her desk, seldom spoke, and voted invariably with Huey Long.

I can't say the same thing for Rose Long, Long's widow who succeeded him. She was a delightful character, a fine woman. She was not at all like Mrs. Caraway, and I might also say

not at all like any other woman Senator since. She was a good woman, who did her job while she held her office. She was the one that saw that sign on the Senators' restroom, "Senators Only," and started to walk in, thinking that was another place, or so it was said.

RITCHIE: I guess they didn't have to make any distinction at that time.

ST. CLAIRE: No. There was one other woman before Hattie Caraway.

RITCHIE: Just Rebecca Felton, who only served for two days.

ST. CLAIRE: Yes, and I believe you will find that Senator Walter George stood aside so that she could get that honor. But I believe Mrs. Caraway was the first elected one.

RITCHIE: You mentioned earlier Key Pittman, who also seems like a fascinating figure in that period.

ST. CLAIRE: Yes, he was something of a rogue. He came out of Alaska and Nevada and would make a

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speech about silver if you dropped a quarter at his feet. It was possible for him to speak on almost no other subject except mining and the price of silver, on ferrous and non-ferrous metals. You can well understand why, because in those days, before they discovered easy divorce and the slot machines out there, there had been nothing in the way of taxable resources except railroads and mines, which was about true of Arizona. He became chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, later.

He attended the London Economic Conference in the summer of 1933, which was ultimately broken up over the irreconcilable nationalist economies of the world at that time, and I think also over the devaluation of the British pound. Mr. Pittman liked his drink, and we were not at sea beyond the three-mile limit before he asked for an Old-Fashion. I was on the staff on the United States delegation. We were in the lounge at the bar, and we were sailing at noon. Being a child of Prohibition, I had never seen an Old-Fashion, didn't know what they were. He continued to drink them from

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there on, for eight days across the Atlantic. We practically took him off the ship in a halter.

He had one speech and he was going to make it on silver, and they kept saying, "Don't let him get to that conference." It was a very staid conference, with all the heads of Europe of that time in attendance. On the last day, as the conference was winding down, I'm told that the back doors of that conference hall sprung open. It was Key Pittman, arms spread, on unsteady feet, standing there, wanting to come in and make his speech. And he made it. We never saw him again on the way back.

It was too bad, because he could do very well, either drinking or not drinking, in his speeches. He was extraordinarily gifted and loved people. In 1932, his colleague was a Republican (Tasker Oddie), and Pat McCarran ran against him. Hayden happened to run into Key Pittman one afternoon and said, "How's that election going to go in Nevada?" Pittman said, "Oh, this McCarran, he's just a mean Irishman. Everybody dislikes him. He hasn't got

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a chance." Today, McCarran's in the Hall of Fame. Oddie is gone. But Mr. Pittman's assessment of Mr. McCarran was absolutely correct. He was a mean Irishman.

RITCHIE: A pretty tough character.

ST. CLAIRE: Very tough, almost self-indulgent in his ruthless attitude towards others. I was working in the State Department and McCarran's office called me to come over. The war had ended, and the descendants of one of the silver fortunes of Nevada were at that time locked in Prussia. This daughter's mother had gone over to Germany and married into the Junker aristocracy. The granddaughter, born in Germany and a German citizen, of this family somehow got to McCarran's office, utilizing contacts that went back to the Nevada silver fortune. She could guarantee that they could get to Hamburg, then under British control. But the British would not admit them or pass them through into Norway or Sweden unless the United States embassy in Oslo or Stockholm would guarantee visas to their German passports into the United States and ultimately I guess to Nevada.

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I worked on the case for weeks. Ultimately, I could get nowhere with it within the State Department (I was liaison for the State Department with the Hill at that time) until I walked into one office. There was this friendly foreign service officer sitting there, to my complaints, he offered: "Well, can't you draft a telegram instructing our embassy in Norway (or Sweden) to give

them the visas, and send a copy of it to our consulate in Hamburg?" I said, "Yes, I can draft it, but it needs the Secretary's authority." He responded, "All departmental telegrams carry the name of the Secretary at the bottom. Draft it, and if it goes out, you are his authority." He was an old hand. The telegram went out. The family got to the United States.

Five days later, I was showed a letter from McCarran about another matter, to [George] Marshall, who was then the Secretary of State. In two lines it abused Marshall as no man could be abused because he had not assented to what McCarran wanted him to do in another matter. I took that letter back to the gal in his office and

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said, "For crying out loud, what are you doing to this man? Here he got these Germans out of Germany for you and five days later he's sending this kind of a letter:" She said, "Well, you just don't know how he is." That was the way it was from there on. To this day I know nothing of him that justifies where he stands today, in the Statuary Hall.

RITCHIE: In his judicial robes.

ST. CLAIRE: As a matter of fact, he would have been defeated for public office had he not died in the middle of his last campaign. He was on his way to defeat when he had a fatal heart attack. That's true, and everybody admitted it. He was about to lose not only the election but the nomination of his party.

RITCHIE: The Senate in the 1930's seems to have had a lot more showmen than it does now.

ST. CLAIRE: Well, yes, those men came from a different background. Chiefly from law, I suppose, from trial practice. They were young lawyers who became very good at thinking on their feet, being quite clever, who more often than not fashioned themselves in the image of other politicians who had

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preceded them, many of whom came out of the Civil War. They had a different type of education, classical education, and read law rather than studied law to get their license to practice law. They literally climbed the ladder of politics to get into the Senate of the United States, rather than making it in one fell swoop from the presidency of a university, shall we say.

They had been county attorneys, members of their legislature, Representatives, they had honed themselves over in the House, where politics was rough and vigorous and quick. You start out under [Thomas B.] Reed and go right on through to Champ Clark and read the House proceedings and you'll find some of the best debate, I think, that has ever been made on the floor. They had men like [Thomas T.] Connally and Barkley as Representatives before they graduated to the Senate. They had to be clever, they had to have humor and be resilient, sometimes impractical, and sometimes even unconstructive, in order to get where they were. But when they got there, they were a joy:

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[Everett] Dirksen, Barkley, Henry Ashurst, Connally, Jim Reed of Missouri, Pat Harrison of Mississippi, Huey Long.

The only person you could actually compare them to today is Hubert Humphrey. Hubert Humphrey can walk in front of an audience of 1,500 or 2,000 or 5,000 people and start talking about Hubert Humphrey, take them off and charm them, and do it for 15 or 20 minutes, or an hour, make a marvelous speech, and do it right out of hand. And these men could do it all in those days. They never read anything that was written for them, they didn't have to. They were totally brought up on another bias all together. But they wouldn't last much today, because they would have to come up with facts, with research, with depth.

When you take a man like Henry Fountain Ashurst, my favorite Senator from Arizona, who received ten letters a day, maybe ten a week, in the 1930's, even during the Depression, you can see what they had time for. They had time to fashion their skills to the point where

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they could go out and take on audiences and bring the audiences up to them. And with that, of course, support and votes. Today those speeches would be rejected. They would say the man was quaint. Nothing would come of it. This is why there has been no Dirksen since Dirksen. There is going to be no [John] Pastore soon.

RITCHIE: What was it that made Ashurst your favorite Senator?

ST. CLAIRE: I suppose he was the best stand-up conversationalist the Senate has ever had. He made a profession of it. He liked to stand and talk to people, get them into small knots and entertain them with one story after another, about himself, about Arizona, about territorial days. Also he would bring in other references, and thoughts, he had gained through reading.

He'd been a young cowboy, bright, who was picked up by the widow of a man who'd gone to Arizona to die of tuberculosis. She had some money, and some downtown Washington, D.C. property, as I recall, now in the vicinity of the Statler Hotel. Her husband had been the head of a top

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employee of the Weather Service. He died in Arizona and she picked up Ashurst. She was older than he. She was a real Irish biddy. She didn't stand more than five feet. She was peppy and bright. She sent him off to the University of Michigan, made him get an education, and then pushed him into politics.

He was always known as a show orator, a flowery user of speech. He made a habit of acquiring two or three new words a day and if they were more or less exotic he would use them in his next speech. More than that, he could talk to people, and to other Senators, and bring in reference after reference out of the classics, out of American history, out of the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, giving it an overlay of his experience and personality, and put it out with the brilliance of an Arizona sunset. In fact, that was one of his great ploys, when he failed of anything else he would describe an Arizona sunset.

Everyone knew he was probably pretty much two-dimensional. He was something of a political fraud, they knew this, but he

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was a charming man, and he was a charming fraud. He sat in the back end of an automobile coming out of Prescott at two one morning, when I was driving Hayden down from Prescott to Phoenix (in those days it took that much time), and he never stopped talking about early Arizona characters. He knew them, and he was one of them. When Ashurst talked you heard every word he said, you never missed anything.

But, again, he was lazy, and he didn't look after Arizona too often. When his little wife died, he lost much of his initiative. He stayed back here working for "his people and his state" as he said in his election year, rather than go home and campaign. I sometimes wonder if it wasn't suicidal, and knew damn well it was suicidal, staying back here. I wonder if he really wanted the job. But the fact that no one had seen much of him back there, and that they'd had a bad drought in the state that year, helped defeat him. He was defeated by a man who had conned the state year after year as a county judge, and had laid a great ground-work of support to run against Ashurst.

Ashurst never forgave him for it. That man was E. (Ernest) W. McFarland, who ultimately became Democratic leader for two years.

When Ashurst finally decided to go back to Arizona and speak for the national ticket, people said, "I didn't know he could speak that well. If I'd known that he could speak that well I would have voted for him. I had no idea who he was." There was a transposition in the history of the state and we had gotten a lot of immigration. Essentially this is what happened to Hayden. Too many people came into the state for him to master. Where your population explodes through immigration it has no sense of state history, or territorial tradition. As a newcomer, you have no bond with the state except for the fact that you arrived two days ago, and you registered on the third.

RITCHIE: You worked during this period mostly in the Secretary's Office, as enrolling clerk.

ST. CLAIRE: Yes, I suppose during most of this period I was assistant enrolling clerk, and assistant journal clerk. Then the enrolling

clerk died one night in a Union Station hotel and the Secretary called me down. The Secretary said, "I want you to be the enrolling clerk." I was the enrolling clerk when I left to go in the Navy during the war. I guess I was in the Secretary's office during most of this period of time, but in those days we had quite a bit of opportunity for observation on the floor. It wasn't anything for us to spend two or three hours just listening.

Senators gave the floor a good deal more of their attendance, as did the Vice President in the 1930's. And the cloakrooms were full of Senators, lying on the couches they had in there, smoking cigars, telling stories. If there was a vote they would come out. Then they gave more attention and time, to the floor. There wasn't the committee pressures, the social pressures, the political pressures they have now.

By in large, when you shape a current-day Senator up against the man who represented his state in the 1930's and '40's, the current one comes off very well indeed.

In fact, he comes off much better in nearly all instances. It's only the few greats, like Joe T.

Robinson, Robert La Follette, Hiram Johnson, Pat Harrison, George Norris, and Huey Long that you remember. They were stand-outs. You have to remember there were many other Senators with no great prominence. Many of them who came in with Roosevelt's sweep of 1936 would turn your hair white if you had them in there today. I don't know whether they were political accidents, but they were there simply because they happened to get the Democratic nomination. And they routed from office a number of fine Republican Senators.

RITCHIE: Some historians have made a distinction between the old "Sons of the Wild Jackass," independent, progressive types, who were in there from the 1920's on, and the New Deal types who were elected in 1934 and 1936, who weren't as independent as the old school.

ST. CLAIRE: Well, the "Sons of the Wild Jackass" turned out to be rather conservative by the time that the first Roosevelt sweep took effect, and certainly after the '34 and '36 elections.

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[William E.] Borah, for instance, became extraordinarily conservative, where up until 1928, '29, '30, he had enjoyed the insulated position in his party as an obstructionist, and one of the irreconcilables. He and his friends, I think, delayed the organization of the Senators for weeks in 1929, by withholding their votes from the majority side. He enjoyed that type of obstructionism because it gave him identification.

He was also a very vain and proud man, a man who had early in his life learned to speak in fine, declarative sentences, who prepared his speeches with a good deal of care, so that he got a good deal more press attention than he otherwise would. Newspaper men, because of his clarity, would attend his speakings, whenever they could. As a man, himself, there were several stories about him. They opened up his bank box after his death and found \$75,000 in cash in it, or something like that amount. All his widow could say was, "I didn't know he had it." Where did he get it? They thought that he couldn't possibly have

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saved that from his salary, and in those days you were only making 8,000 or 10,000 dollars and were spending it all on expenses.

But these men were individuals and individualistic, and I think there was a reason for it: they could prepare themselves for a certain individualism by being quite clever and being exceptionally fine speakers, in a popular way. They weren't required to do homework or research, or have research staffs, to have briefings or the analysis that they need today to attack

this institutionalized government of ours, which is totally out of control anyway.

RITCHIE: One Senator who interests me in the 1930's was Harry Truman, who seems to have emerged very slowly from the pack and not very noticeable at first. In fact, he seemed like an appendage to Burton Wheeler in the beginning.

ST. CLAIRE: Well, could have been. Harry Truman was not a very distinguished Senator until he took up that war investigation. Up until that time he was known chiefly for his friends on the floor. He was a friendly

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man who was liked by everyone, but he had done nothing of particular merit to distinguish himself from the pack of Senators. However, when he did take hold of the War Investigating Committee, it seems to me, he grew and demonstrated his worth to the country and to himself. He turned out to be a vigorous President. He's now part of the cult, the Truman cult. He may well deserve it, or it may be a cult that will die out like other cults die out when more history intervenes.

RITCHIE: I thought it was interesting that when he became President, the first person he called was Leslie Biffle.

ST. CLAIRE: Yes, and yet they ended up, I think, somewhat in different corners. I was told, though I don't know whether this is true or not, that Biffle used Truman, Truman's name, and Truman's friendship. He used it to help out Les Biffle. I remember talking to Senator William Benton one night, when we were going home. I told Benton, who agreed, that Biffle enjoyed political power because he never had to use it. You assumed that Biffle had a great deal

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of prestige and authority within the Truman Administration and within the Democratic Administration. And yet, I wonder. I knew Les, I was a close friend of his, and I just wonder whether he had the influence we thought he had. The Democrats would not return him to the Secretary's Office in 1955, when he wanted to come back. Again I say I was told ultimately that he and Truman ended up in different corners. There used to be a line to the White House on Biffle's desk, and I heard it was taken out by Truman. What the cause was I'll never know.

He had power he wanted you to assume he had, and as a consequence you thought,

though you really never knew, that he might have done something for you in a political way, that he might have propitiated your purposes. He was very good at creating hope and optimism and extending it to you, with the feeling that everything is going to turn out all right. Eventually, when he left, he didn't leave a vacuum, because he had spatial or real.

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You've got to remember, too, that this was the days before the federal election laws. We had what we called, and still call, Senatorial Campaign Committees. Their records were variously kept, or not. Somebody who was a multi-millionaire would come in and give you \$20,000 for the boys in the next election. You put it in the safe that was always in the Secretary's office (in those days there was a safe in the Secretary's office). The contributor didn't know whether you put in \$10,000 or \$20,000 in that safe. He had no way of knowing it. But if he came back with a request, it was up to me to produce: "I'll have some senators together for lunch tomorrow and you can tell them what you want." That's the way it was done. Not now, nor has it been that way in recent times, but in early days the Secretary of the Senate, for that very reason, because of his dependence upon the senatorial futures and successes of his colleagues, was important to them.

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Senator Hayden would get a wire from Les Biffle, or from (Edwin) Halsey, saying "Forwarding \$5,000, congratulations on your nomination." The \$5,000 was to be used for Hayden's election campaign. I saw Hayden turn his check over and endorse it to the Democratic committee of the State of Arizona. He didn't want the money. He was great about the way he got rid of it; he could say that he never used it. No more.

RITCHIE: What type of a person was Colonel Halsey?

ST. CLAIRE: He had been a page, and superintendent of the press gallery, and had been the first minority secretary when those two positions of majority and minority secretaries were created. Of course he stepped from that into the Secretary's office. He was a man who was very good to me, really promoted me into two Democratic conventions and helped me along, quite well. He died while I was in the Navy. But extraordinarily vain, terribly vain. He had a son whom he worshipped who was tragically killed in an automobile accident some years ago. He had a wife

who was as broad as that cabinet over there, a lovely woman who came from a marvelous Virginia family. She happened to adore ice cream.

Halsey was an easy man to counsel be-cause he did not have too much education, but he knew how to establish his personality, and his presence, so you knew that he was there. He would go in on the floor and walk up to a senator and say, "Here, have you seen this today?" It would be something that that senator was interested in. He just played these senators like a harpsicord. He could have stayed in bed all day long, never coming to the office, and sometimes he did. As a matter of fact, sometimes he showed up at five minutes to twelve, to sign enrolled bills for the House message. In those days I was the Senate messenger to the House, and would take off on a dead run to get the message in. I guess he was lazy, but adroit, and a product of his times. He couldn't exist today.

RITCHIE: Did the Secretaries then have anything to do with legislation?

ST. CLAIRE: No, none. They kept the "well", which of course, we still keep. If you want a drink you go in there and get a drink. They staged luncheons at which legislation might have been discussed and some programming might have occurred. In the early days, actually, the Secretary was the source into the Senate, the communication line for the Executive. There was a direct line from the White House into the Secretary's office. In fact, it might even exist today, I don't know. But it was used much more in those days. There was a phone booth in S-221 on which you could get the White House operator, and the President was nearly always available for the call. This was before instant radio.

RITCHIE: It seems like New Deal support in the Senate fell apart after 1937 with the Court Packing controversy. That must have come as quite an explosion.

ST. CLAIRE: It did. It's rather a shame because I would have thought that even in cursory readings of the Supreme Court's decisions after the election in 1936, Roosevelt

would have realized that these old men, who had opposed him, were turning around. I think they were. As Mr. Dooley said, the Supreme Court follows the election returns. I think that's what

they were doing. But Roosevelt was never known for his lack of confidence, and when he sent the court bill down it did fracture the New Deal coalition.

It betrayed a number of his friends, who had to defend it, like M. (Marvel) M. Logan of Kentucky, who was one of the top men on the Judiciary Committee. The day it arrived, Logan was baited like a badger on the Senate floor. I can see him yet, twisting and turning, fighting off one man after another, because the chamber had filled with senators who had come to talk about it. Joe T. (Robinson) was called upon to defend it. It may have hastened his death. Certainly, his death denied him a post on the Court. For two or three days he was in high anger about this move of Roosevelt's and yet he felt compelled as the leader to defend it.

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The last day, or maybe the next to the last day he was on the floor, after he finished a speech, when he also had been baited, he sat down. His face was quite red. He had been on a strict diet for several months. Robinson pulled a cigar from his pocket, bit the end off, and started to light it, sitting in the chamber, until a senator reminded him about smoking on the floor. He'd forgotten. People said that's when he started back. Within a short time they found him dead in his apartment.

Roosevelt could not possibly have survived the court bill if it had not been for the outbreak of war. He would have been denied a third term. By then (James A.) Farley had gone against him, and (John N.) Garner had gone against him, and Carter Glass had decided that he was going to nominate Farley. Garner really wanted it. Garner was one of the boys who met afternoons in his formal office during the '30's. You could hear laughter all the way into the Senate chamber. This was in the age before air-conditioning

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They had opened windows, and the whiskey vapor would come flowing into the chamber from the formal office, along with the laughter. Garner eventually emerged, red-faced, ready to adjourn the Senate almost by himself. Garner wanted the nomination. He stopped drinking, cleaned himself up, bought himself some expensive suits. I would go into the Marble Room in the morning to pick up a paper and Garner would already be there, from dawn practically, smoking and walking up and down that Marble Room, thinking and walking. You could just see what was on his mind: he was doing his damndest to see how he could plan and plot to get the nomination.

When they were attacking Huey Long, you also could go in the Marble Room to find Long in the morning, reading the *Washington Post* or the other local papers opposing him. He

always looked up with a smile. On Long's last night on the floor, he was opposing some bill that had the backing of labor. (Lewis B.) Schwollenbach of Washington, a great labor leader and

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labor senator, was trying to force it through, and Huey was conducting a one-man filibuster against it, for reasons I don't know. The more they asked him to yield for the purposes of doing something popular or in the public interest, the more stubborn he got. Schwollenbach kept asking him to yield, "Is not the Senator aware that by his opposition, etc.?"

Finally, old Joe T. Robinson got up and asked for immediate unanimous consent for consideration of adjournment resolution that provided that when the hour of twelve had arrived that the Senate would thereby adjourn *sine die*. Long allowed the request, not quite realizing, I think, what he was doing. Robinson walked out into the Marble Room, where I heard him saying, "Now I've got the son-of-a-bitch where I want him: He's got to shut up and pass this thing or he's going to adjourn the Senate at twelve o'clock." And Huey adjourned the Senate at twelve o'clock. He was gaveled down, though the *Record* doesn't show it.

With that, Long picked up two of his aides and walked out through the

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door and along the rear corridor, as fast as he could. He always walked fast, maybe because he was afraid of strangers, and well he might have been. If you talk about people being threatened, he was threatened. As he walked out, everybody was relaxed and standing around looking at each other. Outside the Senate wing an auto backfired, and somebody said, "I wonder if he's been shot." He went home and shortly afterward he was shot.

That was a dramatic time. I have that part of the *Record* that was taken out of the *Record* by Long and by Bennett Champ Clark, an exchange they had on the floor of the Senate one afternoon when Bennett came in about four o'clock, showing no pain, got mad at Long and they started abusing each other. It's all there. The next day they took it out, but I'll bring it in and let you have it. I doubt if there's any record of it left anywhere else. I found it in the basement.

RITCHIE: That's great. I imagine that there are a lot of interesting stories that don't make it into the *Record*.

ST. CLAIRE: That's true.