

# William F. Hildenbrand

Secretary of the Senate, 1981-1985

Secretary to the Minority, 1974-1981

Administrative Assistant to Senator Hugh Scott, 1969-1974

Assistant to Senator J. Caleb Boggs, 1961-1969

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## **Interview #1: From Broadcasting to Congress**

(Wednesday, March 20, 1985)

Interviewed by Donald A. Ritchie

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**Ritchie:** We're interested in all of your experiences and observations. We're collecting the institutional memory of the Senate, except that we're looking at it from each individual's unique....

**Hildenbrand:** Perspective.

**Ritchie:** Yes, and we're interested in the whole person, so I usually begin by asking a little about your background.

**Hildenbrand:** I don't have a background.

**Ritchie:** I looked over your staff biography and saw that you came from Pottstown, Pennsylvania. I was going to ask if your family was traditionally from that area of Pennsylvania.

**Hildenbrand:** Yes. As far as I know everybody was born in and around that area of Pottstown, Stowe, funny little places like that.

**Ritchie:** What did your family do?

**Hildenbrand:** Mother was just a housewife. My father worked for the Philadelphia Electric Company for about thirty-five years, or thereabouts, most of the time. He started out as a lineman, climbing

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poles and doing things like that, but he fell out and broke his leg and his arm, and that was the end of things like that, so then he went into the office and spent the rest of most of his adult life with the Philadelphia Electric Company.

**Ritchie:** My family came out of Con Edison in New York.

**Hildenbrand:** Oh, same background.

**Ritchie:** Yes. Did you attend local schools?

**Hildenbrand:** Oh, yes. I went to high school in Pottstown -- I guess I didn't -- we moved away during the Depression years. Daddy lost his job, so we moved away and went to Trenton, New Jersey, and I spent one year in Junior 3 in Trenton, New Jersey, and then we moved to Prospect Park, outside of Philadelphia, and I went to Prospect Park High School, which is no longer. They mixed it up with some other school and it's now called Interborough High School. Then I went in the war.

**Ritchie:** That was '41?

**Hildenbrand:** '42. August of '42.

**Ritchie:** It was right after you graduated from high school?

**Hildenbrand:** I graduated high school in '40, and I worked during '41 at Westinghouse, and then I went in the military service.

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**Ritchie:** Did you enlist?

**Hildenbrand:** No, I went to enlist, but I was color-blind. I tried to go in the Navy, the Coast Guard, but they found I was color-blind, so I couldn't do that. Then I went to the Army and tried to enlist there. They gave me some song and dance about some high arch on my left foot, or some dumb thing like that, and said that I couldn't walk very far. Five months later they drafted me and I walked all over Europe, which shows how much they know.

**Ritchie:** You were stationed in Europe throughout the war?

**Hildenbrand:** Yes. I went over in 44 and came back in '46. I was over there a little less than two years.

**Ritchie:** I saw in your biography that you received a Bronze Star, was that from World War II or Korea?

**Hildenbrand:** That's from World War II.

**Ritchie:** How did you get that?

**Hildenbrand:** Just because I was there. At one point they made a decision that anybody who came under enemy fire and was in the front lines -- about 1947 or '48 they decided that if you had been in that situation you were entitled to a Bronze Star, so they gave everybody a Bronze Star like Crackerjack boxes. Some got them for doing heroics, but at the end they gave everybody a Bronze Star.

**Ritchie:** But you had to be at the frontlines at some time.

**Hildenbrand:** Oh, yes. I was in an infantry unit. We were in the Bulge, but that was about all.

**Ritchie:** That was probably enough.

**Hildenbrand:** Yes, that was an indoctrination, as far as we were concerned. Our first combat was in the Bulge. We thought, if this is the way it is, we ain't got no business being here. It was not that much fun. It was winter time, it was cold, it was snowy, it was a mess.

**Ritchie:** Did you find that being in Europe was an education in itself, coming out of Pennsylvania.

**Hildenbrand:** Well, in the early days, until the war was over, you weren't concerned about where you were. You were looking for existence more than anything else. You didn't care where it was that you existed. Then after it, I stayed over for about a year. The war was over in May of '45, I guess, and I stayed until June of 46. And I got into the radio business while I was over there, with AFN. I worked in AFN-Kassel, and AFN-Berlin. Then they decided to send me home. So I came home.

**Ritchie:** How did you get into the radio business?

**Hildenbrand:** I was running a prisoner-of-war camp in Kassel, Germany. We were building a hospital after the war, and we were using prisoners to build this hospital. The radio station manager came to us at one time and wanted to know if he could borrow some prisoners for something. We allowed as how we had some to spare, if they wanted to do something. We got to talking. I'd always wanted to be in the sports broadcasting business. Most people want to be firemen or cops or something like that. I always wanted to be a sports broadcaster. He said, "Come on over." So I started hanging around the station, and they put me on the air a couple of times, until finally they got me transferred from the P.O.W. camp that I was running over to AFN-Kassel. Then they closed AFN-Kassel and they transferred us up to AFN-Berlin.

**Ritchie:** What types of things did you do?

**Hildenbrand:** Disc jockey, news, stuff like that. Mostly disc jockeyed, because AFN did a lot of recorded music, so you did a lot of disc jockey work.

**Ritchie:** So you really learned on the job.

**Hildenbrand:** Yes. It was a good place for experience. I was home just one month and I went to work for a radio station in Philadelphia, so it was obviously good training.

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**Ritchie:** You just naturally decided to follow-up on the radio experience?

**Hildenbrand:** Yes, that's what I wanted to do, and since I had that experience in the Army, why I decided that that was what I really wanted to do. And so I did. I was lucky enough, they were looking for a newscaster at that radio station in Philadelphia.

**Ritchie:** What station was that?

**Hildenbrand:** WDAS. I don't even know if it's still there. Some independent station. So I went to work there, and then I got called back in the Korean War in '50. But Mrs. Rosenberg, who was then -- was she Secretary of Defense?

**Ritchie:** Anna Rosenberg was Assistant Secretary of Defense.

**Hildenbrand:** Whatever she was, she made an edict that if you had been overseas in the Second World War you were not to be sent overseas in Korea. I had been under orders to go to Fort Bliss, Texas. They changed the orders and said "No, you can't go there, because they're going to Korea and you're not supposed to go to Korea." So they sent me to Albuquerque, New Mexico, to Sandia Base, which was an armed forces special weapons project base. I was Sergeant Major of Intelligence there for about nine months, until they counted up all the points that I had and said "What the hell are

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you doing here?" said, "I don't know, you guys sent for me, so here I am." They said, "Well, go home." So I did.

**Ritchie:** What did being a Sergeant Major in Intelligence entail?

**Hildenbrand:** Mostly administrative work. You had responsibility of the base, and the buildings on the base, in terms of not necessarily the security of the base itself, but the papers and things like that that might be around the rooms and areas. It wasn't a very hard job, I can tell you that.

**Ritchie:** Albuquerque didn't have anything to do with nuclear weapons, did it?

**Hildenbrand:** Oh, that's what it was. That's all they did down there. Most of our places that were connected with Sandia base were nuclear bases.

**Ritchie:** Did you feel that being called up again was double jeopardy?

**Hildenbrand:** It didn't really bother me at that time. I had a choice of getting out entirely or staying in the inactive reserve. I stayed in the inactive reserve -- I don't even know why I did, it just seemed to be the thing to do. It didn't bother me too much one way or the other.

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**Ritchie:** Going back to when you were in the radio station in Philadelphia, you said you were news director?

**Hildenbrand:** Newscaster.

**Ritchie:** So you basically wrote and read the news?

**Hildenbrand:** Yes, we had wire service tickers, AP, and UPI (or UP in those days, because they hadn't merged with International, INS, at that point). I had five minutes every hour on the hour from 3:00 o'clock in the afternoon till 11:00 o'clock, something like that. I just did news every hour on the hour for five minutes. It's a pretty good job. Then I did a ten to eleven disc jockey show of classical music, of which I knew absolutely nothing about. I had an engineer who was a classical music buff, so he would tell me how to pronounce Shostakovich and all those funny people's names, otherwise I had no idea what I was doing. I don't like it any better now than I did then, even after listening to it for weeks on end.

**Ritchie:** You must have done some interviewing as well, because you were telling me the other day about interviewing Strom Thurmond.

**Hildenbrand:** I did some interviews when celebrities or somebody would come into town and they were going to play in one of the local theaters. And then I covered the political convention in '48, because the owners of the station were from South Carolina and they

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wanted to have the Democrat convention covered. So I went and covered that and then when Alabama and that crowd walked out of the convention, why I went back to the hotel and interviewed [Strom Thurmond](#), who then was the governor and was the States Rights candidate, I guess, in '48 after the walkout.

**Ritchie:** Would you say that was your first introduction to politics?

**Hildenbrand:** It was. Yes, exactly. And then I covered mostly local elections after that, in Trenton, New Jersey, which is a nice place to cover elections. They're high spirited elections there.

**Ritchie:** That sounds like a euphemism! Did you find that you were growing interested in politics while you were covering it?

**Hildenbrand:** I enjoyed politics. I enjoyed covering politics. I enjoyed what politics was all about. I wasn't sure that I knew what it was all about, but it was interesting, and it was fascinating, and I liked the campaigns and things like that.

**Ritchie:** Did you ever think while you were covering it that you would get involved in it?

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**Hildenbrand:** No, never even dawned on me that I would get involved in it. I never looked at it from a standpoint of "Geez, I'd like to do this someday." I looked at it as "This is fun," but I was on the outside looking in.

**Ritchie:** After the Korean War, when you came back, did you do the same kind of work?

**Hildenbrand:** I went back as the same thing, I was a program director, but it wasn't the same because I'd been away for almost a year, and it's always hard to go back. They've made other arrangements and they've got other people. They bring you back because that's the right thing to do, but they've sort of made other arrangements and other plans. So it's never quite as comfortable the second time. And it wasn't in this case. So I began to look around to go on to someplace else. I had a number of jobs, and wound up in Wilmington, Delaware, with an NBC outlet, as a matter of fact.

**Ritchie:** I was wondering, since so many of your connections have been with Delaware, how you made that connection.

**Hildenbrand:** I was working in Frederick, Maryland, as a program director and I had an agent up in New York. Got a call that said there was an opening for a program director at a station in Dover, Delaware, and would I be interested. I said "Well, you know, I'm not too happy where I am. Sure, I'll go talk to them." So I went

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and talked to them, and decided that it was closer to home -- I was from Prospect Park, which wasn't very far. So I made the change, and then I wasn't there very long before there was an opening up in Wilmington, which was a much bigger market. I went up and auditioned for that, and they said "We'd like to hire you." So I wound up in Wilmington. I covered the '56 election, and then the congressman who got elected called me. Well, the newscaster on the television side of our operation became the administrative assistant to our mayor. When the congressman got elected, he asked this guy to go down and be his AA in Washington. He and I had been good friends from our days in the radio and television stations, so when they had an opening, he suggested to the congressman that he talk to me, which he did. And they said they'd like to have me come down there, so I decided, "What the hell, I ain't got nothing else to do." I wasn't getting any place in the radio business. The radio business is the kind of a business that you either struggle all of your life for enough pay to pay the rent but never buy a swimming pool. Or you hit it big and buy two swimming pools. And I wasn't going to get no swimming pool! So I decided I'd go do this.

**Ritchie:** The 1950s was a period when radio was really losing the war with television. Did you feel that kind of pressure? And did you ever think of going into television?

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**Hildenbrand:** No, never did. It was still in its infancy even then, in '55, '56. We had it, but it was new. I don't think anybody -- well, maybe somebody thought how much a part of our life it eventually would become. It was a new toy and everybody enjoyed it, but I had never thought very much about going into it.

**Ritchie:** Considering that your foundation was in radio, do you think that it was a good training ground for what you did later on in terms of your dealings with politics and the Senate?

**Hildenbrand:** I don't think so. I don't see a relationship between the two. I don't see the things that I did through the years that I was here that my work as a radio broadcaster contributed anything to it. I think that the military side of the operation, the administration, the discipline probably was more of a contributing factor to the things I did in politics, more so than the radio.

**Ritchie:** I was wondering if you felt you had a feel or understanding for the media, what they needed and how they operated?

**Hildenbrand:** Oh, maybe to that degree, that's a possibility. But if I were going to be a press secretary then the background that I had would have been much more advantageous. You have more of a feel, I think, for things that make news from a political standpoint. My guess is that I was helpful to a member in writing press releases, in getting things into the media because I understood what



it is they liked and what they didn't like, what they'd use and what they wouldn't use. But that was a small part of all the things that I did in Congress.

**Ritchie:** I was wondering if Congressman [Haskell](#)'s interest in hiring you at that time might have been shaped by your experience in the radio?

**Hildenbrand:** Oh, partly. He hired me as a legislative person, however. He was working on a single issue, and that of near-misses in the air. Never before had there been any indication that there were a lot of near-misses that were going on in the air corridors of the country, and he became interested in this and decided to pursue it, and needed somebody to come down and help on that particular issue. He was on the Education and Labor Committee, and so the AA was working that side of it, but they needed somebody to do this, which was really why he hired me. So I came down to do most of the work on near-miss legislation and those kinds of things within air transportation.

**Ritchie:** Did you feel you knew about the field?

**Hildenbrand:** Hell no! I didn't know the first thing about what I was doing! I didn't even know why I came to Washington. I hadn't been there except on a high school trip. I had no more idea about what government was all about than flying. Government I didn't

understand except ninth grade civics. But it was a job, and the money was good -- better than what I was making. It was interesting, and it was a totally new life.

**Ritchie:** What did you think about the House of Representatives, when you arrived?

**Hildenbrand:** Well, I didn't know about the Senate in those days, so I thought the House was sort of neat. In those days it was, and it may still be, because it's been twenty-seven or twenty-eight years since I've been over there. But when I came over to the Senate I found the relationship between the two was that the House was a much more friendly place. The doors of the offices are always open, and the staff has a tendency to mingle much more so than they do in the Senate. So from that standpoint there was a vast difference. But in terms of getting things done, in terms of a member, the Senate was obviously the place to be. That's where the action was, unless you happened to be a [Sam Rayburn](#) or somebody like that. You're one of 435 as opposed to one of a hundred, and that's a big difference.



**Ritchie:** And you were working for a freshman member of the minority party, which makes it even more difficulty to get heard.

**Hildenbrand:** Oh, yes. If it hadn't been for the near-miss business that he was involved in, nobody would have ever known who he was, or how he got there, or that he'd left.

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**Ritchie:** How far along did that near-miss legislation get?

**Hildenbrand:** Not very far. They formed the Airways Modernization Board and Elwood "Pete" Quesada became the chairman of the Airways Modernization Board. Out of that grew a lot of the kinds of things they researched in, the radar particularly. The Canadians were, I think, messing around in radar-kind of things. They used to do strips and they'd pass it along from one controller to the next, and that's how they controlled things. Christ, you'd go blind looking at those goddamn strips! It called attention to a problem, and of course the Air Transport Association went bonkers because they didn't want anybody to know about all these goddamn near-misses. But it called attention to the problem and I think it made it easier to get air surveillance equipment at airports, and things like that. Eventually it would have happened, but I think it happened a little earlier because of the interest that he showed, and also how much he tried to bring it to the attention of everybody.

**Ritchie:** Could you tell me a little bit about Harry Haskell? I know he became Mayor of Wilmington later on, but who was he?

**Hildenbrand:** Well, his father was the treasurer of the DuPont Company, back in the days when the DuPont Company went from munitions to whatever it was they went to. There was a period of time in there that they didn't know what they were going to do, because there was

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no longer a war and they weren't making gun powder, and they didn't know what the hell they were going to do. Then they decided that they would get into some other things, and finally some guy found nylon for them, and they went off from there. But he was treasurer, so Hal inherited a lot of his money and was quite well off. I think they owned a piece of Honeywell in Minneapolis. And of course Chrysler in those days was owned by DuPont until the courts made them divest. So he had money. He had served in the [Eisenhower](#) administration with [Nelson Rockefeller](#), when Rockefeller was Under Secretary of HEW, when Oveta Culp Hobby was there. So he had been down there, and Eliot Richardson was down there, and a guy from the DuPont Company by the name of Harlan Wendell was

down there. They were all part of that Rockefeller crowd. So Haskell just decided he would run for public office in that '56 campaign, Eisenhower's second term. He ran and won, and then ran into that terrible '58 election when all Republicans went down the tubes. He lost by 680 votes, something like that.

**Ritchie:** Having gone to work for a Republican congressman, had you identified yourself as a Republican at that time?

**Hildenbrand:** No, I had no idea what I was. It never dawned on me to be one thing or another. I had never registered. I had never voted. So I didn't have any idea what I was. My tendencies were certainly moderate, liberal to moderate, moderate to liberal,

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whatever it is. I think I was entranced by a statement that Eisenhower had made, relative to what he thought a Republican was, or at least his kind of Republican. He said that "I'm someone who is liberal to their needs and conservative with their money." That sort of stuck with me. I was attracted to that kind of phraseology. I never got to the point 'where I was a [Javits](#) liberal -- Javits really wasn't that liberal, as a matter of fact, [Cliff Case](#) was much more liberal than Jack Javits was -- but I never got to that. Coming through the Depression I was trained and raised that money was important and you didn't give it away. You earned whatever it was that you got. So I had trouble with some of the New Deal philosophies, you know: if you don't want to work we'll give you the money to do whatever it is you do. I always had problems with that. But in the areas of civil rights and things like that, I was much more liberal than some of my friends would have liked me to be. My father always used to say, "Always be nice to the people on your way up because you meet the same people on the way down." I always remembered that.

**Ritchie:** So politics was something you really did come upon accidentally.

**Hildenbrand:** Yes, I had no idea. It just was a job and I was ready to make a change. In fact, I really did not make the decision. It was made for me. By the time I had the interview and got back to the radio station, the congressman had already called the station

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manager and said "I want to hire him. When can he come to work?" I'd never told him I'd come to work, but when I got back they told me that I was going to Washington. I said, "Thank you very much for letting me know." So I did.

**Ritchie:** In addition to the near-miss legislation, what kind of jobs did you do for the congressman?

**Hildenbrand:** Oh, just press statements, and any kind of research that he wanted. Because it was in Congress you also have a tendency to run from the day you get elected, because the next election is right around the corner. So we did a lot of political things. We did radio broadcasts. Delaware had no television station and only had a few 24-hour radio stations, but an awful lot of dawn-to-dusk radio stations, and only had about two major newspapers, but an awful lot of weeklies. So we did a lot of preparing stuff we could send out to be in those weeklies, once a week, and to go on the radio stations. We did a lot of that kind of stuff.

**Ritchie:** Probably a pretty small office, I would guess.

**Hildenbrand:** Yes, five people in those days.

**Ritchie:** So everybody had to throw in together.

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**Hildenbrand:** Yes, everybody did everything. In those days it was easy because we quit the beginning of August. We didn't have long sessions like they do now. I didn't realize that they stayed here till Christmas time till I got over in the Senate, because we had left in August in '57 and again in '58.

**Ritchie:** Did you find that the people that you met in that period, 1957 to 1958, were people you continued to see? Did that begin a nucleus of contacts for you?

**Hildenbrand:** Oh, yes. A lot of the people that I know now are people that I knew then. Two of the girls that worked for me in '57 and '58 are still around. One works for the Doorkeeper of the House and one works for Bill Roth. So that's what, twenty-seven years in both of their instances. We hired both of those girls. And the AA who was there lasted through [John Williams](#) before he retired. A lot of them are still around. [Bob Michel](#), who was right across the hall from us, now the Minority Leader, who I became quite close to in those days, is still around. We belong to the same country club and see each other quite a lot.

**Ritchie:** In your file of letters of congratulations, I saw a letter from Jeannette Smith, who was later on Jeannette Williams, saying that she remembered working with you over in the House.

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**Hildenbrand:** Yes, [Cornie Gallagher](#) had gotten elected in 1958 -- who eventually went to jail for something, I can't remember, income tax evasion or something -- but anyway he was elected to Congress from New Jersey in 1958, and she and the sister of the personal secretary to [Warren Magnuson](#), Alma Hostadtler, were staff people for Gallagher, and they came and looked at the office that we had in the Cannon Building, and eventually took that office, which was 233 Cannon. And that's how I got to know Jeannette. Then she came over from Cornie to work with Pete Williams on the Aging Subcommittee, and then eventually became Jeannette Williams.

**Ritchie:** It struck me when I saw that letter that you really do build a network of acquaintances on the Hill.

**Hildenbrand:** Oh, yes. I think that's true.

**Ritchie:** You mentioned getting to meet Bob Michel. I guess it was easier as a staff member to deal with the other members of Congress in the House than perhaps in the Senate. Did you find it that way?

**Hildenbrand:** No, I don't think that's true. I think you dealt with the staff much more so on the House side -- maybe that's not quite accurate. I don't know how it is now, but in those days, we used to have what we called "hall parties" every Friday afternoon. One office in the hall would take turns and have a party. So every

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Friday afternoon we had a hall party, and you got to know not only the staff in the hall but you got to know the members. You knew the members within your own hall, and you knew the members that served on the committee that your boss served on. But beyond that you didn't have that many contacts with other members. I guess the members of the House are more accessible than senators, certainly today. I think most senators now are very, very hard to get to see. That's not because that's the way they are, that's just because the staff make up is such that they're protected much more so than they were then. I don't know how it was back in those days so far as the Senate was concerned. My guess is that it was pretty much the same as it was on the House side, because staffs were smaller, and it was easier to get in to see a member. And he had more time than they have now. They don't have time now to see anybody.

**Ritchie:** Did you have much dealings with the House Republican leadership in those days? Was that [Halleck](#)?

**Hildenbrand:** No. [Joe Martin](#), I think was leader in those days, and probably Charlie Halleck was whip.

**Ritchie:** But they were pretty far removed?

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**Hildenbrand:** Oh, yes. You knew who they were, and they might call from time to time if they needed the congressman for something, but you didn't mess with them. You knew who they were, but beyond that, that was all.

**Ritchie:** Well, Haskell was defeated after his first term . . .

**Hildenbrand:** '58, yes.

**Ritchie:** What did you think you were going to do at that stage?

**Hildenbrand:** I didn't know what I was going to do at that stage. He had his own idea of what he wanted me to do. He just said, I don't want you right now to come back to Delaware. I want you to stay down here and get some more experience." I said, "Well, that's fine, except who pays the rent and all that kind of jazz?" I had just moved into a new apartment and furnished it. I had been living in a furnished apartment up until that time. He said, "Don't worry about it. I'll keep you on my payroll until you find something." He said, "I just don't want you to take anything. You let me know what it is you're taking and I'll decide whether I think that's what I want you to do." I said, "Gee, that's great." So he used to send me a check every month for my salary, while I kept looking for a job. I think I called him one time, when I think the

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Labor Department or somebody had a possibility. He said, "No, I don't want you to go there. That's not what I had in mind." I said, "Well, you're paying my salary, so whatever the hell you want I guess is fine."

Then I had a chance to go to the White House Conference on Aging. We had passed in the late days of 1958 a bill to create a White House Conference on Aging to try to do something for elder citizens, older Americans, because nobody had anything for them. They were looking for somebody, and I was interviewed. They said they'd like to hire me, so I called him and said "What do you think?" He said well, he was familiar with HEW because he'd worked there and was close to it, so he said "That's a good idea. Take that job." I guess I worked there for about six months. I got close to the Assistant Secretary for Legislation, who in those days was Bob Forsythe, who had been the AA to a senator from Minnesota.

HEW, just before Thanksgiving, took cranberries off the market because of a drug called aminotryzol, which had been sprayed on cranberry bogs all over the East coast at times when it shouldn't have been sprayed. So they said, "OK, that's it,

cranberries off the market." And we're two weeks away from Thanksgiving. It hit the fan. And [Margaret Chase Smith](#) came screaming in. And [Hasty Keith](#), and the New Jersey delegation, and everybody else. Forsythe got in touch with my boss and said "Can I borrow him? We've got so many

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people screaming at us, we need some help in the congressional liaison area." So they loaned me to Bob, and I worked that. Then about three weeks before Christmas they got cute and they found that diaethylstilbestrol pellets, which cause capons to get big breasted in a very short period of time, was also a carcinogen. So then they took those off the market just before Christmas, and that started another furor. He kept me there, and then by that time it was into the beginning of the year, and he conned them into letting me stay up there.

I stayed up and worked in the congressional liaison office until about the middle of August. Then Haskell called me and said, "Governor's going to run for the Senate. I want you to come back and run the campaign." I said, "That's all well and good again, but who in the hell's going to pay all this jazz. I can't very well be on this payroll. I've got to quit." He said, "Don't worry about it, just quit." He said, "How much are you making?" I said whatever I was making, it wasn't very much, ten, eleven thousand dollars, something like that. He said, "Don't worry about it." So I left in August and went to Wilmington and ran the campaign. He paid my salary while I was up there, and my expenses. And [Cale](#) was fortunate enough to get elected. We ran against [J. Allen Frear](#), who was a twelve year veteran, and with some covert labor help, why we managed to get elected.

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**Ritchie:** What do you mean covert labor help?

**Hildenbrand:** The labor unions didn't like Allen Frear. He was a conservative. He hadn't voted along some of the lines that they wanted. But they thought if they came out overtly to support Boggs that it would hurt him, because in those days labor unions supporting Republicans was even more of an anathema than it is today. So they had a guy by the name of Jim Lepenta, who was the shop steward, or some dumb thing, in the Delaware AFL-CIO, and he figured out a way to send out ballots to all of the labor members in the state. He made three mailings. On the ballot were Boggs and Frear and everybody else. They checked everybody that they wanted their members to vote for. Initially very vaguely, when they got to the Boggs-Frear thing, you could just see for Boggs a very light check-mark. It was hardly discernable. But each mailing they sent it became more and more obvious, so that they last one they sent out obviously had Boggs checked. We got a lot of labor vote, and I think we won by 2,800 votes. I've always contended -- Cale may not contend, but I've contended -- that really was the difference,

because other than that there wasn't that much difference between Boggs and Frear. Also Boggs had been governor. He was there all the time. They have a tendency, even though Boggs always contended that every time you make a decision you make fifty percent of the people happy and fifty percent unhappy, nevertheless everyday he was there and he was in the

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papers. So they knew who he was. And he'd been a three-term congressman and eight years governor, so he was not just somebody who just cropped up.

We won, and then Haskell went to Boggs the night of the election and said, "I want Hildenbrand to go to work for you." Boggs said, "That's fine." So back down I came. He wasn't very happy that they were going to pay me eleven thousand dollars, and he as governor only made twelve. He really wasn't very happy with that, he just couldn't understand how somebody like me could make eleven thousand dollars when he only made twelve as governor. But he managed to get over that.

**Ritchie:** Did Haskell have ambitions to come back to Washington? Was that one of the reasons why he wanted you to stay here?

**Hildenbrand:** Yes. He wanted to come back. But circumstances worked against him. Delawarians are funny. They don't like to have things necessarily controlled. They like to make up their own minds. DuPont had always been something that was something that -- you know, you talk about Delaware you talk about DuPont, and there was some resentment among the people of anybody that was tied to the DuPont Company. So Hal had a tough row to hoe. He didn't know what he really wanted to do, and then he ran for Mayor. My guess is that at some point he would have run for the Senate, but by the time the

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opening came, by the time John Williams decided to step down, it was too late politically. He was dead then.

**Ritchie:** Just in general, what type of a person was Haskell?

**Hildenbrand:** Very, very nice person. Very compassionate, very understanding. He had no conception, however, of your own individual life. If you told him you had to go do something, he would completely understand that, but it never dawned on him that you might have anything to do. He'd call at 7:00 o'clock on a Sunday morning and say "There's a staff meeting at 11:00 o'clock in Wilmington." You're sitting in Southeast or someplace, but you're supposed to be there, that's fine. But he'd do anything in the world for you.



I did a speech for him one time on the Older Americans Act, or the White House Conference on Aging, and he was due to give it on Monday, and it was during the summer time, and his family was at Rehobeth Beach. On Friday afternoon he was going to Rehobeth. By the time he got back to the office it was like 3:00 o'clock in the afternoon, and he hadn't begun to look at the speech. We knew he was going to testify on Monday morning, and I didn't have an idea when he was going to look at it, make the corrections, and we had to go ahead and get it ready. I had a date, as a matter of fact, that night at 7:00 o'clock. He said, "I've got to go to Rehobeth, so why don't you fly over with me and then I'll have the pilot bring you back. I'll

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do the speech on the way over and you can bring it back." So I get on the plane and we fly to Rehobeth, and he does the speech, says "Thank you very much, see you next week," and they fly me back. I brought the speech back and kept the date. But that's the way he operated. That's the only way he knew how to operate.

Eisenhower wanted him to play golf one day, or the next day, and he didn't have any idea where his golf clubs were. He had a place down in Florida, a place in South Carolina, and a place in Maine, as well as the place in Pennsylvania, outside of Delaware. Didn't know where they were. Anybody with his kind of money would have gone out and bought another set of golf clubs and not worried about it, but not him. He found them in Florida, so he got a plane to fly down to Florida, pick them up, and fly them back. Which made no sense at all, none at all, but that was Hal. That's just the way he was. It never occurred to him that that was a strange thing to do. He liked those golf clubs and those were the ones he wanted. We're still good friends. He still calls. He's very much involved with Laurance Rockefeller, one of those Rockefellers that does a lot in the conservation area, parks and things like that. He's big in that area, and he's doing a lot. He bought Abercrombie and Fitch at one time, but I don't know what that deal is now, whether they're still alive or not. But he's still around.

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**Ritchie:** Your descriptions of working for him remind me of reading some of the descriptions of people who work for Rockefellers.

**Hildenbrand:** Yes. They all have pretty much the same kind of attitude. He used to fly back and forth from Delaware. Friday we'd give him a ticket to fly down Monday morning. So we gave him his ticket, and he went out there this one Monday morning and it was socked in. It was foggy and there was no way he was going to get down here, and he had a meeting of the Education and Labor Committee. So he went to the train station, and typical of people who have all that money, he didn't have any money. So he couldn't buy a ticket. But he saw one

of his drivers, one of the Greenleaf Dairy Drivers, and he hailed him down and wanted to borrow the money from him. But he had just started out on his collection route, and he didn't have the money. So Hal gets in the truck and he rides with this guy till the guy collects enough to give him the money so he can buy a ticket to come back to Washington. Then he gets down here and has no idea who the driver was, or what his name was, or anything like that, so we had to call the Dairy and say "There's some driver there that's going to be short twelve or fourteen dollars. Find out who it is and we'll send you the check." But that's the way he operated. It never dawned on him that this was something people didn't do as a rule. Eliot Richardson was the same way. He got on a train from Boston and rode down. They asked him for his ticket, and he didn't have a

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ticket. He tried to tell them who he was, but that didn't make any difference to them, they wanted his ticket. Well, he didn't have one. He had a terrible time.

**Ritchie:** The Kennedys apparently were the same way, never carried any cash.

**Hildenbrand:** Yes, I don't know what it is about those people who have that kind of money, but Hal never had any. He was always borrowing money from somebody. He came down one time, the cab brought him to the office building. He ran in and had a meeting upstairs in the Education and Labor Committee. About two hours later he called down and said, "Oh, I forgot to pay the cab driver. Of course, by that time the cab driver figured he got beat for the fare, so we had to find the cab company and go all over the place trying to find this poor man to come back and get his money. Hal hadn't had it, and forgot when he ran in to tell somebody to go out and pay the cab driver. But we were used to those kinds of things.

**Ritchie:** To back up a little bit, you mentioned you were on the staff of the White House Conference on Aging for about six months. Did you work with the White House staff in the Eisenhower administration?

**Hildenbrand:** No, it was just called the White House Conference on Aging because the President called the conference. The HEW

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Department was the action agency, they're the ones that set it up and did all of the things that needed to be done. I think the first conference was held in 1960. But the White House wasn't that much involved.

**Ritchie:** What was your reaction to HEW in those days?

**Hildenbrand:** It was as bad as it is now. It's got now twice as many people, more than that I guess. And a much bigger budget. But in those days it was the biggest department, an awful lot of people. It was a nice experience, and I'm glad that I did it, but I would not necessarily want to go and do it again. The bureaucracy is a totally different world.

**Ritchie:** What about working as a congressional liaison? What does that entail?

**Hildenbrand:** Well, that was the best part. The fact is, working as a congressional liaison officer meant that I was back up on the Hill most of the time, walking the halls and making sure that if anybody had any troubles, what they were and if we could help them -- Social Security problems and things like that. That got us out of the regimen of going in at 9:00 o'clock and sitting at a desk until 5:00 o'clock. We'd go in at 9:00 and have a meeting and about 10:00 or 10:30 we'd go up on the Hill and then not come back till about 3:00 o'clock or 3:30 in the afternoon. So it broke up the day.

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It was a good job. If I were going to go back into government in some capacity, that's the kind of thing I would like to go back and do, because that's what I've done all my life anyway.

**Ritchie:** Did you find that part of it was explaining to the agency what the congressman wanted? Or were you explaining the agency to the congressman?

**Hildenbrand:** It was a combination of both, because you'd be surprised how little the bureaucracy understands about Congress. And Congress feels it doesn't have to understand the agency. To some degree they're probably right. The agency is much more dependent upon Congress than Congress is upon the agency. Trying to explain to members about bureaucracy is sometimes a very difficult thing to do, because they don't understand it. Although Congresses are now getting more bureaucratic each day, and pretty soon it's going to be easy to explain it to them, because they'll be living with it.

**Ritchie:** Is there a certain constituency that an agency like HEW has on the Hill?

**Hildenbrand:** Well, yes, your education people and your health people, and Social Security, and those things which they are responsible for as an agency becomes their constituency. Then you help anybody else that has problems with an agency. The biggest problem we had was in making grants. We had [Prescott Bush](#) from Connecticut

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[Tom Dodd](#), [Chris](#)' father. It was a continual war because we would give to Pres Bush maybe an hour or a half an hour's notice on the announcement of some sort of a grant before we'd ever called Tom Dodd. And he would always call up the Secretary and just bitch that we were treating Pres Bush differently than we were treating him. Then we'd get called in the Secretary's office and he'd chide us about doing what we were doing, which we just continued to do. We always had that problem, but we were politically oriented and we were not about to change. If they wanted to bitch, let 'em bitch.

**Ritchie:** So you felt you were working for the Eisenhower administration.

**Hildenbrand:** Sure. There was no reason to give Tom Dodd anything before we gave it to Pres Bush. And if we had Democrat senators, we'd give it to some congressman first. Except that we would give it to Democrat senators who controlled our budget or our programs, like [Lister Hill](#), for example. Whatever Lister Hill wanted, Lister Hill would get. And some of the others were the same way. Otherwise, we went to some congressman if we didn't have a Republican senator. We also used to get into problems that way cause we'd give it to a Republican senator and they'd have Republican congressman in the District, and then he'd bitch, because a senator got it before he got it. But you learned to live with those things.

**Ritchie:** Did you see much of Lister Hill at that time?

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**Hildenbrand:** No, we'd go to see him once in a while, when we had a bill or something that the administration wanted him to introduce by request, or something. I saw more of Lister Hill, of course, when I came on the Senate side than I did during that period of time. He was a fine gentleman, absolutely.

**Ritchie:** When it came to health issues, he was really a power.

**Hildenbrand:** Yes, he was the Hill of Hill-Burton. He really was the hospital boy in the Congress, the health person.

**Ritchie:** Would you feel pressure from a Lister Hill to kowtow to things he was interested in?

**Hildenbrand:** No, they didn't do that in those days. They didn't feel that they had to. There was never the pressure that there is now. They were much more gentlemanly in those days than they are now. We never had the pressures that you have now.

**Ritchie:** It was more an agency like HEW wanting to keep the chairman happy.

**Hildenbrand:** Oh, yes.

**Ritchie:** Keep him informed.

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**Hildenbrand:** And you know, your fights were fights of substance. You wanted this and they wanted that. Sometimes they had the votes and they won, sometimes you could convince them and you won.

**Ritchie:** It was in '58 that they finally passed the big education bill.

**Hildenbrand:** That's right, the National Defense Education Act. That came up after Sputnik went up in '57. Then we had another big elementary and secondary education bill in '59 or into '60, I guess. Of course, Eisenhower was at the end of his term, and the heir apparent was [Nixon](#). I can remember sitting in [[Leslie Arends](#)] office, with Bryce Harlow, who was liaison at the White House, and working with [Frank Thompson](#) from New Jersey, who was a Democrat on the Education and Labor Committee, trying to work out a compromise with Charlie Halleck on an education bill. They contacted Nixon and said, "Can you live with this?" And Nixon said no. So we never did a bill. My guess is if he had said "Yeah, that's all right," we would have had a bill long before we did in the areas of elementary and secondary education.

**Ritchie:** It was too hot for him to handle?

**Hildenbrand:** Yes. He didn't want to do it at that time. Whatever it was, he didn't want to be involved in it, so we didn't do it.

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**Ritchie:** Did HEW get you involved in civil rights disputes at that time?

**Hildenbrand:** No, they were not involved in civil rights. The only civil rights that anybody ever got involved in there was what was on the floor. When Thurmond [filibustered](#) I sat up in the gallery with Jean, which was his first wife, at 2:00, 2:30, or 3:00 o'clock in the morning, in '57, when he set the record for filibustering. I was over on the House side and I came over to watch it. But that was the only thing about civil rights that we knew anything about. Civil rights had not become anywhere near the issue that it became in the '60s with Martin Luther King and the Voting Rights Act.

**Ritchie:** The educational side was still moving with "deliberate speed."

**Hildenbrand:** Yes, under the '54 decision. And of course, Boggs had been very much involved, because he was governor and he enforced the '54 decision in Delaware, and people just were apoplectic about that. In fact, there was a party started in Delaware, called the NAAWP: The National Association for the Advancement of White People. It was started by a guy out of Texas, whose name escapes me, who was eventually killed in a domestic brawl. But he started it in Delaware, and they used to have rallies and all this kind of jazz. There

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was a lot that went on from the educational standpoint, but really the Voting Rights Act and stuff like that wasn't until Martin Luther King got involved in the '60s.

**Ritchie:** In 1960 you went back to Delaware to run Boggs' campaign.

**Hildenbrand:** Or at least help run it.

**Ritchie:** What is it like to be suddenly in charge of, or be a major part of a political campaign like that?

**Hildenbrand:** Well, it wasn't too much, because in '58 I had done Hal's campaign. I had at least one campaign. And when you work from a state that has one congressman, it's the same thing. It wasn't that much different from what we did in '58. The same people that worked for us in '58 were working for us in '60. The nucleus of Hal's campaign group was now Boggs' campaign group. There wasn't that much that had to be done. Nixon, we thought, was going to run strong. It turned out he didn't. He lost Delaware. We were the only ones to carry it. We lost the governorship. We lost lieutenant governor. We lost the presidency. We were the only ones to win, of all the people that were running. Bill Roth ran for lieutenant governor that year with somebody, I don't remember who -- it doesn't matter -- but he only got beat by 1,800 votes.

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**Ritchie:** Was Kennedy particularly popular in Delaware? Do you think that had some influence?

**Hildenbrand:** Kennedy was particularly popular, and they brought out a heavy labor vote -- which also helped us, because they split the ticket and voted for us and also voted very strong for Kennedy. But, as it turned out, Kennedy lost three of the four jurisdictions, but won the fourth one so big that he was able to counterbalance it. We did exactly the opposite. We won three and lost the fourth.

**Ritchie:** Well, as you said, Frear was pretty conservative. He really wasn't a Kennedy-type Democrat.

**Hildenbrand:** Yes. See, South of Canal, which is what we call the lower part of the state, he was very, very popular. We won in the city and lost everything else. But that was enough to carry us through.

**Ritchie:** Frear was the kind of person who really didn't stand out in a crowd, either, was he?

**Hildenbrand:** No, he was very, very nice. He was an extreme gentleman, but he never did anything in the twelve years he was in the Senate. He was always in John Williams' shadow, because John had found that income tax thing in the early '50s and he just rode that to a fare-thee-well. And Allen had no place to go, nothing to do. He was just a journeyman senator.

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**Ritchie:** He apparently was under the thumb of Lyndon Johnson, too.

**Hildenbrand:** Well, there were stories that he went over and shook his finger in Allen Frear's face on some vote in '60, which we used, of course, in the campaign. Whether there was that much truth to it or not, I don't know, but the story persists.

**Ritchie:** Johnson supposedly yelled: "Change your vote!"

**Hildenbrand:** Exactly, and he did.

**Ritchie:** Well, can you tell me a little bit about [Caleb Boggs](#)? He was a person who seemed to be very popular in the Senate, but it's hard to find out a lot about him.

**Hildenbrand:** Yes, we ran a campaign on the basis that there isn't anybody in the state that doesn't call Cale by his first name. He just knew everybody and everybody knew Cale. He was the kind of person that you called him Cale. I didn't, simply because I'd come out of the military, and there were certain disciplines that you understand. You don't call officers by their first names, so you don't call people that you work for. But everybody else called Cale "Cale." Everybody in the state knew him and liked him. There probably wasn't anybody in the state that really didn't like Cale, including the people that ran against him. He had been a three-term congressman, and been eight years as governor. He was just committed

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to public service. Had no money. To this day he doesn't have any money. They didn't have a mansion in those days -- I don't know whether they do now. He lived in an apartment, a one-bedroom apartment in Wilmington. But everybody liked him. He didn't have any more substance, I think, probably than Allen Frear had. He had a better personality than Allen Frear, at least it came across better.



Senator James Caleb Boggs (R, Delaware)  
*Senate Historical Office*

He was strong in constituent services. Everybody knew if you needed something you could talk to Cale and Cale would get it done for you. And they didn't give a goddamn whether Cale voted for labor unions or voted for this bill or that bill. It didn't make any difference to them. Cale was there if they needed help. They knew who to go to. That was his strength. Through all the years that he was an elected official, it was simply based on the fact that he was so good at constituent services. It was almost twelve years before he got on the Appropriations Committee. He wanted to get on Appropriations and never could, then got beat. He got on the committee and he got a hideaway office in the Capitoll. They blew up the hideaway the day he got it. He got it Saturday and they blew it up on Sunday. He'd been waiting twelve years to get a hideaway, and they blew it up the next day! Then he got on Appropriations Committee and then got beat. So he didn't have a very good career towards the end.

**Ritchie:** How would you describe his political standing?

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**Hildenbrand:** He was a moderate, along the lines of Haskell. Much more moderate certainly than John Williams. His voting record and John's would not be that akin, except in terms of Delaware issues where of course they would be

together. He was more moderate. In fact, he was the campaign manager for [Hugh Scott](#), when Hugh Scott ran against [Roman Hruska](#) to be Whip in 1969. Boggs was his campaign manager. So he came out of the Scott and the [Hatfield](#), and [Ed Brooke](#), and [Javits](#), and [Keating](#), and that wing of our party.



*Left to Right: Roman Hruska (R-NE), Hugh Scott (R-PA), Thruston Morton (R-KY), and Kenneth Keating (R-NY)  
Senate Historical Office*

**Ritchie:** So after the election was over you pretty naturally went to work for Boggs.

**Hildenbrand:** Nobody ever asked me. He didn't ever ask me. I'm not ever sure he wanted me. Haskell just said, "Your legislative assistant is Hildenbrand." And Boggs said, "Thank you very much," because Hal had done so much for him, to get him into the Senate seat, that I guess he thought he owed it to Hal, that whatever Hal wanted he was going to let him have it. And what Hal wanted was for me to come to work for him, and so I did. Hal's AA by that time had gone to work for John Williams, the one that we had when we were in the House, so we were both down here by that time.

**Ritchie:** But it sounds like you were able to establish a pretty good relationship with Boggs.

**Hildenbrand:** Yes. Through the years it got better and better. I think everybody has problems from time to time when you work very closely with someone from a personality standpoint. But Cale never said a cross word to anybody, never had a fight with anybody. I think in all the years I worked for him he only really had a flash of temper one time. That was at a time when there was a big fight over

whether we were going to seat [Pierre Salinger](#), out of California, which would have been 1964. As a typical staff person, I wanted to listen to what was going on, because it was interesting and it was fascinating. So I was on the floor, and Boggs wanted me to go and meet with some constituents down in the dining room. In my brashness I said I was listening to this, and I thought it would be better if he went and did it. He said, "Well, unless you're going to vote for me when my name is called, you better go." So it suddenly dawned on me that "Hey, man, I may have overstepped myself a little bit. Maybe I better go." I realized at that time that I was a little much. I really wasn't the senator, like I thought I might be. But that was the only time that we ever had any words.

He loaned me to the Committee of Nine, which was created in 1966, to go out and help some lieutenant governor by the name of Ed Fike to run against [Alan Bible](#). To tell you the kind of guy that Cale Boggs was, he and Alan Bible had gone to school together at Georgetown Law School, had been classmates, and they were both staff up here when they went to night school, or whatever they went to.

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And Bible found out that I was out there, as only the Nevada senators can. They know everybody that comes into that town. When I registered at a hotel, Bible found out that I was registered, and called Cale. He was just terribly hurt to think that Cale would send someone from his staff out there to work against Alan in his campaign. Cale was so mortified at that time, he called me on the phone and said, "I want you to come home right away." To this day, I could not explain to those people in Nevada why I had to come back here. They didn't understand that. He called me on a Friday. Sunday I left and came on back. But that was the kind of a person that Cale was. He never wanted to say anything bad about anybody. Never did say anything bad about anybody.

**Ritchie:** How did you find his office worked, by comparison to the House office? Was it pretty much the same?

**Hildenbrand:** Yes, because being the congressman-at-large, the mail and everything is pretty much the same. It doesn't increase. You don't get added constituencies. And in addition, now you have two people, because there's another senator, whereas when you're in the Congress it's just you. So the workload was no different. I could do the legislative mail by 10:30 in the morning. I had lunch with a guy yesterday from [Gordon Allott](#)'s Colorado office, and we were reminiscing about the days in the '60s when they'd get a hundred letters a day and I'd get twenty a week. But we just did not get

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very much mail. It would take something like a Right-to-Work bill, or something like that, to generate mail. And then, for us, a thousand letters in a whole year would be a big generation. There was not that much difference. We went from five people to ten, but that's about all.

**Ritchie:** So you had one congressman with five staff people, and two senators each with ten people.

**Hildenbrand:** Yes, because John never had many more than that, if he had that many. He had a small staff too. Both of us had very small staffs.

**Ritchie:** Well, what was the United States Senate like in 1961 when you first came here?

**Hildenbrand:** It was a great deal different then than it is now. It was a thinking Senate. It was a Senate that deliberated, as its name implied years ago, when it was called the "world's greatest deliberative body." In those days it lived up to that name. It would deliberate over a piece of legislation for weeks on end before it would finally act. It was a debating legislature in those days. We spent maybe three hours a day -- they'd start debating about 2:00 o'clock and a 5:00 o'clock they'd quit. But they'd debate the issue, whatever the issue was. There were no unanimous consent agreements, or time limits, nothing like that, to vote at this time, or vote at

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that time. Everybody knew that the work week was Monday through Friday and votes could come at any time. Nobody ever would think of coming on the floor and saying "Can I ask you not to have any votes tomorrow because I've got to go to wherever the hell it is I've got to go." Nobody ever thought of doing that.

We didn't work very long hours, didn't pass a lot of legis- lation, didn't have a lot of roll calls. If we had a hundred and some roll calls it would be a lot in a given session. We were beginning then to get into civil rights. Vietnam had begun to heat up. We were just a short year and a short year and a half away from the Cuban Missile Crisis. So things were beginning to change. Some of the old bulls were beginning to die off, the [Bob Kerrs](#), and the [Denny Chavezs](#), and the [Lister Hills](#), and the [Dick Russells](#), and the people that had been around a long, long time. I guess that was the beginning of the younger movement, with [Kennedy](#) coming. [Quentin Burdick](#) came in '60. There was only four that came in: [Jack Miller](#), Cale Boggs, Quentin Burdick, and one other.

**Ritchie:** Was [Metcalf](#) elected in 1960?

**Hildenbrand:** Maybe Lee Metcalf was the other one. Those were the four that came in at that time. No, wasn't [Keith Thomson](#) elected and then got killed in that

airplane crash in December? And [J.J. Hickey](#), the governor, appointed himself. He got beat; [Milward Simpson](#) beat him. That was also the time when we got the first

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Republican senator from Texas, when [John Tower](#) came in in May of that year, '61. He got Lyndon Johnson's seat. They had appointed a guy by the name of [Bill Blakely](#) to be senator, big, tall Texan. And then Tower beat him.

**Ritchie:** Do you think the Senate was a clubbier institution in those days?

**Hildenbrand:** Yes, very much so. I think it was partisan clubby. I think the Democrats were clubby and the Republicans were clubby. I don't think there was as much cross-fertilization, politically, as there is now. I think that members today have a tendency to have friendships outside of this place that cross party lines. Back in those days, I think that everybody was friendly but you stayed pretty much with your own group. You didn't run around with the opposition in those days. And the Republicans didn't provide much opposition, because their numbers were pretty small.

**Ritchie:** Once again you were working for a freshman member of the minority party. What was it like to work under those circumstances?

**Hildenbrand:** It was easy. You didn't have nearly anything to do. You couldn't impact on anything. All you had to was worry about the votes, and we didn't have that many votes. So you really confined yourself a great deal to constituent services, which was

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Boggs' strong suit anyway, so it was easy from our standpoint. But in terms of getting into deep issues of the world, we didn't get that involved.

**Ritchie:** Did you spend much time on the Senate floor?

**Hildenbrand:** I spent more than Boggs wanted me to spend, because I liked it. I enjoyed the floor. Having only about five or six letters a day to worry about, why I had nothing else to do, so I spent a lot of time over there. Boggs on occasion would get a little upset, because he knew I was spending a lot of time over there, couldn't understand why, because I couldn't do anything. And he was right. So I would go through periods of time when I would decide not to go over there as much. But it would always like a magnet draw me back, and I would wander back over there, until he'd get mad again, and then I'd lay off for a while. But I always was fascinated by what went on on the floor.

**Ritchie:** I've heard from some others that the best learning experience was sitting on those big couches . . .

**Hildenbrand:** In the back, yes. We spent a lot of time back on those couches. And I think that's true, I don't think there's any question that you can learn more sitting back there in one day than you can learn in six months not being there.

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**Ritchie:** How did Boggs fit into the Republican network. He was a moderate. Did he fit in easily?

**Hildenbrand:** Oh, yes, Boggs would fit in anyplace easily. He was like an old shoe, he was just comfortable. He was comfortable with most people. There wasn't hardly anybody he didn't like. You had to really be bad for him to not like you. So he fitted with everyone. And after the beginning of his first term, Mark Hatfield came in, and they had been governors together. [Fritz Hollings](#) came in in the middle, and they had been governors, and some of the others who were governors he knew. So that gave him a feeling of having some comrades that he knew and could relate to. He ran with the Hugh Scotts of the world, and the Jack Javits, and the Ken Keatings, and the Cliff Cases, and people like that in the early days. Although he was very friendly with the [Francis Cases](#) and the Roman Hruskas, and the others of a more conservative persuasion.

**Ritchie:** And [Dirksen](#), did he get along with him?

**Hildenbrand:** Well, everybody got along with Dirksen. But here again, Dirksen was the Leader, and he didn't ever let anyone forget that he was the Leader. He would call you, don't call him, that kind of thing. So we didn't really have that much involvement in those days with the leadership. Boggs was a party person. They didn't have any trouble with him in terms of votes. He was going to vote pretty much the way the party wanted him to, unless he really had

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some strong feelings. Then of course, he would leave the party on occasion, but most of the time he would stay pretty much with the party. And he tried to stay with John Williams as much as he could. He and John got along quite well. There was no animosity between the two of them, or between the offices.

**Ritchie:** They had very different interests, though.

**Hildenbrand:** Oh, yes. John was very big on the Finance Committee and very big on taxes. Boggs became an environmentalist, simply because we created the Air and Water Pollution Subcommittee in '62, and his ranking on the committee



by that time -- [John Sherman] [Cooper](#), for whatever reasons, gave the ranking minority membership to Cale. [Ed Muskie](#) was the chairman. So we became air and water pollution environmentalists. It gave us something to do other than just whatever we were doing.

**Ritchie:** I wanted to ask you about committee work. The reforms that allowed members to have staff on committees came along in the '70s. In the '60s, did the senator's own staff serve as his committee staff?

**Hildenbrand:** Yes. Unless you were chairman, you didn't have committee staff as they have it now. You didn't have a legislative assistant for every committee you served on. We were on Agriculture and Public Works in those days. I did both of those, knowing nothing

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about either one. But there was only one legislative assistant. So you did that and you did the floor work. But even then, you weren't overtaxed doing that. Now you couldn't even begin to do it, but in those days it wasn't that hard.

**Ritchie:** Nowadays you go to a committee meeting and you see more staff than you see senators. The senators are all absent, and sitting behind their empty chairs are the staff. I gather that wasn't the way it was back then.

**Hildenbrand:** Not as much as now, although we did sit behind members, on Public Works as well as in the Agriculture Committee. The numbers were smaller, in terms of committee sizes. Now you're looking at eighteen to twenty members, and everyone's got a staff, plus the committee staff, you've got thirty people. But in those days we had a couple of people on the committee, and members would bring staff from time to time. Most members didn't bring staff. Members did not rely on staff as much then as they do now, because they had the time to study the issues on their own. Now they either don't have the time or don't take the time, or a combination of both.

**Ritchie:** Committee staffs in those days were ostensibly non-partisan, professional. In some committees they claimed that it worked, and on other committees it clearly didn't. Did you find that committee staffs were helpful to the minority?

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**Hildenbrand:** Yes. The Agriculture Committee was really a bipartisan committee. Agriculture is not necessarily a partisan issue, and so it was sort of easy for them to be that. Because of the relationship that Muskie and Boggs had, having both again been governors at the same time (Muskie was governor of



Maine when Cale was governor), they knew each other and respected each other. So that staff had a tendency also to be sort of bipartisan in its application of things. But there were some other committees, you know, Foreign Relations for example, were there was no such thing as bipartisanship, even though the policy, foreign policy was supposedly bipartisan, the committee was not. Commerce was another one that was very partisan. And there were others like that. Labor was very partisan. [Goldwater](#) was ranking in those days, and that was a very, very partisan committee.

**Ritchie:** The Public Works Committee was chaired by Pat McNamara . . .

**Hildenbrand:** No, Dennis Chavez in the early days, and then Chavez died maybe in '63, and then [Pat McNamara](#), and then he died.

**Ritchie:** Both of them I think of as partisan figures.

**Hildenbrand:** Chavez not as much as McNamara. McNamara coming out of Michigan was more used to partisanship than Chavez was coming out of New Mexico. There wasn't as strong Democrat feelings

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politically in New Mexico as there was in Michigan. McNamara had been a plumber, steamfitter, something like that, and came out of the union movement, and was very partisan. But he only was there for two years, I guess, before he died. Then, I guess, [Jennings Randolph](#) became chairman, after Pat McNamara, and was chairman until 1981 when the majority changed.

**Ritchie:** But the subcommittee was independent, had its own staff?

**Hildenbrand:** Yes. [Ralph] Nader forced the creation of the committee, screaming about air pollution. He had been on seat belts, and he got tired of that and went into air pollution. So they decided, what the hell, maybe we ought to do something about it. So they decided they'd form a committee, and they made Muskie the chairman of it and called it the Subcommittee on Air and Water Pollution. It took off from there. We put the Clean Air Act together in '63, and then in '65 the Clean Water Act.

**Ritchie:** We're almost at 11:00 o'clock, and I want to ask more questions about those bills. So I think the best thing would be to stop now.

**Hildenbrand:** Yea!

**Ritchie:** But I'm having a great time. I'm really enjoying listening to this.

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**Hildenbrand:** I'm delighted that you are. I'm glad somebody's having a good time.

[End of Interview #1]

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