

LINDA GUSTITUS

**Staff Director, Subcommittee on Oversight of Government Management and of the
Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations,
and Chief of Staff, Senator Carl Levin,
1979-2003**

Oral History Interviews

U.S. Senate Historical Office
Washington, D.C.
September 24-December 10, 2012

Deed of Gift

I, Linda Gustitus, do hereby give to the Senate Historical Office the recordings and transcripts of my interviews between September 24, 2012, and December 10, 2012.

I authorize the Senate Historical Office to use the tapes and transcripts in such a manner as may best serve the educational and historical objectives of their oral history program. I also approve the deposit of the transcripts at the Library of Congress, the National Archives, the Senate Library, and any other institution which the Senate Historical Office may deem appropriate.

In making this gift, I voluntarily convey ownership of the tapes and transcripts to the public domain.


Linda Gustitus

9-2-14
Date

Accepted on behalf of the Senate Historical Office by:


Donald A. Ritchie

September 2, 2014
Date

Table of Contents

Preface.....	i
Interview #1: Looking to the Hill.....	1
Interview #2: No “How To” Manual.....	30
Interview #3: The Objectives of Good Oversight.....	60
Interview #4: Personalities and Power.....	86
Index.....	127

Preface

By Katherine A. Scott

Linda Gustitus's first introduction to Congress came in the summer of 1966 when she interned in Congressman John B. Anderson's [R-IL] office. She returned as a paid intern a few semesters later, and those experiences left her with a positive impression of both Washington, D.C., and the legislative process. After graduating from Oberlin College, Gustitus moved to Chicago and started working as a community organizer, where she met her husband. She became a newspaper reporter, got married, and then began law school, but transferred to Wayne State University Law School in Detroit, Michigan, when her husband accepted a job there. Gustitus became active in local Detroit politics, and it was there that she first met Carl Levin, then chairman of the Detroit City Council.

After law school, Gustitus returned to Chicago where she worked first for the Fair Employment Practices Commission and then as a prosecutor for the Cook County states' attorney's office. When her husband was offered a job in Washington, D.C., Gustitus jumped at the chance to return to D.C. She began working as a trial attorney at the Justice Department in the civil fraud division, gaining keen insight into the relationship between the executive and legislative branches.

In the fall of 1978, senator-elect Carl Levin hired Gustitus as a legislative assistant. During her first year on Senate staff, she was Senator Levin's point person on his signature issue: the legislative veto. In 1980 Gustitus became the staff director of the Governmental Affairs Subcommittee on Oversight of Government Management. For the next twenty years she worked as majority and minority staff director, investigating a wide-range of topics including Enron, sweepstakes solicitations, the Social Security Disability Program, defense contracting, and campaign finance reform. Gustitus later served as staff director of the Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations (PSI) and briefly as Senator Levin's chief of staff.

During her more than twenty years on Governmental Affairs, Gustitus became an expert on the process and procedure of effective congressional oversight. In this four-part interview, she conveys the important role Congress can and should play in providing oversight of the executive branch, arguing that congressional oversight is "not intended, under the Constitution, to be political oversight. It's intended to be institutional oversight." She explains the role of journalists and whistleblowers, the subpoena power, the appropriate use of documents, the role of investigators, the challenges of conducting investigations with a small staff, and how well-planned hearings can shape public opinion.

In addition to oversight, Gustitus gained intimate knowledge of how the Governmental Affairs Committee and its subcommittees operate, the role of the chairmen and staff, and the unique features and design of PSI. She also observed great institutional change within the Senate, having joined the staff at a time when women began to play increasingly prominent roles throughout the Senate. As a founder of the Senate Child Care Center, she discusses the challenges faced by two-working-parent households in the modern era and the evolving role of women in the Senate during the last quarter of the twentieth century.

After retiring from the Senate in 2003, Gustitus served on the Wartime Contracting Commission, gaining perspective on the work of outside commissions. Alarmed by the allegations of torture at Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq in 2004, she helped found and served as president of the National Religious Campaign Against Torture, which advocates for ending the use of torture. Her years of experience inside Congress helped her to demonstrate how citizen activists can effectively pressure Congress and the president to effect change.

About the interviewer: Katherine (Kate) Scott is a historian in the Senate Historical Office. A graduate of the University of Washington, she received a M.A. in history from the University of New Mexico and a Ph.D. in history from Temple University. Scott is the author of *Reining in the State: Civil Society and Congress in the Vietnam and Watergate Eras* (University Press of Kansas, 2013) and various book chapters, including “A Safety Valve: The Truman Committee’s Oversight during World War II,” in Colton Campbell and David Auerswald, eds., *Congress and Civil-Military Relations* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2015). She lives in Rockville, Maryland, with her husband and two children.
