

Howard E. Shuman

Legislative and Administrative Assistant
to Senators Paul Douglas and William Proxmire, 1955-1982

Interview #6: LBJ as President

(September 17, 1987)

Interviewed by Donald A. Ritchie

Ritchie: Why don't we start with your story about attending the 1944 convention and then talk about some of the presidents that you have known and had dealings with.

Shuman: In 1944, when I was an apprentice seaman, between my period at the University of Michigan and going off to the Midshipman's School at Harvard, I spent about six or eight weeks at Great Lakes, and I had very little to do. They put me in the typing pool, but essentially I didn't have anything to do, and I could get long evenings in Chicago if I wanted to go down. It was forty or fifty miles, but there was very good train service. The Democratic Convention was there that summer. I was very interested, and I made a point to try to go to the convention. The first time I went down a policeman, saw me in my white Navy uniform, and let me in to sit in the press gallery, just behind the speaker's platform. I was about as close as one could get to the speaker.

The big thing I remember about it: I was there the evening when [Robert] Hannegan was on the platform, and it appeared certain that [Henry] Wallace would be nominated again for Vice President. The galleries were loaded with people chanting

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"We Want Wallace." They had been given extra tickets to get in. Of course, the powers that be did not want Wallace. They wanted either Truman or Justice [William] Douglas. They were the two, and Hannegan put Truman's name first on a list presented to Roosevelt, which was the reason he was chosen, I've read. Anyway, at nine o'clock or so at night, with Wallace a sure thing, the galleries full and the vote ready to be taken, or even underway, the presiding officer, who must have been the House Speaker, took a motion for adjournment. The question was all those in favor say aye, and there were almost no ayes. All those opposed no, and the whole place said no. He declared the ayes had it and gavelled adjournment! That night, in what were then called the smoke-filled rooms, Truman was agreed on. I came back the next day and watched as Truman accepted the nomination.

I then saw Truman one other time, when he came through on his whistlestop tour in '48 to Tolono, Illinois, which was about ten miles south of Champaign-Urbana. I went down there with my friend Dick Murphy, and we stood relatively close to the back of the train. There was an extraordinarily big crowd. We were surprised at the crowd; we thought we would be the only ones there. Truman gave one of his short "Give 'em Hell" speeches. It was very good. The farmers were in trouble, and he mentioned the grain storage bins, and left. I had no reason to think that he would win, except that in Clinton, Iowa, near my home in Northern Illinois

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Dewey gave a fatuous speech. [Thomas] Dewey said -- trying not to offend anyone in the election -- that "your past lies behind you and your future lies ahead of you," which reminded me of the famous Calvin Coolidge statement that when men are out of work, unemployment comes about. The same day Truman was at Tolono Dewey was in Southern Illinois. He criticized the Dewey train engineer for backing his train up into the crowd after taking on water. No one was hurt and it was a minor incident, Dewey called the engineer a "lunatic." A tip-off to the election was the engineer's reply. He said he wasn't bothered by Dewey's criticism because he wasn't going to vote for him anyway.

I had a very good friend, Arno Hill, who was running for county treasurer in Champaign. He and I were at the courthouse on election day, in the morning. I had voted early. As we were coming back in a taxi from downtown Urbana to the campus, Arno kept telling the taxi driver Truman is going to win. I kept saying, "Come on, Arno, it's okay to keep up pretenses during the campaign, but this is election day, and you don't have to continue with this line." He said, "No, I'm convinced he's going to win. No question about it." He said, "I've bet a lot of money on him." It turned out he had bet several hundred dollars with big odds that Truman would win. Later, I asked him why he was so confident. You remember I mentioned earlier about how the organization in Chicago kept presidents out until the Friday night

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before election. Well, Truman had come to Chicago the Friday evening before election; and the organization held a magnificent torchlight parade. I suppose more than a million people lined the streets, some of them of course produced by the organization. But nonetheless, Arno had been there and had seen a million people on the street. It was a very quiet crowd -- Mr. [Douglas](#) told me about it later as well -- very quiet, as if this were the end of an era. Arno saw the size and nature of that crowd, and became convinced that Truman was going to win, and bet a lot of money on him.

The only other person who thought Truman was going to win was Clifton Utley, the father of the NBC television correspondent Garrick Utley, from Chicago who was very famous and was offered network positions and refused to take them, who did five-minute commentaries in Chicago routinely for both the Chicago area and the networks. In any case he had polled the people at the NBC station in Chicago the morning of the election: how are you going to vote today? And he wrote it down and kept a record of it. Then when they came back from the polls, he asked them: how did you vote? And he found a great difference, and became convinced that when people got into the voting booth they were just unable to vote for Dewey. When Truman was a couple of million votes ahead and H.V. Kaltenborn was saying that when the rural districts came in Dewey would win, Utley was the first one to say that Truman would be the winner. Well, anyway, those are minor stories

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about Truman. The blue ribbon ticket of Stevenson and Douglas pulled Truman in in Illinois, as Douglas helped [Kennedy](#) in 1960. Kennedy said in 1960 he was hanging on to Paul Douglas' coattails for dear life.

When I was in Washington, from time to time I got down to the White House. I've mentioned the event with the Illinois group going to Europe meeting with Kennedy. I don't know whether I mentioned the time we were there about our postmasters, with Larry

Ritchie: O'Brien?

Shuman: O'Brien. This has to do with Lieutenant Colonel [Oliver] North in a sense. A lot of people have said that no lieutenant colonel could do what he did without orders from the top. I was never quite convinced about that, because of a situation with Larry O'Brien one time, when [Dirksen](#) was holding up our postmasters in Illinois. I went down to the White House with Senator Douglas, and he had a list of things he was interested in. We saw Larry O'Brien and complained about the postmasters being held up because Dirksen was in cahoots with [Olin Johnston](#), who was the chairman of the committee, from South Carolina, and who was a Dixiecrat. His heart did beat for poor people, but he gave terrible speeches against blacks, racist speeches on the Senate floor. Larry O'Brien picked up the phone and

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called Johnston while we were sitting there, without so much as a by-your-leave from Kennedy, and said to Olin Johnston: "The president wants the Illinois postmasters put through."

Now, I'm sure that O'Brien was confident the president would back him, that he didn't have to ask about it. But nonetheless it has always seemed to me that someone working out of the White House can quite easily do that. A lieutenant colonel can call an admiral and say: "Admiral, we've just had a meeting of the National Security Council, and I've been instructed by the President that you are to do such and so." I think a person can do that and get by with it, because no one outside the White House dares to say, "Well, I think I'll check with the president about that." That incident convinced me that an operator in the White House can get a heck of a lot done on his own agenda without actually going to his superiors or the president who can't be bothered with every item.

I want to talk later about the Buck case, which involved [Lyndon Johnson](#), but I want to talk about another incident that happened just after [Nixon](#) resigned and [\[Gerald\] Ford](#) was president. Ford held an economic meeting and brought in the major economists in the country. He met them in the East Room around a huge table. There must have been eighty to a hundred people there from all walks of economic life and of all political persuasions. Walter Heller was there. Ford didn't leave out the Democrats.

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I was there because Senator [Proxmire](#) was asked to go. Well, Ford sat all day long and listened to all of them speak and give their opinions, three or four minutes each on what Ford ought to do about domestic economic policy. I was really thrilled by this, because it was such a difference from Nixon, who had been holed up in the White House, unwilling to see anybody or speak to anyone. I was very, very impressed.

At the end of the day they adjourned, and I wasn't with anyone in particular -- the senator had gone back to the Senate -- and there was going to be a reception in the dining room, which is at the other end of the White House. Having nothing else to do, I walked through to the dining room and found myself the only one there. While I was there, I walked President Ford. Well, I remembered a reporter, Ed Leahy from the *Chicago Daily News*, a great reporter; self-educated, he hadn't been to college, but he was a great reporter. He had a phrase about covering the White House: "Fawn not on the mighty." Ford walked in and I was there with him, and I fawned all over him: "How are you, Mr. President?" "Great to see you, Mr. President." "Like you, Mr. President, I went to the University of Michigan." "My wife went to college in Michigan." All these cliches! I think I told him if we had to have a Republican president, he was the kind we should have. It

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was awful! The lesson is that everyone fawns on the president. Almost no one says anything to him other than to agree with him,

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to tell him what a great person he is. Unlike senators who go out and meet the public, day in and day out, and who hear criticism or are criticized to their face, that really doesn't happen to a president, except rarely. I think it is one of the great weaknesses of the American presidency. It certainly was my weakness that day. I fawned over that fellow, simonized the grapefruit, polished the apple, licked his shoes in a way that I've always been ashamed of.

One other anecdote about a president. I went down to the White House to a signing of a housing bill. Proxmire as chairman of the Housing Committee had produced a major housing bill. There was a signing ceremony in the Rose Garden which most of the mayors from the big cities attended along with other housing people. I knew a lot of them because of the Douglas Commission. After the ceremony, President [Jimmy] Carter came around and shook hands with everyone, including me. So I mentioned whom I worked for. "Oh," he said, "your senator had an amendment to the bill," and he mentioned it. Well, that bill was at least six inches thick and there were dozens of amendments to it. I remembered the amendment, but it was a very minor one. It occurred to me then what a waste of time it was that he was so well briefed on the minor amendments to that bill. Of course, it was the criticism of Carter, to me underlined by that event, that he overburdened himself with detail and swatted up the minor issues at the expense

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of the large picture. Now, of course, the opposite is clearly true of [Ronald] Reagan, who may have a grasp of the big picture but knows few of the details. Somewhere there's a happy medium, but I thought at the time that that event illustrated the general weakness of the Carter presidency.

Ritchie: Do you think that Lyndon Johnson was an example of a president who knew the broad picture and the details as well?

Shuman: Yes. I think he probably did combine the two better than most. Probably out of his legislative experience. He had all that time in Congress when he couldn't help but know about many of the details. Johnson was never interested in the academic side of legislation. He was in no way an intellectual, other than he was very quick and very bright. He must have had an IQ of 180. But he never had a philosophical thought that I'm aware of. He seldom inquired as to whether this was good or bad, or the best way to do things. He was good at taking

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advice from experts, but I don't think he ever had a philosophical thought. So he knew legislation, not the details of every line and every amendment, but he knew in general what an amendment was about, and whose interests were involved, and what the politics of the amendment were rather than the substance or intellectual quality of the amendment. So, I suppose yes, he probably did combine, with perhaps some shortsightedness in foreign policy, the details with the general political overview better than most.

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Ritchie: I wanted to talk a little bit about Johnson as president. We've talked a lot about him as senator.

Shuman: Right. And I was very critical of him as senator. I've always thought he was a better president than he was a majority leader, with which almost no one else agrees.

Ritchie: I found a quote from Senator Douglas in his memoirs; he said that "If I had been told in 1956 that ten years later I would be one of Lyndon Johnson's strongest supporters I would have thought the seer was out of his mind."

Shuman: That's true enough!

Ritchie: I wondered what was it that accounted for the change, both in Johnson and in the relationship between Johnson and Douglas?

Shuman: Well, I don't think Douglas did anything particularly to change it -- perhaps one or two things. But the big thing is that Johnson, as I have mentioned time and again, when he was in the Senate was beholden to the South for his power. That was his power base. He was unable to carry through the Democratic party position on issues, which was why Mr. Douglas was so critical of him. In fact, I looked up a speech last night, which Mr. Douglas made on the Senate floor in support of [Joe Clark](#)'s criticisms. That was a February '63 speech in which he was not

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criticizing Johnson, because he had left, but the power elite in the Senate. He complained that the Democrats as a whole campaign on certain issues and get to the Senate only to find out that the bipartisan coalition frustrates their goals, which was exactly what Johnson did as the head of the bipartisan coalition when he was majority leader. So they were at odds politically and on issues. When Johnson got to be president -- I don't know what his position was as vice

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president -- essentially he was emancipated, almost in the same sense that slaves were emancipated during the Civil War, from that power base. His power base then became a national power base. In '64 he was elected by the national Democratic party, and he campaigned in the larger industrial states which he won as well as the smaller states. He was no longer beholden to the coalition of Southern, mountain state, trans-Mississippi Republican senators and their economic and political interests. It was his transition. I remember seeing him in Chicago and East St. Louis in 1964 supping with the Democratic big city organizations whose interests he had spurned as [Majority Leader](#).

He was a man who, as I have said, was never a racist or anti-Semitic, or opposed to the poor in any visceral way. He was for the poor, but he never let that stand in his way to support the rich. He was quite able to take the Democratic agenda, and Kennedy's agenda which had not yet gone through, and he put them

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through in an amazing way. Not since Franklin Roosevelt's 100 days and the first term of Woodrow Wilson had anyone put through such a massive amount of major legislation. But I think he was emancipated from the political ties that had fettered him before, much in the way Gulliver was fettered. Oil and gas, public works, the filibuster, anti-Civil Rights, all those were the fetters that kept him from being a great national historical leader in the Senate, because he was tied to the Dixiecrats. So I think he was a much better domestic president than he was a Senate leader.

Ritchie: Did Senator Douglas have any suspicions about his sincerity, having dealt with Johnson in the Senate as one creature and dealing with him as another as president?

Shuman: No, I don't think Mr. Douglas thought Johnson was insincere on domestic policies as President. But I don't think he ever thought Johnson would be the liberal domestic president he became. There was an incident which I think made President Johnson think pretty well of Mr. Douglas. There was an old V.A. hospital I think in Dwight, Illinois, which was fifty or sixty years old. It had been started as a private hospital, originally for the treatment of alcoholics. It was in a very Republican town, eighty miles south and west of Chicago. When Johnson was on an economy kick, he proposed that it be closed along with a number of other outmoded installations for veterans in the country. This created one awful stink. Every member of the Senate and House

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with one of the institutions in his state or district raised holy hell. Mr. Douglas was the only one who said yes: it is an out moded institution, it doesn't do what it should be doing, and the President is right on economy grounds to close it. Well, Johnson called him on the phone. Mr. Douglas wasn't there, and he asked for me. He said, "I just want to call you to tell you how much I appreciate the support. Tell the Senator I'm a Douglas man!" I said, "Thank you very much, Mr. President." I said, "Up here we're Johnson men." And we both were lying through our teeth!

Of course, Mr. Douglas backed him on Vietnam, and was a part of a bipartisan group who supported Vietnam, which Johnson appreciated. But on the other hand, in 1967 and '68, after Mr. Douglas had been defeated and headed up the Douglas Commission on housing, which was quite critical of HUD, and of [Robert] Weaver, and of the housing program, Johnson was somewhat hostile. Johnson may have been talked into it by Weaver, or [Joseph] Califano, but in that period, Johnson treated Mr. Douglas and us very miserably. Joe Califano kept Mr. Douglas waiting for more than an hour outside his office one day, an outrageous gesture. I think those orders probably came from Johnson. Johnson really could not stand criticism of any kind. We were holding hearings in twenty-two cities of the country. We found out that most of the propaganda about what was being done on housing wasn't true. There was a new program which provided subsidized units. We found out that HUD,

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if they put four units of subsidized housing in an apartment building of a hundred units, with ninety-six units of housing paid for by the private market, counted a hundred units as part of their subsidized program. We exposed that practice, to the chagrin of Secretary Weaver and others. That kind of criticism was made public, and Johnson was pretty thin skinned about it.

Ritchie: Was Douglas ever close to Johnson during those years when he was working with him? Or were they just basically in agreement on the issues?

Shuman: Well, Johnson did I think one rather classy thing for Mr. Douglas at the time of the '64 or '65 Civil Rights bill. Mr. Douglas was never pushy. To be a successful politician, he would say, one must be pushy but not appear to be so -- which may have been a paraphrase of Oscar Wilde. Whenever we traveled together, Mr. Douglas would always wait to be the last one on the airplane. He wouldn't use his position to push on first. He would wait until everyone else was off before he got off. With a crowd of people he never would take any advantage of the fact he was a senator. There was the signing of the '64 or '65 Civil Rights Act, and I'm not sure now whether Johnson came up to Capitol Hill and signed it

-- I have a picture of it, it was under a big chandelier -- or signed it in the East Room of the White House, or in the President's Room in the Capitol.

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Ritchie: He signed the '64 bill in the White House, and the '65 Voting Rights bill at the Capitol.

Shuman: Well, then it was the '65 act, but I do have a photograph of it. In his way, Mr. Douglas did not push himself to the front of the group standing behind the president to be photographed. You see such pictures, and it always galls me when some pushy congressman or senator who had nothing to do with the legislation ends up standing next to the president. Mr. Douglas, was without question a, or the, key person behind the bill. He and Senator [Javits](#) were the key people in Civil Rights in terms of fighting for it longer and harder than anyone else. But Mr. Douglas was in the background. He stood back and away and didn't push himself to the front. Johnson during the ceremony singled him out and called him up to present a pen to him, which was a gesture which said he was sorry about the fights they had had earlier on this issue, and recognized what he had done. From other histories I know that Johnson almost never apologized directly for past mistakes or indignities. This was his way of saying he was sorry.

Ritchie: I wanted to ask you about the '64 Civil Rights bill, because I have read a lot of the literature on it, and while Senator Douglas is always very prominent in the discussions of the 1950s bills, he's almost never mentioned in relation to the '64 bill.

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Shuman: Well, in 1964 the president was for it. Douglas didn't need to be the point person. The fight for legislation was over. That vote was merely the ratification of an issue already decided. This sort of thing almost always happens, I think I've said it before. The person who gets the credit is the one who comes around at the key point. The Johnny-come-lately, not the pioneer, gets the credit. The difference between '64 and '57 was that public opinion was overwhelmingly in favor of the bill. Everybody jumped on the bandwagon, everybody took credit. The newcomers were all out there appearing to fight, but the battle was over. As the saying goes, success has a thousand fathers. Failure is an orphan.

Ritchie: What was Douglas' role on the '64 bill? Did he play a role in it or was he just a general supporter of it?

Shuman: He played a major role. I have a sketch by Howard Brodie of Douglas debating [Stennis](#) and Olin Johnston in that fight. He spoke very strongly for it, but it was done. The battle was over. I don't remember what the final vote was, but it was overwhelming. It was like the Greek play. The battle had taken place offstage before the play was presented.

Ritchie: Once the filibuster was broken.

Shuman: Yes, correct. And there was no question that it would be broken. So it was a difference in climate.

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Ritchie: It's ironic that one of the senators who gets so much credit for that bill was Everett Dirksen, because he was one of the last, as you say, to climb on the bandwagon.

Shuman: He was not only one of the last, he was one of the bitter opponents all the way through, especially on the Voting Rights bill. I think I mentioned that in 1960, when Douglas and Javits proposed the Voting Rights bill, Johnson as majority leader, moved to table it, Dirksen seconded it, and they killed it. And five years later, I think to the day, Johnson as president sent the bill up, Dirksen introduced it, and they kept pounding themselves on the back and beating themselves on the chest saying what great Civil Righters they were. That was hard for me to take.

Ritchie: Do you think that it disturbed Douglas that Dirksen got his picture on the cover of *Time* magazine because of the Civil Rights bill, and that other people got the glory for the bill?

Shuman: No, I don't think it did. I'm sure he felt that a little bit, but not so much that he didn't get the credit. Perhaps he felt bad that the wrong people got the credit, but he was pleased that Johnson got the Civil Rights bill through, that the battle was won. He was more interested in the substance than in who got the credit. Throughout the period of the fight over Civil Rights bills, he kept trying to push other people forward to

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get the credit, and to join the fight. It was a very lonely thing when he was the point person. There was a great Civil War battle not too far south of here at Spottsylvania where the "Bloody Angle" at the mule shoe existed. I've been down there, where a group of northern troops attacked the key fulcrum point of the

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battle, where soldiers had almost no chance at all to survive. I used to think of Mr. Douglas in the manner of leading the charge, even a sharper charge than Pickett's charge at Gettysburg. I mean, they were blown out of the field at Spottsylvania and in the Senate when they attacked the citadel, the Southern strongholds and breastworks. Mr. Douglas was fulfilled that Civil Rights had finally made it, even if he didn't get the credit at the time, and he may not get the credit historically. I've seen people as able as Dave Broder report about that period -- a fine political writer, one of the most astute -- give the credit to some of the wrong people. I once dropped him a note about it. There is a lack of historical knowledge or perspective about what happened, which I would like to help put straight.

Ritchie: One other influence, it seems to me, on Senator Douglas, was his wife [Emily Douglas](#). I've seen a lot of references to her participating in Civil Rights demonstrations, as late as '64 and '65, the march on Selma and things like that. Was there any evidence of her influence on him in the office, or was that really a private part of his life?

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Shuman: She was quite good about not interfering in the office. I know there were a lot of senators' wives who did, and the staff were always very unhappy about it. But she was quite good about it. She seldom came to the office and never worked in the office, and almost never interfered with the staff. She wouldn't call me except on rare occasions to ask that I do something, but whatever influence she had she would talk to him about. And he thought she was a constructive influence, and that she had great political smarts. Of course, she herself had been a congresswoman. She was elected in '44 as Congresswoman at large in Illinois. So she knew the whole state, had campaigned the whole state. She was defeated in '46 by a man who made a very dirty campaign against her, who was a [Joe McCarthy](#) type. One of the things Mr. Douglas was always proud about was that both he and his wife improved the quality of the opponent every time they ran. So she was a smart political person in her own right and had very good instincts on issues. When I campaigned with him in Illinois in '60, '64, and '66, he would call her, usually in the morning at breakfast time, and talk with her at length about what he was doing, what the issues were, and what advice she might offer.

So yes, she had a very constructive influence on him, both on issues and in her political knowledge. The daughter of the sculptor Lorado Taft, she spent her summers near Oregon, Illinois, along the Rock River where the great sixty-foot-high statue of

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Blackhawk the Indian looks down the river. It was Taft's work. The area is a lovely, lovely place. There was an artist colony there. Emily was on the stage at a later time in her life. She was a very good speaker, very knowledgeable in political affairs, and had good instincts.

She did go to Selma, and she marched with King at the front of the line. When she called from Selma, I talked to her because the senator was on the floor. She told me about the impending chance that they would be attacked, and asked about what he thought was the right thing for her to do. His position was that she was a person in her own right, she should make up her own mind, regardless of what effect it might have on his political career. They worked very closely together.

He didn't drive because he'd lost the use of his left arm in the war, and so almost every day Emily would drive him to the Senate from their home up in the Northwest of Washington, Davenport Street, probably a thirty or forty minute drive. I know that on those occasions he would talk to her at length about what was coming up during the day.

There was the period in 1956, when Mr. Douglas tried to get the aborted Civil Rights bill out of committee, but was defeated so overwhelmingly by Johnson on his motion to adjourn, when he felt isolated and shunned by the establishment in the Senate. The

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attitude was picked up by the lesser-lights who believed in going along in order to get along, and they reflected at least publicly Johnson's will. I know that Emily gave him great strength at that time, in terms of advising him to hold his head high and to take it in stride and to be proud of what he was doing, when it was extraordinarily difficult for him to survive with all this collegial opposition on the floor of the Senate, even from people like [John Pastore](#) and others who supposedly were with him on the issue.

Ritchie: You mention that she didn't interfere with the staff at all

Shuman: In the day to day workings of the office. No, she worked through him and through his personal secretary, Jane Enger.

Ritchie: I was going to ask you about what Douglas' office was like in the 1960s. I know you began to spend more time at the office and less time on the floor.

Shuman: That's true. When I became Administrative Assistant, I spent more time in the office, but I still was sort of a super-legislative assistant. I did not really administer the office. We had an extraordinarily loyal office. We had one

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Administrative Assistant; we had one Legislative Assistant, Kenneth Gray, who was an extraordinarily able fellow. There was a metamorphosis of Kenneth Gray - I think I can say this. Kenneth

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was a PhD out of the University of Chicago. He worked in Mr. Douglas' campaigns. He has always been a marvelous fellow. His wife worked in [Humphrey's](#) office. But when Kenneth came to the office, his idea was that he really was a scholar who should work at the Library of Congress. His view was that he should go off into his cubical and sort of swat up an issue and come back. Well, that isn't the way it worked. The way I describe what I had to do was to shoot from the hip and correct the record. One had to make immediate decisions. The job was more like that in a newspaper office where a person had a daily assignment that was fresh and new, that he or she didn't really have time to plan, where one had to gather information very quickly. It had to be accurate, because if it wasn't we'd get into a hell of a lot of trouble. The senator would use the data in a speech or for a conference or a vote or a mark-up, and then we'd forget it and go on to something else.

There was a daily encounter, almost a running battle. It wasn't anything like the leisurely academic pace. Furthermore, it differs from the academics in that people have to be very decisive and very quick. There was a time in '58 when Douglas was proposing in '58 a tax cut, and he held a hearing. He had proposed a six billion dollar tax cut designed to stimulate the economy quickly. In fact, if it had gone through, it probably would have saved Eisenhower's 1958 congressional election, which

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went so much against him. Probably the Republicans wouldn't have been as badly defeated as they were. Mr. Douglas proposed the cut, and the day it was coming up there was a meeting of the Joint Economic Committee at which six or eight economists testified, one after another. At the end of the testimony, at about noon, he said to them: "Today I am going to offer a six billion dollar tax cut. The purpose is to stimulate the economy. And I want to know how you economists would vote." He went up and down the line and asked them specifically. All but one said "maybe." "On the one hand this, on the other hand that." It reminded me of Truman's statement that he always wanted to have a one-handed economist so he couldn't say "on the one hand this and on the other hand that." But they couldn't make up their minds. He chastized them. He said, "The bell is ringing. The clerk is calling the roll. He is calling your name. You have to say yes or no; you can't say maybe." The only one who answered directly was Bob Nathan, who's

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still alive and who was an economist in the New Deal; I think he was also on the Council of Economic Advisors, or on the staff under Truman. Bob said yes; he was decisive. He had had political experience, but none of the others had. Those were the kinds of decisions that had to be made every day, decisively. That's the way it was. But the economists and the academics were indecisive.

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The point about Kenneth is he wasn't a natural, political legislative assistant when he came with us. He was an academic. He grew as time went on. In 1964 we loaned him to Hubert Humphrey for the Vice Presidential campaign, and Kenneth shepherded the press on the press plane, oversaw their baggage, was deeply involved in the Humphrey campaign and traveled with him all over the country. Kenneth came back a different person. He was very practical. He was no longer the academic-type of legislative assistant. He took to the political game. As a result, he was extraordinarily effective with respect to saving the Indiana Dunes, and Kenneth deserves a terrific amount of credit for saving the Dunes, along with the senator. But if he hadn't gone with Humphrey, I don't think he would have been as effective. He ended up being a very, very astute legislative assistant.

Ritchie: What was it about going along with Humphrey that changed him?

Shuman: Well, I don't quite know, but he probably saw that Humphrey had the combination of massive intelligence, quick intellect, the ability to understand an issue very quickly, and then translate that into doing something practical about it. Certainly all that must have rubbed off on Kenneth.

Ritchie: He's become somewhat flamboyant since then, hasn't he?

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Shuman: Oh, you're thinking of the wrong Kenneth Gray. This is not the Congressman [Kenneth Gray](#). This is Kenneth Gray who was our legislative assistant. The Congressman Kenneth Gray has always been flamboyant. He represented the most Southern of all the Illinois Congressional districts. He was a man who performed magic tricks and could even get other Congressmen to stand up in front of him and literally take their shirt off before large audiences. But there are two Kenneth Grays. Our Kenneth Gray was a PhD from the University of Chicago, in political science. I'm sure the other Kenneth Gray has many virtues, one of which is not that he was a PhD out of the University of Chicago.

Ritchie: Did [Paul Simon](#) work in your office at all?

Shuman: No, Paul Simon did not work in our office, but Paul Simon worked with us a lot. He was a protege of Mr. Douglas. Mr. Douglas promoted him at every possible time with the politicians and with the Democratic party in the state. Paul Simon started out as a very young newspaper editor in Troy, Illinois, got a string of papers over the state, small weekly or biweekly papers, ran for the state legislature in a very heavily Democratic stronghold near East St. Louis, which is more Democratic than Chicago, and upset the incumbent. He did it in the Douglas manner of going out and shaking hands, going house-to-house, and working street corners, at a time when the professional politicians relied on the organization to get them elected. Paul Simon defeated

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a professional politician who had been a time-server in the legislature. He exposed a corrupt practice involving kick-backs to the local sheriff and won the enmity of the local Democratic organization. But he won by going to the people over the heads of the organization. Then he went to the state senate. Somewhere in this period he met and married his wife, Jeanne, who was a Democratic legislator from one of the Chicago suburbs. Mr. Douglas used to say that this was the only time in history that two politicians actually fell in love with each other. That had never happened before. Politicians pretend to like each other, but generally they don't.

Then Paul ran for lieutenant governor. Before that, in the '64 election, when the Supreme Court had passed on one-man-one-vote, the Illinois legislature had to run at large. Ab Mikva, young Adlai Stevenson, Paul Simon, and half a dozen others, many of whom were proteges of Mr. Douglas in the progressive, ethical wing of the party, ran and came in at the very top of the ticket. I think the Democrats got about two-thirds of the seats in the state legislature, and Paul Simon and Adlai Stevenson and Abner Mikva were among them and led the ticket. Mr. Douglas campaigned with them in that election. Ab Mikva tells the story about when the group was in Southern Illinois and they were begged by someone to go talk to a small group of students who were very interested in listening to them and seeing them. Because it was in the

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evening after they had campaigned all day, they were reluctant to do it. They finally relented and went off fifteen or twenty miles to talk to this small group of interested students. When they got there, who was talking to them? Senator Douglas. I was there that night, I'll never forget it. Ab tells this story about the senator's dedication to campaigning.

Mr. Douglas promoted Paul Simon for lieutenant governor, where he served very well. When he was lieutenant governor, he hired as his parliamentarian [Dick Durbin](#), who is now Congressman from the Springfield area. Dick had started his career in the Douglas office when he was a student at Georgetown. He was our advance man in '66, without question the best advance man we ever had. He was terrific. He then became a protege of Paul Simon, was brought along by Paul, ran for Congress and finally won. Now he has that Springfield seat.

The Democratic organization dominated by Chicago, after Paul Simon had criticized it heavily over the years, needed to win -- I've forgotten which year it was -- and it adopted Paul Simon for Governor. That was when I learned that the organization could no longer produce. There was a time when it could win a statewide election if it decided to do it. It didn't win many. There was a deal. The *Chicago Tribune* supported the Democratic mayor and organization provided the Democratic Chicago organization didn't try too hard to win the governorship. It was a trade -- a rather

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raw political deal. The *Tribune* didn't criticize or investigate the organization. Then there was a time when the organization couldn't win statewide, but could nominate statewide. Then there was a time when it could win only in Cook County. Then it got to the place where it could win only in Chicago. Now it can't win there. Well, this was an example of the organization not even being able to deliver the nomination for governor. The party had agreed on Paul Simon. It needed a blue ribbon candidate, much like the Douglas-Stevenson candidacies in '48. It nominated Paul Simon, and then a man named [Daniel] Walker became a candidate in the Democratic primary and campaigned the state against the organization, winning the primary, largely because the Chicago organization couldn't deliver. It's a myth about the organization being able to deliver. It couldn't and it can't. If there was a really good candidate on the ticket and the opposition wasn't too good, it could deliver, but it couldn't deliver even in a pinch in the mid-60s. **Ritchie:** Is that because the times were changing, that the media was different, or was it because of inefficiency and poor organization?

Shuman: Well, it was a combination of things. One was the difference in media; two was the New Deal, which meant that the politicians didn't deliver food baskets anymore, or Christmas baskets to people. What the politicians could offer in the terms

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of material things vastly decreased. They couldn't get people beholden to them for favors as they once had done, because these necessities were now provided by government. One hopes the government is compassionate, but that is not always so. These were the major reasons why the organization could no longer deliver the vote. And then there was the big migration to the suburbs, especially of the Irish. There were all kinds of wards in Chicago where the ward committeemen or the precinct committeemen ostensibly lived in that ward but actually lived in the suburbs! It was a scandal. Some of them kept power for many years beyond the time when they actually lived in the wards and precincts. This wasn't true of Mayor Daley who stayed in his neighborhood.

Ritchie: As I recall, didn't Walker walk across the state.

Shuman: He did. I think he was the first one to do that. It was later picked up by [\[Lawton\] Chiles](#) and others. And Walker has just gone to jail for embezzlement. I was shaken by that, because as much as I didn't like him, I didn't think he was a crook. And as far as I know he did not have a crooked administration. He had a clean administration.

Ritchie: Well, so is Robert Anderson in jail now, too.

Shuman: Yes, I'm shocked by that. I saw him a lot. He used to come to see Mr. Douglas on treasury, and tax, and

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financial issues when he was Secretary of the Treasury under Eisenhower. I found him very conservative, but a very upright, straight-arrow type. I was amazed when he went to jail, and I don't understand it or what happened to him.

Ritchie: The question I was thinking about with Walker and his walking, was whether the organization was slower to respond to changes in the media than independent candidates. It seems as if it is the outsider who is best able to exploit the new changes, and the insider who goes along with the traditional and the comfortable.

Shuman: I think that's absolutely correct.

Ritchie: I wanted to ask a couple of questions about the press, and your experiences in dealing with it. How well did the press cover the Senate while you were there, and specifically Senator Douglas? What were the relations between his office and the press?

Shuman: We had good relations with the press, I would say, looking back on it. I think they were on the whole favorable to Mr. Douglas, especially the working press were very favorable to him. We always made a distinction between the editors and the working press.

Ritchie: You mean the reporters.

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Shuman: The reporters. And I don't think the reporters were necessarily liberal. They didn't go for him just because of his stands. In fact, on Vietnam and a few other things the reporters obviously were against him. But I think they admired him because of his ethical standards and the way he differed from most other politicians, particularly his intellectual qualities. The press people were interested in following him, interested in writing about him. I think the man who wrote the best article I ever saw about him was Peter Lisagor from the *Chicago Daily News*. Now, I knew Pete very well. I played tennis with him every Sunday for ten years before he died in '76. Pete was the head of the *Chicago Daily News* bureau, and he covered the White House, so he didn't come up to the Senate as much as Jim McCartney, and Bill McGaffin, and other Chicago Daily News reporters. But occasionally he would come up and then he'd write a think-piece. And on a couple of occasions when he did this, I thought he captured the essence of the senator better than anyone who had ever written about him, with the possible exception of Mary McGrory. Peter and Mary could look at the back of the neck of someone and tell you what their real personality was. It was an amazing sixth sense Peter had and Mary has. Very few even good reporters have it. That sixth sense is an enviable trait.

The Illinois press differed from the Washington press in an amazing way. I had to get used to them. The Washington press was

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quite gentlemanly in those days. They would make appointments. They would ask tough questions, but they wouldn't ask offensive questions. Those were off limits. When we campaigned in Chicago and Mr. Douglas went into a Democratic ward headquarters to meet with the alderman in his office, the Chicago press would barge in uninvited. They felt they could do anything, say anything, be as unkind in a physical way to a candidate or to a politician as they wanted to. It was very different from the rather genteel way in which the press in Washington treated us.

Our press relations on the whole were very good. I went to Europe with Senator Douglas in '57 and '61, and I believe the example I want to make occurred in '61. That was a time when there were still counterpart funds available abroad and no expense had to be made public. When we arrived at the airport in Paris, the State Department was there, and gave us an envelope full of French francs, to be used anyway we wanted. The funds didn't have to be reported. They weren't publicized in any way. I was the treasurer and Mr. Douglas was the Senator, and we made a point when we traveled of trying to live on the government per diem. We spent for the hotel, breakfast, lunch and dinner, what the government per diem was. Now, this wasn't too difficult, because we were invited to eat with others a great deal, but in response to that we always picked up the tab for the State Department staff representative who accompanied us. There was usually one, some-

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times two. We did live within the per diem. I kept an account of everything we spent. Furthermore, Mr. Douglas almost always traveled on commercial airlines, not military planes, and he traveled tourist class, not first class. We absolutely had to beat the State Department over the head to put us up in modest hotels. Mr. Douglas had visited Paris many times, and he had a modest hotel where he liked to stay. The State Department insisted on putting us up in the George the Fifth. We had a tough time to get them to change, which we did successfully on most occasions.

When we came back, he said to me, "I don't want to make my colleagues look bad, be a hot dog on this issue, but quietly call the Chicago press and the St. Louis press and tell them what we've done, and that we've got all the records, and that if they want to come up to the office and look at them, fine. They're open to them." I prepared all this in detail and had a written report of our schedule and expenses. Not a soul was interested. No one came up. If we'd tried to hide it, they would have been up in a second. But when we were open with them, they didn't do anything. So there's a double-standard in the press. News is something bad. Conflict is news. One of the things about dealing with the press that's important is to know what the press will go for. One thing they'll go for is conflict. Senator Proxmire, who had worked as a reporter early in his career, for the *Madison Capital-*

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Times, knew this. He knew how to generate conflict of one kind or another, which the press would almost always report.

One also had to know the weaknesses of the press, to know how to deal with them. For example, if you didn't give them a couple of days lead on a press release, it wouldn't get printed. Some of the press loved to come in at ten o'clock, come to a hearing, leave at eleven thirty or twelve, write the piece before lunch, then go to a good bar and enjoy a good lunch, and that was that. You couldn't really get most of them interested in any immediate news after lunch; they were not equipped to deal with it. So one had to know their foibles.

In some ways the press is lazy. They decide on what to cover, they write the article, and they don't want any other news to break because then they have to do more work. The wire services handle the breaking news.

The press, when I worked in the Senate, certainly through '66, through Mr. Douglas' time, was not very critical of people. They didn't report the drunks or the crooks. I have a vivid memory of Senator [\[Karl\] Mundt](#) of South Dakota with his arm around Bobby Baker in the most friendly way, just a day or two before Baker was fired. Mundt was very chummy, and the press would not, or did not report Bobby's peccadillos.

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I think the press has improved over the years. There are a lot of people who think that investigative reporting as a result of Watergate has gone too far, and in some ways it has, but it still is an improvement over the days when the press was part of the establishment. On the other hand those senators not in the club took a beating from Lyndon Johnson's press friends, especially William S. White. The *New York Times* in those days had as their Washington editor a man of Southern beliefs.

Ritchie: Arthur Krock?

Shuman: Arthur Krock, a very conservative fellow. And William White covered the Senate for the paper. What some people don't know is that most of the editors of papers around the country take their lead from what they read in the *New York Times* or the *Washington Post*. The television news editors do the same. The only difference is the TV editors play the stories which have film to accompany them. So if William White wrote as he always did on Civil Rights, that the Northern liberals were going to lose -- he never would write about the substance -- they would follow what he said. It was the lemming approach. I have a speech here that I got out of the 1957 Record, a detailed speech during the Civil Rights debate on the ways in which blacks in the South were denied the vote, state by state, area by area, method by method, which I wrote for Mr. Douglas. It was never reported. It never got into the papers because they were

uninterested in the substance. They were interested almost exclusively in the battle: who's going to win? Who's got the votes? White, as Johnson's Boswell, constantly wrote about the knee-jerk liberals and what losers they were, how they didn't know how to count, and all the rest. That was then picked up by editors around the country. It had a big effect. It was a harmful effect. It was a major part of Mr. Douglas' difficulties in '66. Probably that plus his position on the Finance Committee, taking on oil and gas and the banks and savings and loans institutions who didn't pay any substantial taxes, was in the end a major reason for his defeat. The *New York Times* then had a major, almost dominant influence, which was on the whole a very conservative influence. And the *Washington Post*, even though it was edited by the husband of Katherine Graham, had a similar effect.

Ritchie: Phil Graham.

Shuman: Phil Graham was Johnson's great political ally, and was in Johnson's suite in Los Angeles when Kennedy offered him the nomination for vice president. Well, the *Post* at that time, had a fellow covering the Senate, a very nice fellow, who wrote in what I call a homogenized style. His articles reminded me of driving on an interstate highway and listening to Muzak while staying in a Holiday Inn motel. He was always the same. He never was critical of anybody, but he never praised anybody, and there was little

that was distinctive. It was almost a wire service story he wrote about the Senate. He would call me a lot to talk, and he always played very dumb. I could never figure whether he was dumb or whether he just pretended to be dumb. He was a meek, modest fellow who could write well. When he would call me, I got very suspicious, because he'd ask me a question and then he'd pretend not to understand the answer, and then ask me two or three additional questions. Could I explain it a little more? He was very good at getting things out of me that probably I shouldn't have told him.

But the point I want to make about the *Post*, is this. In those days the *Post* between big issues was on our side. But on the Civil Rights issues and on filibusters and so on, the *Post* was then a fair-weather friend and a sunshine soldier. Before the vote on any big issue, particularly in '57 and again on attempts to overturn the filibuster, after denouncing it editorially, in between times, when the vote came it would always have an editorial: now is not the time; this is not the place; wait until next year. Pure Johnsonian stuff. I found that Graham would

come in at those times and assert his position as publisher and change the editorials. So the paper was of very little help. Both those papers then were relatively conservative papers, at least with respect to the Washington coverage and the coverage they gave us. The *New York Times* editorials were superb. But the Washington

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bureau was the opposition. They were not our friends, when the chips were down, although individual reporters played it fair.

Ritchie: How would you plan strategy with the press? You mentioned that they liked conflict, would you try to design something, or try to leak things to reporters? How would you try to get a good press?

Shuman: Of course, it depended on the issue. There was one way we got a lot of good press in Chicago. I used to do this with Bill McGaffin of the *Chicago Daily News*. The *Chicago Daily News* was an afternoon paper, and their deadline was roughly twelve o'clock noon in Chicago, or eleven to twelve. So this is what I often did with McGaffin. If we had a good story, we knew that if he got it exclusively the paper would give it a big push. It would not always make the front page, but it would be a major story. The way to do that, without appearing to be unfair to the rest of the press -- because the press is very touchy about leaking good stories to others -- was to put a twelve noon release on the piece, but give it to McGaffin the night before, so he had time to write his piece. By the time the twelve noon hour came, the story would be in the *Chicago Daily News*. Their paper, even if printed at eleven in the morning, didn't get on the street till twelve, and was delivered at three and four and five in the afternoon. So it was quite legitimate. The story didn't get on the street before the twelve noon release. Then I would deliver the release

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to the Senate press gallery at eleven, with a twelve o'clock release, which meant that no other reporter would have time to actually do anything about it. That was legitimate and we used to get a lot of play from McGaffin, or some of the other papers depending upon the circumstances, as a result. That practice was a bit esoteric but it worked.

Second, it was necessary to have something that was newsworthy. You can't make news by faking it. It has to be genuine news. Reporters can smell it out if it's a fake. Because the press, as I've said, tends to be lazy (some of them), you've got to give them a big lead time if you have a major story. If you've got a story that you

develop on Thursday, don't write the press release and take it over to the gallery Friday for a Friday afternoon release. It will die. You might as well throw the release out the window, just let it go to the breezes. Generally speaking, if you wrote a release on Thursday, mailed it out on Thursday, it would get to most of the reporters on

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Friday; in fact, you aimed at getting it to them on Friday, because most reporters don't work on Saturday and Sunday. Then the second team comes in. The papers are very thin on Saturday, the stuff that's in the Sunday papers is generally written a considerable time ahead of time, Thursday think pieces. The quick stuff or breaking news comes from the wire services. So you'd write a piece for Monday release. If you got it in the hands of the reporters on Friday for a Monday release you'd get a play on it because the reporters would have time to read it on Friday and to write it either on Friday or early on Monday morning. You had to have a two or three day lead on a story to get a real play on it. It was a matter of knowing how the press works.

Another thing, you must never lie to them. You don't always have to tell them the entire truth, but never, never, never lie to them. It's unforgivable. You learn that. I think much of the hostility to the press that I find in the executive branch, now that I work in the executive branch, is because they've had no experience with the press. They don't know how the press works. I tell my students, who are getting their tickets punched for admiral and general, that it is very much a part of the commander's art to know how to deal with the press. It's as important that they know how to deal with the press as it is important that they know how to drive a ship or fly a plane, because dealing with the press is going to be a very, very important part of their job. It does no good to go around complaining about how bad they are, and that they are unfair. I think that on the whole the press is extraordinarily able. I can't tell you the number of times when I have read a story written about something I was involved in, on a very technical and difficult matter, a tax bill or maybe the hundred and sixty acre limitation in the reclamation law, when I was amazed at how succinctly and how simply they were

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able to take a very complicated issue and put it correctly, in simple language, and in a short space. It's an art. So I'm far from doing them in. A few I didn't much care for.

I think it's untrue that the press and the media are one sided or have a strong liberal bias. That's not true. If you look, especially now, at the television

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programs, they are anything but that. Instead of getting two people, maybe one conservative and one moderately liberal who talk pretty intelligently, the talk shows feel that they now have to get the most extreme people they can get from each side. I feel myself almost never represented well by people who come on to speak from the liberal point of view. Now, maybe that's because I'm getting older, but I think it's because they almost always pick somebody who's an extremist. The same with the conservative side. They put on some really radical person, [Pat] Buchanan for one, or Bob Novak to name another. There was an economist from the Treasury early in the Reagan administration, [Paul Craig] Roberts, and I remember Alice Rivlin saying the number of times she'd been requested to go on a program with him, because he was almost the only one to give the radical supply side position. He was a nice fellow, but certainly his views were marginal views on the far right. But he was routinely asked to appear on programs. The use of Vigurie or Howard Samuels or Reid Irvine are other examples. The media now bends over backwards to present extreme

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conflicting views, and one finds even in a liberal paper like the *Post*, I suppose at least forty percent of the articles on their editorial page are written by relatively conservative people. That's fair enough, I believe in that. I'm a strong believer in having both sides represented. I believe in the cut and thrust of debate. It's our political method, it's our academic method, and it's our legal method as well. But the most radical or ridiculous views don't always have to be presented in a pro and con argument.

Ritchie: Did you find that there was any difference between dealing with reporters for newspapers and those for TV and radio? Did you have to approach them differently?

Shuman: Not too differently, mainly because most of the TV people -- the working TV people, not necessarily the people who are in the slot -- but most of the working stiffs who cover a particular story, are in fact trained journalists. They were journalists before they were TV people. I guess most of the anchor people have been journalists, or are journalists, but theirs is a different function. That's show business. Most of the working people both for the newspapers and for the television are well trained reporters. Of course, the TV reporters have only a thirty second or one minute bite. The TV news differs from the newspaper news in one very important way: the TV news is little more than a headline service. It reports the headline and the lead, and

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that's it. The working press at least sometimes get six or eight paragraphs to tell the story.

Ritchie: Senator Douglas' career spanned the period from when there really was no television broadcasting to the period when television had come into its own in terms of dominating news broadcasting. Was that a detriment to him? Towards the end he was getting older, he was in his seventies, he was up against an attractive young candidate. Does it work against somebody who's got intellect but perhaps isn't photogenic?

Shuman: Well, he was pretty good at television. Both in '60 and '66 we used television a lot. Almost every day we campaigned we would end up at the local television station, after the evening news, sometimes on a paid broadcast, sometimes they were just interviewing him. He did very well, because he was very articulate, and could speak without a note and knew what he was talking about. I suppose the television exaggerated his age.

The one place where I think [Percy](#) in particular had an advantage was in the ads. They marketed him much as they marketed soap. In fact, he made a deliberate effort never to wear a tie, to be young and youthful and vigorous and so on. It was an image or visual way of trying to make the age issue. He didn't make the age issue directly, but he kept saying things like, "Senator Douglas sees things through a rear-view mirror." We came back at

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him. Percy alleged that Mr. Douglas had been his teacher at the University of Chicago. Mr. Douglas couldn't remember that he'd ever had Percy in class, but it might have been because he'd had so many students. But we ended up by asking "Who's the teacher and who's the student?" Who is the modern man and who is the old fashioned person? Percy was against the eighteen-year-old vote, he was against Medicare, he was against saving the Dunes, and he had come out against open housing in '64. So we used those issues against him to answer his indirect challenges on age. I thought this tactic was reasonably effective.

The press in Chicago, though, in 1966, really did not help us. In fact, they were very much a detriment to our campaign. The big thing that the *Sun Times* did . . .

Ritchie: You mentioned about the polls they took.

Shuman: I mentioned the polls, but there were two or three other things the Chicago press did. There were marches in Chicago by the blacks into the white ethnic neighborhoods, and there were race riots in Chicago in 1966. The press

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played those to the hilt for days and days and days, and associated us with the rioting. The *Sun-Times* in particular for months, almost for two years before the election, blacked out Mr. Douglas. When your own president is in the White House, it's harder for a senator to get attention on issues than when the opposition is there, because

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you're not going around attacking your party very much. But there were a whole series of things that paper did, and I'll give you some examples. The *Chicago Sun-Times* carried Herblock's cartoons. There was a marvelous cartoon on Mr. Douglas that Herblock did on the Truth-in-Lending bill. I think it showed Douglas as the policeman on the beat, and the crooked guy had a wallet that he was pulling back from under the fence, but anyway it was a very telling Herblock cartoon. That wasn't printed by the *Chicago Sun-Times*, although they took the service and routinely printed the cartoons. Ordinarily you would expect them to print a cartoon having to do with a local senator. They didn't print it.

The second thing that happened concerned a woman out of New York or New Jersey who was a very good syndicated economics writer, Sylvia Porter. She did a series of articles on the Truth-in-Lending bill, pro and con, very balanced. The *Sun-Times* printed the con and didn't print the pro! There were a series of issues like this. I listed six or eight of them, and in fact I sent a personal letter to the editor. He really was tough about it. I mean, talk about thin skin! Talk about people being able to dish it out but not able to take it. You get that from some press people more than from anyone else. His basic answer was, without denying a specific point, that the charges were absolutely untrue and that he wanted me to know his wife was a Democrat. That was his argument! It had nothing to do with whether or not

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they had in fact blacked us out, but the *Sun Times* did essentially black out Mr. Douglas. That was their method, rather than to oppose him directly. I think I touched a raw nerve.

We did get in that election support from the *Post-Dispatch*, which came out for Mr. Douglas, and neutrality from the *Chicago Tribune*, which did not like Percy and endorsed him I think only the Sunday before election in a very tepid editorial, but allowed their paper, the second paper, the *Chicago American*, early to endorse Mr. Douglas in the strongest way. But the *American* was the least read paper in the city. The *Tribune* didn't care very much for Percy. We got editorial support from less than a dozen out of several hundred papers in the state. But I

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really can't complain about our coverage, over a long period of time. We didn't have a press secretary in the Douglas office, and I functioned as the press secretary.

Ritchie: Why didn't you have a press secretary?

Shuman: We felt the press secretary got in the way. This happened in Proxmire's office too. There were times in the Proxmire office when we had a press secretary, then if he left we didn't replace him. It was a very simple thing: a press secretary doubled the work. If you were involved in an issue, what you would have to do is sit down with the press secretary and explain in the greatest detail about the bill, the politics of it, what

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was going on. You would have to educate the press secretary about the bill, or about the release. Then he would write the release, and then you'd have to proof it to see that he got it right, before it was sent out. It really doubled the effort. So, we tried to hire people for our staff who could write. The first thing we wanted them to do was to write good, simple, straight forward English. They didn't necessarily have to know how the press worked, because I could tell them. I would always put the date on the release. The senator would see every release. No release went out without his approval. He would often rewrite the lead, because as a newspaper man he knew what the lead should be. So each of our substantive people would write the release for his or her subject area.

The senator -- Proxmire and Douglas too, but Proxmire especially -- would say, okay I want a press release every day this week, particularly when the Senate was out of session. Not all of these would be on national issues, some were. Some went to the state. Some were on economic or banking issues. We would get together as a staff and ask what news on what issue have we got? I asked each member of the staff, "Is there anything you've got that's newsworthy?" If so, that person would write the release and submit it. I would put the release time on it, and supervise it, and maybe rewrite part of it. So we functioned without a press person most of the time. In the Douglas office we hired a

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press person for the year before the '66 campaign, which was a mistake. A press person to be good has to crawl inside the senator. He's got to be with him all the time. He's got to know all the issues. I think that's the only way he can function. Unless we had a press person who did that, and who liked to do it, and who knew the issues, it was just more bother than it was worth.

Ritchie: I've heard press secretaries complain that the legislative assistants want to deal with the press directly.

Shuman: Sure.

Ritchie: And in a sense they have to fight them off. But what you're saying is that they should be dealing with the press directly.

Shuman: Yes, I think that's true. I would not have a press secretary. Maybe in the White House you've got to have one, but you've also noticed that the very best press secretaries in the White House were people who were the direct confidants of the president. The best one I suppose was Eisenhower's press secretary.

Ritchie: James Hagerty.

Shuman: Hagerty, and Kennedy's fellow, [\[Pierre\] Salinger](#), because they were involved in the day-to-day details of the

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subject matter. Unless you're prepared to do that it is better not to have one. In other words, I would say that the press secretary has either got to be the number one person in the office or at least present at the major events or you'd better not have one.

Ritchie: I have some questions I'd like to ask you about the housing commission that Douglas was appointed to chair when he left the Senate, but we've been talking for an hour and a half now, and I think it's a good idea for us to stop at this point. We can start with that the next time. I read your article, by the way, which I enjoyed quite a bit, "Behind the Scenes and Under the Rug," and that raised a lot of questions.

Shuman: That was the most difficult time I spent working for the public, the two years on that commission. That was hell on earth.

Ritchie: It was quite a hot time to be studying that issue.

Shuman: As I said, we preceded the riots and we followed the riots in the hot summer of 1967. We didn't go to Cleveland because we felt we would start a riot, which didn't happen, and we did go to Detroit because we figured there wouldn't be a riot, which did happen.

Ritchie: Let's begin the next time with that.

Shuman: I'd like also to talk about the Buck case.

Ritchie: Yes, I'd like to talk about that too.

End of Interview #6