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Secretary of the Senate, 1981-1985

Secretary to the Minority, 1974-1981

Administration Assistant to Senator Hugh Scott, 1969-1974

Assistant to Senator J. Caleb Boggs, 1961-1969

Interview #5: Watergate

(Monday, April 22, 1985)

Interviewed by Donald A. Ritchie

Ritchie: I wanted to ask a few questions about the 1972 campaign. I noticed that [Hugh Scott](#) played an active role in the '72 presidential campaign. The report that he put out for the Senate Republicans that year was very critical of [\[George\] McGovern](#), and Scott spoke out a lot during the campaign. Was that usual for the Republican leader? Or was he trying to get back into the good graces of the [Nixon](#) administration?

Hildenbrand: No, and I don't know that he was that much involved in the presidential campaign. He was involved certainly in a lot of the campaigns of his colleagues who were running. But as a former National Chairman of his party, and someone who had written a book -- if you recall, he wrote a book called *Come to the Party*, which was around '64 or thereabouts, about the time of the Goldwater campaign -- he was a political animal and was well respected in that field.

I had gone down to the Nixon reelection headquarters, and was working down there, so I wasn't really that well versed on what he was doing. But I know that he spent a lot of time helping out his colleagues who were running for reelection. I would hesitate to

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think that he was that much involved in the Nixon campaign, as much as I think your questions implies. He would never have gotten into the good graces of those people in the first instance, and in the second instance, he would have never campaigned for that reason. I don't think he cared whether he was in their good graces or not. He had a job to do, and he was going to do that job. His relationship with Nixon was as good as it was ever going to be, and I don't think he cared much about what the rest of those people thought.

Ritchie: The reason I asked that question was because I looked through several sources and they all quoted the same line he used during that campaign, that McGovern's campaign stood for "acid, amnesty, and abortion." That was pretty tough language.

Hildenbrand: Well, he was a very tough, pragmatic politician. And very partisan. He was very, very much a Republican. He never drew the line in regard to the kind of Republican it was. He was just as comfortable going out and taking on somebody who was opposing somebody like a [Jesse Helms](#) as he would a [Jack Javits](#) or a [Ken Keating](#). He was really a very partisan politician.

Ritchie: Did he have much use for Senator McGovern at all, or was it just McGovern as a presidential candidate?

Hildenbrand: Oh, I think it was just McGovern as a presidential candidate. There was hardly anybody in the Senate that he didn't get

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along with. I just think that he thought McGovern's ideas were for the birds, and he was just going to make sure that everybody in the country knew it. He was never hesitant about saying what he thought, and about taking on Democratic colleagues, and it had nothing to do with personalities.

Ritchie: There sometimes seems to be a different persona when someone runs for office -- campaigning for office sometimes makes people take on a more strident tone and lose some of their collegiality. Is that true?

Hildenbrand: I think that's true. And I think the closer the races are, that is, the closer the individual is in his race, the more the tendency is to become strident. There's a certain fear syndrome that sets in that maybe you're going to lose, so you have a tendency to become an attacker. The same is true, I guess, if you're running against somebody and you're down in the polls and you don't have really anything to lose, and so you go ahead and say whatever comes to your mind, and maybe you get lucky. I guess you take on a different personality. Only those individuals who have comfortable seats can afford to not change in their personality. Somebody said: "Show me a good loser and I'll show you a loser." That's the way I think politics are. If you're going to be genteel in a campaign, you can have your head handed to you.

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Ritchie: I was interested that you said you went to work for the Committee to Reelect the President in '72. What did you do for them?

Hildenbrand: We broke the country down into regions, and there were I don't know how many of us, maybe six of us, and we had operatives in each of the states. Our job was to just continually stay in touch with them. They continued to feed us information about what the papers were saying, how things were playing, how they weren't playing, what the polls were saying, what was going good, what

was going bad. Then we would consolidate that, and then they would present that to the president. At the end of each week they'd give him an update on how it was going around the country, from his own people.

Ritchie: Did you have a particular part of the country that you covered?

Hildenbrand: I did the Northeast: Pennsylvania, New York, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, those states.

Ritchie: So you constantly got in touch with people there.

Hildenbrand: Mmm-hmmm.

Ritchie: And who did you work for in the Committee to Reelect the President?

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Hildenbrand: Bob Mardian, who became famous in Watergate, was down there, Kleindinst, that whole Nixon crowd that was around in those days, that all became part of Watergate, as it turned out.

Ritchie: That campaign was a strange one, in the sense that the White House really played its own campaign.

Hildenbrand: Oh, yes.

Ritchie: Did you feel the division between the two, or that there was good communication or poor communication between the two?

Hildenbrand: Between what two?

Ritchie: Between the White House and the

Hildenbrand: It was the same thing. It was the Republican National Committee that didn't have any contact with the Reelection Committee.

Ritchie: Well, you had old-time connections with others in the party outside the White House, did people on the Republican National Committee ever get in touch with you about what was going on down there?

Hildenbrand: No. That's a decision the president makes. That wasn't the first time that somebody made that decision, to go out on

their own and form their own committee. The whole make-up of that White House, there was no doubt in anybody's mind that they would go their own way. They really didn't have any trust in anybody else, and any faith in anybody else to know as much or be able to do as good a job as they did.

Ritchie: Did you have any inkling while you working there that things were going wrong? That there was any problem?

Hildenbrand: No. The Watergate break-in had occurred, and then it sort of died down pretty much. People began to focus on the campaign. There wasn't that much involved. We just treated it as something that was a stupid thing for somebody to do, but we had no idea that there was as much behind it as it turned out that there was.

Ritchie: Why did you go down there, considering you had responsibilities with the Senate, and Congress was still in session?

Hildenbrand: We went down about the time the session was over, about the last five or six weeks of the campaign. Those of us that are political animals, we're like fire horses -- when the bell rings you want to get hitched up and go. I'd been involved in campaigns since '56. This was a campaign, and I didn't want to sit on the sidelines. They always ask for volunteers, for people to go down and help out, so I was very happy to do that.

Ritchie: You had the one state in your region that they didn't carry.

Hildenbrand: Massachusetts.

Ritchie: Did you suspect that?

Hildenbrand: We knew that all along. We did not believe that it would be of the landslide proportion that it was. We knew that he was doing exceptionally well throughout the country. I don't think we thought the day before that he would in fact carry all the states but Massachusetts and the District of Columbia. Minnesota, it seems to me, was fairly close in those late days, and some others that we thought would eventually because of their history of Democratic politics would go Democratic. But, as it turned out, the whole thing went Republican.

Ritchie: Then, when the election was over, you came back to the Senate?

Hildenbrand: Mmm-hmmm.

Ritchie: I was reading Dan Rather's book, *The Palace Guard*, on Haldeman and Ehrlichman, and he has a story in it that shortly after the election Haldeman called Hugh Scott and said that the president wanted another Republican leader of the Senate. Scott said he

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wouldn't believe that unless he heard it directly from Nixon, and Nixon never called him back. Is that story accurate?

Hildenbrand: Yes.

Ritchie: I find that an unbelievable story, but it's amazing that it's true.

Hildenbrand: They couldn't find anybody to run against him. [Howard Baker](#) had already run twice, and wasn't about to go the third time. They couldn't scare anybody up to take Scott on. By that time, Watergate was still there, and members were beginning to look at that. Also, it was Nixon's last term. So that was just something that Haldeman would like to say.

Ritchie: I can't imagine that he would have thought he could have succeeded in talking Scott into stepping down.

Hildenbrand: They had no conception of Congress as a body or the individuals that made up that body. They figured you call up a guy and tell him the president doesn't want you, he'll quit. Well, the president could call up and sometimes that wouldn't have made any difference. If the president had called Hugh Scott and said, "Hugh Scott, I don't want you to be leader," he might just as well have told the president to go to hell. Presidents don't dictate to the Congress, as a rule, as to who's in the leadership. Scott would just

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as soon have told the president, "I don't like Haldeman. I want you to get another chief of staff." Made as much sense.

Ritchie: That was the period when Nixon went up to Camp David and was making decisions on everyone in his administration.

Hildenbrand: He had asked for resignations from everybody. I guess Haldeman thought that that included the people up on the Hill. He thought they were part of the administration, I guess. But, I remember that they had asked for everybody's resignation, and they were going to decide whether they should stay or go.

Ritchie: Were they losing touch with reality?

Hildenbrand: I don't think they ever had any touch with reality. I don't think they ever understood. I think I said earlier, they needed a lesson in ninth grade civics. I've contended that for as long as I can remember in dealing with them, that they just never understood the Founding Fathers and how they put this government together, and how it was supposed to operate. From their standpoint, they didn't want checks and balances. They were the administration, he was the president, and everybody was supposed to do their bidding. As I say, they would have been great in a monarchy. They didn't do so good in a democracy.

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Ritchie: It was in '72 and early '73 that Nixon was following the policy of impounding funds that Congress had appropriated. Was there any concern in the Republican ranks over that kind of presidential power?

Hildenbrand: No. That wasn't new. Lyndon Johnson did that, and ran into a hailstorm of opposition on the Hill when he tried to impound funds. They had a big meeting of the Appropriations Committee. Alan Boyd, I think was then head of Transportation, and they were impounding highway funds. That's how they got in trouble, because highway funds are trust fund money. They tried to impound moneys they didn't even have -- it wasn't even theirs in the first place. It was in a trust fund that was designed strictly for highways. So they ran into a big firestorm over that. But impoundment is something that has been on the books for a long time and presidents have used it from time to time, so it's nothing that members get excited about. They just make sure they don't get it done.

Ritchie: I got the feeling that there was a sense of helplessness in some respects. Congress would appropriate money and the president would impound it, and there seemed to be no congressional response to a situation like that.

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Hildenbrand: Well, Congress always managed to respond to those kind of things. I don't remember anybody impounding moneys in which the Congress sooner or later were not able to have that money spent. They have so many weapons at their disposal against a president that he's got to be foolish to go ahead, for the little that he was going to gain by that impoundment, to suffer what he could suffer in the long run. Because they control all of the purse strings. If I remember, back in those days somebody even offered an amendment to cut out the moneys for the salaries of the people at the White House, which is a way that they get everybody's attention. So I would not feel sorry for the Congress against any president on a one on one. The only real power he has is veto, and

even that two-thirds of the Congress can shove it right down his throat. So I would not feel sorry for Congress.

Ritchie: So Nixon was really stirring up a hornet's nest in trying to impound, if ultimately he wasn't going to be able to get his way.

Hildenbrand: But here again, that was the way they thought. It wasn't a question of whether they would get their way or not get their way. It was a question, from their perspective, of what's right. This is what we want to do. And they never understood that just because they wanted to do it doesn't necessarily make it so. They did those things that they wanted to do, and Congress, whenever

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they wanted to, didn't let them. Then they'd rail at the Congress. But the bottom line was always that Congress would let them do whatever Congress wanted them to do, but was not going to give them a blank check.

And you were still dealing with a Democrat-controlled House and Senate, which is tough for any president, let alone one that wants to engage in confrontational politics -- which was another thing those people never understood. It's one thing if you want to get into a battle that you can win, but to get into a battle like that that you haven't got a prayer of winning, it never dawned on them that the votes were sitting up here and they were all Democratic votes. I don't know how they expected to win anything. In fact, they had some defectors on the Republican side in most instances. They decided that they were going to run against the Congress consistently, and that's what they did.

Ritchie: The same thing was true in foreign policy, in the sense that they believed they could operate independently.

Hildenbrand: Yes, but they were much closer to being right in foreign policy that the Congress has been right in getting involved to the degree that it has gotten involved. Were it not for the Vietnam war, and were it not for the War Powers Act of Jack Javits', we would be about where we've always been in terms of foreign policy. The Congress would allow the president to go ahead and set that

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foreign policy. But it's like sharks in the water: the more blood there is, the more sharks. They got a taste of blood during Vietnam and decided that they could begin to set foreign policy. And I really don't think that it has stood the country in good stead because they're as much involved in foreign policy as they are. It has tied, I think, the president's hands in going ahead and trying to do the kind of things he would like to do in the rest of the world.

Ritchie: The War Powers Act, even before it was passed, must have been a divisive issue in the Republican ranks.

Hildenbrand: Well, the conservatives, of course, believed then and now that the president has the right to establish the foreign policy of the United States, and commit the military might of this country, and that Congress has only the power the Constitution gives it to declare war. It doesn't have the power, according to them, to decide where and when that flag will be committed. But they took a different view, and with the War Powers Act they became a party to this so that if you send troops in someplace, if you don't get the approval within thirty days you've got to get them out. That, by its very nature, has restricted, I'm sure, presidents from moving along those lines. Unless you can move into a campaign and settle it, within that thirty day period, so that when the thirty days are up there aren't any troops there to withdraw -- as was the case in Grenada. By the time they notified this body up here that they were

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there, they were gone. It was over. So you have to prepare for those kind of things, but it's very restrictive on a president, in his ability to do what he thinks is best. The unfortunate part about it is that the Congress never has all of the facts, or the details, as a president does. He makes his decisions based on those facts, and Congress just throws up its hands and screams bloody murder, but really doesn't have the facts to back it up.

Ritchie: Did Scott work in any way to dissuade Javits?

Hildenbrand: No. I'm not so sure that Scott, being a creature of the Congress as he was, and having gone through that terrible, brutal effect of Vietnam, did not go along with Javits and say we've got to do something and this maybe is the most sensible thing to do. It would have been consistent, I think, with Scott's feelings.

Ritchie: In the spring of '73 the Watergate story began to dominate everything. The Senate appointed the special committee to investigate the presidential campaign. Can you tell me a little about the background of that, from the Republican point of view, and particularly on the decisions on how to appoint the Republican members of the Watergate Committee?

Hildenbrand: Scott made the decision who to put on there. He was under some pressure from the White House. They wanted to be a party to it, they wanted to make the selections, and Scott wasn't

about to let them do that. Scott would listen to whatever they had to say, but he wasn't about to let them tell him who was going to be on there. He went ahead and made the selections. He talked with Mansfield and the two of them talked and exchanged views as to who ought to be on, and who ought to be chairman.

Scott decided that he wanted Howard Baker to be the ranking member of that committee. He believed that he would get along exceptionally well with [Sam Ervin](#), which as it turned out he did. He didn't get along too well with Sam Dash, but he got along with Sam Ervin. Then, Scott had campaigned for [Lowell Weicker](#) in 1970, and had a lot of respect for Lowell and decided that he would bring some semblance of balance so that the people would not say: this is going to be a whitewash, they're putting all Nixon supporters on it. Lowell Weicker could never have been called a Nixon supporter. Then they put [Ed Gurney](#), who definitely was a Nixon supporter on there. So what he had was somebody that the anti-Nixons would be happy with, in Lowell Weicker; somebody that the pro-Nixon people would be happy with, in Ed Gurney; and then somebody that neither side could complain about, who was a very fair individual, in Howard Baker -- and who was very articulate.

Ritchie: Did you work with the committee after it got started?

Hildenbrand: No. It had its own staff. Howard Liebengood, the former Sergeant-at-Arms, was a member of that Watergate staff, as a matter of fact. He came up here from Tennessee to be on that staff. But we had very little to do with it. We did from time to time have meetings in which they would brief the leader on how it was going, and what was happening, and what to expect.

Ritchie: Scott stayed a loyalist, despite all he had to put up with. It's rather amazing that he stayed as loyal to the president as long as he did.

Hildenbrand: Yes. You know, the president flat out told him that he had not been involved in anything, and sent Alexander Haig up from time to time to buttress those feelings, that he didn't have any idea what this was all about, and had no part in it. In fact, and Scott has said this many times, in early December, about the last time that Scott made some very strong pleas on behalf of the president, they brought transcripts -- the tapes had broken by that time, Alex Butterfield had told them about the taping system. They went out to Scott's house and gave him a transcript, and he read the transcript and then afterwards once again stated emphatically his support of the President of the United States; that he had done nothing; that he had read the transcripts and that there was nothing at all to them. What he did not know at that time, and what he

learned later was that they did not show him all of the transcript. That's when the whole thing came apart, when that came out.

Ritchie: From your position, in the Republican leader's office, did you feel that the Nixon White House handled things well on their end or were you frustrated by what they were doing? Do you think they were lobbying effectively at that time?

Hildenbrand: Well, no. They carried that pretty much on their own. We were really not that much involved. The Watergate Committee was involved, but no one else really was involved. It was strictly the White House and what they were doing with the Justice Department. It became almost ludicrous, because every time something would happen it would get worse. You know, there was the [L. Patrick] Grey situation -- you remember, he said he threw papers in the Potomac River.

Ritchie: "Deep-sixed" them.

Hildenbrand: Yes. And everybody just got to the point where they just shook their head and wondered what the hell was going to be next. They could not believe that people as steeped in politics, as Nixon certainly was, could resort to the kind of things that they resorted to. There was no damage control that anybody could find.

Ritchie: Did the administration lose control of other legislation as well at that time?

Hildenbrand: No, not that was noticeable. Nobody ever voted against anything because of Nixon and Watergate and things like that. Nixon was not that well thought of on the Hill in the first instance, so my guess is that with or without Watergate he would not have been any more or less successful than he was, in terms of legislation.

Ritchie: I wondered in the sense that they didn't have very much time to devote to other issues.

Hildenbrand: As long as the Watergate Committee was meeting we didn't have anything on the floor. It was taking a lot of time of members because anytime you went anywhere near a press person they didn't care about anything except talking to you about Watergate. So members did devote a lot of time to Watergate, although we were not involved in it.

Ritchie: Was there any sense of strategy on the part of the party on how to deal with the problems being created by Watergate?

Hildenbrand: We had no problems with anything until it got to the point where the House decided that impeachment proceedings were in order. Then we suddenly realized that, hey, if that happens, we become the court of last resort, and it's coming over here, and we better decided now how are we going to handle it, what are we going to do? We met with the Sergeant-at-Arms and began to talk about lighting in the Chamber. We studied previous impeachment trials in

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the Senate to see how they conducted them. We got the language that was necessary, the procedures that would be required when the House brought over its article of impeachment. We did all that. We were ready to go. If the House had impeached him and he had not resigned, we were ready to conduct the trial. We had met with [Warren] Burger, and we were ready to go. We didn't want to, but we were ready to do it as the duty of the Senate. But we were sure hoping it went away someplace.

Ritchie: As a head counter, what was your feeling about how it would have turned out if there had been a vote in the Senate?

Hildenbrand: Oh, he would have lost. I don't know whether anybody's written it, but when [Goldwater](#) -- when Scott went down to the White House, whether Barry went with him or not, I'm not sure, initially he didn't -- but Scott went down and told them that he couldn't see any more than ten to twelve votes in the Senate against impeachment. That was when, on that Tuesday afternoon when the vice president was there, [Ford](#) was there, they began to talk about going down and telling the president to resign. Ford, as soon as the discussion started, got up and said, "Gentleman, I must leave." He said, "I do not want to be a party to whatever it is you're going to decide in this body at this time."

Ritchie: This was the Republican Conference?

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Hildenbrand: Yes. So he left, and they went back at it, and that's when they commissioned Scott and Goldwater to go down to the president and tell him exactly what the situation was. That's also the time that Goldwater got up and made an impassioned plea, and then said, "He has lied to me for the last time." So they went down and told him what was what. And he resigned the next day.

Ritchie: Did Alexander Haig have anything to do with that conference?

Hildenbrand: He was not there. Haig had made many, many visits to Scott. In fact, it got to the point where we used to sneak him in the old Law [Library] Door and take him up that back elevator in the Capitol up to the secure rooms on the fourth floor. Then Scott would meet him up there, so that people would not know that Haig was up there. Because, if you remember, in the late, late days of that there was some talk that Haig had become president, because of how things were going he was the only one that was functioning down there. So he used to sneak in and talk with Scott from time to time, without the press knowing he was even there.

Ritchie: Did you ever sit in on any of those meetings?

Hildenbrand: I did not.

Ritchie: It was just the two of them?

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Hildenbrand: Yes.

Ritchie: And it was just to keep Scott informed on what was happening?

Hildenbrand: Mmm-hmmm. And with just the two of them it made it possible there wouldn't be any leaks as to what was happening. Haig knew the situation, and knew the support -- or lack of support -- that there was in the Senate. He could not bring himself to be the one to tell the president, hey, you know, you've got to go. Because he wouldn't do that, why that's when they decided that somebody had to go do it. So they picked Scott and Goldwater.

Ritchie: Did Haig suggest that a delegation should go down there.

Hildenbrand: No.

Ritchie: And there was an actual vote of the conference?

Hildenbrand: They didn't need a vote. They just all said that's a good idea, why don't Barry and Scott go do it. They didn't need to vote on it. Even the most dyed Nixon supporters at that time could read the handwriting that was on the wall.

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Ritchie: It's still hard for me to figure Scott out. The Nixon administration and the conservatives seemed to be so against him, and yet he's still obviously very influential. He's the man delegated to go down for this very delicate situation.

Hildenbrand: That's because the people at the White House did not think about Hugh Scott the way his colleagues did. If the people at the White House had thought that here's man who got elected twice leader and once whip, against the strongest of opposition, [Everett Dirksen](#) and Howard Baker, with all of the conservative ties that they had, and still managed to win three races like that, they should have realized that he had a great deal of respect among his colleagues. But they always felt that they could do whatever they wanted to do.

Ritchie: Well, it was in the midst of all of this, in January of 1974, that you became the Republican secretary. That was quite a time to step into that job.

Hildenbrand: Yes, because six months later Nixon resigned. I had been involved in most of it, and then I had my own campaign to wage when Mark Trice notified [Norris Cotton](#) in New Hampshire that he was going to resign. Cotton called Hugh Scott to tell Scott, and Scott was in Japan, I think, at the time. I called him and told him, and then told him at the same time that I felt that I had no choice but to try to seek that post, since it was open, and since I was the highest ranking staff person, that I thought I just had to go for

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that. Whether I won it or not, I felt that I had to do it. So I began to call the leadership and let them know that I was interested in this, and that I wanted to do that.

Howard Greene was the only other one who would have been under consideration, because he had been deputy to Mark. He on his own made a decision, came to see me, and said that he would just as soon stay deputy and had no intentions of running against me, or letting them talk him into it. [Hruska](#), and Oliver Dompierre, the Dirksen people, wanted him very much to do that. But he said no, that he was going to stay deputy if I would have him, and I said, "Of course. I have no problems with that."

So they put my name up at one of the Tuesday luncheons. [Jim Pearson](#), the senator from Kansas, still loves to tell the story that I'm the only person he knows who lost a one man race. They put my name up, and yet I was not elected that time, because the conservatives still did not want me to be secretary and still hoped that they could find somebody to run against me. They talked about people like [Gordon Allott](#), the ex-senator from Colorado.



Senator Gordon Allott (R-CO)
Senate Historical Office

You know, they were grasping at straws to find anybody that would run against me. So the caucus broke up and they had made no decision. In those days, we had a personnel committee, which was comprised of Hruska and of Baker. They came into the back room, in our leader office, to tell Scott what had happened. Baker, at that time, said to Hruska, "Look,

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I don't know what it is you're trying to do, but I don't want any part of this, and if you continue I'm going to resign from this personnel committee." He said, "Hildenbrand is eminently qualified to be the secretary of the minority, and I don't see any reason why we're going through this exercise. I think we ought to have another meeting and get it done." So they called a caucus for Thursday morning at 9:00 o'clock in the Russell Building, and elected me then secretary of the minority.

Ritchie: Was Hruska still smarting, perhaps, from 1969?

Hildenbrand: Of course. I was a Scott person, and certainly not a conservative. *Human Events* had called me an "evil genius." They thought of me as a liberal and had no use for liberals being in powerful party positions of any kind.

Ritchie: I saw those references to the "evil genius." They somehow thought that you were persuading Scott to change his mind on things?

Hildenbrand: Well, no, it came about as a result of the Voting Rights Act, which I have talked about, Hruska and the administration's proposal, and the Hart-Scott proposal. They accused me of being the person behind the Hart-Scott that managed to get Hart-Scott passed and defeat Hruska and the administration, which was very far from the truth, because I wasn't that much involved in it. I

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certainly was not the one that caused it to be defeated. It sort of fell of its own weight. It wasn't a very good bill in the first place. But they nevertheless labeled me as such. Then about three years or four years later they made their peace with me. They did that before I became secretary, and then after I was secretary for a while they made a statement that I had made my peace with the conservatives. I didn't know that I was at war with them; I thought they were at war with me.

Ritchie: Maybe it was because you were such a good head counter, and always seemed to know a little bit more than they did.

Hildenbrand: I don't have any idea why they said what they said.

Ritchie: I had always thought that the majority and minority secretaries were pretty much the choice of the majority and minority leaders. But this was a case where Scott presumably wanted you, but there was still opposition.

Hildenbrand: Well, Scott was never that strong as a leader. He was not a Dirksen. Dirksen said this is what we're going to do, and everybody said fine. That was never the case. Scott never reached that point where he could make those kinds of decisions and the party would just blindly say that's fine. There was always that conservative element that never really liked him, and never thought that he

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ought to be leader. They did not want him to continue to put his people in spots, particularly spots in which you had to serve the entire membership. Because then they thought that I would simply be doing Scott's bidding and they would not have a voice, or they wouldn't have any place to go.

Ritchie: Was there anything significant in Mark Trice's notifying Norris Cotton rather than Hugh Scott?

Hildenbrand: No, Norris Cotton was chairman of the conference, and that's the proper thing to do, to notify the conference chairman. My guess is that Trice would have notified Cotton even if that hadn't been the situation, because he and Scott did not get along.

Ritchie: That was going to be my next question. He had worked very closely with Dirksen, was he able to work closely with Scott at all?

Hildenbrand: Mark was a professional. Mark did as much as he could for the members of the Republican side of the Senate, but he never was very close to Hugh Scott.

Ritchie: Did that pose any problems?

Hildenbrand: No, not really. As I say, he was enough of a professional that he was never going to let the party get into trouble because of how he might have felt about the leader. As a

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matter of fact, when Scott was elected leader the first time, there were members on our side of the aisle, the first thing they wanted Scott to do was to fire Trice, but Scott would not do that.

Ritchie: What type of a person was Mark Trice, from your dealings with him?

Hildenbrand: Well, as I said, he was a professional. He knew that Senate as well as anybody, I think, that I've ever run into. He knew the membership. He may have had more of a political philosophy of his own than is good for somebody to have in that job, if you're going to serve the likes of a [Jack Javits](#) and a [Bill Scott](#), for example. I'm not so sure -- you're much better off to be a political neuter and sit in that job; I think it's easier for you to do that job. But he had some very, very strong political feelings on conservative issues. That was reflected not in the party that now was in control of the party, the Scotts and the Javitses and the [Hatfields](#) of the world, but in fact in the Hruskas and the Goldwaters and the [\[Paul\] Fannins](#) and the [\[Carl\] Curtises](#) and the people like that.

Ritchie: What exactly does a party secretary do in the Senate?

Hildenbrand: He's responsible for keeping the minutes of all of the Policy Committee luncheons, keeping the minutes of the conferences. He tells the leadership everyday where every member is. He

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knows where all the people are, all the time. He knows when they are leaving and when they are coming back. He keeps track of that for the leadership. He's responsible for controlling the calendar of business on the floor, and he's responsible for liaison with the leadership in knowing how all the other members feel about legislation. Those who support and those who oppose it, they go

through him, and he tells the leadership who's opposed and who's for. He has control of the floor in terms of keeping the leadership advised as to what's coming up, and members who want to speak, when they want to speak. He has the responsibility of recording the absent members who are not there for record votes. It's his responsibility to get positions, if members wish to leave a position, and it's his responsibility to write up the voting at the end of the day to reflect that they were absent and not voting. He does patronage for the members, he's in control of that. He's got control of the pages, they work directly for the secretary of the majority or the minority. Then whatever else the majority leader wants him to do.

Ritchie: Did you find that you did things differently than Mark Trice did?

Hildenbrand: Yes, because of my relationship with Scott. It was a different relationship. I was much more involved in the legislative side of the floor operation than Mark was, because that's what Scott wanted me to be. I was more involved in the day-to-day

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operation of the Senate as to what came up, and under what kind of a consent agreement it came to the floor. I dealt very closely with [Bob Byrd](#), when he was the [majority whip](#), in scheduling and things of that kind. But that again was something that Scott wanted me to do, which Mark Trice did not do, which I did from my position in the office of the leader. I just continued it when I became secretary.

Ritchie: So you expanded the role that you had and merged the two positions?

Hildenbrand: Yes, I added on that legislative thing, and that's still the case now with Howard Greene, who's now the secretary of the majority. He has that same role. He does an awful lot of the floor activities that was not the case back in the old days.

Ritchie: What was Howard Greene's role as deputy while you were doing what you were doing?

Hildenbrand: Well, I should say that that's the role of the secretary's office. A lot of people do them. Howard Greene did the pages, for example. He took care of the nitty-gritty kind of things. He made sure that we had somebody to preside when we needed presiding officers. He made sure the cloakroom was running and operating; he controlled the cloakroom people that were there. He did those kinds of administrative tasks. He kept the record at the end of the vote; he would write down what happened. And then when amendments were

Coming up, he would be responsible for writing what the amendment did, so that members could go down in the well and look and see what this amendment was all about. And he did the checks in the morning to find out where everybody was.

Ritchie: I know you spent a lot of time on the floor in those days, because when I first came to work for the Senate in 1976, I spent a good deal of time sitting in the gallery just watching what was going on. It took me a week to realize that you weren't a senator -- because you were always on the floor, and you always looked like you knew what you were doing, which was more than some of the other people on the floor appeared.

Hildenbrand: [Laughs] That's cause I wouldn't tell anybody else what was going on. I was the only one that knew.

Ritchie: But you must have spent most of your day on the floor, at least when they were in session.

Hildenbrand: Yes. And that pretty much is the role of the secretary of the majority or the minority. When the session starts his role really is on that floor, and he stays there until the end of the day. It's hard to leave it and go up to your office and do some other work because you lose continuity. The key to being able to know what's going to happen is to be able to be there all the time and look at the various nuances that are going on, and the little by-

plays that might occur in a cloakroom. Unless you're there, you miss that and you need to know those kind of things.

Ritchie: The majority leader and minority leader are present a lot, but also the chairmen and the ranking members of the committees, the people who sponsored legislation, often handle the legislation. Did you have to do a lot of coaching of Republicans who were going to floor manage a bill, or oppose a bill?

Hildenbrand: Not too much. Most of them had been there long enough so that they pretty well knew how to be the manager on the minority side of a given bill. Then they just moved over to become majority, and become chairman, they had watched their chairmen of their committee operate for so long.

It was much more difficult for [Russell Long](#) to learn to be the ranking minority member than it was for [Bob Dole](#) to learn to be chairman of the Finance Committee. The same is true of [John Stennis](#) on Armed Services than it was for [John Tower](#). We had been minority for twenty-six years, so we had seen the

majority operate, and we knew how they operated. The majority, while they had us as a minority for twenty-six years, hadn't bothered to see what we did. It's only been in the last year maybe that they have suddenly begun to realize how to be an effective minority. I think this year you will see that they have become more and more effective as a minority. They have finally realized they no longer are majority, and they have

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begun to study how we operated as a minority, and they're taking a lot of leaves from that same book. Their actions on the Farm Credit legislation is a good example of how effective they can be if they continue to do the things that they are doing.

Ritchie: What is the best strategy for the minority, in general?

Hildenbrand: The first thing you have to do is get a solid minority, that is, one that is totally together. We did not have that for most of the years certainly that I was here, until 1974 when they got into that [Wyman-Durkin](#) fiasco. That was the first time we really began to act as a party in total number, and it makes a difference. In those days prior to that, the Democrats would propose something, and they would have seven or eight detractors, and we'd have seven or eight detractors, and so we always lost. If we could have stayed together, with their seven or eight detractors, we could have won. But we never did that. It wasn't until after that that it suddenly became obvious to all these people that hey, there's 43 of us, and if we stay together as a group we only need seven Democrats and we can win.

They give a lot of credit to [Howard Baker](#), in his years as minority leader, for the success that he had against the Carter administration. A lot of it is simply due to the fact that the party realized that if it stayed together as a group, it could, in fact, be

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very effective. So it stayed together an awful lot during those four years. Baker just made sure that they stayed together.

But you have to be an effective minority in that you can't just oppose, for the sake of opposing. You have to begin to offer alternatives to things. You have to have a program yourself. That's the problem the Democrats find themselves in now: they don't have a program. Not only don't they have a candidate to espouse it, they're not sure what they want it to be. Do they want to be the party back in the Roosevelt days? Or do they want to be a party like Truman? Or what do they want to be? They don't know. It's told on them now in two elections, because you just

can't continue to say: "They're wrong." The people out there say: "Well, okay, what's right?" And if you don't know, the people are going to say: "That's crazy, why should I vote for this because you say it's wrong, but you don't know what's right."

Ritchie: You've on a number of occasions pointed to the Durkin-Wyman election as the turning point. Why did that become such a fiasco? It went on for months.

Hildenbrand: Three months.

Ritchie: They finally had to hold a new election. How did that one election get so bollixed up?

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Hildenbrand: Well, when they failed to seat Wyman, and they went into the investigation and sent the Rules Committee up there to count the ballots -- it's very much like [Richard] McIntyre and [\[Frank\] McCloskey](#) that's going on now in the House. If the House Democrats continue, and if they try to seat McCloskey, my guess is that this session will turn into a tremendous battleground in the House, because the Republicans are just not going to stand for that. It's just going to be a terrible, terrible situation over there. That's about what happened in the Senate in Wyman-Durkin. It just appeared that they were going to try to steal this election. It's the same situation in the House: it made no difference, one more vote did not give us anywhere near control of anything, and it didn't help the Democrats that much. The House is in the same situation. There's, I don't know, sixty votes difference now, so one more is not going to make that much difference. But they just, for whatever their reasons, believed that Durkin should have been the winner, and they were going to go ahead and do this.

We didn't really start that debate until June, I guess, in earnest, when we just laid it down and said this is all we're going to do. Mansfield got a lot of things done before he ever brought that up. Then they just went at it for those three months. They believed that they could get cloture, because they believed that the Republicans who had always supported cloture, the [Javitses](#)? the [Cases](#), the [Mark Hatfields](#), would continue to support cloture, no

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matter what. Therefore they would get cloture, and once they got cloture they could have seated Durkin all day long. But they miscalculated the strong feeling of partisanship that Javits and Case and some of the others had. So Mansfield kept calling for cloture votes, and our side kept voting 43 solid votes against cloture. They kept up, I think, because they believed that sooner or later Javits

and Case would say this has gone on long enough and we're going to vote for cloture, but they never did.

Ritchie: Did you ever have any fear they would?

Hildenbrand: No. I'd get rumors from time to time. Some of the staffs wanted Javits to vote for cloture and switch. I'd get rumors and I would simply go to Javits and find out, or send Scott to talk to him, if I thought it was serious. But once they voted as often as they voted, there was no need to change. Nothing had changed from the first time they voted against it, until the time somebody said now it's time to vote for it. Well, vote for it for what reason? What's different? Why didn't you vote for it the first time? So it was easy for them to stay there. I think they were uncomfortable, not because of Wyman-Durkin, but simply of the procedure of cloture. But they stayed in harness, and the Democrats finally threw up their hands and we made the compromise resolution and had the election over again. And then Durkin won it.

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Ritchie: Is there any way that such a partisan body can really settle an issue like that? It seems like the only solution is a reelection.

Hildenbrand: Well, we're going to find out in the House, to see what they try to do over there. I think that's right. I think that, for whatever your reasons, if you finally decide that you can't seat the person who has been certified, then it seems to me the only thing you can do is to have another election. You can't really in good conscience elect somebody in the House of Representatives. Because if you follow that to its ultimate conclusion, we don't have to have elections anymore. We just send over to the House the names of the two people that are running, and let the House vote. Because in effect, that's what they've done. They've said that the people of Indiana in that district should not be represented by Mr. McIntyre, and they ought to be represented by Mr. McCloskey, and they're going to try to seat Mr. McCloskey. It will be interesting.

Ritchie: What did you find to be the most pleasurable part of your job as Republican secretary?

Hildenbrand: Everything.

Ritchie: You liked the whole thing.

Hildenbrand: Yes. Next to working, it's the best job you can have. No, I thoroughly enjoyed it. I liked the floor. I always

had, from the time I came into the Senate I was always fascinated by the things that went on there. Now, to have the responsibility of being on the floor, which was not my responsibility when I was with Boggs, but now to have my job to be there -- from my standpoint it was the epitome of everything that I ever wanted. It was the crowning of a career to be that secretary.

Ritchie: Did the job carry any headaches you wished weren't part of it?

b>**Hildenbrand:** Not really. I mean, you deal with egos, but you get used to dealing with those kind of people. There's no way that you could not deal with them. There's no way that you could do it differently. I didn't find anything about the job that I would do differently if I could do it. It's a thoroughly enjoyable job, if you like the legislative part of the Congress, floor actions. If you like to get into substance and mess around like that, it's not a very good job, because I would get into substance only at the very end, on a last resort kind of thing when we had to work something out. Then I might get involved, but up until that point I didn't have any idea what half the amendments were being offered did -- or care.

Ritchie: You were more involved in strategy.

Hildenbrand: Yes.

Ritchie: And you've said that personality was as important as politics in deciding how a person was going to vote.

Hildenbrand: Oh, I think that's true. I think that those members on that floor have a tendency to be guided a lot by the relationships that they have with other members. I think where groups of citizens make a mistake is that they believe that every senator is as concerned about whatever their problem happens to be as they are. They don't understand that to some it doesn't mean a damn thing. They really don't care. They don't have a dog in that fight, as the saying goes. But groups such as that, that are so wrapped up in their own proposals, whatever it is, believe that everybody else feels as strongly about it as they do, and that's not the case. So a guy who doesn't have that strong feeling is going to be guided by something else. And what is it going to be? It's either going to be some constituent that he listens to, or has respect for, or it's going to be a colleague that sits next to him on the floor, or a colleague that sits next to him in the committee, or his committee chairman, or his leader, or his president, any number of those things will be factored into how a person votes.

If you look at [Reagan](#)'s record, in his ability to get some things through, he did it strictly on personal entreaties to a person: "I need your vote." And Howard Baker was very successful, sitting down in that well on that table, when members would come in.

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They would come to him and say: "Howard, geez, I can't vote for this. Do you really need me?" He'd say, "I really need you." Members will tell you that many times they voted for something simply because it was for Howard Baker.

Ritchie: But Howard Baker had to know that he needed "x" number of votes, that he was that close to winning.

Hildenbrand: Oh, yes. Well, we always pretty well knew where our count was. We knew how to count.

Ritchie: Because I assume you don't win anything by having one more vote than necessary.

Hildenbrand: Oh, no. We knew where those votes were. We knew how many we had. And we have, from time to time -- those people who said, "I just cannot vote for this, can you let me off the hook." We'd say, "No, we really need you." They would vote with us, and then if it was obvious at the very end that we did not need them, Baker would release them and let them vote against it. And they knew that. They knew that he would not keep them there in that position unless he really needed them. If he could release them, he would, and he did.

Ritchie: There must also be some reciprocal arrangements. If you're in a tight situation and you vote with the leader because he needs you, then I suppose he owes you something back.

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Hildenbrand: Well, yes, but that's hard to do, because the leader doesn't really have that much that he can give you back. The only thing he can give you back is his vote on something that you're very strong for. And that too has happened, where Baker has given somebody a vote because they gave him one.

Ritchie: The first two years you were Republican secretary were the last two years of Scott's period as leader, and it was also the [Gerald Ford](#) administration. I was looking at the statistics the other day, and I hadn't realized how many bills that Ford had vetoed, and also how many vetoes the Congress overrode -- although they only overrode a small percentage of his vetoes, it was still the

largest number overridden since [Andrew Johnson](#). What was your situation at that stage, given those circumstances?

Hildenbrand: We were in a much stronger situation than we had been in previous years, but by the same token, we did not have the votes to pass anything. But what we did have was the votes to try as best we could to sustain those vetoes, because it takes two-thirds to override. So we were sitting there in a position -- and that's one of the reasons why we failed to override as many as we did. But at the same time, because he vetoed so many, the percentages of override was fairly high. But we sustained an awful lot too, and we did it simply because our people stayed together. Here again, some of the things that he vetoed, guys getting ready to run in 1976, there's no way in

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God's world they could ever vote to sustain that kind of a veto, just from a political survival standpoint.

Ritchie: Did you find the Ford administration more open to suggestion from Republicans in the Senate?

Hildenbrand: Oh, yes. It was a totally different atmosphere. Ford was a creature of the Congress, had been there all of his life from the time he came into politics, in the late '40s. That's all he knew. He ran the White House the same way. We had known him, and worked with him, and we knew the people around him quite well. It was a good relationship.

Ritchie: Did his legislative liaison staff change very much from the Nixon administration?

Hildenbrand: Well, there was Clark MacGregor and Bill Timmons, and then Timmons and Korologos and that crowd got out. I guess those were the days when Max Friedersdorf came in, and I don't remember who else. So it was a different liaison group than it had been before.

Ritchie: Did you work together on strategy and suggest approaches to them on how to operate?

Hildenbrand: No, not really. They had their agenda and we had ours. We communicated a lot, and they knew pretty much where our people were. We knew what their problems were. With Ford coming in

at that particular point in time, it was the middle of a four year term. Unlike the beginning of a term, when the administration will send up countless pieces of legislation, they'd already been sent up by the Nixon people. So there wasn't really a great deal of activity on Ford's part. All he was trying to do was stem the tide of all this so called bad legislation that the Democrats who controlled Congress were trying to pass. That's why you found so many vetoes.



*Standing, left to right: Hildenbrand, Warren Berger, Darrell St. Clair, Gerald Ford, and Nelson Rockefeller;
Seated: James Eastland
Senate Historical Office*

Ritchie: You said at one point that the Democrats to a degree cooperated because they wanted things to heal after Watergate. How well did your office work with Mansfield's office at that time, and what sense of cooperation did you get?

Hildenbrand: We worked with them as well as we ever worked with anybody. Mansfield was the type of person that was easy to work with. He was just as heartbroken about the incidents of a president resigning as anybody else. He just didn't feel that it was good for the country to be in that kind of a situation. So, unless it was absolutely impossible, from a purely partisan standpoint, where his people would have run him out of town on a rail, he wanted to cooperate, I think, with the Ford administration, and with Scott, as much as he needed to cooperate with them. Ford, of course, treated him with the respect that someone who is majority leader deserved to be treated, unlike the Nixon operation. And Mansfield responded in kind.

But, Ford came over from the House with a set of values which were a lot different than the Senate's sets of values. That's why I think there were so many vetoes. Also, he was getting ready to run for election on his own. He had not been elected vice president, he had not been elected president, and I think that sort of

rankled him somewhat, that he was sitting in both of those spots and had never been elected by the people. So he was trying to make a mark for himself also.

Ritchie: What was the reaction among Senate Republicans when Ford pardoned Nixon?

Hildenbrand: Well, the group that were still Nixon supporters thought it was a very humanitarian thing, and the proper thing for him to do. Those who did not like Nixon, or believed that he really was more involved in it than was ever proved, thought that it was dumb thing to do. But at the same time, there was a general feeling that the country, now having gotten out from under it, did not have to go back into a trial or something along those lines, which would have relived that whole thing over again, and they were just sort of glad to get it out of the way. I think the Democrats politically believed that he made a big mistake, that it was going to come back to haunt him. As it turned out, it did. But I don't think any of them

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ever really wanted another trial. I don't think they liked the fact that he was pardoned, but they would have liked it less to have the trial.

Ritchie: Did you work at all in the 1976 election?

Hildenbrand: I worked in the convention, with Jim Baker and John Tower and [Bob Griffin](#), who was floor manager, in stemming the tide of Reaganism, so that Reagan did not get the nomination. I was what they call a delegate hunter. I was on the floor continually, making sure that we knew where the delegates were, and who they were, and that they voted the way they were supposed to vote.

Ritchie: How did you wind up becoming a delegate hunter? Did you volunteer?

Hildenbrand: Well, I was close to Bob Griffin. I had come into the Congress in 1957, the year that Bob Griffin was elected to the House. He was one of thirteen Republicans that was elected to the House. [Bob Michel](#) was another one. So I had known Bob Griffin since 1957, and we worked very, very closely together during that period of time. Then when he came to the Senate we renewed our friendship, and then when he became whip I worked with him very closely, both as secretary of the minority as well as assistant to the leader. When it became obvious that there was going to be a fight on behalf of Reagan

for the nomination, Griffin came to me and said: would I be a part of the group that was going to try to lock up the convention and keep it away from Reagan? I said, "Of course."

Ritchie: Did you specialize again in a particular group of delegates?

Hildenbrand: No. We did pretty much generally in the convention. We began to find out where everybody was. I did Pennsylvania, simply because I was close to the delegation, and close to the chairman of the delegation, who happened to be Drew Lewis, at that time, as a matter of fact. And the Delaware group, because I knew them quite well.

Ritchie: Did you think there was much danger of Ford not getting the nomination?

Hildenbrand: Up until about a day or so before the vote, yes. In fact, the morning of the vote we were not quite so sure. Mississippi had still not decided what they were going to do, and without them we probably would have lost. But when their name was called and they voted the way they did, then we pretty well knew that we were okay.

Ritchie: What do you think worked the best for Ford?

Hildenbrand: I don't know. You could speculate. My guess is you can come up with any number of reasons and everyone has as much validity as the next one. He'd been president, and there was a feeling that: geez, you don't want to kick him out. He's the President of the United States. He deserves a chance. My guess is it was that kind of a thing. And the Reagan people had not taken over as completely as they took over in the 1980 convention, when they really controlled it, and again in '84 when they really controlled it.

Ritchie: Did you work closely with Jim Baker at that time?

Hildenbrand: Mmm-hmmm. We worked on almost a day-to-day basis. We would meet each day, morning or afternoon, and go over delegates, who they were, what we needed, what we didn't need.

Ritchie: What was your impression of James Baker then?

Hildenbrand: About the same as it is now. He's an outstanding public servant. I think he did a tremendous job in the White House as chief of staff to Reagan. I

think it will stand to Reagan's credit that despite all that Baker had done to keep the nomination away from him in '76, and as deep as some of his staff felt in opposition to him, that he recognized the talent that he brings to that kind of a group, and his organizational ability, and his political savvy. I think it was an outstanding choice on Reagan's part.

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Ritchie: I suppose in 1976 you would never have imagined that Jim Baker would wind up as Ronald Reagan's chief of staff.

Hildenbrand: Oh, I think that's right. I don't think there's any question about that.

Ritchie: He's another one who has been considered an "evil genius."

Hildenbrand: Mmm-hmmm. And probably with much more reason than I ever was.

Ritchie: Having been so close to Bob Griffin as minority whip, did you work for him when he ran to succeed Scott in 1977?

Hildenbrand: I did not. I stayed out of that race entirely. I made a commitment to Bob Griffin in 1974, when I ran for secretary. He said that he would support me for secretary, but I made a commitment to him -- at his request -- that I would not involve myself in any leadership race after that. So I stood by that commitment and did not get involved in that race.

Ritchie: Why would he ask you to make a commitment like that? I would have thought he would have wanted your support rather than to have you neutral.

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Hildenbrand: Yes, but I guess he wasn't sure. I guess that he just did not want me to be involved at all. Unless he was sure that I was going to be for him, he sure as hell didn't want me to be for somebody else. Because of my role as secretary of the minority, it's a unique position in that you become closer to the members than almost anybody else, even sometimes their own staff. That's some thing that I would not, if I were running, want to have somebody who had that kind of a relationship with all of the members, against me. Because I could talk to every one of them at anytime about anything. This way he neutralizes that by asking me not to get involved. It's just one more thing he doesn't have to worry about, even though I might have been for him. As it turned out, I'm glad that he did, because I would have hated to have had to choose between Griffin and Baker, who I liked both extremely well.



Senators Roman Hruska (R-NE) and Robert Griffin (R-MI), in committee hearings
Senate Historical Office

Ritchie: It would seem that the best way to succeed in your job would be to treat everybody equally.

Hildenbrand: That's the best way, I think, to succeed as a secretary of a party. I don't think that you can be anything less than a friend to each of the members, no matter what their philosophies may be. I like to think that I treated a [Carl Curtis](#) or a [Bill Scott](#) as well and as equally as I treated a Cliff Case and a Hugh Scott, Jack Javits.

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Ritchie: At one point you said that you had difficulty dealing directly with [Margaret Chase Smith](#). Did you find as Republican secretary that there were any Republican senators that you had difficulty dealing with?

Hildenbrand: No. By that time, for four years I had been in the leader's staff, so I knew all of them, much more so than I did when I first became assistant to the whip. But there was no one on our side of the aisle that I had any difficulty in dealing with.

Ritchie: If Hugh Scott hadn't decided to retire in 1976, do you think that Griffin would have ever challenged him for his position?

Hildenbrand: No.

Ritchie: He was content to wait.

Hildenbrand: Yes, he was twenty years younger probably than Hugh Scott, so he had plenty of time.

Ritchie: I suppose the leader always has to worry a little about the whip.

Hildenbrand: I guess so, except I don't have any idea when the last time a whip ever challenged a leader. You'd have to look it up, but my guess is also it would be a very long time ago. It's just not the thing that you do.

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Ritchie: Did you know that Scott was planning to retire in '76?

Hildenbrand: Yes. It was no surprise.

Ritchie: The one thing that has always puzzled me: for a man like Scott with his particular reputation, in the very end he got caught in the controversy over Gulf Oil as a client in his law firm. How do you explain something like that, which seems so contradictory to his reputation?

Hildenbrand: I just don't think -- I didn't think it then, and I don't think it now -- that there was anything to it. I don't think it's a question of him getting caught, or anything like that, I think it just wasn't what everybody thought that it was. I knew Hugh Scott too well, I spent too many hours with him, I knew the kind of person that he was. This was not Hugh Scott, this kind of a thing he would not have been involved in. I knew Claude Wild as long as I can remember, but no one has ever shown a scintilla of evidence that Scott was really involved, beyond that stories that appeared. Nothing else ever was proven.

Ritchie: What motivates the press at times like this?

Hildenbrand: Sensationalism. You make enemies in public life, and if happens that an enemy gets ahold of this instead of a friend, those are the kind of problems. And you have media people who don't

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like certain senators, and who would do anything they could to discredit them. You have others that like them and would do anything they could to keep them from being discredited. Part of the reason, I think, that this never got further than it got, and was sort of confined, is that Scott himself had so many good friends in the press. They respected him. They just stayed away from this and were not going to get involved. It could have been a much bigger story, if everybody there had suddenly decided that there was something to it, and they all got into it. But

in most instances, it was like a Woodward and Bernstein thing, it was confined to just a couple of people, and nobody else picked it up.

Ritchie: Jack Anderson.

Hildenbrand: Jack Anderson, exactly. And there never was any love lost between Scott and Jack Anderson, for whatever reasons, I don't know what they were.

Ritchie: Still, it must have hurt him at the end of his career to have that kind of a cloud over him.

Hildenbrand: Oh, I think so. You hate to retire under that kind of a cloud, particularly someone who had the kind of illustrious career that he'd had through all those years. It's one of those things that's unfortunate.

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Ritchie: Do you think that senators and politicians generally feel vulnerable against the press?

Hildenbrand: Oh, sure. Because you're in a position where you can never refute anything that's said about you. And if you do, it's never going to show up at the same place. You know, the denial never catches up with the charge. When you run in campaigns you are always fearful that Monday before an election that a Jack Anderson story will show up, or some other story will show up. You try to guard against it, and sometimes you over react, and you try to answer a charge before one's been made, which even makes it worse. But you don't think about it at that time, you know you're going to get hit with this thing, and you know that there's only three days before an election, so you try to cut your losses if you can.

End of Interview #5

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