
Interview with Larry Burton

The interview was conducted by David Welborn in Washington, DC on March 25, 1993

Audio cassette 111a
DW: First of all, Mr. Burton, thanks for coming out early in the morning.

LB: Thank you for the invitation.

DW: Let me ask you to put on the record a little bit of your background leading up to your joining Senator Stevens’ staff. How did you get there?

LB: How did I get there? I was a college student in 1975 on a Washington, DC program, and I interned in the office of Congressman Young from Alaska. That got my name known in the office, and after graduating from college I came out to Washington, DC and worked for Congressman Don Young as one of his legislative assistants for a couple of years; that was from August of 1978 until April of 1980, whereupon I got a telephone call from Senator Stevens’ office and was informed that his floor assistant, Susan Alvarado, had been named as assistant to the vice president for legislative affairs.

DW: This would be 1981.

LB: This was 1981, that’s right, 1981. He asked me, his staff asked me if I would like to come over and talk with him about a potential position, a floor assistant position, which I was very excited about because it came out of the blue. I went over and interviewed with him that afternoon and was hired to fill Susan Alvarado’s position.

DW: Had you known Senator Stevens previously?

LB: I’d worked quite a bit with his staff on a number of different issues. It was very important, being a small delegation, to work together, and I was known to a number of his staff as a conduit on the House side. That was the relationship that began the relationship with Senator Stevens.

DW: How long did you stay with Senator Stevens?


DW: Then what did you do?

LB: Then I went to the Office of Management and Budget in the Office of Legislative Affairs. David Stockman was the director of the entire organization. I stayed there for two years and then left. Jim Miller was the director for, I’d say, a year and a half of that period.

DW: And you have been with BP America since that time?

LB: Since May 1 of 1987.

DW: Let me ask you this -- maybe this is an unfair question --

LB: Don’t ask unfair questions!
DW: Which institutional setting did you find most interesting, so far as work is concerned? The legislative or the executive?

LB: That is an unfair question, but let me answer it in my own way. The answer is that the more I worked in each -- in the various branches of government, working in the House, working in the Senate, and then working in the executive branch -- the more I realized there was to learn about the government process. I came out of the House of Representatives fully confident that I knew a lot about how government works, and I left the executive branch realizing that there was much, much more to learn. It’s a much more cumbersome process in the executive branch, getting policy out and having it cleared through a number of different stages. It’s frustrating in some senses, but at the same time, I think the quality of product was excellent when it did get out. But the responsibilities and natures of the two branches are different, but I think equally exciting.

DW: What were your main responsibilities when you worked for Senator Stevens?

LB: My main responsibilities really included being his eyes and ears on the Senate floor when he could not be there. Working with Senator Baker’s staff, working with the various committee chairmen and their staffs, and being a liaison with the House leadership staff. Henry Gandy, who worked for Congressman Lott at the time, was the House whip, and I would keep in contact with him. It was a very loose, very network-oriented set of responsibilities. The axiom “information is power” is really valid; my role, as I viewed it, was to try to keep Senator Stevens informed of what was going on in the House and what was going on in the Senate, so that he could act as Senator Baker’s lieutenant.

DW: Were there any particular things or types of information that were of special interest to you?

LB: Again, let me just preface this by saying that my role -- and I believe when you talk to Senator Stevens he’ll confirm this -- his role was to act as Senator Baker’s lieutenant. There could only be one leader, and Senator Baker was the leader. So everything that we did related to supporting that particular role. If there was a piece of information or an idea or a rumor or an amendment that might be floating around or some priority that the House of Representatives might be moving toward, a quality of life issue for example, my responsibility was to put those things in front of Senator Stevens so he could ascertain whether or not he should take that up with Senator Baker and move it forward.

DW: One of the things I’ve been interested in and have not found out a whole lot about is the working relations between the Republicans in the Senate and in the House. You just referred to your relationship to staff members associated with Representative Lott; were there similar staff relationships between Baker’s people and Michel’s people?

LB: Well, again, you get a better answer speaking directly to Senator Baker’s staff. My perception is that they had a positive working relationship. I know that Billy Pitts from the leader Michel’s office and Jim Range and a host of others from Senator Baker’s
office spoke; I can’t tell you exactly how frequently. I know there was contact, but I think the specifics would be better coming from them.

DW: You referred Senator Stevens as Senator Baker’s lieutenant -- what does that mean. What did it mean to be Baker’s lieutenant?

LB: Again, that’s a great question for Senator Stevens.

DW: Your perception.

LB: My perception is that there could only be one leader in the Senate, and Senator Stevens’ role was to support Senator Baker in his leadership roles; to step in when necessary, it’s like being a batter on deck. He was ready to step in and take a swing if he had to, or lead the charge, or fill in. The leadership really doesn’t have roles that are defined in the Senate rules, as you have read from Senator Byrd’s comments or learned from speaking with others. They have to do with the precedents and practices of the Senate. A lot of those are procedural, a lot of communicating with the press, the dugout chatter about activities, what’s going on in the Senate that day, what’s going on that week, what’s happening from a White House meeting. So if Senator Baker could not go to the White House or open the Senate or close the Senate or procedurally move issues along, the leader having priority of recognition, if Senator Baker weren’t there, then Senator Stevens could seek recognition and move the legislative agenda forward. He would do that as deputized in a coordinated fashion with Senator Baker. I cannot recall a single instance where he would try to get out in front of Senator Baker. He was a faithful and dutiful lieutenant. I think one thing that Senator Stevens did try to do is make sure that the -- at least raise the issue of quality of life in the Senate. He took up some issues that may be politically unpopular outside Washington, DC, but I think were very important for the rank and file of both the Democratic and Republican parties. That includes things like pay and things of that nature, where he worked pretty closely with House members. Maybe you can go into that with him, if you’d like, as to why he was involved in that and the successes and failures associated with that. It was appreciated that he cared about the quality of life. In 1981 -- at that time he was remarried and had a young, in July had a young baby, so he was -- Lilly -- he was very proud of, I can’t believe she’s now what? 12 years old. And he was very cognizant of wanting to spend time with his wife and child. For the younger senators, recall in 1981, following the election of 1980, you had 16 new freshmen that -- I think he wanted to set an example that you could contribute as a public servant and have a quality of life that was healthy. Which I think dovetailed with Senator Baker’s notion, which I think more and more people are thinking about, of the citizen legislator. You don’t have to spend your entire life being in Washington, let’s do our business and then go back home and spend time with people who are living the consequences of the decisions made here in Washington, DC. It was a good dovetail relationship, I think.

DW: Talk a little bit about the personal relationship between Senator Stevens and Senator Baker.
Senator Stevens had and has the greatest respect for Senator Baker. I think that Senator Baker has a great deal of respect for Senator Stevens. Their personalities are different; that’s the spice of life. There was loyalty from Senator Stevens to Senator Baker that was unquestioned. I notice one of your questions here was, “What role did Senator Stevens play when Senator Baker was running for president?” I wasn’t there on the staff at the time; there are others -- I think you talked to Rebecca Cox and she can probably give you a much better perception of what Stevens perceived his role to be. Clearly, Senator Baker came back and stepped back into the leadership role, and Senator Stevens supported him in an unquestioned fashion. Hopefully, a lot of points were scored in terms of the relationship that way. Senator Baker’s staff also respected Senator Stevens for his willingness to step in at any point in time. It goes back to the fundamental point that I made in the beginning: there can only be one leader and Senator Baker took it upon himself to -- in spite of his own presidential ambitions prior to 1980 -- he was a team player and he took up President Reagan’s agenda and did the best he could to move it forward. That is an admirable quality; Stevens supported him in that effort.

In regard to the notion of there only being one leader, do you think that at that time most of the Republicans in the Senate who were in some sense leaders in their own right, such as Tower, McClure, the committee chairmen, were of that view at all?

You raise an interesting point, and it goes to the whole -- if you look at the Democratic leadership and how that functions -- it’s changed a lot since --

Where there is just one leader.

It’s changed a lot. On the Republican side, Senator Baker did an amazing thing; if you look at it from a business school point of view and the whole notion of empowerment, then I think you can see that he really got the most out of his team. He was the leader, but at the same time it was decentralized in the sense that committee chairmen had a lot of latitude. My perception was that Senator Baker didn’t give orders and say “do x, y, and z.” People came to their own conclusions based on some general principles that Senator Baker and the White House had discussed and agreed upon. Senator Stevens provided a forum, four actually, where the agendas could be discussed and committee chairmen would feel as though they had a place on the agenda. The leadership really is a conduit to allow issues to be expressed and debated and dealt with. One of my favorite phrases from Senator Baker was, “Moving the Senate is like pushing a wet noodle.” But that’s not to say it can’t be done, just that it’s a frustrating process; it’s a slow process. I’ll give you examples of when they actually had a chance to discuss these issues. Every Tuesday there was a chairmen’s meeting prior to the Policy luncheon. In the chairmen’s meeting, the committee chairmen would get together and they would try to discuss what the priorities were in their committee and what they would like to have come to the floor and share that with Senator Baker. Through almost consensus leadership, if that’s a term of art, they would come to some decision about how to move forward, factoring in the president’s priorities. Then, following that, they would go to the Policy lunch whereupon Senator Tower who was the Policy chairman at the time would assist in leading the discussion. So it wasn’t like Senator Baker went from chairing the committee chairmen’s
meeting to chairing the Policy lunch, but he was leader. Even though he wasn’t
necessarily chairing the lunch, people took what he said as where we were going. That’s
the place where Senator Stevens would give the House report, which was one function,
then whoever wanted to speak would get up and talk. It’s a place where people could
speak their mind freely and get reactions freely and move forward. That allowed people,
they felt that there was a place where they could be heard, whether they were a freshman
or whether they were a committee chairman. And I might add, and you might want to
check this with people that were much more senior than I was in the process like Jim
Range or Bill Hildenbrand or somebody like that, I believe a freshman was invited to
each of the committee chairmen’s meetings so that they would feel included in the
process. The Senate’s a small place, so by being included they would talk to their other
colleagues; it’s funny in the Senate, when you’re a junior member you’re kind of off in
[the hinter], on the side, in the back or whatever. So you have two or three freshmen
who share an area, and they would build up a friendship, if they had attended a leadership
meeting and had a positive experience, they could share that with their colleagues. That
reinforced the whole notion of Senator Baker’s leadership style which was highly
successful.

DW: I was talking to Senator Symms yesterday and this came up. I asked him what the effect
of attending the meetings, the chairmen’s meetings, two or three times had on him. He
said, “It made me sensitive to the necessity of looking at the whole picture of what was
going on, rather than just the things that I was particularly interested in; seeing how
things related to one another.” Clearly, as far as he was concerned, it had a positive
effect. What you’ve been talking about touches on one of the things that is hardest to
grasp or conceptualize. Baker operated in a collegial kind of manner, but I get the
impression that decisions were not themselves collegial in character. How do you react
to this: Baker, in the various meetings he had, let people have their say, talk in full, and
then at some point he might define what the outcome was, and then you would move to
the next step.

LB: I think I know what you’re saying, and hopefully my response perhaps will guide you to
the mark or at least contribute to where you’re trying to go on that. Politics is an art, not
a science, and I would say leadership is pretty much that way. Senator Baker had
leadership down to an art; where humans want to contribute and be part of the process, I
think he knew how to guide them in contributing to that process. But I think he always
knew the direction in which he wanted to go. So the art of it is helping senators make
their contribution and feel as though they’re going in the direction that he generally
wanted them to go. I know you had -- one of your questions here was “how were the
staff people” and all that: he had excellent strategists on his staff. Between Howard
Greene and Marty Gold and Jim Range, they were excellent and they had excellent
relationships with the White House. Senator Baker had an ability to help guide the White
House’s thinking as well. He had a remarkable ability to get past the politics and into the
person, to help them want to be part of the team. That’s obviously not going to work 100
percent of the time; a lot of issues had to be dealt with that were very emotional. The
ones that come to my mind are the social issues, which were very difficult to deal with:
school prayer and abortion and things of that nature. Where do you lead the Senate then?
You allow the Senate to express itself. I think he knew when to push and when to pull and when to let things go. There’s only so much you can do in a certain period of time. Think of the Senate as a sponge. He squeezed out as much as he could, but you’re not going to get it all out every single time.

DW: He had leadership meetings, he had the chairmen’s meetings, and he had his staff meetings in the mornings.

LB: Which he allowed us to attend.

DW: Did you attend those fairly regularly?

LB: I did, fairly regularly with Senator Stevens.

DW: What were those like?

LB: I thought they were very good in that they allowed his staff, and allowed us, to participate in what we were planning to do that day, generally, the direction we were trying to go. That doesn’t mean you’re going to accomplish it, but he could let Senator Stevens know if he was needed that day in any particular way and what he was picking up on certain issues. It allowed strategizing about what the reaction might be from the Democrats, if the issue was controversial in nature. I think the meetings were good, even if they were only for 15 minutes, and they weren’t long, long meetings. It was just a chance to get together. I suspect Senator Baker and his staff met at other times during the day and we didn’t participate. But informally, since our offices were so close, Baker and Stevens would run into each other and they would chat informally or I would talk to Jim Range or to Marty Gold or to the cloakroom people.

DW: So there were open lines of communication.

LB: Yes. Having our offices so close together, it’s a proximity issue and you end up -- if there was a meeting that would be called informally, then we were close enough not to have to make a big deal out of scheduling it.

DW: So would Baker often ask Stevens to do particular things? “Talk to this person,” or “Go to that meeting.”

LB: I don’t think it was a “go to that meeting” thing; it was more -- I think he knew that Senator Stevens and Senator Byrd had a special relationship. That’s not to take away -- Senator Byrd and Senator Baker had their relationship and they were the leaders. So that was a healthy thing. Stevens and Byrd served on the Appropriations Committee. Who knows what goes on between -- I don’t know the specifics behind that. I know that they had a special relationship.

DW: Apparently all appropriators at some point have.
LB: I think Stevens and Byrd had a special relationship that goes back to when Stevens was appointed to the Senate in 1968 and Senator Jackson took him under his wing and then Stevens and Byrd served on the Interior Appropriations Committee together and that has an impact on Alaska.

DW: Someone, in talking about this, said it even goes back to the period in the Eisenhower administration when Stevens was in the Interior Department.

LB: You’d have to ask him that, I don’t really _____.

DW: So it’s longstanding.

LB: I know that Senator Stevens has a great deal of admiration for Senator Byrd.

DW: I’m asking you to speculate: how did this relationship affect things? What could be done through this relationship that was –

LB: Talking about the Stevens relationship with whom?

DW: With Byrd. What was its significance in terms of the operations of the Senate?

LB: In dealing with issues on timing, procedural issues on the floor, because you know that things have to be cleared. At the margin, that was probably a beneficial thing, or just good faith that “here’s where we’re trying to go.” In the Senate, you don’t really pull many surprises, if any, because it’s a collegial institution. People can disagree and they can make their voices known, but I don’t think many surprises get pulled. Stevens had a relationship with Byrd. They wanted to work together to ensure the fairness of the Senate in deliberating an issue. That’s a good question for Senator Stevens.

DW: I noticed a picture over here of you at a White House meeting with President Reagan and others. With what frequency would you go with Senator Stevens to the White House?

LB: That was actually when I worked at OMB. By coincidence, though, I’m sitting next to one of my favorite people in the entire world, John Tuck, who was one of Senator Baker’s chief lieutenants.

DW: I’ve talked to John twice thus far.

LB: John is absolutely wonderful. Loyal as the day is long; he has a love for the Senate equal to Senator Baker’s and Senator Stevens’. He worked in the Congress for many, many years.

DW: When you were with Stevens, did you accompany him to White House meetings?

LB: No, I did not.
DW: Would he ever comment on them to you after he got back? Give you the flavor of them?

LB: He’d give me the general gist of it, but he didn’t divulge a great deal of personal detail. He respected the position of Senator Baker as spokesperson. Again, if Senator Baker were tied up and he wanted him to make some comments or -- again, it flowed in a very informal fashion. If they were at the White House and the Senate had to open at 10:00 and they were still in a meeting, he would ask Senator Stevens to come back and talk to the press, dugout chatter, and then open the Senate, make a few remarks and then Senator Baker would come. One of Senator Baker’s great attributes and techniques that he used was his openness with the press. Tommy Griscom did a superb job of taking where Senator Baker was, distilling where the Republicans were and where the White House was, and helping to create an understanding among the press about where they were going and why they were going there. That openness served Senator Baker extremely well. We didn’t have that same type of extended apparatus; our staff wasn’t as big as Senator Baker’s, for a lot of good reasons. If Stevens were around, then he would have to rely on Senator Baker’s majority leader apparatus to fill in the blanks.

DW: So when Baker was away, Stevens was opening, and Griscom would perform the same functions for Stevens that –

LB: If he was around, right. I wouldn’t hold a press conference or anything like that. That wasn’t my role, and Tommy was very capable of -- in fact, he went on to serve in the White House in a very senior post. Then I believe he’s been down in Tennessee and elsewhere.

DW: He’s now in North Carolina. Let’s talk a little bit about the Policy Committee and the Conference and their staffs and how they fitted into the leadership operation. Clearly, the core was Baker-Stevens, but you had Tower and the Policy Committee and McClure at the Conference and their staff people. What kind of relationships were there with the Policy and Conference operations?

LB: My view was that the Policy Committee staff really carved out a niche for themselves in terms of informing Republican staff about specific issues, because they would always issue these -- issue briefs and describe the bills that were coming up and potential amendments and things of that nature.

DW: Was this really useful to senators?

LB: To senators, I would say probably not as useful as the actual conversations themselves. But if you take into consideration the staff support to senators, and the staff depended upon these pieces of information coming out of the Policy Committee, then I would say yes, it was helpful to the staff who then served a senator. It also provided a forum on Fridays where, much like the Tuesday Policy luncheons that would occur [and] the chairmen’s meeting, Jim Range would -- or Dan Crippen, his successor -- would chair a meeting of legislative directors, who would come in and basically say, “What’s going to happen” --well, actually Friday mornings this wasn’t the Policy Committee, but we had a
meeting of the staff directors of the committees where Jim would tell “here’s where we’re going and why” and I would give the House report; in the Policy Committee itself over in the Russell Building he would meet with the legislative directors and he would give a “here’s where we’re going” report, [and have a dialogue, and I would stand up say “here’s what the House is doing”] just to give a perspective. The main focus was what was going on in the Senate, and he was clearly the spokesperson for the leadership. I think it provided that forum for inclusion so you have a decentralized empowered notion, but at the same time you have clear direction from the leadership, from Senator Baker about where we were going. The Conference, I didn’t interact a whole lot with Margo. I think Margo was staff director over on the -- Margo Carlisle. I did not interact with her a great deal; she did attend the Policy luncheons, and Senator McClure was included in all the leadership meetings. And he and Senator Stevens were close as well. Policy provided as good a product and service as you could expect. The Senatorial Committee, you didn’t ask about that. I was just going to say that again, I think the Senatorial Committee’s considered a leadership spot, and they were included in the process as well. Being part of the leadership helps that position in recruiting other members, potential members of the Senate,_____ candidates. Senator Stevens served at the Senatorial Committee prior to becoming the whip; Senator Mitchell served in that capacity prior to becoming majority leader. The decentralized notion is important, people feel included. You may not have leadership responsibilities day to day, but you’re recognized as part of the apparatus. Stevens can come there and Baker -- if Baker couldn’t open the Senate or close the Senate, if Stevens couldn’t open or close the Senate, then there was sort of a pecking order involving Senator Tower and Senator McClure and others who would fill in.

DW: Let’s talk a little bit more about the committee staff directors’ and the legislative directors’ meetings. What purposes were served and what benefits resulted from these two sets of meetings?

LB: I suppose it depends on your perspective. From my perspective, it was helpful to hear really what the dynamics were in various committees, if people chose to share. Each committee staff director had his or her own personality dynamic, and they were all great. George Dunlop from the Agricultural Committee, you know he had some difficult issues on the farm bill and agriculture. Steve Bell from the Budget Committee had big, big responsibilities to deal with, the budget and reconciliation and all the groundbreaking issues that were moving forward in that. Hearing from them about the challenges and the difficulties and what they were facing helped Jim Range to prepare, and Marty Gold and others, to prepare for Senator Baker so that he would not be blindsided by his committee chairmen. At the same time, it showed the committee staff directors or the legislative directors that, “You know, we’re all in this together; this is not an ivory tower exercise, this is an exercise where leadership is through empowering you and through you giving us some assistance in being able to move forward.” The leadership style was not dictatorial, it was very much one involving an inclusive process. Again, Senator Baker knew where he wanted to go, but he had to have information about where the potential exposures were in order to move forward. See, if you can move together with a majority, then it’s much easier than to get on the floor, bring something up, and then be blindsided.
DW: It strikes me that there probably was very little of any importance that was going on in the Senate that Baker did not know about because of the various channels of information flowing in to him.

LB: You know, thinking about it, not only did he have tentacles out there, he had an amazing ability to attract, where people wanted to tell him things. He was the guru, people wanted to view him as their confidante, because he made people feel comfortable and feel that he was looking after their interests. Leadership -- one of the main responsibilities is to look after the interests of the individual senator, Democrat or Republican, protect them on votes, make sure that they can maximize their legislative opportunities, minimize their exposures. Even a staff person like me, he would make me feel comfortable and he made me feel like a human being because he knew my name. He had an affability to say, “Hey, Larry, how are you doing.” Disarming as it was, he had an ability to put people at ease and to want to be successful. Leadership -- one of the main responsibilities is to look after the interests of the individual senator, Democrat or Republican, protect them on votes, make sure that they can maximize their legislative opportunities, minimize their exposures. Even a staff person like me, he would make me feel comfortable and he made me feel like a human being because he knew my name. He had an affability to say, “Hey, Larry, how are you doing.” Disarming as it was, he had an ability to put people at ease and to want to be successful. So my limited exposure to him, which was in the 1981 to 1985 time frame, he was successful, history was on his side -- he didn’t get the presidency, but I mean in terms of -- the cards that he was dealt at that time, history was on his side, his personality was one that was positive, he had a team that was extremely effective because they were diverse in their character and capabilities. He had an ability to communicate, he used what I consider to be the notions of empowerment combined with the notion of effective leadership, and he had the trust of the White House because that was the arm that was going to get things moving for President Reagan’s agenda. So I think you add up all those things, and Senator Stevens was there to support him as necessary and needed, I think you’ve got a pretty good team.

DW: Let me carry that just a step further. There were strong ideological undercurrents in the Senate at that time. You had a group of senators who were somewhat liberal in their orientations and then you had a larger group who were quite conservative in their orientations and with strong personalities and individualistic tendencies in both camps. Baker seemed to manage these ideological differences in some way; how did he do that?

LB: Again, part of it goes back to Republicans wanting to be successful. When Reagan was elected, Republicans hadn’t been in power for 30 years; in spite of ideological differences there was a desire to get past those and on to other issues and to be successful. As I said, the issues of school prayer and abortion and busing were all divisive issues, but Reagan did have the benefit of coming off a big win, so there was momentum. Second of all, Baker had an ability to allow people to express themselves, diverse as the opinions might be. Eventually people got past the issues, it may have taken a lot of time into the late hours of the night, but he was very patient; I don’t think that he ever cut anybody off, to my recollection. He allowed a full expression; in doing so, he eventually got where he wanted to go.

DW: I suppose you were on or around the floor most of the time when the Senate was in session. Did you ever see Baker visibly frustrated, angry, showing emotions of any kind on the floor?
LB: He’s only human so yes, he did get frustrated from time to time and was not beyond pointing out his frustration saying, “Why can’t we get on with the business? Let’s move forward. People have had their time,” sort of thing. But amazingly, he didn’t do it, in my view, in a vituperative fashion. It was more a frustration with, “Why can’t we move forward?” I don’t recall him ever getting personal with anyone. It was just a frustration of “can’t we” -- I’m trying to think of a specific experience, which escapes me right now. I’ve seen his face get red, and I’ve seen him smile but be frustrated at the same time. There’s an art in being frustrated and expressing your frustration, and also in being able to use your frustration as a tool to wake people up. If you’re a nice guy all the time and people view you as being very even-handed and unshakable, if you get shaken up once in a while, it makes people scratch their heads and say, “Why?” Look in the mirror a little bit and say, “Are we being unreasonable?” He had a grasp of his emotions in that regard and was -- he wasn’t -- he was human.

DW: When important votes were underway where the outcome was uncertain, how did he conduct himself on the floor? Assuming that there were times when it would be necessary for him to work on one or another of his colleagues to get them to vote the right way.

LB: I’d like to post that question to him myself. It would be, “Did you ever have a vote where you weren’t certain about the outcome?” I think he pretty much -- between him and Senator Stevens -- they had a pretty good grasp, a huge percentage of the time, the 99th percentile I would say, of the outcomes of the votes. You know about the notion of whip checks; you pretty much knew if your guys were going to be there. If they weren’t going to be there, part of the leadership advantage is being able to schedule a vote and the art of persuasion is the quality that -- is an important quality in leadership. Between time and the art of persuasion, you pretty much knew -- I think he knew generally how the votes were going to come out. He also typically would stand in the well, right next to where the vote was being taken so, you know, you don’t necessarily have to say things to be persuasive. Presence is persuasion. People wanted Senator Baker to succeed because it meant -- the Republicans -- because it meant that they were going to be successful. He knew where people were going to go most of the time. Howard Greene was the secretary of the majority and generally did the whip checks on whether we going to vote or table or not table or vote for this amendment or not that amendment. Between that and the White House, they had a pretty accurate idea of where things were going.

DW: Were there ever times at which the floor seemed out of control?

LB: Sure, that’s the art of unlimited debate in the Senate. When you say “out of control” that connotes “when will this ever end? How are we ever going to get out of this predicament?” Yes, I felt that way sometimes. I don’t know if Senator Baker did, maybe he did too. But that’s -- you can’t control everything. If you felt like you could control each word coming out of each person’s mouth, that would make one have ulcers, ultimately. But it’s a lot like going to confession. You just let yourself go and then pretty soon people decide, “OK, we’ve gotten that argument out and that argument out, now where are we going to go?”
DW: Talk about the relationship between the Senate leadership and the White House legislative liaison group. Where did they fit in?

LB: They spent a lot more time in Senator Baker’s office than they did in ours, although Senator Stevens got along well with them. The White House congressional affairs office is going to focus a lot more on his apparatus. They depended on Baker’s people to carry messages back and forth and then decide when discussion with Chief of Staff Baker or the president would be necessary. They were there to be eyes and ears and they were included in a lot of discussions. They had what I perceived to be access -- they had access to our office, if they wanted to use the phones or whatever. They had access to Senator Baker’s office. I’m trying to recall if they sat in on any of these meetings; they didn’t sit in on the Policy lunch, although the vice president’s office had a representative there. The chairmen’s meetings, I think one person may have sat in the chairman’s meeting. You’d have to double check that with somebody from Baker’s office. Through those symbolic exercises, they were included as a part of the team.

DW: When they were operating in and around the Senate floor, under whose direction were they working? They obviously were working for Ronald Reagan but were they working for Reagan through Baker? Was it really the Baker people who were guiding what they were doing, or were they under other direction?

LB: They were getting [under independent direction], my perception. [They were an extension of the Baker apparatus], if that’s the gist of your question. Although, if you look at the people, Pam Turner came from Senator Tower’s office and whoever else was around, I can’t remember everybody, but Max Fridersdorf had been on the Hill for a long time; but their loyalties were to the White House, to Ronald Reagan. It just so happens, because of personal relationships, they knew a lot of the Baker people; they knew Senator Stevens. But yes, they were taking their direction I would say from Max Fridersdorf, who had a lot of clout and was highly respected. I know he was highly respected. Of course, Baker would step in from time to time.

DW: Talk a little bit about the relationship between Senator Stevens and Senator Tower in the Appropriations-Armed Services context.

LB: I’ll just give you my perception, and I think that’s an interesting thing to explore with him. Senator Stevens would better respond to that. I know that it was testy from time to time. They both felt passionately about their views on policy and their respective roles in the Senate, authorizing versus appropriating. I have to say that over the course of time when Senator Tower was nominated for Secretary of Defense, one of his biggest proponents was Senator Stevens; Senator Stevens defended him, and you can find out the reasons why. Over the course of time they became closer.

DW: The differences there are well documented, but I’m wondering about the role that Senator Baker might play in a situation like that where two members of the leadership holding important and responsible positions occasionally find themselves at odds. Would this be
something he would get involved in?

LB: The academic answer is: I don’t think he would view this as an argument between two members of the leadership. He would view this as a discussion or debate between two members of the Senate who have authorizing and appropriating roles, and let the chips fall where they may in that regard. Now behind closed doors, I can in my mind picture him walking in, going “Come on, guys,” with a smile on his face, “when are we going to finish this?” In some humorous way, just disarm it in a humorous way. I don’t think there was ever any ill will between Senator Stevens and Senator Tower; these are institutional and fundamental sorts of arguments that are for history and for process and procedures. What goes on in public may be different from what really goes on behind closed doors. That goes cross-party, too.

DW: If you had to emphasize two or three things about Baker that were associated with his leadership style and effectiveness, what would you emphasize?

LB: Number one, loyalty; he was very loyal to the president, he was very loyal to members of his party, he was very loyal to those around him, and to the institution -- so loyalty is number one. Number two, I would say integrity; he had the highest form of integrity in himself and demanded integrity in those around him. Number three, he truly, truly wanted to be in touch with the American people and the citizen legislative concept, which is why he left the Senate after what, 18 years or something like that. He truly felt -- my perception was that he truly felt that there needed to be a better linkage between what was going on here and what’s going on out there. I personally think he would have been a great president; he had all the skills and capabilities to perform that function. The Senate was a much better place for the entire time that he spent there. I feel very fortunate to have had the chance to work around him. One great experience I had, actually, was when he -- toward the tail end of that time frame -- I took him up to Alaska because he’s a big photography buff. We went up there and photographed eagles in Alaska.

DW: Did you go commercially or -- ?

LB: We went commercially.

DW: Just you and Baker?

LB: It was Senator Baker and Tommy Griscom and we had a guy, a photographic friend of his, Terry Ash, from, I think, *Time* magazine, it was. It was a great experience because he just loved nature, he loved being with people, he loved the human experience, which made him a great senator and a great leader. I know Senator Stevens was just excited to have him go up to Alaska and see for himself where -- his home.

DW: Are there any other things that occur to you that we ought to talk about? Any other experiences that you had related to Baker and the leadership that would be worthy of note?
LB: I suppose I could spend a number of hours talking about what a great experience it was, but I think your time is better spent talking to people much more senior than I was. There are a whole host of people who surrounded Senator Baker, that he surrounded himself with, who can give you a lot of institutional memory. I wish I could go along with you to listen to them.

DW: Well, you would be welcome! Thank you very much for your time. This has been very, very useful.

END OF SIDE A