
Interview with Scott Cohen

The interview was conducted by David Welborn in Washington DC ON May 5, 1993

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SC: January 1967 I was assigned to the small office, the agency maintained in Chicago, for liaison with people in industry and banking and universities and so forth, who had regular sources of information from around the world. Soon after I arrived in Chicago from Washington I became aware of Percy because he was a frequent guest on the late night television programs, discussion programs. We don't have anything like that here, in Washington. At Random, some other people who copied that—it was a very good thing. I guess we don't need it here, particularly now that we have C-Span and everybody [hears] everybody all the time, but it was a good thing then. Percy always appeared to me to be a man of moderation and reason, who could see the other guy's point of view and didn't put anyone down. He really struck me as a man I could respect. Also, it was clear that although he had not run for public office, it seemed to me that he would make a great candidate. That was 1967; he didn't run for office for seven more years. I was a Massachusetts Republican, moderate to liberal Republican, liberal on social issues but with some sense of fiscal restraint. I followed him and then in 1963, the chairman of the political science department of the University of Chicago, who was a friend of mine and a friend of Senator Percy—not close, but he knew Percy as a member of the board of the university since 1952—and he just thought Percy had made a very great contribution to the university in developing particularly their biological and physical sciences departments. This fellow, Morton Grudsons, said, "Someday Percy is going to run for public office and you ought to go with him because you think alike." I bumped into him on a staircase and he said, "Percy's about to announce for governor of Illinois. Let me put you in touch with him." I thought I had nothing to lose; I'd been in the Agency about fourteen years and was happy and proceeding all right, but I was interested in politics, always interested in foreign affairs. When Percy began to run, then he made an appointment for me with one of Percy's aides, who was an associate professor at the university. He recommended me to the campaign manager; the campaign manager had a drink with me and recommended me to Percy. I had a long discussion with Percy on the phone; I was hired without his ever seeing me. I left the Agency in two weeks, after fourteen years. That's how it happened.

DW: He lost that race for governor, didn't he?

SC: Yes; it was in the Goldwater disaster year. He, like Bob Taft in Ohio, was clearly drawn down by Goldwater being at the top of the ticket. I think Bob Taft ran a million votes ahead of Goldwater and lost, and Percy ran 900,000 ahead and lost.

DW: What year was it?
SC: 1964.

DW: What year was it that he successfully ran for the Senate?

SC: 1966. After he lost in 1964, he called a press conference for the next morning. When the conference ended he walked over to me and asked me to meet with his family in three or four people upstairs, and he hired me to stay on with him personally.

DW: So you started working on that 1966 campaign?

SC: No, he didn't intend to run for the Senate. He saw himself as a manager, as a governor, not as a legislator, from his experience as chairman of Bell & Howell, a position he gained at the age of 29, some years before. Baker enters this a little, indirectly, because in 66 when they needed a candidate against the incumbent, Paul Douglas, it was felt that he was the only Republican who had a chance. As he put it at the time, privately, "a chance to lose," because Douglas had always won by such tremendous margins. But Senator Dirksen told him that he should run and that it would unite the party, because in 64 the more extreme conservatives really didn't like Percy and didn't want him to take over the Illinois party. He got lots of requests from all elements of the party. We had a cynical attitude; we felt that those who weren't normally for us would be happy if Percy lost, that the second loss would take care of him. Or, if he won, he would go after Washington and not bother the state of Illinois any more with his liberal ideas. When it became clear that they were really serious, we did a poll and found that as of then, November 1965, we would only have lost by six points to Douglas; Percy was much better known in the state, having run so recently, so it looked like a possibility.

DW: Did Senator Dirksen work hard for Percy?

SC: He said all the right things. He was not emotionally for Percy; Percy wasn't his kind of guy, and that was mutual. Dirksen was the old politics, and Percy was not really a politician, although he learned.

DW: So Senator Percy and Senator Baker entered the Senate at the same time.
SC: The class of 1966, with Mark Hatfield and Hanson from Idaho, Brooke from Massachusetts, and Griffin, his first full term. It was a great Republican year.

DW: When did you first come to know Howard Baker and the Baker people?

SC: I suppose pretty soon after we got here, because we had a lot in common with them. Both Illinois and Percy and Baker being rookies and both thought of very highly, coming in with good reputations and working together on things.

DW: Talk a little bit about the relationship between Baker and Percy over the years.

SC: I would say that they were very cordial to each other, very friendly, but didn't really become social friends. The families didn't become involved as both had relationships with others, but they were always friendly and worked together when they were on the same side. They didn't always find themselves on the same side, but there was never any negative thing. They are both real gentlemen, both nice people.

DW: Do you have any recollection of who Percy voted for in the 1969 and 1971 leadership contest when Baker challenged Hugh Scott? I'm assuming he probably voted for Scott.

SC: I don't know, I don't remember. I wouldn't have thought he voted for Hugh Scott, because I suspect that he thought Baker was smarter and might be more effective. He did like Hugh Scott; Hugh Scott, like Baker, was really a very warm, outgoing person. But he had differences with Hugh Scott, too, on issues. I can't tell you that. Are you going to interview Percy, or have you?

DW: Yes, as a matter of fact. He's agreed to it, we've just never been able to schedule it, but we will.

SC: Well, ask him that.

DW: What was the nature of your responsibilities with Percy after you got to Washington?

SC: In the 66 campaign I had been his press secretary and took over the research department, the last few months, to make it more responsive to what we needed on a day-to-day basis. When we came here, he gave me a choice of doing foreign affairs—in which I had had quite
a bit of experience, even before the CIA—or press. For a couple of weeks I was doing both, and it was really killing me. He saw me as his press secretary but also I had been his advisor on foreign affairs for a couple of years. I chose foreign affairs so the press wouldn't call me in the middle of the night to verify something! But I was glad to get into something substantive, too.

DW: When did Percy go on the Foreign Relations Committee?

SC: I think it was February 1972.

DW: I think Baker went on around 1974 or 1975.

SC: Yes.

DW: Then when the Republicans gained the majority and Percy became chairman, your name appeared on the roster of the Foreign Relations Committee.

SC: As assistant to the chairman and spokesman for the Committee.

DW: How did your role relate, or jive with that of Ed Sanders?

SC: I recommended Ed Sanders to be staff director. He had a very good reputation, although he had no political experience. He seemed a person of very sound judgment and the honest, clean type of guy we always tried to hire. He came highly recommended by Hans Benedict, who worked with us and who knew him for some years. He would also have been on the NSC and OMB and knew him there. There were long interviews and so forth; ultimately, we recommended two people, and Percy was to make a choice. The other fellow said he didn't want to make a commitment until he saw whether he was going to get a good job in the Reagan administration; he became an Assistant Secretary of State, now I think he's vice chairman of Lehman Brothers. But it didn't make a great difference to me because I had respect for both of them. The other fellow was stronger on the economic side of things, but it was a good choice. Then when Ed Sanders left, I became staff director. He went with Carlucci in the Sears World Trade.

DW: Let's talk about the role Baker played on the Foreign Relations Committee up to the time he became minority leader, which was a period of two or three years there when he was not in
a leadership position and was on the Committee. What can you say about his role in the work of the Committee during that period?

SC: It's very hard for me to discriminate between his role at this time and that time. When he was majority leader, I can talk about that more clearly than earlier. Before he was minority leader, he had more time for the Committee and had very good attendance, then it slipped off some. When he became majority leader, it slipped off some more. Although he didn't come to many hearings because of his other responsibilities at 10 o'clock in the morning in those years, he usually was there for the closed meetings, for the markups, and for the executive sessions in the Capitol. If there was something in the evening where they got together with the secretary of state, he would be there. I would say that he wasn't initially influential or a major player, but he was always respected for good judgment and for being a good listener, for expressing himself very well, he was prepared; it was just that he was down the line at the table, so he wasn't a big player at that time. Later and of course particularly after he became majority leader, his views had to be taken into account on everything. Sometimes he played a very strong role in particular issues when he was getting some heat from the White House to get it done.

DW: Can you recall some of the issues in which he played a very strong role?

SC: Yes; in the Carter administration the two big issues were the Panama Canal treaties and SALT II. Those two issues dominated the discussion in those years in that administration. As you know, on the Panama Canal treaties, he was for them and that got him in a pack of trouble politically. As soon as the SALT II came over, he found problems with much of it. I don't know if this is a fair assessment, but it was generally felt on the Committee that he was going to atone for his sins by being negative on SALT II. But the way he expressed his dissatisfaction with it was really quite responsible. He was trying to improve them and to get all the questions answered; he insisted that the executive branch make available to the Foreign Relations Committee every paper, every preparatory note, and so forth. They were very reluctant to do that; in any administration they would be reluctant. But he got a lot. Questions were answered, but new questions arose all the time. Senator Glenn, who is someone else who probably wouldn't have been so negative, was also responsibly negative; I forget what angle he had, but it also would strengthen the treaty from our point of view.

DW: Do you think Glenn was influenced in his views by what Baker was saying?
SC: I'm not sure; there was one element of it that he was interested in. Baker was kind of going at it from all angles; never really came out against the treaty, I believe, but gave that impression that he would if he weren't satisfied.

DW: Were he and Percy on the same wave length on SALT II?

SC: I can't say because I don't know where he would have come out, ultimately. We suspended that because of the invasion of Afghanistan, which is something that is coming up now, because the war powers question. I'm also working on an Afghanistan peace plan, so I've been reading that today. At any rate, I suspect that Baker probably ultimately would have voted for it, with some reservation. Ask him, I don't know. Percy was openly for the treaty and didn't mind amending it to strengthen it, but didn't want to undermine the treaty.

DW: What can you tell me about Howard Baker as a legislator and as a leader, based upon your observation of him, particularly in the Foreign Relations Committee context.

SC: I don't know that he took a strong legislative role on foreign affairs; basically the two continuing issues before the Foreign Relations Committee are the foreign aid bill and the foreign relations authorization. I don't think he took strong positions on those bills, although there may have been some amendments, emotional amendments, that he did, I don't remember that. In those years I wasn't thinking "What's Howard Baker doing?" unless it impacted on what we were doing. He was an influence, he was a political influence among the Republicans.

DW: What do you mean when you say that?

SC: Pointing out the political effects; he was very sensitive to all that. Of course, later his relationship with Reagan and how that affected him. There were times when he felt strongly, but I never saw him feel more strongly than once in a closed meeting of the Committee in the Capitol, S116, when he was pushing some administration position, some Reagan White House position. The Republicans were skeptical, as well as the Democrats. One young Republican, it might have been Pressler, sort of challenged him and said, "If you weren't the majority leader, carrying the ball for Reagan, would you really be for this?" Something of that nature. Someone else picked it up, a more senior person, I don't remember who it was. Suddenly, Baker stood up, his face red, fighting mad, and he said something like, "I won't allow you to impugn my integrity. When I say I'm for it, I'm for it!"
And I'm not going to listen to anything like this." That's a paraphrase, but he was hot! And he stormed out of the room.

DW: What was the reaction of the people in the room?

SC: Shock! He's a mild-mannered man and always so reasonable and nice. He really was hurt. About a half or three-quarters of an hour later, he walked in and sat down. The conversation stopped, and he said, "I just want you to know that I've been deeply hurt. I can't take this; you know I tell the truth"—something of that nature, so all was forgiven. But it was something!

DW: He certainly was behaving out of character.

SC: Yes.

DW: The Foreign Relations Committee was struggling with the foreign aid bill and State Department authorization of some sort; you never got the feeling that the leader was in some way or other attempting to shape things as the Committee was doing its work?

SC: Only when he was majority leader. He was about 95 percent supporting the White House position, and he did it in a nice way. His hit man was Cran Montgomery, who talked in much stronger terms and really alienated a lot of people. You've probably heard this before. He would call up and give us marching orders; that made it almost impossible for us to support him.

DW: Did Cran also call Senators and talk to them that way?

SC: I don't know if he called them, but he would see them on the floor and in the halls. He really got extremely hostile if some Republican didn't see it the same way Reagan did. I remember we used to say, "Don't carry water for the White House! I'm sure Howard Baker doesn't feel that strongly." Often you could say that, because some things aren't black and white, and the White House—in any administration—isn't always right.

DW: Talk a little bit about how White House and State Department liaison worked in the case of the Foreign Relations Committee.
SC: They worked both on the staff of the Foreign Relations Committee and the Senators at the same time as they were working each office individually, and it didn't really make much difference whether you are Committee staff or personal staff in Foreign Relations. If you're doing that, they talk to you. It depended on the administration and on the individuals. There are a lot of incompetent people in _____, which is the Bureau for Congressional Relations _____; they were intelligent fellows, practically every one at the State Department is intelligent, but some are more apt than others. Some are very uptight when they come to the Hill, because they are used to a very structured, hierarchical regime; suddenly, some 25-year-old aide to a Senator is talking back to them. They get flustered, and they know they can't get mad. So it's tough for some foreign-service personnel to deal with the Hill, very tough. There was a program—I think it was called the Pearson Program, Senator Pearson started it—that enabled foreign service offices to come to the Hill, a few each year, and work for three months in a Senatorial office and three months in a House office. Those fellows usually get the picture. I don't know if they are still doing that; it was a problem for the State Department in that the best of them were hired on the Hill. They loved it up there because there was more freedom to express yourself. They weren't in the same kind of hierarchy; you didn't have to have a high rank to express your opinion to a Senator, and it was even easier to a member of the House.

DW: During the Reagan presidency, did it generally appear that the White House and State Department people were singing from the same song book?

SC: I'm trying to think if there was any problem. I was only there during the first Reagan administration. I would say that when General Haig was Secretary of State, the foreign service felt quite independent of him. They didn't like him representing them—or his views or his attitudes. There was a hostility to Haig from the start, although I remember when he was on the NSC under Kissinger, he was a different man. But when he became Secretary of State, God! He was commander in chief of the armies! It went to his head. But Shultz was popular in the department; they would take his judgment and they would support it very well.

DW: The White House and State Department, [took the same position, when they came to the Hill].

SC: Yes, it was decided by them.
DW: What is the volume of liaison activity? Were these people around all the time?

SC: Yes, they were assigned to us. Earlier on, I don't know what year, mid-1970s, maybe the Ford Administration, there was a foreign service officer named Kempton Jenkins, who was so outstanding that he got more done than anybody else. He's out of the service now, so I can tell the truth about him. He gave the official line to us and in the best possible way and then you could say to him, "Jenks, do you buy all that?" And if he knew you pretty well he would say, "Well, you know how much of that I would buy." Or, "except for this little thing." He had credibility. Then, when it was something tough to sell and he said he was for it, it had an impact. He was just a little independent; most of them don't dare be the least independent. The White House liaison, in most administrations, was as bad as the State Department. By and large, it wasn't strong. The State Department people were not comfortable on the Hill with all these freelancers. They had no respect for the young people who worked as legislative assistants, and it showed. For us who were more senior, if they couldn't persuade us from the White House, they would threaten us, especially in the Johnson and Nixon administrations.

DW: What about in the Reagan administration?

SC: No, I would say that the White House liaison in the first Reagan administration was weak but pleasant. They didn't have the strong people. They usually had both political appointees and foreign service people and sometimes, like Jenkins, a foreign service person who understood the Hill and was very effective. If the person didn't really understand what went on, he or she didn't get anywhere. From the White House, there's a derivative feeling of power in all the players; if they don't get their way, because they are really deputized to go and get their way, they sort of threaten you; boy, that really turns people off.

DW: One of the things I'm trying to understand is the relationship between the White House and, in this case, the State Department liaison people and the Republican leadership in the Senate—where the efforts connect. Do they connect?

SC: There's a room off the Senate floor, off the outer hall, where the administration people usually go and meet the party leadership and develop plans for what's on the floor and how to check out who is for what and what has to be done and so forth. They work pretty closely in most administrations, I think. But it depends a lot on the zeal and the political skills of the leaders and their aides. And that varies; while Cran Montgomery could turn
people off, somebody else who was even less knowledgeable—he was quite knowledgeable about things—might be more effective, just because of demeanor.

DW: Did Montgomery sit in on the markup sessions and the like?

SC: Yes, we all did.

DW: What kind of role would he play in those?

SC: He'd do a lot of whispering—to Baker and to anyone else who would listen to him. We all did that. The staff by and large didn't speak up unless called on for some input by one of the Senators. If something came up—maybe you're afraid your Senator didn't hear it or wasn't paying attention or was whispering to the guy next to him or didn't know about that—one way was to write a fast note, another way was to go up and whisper. I whispered less as Percy's hearing got worse!

DW: Was Baker a fairly active participant in the markup sessions?

SC: Sure—on those things that he cared about or was carrying water on. Baker was no fellow to stand off to the side, he was not a wallflower. He was a participant; he's a strong man, a very good man.

DW: Talk a little bit about the transition from minority to majority status on the Foreign Relations Committee. Some people said the Republicans had a difficult time in adjusting to the change in status, in viewing themselves as the majority rather than as the minority.

SC: I would think only a Democrat might say that. We were quite elated that we had the opportunity to provide some leadership there, because the Democrats—at least through Fulbright, he lost in 74—didn't pay any attention much to Republicans, except when they needed a few votes. Of course, Fulbright didn't pay much attention to the White House, whether it was Johnson, Nixon, or Ford. He was his own man, and almost the entire staff had been selected by him. It was a single staff then, there wasn't a Republican staff. Javits—and I'm not sure if Baker supported him—wished a Republican staff. That was under Sparkman, probably, Sparkman succeeded Fulbright. It was a moment of weakness for the Democrats, because Sparkman was way over the hill. He had been a leader fifteen years earlier, but by the time he became chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, he
couldn't keep awake. A nice guy, but it was too late for him to have that responsibility. They took that opportunity to demand a staff. They got a third of the money and a third of the staff. I guess Javits was the ranking Republican at that time, so he hired a small staff. But the staff became too much his personal staff, and a lot of the other Republican Senators were unhappy. If you wanted an opinion from his counsel, the counsel for the minority, you had to go to the Republican staff director and ask if you could speak to this fellow. Well, things don't work that way—and never had—even when Fulbright was there, the Democratic staff members would provide anything we wanted, would be cooperative in any way, even help us write a dissenting view. There was always cooperation, at least at staff level. Javits' staff director played it wrong. I think that was a moment of weakness for the Republicans. When Reagan was elected and Percy became chairman, we reorganized and gave every Republican member a subcommittee and a professional staff position, and we all worked for everybody.

DW: Every Republican and Democrat alike?

SC: We all knew the Democratic staff because they had been helpful to us, but they didn't come to us so much. They thought they knew more, because a lot of us had been junior to them, since Fulbright had had the same staff—some of them are still there! What was the original question? I don't think so; we organized pretty fast so that we could handle the Haig confirmation hearing early in January. With all the Senators away, we did big briefing books on every subject; we hired investigators so we could answer every question the Democrats would put. Also to find out all about Haig, so that we would be prepared. When the Senators came back, we started the hearings very quickly, and they were very substantive hearings.

DW: Did Baker play a special role in the Haig confirmation proceedings?

SC: I don't remember. Haig and his staff dealt directly with Percy and me on setting them up. This is an aside, but it's interesting. Woody Goldberg was Haig's special assistant and is still with him over on 15th Street. Woody Goldberg was a very smart fellow; he came over about the physical arrangements for the confirmation hearings, and he said that Haig would like to have Califano, his friend and counsel, on his right and his wife on his left at the witness table. I said, "Gee, that's not a very good idea. His wife will wilt under the lights, hour after hour, day after day; this might go on for five days, even evening sessions. She'll know the camera is on her every minute, it will be terrible for her. And Califano will be so
full of advice that he'll be whispering in Haig's ear all the time, and Haig will look like he doesn't know an answer." It wasn't until a couple of days before the hearings began that they finally said OK, but they had been insistent. I wanted to do the best by Haig since he was our guy, although I must say that Percy had recommended Shultz to Reagan before Haig was named.

DW: Do you have any insights as to the kind of relationship Baker had with Haig?

SC: I don't know.

DW: With Shultz?

SC: I never saw him alone with these fellows. In a larger meeting, Baker is always very cordial to everybody. As far as I can tell from my experience, in a small meeting he was always nice. He's a very nice person to deal with. I know Percy often commented what a really nice colleague he was.

DW: Of course, there were a lot of very touchy and politically difficult situations that the Foreign Relations Committee had to deal with during that period and had some difficulty in getting matters to the floor, in certain years at any rate. Can you talk a little bit about the problems involving getting a foreign aid authorization bill out of the Committee and to the floor and getting it passed?

SC: The Reagan administration decided that rather than take the policy amendments that were passed in the Foreign Relations Committee and on the floor, they would rather that we didn't have a bill passed, so they could go through the Foreign Operations committees.

DW: The Appropriations Committee?

SC: Yes, a subcommittee. Because in the Senate, Caston would do just about anything they wanted, and he was a strong Senator there, very influential on his subcommittee, which was more conservative than the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. So they played it that way, and they succeeded in foiling the foreign aid bills as they came out of Foreign Relations. They stripped them of those policy amendments usually.

DW: How did Baker get involved?
SC: I don't know, but I suppose that he was supportive of what the administration was doing. I think if he had raised a big stink he might have been able to stop it. That was a way for the Reagan administration to get its way.

DW: You had some independent-minded Senators on the Foreign Relations Committee, Helms among others. Watching Baker operate, what can you tell me about how he handled people who were determined to go off in this or that direction or who were unwilling to compromise?

SC: I think he left it to Percy to handle Helms. Helms was holding up a lot of Reagan appointees, as you recall, and Baker may very well have talked to him privately and tried to be persuasive with him, but openly and in the Committee and so forth, he didn't get into that, as I recall. Percy would let Helms run through all his gamut of legislative tricks and delays and so forth and then suddenly call him in the morning and say, "We're going to vote on so-and-so at 10 o'clock," and sometimes get Helms off guard and unprepared. Helms might not even come, because he knew he would lose. By and large, Helms is a loser—he loses almost everything he does, just an amendment once in a while. But for every one he succeeds in, he fails in fifty. And he knows he going to fail; he sometimes doesn't show up when the vote comes. But he's making a record for his national constituency, and he's very smart at it.

DW: When a Foreign Relations Committee bill did come up to the floor, Percy would manage it, I assume. What role would Baker as majority leader play in its management?

SC: We would coordinate everything with Baker, sure. Baker had influence with some people we didn't, so we worked together very well. Of course, it was much easier when we were in full agreement. If we weren't, it was very polite and friendly, but maybe working at cross purposes.

DW: You're talking about being in full agreement with Baker?

SC: Yes.

DW: Do you remember any particular instance in which there was something that Percy and the majority on a committee were for and that he had reservations about?
SC: I don't remember, really. I'm sure there must have been more disagreements in the Johnson and Carter years. I don't know if Percy would even remember this, but it seemed that he had a feeling, when the new president came in, whether he was of your party or not, you should be helpful to him if it doesn't violate great principle and give him a chance. So he was cooperative beyond party, usually, at the beginning.

DW: You're talking about Percy?

SC: Yes.

QUESTION FROM FEMALE VOICE NOT UNDERSTOOD

SC: In everything. He felt this man was elected, you should give him a chance, unless you had a very strong disagreement with him on the issue. I'm not sure Baker felt that strongly about it.

DW: What is your assessment of Baker's political style and skills, his leadership style and skills? How did he go about exercising influence? What was distinctive about the way in which he functioned in the Senate?

SC: Fundamental to his success—and he was successful as majority leader—was the respect in which he was held on both sides of the aisle. That's a great asset, because in a lot of these things, not all Senators have strong feelings. There are some things where you can see the arguments of both sides—it may not be fundamental to your own primary interests or concerns—and you can be swayed. When the persuader is someone who has your respect, he's more likely to get you than if he doesn't. It's a psychological thing; you tend to trust the person you respect.

DW: Why did Senators respect Baker?

SC: I think he deserved it. He was a hard worker, he was a sincere person, he had a sense of what's good for the country. He wasn't a provincial Senator. There are always, out of the 100, maybe fifteen or twenty whom you feel really are working for the country and really care about a lot of things. Those are the ones who have the respect; if they have a wonderful personality and a sense of humor like Howard Baker, that's doubled.
DW: Did you ever see him or were you ever aware of him, as leader, causing or bringing Percy to do something he really didn't want to do?

SC: I wouldn't be surprised if he changed Percy's vote once in awhile, if it wasn't something fundamental, yes. Because Percy did respect him; if it were an issue on which Baker cared more than he, he might have voted with him.

DW: Does the Republican leader in the Senate have real power? Is he able to cause things to happen, or is he in reality just a glorified clerk?

SC: No, it's more—but being the leader of the opposition is a much stronger position than being the leader of the president's party, because you have to be taken into consideration on everything, as Clinton found with Dole recently. So it's great to be the leader of the opposition; it's not so happy to be the president's man up there. It's a wrenching thing for most of them; they don't have full freedom, they have a party loyalty that they have to put first very often and so they are not always doing what they would like to do. They have to argue things they really don't like too much.

DW: Do you feel that characterizes the position Baker found himself in?

SC: Baker's views were closer to Reagan's than Percy's were, but even Percy, if he didn't care a great deal—and they cast thousands of votes—if he didn't care a very great deal about something, he would vote with the president.

DW: Can you comment on the relative power position of the floor leader versus other people in the leadership? Does it make any real difference, in terms of power and influence, that you happen to be chairman of the Policy Committee or Secretary of the Conference?

SC: The majority and minority leaders are the powers, the others don't count much. In the House, it's different.

DW: Do other things occur to you that might be useful for you to tell us about Howard Baker, based upon your years in the Senate?

SC: I could tell you an obscene story.
DW: Go right ahead.

SC: It doesn't reflect badly on him—do you mind four-letter words?

I: No.

SC: I don't know what brought us together, but Percy took me into a meeting with him and John Tower and Howard Baker in Baker's back office in the majority leader's suite one morning. I think he brought me because he wasn't going to be able to stay, he had to make a speech downtown or something. He would only be there about 20 minutes and, if they didn't mind, I would represent his interests. So Percy left and John Tower sat in his chair and glared at Howard Baker and he said, "That son of a bitch." Baker said, "Percy?" "No, no! The president!" He said, "I am chairman of the Armed Services Committee, and Reagan wants to spend more on defense than this country can afford, and he wants to cut taxes, and he can't do both! I'm trying to get through to him to tell him that even though I'm strong for defense, we're stronger than the Russians now and we don't have to go that far." Publicly, he never took this position, he fought for every cent. He really meant it, he was serious, he was mad. He said, "I can't get an appointment to see him, because I think he knows what I want to say. This nation will suffer if we do this"—and he was right. His face was red—I don't know if you ever saw John Tower; he was hard, tough, five feet tall, really a tough guy—and he said, "The president—fuck him!" Baker, without showing any emotion, responded immediately: "Oh, I wouldn't go that far." I thought it was a great moment! And since I'm not going to write my memoirs, I won't be using it. Baker said, "Let me call the White House and get you the appointment." He picked up the phone, got Jim Baker, and said, "Tower has to speak to the president; will you do it for me?" [Jim] Baker said, "OK, I'll get back to him later."

DW: Do you think that's fairly illustrative of the way in which Baker operated?

SC: Oh, yes. Baker was a peacemaker and so forth, but had a great sense of humor.

DW: Are you aware of any instances in which he was of special assistance to Senator Percy in some manner?
SC: When Percy would campaign he would always make appearances for him. Percy, I think, did for him, too, when it was to his advantage. It's not always advantageous to have someone who has different views to come. Yes, they did a lot of political things together, I think. Baker is such a warm guy. They had a party in the Capitol for Percy when he retired from the Senate, and they had one for me. I don't know at which one, but Baker showed up; although I didn't know him so personally, he must have been sympathetic or empathetic because we had lost our jobs. He put his arm around my shoulder and told the photographer to take a picture of us. And he was always available to me afterwards if I needed some advice or help on something.

DW: Is there anything else that needs to be said?

SC: Let me see if I wrote anything down that I haven't said. I've said a lot that I didn't intend to say!

DW: That's a sign of a good interview.

SC: I remember on SALT II he hired a specialist to work with him. I think it was Ed Rowney; Ed Rowney would have given him plenty of reasons not to be for it.

DW: He did that on the Panama Canal treaties, too; he hired one person on one side and another person on the other side and educated himself on the treaties, to really debate between these two consultants.

SC: I would say that he was one of the most respected and well-liked people in the Senate in the eighteen years I was there.

DW: On that note, we will close. Thanks so much.