
Interview with William Gribbin

The interview was conducted by David Welborn. Unknown location and unknown date.

Audio cassette 5b1
DW: [...] 24 hours...that's the story of our experience. Would you describe for me, first of all, the route you took that led you to a staff position in the United States Senate.

WG: I am finishing my 23rd year here. I had been involved in conservative political activities outside the Hill back in the middle 1970s. I had been teaching history at Virginia Union University, an old black Baptist school in Richmond. My doctorate is from Catholic University. I'm sure you've read *The Church is Militant: The War of 1812 in American Religion* published by Yale University Press in 1973.

DW: Many times.

WG: And a whole series of learned monographs in all the best journals. But, in short, I was an academic hack before becoming a political hack. I came to work for Senator Jim Buckley in early 1975 because I knew people in his office and it was the center of conservative activity...ideological legislative activity on the Hill....and stayed there for 2 years until he lost to Moynihan, and then went to Republican Policy Committee, chaired at that time by Senator Tower. That's one of our Leadership offices here. It seems like most of my years on the Hill have been at the Policy Committee with some interruptions. In 1981 until early 1982, that first year of the Reagan Administration, I was Deputy Director of Legislative Affairs at the White House. When Dan Quayle became Vice President, I joined him for those 4 years as his Chief of Staff here on the Hill....that is, heading the Office of the President of the Senate, as opposed to the Vice President. That, of course, is intimately conjoined, so we use titles like "Assistant to the Vice President for Legislative Affairs" or whatever. I have, just to flush out the record, been the Editor in Chief for the last four Republican platforms, and also worked on the 1980 platform....all of which meant I have been working with...associated with Trent Lott all the way back to his House days. He was very much involved in the 1980 platform, and took over much of the process when one of Bob Michael's parents died and he had to leave. So, in effect, I was working for Trent Lott back in 1980...all the way back then. And in leadership circles on the Hill, it's almost as if, in some cases staff are [hungeable], in that, yes, you are on so-and-so's payroll but "Hey, you do this for me." And we do. So we have a long-standing working relationship. When he became Whip, Assistant Majority Leader, in the last Congress, I joined his small staff there, and it was only natural when he became Leader for me to move up here with him.

DW: What sort of things do you do for Senator Lott?
WG: My official title is Counselor. Not Counsel. As a matter of fact this is a throwback to Howard Baker days. When Howard Baker became Leader, he brought down from the White House, which was then, of course, falling apart at the end of the Ford Administration, Jim Cannon, who I'm sure you have talked to, and because of Cannon's very illustrious background, gave him an unusual title of Counsellor to the Majority Leader....a title I think no one has had since. Anyway...which means that everybody here has to have a title, and "I'm not this; I'm not that; I'm not the other; and I'm the oldest person on the staff, so I get to be Counselor." I write a lot of speeches. I do a lot of domestic policy. Social policy, and other things. That's it. That's enough.

DW: When you were working for Senator Buckley, did you have any relationship with Senator Baker or members of Senator Baker's staff?

WG: At that time....those 2 years, 1975-1976, I didn't have any relationship with Baker, or with his staff. I'm trying to remember people who were there at the time.

DW: Buckley and Baker shared membership on the Public Works Committee. I think that was the strongest tie.

WG: And Buckley's Public Works Committee matters, where he was very, very active, were handled by a young lady by the name of Jackie Shafer....Jacqueline Shafer, who later became one of Ronald Reagan's three members of the Council Involvement of Quality, a senior EPA official, and she is now one of Pete Wilson's chief environmental people out in California. And I can give you her number later. Jackie is a gem. She worked very closely with Jim Range, who handled Public Works [about other people], before going on to Waste Management and other glory. I'm trying to recall his Defense person. So I had interaction with the staff but not with the Senator. When he became Leader, on that memorable day in January 1977, I was standing outside the Policy Committee door, waiting for the results with everybody else, and remember very well when it was announced. It was something of a surprise ....something of a shock, because we expected Bob Griffin to win. I remember still the look on Mr. Griffin's face. As people have probably told you, it took Bob Griffin many, many months to get over that.....he was a changed man. And thereafter, because I went to work then for the Policy Committee, and the Baker folks came here and took over the Leader's office, from that point on, we had more interaction.

DW: What were your major responsibilities on the Policy Committee staff, and did they change
over time?

WG: Domestic policy, social policy.....no. John Tower ran the Policy Committee staff in what might be....a surprising way. As long as we were keeping senators happy, and doing things for them, he was hands off. Every once in a while, he would ask....and I mean he would request...not order...that I do a special speech for him. Quite different from his public persona of being a gruff, heavy-handed person. He was to us an extraordinarily gracious boss. Tower knew that the Policy Committee staff were oftentimes involved in legislation that was contrary to his own position....especially on social issues. But as long as we were serving Republican senators and making them happy, he was hands off. Remarkable record up here. Very unusual. And I want to give the man credit. Years later, the only way I could thank him was to do the Eulogy that Dan Quayle did for him at the cemetery in Arlington, which was a happy, fun-filled eulogy....just what John Tower would have wanted. Quite unlike the Democrats' Policy Committee, which, since the days of Lyndon Johnson, has been tightly controlled by the Democratic Leader. It is indistinguishable from the Democratic leader....for better or worse....I'm not criticizing. Our Policy Committee, like all our leadership offices, are entirely independent.....and while we work very closely now, that has not always been the case. And in the past, the folks of the Policy Committee, whether under Tower or Armstrong or Don Nichols, might be working on a major issue contrary to the position of the leader. To the Democrats around here, this is inconceivable. To most political scientists, it does not ring true. Let me tell you from personal experience, it's the way we take it for granted, because not just Republican rank and file, but the leadership, are a very independent, autonomous bunch, and the leader does not control, and would not presume to control....Howard Baker would never have presumed to try that sort...beat the Policy Committee into line or something like that. It was a very healthy working arrangement.

DW: What kinds of services did the Policy Committee staff provide senators back during that period?

WG: We served as a legislative think-tank. Some offices used us more than others. Frankly, the conservative offices used us more than the moderate offices. Jody Baldwin, that you've already talked to, developed what is now just taken for granted, of course.....the...

DW: Legislative Notice?
WG: Legislative Notice. You can imagine this place running without a Legislative Notice! I can't. But Jody developed that. When Max Friedersdorf came down from the White House....he had been head of Legislative Affairs at the White House....and at the end of the Ford Administration, came down. Max started immediately sort of structuring the week by having regular weekly meetings of legislative directors, committee staff directors, etc. Now imagine this place running....we're talking about Republicans, now....without that. But before February 1977, they didn't do that. The flow of information was crippling. So starting under Max, we started pulling people together, especially since we were now in the resistance during the Carter years...and the Policy Committee became the place where the legislative directors got together, the AAs got together, the press secretaries got together, the committee staff directors got together....just to exchange information....sometimes to coordinate. Policy Committee staff, as of January/February 1977, became more involved in what was going on on the floor...working with offices, developing amendments, etc. Working with what were then a tiny, tiny band of what came to be called supply siders....people like Paul Craig Roberts and Jan Olson, etc. There were very few of us in those days, let me tell you. But we would work with, for example, Senator Bill Roth's office....for one Roth tax cut after another....so that at the end of the year it wasn't just that these guys had voted against cutting your taxes, but these guys have voted against cutting your taxes 22 times! I recall walking over to the floor with Barry Goldwater with his bad hip, grousing...and that's an understatement....grousing about how "We're having another vote on busing! We already voted on that this year!" Because people like Barry Goldwater were from a different era, and didn't understand the rules of the game have changed. And it isn't that the incumbent has voted against busing once, he [can] explain it....it's that this incumbent over a period of 2 years has voted against busing 43 times. And with all due respect to the Barry Goldwater’s of the world...it was hard for them to make the adjustment to legislative activity that in a way wasn't primarily legislative activity. It was basically creating quite a different institution we have now......a radically different institution we have now. And I was thinking that Howard Baker was the transitional figure, with one foot in the old order and one foot in the new order. And it was a rough transition for people, and Baker, in a way, was smoothing it out. We also provided all sorts of paper work services. The record vote analyses, so people could know who voted which way.....you have instant recall for your boss's record. So that when someone says, "You voted against Social Security 5 years ago," you can flip back to the vote and find out what it really was...to justify how you really voted. That sort of thing.

DW: Could you go a little further into the background of these meetings that Friedersdorf
introduced. Were these his ideas, and what was in his mind when he initiated them.

WG: Yes. Well, I can't speak of what was in his mind, but Max came down from the White House, where he had served in Legislative Affairs for 8 years. He had been Head of the House side for the first 4 years of Nixon, and then moved up to be Head of Legislative Affairs for the last 4 years for Nixon through Watergate and Ford. And he comes down to the Hill with a Democrat in the White House, and Republicans here in disarray. Well, the first thing you do is you get people in to share information, coordinate as best you can.....I'm not talking about directing, now. Nobody directs the chairmen of the committees...you know that better than that. But the first thing is to find out what's going on, what's going to happen, who's going to do what, and in the process, basically, you build a team. Which, to one extent or another, coordinates....not that everybody agrees with everybody else. To a certain extent, we just took for granted.....who would not do this under these circumstances. The shocking thing was that it had not been done before.

DW: What role did Baker's staff play in these meetings? I understand that after 1981.... from 1981 on...Jim Range ran the committee staff directors meetings.

WG: It would be Jim and Max. Jim and Max. By 1981, Max was no longer _____. The committee staff directors......they were always ____as I think it still is, jointly chaired by the staff reps, the Policy Committee, and a leader staff director. So that every week our staff director, Dave Hobby, goes over to the Policy Committee, and he and Jay West jointly chair the meeting. Max, of course, was very close to Howard Baker personally. And this was all done with, obviously not just Baker's approval, but with his staff participation.

DW: Probably Howard Liebengood at that time.


DW: They do. They do. You referred to this pushing for a sequence of votes on issues that would put Democrats and even liberal and moderate Republicans clearly on record in regard to certain matters of concern. How did Baker relate to this strategy? How was he involved in it? Or was he involved?

WG: I don't think he was involved in it. I don't think he ever objected to it. But how he felt personally, I don't know. I was very much involved in it, and I don't recall any resistance
from Baker or the Baker office. Let me put it that way. OK? Remember, many people were doing this, and the architect of that, of course, was Jesse Helms, who would start out offering an amendment and getting 12 votes, and then, by the end of the year, might have 30 votes. Helms and Baker had a very cordial working relationship, so that I don't know the extent to which he was a bystander; I don't think he was objecting to it. But you'd have to talk to other people.

DW: My impression is that he was not objecting. Now how enthusiastic he was about it, I have no idea, and I'm reminded of a comment that Senator Hatch made. I was talking to him about the Labor Reform filibuster....and I want to ask you about that in a moment. And he was effusive in his praise of Baker in regard to that matter. And he said, "You know, I never knew what Howard really thought about the substance of our position. But the important thing is that he let us do it, and he could have shut us down, if he had wanted to." Now whether he could have or not I don't know, but that was Senator Hatch's perception.

WG: As you know, Howard Baker did not run around shooting his mouth off about every issue. And frequently kept his own counsel.....probably because I guess that was the practical thing to do, but because the Leader is supposed to bring people together, and the more the Leader is perceived as taking a rock hard position, the harder it is for him to work out accommodations. And Baker, as you know, rarely got passionate about any issue.....that's an understatement. You read his floor speeches...as we listened to his floor speeches, and there's not much excitement, to put it mildly. There may well be a good reason for that....that is only on rare occasions is it the function of the Leader to excite. Especially when you are trying to hold things together. If you're trying to hold the pack together, you don't throw them raw meat.

DW: Going back to the Policy Committee for a moment, talk a little bit about Senator Tower's experiment in using the Policy Committee to stimulate the formation of policy position that came along shortly after you became Chairman.

WG: Yes. Well, remember the political context of this. After 8 years, you now have a Democrat in the White House. And after 8 years of being deferential toward Republican administrations in terms of their taking the lead. In a way I think that Republican senators now would not be deferential. Because the institution has changed so much. But if a Republican gets elected the next time, he or she is not going to have the kind of policy deference that Nixon had here. I think never again. The world has changed. But Tower
and Max understood that the Republican offices which had been in a receiving mode of what the Republican president wants to do, now had to get their act together and not just wait to find out what Jimmy Carter wanted to do. And Tower formed an energy task force, a tax relief tax force, an economic task force....and something else I've forgotten.

DW: Well, the third was a defense national security that seemed more to be run out of the Armed Services Committee more than the Policy Committee.

WG: Built with Tower. That was Tower's great passion. And to a large extent they worked. Jacob Javits was put as head of the economic task force...something which made a lot of us gasp. But Tower knew what he was doing.....he was bringing in.... Remember, I'm going to say this with respect. In talking about people like Javits, we're not talking about moderate Republicans...we're talking about old-fashioned liberal Republicans....extremely liberal Republicans. It is inconceivable, I think, if Javits were here now, that he would be a Republican. The moderate Republicans of [today], compared to Jacob javits, are right wingers.

DW: Well, Javits was most conservative....on economic policy.

WG: Yes. And Tower was reaching out, ______ things together, etc. Even so, we were in transition. The Party was in transition. What Javits came up with targeted tax relief was a far cry from what 4 years later would be Republican orthodoxy in supply side economics. It was a tremendous shift, and the resistance....the small band of resistors in that Javits working group were the people who later took posts in the Treasury and the White House. In January he won. It was quite a different economic agenda. It happened rather quickly. Zoom. From the back of the bus to the front of the bus.

DW: Describe for me in a summary fashion, what happened to the Republican Party in the Senate between 1977 and the elections of 1980 that contributed to the Republican victory in that November.

WG: Yes. I had several days to work on this, I'd know how to [weight] it out more carefully. But here goes. First, there's generational change. Some younger people with different ideas get elected. Secondly, there's a radicalizing process when you are confronted with the Carter Administration. And some of the people in that Administration and some of the policies in that Administration. So that a lot of it....not Jimmy Carter himself....but a lot of it was fairly
far out. People like Mary Berry, who's now head of the Civil Rights Commission, saying that Communist China schools are a model for our own. It doesn't take much like that to get people thinking, "Wait a minute! We're not going to play the game by the usual rules." And there was a lot of that. The IRS attempt to deny...I have to be careful how I say this, now....to deny tax exempt status to schools which, even for religious reasons, discriminated by race or by gender. What later became the Bob Jones case about race started out with the IRS insistence that schools, even for religious reasons, could not discriminate by gender. It was going to put out of business all the single sex Catholic and Jewish Orthodox schools, etc., which created a firestorm of public opinion. The largest outpouring of public opinion this country has seen in terms of the mail.....it was a...hysteria. They then [jumped] the gender stuff... for the time being....and went just back to race, which then limped along until we had this Reagan fiasco with the Bob Jones case, etc. But every week brought something else like that. And members' offices up here got more and more hostile....more and more radicalized. Where Billy seemed to have brought everything to a head....and there were court appointments as well. I remember very well, in the Carter years....there was a small group down here, fighting to block the nomination of a radical ACLU, hard-left ideologue, who had made no bones about her positions....and they were scary. And our argument to members was, "You let her on the Appeals Court...she will one day be on the Supreme Court." But nonetheless, the Senate confirmed Ruth Bader Ginsburg. So you had this radicalizing process. And if anyone in posterity thinks that is unfair, go back and read your ACLU memos....you will lose your socks! But what brings this all to a head is the Panama Canal issue, in which Howard Baker, of course, had a crucial role. That was clearly a water shed. And looking toward the Republican victory of 1980, I think that the polling data will confirm that more than anything else. That was the biggest issue...in terms of organizing resistance; in terms of pushing people over the brink. And you know what happened.

DW: In regard to the Panama Canal Treaty fight. In your opinion, did Baker suffer any lasting wounds in the Senate as opposed to in his standing with the Republicans?

WG: Yes and no. With the grass roots....the effect on the grass roots became clear when he ran for president in 1980. And when you think of it, for an enormously successful...the Republican Leader of the Senate....to be getting 2% of the vote, 3% of the vote....it shows you what a gap there was between the institutionalized Republicanism of the Senate and the Party rank and file. That should have opened people's eyes. Frankly, I don't think it did. OK. Obviously the conservative senators were deeply disappointed in that. I can't point to
anyone....and say that "He lost this [fret]. A good [place] doesn't work that way. So no, did he become a pariah among conservative senators? No. Some of them....without naming names.... might refer to him privately as the "Assistant Majority Leader." I don’t know whether anybody you've interviewed has used that phrase...but it was in common parlance...and Howard Baker was....

DW: The Assistant Majority Leader?

WG: Yes. The Assistant Majority Leader. And it was often said with humor...it was sometimes said cruelly and meant. But no. It just doesn't work that way. Paul Laxalt, who was heading the anti-Treaty forces, of course....Senator Laxalt was a genuine gentleman, and _____ So. How many years later....4, 5 or 6 years later, Howard Baker is _____ White House's Chief of Staff to the president. That tells you what you really want to know.

DW: Right. I've been told that, in the opinion of some....one of the most important contributions that Senator Baker made as Minority Leader, was purposefully to try to get his colleagues....Republican colleagues....in the Senate...and especially the ranking members of the various committees...to sort of break out of that Minority mentality, and to start thinking about how they would perform if they were in the Majority in the Senate. And hopefully with a Republican in the White House. Did you sense anything like that going on? An effort to change a mind set to create a different kind of energy on the part of Senate Republicans?

WG: No, that just isn't true. That would have passed me by. The sad thing, of course, is that it really didn't work, which....I'm not criticizing Baker because it didn't work, because when we did get the Majority, most of the chairmen were utterly unprepared ....didn't have a clue....kept on their Democratic committee staff. Go back to 1981. How many show trials do you recall from the Senate? How many Carter Administration officials were brought down here....former Administration officials were brought down here to answer for their serious misconduct, etc.? Bert Lance...one. For those who had waited and worked so long for that moment, believe me, it was a big bust. And let me just say parenthetically, because some of us lived through that, enormous disappointment. That's why, when the Republicans took over the House, in 1994, things were different....because some of us who had lived through the Senate experience in 1980-81...back in 1993 had gone to Newt Gingrich and said, "This is not going to happen in the House. You're not going to do to us what the Senate Republicans did to us. This time you're going to be ready." But that's a
different story.

DW: What's the story of your moving from the Policy Committee to the White House in 1981?

WG: Simple as this. Max Friedersdorf had been our Staff Director down at the Policy Committee for those 2 years, and then had gone off to the FEC....courtesy of Howard Baker, which again emphasizes the close working connection for a Republican seat in the FEC had to be someone absolutely trusted. And Max....I don't know if you've had a chance to talk to _____, who is a.....you're not going to find many like him.....he was an institution in this city, now I don't know if we're worthy of the institution anymore. Anyway...class act. And the Jim Baker team asked Max to come back and head up Legislative Affairs. And that was announced in early January, and I'm not sure exactly what happened next....whether I called Nancy Kennedy or Nancy Kennedy called me. You've talked to Nancy. And Max had already been picking me for his team, and I was told, "Hang loose. We'll see what happens."

And a couple of days later, I'm down at the Transition Office, and _____ something part of Max's team.....even though we're here on the Policy Committee payroll....you know, we were playing _____, and a few days later we were all thrown together down there. It's just as simple as that. This was not a campaign or anything like that. I had no intention of joining the Administration. I was happy as a pig in mud [to be on] the Policy Committee. I'm not an executive branch person.....there are two different types....very different types. Unfortunately, White Houses tend to be comprised mostly of executive branch types, and very few Hill people, which is why they keep crippling themselves down there. But anyway, that's another story. When Max was pulled out of the hat in early January, I don't know if there was anybody else in the White House I would have gone to work for. But there you go. They were thinking along the same lines.

DW: What were your major responsibilities when you were down there?

WG: At the White House?

DW: Yes.

WG: I was sort of the inside agent. We had our House team headed by Duverstein and a Senate team headed by Powell Moore. And it was, if I might say, the best Legislative Affairs operation I've know of in all these years. And I very rarely came down to the Hill. I spent all my time....these hellish days....in a hellish year. I think I was off 5 Saturdays that year, and it was hell. I would never do it again....but worthwhile. Look what we did. And
frankly, let me say, the Legislative Affairs Office was the little engine that pulled the empty boxcars. Without naming empty boxcars. Gee! But the Reagan White House...like most White Houses...through incessant meetings. But they carried it to extremes. You remember they broke down the Cabinet to Cabinet Councils. Some of these would have five Cabinet Council meetings....and you had to have somebody from Legislative Affairs there....if only to find out what these guys were talking about....what they think they're doing....what kind of catastrophe they might be leading the President to. "______ good ideas we ought to tell the President about".....you had to have a Legislative Affairs voice there. And so I would cover the Cabinet Councils. Most of that year I would start off my day at 7:15 or 7:30 over at Dave Stockman's office at OMB.....as the person from the West Wing who would go over and keep an eye on what Davey was going to do that day. You needed somebody there spying. No one else would take it. Stockman...very clever fellow...had the earliest staff meeting in town. And by the time other people had their staff meetings, Stockman's people were already out working....making things happen. And the rest of the City spent the rest of the day responding to the dominoes he kicked down at 7:30. Amazing. And they never caught on. Anyway. I worked closely with the President's speech writers....Ben Elliott, Ken Cochigian, who started it, and hired people like that. Ira Bachtrachian, etc. For Congressional sensitivity....also for ideas. Remember, many of these people were old friends, so what your institutional duties are isn't necessarily what you do during the day. Working closely with Elizabeth Dole's whole operation, with people like Morton Blackwell and others in a Public Affairs Office who were an absolutely indispensable public arm of rallying support for the legislative initiatives. The best Legislative Affairs operation in the world can't do it down here unless you have....you need that public arm with people reaching out to the professional societies....reaching out to interest groups....reaching out to church groups.....reaching out to ethnic groups, etc. And nobody did it like Elizabeth Dole and her team. So anyway, I also was supposed to....I say supposed to because it's too big a job....I don't think I did it very well...coordinating the Legislative Affairs operations and then the departments and agencies. I don't say I did that....that was a goal...which I just wasn't up to. But ironing out problems....giving them guidance as much as you can...etc. Sound like enough?

DW: You were a busy guy up there.

WG: I also represented the office in judicial selection meetings. If you ever want to know how a White House pulls judges names out of its pocket....you have to have some sort of mechanism....some sort of meeting...where names are thrown on the table by the
Department of Justice...where they already say, "These are good names. We've gotten them from the _____"...and you have somebody like Glen Noffziger telling them what the state party people feel about that.....somebody into government affairs saying what the Republican governor or Republican County Commissioners feel about that person....somebody who know what the people on the Hill think about this person. So that you have an orchestrated, conflicted interest....[a great torment]...orchestrating...isn't that great? ____ orchestrated conflict of interests...first of all, to make sure that bad apples don't get through...and secondly, to make sure whose interests are being served...whose interests are not being served....most of all, are the President's and the nation's interests being served in this individual. And it's a very healthy process. What you don't want is a process that enables things to go whizzing through. How many whizzing throughs have we had most recently....you know...the Ambassador to Switzerland.

DW: What sense did you have at the time of the working relationship...and personal relationship, for that matter, between Jim Baker and Howard Baker?

WG: Excellent. Absolutely excellent. Howard Baker was able, at least from all appearances, was able to sublimate whatever ambitions or disappoints he may have had with the vice presidency....and become an absolutely integral part of the Reagan legislative operation. Obviously we deferred to Howard Baker. And the Reagan White House would be very reluctant to do something that he said you shouldn't do. But it was a very cordial relationship....very much a team relationship. I don't recall, in that whole year, any prickliness. Now that works both ways...because if you get a signal from Baker, or Baker's people, that he really doesn't want the President to do that...unless it's a matter of real deadly seriousness about something or other...you don't do it. It was a very healthy working relationship.

DW: Well, there's no question in anybody's mind that Howard Baker really understood the Senate and where the Senate would be or would likely be on a particular matter.

WG: Yes.

DW: What sorts of situations would bring you to the Hill?

WG: I was in charge of Terra Belle's nomination....for example...at the outset.... little thing like that. I was sometimes involved in a problem nomination where I might have a personal tie
with the senator. Or a legislative situation....I have one thing in particular in mind, the
details which I won't go into, where I could go into the senator's office and sit down with
him...and talk this through, because of the level of personal trust. Go back to the Policy
Committee days. At the Policy Committee, all of us sometimes worked very intimately
with members on very delicate matters.... ____sometimes in disagreement with John
Tower. And it was that kind of thing, [unusually]. But our excellent staff....Powell Moore,
and Pam Turner...people like that... they didn't need me, but sometimes, when you have
almost a blood relationship with somebody, you're the person to go to...that's all.

**DW:** What were the circumstances of your return to the Policy Committee?

**WG:** People asking why you're leaving.....and I would quip seriously, "Why stay? You want a
reason for staying." In all seriousness. First, having gone through that year, I don't know if
I could physically have made it through another year. By the end of that year, I would
sometimes....it would be 8:00 o'clock at night, and I'd be going....on my hands and
knees...up that back staircase at the White House....up to our office on the second floor.
Now, you get to a point where...pardon me...the hell with this. Secondly, Max was
leaving...to go to Bermuda...and I had come there to work for Max....I don't mean this to
slight Duverstein at all...and Ken not only asked me to stay, but Ken went to certain key
figures on the right around town to put pressure on...which didn't work. But you know, they
duly made their calls...."You really have to stay there for the revolution, etc." I said, "I've
been to the revolution, thank you," and hung up. And finally, it was clear by the end, by
December, which is when I made my decision to leave, December of 1981, that we had
done what I came there to do....the tax cut, etc....and whatever kind of pruning back we
could....and people already talking about, because we were starting a recession, people
talking about tax hikes, etc.....I don't mean this to sound uppity, but I don't do tax hikes.
And would not have done it if I'd stayed there. And it was time for me to leave.

**DW:** When you returned to the Senate, did you find that the role of the Policy Committee had
changed in any significant way, or as a result of it being –

**WG:** No. It was just as rambunctious as ever. And remember, I had been in virtually daily
contact with people of the Policy Committee all that year. This was....you are never ready
to leave home. It was just ____ and it was still there. And Jody was there... Thompson,
our staff director, a real hero of the people. Jim Heinisch, who had been, way back in the
early 1970s, the pioneer of regulatory reform, with a little known economist out in St.
Louis, Murray Weidenbaum, who had later become a....OK, and there was this tiny handful of regulatory reformers. I used to say, "What's that? What's regulatory reform?" And they would start talking about what they were going to do about airline deregulation....oh, it would never happen. Anyway, so it was as much fun as ever....it was as much spirit as ever. And they still had my desk.

DW: What did you mean when you referred to Dick Thompson as a hero of the people?

WG: Oh, Dick was a....so many years on Capitol Hill...always slow-key, always soft-spoken, always keeping his eye on the ball, what we were here for, in terms of policy, in terms of changing policy, in terms of changing the country.

DW: So he had a steady hand on the movement of the policy in a certain direction.

WG: Yes.

DW: You may have touched on this before, but what about the personal relationship between Senator Baker and Senator Tower?

WG: I think it was very cordial. Cordial and mutually supportive. If there was ever any difficulty, I certainly didn't know about it. They are both independent gentlemen. Nobody bossed around John Tower, but then again, I don't think it would ever have occurred to Howard Baker to try to boss around a John Tower....or anybody. And we were, in general, supportive of leadership...our Policy papers tried to support what the Administration and Baker were doing in tandem.

DW: Did you attend...after you returned from the White House...was it your practice to sit in on the weekly meetings of the Legislative directors and the committee staff directors?

WG: Sometimes I did, sometimes I didn't. Yes.

DW: Were those useful meetings, and if so, how were they useful?

WG: Yes. Yes. Remember what the benchmark is here. Would you rather not have these meetings at all? Sometimes they could be deadly dull....sometimes people could talk on at length....sometimes a staff director whose ______ boss on the committee, or the chair....they
have their own agenda, [or the like], and they're not going to give you too much information...but can you imagine operating without them. Yes, they were useful. And sometimes they would alert us to problems that we might not otherwise find out until it was too late. Yes, and they are still useful. I don't go to them because I'm swamped with things here, and we have somebody else going to them. But yes, they're still useful.....I can't imagine running the place without them.

**DW:** When I talked to Dick Thompson, he talked a little bit about meetings that Howard Green had periodically with the heads of the various leadership staff groups.

**WG:** Yes, I never went to those.

**DW:** No...you...no direct experience.

**WG:** We still do that. More so than ever. Now, much of the leadership staff....at least once a week. Jade West from the Policy Committee. Doug Badger and Eric Eulen, both from Nichols' Whip office, from the secretary of the Conference and the Campaign Committee....most of these people, again, have known each other for a long, long time. We'd been at each other's christenings, etc., etc. But the interaction, now, is much greater than those years. Again, it's hard to imagine running the place any other way.

**DW:** Well, my next question was going to be, how much interaction was there between the Policy Committee staff and the Conference staff, the Campaign Committee staff?

**WG:** Well, it varied. It varied on the issue; it varied on personality, etc. For a long while there....I'm trying to remember...but Margo Carlisle was head of the Conference....

**DW:** Well, that was in that period, she was head of the Conference staff.

**WG:** Yes. And Dick Thompson was head of the Policy...

**DW:** And Jade West...well no, that was the Steering Committee. I had forgotten who the Campaign Committee was.

**WG:** The Steering Committee....unofficial, private ___ conservatives....who had been head of the Steering Committee....director of the Steering Committee before Jade? Margo Carlisle. OK? Who is head of the Policy Committee now? Jade West. Who was head of the
Steering Committee? Mike Solan. So _____, who for much of this past year was our staff economist here. This is a very tightly knit group of people who, over several decades, had been strongly committed to an ideological agenda, and many of whom, I must say....I have tremendous admiration.....they could be doing other things...they could be making a lot more money. Let me take a case. There was, in general, very close coordination. I mean, sometimes I'd be working on my own, doing things that nobody else was doing....I'm doing my own little thing.... and it was flexibility. Flexibility. Flexibility is understatement. I used to joke that at the Policy Committee under Dick Thompson I could just stay home and they would send me my pay check. Of course, Dick made it a point of hiring people who would not stay home. He made it a point of hiring people who would come in and work 60 hours a week whether you paid them or not. You don't run into situations like that around Washington very often....with that complete flexibility. So, the coordination was such as it was needed. When Packwood was running the Conference that made it a media operation, more than anything else. His folks didn't get much more than policy. And so to the extent that we were getting out a message, we might use them.

DW: What was your impression at the time of the role that Senator Stevens played as Whip when Baker was Majority Leader?

WG: I'm talking sort of third-hand here. I don't think it was a strong role...not because Stevens is not a strong individual....he is, as you know, one of the strongest, most forceful individuals around here. Just that Howard Baker was just such a hands-on Leader that the more a Leader is involved in pulling people together and coordinating, the less the Whip has to do. I think the role of the Whip office and the size of the Whip office has increased over the years. It is now, as you know, unprecedentedly large under Nichols. It is a big operation such as we never had before. Susan Alvarado was working for Stevens then, and I think it was more of a low-key operation....just because Baker was a people person with the other senators. That's my impression.

DW: Well, I think that's accurate, based upon what we've been told. I asked Senator Stevens what his view of his role was. He said it was to do whatever Howard Baker asked me to do. You made a reference to Senator Nichols' operation. Has that operation become institutionalized in the sense that it has its own functions to perform on a regular and routine basis?

WG: Automatically, no. Unlike Policy that automatically does such-and-such-and-such....they do
Whip-checks at the request of the Leader. So much of what they do is "at the request of the Leader." But the Leader requests a lot. In addition, under Nichols, the Whip office is involved in policy and policy formation...more than the Whip Office ever has been. Doug Badger is a very senior policy person around town....from the Reagan Administration, etc., [he has been over there]. And that's one reason they have a much larger staff, because they do a lot more than the traditional whipping of votes.

DW: One of the more interesting things, as I'm sure you're aware, about the Whip operation under Senator Baker and Senator Stevens, is that the Whip's office did not do Whip counts. That was done by Bill Hildenbrand, still...and by Baker himself.

WG: The floor count...[that's what I was getting to], yes. Baker was very hands-on.

DW: How much time did you spend on the floor?

WG: Very little. This is partly out of personal preference. When you have a lot of work to get done, you can't get it done on the floor. And some people, frankly....you know the syndrome.....they like to hang out on the floor, because if you're important, you're hanging out on the floor. So I would come to the floor only when I had to. I still do that, by the way. I only go down there when I have to.

DW: What would bring you to the floor during those days?

WG: A senator is going to give a speech I wrote, and in case any of it is challenged, I'd better be there to back it up. An office is handling a piece of legislation, or an amendment which I either came up with or to which I was contributor, and once again, you're part of the support team. If senator so-and-so stands up and challenges this fact, you'd better have something in your notebook to justify it with. Or a major reason why I go to the floor now....because that's where you can trap people who do business. I want to talk to senator so-and-so....best be on the floor during a vote, and walk out with him...or if you want to talk to key staff, etc. It is still a good meeting place, and when we're in session on a daily basis, I run down there because I know I can catch somebody....catch him in a corner...do business quick and leave.

DW: You mentioned a moment ago that conservative Republicans were more inclined to look to the Policy Committee staff for help on legislation than were the moderate and liberal Democratic senate offices. Is that because the Policy Committee had a conservative
coloration to it?

WG: Yes, and because the ideas we would come up with would be conservative ideas, and .....I remember...well, [name me the office] .....early 1977...newly elected senator sent his legislative director over to talk to us about ideas for jump-starting the economy, which was in the doldrums, etc. And we sat down with the very.... this fellow had been very well established around town....had been a Ford Administration official, etc. And I told him what our ideas were, which diametrically conflicted with everything his new boss had done as governor of the state which had put their state in the pits.... in terms of taxes, etc..... etc. Now, do you think they're going to come back to you for another hit? No they're not going to. Well, let me say this. It was only prudent of us at the Policy Committee, and it was also only fair for us on the Policy Committee, to look for opportunities to service all offices. And so, people like me were always on the lookout for opportunities to work with and do things for moderate Republican offices. First because they were part of the team, part of the family. Secondly because the Policy Committee does have a mandate that serves everybody. And that's why the Record Vote Analyses was so important...the Legislative Notices were so important...and scrupulously fair and accurate. You go back to the things we did in those days, and you look for bias, and you won't find it. Anyway we could service Stafford...people like that....I'm trying to think of others from those days....

DW: Weicker.

WG: What...Weicker? With all due respect, Senator Weicker would be in a separate category. Posterity will understand. But we would be doing different things for those offices than I might be doing for, say, Senator Jim McClure. Or Senator Hayakawa. Speaking of Hayakawa, there would be senators who would be conservative on some issues, and not on some other issues. I wrote an enormous amount for Senator Hayakawa...I was the closest Sam had for a speech writer....and to his credit, he was a gutsy guy, and he would give in-your-face speeches that I would do. I'm talking about rabid....but clever, pointed, etc.....he would do legislative initiatives...and he actually offered an amendment on the Senate floor to cut off all federal transportation funds to any municipality...any jurisdiction, like New York City, which held down discouraged minority entrepreneurs by prohibiting jitney buses and ghost taxis. We lost, of course, but we made a point. At the same time, on social issues, like abortion, he and I did not see eye to eye. His staff and I saw eye to eye. So it's only prudent and fair for us to figure it right now. In this office where do we have common ground, and what can we do together? And in most cases you can find that.
DW: So what you're saying, in some sense, is that the staff of a pro-abortion senator would never dream of coming to you and ask to write a speech on that topic.

WG: I'll tell you for the record, one instance on that point. I forget which year it was, that Senator Goldwater faced a very close re-election. You can tell me which year that was. And his staff did come to me, and say they wanted to do a letter to pro-lifers in Arizona, letting them know that the senator is basically on their side, and he's been thinking this issue through, and would expect to be voting with them more in the future. Because I had certain credibility on this issue. And I did a draft letter for them, which they used. I'm not saying that turned the tide....he squeaked by, if you remember...we almost lost Barry...he squeaked by. And came back and voted hard-core pro-choice from that day on....worse than ever before. I don't take that lightly. None of us like to be used. But yes, it was possible for things like that. And as you well know, there's a personal factor here, where I'll bring you up to date, whether on that issue or other issues where there are disagreements among Republicans, it doesn't necessarily prevent the formation of personal connections or disrupt those personal connections that are already there. Otherwise we simply couldn't function. I couldn't function. I mean there are people who are people people, and there are people who are not. And if there is a people person up here, you can't be slamming too many doors in too many people's faces, otherwise you are going to find yourself outside the door.

DW: I recall Dick Thompson telling me that after Senator Tower asked him to take the staff director's position, his first official act was to go see a friend of his who was on Senator Javits' staff, and ask this friend to request a particular service or a particular paper from the Policy Committee. To demonstrate to Senator Tower that he was completely open to assisting any Republican senator. You betcha'. Did Senator Baker or his staff ever make use of the Policy Committee in a substantive kind of way, by making requests?

WG: Yes. Range did a lot of that. Jim Range. I don't know if you've talked to him already. Oftentimes they just run things by one or another of us. "What do you think about such-and-such? What do you think the conservative reaction will be if we do such-and-such?" I don't know if I ever wrote anything for Howard Baker. I don't know if I did that or not. So, one thing that does stick out. The Social Security...sort of a Memo we solved Social Security last time in 1982-83. I don't know who it was on Baker's staff....whether Jim Cannon or who...asked me, which started the process, by putting a paper together for them...not for general distribution....of all the options....whacko options and so forth and so
forth...going through things...you know, make recommendations, etc. That started the ball rolling. Now the final results...you know, the Commission, etc. selling something different.... _____.

DW: That may have been Dan Crippen, who was Baker's economic policy person.

WG: Was he there already?

DW: Well, in 1982.....it may not have been. Oh, this is completely out of context, but it just occurred to me. There was a Baker person named Pat Butler, who did a lot of work for him in the late 1970s. Now, was he officially tied with the Policy Committee?

WG: He was actually on our payroll a while.

DW: But he was not working for the Policy Committee so much as he was working for Baker.

WG: Pat was on our payroll. I keep in touch with Pat. And Dan was just in here last week. So...nobody ever leaves.

END OF INTERVIEW