
Interview with Frank Moore

The interview was conducted by David Welborn in Washington, DC on July 20, 1993

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DW: First of all, Mr. Moore, thank you for making some time for this conversation this morning. Let me begin by asking you to provide a little bit of biographical information. It's well known that you were on the staff of President Carter when he was governor of Georgia. How did you find yourself in that position?

FM: Like so many political stories, its one of personal relationships—not necessarily a predetermined course of action or lifelong dream to work for a governor. As a matter of fact, the story begins in Tennessee, not far from the University of Tennessee. I was a freshly minted college graduate. My second job was working for the Quaker Oats Company. I had a degree in marketing, and Quaker Oats Company was conducting two test markets on Captain Crunch, the presweetened children's cereal; they chose Buffalo, New York, and Knoxville, Tennessee, as the two test markets. Those people who know something about marketing will understand why, because in television in those days, Knoxville being hilly, if you drew a circle with the television coverage, it was almost coterminous with the wholesale distribution of groceries. So you could run ads and measure their impact with about four big wholesalers in Knoxville and then some small chains around. I was living in Knoxville in the James Agee Apartments on Kingston.

DW: Kingston Pike.

FM: Kingston Avenue, I think—was it Kingston Pike? I was coming home at night, and one of my duties was going around calling on wholesalers as they would pick all the broken and cut bags and I had to write a voucher for them and put them in the trunk of my car and dispose of them—the purpose being, number one, for the wholesalers to get their money back from the manufacturer, and it was also important to keep rodents and vermin out of the warehouse, to keep the warehouse clean. You couldn't just pay them, you had to remove it. I was throwing them into a _____ dumpster also manufactured in Knoxville. One night I came back about dark and these kids were in that dumpster; I put the stuff in there and they grabbed it out and ran. I came to realize that these children were essentially feeding themselves out of the dumpster. I was a steward in a church up near the university, also on that same street—I don't think it was Kingston Pike, it was "something Avenue," teaching an adult Sunday school class. We began discussing it in the adult Sunday school class, and we began investigating, talking to different people. Cas Walker was mayor of Knoxville.

DW: Cas, by the way, is still alive and vigorous at the age of 90. No longer in politics, though.
FM: That doesn't surprise me. Still in the grocery business?

DW: No.

FM: Anyway, several of us began discussing it; there was a young man my age who represented a pharmaceutical company and so forth. We went down to the City Council to see what could be done. We were young and naive. They sent us to the welfare people; they said there was nothing that could be done. Pretty soon we figured out the problem was one of economic development. It was a social problem, but it was also an economic problem, the basis of it. We started calling on some of the homes, found the situations there, just several blocks from where we lived—in relative affluence ourselves, but three blocks away people were living in abject poverty. They happened to be white, I don't think it made any difference, but they were very poor. I went home on holiday and began talking about it; my home was in northeast Georgia. The war on poverty was just beginning. The first and only president I ever saw, until I met Jimmy Carter when he was president, was President Johnson, who came through Knoxville in the election with Goldwater in 1964. So, you see about the time. A position came open and was offered to me to be the number two person in a fourteen county economic development region in extreme northeast Georgia, bordering on Tennessee and North Carolina.

DW: If I may interrupt there—that's interesting, I didn't realize that. That was the Georgia Plan, which was one of the prototypes for what later became the economic development district. Hugh _____ was involved in that.

FM: Exactly. What I was doing essentially was coming up here. Phil Landrom was the Congressman from that district; he was on Education Labor at that time, later went onto the Ways and Means. It went through Education and Labor, and I was able to secure through him and Senator Russell some demonstration grants. Actually, it's amazing what happens in government. They had no forms; I designed the forms, then filled them in—asked the questions, answered them, and sent them in. About a year later I got them back from the government—they were my forms, they just copied them! There was another section of Georgia doing the same thing. James Earl Carter, Jr. was the chairman of the school board, the chairman of that, the chairman of this. Their guy died or something, and I was offered the step up. I had never been to middle or south Georgia, it was a foreign country to me, being from the mountains. I wasn't used to waking up in the morning and being able to see something sticking up in front of me—it was flat. I went down there and went to work for
the economic development district. Then Carter ran for governor, and I did spear carrying duties in that governor’s race—very, very small role indeed.

DW: Was that the first time he ran?

FM: The second; he had just run when I went down there, so he was essentially campaigning four years when I was there. I was there about five years, then I went up and worked for him in the governor’s office. I became his chief of staff when Hamilton Jordan came up here to work for the DNC as John the Baptist did in the New Testament when he went to prepare a place for us. So I became chief of staff; during the campaign I was finance chairman, which is a strange role for me. I wasn’t very good at it. I had represented the governor on Coastal Plains Regional Commission, Appalachian Regional Commission—all the EDA stuff and Southern Governors Conference—so I had friends and knew people in politics in most of the southern states. Who do you go to when you raise money but your friends? I did that for about a year. I was also deputy campaign manager for essentially the old Confederacy. I didn’t have Maryland, but I had Virginia through Texas, those states. I did all those in the primaries, then came on up here in May. After Kentucky and Arkansas primaries were on May 25, those were my last ones; when they were over, I moved to Washington, essentially, and came up here and started trying to coordinate the campaigns with congressional delegations and so forth.

DW: Then when President Carter was inaugurated, you became head of the White House congressional liaison operation?

FM: Right.

DW: When President Carter’s term expired, was that the point at which you joined Waste Management?

FM: No, there was a two-year interim period when I was with a private oil company in Houston, Texas. I’ve been with Waste Management ten years.

DW: When you were living in Knoxville, were you aware that there was a Howard Baker, Jr. on the face of the earth?
FM: Vaguely, because of the editorial policy of the *Knoxville News-Sentinel*, or was it the *Journal*?

DW: There were two papers at the time; the Republican paper was the *Knoxville Journal*.

FM: OK, the *Knoxville Journal*; I was vaguely familiar because of the editorial pages of the *Knoxville Journal*.

DW: Did you have any associations with him prior to the time that you went to the White House?

FM: Absolutely not. I can't remember the first time I met him. Of course, I paid a courtesy call on him as the leader of the Senate, I believe he was a new leader at that time.

DW: He was elected to the leadership in January of 1977.

FM: Senator Byrd on the Democratic side had been elected to leadership in probably December of 1976 or January of 1977. Tip O'Neill had been elected to the leadership, Cranston had been elected to the leadership; the entire leadership was new with the exception of Rhodes. In fact, Bob Michel may have been new, Rhodes may have left. No, there's a two-year deal, Rhodes left and then Michel came in. Senator Baker, as anyone who knows him knows, was gracious and courteous to me. Even though he was in one party and I was representing on the Hill a president of another party, it soon became apparent that we had a lot more similarities than dissimilarities—philosophically and, of course, both being southern. I had gone to Darlington School for Boys in Rome, Georgia, and we competed athletically against McCallie and Baylor in some sports, not football but in track and field.

DW: Senator Baker attended McCallie.

FM: Right. We soon found we had some common friends, as southerners do when they start talking.

DW: What kind of personal relationship did you develop with Baker over time?

FM: I hope it was one of trust. He was uncommonly courteous to me and included me. In fact, the first time we really had a chance to talk was when we went to a funeral—I can't remember whose funeral it was, it might have been Senator McClellan's in Arkansas, but it
could have been someone else. Of course, the White House provided the plane, so I went. We had two planes full of Senators; I remember his patting the seat and saying, "Come sit behind me. I want to talk to you." In a nice way, he pointed out the same things that some people are probably pointing out to President Clinton now—that there are some back channels you can use and ways to get things done that aren't always in the news and are always open and aren't always partisan. He explained his philosophy and background and the courage he had had on the Open Housing Act and the political problems it had caused him, but he did it because he thought it was the right thing. Essentially he said, "When the president is right, I'll try to be with you guys. When he's wrong, I won't." Which I thought was about as good an understanding as you can have. He later was nice enough to invite me to go on some trips with him; I went to Panama with him and then I went to Russia.

DW: That was the famous Panama trip, when he met with Trujillo and Noriega? The Russian trip was the Brezhnev trip, wasn't it?

FM: Yes. He included me even though I was staff. On the first trip we went on, we actually went to Mexico. He included me and he really didn't have to do that and probably shouldn't have done it. He probably did it at his own peril, because there were Republican Senators along. Of course, his rationale was that I was representing the executive branch and I was the highest ranking person there as an assistant to the president. He took me to breakfast with the president of Mexico, and he took me into the meeting with Noriega, and he took me into the meeting with Trujillo.

DW: Why do you think he wanted you at those meetings?

FM: I think it's his nature to be open and aboveboard; he wanted me to report back to the president what his concerns were and whether they were being addressed. Of course, it wasn't just Howard Baker that had to be for the Panama Canal treaty, it was all the other Republicans. He was assuming a leadership role in trying to bring them together on it, and he wanted me to understand his problems, I'm sure. He didn't say that, but anyone with any good sense could see the problems he would have. I was also able to see the diplomacy he exhibited. For instance, on that Panama trip, it was a typical South American—or in this case Central American—macho power play. We got ready to meet with Trujillo and got word that he couldn't come to see us, because his helicopter was broken. I think a lesser man would have said, "The hell with him. Let's go on." We had an airplane, and we were scheduled to take off and go to Costa Rica and had people waiting to meet us there. I can't
remember if it was Costa Rica or on to Mexico. Senator Baker met with Howard Liebengood and with Ron McMahan and said, "OK, we'll go see him." The logistics—they aren't like they are here—he was in a jungle hideaway, essentially, on the other side of the country. It's not a very wide country, but still it was difficult to ride in a car and get an American helicopter and fly there and fly to his place. When we got there they had the cowling up on his helicopter and were pretending to work on it, but I don't think any of us thought it was broken! He met on Trujillo's turf, in his house. It shows how far he was willing to go.

DW: How did he handle Trujillo?

FM: Like the consummate pro that he is. Trujillo knew he was meeting with a formidable person. Looking back on it, I think Trujillo was a little intimidated by Howard Baker. He pretended not to speak English, but I think he understood it better than everybody thought. As so many people do, he used that period of translation to collect his thoughts and decide what to say. Trujillo was a very clever man, as you know; great native intelligence, cunning. He wouldn't have been alive as long as he was if he hadn't been. I've often wondered if that same helicopter that they were working on that day was the one that later blew up. He handled Trujillo very, very well, but—more importantly—the other Senators on that trip. I made so many trips down there, I made four or five down with Democrats and Republicans, I can't remember who was on that trip. I'm sure Senator Chaffee was on that trip.

DW: What did you perceive Senator Baker was trying to accomplish in that meeting? Was he trying to size up the Panamanians, was he trying to get some points across?

FM: I think he wanted to see with his own eyes, look Trujillo in the eye, and talk to these other people; he wanted to know whether they were going to really live up to the provisions of the treaty, what their attitude was, if they were serious, whether they were competent to run the canal were they to take it over. There were rumors of their playing footsie with Castro and the Cubans; there were some communists running down there on every election. Trujillo wasn't communist, he was a Marxist, if anything. Various shades, I understand. I think he just wanted to satisfy himself about who this guy was and where they were going. It wasn't so much the canal which was important to this country, but the strongest army certainly in that part, probably the strongest army other than Mexico at that time in Central America and North America, as far as we're concerned. Just where this guy was going to go with his
neighbors. As he always does, Senator Baker was really looking at the long run. Where's Panama going to be? Suppose he teams up with Cuba? What's going to happen to El Salvador and Honduras and Nicaragua. Those were his concerns. I didn't realize it at the time, but in retrospect I think they probably were.

DW: Do you think that trip was influential in terms of the position he ultimately took?

FM: I don't know. I certainly don't think he would ever have come out in favor of the canal had he not taken that trip and satisfied himself. He wanted to go to Mexico, too, he wanted to all with all those people and see what they thought about it. He met with a lot of the leaders in the area; he went to Columbia, he went all in that section and talked to them. I'm speculating, purely speculating, but I assume he wanted first to satisfy himself and then to be able to represent to other Senators that he had gone and looked these people in the eye and talked to them and felt comfortable that this is the way it was going.

DW: It was clear he wanted President Carter to understand clearly and correctly what he was doing on this trip.

FM: He clearly wanted a representative of the White House to be included in everything. He wasn't playing any games. It was just happenstance that I was the person, because of my position and as congressional liaison. There was a secondary reason, too. Unlike subsequent assistants to the president, I reported directly to the president; I didn't report to the chief of staff. There were four people in the White House who reported directly to the president: Brezhinsky, Powell, Jordon, myself. There probably were some more, but those are the principals. He understood that I wasn't going to go back and write a long memo and send it to someone who would edit it and then send it to the president and then send copies to the State Department and all that stuff. I just sat down in the president's study one night and put my feet up and took my notes and talked to him for about an hour on what had gone on on the trip, and I guess Senator Baker knew that's what would happen.

DW: In talking about that plane trip to a senatorial funeral, you used the term "back channel." Would you elaborate on that just a little bit, what do you think Baker was trying to say.

FM: It was not relating to congressional affairs at all. He used his father-in-law and President Johnson as an example. More on foreign affairs and large matters of public policy than in votes within the Senate. He described when President Johnson would come calling on
Senator Dirksen with his entourage and his dogs and he would talk to Senator Dirksen. Senator Dirksen as the Republican leader would talk to people he knew outside of the government and maybe get a straighter answer than the president of the United States was able to get. I replied to him that President Carter had found that when we were visiting around different countries in the campaign—you're preparing yourself and getting some foreign policy experience—of course, Coca Cola is headquartered in Atlanta, and they were nice enough to loan us their plane—they would provide then candidate Carter with briefings in the capitol and go on to the embassy and get an economic briefing and a military briefing and a security briefing. Always, always, the Coca-Cola briefing was more accurate and more precise. They would almost tell you that there was going to be a coup on September 27th and So-and-so will be the new president, and, sure enough, that's what would happen. Of course, it was more important for them to know; they had a bottling plant and they had business to protect. They just kept on bottling and selling Coca-Cola, no matter who was president; they made it their business to always be in good shape with them. After he became president, President Carter used some intelligence from the business community to just check against the government intelligence. Oftentimes, it was very, very accurate. I have no examples. I think that's what Senator Baker was talking about. Also, he was saying to me in a nice way that the Senate has two parties—really, it's got about six parties: liberal Democrats and conservative Democrats and mid-western Democrats and western Democrats and Republicans; I don't presume to understand their party, but they've got more than one group there—and if you deal just with the Democratic leadership all the time, you really are missing part of the story. We didn't take as much of his advice as we should have; we should have worked with the Republicans a lot more in the House than we did. In fact, if we had won a second term, I was determined to go to the Republican leadership in the House and ask them to recommend me somebody to hire. I was going to hire a full-time Republican. But in the Senate, because of the nature of the body, we got ten or twelve, always some Republican votes. Sometimes, Senator Goldwater or Senator Helms or people you wouldn't expect we would get—because of Senator Baker's advice, we just went and talked to them. Using Senator Goldwater as an example—people think he is such a hard right Republican—if it didn't concern Arizona and it didn't concern the military forces and he thought you were right—if it was a close call, he would vote for you. He said, "I think we ought to support the president, whoever he is." That was his view; we only have one president at a time, and this is what the president wants. That's true on nominations, on confirmations, it's true on matters of public policy. But if something came before his committee of jurisdiction, then he had very strong opinions on it.
DW: Would Baker then give.

FM: He gave me advice; he would say, "Why don't you go talk to Goldwater?" I would say, "Suppose you do." He'd say, "No, I'm not going to talk to him. It's not my job to go talk to him. I'm just giving you a hint. You might want to go talk to Goldwater, you might be surprised at where he stands on this issue." Sure enough, I was!

DW: Did that sort of thing happen often?

FM: Often enough for me to remember it. He wasn't tell stories out of school or anything or revealing secrets, but he would just give me a hint.

DW: Talk a little bit about the routines in your relationship with Senator Baker in President Carter's term. When would you see him, how often would you see him, what would you talk about?

FM: Almost always when I went to see Senator Byrd. When Congress is in session, the president—as all president do, I suppose—met then with the Democratic leadership every Tuesday morning at breakfast in the White House. We'd go through people who worked for the Speaker; they and Senator Byrd and myself would pre-negotiate the agenda and have pretty much everything agreed on when we got there.

DW: The schedule?

FM: More than the schedule—but scheduling and timing on legislation, when it was coming up and so forth, making points back and forth. I would generally follow that up with a trip to the Hill on Tuesday after that breakfast or on Wednesday and go by and see Senator Baker and Ron and whoever he wanted me to see—Jim Cannon, often, who was his chief of staff. A lot of conversation with Cannon, back and forth.

DW: What sorts of things would you talk about?

FM: Cannon, being an old newspaper person, was often interrogating me, trying to find out what was really going on—in a nice way, under the guise of polite conversation. I, in turn, was interrogating him, trying to find out what the Republicans might do; that's just part of the
process. We had a mature and, I suppose, proper relationship in that we communicated about things; he didn't reveal any secrets to me, and I tried not to reveal any to him.

DW: Sometimes in those relationships, there are things that you do want the other side to know about.

FM: Exactly, exactly—but it wasn't a game of cat-and-mouse. At the end of the conversation, sometimes either he or I would say, "There's one more thing"—

DW: And that was the important thing.

FM: After speaking for forty-five minutes, that was the one thing he wanted you to take out of the meeting or I wanted him to take.

DW: Is this Cannon or Baker or both?

FM: Both. Baker's whole staff; Baker had an absolutely fantastic staff. It depended on the issue. It might just be meeting Howard Liebengood in the hallway, just having a quick conversation. Sometimes he'd say, "Let's go see Joe Stewart," who was Senator Byrd's chief person. The three of us would have a conversation, and Stewart would say, "Let me check. I'll get back to you," and Howard would say, "Let me check and get back to you," and they would get back and say, "Yes, we can do that," or "We've got a problem. If you wait about a week, we can do it then."

DW: This would be scheduling a particular bill, something like that?

FM: Of course, I was never presumptuous enough or hoped to insert myself into scheduling of the Senate or in with any of Senator Byrd's relationships with Senator Baker, but sometimes Senator Byrd would say, "It's all right with us. I don't know how it would be with Howard, and I don't want to ask him right now because I know he wants something from me. If I ask him this, he's going to ask that of me. Why don't you go ask him?" Not that straightforward, but that would be it. So I would end up going to the staff and saying, "Would you _____?" and they would say, "Just come on in and talk to the Senator. Just ask him," so I would ask him. He would say, "I have to check with Chafee and with Goldwater, I'll get back to you." He'd call back and say, "I can't do it," or he would call back and say, "I can do it." Or "I can do it, but we have to wait until this happens." Or he would
say, "Goldwater has a problem with you guys. He's got a guy out there in Arizona that President Nixon appointed to so-and-so. It's a Republican slot, and he's really wondering whether his guy is going to get reappointed or not. He hasn't had any word." I'd say, "I'll see if I can get some word on that." Then I'd come back and say, "The guy has done a good guy and they like him. It's your call anyway, it's a Republican slot. If his name is resubmitted by the Republican leadership, President Carter would look on it favorably." You know, you talk in euphemisms. That's just the dogs and cats and nuts and bolts of it; that goes on everyday. I don't say hundreds of times, but many dozens of times; it's all interrelated.

DW: Talk a little bit about the relationship between Senator Baker and Senator Byrd as you saw it. How would you characterize it?

FM: I suppose proper and one of mutual respect.

DW: How did they work together? In some sense, the Republican and Democratic leaders, at some level, have to work together and cooperate in some spheres.

FM: Being a representative of the executive branch and not the Senate, I wasn't privy to that and shouldn't have been. The only time I ever observed it was when we were working on something specific like the Panama Canal or maybe a major confirmation like the _____. At that time you tended to work with individual Senators or committee chairmen or staff; I just wouldn't presume to comment on that relationship, because I was just a distant observer.

DW: I understand. Were you involved in the events leading up to what is known as Black Wednesday—in 1977, with Mondale in the chair, on natural gas. Senator Byrd with Senator Baker's support called up a batch of amendments that Senator Metzenbaum and _____ had and ruled them out of order?

FM: No, I wasn't.

DW: Let's talk a little bit about the relationship between Senator Baker and President Carter. How frequently did they talk or see one another?
FM: As you can imagine, as time went on, more and more frequently. At my suggestion, we began scheduling fairly regular meetings with Senator Baker. The first couple of times it was just one on one; maybe I was in the room, but essentially it was the leader and the president. Then Senator Baker asked to bring other members of the leadership—they weren't structured exactly like the Democrats were—two or three other people. Those weren't as regular as the Tuesday morning breakfast but on an as-needed basis. There was frequent telephone contact, particularly when they were out of session, in the summer or over Christmas, something like that. I would often write a briefing paper for those calls, that's the only reason I know about them.

DW: I have the daily diary entries for Senator Baker from the Carter Library. Let me take one year as an example and see if this strikes you as reasonably accurate. Take 1978, for example; the diary shows fourteen completed calls from the president to Senator Baker, shows two bipartisan leadership meetings.

FM: Those weren't very productive.

DW: Eight other small meetings in which Senator Baker was a part of the group and three meetings between the president and Senator Baker alone. Does that sound about right?

FM: Yes, that's about right. The smaller meetings would probably have been with the House as well; it probably would have been bipartisan meetings with the House as well. It would have been on a specific issue.

DW: Like the Middle East, something of that sort.

FM: Yes.

DW: Did Senator Baker ever initiate a meeting with the president, or did it generally come from the other direction?

FM: I know he initiated some meetings, because I was involved.

DW: Do you recall any meetings between the president and Senator Baker that stand out in your memory?
FM: Probably the ones that stand out are the ones I wasn't present at!—when they met alone.

DW: What do you imagine those meetings would have been like, knowing the styles of the two individuals in question?

FM: Courteous, with good humor, with the underlying current of dead seriousness and an enormous amount of respect. President Carter and all of us in the White House staff respected Senator Baker enormously—his leadership ability, his intelligence, his grasp of the issues, his common decency. To some degree, we feared him, as a potential rival as a presidential candidate. We would often sit around and say, "Who"—and Senator Baker was the one we feared the most. It wasn't Reagan! Because we had a lot more respect for Senator Baker than we did for Reagan.

DW: I'm aware of one situation which apparently created a fair amount of tension in the Baker-White House relationship; that had to do with appointments to the Federal Election Commission. Does that strike a chord in your memory?

FM: I remember that; Senator Baker did meet with the president on that. It was with the so-called independent person they set up. You have to remember that the Federal Election Commission was a relatively new device at that time, because the 1976 presidential election was really the first election that was conducted under the new federal election laws. I know that because of having been engaged in fund raising. I had to explain it to people; everybody thought if they gave $10 they could go to jail because Maurice Stans just had. Everybody recalled seeing him going down, standing in the courtroom. Senator Baker, of course, had a lot more historical knowledge of what the Congress intended than we did, having come in here. That there should be an equal number of Republicans, an equal number of Democrats, and an independent appointed in the middle to the swing. Of course, the labor people were insistent that an independent could be a Democrat who claims to be an independent. I don't even remember the individual—that was more a labor-management issue than anything else. I think, subsequent to that, probably President Reagan and President Bush followed the same policy President Carter did. Am I wrong on that?

DW: I have not checked the record, I'm sorry.

FM: I think they appointed so-called Democrats who really were Republicans. After all, if you want to get on there, you've got to tell me you're going to give us the benefit of the doubt in
the close votes. I happen to agree with Senator Baker; I think that's the way the thing ought to be set up to be truly independent. I think there was more tension in Jake Butcher, when he ran for governor; I recall that tension when he was running for governor.

DW: What were some of the [manifestations of that]?

FM: There was a hell of a lot of stuff going on, the World's Fair and announcements and [hood] grants and grants from all over the government to Knoxville—just the traditional deal of "who gets the credit for it?" I wasn't doing that part, someone else in the White House was; I would find there was going to be a press conference featuring Jake Butcher and Senator Sasser. I would say, "I've got to call Senator Baker." They would say, "Why do you have to do that?" I would say, "I've just got to do it." They would say, "Why?" I'd say, "I'm going to do it," and I would pick up the phone and call Senator Baker; I'd say, "This is what is going to happen." He'd say, "Well, you've got to do what you've got to do, and I've got to do what I've got to do."

DW: That really didn't affect the ongoing relationship between the leadership operation and the White House, did it?

FM: It created some temporary tension; home state politics, after all, is important to anybody, particularly someone with his history in the state and his family.

DW: To your knowledge, was Baker a source of political advice to President Carter in terms of the country's mood or likely reaction or the Senate's mood and likely reaction to a situation?

FM: I think he was; I don't say the country, but I say the world, because Senator Baker maintained, and I suppose to this day does, an ongoing relationship with a lot of world leaders. He did offer advice on the world's reaction. Maybe this is a subsequent question you have?

DW: No.

FM: It was received and understood, taken with a great deal of credibility. [And the Senate's]. I don't think Senator Baker ever said, "That's what I think the country will do," but he said, "I can predict what my side"—that was always his term—"This is how my side will react to this." Without naming names—and sometimes "my state." "This won't be popular in my
state." But I don't think he ever said, "This is what the country will say or do." I assume the Republican leadership was conducting polls, as were the Democrats and as were we. The Democratic leadership didn't share their polls with us. They never showed them to us, but Tip would talk about them.

**DW:** You might be interested in this and perhaps it was the same when you were in the White House. When Baker was majority leader, he had a rule that Senate Republicans would not share their head counts with the White House unless he specifically approved it.

**FM:** That's a good rule. That wasn't the way it was with us. Cranston was the head counter. Of course, I know Senator Byrd kept his own head count, but ostensibly Cranston was the— I say I know, I don't know, but I just suspect he did, just knowing the gentleman and how precise he is. But Cranston did share it, and we shared ours with him. Ours was pretty damn accurate; it's surprising how accurate it was. From a lot of different sources. I think Senator Baker had the right rule; I wouldn't have. We never ever had a leak, ever—no embarrassment in congressional relations. We had leaks in the White House, but we never had a leak in congressional relations. I didn't share my head count within the White House, that was my rule. Dan Tate and Bob Thompson kept the Senate head count, and we would share it with the President, but we didn't share it with anybody else. That's why we never had a leak. People blab, they like pretend they are important and talk to newspaper reporters. I never told them a damn thing; they were mad at me constantly about it. That's why I understand why Senator Baker had his rule.

**DW:** When President Carter wanted Senator Baker's support on something or wanted Senator Baker to do something, how would he go about it?

**FM:** Pick up the phone and call him.

**DW:** Ask forthrightly?

**FM:** Yes, just ask him straight out.

**DW:** When Senator Baker wanted the president to do something?

**FM:** Same way. Suppose it's August recess, sometime in the middle of it you set up a meeting on September 10 with Senator Baker, first Tuesday you're back. Then naturally a little list is
going to accrue: you're going to see somebody, I'm going to talk to him, "Well, I'll add that to the list." Not a long list, eight or ten things; each person has their list, and they kind of go down it. You probably preface those things by saying, "This is not important to me, but I did tell So-and-so I would check with you on it." "That's an easy one. You can tell him yes, and why don't you tell him instead of us."

DW: Let me ask you two more questions. How would you characterize his leadership style and skills as reflected in his dealings with his fellow Republicans?

FM: One of consensus; certainly not trying to impose his own beliefs on them but acting with gentle guidance and persuasion, reaching consensus from the very different elements of his party in the Senate and all the other parts of the party, I suppose: RNC and traditional business support. As a conciliator.

DW: Did you ever see him get angry?

FM: Never.

DW: Did you ever hear him express irritation with any of his Republican colleagues?

FM: Not irritation, maybe frustration. I think it's a function of the time of day. I was over at the Senate and the Capitol late a lot of times, when it was kind of winding up after a vote, something like that. Oftentimes, once or twice a month, sort of closing down at nine or ten o'clock at night; I would be leaving, I'd be out front waiting on a White House car. Joy would be there, waiting on Senator Baker in their car. A lot bigger car than mine! And nicer, maybe the heater was running. Oftentimes, Joy would just open the door and say, "Come sit down and talk to me." I'd sit in the front seat with the driver and turn around; then Senator Baker would come down with a briefcase and a bunch of people following him, telling him to do this and do that, "You've got to call So-and-so." He'd sit down in the car and I would start to get out, saying, "I know you're tired and want to do home." He'd say, "No, just sit here a minute." I don't know if he ever gave me a ride some place; once or twice he might have said, "Look, I'll just drop you off where you want to go," and gave us an opportunity to talk. And that was the end of a long, long day—maybe a long week, being up all night. He never expressed irritation to me, sometimes frustration.
DW: What sort of things would you and Mrs. Baker talk about? What was she interested in talking about?

FM: She liked to travel, and she liked to know what was going on around town—who's doing what and so forth. Just personal things, "How is your family?" About her family and life and stuff. I was always glad to talk to her, she's my favorite.

DW: Apparently many people felt that way about her. It's often said—by political scientists at any rate—that the position of Republican leader in the Senate is inherently weaker than the position of Democratic leader in the Senate, because on the Democratic side the leader has got all the instruments of leadership—the Policy Committee and so on and so forth—consolidated under his control, whereas on the Republican side you have other leaders who are elected in addition to the floor leader. What's your reaction to that?

FM: I'm not a student of the Senate, only that brief period when I worked up there. I wouldn't presume—the Senate is a marvelous, marvelous institution, certainly different from the House. I just wouldn't presume to comment on that. I think it's a function of the personality of the leader. I don't think it's a function of how it's organized.

DW: Let me ask it this way. When you were up there working with the Senate, how did you see, as you worked day to day, Senator Baker in terms of the power that he had at his disposal in terms of the amount and the sources?

FM: I think he had considerable power, and I think it was the force of his own intellect and his personality.

DW: You saw him as being able to successfully influence other Senators to do certain things?

FM: Absolutely. He had to do it in his own way, it wasn't a "We're going to do this, fellows. You're going to do it." He had to have endless meetings with different groups and talk about it and move this way and compromise and do that. He was working on a lot of different pieces of any issue and a lot of different issues at any one time, as was Senator Byrd. You often heard Senators say, both Democrats and Republicans, that "Howard Baker is the best Republican leader we've ever seen." He's the best one they have ever had, you often hear that.
DW: What were their reasons?

FM: I don't know, that's just something you heard constantly.

DW: Do you have any observations on his performance as majority leader, as White House chief of staff?

FM: I was a long-term observer, again, as majority leader—God almighty, often—he did a remarkable, remarkable job for President Reagan. I just wasn't sure that the Reagan White House appreciated what they had in Howard Baker, how valuable he was to them in accomplishing their legislative goals. I just wasn't sure they understood it. Of course, I don't know about chief of staff; I wasn't living in town, wasn't part of it.

DW: What is the essential Howard Baker? What would you say for the record in conclusion about Baker the politician, Baker the man?

FM: Like all public men, he's much more complex than those of us who worked with them realize. We don't see all the facets of them. Essentially, what you see is what you get. He's just the way he is. He's very intelligent, a very decent person. He's Republican and he's partisan, but he takes the longer view of what is good for the country. And, more importantly, what's good for the world and how our country fits into it. He will probably go down in history as one of the great political leaders of Tennessee. Have you heard Senator Baker's story about Cordell Hull?

DW: No, tell it.

FM: It's funny. You know, he's a great photographer, in his own right. He's a wonderful, wonderful—he could make good money as a professional photographer.

DW: I think he has a spread coming out in the National Geographic in the fall.

FM: I'll look forward to it. He said one time—I don't know how long your tape is going. You might just want to cut it off to hear the story. I'm telling it to you because you ought to ask him to tell it to you.

END OF TAPE

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