
Interview with Jim Range

The interview was conducted by David Welborn on March 1, 1994

Audio cassette 53a
DW: This is a continuation of the interview with Jim Range. The date is March 1, 1994. First of all, thanks for coming in from ____.

JR: You're welcome.

DW: I would like, first, to pick up on two or three things that you had referred to in our previous conversations, and get you to elaborate just a little bit. You mentioned the leadership staff meetings that occurred periodically, with people from Baker's office, the Policy Committee, the Conference staff. What was the purpose of those meetings, and who ran them, and what were they like?

JR: OK. The best way to start a discussion of an answer, here, is to take a look at the—I guess—management philosophy that Senator Baker had with regard to the Republican members of the Senate, and it's strikingly different from his predecessor and from his successors, both Dole and Mitchell. What we had seen when we were in the minority and Byrd was Majority Leader was a very large contingent of staff folks who were on the Democratic Policy Committee. They were essentially charged with areas of responsibility—jurisdictional areas of legislative and policy responsibility. They worked directly for Robert Byrd, and if you were dealing with almost any issue, you had a bit of a difficult time deciding who was in charge of an issue, because what you would end up with is a committee staff director who necessarily worked with someone who was almost on a par with him concerning a set of issues over which his committee and his chairman had jurisdiction, and it wasn't completely true, because you had people like Russell Long, and some of those fellows. But by and large, you had a very, very powerful Policy Committee run out of the leadership shop, and Alan Cranston was by and large a nonexistent member of the leadership, at least from my perspective—so that essentially they worked for Robert Byrd. That was, I am assuming—I don't know this—you can read Byrd's history of the Senate and figure out if he—that was a creation of his. It was his way of really handling and managing not only the day-to-day working of the body, but its policy direction and substantive efforts made by the Democratic side of the aisle. My guess is you can get all kinds of read on how people like that, from people that thought it was a good idea that you had a place where you could draw consensus prior to getting to the floor at the staff level, to other folks who really didn't appreciate the interference—they thought their committees were doing a pretty good job. And all shades in-between. So that what you ended up with is a large leadership staff. We had not run our operation that way on the minority side. I'm
not saying that we had completely autonomous Policy Committee and completely autonomous Conference, and that sort of thing. They were constantly searching for roles, and they had this other little clique of people that we've talked about before, that were the—I guess the torch carriers for the right wing that kind of revolved around various individual members' staffs, etc. But we had a decision to make early on, and that is, were we going to try to have the same management style that Byrd had had? Well, as you know, we didn't. There were about 4 or 5 of us that were on Baker's Majority Leader's staff. If we had any people that we looked at as additional staff capability, that came from Baker's own personal staff people. And in a few instances, maybe from someone else's personal staff, but we did not have, and were told on the front end that we weren't going to be given a big committee staff to run the outfit with. That the policy group had a function, that the Conference had a function—if anybody could figure out what it was—and that we were to work with them; and that left you, if you were in my situation or in Crippen's situation, with a hell of a lot to do and not much to do it with. And we sort of took our lead from Senator Baker in that regard, and he began, almost from the get-go, to get the new Republican chairmen of the committees together once a week, prior to the Tuesday luncheon. We had a chairmen's meeting in our office, and you had a real chance to mix it up, as amongst the committees, and I think that it was an extremely good interchange of ideas that was extra the normal committee process. It was outside of that process, and we learned a lot from that.

DW: What did you learn?

JR: Well, I mean, [you] learned not only where you were going to have jurisdictional problems, and in many instances, after the committee chairmen had been there for awhile, they were a direct conduit back into their committee for individual members' problems that would surface. You know, you'd have—Bob Stafford would raise some issue in the environmental arena, and Jim McClure would say, "I've got four people on the committee that don't think that's a good idea." And I would immediately say, "Well, we need to get that worked out," or whatever. But what we ended up doing is taking that chairmen's meeting and bumping it down one level. So that in effect, the staff of the Majority Leader's office ended up being the staff directors and the counsels on the Majority side of the fourteen committees. And the meetings that you are referring to, and that your question goes to, are the meetings that we held weekly—on Friday most of the time. It was on Friday morning. It started out—Dick Thompson, whom I assume you all know Dick—Dick pulled those meetings together. We held them in his office, and again, it was a more than free interchange of ideas as to
what those people thought their committees ought to be doing. Problems that existed going both ways—us trying to tell them "No, you're not." I'll pick the guy that I enjoyed the most in a lot of ways, in that forum was a guy named George Dunlop. And George was the staff director of the Senate Agriculture Committee for Helms. He was Helms' closest personal friend. They are next door neighbors. By the way, his wife has just been named the Secretary for Natural Resources in the State of Virginia by Allen. A little bit more conservative than I was. But he would come into the meetings and you would get a real dose of what was going to happen to you on the issues that were confronting the—you know, I'll never forget. You're the one that started cutting all of the budgets on the Hill. Well, of course, I had people coming in and talking to me about—"Hell, if we do this percentage cut, we've got to cut out three guys. I'm not going to have a guy to run this subcommittee, and this and that—whatever." And George came in and said that he and Senator Helms had talked, and they decided that staffs had gotten too big. And they wanted to cut the whole appropriation for Congress by 25% at the staff level. OK, it's one thing for him to sit down and do that with me. It's another thing to sit down with his thirteen colleagues who have been raising hell with me, and say, "Well, George, not to be curt or anything, but I think you've lost your damn mind." It was also an opportunity, although the people involved ultimately all became personal friends of mine, and Crippen's, etc., if you'll recall the struggles that we encountered early on, essentially what we were doing is attacking the budget of the country. And there was a great deal of interplay between three committees in particular. All headed up by very strong individuals. We had the Budget Committee, and a fellow named Steve Bell, who is now over at Salomon Brothers; we had the Appropriations Committee, headed up by a guy named Keith Kennedy, who is still Minority Staff Director of the Senate Appropriations Committee; and we had the Finance Committee, headed up by a fellow named Bob Lighthizer, who is an attorney with—I want to say Steptoe & Johnson, but I don't think that's correct—but in the process of going after the budget, you had two guys who worked as the head of two committees—Kennedy and Lightheiser, that were the preeminent committees of the Congress. And particularly with regard to budget matters. That's because in one you had the appropriated funds, and in the other one you had all the entitlements. They joined up in an odd way, because they didn't like the fact that the Senate Budget Committee with Steve Bell infringing on what they thought were their prerogatives, in a policy sense. They also had a big interplay, when you started to really make savings, as to where those savings would come from. Would they come from increased or decreased taxes? Would they come from changes in the entitlement program? Or would they come in reductions in the appropriated side of the budget? And so
that would set them at odds. If you'll think of them sort of, at least in the first couple of years as the guys that really had quite a stake in what was going on in major players, every, all of the jurisdictions of the other committees, with a few exceptions—I mean, we had abortion and some of the social issues that ebbed and flowed as to when they'd get done—we were criticized by the folks on the right for not being totally committed on those issues. It's not true, but nevertheless, that was an allegation that was made, but with that as an exception, everything else that was played in those first couple of years depended on what happened with those three committees. Because they set the new budgets—those new budgets in effect decided whether they would go forward with initiatives or didn't go forward with initiatives that they might have otherwise. And so there was a real—that meeting was the place where we were initially able to make everybody understand at the staff level, "We've got a job to do here. We've got this set of issues out here" that some people really cared about [we can talk about that in a minute], but what we were able to do is, people at the staff level, and they were important and are important, we got them to feel like we were members of a team, and we ended up with them understanding that everybody was throwing in this, that, and the other, and we identified and crystallized for the leadership, which was the committee chairmen, places where they needed to make some decisions that the staff ought not to make. And that, in my opinion, served an absolutely useful purpose for Senator Baker and for the other chairmen, because you had time in those meetings to sit down and hash through some of the problems in more detail than he could do in just a Tuesday morning meeting, especially when, with all the other chairmen sitting there, you might not be able to get from one chairman the fact that he just didn't like what he just didn't like what this other son-of-a-bitch was doing. And you could get that from his staff director. Or you could find out why something wasn't working. So we held those—I think almost every week during that 2 to 3½ year period that I was there—I think Danny continued them. They were very, very useful. I don't think we ever wore out our welcome. As we went further—I don't know. You have to ask Dick Thompson this, because I can't remember exactly how this all came about. I think this is the way that the progression—We started those with the staff directors. They really did prove to be quite useful. And I don't know whether it was a group of people or Thompson—it could have been me. I don't think I'm that smart, though. But they decided that it might also be worthwhile, not with the same frequency, to have the legislative directors from all of the individual offices come in. It was built on the same concept as this meeting. And we begin to have, again in the Policy Committee, a number of meetings where I would go over, Danny would go over, or I'd send somebody—something else that was hot, that somebody else might better brief these folks
on what was happening. We'd have the individual staff directors come in and talk with the legislative directors, if they had a bill that was going to be on the floor. So that it was a place to really communicate with the legislative directors of the personal staff. I know that was never done on a formalized basis before, and I don't know whether it was discontinued after—I have to think that it was. And some of those meetings, as I mentioned a second ago, got to be sort of boisterous. There was a, I guess, a perception or whatever, that Senator Baker allowed this guy, Range and some other folks, who were somehow not completely a part of the new conservative revolution, to manage the business of the Senate, in my capacity, and so you had on some of the social issues the feeling that we weren't giving them a fair shake. The fact of the matter is, and I say this—I've got a pretty good feel for what a staff member is and what a member is—and I was not a member, I was a staff member—what a lot of the folks that felt this way. There was a guy named Quentin Cromlin, who I think has now been indicted for raping one of the pages, or something. But he was just—he stood up in a couple of meetings, and just read me the damn riot act. You know, "You ______. And we don't like it." You know, this, that, and the other. But the fact of the matter is, it didn't have anything to do with me. We had a job to do, and the principal job in the mind of the boss, and in the mind of the administration, Jim Baker and a lot of the other fellows, was that we get in place the principal subject matter of the Reagan revolution, which was less government. And the way they decided to do that is one of the few things that I have ever agreed with Ed Meese on. And we're living with that legacy today. Essentially what they had decided is, "There's no way you can come to Washington and cut out all these programs." If you try to attack them straight on. Because they each have a constituency. They each have more or less a need or whatever. So what do you do, if you really want to attack the size of the federal government. You take the money away. You don't take it away from any specific entity, and then you let them have to deal with the fact that the federal government does not have the money that it needs to do everything that everybody wants it to do. And that's exactly what that whole push was about. It has, in my opinion, been successful. We can have another discussion as to what you think about taking the money out of one pocket and putting it in defense, but as far as I'm concerned, the fact that we won the Cold War by spending a lot of money in the defense area is—I think that's probably a good policy. But we ended up being castigated by some of the folks in that meeting as being not totally with the program. They somehow easily forgot the John Chaffees and the Mark Hatfields, and the Lowell Weickers, and all that other crowd which made up just as big a chunk as they were—Bob Packwoods. And if, you know—what we ended up with is such strong feelings on prayer, abortion, family planning to a certain
extent—so what we ended up with is the inability of the Senate to conduct this principal business if we spend all our time over in this area. And there was no way, then, and there's no way, now, that you would be able to get a Lowell Weicker or a Bob Packwood to change their position on abortion, to change their position and, as a matter of fact, we let it go one time, and Packwood spent three days on the floor by himself filibustering, if you recall. Weicker felt the same way about prayer. And so we ended up getting blamed for the fact that we had a diverse membership. And I guess that's one of the functions of being at the top of the heap, is that you have to take that. But these meetings provided a place for that, at least at the staff level, for those things to be said and for them to blow up and be dealt with as best we could. And it also gave us a way to say to Senator Baker, "Look, according to what I just got both barrels of, you need to talk to Senator Helms, or Senator Hatch, or to someone, and find out where they are on this stuff. You don't want to ignore these fellows and end up with an amendment going on that stops the appropriations process for three months, or whatever." And we were able to do that. And by doing that, we were able to avoid what's happened to Mitchell. It's almost impossible for him to get anything done because he wants to air issues which really don't lend themselves very easily to resolution. Maybe that's what the Senate ought to be doing. But until we get our financial house in order, it seems like that's not the only principal order of business that this group ought to be doing. That's what those meetings were geared to do. I don't know what you've heard from some of the other folks. But I very much appreciated the fact that the Policy Committee—and, you know, Dick and Margo Carlisle, they were very, very helpful. You find very many people that are any more conservative than Margo, I'll you a nickel for each one of them. And Dick is almost in that camp. But they were extremely helpful in putting that together. And they were extremely supportive of the leadership, and I appreciated it, and Senator Baker appreciated it.

DW: Did you have regular meetings with Thompson and Carlisle, or did you just talk on an ad hoc basis?

JR: We talked on an ad hoc basis, but I think Dick felt—on a number of occasions, he felt like he was comfortable enough calling me up and saying, "You better grab hold of this. This is a problem that is getting out of hand. An issue that really needs to be given some thought." It's always been hard for me to—I never could understand exactly or totally what they perceived their marching orders to be. But in looking back on it, it must have been sort of a mix between, "We want this leader to be successful, but we also," and they were a lot closer

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to some of the Reagan folks than I was originally, “but we want also to continue to have and serve that group of people that sent us here.” If you understand. Which in my opinion, is a perfectly legitimate and positive way for them to view their responsibilities. I never did, during that time, as I recall—McClure was Chairman of the Conference. The Conference really did not serve—it did not serve a purpose like the Policy Committee, in that regard. Now Margo, I think, was involved with the Conference pretty heavily. But she worked closely with Dick, and what we ended up with—there's a little group of people that—this Quentin Cromlin guy—there's another fellow named Mike Hammond. Mike, believe it or not, is running for Congress in Connecticut, now. And he is a fellow that, back in my old Environment Committee days, had anything that I did in the—he worked for McClure—anything that I did in the Fish & Wildlife area, he viewed as a Communist plot and that I was trying to do something to the NRA or gun control, or whatever—and I guess when I first started dealing with him, my first reaction was, "This guy's really crazy." And then secondly, was, "He's got a photographic memory." We were doing a thing called the Lacy Act, which in effect is the overlying federal legislation on enforcement of natural resources laws. Bunch of criminal code provisions. He could repeat whole damn sections of the Criminal Code. Then I thought, "Hell, he's smart."

DW: You can be smart and crazy.

JR: And he wasn't crazy. He was a zealot. In a lot of ways. And ultimately, you'd have to ask him, but I always kind of felt like—I've talked to him while he was running, and saying, "You know, Mike, you know, honestly I cannot believe that you are running for Congress. If you get elected, the House of Representatives, no matter what happens, will never be the same." But I viewed him as a friend. You couldn't view him as an ally, but he's one of these fellows that's like this Firing Line deal—they just love to argue, you know. And I got to the point where I felt like I could call him and say, "Now you've got to ease up on this. And if you don't believe me, go talk to Senator Helms, or go talk to Senator Hatch. I know how you feel about this, but you better—I'm not going to tell you what to do, but—" The Conference—there were about six or eight of these fellows. And after Chaffee took over the Conference, they started switching around to various staffs, between McClure and Hatch, and East and some of these fellows, and it was the conservative, ultra conservative group of folks at the staff level that were always—they felt like they knew what the standard ought to be for a good Republican. And they were always in and out of issues, as you might imagine, they were extremely involved in all the social issue stuff, and they got involved in
the—you know, DC had this model sex code, and it was in an appropriations bill. And for the longest time I couldn't figure out why we couldn't get the damn DC appropriations bill moving, and this and that. What it was was there was some stuff in there that they thought was anti-family, anti-this, anti-that. And they just absolutely went bananas. And as soon as I knew what the deal was, I said, "Well, you know, Mike, OK, tell me what the problem is." And we could get it worked out. But they liked to fight. Now I don't mean—but they liked to get into philosophical debates and would love for the Senate to spend years in. They are wonderful dedicated people with a point of view which is—it's different from most people's. They were certainly given a road to run. I mean, Jim Lucere, you all know Jim. Jim was Helms' Chief of Staff for a pretty good little while. Hatch utilized them. Mike was, as I said, he was a brilliant legal tactician. But they had a relationship with the Conference and with Margo, and with all these folks, which I never did understand exactly where all of that stood. And I knew if I asked the question, then someone would say, "Oh, he's in there trying to mess those guys up." So I didn't do that. But they were always over here in the wings, hooked up with the Conference. Because McClure was there. But Margo, herself, both then and almost up to the present—I don't know where Margo is now—she was really, really helpful. And she was helpful in the context of these other meetings, and in being sort of eyes and ears, and pushing us to do some things that we needed to do to be responsive to the various elements of the party. So I don't know. I think that by and large, we ended up through Baker's chairmen's meetings, and through our efforts at that level, we avoided some intra-party gridlock that might have occurred. Most certainly would have occurred had we not done that work, and it would have occurred between the social issues and what else was going on, and it would have occurred between personalities that, if they had just been allowed to sit and stew in their own juice, would have blown up and caused problems.

DW: You're talking about senators.

JR: No, I'm talking about staff directors. Staff directors can cause you a lot more problems than a senator can, on most occasions. And a bunch of these guys were brilliant, now. Bobby Linehart was as smart a damn staff director as they've ever had. He was Dole's guy on the Finance Committee. Steve Bell is a damn genius. I mean—and they could really get at one another. And for whatever reason—I don't know what it was—they let me get between them, and that's what we did in these meetings.

DW: Margo is Cochran's Chief of Staff.
JR: Is she?

DW: She runs his whole operation.

JR: Well, no wonder he's moving up in prestige and so forth.

DW: Did you have the impression that Tower actually ran the work of the staff on the Policy Committee?

JR: No. I did not. I couldn't remember who was there. McClure took over after Tower, didn't he, on the Conference? Or was it the other way around?

DW: Tower had the Policy Committee from 1977 to the time Baker left and maybe after that. And McClure_____.

JR: The staff leadership remained the same. I mean, those guys were either one place or the other. So it was Margo, or Thompson, or.

DW: Yes. But you got the impression that basically, Tower sort of presided and Thompson ran the Policy Committee operation.

JR: Well, Tower—I don't think his interest was in the Policy Committee arena. I think he really was interested in what was happening at the Defense Department. And he and Rhett Dawson, who was his Staff Director, were very, very much involved in that other part of our military industrial complex build-up. It would be a mistake of the greatest order for me to say that Tower let Dick Thompson just run everything on his own, because I don't think that's what happened. There was another aspect of that that I hadn't thought of. I don't know whether you've ever talked to Senator Baker about John Tower or not.

DW: No.

JR: But Senator Baker said that he likes John Tower a lot because he is one of the few people in the United States said that he could directly in the eye. They're both about the same. And they did. They were very supportive of one another. So that had a lot to do with the—and I
don't think there's anything I would change in what I've said. I would still think that McClure was more active in that whole type of activity than Tower ever was. McClure and Hatch, and there are a few others who may have felt that way, but Dick had been there longer than I had, so he knew the ropes, and I assume that he didn't overstep his bounds. He ran what they had over there.

DW: Let me ask you about another person in that group. It's a fellow named Richard Ribbentropp, who was the Steering Committee staff guy.

JR: Steering Committee. That's the group I'm trying to—that's the group that this crowd's all hooked up with. I had forgotten that name. Yeah. That's the group that I just described. Hammond. But the brains of the outfit is a guy named Mike Hammond. And I still think there was some kind of a hook-up with them in the Conference, whatever that was. But Margo, she knew all them guys.

DW: Well, Margo had been the top staff person on part of the Steering Committee, before she moved over to the Conference with McClure.

JR: That's what it was. That's what the deal is. But she was someone that could tell me, "You'd better watch out. Somebody's getting ready to put a grenade in your underwear."

DW: She was helpful.

JR: She was helpful. She and Dick were both helpful. If you could ever figure out what some of the people on the Steering Committee wanted, they could be helpful. And you know, you've got all these other guys, like the Bells, and the Kennedys, and the folks that really—you know, they had a big job to do and a very complex assignment on these committees, and so forth. And then you had these fellows that were out there, and it was like having a bunch of thoroughbred house cats and trying to say, "OK, now we'll put this wildcat in here, and we've all go to be—" and they'd do it sometimes, and then they'd say they didn't have time to fiddle with it. But, most of the time, if you could include these fellows, they would come around. But they—and however that was structured—I'd be happy to sit down with Margo some time; maybe she could enlighten us all—that was the conduit for the Wyricks and all these people into the Republican Policy arena, and they are the ones that were saying, "Hey, we got elected to change America's way of looking at things. And that group
was their vehicle into it. However it was structured. And as I say, sometimes they could be helpful; sometimes they were a real pain. But you know, they had a point of view. I had very, very strong feelings about abortion. And then I got to the point in listening to these guys and the people that they would set us up with, and they believe just as strongly as I do and all these other folks, and you've got people out here killing one another about it right now. I mean, for a bunch of people that's an issue that you can't resolve other than one way. And I don't know whether we're ever going to get it resolved in this country, but they brought that in to the mix of things. And our problem was you had to make the railroad run; you had a major job to do; and this was a part of your job, but it had to be managed. And I don't know how well we did that. You guys—you're historians—you make it up.

DW: My impression is that these people were provided plenty of opportunities to bring their case to the floor—on a fairly regular basis. Whether it be prayer, or busing, or abortion, or whatever.

JR: Busing, that's the other issue. I had forgotten now. They ended up being right on busing. I mean, everybody's turned around on that little deal, now.

DW: Do you recall how often these meetings were held with the people from the individual offices?

JR: I really don't. I want to say once a month. But I think we also—we could call those—let's assume that we had a major piece of legislation going to the floor, just for—a reconciliation package. We might call two or three of those meetings, and get those folks together, in order to make sure that everybody understood what was being done, both procedurally and who was pushing what, and this and that and the other. You know, from an individual staff member, and an individual member's view, I would think that they would almost demand that type of review of legislation. I don't think people do that much anymore, but it really gives a staff member an ability to go in and advise his boss on things that his boss will have to find out on the floor. You know. You go in, and his boss says, "Hell, I don't want to fiddle with this. I'm just going to vote this _____." "Well, you don't want to do that, because I found out that Senator Hatch is lined up with so-and-so, and this isn't going to go, and he's going to sit." So you need to think about what the leadership is telling you, or the committee chairman is trying to say to you. Don't just do something because you think, "Well, that's what I want to do." And then sometimes, of course, you've got people who
say, "Well, that's what I'm going to do anyway." But I've had other people say that they miss that type of interaction.

DW: Describe for me how you communicated what you were learning at these meetings and in your interactions with these people to Senator Baker.

JR: OK, well what, again, aside from the philosophical part of this, which—you can only go so far in that regard. And then what I did, even on this issue, is say, "Look, you [have to worry] about my philosophy. Whatever my philosophy is will be determined by pulse. But here's what we're trying to do." And essentially, what they wanted to know is, "Are you trying to get the bill that my boss is worried about on the floor? We worked on that daggone deal for 6 months. We really want to get that through. The House is doing something, and if we don't act, it's going to foul us up." And I would try to go through the schedule. I'd try to answer questions about why we weren't getting the bill up. I would try to get questions that I couldn't answer and take them back and find the answer and communicate with either the staff director or the legislative directors. But it was not a set routine. We would try to—somebody might stand up and give a big pitch, in one of these legislative directors' meetings—you have a staff director come in, and say, "Well, we're going to take up this part of the crime package. And there are three elements in it, and two of them we don't think are a problem, but here there's a controversial one. Has to do with gun control. Let me explain what we're doing, and you'll understand where we're coming from. And so they, then, at least had the No. 1 guy on the committee's thoughts in mind. And we did it that way. Sometimes—I shouldn't even say sometimes—I think that one of the sad realities of the representation of members by staff in the Senate, and I suspect in the House, is that a lot of people who are called upon as staff level to represent some-body, haven't the slightest idea what their boss thinks about a subject matter. And one of the things that occurs—and you all can assess how much it occurs—is that a staff member has a very strong point of view, and until the day of the vote, that gets to be known as his boss's point of view. And his boss can say, "Well, you know, I don't care about this, or" —and that happens more than one might like to think. One of the things that I was able to do is, on occasion, be able to know somebody's boss a hell of a lot better than they did, or have known, after sitting through their own—a couple of us sat through these chairmen's meetings—know what their boss said on a particular subject, and
could either put it in context or say, "I think maybe you ought to check that with somebody," or know I had a problem to deal with, or whatever. So the schedule, looking back on those meetings as I remember them, the schedule was the principal thing that it was the skeleton around which the meetings were hung, and then everything else came out. I mean, you know a bunch of these guys that work on the Hill—you give them a place where they can raise their hand and get somebody to talk with them and argue with them or whatever, they're going to take advantage of it. So, that's what they did.

DW: Going in the other direction, how would you convey to Senator Baker what you were learning and what you were hearing?

JR: I would—I don't know how many different ways—but I would both through myself, and where possible, sometimes, a good way to get him to listen would be to talk with a chairman himself, and say, "Well, from what I understand, there are some problems that are going on in your committee, or going on with another committee, and you'd guys—you and Senator Baker, and whomever else—need to get that worked out." So, I would sometimes try to work with a chairman individually, and get him to work with the boss. A lot of times, I would be in a position to tell Senator Baker, "You ought not to do this, that or the other, or we ought not to bring this bill up today because they're going to have to work out more of the problems in committee, and then we'll be able to get the damn thing through. We'll be able to dispose of it." And Baker did the right thing. He was sitting on the top of the—he was the engineer on a railroad and kept saying, "I want bills to go through this floor that are good pieces of legislation. We need to get those done—get me some. Get me some. Get me some." And I promised the Administration we'd get this done. Where is it? Why hasn't it gotten here?" Answers to all those sorts of questions came from a mix of the chairmen's meetings, staff directors' meetings, legislative directors' meetings. And I would try as best I could. I mean, I didn't go in and do a brain dump after every meeting. But we had a staff meeting every morning in Baker's office. I mean, every morning at 9:30 we went in there and there would be a major amount of discussion as to what could be done and what couldn't be done. And we had—do you know Howard Greene? OK. Howard Greene was getting his—he had feedback through the membership. Bill Hildenbrand had feedback through the membership. I had feedback through my sources. Crippen had, and Tommy Griscom, and we ended up in a situation where, on any individual subject, you have information coming in from a lot of different directions. And as the subject matter came up, you'd say, "Oh yeah, well, he said that about this particular provision, or this issue, or
Sometimes what I would try to do is—say a staff director had a big problem. I would tell him, "Look, there are a lot of people who don't understand this. You need to get with your boss and either get him to go talk to Baker, or you need to get some kind of a memorandum together so that we can help you distribute it so people begin." In other words, I could use them to get the same job done. Because a lot of the staff directors are pretty close to the members.

DW: Is Baker a person to ask a lot of questions?

JR: I'll tell you what. He doesn't ask a lot of questions, but he asks damn good questions. I'll have to say, I've never seen anybody that has, in my opinion, been able to catalog as much information that, if you want to say, "What is the Majority Leader's principal role," and that is to be the spear-chucker for the Administration to win and count votes. And he could count votes better than anybody I've ever been around. I could be 1000% sure, if somebody was going to do something, and he'd say, "That isn't going to happen that way," and I'd sit there and say, "I'm going to beat you this time." I didn't win many of them. His forte was taking all of that information and background, I think, and having a personal relationship with almost every member—damn near every member of the Senate, but especially on our side of the aisle. And he had a personal relationship with them that, unless you all are finding out some-thing that would amaze me, he had a personal relationship, the membership of our side trusted him. And I am sure that if I went in there and said, "I've heard Senator So-and-So is all upset about this," he found a way to find out if that was really something that he needed to worry about. He really did do a good job of synthesizing information coming from a lot of different sources. He … would ask a lot of specific questions about an individual piece of legislation. He'd end up with somebody in his office and he'd call up and say, "Can you come in here." And he'd have somebody from Administration, or maybe even somebody from outside, or somebody that he was interested in getting their perspective on how he ought to approach the subject, and he would say, "OK, now are we about through in committee? Where are the hang-ups?" And all of that sort of thing. But I can't say that… he operated on the level of a leader.

DW: What do you mean by that?

JR: I mean, he didn't try to delegate everything away, but he delegated a lot of things so he could focus on getting his principal jobs done.
DW: Would you agree with the proposition that Baker knew more about what was going on in the Senate at any given time than anyone else in the Senate?

JR: Yup. And I think that we did a good job of staffing him, and I say that as "we." That includes Margo and Thompson, and the rest of the guys on our staff.

DW: Of course, he was learning a lot of stuff from his conversation with senators.

JR: That's where, in my opinion, knowing what's going on in the Senate is—knowing the ins and outs of S16205 may be something that a lot of damn people think makes a brilliant senator, but knowing what is going on in the minds of 51 of those guys at any one time is a hell of a lot more important for a leader. Yeah, I agree with that proposition, because I think they confided in him.

DW: Can you carry it one step further? You alluded to this a moment ago. How does information translate into power in the Senate?

JR: It allows you to give—as long as you protect the—in a partisan government, you can't say 'neutrality' on issues that arise philosophically or politically, or otherwise, but as long as you are able to place yourself in a position that people think you will be fair in the information that you are giving them, or they are giving you, and how it's used, etc., what having all that information allows you to do is to be really a guide for everyone. And you might think, well, we had to get something done on the Defense Bill, so he had to tick off Ted Kennedy.

END OF TAPE