
Interview with Emily Reynolds

The interview was conducted by David Welborn on November 14, 1996

Audio cassette 45
This is an interview with Emily Reynolds. The date is November 14, 1996. Thanks for taking time out of what seems to be a very busy day to talk to us about your former employer, Senator Howard Baker. Describe for me the route you took that led to a position on Senator Baker's staff. I think it was about 1981 when you came to the staff, was it not?

It was September of 1980.

Describe for me what you had been doing that led you to this position in Washington.

Actually, it's kind of coincidental on a variety of fronts. I had, like so many young people, wanted to go to Washington to intern for a semester while I was in college. And I did. And I ended up in Senator Baker's office. My father was close friends with Bill Hamby, whom I know you've heard others speak of him in these interviews. And even though my father was a Democrat, and a fairly prominent Democrat in Nashville, he and Hamby were friends, that was 1976... the school year 1976-77. I wanted to go in the spring of 1977. I was in college in Missouri, at Stevens College, but Nashville was home.

Right.

And my father had been active in the Sasser campaign, and as I said, was a prominent Democrat. So after Senator Sasser was elected, Dad tried to call Sasser's office, to say, “Emily wants to intern. What can we work out?” And Senator Sasser's office never returned the phone calls. So Dad said to Bill Hamby, “Bill, can you help me? You know, Emily wants to go to Washington, etc., etc.” So lo and behold, I end up, instead of sort of in that
Democrat tradition that I grew up with, I end up interning with Senator Baker. And the long story short of that, when I said there were coincidences [to this], it was exactly 18 years after that happened that I returned home to Tennessee to work for Bill Frist, and to ultimately defeat Jim Sasser. So you never know in this world.

DW: That's right.

ER: But anyway, I worked on the Baker staff then...I think probably March, April, May...

DW: You were in the State office?

ER: No, I was in Washington.

DW: No, I mean his...

ER: The Tennessee office. But because I was a reasonably good kid, I ended up getting to spend a lot of time in the Minority Leader's office, which was fine. And Jim Cannon was hired in April of 1977, and I remember him joining the staff because there was all this, everyone kept saying, “Oh, this big deal guy from the Ford Administration is coming to work here.” Everybody sort of approached his hiring with great trepidation. His hiring was kind of also viewed internally as obviously being indicative of the fact that Senator Baker had greater ambitions, working to build a national network, because you're bringing in this Rockefeller Republican, big deal New Yorker. So you know, when you're 20 years old, you sort of absorb all this by osmosis. But I just remember those impressions. So after college, I ended up working for my alma mater for a couple of years and then decided I wanted to move to Washington. And having been an intern, and having had a fairly decent track record, as I said, 2 years before, I just went by the office to say, “I'm interested in coming to DC. Anything open?” And ironically enough, Mr. Cannon was looking for an assistant. He
wanted someone who had an interest in politics....not just some-one to answer the phone and schedule him, but someone he could sort of train in politics. And September of 1980, then, is when I moved back.

DW: When you think back on those days in which you worked for Cannon and Baker, what are the first things that pop into your mind? What are the recollections that really stick?

ER: The very first thing that pops in my mind is how little I personally really knew. You know, once you get someplace, just how overwhelming what you're walking into is. The second thing is just the thrill of....because I'd always loved politics and always thought I wanted to do something in politics....was just that sort of day-to-day thrill at the opportunity of being a part of what makes government and this country work. And the third thing that I will never forget....and clearly, since it is the first thing I brought up....was arriving there as an employee 6 weeks before that election. And not really knowing, and I don't think anybody really did, but me least of all. All of a sudden I got to move to an office in the capitol and it was trial by fire, in terms of what it meant to be in the Majority. And the fourth thing, which is a credit to Senator Baker that I will never forget, is that the Senate was truly a reflection of his personality. It didn't matter if you were one of the painters that helped us as we worked on reconstructing the offices there in the Capitol or the waitress in the Senate dining room, or a fellow United States senator. That place ran like Huntsville, Tennessee. It was home and everybody was family, and even if they weren't immediate family, you were nice to them. And it was never a spoken edict, it was just an attitude, that I think because he felt that way about the place, by default all of us felt that way about the place. And I've thought about that a lot in the ensuing years. And it is a legacy that now that I am back home in Tennessee and
working for the junior senator from Tennessee that I can't forget, because Bill Frist's personality is so much that same way. And because people look at Howard Baker that way, if there's one single thing I can do for Bill Frist, it's reach out to people the same way we did in that Majority Leader's office.

DW: Was it the entire senate operation that was Huntsville, Tennessee, or just Baker?

ER: You know, that's a good question. I guess, when I say our whole operation, the secretary of the Senate _____, the sergeant at arms _____, you know, I saw it probably not so much in terms of other senators or their operations, but more just in terms of the Capitol environment, I think is probably the best way for [me to say it].

DW: How did Senator Stevens and his staff fit into that?

ER: I did not have that much exposure to them, although certainly some, because they were in and out of our office all the time, and Jim Range's office worked with them more closely as whip on legislative matters. But we had a good relationship there. They were just down the hall. We had a good relationship with the Veep's office down the hall. But again, on the legislative side, that was really where the interaction happened more with Senator Stevens' office. So much of what I did was more politically oriented, and I just wasn't as involved with them in that regard on a daily basis.

DW: What would you say were the major elements of Jim Cannon's job as Chief of Staff? I might say before you begin an answer that although I've talked to Cannon, and I've talked to a lot of people involved in one way or the other with Senator Baker's office, I'm still a little uncertain as to exactly what his job was.

ER: As Chief of Staff, he was the [go-to-guy for]major decisions that had to be made. He was not
so much as you would think a Chief of Staff ____. He was not so much involved in the day-to-day scheduling decisions, particularly as it pertained to Tennessee, but he was the go-to-guy on any big picture...policy...project...political....the alliteration there is pretty good....part to the operation. The most important thing he probably brought to the Baker operation was, having come out of New York originally, and just having known a lot of people, certainly Senator Baker by default in terms of being Majority Leader, there were folks that wanted to get to know Howard Baker. But Jim Cannon, on a daily basis, had talked through the years with Bunny Lasker, former Chairman of the New York Stock Exchange...Benner Schmidt, Sr....you know, those folks had been his peers and his colleagues through the years. So I think by default, giving the Senator that network of people that we could tap into...and I don't mean necessarily just for money or presidential ambition, or anything like that...I mean folks that you went to when there were national policy decisions being made...folks that you went to secure their input, in terms of what was happening in the Senate, or what their vision was for that particular Congress. That's probably the most important asset he brought to the table.

The second thing that he did was just politically speaking, because Senator Baker was so mindful of the importance of keeping the majority in the Senate. Mr. Cannon, during election cycles, and obviously this wasn't true in the early months of a cycle, but on a weekly basis....you know, was the one that sat down with the folks from a Senate committee and other key AAs from around the Hill, just to keep a finger on the pulse of what was happening in the field in all of those races. That was one thing that he did for the Senator. Really on a daily basis, as the season went by, less infrequently in the early months of the cycle. But very involved in knowing who we were recruiting as candidates, you know....bringing people
through the office who were looking at running, counseling them. Those two things....probably the most significant things...and then again, just for the staff, whether it was Jim Range, or Tom Griscom, or Senator Baker himself...if there was a critical piece of the puzzle, where you needed a judgment call....someone with a little gray hair, if you will....and just to give it perspective. That probably of all things, the most valuable...serving as a counsel, if you will.....probably the most valuable thing he did.

DW: So, then he was not that much involved in legislative politics on a day-to-day basis, then.....would that be fair to say?

ER: Yes and no. I mean, he was to the extent that, as you probably know from everybody, at 9:30 every morning, you know, the guys would gather around the table in the Conference Room, and that was the beginning of the day. He was, in that respect. But no, in terms of sort of calling the shots of what happened on the floor, or what was coming up, or any of the sort of...bad expression...but back room politics that accompanied that, he was always on the periphery....he was always involved....he always had knowledge of what was going on. But my impression, sitting outside his office, and across from Mary Kay and Range's office is that much more of that was being driven by the Howard Greens, the Bill Hildenbrands....the Ranges of the world.

DW: You said that...you used the term that, “He was a Go-To guy for several types of matters.” What does it mean to be the Go-To guy?

ER: Again, because...Tom Griscom, Jim Range....those guys all had a lot longer experience with Howard Baker than Mr. Cannon did. They knew the Hill backwards and forwards. But Jim Cannon, by virtue of who he is, just demanded....and I mean it in a nice way....demanded
respect, and you wanted to respect him. But if there was something where you needed a judgment call made, if it pertained to the Senator, or just generally speaking the Senate.....that's why I used the word “counsel.” That's the person everyone ultimately went to on those big picture decisions.

DW: Well, what was the nature of Cannon's working relationship with Senator Baker? They saw one another at the...

ER: At the 9:30 meeting. Yes.

DW: By the way, did you ever attend those meetings?

ER: No. In fact, as a young woman of 24 at the time, I'd always think, “You know, some day I want to grow up and be one of the guys, and be able to go to one of the 9:30 meetings.” And this is not a criticism. But our staff, and I don't know if anybody else has reflected this or not....even 10 or 12 or 16 years ago, now, when I joined the staff .....our staff is pretty much....the guys are up here and the girls were in more subservient sorts of roles, to tell you the truth. And that's one reason why I still love Jim Cannon so much. It's not that I had a tight schedule every day, but at the same time, he really brought me along. And I remember when it was time for me to leave the Senate.....I mean he pushed me out of the nest, and just like a bird, and said in his words, “It is time.” His words were, “You've got to go fly on your own.” But, while we had a lot of bright, engaging women on the staff, who did all kinds of things, as I said, there were lines of demarcation. It's true. But it was a reflection of the times.

DW: Have you read Jim Miller's book Run In Place?

ER: A long time ago. Long time ago.
DW: Two questions in relation to that. This is a diversion, but was it your sense at the time that it was a fairly accurate description of how business ebbed and flowed around Baker's office?

ER: Yes. Yes. And again, it's not. Senator Baker, I think, has an enormous amount of respect for women. He is like my Dad. He is one of those men who...women just did different things in their mind...until their own daughters grew up. And you see it in Senator Baker's relationship with Cissy. You know, where they want their own daughters to be anything and everything they want to be. But it was just different in the business world for them.

DW: I haven't checked this, but did Senator Baker give his little secretaries speech that Miller talks about in that book?

ER: You know, I'd have to go back and read the passage. I can't....

DW: Well, you were identified as one of those most bothered by word that Baker was going to remark about his secretaries in the context of National Secretaries Week.

ER: It was the Secretaries Day. I was bothered by that. And I distinctly remember....I can see the picture, even. I distinctly remember it was National Secretaries Week, or whatever they call it....or Secretaries Day. I happened to be out of town. Senator Baker took every woman on staff to lunch in the Senate dining room, which was a great treat. But that meant LCs, LAs....everyone went to lunch for National Secretaries Day. And I had forgotten that Jim put that in there. You might have ascertained that Jim and I weren't particularly close. But that bothered me. And I remember the women on staff....those that I was closest to....telling me that they were actually relieved that I wasn't in town that day, because they weren't sure what, if any, reaction I would have had to that. Yes. And I would probably have never said anything, except jokingly around the office. The last thing I would want to do is be dis-
respectful. But that did bother me. And as I said, even had Allen Porter, the Senate Photographer, come take a picture of everybody with him at lunch. As I said, I can still see the visual in my mind, now that you brought it up. I had forgotten that Jim put that in there. Guess I just blocked it out. But yes, that did bother me. Part of it was, as a graduate of a women's college, I was just very....I hate to use the word “feminist,” and I suppose I was in many ways, and that just always kind of bothered me.

**DW:** I had asked you to characterize the working relationship between Cannon and Baker before we got on to this. You mentioned, of course, they were together at the morning staff meetings. Was there any pattern to their interaction that you observed?

**ER:** A lot of it was driven....a lot of it was just driven by what was on the schedule each day. Because most meetings Mr. Cannon sat in on in some way, shape, or form. Because of that, and because the Senate is a place where many times you're caught up in reacting to things instead of really being able to take the time to initiate. And Jim Cannon was someone who....particularly because Senator Baker had great ideas and wanted to initiate things....I remember there were days when Mr. Cannon felt so inundated by just the routine of appointments...returning phone calls. I remember one day....it had nothing to do with me, and everything to do with just his frustration level was.....”I am tired of the Calls to Return Sheet. I want my Calls to Initiate Sheet.” And there are days, even now, that I feel the same way. It's a natural frustration. But by the very nature of the Senate, you remain almost in a reactive mode many times. So that relationship, on a daily basis, sort of ebbed and flowed, depending on the demands of the day. There were many things, again, from a policy
perspective or even just project things that Senator Baker had in mind, that he just pretty much handed off to Mr. Cannon. One thing that comes to mind. It's one of the things that I remained sorry that we were not able to really get off the ground, because it was a great idea. As you know, Senator Baker's office was the original Library of Congress. And we worked with Encyclopedia Britannica and the architect of the capitol and others in devising a plan to restore that office as the Library of Congress. It would have required an inordinate of Senator Baker's time on the fundraising side, because at that time, and that was 1981 or 1982, we estimated at that time, I think, or Encyclopedia Britannica did, at about a $3 million project. Lord only knows now what it would be. But that's something I worked with Mr. Cannon on. Again, one of Senator Baker's ideas....that was one of Mr. Cannon's projects ultimately, and then for a whole host of reasons, we weren't able to put it together. I think their relationship, because they didn't know each other really, prior to 1977, I never had the feeling, and I don't think he had to be....Mr. Cannon was not Ron McMahan; he wasn't Tommy; he wasn't a Tennessean; he wasn't a 'good ole boy. I never had the feeling there was that sort of yuck-it-up kind of comfort level there. And yet there was clearly a mutual respect on a professional level, and I find....it's neat, now, to see that once or twice a year he and Mrs. Cannon come down to Huntsville to spend the weekend with Senator Baker. Like everybody else that Senator Baker has had around him, including little old me ......I mean who was I....nobody for those 4 years. But now when I see him, I feel a tremendous loyalty to him; he does to each one of us in return, too. And is complimentary of us to others, and proud of us, and I just find that so.... it makes what I did X number of years ago all the more meaningful. And so I see the same thing as now an outsider looking in, in terms of his
relationship with Mr. Cannon.

DW: You mentioned a moment ago that one of the things that Jim Cannon did was to maintain contact with the campaign committee operations. Candidate recruitment, etc. So that would mean 1981 through 1983.....Senator Packwood, and then 1983 to 1985....

ER: Heinz....is that right? No....Lugar.

DW: Lugar.

ER: And then Heinz took it after that. So Mitch Daniels....there was a circle of AAs on the Hill. Mitch was one....Alex ______ with Danforth....Lee Rawls, who was with Domenici at the time....and I may leave out one or two because my memory is dim. But Mr. Cannon would have breakfast with about once a month, or once every 2 months, and that was an important coterie for a variety of reasons. It sort of fed back in to Senator Baker's....still maybe potentially having some national aspirations at the time. But again, just going back to just sort of creating a vision for the country, and what ought to be going on in the Congress, that was an important echo chamber. To balance ideas off of, just to see what was going on on the Hill...in addition just to see what was happening in their individual offices.

DW: How much contact did Cannon have beyond what you've already mentioned with senators themselves?

ER: A lot. A lot. And again, he was someone I think that they felt like they could come to on a whole variety of issues. There were some he was closer to than others. But again, I think they all respected him. He had a good working relationship, and I remember specifically, when we won the majority in the Senate, and because we had so many folks....not unlike 1994, coincidentally, who had never been in political office before, or for whom this was a
whole new world.....he helped a lot with the Warren Ruddmans, the Matt Mattingslys of the world...again, just kind of counseling .....in terms of what the Senate's like....what to expect....what sort of committee assignments they ought to be looking for. He and Rudman were pretty close; he and Senator Danforth were very close, and in fact, he would go....Senator Danforth led the service at 7:30 every Tuesday morning at St. Albans....and Mr. Cannon went to that on every opportunity he possibly could. So he....they had a lot of confidence in him. Those were good relationships.

DW: What was the service at St. Albans?

ER: Every Tuesday morning at 7:30, St. Albans does a mid-week service, and Mr. Cannon was Episcopalian...was very close to Jack....not only to worship himself, but because of his friendship with Jack...would try to go up most every Tuesday.

DW: Would Senator Baker attend those, do you know?

ER: Not to my knowledge.

DW: As Chief of Staff, were there Cannon meetings of one sort or another that were held regularly involving staff?

ER: No. No. The 9:30 was pretty much it, and then, you know, sort of the rest of us got our marching orders out of that. And to be perfectly honest with you, we really did very little. There was a chasm between the Majority Leader's office and the Tennessee office. And that's not to say that we didn't all get along, and work well together and all that. But in those years,
the focus was really the Capitol office. And obviously, probably in the back of his mind he'd already decided he wasn't going to run again, anyway. That's not to say that Tennessee wasn't important. But after 3 terms, that one was pretty much on autopilot....there were good people in place, and people down in the state whom he'd known for years....so things functioned and functioned well.

DW:  Did Cannon have responsibility for the Tennessee office?

ER:  Yes. What...Tommy was the AA for awhile....David Spear...Bill Hamby. You know, he was in constant contact with those guys, and they were always in the 9:30 meeting. Now that I am the Bill Hamby of Tennessee, as I say, I guess I could go out to be in the 9:30 meeting.

DW:  Right.

ER:  But no, they were always in the 9:30 meeting. So I don't mean to overstate the chasm. It was just, you know, that the place pretty much functioned on its own. But whomever the current AA was....this was before the Chief of Staff title and the state office has got to be so popular.....Whomever the AA was was in the majority leader's office a lot....but there wasn't much traffic going the other way.

DW:  What were the major elements of your job?

ER:  I did a little bit of everything, from soup to nuts...which was what I enjoyed. Because Mr. Cannon was so involved with the Senate Campaign Committee, I always had a good handle on what was happening in terms of Senate races....did a lot with Bob Michel's office on the House side...on the political end....mostly where we had requests to try to help House candidates in some way.

DW:  Who was your contact over there?
ER: I usually talked to Ralph Venovich, who had been with Michel forever, and was his chief of staff. And then there were a couple of women in that office, too, who were great, and I can't remember their names off-hand. I also, as you can imagine with Reagan winning the White House....you know, we had a phenomenal number of people in those 4 years, especially early on.....who wanted jobs in the White House. One of the more dubious honors of what I did was get to handle that whole process, which was an absolutely....one thing that I learned and learned quickly....is you can be Howard Baker...you can be Majority Leader....you can be as close to Ronald Reagan as Senator Baker was....but you really can have very little impact in that process of who's going into the Administration. We had a few successes in that end, and we had some good successes. But that's a train that just moves unto itself. And you could impact it on occasion, but you had to pick your fights pretty carefully as to what was important to you. Because White House personnel....that's their show to run basically. I did that. I did a lot of special project things, and whether it was putting together this whole Library of Congress plan, or when we moved and took over some extra space in the Majority Leader's office, I did that restoration project with the architect of the Capitol's office, which was fascinating, and lots of fun. As I grew into the job, if Judge Summer from Goldman Sachs needed something on the legislative side, or needed Mr. Cannon on something...as they grew more confident on me, and I was more confident on what I was doing, there were many times when I could answer it or solve it without having to go to office staff. So much of it was just sort of a jack-of-all-trades kind of a thing.

DW: What's the status of this legislation or what's really going on in regard to that piece of legislation?

DW: Is this something we should be concerned about? That kind of thing?

ER: Yes, exactly.

DW: Am I not correct that you sort of, at one level at any rate, were in charge of Baker's leadership pack?

ER: No, that was Mary Drake. Yes, I didn't run in the pack. Again...and that's one other thing Mr. Cannon did a lot of, was oversee that, and worked closely with Mary. But now I didn't oversee that. No.

DW: That's right.

ER: And I also did a lot of just the nuts and bolts of the operation, which actually was one thing that I learned and learned young...is that it's always good to sort of handle the money in some way. I mean, I was our Disbursing Office contact, so when we made salary decisions, I knew what everybody made....it was, clearly, Senator Baker controlled as to what we spent....but just sort of being in that loop and being able, in a limited way able to impact those decisions....that was a good thing to learn at about age 25 or 26, because you think “You know, _____ position I don't want to leave in any future job.” Because there is, to put it bluntly, there's a lot of power in that. And in fact, Mr. Cannon still laughs about the day Jim Miller decided to announce he was leaving us, I wasted no time in getting him off the payroll.

DW: What was it about Jim Miller that got to you?

ER: Uh, Jim and I sort of had a love/hate relationship. He was a smart guy; he was an intriguing
guy. But you know, I've never said this, and I probably shouldn't say it now, but in my heart of hearts, I never had a good gut feeling about him. I felt like he was a fraud...personally, in so many ways. And there wasn't a loyalty there. He was using us for something else. And I couldn't tell you specifically what it was to this day, but I never had a comfort level.

DW: Obviously part of it was getting material for a book.

ER: Yes. Yes, exactly. So...he was an intriguing guy. Have you interviewed him yet?

DW: No. No.

ER: OK.

DW: I understand he's in California, doing something.....I have no idea what. And I've forgotten who told me. As you know, we've talked several times with Jim Cannon, and I like him, and respect him, and also sympathize with him in this sense. And I'd like to get your reaction. Here you are, he had the title of chief of staff to the Majority Leader of the United States, which is a potent title. And on the other hand, the staff of which he was chief consisted of a number of very smart, very able, very aggressive, if not to say ambitious people who prized their own relationship with Howard Baker. And who did not see themselves as working for anybody other than Howard Baker in the direct sense. Seems to me that was...if that's to the extent that was true, it seems to me that it was an uncomfortable position Jim Cannon was in. How do you react to that?

ER: That's an intriguing question, and again, in terms of where I was in my own career at that point in time, I didn't see it that way probably in no small part because I didn't know better. I had no frame of reference against which to judge it. Yes. When you now look at operations on the Hill, and always I joke with Mr. Cannon, “You know, no one up here ever called
himself ‘chief of staff’ until you got here and gave yourself this title, and now everyone....even House members, 'I'm so-and-so's chief of staff.’” And so I tease him about that. I think a couple of things. I think 1) he's absolutely right in that assessment, because yes, most of those folks, as I said a minute ago, did have a much longer relationships and because they were Tennesseans, more comfortable relationships; but I think 2) again, having sat outside that door and referencing what I said earlier, I don't think he's giving himself enough credit on that. Because I can't tell you the number of times where if Jim Range had a problem, or we were close to getting...not to getting caught on something, but to getting ourselves in an awkward position in some way, or just kind of needing general advice....his was always the door they headed for. So, because those relationships were so long-term, you can't come in with a heavy hand and say, “I'm in charge here, to borrow from Al Haig,” but what he did by default, as I said in just being the person that he is, he's not giving himself enough credit, in terms of looking back. You know, I can sit here now and see Tommy Griscom coming at me, going, “Where's Mr. Cannon?!” Nine times out of 10, it was probably something that Tommy could have solved himself, but they came to him. So it cuts both ways. I can see what he's saying, but I think....

DW: Well, that was my....

ER: Yes, but as those relationships evolved, don't sell him short on that, because he really was ultimately in charge when it came to final....Senator Baker was ultimately in charge....but when there were crises or whatever, he was, as I said earlier, the Go To guy.

DW: I was going to follow that by saying that at the same time, as compared with some other situations with which I am familiar, whatever rivalries and tensions there might have been
there do not have seemed to have risen to the destructive weapon.

ER:  No. And that's one thing. We never had....and again, I was naive, but I think even when you're naive, you can always pick up on if there's something healthy going on. I never sensed anybody sort of out to get anybody else. I mean sure, I know probably in those 9:30 meetings they went at each other on a variety of days and topics and a whole host of things. But as grown men who all fundamentally respected each other, and who all's loyalty was centered on one individual, and probably secondly the Senate, whatever the fight was, they truly did live to fight another day. You know, work went on; there was no back-stabbing. And really they never...and this is not revisionist history on my part....there was never a climate there where you felt like anybody was going down, or somebody was upset with somebody else. And having worked in campaigns a lot since then, lord knows, I've lived in that climate. And at my level at least, you never felt it.

DW:  How would you characterize the basic climate of Baker's offices during that period?

ER:  Low key. Frantic on occasion, just by sheer volume, depending on what was happening on the floor of the Senate, or what was happening that day, or recesses were obviously very different. But the office itself....low key, lots of work getting done, low drama, really...but just a sense that you were about something that was much bigger than yourself.

DW: Where were you and Cannon located physically?

ER:  Senator Baker's office was S230. And we....originally when we took the majority....well, when I first started, he was using senator's office in Dirksen. That wasn't working well, because we were....I just remember taking like as many books on this table....reams of paper back and forth between there and the Capitol. It was horrible. And then I'd sit on a corner of
the couch, in S230, and you can't work. So once we won the majority, we got space on the 3rd floor of the Capitol, which was clearly much more workable, but still not as ideal. I mean you just had a staircase or elevator to go down. And then, when we took these other offices .....there was S230 ...and we took all this space that had been Senate Disbursing, so our suite....you know, you just went through a variety of doors. So we were down the hall, so to speak. And that's where we stayed.

DW: On S230....the S230 side of the corridor.

ER: Right. Right. Not across the hall. And I think our actual office room number was S235.

DW: Again, a slight digression. Do you remember where you were Election night 1980?

ER: Yes. Yes. We were in the Minority Leader...soon to become the Majority Leader's office. We were in that conference room that night. My big responsibility had been to prepare the notebook of everyone running for the Senate and where we could reach them that night. I will never forget. God, I had forgotten this. And Mr. Cannon....I can't remember who came in first.....who won first in the Senate. Oh yes, I do. For some reason I think it was like Paula Hawkins down in Florida. And Mr. Cannon had tried to call her for Senator Baker. And come talk to me with this ______. “This is not the right number. I cannot find her. I hope the rest of the night does not go like this.” And I thought, “Oh, I'm going to be sick.” But come to find out they were the right numbers. I found Paula Hawkins. I think he had misdialed or something. And I had thought, “No. Six weeks into this, it is not going well.” But that's what we did that night. We watched returns come in between the networks.

DW: It was a working session....it wasn't a party.

ER: It was not a party. No. Between races, he called the winners during the night. Then there
were some folks....part of the reason this memory is so vivid is that there were some folks
who weren't in races, who were in the Capitol, dropped by to see us. Not very many. But
John Warner and Elizabeth Taylor were married at the time, and they were two of our guests
that night. And they walked in.....and she was a delight. I had a nice chat with her. And they
were so mushy-goo with each other. I just remember
standing and staring. And at one point he grabs her very dramatically and swoops her
down....big kiss. And Ron McMahon....have you met Ron yet?

DW:  Oh yes.

ER:  Ron McMahon looks around and goes...."Why in the hell doesn't just take her in the back
room and go make out! This is no place....." I don't know. It just stuck in my mind. That's
why that night is so vivid. And then they went....whooshing back out into the night. But no,
we were working. And as I said, you know, you had a few cameo appearances as the night
went by, but no, we were working. And then it was Melinda Baskin, who is now Melinda
Hudson, I think is her married name now...when Ronald Reagan won....she was the one who
ended up finding Ronald Reagan for Senator Baker. And she was so excited, because when
they patched her through to Reagan's room for Senator Baker to say, “Congratulations,” she
said, “Is President-Elect there? Is President-Elect Reagan there for Senator Baker?” And she
said, “Oh, you wouldn't believe what Ronald Reagan just said to me. I asked him if he was
in, and this male voice said, “You got him.” I said that was a pretty special night. That was
a very special night.

DW:  Do you have any recollection of how Baker responded to the increasing likelihood as the
evening wore on if the Republicans might take the Senate?
ER: I sort of remember...I remember him being excited....but again, in sort of that Howard Baker way. In no small part, because we finally left there at 3:00 o'clock that morning, and we still didn't know. Bob Casson's race in Wisconsin was still out, and maybe one other. So we still weren't entirely sure that we had the Majority. So I remember him being excited.....I don't really specifically remember anything he said that night.

DW: What is it to be excited in the Howard Baker way?

ER: Pleased. There's that great big grin when you know that he's sort of happy, or effusive about something, or just.....yes, it's just more of the smile. And yes, that's about it.

DW: Do you know whether he had any contact with Senator Byrd that night? Because I understand the Byrd people were just around the corner.

ER: They were, yes. And I don't remember. It's interesting, because this was not Senator Baker at all. But people who had been on the staff a long time, like Lura Nelle (?), were really more salivating at the prospect of what this meant than Howard Baker was. I don't really remember him talking about it that night. It might have been that I was never standing in the right place at the right time. And I distinctly remember the next morning, as I dragged myself back in....I remember being up at 7ish, you know, getting dressed for work. And I couldn't....we didn't have CNN....and I was never catching any news show at the right time to find out whether or not we'd won the majority. So I remember having to wait until I got in that morning. And I remember hitting the door, and looking at Lura Nelle, and her first words out of her mouth were, “We won the Majority!” And that was the first.....I knew it was only about 5 hours later from when we'd gone home, but still, that was the first
verification that the role was about to change pretty dramatically. And then I still for weeks was in that one corner of that damn couch, answering the phone....non-stop. It's like. “How many people could possibly call one human being!” It was unbelievable.

DW: Now where was your couch located? Was it in that long room?

ER: No. You know, when you walk in to 230, there's that little ante-room first. And Lura Nelle sat at the desk there, and then the couch was right across.

DW: Oh, OK. You were right across.

ER: Yes.

DW: And at that time, Baker's desk was in the long room?

ER: Right. Or had he moved it to the back room? No, the desk was in the back room, and the long room, you'd walk in and there were a couple of chairs, and then the conference table was in there.

DW: Right. And that's where the morning staff meeting was held?

ER: Yes. Yes. At 9:30.

DW: Yes, 9:30. Did you ever have occasion to do any work directly for Senator Baker?

ER: Not much, because there were three women as we grew bigger, and then the room that Bob Dole then used as his office, we used as a reception room. That had been the old disbursing office. There were three women who worked in there who swapped off with Laura Nelle when she was out, so they really did more of placing his personal calls, any sort of family business, his dictation....I really never did any of that. My exposure to him was somewhat limited in that regard. Because I was just far enough back. But again, more of what I did....virtually all of what I did....came to me directly through Mr. Cannon.
DW: Well, when and under what type of circumstances would you interact with Baker, or be in the
presence, as it were?

ER: I'm going to reverse myself on that. Very rarely in meetings, but more often than not, I was
sort of the Memo person on the background for the meetings.....especially if they involved
anything political or VIPs coming in. You know, if Mayor Boynavic from Cleveland, who
was Georgia's mayor at the time was coming in, I did the background Memo, what he wanted
to talk about. I did a lot of correspondence....not his dictation, but I was a decent writer to
start....decent grammar skills. And then thanks to Jim Cannon's influence, I really turned into
a pretty fair writer.

DW: Did he edit you?

ER: Yes, he did. He did. He's a good editor. He's a good editor. And probably the most
valuable thing he ever said to me is, “Just write like you talk.” And clearly that doesn't work
in all cases, but it was amazing what a difference it made, once I finally got over it. Because
I remember the first time he asked me to compose something for Senator Baker, and I sat
there and thought, “This man was chief of correspondence at Newsweek. I mean I just sat at
the typewriter, and thought, “I just can't do this.” But I did a lot of not the Senator's
dictation, but just a lot of correspondence we initiated that I actually got to write. Did a lot of
that. So my sort of being around him .....you know, sort of running that stuff in....and then I
had a lot on my phone that I would have given away in a fire sale. 224-5311. I still
remember it. That Mr. Cannon could call me on....or anyone that needed it. And that Mr.
Cannon would call me and just bark, “Can you get in here. Senator Baker needs to ask you a
question.” Or Lura Nelle. I'd get the frantic call, “Senator Baker needs you right now!”
DW: Now what kind of questions did he ask, do you remember?

ER: Well, I'm trying to remember now. It's like, 'What was I working on that would have ....' and I honestly can't remember. But it seemed like I always knew something, or had something going on that somebody else needed to know about. It was part of just being that jack-of-all-trades, and I can't even come up with a specific example right now except that I know that that phone line drove me crazy.

HS: [Did you have one of those lines that] only certain people had the number for?

ER: Yes. It was Mr. Cannon and Lura Nelle. And then one guy that I was dating and I was crazy about, I gave it to him. Because I just needed a break on the line. I just needed a friendly call from time to time. But those were the only people that I think that really ever used it. Yes. Or if they were down on the floor and there was something that I was working on that came up, Mr. Cannon would call me from the Cloakroom, “Can you come down and fill him in on this?” And I remember Mr. Cannon at the end....when we were leaving the Senate, and I had already taken another job, and I remember Mr. Cannon coming to me one day and saying, “You know, Senator Baker asked me if you were happy about what you were going to go do, because he's interested in talking with you if you want to go over to the law firm and do something there.” And I remember thinking at the time, not only 'what a great honor,' but 'Oh, my gosh. If you keep your head down and do your job, you don't have to be in somebody's face every day for them to think to themselves, “Oh, she knew what she was doing.”' But that made me proud of myself, because it's like somehow I did something right. He paid attention along the way. And on a personal level of satisfaction, that was nice.

DW: Describe for me Baker's style and temperament around the office.
ER: Very quiet, very easy. I remember....you know, the times I was sitting in the little ante room there where you come in in the mornings. You, he’d just open the door, “Hi, Lura Nelle. Any calls?” You know, never....very even keel. Then again, I never really had the opportunity to see...maybe the moments when he wasn't so even keel. I really never saw him ruffled.

DW: What were your hours like....particularly when....were you obligated to stay around at least until the Senate was out?

ER: What we tried to do is kind of shift, at night...if we knew every May, when you go through appropriations processing, you knew you had a lot of long nights ahead of you. We'd try to shift off so that no one person was carrying that burden. Or you'd go to dinner and you'd come back. The hours were long. And I remember, especially that last year, after Mr. Cannon's cancer scare, and he and I were so close anyway. Almost every morning, once he got through that problem, almost every morning, we'd have breakfast in the Senate dining room together....Sometimes kind of talk about the day; sometimes really talk about nothing at all. As much as anything, we'd really just enjoy each other's friendship. Sometimes other people would have breakfast....we'd use it for appointment time with folks. So the day was long, and again, the longer I stayed, the earlier it got, by default. The beauty, however, was that when we were in recess, really far more than obviously the state offices, we could truly be in recess. So we'd work from 9:00-3:00, or 10:00-2:00. And that was another thing that both Senator and Mr. Cannon were great about.....was just making sure that we staggered a schedule so that everybody got some time out of there. So that was him. You talk about getting spoiled at a young age. You know, if you've got a few days off every 2 or 3 months
or whatever. But yes, the hours were long. It was not the freneticism of the first year of the 104th Congress by any means. And it was one thing that I know you've heard....repeatedly, probably, by now....is that because Senator Byrd....just because he loved to work, and would keep the Senate in so late....one of Senator Baker's very early commitments to certainly his Republican colleagues, but to the Senate in general was to have a designated late night...Thursday night....but to try to allow people to be out of there in time to go to things, or just have dinner with their families. And I remember so many Senate wives commenting on how grateful they were that there was more.....they always understood if you were hitting a time crunch, before recess, but just how grateful they were that they could plan more in their schedule, and that there was more family time. So that was one of the great things he did in just bringing some normalcy to the process.

DW: When the Senate was engaged in one of these late night sessions, and there would be a filibuster going on on the floor, what would you be doing?

ER: Well, it just depended. If I wanted to use my time constructively, I could catch up on the things that you think, “Oh, I'll do that later.” And I would be interested to know, and I haven't asked anybody this, and I need to. Again, you know the times are different. The bar was always set up in that back office, and a lot of senators would drop by to have a drink. Jim Range, in his little neck of the woods...you know, the bottle of Jack Daniels always came out. So all of the legislative types that he was close to would drop in there. Some nights Mrs. B. would come up. And she'd bring....What was that restaurant...Arthur's? She liked their ribs? [And they have] the name of the restaurant...but it's gone now......long gone. So she would come up with Wilbur....you know, the driver...with all these ribs and onion rings and
everything, and that would be a big spread in the Conference Room. Or we'd all go down to dinner in the Dining Room together. We didn't do a whole lot except hurry up and wait. And again, because that was your family, even though it was work, it really wasn't work in the strictest sense of the word. So those nights there was just more camaraderie than there really was actual work going on.

DW: Now where did Range hold his entertainment? In his office?

ER: In his office.

DW: And who would show up there?

ER: Well, obviously, Dan Crippen and our guys. And then Fred McClure, who was the White House Legislative Liaison, and who worked for John Tower. Fred was a regular. Ken Duverstein was a regular. I'm trying to think who else was in that “band of renown.” Now, Rebecca Cox, who Jim ultimately married, who worked for Ted Stevens at the time.

DW: Rebecca Gernhart Range Cox.

ER: Yes. I'm trying to think who else in sort of the male...kind of blanking at this point. But there weren't a lot of newcomers ever to the group. There was a pretty steady clique of 4 or 5 diehards.

DW: Would Susan Alvarado be around Baker's office or Range's office?

ER: Not with the guys. She was sort of in perpetual motion. She was in and out a lot. In and out a lot, but never lingered.

DW: Were there senators who were regulars in Baker's office during such evenings, do you recall?

ER: Ruddman, Jay Danforth to a greater or lesser extent. Senator Goldwater. I remember, and it was probably just because they were always in because there was something always going on
in terms of floor negotiations. And I remember Metzenbaum in particular, and Senator Kennedy being in a lot. I don't know that I associate so much with those nights....as I said, particularly on tough legislative matters.....their coming in and out a lot.

DW: I understand that around the corner Hildenbrand generally held Open House... the Secretary of the Senate's office.

ER: Yes. And Howard Green.

DW: And upstairs, Liebengood held Open House over there. There were numerous places you could get around.

ER: Yes. There were. It's so hard....other senators....I'm just blanking on.

DW: On those tough nights when things seemed to be falling apart at times, was Baker the same as he always was, or was he different in some ways?

ER: I never really noticed any difference. He was probably more tired, physically. But again, always pretty....again, I wasn't as close to it, clearly, as the legislative guys. I never detected much of a substantive difference. Just the other memory I have is just standing along that back wall in the Senate Chamber....just sort of waiting to go out.....watching. And Senator Metzenbaum...the only reason I ever wanted to defeat Howard Metzenbaum....the largest reason I ever wanted to defeat him....was to keep him at 2 a.m. from objecting to every “You see” item that came up. I mean it was just _____ . And he would be....aside from maybe Senator Baker, he'd be the lone senator there on the floor. He'd have a staffer beside him; we'd be trying to run through this stuff as “You see” items, and you'd see the staffer sort of prod as one was coming up, and just like a jack-in-the-box there he'd go. “Mr. president, I object.” It would just be like, “Can we go home?” I just remember being tired and ornery.
DW: How much time did you spend on the floor?

ER: Off and on, a lot. I was never down there because I was working on a piece of legislation and it had to be my life, for days at a time. But I was down there a lot just because I had other business to conduct, and maybe Mr. Cannon was down there for hours, if we were working on something. So I was on and off the floor a lot. It's interesting. I liked being on the floor to watch what was going on. I never had a comfort level staying in the Cloak Room for long.

DW: Why is that?

ER: Well, I think it's because it was like the 9:30 meetings. It was a male.... You know, there was a young woman that worked in the Cloak Room, Anne Haldeman. You know, as one of the Cloak Room workers. It's not that there weren't women there. And obviously Senator Kassebaum was in the Senate. But it felt like a very male environment. And I'm sure they still do it. You know, just the camaraderie....the kind of yukking it up....I never had a comfort level.

DW: What kind of things would take Jim Cannon to the floor?

ER: If he needed to see Senator Baker about something. Frequent, really, just to spend time...as we were talking the relationships he had with senators....you know, just to spend time in conversation on things. Monitor what we were doing legislatively that was a big issue. I mean, he probably actually did a lot more of the personal lobbying, if you will, with senators for Senator Baker than I ever actually realized. But unless it was something huge, he never spent hours at a time like a legislative person. But he was down there a lot.

DW: Tell me about Mrs. Baker and how she related to people on the staff.

ER: She was good with people on the staff. And I never had any direct responsibility in terms of
Ms. B. I just remember the thing that I was always most struck by with her was just how razor sharp her memory was, and I never ceased to be amazed at how just plain old smart she was. I remember one day she played a joke on me. One of the women on staff was out with her doing some things, and lord only knows how it came up, but Meredith in conversation told Mrs. Baker that I didn't like birds. And Ms. B. calls me from the car to tell me that they were going out of town, and she had just bought a parrot or a canary....I can't remember what she told me. But she had just bought a bird, and would I mind terribly keeping it for whatever period of time they were going to be out of town. And I just remember that sinking feeling of, “Oh my god, this is my boss's wife. I hate birds. What am I going to do?” And I just....you know, you want to say the right thing, and yet I was just dreading it. She had me going! She was very generous to everybody on staff. And as I say, the nights that she would come up and sort of take care of everybody for a while. But I really didn't know her well at all. We saw a lot of her. But I just never had an extended period of time that I spent with her.

DW: What were she and Senator Baker like when they were together?

ER: Oh, great. They had a great camaraderie. Because I was always struck by the fact that really..... And Mr. Cannon and Mrs. Cannon and I talked about this not long ago, when I was with them. I had always thought that Senator Baker was basically kind of shy around women. He has a very good relationship with Sherry Cannon. He's comfortable with her, and he talks with her. I mean I just remember I always noticed that, even as a kid, and it's still evident now. And he was the same way with Mrs. B. He brightened up when he saw her come in. He was happy to have her around. And unlike trying to talk to some of the rest
of us, whereas I said I always felt like there was an awkwardness or a shyness? And obviously, it was his wife, but it was more than that. There was a genuine friendship there that was always fun to watch.

DW: Was Cissy around the office very much?

ER: Not a lot. I mean, our office, obviously, was impacted by her '82 Congressional race. So she was there in spirit, if you will, and that year in particular, because he was such a help to her in terms of raising money and everything else. But she was never really around the office very much. And Mo, Maureen, had a very strong personal tie there with Cissy.

DW: She came down and was in Cissy's campaign.

ER: Yes. Traveled with her. Yes.

DW: Yes. Well, we've covered quite a bit of territory. Are there things that I should ask you about that I haven't asked you about as yet?

ER: No. I think the one other thing that I thought of, and Bill Frist and I have talked about this a lot. And I have alluded to it several times in the course of this conversation... is, when I look back at those years and at the people, and you've probably sensed some of this in the conversations that you've had already....and I was reminded of this most especially last year on Senator Baker's 70th birthday, when there was a nice party for him here in town that the Haslams and others had.....was how as different as everybody as individually, as different as our paths have been in our subsequent careers, what Howard Baker did—it was building loyalty. Even though everyone either before he left the Senate or certainly after....even though others went on to do different things, I think one thing that is a hallmark of his time in the Senate is that we are all....we remain close....and I don't mean that we all talk to each
other every week, because I certainly don't, and I've gone for years without seeing or talking to anybody I worked with on that staff, just because I've been gone so much. And yet that familiarity, that sense of family, that respect for each other, and that notion that we were all tied to a time that was important in some way....I still marvel at how just delightful it is to stay in touch with each other, however sporadic it may be, and that each of us is proud of the other's successes. And I think you can attribute that directly to the kind of environment that Howard Baker created for us. As I said, Bill and I have talked about it...particularly after his...he's been in the Senate, now, 2 years. We've had some people leave...go on to do other things. And even though he never knew Howard Baker until 4 or 5 years ago when he first started looking at running for the Senate, he has said already, “You know, I'm sorry to lose good people, but I know people move on, and if I do this right, I'm creating the same environment Howard Baker did, to enable people to succeed in other ways, and that means that I can stay in touch with them and keep them a part of my life, build a network out there that I can call on for advice on issues. It's interesting to me that he has seen that as a total outsider looking in. So that's the one thing in kind of thinking about coming over here today...and again, you may well have heard it from others in different kinds of ways...but the real hallmark, and it's a real testament to the personality of the man we worked for.

DW: What is said is....several people have made similar observations, and often it's put... “We all still worked for Howard Baker. Whether we're on his payroll or not.”

ER: That's a more succinct way to put it. Absolutely. I couldn't agree with them more.

DW: And he does call on people. You know, if he has a little writing job that he's involved in, he'll call Pat Butler for help. I'm sure A. B. Culvahouse is still his lawyer, isn't he? And
Liebengood is his intelligence guy. And Cran is still his foreign policy guy. And so it goes.

That's the way it goes.

ER: Yes.

DW: Well, thank you very much for a very interesting and insightful set of observations.

ER: Well, it was an honor to do it. I was so junior, I wasn't sure I would have much to offer, but that was fun.

END OF TAPE