INTerview: John Seigenthaler

PLACE: Knoxville, Tennessee

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DW: This is a continuation of the interview with John Seigenthaler. In order to gain the appropriate balance, we have moved from Vanderbilt to the campus of the University of Tennessee in Knoxville, and we are in the offices of the Political Science department. I would like to begin by taking off on a few things we talked some about last time. I went back and reviewed my interviews with Hugh Branson; he told the story of a luncheon that was held, he placed it in the context of the 1966 campaign. It was a luncheon that he viewed as especially significant in the development of the relationship between the Tennessean and Senator Baker. His recollection is that it was at John Jay or Henry Hooker’s house; present were you, Baker, Branson, the two Hookers, and Eddie Friar. Do you have any recollection of that luncheon?

JS: Yes, it was at John Hooker’s house. I believe that Gil Merritt was also there.

DW: Who is Gil Merritt?

JS: He was a Nashville lawyer; he and Hooker were brothers-in-law, he’s now a Chief Judge of the 6th Circuit, U.S. Court of Appeals. He was Hooker’s campaign finance chairman in 1970. I believe he was there too. What did Hugh say?

DW: He spoke in general terms, but he felt, as I recall, that it was at this luncheon that, at least in his view, you really began to see some possibilities for Baker and the Tennessean and the development of the Republican party in Tennessee.

JS: That’s right. John Jay was the primary mover in that; Henry, who is married to an Ingram, was also anxious to be included. From Hooker’s point of view, it was primarily that he had a great house at that time and just wanted us to be relaxed.

DW: Did he want you and Baker to get to know one another a little better?

JS: I think he wanted to do a couple of things. One, he wanted to separate himself from his father, who was very close to Ellington. Politically, he wanted to separate himself. And he was very close to Frank Clement; of course, the Tennessean was on the other side of that.

DW: You had not endorsed Howard.

JS: No, and not Clement nor Ellington. I remember it; we ate by the pool, I think. Hooker’s house then was on Chickering Lane, it was a great house. As I recall, we ate by the pool, we talked up there, but we might have gone down to the house for lunch, I can’t remember, but we talked a lot around the pool. I think Amon Evans was invited to come, but couldn’t or
didn’t. It would have been after Hooker’s defeat, I think, after his defeat in 1966, so it would probably have been in the fall. John Jay really wanted to be a sort of catalyst; he was not happy with Ellington, and he was anxious to establish a new direction. No, I correct that—it was at Henry Hooker’s house, and we met first by the tennis court and then went to the house for lunch. Henry had been playing tennis; we met up there and then went down to Henry Hooker’s house, that’s where it was. I was Henry Hooker’s next-door neighbor, that’s where it was. I think Amon Evans was invited, and Bronson Ingram was not; he heard about it later and had wanted to be, Henry told me. Hugh’s right, it was a good, open-ended conversation, but we talked mostly about Howard’s prospects for election, whether he could win. At that meeting, I gave him some additional names of people I had talked with since we had met in my office for a prolonged session. This was really a sort of get-acquainted meeting. I remember when we left, I was skeptical of whether he could win and told Henry and John Jay that I thought he couldn’t. I remember Hooker told Baker that the greatest poem ever written was Rudyard Kipling’s “If,” and he recited a little bit of it. Howard said, “My God, I haven’t heard that since I was in high school.” There was some strategy talked at that session; I had told Hooker and Amon that I felt that the posture of the Tennessean after Hooker’s defeat—we had gotten into that very heavy-handed exchange with the Banner. The best way to characterize it is that they dedicated all of page one every day, except Red O’Donnell’s gossip column, to pushing Buford and knocking Hooker. They had something like 18 front-page editorials and cartoons, characterizing him, among other things, as lying on a psychiatrist’s couch with a drink in his hand. And that was on the front page for 18 days during the campaign. I had told Amon and John Jay that I thought the development of the two-party system was a healthy thing. Hooker’s view of it was that the next time he ran, he well might be able to attract Republican support. Of course, the two-party system was what beat him four years later; Winfield created that bridge between west Tennessee and east Tennessee and beat him. So he may have been, with that luncheon, the architect of his own agony. But he arranged the luncheon; I can’t remember why he met at Henry’s house instead of his own house.

DW: Were Baker and the Hookers already acquainted or was this a first meeting?

JS: I believe it might have been a first meeting. I had met them, but I believe it might have been a first meeting. I had talked to Hooker and Amon about the sessions I had with Howard, and I think it was John Jay’s first meeting. Let me go back to Hooker’s campaign in 1966; I was talking about the way the Banner played, they gave the whole front page and we gave about half of it to the race. The best example of what happened—you remember the shooting of 15 people from the Texas University tower?

DW: Oh, yes.

JS: That story broke early one morning, and the Banner’s first edition came out and they had nothing on the front page but Ellington and Hooker. When the city edition came out, of course, I expected the Texas shooting to be at the top of the page. They ran a one-paragraph bulletin in the bottom right-hand corner of the paper about the Texas shooting and stayed with that, may have put a story inside in their sports final. Hooker’s unpopularity at home and the Tennessean’s—since Amon and I had come there as editor and publisher in 1962, the
Tennessean had endorsed nothing but one including a dead judge, a lawyer whose primary source of income was wholesale condom sales, a guy named John Harris was running against a judge who died in the primary and we endorsed the judge, saying vote from him to keep Harris from having the job, and he was elected. Everything in middle Tennessee, it had been magic. We lost middle Tennessee heavily in Hooker’s case. I felt the Tennessean had hurt him, not helped him, by overplaying the story. He and Amon felt that the way I played it, which was about a third or a half as seriously and intensely as the Banner had, had helped him. There was a good deal of antipathy for Clement as a result of that campaign, and I saw that as a good opportunity to move us toward a two-party state. So this second meeting, as I was talking to John Jay about it, he called the meeting, set it up, recited “If” at some point, but it was basically telling Howard again about the people who had been for Hooker, who identified with the Tennessean’s editorial philosophy and politically stood with Hooker. That included people like Joe Bean, up somewhere maybe in Lincoln County; Jimmy Powers—I think I mentioned the Powers brothers last time we met. But that was an opportunity to really reinforce. I had forgotten that meeting, but it went on a long time, Hooker talked a good deal about his own ambitions and dreams and dominated most of the conversation. Out of it grew close friendships, the first time we ever really had a social chance to chat.

DW: Did Hooker and Baker maintain a relationship after that?

JS: Yes; it was very spotty and occasional. Hooker was disappointed; he had expected to draw Maxie Jarman in 1970 and thought that would be a breeze, because Jarman was damn near as unpopular in Nashville as he was! He had carried Davidson County against Stan Snodgrass in the primary, which surprised a lot of people. He was still very controversial in the four years he had started Minnie Pearl and it had failed. He was suffering some from that, and the Banner was pounding him again, just pounding the hell out of him. Not as severely as they had four years before, but still pounding him. I think I told you, we tomb-stoned the stories on that; one column for each one of the candidates for both the governorship and the Senate race and gave absolute equal space to every one of those races.

DW: That was in 1970?

JS: That was in 1970; I did that because I was convinced that part of what had happened to Hooker in 1966 was our overplaying it and part of it was because I just felt that [the paper’s] credibility needed a heavy dose of support. Giving that balance to Howard in that race helped.

DW: You mentioned a moment ago that Hooker dominated the conversation. Of course, he is a vibrant, effusive personality. Do you have any recollection of how Baker reacted to him?

JS: Yes, I thought it was tongue-in-cheek. He was immensely entertained. You’re talking now about a very lean, much more intense Howard Baker. Being the son of a great man, a political figure—he didn’t have a lot of the complexes about his father that Hooker had about his. It was clear that there was psychological effort on Hooker’s part to equal his father’s position in government and law and every other way. Howard was really astounded and
amused by John Jay’s performance. As I said, when Hooker recited “If,” Howard had his
tongue in his cheek and said he hadn’t heard it since high school. On the other hand, when it
came to discussing his own political future, his own political ambitions, and in making the
argument about a two-party state, he was articulate and even eloquent. He talked very
candidly about Republicans, very candidly about who was for him and who wasn’t for him.

DW: It strikes me that this was a very unusual meeting, extraordinary in a sense in that two
relatively young politicians attempting to make their mark and who perhaps saw themselves
as the new wave within their respective parties would get together and have such a candid
collection.

JS: That’s exactly right, and it was very candid. I used to talk Hooker a compulsive truth-teller.
He was that, he would just tell you everything about himself. Howard, of course, was much
more guarded, but there was candor met with candor. I was still looking upon
the Republican party as a sort of shadow party; I had no idea—Hooker thought he might win—
but I had no idea that he was really going to be able to pull it off. I didn’t believe that the
Bass defections would be as widespread. Somebody, and it might have been Branson, really
worked the people we gave them, really worked.

DW: Based upon Hugh said, he was out the door almost immediately to contact those people.

JS: I think that’s right. I heard back from Bean and Powers right away. I don’t know how many
of these people they got, but they included people like Frank Wilson, who later became a
federal judge in Chattanooga; Charlie in upper East Tennessee. It was a statewide network of
people, and it was basically the remnants of the old Kefauver crowd.

DW: Did Baker get a fair amount of help from those people?

JS: Yes, I think he did. I don’t know how they handled it, because I didn’t get into it. Hooker
had been beaten, and Amon’s interest in the campaign had dissipated a bit. Ross Bass
dutifully endorsed Frank Clement and sent him a thousand dollars on the day after the
election and then left town, didn’t [hit a lick at a snake] for Clement. But they were good
names, and they were all hot to trot. I had given those names to Howard previously, and I
had called some of them and said, “Look, I don’t know what you’re going to do, but I’m
telling you what we’re thinking about doing.” Most of them were delighted to hear it. The
Powers brothers, I remember particularly; one was the mayor of Waverly and the other was
an absolute powerhouse in Clarksville, and both of them were dentists.

DW: I should know this, but I don’t, so I will ask it. Is Ross Bass still living?

JS: No, he died two years ago; I gave the eulogy at his funeral.

DW: Did that meeting contribute to the way you were seeing Baker, or did it merely reinforce the
conclusions that you had reached based on your previous conversations?
JS: My recollection of how we came out of that was that Hooker thought the meeting was extremely beneficial; Howard seemed to like him and was deferential to him. As he said, “He paid me court.”

DW: And he liked that.

JS: Yes, he liked that. Hooker saw it basically as an effort to enhance his own political goals. I saw it as possibly that, but it seemed to me that it was the nearest thing we were going to have in a long time to a viable Republican statewide campaign. I was interested in that, and Amon was interested in that. I had convinced Amon that this was the way that we should go.

DW: Hugh’s recollection is that not long after that meeting, you called Martin Knox of the Chattanooga Times.

JS: I did.

DW: Tell me about that.

JS: I called Martin—Martin later had some emotional problems, but at that time he was very lucid. The Chattanooga Times was the morning paper in Chattanooga then and was a dominant paper. I just said, “Listen, I’ll tell you what I’m thinking about doing.” His first question was, “How does Amon feel about that?” I said, “He feels pretty good about it.” Ben Golden was still the publisher of the Chattanooga Times; Ben Hale Golden was married to Ruth, who is now Ruth Holmberg. She was Ruth Golden, she’s a Solsberger. He said, “I’m not sure I can get Ben to go along with that.” I don’t recall what happened after that except that I said, “I know you’re going to have him to the editorial board meeting, and I think you will be impressed with him.” He said, “Of course, if he calls, we will have him to the editorial board meeting.” I can’t remember what they did after that. I know that Ben was jealous of Martin, and there was a little tension there. It’s just an inkling that I either told Hugh or Howard that I had made the call, and they followed it up, I think that was the strategy. I told him that I couldn’t be helpful at all in Memphis, because I didn’t know Algren well enough, and that Scripps-Howard crowd had a link between Knoxville and Memphis. I think the only person I called was Martin. I also talked to the editor whose name was Bradley, I forget his first name. Martin was their editor had their editorial page, and Bradley was the managing editor, and I also talked to Bradley.

DW: Let me clarify a point. When we talked last time, you said that 1966 was the year that the Tennessean made no endorsement in the race.

JS: I think that’s right, but I could be wrong.

DW: I should have checked this. Hugh thinks you did endorse in 1966, so perhaps it was 1964 when you made no endorsement.

JS: That’s exactly right, yes.
DW: You said last time that some anecdotes or stories about Baker might come to you in the aftermath of that conversation. Has anything popped into your head?

JS: There are number of things; most of them come later on.

DW: Why don’t you tell those.

JS: When the Tennessean was sold to Gannett, I had been offered another job and had turned it down to become the editor of the Washington Star. The truth was, I didn’t want to leave Nashville, and I didn’t think the paper was going to be sold, but it was. Newhearth invited me to stay and subsequently called me on the phone one day and said, “Hope you’re going to do this. I found out something about you I didn’t know and that is that Howard Baker is a friend of yours.” I said, “He is.” He said, “I’m just going to tell you what Howard said. I ran into him at a social event and we were talking.” Maybe it was a Gannett year-end meeting and Howard had maybe spoken to them or had been invited and stopped by. He told him he had bought the Tennessean and asked him, “What do you think of Seigenthaler?” Howard said, “John Seigenthaler is a very special person; if you get him, you will be very, very lucky.” Howard to this day has never told me that he told Al that, and Al expressed some surprise. He said, “I’m surprised that you would say that. I know he calls himself a member of the Kennedy government in exile.” Howard said, “I tell you because I know he is a very special person, and you will be lucky to get him.” He repeated it. That’s an insight into Howard’s personality; this would have been a long time after. A couple of other things—I remember having lunch in the Senate dining room with him during Watergate, it was shortly after the Gridiron Dinner. I guess maybe I was teasing him about being identified as “the studliest Senator.” He had gone to the Gridiron Dinner, and everybody there from the White House had snubbed him. He had gone out of his way to try to be fair to them, going so far as to set up a line of communication with Dick Kliendienst, whom he liked and trusted. He was clearly hurt by that. I remember he was on a diet at the time, drinking eight glasses of water a day. He told me all about the diet and then we got into this. I said, “How did you like the Gridiron?” He talked about that a little bit, and then he said how cruel they had been. It was Haldeman and Erlichman, maybe even Brice Harlow. He had run into them in the john, and they had been cynical and mean. I was impressed by the fact that he really couldn’t understand it. This would have been before Fred Thompson found the tapes. I remember going back to the office—I guess McMahan was still there—and when we got back to the office, I spoke to McMahan about it. He said, “Howard’s face was as white as a shirt when he came out of the john.” You might ask Ron whether he was present when they cut Howard. I thought, “Here’s a guy who has been around politics all this time. He knows an awful lot about these guys—still didn’t know there was a smoking gun and hoping there was not, I’m sure—and thought that his conduct and the question ‘what did the President know and when did he know it?’ was going to be an escape hatch for Nixon.” He couldn’t comprehend or fathom what it was. Of course, it was that they were seeing his fairness as an adversarial position. As I say, it’s just a flash; I’m not sure he remembers how hurt he was by it.

DW: What does that say about Senator Baker?
JS: First of all, his performance as a lawyer and as a public servant and Senator was absolutely impeccable. He set up a line of communication that he could live with to be as helpful to them as he legitimately could, so that if they had messages to send to him, questions they wanted to ask, there was a way to convey those. He didn’t in any sense think he was doing their bidding, he simply thought, “I’m a Republican, they’ve got a point of view, and I’ll be glad to express it.” I think it says that there was about him, first of all, a sense of loyalty; secondly, that he could be hurt. You look at him and see that he’s very vulnerable.

DW: Do you think it also might suggest that he tends to see people in their best light and then is disappointed when they reveal themselves as something else?

JS: Sure, that’s right. In another conversation with him...I was doing a piece—and maybe I got into this on his stand on moderation? Last time?

DW: We talked a little bit about that.

JS: I was doing a piece on him and interviewed him. I can’t remember what magazine I was doing it for, but I interviewed him about what it was to be a moderate. He said, “Some of the great social enterprises of the government over a long period of time have come from the left. Some of the most innovative ideas have come from the right. If I lock myself into a position on either side of center, I’m robbing myself of an opportunity”—and he meant emotionally robbing himself of an opportunity to graft from both sides and create a position or program or policy that is truly centrist. It said something else about him too: he may be the only true moderate I ever met. It’s there in his core. Just think of the issue of race; it’s not just that he’s the party of Lincoln so he’s loyal to the party of Lincoln, he understands the difference between right and wrong, justice and injustice, equity and an absence of it, and it guides his life. He’s got a moral compass.

DW: Did he ever talk to you about his presidential ambitions or his experience as a presidential candidate?

JS: Some. He talked to me briefly about going to Maine, maybe the week before that disastrous event and was absolutely confident that Bill Cohen was for him and that he was going to win Maine and it was going to be the first step toward a campaign. Of course, it was the last step in the campaign. I didn’t think about it at the time; I believed him, I thought he was going up there to Maine and win.

DW: They all believed it.

JS: That’s right. I remember the conversation and the confidence that he expressed; he had pretty well outlined what was going to happen. I remember thinking afterwards, how could he be so wrong? Then I convinced myself that the truth of the matter is, somewhere deep inside his soul, he really didn’t want to run for president. He might have wanted to be president, but he didn’t really run for president. He liked being a United States Senator, and he liked being a leader of his party, and I’m not sure that he ever seriously committed himself to the ordeal of running for the presidency. Part of it was maybe the nature of him, and
probably part of it was Joy. I remember being in Kansas City, coming in from a tennis match with Hudley Crockett, going up to the suite, waiting on the call to come from Ford. After a little while, it was clear to me the call was not going to come from Ford, and he was not going to—

DW: You were in Baker’s suite?

JS: He was laid back, loose as a goose, and I will tell, I don’t think he cared a damn whether the call came or not. It was shortly after that crappy column that Jack Anderson ran about Joy.

DW: That was on the Today show, I think.

JS: That’s right. Anderson did it and then it made the wires. By the time I got back from wherever it was, I heard about it. He was totally relaxed and not worried about a thing. Now she was very uptight about the whole thing. Of course, he was mad at Anderson, he was very upset with him, thought it was, used the word, “unconscionable” and said it was false. I asked him if he had explained it to Ford; he didn’t say he had done it, but he said, “It has been explained.” I asked, “Do they understand it?” He said, “I hope they do.” But again, he was a hell of a lot more upset about what happened to Joy than he was about what happened to him. I will tell you again, and I asked McMahan about it, whether there was any tension between them as a result of it.

DW: Tension between...

JS: Between Howard and Joy. A normal human being in some moment of pique might let his innermost feelings spill over and say, “Goddamn it, I would have been the vice president if you hadn’t...” He said, “I don’t think he ever mentioned it to her in the way you’re talking about. The only thing I think he ever said to her was that it was all right, it’s fine.”

DW: When the word came that it was going to be Dole, not Baker, were you in the suite?

JS: I was there or out in the hall, I can’t remember where I was. I think I was out in the hall; maybe he went into a room and took a call. I can’t remember if it was from Ford or somebody else. At any rate, there was some call; he knew before it came over television. He didn’t tell me; I found out from somebody else. I saw him a few minutes later, he was smiling, he did not appear to be hurt. If he was disappointed, I couldn’t tell it.

DW: Ron and some other people have said that in their view, that was the only political defeat that Baker ever experienced that really hit him, that he really had difficulty with.

JS: Well, he might have, but he sure didn’t show it immediately afterward. I would say I saw him five or ten minutes afterward. Of course, Ron was so close to him; Ron felt his pulse.

DW: I think Ron was in the room when he took the call.
JS: I’m sure he was. I saw her a couple of times that day and the day that followed. She was around there, and I thought she was very, very tense. I called Jack Anderson about it after it was done. There was not time to get him between the time I heard about it. I called him in the presence of a guy who worked with ABC television named Bob Siegenthaler, spells his name slightly different, Sie instead of Sei. I told him I was thinking about calling him and did call him and told him that Howard was furious at him and that Joy was terribly hurt by it. Jack went through some bullshit about his sources were impeccable and that he felt that the story was solid. I asked him if it was possible that anybody representing any other candidate had been responsible for him getting the leak. He said he didn’t believe it, that he just thought it was a coincidence. Anderson was a friend of mine, but he could be a common sonofabitch. He still is a friend of mine, as a matter of fact.

DW: Do you recall any conversations you had with Baker when he was in the White House as chief of staff?

JS: Yes. Did I tell you the anecdote about going over there?

DW: No.

JS: He called me on the phone and said, “Would you be willing to come over from USA Today did sit down with Tom Griscom and me?” Remember to ask me about majority leader too, there is a little anecdote there I had remembered. He said, “I’m going to have George Will, John Chancellor”—there were five of us, I’ve got a memo on this somewhere. He said, “I’ve got to do something about Reagan’s image with the press. I’ve asked you five guys to come over here to talk to me about it and to tell me what you think.” I said, “Look, Howard, I want you to know I came, and I came because you asked me too, and you’ve told us that this is an off-the-record meeting. We’ve all agreed not to write anything about it, not to say anything about it, but I will guarantee you, it’s going to leak that we got together.” All of us have some credibility at stake, because what we’re doing is going to be viewed by some people as not something journalists should do.” He said, “I know each one of you, and I do not believe it’s going to leak.” I wish I could remember who the other two were, because that’s the point of the story! We talked about what to do, it was a long meeting, maybe two hours. There were a lot of different ideas. When it was over, I told him again, “It will leak.” About two weeks went by and it leaked. It left out one of the participants; Howard called me and said, “Have you seen that story in the paper?” I said, “I’m glad you called me, I was going to call you.” He said, “I cannot believe that sonofabitch leaked that story.” I said, “He didn’t.” He said, “What do you mean he didn’t? He’s the only one not named.” I said, “Will leaked it and didn’t name him so you would blame it on him!” He said, “How do you know?” I said, “I’ve already heard, I knew it was coming. I got a call from somebody who asked me if I was there. I told him off the record that, yes, I was there, but I didn’t tell him anybody else who was there. He already knew who was there.” But he didn’t mention—it might have been Alan Otten from the Wall Street Journal—I think Otten was probably the least known of all of us there, so George stuck it on him by leaving his name out.

DW: Why would Will want to leak this? Just to let it be known that he was in the White House?
JS: In my view, it was just ego. The meeting was fascinating. Howard asked all the questions, Tom simply took notes. They were trying to devise a way to get Reagan to begin to interact with the press so that the image of non-contact could be destroyed. What he was really trying to do was to find some way to do it without doing it. When he was elected majority leader, he called me that night at the paper and said, “What have you got? Do you all have anything I haven’t got? I have good sources, but some things are happening here that I didn’t know were going to happen.” I said, “Let me give you everything I’ve got.” We had the wire and we were taking calls from various people and I was calling various places. I said, “I think it’s remotely possible that we’re going to wake up in the morning and you’re going to be majority leader.” He said, “You know, the embarrassing thing about it is, I’ve been saying that and didn’t really believe it!” Because he had been saying we’re going to win this, we’re going to win that and suggesting that they had enough strength and he didn’t want to show any weakness.

DW: I don’t think there was anyone in the country who was not surprised.

JS: I presented him with an award for the American Institute of Public Service; I was on that board and made that presentation to him. The guy gets a lot of awards, but I think he was truly touched by what I said that day. He flew out to San Francisco to the American Society of Newspaper Editors while he was in the White House and spoke to them. I called and asked him if he would come; Reagan was going to be at home in California. He said, “Yes, I can fly up there, but is there anyway you can expedite my getting from the airport and back?” The editor of the paper in San Francisco is a guy named Bill Jerman, and he practically owned the town. Howard came, but he was about forty minutes late. A thousand editors waited forty minutes, but they had wandered out and were wandering all through the Fairmont Hotel. When we came in, I could see a lot of them; when we walked into the room, there was about half a house. He said, “I’m sorry I got here late, they’ve all left.” I said, “Howard, I’m going to be very much surprised if ______ which showed something of how editors and journalists feel about him. I was reminded of this again the last time he appeared at the First Amendment Center. We had all of the Neiman Fellows there, whose partisanship clearly ran toward the Democrats. With that crowd of editors, they were all over him after he got through, it was like they wanted to touch the hem of his garment. Editors would meet a president and they wouldn’t really—just another president—but there was real affection for Howard.

DW: I’ve encountered this time after time after time in conversations with media people; just a week or so ago, Jack Tremond said on some talk show, talking about politicians who should have been president but had never made it, and he mentioned Baker. What is it about Baker that makes him so attractive to the working press?

JS: First of all, he makes sure that his press secretaries are professionals and have got good common sense and tell him the truth. The next thing is that he makes himself accessible, and he is the least puffed-up politician any reporter ever interviewed. He’s always himself, never puts on airs, dodges questions and laughs when you call him on it and says, “Well, hell, you didn’t expect me to answer that question, we both know that!” He’s the same all the time, and he never puts on a big hat. He’s just Howard. He takes his heritage in politics so
naturally; he won’t invoke Everette Dirksen’s name to make a point for his advantage, but frequently during the conversations, stories will come out about Everette Dirksen which are funny and insightful. There is some common ground as a result of the fact that he’s a photographer, but that’s merely a fascination and a point of conversation, but it contributes something. The truth of the matter is, he makes you think he is without guile; he honestly tries to tell you everything he thinks he can. He’s not afraid at all to laugh at himself. In that way, there are moments when his dry, self-effacing wit reminds me of Jack Kennedy, that willingness to poke fun at himself.

DW: Let me ask you this, which will probably have to be the last question. I’m sure _____ Teeter is pacing anxiously in the corridor. Do you have any insight as to the role photography plays in Baker’s life and how it might have affected him, if it has at all, as a public man, as a politician?

JS: I guess everybody needs an avocation; I just think it has been for him a diversion that he really enjoys. Beyond that, I don’t have much answer. I don’t think there is anything psychological in it.

DW: Some of his staff people said that he uses the dark room to get away, to be alone. That’s where he does his heavy-duty thinking, when he’s in the dark room. All of them are extraordinarily curious about what goes on when Baker’s in the dark room! They don’t know.

JS: I will say this, he loves it and will talk about it endlessly. If I think of any other anecdotes, and there are some that I’ve forgotten, I’ll just jot them down and send them to. We can get together again, or I can just send them to you.

DW: That’s great, thank you so much.