

Preface

“When Martin Gold, [Howard] Baker’s former procedural expert, was still in the Senate, walking through the Capitol with him was like walking with a member,” wrote one of Senator Baker’s staff, James A. Miller, in his book *Running in Place: Inside the Senate*: “Senators would stop him in the halls asking for consultations and recommendations, reporters would ask him for help in deciphering what was being played out on the Senate floor, and of course other staffers would be tracking him down to pick his brain so they could impress their bosses with a strategy or get a step up on the opposition. Baker was proud of his specialist, and would freely offer Gold’s services to other Republican senators when they found themselves tied up in a procedural knot.”

Martin Berson Gold was born in New York City on January 17, 1947. He grew up in South Florida, and attended the American University, in Washington, D.C., where he received a bachelor’s degree in 1968, a Master’s in public administration in 1973, and a law degree in 1975. He also served in the U.S. Army from 1969 to 1972. Upon leaving the army he joined the staff of Senator Mark Hatfield, an Oregon Republican. In 1976 he became Senator Hatfield’s staff appointment to the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, and the following year he was made minority counsel to the Senate Rules Committee. As Senator Hatfield later commented: “First in my personal office, then at the Intelligence Committee, then at the Rules Committee, Marty consistently demonstrated the intelligence, wit, attention to detail, and respect for procedure that have won him the respect and friendship of so many Senators and staff. In fact, it was his outstanding work as minority counsel at the Rules Committee that first caught the eye of the majority leader, and much to my chagrin but to the greater benefit of the Senate, the leader stole Marty from me.”

In 1979, the Senate Republican leader, Howard Baker, recruited Gold as his procedural specialist, a role he continued to perform after Republicans won the Senate majority in 1980. Two years later, when Gold left the Senate, Senator Baker said in the Senate chamber: “We have many parliamentary scholars and experts on the floor—none, in my opinion, who have ever even approached the prowess and ability of the distinguished minority leader [Robert C. Byrd] and whose statements on this subject will form the basis for guidance of parliamentary procedure in this body for many, many years, in my judgment. But at the staff level, Mr. President, Marty has no equal.”

Senator Alan Simpson, a Wyoming Republican, commented that he had “always been fascinated in watching him monitor the flow of debate and legislation in this body. I have been the beneficiary of his fine counsel, his able assistance and his parliamentary expertise on more than one occasion and I am most appreciative.” And the Senate Democratic leader, Robert C. Byrd, added: “I must say that he is an individual who has always been quiet, unassuming, very courteous, very considerate, and cooperative with the minority. We all like him. I do not know why anyone would not like Marty Gold.”

Gold left the Senate in 1982 to join the firm of Gray & Company. In 1984, he formed a partnership with former Senate Sergeant at Arms Howard Liebengood in a lobbying firm called Gold and Liebengood. After that firm was acquired by the New York-based public relations firm of Burson Marsteller, Gold left to join Johnson, Smith, Dover, Kitzmiller and Stewart, and later Covington and Burling. Throughout these years, he continued to give regular seminars on Senate procedures and to publish new editions of his handbook on handling legislation on the Senate floor.

Frequently mentioned as a possible Senate parliamentarian, Gold repeatedly declined to accept the position on the grounds that the nonpartisan post would best be filled by promotion from within that office. In 2002, however, following a sudden and unexpected change in Senate Republican leadership, Gold accepted an invitation from Senator Bill Frist to return to the majority leader’s office as a counsel on procedural matters. His oral history therefore offers some unique insights from inside and outside the Senate from 1972 to 2004.

“All of us owe a great deal of thanks to Marty,” Senator Mark Hatfield said at the time Gold first left the Senate staff. “Time and again, over these past years, he has patiently explained the intricacies of Senate procedure to Senators and staff. Surely he must have become exasperated with his students, who would ask the same questions every time they drafted an amendment, but that exasperation never showed. Instead, he would once again cogently explain the situation, pointing out the advantages of one legislative tactic and the pitfalls of another, and in so doing he participated in innumerable legislative victories in this Senate.”

About the Interviewer:

Donald A. Ritchie is associate historian of the Senate Historical Office. A graduate of C.C.N.Y., he received his Ph.D. in history from the University of Maryland. He has published several articles on American political history and oral history, including "Oral History in the Federal Government," which appeared in the *Journal of American History*. His books include *James M. Landis: Dean of the Regulators* (Harvard Press, 1980); *Heritage of Freedom: History of the United States* (Macmillan, 1985); *The Senate* (Chelsea House, 1988); and *The U.S. Constitution* (Chelsea House, 1989); *Press Gallery: Congress and the Washington Correspondents* (Harvard University Press, 1991); *Reporting from Washington: The History of the Washington Press Corps* (Oxford University Press, 2005); and edited the *Minutes of the U.S. Senate Democratic Conference, 1903-1964* (Government Printing Office, 1999). He also edits the Executive Sessions of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee (Historical Series) (Government Printing Office, 1978-). A former president of the Oral History Association and Oral History in the Mid-Atlantic Region (OHMAR), he received OHMAR's Forrest Pogue Award for distinguished contributions to the field of oral history.