

Francis J. Attig

Official Reporter of Debates, 1952-1974

Preface

by Donald A. Ritchie

It has often baffled me how readable the *Congressional Record* is. Not only is it readable, but also it is authoritative and is authentic, because everything that happens in the Congress is found there, and it is always in perfect order.

It baffles me when I think of the readability of the *Congressional Record*, because, when all is said and done, I think it will be agreed that Congress is really the home of the split infinitive, where it finds its finest fruition; this is the place where the dangling participle is certainly nourished; this is the home of the broken sentence; and if there were no dashes I do not know what our distinguished Official Reporters would do. This is the home where, with impunity, we can ignore the comma and the period, we can ignore the colon and the semicolon, we can ignore the exclamation mark and the question mark; and yet, somehow, out of this great funnel it all comes out right, and it is always readable. And when it goes out, in thousands of copies, to be used by high school youngsters in debate or by college debating teams or by that great concourse of people who read the *Congressional Record*, including the executive and judicial branches, it is authentic, and, above all else, it is readable; and the reason why it is readable, Mr. President, is to be found in the endeavors of the distinguished group who are the Official Reporters of Senate debates."

Everett McKinley Dirksen Congressional Record, July 31, 1963

It is not unusual for visitors to the Senate galleries to witness a largely empty chamber, with one senator presiding, another speaking, and only two or three others at their desks. In this small assembly the Reporter of Debates often stands out noticeably, hovering near the speaker and rapidly recording his words. Every ten minutes the reporter's shift changes and a new reporter appears on the floor with pen or stenographic machine to continue the note taking as the relieved reporter hurries off to transcribe his notes. By the next morning a printed copy of that speech along with all other Senate business of the day will be available in the daily *Congressional Record*. The speed and accuracy of this publication is nothing short of remarkable, even to the senators themselves, as Everett Dirksen liked to point out.

Over the years the position of Reporter of Debates has steadily evolved. Although the Senate has always maintained a journal of its proceedings, during its early years it barred all reporters from the floor. Not until 1802 were representatives of the *National Intelligencer* invited onto the floor to make notes and publish a summary of the proceedings for their newspaper. While the *Intelligencer* generally performed a creditable job, shorthand reporting was still at a primitive

stage and the results were often haphazard. Some reporters were politically biased and favored certain speakers. Some senators neglected to submit copies of their speeches or to correct the early drafts of the reporter's notes. In at least one instance a reporter dozed off during one speech and awoke during another, recording both speeches as the same.

The *National Intelligencer* held its official position by patronage, and when the political tides turned against its allies, lost the privilege of reporting debates to the *Congressional Globe* in 1833. At that time, Gales and Seaton, publishers of the *Intelligencer*, collected their notes on the earlier Congresses and commenced publication of the *Annals of Congress*, which covered the proceedings of Congress from 1789 to 1824. This publication was succeeded by the *Register of Debates in Congress*, covering 1815 to 1837, and by the *Congressional Globe*, covering 1833 to 1873.

During all these years the reporters worked directly for their newspapers. Not until 1873, when the Government Printing Office launched the *Congressional Record* did Congress hire its own reporters on the public payroll. They have remained as Senate and House employees ever since.

For those using the *Congressional Record* in their research, certain questions inevitably arise. Is the Record accurate and reliable? Does it tell what actually took place on the floor? In what ways, and for what reasons, is it or is it not strictly verbatim?

Some of these questions are answered in the oral history of Francis J. Attig, who served for twenty-two years as a reporter of debate on the Senate floor. Born in New York in 1907, Frank Attig began his career as a court reporter in West Virginia and Washington, D.C. In 1935, he joined the firm of Hart and Dice, where his duties included stenographing the hearings of several Senate committees. From 1941 to 1945, he frequently worked as a reporter for the House and Senate appropriations committees, before taking a post as a reporter for the federal district court of Washington. In 1951, James Murphy, the long-time chief Senate reporter, invited Frank Attig to join the Senate staff as a floor reporter. He accepted and began work in January 1952, holding that post until his retirement in June 1974. His was an unusual view of the Senate, literally from the center of floor activities. He was responsible to every senator for the accuracy of their recorded remarks, and to the traditions of the Senate for observing decorum and proper language in the written record, even if forgotten in the spoken debate. Throughout each session and around the clock during filibusters, Frank Attig was present, listening, watching, and recording the proceedings for history.

Francis Attig died in Washington, D.C. in 1983.

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 taught at the University College of the University

of Maryland, George Mason University, and the Northern Virginia Community College, and conducted a survey of automated bibliographical systems for the American Historical Association. He has published several articles on American political and economic history, and a book, *James M. Landis: Dean of the Regulators* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1980). He has also served as an officer of both the Oral History Association and Oral History in the Mid-Atlantic Region (OHMAR).

**Oral History Interview
with
FRANCIS J. ATTIG**

**Retired Senate Official
Reporter of Debates**

April 5, 1978
Washington, D. C.
by Donald A. Ritchie

RITCHIE: You said you were born in New York on June 23, 1907?

ATTIG: That is correct.

RITCHIE: Was your family living in New York City at the time?

ATTIG: Yes.

RITCHIE: Your father was working there?

ATTIG: Yes. My father was a machinist for the Simplex Automobile Company, a small company which made an expensive car. One of them is displayed in the Museum of History and Technology, in Washington. Whenever I take my grandchildren there, I tell them, "Your great-grandfather helped to build this car."

RITCHIE: About five years later the family moved?

ATTIG: We moved out to New Brunswick, New Jersey.

RITCHIE: The Simplex firm moved out there?

ATTIG: Yes. One day last month, while on a train from New York, we passed the old buildings, and there is still a faint sign imprinted on one of them: "Simplex Automobile Company."

RITCHIE: You grew up in New Brunswick?

ATTIG: Yes, from the age of five I grew up there. I lived in New Brunswick for nineteen years.

RITCHIE: You went to school in the area?

ATTIG: I was graduated from New Brunswick High School in 1924.

RITCHIE: That was the year you went to work?

ATTIG: I worked for Mack Trucks for six years.

RITCHIE: What did you do at Mack Trucks?

ATTIG: I was a stenographer, but it got to be a sort of general clerical job. In 1930, I became ill and had to stop work for a while. I was kept on the payroll while I was in the hospital for five weeks. When I recovered and returned to work I was kept on the payroll only a couple of weeks. Employees were being laid off--that was the beginning of the Depression--and I was laid off, too.

In the meantime, I had been taking a shorthand reporting course in Brooklyn, so I decided to devote full time to it.

RITCHIE: When did you get interested in stenography and shorthand?

ATTIG: In high school. I had a shorthand teacher who told me that I had the capability to become a court reporter. She mentioned the name of one of my neighbor friends who was a court reporter in Newark.

I decided to become a shorthand reporter and enrolled in a course, beginning about 1928, conducted by Clyde Marshall, an official reporter in the New York Supreme Court in Brooklyn. I commuted from New Brunswick to Brooklyn three nights a week. I continued with that course when I was recuperating, and in 1931 Marshall told me that I would be ready to begin work as a reporter in the fall. He was getting requests from reporters in different parts of the country who knew about his course, and when they wanted reporters they would contact him. I was offered a choice among three openings.

RITCHIE: What method of shorthand did he teach?

ATTIG: Basically, Pitman shorthand, but he called his the "Fluency System." He had devised it himself, based on Pitman, but with a type of penmanship that enabled one to write fast--an abbreviated shorthand, with many phrases.

RITCHIE: How did it differ from the Pitman and the Gregg method?

ATTIG: The style of penmanship enabled one to write fast with more ease; hence the word "fluency." He had devised his own shorthand books, called the "Fluency Drills," and we practiced these drills. He was a stern master on that subject. He made certain we knew the fluency drills thoroughly. They were a great help in mastering the system.

RITCHIE: Did you keep that general method of shorthand?

ATTIG: Yes, during all my shorthand reporting years.

RITCHIE: I guess it is generally known that everyone has one form of shorthand that he follows through with.

ATTIG: Yes, except that nowadays many reporters who have learned the Pitman and Gregg systems have switched to stenotype machines; and in even more recent times they have been switching to electronic reporting.

RITCHIE: Well, in 1931, you said you had been offered a choice of jobs.

ATTIG: In 1931, Marshall offered me a choice among three positions. One was in Mineola, Long Island, but the judgeship hadn't yet been created. Another one was in Louisville,

Kentucky, and the third was at Wheeling, West Virginia. He suggested that I take the Wheeling job, because it seemed likely to be permanent--and it would have been had I remained there.

In the fall of 1931 I began working in Wheeling for Louis E. Schrader. He was a delightful man to work for. I had the grand title of Assistant Official Reporter of the Intermediate Court of Ohio County, which was a county court.

Schrader's reporting business, besides his officialship, was depositions. He took most of them, but he had on his staff another fellow besides me and we did most of the court work. After about a year and a half I decided that there was not enough work for me; it was too stodgy a job, I was still in contact with Marshall, and he knew that I would like to get out of Wheeling. One day while I was on vacation a telegram was forwarded to me from New Brunswick from a man in Washington who said, "Were you still interested in locating in Washington?" I thought I would go down to see him while I was close by.

RITCHIE: I think you once mentioned that while you were still in Wheeling there was a particularly big trial. Was that when you were working for Schrader, or was that afterwards?

ATTIG: In Wheeling I handled the usual run of murder cases, other criminal cases, and some civil cases, but there wasn't any particularly big trial. There was a big deposition that was continuing from time to time--an income tax settlement case. It involved the Wheeling Mold and Foundry Company. Sometimes we would have a long deposition in Wheeling, and I used to help report that. That's the only big case I can remember.

RITCHIE: I was recalling a murder case that you talked about. Was that at a later period?

ATTIG: That was when I had come to Washington. It was a trial in Leesburg, Virginia, which was handled by H. S. Middlemiss, who was my superior in Washington.

RITCHIE: OK, I got ahead of the story. So, you worked in Wheeling, West Virginia, from 1931 to 1933, and then in '33 you went to work for Middlemiss. Was that the name of the company?

ATTIG: Middlemiss operated a private reporting office. I was his first, you might say, assistant in

the office. He needed help, and Marshall recommended me. Shortly afterward Nick Cinciotta came, and then a third reporter, Joe Sweeney. All three of us came from Marshall's course. Evidently, Middlemiss was pleased with Marshall graduates. Not only did we learn shorthand at Marshall's, we learned more than the rudiments of English. He was a stickler for good English usage. We had pre-medical and pre-legal instructions, enough to understand medical and legal testimony when we got into court. We specialized in law work because that's what the courts are for, but we had plenty of medical testimony, as well.

RITCHIE: It was while you were working for Middlemiss that you went back to court reporting.

ATTIG: Yes, I did court reporting with Middlemiss for two years. The trial you were speaking of was in Leesburg and involved one George Crawford, who was accused of murdering a Mrs. Illsley and her maid. The trial lasted a week, or maybe a little more than a week. That was in 1933. Nick Cinciotta and I went to Leesburg, as did two typists. We set up housekeeping or officekeeping next door, in the old Leesburg Hotel, which was where the newspapermen from

Richmond and other big cities were staying to cover the trial. We reported plenty of medical testimony, especially pathological testimony.

That was a big trial. The courtroom was crowded every day, Judge James R. McLemore, of Suffolk, Virginia, was assigned to try the case, so as to avoid any appearance of local partiality, I suppose. Crawford was found guilty and sentenced to life imprisonment. Many years later I inquired about him and learned that he was still living. But that was some years ago; he may now be dead.

RITCHIE: I suppose those occasionally big cases made your work very interesting.

ATTIG: Yes, they did.

RITCHIE: What was the general type of work you did?

ATTIG: For the first two years that I was with Middlemiss we reported employees compensation cases before a deputy commissioner of the United States Employees Compensation Commission. That work involved much medical testimony, and I got good medical reporting experience there.

RITCHIE: This was at the beginning of the New Deal, when I suppose there was a lot more federal employment.

ATTIG: Yes. Roosevelt was inaugurated in March 1933, and late in the fall of that year I went with

Middlemiss. For the next two or three years there was plenty of work for reporters. But I never got into the New Deal hearings.

RITCHIE: Did you do any work with the National Recovery Administration?

ATTIG: That's what I'm thinking of--NRA. No, I didn't do any NRA code hearing work. If they got into court for any reason, I might sometimes have gotten a court case involving an NRA code. Mostly it was general court work in the city; a will case, a murder case, a negligence case, a civil case of any kind. That was really the kind of court reporting work that I liked. But I also knew that many reporters were doing committee work on the Hill, and that's what I wanted to get into.

RITCHIE: Why were you interested in that?

ATTIG: I thought it would be good to have an all-around background. Middlemiss didn't take on that kind of work, but Hart and Dice, a reporting firm downstairs from us, did. I got to know the fellows there, and saw the type of work they were doing. It was different from court reporting, and I thought, "Well, I'd like to get into that, too."

One day George Hart asked me if I would be interested in joining his office, and I said

yes. So I left Middlemiss in good grace, and still worked for him occasionally when he had a case I could handle. But I found the committee work far more challenging; it's different from the ordinary question-and-answer work in court. I worked on the Senate committees that Hart and Dice covered, such as Banking and Currency, Interstate Commerce, Commerce and Indian Affairs. I did that for four or five years.

RITCHIE: Did the stenography or reporting firms that worked for the Senate have their territories, so to speak?

ATTIG: Well, that was patronage work, depending on political parties, and sometimes depending on the committee chairman himself. Hart was a Republican. He was the official reporter of the Republican National Committee for some years, especially when the Republicans were in power in Congress, and he retained those committees – they don't just change willy-nilly when a good man is reporting them. I remember that Senator [Burton K.] Wheeler, a Democrat, was chairman of the Interstate Commerce Committee and always had Hart report his committee hearings. There was a senator from Oklahoma, a former judge, Elmer Thomas, who had Hart

report his committee. Carter Glass, a Democratic senator from Virginia, was chairman of Banking and Currency. Hart had come from Roanoke; Glass, from Lynchburg. Hart had that committee.

RITCHIE: How did those offices handle committee work? Did they have a squad of people who worked for them?

ATTIG: Yes. Hart and Dice had an office staff of four or five reporters. If extra help was needed, they would call on somebody from outside to assist with the work. If a hearing was going to run morning and afternoon, two reporters would cover it: one would take the morning, one the afternoon. In the meantime, they were available for other work. I have worked in court in the morning and on a committee in the afternoon, or vice versa. Or I would go to the morgue for an inquest in the morning and then take a committee in the afternoon. So you might say I have worked in every forum from the morgue to the Supreme Court. We used to get calls from the Department of Justice to report arguments in the Supreme Court.

RITCHIE: Did you have to have a transcript ready to deliver to the committee by the next day?

ATTIG: Always the next day, unless it was a case that did not involve daily copy. But for committee work, yes. That's why we didn't take more than two or two and a half hours during the day on a committee.

RITCHIE: So they would alternate: one person would work first on a committee hearing and then go back to transcribe?

ATTIG: And the next day we might reverse the order. Sometimes there was nothing to do during the day. It was strange. We might get nothing one day, and the next day be flooded with calls. But that's the way we worked.

RITCHIE: Did you work for any one of those committees more than the others?

ATTIG: I think that I worked mostly on Interstate Commerce, and I liked that committee, too. The next busy one was Banking and Currency. Carter Glass was the chairman of Banking and Currency when I began to report there. It's strange that nobody knows Carter Glass these days.

RITCHIE: I understand that he had an unusual way of speaking, that he spoke only out of one side of his mouth.

ATTIG: He did. Whether it was a paralytic fault, I don't know. Men like William Gibbs McAdoo were on the committee at that time, but he retired or resigned from it shortly. Robert La Follette, Jr., was a member of the committee, and some other old timers, whose names I've forgotten by now.

RITCHIE: Was there any one of them who impressed you more than the others?

ATTIG: I don't remember now.

RITCHIE: What about Glass? He was something of a very unusual character.

ATTIG: Yes, he was.

RITCHIE: Woodrow Wilson once said "Look at the way that man speaks. Just think what he could do if he could speak out of both sides of his mouth."

ATTIG: I had no trouble with any of them; I got along with all of them. They were all friendly toward me; they knew I was from Hart's office, and that satisfied them.

RITCHIE: You worked with the Interstate Commerce Committee when Burton Wheeler was chairman; he was a very flamboyant character.

ATTIG: He was a fiery character, yes. Harry Truman was a member of that committee, too. When he was a senator I got along very well with him

on Interstate Commerce work. He was one of three members of a subcommittee in charge of an investigation of railroads. Sometimes he was the only senator present. When Wheeler didn't show up, Truman would handle the proceedings. The third man, Senator [Prentiss] Brown, seldom came to the committee hearings. Sometimes I'd arrive a little early, and so would Truman. We would have a pleasant chat for a few minutes before the witnesses began to gather. I met railroad presidents, railroad officials, transportation officials. We had lots of interesting testimony at those hearings. I'm railroad buff, and I like railroad hearings.

Another committee was Commerce, on which we didn't have too many hearings. Indian Affairs was another interesting committee. Sometimes Indians in full regalia attended the hearings, and testified, as well.

RITCHIE: Were all of these hearings public?

ATTIG: Yes.

RITCHIE: Did you ever go into a closed door or executive session hearing?

ATTIG: I don't recall that. There may have been one or two. The only closed proceedings I remember were when I worked in the courts. I reported

many grand juries. Grand juries are not normally reported, but in some cases they are. One grand jury that I remember particularly involved the liquor business in Washington. Another involved the fixing of prices by concrete producers. The investigation of the American Medical Association was the first one I worked on. I think that was the longest one of them all.

RITCHIE: Sometimes that information would be very valuable to people on the outside.

ATTIG: I suppose so.

RITCHIE: Was there ever any pressure of people trying to get transcripts?

ATTIG: No, because they knew we were sworn to secrecy on the grand jury. I don't think that anybody ever bothered me. Nobody even approached me on it. On one or two of the investigations we were in and out a back door; and there were courthouse deputy marshals around, too.

RITCHIE: What about the committee hearings. I suppose there would have been some advantage in seeing the transcripts of those before they were published by the Government Printing Office.

ATTIG: We supplied the rough transcripts to the committee every morning, and if they wanted to

supply them to anyone else, that was their business.

RITCHIE: Did a company like Hart and Dice ever sell stenographic transcripts?

ATTIG: Yes. If it was an open hearing, there was no objection.

RITCHIE: So, in effect it was just an early copy before it had been printed.

ATTIG: Sometimes the hearings were never printed, but most of the time they would appear in print.

RITCHIE: Were the witnesses given the chance to correct copy?

ATTIG: In some cases, yes. I don't know what happened to them after we delivered the copy. I know that on the Mexican Water Treaty Hearings – I had become a free-lance reporter by then – we supplied transcript nightly. Three reporters worked on that hearing. We supplied practically running copy all day and at night we sent it to the chief reporter of the hearing, Earl Pendell. His office was in the Evans Building, and he'd be getting out his portion; and Chester Wilfong and I would be getting out ours in the Columbian Building. When Chester had finished if he were ahead of me, he would give me his copy. I would finish up mine, and

take both of them to the Willard Hotel to a Mr. Shaw there. I think he was chief counsel for one group. A number of men were in the room – it would be late at night, too – preparing for the next day's testimony. They would have the transcripts spread among themselves, picking out the important parts of the testimony and underlining them. When I arrived with Wilfong's and mine they would say, "Oh, thanks; we're just waiting for that. We'll take it. Good night." What they did with it after that I don't know. The committee got its own copy the next morning.

RITCHIE: Were any big Congressional investigations going on at the time when you were working with the committees?

ATTIG: I don't know how big they were, but all hearings in a way are investigations. I don't recall anything in particular except the railroad investigations, which was important at that time – it made the newspapers. This Mexican Water Treaty was an important hearing, but I don't think it was anything that demanded worldwide or nationwide attention. It involved supplying water to Mexico from the Colorado River and its tributaries, based upon so many thousand or

million feet of water that passed Lee Ferry, Arizona. Mexico was to get so much water from such and such a point; above that point it was American water. From that point the amount for Mexico was negotiated between the two countries. That was back in the '40's, which was some thirty years ago.

RITCHIE: Then in 1941 you decided to go independent.

ATTIG: Yes. The hearing work was principally what I was doing then.

RITCHIE: Was there any reason why you decided to leave Hart and Dice?

ATTIG: To make more money on my own on the outside. I also worked on the House side then, mostly on appropriations.

RITCHIE: If the positions were patronage, how did an independent reporter get work?

ATTIG: The House committee work was handled in a different way. House hearings were reported by a House Corps of Official Committee Reporters. When they were too busy and couldn't cover all the committees they had a list of reporters from whom they could choose. I got on their list and would be called by Bill Day, their office manager: "Can you cover this committee today at 2 o'clock?" "Sure." That is the way we did it.

RITCHIE: Is there any particular reason why the House has official reporters?

ATTIG: No, I don't know the reason. The Senate does not have such a system.

RITCHIE: Does the House still have a permanent corps?

ATTIG: Yes. I think in recent times much more of the work is being done by independent reporters. I don't know how much committee work is done by the House staff and how much by private Reporters.

RITCHIE: Did you find any difference between reporting for the House and reporting for the Senate?

ATTIG: Not much. It was about the same. Sometimes there were more members of a committee in the House than there were in the Senate, but the hearings were conducted in about the same manner.

RITCHIE: Most of your work was with the Appropriations Committee?

ATTIG: A lot of it was, on the House side. Once in a while I would manage to get a committee that would afford me the chance to sell copy. I remember that Representative Fritz Langham, of Texas, was chairman of a committee. The hearing related to post-war housing. It lasted about two weeks, and I could sell copy. Many people

were interested in having transcript, and I would sell copy to them.

RITCHIE: The Appropriations Committee in general seems more difficult work than other committees, in types of things being discussed, and the statistics quoted.

ATTIG: Appropriations was a difficult committee. The others were not quite so bad. There were subjects I couldn't understand completely, but I'd learn through reporting what was going on.

RITCHIE: I would think that accuracy would be especially important when you are dealing with so many numbers. Did you ever have any problems with catching all that was going on?

ATTIG: No, no. I think that with experience you catch on very, very early.

RITCHIE: Did you ever sit in on any of the markup sessions?

ATTIG: No, in those days they were closed. One investigation on which I reported was not a Congressional committee hearing; it was the military investigation of the German saboteurs who came to the United States in 1942 – the fellows who were landed by submarine on Long Island and in Florida. There were three reporters on that investigation, and I happened

to be chosen as one. Chester Wilfong, my colleague at Hart and Dice, and another reporter from outside were the other two. The investigation lasted two weeks. It was a highly secret proceeding. Guards were posted at the doors, policemen at the elevator entrances, and so on.

At the end of the hearings we had to turn our notes over to the FBI. That was really an interesting hearing. The eleven men accused were seated along a wall. They were the defendants in the hearing, and we heard the testimony of each of them. We also reported the arguments on appeal in the Supreme Court when the matter went there on a question of *habeas corpus*.

Mr. John Edward Weeks has written a book entitled *Operation Pastries*. Many years ago, before its publication, he wrote to me, asking for my recollections of the trial. I told him I had taken an oath of secrecy from which I had not been released. However, I told him something of the atmosphere of the trial and the set-up of the room.

It wasn't very long after the close of the trial that I was in New York, visiting. As I

was about to board an elevated train, I bought a newspaper and saw a screaming headline about all but two of the men having been electrocuted in the District of Columbia jail before dawn that day. I thought, "My gosh! How terrible." But then I also thought: "Still, American boys might have been killed as a result of the activity of these men." So that was one way to handle it. The two who were reprieved were sentenced to life imprisonment. George Dash was the name of one; the other was Ernest Burger. Dash was the ringleader. In return for giving vital information and aiding the authorities in locating other men, who had scattered, they were accorded relief, you might say, of not having to be electrocuted. But everyone was astonished that they had been put to death in the electric chair, quietly. Nobody knew what day it would happen, but it happened, and only a short time after the conclusion of the hearings. Roosevelt wanted to get it off his mind, I guess.

RITCHIE: In that same period, during the war years, you also were court reporting in Baltimore?

ATTIG: I did some work in Baltimore. A friend of mine was contacted by a firm in Baltimore to

do some work, and when he couldn't handle it all he recommended me to take on some of the work. I was called one day: "Would you be interested?" And I said: "Sure, I'll come over." It was very interesting work. The federal courts in Baltimore are a little different from the federal courts in Washington. The federal courts here at that time handled many cases that ordinarily would have been handled by a state court. In Baltimore they handled strictly federal work. Now, since the adoption of the Superior Court system in Washington, all that work has been transferred to them, and the federal court in Washington handles strictly federal work. That's the way it was in Baltimore. I did some reporting of admiralty trials in Baltimore. They are rare in Washington. Baltimore being a large seaport city, the federal court tries numerous admiralty cases. They're somewhat different from the ordinary run-of-the-mill cases. You get a lot of nautical and shipping terms. I reported a few NRA cases in Baltimore, but I handled only two or three that were somewhat lengthy.

In 1945, the federal courts switched to official reporters. The reporters then came onto the government payroll and were under the jurisdiction of the judges themselves. I was one of twelve who were appointed in Washington.

RITCHIE: It must have been quite an honor; I'm sure there must have been a lot of competition.

ATTIG: I didn't even know some of my new colleagues; they had worked "uptown" and I had worked "downtown." But we all worked together very well.

One thing was different; we had no office quarters in the courthouse. The courthouse here at that time wasn't big enough. Three or four judges themselves were housed in the old Standard Oil building on Constitution Avenue at Third Street and in the Municipal Court building were two more federal judges. But nothing was provided for the reporters. We had to rent our quarters in private buildings. After a while, when the new courthouse was built, the reporters got their offices in the building. But I was gone by then.

RITCHIE: You said there were "uptown" reporters and "downtown" reporters. What was the difference?

ATTIG: The uptown reporters were those who worked, you might say, above Fourteenth Street or on Pennsylvania Avenue. The downtown reporters were those who Worked in the Columbian Building, or the Appeals Building, close to the courts at the corner of Fifth and F. The Columbian Building, on Fifth Street, was the hive for most of the downtown reporters. The uptown reporters reported hearings in government offices uptown: the Federal Trade Commission, Federal Communication Commission, the Interstate Commerce Commission, and so on.

RITCHIE: You stayed, then, with the federal courts from 1945 to 1951.

ATTIG: In 1951, I was invited to join the corps of official reporters in the Senate. I knew Mr. Murphy, who was the chief reporter, slightly, not too well. But one day he stopped me at a church gathering, and asked if I were going to be detained long – we were greeting a new pastor – and I said, "No, I'll be out very shortly." He said, "I'll wait for you."

When I came out he told me that Fred Carlson, who had been a Senate reporter for twenty years, and whom I knew, was in poor health, and the office was going to need a reporter

beginning in January. This was in November. I said, "Yes, I'd be interested to come." So he asked me to meet with him and John Rhodes, the next senior man, on the following Sunday afternoon, to discuss the matter. Rhodes knew me better than Murphy did.

I agreed to begin working for the Senate the first of the year. And that's what I did. Carlson didn't live long; he died in the first month, January. That was the end of Carlson and the beginning of me.

RITCHIE: Murphy, who hired you, was an interesting fellow. He was there for some sixty years.

ATTIG: That's right; sixty-four years, I think. He went with the Senate in 1896. His father was a Senate reporter before him, for something like fifty-nine years. They were a part of the Murphy family, who were a clan, you might say, which began its senatorial existence with a Dennis F. Murphy, whose patron was John C. Calhoun. Somebody had called Dennis Murphy to Calhoun's attention, and Calhoun was instrumental in getting him on the Senate staff as one who could record word-for-word. But, anyhow, James W. Murphy had been with the Senate sixty-four years when he died.

He worked almost up to the last month. He didn't report all of that time; he was the chief editor for many years and knew the Senate operations. He could clarify any parliamentary point himself. He was a kindly man. I had no trouble getting along with him or with the rest of the staff. When you join the staff, you're part of the family. That's what I found, and what I liked. You didn't have to run out to this job or that; all the work was in the Senate Chamber or in the reporters' office. I was there almost twenty-four years.

RITCHIE: And you worked exclusively on the Senate floor?

ATTIG: On the Senate floor.

RITCHIE: There are about how many reporters, on the average.

ATTIG: Well, there were eight men on the staff. But Murphy and Rhodes did not take notes, although Rhodes did occasionally help out. The other six of us were the Reporters of Debates.

RITCHIE: It must have been quite a day, the day you first stepped out onto the floor.

ATTIG: Well, at first you didn't go by yourself; you went with one of the experienced men. Rhodes did that with me for quite some time, maybe the first four or five months. He took notes, and

I took notes, but I would dictate them, and after the first week I was catching on. During that time Murphy would catch me, too. He would say, "You don't do it that way, you do it this way." So I learned from him, as well. There were hundreds of forms you had to learn in handling a bill as it passed through the Senate, and what you would do with them as you dictated. You learned them by heart; you had to. Then you were on your own. After the first year I was getting along quite well. The work was altogether different, there was no question-and-answer reporting, except as one senator or another would be in debate. Then there would be back-and-forth colloquy. As I listened over the radio during the Panama Canal treaty debate, I could see myself reporting once again on the floor. I think some of the niceties that Murphy would have insisted upon are no longer followed. For instance, we always referred to a Senator as "the Senator from Utah . . . the Senator from Nebraska . . . Does the Senator," and so on. But now it has turned into a direct address: "Do you?" . . . "What do you think of this?" "You haven't answered my question."

Murphy held strictly to the line on that. He would tell us, "No, you don't do that in the Senate. In the Senate everybody theoretically addresses the chair. You're talking to the Chair, not to one another. You may look at one another, but you are always theoretically addressing the Chair." One day back in the late 1800's, I think it was, we discovered in the old Records that another senator rose to gently chastise two senators having a colloquy with "you" and "I." He explained the rule, and the offending senators acquiesced . . . at least for a while.

Some things like that I miss. In the old days senators didn't talk that way. But the gist of it is still there.

RITCHIE: And if they did talk that way, Murphy would set the record straight?

ATTIG: He would straighten it out in the record. In fact, when Drescher was chief reporter and I was first under him, if I had to go over the remarks late in the afternoon, if he got too burdened with the *Record*, I would change those things. I think he did too. So, if you read the *Record* you wouldn't find "you's"; we corrected the *Record* ourselves in that way. We

didn't change the substance of the remarks; we changed them to conform with the style of Senate debate – Senate language.

RITCHIE: Could you describe the average working day of a Senate reporter?

ATTIG: The Senate used to meet at noon. When I first went there in 1952, the first order of business was what is called the Morning Hour. They still have it, but it may occur at any time of the day now and sometimes it is dispensed with. But in the Morning Hour, senators would rise in their places and be recognized by the Chair. They might spend from five to ten minutes reading a statement into the *Record* or speaking on some subject. The Morning Hour would theoretically last until two o'clock, sometimes it wouldn't. At whatever time the Morning Hour ended the Senate would revert to the regular business of the day. At two o'clock, according to the rules, the Senate reverts to its normal business. The Chair would say, "The hour of two o'clock having arrived, the Chair lays before the Senate the unfinished business"--which was really the legislative business before the Senate. But then he would stop, the legislative business would be printed in

the *Record*, and he would then recognize the senators who had not yet been recognized in the Morning Hour, and their material would go in following the two o'clock announcement. But in time that wore away and that isn't done anymore.

Nowadays, Senator Robert Byrd, the Majority Leader, will say, "Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that there be a period for the transaction of routine morning business, not to exceed fifteen minutes" – or "thirty minutes." At the end of thirty minutes the Chair will announce: "The Chair lays before the Senate . . ." and if anybody has anything to go in after that he can just leave it at the desk, which is not strictly orthodox, but it's the practice now. Then the Senate would go on with its regular legislative business. There would be the reporting of those proceedings, which would continue until the Senate had finished for the day, or until the Majority Leader had consulted with speakers who still had amendments to offer. The leader would ask unanimous consent that an amendment be laid before the Senate, and it be the unfinished business for the next day. For many years the Senate recessed or adjourned

at a reasonable hour. We seldom sat until seven or eight o'clock at night, unless the Senate was going to finish a big bill and get it out of the way. There's more late sitting these days than there was when I started out.

RITCHIE: As a reporter, what was your routine on the floor?

ATTIG: I would go on the floor once an hour. We had specified times. For a time I took from twelve to twelve-ten or one to one-ten. They usually put the new man on for the first ten minutes to make it easy for him to get used to the work. I would return to the office at the end of my ten minutes and begin to dictate to the Dictaphone what I had taken in those ten minutes.

Immediately the transcribers would pick up my belt or cylinder and start to transcribe it. As they finished typing the pages, they would start coming back to my desk. By the time I finished my dictation of the ten-minute turn I would have the whole copy before me, or I could work on a part of it and the rest of it would be brought to me as the transcribers finished it.

RITCHIE: Then, after you dictated it . . .

ATTIG: I would revise it myself, in accordance with what I knew happened on the floor, and I would then turn it over to Murphy or Rhodes. Then they would go over my copy, not only for correcting the grammar, but also in case there was something that they learned from somebody else's turn that I might not have understood. Then they might have to correct what I had dictated. Or Murphy might ask me: "Are you sure this is right." And I would say: "That's what I heard, Mr. Murphy." "ACRR right, OK"; that was Murphy: gruff voice but a kind heart. Rhodes would do the same thing. We also had a lot of interchange among us reporters. We'd ask, "What is this we're working on? A joint resolution or a concurrent?" We wouldn't know. Senators would simply talk about "the resolution." If we didn't know what happened at the beginning of the debate, or what was going on, we would have to ask: "Did you have such-and-such in your turn." Or if I wanted the spelling of a name, I might call around the office, and we would get it straightened out. That was a part of the routine.

RITCHIE: Did senators ever give you prepared copy of their speeches?

ATTIG: Oh yes, Gregor MacPherson always used to say, "That's a statesman speaking out there." Anybody who read a statement was a "statesman."

RITCHIE: Once you had transcribed the record, and Murphy had checked it, was the copy sent to the senator's office?

ATTIG: Yes, if he wanted it. If he didn't, it didn't go; it would simply stay in the office until it was time to go to the Printing Office. The Printing Office would begin to get copy from the first part of the day late in the afternoon. If senators took the copy, we asked them to have it back reasonably early, by four or five o'clock. And it would come back. After a while they didn't come in themselves; they sent assistants to look it over.

RITCHIE: Some of them would come in themselves?

ATTIG: Yes. Senator [Mike] Mansfield, before he became Majority Leader, would come in and go over his own copy. Senator [William] Promise would go over his. But other senators had their administrative assistants go over it. Administrative assistants began to get more power during the years.

Joseph P. McMurray was one administrative assistant who later became chairman of the

Federal Home Loan Bank Board. Later still he became a member of the board and consultant of the Bowery Savings Bank or New York, the largest savings institution in the United States. He and Mr. Murphy were very friendly, always joshing each other.

Mr. Murphy was a great joshers of people. He and Senator O'Mahoney were great friends. When Mr. Murphy's sixtieth anniversary in the Senate was approaching, MacPherson and I were talking it over. We said "Murphy ought to be recognized by the senators in his sixtieth year." So MacPherson suggested we talk to O'Mahoney, because he was a good friend of Murphy's. "By all means.." he said, "we should do that." He said, "You fellows get together and set the date, and we'll have it arranged on some pretext that Murphy will come to the floor.

That's what happened. It was an evening session, too, and that tickled O'Mahoney because he knew he could get the floor in the evening and make a good speech about Murphy.

So Murphy was called to the floor on the pretext that he was wanted at the desk; that the Parliamentarian wanted to talk to him about something in the Record. He got up

from his chair and went to the floor. Some of us managed to sneak out from the office. There was Murphy sitting in a chair. Somebody had told him to take a seat. O'Mahoney had submitted a resolution which was the business before the Senate. It was necessary to have a resolution on which to act. After O'Mahoney finished, other senators began to praise Murphy to the skies.

Senator Morse, I remember, said, "If anybody's going to put words in my mouth, I'd rather have Mr. Murphy do it than anybody else." Senator Lyndon Johnson made some very kind remarks. Senator Monroney made a comment about newspapers, he having been a newspaper man. He spoke about Mr. Murphy putting the Record to bed every night. Some speeches were long, some were short, but all were in praise of Mr. Murphy. All of us reporters were glad he got the commendation he did.

RITCHIE: I suppose Murphy was quite taken aback by that?

ATTIG: I think he was. When the tributes were over, he rose from his seat, bowed to the senators, and left the Chamber amid great applause. That was Murphy for you.

RITCHIE: Was he the type of person who ever reminisced about his service?

ATTIG: He reminisced to me sometimes. He lived on Primrose Street, in Chevy Chase, not far from where I live. Once in a while he'd ask me to stop by his house to pick up some papers if he was not coming to the office that day. We would chat for a few minutes. He would reminisce about the days when he was a youngster in the Senate. Once he showed me an old Senate desk that had been discarded as too old to be of further service. I've forgotten whose it was now, but he had it up in his room. The senators had given it to him. But when you had a private chat with him he would talk about the old days, the old-time senators.

He was on the staff when senators were elected by the state legislatures. In 1913, they began to be elected popularly. He would comment on the difference in the type of senator we were getting. I never knew the old type of senator, but he would talk about the change.

RITCHIE: Was he pleased with the change?

ATTIG: I think so, but I couldn't be sure. In those days they had, what they called, the giants of the Senate. Some of them had been elected by

their state legislatures and remained as senators under the new system.

RITCHIE: He was a man with a lot of history behind him.

ATTIG: He had sixty-four Senate years behind him. He was a graduate of Georgetown University. I think he had a Master's degree in English, and that was probably how he got his ability to edit properly. I learned much of my editing from Mr. Murphy. John Rhodes advised us younger reporters to read the *Record* copy after Mr. Murphy had been over it so we would see how it is done. Of course, Rhodes was no mean editor himself. He could edit a transcript in A-number-one shape. But Murphy's was the final word. He used a big black pencil, would hunch over his desk., and smoke one cigarette after another. He was an inveterate cigarette smoker.

RITCHIE: I read a quotation about the Senate reporters; that they were "the world's fastest shorthand writers."

ATTIG: I don't know whether we were or not, but it's nice to have that compliment.

RITCHIE: Was being a Senate reporter more demanding than being a court reporter?

ATTIG: Yes, I would say so. In the Senate we couldn't take the liberty of stopping a senator and saying,

"I didn't get that Senator." In the courts the reporter should do that. In the Senate we made a note on the side of our pad, and when our turn was up we could go to the senator, if he wasn't speaking, sit next to him, and say, "At this point you said such-and-so, and what's the word I'm missing here?" He would gladly fill it in. It might have been a strange word. That was one demanding thing. We tried to get our record as complete as we could on the floor.

Also, we wanted the copy they were reading from. If it were a book, we could generally get the book. But if it were a document or a paper that the senator was going to keep for himself, we wanted to borrow it. Some of the newer senators were rather reluctant to give it to us, but the older ones would readily give it to us.

I would say, "Look, Senator, we've got to have this or else leave it out of the record. You read that pretty fast, and we want to get it exactly as you read it."

"Well, OK, OK." He would give it to us, and we would get it back to him as soon as we could – senators were pleased to know that kind of service was available.

Often a senator like [Sam] Ervin would come to the floor with a briefcase bulging with law books, with pages marked and inserts in them. He would read, and read, and read. When we were going to leave the Chamber, when our time was up, and if he thought of the reporter, he would say: "I read from here, from here, and from here. You can take the books with you."

He was a thoughtful man. At one time he was a state judge. I think it depends on what one's previous experience was. If he were a judge or a skilled trial lawyer, he knew what a reporter was there for, and he would always assist the reporter. Some senators were rather reluctant to give us papers that we needed, but we had to either demand them, or get them later. Some administrative assistants to new senators, who themselves were new, would say, "No, I can't let you have that." They had to find out what we were doing. They had to learn what we were doing, and what would happen if the contents of the papers that were read did not get into the *Record*. So then they, too, began to cooperate.

RITCHIE: So, sometimes you had to leave things out of the *Record*?

ATTIG: Well, we didn't actually leave it out of the *Record*. It got into the *Record* somehow. We'd call the senator's administrative assistant and say, "If you don't let us have it, it will have to stay out of the *Record*. We couldn't report exactly what he read from something from which he read very fast." Then they would say, "We'll put it in when we get the *Record*; we'll fix it up." Gradually the practice of their editing their own senator's remarks came into being. They were not to change the substance – they were not to change a senator's remarks for instance – if he were answering the question of another senator because if they changed the question or answer around, it made the other man's remarks look foolish. We told them they couldn't do that. Sometimes they would add a whole page, and we would say, "You can't do that; the other senator didn't have a chance to hear that. He's answering what was asked him on the floor, so you have to let it go at that." Then they would say, "Well, we will take it out." They had to learn the rules the same as we did on our part.

RITCHIE: What happens when you're reporting and the debate is going on and several people are trying to talk at once.

ATTIG: Well, you can pretty nearly keep up with it, if it's not long or too fast. But when it becomes a shouting match, you just can't do it.

One day I was reporting and Senator [Philip] Hart was presiding, two senators were arguing back and forth across the entire width of the Chamber; a Republican and a Democratic senator were having a heated colloquy. It got to the point where I couldn't distinguish between them, so I had to motion to the Chair by shrugging and holding up my hand. The Chair banged the gavel and said, "Gentlemen, gentlemen. The reporter is having difficulty; you're both talking at once. Even I am having trouble understanding what you're saying." So they accommodated and apologized to the Chair and conducted themselves in a more orderly manner. When I was leaving the Chamber after my turn, I stepped up to Hart and said, "Thanks, Senator." He said, "Don't worry. I don't see how you fellows manage to get that kind of talk. Any time you have such difficulty, let us know." You can see who's backing

you up. Even the senators themselves will apologize to you.

Senator [Hugh] Scott of Pennsylvania was very helpful. This was not in colloquy necessarily, but when he would speak on a subject and try to draw a parallel, he might use a Chinese expression – he's a connoisseur of Chinese art, and can speak Chinese, to a degree – he would always sit down and write out on paper what he had said, giving you the Chinese spelling. He would walk up to you with it before you left the floor. You would look at it and say, "Oh, so that's what he said." Then when I left the floor, I would always go up to him and say, "Thanks, Senator, you saved my life," or something like that, and he would laugh. That was Senator Scott for you. He was always helpful.

RITCHIE: Is it permissible to include foreign language material?

ATTIG: Oh, surely, if it was spoken. Senators would always translate it as a part of their remarks. But I don't speak any foreign language now. I used to know French, but not anymore. I didn't know Chinese.

RITCHIE: You mentioned before about the two senators talking on either side of the room. I know they have microphones, but it must have been hard to hear somebody if you were not standing near him in the Chamber.

ATTIG: If they had good voices it wasn't hard. The Chamber, acoustically, is pretty well equipped. But they were talking through their mikes, as I remember, and that made it louder and pretty tough. So all I could do was to show the Chair I was not getting it.

RITCHIE: Could you identify all the speakers by their voices?

ATTIG: You had to be able to know the voices, and the backs of their heads. If you were sitting in the back row reporting a senator, and somebody down in the front hollered, "Mr. President," you had to know who he was and try to get closer as soon as you could, so that you could hear him better. But by voices, you could tell.

RITCHIE: I suppose that is something you acquire.

ATTIG: You acquire that by experience.

RITCHIE: But it must be somewhat intimidating when you're first getting started.

ATTIG: Well, it was. But you learn pretty fast. Especially at the beginning of a new session,

or a new Congress, when so many new senators are appearing for the first time. We had trouble distinguishing between Senator [George] McGovern and Senator [Howard] Cannon at one time – I don't know why – and getting the names in the *Record* correctly. But gradually we got to know them.

RITCHIE: Were you ever called on to read back your stenographic notes?

ATTIG: Yes. You always prayed that you wouldn't be called upon, but you were once in a while. That usually happened after a hot colloquy. We would be asked to read the *Record*, or go to the office and get the reporter who took that part to come to the floor. If it were I, I would say to myself, "God, what does he want now?" So I'd go out to the floor. Sometimes they didn't suspend the proceedings, and I have sat there waiting to be called to read; but pretty soon they would have forgotten what they wanted, and I'd go back to the office. But I have had to stand and read to them. Fortunately, it wasn't much. I know that some of the reporters have had more to read than I ever had. One of the new reporters, Eleanor Ross, was called upon

to read quite a long colloquy one day last year. She read it well though.

RITCHIE: It must be a little difficult.

ATTIG: Yes, to take it right out of the notes and get the setting in which they were talking. I read mine all right. Proxmire was a tough guy to report; he still is. [Hubert] Humphrey was another one. When I first went there, Humphrey himself had been a senator only four years, and the fellows used to kid me and say, "Wait until he gets Humphrey." It was the beginning of my first month in the Senate. Humphrey didn't appear at that session until late in the month, which was why they kept telling me, "Oh, wait until you get Humphrey; wait until you get Humphrey." Well, he wasn't too bad, but he was bad enough. Proxmire was one of the fast talkers, too. He may be better now.

Wilfong told me something that was useful to me. He said, "I've discovered a trick about Humphrey – he repeats himself. You know he's a fast talker, but he usually goes back and repeats something. In that way you can fill in what he said before, if you didn't get it the first time." That worked out pretty well. Humphrey never had any

complaints; neither did Proxmire. They always claimed, "Well, that's good reporting, just what I said."

RITCHIE: Did the reporters have certain senators that they singled out as difficult and sort of joked about?

ATTIG: Sure, we joked about them. Senator [Allen] Ellender was one of the easiest to report. Senator [Wayne] Morse was good to report. He was very careful in his speech and didn't hurry. I always liked Morse. Most of the rest of the senators were that way. Mansfield was a rather deliberate speaker, but with not much expression to his voice. Senator [Thomas] Kuchel in his day was a good speaker. Senator [George "Molly"] Malone of Nevada was a good speaker. His successor though, Cannon, can really whip it off sometimes. It depends on what they're talking about. If they know their subject, they are pretty fast.

RITCHIE: Did you have any who were particularly tongue-tied, or had more trouble with their grammar than others?

ATTIG: Senator [Olin] Johnston of South Carolina was one who could mash up the words, but he was a

kindly man. You forgave them if they did speak carelessly because they were so kind to you. I had no trouble with them but you had to correct them. Senator [Milton] Young of North Dakota was a man I liked very much. He didn't speak very often, but when he did he would stutter. But he had gotten over that. Maybe the longer he has been a senator, the more he has learned to speak carefully. He would read a lot and give you his paper without your asking for it. Personally, he's a nice fellow and I liked him.

RITCHIE: Did you have trouble with people who used the wrong words at times?

ATTIG: Yes, they all do that at times.

RITCHIE: Did you have to figure it out afterwards?

ATTIG: Not if you knew what they intended to say. Oh, sometimes, they would misspeak themselves and you would know right away that something was wrong. So you would put a mark on the margin to check it out later. You could go up to the senator and ask him: "Is this right? Is this correct?" "Oh, no. I should have said so-and-so. Thanks very much."

One time I had to go back to the lobby behind the chamber to find the senator from Oklahoma, Mr. [Robert] Kerr. He had spoken on a subject related to oil, and I had some doubts about what he had said. So I went out and read it to him.

He was busy talking to somebody, but he, too, was appreciative of the reporters' work. When he saw me coming toward him he said, "Yes, sir, what can I do for you?" and he stopped his conversation with the other person.

I said, "Well, I don't want to bother you too much, but I have this in my notes. Is this correct?" and I read it to him. He said, "Yes, that's absolutely correct."

They were always glad to help you. I found that to be true.

RITCHIE: Did you ever have any senators with complaints about things that got into the *Record*?

ATTIG: Oh, Senator [Barry] Goldwater, in one of my last years there, wrote a letter to Charles Drescher, the chief reporter. Drescher was away at the time, it was over the Christmas holidays. Goldwater had been reading the *Record* and found something that he said he

had not said. So we checked our notes, I didn't have any of the part Goldwater complained about, but some of the other reporters did. We found that he had said it, and we pointed out to him where we thought he might have been mistaken. A short time later a letter came back from Goldwater in which he acknowledged that we were right and he was wrong.

RITCHIE: You didn't have any senators come up to you with complaints the day after the *Record* appeared?

ATTIG: Well, there might have been a word or two that was wrong. We had frequent corrections of the *Record* – small things, minor things. Perhaps the senator had misspoken. He might say, "I should have said this" or "I should have said that." Or, "This figure should have been this, and this should have been that." We would say, "All right, we'll make the correction and it will appear in the permanent *Record* correctly." That was all; not any complaints about our work, just a correction of the *Record*.

RITCHIE: It's nice to have the cushion that the permanent *Record* could be changed.

ATTIG: That's right.

RITCHIE: Has that been significantly reduced in any way?

ATTIG: No, I think it is about the same.

RITCHIE: Every once in a while I've heard stories that senators have made incoherent and sometimes belligerent remarks on the floor that they've later regretted and had removed from the *Record*.

ATTIG: They can do that. I don't think there is any objection on the part of any other senator, because every senator does it from time to time. Once Senator Morse got angry at Senator [Homer] Capehart, I think he referred to the senator as a "rancid tub of butter." I don't know whether Capehart challenged Morse on the floor or not, but Morse apologized, and the remark was stricken from the *Record* eventually. Morse was speaking in the heat of debate.

Morse was a man who stuck to his own opinions, though. He was an independent for sure. At the end of my first year, at the end of the 82nd Congress, he left the Republican party, but didn't join the Democrats immediately; he wanted to be an independent.

Every Friday afternoon he made what he called "The Report of the Independent Party." At first he placed his chair in the middle of the center aisle, but that didn't last long; it was just to demonstrate Morse's independence – that he didn't belong to either party. Eventually the Democrats accepted him into their party, and he took a seat on the Democratic side of the aisle. I think he retained most of his seniority on committees. He was an independent man.

RITCHIE: Did you ever have any questions about the wisdom of including some sections? Did the reporters ever contact senators' offices if they were nervous about some of the things the senators might have said in the heat of debate?

ATTIG: No, we left that to the administrative assistants. Sometimes we might call it to their attention. We would tell the administrative assistant, if he came into the office, "Read that part over carefully and see if you think it should stay in." He might agree with us, or he might say, "No, let it stand."

RITCHIE: What would happen to remarks that were removed from the transcript – say remarks that were not included? Is there any copy of that kept?

ATTIG: I think we kept them for quite a while, maybe a year, or to the end of that Congress, or that session. If no question was raised, we put them in our storage room. We had a room down in the basement of the Capitol where we might have stored them. Nothing ever came of it. We always kept them for a while.

RITCHIE: So then, in the overall, you would say that the *Congressional Record* is a very accurate and reliable source?

ATTIG: I would say so.

RITCHIE: I know that one criticism had always been that there is so much material in the *Record* that senators did not say.

ATTIG: We did not put in what they did not say. We had a hard enough job getting into the *Record* what they did say. It was their administrative assistants or secretaries, who would come in to look over the remarks, who might have put it in.

RITCHIE: I was thinking about all of the additions that are submitted and remarks that were laid on the desk, but were never actually read on the floor.

ATTIG: Oh, that's what we call "backdoor stuff." Now that has all been changed. Recently, that kind of material is put in with what is called a "bullet" mark. I don't know if people recognize the bullet mark or know what it stands for, but I know what it means now: it's material put in the *Record* that was not said on the floor. That has been done in the last few years – maybe last eight or nine years. Senators bring things to the Secretary's desk, and anybody there who receives it is supposed to initial it. Then it is all given to us. It is included in the Record on the Senate side as "Additional Statements." We had nothing to do with that, except to look out for something that should not go into the Record, something uncomplimentary about another senator. We were supposed to just give it the scan, but if it is uncomplimentary we call it to the senator's attention, and tell them to take it out.

RITCHIE: In other words, if they introduce an editorial from a newspaper that is critical of a colleague, that's not permissible?

ATTIG: If it's not unkind, we let it stand. If it's very critical we might call it to their

attention and say, "What do you want us to do with that?" They may say, "Well, strike out that part and indicate that something has been left out of the editorial." We did that.

RITCHIE: Does it frequently occur that a senator will make a few remarks and then have a prepared statement that he won't actually say on the floor, but which will appear in the *Record* as one long speech?

ATTIG: Yes. That is not included in the "bullet" material. If he reads any part of it, we will put the whole thing in the *Record* as if he had read it.

RITCHIE: But other than that, the actual words, and particularly the debate between two senators, is pretty close to the original?

ATTIG: Oh, yes; that is reporting what is said.

RITCHIE: What kind of dealings do the Reporters of Debate have with newspaper reporters? Do they come down to get early material?

ATTIG: Oh, yes. They will say, "Can I see Proxmire's remarks," "Can I see so-and-so's remarks." If it's something that is newsworthy, that is when they will come in. In that way they will get a little earlier handling of the *Record*. They do that, yes.

RITCHIE: Do they try to catch things that are said that have been removed by the senators?

ATTIG: We can tell them, "The Senator has that part now; you can't have it." They may come back later, and then they can get what it has been changed to. Of course, if they say, "it isn't what I heard on the floor, we will say, "We can't help that; the Senator has the right to change his remarks." Yes, the newspaper men are right there to get anything that has been said. They want to get it into their own notes.

RITCHIE: What about filibusters, around-the-clock sessions, and late night sessions? How did the reporters handle things like that?

ATTIG: That had been going on since before I went to the Senate. I got my first dose of it the second year I was there. The Tidelands Oil bill was before the Senate. The states claimed that they had jurisdiction over the tidelands for three miles at sea, and some states claimed jurisdiction for more miles. I have forgotten the details of the legislation, but I remember we sat around the clock two nights, and were just about ready to fall. Mr. Rhodes had a talk with the majority and minority leaders on the subject, not that we

were going to lay down on the job, but we wanted permission to hire additional help. It was readily given.

So then we called in extra help. What we did then was to sandwich in the new reporters between the regular reporters. We went on two shifts. While one shift was home, for twelve hours, the other shift would be working on the second shift. There was always a full complement of reporters, three regulars and three temporaries. As I recall, we had six additional reporters working on the staff. For a while that worked out all right.

Then we came into another filibuster, the civil rights filibuster. The senators had to stay close to the Chamber. Quorum calls came frequently. Some senators would arrive in the Chamber wearing slippers and dressing gowns. There were other filibusters, but eventually Mike Mansfield put a stop to it. He said there was no sense in it. So the Senate began to stop working at a reasonable hour. We'd go home about 9 o'clock and come back the next morning at ten or eleven o'clock and start over again. In the meantime, the majority leader would be working

with the minority leader to get an agreement to limit the debate before a vote on an amendment.

The filibusters as I remember them broke down. I don't think there has been an around-the-clock session for a good many years. The Senate has had late sessions, and early beginnings, but not around-the-clock.

Usually when they came in early in the morning only the senators who were going to speak on the subject at that time would be there – maybe five or six senators. They would come in early, and when their work was done they didn't come back to the floor unless there was to be a vote at a certain hour. Nowadays the Senate will agree to have no votes after a certain hour of the day, or not to begin voting until a certain hour of the day. That has helped considerably, too.

RITCHIE: Lyndon Johnson seemed to manipulate the hours of the Senate more than most of the leaders. He had them working late and odd hours.

ATTIG: Yes. We had several filibusters under his leadership. I remember that after one long filibuster he got a unanimous consent agreement to limit debate on the remaining

amendments. He came to the desk and said to the Parliamentarian, Charlie Watkins: "We're going to table everything including the Lord's Prayer."

When a cloture motion has been entered and agreed to, every senator is allotted one hour. Most senators don't use their hour. Then the Senate takes up the amendments that have been filed up to the time of the agreement on cloture. All amendments at the desk at that time can be considered once cloture is imposed. When the last one is disposed of, the Senate then votes on the bill. That is what Johnson meant when he said they were going to move to table everything; they were not going to allow debate on it. The amendment is stated, and the motion to table it follows immediately. The question is on the motion to table, the yeas and nays are ordered, and the roll is called. If the motion to table is agreed to, that is the end of that amendment.

If a senator had a good case to make on his amendment, and wanted to speak, he would get his hour; but if Johnson or some other senator could get the floor, he might move to table it.

RITCHIE: Johnson really seems like the dominant figure at that time.

ATTIG: He was a dominant figure. Robert Byrd is trying to be a dominant figure. I think he is succeeding, though in a little different way.

Mansfield was never that way. Mansfield was more accommodating. He was what I would call a peaceful senator. He didn't want a lot of antagonism. Mansfield would let things run their course; Byrd tries to stop it from running its course by getting agreements to vote at a certain time. Whether that is the better way, I don't know. He was elected Majority Leader at the beginning of this Congress, and he seems to be getting along well.

RITCHIE: Johnson, from my remembrance of him, was the type who must have been a fascinating speaker on the floor, a shouter and all.

ATTIG: Yes, he was a shouter.

RITCHIE: Were there some that you enjoyed listening to more often than others?

ATTIG: I enjoyed Morse. Morse was a very interesting speaker. His trouble was his long-windedness.

Years ago, Senator [Paul] Douglas and Senator [Eugene] Millikin of Colorado would

debate. They were both good debaters, and neither of them was particularly fast. They were the kind of men who would discuss economic affairs. Douglas would approach the subject from the standpoint of a professional economist, whereas Millikin, who was a banker, would discuss it from the viewpoint of a banker. We always thought that Millikin got the better of those debates. He would sort of stifle Douglas, and he usually got the better of the argument. He was a smoother talker, too. In two or three years his term expired, and he retired.

RITCHIE: I suppose the man with greatest reputation as a Senate speaker in the last generation was Everett Dirksen.

ATTIG: I liked Dirksen; I liked him very much. He did not talk all the time on the floor. He was more of the Senate debating type, and he was a good debater. In 1959, he wrote each one of us a letter at the conclusion of the session, in which he told us how fine our work was. He said he had appreciated the work of the reporters through the *Congressional Record* when he was a debater in high school; he found in the *Record* the material

that he needed for his debates. He said that when he came to Congress he appreciated our work all the more because he himself had benefitted by it in earlier years. I have that letter home yet.

RITCHIE: It must have been somewhat difficult to report him because of his choice of vocabulary.

ATTIG: He had an excellent, wide vocabulary.

RITCHIE: He had a wide choice of unusual words to throw at you.

ATTIG: He was a good man.

RITCHIE: I guess he was a Biblical quoter.

ATTIG: He had used some Biblical quotations, but I don't recall his being a Bible quoter all the time.

RITCHIE: Do you keep a copy of the Bible and of Shakespeare's works in the Official Reporters' office?

ATTIG: Yes, we have an excellent reference library. We add to it from time to time when we hear of something good that is on the market. We frequently refer to our library. Senators come in to our office to check quotations from the Bible. There are instances when they misquote; also, they misquote other sentences that can be readily checked in

Bartlett's Familiar Quotations. Those two are very useful books. Sometimes senators will attribute to Shakespeare what is in the Bible, and vice versa. That is something we have to be very careful of. Murphy told us always to refer to the books.

RITCHIE: You mentioned Charlie Watkins, the Parliamentarian. Does the Parliamentarian's office work with the reporters? I know you deal with a lot of parliamentary procedure.

ATTIG: Oh, yes. We have many parliamentary questions that arise. We would check with the Parliamentarians, or they would sometimes advise us before we left the floor. Sometimes they would write out for us the language as it should appear in the Record. That was always a help. Sometimes we might have a question while we were dictating, so we would check it with Charlie Watkins, or with Doc [Floyd] Riddick, when he became Parliamentarian. Charlie Watkins and Doc Riddick were always cooperative with us. Murray Zweben, the newest Parliamentarian, is an excellent man.

It takes them many years to become skilled in their work, just as it does the

reporters to get acquainted with theirs and to handle it right.

RITCHIE: In effect, a reporter has to be a parliamentarian himself.

ATTIG: He surely does. He's not the skilled man who can reason things out and interpret the rules the way they do. But when we know that something needs parliamentary attention, we take it up with the Parliamentarian.

RITCHIE: Do you think that the reporters of debate now will be adopting new methods, more mechanical methods?

ATTIG: Well, they have adopted stenotype machines for use on the floor. They can be seen working on the floor, with their machines strapped around their necks. We used stenotypists when we had the filibusters, but they didn't have the machines strapped around their necks at that time; they used the senators' desks.

RITCHIE: This gives them a little more mobility, to get close to the speaker.

ATTIG: Yes, and you have to have it.

RITCHIE: Do you think they will ever be able to use tape recorders?

ATTIG: I don't know. Mobility is one thing that is important on the floor. You couldn't carry a tape recorder around with you all the time. The use of the new microphones by senators aids the reporter very much nowadays. We have asked a presiding officer to ask a senator to use the mike, and he would tell him, right away, "Senator, please use the microphone." If I knew the Senator well enough, I would say, "Senator, will you use your mike, please?" and he would reply, "Oh, yes, excuse me." Senators are quite willing to cooperate.

RITCHIE: Well, now especially with the broadcasts. Do you detect any changes while listening to the broadcasts in the way senators speak and operate?

ATTIG: No. I can tell pretty much what's going on. I know what's right and what's wrong when they speak.

Last night my son was tuned to WAMU, to hear what was going on. A rebroadcast of a portion of the Senate proceedings on the Panama Canal treaties was taking place. I was putting a book in the bookcase in another room, and I said to my son, who was in the

kitchen, "That sounds like Senator [Frank] Church." I knew his voice right away. My son said, "It is." So I went out and listened to Church for a few minutes. Church is an able debater and a clear speaker. He doesn't repeat himself, he's not a hasty talker. He is another man whom I liked.

RITCHIE: You worked for the Senate then for. . .

ATTIG: Twenty-four years.

RITCHIE: Do you detect any changes in the institution in those twenty-four years?

ATTIG: Yes. Some things have changed; for instance, the morning hour. In the first years the Senate seemed more easy-going than it does today; for what reason, I don't know. I attribute it to the fact that the world has changed to such an extent that there is more legislation being passed these days. That's what keeps the Senate working as an all-year institution. In the first year I was with the Senate, we sat only six months. The next year we sat a few weeks longer. When Johnson became the Majority Leader, we began to sit pretty nearly the whole year through, so much so that Senator [Gale] McGee, from Wyoming, began to make speeches, about this time of

year, urging that the Senate provide some time off to enable senators to go on vacation with their families for a month. In time that came to pass.

This year there probably will not be an August vacation, because senators hope to finish their work before the elections; but in the odd year they usually take off the month of August, and then come back and work sometimes right up until Christmas. Under the Constitution, they are supposed to begin the second session of the next Congress on the 3rd of January, or the next available date, unless Congress legislates otherwise. Sometimes if they are going to sit right through to the 18th or 19th of December, they will return on the 18th or 19th of January. They get their full month in that way. For many senators, that is their month's vacation. If they plan to stay around this part of the country, or live in this part of the country, winter is not the time of the year for a seashore vacation unless it was in Florida. I think that most senators prefer to take their vacations in the summertime. But the Senate does more work these days. More bills are

being introduced, especially by the newer, younger senators from populous states, than there was in the old days.

RITCHIE: What about the newer, younger senators, do you detect a different type of person coming into the Senate?

ATTIG: I would say not so much. Maybe in the House. The younger members of the House have taken the bit in their teeth and have been demanding more recognition than previously, and are getting it. But in the Senate there is still the seniority system which benefits the older senators in taking the chairmanships. The method of assigning senators to committees has changed a little. The new senators are assigned to at least one important committee, instead of having to work their way up from the bottom on some less important committee.

RITCHIE: Some of the people I've talked to regret that they don't hear anymore the great speakers that they heard in the 1930's and 1940's, and even the '50's.

ATTIG: Well, that depends on the ability of the man to speak. I mentioned Senator Church; he is an excellent speaker. Senator Morse was an excellent speaker, as was Senator Dirksen.

Some senators are casual speakers; others are more deliberate in their speaking. I don't know who would be a giant these days – I never heard [William] Borah or [George] Norris speak. But I think we have them today and don't really notice them. Maybe it's the way of life these days, everyone is in a hurry, and senators feel they've got to get their remarks off their chests. There is so much work to handle on the floor, there is not the time to make the kind of speeches that were made in earlier times. In those days there was plenty of time, the country wasn't so large. In the middle '50's and '60's of the last century there were only fifty or sixty or seventy senators. Now the same Chamber that was used beginning in 1859 accommodates one hundred senators. But a senator's time is fully taken up these days. We know that from the fact that huge office buildings have been built; and then a second office building; now a third office building. I was walking through the Dirksen Building this morning and saw crowds walking through the corridors and crowds in the auditorium. There were not such things in the old days – my "old" days, even. There were just

the Senate Office Building and the Capitol. Nowadays the people are coming to Capitol Hill in droves.

Then there are the television and the radio that have made people more aware of their senators and representatives. I'm not going to get philosophical about that; other people can talk on that subject better than I can. But I think that is one reason why there has been such a great change. People are in more contact with their senators today than they were before. Most people know what is going on. Even if they can't express it themselves in the words they would like to, they know what's going on. Senators are getting more mail today than they were in the old days.

RITCHIE: I've heard it also said that senators in the old days were more generalists; they could talk about more different things, now they're more specialists, and have their own areas.

ATTIG: I don't know about that; I think that they are about the same. They travel more, and they are more aware of what's going on throughout the world than the senators of fifty or sixty years ago. Senators didn't go on the junkets in those days that they go on now.

Most of them talk freely about what they've seen and heard. They have their counterparts in the legislatures of other countries, with whom they've made contact, and are thus made aware, when they talk about foreign affairs, of what's taking place throughout the world.

RITCHIE: There's one other senator that I was thinking of, who is appropriate to mention at this point, and that's Carl Hayden, of Arizona, who served in Congress the longest period in history and probably spoke the fewest times on the floor.

ATTIG: The fewest words, yes. He would speak mostly on appropriations matters. I never heard him speak much on anything else, except perhaps irrigation and farming in the west. He would usually read a statement that had been prepared for him, and then take his seat. Senator Harry Byrd, Sr., would do the same thing. He, too, was a man of few words, the same as Hayden. He would read his statement, and if a senator wanted to question him, he would say "yes" or "no," or "I don't think so"; and that was his speech. Hayden was the same way. Both of them were kindly men. When Hayden came into the office, he would go right up to Murphy;

he didn't want anybody else but Murphy. He and Murphy were oldtimers. Murphy was "Jim" to him, and he was "Senator" to Murphy. Murphy would always call him "Senator." Murphy was of the old school of politeness. If a senator would enter the room, Murphy would rise right away and greet him: "Hello, Senator." We followed that practice, too. We learned much from watching Murphy and Rhodes.

RITCHIE: Did you have very many dealings with the Vice Presidents over the years?

ATTIG: No, except after one of the big filibusters, when Nixon was Vice President. When the filibuster was over, he sent us a huge basket of fruit with his compliments. That was Richard Nixon. Nobody else in the Vice Presidential office ever did that. He wrote on a little card that came with the basket that he appreciated the hard work and the long hours we had spent on the job.

RITCHIE: I guess the Vice Presidents don't really preside that often.

ATTIG: No, they don't. I was reading last night in *The Senate of the United States*, by George H. Haynes, about the questions that have arisen in the Senate as to whether the

Vice President could cast a vote to break a tie in certain instances – such as the seating of a senator, for instance. Some took the liberty of doing it and were not challenged. Others took the opposite view. [John Nance] Garner even said at the end of one of his terms that the Vice President was nothing but a fifth wheel on a vehicle: he didn't have anything to do; he wasn't worth a pitcher of spit.

But nowadays it's different. Vice Presidents are put to work. Whether that's proper or not, I don't know.

Some of the statements by senators in the early days were that the Vice President should preside over the Senate. But most of them don't want to do that; it's too boring for them. George Washington, I read, wanted John Adams to preside at or take part in Cabinet hearings when Washington went on a visit of several weeks to the south. When Adams attempted to do that, he found he wasn't wanted at Cabinet meetings, so then he stayed away. Still, the Vice President has not been made a part of the Cabinet. I don't know whether [Walter] Mondale sits in on Cabinet meetings or not. But he has other jobs that

have been assigned to him by the President. I don't think he presides often unless there is the likelihood of a tie vote at a particular time. Then he may come in.

RITCHIE: So the Vice President really isn't instructed to address the Chamber.

ATTIG: No, only by permission. The Senate gave Mondale an opportunity, as it did Jerry Ford, when he became Vice President, to address the Senate. Ford said something to the effect that he wouldn't have many opportunities to speak again in the Senate except to make rulings.

RITCHIE: Can you think of anything else you would like to say?

ATTIG: I think I've said too much.

End of Interview

Francis J. Attig
Official Reporter of Debates, 1952-1974

Index

Adams, John, 73
Borah, William, 69
Brown, Prentiss, 14
Byrd, Harry, Sr., 71, 72
Byrd, Robert C., 31, 60
Capehart, Homer, 51
Calhoun, John C., 26
Cannon, Howard, 45, 47
Carlson, Fred, 25, 26
Church, Frank, 66, 68
Congressional Record, 28-34, 38-43, 50-56, 61-62
Nay, Bill, 18
Dirksen, Everett M., 61, 62, 68
Douglas, Paul, 60, 61
Drescher, Charles, 29, 49
Ellender, Allen, 47
Ervin, Sam, 40
Filibusters, 56-59
Ford, Gerald R., 74
Garner, John Nance, 73
Glass, Carter, 11-13
Goldwater, Barry M., 49, 50
Hart & Dice, 9-11, 13, 16, 18, 21
Hart, George, 9-11
Hart, Philip, 42
Hayden, Carl, 71
House Appropriations Committee, 19, 20
House Corps of Official Committee Reporters, 18, 19
Humphrey, Hubert H., 46, 47
Johnson, Lyndon B., 36, 58-60, 66
Johnson, Olin, 47, 48
Kerr Robert, 49
Kuchel, Thomas, 47
La Follette, Robert M., Jr., 13
Lanham, Fritz, 19
McAdoo, William Gibbs, 13
McGee, Gale, 66, 67
McGovern, George, 45
McMurray, Joseph P, 34, 35
Macpherson, Gregor, 34, 35
Malone, George "Molly", 47

Mansfield, Mike, 34, 57, 60
Mexican Water Treaty Hearings, 16-18
Millikin, Eugene, 60
Mondale, Walter, 73, 74
Morning Hour, 30, 31
Morse, Wayne, 36, 47, 51, 52, 60, 68
Murphy, Dennis F., 26
Murphy, James W, 25-29, 33, 35-38, 71-72
Norris, George, 69
Nixon, Richard M., 72
O'Mahoney, Joseph, 35, 36
Patronage, 10, 11, 18
Pendell, Earl, 16
Proxmire, William, 34-36, 47
Republican National Committee, 10
Riddick, Floyd, 63
Rhodes, John, 26-28, 33, 38, 56, 72
Ross, Eleanor, 45-46
Scott, Hugh, 43
Senate Banking and Currency Committee, 10, 11
Senate Commerce Committee, 10
Senate Indian Affairs Committee, 10-14
Senate Interstate Commerce Committee, 10, 11, 14
Senate Recesses, 66, 67
Tidelands Oil Bill, 56-58
Thomas, Elmer, 10
Truman., Harry S., 13, 14
Vice Presidency, 72-74
Washington, George, 73
Watkins, Charles, 59, 63
Wheeler, Burton K., 10, 13, 14
Wilfong, Chester, 16, 21
Young, Milton, 48
Zweben, Murray, 63