

Leonard Ballard

Inspector, United States Capitol Police (1947-1984)

Interview #9

(Tuesday, January 10, 1984)
Interviewed by Richard A. Baker

BAKER: I brought back the photographs you sent over. I went through them and picked out some that we would like to include in your book. As long as I have them out, I'd like to ask you to identify some of those I might not be familiar with.

BALLARD: That's Hugh O'Brian who played Wyatt Earp on the television series. He came up here one day to appear before a committee. He was doing his clown act. I haven't the slightest idea when that was.

BAKER: That's Red Skelton?

BALLARD: No. That's Bill Wannall [Sergeant at Arms] and the House Sergeant at Arms with Gerald Ford.

BAKER: Here's John Kennedy in 1963.

BALLARD: His last appearance in the Capitol Building for the State of the Union message.

BAKER: Is that George Stewart [Architect of the Capitol]?

BALLARD: That's George Stewart. It was always customary for the Architect to meet the president. We used to have an architect--

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Dave Lynn--who was Architect before George [Stewart]. But Dave never liked that detail. In fact, he never liked to leave his office. He left it up to his assistant, an old man by the name of Gus Cook. They always came at noon in those days. Lyndon Johnson was the one that started the 9:00 o'clock [p.m.] bit on account of prime time [for television audience]. Gus would run to me and say, "Have you heard from them?" "No, they haven't left the White House." "I've got time for one more drink, huh?" I said, "Yep, if you will hurry, Mr. Cook." Back of the old Crypt, in his office there, he had his bottle. He had a refrigerator built in the wall. And he kept his booze there. And he'd run and get him another one. And get back in time.

BAKER: This was all before noontime?

BALLARD: Oh, yeah. Yes, sir. For his lunch. He was a character. Now that picture is of the original police force. They were night watchmen and then they

decided they needed police and they appropriated \$3,000 and hired this group here. You'll notice this fellow here.

BAKER: A black man.

BALLARD: He was a tall one. I've forgotten how tall. We measured one time. This was right outside the Law Library Door [to the Capitol]. Six feet something.

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BAKER: When do you suppose that picture was taken?

BALLARD: Well, 1856 or 1857. He [pointing to a man in the right front] must have been a captain because he has a double row of brass buttons. Now that one is when [Richard] Nixon was a senator. We were making him a member of the Senate Staff Club. We organized the Senate Staff Club. This fellow worked for a Nebraska senator. McDermott was his name. He was elected first president of the club. And we went up to present Nixon with a membership card.

BAKER: I like this picture a lot [President Eisenhower and Ballard].

BALLARD: Now, that was the first time he came to the Capitol after he left the presidency [in 1961]. He came up and spent the day. He had a luncheon in S-207. I was with him the entire time. The chief assigned me to stay with him the entire day. He had no Secret Service. He didn't want them up there that day.

BAKER: So that really added to your chores.

BALLARD: In those days there was no concern. Who's going to shoot [a former president].

BAKER: Was the building open to the public?

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BALLARD: Oh, yeah! We fooled around. We sat in S-207 in the afternoon. He and I sat in there and chatted. Nobody around. We talked about World War II. I was in the Ninth Infantry Division. He said, "That was one of the better divisions." I said, "Well, I'll agree with you there. I think it was the best division." He said, "Naturally." He told me who the first commanding officer was. We had quite an afternoon.

BAKER: I'll bet you never dreamed you'd end up talking to him when you were being evacuated from Durn.

BALLARD: No (Laughing), I never thought that I would. In fact, when I came back from overseas, we came back by air part of the way. We came back from Paris to England and then by plane from Preswick, Scotland over to New York and then down to Richmond. We flew over Washington. We had an old plane

with benches on the side. I remember we flew over the Capitol. The Capitol looked like a souvenir ashtray. But I never thought of working in that building.

BAKER: I have wanted to ask you about a great institution on Capitol Hill that is now gone. Ann's Newsstand. It used to be out here in a trailer next to the office building.

BALLARD: I'm very familiar with Ann's Newsstand.

BAKER: How did that all come about?

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BALLARD: Ann Cooper came here from Ohio and got a job as sort of a maid in the Carroll Arms Hotel. She decided to go down to the Lewis Hotel Training School. It was a very well known, established, and respected school. Started out by an old man and woman named Lewis. It was down on Pennsylvania Avenue at about the 2100 block. She graduated from that school and got a job as assistant desk clerk at the Carroll Arms. She noticed that the newsstand in the hotel, that there was where the money was. So she got into that newsstand and stayed in the newsstand until the hotel went bankrupt. And they closed it in 1973. Well, she had enough clout among the employees to get them to let her rent a trailer and set it up on the grounds here next to the hotel. She had a little trouble. She didn't pay city taxes. I was up there one day and some new Metropolitan policeman came by and she didn't have a vending license. And I told him, "She doesn't need a vending license." Now, I know you have to bend the law. She had flowers for sale out front. I said [to the Metropolitan policeman], "You're wasting your time. You are not going to touch her. You'll get a call." And then one day we were having a meeting down here. The city had closed in on her and was going to close her up. Well, he was later deputy chief, but in those days he was captain in the Senate office building. We were having a meeting and he said, "I've got to leave here at 10:30 because they are going to cut the power off of Ann's trailer. I said, "Bill, does Ann know that?" And he said, "Yes, she's been notified." I said, "Well, you

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won't leave at 10:30, because they are not going to cut the power off. Carl Hayden or [William] Proxmire or some of those people are going to put the call in. You might as well forget it." So sure enough, he never got called out of the meeting. Ann had an awful lot of friends. Of course, she had an illness and she turned . . . she didn't turn it over, they just took it over . . . some young people there and they just ripped her up. They didn't pay their bills. They pocketed the money.

BAKER: Where did they come from?

BALLARD: They were local. Some were policemen.

BAKER: They said they would help her out during her absence?

BALLARD: Yeah, and they were "helping" her out, too. Now, I knew Ann well, from the day I used to live here on Second Street and bought newspapers from her in the evening. I suggested to her that she close it up. "You'll be better off and then when you get out of the hospital you can open back up again." But she wouldn't do it.

BAKER: She felt loyal to her customers?

BALLARD: That's right. And half the time those people didn't pay her. When she got ill and didn't remember who owed her, she kept no records. Mark Russell [the comedian] and Sid Yudain [publisher of the newspaper Roll Call] held a benefit for her when she got out of

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the hospital. They got a room up in the Senate office building and had a crowd of people. I was there. The admission was \$10.00 or something. They raised about \$8,000 and paid off her bills completely and then she got right back into debt, letting those youngsters tear her up. They just took her to the cleaners. Then when she died [in April 1983] she was in debt. They introduced a bill [in the Senate] for \$4,000 to pay her funeral expenses. Of course, they took the trailer out.

BAKER: That area was considered Senate property?

BALLARD: Oh, of course. It was just as illegal as it could be. But nobody was going to pay any attention to it. Once in a while you'd run across a Metropolitan policeman. I'd get a call from Ann to come up. And there would be a Metropolitan policeman there and I'd try to explain to him. "You are butting your head against a wall, fella. Because the minute you leave here, she is going to call somebody."

BAKER: I am surprised that Metropolitan thought they had any jurisdiction up here.

BALLARD: Well, you get some young ones down there, or a new captain or a new inspector and he's making a tour. He wants to sweep

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everything. So you have to wise him up. "Best thing to do is just drive on by, partner. (Laughter) This is Capitol Hill. There's nothing you can do about it." Well, to get back to the Lewis Hotel School, I'll tell you a little trick I pulled. You know, the jobs [in the early days] were all patronage. I was desk clerk on the third [police] relief. That's four to twelve. There was a change of administrations. Everybody was getting notices. Well, I was desk clerk, because I was the only fella on the relief who could type at that time. Here came a notice from Mr. [Carl] Hayden, who was chairman of the Patronage Committee that there would be nobody held over except students. The rest of the personnel were subject to dismissal. I don't have to tell you, I became a student so fast, it made your . . .

(Laughter). I was a veteran and I had a good friend from close to my hometown who was chief clerk of the House Veterans Affairs Committee. A fella named Casey Jones. I went over to Casey and told him, "I have to have a certificate of eligibility by tomorrow so that I can get into school--into Lewis Hotel Training School. I picked that one out because it didn't require much.

BAKER: This was long before Ann got involved in it?

BALLARD: Oh, yes.

BAKER: What year was that?

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BALLARD: It was about 1950. The Democrats took over [in 1949]. Hayden took over as chairman of the patronage committee so it must have been [1949 or] 1950. Well, Casey had a devil of a time getting me that certificate of eligibility that fast. He had to check with the VA downtown to get my record. But he got it and I motored right on down to Lewis Hotel Training School and enrolled. And then when they sent word out for the list of students, the Patronage Committee did, all I had to do was add my name as a student. And, you know, I attended school down there, for a while. Several months. And then I got notice that they had appointed a new captain. When you went in on the afternoon, they day clerk would tell you, "Take your gear and report to the captain's office." Well, that meant, that was it [you were fired]. I used to go in and loaf in there and the day clerk would take off and I'd do the work. Of course, you couldn't loaf anywhere. You can't loaf in a bar unless you drink. That was the only place to loaf. So I went in one Saturday. I didn't go in early on Saturday because my wife was home. But, when I went in, he said to me, "The supply sergeant wants you to come to the office when you come in this afternoon." I said, "Did he say anything about my gear?" And he said, "No, he didn't say anything about your gear. Just for you to come over there." So, I went over and there was the new captain. Nobody even knew he was there. He introduced me to the new captain. He said, "I understand you go down to the guard room there and loaf during the day and that you know quite a bit about the

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building. How would you like to come over here and help us out." There were so many transfers and vacancies. The whole place was loaded up with old uniforms. "When the time comes to go to your shift over there, you can go over there." I said, "Well, I don't care. I'd just as soon be over here as down there."

BAKER: "Over here" was where?

BALLARD: He wanted me to come over to the captain's office in the basement of the Capitol Building. And I'd been going down to the guard room in the office building.

So I went over and, of course, I had to quit school. I was on day shift! And I got a call from the school. They were very complimentary. I was doing so well, that they wondered why I quit. I told them police duties prevented it.

I was there a couple of weeks and the new captain wondered who my patronage was. I told him I didn't have any. He said, "How'd you stay around here all this time without any patronage?" I said, "Luck, I suppose." Well, a little bit of luck and, of course, I made some luck, too. He said, "I'd like to keep you if you had patronage. I said, "Well, I just don't have it and I can't get it." He said, "What about the West Virginia senators?" I said, "Each one of them have a man and I wouldn't go near them." So, he said to me one day, "I'm going up to see Joe Duke to see if he'll keep you, because you

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do a good job here. " He came back and said Duke said it was all right with him. That was the only problem I ever had.

BAKER: When they said everyone but students had to leave, what percentage of the Capitol Police Force at that time was nonstudent?

BALLARD: At that time, a big percent were non-students, because most of the men were in the service [during World War II] so they gathered up retired Metropolitan, just anybody who came by could get on the police force.

BAKER: So that decree really weeded out many of the people who had been there during the war.

BALLARD: That's right. It got them all.

BAKER: And it was the Democrats who did that rather than the Republicans. They hadn't done that in 1947 when they took control of the Senate?

BALLARD: The Republicans didn't bother them unless you came by and wanted patronage.

BAKER: So the people who were there, they left?

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BALLARD: Yes. And it was no trouble for a Republican to get patronage because the people you replaced didn't expect to be there any [length of] time anyhow.

Now, the Democrats did want to put students in. And there were students. And when they lost [in 1952] in the 83rd Congress, the Republicans did the same thing. They loaded it up with students. The third relief of the Senate office building [detail] was damn near made up of men of Utah because old man [Arthur] Watkins and Wallace Bennett both had seniority and clout. They filled up that third relief with Mormons--fine boys, every one of them. They were

students. Dental students, law students, medical students, all students. They weren't interested in police work. We had one fellow who we had to take down to our uniform man and have a special uniform made for him. The only place we could work him was at the Delaware Avenue entrance to the Senate office building right outside the Senate guard room. He looked normal sitting at a desk. You couldn't send him down the hall in his uniform because he was only about that tall--less than five feet. He was a dental student and we used to kid him. His brother was a dentist and he was going into the office with him. His brother was going to have a special seat made for him. So he could stay seated all the time.

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BAKER: You indicated that you had some additional thoughts related to the growth of security requirements over the years.

(Portions Deleted)

BALLARD: When I was in [assigned to] the Capitol Building when that bomb went off in the basement [1971], they decided to have inspections. They had a policeman--a very good friend of mine, was then, is today--who was put in charge of the Inspection Division. He came over to the Capitol Building to come through one of my men with a phoney package. Well, I knew it. I went up there and I met him! And, I don't have to tell you, I got him by the ear and led him to the Document Door and told him, "Don't you ever come over here. You can come over if you want to, but not on missions like that, because you are tearing up the morale of these men over here who are doing a job that they think they can do. And they are doing it. They are standing up here long hours. But when someone comes in here and tries to torpedo them, I don't like it." And he didn't come back [for that purpose]. Now, for this [upcoming] joint session, we'll have 1,200 men out there.

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BAKER: How many are in the force?

BALLARD: 1,200.

BAKER: Where will they be?

BALLARD: They'll have about 500 across the [East] front. Now, that's ridiculous. I'll admit, things [these days] are a little more scary. I try to tell them, back during World War II we used to have one [head of state or high security risk visitor] a month. The leaders of the new countries and all. They were over here [for joint sessions of Congress] at least one a month. And they were at 12:30 /p.m., not at 9:00 [p.m.] when the building is closed. These were at 12:30 when the tourists were here. I don't know how many I have worked in my time with [only] thirty-two men. They will have thirty-two now in one room there. I try to tell them that it is a waste. They will trip over themselves.

Now, this Chinaman who is due up here tomorrow [Premier Zhao Ziyang]-- between a twenty and twenty-five car motorcade! Ten of those cars will be filled with Secret Service agents. Why? Because they hired so many agents for these presidential campaigns, they we don't have anything for them to do now. So, we'll give them to the Chinaman!

From the old days, when I had to do it the hard way, these things look awfully stupid.

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BAKER: A long way from the days when President Harry Truman would come up by himself.

BALLARD: He came by himself! Except maybe [Harry] Vaughan would be with him. There were no Secret Service here. They didn't come up here, because he didn't bring them. It was all right for them to be down at the White House. I met Harry Truman up here [the time], he came up in Harry Vaughan's car. It was a trap, to begin with. In fact, I didn't recognize it the first time. It was an old beaten up car. That's the way they traveled. They didn't attract attention. Now there was the incident with former Deputy Sergeant at Arms Bobby Hough.

BAKER: The former page.

BALLARD: Yes. He let the Secret Service build up enormous security. I used to tell him we don't need it. Well, the second one [head of state], I've forgotten what country he's from. They had men all over the Senate steps, down under the arch and all that. And I had a sergeant in my car pool. I had him working the Foreign Relations Committee door [site of the meeting]. And I was out at the Senate Door waiting for the man to appear under the arch there. Jim came out and said, "I don't know what happened, but he just went in the Foreign Relations Committee room." (Laughter) I went around and

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his escort was there and they said, "Well, when we got up to the Senate steps, our driver said, 'We better go up to this door here and unload there. There must be something going on. They have got the steps cut off.'" (Laughter) They went to the Law Library Door and went in and walked down the corridor.

BAKER: How long ago was that?

BALLARD: Not very long ago. And we were waiting. Had the Secret Service and the whole bit.

BAKER: That's a wonderful story! Those things are going to happen.

BALLARD: It happens all the time. I'm not putting the Secret Service down in a minute, but the Secret Service looks up into trees and buildings. They don't look

on the ground. And they don't work with the press. I used to work with the press. I gave the press concessions. But the press kept me tipped. If there was a stranger in the crowd, I knew about it. Because Leroy Anderson or some of those boys, I allowed them to park on the East Front. They had to make a living. They didn't come up here because they were sightseers, but because the office sent them up there. I used to tell the men. Park them out here on the Front. They're not going to be here long. They knew it. They'd call and tell me. The president is on his way to the Capitol. And I was ready for them, because the press

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would call me from downtown. But the Secret Service will not work with the press. I don't know why. You have got to tell the press a few things.

BAKER: Sure, or else they'll make things up.

BALLARD: You're darned right. When Reagan got shot, that boy [the attempted assassin] was right there with the cameras. And the NBC press man told them [the Secret Service], "This fella is not one of us." And they paid no attention. Around the Foreign Relations Committee room, when you had somebody hot in there, the press man would come to me and say, "See that fella over there? He's not one of us."

BAKER: And what would you do then?

BALLARD: I'd go over to him and I'd say, "I'm sorry, this area is for the press. Do you have your credentials?" "Yes, I have. I just got them. I'm new." "May I see them?" "Yes." And they were. It was all right. Or he would say, "No. I'm not a member of the press. I just saw this crowd and I wondered what's going on and I joined it." And I said, "Well, I will tell you what's going on, but you will have to move down in this area." And that was all right. He didn't feel insulted.

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BAKER: How useful, in that connection, are the Senate employees who are superintendents of the various press galleries?

BALLARD: I'll tell you, they don't want to get involved. They want to take care of their little nest, but they don't want to get too involved.

BAKER: So, they are not your best source if there is a stranger who suddenly shows up?

BALLARD: They won't go in [to it], because they don't know whether he is a photographer or what category he is in under the jurisdiction on one of the other galleries (TV, Periodical Press, Newspapers, etc.). You don't count on them. You count on the working press.

BAKER: Thank you, Inspector Ballard.

[End of Interview #9]

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