ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES
Interview #2
Wednesday, August 17, 2005

RITCHIE: I want to pick up with some of the issues that we talked about last week that we didn't quite finish.

BREZINA: Fine. This is, again, a great honor to be able to be involved in your oral history project. There were some loose ends at the end of the conversation about the Harris subcommittee work I did. They were sort of poignant anecdotes that I was getting to but didn't have time for or had pushed off to the side. One thing that really impressed me when I came over to work in the Senate from the Legislative Reference Service, that I discussed briefly last time, was that my boss, the staff director of the Harris Subcommittee on Government Research, was Steve Ebbin. He was a PhD in political science, which was not too common up here at that time, and he had come to the subcommittee from the staff of the majority leader, Mike Mansfield.

However this started, I'm not sure, but there was a ritual almost every morning from about 9:00 to 9:45, or whenever the subcommittee clerk would haul Steve back over from the Capitol Building, a meeting with a half dozen or so Senate staffers in the Senate café. It wasn't just a set group, but it included Charlie Ferris and Dan Leach, who were on Mansfield's floor staff, George Murphy with the Joint Committee on Atomic Energy, a couple of people from Russell Long's staff, Wayne Thevenot and John McConnell, and then a few others. I was invited and sat there with Steve Ebbin and listened and was in rapt amazement at the caliber of the people, the camaraderie, the almost clubiness. I call them now (but not then) the Senate's version of the Algonquin Round Table. It was a lot of BSing and things like that, but some of the jokes and anecdotes were just awesome for this relatively fresh Senate staffer. They included just really off-the-cuff remarks that people like Wayne Thevenot had an ongoing difficulty in straightening out the *Congressional Record* for Russell Long when he spoke on the floor and often, if not always, was tipsy. We would see the before and after sometimes. It was just incredible. You couldn't possibly do this today with C-SPAN. In those days, the alcohol problem was still pretty much a joke. But also, of course, probably things have not changed too much. Because of the pressures up here, one needs to have some kind of relief, I guess.

That was the kind of thing that was happening. Then, interspersed between these lighter moments, Murphy, the conservative of the group, and we were the liberals, would go after us with Communist-baiting and how we needed to get our nuclear doctrine all straightened out. But it was all done in a sort of light, jovial, collegial way. And in between would be the guts of what was going on, and I was just amazed at how Charlie Ferris and Dan Leach—mainly Ferris at that time—would talk about what was going on on the floor. Nothing really intricate, but just the dynamics and the pace and the trade-offs. I felt at the time, and I haven't changed since then, that this was the best poli-sci education one could ever hope for.

RITCHIE: Were these early morning meetings to get people aware of what was happening, or to coordinate things?

BREZINA: Just an impromptu coffee club. Just have a cup of coffee and shoot the breeze, and it just seemed to have great regularity to it. By the time the staff director, Steve, got back to the office, there were about 20 calls waiting for him and the clerk was usually a little upset. So there really wasn't anything directly accomplished, but indirectly it was a bonding exercise.

RITCHIE: Because Ebbin had worked for Mansfield and so he was part of that group before he came to your committee.

BREZINA: Right, but you know, it was just a Senate staffer ad-hoc meeting. There was a lot of politically incorrect, by today's standards, stuff discussed. But not formalized. I don't know whether you can do that anymore. You almost have to have some bottom line, and I don't believe there was a bottom line there. But it was awesomely interesting and some of the anecdotes were so, by my standards, sophisticated at times. There was a Carl Hayden joke that was being tossed around. He was probably close to 90 by that time, chairman of the Appropriations Committee, frail, feeble, been up here for quite some time. He, evidently, had an assistant who had been Miss Arizona. Just a strikingly beautiful young lady. I guess one time on the floor, Gene McCarthy got into this with his wit and sense of timing. He came up to Hayden one time right after this young lady had delivered a memo or something like that and walked off. He said, "Carl, it must be a shame a lady like that's going to waste on a person like you." And Hayden shot back, "She's not going to waste at all, Gene."

Then there was one about Frank Lausche. I don't know where this really came from, but he was evidently in the senators' washroom one time in front of a urinal and again a Gene McCarthy-type of senator was standing next to him and said, "Frank, are you pointing with pride or viewing with alarm?" So that's how it went. That was one thing that I experienced that I would not have traded for anything in the world and had no idea that was ever going to happen in the first place. Just being there in the right place at the right time. It sort of got my feet on the ground.

RITCHIE: Didn't you mention at one time that Carl Hayden used to come by your office on the basement-level of the Russell Building?

BREZINA: The same subcommittee office on the ground floor of the Russell building was where I hung out. It was Mike Monroney's former storeroom. No windows, but that was okay. Right by the Delaware and C Street exit, across from a small police station there. And Carl Hayden, Senator Hayden—I don't want to sound like I knew him personally—Senator Hayden used to come by in the afternoon to get into his limousine that was waiting outside. He was president pro tem at the time. You could tell when he was coming because you could hear the "Hayden shuffle." He wasn't picking his feet up and he sort of shuffled along. We could almost set our watches by it.

When you have all this going on, you can embroider on things. So without opening any door or anything, over a period of time, we wondered whatever happens if he just faints right outside the door? Are we going to be able to handle this? As if that were our major priority on the Subcommittee on Government Research. One thing led to another and we—"we" would be myself, the minority staff person, and the assistant clerk—developed a "Carl Hayden emergency" routine or spiel. We had a little "Carl Hayden emergency" first-aid kit, and we went through the mechanics of what one might do, all in jest and not trying to be disrespectful. We kept it as an inside joke. We even put a chair out there. We had an extra chair and we put a chair out by the door in case he needed to rest. But we never really told anybody why that chair was there.

One day you start picking up the "shuffle." You can hear this sort of Doppler effect of the shuffle and it's coming closer to the door. The door is only about ten or 15 feet from the exit and all of the sudden the shuffle stops and you hear a voice, and it happened to be a policeman, shouting "Senator Hayden! Senator Hayden!" I leapt out of my chair and

opened the door. It was almost like the Wicked Witch of the West when she expired, all you saw were his clothes. I mean it was just a little ruffled bit of fur. He had collapsed right outside our door! I got on one arm and the policeman got on the other arm and we lifted him into that chair and he was so light it was almost like, I'm kidding, like we could almost hit the ceiling with him! You could put both hands down his collar, he was so frail! Well, he was not unconscious, but it could have been the time of year and the heat and stuff like that, although there was air conditioning in those office buildings. He just sat there for a minute or two. By that time his limousine driver had come in, and he said, "I'll be okay. I'll be okay." He was helped out by me and the officer and the limousine driver in about five or six minutes. When I got back to our office, I closed the door, I said, "Oh my God, we'd better be careful about what we think of doing in the future!" We swore off any wise stuff anymore because this prophecy had come true.

So there was that kind of thing happening, and there are a couple of other anecdotes that come to mind. One is very precious because it can be documented. The subcommittee was starting to go out of business in '69 because of—well ostensibly, it was John McClellan, the chairman, saying there were too many subcommittees on Government Operations. But probably it was also the clash between the Fred Harris-style of looking at the King riots and the Kerner Commission effort and the McClellan Permanent Investigation Subcommittee-style where there was more concern by McClellan that the government may have incited some of these riots by the poverty program funding. So there was a clash there. Not so much direct, but at least in philosophy.

I had more time than I normally had in late '69. Of course, I had to look for another job, but I also took advantage of the fact that you could still get on the floor fairly easily and sit over in that staff sofa and listen to one of the greatest debates I'm sure the Senate engaged on the Anti-Ballistic Missile System, the "Army Sentinel System," I think it was called. The reason it was so good was because it got into all phases of strategic doctrine, and there was hardly anybody predicting how that vote was going to come out. It was going to be so close. It was a big, big deal. So I would go over there day after day, when I could in the afternoon, and listen for a half-hour or so and just get a fresh sense of the pros and cons and implications.

It came time for the fatal vote. Now the vote probably was on an appropriation bill or maybe a defense authorization bill, I forget. What was interesting was the chaplain that

morning gave what I think anybody would agree was a pro-ABM prayer. It was something like, "Let us put on the armor of God and deploy our best missiles of good will," and this and that. Shortly after that in the gallery was sort of a disheveled kind of chap who got up and shouted down to the floor, "A plague on your house in the name of Jesus Christ if you vote for the ABM!" He was escorted out very quickly.

I had an intern, a Yale undergrad, and we caught a drift of that and the question then came up: well, if God's in favor and Jesus Christ is opposed, what happens if you have a tie vote? Does the Holy Ghost get the chance to vote or do you go to the parliamentarian? The *Washington Post* picked up the stranger in the gallery and of course the *Congressional Record* to the chaplain's prayer. We tossed it around for awhile and then packaged it and sent a copy over to Mark Russell. It was before his public television days but he was at the Marquee Lounge at the Shoreham Hotel. I used to go over there and enjoy him immensely. We sent another copy to Art Buchwald. I got a note back from Russell saying this was too rich for him. But Buchwald, evidently, incorporated it into one of his articles. This is the kind of thing that when I talked to that intern 30 years later, just to say hello, the first thing that he reminisced about was the debate over God, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Ghost. It stuck with him.

Those were some of the rich experiences that came through my being on the staff up here. One other thing and I'll let go. As I was preparing to leave that subcommittee, my goal was to try to get on the staff of either the Foreign Relations Committee or the Armed Services Committee, in that order. I had come in contact with some of the staff of the Foreign Relations Committee and they were just so good at what they were doing. Bill Bader, Bill Miller, Dick Moose, who I got to know a little bit later, Norville Jones I think was just starting, and Mirella Hansen. I was always so impressed with what Fulbright was doing, trying to do, in raising key questions. One of his hearings—I've got a copy to this day, "Psychological Aspects of Foreign Policy"—brought cultural anthropologists to testify that it's not just what the Russians are doing, it's also what the Russians think we are doing, and what we think they are doing, to get at a depth of perception of the interaction between two nations that normally doesn't get discussed in most foreign policy matters.

Senator Gore, the senior Gore, was chair of a Disarmament Subcommittee on Foreign Relations, and he had David Packard, undersecretary of defense, up one time to testify on strategic doctrine. It could have been ABM, it could have been MIRV—the Multiple

Independently Targeted Reentry Vehicles, the missiles that had multiple warheads. How many do we need? When DOD goes up to the Hill, it has a full media show. He had his slides and pointers and so forth. Very sophisticated presentation along the lines of the fact that we need all of these tens of thousands of warheads. Bill Bader was the staff person in this regard. It could have been Miller, too.

Senator Gore, Al Gore, Sr., was maybe five foot five or something like that, sort of short. So Packard made his presentation. Then Gore had this hokey-looking easel with flip-pages on it, and he said, "Well I've got some things I want to show you, Mr. Secretary." Somehow they had devised a theatrical presentation where Gore started pointing out on this chart, which was really rough-done, not as well done as you see on C-SPAN on the Senate floor these days. But, "Here's our number of missiles." And this curve over time was going up and up, and then it flattened out, and then MIRV came in. Well, the MIRV numbers were off the top of that chart. There was a temporary chart on top of the main chart that his assistants were holding, and it showed the number of warheads going way up. Gore got on this little three-legged stool on his tiptoes with a pointer. He upstaged Packard tremendously. He said, "I can hardly reach this high." I've always thought that sometimes a simple theatrical way, timed in the right fashion, can really get the point across. He was up against DOD and its presentation strategy. They would never think of anything that silly and that funny. But he made his point.

Talking to Senator Proxmire's staff and folks like that, there were more warheads than there were targets! There would be these conversations that a Proxmire staffer had with some general in a taxicab, "Where are you going to aim those?" [whispers] "I know, we've got too many warheads." But they couldn't say it directly. The technology was leaping ahead of the strategy. That often happened in those days it seemed.

So those were things I just wanted to mention before going on to the fact that I was not able to get onto the staff of the Foreign Relations Committee. I did want to stay up on the Hill. Armed Services was even harder to crack. I then started looking for other places and fortunately ended up on Senator Gaylord Nelson's staff as a legislative assistant. The LA for foreign and military affairs was leaving, so I got a chance to replace him and picked up a couple of domestic issues, as well.

RITCHIE: Before we go into Gaylord Nelson's office, I just want to go back a little bit onto that period from '67 to '69.

BREZINA: Go ahead, sure.

RITCHIE: The Vietnam War was causing a lot of demonstrations in Washington at the time, and I wondered how much of all of that spilled into the Senate? Was the war a part of everyday discussion? For instance, the morning coffee meetings you had with the staff and people like that, was that something that was on everybody's minds or was that something that was off in the distance?

BREZINA: Before I got on Senator Gaylord Nelson's staff, there wasn't as much going on as in '69, '70, '71. There were only a few senators then, in '67 and '68, that were making much of a fuss over that, such as [Wayne] Morse, Nelson, [Ernest] Gruening. To answer your question, at the roundtable discussion, there wasn't much at all said about it. Maybe a little bit of concern about the cost. I think Senator [Richard] Russell was starting to raise some questions about the cost of it, but not in a formal way. And it just changed. There was a sea change in '69 and '70 and, of course, for myself, shifting to Gaylord Nelson's staff, it was a big, big deal then. I was in the center of it working for one of the senators who had a history of concern over Vietnam. But not so much up until then. I think in the '68 campaign, Hubert Humphrey was supporting Johnson's position, so the centrist Democratic position was pretty much to let's go stay the course. It was bubbling, but not bubbling over yet.

RITCHIE: The other issue—you mentioned the riots in '68 and how that affected the committee and its response, but the riots also took place here in Washington. Were you affected in any way by that?

BREZINA: I believe that the Senate closed down for a few days, and then the National Guard were posted around, not unlike today, but unlike it had been for quite some time. I remember coming up to work and passing soldiers with fixed bayonets, looking straight ahead. I remember seeing smoke curl around the Capitol Building from the 14th Street riots that weren't too far away. Working for Harris and the Kerner Commission, you felt sort of right in the middle of it.

There were, of course, two assassinations that year, and Harris was very close to Mondale, they were seat-mates on the Senate floor, as he said in my interview with him, on the floor, and also to Bobby Kennedy. He lived almost right next door to Kennedy in McLean, Virginia. Bobby Kennedy used to be so interesting. He used to walk across from his office to the Capitol with his hands in his pockets like deep in thought. After he was assassinated, one of his staff people who knew staff director Steve Ebbin quite well, Esther Newberg, came up to Steve's office. I just happened to be there. I don't know what I was there for, but all of the sudden, there was Esther Newberg talking about what had happened and what her feelings were and so forth, and it was just so depressing, and so sad. It was so tragic.

A couple of days later, he was buried in Arlington Cemetery next to his brother. Dun Gifford, who was the LA for Teddy Kennedy, who had recently worked with Harris on a floor amendment. They were both junior senators at this time, and they partnered to get the National Science Foundation an extra $50 million on the floor of the Senate that had been cut out in Appropriations. And so I got close to some of Kennedy's staff in that process and the two senators were successful in doing that. Anyway, Dun Gifford came up to me after the Bobby Kennedy assassination and said, "You're welcome to participate in the candlelight ceremony." That is something I will never forget, because there were maybe hundreds or thousands that came together on the Capitol grounds about an hour or two before sunset a day after the funeral. With lighted candles, we walked from there over to Arlington Cemetery, singing the "Battle Hymn of the Republic." There was nothing more powerful and awesome and historic in my memory. It was so, so special for a fallen hero who was doing incredibly well in a campaign, although he was criticized for being a make over. But he was striking a nerve in the country, and how sad to be taken down. I'm not sure whether he was assassinated before or after King, but they were almost together.

RITCHIE: King died in April and then Kennedy in June.

BREZINA: That's right. You were starting to wonder how well our institutions were going to hold together. Harris was co-chair of Humphrey's presidential campaign with Mondale, and there was incredible discord at the convention that summer, which, thank God, I didn't attend or didn't have a reason to be there. That's when the subcommittee got put on hold because of Harris' involvement. So it hit home, close. Not too much tear gas until the '70s and the moratorium marches on Washington, but just about everything else.

RITCHIE: I was just interested in the context of the times. Then you switched to the office of an individual senator. How different is it to work for a senator as opposed to a subcommittee?

BREZINA: I had more leeway, more responsibility, and a lot more constituent mail to answer. It was probably one of the peak periods of Nelson's career, because not only was the Vietnam War more and more openly disputed, both on the Hill and in the nation as a whole, but also Nelson came up with this idea for establishing an Earth Day, a National Earth Day, a National Environmental Day. That started in '69 at about the time that I came on the staff, and the first Earth Day was held in April 1970. So I, looking back at room E-404 Russell Senate Office Building (the Old Senate Office Building, it was called in those days), there were four LAs and two secretaries in that room and it was everything that you can imagine in a boiler room. In a way, I was in the right place at the right time. And not to brag. Nelson was up here for three terms, eighteen years, from '62 through '80. He had just been reelected, so there was a lot of leeway to do things that he really wanted to do, although the constituent mail and paying attention to Wisconsin was always a huge priority. I was always impressed with that in the Senate. Obviously in the House it would have to be, but in the Senate also.

What impressed me—and I don't wear this on my sleeve—working for Nelson for two years, when he died around this Fourth of July, the lead *Washington Post* piece that was sort of an obituary and was quite lengthy. The first paragraph or so of everything would always start with Earth Day. But then the other things that he did, there were six listed. Two of the six were ones that I worked on exclusively. I thought, "Oh my God, you know, the test of time." There was the Vietnam herbicide issue, which was called "Agent Orange," and rightfully so, because Agent Orange is going on and on and on in terms of the Veterans Administration, and secondly environmental education. I didn't have any sense that I was doing one-third of his major legislation at the time because they weren't, you know, all that awesome. But anyway, this article seemed to consider them fairly important.

RITCHIE: It made him internationally famous, too. I was in Europe at the time he died and his obituary was prominently placed in the British newspapers. Earth Day and his environmental issues were the first things they mentioned.

BREZINA: Earth Day was an attempt to find a positive alternative to the disruptive tearing at the social fabric of America over the Vietnam War, particularly on college campuses. I think that Nelson as much as anybody was stunned by the numbers that turned out for that. It was in the millions. So there was a lot of planning, a lot of this and that, I remember.

One of the things that preceded my working for Nelson was an interview. I'm a bird-watcher. I have been a bird-watcher since the eighth grade, and that was done out in the Midwest during the McCarthy era, where bird-watching was almost as taboo as homosexuality. I mean you just didn't do that. But it was an eighth-grade schoolteacher who got us involved, and I stayed with it. Stayed with it in my navy days, and I still do a little bit. But that morning of the big deal interview with Nelson's AA, Bill Bechtel, and his legislative director, Bill Spring, was also the morning that there was a chance to see a lark bunting in the marshes along the Potomac River, coming in from Maryland. The lark bunting was a thousand miles off its range. When you get into bird-watching, a "lifer" is a new bird for the life list. When rare species come into the Washington area, word gets around and everybody goes to see the so-and-so, whether it's the summer tanager or the painted bunting or the lark bunting, or whatever. What was interesting about that was that this bird was very difficult to see. It wasn't in its spring plumage. It was in the fall, and literally, you had to crash through this canebrake marsh. And I'm in my suit, you know, and I got all sort of roughed up by that.

I thought I was never going to make a very good impression. I had water in my shoes and cut hands and burdocks and the whole thing, but we did see the lark bunting. I was only fifteen minutes late for the meeting, but because I was so passionate about the lark bunting, I think, in large part, and I had known Bill Spring before, when I worked in the Congressional Research Service, so it wasn't like totally starting from scratch. But the lark bunting probably turned the deal because being a conservationist and an environmentalist like Nelson was. Here was somebody out on the barricades doing this thing. As long as he didn't make a career out of it.

Of course, I had decided to be very squeaky clean after that, but I was sort of like I had gone through the ringer, getting out there and seeing that bird. It probably wasn't the best thing to do that morning. You never know if it wouldn't be there the next morning or something. So I got the opportunity to work for him, and you got on board and started

running right away.

RITCHIE: Were the plans for Earth Day underway already or was that something that evolved as you were there?

BREZINA: It evolved, but it was underway. John Heritage, the legislative director, had been working on it with another LA by the name of Linda Billings and so maybe six months of preparation had started. I don't want to make it sound like I was in the middle of all that. I was a part of it, but there was just an awesome amount of crafting to do because Nelson then came out with an environmental agenda, and to get press attention more than feasibility of getting it passed, it led with a constitutional amendment that everybody had the right to a quality environment. Then air, water, environmental education, the herbicide issue, which was labeled environmental warfare, and so there were about 10 or so of these initiatives. These were all being woven into not only his legislative work but also into the agenda for the teach-in that was planned for April 1970. Dennis Hayes was brought in. He was a law school student and became the national coordinator.

What Nelson was doing was giving it political muscle and foundation and legitimacy. What was interesting, at that time, the word "environment" was not something in everybody's lexicon. It just wasn't the way people talked about those issues. So old-line conservation organizations were getting up to speed. One of the functions of the office was essentially trying to legitimize the idea that environmental action might be appropriate at this point in time versus just conservation education. The old guard was sensing there was something afoot, but I think the political side of it was being manifested in making a case to give stature and prestige to the concept of an environmental teach-in versus a conservation teach-in. That didn't always go over real well with everybody. So there was the political effort on the Hill that maybe a lot of times is not understood as to how it plays into something that's happening out there. It's always amazed me that what goes on on the Hill almost always attracts a lot of attention.

I felt grateful to be there when this was happening. There was a lot of pressure, a lot of stress. One of the things that I did wasn't that great. But Nelson never had had a softball team, for whatever reason. So we created a softball team and called ourselves "Gaylord's Grebes," which is a kind of a water bird. It was hokey and funny, but the hidden agenda was to get people out of the offices once or twice a week, onto a softball diamond, and blow off

some steam. I look back and perhaps we did too well because we didn't lose any games against other Senate softball teams. So we may not have relaxed as much as we had hoped to.

But then there was a second thing that happened and that was the rubber chicken anecdote that I may have mentioned to you before. This was in room E-404 Russell. The window of the legislative director looked into the inside of the Russell quadrangle there. And then the other three LAs were out along the wall to the door. I came across a rubber chicken from somewhere and got in, with a little bit of help from other staff people, early enough one morning that I could string it outside the window by the legislative director's desk, and bring the string in so it wouldn't attract attention and so I could pull up and down on that rubber chicken at will without any fanfare.

John Heritage, who was the "Mr. Environmental Earth Day" person on the staff, always swung in about 9:30. A very intense guy. He'd get in there and you'd say, "Good morning, John," and that would be it for the next twelve hours. There was a little sign on the rubber chicken that said, "Gaylord's Grebes." I think the word "conspiracy" was in there. John always felt that the words "Gaylord's Grebe" and the word "grebe" implied some kind of conspiracy that he never could get his hands on. He was always too busy to go to the softball games. He was the last guy that would get out there on the softball field. So we were all sitting there doing very little but wondering how much longer before John would come in that morning. He came in about 9:30 and the first thing he did was take his callback slips and punched in a number and swung around looking out the window as he was talking to somebody. That's when I pulled the string and this rubber chicken came up right in front of John's face, about three feet away. He just about went into orbit! The consensus was at the time that he peed his pants, but he denied that. He said, "Goddamn you, Brezina." He knew exactly who did it. I don't know, I should have been more careful about covering my tracks.

Well, that was funny, and that was as far as it was supposed to go. But John then took the rubber chicken into Gaylord's office and told him what had happened. Evidently, he just took it and said, "I'm going to show this to Gaylord." Well, it somehow got from Gaylord's office that day over to Senator Thomas Eagleton's office. Eagleton took it down to the Senate floor, and the next thing you know, it was stuffed in Gaylord's desk. Gaylord then, knowing that Eagleton was involved in this larger plot, put it over in Eagleton's desk. It seemed to move around the Senate floor that day under cover of the pomp and ceremony of the world's

greatest deliberative body. It just went on and on, and I don't know if one ever would think about doing anything like that here anymore. Probably not. You asked about staff now and then, I don't think the pranks go over as well, because you've got to be very careful. Perhaps even then, one had to be careful, but there was a little more flexibility in dealing with situations in creative ways, I guess you'd say.

RITCHIE: What kind of a person was Gaylord Nelson to work for?

BREZINA: Well, he had all these LAs that were always bothering him, and so I learned the art of developing the one-pager working for Nelson. You just really couldn't go beyond one page, or even a half a page. You would catch him in the hallway or the corridor on the way to the Senate or something like that, and you had 10 seconds. Sometimes you could go in and an AA would work it out so that you could get in to see him for three or four minutes, but that was rare. He had a very active staff that you were competing all the time to see him. He had a down-to-earth kind of philosophical outlook on things, and he didn't use a lot of polysyllabic words. But he had a profound way of putting things. Simple, but with a context that gave it some depth.

He could speak very eloquently about the environment, and also the concern about our war machine going out of control. He would inspire his staff. It was awesome, the amount and the variety of issues that he was involved in. He had at least two subcommittees that he chaired. One on poverty and one—I think it was the subcommittee that Kefauver had back when he was dealing with crime—that Nelson got into pharmaceuticals and things like that with. He was a busy guy. He used to hide out in [John] Stennis' office or one of Stennis' retreats in the Capitol. I'm told, I didn't know this at the time, that he used to (we were right across the hall from Senator [Thomas] McIntyre of New Hampshire's office, and not too far away from Senator Gene McCarthy's office) sneak out with McIntyre over to the Monacle for a drink or two.

When you're up that close, this was not only a name but it was a person, but the name was important. "Gaylord Nelson" just had a ring to it. He'd had a great career as a governor and state senator, and this was his second term as a U.S. senator. I was so pleased to work for him. I didn't like his AA, though. His AA was incredibly difficult. Everybody had problems with him. Everybody I talked to who had been on Nelson's staff when preparing for the interviews still groused about the AA. We had Bill Bechtel, the AA when I started,

who was the nicest guy in the world, and then it shifted to Bill Cherkavsky, who everybody disliked. I think Cherkavsky's style was to get that to happen. To this day, we're not quite sure how that benefitted Gaylord Nelson. I didn't have a huge amount of interaction with Nelson, but you just did these things without touching base too often. It was a lot different from the subcommittee, when I was under the staff director's thumb most of the time.

RITCHIE: You mentioned that you were working with Agent Orange and herbicides. Was that something that also was underway before you got there or was this something that you discovered while you were on his staff?

BREZINA: I was wondering about that this morning. It wasn't really going on in the staff before. Where it came from? There was concern on the House side. There was a series of articles by Thomas Whiteside in the *New Yorker* about the environmental warfare program in Vietnam that involved Agents Orange, White, and Blue. Orange was a defoliant and White and Blue were used to deal with things such as crops, killing rice in paddies and stuff like that. The Whiteside article loomed up. It came onto the agenda. I'm sure I went to a few meetings talking about this. There was a concern in some quarters of the country, among some legal professionals, that destroying food was a violation of Geneva protocol. The level of defoliation was awesome in Vietnam. I've always wondered why even a President Clinton would ever want to go back to Vietnam without worrying about whether he's going to come out alive again after what we did to that country. More bombs were dropped than in all of World War II, and the defoliation amounted to an area about the size of the state of Massachusetts, which is probably maybe 20 to 25 percent of Vietnam.

That was a big issue, environmental warfare. It moved strategically into a couple of amendments that could be added to the defense appropriations bill at a time when there still weren't very many senators willing to speak up against the war, through more than, say, a couple years before. And out of that process, there was Congressman [Richard] Ottinger in the House, Senator [Charles] Goodell's staff person Heidi Wolfe and I worked together on the Senate side. A number of media people were pulling for us. One of the things that happened, and again I was at the middle of this, but probably just by accident, there was an issue that the State Department was handling at the time with regard to the defoliation of rubber plantations in Cambodia, in the Parrot's Beak area just over the border from Vietnam. A blue-ribbon U.S. government task force had looked into that and concluded "accidental drift over the border, nothing deliberate." We were being asked by Sihanouk, who still was

in power at that time in Cambodia, for $30 million in compensation. We essentially erased the rubber production in Cambodia.

I had a copy of that study. These were top-level government scientists. And with the help of two interns, Bruce Lederer, who was working as an intern for one of the Hawaiian representatives, it could have been Spark Matsunaga. He was interested in this and we connected after hours. And then Peter Huessy, who also was an intern. We looked into the Cambodian issue and started putting the numbers together and concluded without any question that you couldn't just defoliate in Vietnam and have this drifting over and killing $30 million worth of rubber plantations. It had to be a deliberate overflight that likely was punitive because Cambodia was allowing the Vietcong refuge there. Well, as if they had any choice. We did our homework and we went through it, and went through the study.

Somebody said, "What about Sy Hersh?" He had just gotten the Pulitzer for the Vietnam My Lai massacre story. This was the summer of 1970. Sy Hersh was on Martha's Vineyard or Nantucket for vacation, and he had, by that time, an agent by the name of David Obst, who I think later on has really made a name for himself in negotiating media deals. We had a package and we sent it up to Obst, and he contacted Hersh who was on vacation and just not really too excited about doing anything. He liked it and put together an article that Obst orchestrated publication for August 20, 1970, it was a Sunday. This Cambodian research that we did came out on the front pages of the major papers across the country. That made me think, gee wiz, guess what I've been doing. It was just myself and Lederer. Lederer was the son of Bill Lederer, who wrote *The Ugly American*, and his two aunts were Dear Abby and Anne Landers! He had all these stories about how his father would write about families and stuff like that.

But we did our homework and really got some exposure. However, it didn't make a big difference in terms of the amendments. The amendments got defeated two to one, and Gaylord said that would happen on the floor of the Senate. This was when I got to know a little bit more about the Foreign Relations Committee. Dick Moose, who really, really impressed me, got wind of this whole thing, and in one of his trips over to the State Department, he went to the Cambodian desk officer and literally pounded his fist on the desk, and said, "This has got to stop!" He was telling me afterwards, the State Department didn't have a lot of clout in the herbicide issue. And he said, "Also the stray bombs that are hitting Soviet ships in Haiphong Harbor not by accident have got to stop!" I never wanted to get into

that, but it sounded like we were almost trying to pull the Russians into this, too, with that kind of accidental/deliberate action. Not that that made a lot of difference, but here was a Senate staffer that was doing something like that!

We had a meeting later with the Vietnam Task Force director, who was an army one-star general. He and his staff came over. Claiborne Pell and Goodell's LA and a few of us were there before the amendment was up on the floor. Literally, he shouted me down just for even raising the issue about being concerned about herbicides. "We've got to save American lives." It was just as simple as that. I said, "But, but!" Well, you didn't "but" him. This was in the Senate, and an army officer being very, sort of, overly vocal, I guess, from my standards, but maybe I was being a little too passionate by his standards.

Two to one the amendments both went down. The first was an across-the-board ban, and then the second was a more refined amendment. I forget what that was, but to stop destroying rice paddies, and food crops. Proxmire came up on the floor and said to Gaylord when I was there that, "You could introduce an amendment that you can't spray defoliant on a water buffalo of a one-armed orphan and not get a positive vote on this today, Gaylord." It just wasn't going to go. Nelson said to me, "As long as they can use it for even just around perimeters of bases, they're not going to get rid of this program." One of the things about Nelson, he always knew where things were going to come out. Obviously that's the role of a senator, but I was impressed that he pretty much knew. This was unprecedented to try to stop the herbicide program, but he pretty much knew that it was going to lose by a two to one margin.

RITCHIE: It's ironic that the army was doing it to protect the soldiers and it turned out it was killing the soldiers in the long run.

BREZINA: It was doing that, and then an NAS study was called for by McIntyre's Subcommittee on Military Research and Development. Essentially, when you raised this issue, it was the beginning of the death knell of this program. But the way that Washington works, it doesn't stop right away. It gets slowed down and then you study it. The study by NAS, National Academy of Sciences, a year later, concluded that if you improve the ability to see from point A to point B, you have also improved the ability to see from point B to point A. It was sort of a wash. But the awesome level of it, it wasn't the military, it was just that things got out of control. The informal motto from the air force plane squadrons that

were spraying the defoliant was, "Remember, only you can prevent forests." It was that kind of devil may care attitude that we conducted that war in Vietnam.

But yes, there were these questions about carcinogenic and teratogenic capabilities of these defoliants. There was a dioxin in Agent Orange and the others. That's an ingredient in those herbicides that was carcinogenic and teratogenic. And then the question was how extensive it was. I never followed through. I could probably be the head of some big something now because of all the flack that occurred as a result of the impact of the defoliation in our own military personnel. God knows what it's done to the Vietnamese. And I'm not anti-military. I'm a Naval Academy graduate. It just was a little bit much.

RITCHIE: How do you date your own interest in environmental issues? Rachel Carson's book, *Silent Spring*, came out in 1962. Was that something that affected you right away, or was that something you came to later on? Did evidence pile up to convince you?

BREZINA: Well, I was this longtime bird-watcher and very close to the natural world when I could be. Even on navy ships, I had a great amount of joy in spotting seabirds. Or every once in awhile on the Mediterranean, during a migratory period, land birds would just land on your ship by the hundreds. They would be very, very tired. You could almost literally go over and pick them up. These would be warblers and wagtails and what have you. A totally different kind of experience at sea, and you'd see the albatross occasionally. They were hundreds of miles from land.

One example of how this played out: when I was working for Nelson, I guess like old-line organizations, I had to go through my own learning curve to move from conservation to environmental awareness. One time was when I was at a social event, that was in '69, I think it was, an advanced showing of *Ring of Bright Water*, which was a sequel to the movie *Born Free*, which was a movie about Elsa the lioness that had to be let go back into the wild, eventually. A tear-jerker movie. Well, *Ring of Bright Water* was about otters, and it just so happened that during the intermission—this was at one of the movie houses up on Connecticut Avenue—there was Senator [Charles] "Mac" Mathias and his wife. Normally I don't press myself on people like that, but we were in polite conversation and Senator Mathias said it's a shame that there's so little green anymore in Washington, except maybe for Rock Creek Park, because of the development. I said, "Well, there's an exception, Senator, there are the eighteen acres of green surrounding the White House."

It was one of those rare moments, because, getting back to the Rachel Carson thing, I had seen an article that the staff director of the Rachel Carson Trust Fund had given to me just a month or so before, just for curiosity's sake, that was out of the *Washington Star*. It was a 1917 article that listed the birds that Teddy Roosevelt had seen on the White House grounds when he was president. The last bird-watcher president. And it included the bluebird and the saw-wet owl and a lot of warblers and vireos, etc. I said, "Well, it would be great, Senator Mathias, if we could get bird-watching back to the White House grounds." And I mentioned the Roosevelt thing. He just got very intrigued, which I later found out why. He said, "Well that's an interesting idea. Why don't you come by my office sometime and we'll talk about it." He knew I was a staffer up there.

This really amazed me, because this was how, if you do your homework, things worked. I was just sort of there, you know? Being there, the movie. In his office, he took me behind his desk and he said, "This picture here, this is my grandfather." It was a limousine with gentlemen dressed in formal attire in an open-air limousine. His grandfather was sitting right next to Teddy Roosevelt. His grandfather was one of the first of the Bull Moosers when Roosevelt was running against Wilson and Taft in the 1912 election. So that was where the Roosevelt connection came in. He said, "This is a great idea. Give me a memo," which I did, and he later called over to the White House.

The White House brought the Department of the Interior into the loop, back in 1969, and they decided that they can't have bird-watchers coming and going, but that on the annual Audubon Christmas count, which is once a year at Christmas time, they would allow a bird-watcher, and in this case it was a Dr. Fred Evenden of the Wildlife Society, come in and do a bird count. That was in late December of '69. It was a very blustery, cold, wintery day. The White House staffer didn't dress too warmly and almost caught pneumonia, which he blamed me for, for about a year. There were more press there than birds on the grounds and the front page of the Sunday *Washington Post* and the *New York Times*, "White House is for the birds," and stuff like that. But it got done! And I just checked recently and it has been going on ever since, with the exception every once in a while when there's some security flap. But they've also had nesting censuses.

I don't know if that's an answer to your question, but when I worked on the Hill, I found that there were ways of getting things done that sort of epitomized the environmental cause. I wasn't much of a program person. I was more of a generalist than a legislative aide,

and so I would sneak things in like that every once in a while and be glad that I was somewhere at the right time and the right place.

RITCHIE: Well, you raised the question: what is, exactly, a legislative aide? What was your responsibility in an office like Nelson's and how does it usually work?

BREZINA: Well it usually helps if you have a legal background, law school and so forth. My background was the Naval Academy and then history of science at Harvard, and an attempt to get a PhD in political science at George Washington, a very sincere attempt, but I never quite could pull it off. So I'm a PhD dropout. Well, 90 percent of it is just drudge work. It's important drudge work: constituent mail, talking to constituents, keeping in touch with the issues you were dealing with at the constituent level. One of the things that was really drilled home to me, and in terms of what I do now, it's never left me, is that when that Sy Hersh article came out and the *New York Times* and the *Washington Star*—it could only be one of the two Washington papers—and the *Philadelphia Inquirer,* and the San *Francisco Chronicle,* and so forth, the AA that nobody loved, but every once in a while he would make a great point, came up to me about a week later. He had a Chippewa Falls, Wisconsin, editorial about the herbicide issue. He said, "*That's* what the senator is interested in and not the *New York Times*." This was Gaylord Nelson, national leader. You know, I didn't really care for that comment at the time, but I understood that was sort of bringing me back. I didn't intend to get into the *New York Times*, but I had forgotten that it really needed to get into Chippewa Falls paper. The first thing: that politics is local. Doing what is needed to be done to help that senator stay a good senator, whatever that takes.

Nelson Polsby, in my interview with him, in terms of comparing staff then and now, had this incredible quip about how we were proud to serve and serve with anonymity, "a passion for anonymity" was another phrase that was up on the Hill then, compared to "proud to be self-serving" and "concerned about career trajectories." There is quite a difference, but you're trying to get him reelected, even if it was in the first year of a six-year term. Not always doing it exactly as it might be. I didn't exactly like the constituent work, and it wasn't just that LAs did it all, but when it got to something that the constituent force couldn't handle, if it got into some of your issues and it had to have more than just a standard response, we would get those letters. And that would be 20 or 30 a day.

RITCHIE: Were the types of letters complaining about the stands that he took or trying to get him to take other stands or supporting him or what types of things?

BREZINA: Quite supportive, but maybe just asking some innocent questions. There weren't too many really deadly letters. The kind of thing that would be in that category was where the AA would take me off to the side when something was happening in Israel or in Vietnam, and how you worded this or that so that some of his main funding sources out of Milwaukee would not get on the wire right away. I didn't get into that too much, but that would be another level of constituent concern. I don't know, we all were running so fast that you didn't have a lot of time to reflect as to whether it was the right job or we were doing the best job or not. But also, there was enough job insecurity that you had to keep on your toes.

RITCHIE: The other thing that was interesting was you talked about when you got together with legislative assistants for other senators. When there was an issue like herbicide, was it important then to network to build up a group of people instead of keeping this issue exclusive territory for your senator?

BREZINA: Yes. I think Charlie Ferris really got a group together on the foreign policy side, which was an increasingly larger group of senators and their LAs that included Charlie, who was Mansfield's person; Muriel Ferris, who was the AA for Phil Hart; [Stuart] Symington's person and a number of others, to sort of coordinate activities with regard to the issues and the amendments to the military authorization and DOD appropriation bills. So there's where you had an opportunity to do that. And then you had people on the outside that wanted to help and if they were able enough then you asked them to contact people to see if you could get some of the senators to move over. I wasn't real good at that, but it also didn't seem like I had a lot of time to do that. You tried to expand the concern as best you could in those issues, yes.

RITCHIE: And I suppose, did some of those people try to get you on board on some of their issues as well?

BREZINA: Yes, vice versa, and there you would have to clear something with the senator in terms of co-sponsorship. If there was an environmental education act that was introduced, then you tried to get as many co-sponsors as you could before Nelson introduced it, maybe 10 or 15. The same with the herbicide amendments. Certainly, with the herbicide

amendments and the Vietnam War, there was sort of a process pretty well worked out so you didn't have to start from scratch. Environmental education was a little different and you had to knock on doors a little bit on that one. But that was important, yes, and it still is today.

RITCHIE: Since you had worked for Harris before, did you continue having any contact with Harris' office during that time period?

BREZINA: Yes, there was a couple of times that they had picnics that I went to and played football and stayed in touch with his immediate staff. I had a routine before, when I worked for Harris—at the end of my notes here, I say that my only real disappointment was that I never tried out for the Capitol Steps. Well, I never would have been a performer, but maybe the writing side. But at the Harris staff parties, I used to play the role of Henry Gibson from *Laugh-In*, with his little poetry. Why they tolerated that, I have no idea, because I was a very poor Henry Gibson. I was two feet taller than him and didn't have his style at all.

RITCHIE: But you indicated that the socializing side of it is an important part of the community up here, of getting things done, knowing people, and maintaining those social relations.

BREZINA: Some of that was done in these watering holes. Without getting into it in any detail, I was starting to get into my own alcoholism at the time. I guess what I was going to say, there's a book that I just got ahold of that tracks through Senator Harold Hughes' in his time in the Senate, '68 to '74, I think it was. He became the chair of the Subcommittee on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse, and his staff director, Nancy Olsen, has written this very detailed account. It's not a page-turner, but it's a pretty exciting book about the politics of alcoholism. What stuck me when reading that just recently, because there's a lot of Gaylord Nelson in there, there's a lot of [Ralph] Yarborough, a lot of that Labor and Public Welfare Committee, and of course Harris was a very liberal senator, so was Mondale, but there was nothing about the Harrises and Mondales. I had moved over into another part of the liberal Democratic world on the Hill. And it just sort of struck home that as small as the Senate is, and there's just 100 members, there's evidently a lot of little pockets that interact in different ways. By just moving over laterally, I moved away from the Harris world, into the Nelson world. It was interesting that I sort of noticed that just the other day. In fact, this whole preparation has brought my awareness up much greater than it was at the time. So there were some social contacts there, but there really wasn't much political payoff

with regard to the Harris people, because they were into another set of issues.

RITCHIE: The interesting thing about Gaylord Nelson is that he maintained close relations with people like John Stennis, that you mentioned, and James Eastland, and there were a lot of conservative Democrats who probably didn't vote with him on the issues and yet he was at least a social companion to the point of being able to have a drink with them.

BREZINA: We would kid Gaylord every once in a while, being very careful not to go too far. I think a couple of times I went too far. Not intentionally. He was invited down one time to Stennis' farm in Mississippi, where they went dove shooting. Now this is "Mr. Environmental Earth Day," shooting doves. I think the press secretary was making some comments at the staff level about it, wondering if the doves had strings tied to their feet so that he wouldn't have any trouble shooting them. I just happened to mention that to Nelson. I said the staff has been sort of kidding about this. He got real angry and said, "No, no! There's no strings!" And he went into what kind of doves they were, and they weren't any environmentally endangered birds. One had to be careful, no matter what you did, how it was perceived. I don't know too much about the connection there, because they certainly didn't vote on the same side of issues—many issues, anyway. But, he was respected and vice-versa, and that's sort of how it worked here, I guess.

RITCHIE: Social connections don't necessarily parallel political connections, but clearly there are some advantages in maintaining ties with people who you're not necessarily in the same political boat with.

BREZINA: Well there's all sorts of political things that happen up here, like office space and funding for subcommittees and so in that respect, I'm sure that it's really helpful. I don't know a lot about the details in that, but I agree that your comment is right on.

RITCHIE: Well, he got some liberal appointees to the court, and even though it was a very conservative Judiciary Committee at the time.

BREZINA: Oh, exactly. You know, one of the things up here on the Senate side that's always impressed me—I've heard different ways of describing it—"cross-fertilization" is one way, because senators are on so many different committees. Staff are exposed to that, whether they are just working on Judiciary or whatever. You're in a big picture world here

and the trade-offs must be awesomely profound at times. And you try not to burn your bridges.

RITCHIE: You make a good point about the staff on committees and the staff in the senators' offices. You'd come from a committee staff and now you're in a senator's office. Did you work much with his own committee staff when you were a legislative assistant?

BREZINA: I was sort of the point person for his Antimonopoly Subcommittee staff. His name was Ray Watts. Ray would sort of go through me, but not because he had to, but just he didn't want to attend all those staff meetings all the time. And that was in terms of scheduling hearings and other subcommittee work. And then on the subcommittees—that was, I think, under Small Business, which was a select committee, if I'm not mistaken. Under the standing committee which I think was called Labor and Public Welfare at the time, it's now the HELP Committee, he was active with the Education Subcommittee and he had his Economic Development and Poverty Subcommittee that sort of had jurisdiction over the OEO [Office of Economic Opportunity] program, et cetera.

Bill Spring was his legislative director that helped hire me when I came in with squishy shoes after the lark bunting, and went from there down to the Poverty Subcommittee. So there was some back and forth from his staff to these subcommittees. But, yes, you worked pretty closely when you had to. Then on the Education Subcommittee was the environmental education initiative. I didn't know which section of what authority this thing would hang in, and I ran into a little bit of flack by the lawyer on that subcommittee, like as if I'm too balmy and sauntering through the Senate. I never really could get a command of that kind of detail. But I did get the bill passed. I could never really remember what all those bells meant. I would just ask somebody, "What is this?" You know, there were a few things that I just could not keep straight, even keeping port and starboard straight when I was in the navy. I was pretty sure. Well, there's not a lot of room for error there.

This is going off on a tangent, but one of the anecdotes that I've written up is "the art of getting lost on Capitol Hill." I had problems, not in this building, but in the other two Senate buildings, in part, because the street entrances are at different levels. There's three different, I think, for Russell, and two for the Dirksen. It's the same thing over on the House side. So I'll say, "Even Mr. Smith, when he came to Capitol Hill, got lost." I got lost. And I got lost when I was working at the Library of Congress. I'd go into the stacks in the

political science section and end up in Egyptian mythology. It's a sense of a little bit of dyslexia. It's not something like I can correct it, I just get turned around easily. It has nothing to do with your question, but I did get reamed out one time by the Education Subcommittee counsel because I wasn't paying attention to section so-and-so and such-and-such. As if I was supposed to, and as if I was a little too balmy as an LA, which is probably true.

RITCHIE: Well, when you worked on that education bill, were you the primary person, or did you share that with various other people? Who sat next to the senator, for instance, when the bill was on the floor?

BREZINA: Well, I was the lead person in the Senate. The problem was getting Gaylord to introduce the bill, and he almost got preempted by Charlie Goodell. I came with that issue—it had an interesting journey out of the Harris subcommittee, when we held hearings on human resources development, the impact of deprivation on the personality. I always had a focus on the people side of the environment. Those hearings, which were a manifestation of the concern that Harris had over the riots, were riveting, and tearful. How do you give people social skills as well as job skills?

That experience was transferred out to a place where I ended up living for a few years, called Woodend, which was the Audubon National Society headquarters in Chevy Chase. It's this 20-room mansion on a 30-acre estate that they got dropped in their lap, this old-line Audubon Society. I developed, with a lady member, an inner-city environmental education project out there that was sort of the precursor to the Environmental Education Act. Blacks in Chevy Chase in 1969 was awesome. This was the first project that the Audubon Society had in their new headquarters, and nobody could say anything. I didn't do it intentionally. This was just my progressing.

In that case, I really came with a head of steam and the biggest problem was getting Nelson to introduce it. It only happened when I was able to say, "If you don't do it today, Gaylord, Goodell's going to do it tomorrow." And I wasn't kidding him. I hated to have to wait that long. But this was sort of bubbling up with regard to the environmental movement. Congressman John Brademas was the sponsor in the House. He chaired a subcommittee and held hearings on it and, long story short, we went through the whole process. And of course, Nelson held hearings and then he was supposed to be here when the floor vote was scheduled. But his plane was delayed in Milwaukee, and that's where Senator Harold Hughes

came into the issue. I had to scramble one morning to find somebody to manage the bill. It was on the calendar. It was coming off. Either you got it now or it was gone, and you might not get a vote on it. That was an incredible morning of being creative and trying to call all your contacts to see who, what, how. And Harold Hughes, his AA Park Rinard said, "Yes, we'll do it." Hughes knew nothing about the issue. I sat next to that gentleman for about two hours on the floor and it was an experience of my life. What an incredible person he was! Oh! I'm reading about him in a book now on the politics of alcoholism. He was such a nice person. He said, "Now tell me—we're going to do in the Charlie McCarthy routine. You just put words in my mouth." But he just picked up on it right away. It was incredible!

RITCHIE: A quick study.

BREZINA: And such a gentle, gentle person.

RITCHIE: Was there much opposition to it?

BREZINA: No. Well, yes and no. But not in the Senate. Not in the Congress so much. It was another categorical program, but it wasn't meant to be a categorical program. It was meant to be a reform program that looked like categorical.

RITCHIE: What's the difference between categorical and reform?

BREZINA: Well, it would have its own budget. It would be a separate category. It also had in the legislation the ability to reform other existing education programs. Now, you'd need a lot of heft and clout and leverage to do that, but the potential was there. And so one of the sections established an Office of Environmental Education in the Office of Education, it was not a department yet at that time. That Office of Environmental Education had the authority to cycle through elementary and secondary education programs, and perhaps some other authorities to try to open up the curriculum, get kids into a classroom without walls. In those days, it wasn't just the subject. Now, environmental education would probably still be done in the classroom. It would be getting out there into the environment as part of the curriculum, to see whether the Tidal Basin's numbers in terms of environmental quality were up to snuff. That's not done too much anymore.

When it became obvious that it was going to pass and then it had these kickers in it, that's when the administration got a little bit concerned. It was interesting, in reading about the creation of the National Institutes of Alcoholism and Alcohol Abuse and the National Institutes of Drug Abuse, it all went through in that 1970 period when a large number of bills were sitting on Nixon's desk that either he would sign or pocket-veto, because it was the end of a session and the end of a Congress. So like the concerns about alcoholism, we didn't know that Nixon was going to sign it. If he didn't sign it, I think, after 10 days—

RITCHIE: It was dead.

BREZINA: It was dead. Well, it did get signed. But then we went into the oversight role, and because I was concerned and Brademas was concerned and a few others—it didn't take too much concern up here, if you really followed something. But, of course, if you're following this, then you're not following something else, and you're wondering whether your priorities are always straight. Eliot Richardson was the head of HEW at that time, and it looked like the management people did not want the EE Act to really happen, which meant they weren't going to create an Office of Environmental Education. Sid Marland was the Commissioner of Education, and this was probably dirty pool, but what happened was that when he did come up to testify before Brademas about how these things were going, he would go through a lot of double talk. It was hard to nail down whether this or that was happening. Before that, of course, I had made sure that there was an appropriation, and that was also eleventh hour.

I was thinking that I really should get a little more sequential here. Yes, Senator [Robert C.] Byrd was chairing an Appropriations subcommittee that Gaylord went before to get an appropriation for the Environmental Education Act. It passed the House and Senate, went through conference, became a public law, and that was the summer of 1970. Around October, there was a chance to get an appropriation through, a supplemental. Two million dollars was approved by the Senate. It held in conference, so there was not only a public law, but there was money appropriated. Well, wait, when I said public law, that meant that the president had signed it?

RITCHIE: Right.

BREZINA: No. He hadn't signed it yet. Congress had passed the legislation. Okay, so Nixon signed it right at the end of the year, so I guess it passed Congress right at the end of the year, and about that time, it wasn't October, it was in December, that we got an appropriation for it. Then it became a question of whether they were going to implement that law and honor the appropriation and so forth. Brademas was picking up on it. He chaired a subcommittee, I think it was called special education. He was into a number of things that included drug education. It was hard to know what the administration was going to do, but the people at the operating level over there were very concerned that they were being undercut all the time. Because they were trying to pull in or reform some of these programs from other entities and that was not bureaucratically appropriate in some people's minds.

Anyway, what probably was dirty pool was that in 1971, there were a series of hearings that were going on, and I don't have all the subcommittees down now. But it started with a Government Operations subcommittee hearing on government oversight. I happened to have a friend that I had met at the Algonquin roundtable who was staff director for Senator [Lee] Metcalf and had a one-pager on the Environmental Education Act and how it was sort of being torpedoed by the administration, and just happened to have Commissioner [Sidney P.] Marland [Jr.] coming up to testify. There were some questions asked and the responses were something like, "Well, we'll get back to you." I got ahold of the transcript, made copies of it, and it just so happened that Commissioner Marland was going to testify the next week before Senator Cranston's subcommittee on population control. He knew the person there, so he had the Marland transcript about the Office of Environmental Education, with another one-pager. And the same questions were asked again, with a little more heft to them. Marland was starting to look around and find out what's going on here? How is this happening? He's going on record a little bit more in terms of whether the office will have capital letters or small letters, and whether really, in fact, it exists.

So there was a second transcript out of that, and those two transcripts and the one-pagers were then taken over to Brademas, and he decided to call the commissioner in. The opening salvo from Brademas is, "When are you going to start obeying the law?" It ended up with Marland apologizing and saying that he would create the office and it would have a shingle, and there would be a press release. He had gotten three separate hearings within about a month, and I was the person behind the scenes. That doesn't win you a lot of long-term friends, but it's possible to do that if you really think it might help the cause. I've never done that again, and usually you don't have the opportunity. But it was a Republican

administration and a Democratic Congress and there was a disagreement over philosophy on this one.

RITCHIE: And also the House and the Senate and keeping track of all that's going on, it's a pretty complicated process.

BREZINA: Well, if you focus on this one thing and become a one-trick pony. Even then, it's complicated, yes. These first two subcommittees, they didn't have to do this. But it gave them a juicy issue. When you go to somebody like that, you only do that if you think you know how to present it so that it's palatable. So you've got to do your homework. I mean, no one's suggesting that. But I was able to pitch it in a way that it was timely and was related to the person who was going to testify. And there was a history here of foot-dragging and equivocating on it.

RITCHIE: It seems to me that it also gave you something tangible on the environment. At the same time you also had Earth Day, which was a big media event, but now you had a piece of law, with an agency that was created to carry something out related to the environment.

BREZINA: Yes, yes. It was the educational side of the environmental movement. It was small, but it had potency, and it's an established phrase now, "environmental education." And who did it? Well, there's a hundred people who put a claim on what happened. And you know, anything that I've done up here that is not attached to me, which is just about everything, doesn't bother me, because I wasn't doing it for myself.

RITCHIE: Did it give you a little bit of extra status within Nelson's office that you helped to get a bill through that was, essentially, a Nelson bill?

BREZINA: Yeah, yeah, it didn't hurt. It's up there with the Chippewa Falls editorial. I will say, another time I probably went too far with Gaylord was when there was an issue called Project Sanguine. Project Sanguine amounted to a 10-thousand-square-mile waffle iron of a communication grid that the navy wanted to construct and bury in northern Wisconsin. Because of the rock formation in that area, it was ideal, they could communicate with their nuclear missile submarines without the submarines having to go to the surface. The communication would be in terms of firing in case a war broke out, so that the

vulnerability of the submarines would be protected. You had to have this huge grid to emit an extremely long, low frequency communication that could penetrate the water in the Indian Ocean and the Atlantic, and so forth.

Well, this didn't go over too well with Gaylord and the environmentalists and conservationists up there. It became my issue, and the AA said, "We'll see how you're going to deal with this one, you Naval Academy graduate," because it was a navy issue. Of course, when I was working for Nelson, it was Nelson first all the time. It ended up being the first time the navy had to deal with an environmental impact statement. Their Engineering Duty Only officers had never done this before. And in a state that's not the most hospitable. I mean, if it were Wyoming or Nevada or something like that, the environmental infrastructure's not so great as Wisconsin, particularly with Senator Nelson.

So I was always looking for angles, and basically there was a string of research studies that came out as to whether the earthworms were going to go south when this thing was turned on, etc. You know, the environmental impact in a dozen different takes. Almost invariably, a study would say that probably more research is needed. That would be enough to hook into the reporters from the Milwaukee papers that were always wondering what the next one was going to say. I would do the rough draft and the press secretary would do the press release, and there would always be good mileage because the navy wasn't able to be 100 percent certain that the downside wasn't substantial.

Gaylord was born in Clear Lake, Wisconsin, a little tiny town in northern Wisconsin. One morning I had the chance to talk to him about Sanguine. I said, "Senator, if this darn thing is going to be as big as the navy says it is and all those wires are going to go into the ground, somebody may well be thinking about acquiring the land where those wires are going to go through and make a killing over just holding onto land that all the sudden is going to be worth more." He turned to me and says, "If that ever happens, I'll kiss your ass right in front of the Clear Lake Post Office!" Like, this was way, way out, Brezina. I just never really after that hypothesized too much around Gaylord. I mean, I thought it was, you know, a neat idea, but obviously it was a hyperbolic take on things. Of course, he wasn't saying it for public consumption, but just wow! I wanted to put my tail between my legs and get out of there.

RITCHIE: What happened to the project?

BREZINA: They scoped it down from 10 thousand square miles to, I think, 900 or something like that, and essentially made it palatable. It didn't have to be quite so humongous. Nelson really won on that one, too. I don't know whether the military does environmental impact statements as routine, but this was definitely what they were doing at that time.

RITCHIE: Everybody was encountering them. Even the Corps of Engineers, for the first time, in the same regions, were having to suddenly have to deal with different issues. People who up until then only cared about navigation on the river now cared about the fish in the river and the other aspects of it.

BREZINA: Yes, the law went into effect at about that time, and with the domestic projects I know that it really impacted. I don't think it normally included national security issues, and this was one of those, so this was an exception. It was an odd kind of issue that played out for quite some time.

RITCHIE: All the publicity that Earth Day got must have made it much clearer to other senators that a lot of people cared about the environment, and that there would be some political benefit in getting on board what previously had not been seen as an issue that would have attracted a lot of public support and gotten them many votes.

BREZINA: That's a real good point. For example, that Earth Day turnout was in the tens of millions, I think. Twenty-two million or something like that. That has to have caught a lot of attention. Yes, and he became "Mr. Earth Day." Of course, there were thousands of people involved in it, but he was the political leader, there's no question about that.

RITCHIE: But also in terms of gathering the votes in the Senate chamber and in the House, getting people to see a practical connection to an issue that otherwise they might think of it in terms of jobs or of the economic impact, or the interests of the military. It ratcheted up the environmental profile.

BREZINA: I think so. Like, you know, not unlike the Great Society programs that went through so well and so profoundly over, say, five or six years before, this probably opened the door for legislating more definitively in the environmental area. It had to, yes. It also got the kids off the streets to a certain extent, although there were still a lot of protests

against the Vietnam War for awhile.

RITCHIE: But it channeled a lot of that energy into other issues.

BREZINA: Yes it did. That was the intention. It wasn't predicted that it would be so profound. It struck a nerve in America. Good timing and all that.

RITCHIE: I'd like to talk about why you left Senator Nelson's office, and what you've done since then. But are there any other issues with Nelson that you wanted to talk about?

BREZINA: Let me take a quick peek at my notes. There are a few anecdotes that I always forget. After a year or two after Nelson, I left in '71. My alcoholism started kicking in, and that's post-Senate. I don't really want to talk about that too much.

RITCHIE: You mentioned when you were talking about the ABM that was going on at the time. Were you very much involved in that? I know you said you sat in the chamber to listen to it.

BREZINA: I wasn't involved in the sense that the senator wasn't involved that much, other than voting against it, so ABM was more of a Symington and Mansfield and Byrd, some of those peoples' issue.

RITCHIE: A lot of these were hotly contested issues from the administration's point of view. Did you see much of the congressional liaison people from the White House in those days?

BREZINA: I did not. In those days, it was the Nixon administration and Nelson was not exactly the most popular senator for them. There wasn't a great amount of cooperation. I don't know what the composition was in the Senate. It was almost two to one in favor of the Democrats, I believe.

RITCHIE: Yes, although the Democratic and Republican parties were much more divided internally. There were a lot of liberal Republicans and a lot of conservative Democrats as well.

BREZINA: Yes, that's true.

RITCHIE: So the party margins hid the ideological divisions that existed.

BREZINA: I would imagine if I had been working on Senator Stennis' staff as Democratic LA, I would have had more contact at that time. But no, not much at all. Not much at all.

I left in '71. The next two highlights were that I worked as a Washington issues coordinator in the Jimmy Carter campaign, and had to leave by the time of the election because of my alcoholism and prescription drug addiction. The prescription drugs were legally prescribed, it wasn't anything illegal, but within a year after that, I became a recovering alcoholic and have been such, uninterrupted, for the last 28 years. And that's where my life turned around. I guess this is relevant in terms of what we were talking about. I have a two-tier resume. The first tier is what we've been talking about, the Harvard, Naval Academy, Capitol Hill, really eye-catching. The second half, since 1977, has been almost entirely voluntary work, helping others, like Harold Hughes was doing after he left the Senate. Helping others who are or were addicted. Families of those addicts, and people who have grown up in such families.

And then for the last 10 years, and this is about the time I got together with my wife who just passed away from cancer, I stumbled on a problem. I got outside of the Beltway and stayed outside the Beltway, both physically and mentally for quite some time. I co-owned a breakfast inn in southern Maryland, raised flowers, wrote poetry, learned to do art, and worked with the alcohol problem through support groups, tirelessly. Not that I was the only person. There were a lot of people doing this now. Ten years ago, I stumbled on a problem that led to my getting back into things, but not that I thought it would happen initially. It just worked its way through with regard to determining the extent of alcohol consumption in moving vehicles, which I call "After the Car Door Closes." It mainly focused on teenage consumption of alcohol and illegal drugs on the open road.

My wife and I engaged in a high adventure and took what is called "shoe leather epidemiology" into the Lewis and Clark league. We made surveys in all lower 48 states over six or seven years. About 200 days on the open road. This goes back to the Chippewa Falls editorial. I had a lot of localized data. I followed up with localized interviews of

professionals that work with teens and adults in alcohol and drug settings. You can't really talk to kids directly because of legal problems, but essentially boxed in the extent of teenage high risk-taking on the open highway. It accounts for about 25 percent of teenage substance abuse. And had 48 sets of localized data that was getting nowhere with the bureaucracies, but was worked into the legislatures. About a third of the legislatures picked up on what I was doing and passed measures, mostly resolutions, some studies, some hearings, some follow on legislation. All modestly self-funded by myself.

I wasn't against partnering, it just was this was not a popular subject. It got good press coverage in local media outlets in 31 states, mostly state capitals. I'm not unhappy that I never got anything in the *New York Times* after I learned that this is really not that important. You talk to the people that are the savvy people in this town, it's like they don't know that. So, six years of briefings on the Hill and I've morphed myself from a one act pony routine, about kids and cars, into more of a resource person in regard to substance abuse issues, looking at it from public health, highway safety, criminal justice, oversight, DOD perspectives. And I try not to be an advocate, certainly not a lobbyist, but to be a resource person and maybe help facilitate action, timing-wise and so forth. I've found more traction on the Senate side than the House side, and this is reinforced by my interest in doing this oral history.

I've been accused of having too much free time. An Augusta, Maine, editorial said, "Is he in the 'too much free time' department?" I figured out a way to determine discard rates of alcohol containers on the roadsides. It had never been done before. Irrefutable evidence. It doesn't mean a hill of beans to most bureaucracies, and so I've had to realize that you need political leverage. My wife was supportive and she was with me at my side and we took a measure of America. Like Granny D, you know, walking across the country. Well, I didn't walk continually, but we stopped thousands of times to count discarded alcohol containers and it caught a lot of attention that way.

RITCHIE: Making a connection between all of the cans and bottles on the side of the road and the fact that people are drinking them on the road. Is that it?

BREZINA: Yes. I discovered, much to many people's dismay, that our roadsides are basically "skid roads." There's a huge amount coming out of motor vehicles, and most of it's coming from teenagers, unfortunately. It's like a closet issue still. I mean, we know it's there,

but we don't talk about it. The reinforcement to kids is sort of like, "We're not gonna ask if you don't tell." It's not the kind of issue in the 21st century that goes over very well.

So I'm back in the saddle again up here. I have such great respect for this institution that just having the opportunity to go through the police search is fine. I try not to look lost, so that somebody doesn't think I'm doing something that I'm not supposed to be doing. I'll stay with it a couple, three more years and see what happens. I've accomplished what I've wanted to accomplish. And I've morphed myself into a resource person, I've gotten into DOD issues again, so there's a question about military service personnel under the age of 21, a lot of them, stationed in the United States, who drink.

RITCHIE: And the military provides cheap drinks for them.

BREZINA: Right, but if you're under 21, where do they do their drinking? They do provide the cheap drinks, but I also suspect that the military may well have some answers that might have some benefit on the domestic side. Because this is not a problem that's going away. It's sort of stuck in the 1980s in terms of assumptions. I'm hoping that somebody says, "Let's get this thing into the 21st century." Because there's now cell phones and more access to cars and stuff like that. This fluid style of teenage behavior is quite different from that of my age.

You don't want to hear too much or I'll go on and on. But it's been one big high adventure, and a Lewis and Clark scale survey is sort of not too much of an exaggeration. Then there was this Mount Everest climb up the decision ladder. To this day, I still spend about two-thirds of my time working at the state level, which is a refreshing "take" to people when I talk to them up here. It's just staying in touch. It's been a red state thing and a blue state thing. I'm sort of where I was in the issue coordinator in terms of sophistication, but I don't have the platform, of course. And none of this was planned. You know, be careful if you've got unfinished business when you start off anew. All of the sudden, you think, "Oh my God, How did I get over here! I thought I was finished with that!"

RITCHIE: You mentioned a couple of senators like Russell Long and Harold Hughes, who had drinking problems. A lot of senators had drinking problems, and I gather that there were probably a lot of staff as well. Do you think it was because it was a stressful institution? Or was it just the culture of the times, that people didn't pay that much attention

to colleagues who had real problems?

BREZINA: There's a W.C. Fields quip about Philadelphia, that alcoholism was so common it was hardly noticed. Also, he was the one that said that closing the bars on Election Day was carrying democracy a bit too far. So I go back to him. "My wife, she drove me to drink and that's the only good thing I can say about her." The attitude was different. But I talked to one person, a really savvy guy on Senator [Arlen] Specter's staff, a couple of years ago, about what I was doing. He was a former teacher and he said, "I know what you're talking about." He said, "You know, unfortunately, there's still a lot of this going on on Capitol Hill." He wasn't involved, but he referred to what the staff do after hours and stuff, a lot of heavy drinking. Somehow it's not as visible.

Nancy Olson, until she passed away a few months ago, was interested in this oral history project. I had hoped that she could participate, because she really could put together what was going on then. When I first talked to her, she said, "Oh, Senator Nelson, how is Warren Sawall?" Well, Warren Sawall was the special assistant to Gaylord, who everybody knew had a drinking problem. There were those of us that were not in that category yet. Warren Sawall became one of the first people that Hughes and Nancy Olson helped in an informal employee assistance program up here, of which very little probably has ever been written. When that came into full being in the Senate, I don't know.

I thought about mentioning this to you and also at the same time I've thought that this is a little bit tricky, because this can be very controversial in terms of what happened then and what's happening now. Because of the stigma, for one thing. I wear it on my sleeve. My resume says I've been a recovering alcoholic for 28 years. Now, I would not have done that in my second year. Harold Hughes could afford to do it because he made a big deal out of it and brought new programs into Iowa when he was governor and so forth, before he even got to the Senate. There's a story there that at some point in time would be interesting. Whether it's timely now (I don't know who would tell it now), but the history of history of the politics of alcoholism in the Senate, or history of alcohol problems, perhaps, or how it's perceived and so forth. I don't know whether that's timely now.

I'm going to meet with the Senate employee assistance program person and I'm going to offer my services as a volunteer. I'm not attached to any sort of one style of dealing with it and I've gone through that, but there may be a chance to help somebody who's concerned

or a spouse that's concerned. I've done that for 20 years. You know, I'm hesitating only because it's a great issue but I don't want to sound like I'm pushing it.

RITCHIE: The role of the spouses is probably not well known, but I think there was a real effort on the part of the Senate wives to make the Senate more health conscious. In the years that I've been here, there's been a much greater emphasis on health concerns.

BREZINA: Yes, I mean, that's a good sign. I'm not suggesting it's as bad as it was, since I don't know how bad it was then. You know, in the navy you weren't a man until you drank hard. There was an old saying about midshipmen that if you got drunk with your uniform on, you were supposed to fall face down so that your brass buttons wouldn't show. When we used to have the football games in Baltimore, the Southern Hotel literally got ripped apart by midshipmen. It was sort of tolerated. However, the thing about military versus non-military, the way the press handles the military, they get a raw deal, I think, and this is one of the things I want to get into in my briefings.

The rate of alcohol abuse in the military, in studies, is about the same as it is in the civilian world. But the way the press plays it out, it looks like it's just a military culture that's beyond reach or something like that at times. It puts the military very much on the defensive. It probably makes things much more expensive to handle, but I suspect the military may have some better answers, because I don't see the answers on the domestic side closing all that well. There's been a sort of a hardening of the categories on the domestic side and zero tolerance is playing out, but there's a lot of stuff that goes on behind the scenes in terms of zero tolerance. So I've had some conversations with staff who have said, "Maybe we can pick up on what the military's doing." The conventional wisdom is that it should be the other way. The military doesn't get into zero tolerance as much as optimizing results. And optimizing results probably, I can't prove it, would be effective in saving lives.

Fortunately, I'm going to get too old to do this much longer. Then I won't have to really think about all this other stuff. But Nancy Olson and Harold Hughes and others were just pathfinders on this, and developing the federal structure. Hughes started worrying, about the time that he left, that we were going to get too bureaucratized and moved away from the problems. The Russell Longs have gone by the by. Gaylord Nelson had a problem, his wife had a problem. And somehow, Gaylord lived into his 80s, so he well may have seen the light somewhere. He didn't have to get into AA. I got into AA.

RITCHIE: Are there any senators today who are Harold Hugheses in the sense of really being concerned about the issue or offices that you find more sympathetic than others?

BREZINA: The issue about teenage drinking and alcohol—the alcohol industry has a huge impact on things up here. It's hard to even talk about it sometimes. So I use "substance abuse" and sort of euphemistically referring to it. It depends on how you measure the impact of the corporate world on Congress today. The old line was Hughes and then Ralph Yarborough and Harrison Williams, who I think also became a recovering alcoholic, and Don Riegle, a Republican who took the lead when the Senate turned Republican for a while. That's the string that goes into the late '70s. Visibly concerned senators about getting alcoholism into the loop of federal programming. There's more, yes, but these are people that are also hammered by a lot of interest groups that are out there, MADD and others, not that there's anything wrong with that, but, you know, I've had to look for a way of approaching in-vehicle drinking without being antithetical to the established groups.

Things are pretty well set up now. It's only been when I hear in a distant way what people like [Donald] Rumsfeld and [Newt] Gingrich, and the 9/11 Commission Report are saying about a more agile, less incurious, less risk-averse government, that I'm energized. Maybe some of this could filter into these prevention programs. I'm hopeful, but I can't do that myself, and I am having a hard time finding anybody that's really articulating it in the substance abuse area. So there's bound to be somebody somewhere, I just haven't found him yet.

RITCHIE: The thing is there are so many issues out there, you have to compete with them for attention. They're all good issues in a lot of ways, and as you say, to go onto one issue, you've got to pay less attention to something else in the process.

BREZINA: My routine now is to try to get in here in the down periods of the year where I can get more access to staff. I'm not a closer, I'm not trying to close anything. And I'm not trying to bother staff when they've got 50 things going on. So this August and October, November, December (if they go into recess in October), and get in once a week. I've been doing this now for six years. So I'm trying to deal with those issues that you just mentioned the best I can by being steady and persistent and getting to know some people over time.

There is incredible turnover up here. Some of the people that I really sort of were rapping with and resonating with, and they're gone the next year and this happens again and again and again. K Street and so forth, law schools, etc. So, I try to deal with it that way, but still, two-thirds of my time, and this has been like 14-hour days, virtually six days a week for the last 10 years. It's out there. I had a good talk yesterday with somebody that I've interacted with several times before. She's been polite, courteous, and I thought I was pestering her at times (this is a program person in Missoula, Montana), and we had a real good talk about putting up some ads on billboards. She asked, "What do I think might go on the billboards?" I said, "Let me think about that," because my issues are a little bit gutsier than a billboard about a bartender checking an ID.

I had a good conversation this summer with a delegate from Maryland who's known what I've been doing for five years. The timing was that she and her husband had just had to pick up a big box of empty beer bottles off their front yard. She said, "I sit next to the superintendent of the state police; what can I ask him?" I would never have gotten that opportunity if I hadn't talked to her over four years, and then the beer bottles on the front lawn. When that happens, I don't always have a quick answer, because I don't get that too often.

The attorney general's office of Indiana (and the attorney general is now the president of the National Association of Attorney Generals) thought kindly of some information I sent out there, and I got back a real good letter. I hardly get any letters anymore. So I just plug away until something happens. The day before my wife's memorial, I donated some money in her name, and also had a chance to talk with a mover and shaker in Duxsbury, who's on the Youth Risk Commission and there might be something happening there. Resource person, pro bono, and facilitate other people, let somebody else do it. But mostly it's policy, not too much on the program level. Now everything is like video games and is in packages. It's hard to get somebody at the grassroots level to ask something outside the box anymore. So, there's all sorts of reasons why I should go on to something else.

RITCHIE: Tell me, when you come back up here to talk to Senate staff, does it remind you of the way it was when you were here in the late '60s and early '70s or is it a completely different world?

BREZINA: It's not completely different, but one of the things I wanted to say, which is obvious—you've been very tolerant, this is a third of a century ago! It's like, it isn't yesterday, and I don't remember all that well, but there was less atomization of staff. Like I hardly ever get asked by staff who else I've been talking to. It's almost like I don't mention that too much, although I mention I've been up here for six years and whatever I do, I do that. They're sort of focused in a narrower sense and in the right here and now. I've had some difficulty with some staff who, after I say, "Well, here's what might be done," they disregard that totally and want to know what the end game is. Well that's dismissing maybe getting GAO to do a study. I come into my work with a big-picture orientation and that can be helpful, but it also can be, you know, you might not be communicating too well. So I've got to be careful. That's why I've taken the different perspectives of this, so I don't talk about just substance abuse.

There's less laughter up here. There aren't any pages in the elevators anymore that you can shoot the breeze with. There's an equalization of the sexes in terms of professional positions. Nelson Polsby mentioned that as well, that the stream coming out of the schools is different now and has equalized. There were only two or three ladies up here that were professional that I worked with that I was aware of. There were Muriel Ferris and Heidi Wolfe, and Kathi somebody in Senator Symington's office. Muriel Ferris in Phil Hart's office. Heidi Wolfe in Goodell's office. Heidi Wolfe and I worked together to the point where some of my male colleagues were probably envious, but they were joshing me all the time about working with Heidi Wolfe. Wondering if I was "getting" anything, or like that kind of thing. Well, nothing happened, but she was so visible. She was a highly educated, very beautiful professional woman. And there were only two or three like that up here. And so the male language was very chauvinistic. That has changed.

Computers have changed things in terms of how information is received. So what I've perfected is a two-page congressional summary of the past year or so that I pass out when I have a briefing. No more than two pages of what's gone on in this particular perspective on substance abuse. I've gotten some good comments on that. And that's just pure digging it out of the Internet. Then I've developed one-pagers, at the suggestion of the Appropriations Committee staff. Most of my impact has been with the Appropriations Committee's staff, where, perhaps much policy is being made, not that I've made it. But there's more opportunity for policy there than in legislative committees, which aren't doing all that much, because of the gridlock, perhaps. I've been able to get one-pagers together for

Appropriations Committee staff for consideration on Defense, DoJ, Health and Human Services, and Department of Transportation. I've cycled those out in the states and so forth. So I get mileage out of it after I spend a lot of time getting something down to one page.

Earlier I mentioned the passion for anonymity. I don't know if it's here as much now. I've heard some people say that people aren't working for their senators and congressmen like they used to and they're more in it for themselves. I haven't seen that so much, but I do know that the turnover is so great that people aren't up here for the long term. I was amazed—not amazed, but I wasn't surprised, either—but I was very pleased to see in *The Hill* or *Roll Call*, comments by the staff of Senator [Ernest] Hollings when they left. A good number of them had been here for a long time, and they were so pleased and so happy and grateful. They were glad to have had that opportunity. It's rare to see that anymore.

I have briefed the alcohol person on Senator Byrd's staff over a five-year period, and every year, it's a different person. I'm not commenting that that's typical of his staff, but there's certainly a turnover in that area, for somebody that's been here forever. The "proud to serve" that I mentioned earlier and Polsby mentioned, versus "proud to be self-serving," that's a little bit caustic, but it's probably true. Usually one didn't just stay here forever. I would have wanted to stay here forever, but for my alcoholism. I would have wanted to get on, say, a full committee staff that wasn't on the firing line. I would have loved to do that. I really liked it up here. It was hard work, though, all the time. It was always hard. But I always had such great respect for the first branch of government that I wasn't that excited about working for the second branch of government.

RITCHIE: It depends on whose perspective.

BREZINA: Right. [laughs] How do you like working for the first branch of government? That is, this branch of government.

RITCHIE: Are there other branches of government?

BREZINA: You've been up here a long time.

RITCHIE: Yes, since 1976.

BREZINA: There must be something about it.

RITCHIE: There's a lot less stress in the historical side than in the legislative side, I'll say. If I had to work the hours that the staff on the legislative side do, and under the same kind of pressures, I would never have lasted as long as I have.

BREZINA: I'm glad to see you've stayed here that long, though. I would even have considered publications clerk or something like that, but I know that I probably would have gotten bored doing that. Perhaps my problem was not being able to find that happy medium. LA work, that's hard to do for a long time.

RITCHIE: There's been a lot of turnover in the senators as well. There are only a handful who are still here from when you were here, maybe about six or so.

BREZINA: That's about it, isn't it? Kennedy. Byrd. You would know the ones.

RITCHIE: Daniel Inouye and Ted Stevens, and that may be about it. There really are not a lot.

BREZINA: Not a lot. Inouye was here, right. Now, he's an interesting senator who is not highly visible, but very effective. Very effective, a huge amount of seniority. Well, I'm running down on things to say.

RITCHIE: This has been a real pleasure.

End of the Second Interview