

SENATORS AND THE MEDIA

Interview #8

October 8, 1993

VASTINE: My picture is in the *National Journal* today. All I've seen is a fax of it, and it makes me look—I photograph terribly. I mean, really terribly, so the background is. . .

RITCHIE: The Caulder statue [in the Hart atrium]. They stood you away from it.

VASTINE: Yes, underneath the trees. I don't know why he put me under the trees. The light isn't as good.

RITCHIE: You're much better right up against it. I'll show you the photograph that John Hamilton took, before you leave.

VASTINE: All right. If it's a really good one, can I buy some proofs from you, do you think?

RITCHIE: Oh, you don't have to buy them. [Laughs] We can make them available.

VASTINE: That would be nice. Anyway, where were we?

RITCHIE: We were talking about the Republican Conference. But there was one word that I was wondering if you would define for me. I think I know what it is, but I'm not sure it's going to be clear. You referred to actualities.

VASTINE: Yes, actualities.

RITCHIE: What exactly is an actuality?

VASTINE: An actuality derives from *realites* in French. It's a statement of the moment. It's a comment, a thirty-second or sixty-second sound bite that relates to an actual event, so an actuality. It's an odd word. It doesn't convey precisely what it is, its meaning.

RITCHIE: It's sort of a verbal press release, or how is it used?

VASTINE: A lot shorter, yes. It's a blip. "I met with the president today, he told me he would fund the Hatch-Hatchee dam renewal program which, as you know, I've been working on that project for twenty-five years now and all residents of Hatch-Hatchee or whatever it is now ought to be really glad that I did this for them." "Thank you, senator." I mean, that's it. That's an actuality. It's a comment on something happening now.

"Today in the Senate we passed H.R. blah-de-blah, and it's going to mean employment for all the people of Illinois. And I did it. It was my vote. It was my idea." That's exactly what an actuality is.

RITCHIE: On the assumption that only a sound bite is going to get on the media anyhow, you don't need much more than a few sentences?

VASTINE: You have only thirty seconds to catch people's attention. And that's the idea. You've got to have your idea and your crisp way of capturing it orally, right in the front. A zinger has to be immediate for television or for radio to be interested.

There's lot of ways of doing it. An actuality is, as I said, a quick, short, punchy—ideally punchy—quotable, newsworthy, interesting statement by somebody relevant to an issue. But then there are all kinds of ways of interacting with, let's say, radio stations. You could have an interview for five or ten minutes with a reporter on a radio station. He would get to ask you all of his questions he thinks are hot, and then he edits out that little clip that—the sound bite of the clip—he feels is going to get the most attention. In the midst of a great, long paragraph—windy paragraph—a senator could say eight, great

words; and those words could get clipped and isolated for the news. And that, in a sense is an actuality.

RITCHIE: It must be frustrating to some of the members, however, to devote a lot of attention to something and only get so many seconds of a speech or something broadcast.

VASTINE: Well, it's even *more* frustrating to someone in the press who can't get a senator to say concisely what the hell the senator means. Why do people care? You've got to really think about that. And senators get so lost in their own self-importance and in their jargon and in their phrases and in their clauses. Unless they've had media training, it's very, very hard for them to forget the BS and get to the point. Really hard! Because this place is so awash in BS. Phrases and forms of address.

RITCHIE: Did you provide any training for any of the senators?

VASTINE: Yes.

RITCHIE: Coach them in any way?

VASTINE: Yes. Umhmmm.

RITCHIE: How? [Laughs]

VASTINE: Well, we had actual media training for them. We had Roger Ailes come on the week when Senate went on the air. Went on C-SPAN-2. We had Roger Ailes come down from New York and give a seminar to a dozen senators. It was available to everybody, but a dozen came, to hear what he had to say about television in the chamber and the basics of how to *be* on television, in a sense, where to look. Never look at the camera in the Senate. Never, ever address the camera. [Laughs] Questions like that.

But when we would put a senator on a cable show we would have to instruct him about where to look, how to be, often. Some senators were terrible at it. Some senators asked for media training, so we would make available the studio and actually find someone whom we thought would be good to come in and talk to them about television.

We gave seminars for press secretaries on how to groom their senators, you know, what kind of tie, what kind of suit. That stuff.

RITCHIE: I remember the first week the Senate went on television. Everybody wore a blue shirt and a red tie.

VASTINE: This is what we told them not to do, because red vibrates. Red is not a good color for television. A bright red tie, you watch. Remember Nancy Reagan's bright, red dresses? Well, actually, they vibrated on the screen. Television has a hard time with red.

RITCHIE: Well, for the President's last message on health care, almost every woman in the Senate wore a red dress. [Laughs] I guess somebody's been telling them they'd stand out in a crowd.

VASTINE: That's the idea. Well, it's their idea that they stand out in the crowd.

RITCHIE: Who among the senators do you feel learned the most?

VASTINE: Are you serious?

RITCHIE: Yes. What kind of evaluation would you have of the members you worked with in that period?

VASTINE: [long pause] Some are naturals, and some are just *very* difficult. They have to work at it. One senator is obsessed with his eyes, with the bags under his eyes. Instead of having them surgically reduced, which is

what you have to do when you get to his age and have bags. They can be taken away very simply, with a simple procedure that costs about a thousand dollars. But he refuses that, so he gets himself all made up, and then he looks like a corpse. So, this is a guy that struggles with it.

Then there's Senator [John] Warner who knows he's good looking and debonair, and all he does is come in and spits in his palms, fully spits in the palms of his hands and slicks his hair. Then there's Senator Packwood who knows that he's a hard sell on TV and has, with the help of consultants—long ago—figured out what his best pose is and always takes that pose. I think I told you that. Then there are others, like Dole, who don't care; and they just come and do it. Somebody comes along and takes the shine off their forehead. It's hard for me to be much more specific.

I mean, Senator Specter is very aware of his appearance and used to bring his wife to the studio occasionally to comment or observe proceedings in order, maybe, to help him out. But, with all of them, it's a very personal thing, how they are on TV. Especially for a politician, how you're coming across on the tube is critical.

RITCHIE: I remember talking to one of Senator Howard Baker's staff members who was talking about a briefing for the new senators after the 1982 elections. After Senator Baker finished, he said, "The press is outside, now; and they'll want to talk to each one of you." And he said, the whole group of them got up and rushed to the only mirror in the room to comb their hair, with the exception of Chic Hecht who stood back and said, "Do we *have* to talk to the press?"

VASTINE: [Laughs] Well, that's a little bit overstated, I think. I mean, that's kind of a good line; but I think most of them are aware. Some run for the other door because they don't want to talk to the press. And some run for the door where the press are, and they sort of jostle each other to get on the camera. And watching senators do that is kind of laughable because they know, depending on the issue, if they want to be on camera, they've got to be visible to

the camera, and some of them will *kill* to get their face—jostle and elbow to get their face over the, behind the shoulder of [Al] Simpson or Dole or something like that so they can be seen within the range of the camera. It's rather of amusing, actually. Especially when they leave the White House and there are a few of them commenting for the press after having seen the president.

Senator Chafee has a very hard time pushing himself forward. He's a traditional sort of senator. When I worked on his personal staff, his press secretary was quite frustrated with him because he wouldn't be the first to rush off the floor and dash up to the gallery to comment to the press. He wanted to be pushed so that he would have a reason to do it.

RITCHIE: You mentioned last week about Dan Quayle being one of the first senators to use the facility.

VASTINE: Yes. He was very, very good. He was a natural for the media. Then he became vice president, and something went dead inside of him. Something froze. I don't understand what it was. The man never figured it out. When he came back to work in our studio after his election, he was a totally different person. We made available, as a courtesy, I made a point of making our studio available to him because he was an officer of the Senate. Why not let Senate facilities be used by the vice president, who is the president of the Senate? So he came to our studio rather often. And the reason that he did was because he felt comfortable there. He knew that we would take good care of him. That we would respect him. That he would have a technically competent crew that wouldn't be critical of him if he slipped, and he slipped a lot.

He would read these precanned little statements for, oh the Winebergs in Iowa City: [stiff and haltingly] "Sam and Rachel, I want you to know how *important* you are to the Republican Party." Before, he would have said: [speeds up cadence] "Sam and Rachel, I want you to know how important you are to the Republican Party." I don't know what happened to Quayle. I don't think anybody's figured out why this extremely promising senator could not make the transition to vice president.

Because I remember Senator Chafee having a lot of respect for him. He was considered a comer. He was a little bit scary. Some of the older senators wanted to make room for him because they could see a lot of energy there and a lot of, not necessarily intellectual fire power, but a lot of get-up-and-go, and a great ability to be an advocate. He'd get on the floor, and when he got cranking, he could be quite a stirring spokesperson for his point of view. He backed Senator Warner and Senator [Sam] Nunn off when Warner was ranking on the Armed Services Committee in the end of the last of the Reagan administration. There was a vote on an Armed Services authorization bill that was very controversial. Warner and everybody wanted to go one way, and Quayle wanted to go another. And Quayle won it! He got the president on his side and this was considered a big victory for him. And he had his Manpower Training Act in 1982 that a lot of Republicans, including Senator Chafee, *ran* on in a year with high unemployment. We talked about this great manpower, whatever it was. It was Dan Quayle's work. In fact I just saw now in Union Station his staff member who did it for him, whose name I can't recall. Couldn't recall it then, either, I regret to tell you.

So Quayle was by no means a yo-yo, and his colleagues did not think of him that way. But I do remember walking down Royal Street in New Orleans on the day of his having been selected vice president and bumping into Senator Warner and his AA. And the AA, Susan Magill, said, "Bob! You'll never going to *guess!* Have you heard?" I said, "What?" She said, "It's Quayle! It's Quayle!" I said, "Oh. No!" And out of the antique shop came Warner with the antique dealer following behind him saying, "Yes, the radio just said Quayle, senator. It's Quayle." And Warner said, "Oh, my God." [groans]

I went to the convention hall that night and went to the Dole sky suite and asked Dole what he thought about Quayle. He said, "I can't imagine what he brings to the ticket." And then he said, "Gee," he said, "I really feel sorry for Dick Lugar."

Senator McConnell was a very, very apt—adept—user of our services. We worked for really about twenty-five to thirty senators who became avid users.

RITCHIE: A number of the people you mentioned were. . .

VASTINE: Senator Stafford was too. I forged quite a good relationship with his press secretary. Very talented man named Tom Calcani. We did a lot of work for Stafford. Not so much for [Lowell] Weicker. He didn't care. He didn't want to do that kind of thing. Not very much for [Mark] Hatfield. Occasionally, but no much. I'm sorry I interrupted.

RITCHIE: I was just thinking the numbers of the names you are mentioned were also chairs of the Senatorial Campaign Committee.

VASTINE: Umhmmm.

RITCHIE: Did the campaign committee work regularly with your operation then?

VASTINE: Oh, very closely, as I tried to indicate last time. Hand and glove. We worked also very closely with Heinz. Heinz was a *very* big user. His press secretaries were very good, and he used us intensively. He was excellent on television. He always looked great.

RITCHIE: I was wondering, not so much for themselves. . .

VASTINE: Oh, I see. . .

RITCHIE: but in trying to round up support for the people who were up, who were vulnerable, and who were their charges for that election.

VASTINE: Well, they relied on me to work as closely as we could with senators' staffs who were up. Senator Chafee made especially strong efforts with them. It was his idea, actually, that we would get some of the weak reeds, the problem senators, and do media plans for them. So my staff and I would analyze a media market—we did this for Dan Coats. We took the state of Indiana, isolated, figured out where the television stations were viz a viz the

radio stations, which media markets served which elements of the population, where the Republicans were, where the Democrats were. And then made recommendations about which media markets he should target.

Chafee would call the senator up, make an appointment, and we would meet in the studio with the senator and the press secretary. So there I would be putting forth my judgment about television and radio media to the senator with the press secretary listening. This was an extremely awkward and very uncomfortable position for us to be in because my knowledge of Senate staffs is that they'll get you. [Chuckles] If you try to do an end run around a senator's personal staff, in the end they'll win. Because they're his staff. He trusts them. He hired them. So that was a very uncomfortable position for me to be in. I understand why Senator Chafee wanted to do it, and I tried to do it in such a way that made it as comfortable as possible for the press secretary of the senator. But it was always difficult.

RITCHIE: Did you find some of those press secretaries really digging their heels in, and resisting?

VASTINE: Yes. Definitely. As I indicated earlier, some of them just didn't like television, and didn't feel comfortable with broadcast media. They much preferred print, and they resisted our suggestions. I remember going to sit down with Senator Boschwitz at the request of his AA and laying out all of the services the Conference and making suggestions for Boschwitz's press activity, that his then-press secretary wasn't doing for him, wasn't organizing for him.

Same thing with Senator Specter. Senator Specter finally called me in because Senator Chafee kept saying, [imitates] "Now, Arlen. Ahrrlin. You've got to be doing more." And "You can do this and you can do that," and then Arlen would go back to his press secretary and the press secretary would say, "No, senator, we can't do that." And Senator Chafee would say, "Oh, yes, we can do that."

Finally, Specter called me up and said, “Will you come up here and please talk to me.” He brought in his press secretary, and we had it out in front of him. The next day the senator came to the studio, and we started working for him and never stopped. At the end of his election—after he was reelected—must have been—wouldn’t that have been. . .

RITCHIE: Eighty-six.

VASTINE: Eighty-six. I got a note from his campaign manager saying that our work in his behalf had been critical to the success. So, whether that is true or not or just AA bullshit, I don’t know. But, you know, that’s just an example of the sales effort.

He and I had a big fight. He tried to take some of “my” studio. And, finally, I said, “Senator, none of us can understand why you want to take our space away. He said, “I’ll tell you why. Because I’m a senator, and you’re not.” I said, “Senator, every one of us worked our knuckles to the bone to help you get reelected.”

RITCHIE: One other person in the equation who we have mentioned from time to time, but I wondered if you would talk a little bit more about, is Howard Greene. And his role in the Republican Party viz a viz Chafee, and Dole, and the other Republican senators.

VASTINE: I’m going to get myself in trouble. Well, Howard, plainly is the servant of the minority, and he’s the servant of his members. He’s very efficient, and they rely on him to do their bidding, to put a hold on something when they ask, to save time for them, or to get them a piece of time in morning business, or whatever it is. He plays it very close to the vest and betrays no confidences and is ultimately loyal, I mean, finally, completely, totally to the leader, and the leader alone. Not to the leadership. Though he is, in fact, confirmed by the caucus. There is traditionally a vote at each organizing meeting of the caucus that says confirms Howard Greene or whoever as the secretary for the—what it’s called, the secretary of the minority?

RITCHIE: Yes.

VASTINE: I sometimes get it confused with the conference secretary. There's another secretary of the minority. Forget it. Scratch all that.

Anyway, confirmed to his post. But, he's just a no-nonsense sort of gruff, in a way unsophisticated person who is under a tremendous amount of pressure and who sometimes gets very wound up and very tense under the pressure. He can be very undiplomatic, and therefore you think he is unfriendly and hard to deal with. But he is sort of unfriendly and hard to deal with sometimes. [chuckles] Yes. I don't know what more to say.

RITCHIE: My sense was, from your references to him, was that he was not a person who embraced new changes and new directions, and was more of a traditionalist.

VASTINE: Oh, I would definitely say that, yes. But you can understand that. I remember his getting angry at all of this stuff that people were bringing onto the floor to demonstrate—charts and graphs and things like that. That to him was just a pain in the rear.

RITCHIE: Exactly. I was just about to say that his life is on the floor of the Senate.

VASTINE: Right.

RITCHIE: Whereas yours was really between the Senate and the rest of the world.

VASTINE: Yes.

RITCHIE: So you were, by trying to reach the rest of the world with charts that might appeal to C-SPAN, you were upsetting his nice floor pattern.

VASTINE: Yes, getting in the way of things. But I got along just fine with Howard, really. He's a former resident of Lewes, Delaware. His family comes from Lewes, Delaware. And that's where I have a little home, so we have that in common. He's a decent guy.

RITCHIE: The one place where the two worlds did collide was when television went into the chamber for the first time, and there was both a desire to have it in there and also a reluctance to have it in there. That was about the time you were in there.

VASTINE: Oh, yes.

RITCHIE: What was the general thought inside the [Republican] Conference about how things would be different now that there was television in the chamber? Did they consciously think it would change things?

VASTINE: Some people feared that things would change. Definitely, there were those. And I was one of those who was opposed to it. Partly because I thought it would diminish the utility of what I was doing. You know, if clips of senators speaking on the Senate floor were readily available to the press, why would the press want to take material that my conference crews were producing?

In fact, it turned out that we used it to advantage. We monitored the floor regularly, and we made it known to all of our Republican clientele—the press secretaries—that if their boss said something newsworthy, we would instantly retrieve it. Because we kept tapes of the floor activity for 48 hours. So, if something had gone on in the previous 48 hours that was newsworthy, they could—the press secretary—could simply identify the time of day. We would search it out and get it back for them, and they could use it. So, often times, we actually took Senate-floor activity and fed it on the feed as newsfeed even though it had gone out on C-SPAN 2, we replayed it for the bird. Put it up on the bird, rather, and replayed it for local stations.

They sometimes asked for it. And then we would, as a courtesy, of course, provide it. So in the end, it all worked out very nicely for us. But, you know, Howard Baker wanted it. He felt it was important to do it, and I can't remember who the opponents were.

RITCHIE: Russell Long.

VASTINE: [Robert] Byrd.

RITCHIE: Yes, Byrd.

VASTINE: I don't think there was a body of opposition of opponents to Republicans. I don't think anybody was scared of it, but I think there were those who were reluctant. But it seems Howard Baker simply got his way.

RITCHIE: You mentioned "the bird." What was that?

VASTINE: That's the satellite. The bird up in the sky. "Put it up on the bird." "It's going up on the bird." A little jargon. Actually, jargon is very easy to acquire, and once you get about ten words, it's enough to make everybody think that you're a real expert.

RITCHIE: Well, you did become a real expert after awhile.

VASTINE: Hope I did. No, as I told you, enough to sell the Conference and its facilities. And we would do regular—we did print pieces. We did regular newsletters. What was it called? It was kind of clever. We did an internal newsletter for Senate Republican staff, especially press secretaries. *Inside Outlook*, it was called, in which we advertised our wares, our offerings, our services.

We had an Hispanic service. We hired a Hispanic broadcaster, and he did voice overs that say we'd get Senator Wilson to give us an actuality about something that was happening in California. And then Carlos Gonzales, our

Hispanic broadcaster, would come along with his excellent broadcast voice and read it in Spanish. [imitates] “El Señor Wilson today, you know, said.” You see you’d have a clip that consisted of Wilson starting to say something and then, you know, that would fade off and you’d hear him in the background, but the voice of this Spanish broadcaster reading over it in Spanish would be heard. And then we’d take that and then phone it to fifty or a hundred Spanish-speaking, Spanish-language stations throughout California.

This was the actuality system. I’m going back and forth now between one form of service and another, but we would encourage senators to phone us an actuality which they could leave with us on our hotline which was on all the time. We had Senator [Gordon] Humphrey phone our hotline from a cruiser, or battleship rather, off the coast of Lebanon during a fire fight—one of the famous ones—from the ship that was bombarding Lebanon. And he phoned in, and then we turned around and phoned that to all the stations in “New Hampsha” [imitation]. That’s what we advertised—available almost all the time to get senators’ news out to their local stations, radio or television.

RITCHIE: It’s interesting that you mentioned Gordon Humphrey because he was known as a man who liked computers and technology. And also somewhat reclusive in the Senate. What was your assessment of him?

VASTINE: Very reclusive. I think we actually sent our crew over to his hideaway where he had his command center, to do things for him. Or he would phone in. I don’t think we saw very much of him.

RITCHIE: Maybe it was having been an airline pilot. He liked being in a little room separated from everyone else.

VASTINE: Well, I guess you’ve been told stories about all that.

RITCHIE: Not much, to tell you truth. Just that he stayed in that hideaway office a lot.

VASTINE: Well, yes, he did retreat to the hideaway and communicated with his staff via electronics. Very odd duck. I'd watch him come into the Senate, and you had the feeling that he just didn't feel like he belonged there, so tentative. But that changed after all. He finally developed a kind of a swagger like all the others.

RITCHIE: One year in the mid-eighties we had to do an inventory of the desks in the Chamber, to record the names that were carved in the desk drawers. The interesting thing was taking all the senators' belongings out of the drawers to then see what was carved at the bottom of the drawer. I remember his desk was filled with airline pilot magazines.

VASTINE: No kidding? Well, then you came to the desk that was filled with candy?

RITCHIE: I didn't open that one myself. There was a whole squad of us in there, so I didn't get to see inside the candy desk.

VASTINE: But you've heard about a candy desk?

RITCHIE: Yes. I understand that's the junior member of the Republican Party. . .

VASTINE: No, no.

RITCHIE: Who sits closest to the door. . .

VASTINE: Sits closest to the door [to the Senate Chamber]. On the right. The first desk on the right on the top of the riser. The drawer is always full. [Chuckles]

RITCHIE: I gather you've helped yourself. [Laughs]

VASTINE: Oh, very occasionally. Candy is not something I indulge. I try not to. But lots of other people did. [Laughs]

RITCHIE: Now, would your work take you onto the floor very much?

VASTINE: Not a heck of a lot. But I liked going there, so I would go a lot. You know, I had access to the floor without requiring to sign in. So I could walk in the main doors. When something really hot was happening, I would go over to the Senate and watch. Occasionally I needed to talk to Senator Chafee, and that would be a very good way to see him. Just go over and get him on the floor after a vote or during a vote.

I was on the floor for the famous vote in 1985. Did I tell you? When the great vote on the budget package, the tax reconciliation tax package of 1985 when the Republican Finance Committee. It wasn't '85, was it? Eighty-four? Eighty-five? It was '85. When Dole led an effort to cut into Social Security, we reduced the COLA by a fraction. Remember that vote?

RITCHIE: I'm trying to remember which one that was.

VASTINE: Oh, that was a great vote! That was our big loss and last chance to cut the deficit truly. It passed the Senate first on a tie that was broken by the vice president. And this was when Pete Wilson was in the hospital with pneumonia. Not pneumonia.

RITCHIE: He came in in a wheel chair. He had surgery, I think.

VASTINE: I think he had an appendix out. I think it was just that. Appendicitis. And he was brought in on a gurney at midnight. I held the door; and he said, "Hi, Bob. Thank you, Bob," or something like that. And he was wheeled into the Chamber to vote. In his bathrobe! With an IV. [Laughs] I don't think it was an IV, actually, but it was very dramatic looking. Very pale. And at the top—he was parked on the top riser and his name was called; and he

said, “Aye,” and he was wheeled out. High drama in the Senate. Really was, because it was a very, very big and important vote.

His being there to vote for it meant that some of the other Republicans who were, like Paula Hawkins with all her Social Security recipients, didn’t have to. And Alfonse D’Amato, who was kind of having a hard time getting reelected, didn’t have to vote for it.

That was a very important vote, and it’s a great shame that the House Republicans rebelled and got Reagan to pull support for it, and it fell. It’s a real shame, from the national-interest standpoint. It might have hurt Republican chances in ’86, but, for the country, it would have been a very good thing.

RITCHIE: What was the relationship of the Conference to the Reagan and the Bush administrations? Did you have much dealings with representatives of the administration?

VASTINE: From the Conference?

RITCHIE: Yes.

VASTINE: Not a lot. And neither did the Policy Committee people, to my recollection. I remember Bob Potts—he was the staff director of the Policy Committee—complaining about the lack of kind of contact. I tried to remedy that to an extent by running every other week a Wednesday lunch, which is still going on, for all Republican AAs and staff directors. And I used those occasions to bring our top pollsters and political consultants and chiefs of staff of the president, and the vice president, and cabinet officers in to talk to Republican AAs and staff directors. So that was my way of trying to send the message or get a message across. Give a chance for the administration to talk to Republicans on the Hill.

Also we organized the annual conferences of Republican senators. Actually, that was something that Packwood had done before we became the

majority in the Senate. Packwood, when he was Conference chairman, I guess was in '78 and '79, that period, he used to have Tidewater conferences. I think at the Tide's Inn or something like that. McClure didn't want to do those. And it was urged on me that I ought to. Senator Chafee just didn't want to, just didn't want to. He just didn't have the stomach for it. He just didn't want to.

Then some of his colleagues got on his case, and they really pressed him. And one of them was Senator [Thad] Cochran. I couldn't act quickly enough for him. I mean, he really felt the pressure to do it. So I raced down to Williamsburg and convinced them to give us some space, I think in early June of '87 or something like that. So we started again those conferences. We did two in a row at Williamsburg, and then one at Charlottesville and one at Shepherdstown, and that was my last one. The purpose was to, oh, give Republican senators a chance to go away and look at their navels a little bit and talk.

These offsite conferences were chances for senators to consider their political future and their party's political future. We tried to bring in very thoughtful and stimulating people, to make the conference as successful as possible. But it was very hard to do that. Senators did not want to come, particularly. I guess they felt they spend enough time with each other.

RITCHIE: Although there are some that say they don't spend enough time together. That they tend to fragment. . .

VASTINE: That's because they don't want to. . .

RITCHIE: . . . and head off to their home states every weekend.

VASTINE: . . . they don't want to spend time together. Didn't we discuss earlier the fact that senators aren't friends of other senators? They don't like to be around each other all that much. They see enough of each other as it is, and they don't like to come to these group things because they feel they're going to get pressured to conform to a norm.

I remember asking Senator [Warren] Rudman once why he didn't come to any of our offsite things. He said, "I spend enough time around here as it is. Why do I want to go off with these guys anyway for another weekend? I spend too much time with them the way it is." Not interested.

RITCHIE: You mentioned about pressure towards the norm. One question I had was: what was the impact of ideology in the party at that time? Was the party split, or were they holding together, or did you feel ideology while you were staff director?

VASTINE: Oh, definitely. Oh, all the time. Definitely.

RITCHIE: In what ways?

VASTINE: Well, just tremendous pressure to conform—especially on Senator Chafee. I mean, it was a great irritant to his colleagues—conservative colleagues—that he would not toe the line on things like campaign finance reform.

End of Interview #8