

Arlen Specter

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Sylvia Lieberman, Sheila Garvey, Dodie Morris, Bill Loughery, Bill Willcox.

I had an appointment at 2:15, which was delayed--and during which I had a chance to see (or bump into) Dan McKenna, Mary Gregory, Carmie Henry, Jack Katosh and assorted others.

I asked Arlen (one of his law partners sat in) how it felt to be in the Senate. (I took notes, so the sequence here is accurate.)

"There are several aspects to it. One is the unrealness of it all. It's the 'Wow, I made it. Here I am in the Senate. I'm really here.' Then there is the mystical part of it. Over on the floor, it's hard to know what's going on. Why is it that Jesse Helms delivers a 40 minute speech against the nomination of Cap Weinberger with no one listening. I was the only person in the chamber and I listened. Or, why did Gary Hart deliver a speech saying that our defense effort was going in the wrong direction? I was presiding over the Senate that day, but I was the only one who heard him. The first time I presided over the Senate, I did so with great wonderment--not with terror exactly, that doesn't make any sense--but with a sense of mystery of it all. How ^{am} ~~was~~ I going to preside, I thought. I don't know the rules. But then I thought 'They wouldn't let me preside unless they had it figured out. It must be like the directions that come when you buy a new vacuum cleaner. It's a system made to be run by idiots. You just read the directions and you run the vacuum cleaner.' So I took charge and ran the system. Actually a little man sits right beside you and whispers in your ear--"Without objection so ordered." And you say without objection, so ordered." So it runs. But it's mystical. There is a great deal of protocol.

But we were told that in the final analysis, there are no rules that everything is done by agreement. So, I'm trying to learn all about the process--all about how this solar system works, how the entire galaxy works, with the 100 of us revolving around, how the laws of gravitation work around here."

"I've attended my committee meetings religiously. They have been very informative. It's a little like the situation where the notes of the professor are transferred to the notebook of the student without passing through the heads of either. The staff prepares and asks the questions and doesn't listen to the answer. They go on to the next question."

"IN the Appropriations Subcommittee hearings, it was a great, thrilling experience to be in Room 318, a giant room listening to Secretary of the Treasury Regan, Budget Director Stockman and Federal Reserve Chairman Volker. I got my turn to ask questions, and I asked a few. The next day we had four economists, Greenspan, Heller and two others I can't remember. That day, we moved to Dirksen 1114, a smaller room. It was really ^{fascinating} ~~frustrating~~. I got to ask questions then, too. The next day, we were going to hear the GAO, the Bureau of Labor Statistics and some others. I got to the hearing and nobody was there. I guess that's not unusual. But I have made it a point to get to every meeting on time. I think it's a good idea for a beginner. In fact Strom Thurmond has complimented me several times. 'If everyone on the committee were as punctual as Senator Specter, we could these hearings started.' One day Denton spoke up and said that he had been there at 9:00. Thurmond said he knew that, but told him the meeting had not been scheduled till ten. Anyhow the staff asked me if I would be willing to preside. I said, 'Of course, I came to the Senate.' Hatfield was 45 minutes late. I ran the hearing. And I asked the three witnesses what they thought the effect of decontrol would be

at the pump for the consumer. I did not say 'what if any effect' as a lawyer would do. Not one of those palookas would answer the question--they were so afraid to admit to anything. I learned something there. And I'm learning how many places there are to cut the budget and how Stockman decided on budget cuts without even consulting with the departments involved. ~~We~~ wouldn't you think he would at least consult with the Labor Department before he came in with cuts affecting that department? It's been very educational. Of course it is easy for me because of my training, as a lawyer, in factfinding."

"In terms of office work I have been hiring staff. As you see there are a few from the campaign--three, Gordon, Dan and Elizabeth Montgomery. Then we hired five from Javits' staff." He then mentioned ^a guy from ~~FEC~~ (B.H. Laughen) whom Shanin worked for, Bill Wilcox from Greater Philadelphia Committee and a guy who was Civiletti's right hand man. "Then we have some good young people right out of college. We pay them 12,500 and they do a lot of our correspondence. The staff is coming together slowly; but it takes a lot of time."

"A tremendous number of people want to see me. And I'm seeing too many people. I'm not going to any receptions. I'm keeping quiet, staying in the background. I got into a fight with my staff because I have ~~refused~~ ^{refused} to issue press releases. I believe you ought to learn before you speak."

Did anyone say that to you? "I've heard stories to that effect, but nobody has said anything to me about staying in the background. It's not different from any other place where people are expected to learn before they start to speak up. I've had a lot of experience, in the DA's office, living right in the middle of the media. I know what that's like. But I can see ^{the} value in ^a contrary position. I'm not interested in the media. It's a long

term; and the issue of my reelection will turn on (factors that are important at the time and on a lot of other considerations) than the media attention I get now." (I should have asked if media are interested in him?)

I then asked him if he had sense that 6 years was quite a lot of time stretching out in front of him." "The six years has a lot of different dimensions. It has a linear dimension of an expanse of time. It has a period of coming up to it during which I spent 8 years in office and eight years out of office. I had the advantage of being out of office for a protracted period of time. There is the extra dimension of being in the prime of a man's life--from 50-56. It's a choice spot for power and productivity in a man's life. Not that 56-62 is not productive, or 62-68. But it's a choice morsel of time. There's a fair amount of time to look over the picture, make judgments and act. There's a lot of power in the Senate. It's a great forum and platform."

Scrambling "I'm very concerned about the budget cuts. There are some big items here. And things are moving with exhilarating speed. We have been give materials an inch think with no idea where the cuts are coming. Baker wants us to move ahead with reconciliation. I checked with Wilcox, Lockery, and Levin. We wanted to find out what other Senators are doing. We found they are not responding. Maybe in general they are, but there are no piece by piece analyses. I caught Howard Baker in the steam room the other day. He's very hard to find. He's so busy I asked him how I could get some of these programs back on track. He said to go see Pete Domenici. I managed to get a half hour of his time this afternoon. Those chairmen are so busy--Domenici, Hatfield.

"I have become co-chairman of the North East Mid West Caucus--against

my better judgment. John Chafee asked me, and said no one wanted to do it. I told him I'd be willing to do it if no one was interested. I talked to Heinz and he said I should. Some others did express interest later, but Chafee wanted me to take it so I agreed." Chafee had had it before.

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I asked if he felt need to establish separate identity from Heinz. "There never would be any problem there. We are so different. My problem is the opposite--to keep from embarrassing Heinz. In several cases, people have come to me when they should have gone to Heinz first. When one guy from Philadelphia came to ask my advice before he asked Heinz, Heinz got mad as hell. I have bent over backwards to be deferential to him. But he has been very good about not playing the senior senator with me. On judge-ships and things like that, he has insisted we work as a team."

I asked him re campaign and its effect on him now. "It's ^a continuum. There are a lot of campaign promises to be fulfilled. We have to look after the export of coal, coal regulation, steel, pollution issues, Japanese imports, textiles. The PSEA, which were a big help to me in the campaign, want more recognition on education matters. There are Jewish issues--Israel, Soveit Jewry. These are the problems of Erie."

I asked him about his Agriculture Committee promise. "Agriculture was available on the first round along with Appropriations. I took Appropriations. I had never promised to make Agriculture my first choice. On the second round, Agriculture was gone. Appropriations is a rare opportunity

for a Freshman. I'm on the Agriculture subcommittee of Appropriations, and that's better, some people say, than the Agriculture committee itself. The farmers understand that, ~~they~~ they are happy that I'm going to speak to them at Breakfast Thursday. They are happy that I'm helping them with appointments in the Agriculture Department. They knew I hadn't promised to make Agriculture my first choice. If Agriculture had been available on the second round, and I had taken Judiciary over Agriculture, then I would have had some answering to do to some unhappy people."

"There are lots of campaign commitments to fulfill. I haven't said anything I can't stand behind. Of all the issues I got involved in during the campaign, only one troubles me--and it's not a major one. It's aid to parochial schools. It concerns me because I was on the other side in the majoralty election. I don't know whether my stand cost me my 10,000 vote margin or not. But this time I thought that because I was so opposed to the Catholics on abortion, it would not be ~~politic~~ or right for me to oppose them on school aid, too. You ~~were~~ were there when I had that tough dialogue with those people. All the rest of the ~~stuff~~ is easy--working for Pennsylvania. The rest comes easy because it's what I'm used to, working hard and working long hours--for twelve million clients."

"The toughest issue for me is abortion. I'm convinced I'm on the right side. But the anti abortion people came to see me. They threatened me. I asked them why they thought their threats would make a difference to me in January when it didn't make a difference in October when I was fighting a life and death election. The logic of my question escaped them."

"I have no plan about going home. I'm more comfortable going home to Philadelphia; and I have been going home every weekend; but now that we

have bought a condominium here, it will be easier to stay here. I plan to keep in close touch with Pennsylvania. The first week in February we held an open house in Philly. We did that when I was DA and it was very successful. We plan to do that in other major cities. I promised the blacks in Pittsburgh a day and I will do that on April . I'm going to open a headquarters in Wilkes Barre and we'll go there fore that. (He listed other committed dates). Joan is committed to doing a tour of the Northern tier this summer. That should be fun. I did that during the campaign. I think first impressions are very important. I think the first year is important in maintaining your contacts--more important than renewing them in you 5th year. It's also instructive as to what people feel needs to be done and should be done."

"We will put out modest press releases--criticizing Stockman for cutting superfund for example. But I'm not holding any press conferences at the moment. I have no interest in stepping up the press operation.

"Hank Morris and Teeter came in the other day to give me some statistics on the election. It was the most regional campaign in the history of Pennsylvania. I got the biggest vote in the suburban Philadelphia area that any Republican has ever gotten. I got 51% statewide. Normally, in order to get that margin statewide, a Republican has to get 58% in suburban Philadelphia. I got 66%. I got clobbered in Pittsburgh. It was a case of one especially popular candidate in the West against an especially popular candidate in the East. (How about Scranton and Wilkes Barre?) I lost Luzerne by 4,000 votes and Lackawanna County by 10,000. They are heavily Democratic areas. I think the abortion issue hurt me there. It hurt me in Philadelphia too. But there, people had lots of other things to judge me by--and they did." Whatever else Morris and Teeter said, the regional split stuck with him most sharply.

Said Morris and Teeter said he ought to get press together and talk about

the election.

I asked him if he felt ideologically slotted by his fellows--as a liberal republican or if they took him one issue at a time without preconceptions. "More the former than the latter. There are two lunch clubs in the Senate. The Wednesday Club is the more moderate group. The Senate Steering Committee is more conservative. I have made it a point to go to both lunch clubs. The conservatives are strong here. I've had Dan McKenna attending their meetings and listening to him. There is the presumption that I'm slotted, but a hope on the part of the conservatives that I'll listen and be with them sometimes. They know I believe in supplying side economics and budget cuts. Terry Dolan even asked if I'd be the spokesman for them in Tulsa. I don't know what I'll do. And Jesse Helms throws his arm around me and says 'Arlen, I sure am glad to see you in the Senate.' In parentheses that means, 'I'm sure glad you made me a chairman.' Being a chairman is very important here."

When I asked him what he thought he'd be most interested in, he said "I'm interested in a full plate of things." No specialization sense. But all he mentioned were his committee assigned areas, i.e., Foreign Operations Subcommittee on Appropriations and his subcommittee on Juvenile Justice. He's chairman of the Subcommittee on Juvenile Justice.

He ended by inviting me to dinner Tuesday night with some Pennsylvania people.