

BILL COHEN

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This was a lousy interview. He was cordial and talkative--almost too much so. I was tired and never could get on track. He's preoccupied with his seapower staff, and I couldn't get any career questions in at all. Well, maybe one.

✓ "The adjustment period is the first two years. Now, I feel totally comfortable in the Senate. I know the procedures and the players. And I've accepted it completely. This is as far as I'm ever going to get. I'll stay here for one more term at the most. By then, I'll be 50 and it will be time to move to other things."

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Another career perspective came out when I was leaving. "I'm supposed to be an expert on all these things, not because I really am, but because I'm chairman of a subcommittee. So, because I am chairman, I'm asked to talk to the German Parliament, the French Parliament. I've just come back from Munich where I took on _____ Zappel in public. I cut him up. I went over and told the Brits that if they thought I was going to vote for a 40 million dollar cut in our budget and then accept their 3% contribution to _____, they were crazy. I can do that now, and I love it. But it's not because I'm an expert. It's because I've become the chairman of a subcommittee."

I asked him if anyone thought he was too inexperienced to be a subcommittee chairman and he answered "We're all inexperienced. I have as much experience, in total years of congressional service as Sam Nunn and more than Gary Hart."

Bill likes Hart and compares himself to Nunn. But he's less focussed

than Nunn (whom Bob Dove sees as the real "Senator" type) and a little less known than Hart. But maybe he and Hart are similar in that they are less ideological than some and attractive and thoughtful. Bill has an exhibitionist streak in him that I've not seen in Hart.

"I'm busier than ever. Ninety-five percent of my time is spent with my subcommittee. We've been holding hearings for three weeks. I can't keep up with the material I'm supposed to read. The military people are crawling all over me with information. I don't know what I'll do when my other committees start to meet. I'm chairman of the Indian Affairs Committee and we haven't had a meeting yet--except to organize. But I'm enjoying every minute of it."

Talked about how he got Joint Chiefs to testify in public yesterday on that rapid deployment force and how he had to bring them kicking and screaming. They are used to doing it in private sessions, but he feels only if he gets them out in public battling over it will Congress have a chance to get an oar in. He thought yesterday's session was "the key one" for RDF and was disappointed that it got a story on p. 24 of the Post--a little one. He couldn't understand it and started mumbling about the power of Pentagon, etc.

I asked him how Maine was taking his new assignment. "The reaction at home has been good--all good. It means I'm not going home as much as I would."

I asked him his reaction to the Republican victory. "Diane and I went over to CBS to look at the returns and it was like a wake there. Then we went to the Republican party and it was tumultuous. A complete contrast. I couldn't believe it, as I watched the returns come in. ~~And~~ I was very anxious about Gary Hart. To my mind, he is the ideal Senator and if he lost I thought we would really be, as he said in the book, 'walking through a time

of darkness.' About that, I was very pleased. But I didn't think much about it till a couple of weeks later when the jockeying for committees started. Chuck Percy wanted me to go on the Foreign Relations Committee, in the worst way. He even offered me the NATO or the Mideast Subcommittee. That's pretty potent stuff. Chuck has been very helpful to me throughout my career. I didn't want to disappoint him, but I wanted to stay on Armed Services. I like the committee, I like John Tower and I work well with him, and I didn't want to start at the bottom and learn all over again. But for a while, it looked like John Tower might become Secretary of Defense. If had happened, I would have left the committee. The problem was personal. The Chairman of the Committee would have been John Warner and I would not have been able to stand another 2 or 4 years under his Chairmanship. The chemistry between us is just not good. It's ~~not~~^{not} my fault, nor his. I don't like people, and I didn't in the House, who speak to you only when they want something from you. Most people sugar coat everything around here and never let on how they feel. I can't, and I suffer for it. But viscerally, I could not have stood that relationship with John Warner and I would have left. But Tower was eliminated as Secretary of Defense and I stayed. I would have gone to Foreign Relations. But the thought of being caught between Percy and Jesse Helms and having that feeling in my stomach all the time was not appealing to me. Tower took pieces from several of the various subcommittees and created a new Seapower Rapid Deployment Force Subcommittee for me. It's at the center of the whole rapid deployment force controversy."

He talked about how Baker was running the Senate better--meetings on floor only on Tuesday and Thursday so people can work in committees. 10% budget cuts for all committees "to show the way." He thinks "the Senate will be better."

We gossiped a lot about his book and its bad reception in the Post. That really hurt him, he said, because it seemed so personal an attack. Family disturbed by it. NYT reveiw wasn't great, but it was fair, i.e., had intellectual content.

We gossiped about new Republicans and who I might follow--it came down to Mattingly or Nickles.

As I say we talked for over a half hour and there was very little meat in it.

He talked about military problems a little, too; staff of subcommittees