

# Howard E. Shuman

Legislative and Administrative Assistant  
to Senators Paul Douglas and William Proxmire, 1955-1982

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## Interview #1: From Illinois to Oxford

(July 22, 1987)

Interviewed by Donald A. Ritchie

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**Ritchie:** I'd like to begin by asking you about your early years in Atwood, Illinois. I understand that you've just been back there, and I wondered if you could start by telling me what kind of town it was?

**Shuman:** Well, I was born in Atwood, where my father taught high school. He taught agriculture. And my mother taught English and music. But I lived there only the first year and a half of my life and I have no personal memories of Atwood at all. My father had to teach five years after graduating from the University before he could become a county agent or a farm advisor. We moved to Pekin for a year where my father and mother sang in the Presbyterian Church choir with [Everett Dirksen](#), and then to Jerseyville, Illinois, which is near St. Louis, and I lived there until I was about five. Then we moved to Whiteside County, to a town called Morrison, which is in the northwest corner of the state, where I've just been back to my forty-fifth high school reunion. That is the county where [Reagan](#) was born. It is also Lincoln Country for he fought there in the Black Hawk War. It is also Grant Country for he came from nearby Galena which was once known as the Sodom and Gomorrah of the West. When you drive

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through, all the Interstate Route signs read: "Visit Ronald Reagan's birthplace." He lived below the river. The Rock River, which the Indians -- mainly the Sacs, Foxes, and Winnebagoes -- called the Sinnissippi, cuts through the county. It comes down from Beloit, Wisconsin and flows through Rockford and Dixon and Sterling and into the Mississippi at Rock Island. Above the Rock River is the good land of the county, and below the Rock River is the sandy soil. The Germans lived on the north side, and the Irish lived where Reagan came from, in Tampico, to the south of the river. My father represented the University of Illinois and took the University's research to the farmers directly. We lived in the county seat. So Morrison, Illinois, is my home, not Atwood.

My father was heavily involved in creating all kinds of farmer's cooperatives and organizing the farmers. He played a big role in trying to keep the farmers from going under in the Depression.

One of my earliest memories is going to a farm sale where the local farmers would prevent anyone from buying out a good farmer who was going bankrupt.

The farmers would bid a dollar and dare anyone else to bid more, and no one did. Then they'd give the farm back to him. But they wouldn't do that for a lazy farmer. It was a very lively and active time. He often took us -- my brother, who was a year younger, and me -- with him, before we were

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in school and then during the summers, out to vaccinate pigs and to do post-mortems on chickens with coccidiosis and to kill chinch bugs. I remember in the early days, 1930 and '31, when he tried to get the farmers to vaccinate their cattle for tuberculosis, he was actually chased off farms from time to time. And the reason was that the best cows, the biggest milk producers, were the ones who got tuberculosis because their energy went to producing milk not fighting the disease. So to go in to destroy the cows with tuberculosis made the farmers angry because that took their best producers.

There was something called the Liberty Lobby, a very right-wing group, which greatly opposed what my father was doing. I was an Eagle scout, and I memorized the Gettysburg Address and said it on Memorial Day at the celebration at the local cemetery -- one or two Civil War veterans still took part. The rumor went around that my father was there and waved me down from the platform and wouldn't let me salute the flag. Well, I'd saluted the flag every Monday night for years at boy scout meetings. And my father didn't happen to be there that day, because there was some crisis among some farmers, chinch bugs or something like that. So the rumor was absolutely untrue, but it was deliberately spread by those who opposed trying to organize the farmers in cooperatives and to help them overcome the worst effects of the Depression.

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I have other early memories of the town. We lived near the railroad, (Chicago, Northwestern, Union Pacific) where at least a hundred trains a day came through, and they were filled with -- we called them -- "bums." They weren't bums. They were the unemployed going West, searching for work. Dozens of them would come by and stop at our house. My mother would feed them. But she required them to do some work. She always had a few things for them to do. They could tell where to go to get a meal, because there were coded signs on the trees or elsewhere. I have some very vivid memories of those early days.

My family was very lively. We were interested in political affairs. We were friends with people like our Presbyterian minister and the newspaper reporter and one of the doctors, and we talked and argued about politics, religion, and public affairs. I used to follow the elections. It was a very Republican place. No Democrat had ever been elected to any office when I was there. Since then it has happened. But I remember in 1936 when there were big torchlight parades for Alfred Landon.

He came through and talked from the back of a train. Many houses in town had a Landon picture in the window, or a Landon sticker. I was certain that Landon was going to win that election. Of course, he didn't. Later I had a friend Ed Kelly who worked with Senator [Paul Douglas](#) and who was from an Irish ward in Chicago. I told Ed about this. He said, "Well the same thing happened to me in

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1928. Everybody in our neighborhood had Al Smith's picture in the front window." He said, "I was certain Al Smith was going to win." So I think what one thinks is going to happen politically may very well come about from the perspective of where one lives.

There was a lot of activity in the town. There was a lot of musical talent. The most famous person from the area was Robert Milliken, who was then America's greatest physicist and won the Nobel prize for physics in 1923. I went to one of the local grade schools and the high school, did all the things that one usually does: played football, played basketball, ran on the track team, played tennis, and played the captain of the Pinafore and the major general in the Pirates of Penzance. I was president of the freshman class and the student body and co-captain of the football team. It was a small high school. I was a big fish in a very, very small pond. In fact, I played quarterback on the football team because I was the only one who knew all the signals, which is not a great recommendation. My senior year we lost every game, although we had been winners the year before.

**Ritchie:** You've just been back there. How did it compare?

**Shuman:** Well, one's memory plays tricks. My memory had been that everything was physically bigger. The houses I had lived in seemed bigger than they were this summer. An interesting thing about the seventy-seven people in my class is that twenty

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percent are now dead, and all the wild people are dead. The kids who were difficult disciplinary cases are dead and most of them died from accidents. The first seven who died were men; now the women are dying. The men have been dying of heart attacks; the women are dying of cancer. Almost everybody in my class is now retired, most taking Social Security. They've moved in off the farm to the town. When I was back there ten years ago, any number of them had had children in the Vietnam war; one or two of them had children killed or wounded. This last week when I was there, two or three people mentioned that they had grandchildren who were in the Persian Gulf, and they were concerned about the reflagging of the ships as a result.

I have never put the town down. I am very proud of Morrison. It's a beautiful place. I went out from Chicago one time with an English friend of mine I had brought back for a visit in July 1950. We drove out from Chicago early in the morning, a hundred and thirty miles. The corn was very, very green and shoulder high, and the oats had turned golden. The land in northern Illinois is rolling, like southern Wisconsin, not flat like central Illinois. In fact, under the Northwest Ordinance, that part of the state north of a line drawn from the southernmost tip of Lake Michigan to the Mississippi River was a part of what is now Wisconsin. As we drove out early in the morning and saw this beautiful green corn and the golden oats it occurred to me what a beautiful part of the world it was. I had not realized that growing up there. There are some more beautiful places, the Grand Canyon for example, but in its own way this rural area is equally grand.

**Ritchie:** You mentioned that your parents were politically active, what was their politics?

**Shuman:** They weren't party political, but they were active on issues. My mother was head of the League of Women Voters one year. My father organized the cooperatives, and his job was to carry out the farm programs of the New Deal. He was interested in conservation, got farmers to plow around the hill instead of up and down, showed them how to build terraces. Later, starting in 1953, he spent ten years in the villages of India doing the same thing, and two years in Afghanistan after that. We joked that when my mother married my father she promised to follow him to the ends of the earth, and when they arrived in India and Afghanistan she said "Here we are." So there was always a lively discussion in our house about politics, about issues, about what was going on. We listened to Roosevelt's "fireside chats." My father was an interventionist before World War II, one of the few people in the area who was not an isolationist. The *Chicago Tribune* had a tremendous effect, politically, there.

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Then, in addition, my father came from a big family. There were eight living children, all of whom had gone to college. My grandfather wanted to go to college and was not able to, but he sent eight children to college. He was determined to do it, and did it. I had an uncle, Milton McLean, who was president of Lincoln College in Illinois and taught at McAlister, Ohio State, and Southern Illinois University. I had another uncle who was a Presbyterian minister. They were all interested in social issues. A close knit group, we had all kinds of family reunions and visits. So we were constantly talking issues, arguing about things. It was lively in that sense.

**Ritchie:** You mentioned that it was a Republican town. Were your parents Republican?

**Shuman:** No, my father was neutral, at least he never publicly professed any party politics, because he was out working with the public. My mother, however, was a pretty partisan Democrat. Her father, who had been the city clerk of a very small town in Illinois, ran as a Democrat. And she had a brother who had lost his home in the thirties. He had bought a house, and that was the period when one had to put down a lot of money and pay it off in a few years. The depression hit him, and he lost it. Her youngest brother had to quit college in the thirties and found it very difficult to get a permanent job in the depression. Consequently out of background and what had happened to them, we

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were pretty strongly in favor of what Roosevelt did. So my mother was really more party-oriented than my father.

**Ritchie:** You mentioned the depression going on around you, but it sounds like to some degree your family was insulated from it.

**Shuman:** My father, I suppose, had the second or third highest salary of anybody in town. There were people with more wealth, but I think he made perhaps eight thousand dollars a year during the late depression years, which was a lot of money in those days. My parents built a house in 1939, under the FHA, which was then not for poor people; the FHA built for the upper-middle-class. So, no, I was insulated. We never had any important personal money problems. But one saw many people who did, even in what was a relatively well-to-do area of the country. I remember some kids coming barefoot to school for part of the year, so one was aware of their need.

**Ritchie:** Did you have a chance to travel much when you were a child, or did you stay mostly in Illinois?

**Shuman:** Well, I certainly traveled a lot around the state. I guess until I was a junior in high school I didn't travel much beyond. I went to places like Iowa City, Madison, St. Louis, Minneapolis and Cleveland. Between my junior and senior year in high school in 1941 I hitchhiked to California to find a

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summer job and to live with my uncle in San Diego. My father thought: well, let him do it, he'll get discouraged and come back. I started on a Sunday morning, got to Boone, Iowa, by late afternoon, and I caught a ride from Boone, Iowa, to Oakland, California, and arrived in Oakland Tuesday noon, and then spent two days hitchhiking down to San Diego and spent the summer there. I hitchhiked back by way of the southern route. I was a bell-boy in a hotel, the Churchill Hotel

in San Diego, and I carried bags for a jewelry salesman, and I earned good money that summer on tips.

Then I came back and the war began, December 7, 1941. I was a senior in high school and I was just turning eighteen. Since I had enough credits to enter the university, I quit high school in the middle of my senior year to go to the university. I was determined to do that. I was very unhappy in high school, my last year or two, because I had almost no one who was interested in the same issues and subjects I was. I was interested in public policies and I was reading progressive papers that my uncle sent me. I don't think you would call him a Socialist, but he was reading all kinds of literature that he would send to me, and I got very interested. And we had a local Presbyterian minister who gave me a variety of books. I think one of the books was entitled *Men and Women of Conviction*, it told stories of social workers, Jane Addams, and a man by the name of Thomas Mott Osborne, who

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reformed the Auburn Prison in New York. I was interested in that but I had very few people to talk with. Most of my friends were a year or two or three older than I was. So when I went to the university, I was very happy. I was excited and stimulated by the intellectual atmosphere.

**Ritchie:** You mentioned it was an uncle who was sending you the material. Was that the college professor uncle?

**Shuman:** No, it was the preacher uncle. He was a pacifist, so he was sending me pacifist literature as well, but I didn't agree with that. But I didn't dismiss it out of hand. I thought a lot about it. I read the literature. I considered joining the ambulance corps. I went to the meetings of the Fellowship of Reconciliation at the University. But I made a clear and positive determination that I was not a pacifist. I think that was a good thing to do and it made me more confident in my view than if I had not considered it thoroughly. I have not changed my mind over 40 years.

**Ritchie:** But it was mostly on social reform issues.

**Shuman:** Yes, it was.

**Ritchie:** When you got to the university, did you have any idea what you wanted to do?

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**Shuman:** Yes, I wanted to study economics, and I was interested in political economy.

**Ritchie:** So you knew from the very beginning.

**Shuman:** Yes, I knew what I was interested in. But I wasn't involved in the political scene. That happened when I got back from the war. I decided after I got back from the war that I had to get involved in politics in one form or another. I made a list of "what can I do to do something about the problems of the world." That was a bit naive, perhaps. I made lists of things to do like joining the American Veterans Committee, running for precinct committeeman, and so on, and I did them.

**Ritchie:** Before that, you said you were in the university for a year.

**Shuman:** I was at the University of Illinois for a year and a half, from February '42 until July of '43. The Navy took me then.

**Ritchie:** You were drafted?

**Shuman:** Well, I wasn't drafted, no. The Draft Board was after me, so I joined the Army, but with an option to transfer to the Navy V-12 program when I was called up, and I did that. I was lucky, because I couldn't see very well, and I waited until the tenth and last day to take the physical. I'm nearsighted, and I

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couldn't really see well enough to qualify for V-12 and officer's training. But I wanted to join the Navy and take part in the war. There was a corpsman there who made an anti-Semitic remark. I jumped on him. I told him that was wrong, he shouldn't do it, and I ticked him off. The doctor heard me, and I think the doctor was Jewish. I'm not sure, but I'm pretty certain he was. So he said to me after I'd flunked the eye exam: "Well, you've probably been studying too hard, seeing too many movies, and not getting enough sleep. Why don't you go in that room there where it's dark and stay fifteen minutes, and we'll do it again." When I came out I couldn't see any better. But he did things like asking: "What is it that the English have in the afternoon, late?" I said "T." He said, "What do you do when you urinate?" And I said, "P." "Well, he said, "you pass. They'll catch you later if you can't see." I had made a decision at this stage in my life to challenge any one who made an anti-Semitic or anti-black or racial slur, rather than to let it pass, which was the easy thing to do. And on the whole I have done that for more than forty years.

So I got in, and when I was called up in July, I first went to DePauw University in Greencastle, Indiana, but they didn't have the right courses for me, and I was



transferred to Ann Arbor, Michigan. But by that time I had memorized the eye chart, which had eleven letters across and the same number vertically, and I

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knew all of them, and I knew them every way, forwards, backwards, up and down. In fact, I still remember the first line. It was OHCDLFNTCOC--O Henry Could Don Leave For New Trier Come Out Come. I had a sentence like that to remind me of every line. I had to take the eye exam three times, and every time I memorized the chart, and finally I was commissioned. Meanwhile I was at the University of Michigan for twelve months. I got sixty hours of credits, two years in a year, and then was sent to Great Lakes for a few weeks, and then to the Harvard Business School, which was the Midshipman's School for the Navy Supply Corps, where I was commissioned in 1944.

**Ritchie:** Why the University of Michigan?

**Shuman:** Only a few places in the Midwest had a V-12 program. The University of Michigan was one, Notre Dame another, Purdue a third and DePauw was another. Michigan had a great football team that year, because they got all the Wisconsin players, and they kept the Michigan players, and a man by the name of Bill Daily from Minnesota, who was an all-American half-back was sent there. Elroy "Crazy Legs" Hirsh was there, and I was the student manager of the football team that year, '43. So I knew them pretty well. Fritz Creisler, an imperious fellow, was the coach and Biggie Munn and Bennie Osterbahn, who were very friendly, were assistants. I was too small to play, but as student manager I got

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out of a certain amount of calisthenics and drill, and I got to go on the trips to the away games.

I want to tell you about going home one time from Great Lakes. I got a ride on the Union Pacific Streamliner, which did not stop in Morrison, but stopped at Clinton, Iowa, fifteen miles west. One had to have a reservation, and I got a seat on that train because I was in uniform. I was given the conductor's seat, which was the first seat of the first passenger coach. The conductor was there and we had a conversation. He was a cousin or an uncle of the druggist in Morrison, Harry Donichy. He asked me what I was going to do, and I said, "I'm going to Clinton and then hitchhike back fifteen miles." The Streamline train had never stopped in Morrison except when there was an accident. It went through at about 90 miles per hour. This was early on a Saturday night, and in those days the farmers all came to town, parked their cars on the main street and talked. The railroad was just half a block away.



The conductor decided to stop the train and let me off. Everybody in town thought there had been a wreck. They all streamed down to the depot and I got off. And there I was, a Navy apprentice seaman with a duffle bag over my shoulder. Now, the sequel to the story is that like every small town, certain people more or less run the town. The Smiths owned the bank. The Potters ran the lumberyard. One Potter was married to a Smith

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daughter and another had a son in the leading local law firm. He was a lieutenant commander in the Navy, served in the Pacific on a carrier, and was a very brave fellow who saw a lot of action. But in any case, his mother couldn't understand why the train had stopped to let me off when I was an apprentice seaman, but her son a lieutenant commander had to go to Clinton and drive back!

**Ritchie:** But it tells a lot about the social structure of the town!

**Shuman:** It could have been the Lynns' "Middletown." There was a social structure.

**Ritchie:** More obvious, perhaps, than in larger places.

**Shuman:** Yes, they used to say the Rotary Club owned the town, the Lions Club ran the town, and the Kiwanians had all the fun. There was a very real social structure in the town. My family had one-foot-in and one-foot-out of the Establishment.

**Ritchie:** Was your father a federal or a state agent?

**Shuman:** Well, in those days, he was paid three ways. He was paid by the University of Illinois, but funds were provided by the Department of Agriculture as well, and then some funds were raised locally. So he had three bosses. He worked for the Extension Service of the University of Illinois.

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**Ritchie:** But it gave him some independence.

**Shuman:** Yes, he did have a lot of independence of action, certainly.

**Ritchie:** What did you do in the Navy after you finished your training?

**Shuman:** Well, I was sent to Pearl Harbor on a World War I destroyer, the *U.S.S. Stringham*. I remember seeing Admiral [Chester] Nimitz at Makalapa almost every day while I was waiting for orders. I asked for a ship, and instead

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they assigned me to the 14th Naval District, to the Naval Ammunition Depot, which had three stations there. I was stationed at two of them: West Lock and Waikele Gulch. We provided the ammunition for the Pacific fleet. I served there for about a year and a half. I was an ensign. I was twenty years old when I was commissioned. My twenty-first birthday occurred just as I arrived. I was probably the greenest ensign who every existed. I had an all black outfit. I was first stationed at Waikele Gulch, in the boondocks, where we stored torpedo warheads back into the sides of a deep gulch, which was at the confluence of Kipapa and Waikakalua Gulches. I ran the galley, paid the men, and provided the supplies.

My senior storekeeper was a man H. Franklin Brown, who was thirty-five years of age, who had graduated from the University of

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Michigan law school. I had been pulled out of Michigan by the Navy and sent off to Harvard, and when I was commissioned I still didn't have a degree, although I had enough credits for it. Here I was, this twenty-one year old ensign who was the officer, and here was this thirty-five year old black enlisted man with a Michigan law degree who was my senior staff fellow, who was terrific. It always struck me that that was an unjust situation.

Among other things I taught remedial courses. About twenty percent at least of my men couldn't read or write. Some signed their names "x." We were visited by the NAACP from time to time. Walter White, who was then head of the NAACP, came out with a group to see how things were going. It was a racially segregated place, except in my galley, where I fed the men. I segregated people by Marines and Navy. When a white Navy working party came to our base to get ammunition, they ate with the black Navy. We had a Marine guard unit, which was white. We would often get working parties of black Marines, and the white and black Marines ate together. So we segregated by service rather than by color, and it worked. So far as I know, we never had a problem, at least in my galley.

We did have a problem another time on the base. When I was at Harvard there was one black officer. On Oahu he was stationed perhaps two miles from where I was. Supply officers traded supplies from time to time. One would run out of something, and

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go to the guy next door to get it. He was at my base one day at the noon hour, so I invited him to lunch at the officer's mess. We only had about twelve officers aboard. Our executive officer was from Waco, Texas, who I must say was a prejudiced fellow. But I brought this black officer in and we had lunch, mind you this was 1945, and our executive officer swallowed three times and treated him

properly. But a rumor got around the base that the executive officer had refused to eat with the black officer. We almost had a riot as a result. And we didn't have a riot because of my 35-year-old storekeeper, H. Franklin Brown. I told him what the truth was. The men thought that the lieutenant commander had done wrong, but in fact he hadn't. And we avoided a riot on the base as a result of H. Franklin Brown's intervention with the men. So there was tension from time to time. We had all white officers. The Marines were white. My chief petty officer in the galley was a white, and the post office was run by a white chief petty officer. But the bulk of the men were black.

**Ritchie:** I was going to ask you why you felt it necessary to keep the Navy and the Marines apart. Was it because the Marines were mostly white?

**Shuman:** No. The men always wanted to eat by service. The services were quite separate in the galley. The Marine guard unit was a very proud unit, and they ate in one part of the galley, and the Navy ate in another. But the few white Navy ate

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with the black Navy and the black Marine working parties ate with our white Marine guard unit.

**Ritchie:** I guess this was the first time you'd encountered any large group of black people.

**Shuman:** Not exactly. When I first went to the University of Illinois in 1942 three or four of us had a black student woman friend, and we took her to one of the campus restaurants and ordered ice cream sodas. We whites all got proper sodas and she got a glass with about a half scoop of ice cream in it. And we were absolutely outraged. We tried to open the campus restaurants. We got no help from the University administration. We failed in that. Then we tried to open up the downtown movie houses, which were segregated. They had a balcony or back area for blacks. And we failed in that because the local black minister, who was the key to this, didn't believe that his people should go to movies. So he was unwilling to help desegregate the movie houses!

Then I had an experience with Paul Robeson. Paul Robeson came through to sing at what we called "Star Course," a half dozen or so concerts a year by famous artists. A woman, Margaret Robins, a sophomore or junior, whose parents were friends of my family, was in charge of escorting Paul Robeson to the concert before and afterwards, and she invited me along. So the two of us

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escorted him. We picked Robeson up at his hotel, and he sang -- he sang "Old Man River" among other pieces and wowed everybody. Afterwards we took him to dinner. He had been an All-American college football player, and he told us his coach told him if he sang as well as he played football he would be a great man. We took him to a restaurant in downtown Champaign but had to go into the alley and take him in the back door where he was served in the back room, which was offensive to me. So there were a number of times when I was involved in trying to desegregate institutions. That was before I was in the Pacific. I was also involved in the issues afterwards. [Truman](#) set up the Civil Rights Commission and published their report, after the war, 1947. When I went home for Christmas, I took copies of the Civil Rights Commission report, and I distributed them in Morrison, Illinois, which led to all kinds of charges that I was a Commie or a radical. But it was a great report. So one of the things I did for Senator Douglas, of course, was to do much of the floor staff work for the Civil Rights bills. I was intensely involved in it because I believed in it.

**Ritchie:** Some of which coming from your experiences in the war?

**Shuman:** Certainly from the war, and from my family. My family taught us that all people were children of God and shouldn't be discriminated against.

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**Ritchie:** Did you spend the whole war in Hawaii?

**Shuman:** Well, I spent a year and a half in the Navy before I went out there, and then another year and a half in Hawaii. Yes, that's where I was. And I was very unhappy about not getting a ship. Now, I look back on it, and I was probably lucky not to have been killed, especially as one ship I had been on as a passenger, the *U.S.S. Stringham*, was attacked by kamikazes at Okinawa. West Loch, where I was also stationed, was the scene of the second or unknown Pearl Harbor disaster in May of 1944 before the Saipan invasion. Six ships were sunk and there were more than 500 casualties as a result of an ammunition explosion. I've just finished an article about it for the Institute of Naval Proceedings.

**Ritchie:** And in '46 you were discharged?

**Shuman:** I was discharged in the summer of '46 and I went back to the University of Illinois and to summer school. I took nine hours, reestablished my credentials, and graduated that summer. I ended up only a semester behind where I would have been if I had gone through the normal university sequence, because of all those credits at Michigan and Harvard. I got thirty-six hours for the Midshipman school at Harvard and sixty hours at Michigan. Then I got a Master's degree at Illinois in 1948 and then I went back to Michigan in the summer of '49, before I went

to Oxford. I had left Michigan in 1944 needing only six hours for the undergraduate degree, and I did nine hours the summer of 1949 and got a second undergraduate degree, the B.B.A.

**Ritchie:** Had you mapped out your future at that stage? Did you know what you wanted to do?

**Shuman:** By that time I was very interested in politics. I got interested in party politics in '48 when [Adlai] Stevenson and Douglas ran for governor and for senator. I was asked to head the "Downstate for Douglas" committee by Charlie Davis who was the chief clerk of the House Ways and Means Committee. Actually we didn't do very much -- but what was wanted of us was to show some downstate interest in the Douglas candidacy. Colonel Jack Arvey from Chicago wanted us to do this. So I organized a bunch of people, and we all wrote to Arvey, telling him that we were people who supported Douglas, that we would work for him, and would contribute to his campaign. We got publicity about this as a way of showing support for Douglas downstate. But as a matter of fact, this was unneeded. It was window-dressing. I didn't know it at the time, but I know now that it was window-dressing, because the issue had been decided. Douglas had been selected by Arvey and the party.

Then I followed Adlai Stevenson around the state, and I heard him speak a dozen times. He was not a very good speaker in '48. In fact, he was a lousy speaker. This may come as a surprise for in 1952 at home and abroad he was the preeminent speaker of our time. Let me illustrate the point. We had a large meeting for him in Urbana, and mostly university people came. Here was this man, running for governor, reform governor because we had a crooked governor, the Green administration. And Stevenson had been to the U.N., not as the ambassador but as second or third, and everyone who came wanted to hear him speak about issues. We had lunch at the Urbana-Lincoln hotel, and he spoke for about twenty minutes and he cracked all the jokes he used in 1952 when he ran for president, but he didn't have the timing down, and the speech really didn't go down very well. As a result, people left disappointed. Then we went twenty miles away to a county seat, Monticello, Illinois, which is the county seat of Piatt county, where I was born. We had a meeting in the Methodist Church basement. We pulled in the old guys off the courthouse square to come to the meeting to swell the crowd. Stevenson was dressed in a pin striped suit. He was a little overweight. He wore a vest. He wore a key chain, with academic keys dangling from it. And he spoke for an hour to that group on the meaning of Western civilization. And he bombed. He bombed both places. If he had given the Monticello speech to the faculty at

Urbana and cracked the jokes in Monticello, he would have been a great hit in both

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places. But he seemed perverse; he seemed to be unwilling to talk to either group in a way they wanted to hear him speak. I saw a lot of him.

We organized a group of university Democrats. We were precinct committeemen in the county. We sponsored and succeeded in electing Charles R. (Jim) Simpson to the state legislature. Jim was blind but graduated from the University Law School with the highest grades in 25 years. He was selected the best freshman legislator by the press. Later he was a fellow at Harvard, rose to the top of the Internal Revenue Service, and with the help of Sheldon Cohen the Commissioner and Senator Douglas, was appointed a tax court judge by President [Johnson](#).

Committeemen were supposed to cast the number of votes at the organizing meeting for the party after the 1948 primary according to how many Democratic votes there were in their precincts. Our group of about a dozen precinct committeemen represented more than a majority of the Democratic primary votes in the county and we were determined to organize the county committee and to defeat the existing county chairman, Leo Pfeiffer, who was an old-line politician. Leo fractured the English language. He looked like a politician. He was overweight. He smoked a cigar. We were determined to defeat him. And I really learned my first political lesson as a result. We went to the meeting with the votes. What happened was that Leo appointed, after the primary, a precinct

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committeeman in every precinct where there wasn't one. Then he determined that each precinct committeeman could cast one vote, instead of voting the number of Democratic votes in the precinct. Then he allowed only one vote per precinct to overrule our objections. As a result, he won, and we lost. He tricked us, and he stayed on for many years.

**Ritchie:** It was a good object lesson in the political process!

**Shuman:** It was. Anyway, I worked hard locally in Mr. Douglas' campaign, Citizens for Douglas. But then I went off to Oxford for three years and didn't go to work for him until after the 1954 election.

**Ritchie:** How was it that you went to Oxford?

**Shuman:** I went to Oxford for a variety of reasons, but basically an Oxford Union debating team came to the University in 1947. Tony Benn, then a moderate



but who is now a radical, left-wing Labor member of Parliament, Sir Edward Boyle, who later became a Conservative Minister of Education and resigned over Suez, and Kenneth Harris, who is the biographer of [Clement] Attlee, and who interviews the Queen on the BBC, made up the debating team, and I debated with them. They were very, very good. They were superior to anything I had seen or heard. I determined that I had to go to the fountainhead to find the source

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of their excellence, so I spent a year getting in. The summer of '48 I went to London and Oxford. Tony Benn wrote a letter of recommendation for me to New College. The warden of the college had asked him to keep his eye out for Americans he might recommend. He did that for me. I applied. A New College don interviewed me on a bench at All Souls College, which is a college with no students and all professors where, because of the wine cellar, it is said that the best brains in Britain are preserved in alcohol. New College accepted me, not for that year but for the following year. By this time, I had a Master's degree and I was determined to go.

**Ritchie:** You had been debating in the United States?

**Shuman:** I didn't debate very much, but I was interested in it, and I was the assistant debate coach to Professor Richard Murphy, who was my great friend and from whom I received great insights. Most of the people I learned from were people I learned from through personal relations, not necessarily in the classroom. And Dick and his wife Theresa were two of those people. There was a woman, Marie Hochmuth, who was in the Speech Department and who wrote history around speech-making of famous historical figures. She was president of the professional association. Those three people had a great influence on me and stimulated all kinds of academic interests.

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I had an economics professor by the name of Don Kemmerer, who was a very conservative fellow, but I had him in my first economics course. He taught economic history. I was excited by his classroom and his teaching, and I did a paper for him, in my freshman year, on the great Chicago Pullman strike of June, July 1894, which pitted Eugene Victor Debs and Governor Altgeld of Illinois against [Grover Cleveland](#). Cleveland sent in the troops to break the Pullman strike needlessly. The violence occurred after the troops came in to protect the railroad from the union. Of course, Governor John Peter Altgeld was Illinois' greatest governor -- even counting [Frank] Lowden, or Stevenson. He pardoned the Haymarket rioters and took on Cleveland in the strike. There is a great poem about him, "Eagle Forgotten" by Vachel Lindsay. Just after he had been defeated, in part because of his stand on the Haymarket rioters, Altgeld was asked not to



sign a bill for the utilities but to let it become law without his signature. He was told that there was money in a lock box in Chicago. He was given the key. He went to Chicago, opened the box, saw that the cash was there, came back, and vetoed the bill. If you read the book *Eagle Forgotten* by Harry Barnard, you'll read about that. Altgeld was a great governor, and he was responsible for getting money for the University of Illinois. He thought that the University of Chicago, with the Rockefeller funds, would be a very conservative place, and he wanted the people's university to grow to offset this conservative place. Well, what happened ironically

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was that, until after Hutchins left, Chicago was the radical university and the University of Illinois was the conservative place. But Altgeld really built up the University, and the law building was named Altgeld Hall after him.

Anyway, I was stimulated by the course and once one gets into one issue, one gets into others. So economics, and economic history, and political history were the things that I was most interested in. Don Kemmerer also put me on to William S. White's *Autobiography* which was an exciting book mainly about the progressive or [Teddy Roosevelt](#) wing of the Republican Party, and that stimulated my interest in politics and economic history. I got to the place when I was more interested, as a graduate student, in going to the political rallies than I was in going to the library. So in the end it was a good thing that I didn't stay and teach and that I went into active political work.

**Ritchie:** Tell me about Oxford when you got there. It must have been quite a change of place and atmosphere.

**Shuman:** Well, Oxford is a place where the students teach themselves. I was there in what I call the "Golden Age." The students were back from the war. Instead of arriving or coming up, as the English say, at seventeen or eighteen, they were my age, twenty-three, twenty-four, twenty-five. I was twenty-five when I matriculated. Most of my friends there, many of whom have

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since become quite famous, even to the degree of running the country, were my age. They had been in the war. Oxford is based on self-education. It was in the tutorial system, where a student spends an hour a week with the tutor, who assigns him a subject matter, and he writes an essay, and reads the essay to the tutor, where the great teaching took place. As President [James Garfield](#) pointed out, a university is a student and a professor (Mark Hopkins) sitting together on a log. There are no courses or credits or routine exams. There are three terms a year. A student stays for three years. The student writes nine exam papers at the

end of the three years. Each term the student prepares for one of the exam papers. If he does history he would have six assigned papers and probably three that he could choose to write on.

He would go around to a tutor who was an expert in one of the nine fields. He never graded him. It was like going to a piano teacher to prepare for a recital, where somebody else did the grading. The purpose of the tutor was to help the student pass the final exams. If a lecture was given that would help, he went to the lecture. If it didn't, he didn't go. Most students went to lectures their first year, maybe their second year, but their third year they spent most of the time getting ready for the exams. Then they took the exams and were graded by people independent of the tutors. The exam grader didn't know whose

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paper it was, and the student graduated with a first, second, third, or fourth class honors degree. A student needed a first class honors degree from Oxford or Cambridge to get to the Foreign Office. That was true then but not now. And to teach in a university in England he had to have a first class degree. Not a Ph.D., but a first class honors degree at Oxford. That was the entry to teaching, to become a don. If he got a good second, just missed the first, he might stay around and do a graduate degree to prove to them that he really had the stuff. That was the system.

Oxford was exciting. Those were the three best years of my life. But I spent most of my time in the political clubs and in the Oxford Union. I met, in a very personal way, most of the leading political figures in the country, and a good many of the literary figures as well, but mostly the political figures, who would come up to Oxford, a) to the political clubs, and b) to the Union, to speak. Every week there was a meeting of the Labor, the Conservative, and the Liberal clubs. Some member of Parliament, usually a cabinet member, or from the shadow cabinet, came up to talk. As I was an American, and in the Union, and in the clubs, the officers of the clubs often invited me to the dinner with the cabinet person the evening he or she came to speak, and then around to the student digs afterwards to talk to them. So I really got to see at close range people like Hugh Gaitskell and Dick Crossman and Bob Boothby and Randolph Churchill and R.A.B.

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Butler, and Dr. Edith Summerskill, and Michael Foot and Lady Meagan Lloyd George and Lady Violet Bonham Carter, almost all the major figures in the county, with the exception of Winston Churchill, who refused to come up. He would not speak at Oxford because of the "King and Country" debate in 1933. I had a marvelous time.

Many of the students since then, people I knew very well, have become famous. Shirley Williams has since been a member of Parliament and helped establish the Social Democratic Party. She's one of the "Gang of Four." So is Bill Rogers. Tony Benn had gone down before I came up but he has held several cabinet offices. Sir Edward Boyle, who later resigned over Suez, had also gone down. But Robin Day, who is now the Walter Cronkite of the BBC was one of my two best friends. Peter Blaker, who is now Sir Peter Blaker, who was the Minister of State for Defense under [Margaret] Thatcher in her first term, is now a Privy Councilor and knighted. Jeremy Thorpe, who became the leader of the Liberal Party, was president of the Union when I was secretary. There is just a long, long list of people. There is John Gilbert who was Minister of Transport and who was Minister of State for Defense, who is now the Vice Chairman of the Defense Committee in Parliament. There is Sir William Rees-Mogg, who was editor of the *London Times*. All these people were there. They were and are my friends. I defeated for president of the Union a fellow who was

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the leader of the House of Commons, Norman St. John Stevas. There was Gerald Kaufman, now a Labour Shadow Cabinet member, and Sir Patrick Mayhew, the Attorney General, and Michael Heseltine the former Minister of Defense. The Labor Government had come in, and there were all kinds of changes going on in the country. I was there for two elections.

**Ritchie:** It sounds like many of the people you were associated with were people who became involved in the Labor and Liberal party. Did you find that was the crowd you felt more comfortable with?

**Shuman:** No, not necessarily. I thought that the first Labor government was a pretty moderate government by present standards. They were strong on NATO. They were strong against Russian aggression. They were progressive at home and their post-war leaders had taken a pretty firm stand against both fascism and the Russians. So I felt pretty comfortable with them. I have trouble now accepting the policies of the far radical left of the Labor party. I think they've made it almost impossible for the Labor party to come back until they change their views, at least in the area of defense. They're unilateralists, and I'm not a unilateralist. You know, Ernest Bevin grabbed the offer of the Marshall Plan and ran with it. Bevin, the Labor Foreign Minister was one of the key figures in establishing NATO. The Labor Party was a very different party then. But I thought that what one

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would call the moderate wing of the Labor party and the progressive wing of the Tory party were relatively close together. There wasn't all that much difference. A number of my friends who were Liberals, and some of them who were Labor,

when I was at Oxford, have since become Tory MPs. Others became Social Democrats.

**Ritchie:** There was a lot of social action going on then; that was a period of nationalization and new welfare programs.

**Shuman:** Well, I never thought much of nationalization. What I thought was important about what the Labor party was trying to do was to promote greater equality in the country. Because of the class structure there were wide differences among classes. The saving grace in this country has probably been the urge to egalitarianism, the ability of people to climb the social ladder, and the division of power in the federal government. The saving grace in England is not that. The saving grace there has been their political institutions, their judicial system, the rule of law, and parliamentary government, although I do not favor a unitary system for this country. But social equality is not one of their strong points. The promotion of greater social equality by the Labor party struck me as important, not nationalization, although I was not offended by nationalizing the railroads. Every government in Europe, mostly conservative, nationalized the railroads. In this country, for all practical purposes, the

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railroads were heavily subsidized. The U.S. Government gave them the land they built on, and the land every other square going to the West Coast on either side of the railroad. So there's very little difference.

I don't see much wrong with the utilities either being owned or regulated, because they are a natural monopoly. There was a special case for the coal mines in the U.K. because they were not going to survive under private ownership. But when it came to nationalizing steel, or operating industries, I thought that was a mistake. And I don't think that has very much to do with equality at all. In fact, what they did in many cases was to substitute a state monopoly for a private monopoly. And that did not necessarily bring any greater equality or egalitarianism. It did not change the social structure, and it did not open up the industry in most cases to people's grievances in any major way either, although sometimes it made a difference, as in the mines. So that part of it I wasn't much taken with. But I was taken with the urge to try to right some of the social class wrongs and to abolish poverty.

**Ritchie:** You did a major study while you were there.

**Shuman:** I did a study on wages in the British engineering industry, which is really a combination of our shipbuilding, steel and auto industries. I traveled all over the country. I had a

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Rotary Foundation fellowship, so I could go into a city and go to the Rotary Club, and get introductions to the heads of industry. Then through my tutor I had access to the unions. And because I was an American, both sides were quite open with me. That was a great experience.

**Ritchie:** What did you feel that you learned the most from that study?

**Shuman:** One thing that I was really struck by: I would go into cities like Birmingham, Manchester, Glasgow, or Coventry, the auto industry towns, and I would go to the homes occasionally of union leaders, men who were uneducated in any formal sense. Their homes would be lined with books. These men were self-taught and well read. One couldn't believe the volumes of books that were seen on the shelves of the local union leaders. It was a remarkable thing. They were extraordinarily knowledgeable. That I think was the most striking thing I saw during that study.

**Ritchie:** It must have been an interesting experience to be an outsider, and to be allowed to get into a society that was so fragmented.

**Shuman:** Yes. I could go into any class of society because of my accent and be accepted, which was a marvelous thing. And I had this entree through the Rotary Clubs too. I also followed the elections of '50. Attlee came to Banbury in 1950. Banbury is

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north of Oxford, about fifteen miles, the town made famous by the nursery rhyme "Ride a Cock Horse to Banbury Cross," and Attlee came to speak there, and I went up to hear him, because I wanted to see the Prime Minister. His wife drove him up there in their little car. No secret service, no crowds of people surrounding him, protecting him, no public relations people, no staff. The Prime Minister just drove up with his wife. He spoke in the town hall, which was crowded. A great many of my undergraduate friends were candidates in those elections; I suppose a dozen or more students. They were candidates for seats where they had no chance to win, but they got their feet wet doing this and later got seats they could win.

Oxford had a big town hall. The four political parties who were running candidates for Parliament, the Liberals, Labor, Conservatives and the Communists, flipped a coin to see which party would get the town hall for their rally on the eve of election. For four nights preceding the election, each party got the town hall. And the Communists won, so the Communists got the favored evening at the town hall, the eve of the election. Students went along to heckle and to fill the hall, and they sang "Lloyd George Knew My Father," to the tune of

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"Onward Christian Soldiers." I don't know whether you know it, but one just keeps repeating the words "Lloyd George knew my father, father knew Lloyd George."

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Jeremy Thorpe, who was the best stump speaker of my era -- not the most intellectual speaker, but the best stump speaker with a crowd -- was speaking one night. He wasn't the Liberal candidate, but he introduced the Liberal candidate. And there was a woman in the middle of the hall, an old woman, and she was toothless. She kept yelling during Jeremy's speech. Finally he said to her: "Lady, if you'd open your mouth any wider we could see your socks." Everybody cheered. In that same election, Aneurin Bevan was confronted by a shrill-voiced heckling woman. He called her a virago, in the sense of a vixen or shrewish woman. He replied by saying that the three worst things in life were half cooked meat, a faithless friend, and a cackling woman. It was interesting to watch the cut and thrust, and listen to the repartee that went on during that election.

**Ritchie:** Tell me about the Oxford Union. It is remarkable that a Yank became president of the Union, but it also sounds to me that English debating was very different from anything you would have done if you had debated in the United States, much rowdier and no-holds-barred.

**Shuman:** Yes. Well, first of all in the United States one debates in a closed room with a judge. There is no audience, which is ridiculous. The Oxford Union is modeled on the British House of Commons, and people sit across from each other. When I was there, there was a debate every Thursday night of term, so

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there were eight debates a term. At four of those debates at least, outside guests would be brought in. I joined immediately and became a life member. It was then a debating society and a men's club. There was a hall, which held seven or eight hundred people, with balcony seats for visitors. There were also two very good libraries. There was a bar and dining room, and a reading room with most of the newspapers in the country. One could get almost any newspaper or journal there. So students joined it as a place to use the library, to read the papers, to have lunch, as well as to go to the debates.

I joined the first week I was there. Peter Blaker, who was at New College, came around and asked me to join. He was then Tony Benn's great good friend, because his grandfather and Tony's father had been in Parliament together. I started off speaking. In the beginning, you get to speak late at night and to give a three minute speech. Then if you do reasonably well, you are invited to give a five minute speech. Then if you do well you are invited to give a paper speech, which



means that you are listed as one of the six or eight major speakers for the evening, and dress up in black tie. Ahead of time you are assigned one of the speeches on the paper. You also climb the hierarchical ladder, from the library committee to the standing committee to officer. So I spoke, and I was recognized and asked to give a five minute speech. Then I gave a speech on the paper. Then I stood for the

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library committee and won. Then I jumped over the standing committee, and ran for secretary and, surprisingly, I won, largely because I stood out. There was something distinctive about the American accent.

I was in on some good debates. The Union debated things like "This House Prefers Its Back to the Engine." There was a debate on the British press, I've forgotten the specific motion now, but I called the British press the "Bubonic boil on the body of Britain," -- which it is. It is and was terrible. They have the best and the worst press in the world. So I was elected secretary. Then automatically I got to speak in the political debates. Then I was elected librarian, which was next to the top. Then I stood for president, and I was defeated twice. Once by Ivan Yates, who was killed in an auto accident. And then by Peter Blaker, who was one of my two best friends. Then I finally won, against Oleg Kerensky, who was the grandson of the Russian [Alexander] Kerensky who was the first post-revolution prime minister, and Pat Hutber, who was the most radical non-Communist left person in the university, and president of the Labor Club, and Norman St. John Stevas, who had come over from Cambridge and was later leader of the House of Commons under Margaret Thatcher. When he came to Oxford as president of the Cambridge Union, we invited him to speak, and he got early paper speeches without having to work for them. And all of a sudden he was

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standing for president. He was Conservative. The Union had a proportional representation system of voting. I debated those other three twice. I spoke on the paper at the first debate of the year, during which Attlee spoke and then the presidential debate, when the former prime minister of France, Monsieur Paul Reynaud, spoke.

The balloting for president was held the day after the presidential debate. At that time, there was no canvassing. You could not go around and ask people to vote for you. That was a disqualification. I won because I was most people's second choice. Pat Hutber thought he was going to win. He was the Labor Club president, and he led on the first ballot but without a majority, and Kerensky was fourth. So they transferred Kerensky's second place votes to the others, and I got more of them than the others and I won on the second ballot by twelve votes, got



a majority of the votes and was declared president. Hutber was very angry. I met him later in the private offices of the Union where there was a fireplace and where the officers gathered. He was so angry about being defeated, he was so disappointed because he was certain he was going to win, that he took most of the glassware and china and threw it into the fireplace, broke it into pieces. He threw a fit. He later became a very, very right-wing columnist in one of the London papers -- I think the Financial Times. He became probably the most right-wing major columnist in the

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country. His career was very typical of people who are one extreme and then shift to the other.

I invited Dr. Edith Summerskill to speak in my first debate as President. She had been Minister of Education. It was a stormy night. It was in the spring and just as she was congratulating me on being elected president there was a great clap of thunder from outside the hall. She turned and said, "Ah, you sir have been acclaimed by the highest authority."

**Ritchie:** That had to be very unusual, to have a woman speak at the Union.

**Shuman:** It was. I deliberately invited her to speak. It was a time when the Union did not allow women members. I also invited another woman, an undergraduate, to speak, Caroline Carter, who was a very radical, left-wing person. This was the time of McCarthy in the States. I determined a) to invite a woman, and b) to invite a radical woman just to disprove the stereotype that all Americans were Joe McCarthyites. So I invited her quite deliberately.

But anyway, Dr. Edith now out of office, was debating Nigel Birch, who was then a junior conservative minister. I invited him to speak. She spoke too long, much too long, and when Birch got up to speak, he said something to the effect that "Dr. Edith in the early part of her speech, *which was a very long time ago now*,

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made the following points." Very clever. One of the undergraduate paper speakers introduced them. Dr. Edith was crusading against boxing, and the student said "How delighted we are tonight to have with us Dr. Edith Summerskill and Mr. Nigel Birch. In this corner, at a hundred and thirty pounds, we have Dr. Edith Summerskill, a light heavyweight. And in that corner, at a hundred and eighty-five pounds, Mr. Nigel Birch, a rather heavy lightweight." It was that kind of clever spoofing that went on.

**Ritchie:** Many of the examples you've given have involved humor. Would you say that effective use of humor was important in that setting?

**Shuman:** Oh, yes, wit, not broad humor.

**Ritchie:** In some cases even more than the argument itself?

**Shuman:** Sometimes. One had to have some wit in the speech. But there were people who were very dull and very dry speakers, who did reasonably well on grounds that they were so dull that people thought there must be a lot of heavy thought in what they said. I've never, ever thought that people who were dull and dry were necessarily good speakers. But people would say about them, "Well, I know he was a little dull, but it was a very thoughtful speech." It wasn't thoughtful at all. It was just dull. But yes, there was a lot of witticism and paradoxes and

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good clean fun. When interrupted, it was a battle between the speaker and the audience. For the audience it was like going to a bull fight. The purpose was to get the speaker. If they got the speaker, he lost out. People like Michael Summerskill, Dr. Edith's son, who was on the ladder to become president of the Union, and he was giving a paper speech and he gave a bad speech. He was interrupted and he didn't have a reply, and it finished him. So every time one spoke, and if interested in getting on, it was not only doing well, but it was surviving the barbs that was important. It was like walking a tightrope. If you fell off you were dead. So you had to survive. When interrupted one could say, "I want to thank the member for his question. Surely there is some point to it," or "The member has made a Euclidian point. It has a position but no magnitude," or as Robin Day once said to a persistent interrupter, "Honorable members may tell jokes but not explain them." We concocted all kinds of stuff to win points.

**Ritchie:** In advance?

**Shuman:** Yes. When I debated Norman St. John Stevas for the presidency, I worked something out with Jeremy Thorpe to provoke an interruption from Norman. Stevas' middle name St. John in England was pronounced "Sinjun," to rhyme with "Injun." So I referred to him instead of "Sinjun" as "Mr. Norman Saint John (pronounced the American way), Stev-as." Well, he'd been called

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that in America and other places many times, so he had an answer. He was then the treasurer, and he came down from his chair and interrupted me. I was then the ex-librarian. "Well," he said, "the Pope may canonize me, but the ex-librarian,

never," to the delight of the crowd. He also was a prominent Catholic so there was a double entendre. I knew that he would have an answer, and I had to have a reply that would fit anything that he said. So the reply was like this. It was exactly like this. I said, "He objects to the way I pronounced his name, but at Cambridge he was called Norman, Saint John, Stev-as, and after all, that's where he made his name." Everybody cheered, but it was absolutely contrived. P> I knew Walter Mondale quite well, and I tried to help him in the campaign three years ago, but I couldn't get by his gate keepers. I was concerned after the first debate, when Reagan did so poorly and when his age was such an issue. It occurred to me that he would have some kind of a remark about his age, kidding himself, self-deprecating and so on, and that Mondale had better have a reply to that that would fit anything Reagan said. I tried to get through to his staff about it, and couldn't. But sure enough, Reagan did it, and I think won back the election in a very real sense. If Mondale had had some quick retort, it might have been different. His staff obviously didn't prepare him and they should have.

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**Ritchie:** It's ironic, considering that Mondale had pinned Gary Hart with his "Where's the beef" quip, and Hart had no response.

**Shuman:** Right, correct.

**Ritchie:** I wanted to ask you to compare American and British politics by their debating styles. Would you say that British politics follows the debating style of the Oxford Union? A lot of heckling of speeches, even in the Parliament, and requiring people to be quick on their feet?

**Shuman:** Oh, yes, certainly.

**Ritchie:** And that the American system does not necessary encourage this.

**Shuman:** Well, that's not quite true. The British system is that system throughout, but I when I worked in the Senate there were some people I thought were as good as any British parliamentary speaker. [Hubert Humphrey](#) was one, [Bob Kerr](#) was another. My old boss, [Paul Douglas](#), was a third. Probably [\[Everett\] Dirksen](#) was another. [\[Eugene\] Milliken](#) of Colorado was another. There were a handful of speakers in the Senate who could have done as well as anybody, and better than many, in the Parliament. But only a handful. Most senators read their speeches. I once heard Hubert Humphrey on the Senate floor. He

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was supporting foreign aid. Somebody got up and said something like, "What's England got that we haven't got?" And quick as a flash, he said, "Westminster Abbey." He was quick on his feet and would have done well in Parliament.

**Ritchie:** But Humphrey and [Wayne Morse](#) were often mocked by people for being long-winded.

**Shuman:** Well, they were long-winded -- articulate is a better word -- but Humphrey, especially was very witty.

**Ritchie:** But is there as much credit for being a good debater in the Senate? It seems as if there are more dull speakers than witty speakers.

**Shuman:** Yes, there are many dull speakers. No, I don't think a senator gets enough credit in the Senate for being able to debate. I have a proposal which I've made on and off for a long time about what the Senate should do to improve debate. I think now that television has come to the Senate that what should happen is that [\[Robert\] Byrd](#) and [\[Robert\] Dole](#) should schedule about once a month a major debate on a major issue, on the president's budget when it comes down, on the economic report when it comes, on Irangate, or tax reform, or whatever. There are enough issues that recur throughout the year that there could be a major debate once a month. The majority party would propose something like "The Senate has no confidence in Ronald Reagan's budget," or "The

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Senate rejects Ronald Reagan's budget." Byrd could lead off, speak for fifteen minutes. Dole could answer. He could propose a substitute amendment: "The Senate has great confidence in Mr. Reagan's budget." Then the two leading budget committee members could speak for ten minutes, and the Finance committee chairman and ranking member, and the Appropriations committee chairman and ranking member, each of them for maybe ten minutes. Then anyone else who wanted to speak could do so for five minutes. The rules should require that they speak germanely, on the subject. About five o'clock or six o'clock, or even later, if necessary, the two people who proposed the motions should wind up with ten minute summary speeches. Then vote. If a Republican Senate rejected a Republican President's budget, that would be news.

Televisе that! It would educate the country. It would be a sequential debate in the Senate, and it would do a lot a) to educate the people, and b) to improve debating in the Senate. That is what I think ought to be done on a regular basis. But when I watch the Senate on television, all I see is senators talking about procedures, about house-keeping matters, trying to get a unanimous consent agreement. Who will speak next; who wants twenty minutes; arguing over the administrative functions of the Senate which ought to be decided off stage, not there on the floor.

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I think the Senate needs to reform that aspect. They could reform it quite easily. That's the Shuman plan, not the

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Robert Schumann plan but the Howard Shuman plan. I think the Senate could have a monthly substantive debate of this kind and that would greatly improve both public education and Senate debate.

**Ritchie:** Television doesn't seem to have changed the institution yet.

**Shuman:** Not much.

**Ritchie:** But if you introduce a new medium there's generally some adjustment. It may take a few years before people realize its potential.

**Shuman:** But back to your question. I think if one goes to Parliament, much of the time one sees a form of theatre. Debate, is a form of theatre, very interesting, with its interruptions, with its arguments, with the wit, and so on.

**Ritchie:** Is it a productive theatre? Or is it a diversionary theatre?

**Shuman:** I think it's listened to a lot. It has great effect on the country. The BBC, both television and radio, has a regular program, "Today in Parliament." People can listen to the live debate on radio. Most newspapers carry a column, "Today in Parliament," where they give, pretty much verbatim, the arguments on the major issues, so that the speaking in Parliament has a

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great effect on public opinion. Even the House of Lords, which has no power to speak of, nonetheless has great power in influencing public opinion. That is not true of debate in the Senate or the House. As far as I can see it's almost entirely ignored. I'd like to see something happen along the British lines here.

As far as the political system is concerned, I prefer our system, because of the nature of congressional committees, the division of powers, and the investigative powers of Congress. A British committee has almost no power even to command the papers of a department or a ministry, but we do here. So the Parliament, as opposed to the Cabinet and the Ministries has little power. It's a rubber stamp, especially if the government has a big majority. Backbenchers have very little to say. They seldom pass their own bills. So in many ways Parliament is superfluous. But not in its debating aspects. They're superior to us in the debating aspects, inferior to us, I think, in many of the other institutional aspects.

**Ritchie:** Have you kept your contacts with the people you met at Oxford?

**Shuman:** Oh, yes. I see most of them regularly. Every year I lead a group of students from the National War College to England, and I see many of them. We're talked to by Sir Peter

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Blaker, by Sir Robin Day, by Michael Heseltine, who was the minister of defense, by Bill Rogers in the Social Democratic party, by Sir Patrick Mayhew, who's the Attorney General and by Tony Benn. Many of my old friends talk to my students about various aspects of Parliament and public policy. One of my friends, Sir Ronald Waterhouse, who is a high court judge, gives us lunch at the Middle Temple every year after we see the criminal trials at the Old Bailey. I think it's important for the military students that I teach not only to see the military side of the country, which we do through visiting the select committee on defense, visiting ex-ministers of defense, like Heseltine, and Sir Peter Blaker, and John Gilbert, all of whom I knew at Oxford, and all of whom were former ministers or junior ministers of defense. The students need to see the country not only from the defense end but as the Mother of Parliaments, as the home of the rule of law, and as the place where free speech started. So I get Sir Robin Day and a newspaper and old Oxford friend of mine, Godfrey Smith, who writes a column for the Sunday Times to speak to them about those institutions. And I get academics like Lord Asa Briggs, the Provost of Worcester College, and Lord Alan Bullock, the former Vice Chancellor of Oxford, to speak to them on social history or U.S.-British relationships since World War II. So it isn't just the military institutions we visit, although there is a preponderance of that.

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Yes, I keep in touch with them. I go back most years, and for thirty-five years most of them who come here usually stay with us. My wife Betty, calls our house London West. Especially when the exchange rates were bad, they stayed with us. Now that they're a little older and a little wealthier they generally do not stay with us. But some of them still do. Keith Kyle and John Gilbert still stay with us when they're here. So, yes, I see them. I know that group of people as lifelong friends better than any other group of lifelong friends I have.

**Ritchie:** It must have been difficult to come back from Oxford to Illinois.

**Shuman:** No, that's not true. I came back to Illinois. I have a great warm spot in my heart for Illinois. You've got to remember, Illinois produced Paul Douglas, and Adlai Stevenson, and [Abraham Lincoln](#), and [U.S. Grant](#) and Jane Addams, and John Peter Altgeld, and Carl Sandburg, and [Ronald Reagan](#). It's no slouch of a place. In the small town I grew up in there were all kinds of people who were

extraordinarily able. One had to search them out, but they were there. So, no, I make no apologies at all. In fact, I would say, as I mentioned earlier, some of my great teachers were at Illinois. Some of the faculty went on to Harvard to teach. One of them was the biographer of [Roosevelt](#).

**Ritchie:** Biographer of Roosevelt. Frank Freidel?

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**Shuman:** Frank Freidel. He was in the history department. Illinois had a great history department. J.G. Randall was there and his wife. [Arthur] Bestor was there. A man who later went to the University of Minnesota, whose book on the history of political thought I have here, was there, Mulford Q. Sibley. The social historian, Fred Shannon was there. Clarence Berdahl was in political science, and Fred Bell and Hod Gray were in economics. His daughter-in-law, Hannah, is now Chancellor of the University of Chicago and she and her husband were at Oxford when I was there. So there were really able people around.

**Ritchie:** I was thinking in terms of the old song, "How'ya gonna keep 'em down on the farm, after they've seen Patee." In the sense that a lot of Americans, after they've been in Europe, have difficulty in coming back to the old surroundings.

**Shuman:** Yes. Well, when I was at Oxford, there were a certain number of Americans who went native: carried rolled umbrellas, wore bowler hats, got a British accent. Pretty fake, I thought. I made a point of staying the Yank from the Middle West, even put it on a bit at times. I was not ashamed of it.

**Ritchie:** Which was one of the reasons why you were noticed, perhaps.

**Shuman:** Yes, I think so. I had very little to do with the Americans there. Some were my friends. My best American friend

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was [John Brademas](#), who became a member of Congress from Indiana, Democratic whip, and now the distinguished President of New York University. And there was Jim Billington, now the Librarian of Congress and an expert on the Soviet Union. Tom Hughes, the head of the Carnegie Endowment, dates from my Oxford days. John Brademas and I would talk by the hour about American politics. But I didn't spend my time with the Americans, or with the American Club, or at Rhodes House, as some Americans did. Some of them I think overdid it. I tried to take advantage of the English society while I was there, their politics, their political clubs, and so on. I made a deliberate attempt to do that. I didn't shun the Americans, but I just didn't make a point of going into all the American



societies. One could have done that and not found out anything about Britain and its institutions.

**Ritchie:** There was a story about them dressing you up in a flannel shirt and a woodsman's cap.

**Shuman:** Yes. Robin Day promoted that. He suggested it. Robin was the producer. He was the ablest person I knew in Oxford. The debate was in the Union and the debate was on "What is the state of the British public schools today?" In the middle of a speech by another man -- Nicolas Dromgoole -- which Robin had arranged, the speaker raised his voice and asked the question "What is the state of the public school boy today?" And at that stage, dressed in a wild-appearing multi-colored lumber jacket and

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a red baseball cap, I was pushed through the door by Robin and I walked into the chamber just as the speaker was saying "What is the state of the British public school boy today?" Jim Schlesinger, who later became the U.S. Secretary of Defense, CIA Director, and Secretary of Energy was there that night. He comes over to the National War College every year, and he reminds me of that event every year. His memory of me was seeing me come into the hall in that lumber jacket. It made a hit. Made my name, I guess. Then I gave a speech, in which I claimed to be the original public school boy from the public schools of East Whistlestop, Illinois. I enjoyed that. That was fun. But Robin really produced most of it. He produced the speeches for both Dromgoole and for me.

**Ritchie:** So there was a certain amount of stage managing.

**Shuman:** There certainly was.

**Ritchie:** Which was a critical element.

**Shuman:** Yes. Robin was pushing me to do well in the Union. He would come around to all of his friends and help us with our speeches. Even when he went down and became a barrister in London he would send telegrams, or call us, or come up when we had an important speech, to help us with it ahead of time. It was self-education. The speech teacher didn't do this. Your closest friends did it.

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**Ritchie:** Which is the Oxford tradition.

**Shuman:** Yes, the tradition of self-education, right.

**Ritchie:** I think it might be a good idea to stop at this point, so we can start up the next time with your coming back to the United States and going to Washington. But this has really been a very interesting session for me.

**Shuman:** Well, there was a lot that happened that I haven't talked about.

**Ritchie:** Is there something in this period that you think is particularly important that we didn't cover?

**Shuman:** Well, you might ask me how I got with Mr. Douglas, which grew out of the fact that I worked for him in the '48 election. I did that business in '48, as head of the downstate committee. I worked in his campaign. Then I went to England, so I didn't go with him to Washington, or he didn't ask me to go in his first term in '49. While I was at Oxford he read about me in the *Manchester Guardian* to which he subscribed. They reported some debates in the Union, and when I became president, and when at Jeremy Thorpe's request I was one of the main speakers at the Liberal party conference. Mr. Douglas read about me in the British papers, recognized my name, and remembered that I had been part of his local campaign in 1948.

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When I came back, I taught at Illinois, but I was unhappy. I really wanted to do more in politics. I worked again in Douglas' '54 campaign as the faculty advisor to the Young Democrats, and I campaigned for him in Champaign County. And whenever he came through I would help swell the crowd. After the campaign he was looking for a legislative assistant, a number two person in his office, because the then number-two man Bob Wallace, was moving to the Banking Committee as its staff director. Mr. Douglas came through Champaign, and he was with a fellow who was on the Journalism faculty, and he offered him the job, but he didn't want it because he wanted to stay in teaching. But he suggested me, and Mr. Douglas remembered me.

Well, this was in November. My wife was about six months, seven months pregnant with our first child. I was really being starved to death. I made \$4500. I had been looking around for a job the previous summer. I'd gone to the various journal magazines, to *Time* magazine and *Newsweek* and so on -- I was *Time* magazine's stringer when I was at Oxford, so I had a certain number of contacts there. I was interviewed by the *Washington Post*, by WTOP, and a few others and was offered a job by the *Post*. But I decided to take the Foreign Service exam. I took the exam and passed it, the last four day exam they gave, and I was about ready to go into the Foreign Service. I passed it and I was in the 99th percentile, out of the several thousand people who

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took it. But I was in Washington that summer. Betty and I sublet Robin Day's apartment in Georgetown. He was then working for the British Information Service here. And I didn't have the nerve to go up to the Hill and ask Mr. Douglas for a job. I was just afraid to do it.

After the election, he held "thank-the-voters" meetings around the state, which is one of the reasons he survived politically: with six years to go he came around and thanked people. There was a luncheon at the Moose Club in Champaign, and I got somebody to take my one o'clock class, and my wife and I went to the Moose Lodge to hear Mr. Douglas thank the voters. He never ate at these lunches. He would go up and down the aisle shaking hands with people, greeting everybody. He came to me, and he greeted me like a long-lost friend. He remembered me. He poured it on. Of course, I was flattered. Then about three o'clock I was home, and I got a call from the journalist friend who said "Mr. Douglas would like to see you in Danville," which was forty miles away. He said, "I think he's going to offer you a job." My wife was at a faculty tea and I couldn't reach her. I didn't have any money in my wallet. The car had only an eighth of a tank of gas. I drove to Danville. I left her a note saying: "I'm going to Danville to be interviewed by Mr. Douglas. If he offers me a job I'm going to take it."

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I got over there. He was then ill. He drank milk in Southern Illinois that hadn't been pasteurized and got undulant fever. He didn't know what his illness was then, but he would rest between meetings. He was up in the hotel room with a blanket over him and talked to me about the job. He then asked everybody else to leave, and then he asked me -- he took me to the woodshed -- if there was anything in my background that might be harmful, especially if I had belonged to the Communist party. I said, no. I said I had belonged to the ADA [Americans for Democratic Action], and he laughed. He said, "Oh, I've done much worse than that!" So he hired me. Called me about a week later and offered me \$6500. I was so pleased, a fifty percent increase in salary. Well, I didn't have any cash. I had to borrow enough money from the local county chairman to fill my car with gas, and drove back. Then I resigned at the end of the semester and came down to Washington.

But I got the job because I'd worked in his campaigns, which was very important. He always remembered people who came out and heard him or worked for him. He was a believer in that form of patronage. People would come in for a job and he'd say "Well, what have you done? Have you ever done anything in politics?" "Oh, no, I'm neutral. I've never done anything." And they expected one to think well of them. Well, I didn't think well of them at all. I mean, where were they when we needed them? And he

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also felt strongly that while intellectuals got rewards in politics because of their belief in issues that to be successful in politics there had to be rewards for people who didn't have an intellectual view. So he believed in patronage in the sense that one rewarded party workers who were qualified. He didn't want to give a job to anyone who wasn't qualified, but it didn't bother him to reward party people who were qualified.

This was ironic, because the organizational Democrats put him up for the Senate because they were afraid that as the former independent alderman in Chicago he wouldn't recognize the party in the state, and they therefore wanted Stevenson for governor and Douglas for senator, so they could get Douglas out of the way. The fact is that Stevenson was really not only non-party, but he played to the other side to a considerable degree. He ignored the party, and I think it's fair to say that if Mr. Douglas had been governor he would have gotten along much better with the party than Stevenson did. I'm sure he wouldn't have let them steal the Capitol dome, but he would have been more understanding of their patronage problems than Stevenson was.

End Interview #1

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