Interview with Hugh Scott
June 5, 1980

Interview took place in Senator Scott's Washington office, with Mary and Walter Phillips

These questions and answers are in addition to the oral history program* which I understand you will be copying and are free to use, and that chiefly discusses my political life and also goes into some discussion of China and Chinese attitudes as of that time and introduces a few interesting errors where I found and have noted that my predictions were wrong, and also contains some correct predictions.

I was born, it seems the best place to begin... (tape interruption)... biography other than to elaborate on family background by saying that my father's people were from Fredericksburg, Virginia, and my mother's people were from Richmond and my uncle, Judge Edmond O. Lewis, moved to Philadelphia and attended Penn, graduating about 1902.

(WMP: Judge Lewis was a great guy.)

He was a wonderful man. And of course Independence Plaza is named for him. I had offers from various firms in New York but I decided to go with my uncle in the practice of law in 1922. My family in Virginia, through my mother's side, dates back to November, 1620, to a man named Peter Montague, who seems to have been a progenitor of a lot of people. He was a member of the House of Burgesses, which is the earliest political background I can find in my family.

Two. Second question -- "I've read that you said that from the age of 13 you wanted to be a U.S. Senator. What influenced you to have that goal at such a young age and who were the people that sparked your interest in public affairs?" I think first of all that I had a natural interest in current events. I was unfortunately precocious in reading at a very early age, perhaps four and a half or five, and I have -- my mother had died when I was five and my father married again when I was seven and my stepmother I always regarded as my mother, and she believed that I was capable of anything, in a nice way,

*Oral History Interview for the United States Capitol Historical Society, Sept. 13, 1976, interviewed by Frank van der Linden
and she thought there was nothing that I couldn't do if I wanted to. She had complete confidence in me and was continually building up my own sense of self and capacity and ego, I suppose, and encouraging me to plan for a career -- not necessarily public life, but she did want me to be a lawyer, and so did my father, and various members of my family had attended both Randolph-Macon College and the University of Virginia, as I did.

Another influence was the local state senator, whose name was C. O'Connor Goolrick, who was the political figure in my town of Fredericksberg and distinguished himself as pretty much a Maverick. He was opposed to the old Flood-Bird organization and I think even to the Carter-Glass organization. In any event, he was regarded as a very independent man and I admired him. And I was also interested from an early time in the career of Theodore Roosevelt.

But mostly I think it grew from just reading. I remember the convention of 1908, for instance. I was seven years old.

Third question -- "What brought you to Philadelphia after you were graduated from law school?" To that part of the question I've answered that I went to practice with Judge Lewis, but he went on the bench -- that was '22 and he went on the bench in '24 so I was pretty much at loose ends.

"What firm did you work for?" I've answered that.

"What members of the bar were helpful to you as a young man in getting started in your practice?" Obviously, first it was Judge Lewis and then it was my associate, David H. Kindley, Sr., and another associate, Guy S. K. Wheeler. I was helped too by Herbert Gould, a lawyer whom I had known at Washington and Lee, who was a fraternity brother and a General Motors executive in Detroit who sent me the General Motors Acceptance Corporation business early on. I was also helped by the active friendship and sponsorship of Harry S. McDevitt and Judge Stern, who was Howard Stern -- Horace Stern -- who afterwards became Chief Justice of the Supreme Court.

Four. "How did you come to be appointed Assistant District Attorney in Philadelphia and was that experience helpful to you politically?" I was appointed actually on the suggestion of Judge Horace Stern, who proposed it to Mr. Charles Edwin Fox, who had just been named by the Board of Judges to fill a vacancy as District Attorney of Philadelphia County. The experience was helpful to me politically in that I gained actual trial experience and made a number of contacts.
Gained a certain amount of publicity. Particularly a 15-month investigation of the Magistrate system together with John Boyle of that office and some publicity in a case where I had tried a group of young men who had disrupted a Jewish meeting which was being addressed by a Presbyterian minister and a disrupting gang were all Irish Catholic and I tried them vigorously and made a very strong point of the right of free speech and the judge was the Hon. Vincent Carroll and so I really had a good mish-mash in that case, but I gained a lot of publicity so that I was somewhat better known when the time came to run for Congress.

Five. "When and how did you become involved in politics at the local level in Philadelphia and how did that lead to your being slated for Congress?" Well, I became involved in politics because as a young assistant district attorney it seemed to me that I ought to have some political background. The district attorneys were constantly changing and if I were a party worker I would bulwark to that extent my claim to being continued no matter who became district attorney, or so I thought at the time. And in the year 1924 I ran for committeeman and was elected in the division which you recognize as the Wayne Avenue bridge. And the big apartment house at the foot of the hill. Mayfair House. It's in that precinct. And I was elected as one of the committeemen and stayed as a committeeman for some years -- ten years or more. And gained a lot of practical experience at that time. And that would be an involvement in politics, but not an elective office. In 1940 I learned that Congressman George Darrow, who represented the Germantown District was thinking of retiring, and he was about 83 or 84 and had been elected many times to Congress from the district, which was then a strong Republican district. Had lost in only one electoral sweep and served 8, 10, or 12 terms and was chiefly responsible for having gotten the Philadelphia Naval Hospital for the city. He was a ranking member of the Naval Affairs Committee.

Well, I was opposed by a man whose name I've forgotten -- his first name was Ralph -- and he had been sent to the Naval Academy by Congressman Darrow and he announced his candidacy for Congress without asking Congressman Darrow whether he was going to retire or not. That didn't seem to me to be very good judgement, so I went to see Congressman Darrow and said I will not be a candidate if you are, but if you are retiring I would like your endorsement. And I remember he was sitting there reading his scrapbooks and I remember thinking to myself that I hope I never get to the condition where I have nothing to do except read my scrapbooks. But I listened patiently to a
number of reminiscences and he ended up by saying that he appreciated my attitude and that he was not going to run, but that he would support me.

There were five ward leaders in my district and only one was for me and that was Dave Watson, who is the father, Tom Watson, and I went to Harrisburg to see Tom Watson and he said he couldn't support me because he was committed to Brian Hermes -- no, that's another incident -- he couldn't support me because he was committed to someone. I then went back and talked to his son -- strike that -- I'm talking about the time I was appointed to District Attorney.

What happened was -- the incident with George Darrow is correct. But from there I went to the five ward leaders and I'm thinking of the younger Watson, David Watson, son of the late Tom Watson, who had helped me become assistant district attorney. So it was a question of who would be supported. By then there were several candidates, including Ralph and one of the Hamiltons and others and I was a good friend of the late Ted Rosen, Judge Rosen. He had been injured and wounded in World War I -- lost an arm.

Well, Ted and I talked over my chances and I decided that since there were about three or four candidates the district was more than half Protestant and they were all Protestant, as I was -- that I would try to get the support of all the Catholic leaders in the district. So I began with Judge McDevitt, who was supposed to stay out of politics. Judge McDevitt advised me who to see and personally called many of them up. I ended up with the entire Catholic support in the district. So that night I still didn't have the nomination and the 22nd ward was having a meeting -- the Germantown Republican Club. So I comported a little with Ted Rosen. Ted said he would be late coming to the meeting and he suggested that I occupy his seat at the head table and in those days there were no women allowed -- this was strictly a male preserve -- and those at the head table always wore black tie. So I went home and paced the floor about 45 minutes, deciding whether to wear a black tie or not. I finally decided to take the gamble and put on a dinner jacket. And I went down and sat at Ted Rosen's place at the head table, whereupon all of my opponents assumed that the ward leaders had endorsed me and came up and congratulated me. And Dave Watson joined in laughing about the thing and before they knew it they all abandoned their campaign publicly in front of everybody and I hadn't been endorsed by anyone but Watson. But following the meeting the ward leaders had a meeting that night and endorsed me. So that's how I got it -- by wearing
a dinner jacket at the right time. So clothes make the man! So that's how I came to be slated for Congress. It was the year of the third-term fight in Wendell Wilke's candidacy and I was the first candidate for public office in Pennsylvania to come out for Wilke. One of my friends was the first candidate for elector -- among the electors to come out for him. We helped organize the young insurance men and businessmen and established pro-Wilke cadres in Pennsylvania. The rest of it is in the oral history which you have so I won't go into it here.

But I was elected for that first term and I served eight terms in the Congress, winning all of them except 1944, when I lost by about 2200 votes, at the time of the argument to give Roosevelt a Democratic Congress. And that was the issue that I lost on at that time. But that was partly my own doing. I had done several things wrong -- I had offended Roosevelt in a personal interview and I had also let it be known to my constituents that they had a choice -- they could either send me back to Congress or send me to the Navy, so I was the only person that year that got elected to the Navy.

Six. "What do you remember of the local GOP organization at that time and what was the strength of the party and who were the leaders?" Judge Lewis had become City Solicitor in the Blankenberg administration in the 1905 election. He had gone to Philadelphia as a Democrat and became an independent and won as an independent, with Blankenberg. Later ran for Sheriff and was defeated. Counted out, in point of fact, as many an old committeeman has since told me. And so when I came many of those were off the scene, but still on the scene were the Vare brothers, Edwin and William Vare, Thomas Watson, Austin Meehan, just coming up, and later on Jay Cooke and John Morrow. A number of others, but those were the principal ones that I remember. The party was quite strong and won most elections by landslides, like 300,000 to 32,000. Something like that. I remember one year when the Democrats got only 8 votes in my precinct. It stayed that way until the Smith election -- Al Smith - Hoover election, when Smith failed to capture Philadelphia, but instead of losing it by the usual 300,000 lost it by something like 80,000 and for the first time a very large number of Philadelphians moved over to the Democratic party and never returned. And within a very few years the city became Democratic. The turn was marked by the Truman election, when Truman carried the city by only 5 or 6 thousand. Thereafter, no Republican ever carried Philadelphia for any major office that I can recall, city-wide.
And I was the last Republican member of Congress -- we elected all Republicans, seven of them, in the 80th Congress, 1946, and then they were all defeated but me in '48. And I was the last Republican until Charlie Dougherty went down there about two or three years ago. So I could always caucus in the phone booth.

The party lost out by failing to bring the people into the party, by internal quarrels, by corruption, and by just refusing to learn the lessons that were as plain as the nose on my face.

Seven. "What do you remember was the impact on the Philadelphia Republican Party when Clark and Dilworth came into power?" I've noted under that question "devastating." That was the final coup de grace for the Republican party. They moved in following the Lamberton administration, which was incidentally a good administration and a good honest man. But the party had gotten so deteriorated and so shot through with corruption at the lower levels, and apathy generally, that it was ripe for a take-over. And when Clark came to power the newspapers were still against him, but eventually the press rallied behind Clark and with Dilworth -- there were some exceptions when he and the Inquirer would tangle from time to time. I think the impact on the city as a city was very good, indeed. These were both good administrators. They had vision, imagination, and with Clark he had the courage of his convictions whether he was right or wrong -- but in city administration, often right. Dilworth had more than that. He had all of that but he also had a charisma that was unforgettable and a candor which kept him in hot water. My own view is that the best mayor that we've had in my 50-some years experience in the city was Dilworth.

Eight. "During your years in the House of Representatives what were the issues relating to Philadelphia with which you were involved?" Well, Independence Hall National Historical Association Bill which was introduced at the request of Judge Lewis and Sidney Martin, architect, who had formed the Independence Hall Association. It was introduced by Hardy Scott and myself, because the hall was Hardy's district. So Hardy and I agreed that we would each introduce the bill. It was 1947. The bill passed the House and Senate and became law and established the historical park and as you know, there were many additions to it later. We had to add not only two other historic buildings but to satisfy the two parties in the Congress from Philadelphia we had to include all the
churches and synagogues that could be embraced within it. And the plan of the restoration was a "T", in which the long arm of the "T" ran from the original site of the hall down to the river and the short arm of the "T" ran to the Delaware bridge and the short arm was to be maintained by the city and the long arm by the federal government. And something which was to cost about 7 1/2 million when it began has, like the cost of everything from battleships to beans, increased many many fold. But it is worth every cent of it. It has now become a sacred shrine for all Americans and foreign visitors.

The next thing was the Navy Yard. Probably the most dramatic thing I did was to go to Tom Gates, a fellow Philadelphian, when he was Secretary of Defense and the navy yard was threatened with removal and implore him not to remove it. It was the week before election. So I went down to the navy yard, campaigning, and the workmen were leaning from every aperture on these hospital ships and carriers and battleships in for repairs. And I had a bullhorn there and I said to them I promise you that the navy yard is going to stay in Philadelphia and it is not going to be removed. Well, nobody believed me because all the other stories were the other way. This was the Friday before the Tuesday election. And Saturday one of the papers contained a big headline -- the Inquirer -- "Navy Yard to be Closed Down". Well, we couldn't change the Inquirer but I knew they were wrong on it because I knew Tom Gates and Tom has since told me how and when he shelved the proposal. It was a commission that had recommended closing Philadelphia. I think he closed either Boston or Brooklyn, actually. So, fortunately, the day before the election, which was not planned -- I've known many things like this to be planned -- most of them -- but this was not. The day before the election the word finally leaked out of the Pentagon that the navy yard would be preserved. So it was not only good politically, but I think from the standpoint of achievements one of the most important things I did.

(WMP: How did you do it?)

I was over at the Pentagon in Tom Gates's office frequently imploring him not to do it. Pointing out to him the number of jobs that would be lost -- several thousand, in fact. It was the largest single employer in the city. I think it had then 11-13,000 employees and half of them would have been gone if you had taken the navy yard away, even if you left some of the administrative section. And as Philadelphia's biggest
employer it would have been terrible news if it had happened. And so I was blamed later for — I think the Boston yard was the one that moved.

Another thing were the arsenals — the Schuylkill Arsenal, the Frankfort Arsenal.

One of the most important things I worked on was the dredging of the Delaware River to keep it a deep-water port and it is still the largest port for liquid cargo in the United States.

And of course help on various legislation pertaining to highways as well as a good deal of general welfare legislation.

Nine. "What were your considerations in deciding when the time was right for you to run for the Senate and what was your relationship with the local and state GOP when you decided to run? Whose support did you have to have to achieve the nomination?" The answer to that is that I had good support in and around the city of Philadelphia, because I had had some good publicity as a Congressman. I did not have the support of the Pugh organization because Joe Pugh never forgave me for supporting Tom Dewey over his choice. You may remember that he was a Taft man at first and then shifted to McArthur because Taft was too liberal for him. And he never forgave me for helping to bring about the nomination of Tom Dewey in 1948, and said so. I had by then brought the Grundy organization in behind Tom Dewey in '48, but they too, had doubts about me and decided that they wanted to back Jimmy Van Zandt (?) for the Senate instead of me. So the Pennsylvania Manufacturer's Association, the Grundy Association were against me too. I had the two leading financial groups against me. So what I had to do was to first send one of my assistants around in a car and meet as many people as he could in 20-some counties that were in the radio business or small newspaper business and find a recognition factor, which was about 21%, and find out whether or not there would be a general hostility to anyone running from Philadelphia and find out whether there was any support for anyone else.

What we found out was that there was no great interest in the race — no objection to anyone coming from the eastern part of the state, and a willingness to hear who I was and what I had to say. So then I made a trip to nearly 30 of the counties and directly solicited their support and came back with promises of a lot of it because I was early and they said they'd like to see me run.
So then I decided and told the state executive committee that
I was a candidate. I think there were 35 members on the executive
committee and they had the power to recommend to the state
committee who the nominee should be. I had the support of
Austin Meehan and the Hamiltons, who had originally opposed
me for Congress. I had their support. But all of these
organizations were against me.

....(tape change).... they had sort of lost confidence in me
because I didn't vote conservatively enough for them and
they felt that Jimmy Van Band would. They also wanted Art
McGonigle of Reading to be the candidate for Governor. So
I then pursued my candidacy and Meehan and Hamilton found
they had 8 votes for me and 27 for Van Band. So that's
when I resorted to the best move I could think of to make.
I announced that I would stay in the race and give them a
primary fight and I was told that the city of Philadelphia
would support me. Which meant one county against 66, but
a big one. And we were playing on Jimmy Van Band's nerve.
So Jay Cooke was for Van Band and Jay called him and said
we'll give you the nomination for the Senate. But Van
Band said "will it be uncontested?" and Cooke said "no,
Scott is going to contest it." So Van Band decided he didn't
relish the idea of a fight and he wouldn't agree to run
unless they could get me out of the race. They couldn't
get me out of the race. They finally made a compromise.
I didn't think their choice for Governor was very good.
So Wilbur Hamilton called me and said -- first Jay Cooke
called me and said that they had agreed on me for the Senate
and then Hamilton called me while they were trying to agree
on the Governor and said that they had compromised on McGonigle
which Philadelphia didn't want. And I said tactlessly that
McGonigle will lose and I will win. And he said "you must
never say that again." But that's what happened several months
later.

I had to have as much support as I could get. And of course
once the state committee had endorsed me following the withdrawal
of Van Band I did have the support of the state committee.
But it was extremely hard to raise money. I was running against
the Governor of the state. And the Governor had resources
I didn't.

Question ten. "What was your relationship with Senator Clark
while you were each in the Senate and did you often join forces
with each other on behalf of the interests of the city of
Philadelphia?" And the answer is often, the latter part of
that question. Our relationship was good, cordial, more or less
provocative. A lot of kidding each other, but mutual respect.
We joined frequently without hesitation on pro-Philadelphia movements. Anything affecting our institutions, such as the ones I've mentioned, and anything affecting employment in Philadelphia -- for instance, I was able to get Hog Island deeded to the airport to increase the size of the airport and Joe joined with me to help facilitate that.

Then he and I had the only joint television show which was ever successfully conducted between senators of opposite parties from the same state. And we reached as high as 14 and occasionally 17 tv stations and an average of 60 or 65 radio stations. Joe and I never thought we had a good program unless we had a bad one -- by that I mean unless we really tangled and argued and fought with each other. We had a good controversial program and we were very proud of it and we tried to avoid being dull and we developed our own following, I think, in this joint show. We both liked it. It never worked again because afterwards Schweiker came to the senate and they had two Republicans and so what happened then was that I would have a show once a month and Schweiker would have a show once a month. Occasionally we would be on each other's program.

But back to Clark -- I used to say to Joe that I'm not nearly as worried about what you say you believe in as by the fact that I know that you do! It's the fact you believe in it that worries me! I thought that to me he believed in some very odd things and I think he thought the same of me. But we got along excellently. We used to quibble sometimes about appointments to the federal bench or the U.S. Attorney's office, which was his function as representing the majority party. And then when Joe left the Senate it was largely mine and Schweiker's. It was his right to name them but he liked to have me approve it and in every case except one I did approve and in that one I held out rather unfairly for a long time until we named Lew Van Dusen to the Circuit Court. Frank Van Dusen. Frank was a good friend of Clark's but I took the position that after 8 or 9 Democrats there had to be one Republican on the court. Clark took the position that he wasn't going to let me name the one Republican, although in principle I was right that there should be one. This went on for months until he finally gave in and said "would you take Frank Van Dusen if we made an agreement?" I said "yes, we'll gladly take him." So Frank was the only Republican:
that got named to the federal bench under the administrations when there were Democratic presidents. And it was of course as you know a very excellent appointment. But I thought that Joe was a good Senator and I think we cooperated very well and Joe did not suffer fools gladly and he would take off after some delegations and of course I would take off after delegations too, but generally we worked our problems out and stayed out of the papers and I don't think there ever was a headline of Clark-Scott clash. Because we thought truly that the interests of Pennsylvania were a good deal more important than our personal differences.

(WMP: That was unique.)

Well, I think it was unique because we were both lawyers, we both recognized that you can argue a case and agree and disagree, and in fact, we liked each other. We were neighbors and we got along.

Then the eleventh question. "What ways were you able to help Philadelphia while you were in the Senate?" We've pretty well covered that -- the navy yard, Independence Hall, the establishment of the U.S. Mint, the building of the new Federal Court House in a year in which only two large federal projects were approved -- the Chicago Post Office and the Federal Court House. It was rather unusual that I had the influence to get that done, which they promptly named for a Democratic Congressman who had nothing to do with it. Then there were post office improvements, there was the Hog Island development, where we got that seeded to the airport. And there were of course many authorizations and appropriations bills which affected Philadelphia and there was the still recurring question of the deepening of the navy yard and of the removal of pollution in the rivers -- the Delaware, particularly.

Twelve. "How much contact did you have with the various mayors of Philadelphia? Would you evaluate the effectiveness of each?" I've written here in answer to that -- time to time. In other words I would have contacts with them when they had problems that affected the federal government or when some constituent would ask me something that took me back to the city government. I would regard Dilworth as the most effective of the mayors because he never took his eye off the main responsibility, which was the improvement and the betterment of the city. He got into more personal confrontations, if possible, than Clark did. But his vision, his sighting, for what the city needed was superb. I think Clark was an excellent mayor and I would rate
Bob Lambert as a good mayor. I think although he was pedestrian in many ways, Barney Samuels presided over the original concept of an improved and better Philadelphia and Barney was a product of the old school but by his likes he wasn't a bad man.

(WMP: He took his cues from Ed Hopkinson.)

Yes. Ed Hopkinson. That's where I think he got the vision and stayed with it of a better Philadelphia. Ed Hopkinson had a real close hold on him.

Tate I think was a rather pedestrian mayor. He's not a bad fellow in many ways, but I thought he was not a remarkable mayor either.

Thirteen. "What do you see for the future of the Republican party in Philadelphia?" Answer -- not good. The possibility of improvement lies by way of securing good candidates. I think that the Republican party will never be a majority in Philadelphia unless the blue collar vote moves over. It will take either the movement of a large ethnic block, virtually all of which are in the Democratic party -- either the movement of one of those blocks or the movement of the blue collar worker. Something like that could do it. The only Republican that I recall that has carried Philadelphia in many years was Dick Thornberg and that was occasioned by just what I said -- the movement over of a large block. In this case, the black vote. And some movement of the blue collar vote. And a general neutralizing of the Jewish vote, which I believe split fairly equally. But it takes that kind of thing because the Republican party is in the same position in Philadelphia that it is in most of the metropolises where the electoral content is fundamentally composed of traditional Democratic voters.

Fourteen. "In all of your years of public service what do you consider to have been your most important achievements?" Well, I go back again to Independence Hall. Then I would put ahead of everything else, I think, my own record on civil rights, which by the way is outlined a good deal in that oral history. But I have mentioned one civil rights bill which passed by my one vote in the rules committee otherwise it never would have seen the light of day. The fact that I was the co-author of several of the key civil rights bills and that I supported them successfully over the years, beginning with the first year I was in Congress -- the anti-lynching bill and the poll tax repeal bill and things of that kind which was as far as we dared go with civil rights at the beginning. And then later we got to the landmark bills of civil rights and voting, education, housing, etc. And in the continuance and extension of those bills, which were always bitterly fought. Then I'm
proud of the fact that the anti-trust bill, the first one in 78 years or more, bears my name — it's the Hart-Scott-Rodino anti-trust bill. It's a very complicated bill and it has changed the law for the lawyers and the companies considerably and I think it is a reform.

Another achievement was in actually saving the navy yard and in helping Senator McClellan draft the patents and copy-right laws. In helping Senator Kennedy draft the provision in the election law providing for public financing of presidential campaigns. That was Kennedy's.

(MBP: I don't know when that was -- was that John Kennedy or Ted?)

Ted Kennedy. And it was about 1975. He was ranking on Judiciary after McClellan and he and I put it through in the conference.

I'm sure if I had time to think about it there would be other things. Those are the things that stand out.

(WMP: It's a darn good list.)

I hope that does it.

(end of interview)