

Robert C. Byrd Legacy Project

Oral History Interview

Dr. Marcia K. Brand

July 29, 2016



Robert C. Byrd Center
for CONGRESSIONAL HISTORY AND EDUCATION

Preface

By James J. Wyatt

Dr. Marcia K. Brand is the chairman of Shepherd University's Board of Governors, the executive director of the National Interprofessional Initiative on Oral Health, and a senior advisor to the DentaQuest Foundation. Between 1989 and 1991 Dr. Brand worked on Senator Byrd's staff in Washington D.C. as a legislative assistant on issues relating to health, education, agriculture, and veteran's affairs. Dr. Brand subsequently ran the Federal Office of Rural Health Policy and served as the deputy administrator of the federal Health Resources and Services Administration, an agency within the US Department of Health and Human Services. A native of Martinsburg, WV, Dr. Brand was a faculty member at Old Dominion University in Norfolk, VA and Thomas Jefferson University in Philadelphia, PA prior to joining Senator Byrd's staff.

In this interview, Dr. Brand primarily discusses her work as a legislative assistant on Senator Byrd's staff, which coincided with the senator's first two years as Chairman of the U.S. Senate Appropriations Committee. Brand details some of the specific duties she was tasked with, including meeting with constituents, writing speeches, analyzing legislation, and keeping the senator abreast of his colleagues' positions on pending pieces of legislation. In the process, she highlights the steep curve new congressional staff face in simultaneously mastering their individual assignments and keeping track of the larger happenings in Congress. Brand also discusses some of the many factors Senator Byrd considered when deciding whether to support a pending piece of legislation. The interview concludes with a brief discussion of the high standard of performance to which Senator Byrd held his staff.

About the interviewer: Ray Smock is the director of the Robert C. Byrd Center for Congressional History and Education in Shepherdstown, West Virginia. He is the former historian of the U. S. House of Representatives (1983-95). He holds a Ph.D. in history from the University of Maryland at College Park. His most recent book, co-edited with Roger Bruns and David Hostetter, is *Congress Investigates: A Critical History with Documents* (2011), a two-volume compilation of scholarly articles and government documents covering the history of Congressional investigations from 1792 to 2006.

Interview #1
July 29, 2016

SMOCK: This is Ray Smock, and I'm with Dr. Marcia K. Brand [at the Robert C. Byrd Center for Congressional History and Education on the campus of Shepherd University]. This is an oral history interview conducted on July 29, 2016.

Dr. Brand, could you please tell us a little bit about yourself and your background, how you ended up in the positions that you are now, and then as we go through this a little further, we're going to be talking about Senator Byrd. But first, I want to know about you.

BRAND: Sure. Well, thank you. I grew up in the Eastern Panhandle, so I'm from Martinsburg originally, and spent most of my life as a young child there, went off to college, and I was going to be a dental hygienist. It was a new field then. It was exciting, and I didn't know anyone who was one. So it's hard to think that a risky choice was being a dental hygienist, but it was then.

I was sitting in clinic in my senior year. We had been in clinic all day, and I realized that I had made a poor career choice because I had made a decision that would require me to sit quietly in a room by myself with an individual with whom I couldn't have a conversation, for the rest of my career. So I became a dental hygiene faculty member because the faculty got to stand up, and talk to folks, and move around, and conduct research.

I was a faculty member at ODU [Old Dominion University] in Norfolk, Virginia, and in Philadelphia at Thomas Jefferson University. While I was at Jefferson in Philly, I worked on my Ph.D., and as I finished my Ph.D., I applied for a Kellogg postdoctoral fellowship. It was a legislative fellowship sponsored by the Association of Schools of Allied Health Professions. I got that fellowship, and so that was how I came to work in the Senate. I enjoyed my time in the Senate, and I learned a great deal about government and our state [West Virginia] while working there. However, working in the Senate is really not a good job for a "grownup" in some ways [*laughs*], which is probably why the average age of a Senate staffer is maybe twenty-six to twenty-eight, and for a House staffer it's even less than that, because your life is not your own. I was already older than that.

So I applied for a position at the Health Resources and Services Administration, which we call HRSA. HRSA's the agency that seeks to ensure that folks who are medically underserved have access to healthcare. HRSA is a large agency; its annual budget is about \$10 billion. It supports an array of health programs, including health centers, maternal and child health, HIV/AIDs, and organ transplantation. I spent some time there working on programs that promote a diverse and well-distributed health workforce. Later, I ran the Federal Office of Rural Health Policy, which I very much enjoyed doing and actually gave me a chance to think about the people in West Virginia and how we might better serve them.

I finished my career at HRSA as the deputy administrator, so that meant that I was "second in command." I was there when the Congress passed the Recovery Act [American

Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009], and I was in that position when the Congress passed the Affordable Care Act (ACA). Most people think of the ACA as having a profound impact on the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, it also meant new challenges and programs for HRSA as well. The ACA significantly expanded our Community Health Center Program, providing new clinical sites for patients who previously hadn't had coverage. The ACA expanded HRSA's workforce programs, including the National Health Service Corps, which places clinicians in underserved communities like many in West Virginia. So it was a really busy time, and I'm very proud of what our agency did to implement the ACA.

SMOCK: You give a nice hint of your Hill experience by saying it wasn't a place for grownups. [laughter] So you were grown up when you went to work there.

BRAND: I was. I was quite grown up.

SMOCK: How old were you when you went to work for Senator Byrd?

BRAND: I was about thirty-eight or so.

SMOCK: As staff goes, that makes you a senior citizen almost.

BRAND: It did, yes. [laughs]

SMOCK: Was that your first observation of what it was like to be in the Senate?

BRAND: No. As a part of the fellowship, you find a placement on the Hill, and it seemed to me to make most sense to go to work in the office of one of the senators from West Virginia, since that was the geography and those were the people that I knew. When you arrive in DC, you participate in a "political science" introduction with other Kellogg Fellows and learn how the Hill works, and then you go find a place, a placement.

So the first place I went was to Mr. Byrd's office, and they offered me an internship, a fellowship. I served as a legislative assistant, and I started managing health and education, which are two things I knew something about, because I had been in healthcare and I had a Ph.D. in higher education. So I was fairly comfortable with the content. Pretty shortly thereafter, I took over responsibility for agriculture and veterans affairs, and except for the fact that my grandfather had been a small farmer, I didn't know much about ag. [agriculture], and certainly I hadn't served in the military, so I didn't know much about veterans affairs. But that's what you do, is you take those things that are assigned to you.

I started out actually not even sitting with the folks in the leg. [legislative] section, because there wasn't room. I literally sat directly outside of Mr. Byrd's personal office in the Senate Office Building. Now, at that time he was chairman of the [U.S. Senate] Appropriations Committee and spent much of his time over in the Capitol. My desk was next to this gorgeous ceiling to floor window, and I could look out at the Capitol and the Supreme Court Building. It was a really interesting perspective on Washington, and I was learning what it was like to be a Hill staffer.

SMOCK: This was in the Hart Building [Philip A. Hart Senate Office Building]?

BRAND: In the Hart Building, right. I could see out that window, and I could see the tourists, and I could see folks demonstrating, and it was an interesting exposure to what Hill life is like outside of the building.

Then inside of the building was a pretty steep learning curve. You do a number of different things if you're a leg. staffer. You do constituent services. So you, Ray, might be concerned about an issue and want to get on a calendar to talk with someone in the office about it. You would be assigned to the staff member who managed that issue as his/her portfolio. So if you were concerned about an issue related to education, you would have been assigned to come meet with me because I "did" education, and we would have talked about your concerns.

I wrote speeches for Mr. Byrd; he changed them, but we wrote them first. And we learned to analyze legislation, which was certainly a new skill for me. Then you have to figure out the "politics." Certainly there were "politics" when I worked in higher education, but nothing like the Hill. In healthcare and in education, you look for a solution where everyone wins. It's not exactly like that on the Hill; it's great if everyone wins, but more likely, there are going to be losers as well.

So I had to learn the politics, and you learn things like Mr. Byrd and Mr. Rockefeller, because they were both representing the State of West Virginia, didn't want to split their votes. They wanted to be able to say to the state that they had a unified view about particular issues. So when it came for the Senate to vote, Mr. Byrd would come ask the staffer assigned to the issue about the vote. He could always find his staff member, because he knew we were going to be there, we were seated where he expected us to be. Mr. Rockefeller, not so much, so he struggled sometimes to find his staff person. So Mr. Rockefeller would come over when the bells and the buzzers went off and say, "What are we doing here?"

And you'd say, "Well, Mr. Rockefeller, this is a measure to do this..."

And he'd say, "Well, where's Mr. Byrd on this issue?"

And you would say, "This is where I'm going to counsel Mr. Byrd to be."

And he goes; "Okay," and Mr. Rockefeller would go cast his vote.

But one funny occasion I remember in particular with Mr. Rockefeller—I don't know that folks know this - but he really liked candy. He used to put the senators' favorite candy in the front of the [Senate] chamber in the little cubbies up there.

On this particular day, the bells ring, he can't find his staff person, he comes to me, and he goes, "What are we doing?"

I said, "I beg your pardon?" I really couldn't understand what he was saying.

He goes, “What are we doing?”

I said, “Mr. Rockefeller—.”

He goes, “Milk Duds, I love these things.” He had a whole mouthful of Milk Duds.

So I guess this is a little bit of a roundabout way to say it was important that, to the extent possible, we had a unified position on legislation and other matters that came before West Virginia’s senators.

The other thing that Mr. Byrd would do that was kind of interesting, if a bit challenging around the time of a vote, is that he would come up and he’d say, “What measure is this?” He’d actually go, “Now, Marcia, what measure is this?”

And you’d say, “Mr. Byrd, this is the final vote,” on this particular piece of legislation.

And he would say, “Where’s the committee [of jurisdiction]? And where’s Mr. Rockefeller on this? Have you talked to the folks at the state?” – meaning folks in the state offices.

And I’d say, “Yes,” and I’d explain to him what I had learned.

And then he’d say something like, “Have you talked to Mrs. Jones from Kingwood?”

And I’d say, “No, sir.”

He’d say, “I do believe we have time.” So this was in the days before cell phones, so you’re out the back of that Senate chamber as fast as you could go and you are looking for a phone, any phone that you can sort of commandeer, and you call Mrs. Jones in Kingwood and you say, “Mrs. Jones, Mr. Byrd is getting ready to cast his vote on the final measure to do,” whatever, “and he wanted to know your views before he did so.”

And of course Mrs. Jones is totally flattered and feels so important and valued, she says, “I would support whatever position Mr. Byrd has.”

So I go running back upstairs and I’d say, “Mr. Byrd, Mrs. Jones says that she trusts your judgment in this matter,” and then he would go vote as he thought he should.

But you can be sure that Mrs. Jones went to church and rotary and everything else that she belonged to for the next couple of weeks and said, “You know, before Senator Byrd cast his vote, he called me and asked me my opinion.” And you can be pretty sure that Mrs. Jones voted for Mr. Byrd forever after that.

SMOCK: Do you suppose he did that with other people on other votes?

BRAND: Yes, I'm sure he did.

SMOCK: He had a regular list of people that he called on a regular basis, sometimes late at night, just to get their views on what was going on in West Virginia. So Mrs. Jones was one of those.

BRAND: This is part of his list. And he did that on any number of issues.

So I had health, education, and agriculture and veterans, and people in the state would have strong views about what we should do in healthcare, education, agriculture. And I have a good story about agriculture and veterans affairs too.

SMOCK: Well, tell that story.

BRAND: So this would have been in 1990, and I was staffing Mr. Byrd for the 1990 Farm Bill [Food, Agriculture, Conservation, and Trade Act of 1990]. Folks may know that every five years or so we pass a new farm bill, and it's a really significant piece of legislation. The Senate's Democratic [Democrats were the majority party in the U.S. Senate, outnumbering Republicans 55-45]. And I'm new to this, right? So I have not really managed much yet. This is a big bill, and I'm hopeful that it goes well. The bells ring, and Mr. Byrd arrives and he says, "What are we doing?"

And I say, "Mr. Byrd, this is the final passage of the 1990 Farm Bill."

And he says, "Where's the committee?" And I would share their views. "And is it going to pass?"

"Yes, sir, it's going to pass."

Then he trusts me, but he waits a little while to make sure it's going to pass, and then he goes and he votes against it. And the Ag Committee staff are looking at me like, "What, you can't deliver your senator? What just happened here?"

And I'm thinking, "What have I done? Why has this happened?"

So Mr. Byrd walks over to me and he extends his elbow, and I take his elbow and we start down that really long, steep stair out the back of the Senate towards the Appropriations Room, and we're kind of arm-in-arm, and I'm thinking, "What has happened here?" And he proceeds to explain to me what has. He said, "This bill is mostly about big agriculture. We don't have big agriculture in West Virginia. We have mostly small family farmers. So I can travel throughout the state and tell them I voted against this bill because it did very little to help them and lot to help big agribusiness."

And I thought, "Brilliant." And that was when I took my moment as a fellow to make my pitch to get him to offer me a full-time position. It was August. They were getting ready to go in recess. If I didn't get a job, a full-time job in the Senate, I was going to have to go back and

teach dental hygiene in Philadelphia. I loved government, and I wanted to stay in government. So I start my pitch to Mr. Byrd, “I’ve learned so much about what you need to hear when you come to the floor. I’m very much enjoying learning more about these issues. I hope you found my work satisfactory.”

He knows where I’m going, right? And he says, “Well, I do have one regret.”

And I think, “Oh, my gosh.” I said, “Yes, sir?”

He says, “I regret the staircase is not longer and we should take this walk again. And you need to go talk to B.V.,” who’s the office manager. In essence, this is how the man offered me a job, “I regret the staircase is not longer.”

SMOCK: Who is B.V.?

BRAND: B.V., I think, Barbara Videnieks.

SMOCK: Barbara Videnieks.

BRAND: Yeah. And it was Barbara who knew that I was looking to stay. And so, “I regret the staircase is not longer.” [laughs]

SMOCK: When you said you were positioned in the Hart Building, outside his office in the Hart Building, he spent most of his time in the [Senate] Appropriations [Committee Office], in the Capitol at that time.

BRAND: He did.

SMOCK: But when he did come over to the Hart Building, why did he come over to the Hart Building?

BRAND: He came to the Hart Building when he was looking for a little private time, a little quiet time. Actually, in the first couple of days that I started working in the Senate, I was working in my little cubby by the beautiful window, and he walked in. He had met me, he sort of knew who I was, but I wasn’t seated in the right place. I wasn’t seated up with the leg. staff. I was down here. He said, “You are Dr. Brand.”

I said, “Yes, sir.”

He went into the office, left the door open but sort of quietly spread out all over the table his papers.

And I looked at him, and I thought, “Oh, I know what these are.” So I stuck my head in and I said, “Oh, Mr. Byrd, you’re working on your galleys,” because I had written a book chapter before.

He lit right up. He goes, “Do you know what these are?”
I said, “Yes, sir, they’re galleys for a book.”

He was, I guess, working on the history of the Senate. And he said, “Do you have time to help me this afternoon?”

Of course the answer to that is, “Yes.”

So he and I spent five hours working on his galleys, and part of the challenge for him was his hand wasn’t very steady, and when you’re working on a galley, you draw a line to where you want to make the change. So I would help with the drawing the line, and then he would dictate what he wanted the change to be, and I would write it there.

About an hour or so into this, he said to me, “Dr. Brand, would you care for a cup of coffee?”

I said, “Oh, no, sir, thank you, I’m fine.”

And about five minutes later, he says, “I’ll have my coffee now.”

It’s like, “Oh, yes, sir.” [laughter] I had totally missed the point.

And when we finished, he collected his galleys and thanked me for my time and went off back to the Appropriations Office. He was going to go home.

And I went up to the leg. office, upstairs where the rest of the leg. staff sat, and they had a bottle of champagne on ice, and they said, “If you could spend five hours with Mr. Byrd and in that intense of a relationship, you’ve got something going.” So it was a very nice welcome to me.

So he came [to the Hart Building] when he was looking for quiet, and he also came to meet his constituents sometimes there, too, because the Capitol is kind of overwhelming, and his office was, as you may recall, just wall-to-wall memorabilia, pictures of West Virginia, people that he knew, pictures of Mr. Byrd in a hard hat, pictures of Mr. Byrd with the fiddle, I mean, a much more comfortable environment than the Capitol was.

SMOCK: Yes, we have all those things here at the Byrd Center now, and when we did the inventory after his passing, there were more than almost 1,400 framed objects on the walls in the Hart Building, all the way up into the staff area. So, yes, I’m familiar with how comfortable it was and how much it reflected his personality and also his career.

Did you report directly to Senator Byrd’s chief of staff, Barbara Videnieks, or office manager?

BRAND: The person that was really helpful to me—and I don’t know if you’ve had a chance to talk to her yet—was Becky Malamis. She was Rebecca Roberts-Malamis, and she was

from the state. Becky, like Mr. Byrd, had come to D.C. and worked as his principal scheduling staff and administrative support staff. But then she went to American [University], to law school, which Mr. Byrd had done. Becky understood the office, she'd been there for a long time, and she knew the players because they'd all come and lobbied her to get to see him. She was delightful, and I am very much thankful to her for the help that she gave me. She helped me understand the process.

I will tell you something—and if folks are easily offended by words, I'm going to use one that's not very polite, but we were getting ready for a meeting, and I went up to see Becky. And she had a fax from the Eastern Panhandle's Chamber of Commerce, and she was fussing about how they want[ed] to come to talk to Mr. Byrd about something that she thought was already resolved, and now they're coming back again about this same issue. And she says, "Those small-town s—." "Shits," you know.

And I looked at the fax and I said, "Well, that one is married to my sister. Do you want me to give him a call?" [laughter] So, yeah, Becky was great.

SMOCK: Going back to your biography, are you a native West Virginian?

BRAND: Yes, I was born here in Martinsburg.

SMOCK: In Martinsburg, and you still reside in Martinsburg?

BRAND: I am the last house in Berkeley County, so technically I'm in Martinsburg, but Jefferson's [Jefferson County] in my front yard, across the creek.

Since I stepped out of government last year, I have a couple of interesting challenges. One is I'm Chairman of the Board of Governors for Shepherd University. We have a new president, and it's a very exciting time for us. It's also critical that we focus our attention on how we ensure that the university is funded going forward. The state's extraction industry, as we all know, is in decline, and we're concerned about making up the revenue, the tax revenue that will no longer be coming to the university. And I'm very excited about our new president. Dr. [Mary J.C.] Hendrix is very entrepreneurial and very energetic, enthusiastic, and I think its good timing for her to join us.

I'm also the executive director of the National Interprofessional Initiative on Oral Health and a senior advisor to the DentaQuest Foundation, and all of that's related to improving access to oral healthcare. Somehow I've come full circle from the dental hygienist back to working on oral health issues. Here is our issue - why is it that when you go to your primary care physician, he or she looks in your ears and in your eyes and up your nose and actually in your mouth, but not at your teeth and gums? So what we're trying to do is get oral health screening and oral healthcare sort of upstream and preventive, rather than waiting until there are serious problems. And it has been helpful to have been an educator, a clinician, to have done the policy work in D.C. and understand the legislative process, and also to understand how the agencies work. So I think I'm, in some ways, a valuable resource to this work because I've had the opportunity to work across all the sectors.

SMOCK: When you worked with Senator Byrd as a legislative aide, did anybody teach you how to do that, or do you learn on the fly? You're suddenly given something and you just basically have to use your own skill and your own intelligence to figure it out? Or is anybody taking you under their wing to the point where they're telling you this is what you have to learn how to do?

BRAND: That didn't happen to me. People were helpful; for example, Becky. But the constituent services, you can sort of figure that out. You sit in on a couple [meetings]; you get a sense for how that's managed. You ask the constituent what he or she's concerned about. You've done your homework so you know if Mr. Byrd has a view, you know if there's a piece of legislation coming along, and you ask them their views about that. You can also be pretty sure that for everyone who comes in as an advocate for a particular piece of legislation, there's someone on the other side, and probably the position that you want to take is somewhere in the middle for many things. Some of the things are clearly, "This is the way we should go and it's best for West Virginia."

In terms of legislation, the political science grounding that you get as a fellow that's taught by the American Political Science Association gives you a sense for it, and then it's pretty much learning on the fly. The great thing about working for Mr. Byrd was—there are two kinds of legislation: there's authorizing legislation and appropriating legislation, the first being the one that creates the programs and says what we want them to do, and then there's appropriations, which says this is how much money we're going to make available for this. And the great thing about working in Mr. Byrd's office and the reason it was such a terrific learning experience is you learn both sides, because he was chair of the Appropriations Committee, and he sort of used his staff interchangeably. If you were working on health, education, ag, and veterans affairs as a part of his leg. team, you also helped to inform his Appropriations staff and vice versa. So that was really very helpful.

The third bucket that we spent a fair amount of time doing was just responding to correspondence, and there is a gentleman who reviewed all correspondence whose name I have forgotten who was, arguably, the greatest stickler for grammar I have ever met. [laughs] Even if you've written your graduate thesis and you've served on other people's graduate thesis committees and you think you know how to write, he's going to find the one mistake you have made in this correspondence. He was terrific. So you get your stuff back and then you learn.

SMOCK: I understand that Senator Byrd, if a letter came in in a given week, that the reply had to go out that same week. If it came in on Monday, you had until Friday to get it out. But if it came in on Friday, you had to get it out that day before you left.

BRAND: That's correct.

SMOCK: Is that true? Is that your memory?

BRAND: That was true. That's my memory. Things didn't sit. Constituent service meant constituent service, that you were back to people as quickly as you could be, whether that

was a phone call or it was written correspondence. What was problematic was when—I'll use this as an example because it's one that first comes to mind, there were massive campaigns. People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, PETA, would have cards printed up by PETA, and all members had to do was enter their congressional members', their senators' names and addresses on the front, and sign it on the back, and off it went. And you might get two hundred of them because that's their campaign for this month, and the responses to those had to go out too. Fortunately, it's pretty much the same response to each, and you just had to create the letter, get it signed, and get it in the right envelope. But, yes.

SMOCK: Senator Byrd didn't sign all those personally. They were signed—

BRAND: There was an autopen.

SMOCK: Autopen?

BRAND: Yes.

SMOCK: I don't know, perhaps even a few staff members that did his signature. Do you know anything about that?

BRAND: I don't know that. I know there was an autopen. I also know that there were occasionally issues or letters that would get flagged for his attention, whether it was because of the author, the person who wrote it, perhaps someone we wanted to be sure that he knew this individual was concerned or an issue perhaps that we thought we should flag for him, particularly if he was getting ready to travel in the state. There should not be a moment where Mr. Byrd is up in front of a group and someone raises an issue that we were aware of that he didn't have the background on.

SMOCK: So when you met with constituents and you listened to them, and they would make their case for whatever they were particularly interested in at that time, and maybe they would give you handouts or position papers or whatever, or you would take notes, who did that material end up going to? How did Senator Byrd get a sense of what all the people that were coming into the office and that the various members of the staff were talking to? Because he couldn't be there personally to talk to every one of them, obviously, how did that filter to him?

BRAND: So I would not have been in those briefings with him, but there are other folks who would have, so that the folks who were managing the leg. staff, the folks who were generally managing the office and constituent services would have done sort of a summary of issues and, I'm sure, just did regular debriefs with him. My responsibility was to keep pretty good files and let the leg. director know what I was working on.

SMOCK: We might have some of your files here at the Byrd Center.

BRAND: I don't know. We'll see if my penmanship was any better than it is today.
[laughs]

SMOCK: So when you're working for a senator like you were, you get a chance to get a sense of the larger Senate, your interactions, you mentioned with Senator Rockefeller. Do you feel like you're part of a larger universe or is the focus pretty much on what's right in front of you on a day-to-day basis?

BRAND: No, you're very much a part of the larger universe. You can't do your job unless you understand what else is happening in the Senate, and that would be at the committee level. So there would be a committee of jurisdiction on every piece of legislation that you're working on, and there would be a committee of jurisdiction for every issue that a constituent would bring to you. So you would need to know what the Agriculture Committee was working on or HELP, [U.S. Senate Committee on] Health, Education, Labor and Pensions, and what they were concerned about.

Mr. Byrd did his work in the context of the larger Senate, too, so he would say to you, if he wanted information about a particular piece of legislation that was on the floor or going to the floor, "Where's the committee on this?" Because he wanted to know where the members of the committee of jurisdiction were, and then he'd also want to know where, as well as the majority, where the minority members were.

Then he had particular senators whom—I don't know how to characterize it. He wanted to be sure that he was in alignment with them. They were individuals with whom he had, I guess, a long and strong working relationship. So it was not uncommon for him to say, "Well, where's Mr. Nunn [U.S. Senator Sam Nunn, Jr. (D-GA)] on this?" And hopefully you could answer his question.

So he wanted you to be embracing the full Senate, majority side, minority side, authorizing, appropriating, and looking sort of across the Senate to get a sense for how this particular piece of legislation might move relative to others. You can't do it quickly. And it's interesting, back then, you know, we read the *Roll Call* or you always had a TV on and listened to what was happening on the Senate floor. That was how you kind of learned what was happening, and there were certain members that when they came to the floor, you'd stop what you were doing and you would listen to what they had to say because you were thinking Mr. Byrd might want to know where Mr. Nunn was when he came to the floor on this, or where Mr. Mitchell was when he came to the floor on this. So it was exciting and pretty challenging.

SMOCK: How long did you work for Senator Byrd?

BRAND: So I worked with Mr. Byrd for about two years.

SMOCK: What years were those?

BRAND: It would have been '89 through early '91. And I loved it.

SMOCK: That was during his first two years as Chairman of Appropriations, after he'd given up his leadership position.

BRAND: Yes, and it was exciting. In some ways, I really miss earmarks, because the years that he was chair of the Appropriations Committee—and when I could, I’d sneak out and go sit and listen in to their meetings, because that was kind of how you learned the art of the deal, really, the art of the deal. Because if you are the senator from Iowa, if you’re Mr. Harkin, and you want something in your state, and there’s someone across the aisle who’s on this committee, is a member of this committee, and he or she wants something in his or her state, you negotiated. So it’s part of what added to the civility of the Senate at that time. Perhaps there were some earmarks that were wasteful, but they certainly did a lot to improve collegiality and process, because people needed to get along to get what they needed for their states, not for them personally, but for their states.

SMOCK: Senator Byrd was often called the “King of Pork,” which was designed to be a derogatory term in many ways, but he embraced it and was proud of the fact that he was—he wouldn’t call it “pork.” He would call it state projects and constituent aid and bringing money to a state, any state. He was involved in West Virginia, obviously, in a big way. We’re still totaling up how many appropriations he brought to West Virginia. But that was a process that made, as you suggest, the whole Senate and the House work because this brought people together who otherwise might not come together.

BRAND: That’s correct. I’m unclear about how he was perceived by others outside of the state, but the folks who lived and live in West Virginia, we have historically been so under-resourced, that what he could bring home was important. If you’re on this campus [Shepherd University], we look at the Erma Byrd Building that houses our nursing program, which we so need, and I’m proud of what he brought to this state. I have no second thoughts about that.

SMOCK: Are there any other comments you’d like to make about Senator Byrd, about your experience on the Hill at this time? Can you think of anything else?

BRAND: That experience is part of what makes me who I am. That the skills and the experience that I gained on the Hill working for Mr. Byrd, the master of legislation, the master of constituent services, those skills were really useful to me as an employee in the executive branch, and they’re useful to me on this campus today. So I’m just very much thankful for the opportunity that he gave to me and for the opportunity to take that walk down the staircase again.

SMOCK: I’ve heard different stories from different staff members about—of course, we talked about his strict rule about getting the correspondence out and getting it answered on time and making it grammatically correct. How would you characterize him as a boss, as someone who led his own office and the Appropriations Committee? I think you were describing him as someone who was constantly looking for consensus among the members, and, of course, that’s the way the Senate works, by consensus, when it works. But would you describe him as a strict taskmaster just in terms of how he expected the staff and everyone to perform?

BRAND: You were to conduct yourself as a gentleman or a lady in all situations, first. In how you presented yourself and how you engaged people, you were always expected to be respectful. He set the bar really high. He expected his staff to be, in some ways, the best. I was fortunate in my tenure there not to have made a big mistake. He was pretty gentle when you

didn't quite understand what he was asking for. He would say, "Perhaps we should consider—," and you'd think, "Oh, yes, perhaps we should." He might have been a little more demanding of the more senior staff, and I suspect that he was, but he was always a gentleman and I very much enjoyed working with him and for him.

SMOCK: Thank you.

BRAND: My pleasure.

[End of interview]