

ORAL HISTORY–

RICHARD M. SCAMMON

This is an interview conducted on October 29, 1991, with former Census Bureau director Richard M. Scammon [May 1961-January 1965]. The interviewer is Frederick G. Bohme, Chief, History Staff, Data User Services Division.

Bohme: **Dick, tell me a little bit about your background, how this tied into the Census Bureau, and how you got caught coming to Census Bureau as director.**

Scammon: Well, let me back up on it. I was born and raised in Minneapolis, Minnesota. I went to a private school in Minneapolis-St. Paul and finished high school in Chicago. There, my father was appointed for a 1-year stay around 1930 or 1931. I went back to Minnesota and did my undergraduate work, graduated in 1935, and then did a year at the University of London with [Harold] Laski and [Herman] Finer. After that, I came back to Minnesota and finished up my graduate work at the University of Michigan under Professor James Pollock, who was its specialist in elections and political parties. This had been my own interest from a very early age.

Bohme: **Were you a political science major in school?**

Scammon: Yes; I have both my BA and MA in political science with specializations in elections and political parties, which I'm still doing. After I graduated from Michigan in the summer of 1938, I went back briefly to Minnesota for my doctoral work. I never did finish that, because in 1939 I went to the University of Chicago to work as an associate producer of a radio program, very well known at that time, called "University of Chicago Roundtable." You may or may not remember it, but it was a precursor of all of the talk shows now on television–the discussion programs anyway. I was in Chicago for 2 years. I didn't go ahead with the graduate work then, but my plan was that when the chance appeared, I would probably take the degree at Chicago.

What intervened was the war. In 1941, I went into the Army. I volunteered (I would have been drafted at my age, being single and in good health). I was in the

Army from 1941 to 1946. I served in several infantry divisions in training and then was assigned to Civil Affairs Military Government School at the University of Wisconsin. I went through a quick course there, went overseas, and was stationed at a couple of places in England while the servicemen were waiting for the invasion to take place: Shrivenham in the West of England; we were in Manchester in the North of England; we were in Eastbourne on the Channel, very pleasant. We didn't do much, but what do you do when you are waiting? About 4 or 5 weeks after the invasion on the beaches in France, we were sent over and sat around what used to be called a "reppo deppo"–a replacement depot. In this kind of operation, you simply were waiting, that's all you did.

We did finally mobilize and they sent us out to Strasbourg, where we were organized into a small I-type detachment of three officers, five enlisted men, and two jeeps and a three-quarter-ton truck. You had to be mobile; you piled all your stuff into the truck and the people into the truck and jeep, and off we went. We started out in that area of Alsace-Lorraine as a civil affairs team. We were not in occupied territory. As a civil affairs team, we had a couple of small villages there across the Rhine when the situation warranted. We must have been in half a dozen little places, ending up in norther Wurttemberg in a little town called Bad Mergentheim, which was very pleasant because it was a spa, like all the other Bads—Bad Homburg and the rest–where the people used to take the baths, the salts, and the waters, whatever it might be.

I was working there with these three officers, five enlisted men, and three trucks. At that time my old professor, Jim Pollock, was down in Stuttgart as head of the regional government coordinating office (a term used in the military government to be the team in the absence of a national team). His team coordinated the three occupied German states in the American zone. He wanted me to come down as a political officer. Fine, so down I went, and I stayed there maybe a year; then I went up to Berlin again. An old colleague of mine, Ed Litchfield (who was later to become Chancellor Litchfield at the University of Pittsburgh) and I were graduate students at the University of Michigan. Ed was under Jim Pollock, who was head of [General Lucius] Clay's staff operation in civil government. Ed Litchfield wanted me to come up and do elections and political parties. Of course, I was happy to do that.

Bohme: **This was General Clay?**

Scammon: Yes, this was General Clay, a wonderful person, really; I think he is one of the men I would admire most in history. He was a first-rate officer. As a civilian, he was an engineer; he really wasn't "military" in the old sense of the word, but you never knew that. In any event, I served there on what was called OMGUS, the Office of Military Government US, Civil Administration Division, as chief of the Elections and Parties Branch. I served there until 1948, when my friends and colleagues (whom I'd known from Minnesota) were at the Department of State asked me if I'd be interested in coming back to Washington.

I hadn't really pondered this seriously. Obviously, I wasn't going to be in military government the rest of my life so I had better get out of it. Of course, it now was 1948, so I said, "Yes; what do you want me to do?" They wanted me as chief of what was called the Division of Research for Western Europe. So back I came, and from 1948 to 1955 I was the director of that division. It was in the State Department's Office of Intelligence Research, then headed by Park Armstrong as Assistant Secretary for Intelligence. I might have stayed in there, about that time we were discussing the possibility of doing what has become *American Votes*, now in its 19th volume. This is a biennial book of American election statistics.

Bohme: **Were you under civil service then, or "Schedule C"? What was your standing?**

Scammon: I was under civil service in the State Department, but you might recall about that time in the mid-1950's, they amalgamated the two [i.e., with the Foreign Service]. That had a certain effect on my decision, because as much as I respected the Foreign Service, I did not want to be living out of a suitcase–professional travel of 3 years here and 4 years in Taiwan, 4 years in Ottawa, or whatever it might be. I wanted to continue my own particular area of expertise; a lot of people might not be interested in it but I was, so this was a rare opportunity.

What happened was that Litchfield had arranged a grant from the Stern Family Fund in Louisiana. Edgar Stern, Sr., was a well known businessman there and they made a grant that enabled me to go with the Government Affairs Institute as its Election Office's director of elections research.

So, I became independent, incorporated with a board of directors, and called the Elections Research Center. Litchfield and I were on good relations all the time until his death. He was killed in a plane crash; went down off that little private field just outside of Chicago on Lake Michigan. Right about where Soldiers Field

is, there is a small field for private aircraft. Something went wrong; the brakes locked or something. It killed him and all aboard. Very interesting guy; I have often wondered what would have happened to Litchfield if he had not been in that plane, because he had lots of ideas and plans and was very much a "mover and shaker" type.

In any event, from 1955 on I have been at the Elections Research Center. I have a small staff; I still have a collaborator, Alice B. McGillivray. We closed our downtown office several years ago to save that $4,000-a-month rent. The royalties on a book like mine are not big enough to cover that expense, so we moved my quarters out here. It is very pleasant, I must say, when I meet, for example, somebody like you, I don't have to meet in the wilds of downtown Washington. You don't have as many intriguing lunches at the Cosmos Club but you can get down there anytime.

So this is where I am now producing copies of the book, *America Votes*. Number 19 is the latest one; I am just doing what I want to do. I don't know how many people at my age of 76 can say that they are still active, still doing what they want to do without a great deal of funding, but they get enough for income.

Bohme: **How did you get drawn into the Census Bureau? In 1955, it looked as if you were going to do this for the rest of your life.**

Scammon: In 1960, after the election of President John F. Kennedy, I had known the so-called "Irish Mafia" pretty well–especially Richard Maguire and Kenny O'Donnell. Maguire asked me if I would be interested in Census work; they were going to make a political appointment as Director.

Bohme: **What was Maguire's position in the Administration?**

Scammon: He had no formal position, but he was one of President Kennedy's very close advisors. He had been with him from the very beginning when they started out there in Massachusetts so many years ago, and O'Donnell had the same kind of relationship. I think, as with any man in public life, John Kennedy sort of held onto that core of the old guard. Being Census Bureau director was not a position which was much sought after. With no disrespect to the Bureau, people were not after that job like they would be for Secretary of State. From what Dick told me (as I remember it), the President knew my work. I met him once or twice; I stayed in there one full [presidential] term through 1965, which was the Kennedy term and first abbreviated term of Lyndon Johnson. In 1965, I talked to Secretary of Commerce, I can't remember how briefly, and then I was asked to visit with President Johnson. I came

down to the White House, and he asked me if I would be interested in staying on. I explained that I had not really been guided through bureaucracy as a career; I had been in the State Department but it was not really what I wanted to do; the Election Research Center was exactly what I wanted to do. So he didn't argue with me; he just said, "Well, if that is what you want to do, OK, but you think about it." I thought about it a day or two but nothing really changed my mind. It had nothing to do with the Census Bureau; that was fine. If I had not had the work that I had wanted to do to return to, I would have been happy to stay there; although, of course, as a political appointee I would have gone out as soon as the Democrats–well, actually as soon as Johnson–went out. Even if Johnson had been succeeded by who knows how many Democratic presidents, I might have gone out at the pleasure of any one. It was strictly "at the pleasure of the president."

Bohme: **Let me take you into a couple of other areas. One, I would like to have you talk a bit more about is the 4 years you spent at the Census Bureau and how you dealt with the Department [of Commerce] and with Congress. Also, if you have time, you might like to talk about Hubert Humphrey and some of the other well-known people that you have been associated with.**

Scammon: Well, as far as the Bureau is concerned, looking back on it for those 4 years and remembering that this is 25 or 30 years ago, I don't really recall we had any particular squabbles with Congress. The 1960 Decennial Census was just over, and we had no argument about readjustment or about estimating as you had this last time. Nobody even thought about it, or if they did, they didn't think it was a function of importance, so there was no problem there. There were a lot of questions that came in from members of Congress with respect to their districts, and we gave them every bit of information that we could. If I could at that time, I would meet with the Congressman myself and I could ask him some political questions and make some comment about his district: "How did you make out with the new county you got?" In an intriguing way, they were always pleased by this, because at least they thought, "Here is a guy who at least knows something about what he is talking about. He isn't some academic statistician who is talking about the z curve of the xy orbit or whatever it may be."

I really don't remember any bad scenes with any Member of Congress. We had more difficulty with the municipal people, the mayors and so on, who had to have special censuses. I said they could if they wanted to pay for them. (Is that still

the rule? [Yes.] It makes sense; otherwise everybody is going to ask for a census every 3 months.)

But all that worked pretty well, really. I think the reason, as I said, was that first of all I was a political appointee. The Democratic Members of Congress knew I was, and so they figured, "This guy must be in here because he must be a good Democrat, so we don't want to argue with him. Let's see what we can get." They would come around, and they would recommend people. In taking the census, in general it is quite customary for this to be regarded as a matter of political patronage. For special censuses and things of that sort, though, it isn't really that important, so there wasn't the kind of pressure that perhaps there was in 1960. My predecessor [Robert W. Burgess] was a Republican; I'm sure he got a lot of pressure to put in the "right people." Often times–at least from what I've understood–that was turned over to the local party people. Sometimes they could pick up good people, but a lot of times they didn't want to take the time.

I may have forgotten because of the passage of time, but I don't really recall any irate Congressman or any staff members coming over and calling me up and saying we have a problem and I'm going to come right out and get this settled. I think they knew enough about me–not a great deal, of course, to know this was a political appointment made by the President. Therefore, there must be some "clout" there or the guy wouldn't have done it in the first place, and they figured I knew something about it. Some of them knew my book, or at least the staff people had seen it. So there wasn't this assumption you get from the politicians sometimes that a man in a sort of technical position in the Government is going to be appointed, or this is a bureaucrat who is going back to be a college professor, and so on.

Bohme: **How about the [House] oversight committee? I think you had one then; Ed Goldfield, I know, got the thing started, I was thinking it was just before you got there.**

Scammon: It may not have been called that, simply because it was institutionalized within the Bureau, and Ed simply regarded it as Bureau activity.

Bohme: **Well, institutionalized in Congress. . . .**

Scammon: Oh, you mean the much broader one. I thought you meant the oversight committee–something Ed had sort of maneuvered then. We never had any questions that I can recall from the general oversight function exercised in Congress. I think that the reason for that is that we never were really that important. There are lots of

people involved in operations in Congress and in the field, and we had a lot more controversy–crime and punishment, for example, welfare, food stamps, all these kinds of things. But [the census] was sort of, I don't mean to sound denigratory–I'm in the same sort, statistical and dry and so on. The members of Congress would pay attention to it really only when it affected them or their districts. In other words, they would be very conscious of this when you got around to reapportionment time. I have that time in 1961, but it's interesting you didn't have then all this talk about term limits, justice, and reapportionment. It was a political task and almost everyone accepted it as that. We know that now in 1991, the number of States that have really had earth-shaking battles over reappointment is pretty small. Obviously, these involve the ones that have gained population or stood still but advanced enough not to lose any of their population. When you loose one or two seats in the House of Representatives, the majority of the members just get together and agree on which two of their colleagues are thrown together and who will be thrown to the wolves, or they make a deal. In other words, they may go to a man and say, "We'll get you some party job," or "We have a opening for an associate justice on the appellate court and you've been here 10 years, John. Why don't you take it easy for a while? There is a nice pension on the job and you have served 10 years. Quit and you're elected for 20-year term or what ever the rule for judges may be." Normally, when you are dealing with the members of Congress, these kinds of problems are adjustable. In any event, the average congressman is really a product of the old Johnson philosophy, "Come let us reason together," or whatever philosophy you want to call it, "Let's talk this out; let's come to an agreement."

This is the normal way Congress works. It isn't like a parliamentary body in Europe, where you get a socialist bloc on one side and a capitalist bloc on the other and the Communists way out in left field, and maybe a liberal intellectual bloc in the middle. These are just bloc votes to vote solid one way or another. If you have any input at all, it's within the party caucus and not in the House of Commons, say, or the Chamber of Deputies. These people are really representatives and they represent their districts. They negotiate all of these things.

Sometimes people who write about politics seem to find a necessity for promoting ideological confrontations. You try to point out what advantages you've got from your colleagues' point of view and from your own point of view. I think that any Director who understands that is the nature of Congress should not have much

difficulty with Congress. You just adjust to what molds to it. If you are Director, and if any Member calls, you talk to him. You don't let anybody else talk to him because you want the member to feel that you are concerned. You know enough in advance; you can bone up a little on the particular districts. Just being able to talk in some way, not as an expert, with these people is helpful. I don't know if Barbara [Bryant] or the people who have been [in the Director's position] between me and Barbara do that now.

Bohme: **I suppose it makes a difference if the Administration is of a different party than the majority of Congress. Would you say that has some bearing?**

Scammon: I'd have to look back at the book, but my impression is that the Democrats were in the majority all the time that I was at Census. The majority party, with a member of their party as head of the Census Bureau, feel that they have an inside track anyway. Even then in the first place, unless it's really important to the Member of Congress, most of your negotiating as a Director is going to be with some staffers. They call you up and say, "I'm John Jones; I'm with Congressman Smith's staff and we have a question on which we hope you can help us." Well, that is a good opening because right away you know this is not a confrontation. This is a guy who wants something, and so you say, "Certainly! Would you like to come on in and we will talk about it?" If it is involved, you meet for lunch–just ordinary, good manners, respect for the other man's job and responsibility, because he has his responsibility to his Congressman. If you treat him right, he will probably treat you better. That sounds sort of Pollyannaish, but it works.

You are right about the major points. Obviously, you [as Director] are a Democrat and they are Democrats, or if you are a Republican and they are Republicans, it will work. There is a little more grease to the jar to begin with.

Bohme: **How about the Department? You must have had to deal with some people down there.**

Scammon: Not much, really.

Bohme: **Did they leave you alone?**

Scammon: Well, the physical separation is really important; the Census Bureau wasn't in the Department of Commerce building. We had a office down there which was staffed during that period. Ellen Largent, also on my staff, came out and worked with me in the Bureau. Ellen was a very good front person because she got along with

people and worked in the Department of Commerce. I think we may still have that office in the main building.

Bohme: **I think we have a room down there.**

Scammon: It may have been only a room; you're right. I don't believe she had a secretary down there; I think she was her own secretary and we had some displays down there in the basement. Are they still there?

Bohme: **They are probably over in the great hall if they are anywhere.**

Scammon: That may well be, but in any event, as I say, looking back at those 4 years again in terms of dealings with Congress, I found that this was not only not a problem but I kind of enjoyed it. I shared a lot of the interest they had of things political and electoral. We would start on one of those problems, like we need a special census because the town of "Gizmo" was going to annex "Gizmo minor," and we want to get a good body count so we know what kind of figures we are talking about; can you help out? We usually could work it out, unless it was something gigantic like New York City wanting a special census. That would be a problem.

Bohme: **Did you report to the Under Secretary for Economic Affairs? I realize that they have changed these positions.**

Scammon: In theory, I did. Luther Hodges was the Secretary when I was there. He came out to the Bureau once or maybe twice in the 4 years, and I visited him once or twice. It's the old story that if it is not broke, don't fiddle with it. If the Census Bureau was working and nobody was raising any questions and everybody seemed happy, there were a lot of other problems I'm sure Hodges had to deal with that were a lot more controversial and demanding of his attention.

I presume and I believe that it is still true: the physical separation, the fact that you are out in Suitland, Maryland. Hodges did come out maybe once or twice and spoke to the assembly or something of that sort. But again, that was good. He was a former governor of North Carolina, as I recall, and a good administrator. You realize this is a major task in administration–finding out where you have to put your time and you only have so much. Where do you invest this time? Obviously, you invest it where the problems are, and I don't think we had many problems, mainly because there was no decennial census taken while I was there.

Bohme: **Well, that would help, although you did have some economic censuses. If I remember correctly, the census of governments includes a certain tabulation of voting elected officials. Did you have anything to do with that?**

Scammon: Yes, but that was a regular thing and it appeared in the *Statistical Abstract* then. It still does, and it was not controversial. There were questions about it, and I'm sure we discussed it in the Bureau at the time, but it is not the kind of thing that would ring bells or fly flags in the political world of the average member of the House, and to a lesser extent, the Senate. There, if you have a 6-year term, it is surprising how that can calm you down. The last two years you may be working like sin to get reelected, but the House Member has got to be working constantly.

As you know, normally in the House of Representatives, half the staff of the Congressman's office do no work on policy at all; they just do constituent service. I remember when my wife turned 65, we had to write a letter to the Social Security Administration. We got hold of our Congressman [Connie] Morella (she is a Republican, not a Democrat) and somebody called right back. You know these are voters so they are going to take care of you; this is what the average congressman is concerned with. The average senator isn't; he is talking about foreign policy or iron mining in Northern Minnesota, or getting more highway money for his State. He is really not that much interested in what is going on; he should be, but isn't.

Bohme: **What about appropriations from Congress?**

Scammon: We testified each year, and as far as I can recall, we probably won some and lost some. I don't recall, though, any grand struggle either negative or positive where we were trying and did get considerable and substantial increases in money or vice versa. I didn't have to spend or submit a budget involving the taking of the censuses (which was in 1960). The cost of most of the other censuses we then and still do take was relatively minor. A lot of them were done by mail in any event. Do we still take censuses of religious bodies?

Bohme: **No; that hasn't been done since 1936.**

Scammon: There also were smaller and less important censuses just built into the fabric of the Bureau. I would not have known about these unless there was some critical issue, for example, as if somebody made a great issue today about whether a certain census had a racial or particularly religious characterization–Catholic, Protestant, Jew-

ish, Muslim, or whatever. I don't remember that kind of controversy within the Bureau or with Congress.

Bohme: **Let's talk about people in the Bureau. For example, Ross Eckler, I think, was your Deputy Director.**

Scammon: He was indeed a first-rate person. I much respected Ross, and we got along very well. I was very happy, when I left, to recommend (how often has this been done in the Bureau's history?) that a bureaucrat, to use that word, succeed me. Perhaps because [President] Johnson was re-elected and was faced with many important problems, who would be the Bureau's Director was not a major issue. It would have been difficult, I think, for anyone to come in and say, "Well, Scammon's term is over, you know; I'd like the job." That point was never made to me and, as I say, I don't think they really even thought of this. From what Johnson told me and the White House contacts I had before that, they just wanted me to stay on. They had other fish to fry; if this thing was set and the man that [President] Kennedy appointed was willing to stay on, fine; forget that and move on to something vital.

With that in mind, I think that when I suggested Eckler, who was a civil servant, nonpartisan, there was no reason not to nominate him if I didn't want to stay. In my case, I simply felt that as much as I like the Bureau, my basic interest was still in elections, political parties, and in my books. I wanted to get back to them full time instead of just sort of doing them on the weekend, and I did. Eckler was an ideal person to suggest because he was noncontroversial. I don't even know if he was a registered Republican or Democrat; he couldn't very well have been a registered Republican–they would be stuck a little on that–but he never raised a question.

I remember that conversation with Johnson. He was a very persuasive guy; he could charm the proverbial birds out of the tree trunks, not to say the tree branches; but, in any event, that went ahead without much difficulty. I testified at [Eckler's] confirmation hearing; I remember that there were a couple of desultory questions, but nobody really gave a lot of attention. That's one of the great advantages the Bureau has–except in this recent discussion over estimating. Happily that didn't have to be solved by Director Bryant; that issue was solved by the Secretary of Commerce and it should have been a political thing. Dr. Barbara Bryant, of course, is a political appointee too as I was, but the Secretary of Commerce is a lot more political than the Census Bureau, or should be.

I have had no input since then. I wasn't asked about whether I have much of a thought about who was, for example, to succeed Eckler, because, of course, then it became a Republican appointee after [Hubert] Humphrey's defeat. In any event, it didn't seem to be any problem, and I've not really heard of any problem in the years since–any fight over the job, or hearings in Congress, or bellowing back and forth; I don't recall any.

Bohme: **I remember that the American Statistical Association (ASA) was somewhat opposed to Vince Barabba's appointment as Director.**

Scammon: That does stick in the back of my mind.

Bohme: **How did you get along with the ASA?**

Scammon: Well, I had problems with them that I can recall. Again, I think there's a reason for that: I was a member of the ASA; I don't know whether Barabba was or was not. But I was a member of the ASA and I had produced statistical work, so there was nobody who said, "Well, he isn't a college teacher, but at least he's got lots of publications." The credit list goes back–but that's pretty good, and I think that was my *nihil obstat*, really, as far as the ASA was concerned. I was a legitimate statistician; in fact, I was a fellow, I think, in the ASA.

Bohme: **During your 4 years as Director, then with Eckler sort of running the day-to-day affairs, what did you usually spend your time at–fielding calls from Congressmen's offices?**

Scammon: A surprising amount of it was just that, or meeting with Congressmen down on the Hill–you know, they gave the Director a car, and I was zipping back and forth to there a lot. Some of these weren't very important, but, as I told Ross at the time, "If you get a call from a Congressman, let me talk to him, because–number one–he wants to talk to the Director. He probably doesn't want to talk to the Deputy Director. Let me talk to him because I'll know something about his district and I can talk to him about that. If I'm going to call him back, at least I've got five minutes to look him up in the *Congressional Directory.* I might look in my book and say, "Gee, he only won by 5,000 votes; he must be in trouble," that sort of thing, and, at least, I can talk his language." And that was fine with Ross, I mean [he didn't] want to talk to these guys.

Let me put it this way: If there were problems, and I'm sure there were problems, they were never of a level which stick in my mind. We had nothing, given the time of decade, about the estimating problems that Dr. Barbara Bryant has

had–nothing. We used to get congressional calls, and we used to send them a lot of material, too. I remember, going over some of my old correspondence files, that there were quite a few [items] in there that had the "congressional" tag on them that the secretaries put on as soon as we got the letter. They were usually "thank-you letters" for information supplied, or a map of the district, or latest data or something of that sort. We made an effort; anytime we had something that affected a Congressman, we'd send it to him. And I guess either they or their staff appreciated that. Now mind you, if they'd had problems, I believe they'd have had no hesitancy in calling on me, because they knew who ran the shop and who voted the money. I don't really recall any problems, although we must have had some small ones.

Bohme: **How about personnel problems? For example, did you have any particular controversies with the union at the time?**

Scammon: Was there a strike there at that time or was that over? I think that was in the community; I just don't remember. Most of the personnel stuff, again, would have been handled by Eckler. The day-to-day, sort of bureaucratic work, I would have tried to stay away from. Now obviously, if it got to be critical–if we'd had an armed picket line around the Census Bureau, I'm sure I would have known. Many in the trade union movement, like the late Al Barkan and Lane Kirkland and so on, were friends of mine. [Barkan] was for quite a while the head of COPE, the Committee on Political Education, and I spoke at some of the union meetings. As far as the unions were concerned, I was regarded as friendly, and I was a Democrat; at least I wasn't an enemy. I wasn't per se guilty of being on the wrong side of the fence.

Bohme: **I seem to remember, shortly after I got there in 1968, we had a group within the Bureau called the Invaders–it was a Black group, sort of a marshalling of or a heightening of consciousness.**

Scammon: No; I don't recall any of that sort of action while I was there. I don't believe we had a high percentage of Black employees in the Census Bureau. I imagine we had as many as you had in most of the what you might call professional organizations of the Government. But for statisticians and so on, at that point in time the number of Blacks who would have been qualified to fill those jobs was limited. They were almost all civil service, of course, so you took the exam and [got hired]. We really had not that much control over it nor did I want to have control over it. There was one political appointee there; that was fine with me. I don't know how Ross viewed that because, of course, he transferred from the civil service to the political service

when he became Director. I think my personal secretaries were all political. . . that doesn't mean they were political, except for Ellen Largent and Alice McGillivray, who'd come over with me from the Elections Research Center. But the regular people there–they may have been called "political," but then that wouldn't make a difference.

Bohme: **OK. Would you like to talk about Hubert Humphrey? Quite off the subject of the Census Bureau. . . .**

Scammon: I remember Humphrey very well because we were both at the University of Minnesota about that time, and he was a bright young fellow from South Dakota. I remember him as an *uitlander,* as an outsider. A very specific picture in my mind is the meeting of us student liberals at the Minnesota Union. Humphrey served on the outside of the group, listening and asking a question or two, bright-eyed and bushy-tailed, but you wouldn't have picked him out as the man who was really going to make a name for himself. Then later on (he was still at the university), we were living in southeast Minneapolis, near the university, and I used to go over to a place called Brown's Drugstore every night around 9 or 10 o'clock to get a coke. Hubert was a soda jerk then at Brown's Drugstore; he was working his way through college. I used to sit up at the counter and we'd talk politics for half an hour or so. I don't know whether Brown ever got mad at it or not, but he didn't say anything about it; Humphrey was a good soda jerk. So, we knew each other well, long before he got into politics.

As a matter of fact, I remember I was in the Army when Hubert ran for mayor of Minneapolis and was elected, and I was amazed. I had underestimated his energy–just plain, bull energy, you know, get up and run, run, run, run, run, run, run, all day long, 15 hours a day, if necessary. I remember voting absentee in that election; you know, if Hubert runs, I am going to vote for him. We could still vote absentee because I was still in the United States as I recall when he was first nominated for mayor. Then, of course, he went on to be a Senator, Vice-President, and ran for President. As he rose higher in the political spectrum, we used to see each other occasionally, but I obviously did not know him as well as I did at Brown's Drugstore. He had other fish to fry, and I wouldn't want to impose on his time. But we used to see each other. We were at the Humphreys' house usually about once a year, and I think they came over here once or twice, and we had mutual friends. My cousin, Bill Simms, was his AA [administrative assistant], and he'd been his secretary when Humphrey was mayor of

Minneapolis. So, I sort of reestablished my connection with Humphrey through Simms at that time. So, we used to see them fairly frequently, and Humphrey used to come down occasionally to the woods, not far from Front Royal. There was some Federal land there on which you would build a house, sort of a cabin-type thing. Simms did that, and Humphrey often would come down and visit with him over the weekend. It got him away from the hurly-burly of Washington and he must have been down there four or five times when we were down there, visiting, talking.

So, we knew Hubert pretty well. But less so as he got higher up the ladder, and less so as Vice-President, and less so when he was campaigning for the presidency, because he was frying a lot of very big fish then, and it was just not personal acquaintance. You wouldn't want to bother Humphrey unless you really had something to say. But I have a great regard for Humphrey. He was not an intellectual in the normal sense of the word. You never think of him as a college professor. But he had a rare instinct for the public, and he had a rare ability to conceptualize very complicated governmental schemes into very specific things for people. He was a very warm person; it was a tragedy when we lost him.

Bohme: **I'd like to ask you a question that we'll put off the record if you wish. As a long-time Democrat and observer and participant in elections, do you have any comments on the presumptive lineup of Democrats for 1992?**

Scammon: I do not really regard myself as a Democrat in the normal sense of the word. I'm a Farmer-Laborite. When I grew up in Minnesota as a boy, there were three political parties: Democratic, Republican, and Farmer-Labor. Republicans were a conservative party. The Democrats were really heavily Irish and German-Catholic. Farmer-Laborities were the old Northwest Progressives like the Nonpartisan League in North Dakota and so on–endemic to that area. When I first voted in 1936 in the primaries and the election, I would always "call in" the primaries for a Farmer-Labor ballot, because I regarded myself Farmer-Labor. But then the two–Democrat, Farmer-Labor–merged, as you would expect in a majority electoral system, because it's just too much–the figures get too complicated. Now they didn't do that in Wisconsin, where the Progressives had their own party too, and they just died out. And now on the ballot in Minnesota you get Democratic-Farmer-Labor. So I didn't really feel that close to the Democratic establishment in Minnesota because as a boy I'd always identified it as a sort of German center party, Deutsche Zentrums Partei, including a religious viewpoint. But then, of course, with Roosevelt, the whole trend

of the Democratic Party changed anyway. It became more or less the liberal flay-flyer in the American political constellation, even despite its Southern wing. And then when you've got heavy voting from Black and Jewish voters, this would always produce an additional push for that camp.

I suppose the reason that the question is difficult to answer is that I have never been a believer in the doctrinal explanation of American politics. The fact is that with the primary system of making nominations, pragmatism wins out over principle every day in the week. For example, when the House of Representatives gathers after they've been elected and they meet on the first day and they vote for a Speaker, every Democrat votes for the Democrat and every Republican votes for the Republican. That's about the last time that any roll call shows all the Democrats on one side and all the Republicans on the other. If you get, for example, a question about cotton, any Southern member, Republican or Democrat, is going to be a protectionist. And if you get something regarding importation of farm produce, you're going to get the same thing in the North, say North Dakota, Minnesota, Wisconsin. You bet they're going to fight for their people. If you get questions involving coal, every coal-mining district in America is a vote against any foreign import of foreign coal to the United States, and it doesn't make any difference whether they're Republicans or Democrats. You come from a Jewish area, you're pro-Israel. You come from a Black area, you're pro-Black. Now those are mainly Democrats, but they don't have to be. I've always felt myself that you really have in Congress 435 independents, some of whom are labeled Republicans and some of whom are labeled Democrats, for convenience's sake. One could say that those who vote liberal in the Congress will probably be more on the Democrat side than on the Republican and vice-versa with the conservatives. By no sense of the imagination is this a truism; it's not a given in the political system. Let me put it another way: Almost every American national contest for the presidency is decided either by the left of the right, meaning the right of the left or vice-versa. You don't get extremists. Occasionally you'll get one like Reagan, who really went in because he was an actor and because they didn't like the other fellow. But usually what you get is a man who may start doctrinally but edge right to the middle. It doesn't mean he has to go to the 50-yard line, but he has to go at least to the 45-yard line, so that the area of contest on that football field is not more than 10, 15, or 20 yards. So what you're going to get here with Bush–Bush is in good shape; right now, he

stands almost, I take it, two-to-one. This is right now, and we haven't gone through all the primaries and you haven't gone through all the rest.

Primaries, unfortunately, can be just as defeating as they can be elevating, because they can also kill people. I think of Gary Hart, for example, who was sort of one of the great hopes of the liberal intellectuals and he just got clobbered because he lost, which is why for the politician, you can be anything but you can't be a loser.

In any event, to get into 1992, you start with Cuomo, who unfortunately has a major handicap: There are a lot of Americans, I think, who, for the worst possible reasons, might accept an Irish Catholic, but for the Italian Catholic, you still have to get over some of that prejudice. That's all it is, just prejudice, but he's got that problem. He also has the problem of being a big-city man, the same problem Al Smith had so many years ago when he was the first Irish Roman Catholic and big-city boy to run for president. And you've got lots of others of all varieties, because there are all sorts of Democrats out there, in all parts of the country–East, West, North, South, Pacific, Atlantic.

In addition to the locational circumstances, you've got all sorts of political dogmatics, although most of the potential candidates are again beginning to position themselves closer to the middle. You see them moving in that way very nicely on the Democratic side. But, if Cuomo decides to run, which he may very well not do, among other reasons because he's been talking about possibly running again for governor in 1994. If he really means it–he may just be ducking because he thinks that the next one–1992–is going to be a loser anyway, so wait until 1996. He may feel that he can sort of solidify himself a little better than he is now. On the other hand, of course, the old story is that you'd better run when you can because you're never guaranteed that there isn't going to be someone else out there to beat when the next election comes. Take it when you can get it, even though you're going to lose. At least you would have been a candidate, a nominee.

Among the others on the Democratic side there are a half a dozen names that you can rattle off and don't really mean much. It doesn't mean that they aren't competent people; it doesn't mean they might not make good candidates, but it does mean that they're not really household words in any sense of the word. In any event, most of the talk you read about in the press about this situation or that–too much attention to foreign affairs, and so on–is going to trip up Bush. I

doubt that. The only thing that might really trip him up is a bad economic situation, which could do it as it did, of course, with [Herbert] Hoover.

On the other hand, there's such a great difference now between America in the 1990's and America in 1929 and 1930. There are all sorts of devices in place, you know, in addition to Social Security and unemployment benefits. I would think that if Bush can escape any major economic trouble, there's not much that he does in foreign affairs that's either going to help or hurt him a great deal. A lot of the newspapers like to say that, oh, gee, he does not have a "laying on of hands," and they say that he's more interested in foreign affairs than domestic. That's quite probably true; that's where he made his name.

I remember the first time I met Bush. He was head of the CIA some years ago, and foreign affairs always has been his forte. It does not mean he's going to be re-elected, not necessarily. The main obstacle to re-election now would be nothing the Democrats are doing; it would just be the economic situation. You're getting some of those layoffs now, and if this continues, this recession gets worse and worse and worse through the winter into the primary season, there won't be much in challenging to Bush in the Republican Party. That won't happen, but you can find the Democrats will use it, because it's by all odds the best weapon they've got to "whang" on Bush, and it's better than them "whanging" on each other. Because when you start whanging at each other, you have the fellow Democrats saying, "What are you trying to do, sink the boat before you even get aboard?" So, they can all follow that, and they'll probably be pretty successful.

Whether they'll win in November, of course, depends on many things. I remember that when I was in the Army, they had a wonderful phrase, "Everything in combat depends on the terrain and the situation." You can say that's true in political combat too.

Bohme: **Isn't it true, though, that you go through a process of elimination in which the candidates try to knock each other off?**

Scammon: That's true. This is one of the problems, and in a sense it's a good situation, because it is not in a smoke-filled room as it used to be right before the first war (i.e., before they began introducing a system of presidential preference primaries. Now you've got the big classic one in New Hampshire, but you have the caucuses in Iowa first. Those caucuses, though, are open votes and they're sparsely attended, but you start with New Hampshire. And then you move through a lot of big ones like California, for example, and Illinois, Pennsylvania, and some big states that

hold presidential preference primaries. Obviously, this is sort of last man out; in other words, in each primary, the people who ran under 10 percent are going to lose. They can't raise any more money; they go around to their favorite friends who have money and say, "I need another $5,000, George," "I'm sorry, Sam, but...you know, I've really tapped the bottom," when he is really says you haven't got a chance, so why should I throw any more of my money away? Their workers begin to go too–the campaign workers, the good ones, the speech writers, and the handlers, and the press representatives and so on–they begin to be approached by the more successful candidates, and they say, "I'm sorry, Sam, I'm sorry to leave you, but I've got, you know, I've got a wife and four kids. I've got to get on a pay-check again." A guy like Jay Rockefeller could stay in forever. You will find that this list begins to "chop down," and it's not inconceivable it could "chop down" to one by May Day. That would be a good time because I'm sure these dates have been set already; usually they've got one in June and one in July.

Maybe the Republicans will go last in August, because they don't need much. The closer they can get their "Hallelujah" session to the election day, the better. But these are all firm, anyway, because you can't set up an operation like this with much less than a couple years' notice. But, in any event, the real thing you would look for, politically, is what I would call the "decimation derby" among the Democrats. The bottom man, usually, if he's really at the bottom (say 10 percent of less) in a couple of primaries, he's pretty well finished. Everybody knows it, he knows it, his staff knows it, the money people know it, the newspapers know it. Equally, you pick a fellow like Gary Hart, who did "zoom up" in the New Hampshire primary; but while others may survive, Gary Hart didn't. They may survive; they may actually be nominated. Whether they win or lose in the fall is not the question; they may survive.

But you may get as many as two or three or four leaders in a highly contested race that you're likely to get from the Democrats, because nobody's winning by a landslide. If you win in a field of eight, if you get 55 percent and the others are down there around 19 and 12 percent–that pretty well does it, because that just shows everybody that "this guy" is way ahead! I wonder if they're looking for a good TV time-buyer" or something of that sort. That is the way it works, and it's worked that way basically since World War I when the primaries really became important. There were a few even before that, but they didn't really become dominant until then.

The question, of course, for the Republicans is how do they keep any interest going in this kind of situation? Being in the White House, if you want to make any kind of statement about anything, you won't get much attention if you just announce "Peony Week" or something of that sort, but you can always take a trip and that sort of thing. On the other hand, if they're really fighting each other and all candidates are bleeding all over the place, you may not want to try to get into the conflict.

Bohme: **Well, I did want to get your views.**

Scammon: Yes.

Bohme: **Is there anything else that you think might be significant for our chat this afternoon?**

Scammon: No; you'll probably think of things as you go over the manuscript. Call me, or we can get together again as you wish. I think we have gone pretty well over the Bureau as bureau, and we have gone over politics as politics. Actually, of course, I think the saving grace for the Census Bureau is that the two do not really mix very much. The fact is that the Bureau's Directors that I knew and know–and I think this has been true whoever has been in–Republican or Democrat–have really been very responsible in not making a political plaything out of the Bureau. Now this may just be their instinct, or this may just be a common-sense evaluation that they'd get into more trouble trying, more than it would be worth, because a lot of people would get really upset if they thought that the statistics were being adjusted or fiddled with. The only thing that really has caused that much excitement I think has been this effort of estimating–"there's no good way of estimating; let's go with the hard counts"–except, of course, for the people who believe they might gain because they have got larger undercounted groups–Hispanics and Blacks and so on, and big-city slum areas. It's hard to undercount a farm area; everybody knows where everybody is.

For that, however, I think it really has been a pretty good run for the Bureau in the years that I was there and since, and that is 30 years. I do not really think of the Bureau as having been a political operation back in the years that I can remember, say the 1930s, 1940s, 1950s. Nor do I think most Americans do. They might even be a little puzzled to hear that the head of the Census Bureau is a political appointee. I'm sure most of them don't know whether he is or isn't, other than the political scientists and activists and, of course, Bureau people themselves. I think that's the way it should be. You do have political responsibility at the top,

as you should have, but it's sort of like the British civil services: You're not expected really to move in and throw your weight around and cause trouble; it is just as well.

You may think of something. If so, give me a ring.

Bohme: **If I do, I shall, and we certainly do appreciate your time this afternoon.**

Scammon: Oh, it's my pleasure.