South Carolina Political Collections
ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Interview

with

Karen Kollmansperger

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University of South Carolina
Interviewer:

Herbert J. Hartsook

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Synopsis:

Kollmansperger’s experiences in Washington, chiefly while working on the staff of Senator Ernest F. Hollings.

Transcriber:

Phillip Warf, December, 1993
[Begin Tape 1, Side 1]

Hartsook: I want to begin by asking you a little bit about your background. When, where you were born, where you were educated, what your parents did. Just a biographical sketch, if you would.

Kollmansperger: I was born in Chattanooga, Tennessee and went to parochial schools there, then graduated from Vanderbilt University in 1963 with a political science degree. My father was an ice cream manufacturer in Chattanooga.

I worked in Nashville, which is the home of Vanderbilt, for a little less than a year. I had been originally scheduled to come to Washington to work for Senator Kefauver in September of Sixty-three. He died very suddenly in August, so I obviously did not come up here then.

I went to work briefly in a law firm, then I worked in a campaign of a House member, Ross Bass [Democrat-Tennessee], who was running for the Kefauver Senate seat. He was elected in the Fall of Sixy-four and was immediately sworn in because it was unexpired term. So I came here in December of Sixty-four.

Senator Bass had a two-year term. He was defeated in the Summer of Sixty-six in the primary and subsequently that became Howard Baker's Senate seat. Howard Baker was elected in November. In the interim I had met Mary Winton Hughes, whose roommate was from Tennessee and friend of mine. Then I joined Senator Hollings' staff in January of Sixty-five.

Hartsook: Sixty-five or Sixty-six?

Kollmansperger: Sorry. Actually it was January of Sixty-Seven because he was elected in November of 1966.

Hartsook: How did you happen to get lined up for the Kefauver job? What interested you in politics?

Kollmansperger: The Mayor of Chattanooga had run for Governor and I had been active in that campaign. Senator Kefauver was from Chattanooga, lived in Chattanooga, and was, I guess,
more of an acquaintance of my family than a friend. The earlier campaign had given me some contacts and so forth. My Mother and I had come up here in the spring of that year to finalize that.

A little insight into female careers at that point--when we talked to him, he was very impressed that I was graduating from Vanderbilt with a degree and said it probably would be wise if I knew how to take shorthand. So, that summer I enrolled in one of those speed-writing things and took that for six weeks. And, actually, in my generation that served me well.

Hartsook: Has your political science education served you well, do you think?

Kollmansperger: It has served me well. At least back then there was an awful lot more theory than practical application. I learned more in that first campaign for governor than I learned out of textbooks in the four years. I think that has changed some now in mode of instruction in political science. It was a bit of an ivory tower thing back then. It was interesting. I think I was as well prepared by a lot of history courses that I took as much as the political science part of it.

Hartsook: What kind of things did you do for Bass in his campaign?

Kollmansperger: I guess in both of those, actually, I was just more or less in the office. In the two years intervening, they had seen to it that I received a lot of training in all facets of the Senate office--case work, some legislation, some very limited press--so that in the second campaign I was more a jack-of-all-trades on anything that actually had to do with Senate issues. That also served me well in the future just from the training that it gave me.

The other part of that was my intention had been at the end of that second campaign to go back and go to law school. I had been accepted by Vanderbilt and had gone through all the procedures and then ended up not going, indeed coming back up here. The idea had been when I went back in Sixty-six that I wouldn't be coming back. But, I showed up again like a bad penny.

Hartsook: When you say limited press and legislative work, can you give us an idea of what kinds of things that you might have been doing?

Kollmansperger: I worked briefly in both those areas more in the correspondence end of it
and the tracking of bills' history in legislation. A lot of that has changed. A lot of that procedure has changed. I guess if I were doing it today I would probably have to go back in and be trained all over. The process of a bill is still the same but there are a lot more variables than there used to be. Then in the press I never even got to the point of writing press releases. I just worked in there for a while to see how it was done and who it was sent to and so forth. Of course, the technology in the last twenty-five years has changed so that when you used to have mimeograph machines and typewriters and stuff, now you're into computers and faxes. So, once again, I don't think that training today would be very helpful to me. I haven't done it in a long time.

Hartsook: But, it certainly served as a good apprenticeship for when you came on with the Senator.

Kollmansperger: Oh, yes. And I was grateful to have had the training in all the various issues when I actually came on with him. I started out doing all the case work that was done. That was, as I look back on it, a voluminous amount of work. But, that prior training had served me well for doing that.

Those things are cyclical in that the military case work was really building at that point and continued to build because of the Vietnam War. In peacetime, military casework falls to almost--I wouldn't say nothing, we always will have cases--but, the volume of that was pretty heavy back then. Deferments, hardship discharges, reassignments, just any number of things. And as well in all the Social Security and Veterans cases and all that sort of thing, which later ended up, particularly the Social Security cases, being done in the home offices in the state.

Hartsook: I'd like you to talk a little bit more about how you actually came on staff with Senator Hollings. We know he's long had a reputation for having just a superb staff and one of the things we want to do is try to track how people came on board and how he's managed to keep people for so long. Isn't that fairly unusual?

Kollmansperger: It is. Yes, I think it is. How I came on is interesting because--I think it's interesting--it's a sign of the times back then as well as other things. He was, as you know, sworn in early in November and immediately went to Vietnam to fulfill a campaign pledge that he had
made. The staff that he had amassed at that point came to Washington. You can imagine all of them young coming up here in the beginning of wintertime--and back then in the Senate you were simply given an office, and probably one of the leftover offices because of being sworn in early--they were basically plunked down in a room and told 'Well, here's your office, congratulations'. There was no orientation. There was no 'This is where you buy pencils.' From what I remember, by the time he got back from Vietnam they were just about all ready to go back to South Carolina.

Hartsook: Who would those people have been?

Kollmansperger: Crawford Cook, Mike and Sheila Joy, Doug Dent, Donna Hall who's now Donna Hall Hurst, Lee Ruef. Betty Bargmann came, but I don't think she was there right at the very beginning. Patty Igoe who's now Patty Cassell. I believe that was all there was. I may be leaving somebody out. At any rate he, the Senator, asked Mary Winton Hughes, who was a family friend, he said 'I need somebody who's worked in Washington before who knows where you buy pencils and how you do.' A mutual friend recommended me to him as well-- someone I had applied for a job with--and he told her that I had been recommended. Then it was Mary Winton who said 'You need to hire her' and so he did. That was I guess January of Sixty-seven.

Hartsook: Were you interviewed? Do you remember what that was like?

Kollmansperger: Not really. I think I talked to him but at that point I had basically been given to understand that I had the job.

Hartsook: What was your first impression?

Kollmansperger: My first impression of him was that I could not understand a word he said. It kind of frightened me because I thought 'I believe he's speaking a foreign tongue and no one told me about this.' Then, of course, as you are around somebody it's not quite that bad. Oh, I know who else was in the office. It was Peatsy Hollings, Peatsy Liddy. I really liked all the people though. I had always been given to understand that South
Carolinians were a little bit--clannish is not the connotation I mean--a little bit to themselves. These people were--I don't whether it was just because I knew where to buy pencils--they just couldn't have been nicer to me and welcomed me with open arms. So, I really liked the people. You kind of felt like you were plowing new ground when you were with a brand new Senator and everybody's new and it's kind of exciting. And they've remained friends all these years.

As to the longevity, I don't know how to account for it other than the man himself who, as you know, is unique and unusual and kind of keeps it interesting, particularly if you like to work. I guess I do, after all these years. My particular role with him in the last several years has been whatever he's involved in I'm peripherally involved in. That makes it something that doesn't get boresome. The issues change and therefore it's more interesting than just doing the same nine to five, Monday through Friday job.

**Hartsook:** Can you tell me what jobs, what roles you have fulfilled in the office from Sixty-seven right up until today?

**Kollmansperger:** The first was the case work. Then I had a little glitch in service in that I left in the Fall of Sixty-nine to go back to Tennessee to go back to work for the lawyer who had hired me straight out of college, who was running for governor. So, I was gone from the Fall of Sixty-nine until January or February of Seventy-one. We lost that election--I'm famous for losing elections in Tennessee--and I called back and I said 'I promise I'll never go again if you just give me a job.'

It turned out at that point that they had an opening in the Senator's office for someone doing projects--we used to call them loans and grants. That was kind of at the end of the Johnson era of more money than you can shake a stick at. All the counties and cities had loan/grant applications. I did that for a brief period and I can't really recall now how long.

Then I became the secretary or assistant to the administrative assistant, who by that time was Mike Joy. I did that and then I just kind of floated into being one of the Senator's secretaries....

[Interview is interrupted by a phone call]
Hartsook: ...So you were saying that you kind of floated into your role as....

Kollmansperger: Yes, I can't really remember the--Mike Joy's place was taken by Mike Copps. Mike Joy then went to be the Senator's person on the newly created Senate Budget Committee. Mike Copps had been hired in my absence while I was in Tennessee to be a writer--speeches, articles, whatever--and he became the administrative assistant. I continued working with him and somehow just ended up doing stuff with Senator Hollings. It never was really a formal move. And the staff, of course, had grown in number. As opposed to one legislative assistant, we had two. We had legislative correspondents--we had a press secretary and an assistant press secretary. Two receptionists and that sort of thing. So, it became a bigger staff and duties were dispersed a little more than they had been at the beginning.

Hartsook: Do you think it's been an unusually effective staff? Do you think that Senator Hollings' office differs in any dramatic way? I think it's a given that people have stayed with him a long time and that it is probably more effective than many staffs. But, can you think of things that make that office different other than those two things?

Kollmansperger: Not really any particular thing. I think each office, at least on the Senate side--I don't know that it's this way as much on the House side--I think each Senate office, not committees but personal offices, is very much a product of the Senator. If he is a person who is not--I don't know how to describe this--if he's willing to delegate all the responsibility and so forth, I think that has an impact on the effectiveness. If your office has a reputation that it's run by the staff, before long you'll find that people try to run over you. Our office has always had the reputation that it's run by the Senator. I think all of us have always felt, and I hope I'm not speaking for others, that we work for the Senator. We don't work for another member of the staff. Some offices have a much more structured setup perhaps than ours. Since I became office manager, which was in the mid-Seventies, my feeling has always been that if you have a highly structured situation it just gives more rules to be broken or bent. To me, if you can get by with less it's better to try to work it that way. If people are happier they stay longer.

But, as I said, the bottom line is that you work for Senator Hollings. You don't work for Jack Jones that works for Senator Hollings. I think that gives you more interest in what you do
around here and more feeling that you're being productive.

Hartsook: And probably a bigger commitment to the job.

Kollmansperger: Yes. And even as the staff has grown and, you hear from time to time, 'I never get to see enough of him,' he's very accessible. The door is open more often than it's shut and I don't think people have the feeling that they're approaching some icon or something like that. Naturally, some people are a bit afraid of him at the beginning.

But I think it's really because of his personality. If we're perceived as having been effective, which I think we must be after all these years, it's his impact that's done that rather than any great expertise on our part. It's just a product of working for him.

Hartsook: I've heard people say that he likes people that will differ in opinion and that he likes to hear—if there's a debate going on the staff—he likes to know all the different sides of the debate.

Kollmansperger: He does. I think that's maybe the trial lawyer in him. He loves that give and take. On the other hand, if he strongly disagrees with you, he can pick you apart. In fact, there have been many times I wish I had just gone to law school so I would be equipped to come back at him a little bit, because I find myself getting very flustered. He doesn't object to people who have disagreed. He may change his mind, he may not. But, he likes that give and take. Like anything else, he thinks he's right but, on the other hand, there's another side to it.

Hartsook: One of the things I'd like to do—and we did it with Mary Winton—is go through a list of some of the staff and just get your comments. What they did, their background, what you might recall, what their personalities were like, how they fit in the office, how much influence you think they might have had with the Senator, how much influence you think they should have had. Whatever you'd care to say. Could you tell me about Crawford Cook?

Kollmansperger: Crawford Cook, to me, was probably the best political gauger, if that's a proper term, of anyone I have ever met before or since. He had an innate political sense, particularly of South Carolina but also here. And as you know, this is a very political place. He
became quickly popular here because he was savvy. Personally, he's been a friend all these years, so I guess you'd say I've been very fond of him and am very fond of him. He had a good personality and had a good relationship with the Senator. He had been head of the, I don't know if it's the municipal association or the South Carolina Association of Counties, but he had contacts all over the state. He's good, he's quick, he's very bright. I think did a wonderful job.

Hartsook: Was it a surprise when he left?

Kollmansperger: Not to me, particularly. I kind of thought that he would probably go. There were golden opportunities out there for him in the PR business and he recognized that. He was good at this job but I don't think he would have been happy in it for a real long period of time. He needed to be out doing his own thing.

Hartsook: Do you think he was particularly well-suited to serve as an AA during that startup period.

Kollmansperger: Yes. Particularly because the day the Senator was elected he was facing reelection and I think it was a perfect combination to have Crawford there because that was Crawford's main focus as well. And that's what it needed to be.

Hartsook: Do you think the Senator's trip to Vietnam and his resulting criticism of LBJ's running of the war helped him ultimately politically? Did you all realize at the time that was something that people would still be talking about almost thirty years later?

Kollmansperger: I would like to think to we did, but I don't think we did. It was a very wrenching time for everybody. It's not comfortable disagreeing with the commander-in-chief, and I didn't know any better. My previous Senate experience had been with someone who ran right alongside LBJ at every turn. It was different experience for me. I don't think we realized the impact. I don't think anybody did at that time, the difference and so forth.

Hartsook: What effect did that have that you could perceive?
**Kollmansperger:** I don't know that it had a huge, long-standing effect. He and LBJ were, as you no doubt know, never close. That dated back to the other Senate race, but I don't really think it had a huge long-term effect. Perhaps it was the beginning of Senator Hollings being known as something of a maverick, which has continued down through the years. That was probably the first indication of how that was going to go.

**Hartsook:** At the time, did it strike people on the staff, did it strike you as something brave or unusual?

**Kollmansperger:** Yes. Because I hadn't been here. I was pretty impressed with the power of the presidency, but, more importantly, the power of Lyndon Johnson, who didn't hesitate to lower the boom if he thought it should be lowered. And here was a young freshman senator saying ‘No way Jose!’ I was impressed.

**Hartsook:** What about Cook's replacement, Mike Joy?

**Kollmansperger:** Mike’s an interesting study. He was, without question, to me, a borderline genius when he came up here as just a fresh college graduate. If Crawford had an innate political sense, Mike Joy had an innate Washington sense from the day he set foot in this city. And they talk about his ability, or they did talk about his ability to count votes in the Senate better than people who had been here for years and years. He along the way had some personal problems. I think he's still inordinately bright and his relationship with the Senator I would characterize as familial. Really, they were almost like father and son for several years. The relationship is not what it was, but it's not estranged at all. It's just changed a lot. Mike Joy was always good to work with and work for, if you will. He was challenging. He was very challenging but he was also very fair and very generous.

**Hartsook:** Do you think he was politically oriented like Cook or more legislatively oriented?

**Kollmansperger:** Politically, but in a different way. I don't know quite how to describe the difference of those two. Mike really gravitated toward how the game was played up here and,
therefore, I guess you'd say more legislatively, more policy-wise. That's not to say that he didn't appreciate his roots, which were in North Augusta, South Carolina, but he knew what people were thinking and why they were thinking that. He and Crawford were both politically astute, just in marginally different ways. I don't know quite how to describe it.

Hartsook: Of all the AA's, would they all be politically oriented would you say?

Kollmansperger: No. I would say Mike Copps was probably the least politically oriented, probably the best at policy producing Senate work. I don't want to take anything away from him because I happen to think he's one of the best people that ever worked for us. But, it was not in that political sense. It was more in a sense of the legislative and the office functions and the excellence therein.

[End of side 1, begin side 2]

Hartsook: Going back to people so I don't get too far ahead of myself, how about Doug Dent?

Kollmansperger: Doug Dent and I were very, very close. I really was extremely fond of him and still am fond of him. He'll always be one of my best friends. He was a bit political but more importantly he really cared about people and it made him a marvelous person for dealing with constituents. He'd get into their problems. I did the casework, but he and I together did a lot of things trying to help people. Doug was always willing to try just one more phone call or call just one more place to see if we could unearth something or whatever. He's just simply a good guy and I think he's proven that through the years. And a joy to work with.

Hartsook: How about Ralph Everett?

Kollmansperger: Ralph Everett came to us I guess almost straight out of law school, I don't remember now. But I do remember thinking he was a younger generation than the black people that I had known in the South. I came along at the time of the sit-ins and the demonstrations (whether it was because I had Mid-western parents I don't know) and I was always in great
sympathy with them. I didn't have enough courage to join them but I was in great sympathy with them.

Ralph came and I think was a little daunted by the Senator at first, but he stayed and he saw it through and he is just an outstanding human being. He is very, very bright and he's disarming. He gives you the feeling that maybe he's not quite as bright as you thought he was and then all of a sudden you find out he's meeting you coming head-on and he's way ahead of you. He's obviously well-connected in the black network, as I would call it. But, he's always got time to just pick up the phone still with his big job now and his six figure salary--just pick up the phone and say 'How are you and what's going on?' He's remained very close to all of us, including Senator Hollings.

Hartsook: Did he fill any special role in the office? I know he acted first as a special assistant and then a legislative assistant with Ashley.

Kollmansperger: In the period that Ralph was there you wanted a black person and you wanted a superior black person--and we had one. I don't mean we went out shopping for that but we were fortunate enough to have that. As you know, there are bean counters that look for that--I don't know that they do so much anymore, but they did during that time. He concentrated in his legislative time on the Commerce Committee issues, which obviously served him in good stead when he took over the committee. And that was, to me, a happy set of circumstances that he moved into that and did such a fabulous job with that.

Hartsook: You talked a little bit about Michael Copps. Do you want to add anything to that?

Kollmansperger: I don't know that we've ever had anybody more innately intelligent that has worked for us. He is a professorial type, but he has--I don't know if I should be saying this to you but I'm sure you have it too--he's a professorial type that has sense of humor. He's a genuinely nice person and I thoroughly enjoyed working with him.

Hartsook: Was he a good AA?

Kollmansperger: He was a good AA. And, as I said, in a different way from Crawford and
from Mike Joy.

**Hartsook:** Were you surprised when he left?

**Kollmansperger:** Not really. I think a lot of that was a financial decision. He has children to educate, a number of them, and on what he was making, and really on the top he could make here, it was just the time for him to go on and do other things that would provide him more income. I don't think he really wanted to leave. I think given his druthers he'd be here today because he loved the job. But, it was just a financial decision. And, he's anxious to get back into government service right now, so I'm hopeful that will work out for him.

**Hartsook:** What do you think makes people want to serve here? Your hours I can't imagine. Certainly some weeks you probably work seven day weeks and ten or twelve hour days.

**Kollmansperger:** Some. The hours are not great. I don't know what it is. Not to assign any great motive to it, some of us have been here so long we wouldn't know what to do anywhere else, but it's challenging and, as I said before, my particular duties now are kind of varied. I like that. It keeps the interest level high. I'm not crazy about working ten hours a day. On the other hand, if there's something going on, I don't mind it. We vary a little in that we go like houses afire that long and then there'll come a recess and it is so deadly dull that you just think 'I can't be here another minute.'

Once again, that gets back to my kind of lack of rules and regulations. We're a lot more relaxed during recess time. The office opens nine-ish and closes five-ish. We want the phones manned and all that but we're not sticklers for hours and all because people just put in inordinate amounts of time when they--particularly the legislative people because they stay, not all of them, but when a bill is on the floor they can be here till the wee hours of the morning. So, when a recess time comes, I'm not going to say 'You work, by gosh, 8:30 to 6:00 or anything like that'. People just kind of go at their own speed. I find that works in the long run.

**Hartsook:** Did many of the staff put in the kind of hours that the Senator does or more?
Kollmansperger: I wouldn't say more. That's a hard question. I would say he probably puts in more hours, particularly if you count the social events—the South Carolina bankers, the South Carolina Chamber, etc. Those are things he goes to, and often times we go to them as well, but it's not a choice for him. I would think he outworks all of us still.

Hartsook: I was real impressed reading back over one of his interviews. He was commenting on that he would never ask a staff member to do something that he wouldn't do. And as an example said sitting in a committee meeting into the wee hours of the morning, where some people go home and leave a staffer to take notes. I just thought that was real impressive.

Kollmansperger: That's accurate. And there have been many times when he's come out to me and said 'There's no point in you hanging around here, we've got to be here, so you go on.' Particularly on late night Senate things, I don't hang around here. If there's some reason for me to, I do, but I don't hang around just for the sake of occupying a chair—and he doesn't expect that. He knows that it's his job and no one else can cast a vote for him on the Senate floor so he's going to be here. We do try to have people here—what we call a late night schedule—to really just man the phones and all for a while on every night. But like I said it generally works out that whoever from the legislative department has a bill on the floor, they're going to be there. So, they end up kind of getting the duty. And, of course, you're not counting weekends when he goes to South Carolina and has functions all weekend long too. I think there's no question he works longer than we do.

Hartsook: What's your typical day like? What time do you get up? What time do you usually come in? Do you usually take a lunch break? That kind of thing.

Kollmansperger: I'm an early riser to begin with and, as someone said, as you get older, you sleep less—and pretty soon it's going to be that I don't sleep at all. But, I don't kill myself to get in here because generally—I try to get here a bit before or maybe a bit after he does—so I would say I try to get here by 9:00 or 9:15. Generally, I don't take a lunch break; I just eat a sandwich or something at the desk, unless somebody's invited me out. We try to set that at times when he's got a Democratic policy luncheon or whatever. The going home time just varies so much. If we're in a recess, I'm generally out of here by 5:00 or 5:30. If we're not I would say it's closer to seven,
or sometimes eight or later--but, generally about seven.

**Hartsook:** Do you socialize with people in other offices or do you primarily socialize with--like, if you're going to go out for lunch with friends is it usually...?

**Kollmansperger:** If I'm going to go out for lunch, it's probably with someone not from the office. Obviously, Mary Winton and I are very close and we'll go get a sandwich and that sort of thing, but if it's an occasion for going out--for example, if I go today it'll be with a man who used to be with the Commerce Committee who's gone downtown, or we'll have lunch with Ralph Everett or we'll have lunch with Mike Copps or other friends--but to just simply go out to lunch with Mary Winton or someone from the office is very rare.

**Hartsook:** Going back to people, can you tell me about Rita Liddy?

**Kollmansperger:** [laughter] Well, the first time I ever met Rita Liddy was at Mary Winton's house and I pretty well knew I was going to take the job. I don't know whether Peatsy knew it at the time or not. But, she lived with Mary Winton and their other roommate Sally and I went in over there as I often did--because they said I was the fourth roommate I just didn't pay the rent. There was a program on that night on television about Winston Churchill and Rita Liddy, in her own schoolteacher style said 'Nice to meet you, sit down and watch this program' and it scared me absolutely to death. I didn't know this woman at all. So, I did what she told me.

Anyway, we became very close friends and she's just an outstanding--back to the language problem, she invited me to go home with her to Charleston that first spring for Easter. We drove down, had car trouble, and got there late. Her household at that point was composed of her mother, her father, and two 'old maid' Aunts, for lack of a better term--sisters of her mother. We pulled in about close to Midnight, they were all up; all three women were talking at one time. Her father really, God love him, never said too much. I thought all the women were speaking a foreign language. I had no idea what they were talking about, but all I could get out of Mr. Liddy was did I want a drink, and I said absolutely I did. I just sat and drank my drink while the three women and Peatsy all talked to each other. They were just all talking so fast and they were all Irish and they were wonderful, but I didn't have a clue what they were saying. They were a very
warm and outgoing family, particularly on her mother's side. She's inherited a lot of her personality from that. We still hear from people who are grown now with children of their own who say they were students of “Miss Liddy,” from everywhere.

Hartsook: She served initially as a receptionist?

Kollmansperger: Yes and in that role was really just outstanding because meeting the public there's just nobody better. Then as we acquired an intern program, she became in charge of that. I say as we acquired one, I don't know what year we really started it. That's when the school teacher in her came out--and she did that until they married. I think when the Hollings family moved up here she was very helpful to the children in seeing about their schools and all that sort of thing.

Hartsook: When was that?

Kollmansperger: Maybe toward the end of Sixty-seven they came up. Maybe that September the children started school. I'd have to check that, I'm not sure. They weren't up here long. They being the first Mrs. Hollings--she wasn't up here long. She didn't like it up here at all and she went back to South Carolina. They divorced in Sixty-nine, so she wasn't up here very long.

Hartsook: Do you think Peatsy is his best sounding board?

Kollmansperger: Oh, yes, no question. Partially because Peatsy doesn't just tell him what he wants to hear, which is a temptation to do a lot of times. Yet, they're like two peas in a pod. He really is right when he says he doesn't leave home without her. It's been a wonderful thing for all these years. I think she's without question his best friend and best sounding board.

Hartsook: Seems to have amazingly good political instincts.

Kollmansperger: Yes. In spite of such a terrific lifestyle change, she has not changed.
Having known her before and known her since, I can attest that she has not changed. She's just the same as she ever was, only more so.

**Hartsook:** Has the Senator changed at all?

**Kollmansperger:** I perceive that he's gotten some older, which he doesn't like. I was telling people up until last year that he's about fifty-five years old because that's what I thought he ought to be. But, he hasn't changed that much. Like anybody else he's gotten older, but he's still running circles around us.

**Hartsook:** Doesn't treat people differently, doesn't...

**Kollmansperger:** Not that I'm aware of. Sometimes I think the real young ones who come right out of law school or right out of college, sometimes he would treat them a little differently than he would treat older people who'd been around a long time. That's not to say any less respectfully, but just they're young.

**Hartsook:** Well, it seems too that as his seniority has increased and his influence has increased and his staff has grown geometrically, you'd think that he just has so little time...

**Kollmansperger:** Yes, it's rare anymore that he has the luxury of just sitting back and talking and reminiscing and so forth. Although, I think a lot of times that's why he doesn't mind some of the late nights and some of the staff doesn't mind, particularly the young ones, because that is a good opportunity for them to just sit down and talk and get to know the man. He doesn't have the time because when he's not in a committee meeting and he's not on the floor then he's got twenty appointments lined up outside waiting to see him. So, time is a problem like it is for anybody else.

**Hartsook:** Where were these late night gatherings? Would they be in the office?

**Kollmansperger:** Yes, in his office.
Hartsook: What happens? Do people just gather, loosen ties...

Kollmansperger: They just gather because, a lot of times, they are just waiting on a bell to ring on a roll call vote and they'll just sit around. They'll watch the news and then they'll just talk. On occasion, if he's got time, he may take them over to the Monocle for dinner and come back—and the Senators' Dining Room when they're in session late is always open so that's a possibility. But, they just sit around and talk. I think it's good for them and certainly good for him.

Hartsook: How about Mary Jo Manning?

Kollmansperger: Mary Jo Manning was one of our famous ones because she was a lady attorney, a female attorney, who came to us from the House Armed Services Committee and was very bright. Pretty political; particularly political as far as the Washington scene goes.

I can't remember what issue she followed in our office. I remember when she went to the Commerce Committee and she did the communications subcommittee, which at that point was kind of the dawn of all the technological advancements and I was just always astounded that she even knew—she could talk for thirty minutes and I wouldn't have a clue what she was talking about. I had never understood fax machines. I still think there are little people inside there that produce those copies. I just don't understand how that can happen, but she does. She knows all that stuff and not only knows it but knows the impact it's going to have on the economy in different countries and all.

She's another one, though, that has maintained her ties to the office. She and her husband were married, as a matter of fact, on the same day as the Senator and Peatsy in Charleston. We've birthed her children and now they're in college and it makes us all feel very old, but we're still in touch with Mary Jo. She called me two weeks before the election when things were looking a little dire. She really stays in touch and I really appreciate that. She'll always be a good friend to all of us.

Hartsook: How about some of his longtime supporters, Henry Tecklenburg?
Kollmansperger: Well, Henry and I go back at least to the beginning of the Senate. Basically, it was Henry who called me to see if I'd be interested in coming to work for the Senator. He's been there since day one and, from what I understand, was there way back in governor days and all. I don't know what else to say.

Hartsook: What role does he fill for the Senator besides trusted friend?

Kollmansperger: I think trusted is a good word, Herb, because in public life I don't know that you always have that feeling that you can trust somebody. He trusts Henry Tecklenburg much the same way he trusted J. C. White--I'm sure they've told you about him. While Peatsy may be his best sounding board, I think Henry's a good sounding board as well. Henry hears things within the Charleston community and probably statewide with all his Ports Authority experience. But, I think the trust thing is probably preeminent. He knows that Henry's not going to just tell him something for Henry's sake; he's going to tell him for the Senator's sake. And what he tells him is true.

Hartsook: Who else would he use as a sounding board outside of staff?

Kollmansperger: Somewhat I would say John West. All of these would just be somewhat. I'm just thinking out loud. Bo Morrison, who is an attorney in Charleston. Judge Blatt to an extent. These are all people he just goes back a long, long way with. Who else? Certainly J. C. before he died. He has stayed very close to his college roommate, who's a Texan named Bob Haynsworth, originally from Sumter. I can't think of any more. I'm sure there are probably some in Columbia and some other places in the state but I can't really think of any more.

Hartsook: Does he stay pretty close to his former AA's? Would those people all be people he might contact if he wanted to bounce an idea off of them?

Kollmansperger: Yes. Particularly those still in South Carolina, who would be Crawford and Doug, to an extent Lee Ruef. I guess out of all of those probably Crawford if he had an idea he wanted to bounce off them. Crawford's good about calling and saying 'I'm perceiving thus and
such or I think this is good or bad or indifferent or whatever.

**Hartsook:** How about other members of the delegation past and present? I know he was commenting in one of his interviews that travel was a good opportunity to get to know other members, and that the delegation meetings and the earlier campaigning had been a great way to get a real sense of who these people were and he was kind of losing that. But, who is he close to in the delegation?

**Kollmansperger:** This particular delegation, he is as close to one of the Democrats as he is to all of them for different reasons. Butler, they go back a long ways. He's known John Spratt for eternities. And he's known Jim Clyburn for eternities, in a different sense.

I think his and Senator Thurmond's relationship has really been a wonderful one for the most part. They've each kind of given the other one their own space. Yet, he's very deferential to Senator Thurmond. They've had their ups and downs of course, but to have a Democrat and a Republican have that relationship for that number of years is pretty phenomenal. I think they enjoy a mutual respect and they--I don't want to say stay out of each other's way because they don't really do that. They interact a good bit, but they just give the other one his own space. They try not to interfere. There's been a little bit of finger pointing over this base closure thing, but in this latest tragedy of Senator Thurmond's he was right there with him. There's bound to be a little disagreement from time to time but it's been a very interesting and very respectful relationship.

**Hartsook:** How about other members of Congress? I know for Joe Biden he seems to have filled an almost mentoring role.

**Kollmansperger:** Yes. I think to an extent Wyche Fowler was a little bit the same way, not as deep as the Biden thing. He and Terry Sanford were friends before. Terry was the chairman of his presidential campaign. He's always seemed to enjoy, for the most part, the House members because he says he feels like they're--at least he used to when he had more contact with them--they were more relaxed. They just seemed to have a better time. The time, I believe it was in the Carter Administration, when he was actually chairman of the South Carolina delegation, we had some fun people in the delegation like Mendel Davis and Kenny Holland and I guess that's when
Butler first came up. Mary Winton and Mendel went back so far and he was a good friend. Anyway, we had a good time, but the players have changed. He always seemed to enjoy the camaraderie of the House side.

**Hartsook:** Let me ask a question I thought of while we were talking about some of the different people. Hollings, one of the reasons that we wanted his papers so badly is because he is a person of ideas and legislation is important. He's not someone that's made his reputation off of constituent service or pure politics. He really does have a remarkable foresight into what's going on. Does his key interest in legislation allow his AA's to be more politically concerned or would that be a misstatement? For almost every one of those individuals you said that they were very politically astute and I know that Hollings goes by his own instincts. But I also wondered as you were saying that he being so legislation-minded...

**Kollmansperger:** Because he would be more caught up in the ideas and they could be...? Perhaps to an extent. But, as caught up in the ideas as he gets, he never loses his political instincts. And with all I've said about all of their political ability, to me it just pales by comparison to his instincts. He has many times--and I can't remember, except the last one, very well--he's taken a position or he's done or he's said something and I think 'Oh no!' and it ends up being, down the line, the right thing politically to have done. Whether it's a conscious thing or just simply an instinctual thing I do not know, but he's...

**[End of tape 1, begin tape 2, side 1]**

**Hartsook:** What do you think went wrong with the presidential campaign and how involved were you, if at all, in that?

**Kollmansperger:** I'll answer the second part first. I was only peripherally involved for the first half of it. We would have Monday morning meetings that I was a part of, but in about--I don't even know what month it was--the Senator learned that the campaign was about $100,000 in debt and it came as a big shock to him. He got Henry Tecklenburg to kind of cast an eye and see what needed to be done and asked me if I'd go over to the campaign, which I did. But I was only
over there four, five, or six months. I can't remember.

As to what went wrong with it, I think it was basically--one factor beyond his control that I have never seen in print, although that doesn't mean I've read everything. At that point in the Democratic Party, it would have been an impossibility to have been successful without the support of organized labor. Bill Clinton managed it last year with lukewarm support, but Senator Hollings never had it. When you have the support of organized labor or even a great chunk of it, it gives you bodies and it gives you money that we desperately needed to do things.

I think we all learned a lot from that campaign and I jokingly said that one thing I learned is I never want to do that again. It was astounding to me how difficult seemingly simple things are, such as getting on the ballot in New York state. That's a petition procedure that, conservatively, back then would have cost $150,000 to accomplish. We didn't accomplish it. We tried to do it with volunteers with trips to New York standing on the street corners. The whole thing was just kind of a joke looking back on it. But, none of us knew that. I think that was one of the big difficulties in the campaign was that no one had any experience in a national campaign. We all had stars in our eyes that this guy was making total sense and, of course, what he was saying is precisely what they've been saying ever since. So, he was exactly right on the issues, but the political thing was just not there nor was the money there. Probably as important, the expertise was not there.

Hartsook: Shifting gears a little bit, we talked about people for whom he has served as a mentor. Who served as his mentor, if anyone? I know he cited Richard Russell as a help to him, especially in his committee assignments. Is it fair to say that Russell might have been a mentor figure?

Kollmansperger: Really, when you use a term like mentor, that would be the only name that would leap to mind immediately. As far as older senators who were helpful to him, you'd have to say Warren Magnuson. That's not to say he didn't return that favor, but Warren Magnuson was, for a thousand years, chairman of the Commerce Committee. Senator Talmadge--he of course later had his own problems. Senator McClellan. Some of the older ones who kind of liked this young whipper-snapper and were helpful to him. But I think Russell would be the only name, if you use the term mentor, would be--and there may have been others in the governor days and
lieutenant governor days and I really wouldn't know who that would be.

Hartsook: I think Sol Blatt may well have filled that role in his early days in the General Assembly. Would Russell come to the office?

Kollmansperger: I suspect it would have been more that we would have gone to his office. We had a happy set of circumstances back then, if you can believe we had to share one WATS line with another senator, and somehow we were able to say that we wanted to share it with Russell. Those of us who had to use the WATS line were eternally grateful for that because the Russell people were so entrenched they never used the phone. So, we probably used it ninety percent of the time. I think at that point our other option was Senator Thurmond and we figured we'd never get to use it. Senator Russell could have been in our office I just don't remember. But, I think the deferential thing would have been to go to him.

Hartsook: What do you remember about the hunger tour?

Kollmansperger: I don't remember the genesis of it. I don't remember what began it except perhaps Robert Kennedy saying he was going to tour South Carolina—that's recounted in the book, I think. The Senator said fine, if he did, he, the Senator, would go to Harlem and whatever. I can remember the Senator's testimony before the McGovern Hunger Committee, which was really the blockbuster of the thing when he said he saw poverty and that he had covered up poverty and hunger as governor in order to attract industry. He was hailed as someone who was brutally honest and we heard from people all over the world. I think that began an effort to eradicate it.

I can remember him having Sargent Shriver into the office when they were talking about—I guess when Shriver was head of the OEO, Office of Economic Opportunity, and the Senator was pushing for free food stamps in Beaufort County and another county, I don't remember if it was Calhoun. Anyway, he got that done on a pilot basis because he said 'These people don't have money to buy food stamps. We're talking no money.' And Beaufort at that point had been discovered to not even be on the poverty level because of all the high income people in the county. It had some of the worst pockets of abject poverty that he found, but the county itself was above the poverty level because mostly the retired military people who lived there.
I can remember being just extremely proud and I told him so. It took a lot of courage to do that. He was just shaken by what he saw on those tours. Mike Joy was with him on them. I. DeQuincey Newman was with him. Tom Barnwell was with him for part of them. I don't remember who else.

**Hartsook:** Was Newman someone he would go to for counsel regarding the black community?

**Kollmansperger:** Oh yes. Very definitely.

**Hartsook:** Is there anyone else?

**Kollmansperger:** Probably today McKinley Washington, Jim Clyburn. I don't want to exclude people...Then, of course, for years we had Shirley Mills who worked for us, who probably he'd still go to. I'm sure there are others, I just can't think of them. But, back then yes, I.D. Newman would have been the person.

**Hartsook:** Is that hunger tour an example--you were saying that he would do something that politically looked very dangerous and later on would turn into a plus--is that a perfect example of that kind of thing?

**Kollmansperger:** Yes, because the people didn't like it. I don't know if that is really a perfect example or not because, although that was a popular thing nationally, I'm not sure the people in South Carolina ever liked it other than people in poverty.

**Hartsook:** It seems like a very, very dangerous thing politically.

**Kollmansperger:** I'm not sure that the manufacturing community ever liked it. In a way the education community liked it because it was calling attention to their mission and the need for training and the need for all that betterment of humanity. Of course the black community liked it. When I made that comment, though, I more or less had in mind the statement about the mushroom
cloud, which is bringing us way past the hunger tour time, but that was an issue that I thought 'Oh my God!' And we did hear from people all over the world. It was just basically a brilliant political stroke in the state of South Carolina. They loved it. I'm not passing judgment on whether it was right or wrong, it just had a very positive effect.

Hartsook: My wife was very socially responsible. She loved that.

Kollmansperger: This is a little off the record. One of my most liberal friends in the world--I mean far more liberal than I am--called me and she said 'Listen, I just want to tell you what I thought about the mushroom cloud' and I thought 'Oh, here it comes.' She said 'I think it's the funniest thing I've ever heard in my life' and I said 'You do?' So, who's to know? But, it worked.

Hartsook: What do you remember of the Sixty-eight campaign? Did you play a role in that? Oh, before we leave the hunger tour, did you help with the book?

Kollmansperger: No. But most of the book, as I recall, was done after I left--when did the book come out?

Hartsook: I want to say the book came out in Seventy-one.

Kollmansperger: I was gone from the Fall of Sixty-nine through all of Seventy. Ruth Singer, who was the outside person hired to come in and do it, and Donna Hall, who was the secretary then, did just about all of that. I didn't really have any particular role in the Sixty-eight campaign. That's been a little bit where my lack of being a South Carolinian comes into it because I don't really get involved in the campaigns themselves. I try to keep the home fires burning and keep the mail going out of up here and stuff like that. I always go down for the election but I don't go down and work in the campaign.

Hartsook: Did people seem pretty confident?

Kollmansperger: I guess so. I can just always remember Bubba Meng, who, when we would
get sixty-five percent of the vote, would convince me by the afternoon of the election that we were going down in defeat because he'd be so nervous. So, I really don't remember but it seems like they were fairly confident that we'd be alright. I can remember being much more frightened this time than I can remember being frightened in Sixty-eight. Then again, it was a long time ago.

**Hartsook:** Is there any question you can think of that I should ask that I haven't or comment you'd like to make? Again, I'm real interested in the office--how it works, why it works the way it does.

**Kollmansperger:** Not really. I guess I probably made us out to seem too lax and the fact that we function at all is pretty amazing. We've more or less been, I would say, a reactive office in that if you need more people to do a particular thing you just have to get more people to do that.

There's also been a change since he's become chairman of the Commerce Committee in the way things are done in the office as opposed to the way they were done before, particularly the work load. Any issues that the committee deals with--because that committee is so diverse they deal with issues all the way across the board--they generally handle mail that comes in on those issues. So, the workload changed. I would say it didn't necessarily lessen; it just shifted somewhat when he became chairman.

Another thing that's increased the workload dramatically is the heavy, heavy use of postcards, form letters, whatever. Those we try to respond to. If they just get too voluminous, we simply cannot. We certainly try to respond to every call and every letter we get. But, the increased use of form mailings has really increased the workload not just in our office but on the Hill generally.

**Hartsook:** Who determines what letters come in that he might see?

**Kollmansperger:** Several people. The people who actually open the mail give him anything that is marked personal and confidential unopened. That may or may not be personal and confidential. Most of the time it is, or at least it's personal. Then they give him anything that is, in reading it say in the first paragraph, clearly of a personal nature. You get to know who the friends are that he would want to see. Then if the mail gets, say, to someone in the legislative
section, if it's made it through the people in the office who open it, and they think it's someone or something that he ought to see, then they put it back in my mailbox and I get it to him.

We try to keep him abreast of what people are writing about. That, too, is a little more difficult now with this huge increase in form letters and mailings. Is it something that people really care about or something ginned up by the NRA or the retired people or the veterans or whatever. You have to make that determination. It's kind of a mix on what he sees.

Hartsook: Does he like to look at general issue mail that comes in?

Kollmansperger: Yes. Every so often he'll say 'I'm just not seeing the mail' and then we'll have to make a bigger effort to get issue mail. He's so busy that you hate to load him up but, then again, he's right. He needs to see it. Particularly anything that people sit down and take the time to write him about, not to say they signed their name to a pre-printed post card or letter. An awful lot of that has to do with the budget and, of course, the budget stuff he's so into and he knows. So, if you get a budget oriented thing that perhaps differs from him or agrees with him or whatever, we like him to see that people are thinking about that.

Hartsook: We had a historian that asked a question about the anti-lynching bill that he got through the General Assembly--a key piece of legislation--and he wanted to know why at that particular point in time and not, say, two years earlier or two years later. I just didn't have a clue. He wrote the Senator and he got a letter back within a week and it was half a page single-spaced and it sounded like the Senator. Is that pretty typical?

Kollmansperger: He, as a rule, will not answer questionnaires. It's been a rule that stood him and us in good stead because he doesn't like the format of them. But, if a single question comes to him like that--as a matter of fact, I think I remember that letter--I've tried, sometimes I try to clean it up a little bit, but I've tried for the most part to be pretty faithful to his dictation because I think that means more to people. As you know, he has a very distinctive way of phrasing and so forth. You can generally tell a letter he has dictated.

I can remember getting a response years ago from someone and it said 'Dear Fritz, received yours of June the third. Now, if you'll just write me one more time and tell me what the hell you
were talking about, I can file it.'  Because he just says 'Dear Joe' and then launches into something, or you're wrong.  I've learned to put lead-ins on them 'In response to your letter of June third.'  But he's very distinctive about the way he answers mail.

Hartsook:  What time of day do you do that?  Is it at the same time every day?

Kollmansperger:  Not really.  Generally it can be one of three times.  It's either before committee meeting in the morning or from about twelve to one.  If he doesn't have a luncheon, he usually doesn't go to lunch until one.  Or it'll be in the late afternoon.

[End of interview]