



It's strictly business for hard-working Senate Whip Bob Byrd, who'd like one day to be Majority Leader. Light lunch is on his desk.

Senate Whip Bob Byrd: From Poverty to Power

by Jack Anderson

WASHINGTON, D.C.

The first time Bob Byrd came to Washington in 1932, as a 14-year-old Boy Scout, he tried out one of the chairs in the Senate wing of the Capitol. "Some of these days," he announced, "I'm going to come up here and occupy one of these chairs."

It was an unlikely boast for an orphan boy from the bleak coal camps of West Virginia. But today Byrd, as Democratic Whip, occupies the Senate's second most powerful seat. He won it by defeating no less a political luminary than Sen. Ted Kennedy (D., Mass.).

Now, Byrd has his eye on another unlikely chair. He would dearly love to become the next Majority Leader if and when Sen. Mike Mansfield, now 68, steps down. Few believe the liberals, who dominate the Democratic side of the Senate, would ever choose as their leader a former member of the Ku Klux Klan, a man some regard as a racist. Yet his past successes suggest it is a mistake to bet against Bob Byrd.

He is not an impressive figure — a rather pale man of medium height, with an undershot jaw, a pompadour, side-

burns shaved off, and dressed inconspicuously.

His voice is seldom heard in the great Senate debates. He never joins in the banter that frequently occurs between Senators on the floor. Unlike Senator Kennedy, who was preoccupied when he held the post of Whip, Byrd is on the floor of the chamber virtually every minute of every session. He marshals votes, and an authority on procedure, acts as the Senate's parliamentary policeman, frequently raising points of order and reminding colleagues

of the rules.

His long hours on the floor have enabled Byrd to be of considerable service to his fellow Democratic Senators. He schedules times for speeches, makes insertions into The Congressional Record and handles innumerable minor floor chores for them.

Every time Byrd performs one of these mundane tasks for a Senator, he sends a brief note telling him the job was done and that he was glad to be of service. Although it is widely believed the sheer volume of such IOU's helped Byrd defeat Kennedy for the No. 2 post, Byrd vigorously denies that the little services were intended as "favors." "I just did my duty," he told

PARADE.

Rugged schedule

Favors or not, Byrd's marathon floor duties have made him live on a schedule that few other men could stand. He works a virtual seven-day week with only an occasional Saturday afternoon off to romp with his five grandchildren. Byrd has two daughters, both married, who live near him in the Washington suburb of Arlington, Va.

The waking hour at Byrd's unpretentious red-brick house depends upon what time the Senate is scheduled to go into session. Normally, he is up by 8 a.m., eats a light breakfast with his wife Erma, and drives to work in his Buick sedan with the radio tuned to a classical music station. The morning is usually devoted to reviewing important constituent mail and conferring with his staff. Then he goes to the floor for the rest of the day, taking a few minutes off to eat a light lunch by himself in the Democratic cloakroom just off the Senate floor.

When the Senate adjourns, Byrd returns to his office to resume work on constituent matters. He seldom gets home for dinner until 10 p.m.

Man for detail

He is as precise and thorough in handling constituent affairs as he is in performing Senatorial chores. Every letter gets a prompt reply, and his staff keeps a close check on the progress of about 75 Federal projects he has wangled for West Virginia.

Byrd has a color-coded card file of more than 2500 constituents ranging from ministers and editors to local party functionaries. He phones everyone in the file at least once a year.

The image Byrd projects to his mountaineer constituents is that of a patriotic, religious, dedicated man of the people