

JOURNAL INTERVIEW—39

Conversation with Senator Harold Hughes

Sadly, Senator Hughes died on 24th October 1996.

Senator Edward Kennedy was shown a copy of this interview with Senator Hughes and has very kindly provided the following comment for publication: "This eloquent interview with Harold Hughes reminds me of how much he accomplished in his extraordinary life and how much we missed him when he left the Senate. He was a powerful force for compassion and justice. His vigorous pursuit of fair treatment for persons battling addiction is legendary. He had approached his own problem with honesty and frankness, at a time when the rest of America discussed alcohol abuse in whispered tones, behind closed doors. Harold Hughes changed all that, and brought hope and help to vast numbers of his fellow citizens. The country continues to reap the benefits of his work, including the establishment of the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism at the National Institutes of Health. If we see farther today on these important issues, it is because we stand on the shoulders of giants like Harold Hughes."

A: Senator Hughes, your actions as a United States Senator in the early 1970s made you a towering figure—a hero—to researchers and clinicians who are familiar with the history of US government policy dealing with problems with alcohol and other drugs. Almost single-handedly, you introduced the legislation that created the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism. You advocated tirelessly for more funds for research and treatment. Then you inserted into the Drug Abuse Office and Treatment Act of 1972 the language that ensured the creation of the National Institute on Drug Abuse. Over the years you have been a public advocate for treatment, always asserting the fundamental humanity of those dependent on drugs. Before we discuss your accomplishments as a member of the United States Senate, can we go back in time to help our readers understand what led up to those momentous years? Perhaps we can start with when you were Governor of Iowa?

HH: I'll go back even before I was Governor of Iowa. I sobered up in the early 1950s after a pretty long and staggering trail of drinking heavily, including public drunkenness, and had been in jail in six different states, before I finally stopped. And I have to give credit for my sobriety to the fact that I took the old "faith" trail of getting on my knees and asking God for deliverance to help me stay dry and stay sober one day at a time. And I would have to say that's the only way I hung on for those first couple of years;

because there was no science in the way I got sober, there was no medicine, there was no drying out. I was, in fact, at the point where my first wife filed a legal action to have me committed to what we used to call an "insane asylum" in the 1940s, where we [alcoholics] were usually placed in "tie-down wards" because that's what happened to alcoholics in the 1930s and 1940s.

After that I started working with men and women who had been committed to mental institutions, attending meetings and doing those sorts of things through the 1950s. I committed my life in a spiritual way to try to restore my strength, my health, my faith, and whatever; I'd lost it all. So the 1950s was a growing period for me of faith.

I also worked in the trucking industry. I had been a truck driver in the 1940s, and after that I worked for the Iowa Motor Truck Association. I then started one of my own, called the Iowa Better Trucking Bureau, which brought me into relationship with the whole political arena. I was a Republican then, and I went to Republican conventions. I went to a State Republican convention as a delegate.

A: Weren't you later elected Governor of Iowa as a Democrat?

HH: Yes. As president of the Iowa Better Trucking Bureau, I went to the Iowa governor, who was a Democrat, Herschel Loveless, and

protested the actions of the State Commerce Commission, which regulated the state's trucking industry. And he said, "You're the most knowledgeable man I've ever known in the transportation industry. Why don't you run for the Commission yourself?" I said, "I don't know that I can." And he said, "Well, why not?" I said, "Well, I'm a recovered alcoholic." And he looked at me and said, "Why should that stop you from running? If you're recovered from alcoholism, you're well. Why couldn't you run for office?" And I said, "For a man in your position to make a statement like that is pretty uplifting to me, because most people look at you like you've just crawled out from under a rock when you say you're a recovered alcoholic." And he said, "By the way, I'm told you're a Republican. If you're going to run, I hope you'll change your political party. You should be a Democrat. I'm a Democrat, and I believe you should run. You don't sound like a Republican. You ought to rethink your political philosophy."

A: And did you rethink your philosophy?

HH: To be brief, I did, and I ran for the State Commerce Commission. I was advised by everyone that knew me that it was the wrong thing to do, that I'd wind up getting drunk. They said I should shut up, be a good boy, go home and forget this baloney. And I said, "Why? If alcoholism is a disease, as you've all told me it is, then why is it any different from heart disease or any other disease? Why, then, can't I seek public office? Even though I may have had the disease of alcoholism, I've recovered from it." They said, "You're always recovering." I said, "No I'm not. I got well. The Big Book of AA even says 'recovered'—it doesn't say 'recovering'. If I didn't recover, what did I do? And is abstinence not recovery?" They said, "Well, we don't know." I said, "Then we should find out the truth, shouldn't we? We ought to be looking for the truth. And that's what I'm out for, to look for the truth, and I think politics is one of the answers and that's where we have to go to find out and to help ourselves."

A: What was the outcome of your decision?

HH: I won the nomination; I won the office. I was serving a 4-year term on the State Commerce Commission as Chairman when the Governor appointed me, in 1959, to chair a Citizens Commission on Alcoholism for the State of Iowa. We could have caucused in a telephone

booth. You know, the numbers of us who really had any interest in the problem were few. Nobody cared, nobody wanted to do anything about it. They especially didn't want to do anything about the men and women in prisons or in mental institutions. Alcoholics still weren't out of the mental institutions. We were still locking people away for a life-time just because they were alcoholics. When their families gave up on them, they couldn't get out of the institution and that was it.

A: Were you able to change some of those conditions?

HH: Yes, we were. Along with the Governor, we worked on interviewing those people and we got some changes made. And when Governor Herschel Loveless ran for the United States Senate in 1960, I ran for Governor of Iowa. I was soundly defeated in 1960 in the Democratic Primary. I never even thought about drinking after the loss. In 1962 I won the Primary, then defeated the Republican incumbent for governor. I was the only elected Democratic state official in Iowa.

A: What actions did you take as Governor to deal with the problems you had identified?

HH: One of my first acts as Governor, when I took office in 1963, was to work to legalize sale of liquor by the drink in Iowa. We were a "store-buying" state, liquor could only be sold by the bottle in state-owned stores. It could not be sold by the drink over the bar or in restaurants. Well, all the "drys" attacked me openly: what was I trying to do legalizing a substance that had caused my downfall? In my own Methodist church there was a coordinated mission to defeat liquor by the drink. Much of the church leadership, including pastors, wrote me very unkind letters regarding my advocacy of liquor by the drink. I went to the bishop and I asked him to bring his cabinet—his district superintendents—to meet with me in the governor's mansion and to discuss the subject of alcohol and the church, which he did. I explained to them quite clearly that the decision was not whether we drink or don't drink; we made that decision with the repeal of the Volstead Act. Because Americans had decided we would drink, the only question is how will we drink—whether we're going to drink with sanity and sense, or whether we're going to drink with insanity, and bury it, hide it, and bootleg it.

A: *What did you do after the meeting?*

HH: I introduced the legislation to legalize liquor by the drink in the State of Iowa and to change our local liquor control systems and it passed. I requested the Iowa State Bar Association to work with the judicial committees of the Iowa House and Senate to change the criminal code of Iowa. The result was a change in our legal code to give the judges the opportunity to sentence men and women to treatment rather than prison, if in the determination of the Court the reason they committed a crime was the disease of alcoholism. This took two years to accomplish.

A: *Was Iowa one of the first states to do this?*

HH: I believe so. I called the White House and talked to a friend there from Iowa about getting a grant. I told him there was a direct relationship, in my opinion, between the men and women in our mental institutions and in our jails and glutting the courts—a direct correlation between that—and alcoholism and alcohol abuse. And he asked me if I had any way to prove it. And I said, “No, but I know it’s true.” And he said, “Well, Governor, you know I have to have the evidence.” And I said, “Well, will you give me a grant so I can get you the evidence? If you can get me help to get the evidence in Iowa—we’re a rather small state population-wise, under 3 million, we don’t have a complicated society, we don’t have large minority imbalances, we have a rather open society—I think we can find the evidence for you in a rather short period of time.” He said then, “I’ll talk to the President and I’m sure he’ll have me talk to Sarge Shriver and I’ll get back to you by phone.” He called me back the next day and said the President okayed me to proceed to look into this matter for a possible grant and I’m to have you call Sarge Shriver. I called Sarge Shriver who was the Director of the Office of Economic Opportunity as well as Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare. Shriver said that the White House had called him and told him to listen to me carefully and give me whatever assistance I needed in writing this application. He said he was told that the White House said it was something the Administration would like to consider, because if it could be used as a demonstration or pilot showing that we can impact crime and criminality related to alcohol abuse, then it was something we should know as a nation. Shriver said he was

willing to assign a person, and pay his salary, to come to Iowa for 6 months to assist my staff in gathering the information if I would assign someone to help him and give them office space. They were to work together to draw together the facts and then make an application to Shriver, as Director of OEO, for funds to form the grant.

A: *Did you get any support?*

HH: Yes, we got the thing started. But of course the President was assassinated in November of 1963, and I thought it would get lost in the confusion, but it did not.

Anyway, the man Shriver promised to send came out to Iowa. We went ahead with the research. We put together the application. Actually Shriver’s man from the OEO wrote the application to make sure we got it right and it would be approved and couldn’t be thrown out by the various committees on its way through the review process. So they hand-carried the thing through the review process all the way, and they gave Iowa a grant of \$1 million. One million dollars in 1965 was a lot of money.

A: *How did Iowa use that money?*

HH: We set up the Iowa Council on Alcohol Project (ICAP). We got through that first year and got out a report, which I presented to the Director of OEO in Washington, DC. A part of the grant was used to start an addictions treatment program at the University of Iowa Medical School.

A: *Given the lack of interest in the problem at most medical schools at that time, that was quite an accomplishment. How did you do it?*

HH: I did it, literally, by coercion. The University of Iowa needed money; and if they needed money they needed to go through the Iowa Executive Council, which I chaired. The Iowa tuberculosis treatment center had magnificent physical facilities—lots of buildings, lots of things were available there—and they only had three active cases of tuberculosis in the state. The University wanted all those physical facilities to convert for research and other things. I proposed to them that I would support their projects with the Executive Council and the Legislature to achieve their goals for utilization of the tuberculosis center, if they supported my goals and established an alcoholism treatment and research center in conjunction with the University Medical School and hospital. We finally worked out a

reasonable arrangement in achieving our goals which did what I wanted.

Harold Mulford, PhD, was appointed Director and did an excellent job of coordinating all of the activities. In the beginning we experienced a lot of difficulty and resistance from the academic and medical community. With time and patience on both sides and me as referee we worked out an excellent program and long-lasting relationship.

A: *That was quite a challenge.*

HH: We set it up, and we did by trial and error what we didn't know how to do.

A: *What year did that happen?*

HH: That was in 1965, I believe.

A: *It must have been one of the first centers in the US of its kind. Even Vincent Dole, at Rockefeller, didn't have anything at the time that could be called a specific "center". After New York closed Riverside Hospital, the only research centers for addictions that included clinical work were the Federal hospital at Lexington, Kentucky, and the small effort of the Yale Alcohol Studies Center.*

HH: I coupled this with a re-write of the criminal law. That way I could say to the judicial districts of Iowa, we have the research center at the University of Iowa Hospitals, we have the auspices and the authority of the State of Iowa behind it, we have the Medical School and the Medical College faculty, we've got the judicial system and we've got the General Assembly—and here we are coupled together to try and find some solutions—whatever the solutions are. And I showed them the statistics that we'd been able to gather in Iowa on the relationship of alcohol-related problems to crime and criminality in the State of Iowa, to our mental institutions, and to a lot of our social problems, including unwanted pregnancies and high school dropouts.

We started a high school dropout program as a peripheral program related to this, too. As a result, we set up a special human resources center in the Governor's office, and I appointed someone to run the center and to take on the problems of unemployment, high school dropouts, jails, mental institutions, and all the parts of our system related to addiction, and coordinate their activities, including rehabilitation in the prisons.

We developed all the systems and we started training counselors. We had the first counselor

training program that I know of in America that amounted to anything. And we sent addiction counselors in the next 5 or 6 years all over America to start programs and to work in programs, and if they had come through the addiction training center at the University of Iowa, they were well received and well accepted wherever they went. I still run into some of them who are my age around the country, who went through that center for training.

A: *What happened to the program after you were no longer Governor?*

HH: The program gradually was changed and altered each year by the Legislature until as the years went by I had difficulty in identifying it as trying to achieve the goals we started out to accomplish.

A: *They were certainly ahead of their time. But weren't you also ahead of your time in speaking openly about your own history of alcoholism?*

HH: Yes. The first major breakthrough in that area came in late 1963 during my first year as Governor, when the renowned author Fletcher Knebel, who co-authored *Seven Days in May*, called me and said he had been commissioned by Cowles Publications, Inc. to do a magazine story for *LOOK Magazine*, which at the time was one of the most popular magazines in the world. He asked if he could come and discuss it with me. I told him I did not want to discuss it and I didn't want an article done about my alcoholism. His response to me was "Governor, I'm very familiar with the problem. It has affected my own family and this is not a question of whether you want it done or not. I will do the story with or without your cooperation and it will be a major story." So, I agreed to the interview.

Over the course of the next several months he was my living shadow researching, riding with me, hunting with me, sitting in my outer office, writing in my back office, visiting all my friends and enemies, scouring my background with a magnifying glass. The story was to be published in April I was told, but didn't run until October, 1964, 1 month before I ran for re-election for a second term.

That issue hit the newsstands in Iowa with a white banner on the cover stating in large letters:

IOWA'S GOVERNOR IS AN ALCOHOLIC

That story was to haunt me for the rest of my life. In political campaigns, used by enemies,

discussed at every level of society, but it also probably saved thousands of lives. My executive assistant put an advance copy on my desk and I opened it, read it, cancelled my appointments for the day, had my driver take me to the mansion for my family to see before the newspapers carried the worst parts and I said to all of them, "You might as well start packing—I'll never win a second term when this hits the streets—it's all over. I pray to God that it's worth the pain it costs all of us."

I won't go into detail of the story, but that was the opening curtain of a new era in my life, private and public, on alcoholism. My life would never be the same again.

A: What happened in your public life after the Look Magazine article?

HH: My Republican opponent in the gubernatorial race was running about 25% behind me. He was the Attorney General of Iowa, Evan Hultman, and in the final debate before election day on statewide television he challenged me, saying I had lied in the *Look Magazine* story about when I had my last drink, stating I had been in jail in Kissimmee, Florida after I stated I had been sober. When it was my turn to speak I told the audience I had been arrested in Kissimmee in February 1954 for drunk driving and I had put up bond and left the state without trial, which is an admission of guilt. I stated that I had also been in jail in five other states and that I regretted the pain and suffering I had inflicted on others, especially my own family, but that I had recovered from the disease of alcoholism and hadn't had a drink since 1954. Now if my opponent wants to spend the rest of his time finding out what states I spent time in jail, he's welcome. I say let's get on with the important issues facing this state, one of which is getting people well from the disease of alcoholism. I feared defeat in the election but was tremendously surprised and shocked by an overwhelming victory. I received the greatest plurality ever given a candidate for office in the State of Iowa.

The following years as Governor constantly included talks on alcoholism and my own alcoholism personally. In 1967 I accepted an invitation of the Greater Baltimore Area Council on Alcoholism to speak to their annual meeting and fundraising dinner, the first time I'm aware of that an elected official had ever spoken on this subject to a large general audience, and once

again the wire services and news media carried the statement of my personal story of recovery on a nationwide basis.

A: The press asked you if you were going to run for re-election or run for the Senate.

HH: My response was I was tired. No one had ever held the Governor's office for more than three terms in the history of our state. I had no interest in running for the Senate and I had an abundance of job offers from private industry, so I was keeping my options open but probably wouldn't run again.

A: But you didn't quit politics.

HH: No. One of the reporters said to me privately, "you've got to run for the Senate. Your state and your country need you there." I told him I didn't feel personally adequate or qualified to be a US Senator. He said, "You're dead wrong."

The following week I received a call from Senator Robert Kennedy saying that our mutual friend the reporter had called him and said I was going to quit politics. He said, "Governor, you can't quit. He tells me, and I believe him, that you can win the Senate seat. We need your voice and vote to end the war in Vietnam. You could also do the things you've always wanted to do on alcoholism and I'll help you. Governor, I wish you'd come to the Empire State dinner that we're having in early November in New York City and let's talk about it." And I said, "Well, I'll tell you what, Senator, would you consider running for President?" He said, "Well, I thought about it, but that's not what this discussion is about." I said, "Well maybe it should be. You want me to run for the Senate; we've got to have somebody run for the Presidency other than Lyndon Johnson."

Well, he said he didn't want to think about it at that moment; and I said I didn't want to think about running for the Senate, but I'd come to the dinner if we could discuss both subjects. He agreed to that; and I said, "I'm not talking about 10 minutes, Senator. You want to give me 2 or 3 hours to sit down and have a discussion and convince me that I can run for the Senate, and I want time to convince you that you ought to run for the Presidency." "Well", he said, "I can't give you that much time." I said, "Then I don't want to waste my time coming in." So he agreed to give me most of the afternoon the day before the dinner, and I agreed to come to New York.

A: When did this meeting take place?

HH: This was 1967. Believe me, this is all related to the alcoholism field. I'm not just talking politics. So I went in and we spent the afternoon talking, and he did convince me that I should run for the Senate. A lot of people had tried, but Bob Kennedy is the one that finally convinced me. The Senate had sent a group out to Iowa to see me. Walter Mondale had come; Joe Tydings had come; a number of men had come that I liked dearly, of my own political persuasion. But I had stiff-armed them, and said "There's no way I'm going to run for the Senate. I don't want to live in that place [Washington, DC]. I don't want to be there. I don't want to commit 6 years of my life to it."

But when I listened to Bob Kennedy, he drew something out in me that made me feel that I owed not myself, but America, God, everything else, you know; that whatever my voice could be in fighting against that war (Vietnam) and bringing it to an end, I should let it be heard; that whatever I could do in the area I wanted to serve so badly, which was alcoholism, I should do it. I had never even thought of it that way before.

So here's another Kennedy connection—getting me to Washington to do what eventually set up the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism. I asked Bob Kennedy how I could get to have some influence in this area. He said if I was elected he'd help me get appointed to a particular committee where I could set up a new subcommittee. He said he'd talk to his brother, Ted, who was the chairman of the health subcommittee, and they'd get the thing put together. If Ted Kennedy hadn't had the interest or authority, I could never have set up the subcommittee. So it was a Kennedy network that actually got me even to run for the Senate, and got me in there and on that committee. I never said this before.

A: You're answering a question that many people have wondered about: how did a freshman Senator manage to get so much done?

HH: Well, that's a part of the tie-in. Now I said to Robert Kennedy, "Well, I can't even raise the money to run for the Senate. Would you help me raise money?" He said, "Yes, I'll commit myself to it right now. When do you want it?" "Well", I said, "I just happen to have a date that I want you in Iowa for a fundraiser if I decide to run."

He called and let me know that night that he

would do the fundraiser if I would run. I asked him what else he would do, and he promised to get anybody, bring anybody, send anybody that I wanted to Iowa to help me win the race and to make sure I could raise adequate funds.

He said, "I commit myself to you, Governor, one thousand percent. You need to run for the Senate. You may make the difference." "Well", I said, "I'm going home and consider this very seriously and I'll call you back in a couple of days. I can't do this without talking to my family and a couple of other people."

One of those people was Park Rinard, who was my respected advisor in Iowa. He had been my "stabilizer", my mentor, my teacher in my political career, and was the best speech writer I ever had. I said, "Park, I won't go to the Senate unless you go with me." He didn't want to leave Iowa either; but I said, "I need you with me, because nobody else knows me like you know me, nobody thinks like I do, like you do. You trained me; everything that I've done, from a truck driver to where I am, and if I'm going ahead you can't drop me, because if you do, I'm not going." He said, "I'll go."

So he's the reason I went along with Bob Kennedy. I decided to run, and called Bob back and he said he would stay with his commitment to come out to Iowa to support me. I said, "When you come out I'm going to invite governors from 12 states to come here and meet with you to convince you that you should run for President." He said, "I don't think that'll do it." I said, "Well, why don't you give me a chance to let these men talk to you?" He said, "Alright, I'll guarantee you the chance—that's all I'll guarantee you."

A: When did that conversation take place?

HH: This was before the New Hampshire primary in January. Bob Kennedy made two appearances for me; one was in January. Anyway, I announced my candidacy a week later for the United States Senate. Part of that was due to his commitment to me that if I got to the Senate he would guarantee his help; he would assure my getting assignments to the appropriate committees, and perhaps establish the subcommittee for which Ted Kennedy would have to release authority from the health committee. That couldn't be done if Ted didn't do that.

I asked him again, "Can you assure me that can be done?" He said, "Governor, nobody

knows what's going to happen in the Senate. I don't know who's going to get elected. I don't know if you're going to get elected. All I can assure you is that you have my word that I will do everything I can to help you do what you want to do to get a subcommittee on addictions in the United States Senate. And that includes working with my brother." I said, "OK. I know you may not be able to produce it but I know you'll try, so I'll take your word for it."

A: But shortly thereafter Robert Kennedy was assassinated.

HH: Yes, he was killed and that shattered my beliefs for the future—what he might have been as President.

Then Brinkley Smithers (Christopher Smithers Foundation, Mill Neck, NY) invited me to speak at the International Congress on Alcoholism, a conference of 62 nations, that was planned for Washington that August. If I went, I knew I would have to talk about my history of alcoholism, so there was some real political risk for me to speak before this group. About all I could say to myself in prayer was "God, you know I've got myself in a hell of a mess. I didn't bring this decision to me and I don't know what to do." And the thought that kept coming to me—well a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush—if I don't do this and I get beat in the election, which I probably will, then I don't have either platform.

I called my Senate campaign staff together, and everybody that I trusted, and told them about the speaking invitation; and they voted 100 per cent that I shouldn't do it. They said, "Don't do it. Don't leave Iowa. Worst thing you could ever do is leave Iowa, let alone talk about your past alcoholism. Who cares about who is in prison and what they're gonna do? Who cares?" I said, "Well I care, and I'm the person that's got to deal with it the rest of my life. The odds of my winning are not very good right now anyway—they're 50/50 and may get worse."

So I called Brink back and said I would be there at the old Shoreham Hotel. He had invited me to come to his suite for dinner that night, and we talked about the speech and the people that were there in the press conference. And I made the speech and a worldwide press conference. It was well attended, and the word went out all over the world. It had been the first time that a public official in the capacity of one of the 50

governors of the United States, and a candidate for the United States Senate, stood up and said to the world, "Yes, I am an alcoholic. I have recovered from the disease of alcoholism, I'm not ashamed of the disease of alcoholism, I'm not ashamed to talk about it. I'm as competent as I've ever been, probably more so, stronger now than I've ever been. And I believe that if everybody came out of the weeds and discussed what they had then we wouldn't be having the problems we have. The cause of one of the major problems is that we're all scared of death of our shadow."

I said, "I'm not going to be afraid of it. The people of Iowa knew for three elections that I had been an alcoholic and they re-elected me every time. Now if they want to use this as a cause—at this point I don't think that they will—they're probably going to be upset that I left Iowa for 3 days to come out here and talk to you people in Washington and all over the world—but they're not going to be concerned really that I'm an alcoholic. We've been through that out there, and the people have affirmed and reaffirmed in election after election that that is no longer an issue in Iowa. So I want to say to every politician in the United States that alcoholism in your life should never be an issue in your political campaign if you've got guts enough to face it." At a later date, when Congressman Wilbur Mills asked my advice about his own alcoholism, I said, "Don't quit because you're an alcoholic. If you want to quit and never run again, that's fine; but for God's sake don't quit because you're an alcoholic. Let's go down there to Arkansas and beat it. I'll come down and give every hour to help you beat it and win re-election." He said, "All right, that won't be the reason I quit. If I don't run again, that will not be the reason." And it wasn't. I really believed him. I wanted him to run because I figured the world would say he quit because he was an alcoholic. I didn't want that flag waving out there anymore; I never wanted it to wave again.

A: How did the speech at the International Congress on Alcoholism in Washington influence your campaign for the Senate?

HH: In November I was elected to the Senate by a very narrow margin, but I don't think my speech had anything to do with it. I moved to Washington, came into the Senate, and in the selection process I was appointed a majority

whip, among other things. It was based on the legislative selection calendar, which meant I had a voice. I was one of 5 people in the Senate who selected the legislation that came up for consideration, debate and vote.

When it came to appointing committees I mostly got the assignments I wanted. I didn't get on the Foreign Relations Committee, and it turned out that it was in God's wisdom, too, that I didn't. I did get on the Health, Education and Welfare committee that I wanted. I went to Senator Ralph Yarbrough when I got the assignment, and the first thing I said to him was, "Senator, I'd like for you to set up a new subcommittee on the subject of alcoholism and alcohol related problems and other addictions." Yarbrough said there wasn't money for another subcommittee, that he couldn't go back to the Senate and ask them for more money, and he couldn't take money from other subcommittees and other committees. I said, "Well, Senator, is that the only thing holding you back? Would you, as Chairman of the committee, set up a subcommittee without any money?" He said that had never been done. I said, "Well, I'll tell you what I'll do. You appoint the subcommittee—or you give the authority for the subcommittee—and you go with me to talk to Senator (Ted) Kennedy to see if he will give us the authority to release from the Health subcommittee his jurisdiction over this subject matter alone for a period of 1 year. Then we'll renew it next year (if we agree that it should be renewed). I'll take the subcommittee and we'll work for a year with no money." He said, "Well, now, how are you going to do that, Senator? You know nobody works around here without money." I said, "I'll do it with volunteers." He said, "Well, where are you going to get volunteers?" I said, "They're all over the place. They're everywhere. I can get people to run the subcommittee and it won't cost you a dime." He said, "Are you sure you can do that?" I said, "I'm absolutely 100 per cent sure." (I wasn't, but I told him that.) He said, "All right. Let's call Ted up and talk to him."

So we got Ted Kennedy on the telephone and we talked to him. And we had a remarkable subcommittee, including Jack [Jacob] Javits, from New York, and Pete Dominick, from Colorado, Walter Mondale, and Harrison Williams.

A: So the subcommittee was established?

HH: Yes, we got the subcommittee and no

money. So I said to Ralph Yarbrough, "What I didn't tell you was, I need some space. I don't need any money, but I do need space; I need some desks; I need some typewriters. So if you can scrounge them somewhere ..." So he gave me a small office under a stairwell—not very big, but with room for two desks and two desk chairs and one chair for somebody to sit in. "Now where are you going to get somebody to staff it?" he said.

I had a meeting with my office manager and administrative assistant and they agreed to a part-time assignment from my own staff along with volunteers until we got some money. Their decision was to assign Wade Clark an attorney on our staff and Mary Ellen Miller, one of our best legislative assistants, to staff the committee. Mary Ellen was Acting Director because of her years of Capitol Hill [Congressional] and Washington experience. They were to recruit volunteers. One of the key people who volunteered was Nancy Olsen, who later became a full-time staff member of the committee. We asked other committee members to loan us staff help as needed. All in all it worked out quite well.

I explained to the members of the subcommittee that we had no money, but I said, "What I'll do is, I'll direct all my honorarium money to fund the subcommittee to pay an extra staff member if we can do it." And I went to Brink [Brinkley] Smithers and some other people and said, "We've got no money. Can you set up some sort of a fund so we can pay some support to people who can work for the subcommittee?" So they did, and I don't even know who contributed to it, I couldn't tell you, but Brink was the key figure in getting it done. I directed most of my honorarium money—practically all of it that first year (probably \$10 or \$15 thousand), to supporting that subcommittee myself.

At the beginning of the second year we went back to the committee and the chairman and got them to agree to make a request to the Senate to formally establish the subcommittee and to fund it, which they did.

So that was the beginning of that subcommittee and how it got done, and how it all began even long before I ever got to the Senate or even thought about running for the Senate. The Kennedy brothers, the President, Senator Robert and Senator Edward, all played a major behind-the-scenes role in the development of addictions treatment and research in America.

A: *Then the bulk of the subcommittee's work began after you were formally established and funded?*

HH: Yes. We set up the subcommittee and we went to work. We got more office space; we got funding; we got the support of both the Republicans and the Democrats. Jack Javits [Senator Jacob Javits, a Republican] and I worked together as a team. Jay Cutler was with Jack, Nancy Olsen was with me, and Mary Ellen Miller was the director of the subcommittee. They're the ones that did all the work, and people all over the country collaborated. And we introduced the legislation creating the National Institute on Alcoholism and Alcohol Abuse.

A: *Early in that term, (1969), President Nixon introduced the legislation for the Controlled Substances Act, which emphasized law enforcement. Yet, around the same time, you were able to get the National Institute on Alcoholism and Alcohol Abuse established. Can you tell about some of the interchange between you and the White House and other influential members of the Executive Branch?*

HH: Roger Egberg (Assistant Secretary for Health, in the Department of Education, and Welfare) was very influential with the Nixon administration. He and I later became very good friends. He came to me at the first hearing we held and said, "Senator, you're being very mean to me and I'm on your side." I said, "I don't want to be mean to you, but I've got to force you to answer some questions. And when you're answering for Richard Nixon and the administration, I know you've got to answer for the administration. But when I say to you, 'Now, Mr Secretary, what's your personal opinion on the matter as a doctor?', how are you going to answer me? Are you going to give me the President's answer, or are you morally going to give me your answer?" He said, "I'm going to tell you the truth, what I think." I said, "That's what I thought, and that's what you're going to get out of me. I'm going to force you to tell me what you think." He said, "Well, I'm not going to be happy about that and neither is the President."

He answered the questions honestly, and his answers were excellent. They were the answers I was looking for. They were very positive in support of us. So actually when he came in to submit a position for the administration it was in opposition to us. But as an individual he said that he believed what we were doing was right, but that it was not his decision to make, that

money was not his to appropriate, and the organizational structure was not his to decide on. And I said, "I understand all of that, doctor, Mr Secretary, but still it is important to the people of the United States on this issue to find the truth." I said, "I committed myself, as a recovered alcoholic, when I crawled out of a bathtub thirty-some years ago after almost blowing my brains out, to try to find the truth of whatever the hell put me in that bathtub. And I'm still looking for it. I don't know what the truth is. I don't have any preconceived ideas about it. I know that a lot of people have found abstinence from alcohol through Alcoholics Anonymous. I know that one of the co-founders of Alcoholics Anonymous testified before this subcommittee and he himself said that he hoped he lived to see the day when tens of thousands of recovered alcoholics would be walking the corridors of this nation's capitol advocating for the cause of sobriety and alcoholism." I said to Dr Egberg, "Alcoholics Anonymous can't take a position, but individuals who are recovered can take all kinds of positions. I'm one who has taken the position of advocating for the cause of addiction disease. I believe if it is a disease, I'm not the one who has to say that. I'm not a professional; I'm not a scientist; I'm not a researcher. All I'm asking you, the Department of Health, Education and Welfare, for is the money, the appropriations, the people and the space to do the research. You pick the people. You do the research. You report to the Congress and the people of America—the truth. You won't be reporting to the Democrat Chair of a Subcommittee—you'll be reporting to the people of America the truth of what scientists can find out about this disease." Dr Egberg said, "I can't disagree with that statement." I said, "I didn't expect you would. You're a scientist. You're a doctor. You're seeking the truth yourself, and you know medicine is not a perfect science."

And we're still seeking the truth to this very day; we don't know the answers yet. Maybe we never will. Maybe the answer is, we won't find it, and we're going to have to live with what we've got, the best we can, but we're narrowing it down.

I said to Roger Egberg (he favored law enforcement), "I don't want to do anything that in any way will let alcoholism be used as an excuse for committing crimes. I'm not saying to anyone that a person who commits a crime should not

be held accountable for the commission of that crime. I'm saying that if they do commit a crime, and the reason they committed a crime is that they're a victim of a disease that we know is a disease, called alcoholism, then we should have the responsibility of treating the disease that caused them to commit the crime. And if they can then be healed of that disease, that should be considered by the legal structures in what the future of that person should be. That's all I'm saying." Egberg said, "Well, I can't disagree with that, either."

So that's what we were working on—trying to work our way through the structure, the administration presenting the law and order position on it and me presenting the health picture on it. I didn't look at it as an us or them situation.

A: When you first came to the Senate, the Federal Civil Commitment statute of 1966, which mandated compulsory treatment of drug addicts (even those who had not committed any crime), was still on the books. How did you feel about that?

HH: Everybody in the Congress was proud about it, and I felt very bad about it. You know, we had a bunch of people even on the committee who were the prime people that had written it and structured it and been recognized for everything that they had done. My point was very simple. I wanted to get people to recognize the fact that I'm no different from anyone else. If I have heart disease, I'm no different. But for some reason if I have what they've already decided is a disease that they don't know what to do with, I am still different. To this very day I have tried to get the American Society of Addiction Medicine to tell me when someone is well from the disease of alcoholism. I can't get them to tell me. Now I say to them, if you go free from cancer for 5 years, you can actually certify more or less that that person is free from cancer.

A: The American Psychiatric Association has used the diagnostic concept of alcoholism or addiction in remission. Many people have asked if this will mean you get labelled for life. That is, are you always in remission? Are you never over it? Is it always put on your medical chart?

HH: You see, I have to lie any time I do anything. To this day, forty-some years later, the questions are there: "Have you ever been treated?" I was never treated for alcoholism. Hell, they didn't treat anybody. "Did you ever attend 12-Step meetings?" I wouldn't tell them

the truth. Why should I tell them the truth? I've been abstinent longer than I was drinking. I mean, there are millions of people out there lying every day and saying they're working a program of honesty. We are forced to work a program of dishonesty.

Why can't the American Society of Addiction Medicine say to me, we have scientifically made a decision that a person who has continued abstinence for this period of time, working and living a normal life, is in remission from the disease and is well. That's it.

A: There are a number of factors that keep them from doing that; but the main concern seems to be that if you say you're cured, then there's no reason you shouldn't behave like a "normal" person, including social use of alcohol.

HH: We are normal people.

A: Some people believe that if you were once alcoholic you are always one drink away from relapse. Their view of the disorder is that no matter how long you have not been actively drinking, you cannot drink socially. Would you like to comment on that point of view?

HH: Let me ask this. Has research been done on how many people have recovered from the disease of alcoholism and then have began to drink socially?

A: Research has been done on this question. Some people have been able to return to social drinking. It may mean that either the initial diagnosis of alcoholism was wrong, or that some people with alcoholism do recover to the point where they can drink socially.

HH: I really believe that people recover from the disease of alcoholism. This is a subject matter I hope we live long enough to discuss. I don't believe we're always one drink away from drunk.

A: Can we return for a moment to your role in moderating some of the provisions of the Controlled Substances Act? For example, although President Nixon wanted the Department of Justice to have the power to determine which drugs it is illegal to possess, under the provisions of that Act, the Senate made the decision to give most of that power to the Secretary of Health. Did you have something to do with that?

HH: I was a negotiator at the Vienna Conference on Controlled Substances. I represented the Senate in the negotiations, in 1973 or 1974, I don't remember exactly when it was. I was also a Senate member of the National Marijuana

Commission under the chairmanship of Governor Shafer. Senator Javits was on the commission with me. Once we had completed our studies (on marijuana and heroin), a lot of which was done by professional staff who visited the Middle East and England and brought information back to us, Jack Javits and I considered that what we were doing on marijuana was wrong. Primarily we were approaching the law enforcement angle wrong because we were putting kids in jail for using marijuana, and that was just absolutely nuts. So what we did was introduce legislation, he and I together, that the simple possession of a limited amount of marijuana for personal use was not a criminal act. A kid down in Virginia had been sent to prison for 20 years or something—picked up down at the airport in Virginia, at Dulles Airport—which was absolutely atrocious. Kids were thrown in the DC jail and raped 25 times overnight for no more than smoking a marijuana cigarette. You know it was just an absolute abomination to us, so we corrected that part of the law by making that a noncriminal violation.

A: How did you deal with the controversy about the Marijuana Commission's position on the legal status of marijuana?

HH: As far as legalizing marijuana, you know people go incendiary over it. You know they just go up in smoke, saying that it's the doorway drug to everything else. Well as far as I am concerned, the doorway drug to everything else is probably tobacco, and then alcohol, and then maybe marijuana comes in a faraway third—y'know, so far back you can't see it running. But we were not going to face the issues of tobacco and alcohol because of money. We're in big dollars, big bucks, big influence, big everything; and until we got some people in government who were willing to call a spade a spade about tobacco—hell, it's not alcohol that's killing me, it's tobacco that's killing me. Every breath I draw I pay a price for every cigarette I smoked. And I was not an idiot.

I was Governor of Iowa in 1965 when they brought that first report in saying cigarettes were harmful to your health, and I sat there and asked the reporters did anyone on that Commission smoke after they brought in that report? They said, "Yes, two people did." I said, "What did they smoke?" George Knowles, the primary political reporter said, "I don't know." I said, "Find out, I'd like to know." He came back and said,

"The guy smokes Larks." Well I changed to Larks and smoked them for another 15 years. That's what an addict is. We were addicted, and just this year I see those guys sitting up and testifying that tobacco isn't addictive. Addictive? It's the most addictive drug that I ever got my hands on in my life—cigarette tobacco, worse than alcohol. It's worse than all the rest of them and it's more deadly.

And then we're saying to our tobacco companies, "Well, all right, we'll help you grow all the tobacco you want, but you ship it all to the third world countries. You send it to Russia, send it to South America, send it to Africa. You addict two-thirds of the world's population—kill them off." Is that a moral issue or isn't it? If we were using some form of chemical gas to do it we would be condemned in the world court, but if we use cigarettes to do it, it's wonderful. We're making a big profit. It shows up on the balance of trade.

Now, marijuana scares the hell out of people. We ought to be doing more research on marijuana.

A: Senator, were you surprised when the Nixon administration decided to put a lot of money into making treatment available to drug addicts, even, for a short time, funding treatment more generously than law enforcement?

HH: I was, and I would have to say in retrospect I'm more surprised by it, because some of the people that followed him in office I thought would pick up on that and advance it. President Carter tried to. He set up the National Commission on Alcoholism and Alcohol Related Problems. The Congress passed it. Carter appointed me to chair that Commission in 1978, but they never got the thing established and workable, and it was up to the President to fund it. Carter lost the election and Reagan came in, and Reagan refused to fund the Commission and let it die on the vine. So even though we had set up the offices and hired the personnel and had the system in place, Reagan just pulled the plug. Nixon wouldn't have done that. Nixon would have let that thing flourish. But I think there was a powerful political influence in the Reagan administration which cut that funding off completely. And it was strictly in the White House, not in the Congress, at that time.

That was my last political hold on doing anything. Of course Carter was the last Democratic

president we had that we could work with. We tried to get Commissions established in the Congress and we failed each time. All the leadership—the older people in the Congress my age in both the House and the Senate—were gone. We died off, or didn't seek re-election, or were defeated. And it just gradually petered out—that's what happened. Yes, I was surprised that Nixon did what he did. I didn't think he did enough, actually, but he was a hell of a lot better than anyone we've had since on this issue.

A: You and others in Congress must have felt some misgivings allowing Nixon so much power for the Special Action Office of Drug Abuse Prevention and for the Drug Abuse Treatment Act. Can you comment on that?

HH: I didn't think that he'd do much with it. I'm not against the Executive having power. I want the right to monitor the power. I think in some ways the chief executive can do a lot more than the Congress can. I did it as Governor, for example. If we had left it up to the Iowa General Assembly to do what I did, there would have been nothing done in Iowa, absolutely nothing. It wouldn't have happened. But you put a powerful chief executive in there who can go to the people, and who gets his strength from the people, and can appeal to the people and make that an issue and say, this is what we need to do, the power is handled OK. And then the people force the pressure on the members of Congress and the Congress has to go along and supply the resources and the funding for what needs to be done.

I don't see anything wrong with the President—and I don't mean the White House, but the President—being held accountable for people he appoints. And I'd look at it all carefully; I'd want to monitor it, hold some hearings to see what did you do and how is it being done?

A: And is that what you did? Did you hold a lot of hearings to monitor what was going on?

HH: That's right. I was concerned about what was happening over in Vietnam. I was concerned about the fact that there was an awful lot of heroin coming in that seemed to be coming with American authority, and some of it through one airline that was supposedly owned by the CIA and being flown into Vietnam—and that we had addicted probably a 100 000 young Americans in Vietnam and then sent them back to the United States by releasing them from the armed ser-

vices. Then we released a flurry of addicted young men across the country, in all 50 states,—on a country that was ill prepared to do anything about the problem. We had created an epidemic in a war in Southeast Asia and released it in America. If it had been venereal disease, we'd have shot somebody; but because it was addiction all we wanted to do was put the men in prison.

A: What did you think about Nixon's decision to change the code of military justice so that military personnel who were addicted or using drugs could receive treatment and not be dishonorably discharged from service?

HH: I was surprised. I had worked for years to penetrate the Pentagon and their systems of justice to try and do that.

A: How generally, informally, did your colleagues in Washington react to your interest in addictions?

HH: Oh, I was known as "Mr Addiction" in the Congress at that time. Anybody in the Senate or the House who had an alcohol or drug problem called me. I was a walking symbol of recovery and a lot of the members who drank heavily said they used to hide behind a statue when I walked by because the word was out that I could tell an alcoholic at 300 feet while walking down the hallway. But most of them did not have a problem. The fact is that the Congress is highly visible, that every member is highly visible; but there is no greater percentage of them that have a problem with alcohol than in any other group. Politics is an honorable profession. I get upset at people who want to pick out the Congress or the administration or executives in government and say—look, they're a bunch of damn drunks. They are *not* a bunch of damn drunks.

A: Senator, another important change in treatment methodology took place during the time of your influence in the Senate, and that was the approval of methadone as a treatment for opioid addiction. Can you comment on that?

HH: Well, I wasn't for it. I had heard an awful lot about methadone being on the street, and the danger of methadone on the street, and the fact that it was an addictive drug itself, and it would be sold and re-sold. What changed my mind was Senator Javits. Jack Javits and I went to New York and held some hearings up there. In the process of the hearings we went down to "the Tombs" one morning to see the men who were

dragged to jail the night before who were heroin addicts—watched them climbing the bars and sweating and cursing and trembling and shaking and no way to get any help or anything, there in the holding tanks that were just massive human terror pits, actually. I said to Senator Javits, who I admired a great deal, “My God, can’t we do something about this?” He said, “Well, Senator Hughes, we’ve got to do something about it, but we probably won’t be successful.”

Then we starting holding hearings and we got methadone approved as an agent that could be used. I’m still criticized for it. Methadone has been misused on the streets a lot of the time and there are a lot of doctors that have prescribed it wrongly—I mean they give people a month’s supply to take home in some places.

A: Senator, you retired from the Senate after a spectacularly successful single term. You have continued, however, to be extremely active in educating the public about alcoholism and working to reduce the

stigma associated with alcoholism and drug addiction. Can you tell us something about these later activities?

HH: I’ve been involved in a great many public service activities since I retired. Here are a few that come to mind. I worked for the Senate Judiciary Committee under Chairman James Eastland, of Mississippi, for 2 years. I was appointed by the Senate to chair a Commission on the Operation of the Senate, which I did for 2 years. I was president of the International Congress on Alcoholism for 6 years. I established Harold Hughes Centers, Inc., in 1984, and am still involved in that activity to the present. I founded the Society of Americans for Recovery, Inc. and SOAR Foundation, Inc., in 1990, and served as Chairman of the Board of both organizations for 5 years. And, of course, I have lectured publicly for the past 15 years on the subject of alcoholism and addictions.

A: Thank you, Senator Hughes.

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