

Partners in the Senate

SCOOP & SLADE

By Hans Zeiger



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ONE OF THE GREATEST DUOS in the history of the United States Senate was “Scoop and Maggie”—Democrats Henry M. Jackson and Warren Magnuson. Together they represented the state of Washington from Jackson’s election to the Senate in 1954 until Magnuson’s defeat in 1980. Oddly enough, in the two and a half years after Magnuson lost to Republican Slade Gorton, a close and important friendship developed between Gorton and “Scoop” Jackson.

Gorton and Jackson first became acquainted in the early 1960s when Gorton was a young Republican state representative and an attorney at the Seattle firm of Little, Gandy, Stephan, Palmer, and Slemmons. Gorton represented Greenacres, Inc., a forestry investment firm owned by Seattle native Michael Lazara. Lazara had

purchased antique Valentine land scrip, a 19th-century government-issued certificate for western land that often had gone to war veterans as compensation for their service. The trouble with Lazara’s effort to acquire scrip lands was that the Taylor Grazing Act of 1934 had reclassified extensive scrip lands as grazing areas, and those lands

Senators Henry M. Jackson and Slade Gorton host a troop of Boy Scouts at the US Capitol on July 23, 1981.

could only be redeemed with scrip by permission of the Interior Department. An additional law in 1955 diminished the pool of usable scrip by requiring scrip holders to register their land within a designated time period. Due to further pending legislation throughout the early 1960s, Lazara’s 1961 application for scrip lands was held up in an Interior Department stalemate.

Gorton became Lazara’s lobbyist as Congress considered new scrip laws. At least twice, Gorton testified before

Jackson's Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs. This became Gorton's first real acquaintance with Jackson, and he was impressed:

What I really remember about it is that on the two or three occasions when I testified, most of the time Scoop was the only one there. It wasn't a big deal, and nobody else showed up. I remembered that when I was on the other side of the dais and sometimes I'd go into these hearings just so these poor people who'd spent all the time preparing for this would know that more than one senator was paying any kind of attention to what they did! But Scoop was out-of-his-way gracious in those things, and extremely impressive.

Jackson ultimately introduced Senate Bill 231 to amend the 1964 act. The amendment captured the attention of Secretary of the Interior Stewart Udall. Udall wrote to Jackson on September 9 that even if Congress didn't amend the 1964 Scrip Act, the Interior Department would offer scrip lands somewhere between fair market value and 10 percent above fair market value. Greenacres was satisfied with Udall's resolution. Udall approved the Greenacres scrip claim in February 1966.

Gorton wrote to Jackson at that time, thanking him for his advocacy and expressing his regard both for Jackson and for the US Senate. "One of the great pleasures of this long campaign has been the chance to meet you and to get firsthand experience into your operations and that of your committee. I can only say that I have been most favorably impressed and hope that we will be able to meet again soon." In another letter that week to Jerry Verker, the staff director for the Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs, Gorton wrote that his experience working with the committee "has made me appreciate the entire system and the way it works far more than I could have without having experienced both the frustrations and triumphs of the last five years."

GORTON ROSE to become majority leader of the Washington State House of Representatives in 1967, which positioned him well for statewide elected office. When Democrat Attorney General John J. O'Connell challenged Republican Governor Dan Evans in the 1968 election, Gorton sought the attorney general's office. He won and served for the next 12 years,

arguing 14 cases before the United States Supreme Court, representing Washington in the famous Native American fishing rights case known as the "Boldt Decision," and suing Major League Baseball for breach of contract after the Seattle Pilots left town in 1969.

Jackson's Republican rival in the 1970 election was State Representative Charlie Ellicker of Bainbridge Island. Sometime just before the election, KCTS television invited Senate candidates to present their message in 30 seconds of free airtime, including an introduction. Ellicker asked Attorney General Gorton to introduce him. "I didn't want to," recalled Gorton, "but I did. All I said was, 'This is a great guy, and he'd make a great United States senator.'"

Ellicker received 16 percent of the vote on election day. Despite the insignificance of Gorton's introduction for Ellicker, Jackson apparently took note of that gesture and shunned Gorton: "Scoop was angry that I had done that. And we went most of the next [10] years without having any relationship at all, which was a real disappointment to me."

For the next decade, when Gorton was visiting Washington, DC, he spent far more time paying courtesy calls to Magnuson than to Jackson. "Magnuson was *always* gracious when I went to Washington, DC, . . . he'd always make time to have a chat."

In the years after his first experience with the Senate in Jackson's subcommittee hearing room, Gorton thought more and more about the prospect of becoming a senator himself. He thought of running for the Senate in 1976 should Jackson decline reelection or win the Democratic presidential nomination. Jackson stayed in the race and won 75 percent of the vote. When it came to Gorton's choice about which giant of the Senate to slay,

LEFT: Henry M. Jackson and Warren Magnuson—known to many as "Scoop and Maggie"—served Washington together in the US Senate for 27 years.

FACING PAGE: Slade Gorton, 1969, during his tenure as Washington's attorney general.



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there was little question that Magnuson was the more vulnerable.

When Gorton challenged Magnuson in 1980, his campaign message was carefully calculated to honor the state's senior senator for his past service while making the case for fresh blood. Magnuson had had his day, but now he was too old—and increasingly ineffective.

The results came early on election night, and it was good news for Washington state Republicans all around. Ronald Reagan included Washington in his column, John Spellman won the governor's mansion, and Slade Gorton defeated Warren Magnuson. Minutes after Gorton learned of his victory, he took a congratulatory call from Jackson. "And not only did he congratulate me, he said, 'Can we get together for lunch next week?'" So ended the decade of distance between Jackson and Gorton.

After Gorton was sworn in, Jackson hosted a reception for his new fellow senator. In his thank you note to Jackson, Gorton wrote about his family's newfound appreciation for Jackson. "You made great fans out of all of them," he wrote, adding, "I'm delighted to have you as my senior colleague and look forward to working together constructively for a long time in the future."

TWO THINGS MADE the personal relationship between Gorton and Jackson stronger than the more famous partnership between Magnuson and Jackson. The first factor that strengthened the friendship was, ironically, their party difference. "My observation of the Senate in general is that very frequently the two senators from the same state get along better when they're from opposite parties," Gorton said, "simply because they don't share constituencies, to a great deal. They aren't both sort of maneuvering to be the number one guy in the party when they're home."

Much as Scoop and Maggie were a political team, their competition for

distinction in the state, their styles, and even their political orientations sometimes created a subtle conflict. "And there was certainly a rivalry there," in Gorton's assessment. "I probably got along with Jackson better than he got along with



Courtesy Washington State Archives

Maggie. Now, it wouldn't have been as close, because they were together all the time and . . . always the honorary campaign chairman for one another, but their views on things and their personalities were radically different."

The second thing that made Jackson and Gorton good friends was their similar styles. Both were interested in the nuances of policy, both had been trained and began their careers in the law, and both were deeply read. "And I was much closer to Jackson in that, more academic I guess one could say, more interested in ideas. So it was a great relationship."

In the Senate, Jackson regularly passed along books, articles, and lists of readings to Gorton. Sometimes Jackson would emphasize the importance of reading selections by giving them directly to Gorton's wife Sally. On occasion, Jackson took Sally Gorton to lunch in the Senate dining room. Sally Gorton and Jackson's wife Helen quickly struck up a friendship of their own.

The legislative partnership of the two Senators was most notable on Jackson's Boeing 747 amendment to the 1982 defense bill and Gorton's Shipping Act of 1983, both of which concerned Washington state interests. The 1982 defense bill included a \$17.3 billion procurement allowance for the Air Force, including a multi-billion-dollar allocation for new Lockheed C-5 Transports. Jackson, with Gorton's close collaboration, proposed an amendment to strike the C-5 section entirely and instead allocate \$350 million for the "procurement of the most cost-effective commercial wide-body cargo aircraft." In other words, commercially pre-owned Boeing 747s could save the country money—up to \$6 billion—in a time of economic hardship.

The proposal was controversial. "The whole establishment was against us," Gorton recalled. Democratic senator Sam Nunn of Georgia, a member of the Armed Services Committee, led the fight for the C-5 program. According to an April 16, 1982, article in the *Washington Post*, the program would create 8,500 jobs at Lockheed's Marietta plant. In January, Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger decided against the 747 concept.

Jackson stated his request for an explanation of Weinberger's decision at an Armed Services Committee hearing on February 22. Weinberger wrote to Jackson the following week that the C-5 had superior military capability, easier loading capacity, more troop space, and superior air refueling capability. Jackson was not persuaded. "I am disturbed by the methodology by which the department arrived at its decision," Jackson replied on March 19. That same day, at a hearing of the Armed Services Subcommittee on Sea Power and Force Projection, Jackson raised a lengthy list of questions about the C-5 proposal.

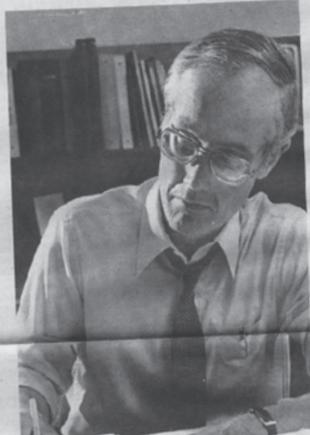
Jackson, Gorton, and the powerful Boeing lobby lined up a coalition behind the 747 program. Bankers,

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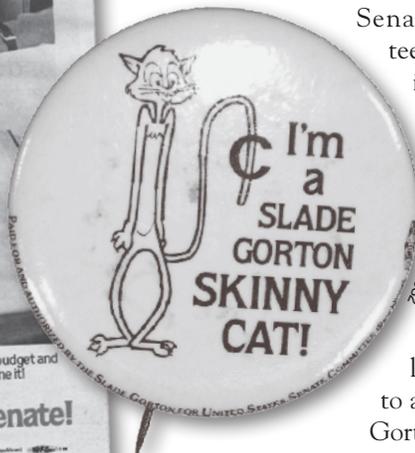
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Campaign materials for Washington State Attorney General Slade Gorton's 1980 US Senate campaign. Gorton prevailed over 36-year incumbent Warren Magnuson and went on to serve three terms.

FACING PAGE: Sally and Slade Gorton with "Scoop" and Helen Jackson, April 21, 1982.



Still, the Pentagon was stubborn. Secretary Weinberger was slow in getting started with the 747 program. Finally, on May 2, 1983, Weinberger gave in. As a preliminary step, he agreed to buy and test three used 747s. Gorton said in a press statement that the agreement was "less than we had hoped for. But, now the military will be able to see firsthand how useful the 747 can be in transporting cargo."

Apparently hoping to exploit Jackson's advancing age—as Gorton had beaten the elderly Magnuson two years earlier—36-year-old Seattle City Attorney Doug Jewett challenged Jackson in 1982. Backed by a quarter million dollars from the Republican Senatorial Campaign Committee, Jewett ran attack ads aligning Jackson with unemployment and the global nuclear problem. The ads backfired, making Jewett look desperate and ungrateful to an elder statesman. Meanwhile, Jackson had more resources than he needed; his campaign raised \$2 million by election day and cruised to an easy victory.

Gorton was hardly mentioned in press coverage of the 1982 campaign. And it was a good thing too. Gorton was a close friend of Jewett's, but his friendship with Jackson was not a thing to be played with. Gorton made several obligatory appearances at Jewett rallies, but "selfishly, I was very fortunate that it wasn't a real campaign." Even so, the campaigning that year was "uncomfortable" for Gorton. However, Jackson didn't seem bothered by his colleague's partisanship this time.

AS A FRESHMAN member of the Senate Commerce Committee, Gorton was last in line when it came to subcommittee picks. Only one remained: the Merchant Marine Subcommittee. "So I took it—without any background in merchant marine at all, or any great interest in the subject." Gorton

airplane manufacturing subcontractors, and airlines joined. For Boeing, the legislation meant a major boost after a significant decline in domestic orders. For the military and for the taxpayers, it was a win-win situation. "For hauling oversize and bulk cargo, commercial wide-body cargo aircraft are less costly to buy, less costly to operate, less costly to maintain, more reliable, more capable, and immediately available," Jackson argued on the floor of the Senate on May 13.

Thanks to Jackson's political talent and Gorton's assistance, the amendment passed on May 13, 60–39. A few weeks later, Lockheed advocates renewed their campaign for a more modest allocation of \$97.7 million for the C-5. The Senate

Defense Appropriation Subcommittee rejected the reprogramming proposal. Constituents wrote letters of thanks to their senators for the successful passage of the 747 amendment. One letter to Jackson attesting to the superiority of the 747 came from a Boeing manufacturing supervisor, Air Force veteran, and "a somewhat conservative taxpayer" who "must demand from every dollar of our Defense Budget, a dollar's worth of return on my expenditure." Said Gorton, "That was [the] first, almost equal partnership we had on a major issue in the time I was there, and it was all kinds of fun, between his reputation and authority in the field of defense and my being one of the new majority—and pretty outspoken."

It was in July 1983, two and a half years into their partnership in the Senate, that Gorton and Jackson spoke on opposite sides of an issue for the first time.

spent the next two years learning everything he could about it, and by 1982 he was ready to push for passage of major revisions to the US Code on Merchant Marine Law.

Gorton's Shipping Act of 1982, Senate Bill 1593, would allow ocean common carriers to fix shipping rates in order to allow US flag carriers to better compete with foreign competitors. Price fixing was the norm of global shipping. In exchange for allowing carriers to fix their rates, Congress would cut subsidies to shipping lines. Opponents claimed that price fixing would raise prices for consumers. The bill died after

Ohio Democrat Howard Metzenbaum threatened a filibuster.

Gorton reintroduced the bill as Senate Bill 47 in the Commerce Committee in 1983, where it passed unanimously. Gorton's coalition included various shipping-related groups, the Port of Seattle, the freight forwarders, and the Northwest Horticulture Association. With help from Jackson, the bill passed through Congress in March 1983. It was the first major legislation Gorton shepherded into law.

Though Jackson and Gorton voted quite differently on domestic issues, they agreed most of the time on foreign policy.

Jackson was so focused on foreign policy that he rarely spoke up about domestic matters. So it was in July, two and a half years into their partnership, that Gorton and Jackson spoke on opposite sides of an issue for the first time. Afterwards, Gorton went to Jackson's desk and said, "Scoop, do you realize that that last little amendment was the first time you and I ever spoke on opposite sides of the same issue? And he just leaned back and laughed." Shortly after that, the Senate adjourned for its August recess.

JACKSON NEVER RETURNED to the Senate. On the morning of September 1, Gorton took a call from Jackson, freshly returned from a visit to Asia. "We had a nice, substantive conversation," Gorton recalled. That night, Jackson died suddenly of a heart attack.

"It's hard for me to say that I ever had a better relationship with any other senator than with Scoop," said Gorton. Yet Gorton is careful to distinguish between friendship and mentorship. It was Republicans Howard Baker (Tennessee) and Mark Hatfield (Oregon) who became Gorton's "absolute role models of what a senator ought to look like and act like." Jackson "became a very close friend. But I can't say that he was a mentor. There would be too many differences between us to fall into that category."

While Gorton and Jackson were very much their own men with their own policy views, on opposite sides of the partisan aisle, they were able to form a deep friendship and working partnership during their two and a half years together as Washington's senators. This partnership may not have been as long or fruitful as that of Scoop and Maggie, but it demonstrates the possibilities of genuine friendship and real bipartisanism in American politics. 🐾

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