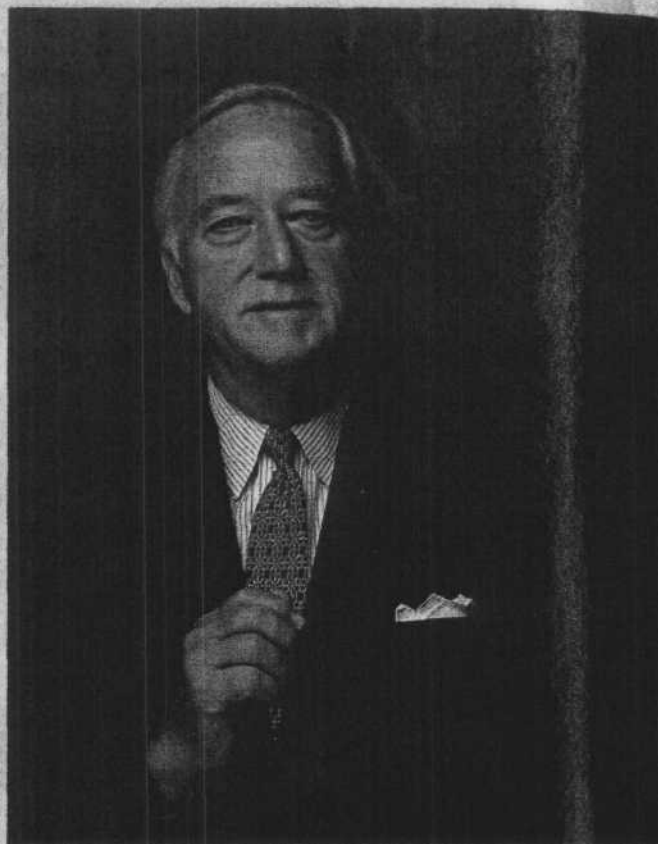




BARRY GOLDWATER



CHARLES McC. MATHIAS

## Nation

# Farewell to a Quartet of Kings of the Hill

*Four retiring members of Congress represent the passing of political traditions*

One speaks with a Southern lilt, one has a Boston brogue, one a patrician richness, one a Western twang. They represent four different regions of the country, reflect four distinct personal styles and stand for four divergent political traditions. Their total years in the nation's service come to 128, and with their retirement this year, they are each closing a chapter in the history of Congress. Russell Long of Louisiana is the sharp, smooth-talking, back-room Senate insider; Barry Goldwater is the quixotic loner whose conservatism was ahead of its time; Charles McC. Mathias of Maryland is one of the last of the moderate, progressive Republicans; and Tip O'Neill, the Massachusetts Representative and Speaker of the House, is the embodiment of traditional liberalism.

As they take their leave of Capitol Hill, they cast a fond eye at the past and discern troublesome aspects of the present. The three Senators seem to mourn the loss of the gentlemanly quality of the old days. They are disturbed by the all-importance of money in the political process and dismayed by the impatience of their

younger colleagues. Each is proud, somewhat battered but unbowed. In their faces and in their careers is writ the recent history of the nation.

### The Conservatives' Conscience

A few days before the Senate adjourned last month, Barry Goldwater sat in his office sorting memorabilia. The model of an Apache antitank helicopter was destined for the Arizona Air National Guard. A rare 1964 record album, *The Goldwaters Sing Folk Songs to Bug the Liberals*, was headed for his home in Scottsdale. The collection of colorful Hopi Indian kachina dolls was tagged for the Heard Museum in Phoenix. The mementos form a miniature gallery of the career of the crusty, often irascible and always independent Senator from Arizona: his dedication to U.S. military strength; his lonely conservatism, which prefigured the more popular version that followed; and a 100-proof Western sensibility that was never diluted by the genteel mores of Washington.

Throughout his three decades as a

Senator, Goldwater remained loyal to a single, inflexible political principle: the right of the individual to be left alone, to be free from the intrusions of government. Once branded as a scary ultraconservative, Goldwater spent much of his time in the American political wilderness. But by the end, the outspoken, silver-haired Senator with the trademark black-rimmed glasses found that the country had moved sufficiently toward him and that he was in the center of the Republican Party.

The son of Arizona's largest dry-goods merchandiser, young Barry started out in the family business. In 1949 he was so disgusted with the corrupt city government in Phoenix that he ran for city council. Three years later he was elected to the Senate on Dwight Eisenhower's coattails. But he never would be, as he put it, a "me-too Republican." Goldwater summed up his views in *The Conscience of a Conservative* (1960): "My aim is not to pass laws, but to repeal them. It is not to inaugurate new programs, but to cancel old ones that do violence to the Constitution."



RUSSELL LONG



THOMAS P. (TIP) O'NEILL

Goldwater's uncompromising libertarianism was appealing enough to both small-town Republicans and big-city wheeler-dealers to give him the 1964 presidential nomination, although he was crushed in a landslide of historic proportions. Today he sees it all as a kind of *felix culpa*, a happy fall. "It never bothered me. We accomplished what we wanted to accomplish. We broke the Eastern Establishment's hold on the G.O.P. We moved it westward." The campaign also inspired another Western conservative by the name of Ronald Reagan.

Goldwater never minced words. During the Watergate crisis in 1974, he journeyed to the White House to tell Richard Nixon that he had lost his support on Capitol Hill. In the 1980s, when many thought of him as a kind of political relic, he achieved perhaps his greatest effectiveness. Although he was never a Senate insider (he was far too blunt and unpredictable for that), as chairman of the Armed Services Committee he won what he considers his most important victory, the passage of the 1986 Defense Reorganization Act, which streamlines the byzantine military decision-making process.

At 77, Goldwater is jaundiced about the political process: "We've got Senators here with over 100 staff members, and they don't have anything to do, so they sit down and write amendments and bills. My God, the number of bills on the calendar every year is unbeliev-

able. [Senators] have the feeling that if they aren't re-elected the country's going to hell. We've had over 1,500 Senators in the history of the country, and it's hard for me to remember the names of any of 'em."

### A Voice for Moderation

They were high-minded, sometimes high-handed, moderate Republicans from the Eastern Establishment, and they ran the party—and the nation—during the Eisenhower years, combining a progressive outlook on social issues with a pragmatic one on international affairs. They are nearly all gone now, shunted aside by the more populist conservatism of the Age of Reagan. One of the last of that breed, the soft-spoken, easygoing Charles McC. Mathias Jr. of Maryland, is leaving the Senate in exactly the manner in which he served there: with quiet detachment and dignity.

Throughout his career, Mathias, 64, often behaved as though the Senate were his avocation rather than his vocation. He seemed to serve neither Republican nor Democratic interests but the private party of his own views, establishing a consistent history of supporting civil rights, voting rights and arms control. He was one of the first Republicans to call for an end to the Viet Nam War, and he was the only Republican Senator to vote against the Reagan tax cut of 1981.

Mathias' family had been active

Maryland Republicans since before the Civil War, so it was natural for the former city prosecutor from Frederick to run for the House in 1960. He served four terms before running for the Senate in 1968 and squeaking into office in a state where Democrats outnumber Republicans almost 3 to 1.

Mathias was most effective on the Senate Judiciary Committee, where he fought off efforts to tinker with the Constitution through amendments to permit school prayer, outlaw abortion and require a balanced budget. He paid for his positions when Republicans won control of the Senate in 1980: conservatives persuaded Strom Thurmond to pass up the job as chairman of the powerful Armed Services Committee and take over Judiciary in order to block Mathias from the post. That maneuver stung Mathias and contributed to his lonely independence.

Mathias' 1980 re-election campaign cost \$841,000, an amount he found indecent. Told that he would have to raise \$4 million this year, he balked. "You know," Mathias observes, "Barry Goldwater said a couple of years ago that all of this money is a crisis of liberty. That was the phrase he used and it is not overstating it. It has gotten so pervasive that the Senate schedule now adjusts to fund raisers."

The Senate of today, Mathias believes, has lost its mission. "We are trying to do more things than we have ever done before. It is a serious, serious problem to get 100 people in the Senate so

organized that they can really pay attention to these subjects. We are writing legislation instead of dealing with principles and policies. We are worried about the commas."

## The Ultimate Insider

With a down-home story on his lips, a hand on someone's elbow and a deal in his vest pocket, Russell Long almost always got what he wanted during his 38 years in the Senate. The agile, garrulous Senator from Louisiana and longtime chairman of the powerful Finance Committee was the ultimate Senate insider who followed his own Golden Rule of politics: Do unto me, and I will do unto you. What Long usually wanted was quite specific: something for the state of Louisiana.

Long, 68, the son of the legendary populist Senator Huey Long, was elected to the Senate in 1948, one day shy of his 30th birthday. But he was not shy about anything when he arrived on the Hill. Ignoring the tradition that new Senators should listen and learn from their elders, he made his first speech in defense of the filibuster, and he rose to speak no fewer than 469 times in his freshman year. Throughout his career, he would use the filibuster time and again in efforts to block civil rights legislation.

In many ways, Long was the spitting image of his daddy. Both were flamboyant orators, given to bursts of wild energy and extravagant gestures. But whereas the father was a radical who preached a sharing of the wealth and derided the Senate's old-boy clubbiness, the son was known to court Big Business and never felt so comfortable as in the clannish, wood-paneled environs of the Capitol.

Long was short on ideology; he was a dealmaker, not a thinker. In closed-door negotiating sessions, Long would look a recalcitrant Senator in the eye and say, "What do you want?" If he could, he would provide it. When Long's hard bargaining aroused tension, he relieved it with a backwoods tale. He was ever ready to repay favors done for him, and many Senators who did not care for his politics loved the man.

"He knows the tax code," William Proxmire once said of Long, "as thoroughly as the Pope knows the Lord's Prayer." As head of the Finance Committee, Long defended tax laws beneficial to Louisiana's oil and gas industry, which no doubt also benefited him, as he inherited considerable oil and gas stock from his father. Although Long was not a frequent sponsor of legislation, he was proud of the bills he did initiate. These included the voluntary tax checkoff provision for presidential campaigns and an earned income tax credit which helps the working poor. Asked to define a tax loophole, Long offered his famous dictum: "Something that benefits the other guy. If it benefits you, it is tax reform."

When he had to surrender the Finance Committee leadership after the Republicans took over the Senate in 1980, Long seemed to shrink a bit. He had modeled himself on the freewheeling style of Southern Senators who dominated the chamber when he first arrived there. But Long realized that the days of the back-room operators were over, and he does not think the change is all to the good. "There's been a great deal of fragmentation," he says. "While a lot of it looks like democracy, to a large extent it tends to go toward confusion and chaos." Long had a few sacrosanct rules that he tried never to violate. "Aside from just being responsible and doing the job, Senators ought to keep their word to each

other," he says. "If you make a commitment, you ought to keep it."

politics: ringing doorbells, listening to constituents, handing out favors. Then, when O'Neill went to Washington in 1953 after winning Massachusetts' 8th Congressional District (John F. Kennedy's old seat), he was adopted by the savvy John McCormack, dean of the Massachusetts delegation and later Speaker of the House. McCormack opened doors for him, and today O'Neill calls his "father-son" relationship with McCormack his "greatest break."

During the 1950s Democrats considered O'Neill a loyal team player, not a leader. But in the '60s Tip began to assert himself. In 1967 he became one of the first Democrats to break with Lyndon Johnson over the Viet Nam War, a switch inspired by the antiwar sentiments of his own children. When O'Neill took over as Speaker in 1977, however, the congressional Democrats had become a fragmented hodgepodge of voices. The seniority system had been jettisoned, and young House members were impatient for power. O'Neill sought unity through compromise. He knew how to listen and was able to span generational and regional gaps. He understood, said one lawmaker, that party meetings were designed not to decide things but to let aggrieved members vent their spleen.

Ronald Reagan's election provided O'Neill with his most disappointing defeats—and brightest victories. Tip was the only Democrat big enough to become the principal antagonist to his fellow Irishman. In 1981 the President's winning combination of Republicans and Boll Weevils rolled over O'Neill and fellow liberals to impose budget and tax cuts. Republicans even had hopes of winning control of the House. But the following year O'Neill counterattacked, taking his stand against the Administration's intention to cut Social Security. "We're the ones that developed Middle America," he said, "and we ought not to run away from the things that made America." In the fall elections, House Democrats gained 26 seats.

O'Neill has taken on the President repeatedly on such issues as the MX missile, Central America and Star Wars. He has also set out to debunk Reagan's rosy vision of the American past. "There is no such thing as the good old days," he says. O'Neill remembers the Depression and points out that it was Democratic social legislation that helped relieve the poverty of that era. "We had the great laws: Social Security, Medicare, the G.I. Bill. We educated millions of Americans under that bill." In his farewell speech to the House, where he received a bipartisan standing ovation, O'Neill said, "I leave with no rancor in my heart for anyone. I will always be a man of the House of Representatives. But first, I'm an American, and so proud of this body." —By Richard Stengel. Reported by Michael Duffy and Neil MacNeil/Washington



GOLDWATER (1953)



MATHIAS (1961)



LONG (1948)



O'NEILL (1952)

## The Man of the House

With his sheath of white hair, his bulbous nose and whalelike body, Tip O'Neill is a caricaturist's dream. Over the past decade, cartoonists have made the Speaker of the House almost as familiar an American icon as Uncle Sam. Though Republicans depicted Democrat O'Neill, 73, as the incarnation of bloated liberalism, the Speaker actually stands for something both larger and smaller: the beliefs that Government should help remedy the inequities of society and that a politician should help those in his own backyard. "All politics is local," O'Neill liked to say; he built his career around that maxim.

Thomas P. O'Neill Jr. had two political forebears. His father, a Boston city councilman, taught him the give-and-take of local