

Lesson for Politicians (And Us All)

John Cornelius Stennis (1901 -1995) was a United States senator from the state of Mississippi. A Democrat, he served in the Senate for more than 41 years, becoming the most senior member for his last eight years. He retired from the Senate in 1989.

With all the rancor and divisiveness among politicians in both the Democrat and Republican parties today, an incident involving Stennis could teach our public servants an important lesson.

It had been a long day on Capitol Hill for Senator Stennis. He was looking forward to a bit of relaxation when he got home. After parking the car, he began to walk toward the front door.

Then it happened: Two people came out of the darkness, robbed him and shot him twice. News of the shooting of Senator Stennis, chairman of the powerful Armed Forces Committee, shocked Washington and the nation.

For nearly seven hours, Senator Stennis was on the operating table at Walter Reed Hospital. Another politician was driving home when he heard about the shooting. He turned his car around and drove directly to the hospital. When he got there, he noticed the staff was swamped and could not keep up with the incoming calls about the senator's condition. So he spotted an unattended switchboard, sat down and voluntarily went to work.

He continued taking calls until daylight. Sometime during that next day, he stood up, stretched, put on his overcoat, and just before leaving, he introduced himself to the other operator.

"I'm Mark Hatfield. Happy to help out." Then Senator Hatfield walked out. The press could hardly handle that story. There seemed to be no way for a conservative Republican to give a liberal Democrat a tip of the hat, let alone spend hours doing a menial task on behalf of someone on the other side of the aisle.

Hatfield served 30 years as a United States Senator from Oregon and was a two-term governor of that state before his election to the Senate.

It takes a big person to keep differences of opinion from disrupting personal and professional relationships.

Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor (Romans 12:10 ESV).

– Beecher Hunter