

Brian Lamb - C-Span
Washington D.C.

Nov. 25, 1997

O.B.K.

Sir,

The book interview with Anita Hill Sunday night was excellent; I watched the rerun a couple of hours later because I wondered why.

I think partly it's because of what she said in the last 5 minutes about the kind of interview she would expose herself to. Partly it's my own reaction to events since the committee hearing in 1991.

I have no interest in taking sides in a dispute so my interest in watching the Judiciary Committee was to see what was happening as a news event.

During the earlier questioning of Judge Thomas I thought he did not have a strong case for Senate approval; so I was surprised to see the reports of a leak to news mediums about Anita Hill & her subsequent appearance before a televised hearing. I have always assumed the leak was by a Democratic Senator or his staff. In the years since 1991 I have studied mannerisms of Senators in different situations & have my own secret opinion that the leak was by Sen. Leahy or by a staffer on his orders.

I recalled watching Pres. Bush's announcement in Maine of Judge Thomas' nomination. I had 2 strong impressions of watching that on TV news: 1) That Bush could say with a straight face that Judge Thomas was the most meritorious prospect for the Supreme Court; and 2) on that occasion, a lawdry "reporter" for CNN asked Pres. Bush if he had monkeyed with a woman 20 years or so before while married to Barbara Bush. The President's reply was in fine taste.

That came to mind at the hearing, when it came out that the alleged harassment took place 12 or 13 years before. At the end of the committee hearing, I thought that Anita Hill and Judge Thomas were equally credible.

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For this reason, I accepted the full Senate ~~to~~ vote 52-48 that approved the nomination. By the time of that vote, the issue was not so much the merits or qualifications but whether one takes sides between Miss Hill or Judge Thomas. I thought it was good that the vote was so close in order to tell Thomas not to feel too cocky. I noted that one of my Illinois Senators voted for Thomas.

I was surprised at the huge backlash by women over the issue of sexual discrimination, a social problem which apparently permeated American life & I had no inkling of it until then.

The following year Sen. Al Dixon's term expired. As an Illinois voter I was not interested in his political career, as I had voted in Republican primaries in Illinois & Al the Pal had a long political career. At the time of the Illinois primary election of 1992, my favorite among the Republican candidates for Pres. had already dropped out (Governor of Tennessee) and I turned to the Democratic primary. There was still a choice & I favored Gov. Clinton, but I could not vote for Senator. The reason was that Sen. Dixon and a Chicago lawyer were flooding TV ads with negative slashes, and I was unaware of a third Demo candidate, a Chicago woman, as a serious choice, so I didn't vote for Senator. Then Carol M. Braun was nominated and pundits said it was a backlash against Sen. Dixon's vote for Judge Thomas.

In the fall election, I voted for Clinton for Pres. I voted for Carol M. Braun for Senator because she was riding on Clinton's coat-tails & would follow his middle-of-the-road agenda for at least her first 4 years; and her Republican opponent was a political dinosaur from Gold Coast of Chicago. In the Booknotes interview, Anita Hill said her part in the Thomas hearing had an impact on the Illinois Senate race.

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I agree that Anita Hill exercised good taste & judgment in waiting 6 years to tell how everything affected her life, rather than re-hash the hearing or the personality clash there between 2 Yale-educated colored people.

In the meantime, 2 books came out on Hill-Thomas issue and both authors were interviewed on Booknotes. I can't remember the names of either author now, but the first book was a hatchet job on Miss Hill by a young conservative man, so I understand. I was impressed with his credentials and apparent scholarship at the time, but I wondered why anyone would buy an expensive book about Anita Hill then. The second book was a strong emotional support, with many legal facts, by a female protagonist. I wondered then why Anita Hill, an articulate law professor, could not speak for herself. Now she has done that & the previous 2 books are worthless in comparison.

After the 1992 elections, Sen. Dixon became chairman of the last base closure commission. I had been greatly impressed by the integrity & fairness of the ~~pre~~ commission in previous years. The commission was getting down to the toughest political nuts to crack in an objective way, and I wondered how Dixon would do. I saw most of its hearings on C-Span & I was impressed with the fine job that he did.

As for Senator Carol M. Braun, she generally did a very good job ~~she~~ during her first 4 years, which vindicated my vote for her. But Illinois no longer needs her services, I think, & so by next spring I will study the candidates of both parties for Illinois Senator.

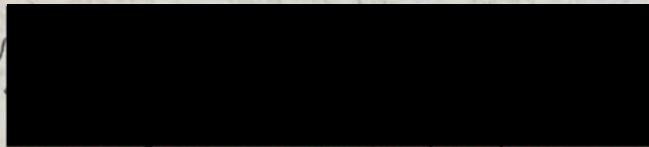
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It was an interesting invitation on Booknotes interview for Anita Hill to comment on the Senators on the Judiciary committee. As a lawyer, she was adroit at characterizing the ones who stood out in her mind.

The 2 Senators who stood out on that panel, to me, were Sen. Hatch & Sen. Specter of Penn. - partly because they were so adversarial to a character witness and partly for a reason which baffles me even now - and that is, that both Senators sat side by side and they both have large pockets of fat on both sides of their mouths. I wondered if that was Mother Nature's way of describing them. I was puzzled about that impression because both of them obviously were never overweight.

Sincerely,



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