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Perhaps Washington's most effective lobbyist, Thomas Hale Boggs Jr. stops for a coffee break after returning from the Hill. By Bill Sneed—The Washington Post

'One-Stop Shopping'

How a Law Firm Works the New Marketplace of Influence

"We don't get paid to be philosophers."

—Thomas Hale Boggs Jr.

By Paul Taylor
Washington Post Staff Writer

The law firm of Patton, Boggs & Blow—the young, swashbuckling state-of-the-art Washington lobbying house of its era—declines to philosophize about many matters, among them trade policy.

"Our approach is to take the first case that comes in the door," said Bart S. Fisher, head of the firm's 15-lawyer trade section.

"That means working both sides of the street. And we've been quite successful at it. We've taken the domestic-protection side for some clients, the free-trade side for others.

"With most lawyers in town, if you tell me where he works, I can tell you the next line out of his mouth on a trade issue," continued Fisher, a hyperactive man with an unquenchable thirst for self-promotion and a disarmingly blunt way of talking about his profession. "With us, we hope when we work the corridors on a trade issue we sort of have 'em guessing."

Like many of the young specialists at PB&B, a

firm that in the past dozen years grew from 10 to 80 lawyers, by providing the lawyers' version of "one-stop shopping" to any client with any kind of Washington problem, Fisher, 40, has built up a dazzlingly lucrative practice in a relatively short time.

While most of what he does is quite technical (he once wrote a 38-page brief on why imported doll houses should be classified as "models made to scale")

GLADIATORS FOR HIRE

PART TWO

rather than toys so that they would qualify for a more favorable tariff), sooner or later his work always comes around to the age-old Washington imperative: He's got to persuade somebody in government to tilt things his clients' way.

For that, Fisher has a simple formula: "I drown them in paper, then Tommy takes them to lunch."

"Tommy" is Thomas Hale Boggs Jr., who at age 42 is by many people's lights the most effective of the

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Law Firm Builds 'Mini-Coalitions' Out of Client Base

LOBBY, From A1

15,000 to 20,000 Washington lobbyists who represent organized appetites at the table of government. He is, people say, the Clark Clifford or Thomas (Tommy the Cork) Corcoran of his generation.

The accolades are nice, but Boggs knows they have a double edge, for his profession has been consigned to the shadows of public esteem since the lobbies of the Athenian Senate first began filling with special-interest pleaders.

In this country, the history of lobbying has been a rogues' saga. The storied tools of the trade have been booze, broads and black bags. And these tawdry stereotypes persist into the modern era, in the person a Tong-sun Park, for example.

But the fact that episodes of skulduggery persist (and always will) should not obscure the reality that lobbying has changed dramatically in the past few decades in ways that make it on the whole cleaner, more professional and more pervasive.

The changes mirror the changes in government. Gone are the days when a small circle of "button-pushers" ran the government. As their power has been watered down, so too has the temptation for lobbyists to influence them illegally. Why pay off Committee Chairman X if he can't deliver the quid for the quo?

Gone, too, are the days when the business of government was conducted in the dark. Now the threat of public exposure is ever present, and presumably that keeps the darker adventurism of the lobbyists in check.

Moreover, the communications explosion has created new and massive demands on each member of Congress to justify each vote back home or stand accountable at the next election. So members of Congress have developed voracious appetites for information, for arguments, for briefs, for position papers. To keep them well fed, the lobbying community has given itself over to the lawyers, the economists, the "experts."

Finally, the skyrocketing expense of getting elected—the cost of congressional campaigns has risen during the past three decades at more than twice the rate of inflation—has turned members into round-the-clock supplicants for funds. Here, too, the lobbyists are only too eager to oblige, and better yet, they operate within a framework of campaign financing laws that encourages, almost demands, their full participation.

Boggs is a transitional figure in all this. As the child of Washington button-pusher Hale Boggs, who was the majority leader of the House, he bounced on the knee of everyone worth knowing when that was still a small club. As an adult, he has built the most lucrative lobbying practice in town around his recognition of how rapidly his youthful vision of power in Washington had grown obsolete.

But Boggs excels at what he does not merely because he understands the new marketplace of influence: lots of people here do. He also succeeds because, though no Boy Scout, he possesses some highly conventional Boy Scout virtues:

He works hard. "Being a good lobbyist is like running a good restaurant," said fellow lobbyist Robert McCandless, "you've got to spend a helluva lot of time in the kitchen. Tommy does." In the heavy political season, Boggs often works 16-hour days and sometimes goes to three fund-raisers a night.

He is smart, both quick-smart and substantive-smart. "This business of Tommy taking care of the who-you-know and the rest of us in the firm taking care of the what-you-know is a lot of crap," said Ernest Christian Jr., the firm's top tax policy lawyer. "Tommy knows that tax code pretty damn well." He apprenticed for four years on the staff of Congress' Joint Economic Committee.

He is generous. "Tommy knows," said one colleague, "that in this town especially, bread cast upon the waters returns a thousand-fold. Whenever he's had a chance to help someone out who really needs it, he does."

For example, Boggs made sizable personal contributions to the campaigns of a number of the Abscam congressmen, and he phoned some members last year hoping to derail the threatened expulsion of then-Sen. Harrison (Pete) Williams (D-N.J.). For a lobbyist to invest in "condemned property" brings no immediate return, but it does get him remembered as a stand-up guy, and among politicians there is almost no higher praise. "I thought Pete got a raw deal," Boggs said.

He isn't greedy. "Tommy knows," said lobbyist J.D. Williams, with whom Boggs keeps a running banter about who's the biggest wheel in town, "that bears make money and bulls make money but pigs don't. When he beats you, he tries to leave something in the pot so it doesn't sting so bad."

He thinks the world of the politicians he lobbies. The admiration doesn't have to be faked, and it is probably his most bankable virtue. "I have a son's respect for his parents' profession," he said.

The decor in Boggs' office is dominated by his father's portrait and memorabilia. Everyone said Hale Boggs (D-La.) was brilliant and complex and more liberal than his district and one ornery critter when he was drunk. In 1972, he disappeared on an airplane flight in Alaska. The plane has never been found. His widow, Corrine (Lindy), who grew up on a sugar plantation and went to boarding schools but learned how to bait her own hook, took over his seat in Congress.

"Dad never said anything good about anybody, and Mom never said anything bad," Boggs said. People who know the family say Tommy is more like his father but without the sharp edges. "When you're a lobbyist, you don't have to tell people 'no' so much, and that helps keep the edges smooth," said one friend of father and son.

The son grew up hooked on the family business. He managed his father's later campaigns (including the crucial one for majority leader, for which he compiled detailed information on the wants and needs of each Democratic representative). And he once ran for Congress himself, in Montgomery County, Md., in 1970. It was a lackluster effort that he now says he's delighted went nowhere.

"At the time a congressman's salary seemed awfully attractive. Now I couldn't afford it," he said, flaunting his financial success with a good ole boy's unashamed golly-gee wonder at it all. (Friends suspect that routine is part put-on; they say they think that Boggs may yearn for things besides money—respectability? a Cabinet post?—but isn't comfortable about letting on).

"Members of Congress work their panties off," the respectful son continued. "If you took the 535 of them and stacked them up against 535 of the top people who sit around corporate board rooms, I'd take the congressmen for sheer brain power any day."

Boggs' favored 535 not only aren't dumb, they also aren't immune to the seductions of genuine admiration. It helps create a kind of tribal bond between them and Boggs—and this bond is *very* good for Boggs' business.

PATTON, BOGGS & BLOW — 1982 LOBBYING CLIENTS

THE FOLLOWING LIST IS TAKEN FROM THE LOBBYING REPORTS FILED QUARTERLY WITH CONGRESS.

Akai America, Ltd.	Lasco Shipping Inc., Portland, Ore.
American College of Mortgage Attorneys	Litton Industries, Inc., Beverly Hills, Calif.
American Congress of Surveyors and Mappers	Lockheed Aircraft
American Express Co.	LOOP, Inc., New Orleans
American International Automobile Dealers Association	Los Angeles Olympic Commemorative Coin Committee
American Maritime Association	Loss Reserve Deduction Committee
American Movers Conference	Marathon Oil Co.
American President Lines	Mars Inc.
American Retail Federation	MCI Telecommunications, Inc.
American Society of Association Executives	Mitsubishi Electric Corp. of America
Armoc, Inc., Middletown, Ohio	Mocatta Metals Corp., New York
ArtPac	Multi Mineral Corp., New York
Asociacion de Amigos del Pais, Guatemala	National Association of Retail Druggists
Asociacion de Azucareros de Guatemala, Guatemala	National Association of Small Business Investment Companies
Association of Trial Lawyers of America	National Cable Television Association
Burlington Industries, Inc.	National Association for Port Progress
The Business Roundtable	National Marine Manufacturers Association, Chicago
California Westside Farmers	NEC Electronics (USA) Inc.
Capital Centre	New Process Company
Chicago Board Options Exchange	The National Multi-Housing Council
Gallery-Judge Grove, Wash., D.C.	National Soft Drink Association
Castle & Cooke, Inc., San Francisco	Northwest Enegy Corp., Salt Lake City
Central America Sugar Council	Ocean Minerals Co., Mountain View, Calif.
Chrysler Corp.	OSG Bulk Ships, Inc., New York
City Investing Company	Options Clearing Corp., Chicago
City National Bank of Beverly Hills, Calif.	Penn Central Corp.
Conoco, Inc.	Pepsico, Inc., Purchase, N.Y.
Coupon Bond Tax Committee	Readers Digest Association, Inc., Pleasantville, N.Y.
Council of State Chambers of Commerce, Committee on State Taxation	Redwood Industry Park Committee, Menlo Park, Calif.
Donaldson, Lufkin & Jenrette, Inc., New York	Retail Tax Committee, Wash., D.C.
Dredging Industry Size Standards Committee	Rockwell International Corp., Arlington, Va.
Duty Free Shoppers, Ltd., Honolulu	Sansui Electronics Corp.
E.G.G. Industries, Wellesly, Mass.	Sanyo Electronics, Inc.
Fluor Corporation	Sharp Electronics Corp.
Energy Research Corp., Danbury, Conn.	St. Joe Minerals
Hampton-Windsor Corp., New York	Sheridan-Kalorama Neighborhood Council, Wash., D.C.
Hitachi Sales Corp. of America	Sony Corporation of America
Hobby Industry of America, Elmwood, N.J.	SSIE Council to Protect Earned Employment Rights, Wash., D.C.
E.F. Hutton Life Insurance Company	State of Louisiana, Department of Conservation
INDECO, Inc.	Sultanate of Oman
Institute of Scrap Iron and Steel, Inc.	Toshiba American, Inc.
International Cogeneration Society	US JVC Corporation
	Wilshire Oil Company of Texas
	Ziess Avionics Systems, Inc.

His business works this way: He has relatively few clients on retainer, so he must in effect reinvent himself every legislative season, attracting a steady parade of new clients on the strength of a steady output of victories.

And they do come: the Chrysler Corp. wanting federal loan guarantees; the trial lawyers wanting protection from no-fault insurance proposals; the candy manufacturers wanting protection from the Federal Trade Commission; an association of Guatemalan sugar companies wanting help on quotas and price supports; the Marathon Oil Co. wanting congressional help in a corporate takeover battle; MCI Inc. wanting legislation enacted to ease its raid on AT&T's long distance monopoly; the Fluor Co. fighting the railroads over coal slurry pipelines; the Sony Corp. trying to fend off the entertainment industry's bid to impose copyright fees on the sale of video cassette recorders, to name a few.

"More than half of Tommy's business is new every year," said Timothy May, a senior PB&B partner with a far more stable retainer-based practice lobbying the Postal Service. "It's a terrible burden; you're always wondering who the next client will be. But Tommy thrives on it."

What Boggs sells to these clients is his personal bond with members of Congress and his intimate knowledge of the quirky ways the Hill works.

"Congress is the sort of place that doesn't make sense to a businessman," said Lawrence Meyer, a PB&B partner who specializes in antitrust work. "Alliances are ephemeral and keep shifting, the path of legislation is almost always irregular. Businessmen aren't comfortable with the way the place works, but they know Tommy is. And since they're comfortable with *him*, it's a perfect fit."

What Boggs also sells his clients, to a surprising degree, is each other. Coalition lobbying has for a decade been the rage in Washington, another example of a service industry accommodating to the shifting demands of its marketplace. In a policy-making arena where power is diffuse, it makes sense for lots of different special interest pleaders to gang up on an issue: They broaden their coverage and intensify their pressure.

PB&B can often build "mini-coalitions" out of its floating client base of 400 to 500 corporations and associations. And from that power base, it can reach out to other appropriate pockets of influence in the business community. Of course, this kind of thing feeds itself: New clients are always attracted to law firms operating in the center ring.

But coalition lobbying has a down side, too. Whenever a broad mix of groups bands together, interests may overlap, but they are rarely identical. Sometimes a lobbyist spends all his energy refereeing intramural disputes. For that reason Boggs believes that defensive coalitions (groups of interests trying to prevent something from happening to them) generally work better than offensive ones. And he's a little bit wary these days of the whole exercise in any form.

Boggs got stung last year when he tried to build a lobbying coalition to save the controversial safe-harbor leasing provisions of the 1981 Economic Recovery Tax Act. He had hoped to marry the profit-starved corporate sellers of tax breaks (his client was Chrysler) to the well-to-do corporate buyers. It never quite worked.

"We need to get some advocacy from the buyer companies, but they started having guilt trips as soon as leasing blew up in the press," he said during the heat of the battle last year. "What we need is to get their D.C. guys to get the corporate presidents to come out of the closet. But they're reluctant. Even though leasing is a good deal for them, it's also a good deal for the have-not companies, and the business community tends to think of its have-nots as all victims of bad management who don't deserve to be saved."

The marriage never was made, and safe-harbor leasing was killed by Congress in 1982, a notable defeat for PB&B (among others).

Because of Boggs' name, his success, his high profile and his gregarious good ole boy charm, and because of the studied anonymity of the other two-thirds of his letterhead (James S. Patton Jr.: "If I go down in history with no one ever knowing how to spell my name, that's fine with me." George Blow: "While you may consider it old-fashioned, it has never been my policy to discuss a law practice with the press."), most of insider Washington tends to think of PB&B solely as "Tommy's firm." Nothing could be further from the truth.

There is one other good reason people reach that conclusion—the firm's personality and Boggs' are so much alike.

Like him, it's can-do, it's entrepreneurial, it's a little bit sassy ("People think access is the name of the game in lobbying," said partner May. "Well, I'll tell you how I get all the access I need: I sue. You can find out whatever you need to know from executive branch officials by depositing them. And if they think you're going to sue again, then by God they return your phone calls."), and it isn't afraid of the bold gambit. "We may be litigating the hell out of an issue for a client and suddenly decide, hey, let's try to move some legislation on the Hill," said Boggs.

Boggs and his firm share another trait: They flaunt the Hired-Gun Ethic of Washington more openly than most. The firm's cool, sleek, Scandinavian-modern offices almost seem to cry out from each abstract painting and every glass-and-chrome coffee table: We're younger; we're tougher, and by God we sell ourselves to the highest bidder!

Boggs would never put it quite that nakedly. Neither would Patton, the real architect and master-builder of the firm, and a smoothly aggressive southern gentleman.

"Quite frankly, the term 'hired gun' offends me," Patton said in a rare interview. "I prefer to think of our people as gladiators." So be it.

It was Patton who in 1966 hired Boggs, freshly minted with night-school law degree from Georgetown, for \$12,000-a-year into what was then a modest, three-year-old, four-lawyer firm. It may have been the smartest thing either man ever did, though the verdict was not unanimous at the time.

"My father was disappointed," Boggs recalled. "He had gone to a great deal of effort to make sure I was interviewed at all the Big Daddy firms in town. We never had much money, and the best he could give me was heritage and opportunity, and here I was not taking advantage of 'opportunity.' He said I was stupid."

Boggs and Patton got along famously from the start. In many ways they are different, but in one key respect they're identical: two savvy entrepreneurs masquerading as lawyers.

Among lobbyists/fund-raisers, calculations go on all the time over their built-in conflicts, but they dwell on the self-preservation aspect of the game. Do you hurt yourself with Client A by raising funds for Congressman B? Will Incumbent Y remember you gave to Challenger Z? Most Gladiators' bottom line: Over the long haul, the more money you raise (no matter for whom), the better off you will be.

As for the thornier part of the conflict problem—what do you do when a client's position on a policy matter is out of step with your own?—PB&B lobbyist and former representative James O'Hara (D-Mich.) is more willing than most to talk openly:

"There are some places you draw a very sharp line. I would never get involved with an OSHA problem because I was one of the original sponsors of the bill creating OSHA. But other times, you *do* end up working with people you would have opposed if you were still in Congress.

"On something like the Alaska lands bill, if I'd been in Congress I probably wouldn't have gotten into it too deeply and would have gone along with Mo Udall and the environmentalists. But as a lobbyist I worked for the timber companies. Well, maybe it's a rationalization but that one didn't bother me that much. I'm more a parks-for-the-people guy than a wilderness buff, and I get a little turned off by the wilderness crowd."

For many lobbyists, the really gnawing problem has to do with image, not ethics. They say they're at peace with themselves but that it grates that the rest of the world looks at them a little funny.

Consider the angst of one top tax lobbyist, who asked not to be identified. He regards himself among the half-dozen most knowledgeable tax policy experts in this town, and many other serious people would second that judgment. "I practically wrote accelerated depreciation in this very office," he said. But do people *really* consider him an expert or must he always wallow in the odor that attaches itself to a mere lobbyist? "My problem is that I have clients," he said.

Other Gladiators find this sort of hand-wringing amusing. Loyd Hackler, president of the American Retail Federation, tells a joke about the relentless self-consciousness of his profession, "I get into a cab and the cabbie asks me what I do. I tell him I'm a lobbyist. He slams on the brakes, pulls over to the curb, turns around and takes a good hard look at me. 'I been hacking on K Street for 14 years,' he says, 'and I've been waiting to meet one of you guys.'"

If humor isn't enough, lobbyists can always resort to the pragmatism they picked up in law school. "Sure you sometimes get clients whose cases maybe aren't the best," said Robert S. Strauss, the head of the Washington office of Akin, Gump, Strauss, Hauer & Feld, "but you've got to remember they didn't hire you to be a judge. They hired you to be an advocate."

And pretty soon the ethic becomes to flaunt one's amorality because, quite frankly, it's easier on everyone all around, especially the clients.

And yet . . . and yet.

One half suspects that a lot of these lobbyists—who are bright and who play hard at public policy and who presumably have their own notions about what's good for the country—go home at night and whip out their own private tally sheets. Maybe they don't talk about it but that doesn't mean they don't keep score.

Every now and then, they may even reveal themselves in polite conversation. Not long ago Boggs, the town's most disarming amoralist, was handicapping the prospects for a customs matter he was lobbying on. Amid his familiar calculations about this congressman's district and that interest group's money, he chimed in out of nowhere. "We also happen to be on the right side of this one."

"It's easier when you're on the right side."