GEORGE H. W. BUSH ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

TRANSCRIPT

INTERVIEW WITH CRAIG FULLER

May 12, 2004
Charlottesville, Virginia

Interviewers

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Knott: …Just to talk a bit about ground rules. In about three months or so you should be receiving a raw transcript and you can at that time make any changes that you wish, including striking things if you wish or you can alter the language.

Fuller: Okay. So I can speak freely?

Knott: You can speak freely, absolutely. Whatever you say in this room, will stay in this room until the entire [Ronald] Reagan transcripts are open, which will probably be late 2005.

Fuller: Oh really, that will be fascinating.

Knott: By the time the project is completed, we will have done about 40 Reagan interviews, maybe 45. We've gotten a good group of people; it's been very successful.

Fuller: That's great.

Knott: The transcripts will be housed both here and at the Reagan Library in Simi Valley. Also, in your case at the Bush Library, College Station.

Fuller: Great.

Knott: You a sports fan?

Fuller: I'm not a great sports fan, I must confess. I blame it on my college roommates. They took the sports section and I took business and politics.

Knott: Where did you go to school?

Fuller: UCLA [University of California, Los Angeles].

Knott: Keep in touch with your alma mater?

Fuller: I have not done a great job of that. A little bit. Some of the people I know there, at various times, particularly when I was in government, came to visit. I keep in touch with it more now; my brother is actually a professor at Berkeley. I just had lunch with him yesterday. He had some colleagues from UCLA, so it's always nice to catch up. I've been back to the campus, it's

probably now four years ago, but I don't get back that often. It's great fun when I do, catch up and see some of the folks who are still there.

Knott: Do you and your Berkeley professor brother see eye-to-eye politically?

Fuller: No, actually he's been the lifelong Democrat and I've been the lifelong Republican. Our parents, I'm sure they were registered Republican but they were really not very political at all, so everybody wonders there. At one point when I worked in the White House, my brother was actually working for Governor Jerry Brown, which was amusing. He's two years younger.

Knott: A youthful indiscretion.

Fuller: Right.

Erickson: Sounds like my brother.

Fuller: Really? We're very close, and it's been fun because we've got obviously great relationships on both sides. He's worked for some of the great liberals in the California legislature.

Erickson: My brother has lived out in California for about the last three years. I think that's actually what turned him to the left.

Fuller: I see. It may have been.

Erickson: My parents are quite disappointed.

Chidester: Now, now, I'm from California. It doesn't happen to all of us.

Knott: Yours is in?

Erickson: San Diego.

Knott: Thank you again, Craig Fuller, for joining us today. This is an oral history interview for both the Bush and Reagan projects. We've gone over the ground rules in terms of the status of the transcript and your right to make any changes that you want to make.

Fuller: Great. I understand it, and I appreciate it.

Knott: Why don't we begin by asking you to tell us a bit about your first experiences in politics and government.

Fuller: I was a political science major at UCLA from 1969 to 1973. I guess I'd always somehow found myself involved in student government of one kind of another. One of the opportunities I had at UCLA as a sophomore, so it would have been 1971, was to lead UCLA's government internship program in Sacramento, which was actually ironic, because I'd grown up in Walnut Creek, near Sacramento. I knew Sacramento pretty well. I told them I didn't want to go to Sacramento; I wanted to go to Washington, D.C. They said, "You're only a sophomore. Why don't you run the Sacramento program? It's a fairly small program." They eventually persuaded

me. Of course, at the time Richard Nixon was President and Ronald Reagan was Governor. The fateful call not to go to Washington probably is what led me to Washington eventually.

I ran the program and I happened to run into some of Governor Reagan's cabinet officers, who thought that a student from UCLA who promised them really fine interns was perhaps a better arrangement than the large group of interns they were getting from UC-Berkeley. So we went from an offering of, I don't know, eight to ten summer internships, to we actually had 90 different offerings. True to my word, we filled 40 to 45 of them with people that we felt were good for the assignments. I took the job for the summer at the Department of General Services, but in the process met the people around Governor Reagan, including Ed Meese, Mike Deaver, a fellow named Peter Hannaford. Those relationships formed in that summer of '71 have been relationships that have been part of my life ever since.

I did meet the Governor and was impressed with him and spent time interviewing and talking with him. He certainly left a strong impression.

Knott: That was your first meeting with him?

Fuller: Actually, my first meeting with him was when I was in high school. I was at Boy's State, so at the Sacramento Fair Grounds, I first met Ronald Reagan, which would have been in about 1968. That was also an experience where he was certainly almost at that point, in many ways to me, a larger-than-life kind of figure. So then to return and have the chance to, at least for a summer, work in his administration was quite remarkable. The relationships formed quickly. They kept asking me and inviting me back up to Sacramento. Governor Reagan appointed me to chair the California Advisory Commission on Youth, which again sort of put me into activities there. They wanted a young person on the California Housing Commission, so I had a slot on the Housing Commission.

I think my professors—I had a wonderful professor at UCLA, Fran Rabinowitz, a political science professor at UCLA—I think it was remarkable for them to have a student who was interacting fairly regularly with the Governor's office and with senior officials. Frankly, most of my senior year at UCLA was spent in Sacramento, working on projects for which I wrote reports and got credit back on campus. I really operated in almost a graduate student fashion, where I had projects going and an advisor, Fran Rabinowitz, and did a lot of work on the local government reform task force and things like that.

That really, in my mind, cemented the idea that I wanted to stay involved in public policy. I enjoyed it. I was much more motivated to the public policy side than I was campaigns or politics. I did a little bit of work on some campaigns. I knew some people, went out and managed campaigns for state offices and worked on behalf of the state senator, but it was the public policy side that really interested me. At the same time, I was interested in business. It hadn't really occurred to me that I would have a career of some kind in government; I was more oriented to business. I was looking to combine the two. If there's any theme or direction I set early on, it was to find a way to balance and work in both the private sector and the public sector.

Knott: Did you classify yourself as a conservative at this age?

Fuller: I'm a conservative. Some of us got characterized in the Reagan years as pragmatists. I was one of those, along with Dick Darman and others. On the theory that—I think on most issues, not all the time, but on most issues—if you were to take a reading, if I was to take a reading of where I start, it probably would technically be considered conservative. On the other hand, when you're in government, trying to make something happen, particularly with the kind of divisions we have now, or even we had during Reagan, with a Democratically-controlled Congress, you say, "Well, what can we go get done? If we want to drive this in a forward direction, what can we go get done?" So I was one of those who wasn't—"rigid" is a negative term, but let's say I was one of those who was more flexible or more pragmatic in our approach.

When I graduated from UCLA in 1973, Reagan of course had a year left in his governorship. I was selected, applied and was selected to be in the Coro Foundation. That's a postgraduate program for people who are selected, they say modestly, because of their leadership abilities, but the idea is to take people who have in some ways exemplified themselves in a variety of areas, not just government and politics, but business, labor, media. They put 12 people together for nine months, and that led to a Master's as well from Occidental. For the nine-month program you go through a series of internships with your other 11 colleagues in the Coro program, and it was a wonderful kind of total immersion. I spent four weeks with the local NBC news station, I spent four weeks with one of the best politicians I've ever met, who was the head of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, who was just a remarkable individual.

Knott: Who was that?

Fuller: I can't remember his name. Warren Olney was the reporter at KNBC, and Tom Brokaw was there. It was where I first met Tom Brokaw. We were in the middle of the Patty Hearst investigation, so it was an interesting time. I worked in the city of Compton on a redevelopment project. Just a lot of different kinds of experiences. One of them was at Pacific Mutual Life Insurance Company. They then asked me if I would stay on as the manager of public affairs and so I decided, rather than go back to Sacramento with people I knew, here it looked to me like it was an interesting business opportunity with one of California's greatest, oldest companies, very involved in the community, very involved in political activities and government.

A wonderful individual who had been the deputy mayor of Los Angeles, Steven Gavin, who has since passed away, but a wonderful individual who was my assignment supervisor when I was a Coro Fellow, was the person who hired me. He was a great mentor. We all have wonderful people in our lives who mentor. He was a wonderful mentor. He took me under his wing and said, "With your knowledge of the people who are in Sacramento, and of Sacramento, work with us on Sacramento issues." [Gerald] Ford at the time was then President, so I ended up with some of my Coro friends being in the Ford administration, so I even spent a little time in Washington staying connected to those people. It was a great opportunity.

One of the things I recommended to the chairman—we had a new CEO [Chief Executive Officer] come in when I was there, he'd moved up from president—was that he get more involved in Sacramento. He happened to be a Democrat, Walter Gerken was his name. Steve Gavin reported to Walter Gerken. Walter was interested in being a much more activist kind of CEO than we'd had, so he liked the idea that I could help set up meetings. Jerry Brown got elected and for some reason Gray Davis and the people around Jerry Brown were people I had

known. I always thought that sometimes it's easier when you're the Republican lobbying a Democratic Governor, because your curiosity factor is high. They've got a whole list of people they know who are lobbying them, but somebody who comes in who is a Republican, it's a little different.

I suggested that we hire this firm, Deaver & Hannaford, the firm Deaver and Hannaford had formed after Reagan left office. We needed help with speeches, we needed help with positioning, and that's what they were trying to do. They obviously had Reagan as a client, and they had the California Trucking Association as clients, and they had Pacific Mutual. That worked very well. They of course took a lot of time off to run the 1976 Reagan campaign, which I was not really engaged in. When that was over, both Mike Deaver and Pete Hannaford came to me and said, "You know, you've now been from '73 if you count Coro, but really from late '73 through '76, kicking around in this corporate affairs world." Laws had changed so companies were forming PACs [Political Action Committees] and public affairs programs. They said, "We really see our firm as driving right into that space, and we'd like you to be a vice president."

In a wonderful gesture, Steve Gavin and Walter Gergen said, "You know, there's lots of things you can do and we'll be your biggest client. If you stay here, you're going to be limited. If you go there, you're going to have a lot of different clients. We'll be happy to sign on as your largest client." So in a move that was unusual even then, and remarkably unusual when I think about it, they said, "Let's work closely together." They probably paid more for me as a consultant than they did when they had me full-time, but it opened up a whole new world for me.

Then Mike Deaver and I became partners and began working together. In another quirk of fate, the direction the firm was going in was one in which we doubted Reagan was going to run again, frankly. We were determined to build a firm and it grew rapidly and successfully and then all of a sudden Reagan was a candidate again. Mike Deaver and Pete Hannaford said, "You know, the question is not, 'Do we need you at the campaign?' We could use six people like you right away. But the last time, we almost lost the firm because we devoted all of our energy to the campaign. You know the clients." So I basically stayed in the firm and worked with the clients. I spent some time around the campaign, traveled occasionally. I got to know Jim Baker. Mike Deaver, I would say, was a great mentor in many ways at that time, because he just wanted to make sure I met and got to know people.

Reagan wins and Mike says, "Look, I'm going into the administration." First he wasn't going into the administration, then he decided to go into the administration. He said, "I'd love for you to work with me, because we work together, but what I do is more advance and scheduling. You ought to get more involved in policy; that's what you really like. You ought to talk to Jim Baker." So I see Jim Baker in transition, now in November of 1980. Jim says, sitting in Washington, "Look, find a place to live. There's four different jobs I want you to do." I'm not even sure I can remember them. I know it was presidential personnel, public liaison, he had a couple of other ideas, intergovernmental affairs was one. He said, "You know Mike, you know Ed, you know me." I was 29 years old. "Just find a place to live."

So I took him at his word; I found a place to live. I knew that Pete Hannaford had elected to stay and maintain the firm. I knew Mike was leaving and I figured, *What an unbelievable adventure. I'll go do this for a couple of years*, which was really what I had in mind, just a couple of years.

So we get into December, I found a place to live, telling people I'm likely going to move. Jim says—actually, as a matter of fact, we got on an airplane in early January, I remember. They sent an Air Force aircraft out to bring the Reagans from California to Washington, right after the first of January. Mike said, "Come on, get on the plane and fly out with us." So they said, "Something's happened, and really the best job is going to be with Ed Meese. He's going to talk to you about this."

I said, "Well, okay, can you tell me about it?" My attitude was at 29 years old, if there's something I can be helpful with, you tell me. I haven't worked in Washington before; certainly I hadn't worked in the White House before. So he said, "The best job is with Ed, but let him talk to you. He'll talk to you on the airplane." So we fly to Washington, have a perfectly nice flight, nice breakfast, land. Jim Baker and Mike Deaver come over and say, "So, did he talk to you?" I said, "No." They say, "Oh my goodness. We'll get time on his schedule." The long and short of it is, I think it was on a Wednesday, in the middle of January—we can figure the dates out if you want—but Ed Meese said, "Come on in and see me in the afternoon."

So I go in, I see him and he says, "Listen, I know that Mike and Jim have been talking to you about something, but there's a job I really would like you to take if you're willing to do it. I have this job called the Office of Cabinet Affairs. It's going to be very important, and you're going to be working very closely with Dick Darman, who's going to be the staff secretary, and reporting to Jim Baker. I need somebody that I know and trust who will be the interface with all the Cabinet. I'd really like you to do it." I said, knowing that Jim and Mike thought I should do it, "Ed, if that's what you guys want me to do, I'll sign up for the program." He said, "That's great. If you can wait and fly back with me on Friday, we're going back commercially, but we'll sit together and talk about it." I said, "Okay."

That Friday was—we'll have to work backwards because it must have been about ten days before the inauguration or something like that—because we flew back on Friday together, which was the only time I had four hours of uninterrupted time with Ed Meese just to talk about how the White House was going to be structured, how it would look and how my job was supposed to work. That's what we did for four hours. Jim Baker and Mike Deaver had told me they were thrilled, this was great, perfect job for you. So in the course of the conversation with Ed coming back on Friday he says, "By the way, it would really be good if you could be back in Washington on Monday because we're going to start a series of briefings on Tuesday," which was one week before the inauguration on January 20th. "We're going to start a series of briefings with the Cabinet members and you need to organize those." I said, "Okay." At least I had a place to live.

So I went home and on a long weekend, tore apart what I needed from my house and packed stuff up, and told clients I was going to leave for Washington, effective Monday. Took the red eye, landed Tuesday morning, and we started briefings one week before the inauguration. So my time in the transition was actually very short because it was so late. Now, I also learned that all this to'ing and fro'ing as to who was going to get this Cabinet affairs job, because people saw it as a real key point at which issues were going to be decided, who got what. I didn't know any of that until much later and I just dove in. The Cabinet at that time had been selected and [David] Stockman was going to be head and he was the one who was leading the briefings. We teamed up, and Dick Darman I got introduced to him. The three of us were at the center of organizing the briefings and it went from there.

I'll pause and let you, if you want to go back and fill in anything.

Knott: Yes, I was wondering if there were any particular memories that you have from the California days of any interactions with Governor Reagan.

Fuller: Every time I was around him, my initial impression was Boy's State, which was 1968, I'm not sure I have perfect recollection of that. But when I was there as an intern, the interaction with him was somebody who was kind, decent, comfortable with himself, responded to any questions. I remember at one point in the Coro Foundation program, that would have been '73, we went up and interviewed him and talked with him. The first time I heard the story—somebody in our group had kind of challenged him in his thinking, and the tone of the question was did he understand what was happening with young people?

It was the first time I heard him use his phrase that he'd used a number of times, which was, "It's true that when I was growing up, in my generation we didn't have cellular phones or computers. My generation invented those things." And it was this stunning comment that in the nicest of ways said, "Don't judge me as somebody who doesn't understand what your generation is dealing with, because my generation created it." Everybody sort of stood back. He was at odds in terms of budget cuts with the university and all that, but I was willing to listen carefully to what he was saying and not judge harshly or quickly.

I had a lot of respect for him and for the people around him. I thought the people around him were particularly strong. I thought I was fortunate to get to know them. I also was amazed because I had had enough contact with a few other political people, that what they presented in public was so different from what you saw in private, and that was never the case with Reagan. He was the same individual sitting and talking after a radio program in the residence about something as he was when he was out in public view. My time at the White House gave me that chance to really see that.

I also have this recollection, as he did with this woman from the Coro Program who kind of challenged him, I would see people who probably were not supporters, but when they got close to him were suddenly taking pictures, asking for autographs, and were just so thrilled to be around him. This is a remarkable quality that this person has to be so disarming and engaging. Those were the impressions. Certainly the points of view, from a policy standpoint, while I was probably still learning what he had to say, certainly was appealing to me at the time.

Knott: You mentioned the people around him, you said they were good people. You're talking about Meese and Deaver or others?

Fuller: Ed Meese, with whom I'd gotten a chance to associate, and Mike, whom I had associated with some. Pete Hannaford was his public affairs or communications person at the time, and was very strong. He had a fellow who worked in the White House, Don Livingston, who has since passed away, but Don had also gone through the Coro Foundation program, was a person who encouraged me to think about that. He was very supportive of what we were doing with our government internship program. He spent time with us. He later came to southern California in a corporate affairs role, so he was somebody that I had a chance to stay connected with over time.

Knott: Did you run into William Clark at all at this time or was he already on the Court?

Fuller: He was not somebody that I met as an intern. I knew of him but I really didn't meet him until he came into the administration in Washington. As I said, the caliber of the people generally on his Cabinet, I didn't meet Cap Weinberger but he was legendary from the first term. Just very solid, thoughtful people. I liked the idea that many of them were a model that I aspired to, which was people who had been able to move out of business and into government; out of government, back into business, something I was interested in.

Knott: Was Mrs. [Nancy] Reagan on this thing at all? Did you ever have any—?

Fuller: Only to meet her in the context of probably a reception or something like that. I didn't really interact with her more until I got to the White House.

Knott: As far as the 1980 campaign, how active were you on the campaign itself?

Fuller: Not very active. Occasionally I would travel. Mike was good enough to say, "Come out on the plane. We're going to do three cities," or six cities, or two days or four. Sometimes I'd help set up a briefing for a business group or something like that. It did give me one very important sense of the reality of a presidential campaign, which was that in spite of what appearances might suggest in terms of structure and management of a campaign, what happens on that airplane with the traveling party, with the candidate, is extraordinarily important.

You can't make all the decisions from the plane, but creating the right environment for the candidate, making sure the headquarters knows what you're going through, making sure you're dealing with messages and the media and all that, from the airplane. I could see with Stuart Spencer, who would become a good friend and Mike Deaver, Lyn Nofziger, who were on that plane, it left a very clear impression with me that certainly, when we got into the '85 to '88 timeframe with George Bush that I carried out, because it just seemed to me that unless you were with the candidate, unless you were really in control of that environment, you left an awful lot to chance in a campaign. So that lesson was a very valuable one.

I was around the transition a little bit, but again, at 29 years old, I was patient to say, "If you want me to come and do something. . . ." If they told me to go work in the Department of Transportation at the FAA [Federal Aviation Administration], I would have been thrilled. Actually, one of the things that I thought was an advantage was that unlike a lot of people, predictably, I really wasn't "after" something. Even when I ended up getting what was probably for me the most ideal job in the White House, I was perfectly content to do that job. It wasn't as though I said, "Oh boy, if I really turn something on here, I can propel myself to something else." I couldn't imagine having gotten the job I got.

As I say, it was perfect for me. It was the right amount of managing people. I've said in describing it, even when I was there, part of the background I had that helped was I managed a lot of clients and client relationships. Now my clients were the 18 members of the Cabinet. I had a small staff and made the point to them, "Look, those people depend on us to understand what's going on here and how it affects them. That's our obligation and that's our responsibility to the President. He says, 'I want an active Cabinet, I want an informed Cabinet, I want the Cabinet involved in what we're doing.' That is our mission."

We even organized our Department of Cabinet Affairs with people having four or five different Cabinet officers and departments they were responsible for. So that was good preparation and I learned as rapidly as I could. The other reality was people turn over so much, or so rapidly, that if you stay in one job for four years you quickly get seniority over most everybody else.

Knott: During that period between ’76 and ’80, for the most part you’re with Deaver & Hannaford, correct?

Fuller: Yes.

Knott: This is the time that ex-Governor Reagan is doing these radio and newspaper columns. I wonder if you might be able to talk a little bit about how that came about and what you saw in that.

Fuller: He clearly, when he left the Governor’s office, had a passion to continue to speak out on issues. Certainly, initially, the people around him and he was interested in seeking the Presidency. Today we call it “grassroots,” but the operation that was put in place was one that would tend to build support around the country behind him. When he failed to get the nomination in ’76, that apparatus was still there and available. It also provided an income. So he had the good fortune to be doing something he enjoyed doing and making money at it.

The Deaver & Hannaford firm from the beginning was managing his business affairs. So you’re right, when I landed there at the beginning of 1977, he was there, his office was there. He would come into the office, not all the time, but frequently. He would go out on these trips and as we now know from the books that have been put out, it’s quite accurate, he would come back with yellow pads filled. Three, four, five of them with handwritten radio scripts, newspaper columns. The amazing thing to all of us was many times it was just page after page with very few strike outs or anything else. He thought about the issue and he just sat and wrote.

Peter Hannaford was the principal editor and colleague, and collaborated with him on the newspaper columns and the radio programs and the speeches, but the ideas and the issues that then-former Governor Reagan were interested in were really ones he identified. He and Peter talked about it, but a good many of them he wrote. He was always wonderful. He was one of these people who walked into the room and spoke to everybody and would tell stories from the road to whoever would be sitting there, whether it was the newest secretary, administrative assistant or one of the long-time people. It’s just the kind of person he was. He enjoyed getting to know people.

That made it a lot easier for me to transition at a young age into the White House, because you had a sense of the individual. I never had the sense—I’ve been around a number of people who would like to be President and who were driven in a way. You never got that sense about him. His view was almost, “I’m going to share what I believe and if enough people are interested, maybe I’ll run again.” But it was never directing us to do things as a firm that would get him on *Meet the Press*, or do this or do that. He enjoyed enormous press. I always thought that managing his press relations was almost the exact opposite of everybody else. It was mostly holding people back who wanted to try to write about him and understand him.

So it was a great time. I think his sheer desire to express himself ended up in an honest way, ended up creating a great following, which then gave him the chance to run again. It was never, it wasn't a sense early on when I got there in '77 or '78, that we're driving to another campaign. We were actually driving to build a firm with a multitude of clients.

Knott: That was my next question. When did you start to sense that he was going to take another run at it? Fairly late, it sounds like.

Fuller: It was fairly late. We were really building the business. Mike and I were out, Peter doing presentations and building clients. I don't know that I have a date. People like Stu Spencer and Lyn Nofziger and Mike and Pete Hannaford began to realize there really is a groundswell here and maybe we ought to form the exploratory committee. That's all part of the record in terms of the dates. That was done. We said, "We can't run this out of Deaver & Hannaford. We have to go set up a separate office," which they did at the airport, I remember that occurring, so that people could fly in and fly out. Of course, it was so much, the period of time in which you were campaigning was much more constricted or whatever than it is today. I guess it must have been after the congressional races in '78, probably.

Knott: Do you recall any particular meeting where everybody sought of gathered together and a final decision was made that we're going to—?

Fuller: I was not a part of that in the sense. I really was almost never in the campaign headquarters. I was really working. We had these clients, and as I said, I wasn't driven to be in the midst of the campaign. They seemed to be chaotic, difficult places. And of course, that campaign was. At one point Mike Deaver stepping away from it and all that. So I heard about it more than I was really engaged in it.

I met some other people. I remember meeting John Sears for the first time when he flew into town. Again, a person I'd read about but never met. It was one of those things where they knew they needed to have him involved, and people were just a little reluctant, but they knew they needed him.

Knott: What was your impression of him, or later impressions?

Fuller: A little bit gruff. I didn't see the strategic thinking that he was purported to have. I do think that campaigns are a very tricky balance of people close to the candidate, with people with a lot of experience, and you can't really do without having both, but there's got to be a balance. That campaign in '80 struggled with that, certainly into New Hampshire, and then got its footing and went from there. I was aware of it but I wasn't in the middle of it.

Knott: Yes. We've had some testimony from Reagan people saying that John Sears was a disaster. We've had others saying, well, in a way yes, it didn't work out, but that Ronald Reagan never would have been President without Sears. Do you have any comment on that?

Fuller: I think that I would tend to believe that John Sears was necessary to propelling the campaign into New Hampshire. You know campaigns are a series of intervals. In that pre-primary period, although some of the people around President Reagan had been part of it before, it was in a very different context as a challenger to Ford in '76. So some lessons were simply not

learned and then others were not necessarily relevant I guess I'd say. I think that the people around President Reagan were very able. Unfortunately John seemed to be somebody who needed to be in charge and to prove he was in charge by dismissing the very people that the Reagans also depended on, and that's where the balance was lost. It would have been a disaster to try to do the campaign without bringing the others back in, but I actually do think, from my vantage point, that John Sears did play a valuable role for a period of time.

Chidester: Was the 1980 campaign the first time you met with George Bush?

Fuller: There's a good question, not that the others haven't been good. It's one I hadn't thought about, though. The remarkable thing to many of the Bush followers is that I didn't know George Bush until I got to the White House. I don't believe I ever—I don't think I even met George Bush in the '80 campaign.

Chidester: So you didn't play any role in his selection as Vice President, I'm assuming.

Fuller: No, I did not. I did not even go to the convention in 1980. I think actually we were so exhausted from dealing with the clients and the business that the convention was kind of a break. Again, I wasn't driven to be in the thick of the political scene. I actually was in Hawaii for part of the convention, which is a very convenient place to watch the convention from because you can go have dinner after the sessions are over with.

Knott: And you're not in Detroit.

Fuller: You're not in Detroit. [*laughing*] I am pretty sure I did not meet the Vice President until we got involved, until I came back that week before the inauguration to prepare for going into the White House.

Chidester: And what were your first impressions of him? You mentioned you were impressed with Reagan the first time you met him.

Fuller: Let me just say, I will always try to be objective in this. I have a wonderful and close relationship with the Bush family, particularly President Bush, number 41. But in all honesty, I don't think, it wasn't one of those "wow" kind of moments. I was meeting a lot of new people and I was glad to meet him, and he was somebody I didn't know. I don't even remember having a particular immediate sensation or impression. I saw him in meetings. I viewed him, I looked at him, as it was described to me, as somebody President Reagan wanted to have fully engaged and involved in the Cabinet. He had a policy staff; we were to keep them informed of all Cabinet issues. So he was one of the clients. A guy like Al Haig probably struck you more dramatically for lots of reasons in your encounter with him.

Having said that, what came to happen early on in the process was that Jim Baker would ask me to go sit with the Vice President from time to time and talk about an issue. Oftentimes he wouldn't even tell me what the issue was. I'd get a call and he would say, coming out of their morning meeting, "At 10:30 the Vice President would like to see you for a few minutes." I'd go in at 10:30 and he would have read something or have a question about something. Actually, it began what was nearly a four-year process of when he had a question about something happening to either a Cabinet officer or within a department, or we had a problem like EPA

[Environmental Protection Agency] issues or something like that, I'd get a call from Jim Baker to go in at whatever time and see the Vice President. The pattern was pretty clear, sometimes it would be before the Thursday lunch they would have.

Based upon everything I knew, this was somebody the President had great trust in because of his experience, someone I had come to see was having an important influence in general on the President and some of what was happening in the White House. So he deserved at least to know what I knew and honestly what we were doing about it. Also, conversely, what we didn't know. I came to learn later that probably this had more to do with than anything else I would know, of my being selected as his Chief of Staff. One of the most formative experiences of his life, I think, was the CIA [Central Intelligence Agency]. What he wanted was somebody who'd come in and brief him honestly, without any spin, and simply tell him what we knew and what we were doing about a particular situation.

I never described this to anybody. Jim Baker never asked me what we talked about, I never got asked what we talked about and I never talked about it. So he came to learn that he could pretty much ask me anything and there weren't going to be any consequences. By the way, I never knew what he did with the information. Anybody can speculate that if he's asking you something at 11:30 on Thursday before he goes and has lunch with the President, that it's something he may want to bring up, but I never knew whether he did or not. So the impression was really a slow-building appreciation for the way the man thought, for the kind of quiet influence he had. I had considerable respect for him as the Assistant for Cabinet Affairs and harbored absolutely no notion that I would ever work for him, I might add. Again, I wasn't seeking something else.

Even when—I'll jump ahead and then come back—but even when his Chief of Staff left and I knew he was looking for a Chief of Staff, when Dan Murphy announced in December of '84 that he was going to retire, it never occurred to me that Vice President Bush would pick somebody out of the Reagan camp, so to speak, to be his Chief of Staff. Just didn't think about it. Not that I—obviously I was honored when he asked; it was that kind of relationship. I had met Mrs. [Barbara] Bush but we just didn't spend a lot of time together. It was all pretty much professional, confined to the West Wing.

Erickson: You've mentioned twice now the level of influence that Bush had on the debate, or this quiet influence. Could you give us some examples of that? Especially early on, having been a competitor to President Reagan during the campaign, in what ways was Bush able to exercise this influence?

Fuller: I think a lot of it we didn't see. So this is terrible for historians and oral history, because a lot of it we didn't see. What I appreciated, I guess, was the way in which he would pose questions. For example, early on, we had the remarkable accomplishment, but at times huge objective, a tall hill we were climbing the first year, of both reducing spending and reducing taxes. As the policies were being formulated, the questions he would ask showed his knowledge of the government, where some of the pain was going to be felt in the cuts and that kind of thing. You had the sense that he wasn't trying to impose an agenda, he just wanted to make certain that the President, and frankly some of the rest of us, understood what the implications were.

Obviously all of us were affected by the assassination attempt at the end of March. The whole manner in which he returned to the White House, and that he didn't want to grandstand, and that he was thoughtful and methodical in going through the steps that in some ways he knew better than any of the rest of us. He was more prepared should something happen, but he didn't want to impose himself or do something that he considered not to be proper. He was somebody, it seemed to me, who always took care to understand what the proper response, the proper approach was. That left the impression of somebody who is contributing substantially to the success of the Reagan administration, not trying to bring benefit to himself.

So many of these impressions really came when I was with him as Vice President. I'm trying to filter back to the earlier ones. Some would argue that in Cabinet meetings or something, that he didn't engage as much. They hoped that he would take sides. What I began to see was that in some of the smaller luncheons that we would have with the President—we began a process of having these Friday luncheons at some point, which were designed as a way for some of the people that the President was leaning on to get things done, to both review issues but also get direction from the President. The Vice President participated in that in a way that because he was now around Baker, Meese, sometimes Deaver, myself, Darman, Stockman, he was more comfortable posing questions or drilling down into issues. Again, he did it in a way that was clearly intended to be for the benefit of the President, not to demonstrate that he was somehow smarter than anybody else in the room.

As difficult as it may have been to bring the parties together around him as the Vice President, it struck me from the beginning when we got there that he had decided this was going to be the model partnership, and it seemed that it was. As an aside, while I have great admiration for Dick Cheney in many ways. I wince sometimes when I hear, "He's the most effective," or "the strongest Vice President." He's a very strong and he's a very effective Vice President, but it always has to be judged in terms of the partnership with the President. I think the Reagan-Bush partnership was every bit as strong and every bit as important, maybe in some different ways, but that was the sense I had of him.

Knott: I hate to keep making you jump around here.

Fuller: That's okay, I know I keep leaping further.

Knott: You mentioned during the '80 campaign that at one point Mike Deaver actually left. A lot of the "California crowd" at a certain point was pushed away, I think Nofziger and Martin Anderson and others. Do you recall, how did people feel about that, about the old guard sort of being shunted aside? What did that say about Ronald Reagan?

Fuller: I'll try to answer that. It said to me at the time—and I still believe it—a lot about Mike Deaver. Mike had almost grown up with Ronald Reagan, was and remains extraordinarily loyal. I think he looked at the situation—he had a lot to do with bringing John Sears in. He clearly was aware of the tensions, I only got a little bit of that, because again, I wasn't there. But I heard from others and I could just tell there was a lot of tension with Mike and stress on how this was playing out. But when it came to this sort of showdown, if you will, in the residence, Mike was the one who said, "This is a choice you're not making, I'm leaving." If what's best for the

campaign at that time, Mike felt, was that he step away, he was prepared to step away. He was not in it for personal glory.

I think that President Reagan, then-candidate Reagan, it was one of those confounding situations where he clearly wanted to win the nomination and go on to be President. He had one team around him that he trusted; he had another team around him that were sort of the technicians who were driving toward that objective, and they couldn't reconcile the differences. I think President Reagan, as has been the case with most of these leaders I have known who've had parties that can't reconcile their differences, had a very difficult time. It's like they don't want to have to make the choice. I think that's what the story tells about President Reagan, but I don't think that's so unusual. I think what is unusual is that somebody who had every right to be considered young, ambitious, and driving toward the same goal could say, "I'm stepping away."

I remember him coming back to the office, probably the next day. Basically the attitude, I never heard a word of anger or accusation towards anybody. He came back and he said, "I've stepped out of the campaign, let's go to work." The therapy, if you will, was great for the firm, because it was really rolling up his sleeves and saying, "Let's see how many people we can go see." It was clearly in the news. It was like good news, bad news. The bad news is that Mike stepped away from the campaign; the good news is he's back in the firm and we were now out talking to clients and building the business. For that period, by the way, I saw somebody who just threw himself into the business, was very happy.

We've talked in the past about all the presentations and all the new clients. Of course then he went back on the campaign and I had all the new clients. It was for him kind of a liberating thing. It was probably also a very maturing moment in the sense that, boy, that cord was cut. The loyalty never disappeared and the respect and affection for President Reagan and Mrs. Reagan never disappeared, but the dependency perhaps disappeared. Because now he was definitely making it on his own. He wasn't a staffer, he wasn't running a firm that was beholden to the office that President Reagan occupied. We were doing all kinds of different things and he really enjoyed it.

I think that, again like other people who have been President or held high office, at some point when the balance seems to be lost, the people who were pushing to get some of the loyalists out went just a little too far. Then something snaps back and Mike went back in. In many cases, Mike probably went back in stronger and more objective in some ways than before. But I think it was a choice. In a way, it was a decision Ronald Reagan made too, that I need to get to the objective, to get to New Hampshire, to get the nomination. He had not gotten the nomination before, in a very different kind of setting in '76. I think he decided what he needed.

Now some of those people, Jim Lake, Charlie Black, are good friends of mine, and they're very good. They are very savvy, and they're very knowledgeable, and it was probably as devastating for them when things snapped back as it was for Mike when he came out. In a way, it's too bad. Again, another lesson in my book, of working extraordinarily hard, and in all honesty, it is extraordinarily hard to hold together different camps inside of a presidential campaign. Obviously mine was Vice President's office and the campaign staff, but the lesson learned in that is if you hold it together, if you can keep the highly skilled political experts at the table working

with others who have been around the candidate and loyal to the candidate, you've got something really strong. There are so many pressures that want to pull that apart.

Knott: Was it difficult on the firm to have people coming and going in a sense, or did the firm thrive at this time?

Fuller: We were doing very well. It's the old adage, "If they spell your name correctly. . . ." So the linkage of Deaver & Hannaford to the Reagan campaign was clear. The clients were, whether I was learning what I was learning out of the newspaper or out of some evening dinner with Mike, they were still interested in what my perspective was, or my colleagues' perspectives were. It was a small firm, but it was a good time for the firm. In spite of the size of the victory, in the early going, there was no certainty about what the outcome was going to be. So we were all pretty determined to keep the firm going. I can tell you Mike Deaver and Pete Hannaford were pretty determined that we keep the firm going as they got more and more engaged in the campaign.

Knott: I know you weren't directly involved in the campaign but did you have any contact with William Casey at this time when he became the campaign manager?

Fuller: Only the slightest. Occasionally when we went on a trip, and only the slightest.

Knott: You smiled when I mentioned his name.

Fuller: He's a fascinating fellow. Partly it reminds me, though, of a couple of trips where literally I'd be sitting in a hotel with Mike, Lyn Nofziger, Stu Spencer, and Bill Casey. Ed Meese would be at the headquarters calling and the guys on the ground at the hotel would literally be deciding where the plane was going to go. The headquarters would be saying, "We've got to go do an event in Lexington," and they're saying, "Forget that, we're flying to—" So when I smiled, it was definitely part of the impression that there are a lot of important things that have to happen in a campaign headquarters, but the day-to-day activity of the campaign was really—in that case, maybe even more than today. Certainly today with the security requirements and everything else, it's hard to call audibles on the road, but my impression was that they were calling more audibles than one might have suspected.

Knott: Maybe this is a good moment to also ask you if you could give us your impressions of people like Stuart Spencer.

Fuller: Stu Spencer was somebody I had known from California politics. I got to know him better over the years, probably even after we got to the White House, and he was always very supportive of me and helpful to me and helpful in understanding political activity. He struck me from the beginning as somebody who was always particularly insightful as to what the overall electorate was thinking and then also particularly what segments of the electorate were thinking.

People say of a presidential race that it's really 50 individual state races, and it is. So to understand President Reagan's base, Governor Reagan's base, how to motivate it, to understand how to go into different states and motivate people, it was part of Stu's genius. He had a style, he certainly had good relationships with the media, but his style was, my impression was always to

utilize those relationships in ways that advanced the interest of the candidate, not his own. I had a lot of respect for him and continue to.

Knott: He's one of my favorite interviews, it was like a seminar on how to win the Presidency.

Fuller: I'm sure.

Knott: How about Lyn Nofziger?

Fuller: Lyn is just out there. He is a force that's unique. He always had the great advantage, I think, of understanding Ronald Reagan and could speak for him without question. He was reflecting the individual. I didn't have a lot of contact with Lyn, it was off and on. Again, when we all got to the White House, I'm not sure what to make of some of us who ended up in these jobs. It was like it suddenly grew so big, it was more fun when there were just a handful of us on the airplane making the decisions. I don't know that he was enthralled with the process of making policy, but had tremendous support and loyalty to the President and was, I thought, a very effective spokesman.

Knott: I'm going to exercise my prerogative. It's early, but I'd like to take a break.

[BREAK]

Knott: Go ahead, Jeff.

Chidester: I'd like to go into more detail about your years as Cabinet secretary. It's an interesting office; a lot of Reagan's predecessors tried to get the Cabinet more involved in policy formulation and it largely failed. The Reagan administration's answer was this Cabinet Council system, which was created I think the second month into the administration. Could you discuss the origins of this system?

Fuller: Actually, it goes back to that plane ride with Ed Meese that I referred to ten days or so out from the inauguration. It was their view from the beginning, the President's, Ed Meese, who had the responsibility for that area, that the Cabinet should be engaged and involved. So from the very beginning the Cabinet met frequently. I remember Secretary [James] Watt from Interior one time early on said how valuable the sessions were, because you came to the White House and you spent time with the President and your fellow Cabinet members, and you really renewed your commitment to go out there and make the changes that President Reagan was elected to make. Then you go back to your department and you've got the bureaucracy and the constituent groups and the congressional committees and all that, trying to pull you down. But then you came back the next week to the Cabinet.

I thought it was an interesting description and it certainly was one of the values of the frequent meetings. We did, from the beginning, view the Cabinet Council process as an important one and so the operation of the Cabinet Councils was left to the Office of Cabinet Affairs. The White

House Policy Group each had staff to the Cabinet Council from a policy standpoint. Marty Anderson headed that at the beginning. We worked very closely. I thought, as time went on, it was a very smart move by the President and Ed Meese to in some ways separate those functions, because we could drive issues in the development of policy by scheduling meetings and holding meetings.

Sometimes we may have gotten a little ahead of the policy staff, sometimes we got a little ahead of the Cabinet departments. I remember one point Secretary [Donald] Regan calling over and saying, "Who is setting the agenda?" I said, "Well, sir, it's your agenda, but it is set here at the White House." He didn't like that answer too well, because if he didn't want to discuss something—he was chairing the Economic Policy Council—he didn't want to discuss it. I'd say, "Sorry, we feel it needs to be discussed." So the Office of Cabinet Affairs, although initially, certainly, designed and thought of as perhaps more administrative, ended up playing a role in driving the development of policy by forcing people to come together, forcing issues to get resolved, forcing papers to get developed and that kind of thing.

Because it wasn't practical to bring all the Cabinet members together and it didn't make sense, the council system was conceived of very early. You would have the date when we actually announced it, then we expanded it by a couple, I think. But it was the vehicle that the President wanted to use and Ed Meese wanted to use to keep the Cabinet really engaged and involved. It was interesting because one of my closest allies, somebody we could talk about more perhaps, but it was Dick Darman who was the White House staff secretary. He felt very strongly that the White House had to drive all these things, and that some of these Cabinet meetings were perhaps not the most important things we could spend our time on.

I would always say, "You can give me any issue—" we had an elaborate tracking system for all these things— "You can give me any issue and I can show you, before the President makes a decision, I can show you where it was discussed in the Cabinet Council process." If it was a decision going to the President, we didn't do ad hoc policy-making. We had a process for getting the Cabinet officers to engage the issue and review it. There's enormous value in that, even if there were issues where Dick and I might agree, that a small group of White House policy people developed the option that the President approved. Even if that was the case, you would involve people and let them have a chance to help shape the policy. When the President made a decision, they weren't angry because they hadn't been involved. They accepted it because they felt that he'd looked at the options. I always felt, again, playing this role of "my clients were the Cabinet members," I always felt that our office had the responsibility to ensure the President fully understood what the view of his Cabinet Council, or even dissenting individual Cabinet members thought about an issue. So when decision memos went into him, he was apprised. If the Secretary of Agriculture took issue with the recommendation, he was apprised of that.

Now again, that was important to the President. Some people at times thought we were heavy-handed, perhaps on the staff, but if a Cabinet officer really wanted to have a session with the President, they could get that. Now most of the time, because the process was in place with the Cabinet Councils, they'd had the opportunity to argue it in the Cabinet—and the President much preferred to get the discussion in a Cabinet meeting, as opposed to having one-on-one sessions and listening to one side, and having another meeting and listening to the other side. Since the Cabinet members understood he wanted to hear the debate in front of him, and in front of the

other members of the Cabinet, that's the forum that they really used. It was a very valuable tool that I think, in the first term particularly, worked extremely well.

Chidester: You mentioned that Reagan liked to hear a discussion, a debate among a small group, rather than a one-to-one meeting with, say, a Cabinet official or a member of the staff. How do you think that the Cabinet Council fit in with Reagan's managerial style?

Fuller: I think as President he liked order and he liked having a process that allowed issues to be worked through and then delivered to him at a point in which a final decision is really called upon. On any given day there could be dozens, if not hundreds, of issues coming into the White House. He wasn't someone who was going to just dive into issues randomly. If he saw something in the press or he heard something, he might direct us to go get information and brief him, but in terms of the kinds of issues, decisions you'd make on spending or taxes or environmental policy or those kinds of things, he wanted a very deliberative process that would then deliver him options. Again, sometimes there was a single recommendation, frequently he was presented options.

People said, "Well, he delegated a lot to his staff," and that's absolutely true. But he delegated it to people who knew him well and who really were familiar with what he thought. Because he was so clear about his views on the role of government, people who had authority delegated to them could exercise that authority with a pretty good sense of what the President wanted to see in the way of options. So far-out approaches that were going to increase the size of government or raise taxes were not going to be well received. I think the other thing that I admired about the way he used the process was that it allowed him to really engage at the moment when his engagement was necessary and would yield a decision. He wouldn't labor it long into the night—as some Presidents are rumored to do—long into the night over briefing papers and decision memos and different perspectives. He would study it and engage in it and then he liked to have a discussion in front of him, in which he would then make a decision.

We actually began to move fairly quickly to a process where he would review the written decision memo, we would have the Cabinet or Cabinet Council meet—typically the Cabinet Council—have a discussion with him. If there were options, he would probe directly why people felt certain ways. He would ask about was there a middle ground here, what if we did this or that. He wouldn't make a decision in the room, but soon after the meeting a few of us would sit in his office and talk it through and get his decision and a signed decision memo. Typically Dick Darman and I were involved in that process, so that we could then go and communicate that decision to senior White House staff and to members of the Cabinet. We had a more orderly process. If you have a decision in the room, then everybody goes out thinking they've heard something, some compelled to talk about it. So we began to use the Cabinet system as this vehicle for debate and discussion, with the decision coming sometimes just within an hour, sometimes coming within a couple of days.

Chidester: Would Reagan get involved in that debate, that discussion among the Cabinet?

Fuller: President Reagan? Yes, he would. He would be involved in probing for information, asking why people might have held certain positions. And as I said, you could see him begin the process of crafting a third choice between two that had been presented to him.

Chidester: So this whole idea of Reagan as a detached, unengaged leader—

Fuller: Absolutely false. It was based on a complete misunderstanding of how a chief executive should make decisions. If somebody came rushing into the room, saying, "We've got to make a decision about an issue that we have to testify on in a month," he might not be too engaged, because he had a whole process for dealing with that. He would know that we would go through that process, it would come to him. He trusted those of us to make sure we were delivering to him the options in a timely manner so that he could consider it and make the decision, which would then lead to testimony or public policy statement or whatever. But for hundreds and hundreds of issues, he was very engaged.

Chidester: How often would he attend these Cabinet Councils?

Fuller: I used to have some of that data.

Chidester: I think I saw somewhere that it was right around 15 percent in the first six months.

Fuller: Fifteen percent of all the meetings?

Chidester: I'm wondering if when he didn't attend, did he get his information from Ed Meese or from you?

Fuller: Let's see, I'm just trying to think back. Every Cabinet Council was different. Actually, Don Regan used to like to have a lot of Economic Policy Council meetings, most of them without the President, because he would use them to bring the economic people together and talk about issues. They would have long—some would say ponderous—but they'd have long discussions, but they wouldn't make a decision. They might clarify one another's thinking. From time to time he would then have a meeting with the President. So in that case, I don't know what the percentages are, but I would guess it would be skewed more in that direction where a fairly small percentage of the total number of meetings involved the President, but any meeting in which they sought a decision would involve the President.

One of the examples, Jack Kemp was so involved with enterprise zones. We had I don't know how many meetings on enterprise zones and couldn't come to resolution. They kept trying to craft the decision. It was one example that I used when people said, "These meetings don't really make that much difference." The fact is, enterprise zones was something that you could track through many different meetings, which ultimately led to a decision memo. They met with the President, after the meeting made the decision, it was transmitted. Yes, the White House staff played a big role in that, but so did the members of the Cabinet.

Other Cabinet Councils, it seems to me, William French Smith as Attorney General didn't have very many Cabinet Council meetings of the legal policy Cabinet Council. But when they met, they usually met with the President, as I recall. So again, there would be different approaches depending on which one of these councils was meeting. It would be a collaboration with the White House policy staff as to, "Is this a meeting we need the President in? If we need him, let's get it on the schedule. If it's going to involve a decision memo, it's got to go through Cabinet Affairs Office. It's got to go through Dick Darman's staff, White House staff secretary's office." The objective was never to have the President come into a meeting in which a decision was

going to be presented to him, recommendations were going to be presented, without the White House staff seeing the memo, without the affected Cabinet department seeing the memo. That's what Dick Darman and I did.

Then we would, as I said, over time, we would end up being the ones, on our own sometimes or with Ed Meese or Jim Baker, sitting with the President and letting him give us what his decision was, so we could duly record it and transmit the information.

Erickson: So far you're describing a process where information and options and participation were brought from sort of the periphery to the center.

Fuller: Right.

Erickson: Did it also play a role to—"discipline" is a little harsh—but make sure that things were fulfilled, that the center could monitor, that the White House could monitor the implementation, make sure the Cabinet secretaries were out, once the decision is made, monitoring and making sure. Did it also play that role?

Fuller: We did. I think over time at least for newcomers like me, we learned how important that role is, because you can't just make a decision and send it out and say, "Okay, now let's move onto the next thing." Now, the beauty of the process was that the Office of Management and Budget was involved throughout the entire process. With David Stockman, we had a very strong OMB director; we had a very strong OMB. Because they were involved in the process, had an actual decision memo, knowledge of what was in it, they had to approve all testimony on Capitol Hill, so they made sure testimony was appropriate given what the decisions were. They also obviously approved budgets, and so any budget-impacting decisions were guided in that manner.

Erickson: When you say that they guided, or monitored testimony, would they work before something was heard or would they be purely monitoring afterwards to make sure that what had been said corresponded to what was in decision memos? Or did they coach people?

Fuller: I guess I'd say both. Using the enterprise zone example, when that decision got made, it was then policy. When the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development had to go up and testify on it at some point, OMB had to review that testimony. For any issue you'd often have, almost by definition, at least one Cabinet officer who had responsibility for implementing and for explaining the policy. Oftentimes that Cabinet officer was somebody who had a strong passionate view about how the decision should be made, and sometimes it didn't come down the way they may have wanted it made. But in testimony, that testimony had to be cleared by OMB, so that was a governing force.

The other mechanism we created that was very important was the legislative strategy group. We really created a first version of that around the budget and tax reduction legislative effort that was mounted in the first weeks or months of the campaign. We knew what the policy was, but we had so many moving parts in terms of negotiating for the successful passage of the bill, that we realized we needed, for certain presidential priorities, a White House-driven strategy group that would work on legislation. Frankly, it became broadened to work on the selling of the policy. We would involve the public liaison office or the communications office.

Larry Barrett writes about this in his book, but Dick Darman and I really put our heads together and said, "We can't make this work with Cabinet departments going to the Hill and our legislative staff going to the Hill and the public liaison people doing whatever they're doing." So we took the position—and Dick was very wise in this—he and I would simply be coordinators of this body, which would meet in Jim Baker's office as Chief of Staff. We wouldn't promote ourselves as anything other than coordinating this process. But that process of deciding what was on that agenda—and Dick has always had a remarkable relationship with Jim Baker, so Jim put a lot of trust in Dick—our ability to say okay on whatever the top issues were. "It's time to focus on what our strategy is. Let's bring in Dave Stockman from OMB, let's bring in a Cabinet officer if we need to, always Ed Meese. Let's sit at the table." Jim Baker never allowed the meeting to go outside of his office, because the table would only hold whatever it was, eight or nine people, and he didn't want all the people who wanted to be in the meeting in the meeting.

So if it was economic policy you'd see Don Regan there, agriculture policy, Jack Block, the Secretary of Agriculture. But those people rotated in and out, the Cabinet officers rotated in and out. The staff group was very small and it became, as you suggest, a mechanism for really driving strategy throughout the White House staff as well as throughout the Cabinet departments and agencies on these key issues. To make sure that, okay, we know what the President wants to have happen, now we have to go take this to the Congress and build support for it. How are we going to do it? That group became very influential in President Reagan's White House. It really, in the division of responsibilities, was a group that Jim Baker drove with a lot of help from Dick Darman, some help from me as the two of us were coordinating.

When we got to the point where in that group we realized we had to make a strategic call on a negotiating strategy or we had to give up something that was contained in the policy that the President approved, Jim Baker would go down and talk to the President about it, frequently Jim Baker and Ed Meese. But that group did not meet with the President, so it was really the Chief of Staff and Ed Meese who would typically go and review the strategic judgment that was necessary with the President and he would make that judgment. Sometimes we'd sit and wait. Jim Baker would come back and say, "Okay, this is what we've decided."

We talked about the balance in a campaign, that was really the place where there was balance between the policy operation and the legislative, political operation, that on the one hand Meese ran, and Baker ran. It worked extremely well through most of the first term, but it also was the place where the tensions began to arise from time to time, probably quite naturally, between policy people who wanted the pure, "Let's go for exactly what we agreed to," versus the pragmatists who said, "Look, we're going to get 80 percent of what the President wants done or we're going to get nothing. Let's get to the 80 percent done."

Knott: Ed Meese is the person who essentially brings you into the White House, but it sounds like over time you became very close to Jim Baker and Richard Darman. Did you ever feel, being a Californian, that some of the old Californians found you suspect, that you'd gone over to the other side, to the dark side? Not to be overly dramatic.

Fuller: I know exactly what you mean. I can honestly say I never was made to feel that way by either side. I was never presented with this loyalty test, that you're either with Mr. Baker or you're with Mr. Meese, by either the Baker side or the Meese side. At times I spoke about the

phenomenon that I saw occurring where sides were being chosen with both Jim Baker and Ed Meese separately. I really suggested that, for me to do my job, I'd just as soon not be drawn in by either of them to the issues that might be going on between two camps. Again, from the very first conversation with Ed Meese, my obligation was to the President, but also to serving the President by serving the interests of his Cabinet. At times when you're trying to set legislative strategy and you have a Cabinet officer that's a little difficult, you might be inclined to say, "Well, let's just not have him or her in the room." But my job was to make sure they were in the room. And if for some reason they weren't in the room, that their views were represented in the room. So that's what I did.

At the same time, as I said, I was in this group that felt we owed it to the President to get as much of what he wanted done that we could. So to the extent that some of the people who might be more purist felt that we were trading things that we didn't have to trade, or we were trading too soon, all the stuff that may go on, I said, "Look, as long as these judgments are going to the President and the President is making them, I'm with the President. If you think that Jim Baker or his people are having too much influence, I'm sorry." I was with them every day. It seemed to me that Jim Baker was, at all times, acting in what he thought was the President's best interests. It definitely seemed to me that Ed Meese was always acting in what he thought was the President's best interests. It was clear that sometimes they didn't necessarily agree with each other in what the best interests might be, but that was a matter that I believed they could work out. I just did not want to get dragged into it. It's a long answer to the question.

It's perfectly possible that people were suspect on both sides. I also formed a tremendously valuable relationship professionally and personally with Dick Darman. A little anecdote, Larry Barrett was authorized to do a book about the tax reduction, spending reduction plan in the early period of the Reagan administration. Baker, Meese, and Deaver all agreed that the book was authorized and they all sent Larry Barrett to see Dick Darman and me. They said, "These guys know what's going on, you've got to go talk to them." They told us we should talk to him. Dick said to me, "I think we should talk to him together." We always were in on Saturdays. So he said, "I think we should do it together on Saturday mornings." I said, "That's fine with me." I wasn't that thrilled about doing it to begin with, but I said that's fine with me.

Larry Barrett was a very engaging fellow, a reporter for *Time* magazine, and he'd been around the White House quite a bit. We'd gotten through about three or four interviews. They were all two hours or more in length and fairly detailed. That's what we were supposed to do, so that's what we did. About the third or fourth interview he says, "Before we start, I've got a question. You two guys have jobs that historically have always pitted the people that had those jobs against each other." Famous great feuds would go on apparently between White House staff secretaries and Cabinet secretaries. And he says, "We've done this now—" I think it was three or four times—and he said, "We just spent a few hours. Number one, you're two of the most distinctly different people in the White House. One's from California, no experience in Washington, somewhat modest means. The other from New England, Kennedy School, government experience, knows Washington. So you couldn't be more different. You've got these two jobs that normally pit people against each other, and yet you actually seem to thoroughly enjoy each other," which we did, it was clear from the interviews. He said, "How do you explain this?"

Without missing a beat, Dick says, "I'll tell you how." I thought, *This is going to be interesting.* Dick says, "Larry, you know why wolves don't fight? Larry said, "No." I had no idea. He said, "Wolves don't fight because they kill their prey by going for the jugular. If wolves were to fight, there'd be certain death for both of them. That's why Craig and I get along so well." I said, "Well, this is an interesting basis for a relationship." From that somewhat native or prehistoric path, we actually became very good friends. We really did—I wouldn't have described it that way—but we really did always realize it was to our mutual benefit to work closely together. Dick has a reputation of being tough on people and I wouldn't argue with that; it really never occurred between us. I had people in my office who were devastated, for one reason or another, but it was never something that occurred between us.

So it actually, going back to the question, made it much more feasible for me to be someone who was really doing my job as honestly as I could do it. If they wanted to have a session to tear apart somebody, they did it without me. Or if I thought we were headed that way, I just left, because I wasn't party to it. You know I left after the first four years and joined President Bush, but I left having enormous respect for both Ed Meese and Jim Baker.

Knott: There were reports at the time and later that both Jim Baker and perhaps especially Richard Darman were fond of leaking things to the press. In some cases, bad items related to Ed Meese.

Fuller: I don't know that to be the case. I heard the rumors. I watched a lot of people drive themselves a little nuts trying to figure out how information gets out of the White House. I generally found that those of us who were in the middle of what was going on and really knew what was going on had the least reason to leak things. The mistake we sometimes would make—and I include myself—is we would talk to other people, and these other people, to demonstrate that they knew what was going on, whether it was right or not or whether they'd even heard it correctly or not, would leak.

I just didn't engage in it and didn't pay close enough attention to know. My own view was formed early on and actually helped a lot by David Gergen—a person I have a lot of respect for also, who remains a good friend. David taught me a lot about the importance of really working with the media to make sure they did understand what was going on. That if you don't explain what's going on, you basically become a victim of the lowest common denominator, somebody who wants to put their view out there and it may or may not be right. So I was somebody who, because it seemed to me important to share insight that I believed to be accurate, things I had witnessed, I did maintain a number of contacts with the media for that reason. There was a second reason that I'll come to.

For those of us who were always credible, put it that way, we were also in some ways always suspect. So that if a story broke, it was like, "Well, we know you have good relationship with *Newsweek*. Obviously you must have told them." The way I responded to that was I always told the truth. Even at times when I made a mistake and I did make some in dealing with the press, I said, "Look, I did it. I'd rather have you know I did it than have six more cases where you think I did it and you know I won't tell you. I'll tell you." But my interaction with the media, and I think in Dick Darman's case and in Jim Baker's case and Ed Meese's case, he dealt with the media, was always to try to explain what was really going on inside the place. It was probably difficult

because President Reagan did delegate and there were only a few of us who oftentimes did have the insight that was necessary.

The other reason that I dealt with the press a lot, or some of them, was that I found them to be among the brightest people with whom one could want to interact, which probably also made me suspect. I mean, I clearly enjoyed them. In a way, when you think about it—although I explained how I got to the White House, it was hardly competitive—but for many people the positions on the staff are highly sought after, competitive kinds of opportunity. Same thing for the media. They work hard, they fight hard. They don't get to the White House unless they're pretty bright people. So for David Hoffman at the *Washington Post* or Gerald Boyd, I could name a whole group of them and I shouldn't start I guess, but they really were people trying very hard to understand the Reagan phenomenon and what we were doing. I really felt—remember, I'd been in the communications, public relations business—if we didn't build those relationships, and there were only some of us who really could build them with the knowledge of what was happening, if we didn't do it, then we really weren't going to serve the President as well as we should.

I'll tell you one example of one of the mistakes, which Steve Weisman at the *New York Times* was one of these people. He's still at the *New York Times,* very engaging. Steve, on one of the California trips we were out in California for the Christmas holidays the end of 1981, Christmas 1981. We moved around from Los Angeles over to Palm Springs, and were in Palm Springs. We had already passed the budget and tax reduction act; we already knew that the economy was going south. We knew we had serious problems with the budget. We were having a very difficult time putting the budget package together. OMB was in the middle of it. Even though I was out in California with the entourage, we were getting ready for budget reviews and the State of the Union message. All of this was swirling around.

The President was working on the State of the Union message, some of us were party to that. You had this very difficult time when you wanted to put the best face on what was a very successful year, and yet you had to also pave the way for the issues we were dealing with. The media was aware of it, but not as aware as some of us as to the extent of the fact we still needed more budget cuts or we were going to have a very high deficit. We knew then, what was clear to a lot of people, that we'd done better getting some of the tax reduction than we'd done getting spending cuts, so we had that cornered. Anyway, in that context, Steve Weisman said, "Why don't we go for a walk?" Okay, great. So we went for a long walk on a golf course. Walked and walked and walked, talked and talked and talked. Now, one, we never set any guidelines for this discussion. Two, he didn't take any notes, he didn't have any paper. It didn't feel like an interview.

Knott: He wasn't secretly wired?

Fuller: That could be too. Actually, I don't think he was, because some of it truly wasn't correct. The next day we were leaving for Washington. So it was the end of our time out there and everybody was relaxed and we go for this long walk. I definitely talked about how we were returning to Washington and the President did have some difficult choices to make in the State of the Union and his budget. There were some real troubling signs in the economy. Steve said,

"What kind of numbers are we talking about here?" I knew them, a magnitude of such-and-such. He said, "Yes, that's serious."

The next morning before I got on the airplane, there sits the *New York Times* with some banner headline. "Reagan needs to reduce budget by X billion dollars," or something like that. It didn't identify me. It said something about "senior officials." To Steve's credit, what he'd done is he'd gone back to his room, he'd taken all these notes and he called OMB. He had a lot of good sources. Well, he had enough information so that the sources said, "Well, I guess we're supposed to put this story out." So by the time he was through he had a very good story. Deaver was livid, absolutely livid. Baker was absolutely livid. "How did this happen?" Mostly at OMB. And I said, "Look, I may have started it. I'll go apologize to the President."

The interesting thing is, one of the reasons they were so livid—I don't want to get myself in trouble—but I don't think they knew how bad the problem was. Some of us were more familiar with the challenges we faced than others. So the story was not inaccurate. The reaction was in the red zone because they thought that Weisman had written this terrible story and things couldn't possibly be this bad. They probably were a little worse. So, was that a leak? Yes, I guess, it was a leak. It also ended up setting the stage for the kinds of things we had to deal with.

I guess another part of that lesson is that you should be careful to set the guidelines. But also, I think, if we leap ahead for just a moment to the fateful decision that President Bush made about putting some tax increases into the budget package, in the budget agreement, part of that problem was that no one set the stage. So that the decisions become such a shock—and again, I don't have to defend myself, but part of the notion is, with those people who are following every move in the White House, who are bright people, members of the White House press corps, I think you better serve the President by helping them understand what's happening. That's a long way from character assassination and I don't believe in that at all, but from a policy standpoint, I think those kinds of interactions are useful. It does turn out that the people who form a good relationship sometimes do it at their peril, because they're suspect.

Knott: Would you comment on President Reagan's attitude towards leaks? You were basically just answering the question.

Fuller: Elected officials all hate leaks, they all hate leaks. They don't like leaks. I think they feel that oftentimes leaks constrict their range of options. That's understandable. Sometimes they may. I'm not sure how much that's true, but it's frustrating. I think what's very frustrating in general, it was frustrating then certainly, was that because President Reagan had such a desire to have the open dialogue, to then have that process cause things to leak was very frustrating. Unfortunately it tended to restrict the number of people who then became part of the discussion. It's one of the reasons that we moved to a system of encouraging the President not to make his judgment, even if he knew what he was going to decide, not to do it in the Cabinet room, but to do it with some of us so that then we could have an orderly presentation of the decision, as opposed to people rushing from the room.

Another anecdote, which was always one of the more amusing ones, was we had these budget review sessions so that Cabinet officers would deal with David Stockman to get their budget in shape. Then if they absolutely, positively, could not agree—and that was only after several

meetings and pretty tough sessions with David—then they could come to Dick Darman and to me and request a budget review meeting, which was with Ed Meese and Jim Baker. It was another tough session. If they still couldn't agree and we couldn't find a compromise, they could then go see the President.

Now this was a gauntlet that not many people enjoyed running through, by design. But there was never any question, and I would say to the Cabinet officer, "You've got to go through the process, but at the end of the day if you believe so passionately in something that you have to talk to the President about it, that avenue is open to you." The good Secretary of Energy, Secretary [James] Edwards, felt passionately in that regard, and with some drama, scheduled his budget review session with the President after having gone through this. I honestly forget what some of the issues were. He happened to be, we were running late that day, and so his session was 3 o'clock in the afternoon. He sat out in the waiting area in the West Wing of the White House, but unfortunately we got so delayed that we had to reschedule it for the next day.

Unfortunately, he'd already leaked it to the press, so the next morning there was a story on what happened in the budget review with the Energy Secretary, except we hadn't had one. That got people's attention; it was perhaps an inappropriate leak. There was a bit of chiding the next day when we did have the session, which we had the benefit of getting briefed on in the *Washington Post.* I don't think that was too damaging, but it is frustrating. It does say, and I think it has the impact, as I said, restricting the number of people involved, that sometimes leads to very poor judgments and decision making, when you don't have all the inputs that you might want.

Knott: I just have a few more troika questions and we'll get back to the Cabinet secretary role. It has also been said by some that Darman, and perhaps James Baker as well, were more interested in their own agenda, in their own careers, their own advancement, as opposed to President Reagan's agenda. I was wondering if you would comment on that?

Fuller: I honestly don't think that's fair. That's not to say that the two individuals, Jim Baker and Dick Darman, were without ambition. But they were two people, both of whom had already accomplished a lot in their life, and certainly I think had ideas that they could go beyond the particular positions they were in. But as I said before, in both cases I saw individuals operating in what they absolutely believed to be in the best interests of the President. That didn't mean that everybody else in the White House always felt exactly the same way, but it doesn't mean they were wrong either. It doesn't mean that they were doing things to promote themselves.

There were times when explanations about how things got done in the White House might have been spun one way or another, but lots of people were guilty of doing that. I have tremendous respect for Jim Baker as somebody who really thought through, in what was a very difficult situation for a good portion of the time—the Democrats controlling the Congress—how to effectively move issues to a conclusion with the Congress that would support the President. Perhaps it's a fundamental matter of how people view the Presidency and whether the President should use that bully pulpit to advance certain issues about which he believes passionately and which have no chance of advancing in the Congress. Some clearly believed he should have done that, or believed that we would never have a chance if he didn't speak out more forcefully on certain issues.

I really never witnessed and was not aware at any time of people doing something that limited the President's choices. In other words, at the end of the day, both those individuals and Mike Deaver had access and interacted with President Reagan virtually every day. If at some point President Reagan said, "I'm off this direction, I want to go that direction," there were enough people who would have known, *Wait a minute, if we've got a direction to go this way, then taking a 20 degree turn is just not what the President had in mind*. I didn't see that happen.

As in any White House, there's competition for ideas and approaches. One of the great examples perhaps of where these issues came together was around education. An interesting little story, Secretary [Terrel] Bell, a wonderful man. As Secretary of Education, he came in to head a department that President Reagan said he wanted to abolish. Yet he came in with a lot of energy and absolute dedication: "If the President wants to do this then the functions that must remain will move somewhere." Eventually we abandoned the idea. So he sat there with this department that some would say we shouldn't even have, it shouldn't exist.

When we began looking at the polling, which some of us did fairly regularly, we realized that the whole message had gotten miscommunicated. It wasn't that the President didn't care about education, it had to do with some fairly sophisticated views about the role of the federal government in education. That had never been communicated. The President was as passionate as anybody about the importance for the quality of education to be improved and Secretary Bell understood that.

He formed a group that met and talked abut this, which David Gardner chaired, and he formed it without the involvement of the presidential personnel office. Just called it an advisory group to the department, very highly suspect by some. "Fuzzy-headed education thinkers" was probably the charitable term some would have applied to it, but I went over and met with Secretary Bell and listened to what the recommendations were. It was the report on *A Nation at Risk,* and it seemed that there were a remarkable set of very reasonable—first of all very troubling conclusions, and some very reasonable steps.

It happened that we were in the midst of thinking about how to help the public better understand the President's views on issues they care about, and education was right at the top of that list. It was probably '83, maybe a couple of years before the reelection campaign, but we were already thinking about where we needed to improve perceptions as we approached the reelection year. Mike Deaver and I—we haven't talked a lot about our role in the White House—but Mike and I, the relationship remained very strong. He chaired a strategic planning meeting and a weekly scheduling meeting, both of which I was involved in. The strategic planning meeting, which met at Blair House, was a very interesting session. We really did try to look a little further ahead and address some of these issues.

I said, "Secretary Bell is going to put in a request for him and the head of this report on *The Nation at Risk* to meet with the President. I know some of our people don't like it, but it's a very commonsense—it's an alarming issue, and I think the President ought to hear it and at least demonstrate that he's willing to listen to these folks and understand what the nature of the problem is with education." Another lesson in the way the White House worked, one of the most powerful groups in the White House was the strategic planning and the scheduling groups, because what goes on the President's schedule has a lot to do with what the public sees.

This meeting was literally set up as a short briefing with Secretary Bell and Dr. Gardner to present *A Nation at Risk*. It lasted longer than we thought. The President got much more interested in it, listened to the nature of the problem and said, "We have got to do something about this." I heard it; Mike heard it; Jim Baker heard it. Ed Meese may have been there too, probably was. It was a meeting that I was responsible for, so I was there.

Because the meeting was education, and that was a little different, the press took an interest in it. The report obviously had a lot of impact. The President's own desire to do something caused us to start putting events on the schedule. The report obviously became very visible. We began doing events, going to schools. Sam Donaldson on ABC News refused, he said, "I'm so sick and tired of going to these schools. I'm going to stop reporting on them," which he did for one night and the other networks reported on them. The next time we went, he reported. The point being, it's an interesting way to describe these pressures at the White House, because immediately in the polling, the numbers went up. The President's approval rating on education, it was a steady march. Every time we did an event, we got media. Every time we got the attention, every time we showed he was paying attention to the issue of education, his numbers went up.

It honestly happened the way I described it. I wish I could say there was a clear strategy. All the credit goes to Ted Bell for saying this needs to be done and doing it. Some of the policy people objected to the nature of the report, they objected to the people who were involved. They weren't the loyal, trusted Reaganites that we should have on something like that, but it also had a tremendous impact on the President. At the end of the day, he was the one who heard the discussion and said, "I want to take action on this."

Those kinds of things, which probably happened hundreds of times, but those kinds of issues—again, for the small group of us who were really thinking it through—Ed Meese didn't reject it or resist it when he saw how the President felt. Mike Deaver said, "Let's follow up." Jim Baker said, "Politically, this is a pretty good thing." But the hundred or two hundred people under us all formed their view as to, *This was a bad idea. Fuller got this on the schedule. This is a Baker thing.* That kind of dialogue I basically just didn't listen to, but I know it went on. In that case, it worked obviously to the President's benefit, that we put something in front of him that he recognized was also powerful. But that's just an example of some of the back-and-forth.

In that kind of issue as well as others, all of us could have told that story at the time. We chose to tell the story, which was very much the reality—it wasn't the entire reality—but we chose to tell the story that Secretary Bell had presented this to the President and the President asked us to do something about it. Absolutely true. The rest of the stuff of staff jockeying and how it happened and all, we just didn't talk about. Which is, I think, what staff should do. We don't need to get credit.

Knott: You referred to Mike Deaver a minute or two ago. This is probably a good time to talk about his role within the troika and your dealings with him.

Fuller: He played a very valuable role because he was so close to President Reagan and really understood what was going to work for him a lot, whether it was the type of event or the timing of events. He could also be an alter ego and the President could bounce things off of him, and Mike would give him an impression. That impression sometimes had no impact on what the

President decided and other times had tremendous impact on what the President decided, but he trusted Mike a lot.

I said that this scheduling meeting was really a place where we decided how the President's time was going to get used. The President could modify that, of course, but because Mike was there, he really had a sense of what was going to work or not. That was a terribly important job. Again, another lesson I learned and took very seriously when I went on to be Vice President Bush's Chief of Staff, that I controlled a lot of the scheduling—interacted with the Vice President to be sure—but maintaining that environment is a very important thing. So that was very important.

The long-range strategy session grew out of the fact that we were frustrated that we just sort of ran out of time, we'd go two or three weeks down the line and that wasn't particularly sufficient. So we began, a smaller group of us got together, usually at Blair House for lunch, including David Gergen, and Dick Darman and Larry Speakes, the press secretary. We just talked about, okay, what's coming at us, how are we using these blocks of time? What do we need to do to prepare for State of the Union, or prepare for a foreign visitor? Mike was very good at that. One, because of his relationship with the President. Two, he's just got a good sense of how to effectively project President Reagan.

We were close. It gave me the ability to speak freely and directly with him. I know at times in scheduling meetings he could be kind of gruff and he could imply, "That's the dumbest idea, we're not doing that," and people were intimidated by that. I knew I could get that all day long and we could go have dinner together or something that night. At times I think people would sit and watch the two of us go at some issue and I'd say, "You've got to put it on the schedule." "We're not doing it." I'd say, "No, you've got to put it on the schedule." They'd say, "Oh my God, what's Fuller doing?" But the relationship remained very good.

I just have lots of respect for him. He was tireless. I think he was somebody who, obviously we all came to realize he was dealing with issues that some of us didn't know about at the time, but he dealt with so much that just people didn't understand. I came to appreciate it in some ways more when I was Chief of Staff, when you have all these people, they all want something. Unfortunately, in that role, your job often is to be the one who says no. But I think he brought a lot to the Reagan Presidency. The Reagans are people who both brought kind of a majesty back to the White House in what I think is the best sense. They certainly wanted that, but Mike knew how to make that happen. I think the environment that was developed and created was really largely his responsibility.

Knott: Is it accurate to say, as many have, that Mrs. Reagan relied on Mike Deaver in a sense?

Fuller: She did, there's no doubt she did. She knew that he was someone she could trust with whatever her concerns or issues might be. She was engaged out of real compassion for the President, but she could only be effective if she had somebody with whom she could be candid and who would be candid back to her. I think that was clearly Mike. When Mike left that role, it was a very difficult situation. I don't know of anybody else who could have played that role.

Knott: Could you talk about Ed Meese? There was criticism at the time in terms of his administrative skills, that he was not particularly efficient, that paperwork would tend to go into the Meese office and disappear forever. Is that an accurate assessment?

Fuller: I didn't find that to be the case. He had the capacity to work through large numbers of issues and quantities of information, and yet he could be out at dinner and be back in there at 7 o'clock in the morning and somehow had read the material he had to read. I think on the policy side of the shop, you end up dealing with a lot of paper, particularly in a White House that had the Cabinet process and other things. Just a lot of paper ran through there, but we had a system that really moved it through.

I think that Ed Meese, in the role he played, was somebody who also had to think carefully about the right time to have a view on a certain issue, because you wanted it shaped. If he spoke too soon, you might cut off the options or you might cause some force to rise up in contradiction. He often would be the person who would and *could* best summarize the discussion in the Cabinet meeting, where we were ending up and what action needed to occur.

I've heard the jokes about the briefcase. A lot of paper went in that briefcase. I can only tell you, because I was the recipient of it, a lot came out every morning also. He worked through lots and lots of stuff.

Knott: Is it true—again, in some ways it would be hearsay—that he was disappointed not to be selected as Chief of Staff?

Fuller: I only had a little glimpse of that in the sense, in the preparation, I think, for the final debate. A group was in Washington and I realized at the time, near the end of the election in 1980, that there was a lot of scurrying around involving a number of people on how the White House should be set up and structured, and people had lists. They would reach into their coat pocket and they'd pull something out and say, "What about—" I just knew there was a lot of jockeying. So having said that, I know there were different views as to how it might be structured.

I think they got as close to the ideal as anybody could want, in terms of striking a balance between somebody, in Jim Baker's case, who really knew Washington, who knew Capitol Hill, with a team that included Dick Darman, knew how to make the White House function. And Ed, as somebody who really was there with the knowledge of the President and his passions and his policy preferences, who was driving on that side. Then Mike, who tied it all together on behalf of the President. I couldn't even go back—there have been different variations on how it might work—I can't really even go back and imagine how a different alternative set of boxes on an organizational chart would improve it. I do think it was a very strong team that really withstood enormous pressure, the shock of an assassination attempt, and then enormous pressures for most of that first term. A little bit of fraying, but that's almost to be expected.

Knott: You saw this very much up close and personal. Is this a system that you would recommend for other Presidencies, or is this something that just worked particularly well for Ronald Reagan?

Fuller: I think you always have to think about how to design something starting with the person at the top. No one is going to be like Ronald Reagan, and therefore probably the structure is always going to differ. I do think there were some good things to recommend from this structure. If it's true that a President can't possibly have all the skills necessary to do all the things a President has to do perfectly, it's probably true of his Chief of Staff and his top staff people. So to some extent there are advantages to having some responsibilities spread.

I think the most—I've thought a lot about it over time, having done it for four years for the Vice President—I think the role of the Chief of Staff and the President is absolutely critical. My thought was always that the Chief of Staff is the person who really ought to draw from the elected official, draw out what kind of structure that person is going to feel comfortable with, and then figure out how best to make that happen. I do believe in a strong Chief of Staff. I think that you absolutely confuse people if you have too many voices with different messages. So I do believe in a strong Chief of Staff system.

Maybe that's what helped me survive what I found myself in, which was I always had respect for the Chief of Staff, even though I reported to the Counsellor to the President. I did see the two as very essential to making the place work. My counsel to any President would be, think long and hard and make a really careful choice when it comes to your Chief of Staff. Let him or her help design the structure that's going to feel right for you. Then delegate and give them the flexibility to go make it work, because there's just too much that just naturally drifts to a President than one individual could possibly deal with.

Knott: Let's get back to your role as Cabinet secretary. Let me just ask one question, did you speak to your predecessor in that? Did you have any meetings with your predecessor in the [Jimmy] Carter administration?

Fuller: With Jack Watson, only briefly. I ended up unfortunately getting to the transition so late, in that sense, so only briefly. I did speak to, Bob Gray was a Cabinet secretary for [Dwight] Eisenhower, and Bob was a friend. So I did talk with him about how they did it. Bob had written a book and articles. I did acquire some information but I would say probably on-the-job training was the order of the day.

Chidester: To just give one more wrap-up question about the job as Cabinet secretary and Cabinet Councils in particular, just what was your overall assessment in the first term of how the Councils worked? Were they effective? Did they foster a better relationship between White House staff and Cabinet?

Fuller: I think they worked very well. Again, some met often, some met infrequently, but they were forums for bringing issues into the White House and ultimately to the President. There was a very important dimension, and you referred to it, which I think has been grossly overlooked. The fact that we had the Cabinet officers in the White House so often and in sessions with senior White House staff, built connections that made the whole process of deliberating on issues, I think, much more effective. There's such a tendency when you're inside that 14-acre compound, that "we're here at the White House and everybody should come to us." If you don't get out—I got out a lot—but if you don't get out, and you don't have the Cabinet in the White House very much, real resentment builds.

Because they were there so often, there was an ability to accomplish things in the formal process, but then informally raise questions, or raise issues, or bounce ideas off of a secretary who would drop by. Secretary [Malcolm] Baldrige of the Commerce Department would rarely be in the White House where he just didn't stop by to visit. "What's going on, what's happening? What's the next trip, where is he going, where is the President going? What am I supposed to wear at this event?" I always said to my staff in the Cabinet Affairs Department, there are no dumb questions; there are no unimportant questions. We got literally questions on what should my wife wear, what should I wear, but we were the office that was supposed to answer those questions for the Cabinet. It wasn't just with me, it was also with Dick Darman. We shared the same suite in the basement of the White House. They got a chance to meet with Dick and talk to Dick, and they liked that.

So there was a very important formal role, which worked very well. Probably what most have missed was the informal interaction that took place was really terrific. It brought a familiarity and a comfort level that when times get tough you've got a foundation and a relationship to build on.

Chidester: We've asked you your opinion on a lot of the members of the White House staff so far. You worked predominantly with Cabinet secretaries. Were there any who stuck out, any who left strong impressions on you? I know you said that Don Regan liked to hold a lot of meetings.

Fuller: I really, truly enjoyed all of them. I actually made it a point to go out and meet with them and with their people in the departments. That surprised some. It surprised some of my White House colleagues as well, "Why are you going out there?" I said, "You know, it's interesting. You ought to go see the Secretary of Transportation. It's a pretty interesting job." They all were unique personalities.

I've talked about David Stockman. I have, and had at the time, tremendous respect for David Stockman. I don't think President Reagan could ever have done what was accomplished early on without David. His knowledge of the budget, his passion for driving negotiations to conclusions with Congress, as well as with Cabinet officers. Jim Watt was a bit of a target of some within the administration, certainly outside, and yet he was so loyal. He had a marvelous—his commitment I guess to doing what the President wanted was great. Yet he got himself in trouble with the Beach Boys.

Knott: Seems to be a recurrent theme.

Fuller: I know, somehow the Beach Boys play big in this administration. [*laughs*] He had a criticism about their appearing on the Mall and we were sitting around going, "Oh my God, what are we going to do now?" I said, "You know, David Gergen showed me this foot that he had." It was a foot, a cast mold of a foot with a hole through the middle. I said, "Jim Watt's coming over here, why don't we give him the award for shooting himself in the foot?" We all thought it was funny. We said, "If we can't laugh our way through this, we're going to have a problem."

So he comes over. I said, "Jim, let me tell you what we're going to do. We're going to give you an award." "Really?" he said, "I thought I was in trouble." I said, "Well, you are, but we're going to try and get you out of it. Trust us, we think this will work." He was good-natured enough to

accept the "Shot Myself in the Foot" award. We got a nice little picture with him doing that, and we got through the crisis of the Beach Boys on the Mall.

There are just so many different—

Knott: If we gave you some names, would you be willing to just give us a sketch, starting with Secretary of State Haig?

Fuller: Secretary Haig, a man who did not like to fly in airplanes without windows. He made a big fuss about that. Al Haig—to this day I enjoy a wonderful relationship with him. He was one of those who, while a Cabinet officer, obviously most of his interactions were with the National Security Council, which was separate from my scope of responsibility. He and his assistant, Woody [Goldberg], who would frequently check in, sometimes saying, "Are we in trouble? What should we do?" I always felt that he deserved to get whatever benefit of my thinking as anybody else wanted to have.

I thought that one of the things that was creating the conflict was not that Al Haig was disloyal or anything else, it was that he was so passionate about dealing with foreign policy issues that he really felt needed to be addressed—that was obviously his domain. But we at the White House we had these other priorities, and the election in large part was won on getting spending down, taxes down and reducing regulation. Those were the pillars. I confess early on to being concerned, that we had the advantage of being very focused but we were leaving a lot of things, just pushing things off the agenda. That was his initial concern and that's where he actually had the initial rub with the troika and others.

To the extent I could, I tried to explain our priorities from a political standpoint. I think it could be argued that we didn't have the structure quite right on the national security side. You had people with pasts, Richard Allen, Al Haig, all of whom had been involved with [Henry] Kissinger, and the National Security Adviser reported to Ed Meese. It just wasn't our focus from a policy standpoint in a way that would satisfy the Secretary of State. The structure certainly didn't satisfy the Secretary of State. And it was a Secretary of State who knew the workings of the White House more intimately than many of us who were at the White House. So it was kind of the perfect storm, if you will.

I thought he was the victim of our newness and to some extent his own personality. But his personality wasn't bent on advancing himself. His drive was bent on trying to work some of these foreign policy issues through with the President. Somebody who had a lot to offer and ultimately, I think, when the structure wasn't going to serve him well, made the right decision and did something else.

Knott: Would it be fair to say that there were people on the White House staff who were gunning for him in a sense?

Fuller: I don't know of anybody who came there and said, "This appointment was a mistake and we've got to move him out," gunning in that sense. I think, over time, it became this frustration that we're not ready to deal with those issues, he's making a lot of demands, he's difficult to deal with. I think somehow the chemistry just wasn't right. I don't think it started that way—it may

have started that way with some, again because of his past history—but it just developed in ways that I'm not sure I can explain.

I'm sure it's one of those cases where multiple parties are guilty. He could have played it differently; the White House could have played it differently. They didn't have to assign him a plane without windows. And you can't threaten to resign too many times before somebody says okay.

Knott: Before we continue with these names, were foreign policy issues part—would they come through the Cabinet Council process?

Fuller: National security and foreign policy issues were dealt with by the National Security Council. Trade policy, some international economic policy, would. Over time, as I stayed in my job, my role, my scope of activity, got a little broader so sometimes I'd get into them more. We did interact, we did keep Defense and State informed on non-national security matters. They were serving on the economic policy, they were serving on some of the policy councils, so there was a channel, a line of communication there.

Knott: Did you have a lot of interaction with Richard Allen and then Bill Clark, or were you two basically separate camps?

Fuller: I had some interaction with both. We were together in senior staff meetings and things like that. With both I'd go in and might talk about how to handle a particular issue. Or if they wanted to weigh in on something, that kind of thing. As I would occasionally do foreign trips and things like that, I'd get more involved with them.

Knott: How about Caspar Weinberger? Your assessment, any recollections of Secretary Weinberger.

Fuller: He's, again, somebody who came in with a lot of experience and knowledge, both of the President and Washington. He always struck me as somebody who spent so much time, at least when I was involved on budget issues, on rebuilding the defense capabilities. At the same time we were trying to reduce the deficit. So I probably had more interaction because in the first four years I wasn't involved with the National Security Council in those meetings. My involvement tended to be more budget and those kinds of issues. He was just very driven and compassionate about what he did. I thought very able and capable, decent.

Knott: Did he and Secretary Haig hit it off?

Fuller: I'm not sure I witnessed the two of them together enough. I would say, one of the hard parts about ever evaluating exactly what's going on there, whether it's today or 20 years ago, is that somehow the bureaucracies pit themselves against each other. So you don't know whether, when the two talk—and sometimes they talk multiple times a day—whether there's an issue between the two of them or just issues between the two departments. Usually it's a combination of both, but it's not usually as strained or as dramatic as it appears, although sometimes it is strained and dramatic.

Knott: You've mentioned Don Regan a couple of times, I was wondering if you might be able to elaborate on Don Regan. If you want, you can talk about his later stint as Chief of Staff.

Fuller: One of the most interesting things I heard about Don Regan after we all got there was that there was probably no business leader who was in the White House more during the Carter years than Don Regan. This was a place that he wanted to, I think, conquer, like he had conquered Wall Street. Obviously a very successful businessman. I think he came into the Treasury Department—and brought some very bright people with him, very able people with him—determined to do well, be successful. In many ways he was. I think he was frustrated by some of the apparatus.

I think like any CEO that I've ever seen come into government, from business or even Governors who come in who are chief executives of a state, they suddenly are very frustrated that they're not in charge. What they find out is that not only are they not in charge, but they've got to listen to 30-something-year-olds who are in charge on behalf of the President. Whether it's the schedule or where your toe marker is on arrival ceremonies, or whatever it is, there are these people around.

He had a wonderful sense of humor, which I fortunately would see from time to time, but sometimes he didn't have a lot of patience for the White House process. A lot of the issues that we were dealing with were new to him. But he had a great affection for the President and he certainly, I think, at all times tried to represent the President. I think in his mind it was a measure of his success that the switch could occur with Baker and he could go be Chief of Staff. But when he became Chief of Staff at the White House, he really thought, *Now I'm in charge*. He found out that you're in charge, but there's a lot of pressures you've got to manage. I think that was new to him.

Obviously the frustration in the relationship with Mrs. Reagan has now been well described and documented. I don't know, it's hard to know exactly what impact it really had. I'd said to him that it was my intention to leave the White House. I thought when he was coming in I didn't want him to feel that it had anything to do with his arrival, it really had been my plan to leave the Cabinet Affairs office and frankly to leave government. So I didn't work with him in a Cabinet Affairs role when he became Chief of Staff. I obviously did work with him in my role as Chief of Staff to Vice President Bush. He was tremendously supportive and helpful and open. As the President included the Vice President in everything, Don Regan really included me in everything. I couldn't have wanted a better relationship in that sense.

I felt for him as he went through some of the frustrations of trying to get his arms around running the White House. It might be the case that no matter who came after the troika would have had tremendous challenges in just trying to make the pieces work. But I do think he made a great contribution. He was very good at—I hope people would say this who were on the economics side of the house—he's the one who used the Cabinet Council very effectively to keep people together, and really discussing and talking about the issues and what we were dealing with. With or without the President, those discussions helped us think through issues involving the budget and other kinds of things.

You read books about challenges today for the Treasury Secretary or at least for the first Treasury Secretary. I don't think Don Regan faced those kinds of issues. I think he had to feel he was heard, he was engaged, he interacted with the President and with others in the economic policy team in a very important and useful way.

Knott: William French Smith.

Fuller: Well, there's somebody with a long-standing relationship with the President. I actually knew him before I got to Washington. His firm was one of the principal law firms that worked with Pacific Mutual. He was also on the board of Pacific Mutual. Very principled, very reasoned, always a cautious individual. I don't know that I got to know him real well, but he and the people around him were excellent to work with. I didn't have as much interaction with him as the others.

Knott: When William Casey was appointed CIA Director, I believe he was given Cabinet rank if I'm not mistaken.

Fuller: Yes, he was.

Knott: Did you have any interaction?

Fuller: Only when he would come to the full Cabinet meetings. Again, when he was DCI [Director of Central Intelligence], I was not going to the National Security Council meetings, so I didn't see a whole lot of him. He did have one of the best lines. We tried about every other year to get a photograph of the President's Cabinet with the President and the Vice President. Just trying to get their schedules to mesh was a challenge. So the first time we got them all set up, all set to go and the photographer says, "Mr. Casey, could you please lower your chin?" He says, "Which one?" So he had a sense of humor, but I didn't have a lot of contact with him.

Knott: Have we exhausted David Stockman, have you given us your complete assessment of him?

Fuller: I think probably.

Knott: Did he hit it off with Don Regan? Did they view themselves as sort of rivals for being *the* economic spokesman?

Fuller: I don't know that they formed a close personal relationship, but David was respectful of the Treasury Secretary's position. He actually was supportive, even in meetings, when it was important that the Treasury Secretary present something. David was capable of sitting back and allowing that to happen. He clearly wanted to help shape any presentation that had to do with economic policy, because David did see that as integral to what he was trying to do with managing the budget process. I thought at all times he was respectful in meetings and discussions. Behind the scenes, I think he worked to try to bolster the Secretary's presentations and materials, that kind of thing.

Knott: How about Bill Clark as first National Security Adviser and then Secretary of the Interior? Of course, more than that, a very close associate.

Fuller: Yes, loyal friend of the President's. Someone I think the President was very comfortable with. I think Bill Clark was one of those people who basically would have done anything. You could have asked him to do any job. If the President asked him, I think he probably would have done it. I think he found the national security process and apparatus a little awkward. Again, I didn't work directly with him. When he did go over to the Interior Department, he did seem to thrive on that. He enjoyed that, he enjoyed the issues, he enjoys the West.

One of the anecdotes I remember was going over, I would try to go over sometimes and sometimes Cabinet officers would invite me over for a breakfast. We'd have breakfast together and then they'd bring other people in and we'd have several senior appointees to the President who almost never got to the White House. So I'd go over and we'd talk about what we were dealing with. Went over for breakfast and the table was probably about as close to the fireplace as this one is to that fireplace. It was loaded with wood. He says, "Well, should we have a fire?" He was very proper, "Well, should we have a fire?" I said, "Fine." He strikes a match, he throws it into the fireplace, the thing explodes. I said, "Good Lord!" I guess he was frustrated, he didn't want gas. They must have put something on it, some chemical on it. I thought, *Oh Lord, he'll burn the place down if he does this every day*. But he enjoyed the department and I think he was probably happier there than at the White House.

I'm not sure I can explain—maybe others can explain to you—exactly how I survived for eight years. When I actually went over and talked to some of Vice President Cheney's staff after about six months, they said, "The first question is, we can barely survive eight months here. How did you survive eight years?" I did enjoy it and there are lots of interesting relationships. It was remarkable to me how the place did chew certain people up. I do think it was always an advantage for me that I didn't spend any time thinking about what came next. I enjoyed the job I was doing while I was doing it. I thought I'd stay two or three years. Then Jim Baker was the one who really said, "No, you've got to stay through the reelection at least." I said, "Okay," so that's four years.

Then I was thinking I was leaving again. If you think you're leaving, and you're really happy with what you're doing, you're not engaged in these competitive battles to get to that next ring on the ladder. I saw a lot of people kind of chewed up by how they were positioned, how they were being reported on. I got pretty good press, got some press I didn't like, but it really didn't matter to me much. Even when I dealt with the press, it wasn't to get to some other position. I had sort of won the Lotto and gotten one of the highest-ranking posts in the White House. I was thoroughly enjoying the job, so I was spared from some of that. But I think a lot of people who came either seeking something else, or seeking a positioning, tend to get ground up in the process, as an aside.

Knott: I do have more names but we can get to them later, it's okay.

Erickson: I was just going to ask one or two on Cabinet Council.

Knott: Please.

Erickson: Given that you had, I believe, six different substantive topical areas the Cabinet Councils were organized around, did you find variation on some issues that the Cabinet Council

system was much more effective on than others? Were there some that it worked very well and others it didn't? Or were they rather uniform, or some other version that I haven't mentioned?

Fuller: I haven't thought about it in quite that way. I think there was an advantage with those Cabinet Councils that tended to meet more frequently, purely because of the human dynamic. They were people who just were more accustomed to dealing with each other. So Don Regan's frequency of meetings with the economic council, and staffed by Roger Porter, whom we haven't talked about otherwise but is an exceptionally fine person, presidential scholar now and all that. The frequency helped improve the quality of the debate. They were just more familiar with each other.

Having said that, the legal one didn't meet as often and yet, when they needed to meet, I think they were effective. I think we imposed a process on them where we tended to use the same process whether they were meeting weekly or every other month, which is, produce a decision memo, which we would help craft, and produce options. Discuss those until the group is comfortable that you've got the best quality of information and thinking, and then we'll go to the President. So the process helped a lot. I think, again, they achieved what we sought out to achieve.

Erickson: My last one on the Cabinet Council is, when you had the issues lunches, the Friday lunches, how did this affect the operation of the Cabinet Councils? Did this allow, back to my old inside-out and outside-in metaphor, did this allow you to signal some of the Secretaries what the President's priorities were or issues were so they could better prepare for them in here? Or in what way did the issues luncheons either help or hinder, or what role did they play in how the Cabinet Council functioned?

Fuller: I think originally we viewed these as a means of getting information in front of the President where we could discuss it candidly with fewer people. I would suggest they were not meetings at which we were seeking decisions. It was really an opportunity to brief the President on issues that were developing. Let me step back and say that one of the phenomena of every White House I've seen operate is that over time you simply get more and more issues in the White House that you're grappling with. In some way, those issues were always there, it's just over time they find their way into the White House. So we needed a mechanism that would allow us to efficiently brief the President, as any chief executive, on several issues, over a block of an hour, an hour and a half.

We also were sending information in. We'd be given the book for the luncheon the night before, but it was really a book that he could then keep over the weekend and reflect on. So the information that came out might have to do with, "I'd like to see this discussed with the Cabinet," in which case that would give me the ability to say, "Get this scheduled for discussion." It might be that something was raised that he then felt he needed to talk to a foreign leader, so the National Security Adviser would get that task. It could be that he reflected on something that had to do with the schedule.

So it wasn't really, in my view, it was not competitive with the Cabinet Councils. It wasn't a decision-making body. It really was a true and efficient briefing that didn't require you to bring everybody in. It also, frankly, created a climate or situation where the President could freely ask

us for more information: "I don't understand, you're talking about Medicare reform, I don't understand how that works." We could talk about it on the spot or we could then go and get some briefing material prepared. I'm sure it did cause some concern among some, "Uh-oh, what's this group doing and why am I not in it?" That was the question everybody asked if they weren't in it. But it proved to be a useful way to provide a weekly summary.

Again, I think—and I make a lot out of this, maybe too much—but it also created a very healthy dynamic among some of us on the staff. The Vice President was there most of the time. We could have Cabinet officers there if we needed them for something, but it gave everybody a chance to make their point of view known. I think at one point, we would go around and we would each brief on our section of the book, so it gave people a chance to have an interaction with the President. It wasn't just the troika in the morning, racing through the schedule. It could be a little bit more forward-thinking. It was a very useful process. I don't know that they do it anymore, but it was a very useful process for us.

Knott: Were you successful in maintaining this Cabinet style of government that the President talked about in the early days?

Fuller: I feel very positive about what we did do. I felt all along that we were fulfilling the mission as it was described to me on that flight with Ed Meese, that we really had engaged the Cabinet in the process. There were people who were dubious, put it that way, about the whole thing. I'd get our tracking materials out. I would say, "Okay, you name the issue. You tell me what issue you think the President has decided that he's left his Cabinet out of." At least in my scope, not national security stuff. And we'd go through that drill and I'd say, "Okay, this is when it first entered the Cabinet Council process. There were three meetings without the President, the fourth meeting with the President. Made a decision two days later. Pick another issue." We'd play this game because I'd say, "Look, I'm not suggesting that it's more than it is. I'm not suggesting that the Cabinet is running the entire policy apparatus. I'm only suggesting that the Cabinet is a fundamental part of the process the President uses to arrive at decisions."

Does he talk to his staff? Of course he talks to his staff. And as time went along, Dick Darman and I both played a greater role in framing options and describing them. I think we both played an honest role of saying—we both did this. My view was always, "Mr. President, I can explain to you in a fair amount of detail exactly where the members of your Cabinet are on this issue." If he thanked me and I left, fine. If he said, "Well, do you think there's an option or a compromise?" I could help with that. And if he, on occasion, said, "What's your judgment?" I'd give him that.

My role was not to go in as a policy advisor and say, "This is the recommendation, you've got to accept it." Again, people turn over so much in that place, after a while on some of these issues, that was second nature. The troika got more comfortable with Dick and me playing more of that kind of role.

Knott: Let's take a short break. We've got lunch at 12:30 so we'll just talk about some issues from the first term when we come back after the break.

[BREAK]

Knott: I thought we'd spend the next 25 minutes, half hour or so just talking about some major events of the first term, and starting off would be the event that you mentioned a couple of times now, and that was the assassination attempt in March. I wonder if you could give us your recollections of that day?

Fuller: Sure. We happened to have some sort of a meeting going on in the Roosevelt Room in the West Wing, just off of the Oval Office. It was a meeting that involved David Gergen and myself. Somebody came rushing in from the press office, very emotional, and said that Jim Brady had been shot. David and I both got up and walked outside with her and realized there had been a shooting. That's about all we knew, other than Jim Brady had been shot. She said that the President was coming back to the White House.

David and I both agreed he'd go find Jim Baker and I'd go find Ed Meese. I walked into Ed Meese's office and I said, "Ed, there's been an incident over at the hotel and apparently Jim Brady has been shot and the President is on his way back." As I said it, I looked over at the screen that the Secret Service had in each of their offices at the time, which would identify where the protectees physically were. It said, "En route, G. W. Hospital." I said, "Whoops, we were told he was coming here, but something must have happened."

So with that I think we headed off to Baker's office. We were in Jim Baker's office for a while and then people, the numbers kept growing, so we went down to the Situation Room. I was one of the people who was in the Situation Room for the rest of the day, dealing with which Cabinet officers do we need, let's find them and get them here. Just working through the issues of the day. It was one of those days where it seemed like you had been working almost for hours and you'd look up and you'd realize only 45 minutes had elapsed. We were trying to get information.

Dick Darman and I were both there, so we were conduits to the people we needed, the Attorney General, the White House counsel, Fred Fielding was there for a good portion of it, as I recall. We were trying to nail down the information we'd need if we had a succession issue. We were trying to nail down what the facts were. We were trying to maintain the point of contact. Then eventually Jim Baker and Ed Meese, of course, decided they should go over to the hospital, which left all of us in the room.

There have been dramas done and everything else done on probably the most well-known incident. I remember I was sitting across from Al Haig. Actually, when Larry Speakes was doing a press briefing and Larry got into national security issues, let's put it that way, I just could see Al Haig just boiling over. It was out of a profound sense that if we sent the wrong signal, we could, in fact, make ourselves more vulnerable. He jumped up and went out of the room. I looked over at Richard Allen, and I said, "He's going up to the press room." He said, "No, he's not. What do you mean he's going to the press room?" I said, "I think he's going to the press room," at which point we turned to the TV and then he appeared for his famous, "I'm in charge here" statement.

It started out—and it was meant to be a message that would be reassuring to allies and cautionary to potential foes—and ended up sending mostly a confused message. But it was a long day and it

ended with my driving Mike Deaver home, I guess, which was sort of remarkable in itself. We'd gone through that entire day and yet we also had to find our way home that night. He was totally drained at that point, and obviously knew more about how serious this had been and really was than many of us realized.

It was always the case that events could rapidly change the situation in the White House, but that was certainly the most profound moment. At the same time it was remarkable how, even though by any measure we were all a pretty new team, had been working together for only three months, at least in the jobs we were holding, or even less than three months, it was remarkable how everybody was just so focused on getting done what needed to be done, both that day and then in the following days. We were certainly interested in having the President back and healthy as fast as possible, but we also were interested in advancing the agenda, not letting the momentum drop. The President contributed to that by what were really brave statements in retrospect, about his own strength and health and all that.

Knott: Did you notice any changes in Ronald Reagan? Obviously he had been seriously wounded, but Edmund Morris suggests that in some ways he lost his edge even as early as this.

Fuller: Yes, I know Edmund. I didn't see that; I really didn't. The other side to it was that he also had a sense of mission. He had survived this and he was going to use his time in the White House. It certainly causes anybody to reflect on their own mortality, but he seemed to me, if anything, to be persuaded that he was going to use that time in the White House to fulfill the missions he came to achieve. The whole decision of getting up as soon as possible and getting before the Congress and a remarkable speech, to advance the agenda, the tax and spending bill.

Some would argue, I think I would agree, that we might not have gotten it done had it not been for this series of events and the remarkable show of support, public support, as well as the support in Congress for him for the way he rallied. So it was a horrible thing to go through, but it also, in a real sense, propelled him and his agenda, maybe further than it would have gone without that event.

Knott: Was Vice President Bush more visible around the White House in the days immediately after the shooting? How did he handle that sort of awkward situation?

Fuller: There was no doubt in my mind that he was prepared if he had to step in to step in. But he was very mindful that with the President recovering—surviving number one, and recovering—that he did not want to in any way eclipse, or impose himself, in ways that would be misread or misunderstood. He might even have been overly cautious. One could argue he could have been more assertive, perhaps. He was somebody who throughout the entire relationship with President Reagan, I think more than most realized, had to struggle with what are very strong inclinations for leadership and being the person in charge. That's the kind of person that he really is. When he accepted the Vice Presidency and became this partner to President Reagan as Vice President, he really sublimated a lot of those very basic leadership instincts.

I think he was extraordinarily careful the whole four years, but at that moment in time when he could have done things that some might have welcomed, to step in and take charge, others would absolutely have been critical. Rather than allow that kind of tension to form, I think he played a

very careful role. You also had unquestionable authority in the troika, who were in contact with the President, and that helped. I think had you not had that, where they each could reassure their own staffs and others that the President is recovering and we're getting through this, it might have forced the Vice President to play a slightly different role then.

Knott: Another major event from the first year in office was the air traffic controllers' strike. I'm just wondering if you have any recollections of that particular event. It sort of helped President Reagan set the tone that he was a decisive leader.

Fuller: It did. There's no question it did, and what we now are hearing—we speculated at the time and what we're now hearing in some of the history of the Soviet Union—it had a tremendous impact even on how people judged him around the world. I have a good recollection because this was involved in the Cabinet department that was one that I interacted with a lot. Drew Lewis was a very strong Secretary of Transportation. What I was aware of in a dimension of this story that really doesn't get told was that there had been some assurances to the air traffic controllers during the course of the campaign that were made to the individual head of the union. So he was in some ways acting in the belief that assurances of better benefits or improvements for air traffic controllers were actually going to be carried out.

These were in a sense private conversations in a campaign environment, but nonetheless they were taken as commitments by then-candidate Reagan to the air traffic controllers union head. One of my concerns at the time was to make sure that if he'd made certain commitments, we at least were aware of them and we were acting in accordance with them. That was in some ways in conflict with those who wanted to confront this union group. There were some of us who were looking for a way to try to resolve this without it leading to a strike. As you know, I'm a pilot. I have pretty high regard for air traffic controllers and what they do and for the amount of pressure they're under.

I confess at the time it didn't seem to me like a wise idea at all to take a strike if you could prevent it. We wanted to make sure we were doing everything we could to prevent it, at least that was my view. So I got involved in it. I spent a fair amount of time with Drew Lewis. At times we thought we might have a breakthrough; at times I was talking directly to the head of the union. In the end we couldn't reach an agreement and took the strike. I think it's a case, again, of the President making it very clear what his view was and others carried out that view, carried out his policy and acted with the full knowledge of his viewpoint. It made a very strong point. To stand up in the way he did sent a very strong signal. It cost us a little bit too, but it sent a very strong signal.

Knott: Towards the end of your first year in office, the article in the *Atlantic Monthly* appears where David Stockman had been talking to William Greider, I believe it was. Any memories from that somewhat painful event?

Fuller: My first reaction is, *David, why in the world did you do this?* Even though I've already acknowledged I think that the communication with the media is important, the extent of the communication seemed to be a bit over the line, to say the least. David felt terrible about it. He came in, I think, the morning that the whole thing broke and sat with Dick Darman and with me and we talked it through a little bit. Again, we had publicly, I think the phrase that was used was

we had him taken out to the woodshed. I was sort of amused, I'm not sure how close he ever got to the woodshed, but that was at least the perception.

At that point the President was, I think, both respectful and appreciative of what David was doing in the administration. I certainly was in the camp that this is not somebody we want to lose. Let's just work through this. So it was a judgment call. Others would have done something differently. I know David felt very bad about it, so we got through it. I think there was an appropriate amount of public angst over it. To be honest with you, internally it was a little bump but we just kept on going. I'm sure David was upset about it, but he was hardly a pariah in the place. We had too much to do and we moved on.

Knott: Stockman later wrote a memo that was not a particularly flattering portrait of President Reagan and some members of the administration. Was there any sense that this is a somewhat ungrateful or ungenerous act?

Fuller: There was that sense. It seems that most of the time when these books get written, people start out to tell a story about their role in a moment of history. I always in some ways blame the editors, who say, "Well, if you want to sell the book, you really have to spice it up a little bit." So suddenly the things that make news overwhelm the body of the book. There are a number of things in the book that are quite useful in terms of understanding what we went through; there are others I would take exception to.

I made a commitment to Vice President Bush when I became his Chief of Staff: I probably would make mistakes, but the one thing I would not do is write a book about my four years with him on the road. It's probably a terrible thing for historians to hear, but when you get into a relationship like that, if you're doing it with the knowledge that you're going to write a book— And we had people literally in meetings who would be taking verbatim notes. The only reason possible was that they would be writing a book, as far as I could tell. But you get into that and it's just hard to have the trust and confidence to speak freely. I think some people wanted to stop talking to him or did stop talking to him. I have seen him but only occasionally.

There's also, I have to say it, a personal filter, where to be honest with you, I sort of screen that stuff out, as you might have imagined. If I saw David today, I'd go have lunch and I would have forgotten the book. But anyway, now that you brought it up, I do remember it. It wasn't a great—

Knott: That's what we're here for. Remind you of uncomfortable—

Fuller: Your binder did that. Kelly did that better than anybody, I'll tell you.

Knott: The Haig resignation in the summer of '82. We've touched on it a bit, but I'm wondering if there are any further observations from that, and bringing George Shultz into the administration.

Fuller: Yes, I was involved in some resignations, but that was not one of them. That was really played out by others.

Chidester: I was going to jump ahead, to the '84 campaign. Just what role did you play in the campaign?

Fuller: Now if my lawyer was here. . . . We really tried, for all sorts of appropriate reasons, to not get the official staff too engaged in the campaign. Maybe I should say you have this role, particularly as I've described our strategic planning and other meetings, you have this role of wanting to make sure you're presenting the President and the administration in the best possible light and that you're doing official events in the best way possible. Then you've got this political operation that kicks in. It's hard to even think about it now, when we're suddenly engaged in presidential politics in February. I saw written somewhere, I don't know whether it's accurate, but it seemed to be accurate, that President Reagan had not mentioned the name of his opponent, Mr. [Walter] Mondale, until he said, "my opponent, Mr. Mondale" in October, before the November election. It was a contrast to what's happening in this administration. A claim made by a credible source, whose name I can't remember.

There was a sense that we were all part of explaining what we had done in the first term and looking to the future, right up to the convention. With the convention in the summer of 1984, the campaign would kick into more of a campaign mode and we'd have two months of campaigning. So that's the contest.

So, my involvement. Actually, one of the things that I thought was one of the smartest things we did, Dr. Richard Wirthlin and the Wirthlin organization came in in 1983, in a meeting in which he made a presentation to several of us that said, "Here are the constituencies that led to the Reagan victory in 1980. Here's the percentage of vote we got in those various kinds of constituencies, by age, by region, ethnic, whatever, all kinds of different criteria. Here, in the polling now, is where we are today. The bad news, folks, is that we're behind in a lot of these areas," which a lot of people forget. We'd gone through recession. In '83, we had a lot of serious issues.

That exercise, for some of us, became kind of a roadmap to say, "What is it that we need to do to shore up the support, constituency by constituency? Do they not understand some of the benefits of the actions we've taken and how can we better explain them? Are there things that we can do between now and November of '84 that would help strengthen their relationship of that constituency?" And, frankly, we asked the question, were there issues that were best left untouched and dealt with after the reelection that could adversely affect that constituency?

It was a pretty carefully thought-through process that informed us—this is probably the best way to describe it—about how we could take measures that would be helpful to the reelection of the President. Thus, in terms of scheduling or in terms of issues that were discussed, we did it at least with the knowledge that some things would help more than others. Dealing with crime issues was a good thing to do, dealing with education was a good thing to do. In that sense I was part of a strategy group that looked at how the issues we were dealing with from the official side of the White House were affecting the political strength of the President.

Chidester: In the middle of the campaign, by the summer of '84, Ed Meese had already been nominated as Attorney General, James Baker had made it known that he was planning on leaving the West Wing in the second term should Reagan win. Did you know by then that you wanted to stay in the administration for the second term? If so, did you feel that your position would change or you would remain Cabinet secretary?

Fuller: I'm trying to think of the timing. Remember, I thought I was going to spend two, maybe three years, and then Jim Baker said, "No, go through reelection." In my mind, I thought that after the reelection it made sense to go do something else. I wasn't sure what that was, but I thought it was something I wanted to at least consider. Then I realized that in fact, Ed Meese was leaving and Jim Baker was talking about doing something else. Mike Deaver and I began talking about, with everything changing, was it a good time, if the President was reelected—? First of all, you start wondering, *Well, should I be thinking about what I do if he's not reelected*? But we didn't think a lot about that. We thought he was going to be reelected.

Mike and I began talking about maybe we'll go form a firm. We did explore it, more after the election I think. I don't remember a lot of this—I'm sure you're right, I just don't remember a lot of the discussion about what people were going to do before the election. Certainly after the election in November of '84, it was clear to me that we were going to see changes and that I was ready to do something else. I thought it was going to be on the outside, because I was talking to Mike about forming a firm. We weren't in any rush.

I forget when Don Regan actually was announced, but at that point, I know when he was announced, I congratulated him and I said, "I don't want you to think anything other than the fact that after four years, I'm ready for a change. You should feel free to pick your Cabinet affairs person, because my plan is to leave the administration." One of the things that was going through my mind was it had been such a remarkable four-year period in my life, with a team of people for whom I really had a lot of respect, that a new team, and starting again—I just thought this is a natural break point. By any standard, it's a natural break point.

I was on that course and was actively talking to Mike Deaver about forming a firm, talking to some other people about it. Actually the first person to talk to me early in 1985 was Nick Brady. Secretary Nick Brady said, "You know, I'd like to come and talk to you." It had to be the end of January, early February. "I'd like to come and talk to you about some of the things that *you* think Vice President Bush should do in the second term, particularly if he's interested in running for President." I said, "I'd love to have that conversation. I'll tell you right now, he's got my complete support." As I said earlier, I felt that he had made such a substantial contribution to the success of Reagan's Presidency, I said, "You know I'm from California and I'm a Reagan person, but I have no second thoughts. If he wants to run, he deserves the shot at it. Frankly, I think he deserves our support so I'd love to have the conversation."

So Nick Brady came into my office and we began a discussion and probably in one of the least perceptive 30-minute periods of my life, I went through this discussion, talking about Vice President Bush. Suddenly after 30 minutes, I looked at him and I said, "Am I getting interviewed for a job?" He said, "Well, as a matter of fact, some people think that maybe you should be Chief of Staff." I said, "Whoa, that's a surprise." And it really was. I knew he needed a Chief of Staff and actually I also knew that two of my very good friends, Lee Atwater and Bob Teeter, were both getting more and more involved with Vice President Bush. The three of them, I guess probably Jim Baker and the Vice President, had talked about exploring this with me but it was left to Nick Brady to do. So nobody had really tipped me off.

It was 30 minutes into the conversation. I said, "I'm honored that anybody thinks this." I honestly didn't even know what to think about it, because I was really thinking of leaving. So

this continued on for about an hour or so, then I also clearly recall Nick Brady saying, "I'm leaving this afternoon, I've got to go out to California. I'll be back next week. Why don't you think about it for a week and we'll talk next week? And please don't discuss it." I said, "Fine." So he left.

The next day I was looking at office space for the purported Deaver and Fuller firm, when the phone rings and it's the Vice President's office saying, "Could you come by in about an hour?" I said, "Okay." So I went up. The Vice President had gotten his report from Nick Brady, I guess, whatever had been said satisfied him, because it was basically, "I'd really like you to do this job." I'm probably not totally objective, because I'm so fond of the guy—but he said, "I know I have to be more like Reagan, but I can't go all the way." I said, "Well, sir, nobody should expect you to. All I know is that if you're going to be successful, and I certainly hope that you will be, you have to be yourself. I watched enough of President Reagan going through what he does. You have to be yourself. Now if what you mean is you want more structure, that's good for me to know because I am pretty process-oriented. I do care about the structure; I do care about decision-making." To which he says, "Yes, I know, I know, I know."

But I said, "I can tell you I'm going to go think about it, but I'm so flattered and honored, I'm not going to say no. I do have a little problem, which is Mike Deaver thinks we're going to be business partners," which was one of the tougher conversations I had. Because, as I said, Mike had been a real mentor to me and that was something I was excited about doing. On the other hand, this was such an enormous opportunity. That was in February.

The first challenge—we may not want to jump ahead this much—but the first challenge was to figure out the transition, because Dan Murphy was still there, although he said he was going to retire. The Vice President said, "I'm not so sure how we're going to handle that." I said, "I'll take care of it," which was to become one of the most frequent conversations, which is, "I'm not sure what we're going to do," and "I'll go take care of it. I'll go figure it out." That is what I did for four years. One of the absolute best jobs anybody could ever have.

When it was announced, which was only I think maybe a week later, or soon after that conversation when it was announced, I got a note from Dick Moe, who had been Mondale's Chief of Staff, who said, "Congratulations, you've just managed to get the best job in the White House," and signed Dick Moe. So I called him. It was the first card to arrive. I don't know how it got in there so fast, but it was the first card to arrive. I said, "Why don't you come over for lunch?" So he accepted. He told me when he came a week or so later for lunch that it was the first time he'd been back in the White House since Carter had left. Nobody had invited him. I'm sure some people sat in the lunchroom in the White House mess saying, "What's going on over there?" But Dick Moe is still a good friend. That's how fast it happened.

Vice President Bush is wonderful in so many ways. One of the things I wish he was willing to do more of is be reflective about these times in his life. I actually still, for the four years was puzzled and in some ways still am puzzled, that with all the vast numbers of people he knew, just what it was exactly that he thought made me right for that job. It was a great honor and a great job. But we never really talked about exactly what it was that qualified me for it, except for his phrase that he wanted to be a little more like Reagan. But I know what he meant by that. What he'd seen us do for President Reagan, the small group of us that was scheduling, positioning and

all that, what he saw us do was worry about those things that up until that moment, when I came on board, the Vice President worried about. His schedule was in a spiral notebook. The Chief of Staff got the schedule in the morning when he arrived to work. It was an operation that I'm sure worked in a congressional office, but didn't work for the Vice President, particularly a Vice President seeking the Presidency.

What he wanted was a more ordered process, to make decisions about how he spent his time and what he did. I think he knew, he must have known, thanks to two good friends, Bob Teeter and Lee Atwater, that we were a good fit. He was looking for a way to put people together who were going to function well together, in spite of the fact that we'd never actually, all three, worked a campaign together, but we were all good friends. We all had very different skills, came from different regions of the country, but somehow, intuitively, he knew that we were going to be a good fit. That was one of the great pleasures of that whole campaign, the three of us, Atwater, Teeter, myself, plus Nick Brady, Bob Mosbacher and Roger Ailes, the so-called "Group of Six" that eventually came to be called publicly the "Group of Six."

Not only were we all at the core of the campaign for the basically three and a half years unofficially and two years officially, whatever it was. Not only were we at the core of the campaign, but we left that process even better friends than we started. That was so different from what I'd seen in the Reagan experience. It was what in many ways so different from other challenges experienced. Not to go there, but other campaigns just fractured and everything else. Even in our worst times, like coming in third in Iowa, nobody ever divided us. If George Bush had a premonition about that, then he really made some remarkable decisions. I think he must have; I think that's probably why. I think he was looking for that right combination of people.

Knott: Let's break for lunch.

[BREAK]

Knott: Okay, we're ready to go. I think Jeff's going to start off the questioning this afternoon.

Chidester: Yes, we're going to start with the second term, the second Reagan term. February 1985, you become Chief of Staff to Vice President Bush. I wanted to start off with just getting some general ideas of how Vice President Bush saw the office of the Vice Presidency. It's a very poorly-defined office.

Fuller: We talked a lot about it. I think he saw it as an office in which the occupant had to be prepared to assume the Presidency if something happened. As a result of seeing it that way, I think he took every effort to fully engage in meetings and discussions and briefings so that he would be current on what the President knew and what he believed he should know. He took a lot of care when we traveled always to get the daily intelligence briefing and to have interaction with the President on a regular basis. The Thursday lunches were very important for them to be able to speak privately about whatever was on their mind. In those luncheons, when I became his Chief of Staff, I knew that President Reagan valued them.

I said at one point, "Would it be helpful to have any background material or any information? I don't need to know what you talk about, but—" He welcomed it, so I would give him at times talking points or issues to raise. I'm sure he raised some of them, but he kept that conversation very private. I offer that as an example of how he was very much aware that what went on between him and the President should stay between him and the President. Some thought that he didn't speak up enough in meetings sometimes. It wasn't because he didn't have a thought or didn't have a point of view, it was really if he was going to give counsel to the President, he was going to give it privately.

I think one of the areas that people came to appreciate after he became President, one of the areas that was really important to President Reagan and Vice President Bush excelled at, was his ability to represent the United States and President Reagan around the world. In the four years that I was his Chief of Staff, we went to over 60 countries. I might note I never went to a single funeral. I went to over 60 countries. The discussions with heads of state—and I was fortunate to be included in most of those meetings—were just extraordinary. For the most part it was without notes, long dinner discussions, the kinds of things the President and a head of state are often not afforded the time in a state visit to do.

With Vice President Bush, many if not all the heads of state knew him pretty well, so he was able to lay out the kinds of issues President Reagan was grappling with. He was able to take back and share with the President privately some of the concerns that a head of state had, that didn't have to go through the diplomatic community. It could go really directly. So what I saw on the international front was a Vice President who was extraordinarily valuable to the President in the conduct of foreign policy, both as a reliable communicator on the points of view that President Reagan had, but as a very reliable reporter and confidant who shared information directly with the President.

Most of the time the information was shared only when he got back and only in private meetings with the President. Some of the time it was shared in a very secure, classified communication only between him and the President. That was a side that I hadn't seen in my first four years much at all, but I came to appreciate quite a bit.

Chidester: You mentioned these trips to over 60 countries, do any stand out to you?

Fuller: It's almost as tricky as reviewing the members of the Cabinet, I guess, because you could name them and bring back, in each case, some probably remarkable events.

Knott: Did you meet [Mikhail] Gorbachev?

Fuller: The Gorbachev meeting, which was in New York but also in Washington, actually, I was not—I became Chief of Staff in February. He actually went to Russia, he went to a funeral. I was not on that trip because I was not yet the Chief of Staff. I had been named but hadn't taken office. It ended up being a trip that kept going because he attended a couple of funerals and those were the last ones he did for about four years, but I didn't go on that trip. I did meet with him when he was in the United States.

One of them, of course, it's been written about, which got us into the whole Iran-Contra controversy, was the meeting in Israel with Amiram Nir, the operative for the Israelis who was

Ollie North's counterpart. That stands out, obviously, because it was the first time I had become aware of this plan that had been executed or been developed to provide weapons to the Israelis to provide to the Iranians. It was remarkable in that because I hadn't been party to any of the other discussions about the plan, what I heard this Israeli operative describe was extraordinary. The Vice President had asked me to keep very careful notes of the meeting. It's not that I do shorthand, but I can write fast enough and keep pretty much verbatim notes. Then before the day was out, I sat and literally wrote out the notes. A lot of what I was hearing I didn't thoroughly understand, so it was important to get the words exactly right so somebody else could interpret what this person was telling us, not somebody that the Vice President knew.

The Vice President said to me, "We have no way of knowing exactly what he's going to tell us or whether it's even accurate, but we've been asked to have this meeting by Ollie North and John Poindexter, so let's have the meeting." While that's the news event out of that trip, it was actually my first time to tour the Middle East. That was a phenomenal visit. Just to actually see the countries in that region, how close they are, to talk to the different leaders at great length.

The King of Jordan and the Vice President had a wonderful relationship, which I had seen in Washington, but we got to Jordan and they were out on speedboats with the Secret Service chasing behind them. So the Vice President had this ability really to work very hard but also to relax and get to know these world leaders in a very different way.

China was a phenomenal trip. The Vice President was treated like a head of state. The Chinese, you know, had a very high regard for him and Mrs. Bush. We did about four days in China. Early on, it must have been '85, late '85, I had again a chance to understand a country that was beginning this transition that we've now witnessed to more enterprise activity. That was also the trip that the Vice President demonstrated he could give two luncheon speeches on the same day, continents apart. He spoke in Hong Kong and then we flew to Anchorage, Alaska, and he gave the luncheon speech, technically on the same date, before he headed home. He said, "I want to be in my bed tonight." We were sitting there in Hong Kong in the morning, and I said, "Well, we'll do our best, sir." But he relished foreign travel and I certainly thoroughly enjoyed it as well.

Chidester: When he became President a lot of historians have judged his Presidency to be very successful in foreign policy. When he was going on these trips, I'm looking at a trip here to Poland in September of '87, he met with General [Wojciech] Jaruzelski. Were these the kind of trips that helped him to formulate the foreign policy that he would take into office when he became President? Did you have any discussions with him about a foreign policy?

Fuller: I want to tell you about the Poland trip a little bit, but let me be responsive to the question first. I think his view of foreign policy was something that was developed really over a lifetime of experience. You could add serving as a torpedo bomber in World War II, but from the United Nations, to China, to the Central Intelligence Agency—all of those experiences taught him a lot, but he's a person who has probably more of a passion for connecting with other people and understanding situations through his knowledge of other people, through direct communications through other people, than most other elected officials I've seen. There probably are some who would study the briefing papers more than George Bush would, but I don't think anybody would work harder at really understanding what's behind the intentions and the statements of the leaders he met with.

So I think the formation of his view of public policy, specifically as to how fast things would develop in Poland, how much we should push, what the risks were, what was the appropriate response when communists in Poland fell, absolutely his judgments were shaped by these visits and by the direct interaction. On Poland for a minute, he actually felt that Poland had the potential to be an enormous victory for President Reagan. He really tried to advance the idea directly. Some of the others of us talked about it, of President Reagan going to Poland. When President Reagan decided, for whatever reason, that that wasn't in the cards, he wanted the Vice President to go. The Vice President didn't advance it as though it were a trip he wanted to make, he really advanced it as a trip he thought the President should make and then instead, he, George Bush, went.

It was one of these trips, it was so delicately balanced, because on the one hand you're dealing with essentially a still communist-socialist regime, but one that was beginning to be pried loose from the Soviet block. It certainly had, the population was enormously supportive of the United States. So it was tricky. You had Lech Walesa there who, as a dock worker, was this model for the change that had to occur. You couldn't go there without seeing him. Yet to see him, in a way, was almost a repudiation of some of the authority. That's something that just—in spite of the fact of all the problems that might exist and the difference in philosophies with the Polish authorities in power at the time—still is difficult for then-Vice President Bush. He was a guest in the country; he was dealing with a head of state. As he would say, "You don't go poke 'em in the eye with a sharp stick."

In all honesty there were political overtones to this. Not ones that he wanted to think about very much, but the Polish population in this country is large and significant and we were mindful that there's a block of voters out there who were going to watch what he did and what he said and how he addressed Solidarity very, very carefully. We had a terrific advance team and they had been over there for three or four days, planning the trip, when John Keller, who led the advance team, called me. He said, "We have a question." One of the things we wanted to do was allow the President to address the Polish people. We weren't any more precise than that particularly, but that's what we had asked for. He said, "The Polish government has said they'll allow him to address the Polish people on television, but does he want to do it live or does he want to do a taped message? So that's the question." I said, "Easy, he'll do it live." They said, "Fine." The Polish government agreed. So that was on our schedule.

We also wanted a meeting with Lech Walesa. Our ambassador had not been confirmed so we had a career diplomat there who was a very fine guy, and he was explaining that we were going to meet with Lech Walesa. We had to meet with the Solidarity folks; we had to do some tours of churches and things. We were told we could see anything. The first rub came when, by our arrangements, a car pulls up at our guest house about the time the Vice President is getting out. The Vice President knew what was going to happen. Lech Walesa is in the car. We pull him out of his car; we put him in the limousine. The security forces are so shocked. They see this, they don't know what to do. It wasn't on the schedule. But we knew it was a secure place they could talk, so the Vice President goes in the car. All the security people came over. They went to the front of the car and they had a Polish flag on the front. They pulled their flags out of the car as a protest. No car with Lech Walesa is going to have a Polish flag on it. We spent part of the day with him and it was a great experience. It began a dialogue.

I think maybe that evening or the next evening we had a meeting with a number of Solidarity people at the ambassador's, or the head of mission's home. So again the Vice President heard first-hand. We went to a church, the advance team had worked all night long with our communications people to put a sound system in place so that if we could get the Vice President up to a balcony of the church, he could speak to what we knew was going to be a huge crowd across the way. Now, I knew that we were going to have a little bit of, shall we say, shoulder-knocking. At some point, we had a path in the church, which was the path we were officially going on. Then we were going to exit. I knew—because the advance group reviewed it—that we had to, instead of at one point going out the door, we had to literally turn the Vice President and walk straight down the aisle, into a stairway, up the stairway, into this outdoor porch.

The visit was not a public event that had been publicized, but the word had gotten out. Thousands, I mean thousands of Polish people were positioned, chanting, the whole time we were in there, "We love Reagan, we love Bush." Chanting in English, chanting this. All I said to the Vice President was, "Sir, at the end of your tour, we have created an opportunity for you to speak to the Polish people in an impromptu way. What I want you to do, whatever you do, is just follow your agent and your personal aide. I'll be behind you." He looks at me and I said, "Don't ask." He looks at me again. I said, "It will be a remarkable experience." So we go in, we go through the whole little formal thing, we do all this stuff. As his guests turn him to go out the door, we turned him and went down the aisle. As I went down the aisle, according to the plan, the people in the aisle just stepped up so that now the official party couldn't get to us and we were moving down the aisle and up the stairway.

When I got to the stairway—and size does matter—I just stopped. People came, bump, bump, bump and gave him enough time to get up the stairway. Again, all he saw was a nice quiet stairway, he was walking up with Lech Walesa, who had joined him at the back of the church. He stepped up there. The only thing I have to say, when I got up there, I was as stunned as he was at the size of the crowd and the raw emotion. I thought, *I hope he can speak, this is unbelievable*. And they're still chanting, "We love Reagan, we love Bush." So he gave extemporaneously a wonderful set of remarks. We came down, of course their security people were furious with us.

We went from there over to a reception, at some point, over at the American embassy with the American community. He was going to go back and rest and I think that night he was doing his broadcast to the Polish people, which we had somehow managed to refuse to give to the Polish authorities. We gave them the press release, an act of which we underestimated the significance. Rather than giving them the text of the remarks, we said, "Here's the press release," which they then believed we'd already released, which actually we hadn't, but that's what they believed. In the middle of the reception, the head of the mission, the U.S. acting ambassador, whatever, came over and said, "We have a problem. We're being summoned to Communist Party headquarters." I said, "What?" They said, "There's a problem with the speech."

I said, "Okay." So I go say to the Vice President, "Some issue, you go back to the guest house. Whatever you do, as long as the Secret Service is okay with it, just go to the television station. I'm not sure what's going to happen, but just go to the television station on schedule and I'll probably meet you there. If I'm released sooner, I'll meet you sooner." We go over to the Communist Party headquarters and on the way over I say to this diplomat, "Now look, let's be

clear about one thing. The Vice President is not changing his speech." He said, "What do you mean? They have some problems." I said, "Well, they may have problems, but we're not changing the speech. I would rather him not give the speech then find out that we edited it at Communist Party headquarters. This is not going to happen."

So we get into the room, it's the darkest, dankest green building I've ever seen. We go into this room with these six guys and they start speaking Polish to our diplomat, which of course I couldn't understand. I said, "I think it would be better if we use English." So then they all spoke English. And of course they're negotiating changes in the speech, they're beginning to talk about changes in the speech. So I said, "Wait, wait, let me understand something. If you can tell me what you're concerned about, I'm happy to sit here as long as you want to tell me what you're concerned about, but there's no way the Vice President will change that speech. It was late getting to you because he was working on it. He personally wrote this speech." Much of it he did write, but that was a little bit of exaggeration.

I said, "You invited the Vice President to speak live on your television station to the Polish people. I have to tell you, he is not going to change what's in that speech." Well, they didn't like that at all. More angry talk in Polish. Another faint attempt by our diplomat to try to get me to change something. I said, "We're not changing it, just trust me. I'll go back and tell him." And they said, "What are you going to do?" I said, "I'll go back and tell him we've had this conversation. We're going to leave at exactly—" whatever it was, 6:30— "and go to the television station. He will sit in the chair; he will give his speech. You can broadcast it or not. You do own the broadcast station. You did invite him to give the speech. You can broadcast it or not, that's your choice. But he's going to give the speech that he wrote, that you have in your possession." They were very unhappy people. So I left. Our own diplomat was like, "Oh, my life is going before my eyes." I said, "Well, we'll see what happens."

So I go back. The Vice President is resting. In fact, he's in bed. I said, "Sir, we have to leave in 15 minutes." "No problem, how'd it go?" I said, "I don't know yet." He said, "What do you mean?" I said, "They wanted to make some changes." He said, "What did they want to change?" I said, "I told them you refused to make any changes." He said, "You did?" I said, "You can't make any changes." He said, "No, that's right. So what's going to happen?" I said, "I don't know. We're going to go over to the television station. I told them you would sit in the chair and deliver your speech and they could decide whether to broadcast it or not." He said, "Oh, my God. Okay."

So we go over, he gave his speech, it was broadcast. We go to a reception afterwards with these six guys, thugs. They couldn't have been friendlier. Congratulating each other, congratulating me. It had been a masterful evening and all that. We never told the press the story, although it's in something. Eventually it got told but it was never told at the time. I think I told David Hoffman one time. I said, "You know, David, the only story you never got out of me was how I almost got held captive in the Communist Party Headquarters in Poland." He was on the trip. Anyway, you asked about Poland. Like I say, every trip probably has a story. That one is one of the better ones.

I do think that it made an enormous impression on the Polish people; it made an enormous impression on President Bush. I think when the countries began falling, Poland as well as the

Wall, one of the reasons President Bush's reaction was tempered was because he knew how much the people were behind this. He wanted it to be their movement, not an American foreign policy victory or something.

Chidester: Vice President Bush begins looking at the 1988 election fairly early in the second term.

Fuller: Right.

Chidester: How does this affect his role in the administration? Was he getting greater responsibilities as it went along?

Fuller: There may be some specific examples you have in mind. I don't think that we changed much about his responsibilities. He had had discreet responsibility for counter-terrorism, he'd had some responsibility for the Drug Interdiction Task Force. I think what changed—and it was a significant change in a way—was the preparation for running. We really began immediately. As I said, we had Bob Teeter and Lee Atwater, and eventually Roger Ailes and all of us involved in thinking about what he should do and getting ready for the race. We formed the Committee on America's Future, which became the political entity that we used to raise money to support candidates in 1986.

If you look at the schedule in 1986, the domestic travel schedule, there's almost as much travel in there as there was in the presidential election year of 1988. The reason was, we had a lot of things going. Vice President Bush had a lot of things going for him at the time, but I think we were very concerned that he really had to be out with the voters. He also had to be with political leaders in those states. He had to get them comfortable with his ability to lead, convince them that he was going to be the strongest candidate. In a way, that 1986 period—he would hate this term—but it was a beauty contest. It was a chance for him, along with Bob Dole, Jack Kemp and others, to go out there and show state party organizations, on the theory that I mentioned earlier, that you've got a 50-state race in a national election, to convince them that he was the strongest candidate.

So the '86 schedule was arduous. It took him out of the White House far more than he'd ever been out of the White House in the prior five, six years. That was something that wasn't lost on us, but we probably didn't anticipate some other ramifications. There were a lot of ways we could stay connected. It was helpful that I had been on the White House staff. It was helpful that the relationship with Don Regan was very good, with Howard Baker was very good, also with Ken Duberstein. Those three individuals were Chiefs of Staff during this period. Colin Powell and I stayed in touch, but the private meetings, and some of the private discussions that we later came to understand were the Iran-Contra discussions, the Vice President was not in. So there were clearly some things he missed. Everybody understood, he was engaged in an active campaign. Obviously it was in the President's interest to have a strong Congress come back, or as strong a Congress as possible. But that was the mission.

I think the travel, more than anything, changed his ability to interact on a daily basis in the White House. We were tremendously supported, I've always maintained this, tremendously supported

by President Reagan and by his top staff members in our effort to stay connected to the White House.

Chidester: Is there anything you can tell us about Bush and his role as head of the Senate? Any significant votes that stand out? I think he made a few of them.

Fuller: Yes, he did. We would rush back occasionally, sometimes needed, sometimes not needed. He took that role very seriously. He enjoyed the Hill office. One of the people in his office who had been running his schedule and really running the operation was Jennifer Fitzgerald. When I came in and we knew we had to make these changes, it was hard to figure out just how to do that without changing some staff around. Jennifer and I got together and I said, "You know, an important part of what he does is on the Hill, how about taking that over?" So she really set up a whole structure up there that allowed him to come up, not just for votes but to talk to members of Congress.

We haven't touched on it, it was another area that was enormously valuable to President Reagan. Much like dealing with heads of state, members of the House and Senate knew and trusted George Bush. Without having to go through all the formality of getting through the gates of the West Wing of the White House, they could walk over to his Senate office, they could sit down and talk with him, have lunches up there sometimes. I think that was very valuable. I think his role in the Senate was important. Occasionally history records important votes cast. What was every bit as important, if not more important, was his ability to gauge the thinking of the Congress on a variety of issues and share that, again, directly with the President.

Chidester: I'm sure he also took the idea of presidential succession in case of disability or death very seriously. Anything that stands out about the 25th Amendment, discussions about invoking that? I know Reagan had surgery a few times and never invoked the amendment.

Fuller: We all became students of that at the time. My knowledge, I'm sure, would elude me now, all the details. But we were very much aware of it. We traveled at a time where everywhere we went, we had instantaneous communication with the White House. Most of the time it worked. Technology has improved since then. Whether on airplanes or helicopters, cars, it was always a consideration. It was challenging then to do a presidential campaign with the Vice President, and it's certainly challenging for the reelection, more so today. But we thought about that, we made sure we were prepared for that.

The other thing I always thought was critical from a political standpoint, and was substantively important to the Vice President and was key to his role, was to be available. To give advice and to know what was going on in the administration. Politically I did operate with this fear that if we landed in a city and walked off that airplane and took questions about something that had developed that we were unaware of, that the Vice President would appear to be disconnected. I took the responsibility very seriously that we just could not allow that to happen. When you think about the times—now we have hand-held computer devices and PDAs [Personal Digital Assistants] and cell phones—we had cell phones, but you have much more instantaneous communications now. Sometimes, if something was breaking or going to break—the secure communication was very good on the airplane, very good wherever we were located in a building. We took very seriously this notion of staying informed, staying engaged.

One of the most striking examples of that was in June of '88, when we were out in California campaigning in the California primary. We had very little money left, but we'd gone out to see the Chief of Police of Los Angeles and then go to the L.A. Police Academy and give a speech on crime and drugs, which was exactly the right note. It was exactly the right place to deliver exactly the right message from a political standpoint. It just happened to fall at the precise time that they were negotiating with Manuel Noriega, trying to get him out of Panama. It also turned out that what I knew, but our political people didn't know—virtually no one else knew on the Vice President's staff—what the National Security Adviser Colin Powell knew and Secretary Shultz knew, and President Reagan knew, was that Vice President Bush really had some serious disagreements with the nature of the settlement and the negotiation going on with Noriega.

It happened that these events simply were reaching a crescendo the morning of the event at the Police Academy, as the Vice President and I talked about the day—he was going to go see cocaine houses and the worst of the worst of the drug problem in Los Angeles, with the chief of police. We were calling, we'd been calling on secure lines, and he and I would be disappearing into secure rooms to make these phone calls, registering his concerns for a couple of days. I said, "I don't know how you're going to go out there and give a speech about the problems of drugs and crime and all that, and I know how uncomfortable you are with the treatment that's being contemplated for Noriega."

He said, "I know, it's terrible." I said, "Would you consider saying something in the speech?" He said, "Well, it would have to be very carefully worded." And I said, "It would be, it would have to be." These morning discussions, which took place lots of times—and this was one of the more delicate ones—were always this delicate balance. On the one hand, I definitely wanted him to speak out and let the people know what he thought. He certainly felt the desire to do it, but he said to himself he didn't want to do anything to differentiate himself from President Reagan until after he had the nomination. We're sitting here in June. People are saying, is there any difference? It was an issue that was real. So we crafted a very short phrase about—the record will show what it really said—but that it was not appropriate to make deals with drug dealers whether inside the United States or outside the United States. That's all he said.

He said to me, as he approved the language, that he hoped that somebody paid attention to what he was saying. Now, I took that to mean that if he was going to say this, that we darn well better do something to make sure it got reported. So we went out and he gave the speech in this large crowd, outdoors, at the Police Academy. David Hoffman was standing there and I said to David, "Pay close attention to the next paragraph." He reads it and David Hoffman turns to me and says, "Did I hear what I just thought I heard?" I said, "You could reach the conclusion he doesn't agree with dealing with Noriega. He didn't say that." Hoffman's gone.

The next morning in the newspaper—actually, it happened earlier than that—David wrote the story that Bush disagreed with what was happening with Noriega, citing this statement in the speech that he wouldn't deal with drug dealers on United States soil or outside the country. The *Post* story ran at 11 o'clock, 11:30 that night. AP [Associated Press] got it and it quoted what Bush said, but then it also quoted somebody familiar with Bush's thinking—great—that indicated that he did have a disagreement. Now I'd called Howard Baker. Howard Baker also had a disagreement; he was the Chief of Staff. I told Howard what Bush was going to do. I said, "And the Vice President says he wants somebody to notice that he's taking this position."

Howard says, "Well, I've got an interview on CNN tomorrow morning." I said "Okay, I'll make sure we've got at least one of our traveling press who knows what this means and you deal with it on CNN." I thought it was a pretty good strategy. So at about 11:30, 11:45 the press secretary calls me and says, "Associated Press is going berserk, there's a story that has run—" Now again, our traveling party—they don't appreciate the subtlety really. They just didn't have the background to appreciate the subtle little reference in the speech. So she said, "What's going on?" I said, "Maybe I'd better talk to them."

I get this person from AP and he says, "Look, I just have to know. Can you confirm this comment by somebody who knows the Vice President's thinking that he really has a concern about the Noriega negotiations?" So I'm sitting there going, *This is bizarre, I'm now being asked to confirm something I said on background*. Now I'm being asked to confirm on the record. I said, "I can confirm on the record, that whoever made that comment was correct," which is what they wrote in the wire story.

So we all go to bed, we wake up the next morning, 7 o'clock. "Craig, what the hell is this? How did the *Washington Post* get this?" I said, "Excuse me?" He said, "The *Post* says I'm disagreeing with Reagan on Noriega." I said, "But you are." "I know, but how did they get it?"

I said, "Well, I told the story, Howard Baker told the story." He said, "Well, why'd you do that?" I said, "You said you wanted it noticed." He goes, "Well, you got it noticed."

Now the campaign called saying this was one of the best things that could have possibly have happened. This was exactly what we needed. How did this occur, how come they weren't involved in it? I said, "If you want to get involved in it, dive in. He's not real happy with me. But it was the right thing to do, it is how he feels." And, guess what? Ultimately the Noriega negotiations proved to be a fiasco and were dropped. Then, ironically, Bush had to actually deal with Noriega with military action. I'm not sure how you got me on that story, except that it's an example of the kind of tension that does occur when you've got a Vice President seeking the Presidency, living with the policies of the administration he's part of, but having slightly different views.

Chidester: Did this get stronger as the election approached?

Fuller: The good thing about this particular example is I think it helped—back up. Bob Teeter had a great phrase in general, not about this specific incident, but he said, "Sometimes people understand your point more clearly when they read it on the front page of the newspaper." I think when this sort of straightforward, common sense statement that we ought not to be dealing with drug dealers appeared, people said, "Yes, you know, that makes a lot of sense."

So I'm speculating, but rather than President Reagan in any way being disappointed, I think he was pleased that, in fact, his Vice President had spoken his mind. It didn't provide any kind of friction. I think perhaps Colin Powell wasn't happy because he had a process he was trying to pursue, but again, I think it bolstered it. We were close enough in June, early June, we were close enough to the convention, that we frankly didn't do too much of it. But having done it, and particularly done it on an issue as important to people as crime and drugs, there was a message that was sent. George Bush is ready to share with you what he thinks about issues and it's not

always the same. That was one of the things the campaign was struggling with, how to get that message across.

Chidester: What other issues did Bush disagree strongly with the administration's policy?

Fuller: Honestly, what was remarkable about the story of the statement about drug dealers in Los Angeles is that it was so unusual for him to reach a point where senior administration officials were going in one direction and he was in a different place. You just didn't see that, so I can't give you a list. It wasn't the way he operated. He didn't sit around and say, "Gee, I wish they'd do this; I wish they'd do that. This is what I'd do." You didn't get any of that, just didn't get any of that. I didn't get any of that and I don't think anybody else did.

Knott: You mentioned at lunch, I think it was at lunch, that the Vice President and Mrs. Bush had thousands of friends and that part of your job was to keep some of these friends at bay. I was wondering if you would tell us about that on the record and the difficulties that that presented, and why you felt you had to do this.

Fuller: It's absolutely the case that the Vice President and Mrs. Bush did have thousands of friends around the country. He'd run for President. He had people, which I discovered in '88—well, I discovered soon after I got there—he had people who were as dedicated to him, maybe more dedicated, than they were to President Reagan. They were people who had hoped he would be elected President and they were all around the country. He had past business associates; he had foreign leaders. He had friends from every place he had been.

One of the mandates that I believe I had going into the job was to try to figure out how to improve the management of his time. These were things he asked me to do; I'm not speculating. To improve the management of his time, to improve the quality of briefings and material that went to him. He had been told by any number of people that he wasn't a very effective speaker. One of the things he asked me was what I thought about that and I told him early on, like the first couple of days, I said, "Look, let's spend 60 days together and then I'll tell you. I used to do speech coaching in the firm I was in, media coaching, media training. Let's just go through 60 days." After 30 days he said, "I demand an answer now." At which I told him, "Actually, I don't think there's a big problem." He said, "That's ridiculous. Everybody tells me there's a problem."

I said, "No, there would be a problem if you really couldn't give a good speech. But the fact is you can and you do. The challenge is frequency." He says, "What?" I said, "Look, if you were a really good tennis player—" he loves tennis and golf so I knew those analogies would work— "if you were a professional tennis player, you would play a really good game of tennis a good part of the time. But sometimes you're off. A tennis coach would come in and improve your game so that the frequency of the outstanding games is up in the 90 percentile area. The same is true with your speaking. You're perfectly capable of giving a very good speech; I've seen you give them. The problem is, you give them 15-20 percent of the time. Some of the time they're just okay, and some of the time they're terrible. But it's not the lack of ability to do it, because you've proven you can do it. We'd have a serious problem if you couldn't do it."

He goes, "I never thought of it that way." He hated the idea of coaching; I'd already heard that. I already knew he didn't like that. I said, "I really think you need to think about this notion of

working on speaking in a different way. You need to think about it as an athlete would think about a trainer. Not somebody who's going to come in and change your hairstyle, or, as people suggested, tell you whether you should wear glasses or don't wear glasses. I don't care. You should do whatever you're comfortable doing. Ronald Reagan would wear one contact so he could see the text and see the people. I thought that was the most bizarre thing I'd ever heard of, but it worked for him, it worked very well for him. So that's not the issue. You really need to work with a trainer so you can identify what happens when you're giving a really good speech, and you can replicate that. That's the key. The person I would like you to work with is Roger Ailes."

Now, he liked Roger. That began an effort to really improve the speaking style and it made a lot of difference. It just got him more comfortable. First of all it taught him what he did when he was really good. Frankly, a lot of it, or part of it went to what Ronald Reagan just knew so well, which is taking the time to review the material, to personalize it, to make it yours, to spend time with speechwriters, so that what you're talking about are things that you really truly believe, not something that somebody conjured up. The only way to do that in a schedule that was just filled with people and interaction was to reduce the interaction with so many people. The painful part for some of the people around him who in many ways were passionate about his being elected President was that you had to say to them, "We can't do both. We can't give unbridled access to this person you care about, and do the things that are required to help him get elected President."

As an example, one of the friends just insisted he get in, and finally he got in. We were up at the Vice President's residence, and the guy is going on and on and on about how he wants to put a team together and do polling for us and do this for us and that for us. I'm thinking, *This is a waste of time, but he is such a good friend, so we'll sit through this*. The guy ends up and says, "And George, there's one more thing that I'm telling you you've got to do. I have an oral surgeon and I think he can improve your voice with surgery," at which point I about fell out of the chair laughing. The guy never got another one of these private appointments again. I said, "Sir, we can keep doing this, but this is another hour of time. They're not going to go do research for us. We don't need that stuff."

So finally it became, "You're right, but you've got to help me." And I said, "Okay." So I was the guy who said, "There's just not time on the schedule."

Knott: But he resisted, it sounds like. You had to sort of—

Fuller: In some ways he resisted. In other ways, I then decided, *Okay, this is a person who is not going to go into a holding room in any city in America and sit there for 20 minutes when the press need the 20 minutes to file their stories*. I tried to explain to him it was important. President Reagan was wonderful. If you told him, "Walk into this room, wait 20 minutes, then we'll leave," he would assume there were good reasons to wait 20 minutes. George Bush would be through that door, that door, that door. So I said to Lee Atwater, "It's obviously not working to get him to have quiet time. Why don't we take all those calls you want to make—" We'd go into holding rooms and the Vice President would get the phone book and start going through the phone book to look up names of people he knew who lived in Des Moines and call them.

I said, "Lee, there's got to be a better system than the phone book. Let's carry around, let the personal aide carry around a list of people either in the city we're visiting, or some other city, that he should be calling. So that when he's got this time—" He would derive energy from the interaction, but if he literally was going to spend his time doing this, let's have him do it in a purposeful way. So we would have these call lists and they worked great, he loved it. That way at least, we were allowing the contact to occur with time that we needed anyway, down time that we needed. So we found ways to work. I think more is made in the press than maybe should be made, maybe I'm a bad judge of that.

I made wonderful friends with a lot of the Bush supporters. If I wasn't sure about that when I did that short stint with Governor [Pete] Wilson around the country, that Wilson could say, "Do we ever go anywhere that you don't know people?" It was all because of the Bushes; it was all the Bush people who were coming out. I think in the beginning it was just hard because a lot of people were testing: "Can we get through, can we get our calls returned, can we do this? Will Craig talk to us?" It was the proverbial taking a sip out of a fire hydrant. It was just too much, but we finally worked our way through.

He hated the concept of being handled or managed, but at the same time I know he came to appreciate the environment that was created for him to get things done. I also know that he was trying to achieve a goal of getting elected President. To do that, you have to perform well in certain areas. I know his performance improved dramatically and people got a better sense of who he was than having four or five staffers yapping at him for 45 minutes on a plane flight and then have him be angry at the press. That didn't serve anybody's purpose.

Knott: Leading up to the election of '88, but much earlier than that, the Iran-Contra affair was brewing and Vice President Bush gets dragged into it to some extent. I think you even got dragged into it to some extent as well.

Fuller: Right.

Knott: What was his attitude towards the Independent Counsel's investigation? Over time, it becomes by the end, when President Bush pardons some of the Iran-Contra figures, there's some pretty bad blood between [E.] Lawrence Walsh and the Bush White House. I'm just curious as to whether you ever heard him talk during this early phase about Iran-Contra, but in particular the investigation that was being conducted by the Independent Counsel. I mean, how much of a pain in the butt was this?

Fuller: First of all, if I think about this chronologically, I guess it was Ed Meese who had been asked to look into some of these allegations, and came into the Oval Office with the Vice President. He explained that they had learned that not only had weapons gone to the Israelis to go to the Iranians, which they knew, or some people knew, but that there'd also then been this plan, they'd executed a plan to take some of the funds and steer those to the Contras. When the President was briefed on that by Ed Meese, I was then with the Vice President getting, I guess, the daily intelligence briefing and then he went in to do this special briefing with the President.

He came back and it was as if somebody had just knocked the air out of him. He collapsed into the chair and he said, "You are not even going to believe what's happened. You knew a little bit

about it." Because we actually never talked about it. I wasn't supposed to talk to anybody else, it was highly compartmentalized and Ollie North and I talked briefly about it. He told me not to talk to anybody else about it. So that was my first glimpse. This then was—he just literally collapsed into the chair. It was one of those moments, at the time I realized and came to appreciate even more, that I know he wondered, *As hard as I've worked, for all I've done, this could make it impossible for me to get elected*. It just was an event that was completely out of his control.

As I told you, a lot of these discussions happened when he and I were not even in town. I think it was just, this is a huge problem. We briefed the Congress, some of us were in that briefing, so we learned some of the dimensions of it. His reaction matched my own, which was that this is going to be a huge problem. I immediately went to Ollie North. Ollie and I had a pretty good relationship. He actually was involved in some of the succession of power issues and planning and I had gotten to know him that way.

He said, "Here, you ought to take a look at this, here's the chronology." He had done this long chronology. I decided, probably this was surprising to a lot of people, but the best person I know for finding out what happened is Bob Woodward, and he works off chronologies. So I took the chronology and then I started just building my own chronology with the dates that Ollie had given me. Literally for every date I began, "Okay, where were we? In Washington? Mostly no. But where were we?" So I put basically the Vice President's schedule into it, what meetings we'd gone to. Other people were then coming up with information. I just kept building and building and building this chronology so that I could explain, I wanted to be able to explain to him exactly, with as much accuracy as I could, what meetings I believed he was in, what meetings I believed he was not in. So that he could begin to reconstruct in his mind what had actually taken place.

What was very clear was that he wasn't in most of these meetings. Shultz and Weinberger were arguing; we were out of town. Those kinds of things were helpful for him to understand it. He was so troubled because he didn't have a good recollection. My chronology showed that the reason was these were not meetings in which there were notes taken and circulated and all that. Not like any other kind of meeting, even the most highly classified discussions within the national security community, this discussion was held with principals and no note takers. So he just didn't know. We knew that it was going to be an issue that was going to run all through the campaign. It frankly agitated him a lot to have to talk about it. Partly, I think, because it was one of those things, "This is not of my doing, and I wasn't in the meetings."

Then I really employed what is a fairly classic communications tactic, which is to say, "Sir, you have answered all—" We had sessions where he sat and answered any question anybody had. I said, "I think you now have to say you've answered all the questions that you're going to answer, and as long as you keep giving the same limited answer there is no story. As soon as you try to think about something new or say something that hasn't been said before, you're going to get dragged into this. Leave it to me to deal with the issue." At that point I had the chronology in my head. There were those of us who could sit and literally say, "Well the 3 o'clock meeting on—" and we would know exactly what we were talking about. Not this sort of skill you'd seek to have, but we had. I said, "Just leave it to me and I'll deal with the press."

So a lot of my press activity—for a while in the Bush campaign I was the only person who would talk on the subject. I forget where Baker was when we agreed to this. He may not have been on the campaign yet, but we all agreed. If some news organization had to have somebody, I would talk about it. It was a pain. The investigation was going in so many directions—trying to find wrong-doing on the part of the Vice President's staff, or making a lot to do out of a handshake meeting he had with some operative—that again, I never heard him say this, but there was this sense that, *After all I've done, why am I having to deal with this?* I in all honesty tried to keep him from having to deal with it, because my public attitude was, *This has occurred. The public has a judgment on it. There's not much we're going to say or do that changes it*. It doesn't look like by itself, it's going to cost us the election. But if it is, there's not much we can do one way or another. We can't say, "Actually we did better than you think we did," or "We did more than you think." You just can't change it. So better to keep him off it and keep on his own message, and just keep him running the campaign.

Knott: Did you get dragged into it? I mean, did you get asked to—

Fuller: Oh yes. I had sessions with the Independent Counsel and hours with the FBI [Federal Bureau of Investigation]. But truthfully, in my case, there was very limited involvement. When they do these massive document searches, you have documents on event requests, notes. They need to ask you what does this mean and what does that mean. I went through that. I guess I come at it like a lot of things, I respect the process. Something was done that was wrong. There is a requirement to investigate it and understand it, and I respect that process. I never felt the Vice President was involved in something directly that was improper. In many cases, as I said, he just didn't have all the information even to make a judgment.

Knott: Did you have an impression of Walsh or his operatives, his team, as to whether they were motivated by partisan concerns?

Fuller: Partisan concerns, I don't know. Some would say that. I actually think that by the nature of a good prosecutor or investigator, you have theories about how something happened and who did what and you work to prove those theories out. Unfortunately you have to press them to the very end and then you decide whether or not your theory was right. I think it's the nature of the Independent Counsel that you get into kind of an adversarial relationship. Clearly, there were things done that should not have occurred and for that the administration paid a very high price.

The one part of it that I've always regretted is that for President Reagan it was a piece of his administration that was handled almost entirely in a different manner than anything else. A small group of people, occasional interactions, the very kinds of things that President Reagan, when he set up his White House, had taken great steps to avoid. For national security reasons and because you had hostages involved, it wasn't exactly your everyday issue. But for a series of reasons it was handled in a very different way, which really denied the President the opportunity to hear from others who might have shared a different view with him. That was unfortunate.

Knott: Do you think it's possible it would not have happened had the old troika arrangement been in place? How much of this is perhaps a responsibility of Don Regan?

Fuller: I don't think you can put the responsibility on any one person. I think the people who were serving President Reagan, who knew him so well, in the first term, would arguably have dealt with this differently. I think in the national security apparatus, had well-intentioned people not been very frustrated by the inability to move things through State and Defense and the agency, had the apparatus worked better, had the people at the top been working more effectively together, you might not have had this. It's hard to say. Again, it's a series of things that came together that really, obviously didn't serve President Reagan well.

Knott: Let's take a quick break.

[BREAK]

Fuller: …and having done well in Iowa before, it was disappointing. I think he almost felt worse for the people who were so loyal in Iowa. We had a chance to move on; they had to live with this phenomenon. I think what was probably good for the organization was, there was never really time to sit around and say, "What could we have done?" Or, "What should we have done?" We knew what we had to do was go win in New Hampshire. So we were, as a team, extremely focused on New Hampshire. We left Iowa before the caucuses were over with and we were in New Hampshire when the news came. We were basically charting a campaign to win New Hampshire. We didn't have a lot of time, but that became the total focus.

Also, there was a lot of talk in the press about how the campaign had to change. The entourage had to get smaller. A lot of this, by the way, was a view we held. It was something that the people in New Hampshire spoke a lot about. I remember one of the people saying, "George Bush used to campaign with me driving around in my station wagon." Well, that was true in 1979 and 1980, but this was 1988 and the Secret Service drove him around and we had an entourage. We had an Air Force jet. I said, "Look, those things help in some ways, they hurt in some ways."

We actually, with the help of John Sununu, who was very strong, running a lot of our ground operation there, we did design a campaign that looked a lot more casual. Instead of having a schedule with set events, we had an open schedule for the press and we had options. We always knew we were going to stop in one of three places and the advance teams were going to tell us which was the best place to stop. It had a look and a feel that was suddenly different. So we got a lot of credit for running a much less imperial, if you will, kind of campaign.

It was run by the same people. Governor Sununu was a huge help. He traveled with the Vice President, he went with us everywhere, but the team that had been in place working with the Vice President pretty much executed his campaign effort. One of the things that Governor Sununu helped us with enormously was the media. The media buys and those kinds of things, that a Governor really understood in a state and I think that helped us a great deal. Then the kind of the proverbial rabbit out of the hat in having Senator Barry Goldwater decide to campaign with us and endorse President Bush, or Vice President Bush at the time. He was just wonderful. He was revered in New Hampshire and it gave a real surge to the campaign, which carried us over the top and definitely got us back on track.

We truthfully had in our scenarios recognized that we might not win in Iowa. We didn't think we were going to, as I said, come in third. So it wasn't as though we hadn't planned on what we would do if there was a defeat in Iowa, but it raised the stakes in New Hampshire in a big way.

Knott: What did the Vice President think of Senator Dole? I know they had a fairly testy exchange, I think it was the night of the New Hampshire primary.

Fuller: Yes, Tom Brokaw, NBC News.

Knott: There seemed to be a genuine antipathy there between the two.

Fuller: A couple of things had happened. First of all, these were two Republican leaders who were competitive. It had become a competitive race. It was a competition in which as a candidate President Bush had to make a decision about the content of advertising. No one that I've known likes—I shouldn't say that, some people love negative advertising—but nobody likes the tough ads in elective office. I don't think they like to use them; they certainly don't like to receive them. But it was pretty clear, at the same time we were building up Vice President Bush, we had to do some things to get people to think a little differently about Senator Dole. The ad that did it for us was an ad in which the voice-over used the phrase, "Senator Straddle." In one two-word phrase we said to the people of New Hampshire, "Here's a Washington politician, a Senator, and here's a politician on both sides of the issues."

It was an ad that was tough, but in my judgment anyway, not over the line. It was one that we looked at, we modified. We probably agonized over it more than anybody in the Dole campaign thought we did. When we ran it, it had an impact. It had an impact that occurred in contrast to the warmth and the reception that Senator Goldwater was getting. I also think tactically some of the advice that Senator Dole was getting about his standing suggested that he didn't have to respond, which was a mistake. So a lot of things just broke at the end the right way for Vice President Bush. I do think it was a right thing to run the ad. It definitely left a very bad taste in Senator Dole's mouth.

At the end of what had been a very intense campaign period, with both of them on national television, juxtaposed in a way that I know we didn't expect, and I'm assuming the Dole campaign didn't expect, sort of split screen images, Tom Brokaw asked that question of Senator Dole, "Is there anything you'd like to say to Vice President Bush?" And he said, "Stop lying about my record," in a tone of voice that, again, demonstrated something about the individual that wasn't particularly attractive. Actually, I have a lot of affection in ways for Senator Dole and he and Mrs. Dole, now Senator Dole herself, have been great to me. It's always been one of those tough moments to recall, because there's no doubt that the actions we took definitely did trigger the angry moment. The angry moment did have an impact on him and it was a lasting one for the campaign, but that's the nature of campaigns.

Knott: Lee Atwater was an important part of the campaign.

Fuller: A critical part.

Knott: In some ways has become almost a legendary figure, at least amongst politicos. Could you talk a little bit about Lee Atwater, his attributes?

Fuller: He was just a remarkable individual in touch with what was on the minds of people. Exactly how he got there was sometimes a mystery to me. There would be times in the campaign, for example, and even the run-up to the campaign, where he wouldn't feel right about our message or what we were doing. He'd just go off to California or go spend some time talking to people and try to listen to what they were thinking about. He'd read the kind of newspapers they sell at the check-out counter at supermarkets, to see what people are tuning into and paying attention to.

Yet with all these quirks of personality, he was a really brilliant strategist. He really did understand how extraordinarily vital South Carolina was going to be. When I mentioned earlier that we came from different regions—I mean, pretty remarkably, Vice President Bush had assembled Lee Atwater from South Carolina, Bob Teeter from Michigan, Roger Ailes from New York, Fuller from California, Mosbacher from Texas. Our life experiences had tied us all to different regions, and all those regions that covered the country were, needless to say, important. Lee certainly moved well beyond just a strategist for the South, but he certainly was good at that.

He also had a remarkable candor about what was helping Vice President Bush and what was hurting him. He was probably, by any measure, more outspoken and certainly more irreverent than I was. Definitely told better jokes than I did. So he was somebody that the Vice President just simply enjoyed being around. Lee knew this, so it's not telling stories that he wasn't aware of. He would at times drive the Vice President crazy. He would appear in print with something the Vice President would be upset about, and yet mostly it was me who would call Lee and say, "Okay, we've got a little problem, Lee."

"I know, I know. Is he mad at me? What's the man saying?" He'd always say, "What's the man saying?" "Well," I'd say, "He's not very happy, but don't worry. Come on over for lunch." He'd say, "What should I say at lunch?" "Just ignore it."

So as I said, I started my mornings getting, "Have you seen what's in the newspaper?" from the Vice President. By lunch, it was Lee and stories about this Senator or that Congressman, and it all went away. It was very good for George Bush. I think that if you could point at one thing—others have suggested this, not just me—if you could point at one thing that was distinctly different in the reelection campaign, it was the absence of Lee Atwater, who really didn't allow any of us to get lost in the "inside the beltway" thinking. He was just constantly forcing us to look at realities.

I think we made a good team. I talked about the importance of keeping a campaign together. I said, "Look Lee, we are very different, we operate differently. We've known each other for quite a while, but we have absolutely the same objective. There's going to be lots of frictions between our staffs on issues. We just cannot let anybody drive a wedge between the two of us. If we prevent that, we have a better chance of succeeding." We essentially made a pact that that wouldn't happen. I know there were times he was frustrated with me and probably there were some times I was frustrated with him, but whatever the frustration was it got resolved between the two of us. We just didn't allow carping to continue.

In fact, I laughed because what literally happened is people on the campaign or on my staff would actually resolve issues because they knew if they raised it to Lee and to me, we would get

together and it would just be settled. They'd rather try to work it through themselves so they had some control over the agreement, as opposed to letting Lee and me get into something, because we would just say, "Done. This is what we're going to go do and everybody go do it." It wasn't always that simple, but truthfully, it was as good a relationship as anybody could ever have wanted in the position I was in. I hope he would, if he were here, be able to say the same thing.

At the end, as I said, we all were better friends, Bob Teeter, Roger Ailes, Bob Mosbacher, Nick Brady and myself, which is a rare thing in a presidential campaign.

Knott: The selection of Dan Quayle, of course, was a major event, reverberates to some extent to this day. I wonder if you could tell us about your role in that selection process and also the positions of others in the inner circle.

Fuller: A candidate for President makes thousands of decisions during the course of the campaign, but the one about selection of a Vice President really tells people a lot about the nature of the candidate. We certainly approached it with a lot of care. We'd had some people who had been through it before, Bob Teeter had been through it somewhat before.

The Vice President, though, had a sense of how he wanted to go about this, in which we had a small group who would get together once a week and talk about the choices as we saw them. Each person in that small group started the meeting, we'd go around the room and we'd list three people. You could list three people every week if you wanted to, but the idea was that based upon what we were learning, what we were hearing, what three people are on the top of my list? Lee's list, whoever's, Teeter's. The interesting thing about that technique is that in a way that I didn't really fully appreciate until later, it favored somebody like Dan Quayle, who wasn't often on the top of somebody's list, but after you'd name two—and you wanted to have a different approach to the third—he was frequently third on people's lists. Even some people who forget that they had him on their list, I might add.

He was high on my list because—I hadn't known him real well, but in the course of the campaign, in '86, we campaigned for him, and he then got involved in our foreign policy group. He was formidable in intellect and comments and that impressed me. Then he was with Brent Scowcroft and [John] Tower and other pretty formidable people. But I also thought—and again this is sort of forgotten now, but at the time—one of the challenges that we knew we were going to have to confront in the general election was whether or not Bush, as President, was in touch with the nation as he was going to find it if elected President. Or was he just an extension of President Reagan? Was he his own man? Was he in touch with what was going on? How were we going to reach out to a generation of voters that was certainly skeptical?

The other part of it was, there was no secret, he was very interested in foreign policy and national security affairs. Didn't spend a lot of time dwelling on domestic policy, jobs programs, things like that, and Senator Quayle had. He had been part of the Quayle-[Edward] Kennedy Jobs Bill and things like that. Ailes and Teeter indicated that he was a very strong campaigner. He'd been through a Senate campaign, where the issue of his National Guard service was raised, effectively dealt with. It wasn't like we didn't know about that issue; we did know about it. We were told and had every reason to believe it was effectively dealt with. There were other people, but at

least it was my notion and from time to time others, that if you wanted to make a bold move and jump to the next generation of leaders, that Dan Quayle represented that.

Now, I have to tell you, on the day we flew to New Orleans, if I can go there for a minute—

Knott: For the convention?

Fuller: For the convention. The convention kicks off. We watch Monday night at the Vice President's home. Dole and others are frustrated that they're being strung out and that they don't know what's happening. We leave on Tuesday morning; President Reagan speaks on Monday night. We leave on Tuesday morning; we fly to New Orleans. We have this sort of exchange at a military base, that was the plan. At the briefing Tuesday morning, the daily intelligence briefing, after it finishes, I'm alone with the Vice President. I said, "Have you made your decision? I don't need to know it, but have you made it?" He said, "I'm getting close."

I said, "Wait, wait, wait. You have said publicly that you will have made your decision when you arrive in New Orleans." He's not good at faking something. I thought, *If he hasn't made it, the press will ask. First question, "Have you decided?" And if he doesn't have an answer, that's not going to be good*. I had no clue as to what he decided. He said, "I'll be okay, I'll be okay." Well, Jim Baker came over and was riding over in the helicopter to get on Air Force Two to go to New Orleans. I said, "Jim, I don't think he's decided and he said publicly he will decide. We've got to make sure he's decided. We're going to get there and the press will be all over us." Never, by the way, intending to do anything other than to announce it on Wednesday or Thursday, presumably we were going to announce it Wednesday.

So Jim Baker is on the plane. We have a little pool on the airplane. Margaret Tutwiler was there, Jim Lake was there, Marlin Fitzwater maybe, no, not Marlin. Jim Lake. Four or five us had a pool. None of us guessed Quayle. Wasn't a betting pool, it was just write down on a slip of paper who you think. Nobody had Quayle. Baker comes back from the front of the airplane and he says, "Okay, the President has made his decision. He wants to announce it when he gets into town," when he gets off this steamboat that we're going to be taking in to New Orleans. I said, "Oh Jim, wait a minute, wait a minute, everything is set up. There's a whole day planned, today and tonight. We were talking about announcing it early on Wednesday but not Tuesday afternoon."

"No, it's what he wants to do." I know Jim Baker thought he knew who it was going to be; he didn't think it was going to be Quayle. The Vice President was concerned that people were feeling strung out in this process, so we literally go into the commandant's bedroom, six guys, or four guys or something. We call Lee Atwater and we say, "You've got to come over here right away." Bush and Baker go into a bathroom and Bush tells him it's Quayle. They come out and I could see Jim was a little surprised. He says, "We're not leaving this room." We're in the guy's bedroom, about this big, sitting on the floor and stuff. He said, "When Lee gets here, the Vice President is going to tell us what his decision is. But no phone calls; it's got to be a surprise." So we said, "Okay."

Lee gets there; we tell him. Lee was concerned. Baker was concerned. I thought, a pretty bold decision, but the logistics were—I said, "Jim, you've got to let me—the advance team has got to

find Quayle. If you want to have them together, get a big crowd, 5,000 people." So he says, "Okay, but you can't tell anybody why." They find Quayle; they tell Quayle he's the one. They want him to meet them at the arrival point. So off we go eventually, get on the boat, on the radios. Nobody can find Dan Quayle. We get there. I said, "Everybody just stay on the boat." I get up on the piling or something, I can't see him, but he was told to look for me, I'm a pretty good target. So he does see me. I had told the Secret Service because we're in a public event, we're going to announce who he's picking. We have some obligation to the man. So the Secret Service were now looking for him. They found him and then they got him up there.

The timing was probably the worst decision in the entire campaign, because we hadn't adequately prepared. Most of all, we hadn't adequately prepared Dan Quayle for what was going to happen, and we certainly hadn't prepared ourselves. It was just a crazy moment. Dan Quayle had fought his way through the crowd, is pumped up anyway, and everybody saw what they saw. The announcement was out, which of course totally eclipsed everything else the convention was doing. Then all of a sudden we were into explaining this to convention goers, like Governors and Senators, who were surprised. So it was just, we just ignored all the apparatus that was in place. But we did surprise people.

So we went back to the hotel and that began this next phase. About the decision, I do think the Vice President, at the time Vice President, in selecting Dan Quayle, liked the idea of going to the next generation. That was sort of my theory. Truthfully he's never sat and explained it, at least to me or to others I know. I think he also felt that he saw somebody who would help him with domestic policy and who would be very loyal, and I think Dan Quayle was.

Knott: Who did the inner circle think the Vice President was going to select?

Fuller: There was no agreement. Jack Kemp was on some people's lists. Pete Domenici was on some people's lists.

Knott: Who did you think he was going to pick?

Fuller: Pete Domenici. I thought that because I thought—I have the highest regard for Pete Domenici. Knowing what we were going to go through with the budget and the Congress and all that, I thought, one, he'd be a superb Vice President. I also thought he would also help with the Hill and some of the domestic issues. It was a remarkable choice, and it turned into one of those issues—I was one of the briefers. I was on the floor of the convention center and Lisa Myers of NBC News, a person I knew very well, I got about this close to her and I hear her, she's screaming into her microphone, or walkie-talkie, or whatever, "I've got Fuller, he's right here, I've got him. I can go live, I can go live, I've got him." And I thought, *What is wrong with Lisa, for God's sake?* This is like the run-up to the convention, the convention starting for the evening. "Tom, I've got him, I've got him."

She looks at me, and she says, "Craig." I turn and she sticks the microphone in my face and she has some question about the National Guard. She's hot, like she's on fire. And I said, "Well, Lisa, all of that's been looked into." I knew by the way she was asking the question—first of all, I knew that she knew a lot more about something than I did. So I sort of ducked the question and got myself off the floor and went back into our trailer and called and said, "What in the world is

going on? What do they—?" That's when they had all these rumors. So we began damage control in the worst possible of all places, which is the national convention, where you've got all these people swirling about. A lot of the rumors proved not to be true, but the damage was done.

Knott: Did the nature of the campaign change at all once James Baker left the Treasury and came on board?

Fuller: The nature of the campaign changed. It changed for that reason. He definitely came on board as the chairman, but it also changed because the convention really did kick off the general election effort. We had, in the '88 campaign—distinctly different from '92 I might add—he came into the campaign as chairman with a carefully developed plan on message and substance and schedule that took us through September. With some things committed in October, but with the flexibility obviously to go in the states you needed to go.

The difference is, we rolled right out of that convention with a plan and we began executing that plan. He stayed on the road with us for about a week. Basically he went to the convention and he ran the headquarters, and really ran the campaign in all aspects with me on the airplane as the conduit back to the campaign. We didn't call audibles from the plane in the sense they were going to go West, you think we're going East, we're going to go West. We stuck to a carefully developed plan. But we'd all been part of the campaign team, had all been a part of developing that plan.

Jim Baker is a very strong, forceful presence in any organization. He gets people focused on what has to get done and his team does the same. A lot of it had to do with advertising, coordinating the advertising message with the message on the road, coordinating message on the road with media, all that sort of thing. He's a master at it and he had a very good team. That helped. In contrast, they didn't like the re-election plan and they basically walked away from the plan after the '92 convention. I'm not trying to be defensive because I was convention chairman or whatever, but my job was more logistically presenting the convention apparatus for them to use. That convention closed the gap considerably with [William J.] Clinton.

After the convention, the Baker people came in, but they didn't like the campaign plan so they threw it away. So they said my job was over. They fumbled around for ten days, two weeks, and that was a terrible time, because it allowed all of the vulnerabilities of the convention to be made newsworthy by a very good Clinton campaign. So we heard more about Pat Buchanan and Marilyn Quayle and not so much about the Bush organization. That's fast-forwarding. But there was a distinct difference. I think that it was why Jim Baker and his team really could hit the ground running, because there was a game plan. Not to say there weren't modifications, but he didn't have to start from scratch.

Knott: The '88 campaign, certainly amongst the [Michael] Dukakis folks but also some people in the media, they often portray it as a particularly negative campaign, particularly vicious in some ways. Would you care to comment on that? You know, the Willie Horton, Boston Harbor, the whole ACLU [American Civil Liberties Union].

Fuller: You might want to judge it by this upcoming campaign. I don't think we set off to make it a distinctly negative campaign, nor do I think it was distinctly negative. There were events—

and the Willie Horton example is one of them—where in that case, people did things outside of the scope of the campaign or the control of the campaign with advertising that became particularly negative. The last thing in the world that George Bush would want to do, as some accused him of doing, is play a race card. That's not him. Anybody who knows him, that was just not him. It was painful to him to hear that suggestion.

It was a close race. We did start in some ways behind our challenger. In a close race, particularly with an incumbent or an incumbent-like person, namely a sitting Vice President, you have to define your opponent. The population had eight years to make up their minds about who George Bush was. Although he was not as visible as a sitting President, he's pretty darn visible, more visible than the Governor of Massachusetts. So the framing of the characterization of just who Governor Dukakis was and what positions he'd taken was something that if the campaign didn't do it, it wasn't going to get done. So yes, there were definitely, within the portfolio of ads, ads that were pretty tough. But again, I think that that's something you have to do when you're in a campaign where one candidate has been out and so public for so long and the other one hasn't. You can't let them just define themselves as they would like to define themselves through their advertising.

I think it's interesting, in a way, some of the toughness of our effort against Bob Dole in New Hampshire had stuck with us. There's no doubt, we were a group that was very determined to do what we could do to help George Bush win the race within the bounds of fairness and reasonableness. There is some self-governing to this. I mean, if you get too negative, too long, and you don't have a balanced—it's easy to point to a single ad or three ads and say, "Those are terrible, this campaign is running negative ads." We might tell you, "Well, those three ads have run a very limited amount of time in a very particular area, for a very special reason." Or the great abundance of the money is going to be spent on fielded advertising. But it doesn't matter. First of all, you don't usually talk about your tactics, and secondly, the media isn't going to write about it anyway. They're going to write about what they think is a little more sensational and the negative ads are always more sensational.

Knott: Sure. Can I get you to jump to the transition now and just talk about your role in the transition and also the selection of John Sununu as White House Chief of Staff, and your decision to return to the private sector?

Fuller: Let's see, if I do it chronologically, we'll take the last one first. Along the course of travels in 1988, probably in the spring, one of the pleasant things about being on the plane and traveling with the Vice President was we were together a lot. We had lunch, we had dinner, breakfast, talked all the time. In a lunch one day he said to me, "What do you think would be best for you to do if I win the election?"

It wasn't a question that I'd dwelled on a lot. Number one, I thought he was going to win, and as I've said earlier, I always had the notion I was leaving. It seemed to me this was a natural point in time to decide what to do. I said to him at the time, "Having asked the question the way you did, the best thing for me would be to leave government." I didn't come to stay this long. I got married in 1985. We have no personal life, really, in this kind of a job. I said, "I think I'm probably ready to leave." I did say to him also, because he seemed a little surprised, I reminded

him that I'd worked for a President. I didn't take this job as his Chief of Staff to win a job working for a President. I thought that that wasn't something that I was concerned about.

I also really believed, it was then and it remains a wonderful relationship, but I think I had the good judgment, I hope it was good judgment, to say to him, "You're never going to have an opportunity, once you win this, to establish a White House the way you want it, like you will in those first few days. There's lots of people who are very supportive of me and of you, but are supportive of me, and believe that they'll be better off if I'm Chief of Staff. So there will be a whole chorus of people who will want that." I said, "All I really want for you is for *you* to decide what you want. If you come to me and say to me, 'This is the job that you have to accept,' I would accept it. But if you ask me what's best for me," which is what he asked, "the best thing for me to do would be to leave. And I'll support you in a hundred ways outside the organization."

He asked me the question a couple of times. He would say, "Are you still sticking to your guns about what's best for you?" Fifty people could have heard him ask the question and nobody would have a clue as to what in the world he was talking about, and I'd always say, "I am." The last time he asked me that question was on election day. We sat in the morning, the polling was actually pretty good. Believe it or not, for all the polling, it was three days out before the election and I sort of ended my day. I thought, *He's actually going to win*. It was an emotional moment in the sense that I always thought he was going to win, but you just never know, you worry about something going wrong. But I reached the point where I just couldn't imagine him not winning.

So on election day, of course you're dead tired, we'd finished in Houston and had a big celebration. He and I were together at 7:30 or whatever it was in the morning, doing the intelligence briefing. He asked me if I was still going to stick to my guns. Now I was exhausted and I said, "Sir, I really am." I also thought, quickly, that you know, at this moment, the only right answer is to say, "You are free to choose whomever you want. You have no obligation to me." It had been an unbelievable four years and I wasn't seeking the job at all. I couldn't have sent a more clear signal that I thought the best thing to do was leave.

He said, "Well, let me tell you what I'm thinking. I'm thinking that if you feel the way you do, if there's something in the administration you want, just tell me." At that point I said, "No, I'm not going to turn down one job to go negotiate for another." And I really meant it. Leaving isn't going to a department or something. He said, "What I think I'd like to do is for you and Bob Teeter to co-chair the transition. I'd like to announce that tomorrow and I'm thinking about talking to John Sununu as Chief of Staff."

I obviously was honored to chair the transition. It's funny, he said, "I think you and Bob could work well together." I said, "I know we can work well together; we've been doing it for four years." But he said, "Let's not say anything about John. I'd like to talk to him. And I said, "Fine." Probably for the first time in four years I really kept my views to myself, on the theory that I couldn't possibly think of a way at the time—partially because I was exhausted—to really offer a critique that wouldn't be read as disappointment. And there wasn't disappointment, I mean, I really wasn't disappointed at all. I thought the man was going to be the next President; I thought we'd been successful.

But it was concern because I had a lot of respect for John Sununu, but I didn't see how he was going to play the role that I thought George Bush would want as President. But I also figured that, well, if he hadn't talked to Sununu and he was going to talk to others, I figured this issue is best left to others. I don't think I probably can even be objective. I did the job the way I thought the job should be done. Maybe he wants somebody to do the job differently, I don't know. There were other people, clearly, who thought there were issues and yet, clearly, President-elect Bush was determined to offer it to Sununu.

Now, we did announce the next day that the transition team chairs would be Bob Teeter and myself. We got on an airplane and Bob and I looked at each other like we've just come through this campaign and now we have to go set up a transition office. We had the good sense to recruit a wonderful guy, Mike Farren, who is now one of the top executives at Xerox, to be our operations person. The three of us kind of landed in there. We gave ourselves a couple of days and then landed in there, I think it was Monday morning. I probably enjoyed more reading the transcripts of the press conferences, because I had never seen them before. But I enjoyed reading them because it did take me back to that crazy scene, standing outside the building where the transition was going to be set up, with neither of us having even been in the building. Both of us tried to get enough sleep and recover, to get ourselves over there on that morning. The press asking, "When are you going to announce the Secretary of Defense? What's he decided, what are you going to—?" The banter is recorded in these transcripts.

That role for me actually was a wonderful one. I didn't have any responsibility for, didn't want any responsibility for the issue of Chief of Staff. That was something the President-elect was going to work out. He did keep me posted. As I reflected earlier, I think I said to him when he chose the Chief of Staff, I would spend any time the person wanted sharing my insights, but I thought that setting up the White House really was the responsibility of the incoming, the designated Chief of Staff and the President. Let us in the transition worry about the Cabinet and subcabinet.

Various people, it has been written, had various ideas about competition that existed from my standpoint. The story I'm explaining to you is absolutely what happened, which was not reported because we didn't talk about it. One of the things I did say to the Vice President in these conversations about what I thought would be best for me was, "Let's not tell others," because then I become a lame duck and it makes it more difficult for me to do my job, which he didn't share with anybody and I didn't share with anybody. But that allowed people to then look for explanations for something they had a hard time explaining, which was first why I wasn't automatically named Chief of Staff. I had to call my own people down and say, "Look, it's a job for which he's going to take some time, he's going to talk to different people."

Ultimately, when it was clear he was announcing Sununu, they'd made the decision, I announced that I'd be leaving government and did it in a way that praised the President-elect, praised Sununu. I made these rounds to all these interviews basically to say, "No, it really is what we say it is. Hey gang, it's been eight years." Somebody sent me a funny political cartoon where there's one frame after another with the press screaming at me and I'm simply saying, "No, I'm looking for a job in the private sector." The next frame, screaming, "No, I'm going to look for a job in the private sector."

The transition was a great way to wrap it up. It was a chance to, I think, make a contribution to helping him look at a lot of talented people that he knew. I said to him, "One thing I think we have to do—in all cases the selection is going to be yours, but in every case I think we would be well served to tell people—even those who you are determined are going to be in a particular position—that they're going to be on a short list. So that we can always come to you with two, three, or four names. It protects the individual that you may want, who we may find has a problem. It protects you against really ticking off friends who say, 'You named this person, but you didn't name me, I'm on a list,' or something."

He was pretty good with that. Obviously he knew he wanted Jim Baker at State and he wanted Nick Brady to stay at Treasury. But for the most part we worked off the list. It also allowed him the ability to find some balance. If you immediately started saying, "I want this person there, this person there, this person there," and you told them, you might look around and say, "Wait a minute, now I don't have the make-up of a Cabinet that I want," either from an experience standpoint, a gender standpoint, an ethnicity standpoint, all things that were important to him. So I said, "You've got to give us a chance to try to find that balance, by not just giving away all the positions."

That was a good experience. Also, in a strange way—which I never intended, I hadn't contemplated—in a strange way I took the position that I can't talk to anybody about a job because I didn't want to get tangled up in even the perception of conflict. I still have this great lawyer, Doug Marvin, so I said, "If you absolutely, positively have to talk to somebody, talk to Doug Marvin, the lawyer, and he'll keep a record and he'll keep me out of it." So it was a nice way for me not to have to confront the realities of looking for a job right away. Although it was a very unusual experience on January 20th, at the inauguration, standing on the grounds, looking up, and realizing that my friend George Bush had been elected President and was accepting this huge burden on his shoulders and at the exact same moment, this burden was totally lifted from mine. Not sure which one of us felt better. But I felt good about it and I felt good about eight wonderful years.

Knott: Did you have any type of farewell, or was it assumed that you were going to be on the scene and there was really no need to say good-bye or anything like that?

Fuller: You know, there really wasn't. There were some snafus that somehow, I know we were supposed to be invited into the reviewing stand for the parade and we never got an invitation. My attitude was, look, for eight years I was involved in making decisions of where people went and I had every courtesy extended to me possible. It made absolutely no difference to me. And some friends had invited us to join them and we said yes. It turned out their seats were across from the reviewing stand. So we of course are sitting across from the reviewing stand and people were on the reviewing stand looking over there. Some of the people came over and said, "The Bushes insist that you come to the reviewing stand." I said, "I'm perfectly fine." "No, they insist." I said, "I'm really okay, it's okay."

They went away and then somebody else would come back. Finally I said, "Okay." So I went over there and they're wonderfully gracious. They have been gracious and great friends during the entire time in office. They were in the White House, and numerous times whenever I could be helpful I was helpful, and afterwards have been involved with the Bush library. One of the

things I've done is I have gone on and led my life. I haven't been caught up in everything that they do, but it's always been a pleasure to be associated with them, as well as the Reagans. It was a remarkable period. Really 12 years with two individuals who cared a great deal about the Presidency and understood, I think, a lot about the power of the Presidency and how it could be used to accomplish good things. I'm sure every President thinks that, but I was particularly proud to be associated with both of them.

Knott: If we could just ask one or two grand questions. Jeff, I'll throw it to you.

Chidester: I guess serving under both Reagan and Bush, what were the major differences between the two? You can answer this in any light, managerial, personality, anything.

Fuller: I think from my perspective, they're both extraordinarily decent people. They're concerned about the people around them. They're just very decent, thoughtful people. President Reagan came to office with some very clear and basic tenets about the role of government. He used those principles or tenets as a filter for virtually every issue that came in front of him, whether it was foreign policy or economic policy. It made it very clear for the people who worked for him to follow what his priorities were and understand how he was going to view issues. He left a lot of the operational things to the people who reported to him. He put enormous trust in people to do the things he wanted done, the way he wanted them done, which is a tremendous responsibility to place on staff people, but it worked. It may have worked better in the first term, but it worked.

President Bush came to the job I think with considerably more understanding of world events maybe, and foreign leaders. In some way a more complex view of the world, but in some ways a less clear view of the world. He relished getting into the details on some issues, more perhaps on the foreign policy side, but he relished looking for ways to solve problems and move forward. He had an interest in getting more engaged in some of the details and the discussions. Just two different styles. I think he had a passion, too, for more unstructured interaction with foreign leaders or members of Congress. He certainly enjoyed that.

Knott: Did you ever get the sense that President Bush was a bit envious of President Reagan's skills as a campaigner or as a communicator?

Fuller: He definitely admired his speaking skills. I remember him saying to me, they had a discussion at some point about how to use a TelePrompTer, or how to have eye contact when you're giving a speech. Because he came back and he said, "He picked up a magazine—" he, President Reagan— "He picked up a magazine and stood there and delivered a page of text as though he had written it. He had never seen it before." It was the ability to look down and capture the phrase and then deliver it. It was a remarkable skill. It was actually a much more practiced skill than most people understood, with careful markings on note cards and everything else; it was really remarkable. He did admire his ability to communicate.

I know he also admired his ability to negotiate with the Congress and not to cave, and to hold out. People would come in and say, "This is not going to work, it's going to fail, it's unreasonable," and he'd say, "No, we're going to stick to it." Then at some point, at a moment of his choosing, President Reagan would say, "I'll move a little bit." When the negotiations started

here and here, he constantly amazed people at how he moved people in his direction. He'd give a little, but he would not give in too soon. I think President Bush learned from that experience, he talked about that.

I know he learned that you have to really guard your time. The Presidency sometimes is a lonely place, the Vice Presidency sometimes is a lonely place. You can't have all the contact you might want to have with all the people who might want to have contact with you. I think he learned that from President Reagan. Although at times my most valuable skill was filling a doorway so he couldn't bust through, just to get him to sit and relax a little bit before a press conference or something else.

I wish you could have President Bush engage in a discussion like this about his relationship with President Reagan. I think it was a very positive one.

Knott: We're going to get you out of here soon, but did you read the Edmund Morris account, the book *Dutch*?

Fuller: I read parts of it. I liked Edmund and certainly cooperated with him. In some ways I thought there was a missed opportunity there. There was so much access and exposure and I just thought he missed a lot of it.

Knott: Morris talks about Reagan as being a very distant person in many ways.

Fuller: We talked about that. I think if there was a distance, it was maybe a protective device for somebody who was so friendly and kind and had such a powerful impact on people, and yet you didn't find yourself getting to know him in a way that George Bush would sit on a boat fishing and talking to you. Now it turns out that George Bush practices some of that too. Again, you don't always get to know him. You might have a good time with him, but you don't necessarily get to know what he's thinking. I've found that true of a lot of people.

I always found President Reagan to be quite comfortable with who he was and interested in learning things you had to tell him, willing to share stories. For some, I think, who want to have an encounter with somebody like Ronald Reagan and come away with some keen new insight into what they were really thinking, they'd be disappointed, because he wouldn't do that. Which isn't to say he didn't do that with some people, but he wouldn't do it with many. Again, I think some people found that disappointing. It was hard to take the measure of the man.

But the job now of President or Vice President is in some ways so perilous that unfortunately I don't think we're going to find many of them trusting too many people. So it's not surprising to me. In some ways it rubs off on the rest of us, in that you end up oftentimes forming a lot of relationships, but there are not that many trusting relationships, which is why I always thought that group of six was so remarkable. We really did get to know each other, personally, professionally, and that's unique. In a way, it was this group, I almost defy anybody to find a group where—I mean Roger Ailes didn't want to go into government and didn't. Bob Teeter didn't want to go into government and didn't. Lee Atwater didn't want to go into government and didn't. Mosbacher kind of did, and did. Brady was already in the government. And I really wanted to leave.

I mean, it was a group of people who really came together as much as any I've seen, around a mission of helping somebody get elected President. We obviously knew that if he was elected President it would be helpful to us, don't misunderstand me. But we weren't there because we were coveting some position of power, that once he got elected we were going to rush in and be the smartest thing on the block. Most of us had enough experience to know that that didn't work too well anyway. It was unique in that sense.

Knott: Do you have any concluding pearls of wisdom? Have we touched on everything that we should have today?

Fuller: You guys have done a great job. I must say, I'm sorry I didn't do this sooner. We've covered a lot of ground.

Erickson: Anything that you think the press or the history books so far have gotten wrong that you'd like to see corrected?

Fuller: You let me straighten out my departure from government, that was good. I've actually been glad to see more attention paid to the amount of writing that Ronald Reagan did, because it was phenomenal. I saw it, as I said, back in the firm, writing a lot of the radio scripts and newspaper columns. Anybody who thought he was somehow disengaged, I'd challenge them to produce the volume of material. There were times when he'd get the State of the Union draft and go to Camp David and not be happy with it and come back and it would be a yellow pad, a couple of pages from the original draft, insert this paragraph, and the rest of it he's just rewritten. You can't be a communicator as effective as he was when he was President who doesn't spend time on it. Yes, there was a lot of natural ability, but a lot of it was hard work. That's something a lot of us knew. We even at times would bring the press in and show them. They could take a picture of the yellow pad, you could find these stories, but it couldn't debunk this myth that he was somehow disengaged. I never believed that was true.

I think one of the interesting things about the two of them, just in contrast, ironically Ronald Reagan, who was clearly more protected in many ways and more protective of his privacy, also knew that this was a stage on which he was performing. This audience, the American people, had to see him. So he was in some ways more willing to project who he was through the media and through speeches and interviews of all kinds. President Bush—when he was Vice President and I think even when he was President—was more, "Well, I'm going to do what I think is right and let people judge."

I've joked with him about this. I kidded him one time, after his first parachute jump, I said, "You know, if you told any of us that you harbored this dream, it might have helped get you reelected." He had this sense of who he should be as President, as Vice President and then as President. In some ways he didn't allow himself to be seen as the person he was then, and in some ways is more clearly seen now. I cannot tell you how many people say to me, "We saw him speak, he was unbelievable. He's so good, he's so funny. He has so many insights. He and Barbara, their relationship." You're going, "Wait a minute, all this was true in 1992. How was it possible that it wasn't better communicated?"

That's one of the sad things, that the people, I think in some ways, because they want and need to protect themselves, not just physically but emotionally, I think they do detach themselves in ways that really deny the public the chance to get to know who they are. Then they can make their judgment whether they like that or not. I'm so amazed, even people who didn't vote for him who now interact with former President Bush, are so enamored with him. Yet he is exactly the person today that I knew and worked with. That's one of the challenges of our system.

Knott: We want to thank you very much. This has been a real plus for both the Bush and Reagan oral history.

Fuller: The link, somehow. Thank you, you all did a great job. Great questions.

Knott: Thank you. Come back any time.