



**GEORGE W. BUSH ORAL HISTORY PROJECT**

**FINAL EDITED TRANSCRIPT**

**INTERVIEW WITH ASHLEY ESTES KAVANAUGH**

September 22, 2015  
Washington, D.C.

**Interviewers**

*University of Virginia*  
Barbara A. Perry, chair

*Brookings Institution*  
Kathryn Dunn Tenpas

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**Perry:** We are here today to interview Ashley Estes Kavanaugh for the Bush 43 Oral History Project. We're going to do a voice identification so the transcriber can identify our voices. I'm Barbara Perry from the Miller Center and I will be leading the interview team today.

**Tenpas:** I'm Katy Dunn Tenpas from the Brookings Institution.

**Kavanaugh:** And I'm Ashley Kavanaugh.

**Perry:** Let's begin. I'm intrigued by your background, and your Texas ties, that obviously were crucial to your position at the White House. Tell us a little bit about your growing up. You were born and raised in Abilene, Texas, right?

**Kavanaugh:** I was born in Lubbock, Texas, and then moved to Abilene—it's about three hours away—and then went to Cooper High School. I ended up at the University of Texas at Austin.

**Perry:** You were a journalism major?

**Kavanaugh:** I was a journalism/public relations major and was always interested a little bit in politics, as much as you can be in high school.

**Perry:** Right. Were your parents involved in politics?

**Kavanaugh:** No, not really.

**Perry:** Did they have particularly strong political feelings or ties? Were they partisan?

**Kavanaugh:** Well, I'm from West Texas, and West Texas tends to be pretty Republican. That said, though, we had Charlie Stenholm—he was a longtime Democrat—and he had been there forever. He was more of a Blue Dog Democrat.

**Perry:** Right.

**Kavanaugh:** He was our Rep [Representative]. I did apply for an internship in the summer through him, and ended up not getting it.

**Perry:** Did you ever call him from the White House and remind him?

**Kavanaugh:** Oh, gosh, no. I feel like everything happens like it's supposed to.

**Perry:** It's so true.

**Kavanaugh:** I didn't have any big ideas. I didn't sit, as a high schooler, pining away or anything.

**Perry:** To go off to Washington?

**Kavanaugh:** No.

**Perry:** So then you did an internship with the Governor's office?

**Kavanaugh:** I had a friend—I had been working in a retail store that I loved, in Austin, which was lots of fun, and I was a Kappa [Kappa Kappa Gamma sorority] at UT [University of Texas], the philanthropy chair for the sorority. I had an advisor who worked in the appointments office, for then Governor Bush. She encouraged me to get involved. She said, "You should apply for an internship," and told me about a couple of fun offices. She said, "The policy office is lots of fun. The appointments office is great." That was run by Clay Johnson. So I said, "That sounds fun. I think I'd be interested."

I applied, and when they called me and said, "We'd like for you to interview for the executive office," I was thinking, *But she said to do the policy and the appointments, it's going to be more fun.* But I said, "Okay, great." I also had another friend, Logan Walters, who was the President's aide—well, he was an intern at the time too—and a good friend of mine from college. I knew that he was there, so I went and interviewed and got the job.

**Perry:** What year were you by then?

**Kavanaugh:** That was for my senior year, so it was maybe the August before, so '96, I guess, the end of '96.

**Perry:** While you were coming up to your senior year, did you want to go into journalism or PR [public relations]? What were you thinking, private sector?

**Kavanaugh:** I wasn't 100 percent sure yet. I had a journalism teacher who was an editor at *Texas Monthly*, who I loved—his name is Evan Smith—and he had encouraged me to do some magazine writing, things like that. I figured it was going to work out.

**Perry:** And it did.

**Kavanaugh:** That's what we did then. I went to the Governor's office for my senior year and started in his executive office. Our duties were to get him coffee every morning. I brought it in to him, which was great, and I helped with picture taking. He did a lot of different photo ops. Different groups would come in and I would keep people in line, in some sort of order, to get them through quickly, and I'd help take pictures. It was before cell phones, but everyone brought a camera, and half the time the cameras didn't work. [*laughter*] We were trying to keep an orderly process. And then I answered phones, I did his dictation.

**Perry:** What did that involve, you transcribed his dictation?

**Kavanaugh:** Yes. He would go into his office and talk into a tape and then bring the tape out and I'd put on the headphones.

**Perry:** Were these letters that he was dictating?

**Kavanaugh:** He would send letters to people. He did many handwritten notes, but then he did many other notes that I would type and then he would sign and do a postscript, but those were his words. I did that some as an intern, but I did that more when I got the full-time job. He had a longtime assistant, Ofelia Vanden Bosch, and she would need to leave every once in a while, so we would answer the phones. I was in charge of the auction requests for the Governor's office. People would write in and ask for the Governor to donate a baseball to their event or different things, so we would research the group, to see if it was legitimate—and we'd also go to the policy shop. They would say yes or no to different things, and then we would send them a signed poster, or different things.

We also did a gift-cataloguing system for different things that he got along the way, to try to keep track of those and be able to find them. They had this huge gift room that wasn't in the capitol, but in another room. It was a mass of things people had sent to him or that he'd gotten when he was on the road, and then we tried to keep track of that.

**Perry:** What would become of that?

**Kavanaugh:** I think it's at the library [George W. Bush Presidential Library and Museum] now. For a little while it went to, I think, his dad's [George H. W. Bush] library, and was held there, and then it eventually moved over to his library.

**Perry:** And does this range, everything from—?

**Kavanaugh:** It could be just a plaque, or it could be a hat. Keeping track of it, because there were so many. Or somebody would give him a CD [compact disc] of their music, or a book they thought he might like. It was just random.

**Perry:** So now, tell us the first time you met then Governor Bush. Do you remember the actual moment?

**Kavanaugh:** They had an elevator in the Governor's office, so he would come in from the mansion. He would pull up in front with the state troopers that were his security at the time, then he would dart in the door and go right to an elevator that popped up on the second floor in the office, and that's where we were. I didn't see him every day, but I saw him most days. Sometimes it was very quick, and he went in the office.

There was an outer office where we sat and some days it was just that I brought him coffee. He's very friendly, and he wanted to know where I was from, and when I said I was from Abilene, that was a big West Texas connection. He wanted to know where I had gone to high school, because my high school played his or Mrs. [Laura] Bush's high school in football.

**Perry:** That's huge, of course, in Texas.

**Kavanaugh:** It is, it's pretty big. That was an easy in, and I think he thought, *This girl is kind of funny*. He was very nice from Day One, but I would bring him coffee and sometimes I'd spill it, because I was nervous. Sometimes I couldn't understand him on the transcript and he would say, "What do you mean, what's this?" and circle it, when you'd send it back to him. That's how I really got to know him.

I came to know the way he liked things and what he didn't like, and started answering the phone when Ofelia would be gone. He wanted everything very quickly. He would call from lunch at the Governor's mansion and say, "Get So-and-So," and I'd try to find them. Of course, half the time they'd be at lunch too, so I'd be calling around trying to find people, and he would hang up, and then call me right back and say, "Where was he?" I'd say, "I had him on the other line, but you hung up on me." [laughter]

**Perry:** Oh, so he would hang up on his end of the phone?

**Kavanaugh:** Yes, and I would be trying to transfer it.

**Perry:** To get him to the person he was seeking?

**Kavanaugh:** Yes.

**Tenpas:** I see a little bit of impatience from that.

**Kavanaugh:** Well, yes, and I think he would admit that. But at the same time, it did take forever sometimes, because I'd call and somebody would say, "Oh, I just saw him in the break room," and they'd look for him in the break room, but he wasn't there. That was the beginning.

**Perry:** Having been a college intern at several points in my career, through college, I would always tell people you'd feel lucky if you saw the principal maybe once during your internship, if it was a Senator.

**Kavanaugh:** Sure.

**Perry:** And on your last day, you'd be ushered in to that person's office for a photograph, or again, you might glimpse them walking by. Did you feel special and honored, to be just coming in the door as an intern and be located physically so close, in an outer office, to the Governor, and then beginning to have these interactions with him?

**Kavanaugh:** Definitely. It was always a big deal if you got to see him that day. We had a desk downstairs as well, that was with the speechwriters, and sometimes we would be down there working, sometimes we'd be upstairs. It depended on what was going on and what kind of coverage they needed at the time. So, yes, it was a big deal.

**Perry:** Were you also getting to know people who would ultimately become key players in the White House?

**Kavanaugh:** Definitely. Karen Hughes was there at the time, Joe Allbaugh was there, a very gruff chief of staff, for whom I ended up working and realized he's just a teddy bear. Then, let's see, there was Margaret—

**Perry:** LaMontagne?

**Kavanaugh:** LaMontagne at the time.

**Perry:** She would become Margaret Spellings.

**Kavanaugh:** Spellings, yes. She was downstairs on the first floor.

**Perry:** In the briefing book she was described as something like “jovially profane.” [*laughter*]

**Kavanaugh:** Well, there was an auction request for an education group, and we turned them down for some reason. I can't remember what the problem was, but they wrote a letter and talked about me, and called me “that damn Ashley Estes,” so for years she would see me and say, “Damn Ashley Estes.” I had nothing to do with it; I knew nothing about it. But anyway, yes, that's her personality.

**Perry:** And Karl Rove, was he there?

**Kavanaugh:** Yes, Karl, of course, was there, but he officed out of—he wasn't in the capitol. He was at Rove and Company at the time.

**Perry:** Right.

**Kavanaugh:** So yes, I heard lots from Karl.

**Perry:** Any initial impressions of these people? You said Joe Allbaugh and his personality, Margaret. How about Karen Hughes?

**Kavanaugh:** Karen was loud [*laughter*], but she would describe herself as loud. She would come in and out, and she had the closest office to the Governor's, just by the way the offices were set up. She could walk through the main sitting room and then come through, which was still not super close. He was off on his own, except for the chief of staff and deputy chief of staff, who was Dale Laine the whole time. There was somebody who left right before that.

**Perry:** So your internship ended and you graduated about the same time?

**Kavanaugh:** Yes. My internship ended, but I knew about an opening. There was somebody who was working as Ofelia's backup assistant, strictly out of the executive office, and she was thinking about leaving, so they said, “Would you be interested in this position?” I said sure. I might have been there a month before I had a job, but then I had a job all of a sudden, and it was doing many of the same things, but with a little bit more responsibility. I was definitely more of the full-time backup, the true backup. That was when dictation became a very regular thing and I stopped doing some of the things I'd been doing before: some of the gifts, some of the auction. It

all runs together, that part of it. Izzy, Israel Hernandez, was still there at that point. He was my boss for a long time, when I was an intern. Then, I'm trying to think when Logan moved over.

**Tenpas:** What year was this?

**Kavanaugh:** I started in August or September '96 with him, and then graduated in May '97, and I never stopped working. I just started getting paid for it in June, and then was there in that capacity for a year. It was about June '99, July '99 maybe, that I moved over to the campaign with Joe.

**Perry:** Prior to that, was there talk in the office about what was the Governor's next step?

**Kavanaugh:** There was definitely talk. Well, partly because of state law, partly because of our general counsel, they had a very strict protocol as far as phones. We had a fax machine that was strictly a political fax machine; we had a phone you could only make political phone calls on. We had a computer that was only used for work. I had to start to know who people were, so that I knew what phone to call them on. We had paper that we would load the fax machine with. We had a copier that was only for work. They tried very hard to make sure there was no ethical issue as far as working out of the Governor's office. It's his office, that's just the way it works.

I started to notice, and I heard discussions. His big phrase was, "Keep your powder dry." People would write him notes, encouraging him to think about it, and he would always write back. I knew things were happening, but part of my job was to not know. Know, but not know.

**Tenpas:** Right.

**Kavanaugh:** Then, when he was running for reelection as Governor, obviously that was his main focus. He needed that to happen before he could even think about anything else. I don't think he had completely made up his mind.

**Perry:** As that decision came closer, were there people coming in and out of the office from the national scene?

**Kavanaugh:** We had more people. There were fewer Texas people calling. It was more people who had been involved with his dad at different points. Ofelia had a gigantic Rolodex, so you could tell when he knew people from different points by reading through the notes on it. It was hard, because there were people he knew from the [Texas] Rangers who were also friends with his dad. There was a lot of overlap.

**Perry:** There was an interlocking network, you could safely call it. Did his dad ever come to the office, or his mom? Did you see the family? And we should also say Mrs. Laura Bush. That's Barbara Bush and Bush 41.

**Kavanaugh:** Mrs. Laura Bush came a lot and I talked to her a lot. I would go drop things off at the mansion sometimes and then see people there, or I'd call because I had somebody who wanted to speak to him and Mrs. Bush would answer. As for his parents, I know his dad came to the Governor's office when I was there. I don't remember his mom coming through. I remember

his dad a lot at the campaign and in the White House, but his mom, not as many times. She would be in the residence for the most part.

**Perry:** We'll certainly want to talk about that when we get to the White House. Anything else, then, to report before you get into the Presidential campaign, about those early days with the Governor?

**Kavanaugh:** Not really. The thing is, he really was the same person then that he became later. It was a little different when he was President, obviously, but he was very similar.

**Perry:** Yes. In personality, in traits?

**Kavanaugh:** In personality and the way he liked things.

**Tenpas:** Just a quick personal question: The prospect of working on the campaign, was that something that was exciting to you?

**Kavanaugh:** I really wanted to work on the campaign, and like any just-out-of-school person, I was eager, thought that I was ready to do everything. I had a good friend who also did fundraising. I think she worked for Rick Perry when he was running for land commissioner. I can't remember what it was, but she had done fundraising and really enjoyed it, and I thought that would be fun. I was trying to find a niche on the campaign that was something that seemed to fit, and so was eager to do that.

Governor Bush would say, "Are you having fun? Are you enjoying this?" I'd say yes, and then he'd say, "Are you excited about the possibility of a campaign?" I'd say, "Yes, sir!" He knew that I wanted to move to the campaign and he said at one point, "Ashley, why do you want to move to the campaign? All the action is here." I said, "I know."

Everything happens as it's supposed to, and you are where you are for a reason, because if I had moved over to the campaign earlier, where it might have been fun, I wouldn't have gotten to know him, which then wouldn't have led to the other. That made the transition to working for Joe, who I didn't know. I mean, I saw him in the Governor's office, but I did not have a lot of interaction with him. I approached him in maybe April or May of '99 and said, "I'd love to be considered for a job on the campaign, if something opens up." He said, "All right." I said, "Okay, great." Then I thought, *I'll just stay here. I'll do whatever I'm supposed to be doing.*

About a month later, he called me and said, "I'd like for you to be my assistant," and I said okay.

**Perry:** Did you have any misgivings about that, given that you said that you didn't know he was a teddy bear, and he was rather gruff by personality?

**Kavanaugh:** No. I was used to working for Governor Bush—not that he was—he just wanted things done when he wanted them done, and I wanted to do it well, so I wasn't afraid of working for somebody who seemed—

**Perry:** Is it more like perfectionism, would you say?



**Kavanaugh:** You know, it's just the way he is. He's a little bit impatient at times, and then, yes, he doesn't want to waste time on stuff, or he doesn't want to waste time hearing why you couldn't get it out.

**Perry:** Just do it.

**Kavanaugh:** Don't explain it, just get it done. Joe, I wasn't worried about. I felt like it was a good fit for my skills at the time. I asked the Governor and he said he thought that that was a good move, in the right spot. Who knows if he really did? But either way, I became the contact, in a way, to get hold of all the people on the campaign staff for the Governor. He could call in to my desk, and I became the political Ofelia of sorts. It worked well, because he was comfortable. By this time, I wasn't new.

**Perry:** Did you ever find out if he had said to Joe Allbaugh, "You should have Ashley come over"?

**Kavanaugh:** I don't know. I can remember times all through the executive office when he would say, "Ashley, if I go to Washington, are you going to come with me?" I'd say, "We'll talk about it when it happens, sir," because I didn't want him to assume. Number one, I didn't want to get too far ahead. And then I didn't want him to feel like he was—that he would talk to me about something and then have it not work out, because you never know.

But he said it many different times. He would talk about his dad's Oval Office setup: "There's a desk right outside the Oval and you could sit there." I'd say, "All right, we'll talk about it."

**Perry:** That would raise the question about Ofelia. She had been with him a long time.

**Kavanaugh:** She started with him, but he had another assistant at the Rangers, Shari [Waldie]. But it was a different stage in his life. When he was at the Rangers, I've heard about his office. It was just barely an office, with boxes and different things, and Israel was there with him at that point. Then when he moved to the Governor's office, I think Ofelia started. I don't know the full story on this, but somebody recommended her, and she was a fabulous assistant.

**Perry:** So she did not go to Washington?

**Kavanaugh:** She did not. Her husband was in Texas, and she was close to retiring. It just wasn't what she wanted to do.

**Perry:** It is fascinating to me, when you get to the White House, that if you look back, the past Presidents, in one of the articles that we had in the briefing book, talked about Evelyn Lincoln, who had been with Senator John F. Kennedy since he was in the Senate. She had already been with him nine years, I think, by the time they got to the White House. Many of the Presidents will bring these longtime assistants/secretaries with them who have followed them through their careers off and on, in Capitol Hill or in Governor's offices. You were obviously coming from the Governor's office, but that does answer a question for me about whether there was a more senior person, in both point of service and age, who had been with him.

**Kavanaugh:** It came down to she was probably not interested in the job, number one, and so it made it easy. Quite honestly, she had a life. I didn't have a life at the time, so I could stay late and help, and be available, where sometimes she was ready to go home and see her husband, understandably.

**Perry:** Yes. Now, tell us about the campaign and working for Joe Allbaugh, what you did and how that was run.

**Kavanaugh:** I worked as his assistant and it was very fun. I'm not sure that I could ever survive and do it again, but it was a wonderful experience. It started off pretty small and then each week they'd add a few new cubicles here and different things. Joe was in charge of budgeting and keeping him on track. For the most part, everybody's interests were melding, and Karl felt like Governor Bush needed to be here and do this, he needed whatever, and then Karen would say, "He needs to do this." Among the three of them, Joe was the person who made sure everybody was being heard. But they all had their own relationship with the Governor, so it wasn't as if one person was the person who was the go-to; they could all go to him, and I think he liked it that way.

Joe did the debates. He was in charge of all the negotiating. He did a lot of the less-specific work, where it wasn't a communications or a political thing, but kind of everything else that fell in there. Not policy shop things, because Josh [Bolten] was there for that. We had needed a correspondence shop at the campaign office, and we had somebody who was in charge of that, but then there were still personal letters that he needed to write, that needed to come from the campaign versus the state office, because they weren't state office matters. So we had special stationery, like we'd had before. There was all the stuff that had gone on, on the campaign trail, we were in charge of preparing and sending thank-you notes for those things and he'd sign them.

I'm trying to think of what else there was. At the time, it was very busy, but we did whatever needed to be done that day. It wasn't like, I'm going to come in today and I'm going to do my job. It was always changing.

**Perry:** And was Joe based there most of the time?

**Kavanaugh:** Joe was there most of the time, and therefore I was too. He didn't do a whole lot of travel, so yes. It was before BlackBerrys were the things, so I had to be at the office at six thirty or so to start checking my e-mails, depending on what was going on or where they were, if they were traveling, and then I left late because I'd still be checking e-mails. It was different.

**Perry:** The good news was, when you went home, then presumably, you didn't have to be— You could be on call, but not checking e-mail?

**Kavanaugh:** Not on call, yes. I feel like the BlackBerry changed my life, because I was able to answer a quick question quickly, at my leisure, but not have my phone ring all the time. If I was out of the office, my cell rang all the time.

**Perry:** So phone calls were the precursors of having e-mail 24/7?

**Kavanaugh:** Exactly.

And then Chairman [Donald L.] Evans would come in, Don Evans, at different times, from Midland. He had the office on the other side of me, so I was, not officially, but his assistant as well. We had a group of interns who helped do the correspondence. We had the autopen at some point, which is scary to think [*laughter*], but we defended the autopen with our life; it was in a locked room. If people needed to talk to him, they could go straight to Logan, the aide, but many people wanted to go to Joe first and say, “All right, this is the deal. Can we get him to do this, or not do that?”

**Perry:** Were there cycles through the campaign during which you thought, *We’re going to Washington, this is going to work?* Or times that maybe took a dip in certainty?

**Kavanaugh:** Well, Iowa felt good and New Hampshire not so good, and then it changed. I definitely remember a big meeting of the minds, pre-South Carolina, after New Hampshire: We have to make a change and figure out a message that is working.

**Perry:** This was Joe to the staff, or the Governor coming back?

**Kavanaugh:** No. I felt like it was Karl, Karen, Joe, all together. I think that’s when they emphasized the “compassionate conservative.” This is what we have to do. South Carolina was big.

**Perry:** And it worked, the rebranding worked.

**Kavanaugh:** It worked. Also, things got uglier on the campaign.

**Perry:** The gloves were off by then.

**Kavanaugh:** Yes, which was not fun, but we wanted to win too.

**Perry:** Right, right. And debates? You said Joe was doing the negotiating.

**Kavanaugh:** He was in charge of a lot of the negotiating part of it: how many people, how many guests we got to bring, how many breaks, how long, who’s the reporter? It was a lot of the behind-the-scenes stuff you don’t think of. Do they get to have a fan?

**Perry:** What’s the air conditioning setup?

**Kavanaugh:** Yes.

**Perry:** The temperature on the thermostat?

**Kavanaugh:** Exactly. Can they walk around? He did a lot of that. He also did a lot of the convention stuff, eventually, working with Andy Card a lot. He worked with Ben Ginsberg a lot, checking legal issues for different things and the way they were, just making sure. He worked with Jack Oliver; Jack was the fundraiser.

**Perry:** Going in then, to the actual Election Day, what was the sense back home in Austin?

**Kavanaugh:** We felt good, but nothing felt sure.

**Perry:** Take us through that day and into the evening. What were you tasked with doing?

**Kavanaugh:** It's funny to think about it. It was a very weird feeling, because there wasn't a lot I could do at that point. I think some people went bowling. I may be wrong about that. Josh Bolten was a big bowler, so he may have taken the policy shop bowling, and then people were in and out. Mrs. Barbara Bush may have come by around that time—I may be wrong; I may be completely confusing that—just to thank people. Then it was what it was, and then that night, everybody was watching things come in and getting nervous.

**Tenpas:** Was there a party?

**Kavanaugh:** Well, there was a party out on the street, right in front of the capitol. That was where the victory party was going to be, but we were all holed up in the—

**Tenpas:** In the mansion?

**Kavanaugh:** Not in the mansion. We were in the headquarters, 301 Congress. There were some people at the mansion, so there was some calling back and forth. The political guys would get information and have to report that, and I can't remember if Karl was there at the campaign and then would call. We were always getting news, because we were getting which precincts had reported and different things.

At some point, I remember them calling it and everybody ran down in front of the capitol. It was raining and everyone was excited; it seemed exciting. My parents were there. My brother also worked on the campaign, in the political shop, for Karl, so he was there. It was fun. I remember being with him, and then my two roommates, who also worked on the campaign.

**Perry:** That part seemed normal, probably like a normal victory.

**Kavanaugh:** It did. It was fun. It was exciting, and then it wasn't. They kept saying we could go down there, but then no one was coming out, and finally Don Evans came out and said they were going to see what happened in the morning, and just left it, if I remember correctly. Everybody had gone and walked home, and then the next morning was just a feeling of *What are we doing?* It was my birthday too, because my birthday was November fourth. My birthday was Election Day and I thought, *Oh, we'll go celebrate*, but we never celebrated because it was never ending. Then people were starting to go to Florida. The campaign had had a very controlled spending policy: fill out forms if you were going to get a car, if you were going to—so that was the thing. When we got back there, the lawyers—

**Perry:** When you got back to the headquarters?

**Kavanaugh:** Headquarters, right. The lawyers, Michael Toner and Kevin Martin, were trying to figure things out: How do we do this? How do we get people there? And political people were just leaving on flights, then they would get there and they would rent a car. They would have to go to a different place and would end up leaving the car. I remember somebody left their car in Volusia, and we said, "You can't just leave your car!"

**Perry:** There's a drop-off charge as well.

**Kavanaugh:** Yes. We had to find it. There were weird things like that, and the cell phone bills were all really *controlled* for a long time, until this happened, and then people were using their cell phones. We would get these bills, or FedEx bills, from different places, and they were gigantic. That part was chaotic, because it had been such a controlled process. It was only chaotic for a short time, though.

The Governor called the next day, “How’s the mood?” I said, “Everybody’s excited, sir, and we know it’s going to work out.” He said, “All right. That’s the thing, everybody needs to stay positive.” From Day One, he wanted to protect, to be sure that everybody was happy, and we reassured him that we were all right, we were good, everybody was good.

Then there was a lot of Don calling, Secretary [James A., III] Baker, and then the Governor calling Secretary Baker and then him coming to the mansion. We were picking people up at the airport. That was one thing I forgot. On the campaign, before this all started, they would have these CEOs [chief executive officers] from huge companies all come together and then come to the mansion, to have an informal, get-to-know-him thing. I would go pick up a CEO, all these different people at the airport, and drive them to the mansion, then drive them back, in my car. It was a funny existence. I just did whatever they asked me to do at the time.

At the beginning of the recount, people thought, *We’ll have some resolution soon*, and then it started being truly like *Groundhog Day*. You woke up every day and realized this wasn’t going to end soon. Then people started leaving for Tallahassee, and the attorneys really kicked in, there were a lot of attorneys there. Eventually, I went with—she was my roommate too—Kate Marinis Walters, who is married to Logan. We went to Tallahassee. They decided they needed some help, because the people who had been working the phones in Tallahassee had been answering the phone nonstop for days, and they needed a little bit of a break.

**Perry:** And this was a makeshift headquarters that had been set up in Tallahassee?

**Kavanaugh:** Yes. Maybe the RNC [Republican National Committee] headquarters. I can’t remember. Margaret Tutwiler was there, George Terwilliger was there. It was a new group of people who knew what was going on, because Secretary Baker had brought them in. All of a sudden the lawyers were there. Instead of it being the political shop, it was the lawyers’ time, so Ben was there.

**Perry:** This was Ben Ginsberg.

**Kavanaugh:** Ben Ginsberg, yes. Joe was there the whole time, pretty much.

**Perry:** Oh, so he had decamped from Austin to Tallahassee early on?

**Kavanaugh:** Yes. Chairman Evans was in Austin much of the time, so at that point, I was doing more for him, just different things.

**Perry:** How long did you stay in Tallahassee?

**Kavanaugh:** I was only there a short time. When I was there, the Supreme Court ruling came down, so we flew back.

**Perry:** This was the ultimate decision, not what turned out to be the first decision?

**Kavanaugh:** Yes.

**Perry:** This was the final decision on December 12th. So you were there, in Tallahassee, when that final decision came down.

**Kavanaugh:** I was in Tallahassee.

**Perry:** What was that like?

**Kavanaugh:** Everybody was really excited, but everybody was so tired too. We came back, and the transition was really—Secretary Card had been picked. Well, we obviously worked a lot with him for the convention, so I had gotten to know him better.

**Perry:** Yes. We should say, for the record, that was because he had been asked to run the convention.

**Kavanaugh:** Right.

**Perry:** Although he was, at this point, in the private sector, in Detroit, working for the motor car company association, the American Automobile Manufacturers Association.

**Kavanaugh:** Yes. But he started to be more of a fixture in about October of that year, around transition stuff and figuring out what would happen, because you had to prepare for it, regardless. In December, I remember working with him a lot, because again, he came down and didn't have an assistant, so I said, "Let me help you get this here," and "Don, go here," and "Joe, go here."

**Perry:** Can I back up?

**Kavanaugh:** Sure.

**Perry:** You had mentioned, on the day after the election, that the checkerboard got thrown up in the air, where before everything had been done to specification, particularly for expenditures. Was there discussion, both during the recount and then just after, about the money? Where was the money coming from? Where were the funds sourced?

**Kavanaugh:** Jack was in charge of figuring out how to pay for it, and there were people willing to donate planes, but we had a way that you had to do that. Janan Grissom was our person they had to go through, and she had to find charters for different things, so it had to have been, obviously, aboveboard.

**Perry:** So after the Supreme Court decision and the concession by Vice President [Albert, III] Gore, it was now official, in the sense that you were looking ahead to transition. You were working with Secretary Card on that. Any work with now the Vice President-elect [Richard B.] Cheney, or his daughter, Liz [Elizabeth Cheney Perry], on the transition, because they set up shop?

**Kavanaugh:** They were upstairs.

**Perry:** In Northern Virginia, were they not?

**Kavanaugh:** Right, but they were at 301 [Congress Avenue]. The VP [Vice President]’s office was upstairs for a little while, so they were in and out. I talked to him quite a bit during the—

**Perry:** For the recount?

**Kavanaugh:** Well, he was in charge of the VP process, and Joe was the person at the campaign to talk to about that, so I got to know him somewhat, over the phone, then, obviously, he ended up being the VP.

**Perry:** Also, when you said “VP process,” you meant the selection—

**Kavanaugh:** Yes, the selection.

**Perry:** —when, at first, Dick Cheney had said no, that he would not take the option to run with Governor Bush?

**Kavanaugh:** Right. He was just in charge of finding the right person.

**Perry:** Right, and then he became in charge of the search team.

**Kavanaugh:** And then the President decided he was the right person and asked him to do it. Very soon after it was decided, President Bush called over to the campaign and asked, officially, if I was willing to come work for him and sit outside the Oval. I said yes.

**Perry:** Before Election Day?

**Kavanaugh:** No, this was after we’d won.

**Tenpas:** So, in December?

**Kavanaugh:** Yes.

**Tenpas:** You said he would allude to it periodically.

**Kavanaugh:** He alluded to it, definitely. It may have been before we officially took over. We were having to proceed like there was a transition, without knowing there was a transition. You know?

**Tenpas:** Yes, right.

**Kavanaugh:** We were getting too close to the date that we were going to have to take over. I think it was before, now that I think about it. So I knew, at least, that I had a job, if we ended up going. He had Logan, and Logan was going to be the aide if he ended up going, so we went over and met with them, along with Clay.

**Perry:** Clay Johnson?

**Kavanaugh:** Johnson, and Andy Card. That gave us a better idea of how things work and how it would look. Then they had an office—I still don't understand this, but they had an office set up to be a transition office, because he was obviously not going to go to D.C.

**Tenpas:** Northern Virginia.

**Kavanaugh:** Yes. I was only in the Northern Virginia office for maybe a day, when we got up there, right before we started. Anyway, he had this office that was LBJ's [Lyndon B. Johnson's] old office, and it looked like LBJ's old office. It had shag carpet and it was just—

**Perry:** Had not been redecorated since LBJ.

**Kavanaugh:** It had not. For reasons unclear, they wanted us to go over there to work out of it, so we went one day, with the Governor, or President, and tried to get the phones to work. It was a joke. We never went back. Anyway, I don't know when that was, but that was part of the transition period.

**Perry:** You had said that at some point, the Governor, now President-elect, or soon to be President-elect, officially had called you. I find this interesting. Did he use the words "Will you come and have the position of sitting outside the Oval Office?" or did he say, "Would you come and be my assistant or my personal secretary?" Did he define it by a title?

**Kavanaugh:** I think he said, "Do you want to be my personal secretary?" And then he said, "You'd sit right outside the Oval," and I obviously said yes.

**Perry:** Right. Then did he say any more, in that conversation, about what that role would be, what his expectations were? If not, did he at any other point?

**Kavanaugh:** Not really. When we went to the Governor's mansion and met with Logan, Andy, and Clay, he indicated that there would probably be—it turned out to be Linda Gambatesa—somebody who was older, in charge of Oval Office operations. Not older, but we were twenty-six or whatever.

**Perry:** Oh, you both were the same age?

**Kavanaugh:** Yes. We understood that would make sense, but that was all there was. We knew that it would be the same, but different, in trying to figure it out. Then he did give us a little bit of direction: Karen is going to be my this advisor, Karl is going to be this, Andy is going to be the Chief of Staff. Then December was a very tough month at the campaign, partly because all these people had just finished a campaign, and everybody was looking for a job. Everybody was trying to figure out where their next paycheck would come from, so I was thrilled for myself, and people were so wonderful and nice about being happy for me. That was great, but also, everybody else was trying to figure out what their next step was.

**Perry:** Were people coming to you, knowing that you had this position?



**Kavanaugh:** Well, they would talk to Joe. No, not to me, but they would come to Joe and say, “I’m interested in doing this.” He, or Chairman Evans, got people who came, but most people worked directly with the people they had worked for.

**Tenpas:** During the campaign?

**Kavanaugh:** Yes. You’d go to Karl if you worked at the vote. It was uneasy.

**Tenpas:** By this day, had you been working seven days a week for almost a year?

**Kavanaugh:** Yes.

**Tenpas:** Or longer?

**Kavanaugh:** Longer.

**Tenpas:** Since ’99.

**Kavanaugh:** Because even in the Governor’s office, we worked Saturdays, because he came in on Saturdays. Not all day Saturday, by any means, but sometimes in the mornings, and yes, it was a long time. It was long. I was very tired. I kept hoping in November, December, that I was going to get some rest and recharge, and then it never happened.

**Tenpas:** Did it ever happen?

**Kavanaugh:** Well, it happened in 2005, when I left. [*laughter*] It really did. That was the thing. It was especially tough because we didn’t have a break. Most people got some time to get a little relief.

**Tenpas:** Right, with the recount, especially.

**Kavanaugh:** And we didn’t have a place to stay. We weren’t even sure when we would go. We were in charge of staying until the President was ready to leave. In December, he was reaching out to Congressional members. We were doing a lot of that part of it. He was figuring out his next steps. We called around and would find people, because he was interviewing his potential Cabinet members. It was a totally, for me, different set of names; all people that I’d eventually get to know, but I didn’t know at the time. That was more in December. It was a lot of reaching out to different people, bringing people in, batting around names for different things. Obviously, I was not involved in any of the major discussions, but I was the person placing all the calls, so I’d know who was up for different things. You know but you don’t know, again, which was most of my job.

Then we flew up with my friend Kate Walters, who I mentioned. For some reason, we were on the Vice President’s flight back, so I guess from Dallas or Austin, I don’t know. But it was a—

**Tenpas:** A charter?

**Kavanaugh:** Yes.

**Perry:** And this was—?

**Kavanaugh:** For our official trip to D.C., from Austin. We went on that flight.

**Perry:** And that was when?

**Kavanaugh:** January. It was right before the inauguration, just a couple of days before.

**Perry:** This was going to the inauguration, going to your new job?

**Kavanaugh:** Yes.

**Perry:** Had you found a place to live?

**Kavanaugh:** No. They put us at the Westin on M Street. I lived there for a month. Many of the people had places there; Karl was on my floor. We'd come out in the mornings and say, "Hi."

**Perry:** Like a dorm.

**Kavanaugh:** Yes. We all felt unsettled, to say the least. Yes, we lived at the Westin. I was only here, maybe got here on a Thursday or Friday, and then we started work the next Tuesday, or whatever it was.

**Perry:** Describe the inauguration and then describe your first day, walking into the White House grounds and the West Wing.

**Kavanaugh:** We started at the transition office, with Andy Card. We met, walked around and met everybody who was going to be in different offices, and I said, "Hello, my name is Ashley. I'm going to be the President's assistant and I wanted to introduce myself." Then we went to something over by the White House, another transition office of sorts, and did the same sort of thing there, and then we walked over to the White House from there.

**Perry:** Prior to the inauguration?

**Kavanaugh:** Prior to the inauguration. It was at the point, though, where they were tearing out the carpets. They start painting; it's like this whole new room for the Oval, but then also everything else, all the work that they've been wanting to do but can't do because occupants are there. I remember walking across West Exec. At the time, I had never been there. It was completely—

**Tenpas:** You'd never been to Washington?

**Kavanaugh:** Well, I'd been to D.C. I'd been in the White House on like on a little tour, yes, on the other side. I'd never been in the West Wing or on Executive Avenue.

**Tenpas:** How many times had you been to Washington?

**Kavanaugh:** Only one time, eighth grade, on my spotlight tour or whatever they call it. So, it was different.

**Perry:** I guess so. [*laughter*]

**Kavanaugh:** I ran into Anita McBride, I remember, on West Exec. She said, “Let me take you up to the Oval.” So we went through, and I remember walking over a carpet that had been pulled up. They were doing all these different things, so it didn’t even look like a real—it was still being put back together.

**Perry:** But this was before Inauguration Day.

**Kavanaugh:** This was before the Inauguration Day.

**Perry:** And the [William J.] Clinton people were not to be seen?

**Kavanaugh:** Nobody was there then, at that point.

**Perry:** They cleared out for the remodeling process?

**Kavanaugh:** I guess. I’m trying to think.

**Perry:** And so they didn’t have you meet Betty Currie?

**Kavanaugh:** No. I got to my desk—it must have been a day before, and I had a letter from her, which was very nice, that was in my desk. It said, “I hope you’ll enjoy this opportunity; it’s an amazing window into history,” or something, which was, I thought, very nice. It’s all a little fuzzy right around when we started. I know I went in at some point before my first day. Then I know for the inauguration, surprisingly, partly because the transition and recount messed up everything, the inauguration was a little bit not as organized for staff, because they were trying to get all these other people set up. We went to the inauguration. It rained.

**Perry:** It was cold.

**Kavanaugh:** It was cold and it rained, and we were walking around kind of lost. We didn’t even have great seats. We watched it all afterward, thinking, *This is so strange, but this is D.C., and it’s huge*. Now it’s not just your state, it’s this huge contingent that he’s dealing with, and so we felt lost a little bit in the shuffle. Then they had a nice reception of some sort, where he greeted people on the Truman Balcony. That had to have been after the inauguration, but I don’t remember.

**Perry:** People came through and met with him on the balcony?

**Kavanaugh:** No. He waved at people and said thank you.

**Perry:** People were down on the lawn.

**Kavanaugh:** Yes. That was the second time I’d been there. Then the next day we showed up for our job. It was an experience. That part was funny, because Logan and I had not been in the place yet. The good news was that he had been in the White House before, and told me things, like if it was too cold, he told me who to call, and other things. He would say call the usher’s

office, so I picked things up. And Linda had been there, Gambatesa, working for 41, so she had this history. That was the biggest learning curve, at the beginning. I was depending on her or somebody to tell me who I needed to call about everything.

Betty Currie's desk was gigantic. It was a huge desk, and her back was to the Oval Office. The door was right here [*gestures*], and then her computer was actually in the desk, so I had to look down on a desk and I could type, but it was in there, so anybody who came up behind me could look and read the computer, but other people couldn't see it. It was horrible, because he, the President, liked to have the door open at all times, and he would come up behind me, before I even—[*laughter*]

Quickly, we decided we can't do this, this is not working. Plus, the poor aide had this tiny desk in the corner, and I had this gigantic desk. At some point very early on we got two desks. It was things like that—we didn't realize that we wouldn't have the setup we had planned on. Then Linda was in a little inner office, so it was just the three of us right there.

**Perry:** The stories that we hear over and over, either reading about or people talking about, are about the so-called vandalism. Did you see anything?

**Kavanaugh:** I didn't have that. That happened more over in the EEOB [Eisenhower Executive Office Building]. There were definitely cases of it, but it wasn't where we were.

**Perry:** Right. So nothing had been done, proactively, to make things difficult?

**Kavanaugh:** No, I don't think so. It was just that the turnaround was not ideal, and people were sad. It was a long process. You understand that.

**Tenpas:** Can you describe a typical day in those first few weeks, like when you arrived, what it would usually consist of?

**Kavanaugh:** Well, I'd come in every morning on West Exec, and get my car swept. The Secret Service would be there with dogs and they'd go around the car every morning. Then I'd pull up on West Exec, through another gate, and come in, go up, sit outside the Oval. We tried to get there about six thirty. There were times he was already there before me, because he was an early riser. I am not an early riser, so that was hard. The aide, fortunately, was an early riser and would always be there. Early on, though, we were always there before him. That was, in many ways, the busiest time of the day for *us*, because it was the time he was unoccupied. He would come in, have his "Sit Room," his daily briefing, and then, eventually, they'd bring up a daily briefing plus the threat report after 9/11. We would put that on his desk, and he'd come in first thing and read through that.

There's a little thing like a POTUS [President of the United States] locator of sorts, that will tell you where he is, and I could see he was in the residence, and then he'd be in the Oval Office. A few people—Secretary Card, the Deputy Chiefs of Staff—had those in their offices, so they could see when he came to the Oval, and they would come down. We might have also gotten a phone call that said, "The President's on his way to the Oval," or we might have called Secretary Card to say, "The President's on his way to the Oval."

Usually Andy Card came in first thing, sometimes for a long time, sometimes just “Hi. Do you need anything? All right, I’m leaving.” And then, usually, Secretary [Condoleezza] Rice would come through. He did much of his correspondence at that time. We had folders that we would leave for him on his desk that had either letters or things for him to sign, or any type of briefing material. If we had questions for him that we needed answers on, that was our time to go in and talk to him and get it done. That was usually the case until about seven fifteen, seven twenty, and then people started arriving for different briefings. Usually by seven thirty, people would stop in and try and get quick answers from him on something. They knew that that was usually a good time, so he was usually pretty occupied from seven thirty to eight, in those types of impromptu meetings.

Often, about seven thirty, he would call different leaders of foreign countries. Those were all set up through the Sit Room, and most of the time they were just checking-in type calls. They would bring a briefing up, what they thought he might want to talk about, and then they were like 15-minute calls. The Sit Room placed those, so he would just pick up.

At eight o’clock, and this was adjusted slightly if he was traveling or doing different things, or if we needed more time, but pretty much at eight o’clock every day, he’d have the CIA [Central Intelligence Agency] briefers come in. When I was there, it was Director [George] Tenet and then it was Michael Morell, who was the [acting] Director for a little while. They would come and they would sit in the outer with us, and be going over the briefings. We got to know them pretty well, because we sat with them often.

That happened from Day One, the CIA coming in, and then after September 11, they would have the FBI [Federal Bureau of Investigation] briefing after the CIA briefing, so they did that together, the CIA and the FBI were both there. It was a way for everybody to be on the same page. Then they ended up doing an NSC [National Security Council] briefing after that, and they added a daily briefing that was more of a staff thing. It was Karen, Karl, Dan Bartlett, and Andy Card, and the Vice President joined them for all of these meetings. That was a typical day, what happened, and then after that you’d have different, either policy meetings or people coming in or foreign visits.

**Perry:** Can you tell us a little bit more about the people who would come in for their informal stop-by before the formal briefings would start? You said Secretary Rice, so at that time she would have been head of the NSC?

**Kavanaugh:** Yes, Dr. Rice at that time.

**Perry:** And Andy, you had said, of course, would start the day.

**Kavanaugh:** Andy, Josh Bolten would come by sometimes. It varied, and many times it was somebody on the senior staff. Most people knew, or started to know, that he would leave the door open, so they would drop in, say hi, sometimes to us, and then he would almost always say, “What are you doing?” and then they’d go in.

**Perry:** This was unscheduled, informal.

**Kavanaugh:** Unscheduled. We had a list, sort of, of who was allowed to go in.

**Perry:** That was going to be my next question.

**Kavanaugh:** Yes, although we didn't truly need it or adhere to it, because that wasn't the way he worked. Nobody who wasn't top staff, senior staff, would have just popped in, but at the same time, most of the time what happened was if somebody would come by. I tried to keep Secretary Card in the know of who was stopping in, so I would call down to his office and say, "Hey, Karen just stopped in. Karen's in there with him," and many times he would come down too. That was the policy that he and the President agreed on, that Andy could stop in to any meeting he wanted to for the most part. Or I'd call him and say, "Hey, Dan stopped in," and he would say, "Okay, I'll talk to him." If he was busy he'd say, "Okay, I'll ask him about it later." That was a way to keep him in the know of what discussions the President had had.

Then there were times when I could tell people seemed like they really needed to talk to him about something and it might not be just a passing issue, or I heard chatter. That's the thing, I would hear chatter from people, or hear maybe there was some disagreement on whatever, so there were times that I would be very specific with Secretary Card and let him know I really thought he should come down, or whatever. But it wasn't like—although we did, at times, control access, when there were times that he didn't want to be interrupted, or we thought that it was not a good time to interrupt. He kept his door open on purpose, and would call people in, but people were very respectful. I'd get a call from Karl often, saying, "Hey, I have a couple of things to run by him. Can you tell me if there's a good time?"

I would say, "After the eleven-twenty meeting I think is going to be good, or you can come by and stand out here and catch him," and that's what people did.

**Tenpas:** And did you just develop the judgment about when was okay, when was not okay?

**Kavanaugh:** Yes. I definitely did. I mean, he's not a subtle guy, so there were times when I could tell that this is not the time to go in there. But yes, for the most part, I would sense that this is a good time, or instead I'd say, "If you have something like that, I would not bug him with it right now, I would wait until tomorrow, if you can."

**Tenpas:** What about days when he was traveling outside the office?

**Kavanaugh:** When he was traveling, it was obviously much slower for me. That was the aide's day to be really on and do all the stuff, so he functioned as my job. The aide still did plenty when he was in the office, but for the most part there were many things that he would go to my job for when he was in the office, that he would then go to the aide for out of the office.

When he was gone, though, most of the time, it was the same type of thing. People would call down and ask, "Hey, when he calls in, I have a few things to run by him. Can you ask him?" I would either ask the question or try to patch him through when he called. And he called a lot; he checked in frequently. He did this to me when we were at the Governor's office. He'd call in at the beginning, and if Ofelia wasn't there he'd say, "Okay, I'll call back." I'd say, "I can try and help you," but he was just familiar with Ofelia.

Then he did the same thing when he got to the White House. That was one of the harder parts of this job, because I felt like I could not leave, because that was my job, to be available.

**Perry:** Aside from your picking up a sense, so that if someone would call or stop by, you'd say you didn't think this was a good time or come back tomorrow, did he ever come to you and say, So-and-So has been coming an awful lot, can you cut back on that? Or I don't need to see So-and-So for a week or so.

**Kavanaugh:** Right.

**Perry:** Number one, did the President ever say that to you. Second, did Andy Card ever have any issues about who was getting in, and not so much that there was a jealousy factor.

**Kavanaugh:** Right, because he's not that way.

**Perry:** Andy always says, "Do you need to get in?" or "Do you have to get in?" or "Do you want to get in, but you don't need to get in?" Was there any conversation like that, as time shook out?

**Kavanaugh:** With the President, not really. He would probably have that conversation with Secretary Card before he would have that with one of us. For the most part, Secretary Card did a fabulous job of keeping us in the know and helping us feel like we were part of a team. He would call at times and say if So-and-So comes by, I need to know, or don't let him come in, that kind of thing, because he's going to ask about this. I usually knew. Certain staffers definitely had access and they might be coming in every day and asking too many questions, but they were who they were and he wasn't going to ever stop them. He wouldn't have said anything. If they continued to harp on the same subject or something, he might say, "Andy," but at the same time—

**Tenpas:** Did you ever have to knock on the door to stop meetings, so he could stay on schedule?

**Kavanaugh:** All the time, all the time. And that was not fun to do, because I always got this evil-eye look.

**Perry:** From him or the person he was talking to?

**Kavanaugh:** From him, from him, because he hates to be interrupted, but at the same time, he wanted to be on time.

**Tenpas:** Stay on schedule.

**Kavanaugh:** It was part of the job; I just did that. There were times, though, that he was okay with it running late, because it was a more important thing, or something that was more serious. For the most part, yes, I did that a lot, that was much of our job.

**Tenpas:** To keep him on schedule.

**Kavanaugh:** We would take turns: "You go in." He did not like to be late and people appreciated that, because it messes up everything. I know that the press appreciated it, because they'd be expecting to go on camera at a certain time or someone expected to do a briefing. It's a respect thing for him. He feels as if we should be there on time, that it shows that he respects them.

**Perry:** Back to travel, then. You typically did not travel.

**Kavanaugh:** No, I did not travel. There were a couple of times I did go. But for the most part, no, I didn't, and I was fine with that. It was the same with the campaign. I did go to Michigan for two weeks or something, and do phone calls, which was great. It was a good chance to see how the guys in the field were working, and that was the point of going, but I was pretty content being at my desk.

**Tenpas:** Did you arrange phone calls for him, like with members of Congress?

**Kavanaugh:** Yes.

**Tenpas:** He would say to get So-and-So on the phone and you would.

**Kavanaugh:** Yes, that was a large part of my job. Sometimes he'd call people on his own, but not often, mostly because people weren't going to be the person answering the phone either, and there would be four people before you got to the person, so it was easier for me to be that person. Yes.

**Tenpas:** Would he work straight through or did he take breaks? Were you able to take breaks to have lunch?

**Kavanaugh:** Many times he would leave at a certain time, like eleven thirty, twelve, then he would work out quickly and then have lunch. It would become like an hour and a half total to work out, shower, eat lunch, and he would periodically call that whole hour and a half. Sometimes he'd be on the treadmill and ask, "Hey, get So-and-So on the phone." No, it wasn't very predictable.

**Perry:** Did you eat lunch at your desk?

**Kavanaugh:** I ate lunch at my desk most days. There were times, if I had something, that I would leave, but I tried not to, because I felt like that was part of it. Then, at times, he would either work out in the morning or the afternoon; he'd leave at five, work out, and then call, but he never stopped calling. He was always calling, and he would call until he got his briefing book from the staff secretary's office. They'd deliver it and then he'd call some more while looking through the briefing book. I always felt—I could tell there were different days that he just kept calling, so I'd sit there and I'd wait for a 20-minute span or something, in which he didn't call, or I'd tell him, at eight thirty, "Okay, I'm leaving," so he would know.

His dad used the White House operators a lot, but he didn't. He did on the weekends, when we were gone. We'd get the phone log, and could tell who he'd called, but for the most part, he would have me find people. He'd call me on the weekends and say something like, "So, can you find this guy that I went to college with? I think he lives—" I'd say okay. And then I'd piece it together and find somebody. It was before you could find a lot of access, so yes, my phone rang a lot on the weekends too, at home.



My roommates might answer. He would call in the morning, at like seven in the morning, on our landline. They'd say, "Yes, sir!" [*laughter*] because they all worked for different people in the administration.

**Perry:** He didn't expect you to be in the office on the weekend?

**Kavanaugh:** On Saturdays, if he was going to be there, we did go in. Toward the end, we started switching off, but yes, he would still show up at six thirty, and then he'd stay until eleven thirty, twelve. It depended on what was going on; sometimes it was quiet. He was doing his briefings. He did his briefings in the residence on Sundays, or by phone, because the briefers needed a break too. The only thing about that is that there's not really a break in what they're briefing about.

**Perry:** The Miller Center is working on this project right now about Presidential first years, and we're starting to gather information about all the people who have worked in Presidential first years. I thought we would make the dividing line 9/11, because we know that upends everything and everything changes.

From Inauguration Day to 9/11, if you were to write out a little memo that would say, here are the things that I learned in those first eight or nine months of the first year of President Bush 43's administration, what to do, what not to do, and pass that on to the person who comes on board for 2017, what would they be? What kinds of lessons do you feel like you learned, or things you wish you had done or hadn't done, or maybe that someone had told you, coming into that position?

**Kavanaugh:** I was still learning everything, like who does what in different places, but there was so much going on. The staff was familiar, because I knew most of them from Texas. He was familiar, because I had been around him enough, so it was just a different place.

I never forgot that I was at the White House, because it's the White House, but I also had to somewhat forget that I was in the White House, because it's a job and I had to do my job and not be in awe of everything I saw. [*laughter*] So for the most part, it was getting my feet wet and feeling comfortable with the different systems. I would say take time and don't beat yourself up. It gets easier and you get more familiar with everything.

**Tenpas:** I know that with the recount it kind of eliminated the prospect for that, but if there had been time, would there have been anything that would have been helpful for you to know or to be able to do before you entered?

**Kavanaugh:** It would have been helpful to see President Clinton's staff, maybe chat with them. It would have been helpful to walk around the grounds and know where things are, before Day One.

**Tenpas:** Apart from that, it's just learning on the job?

**Kavanaugh:** Yes. You don't know what you don't know yet, and then it's all new. But it didn't change that much. Getting people in the building, that part is complicated. And the White House

operators, because I knew they had been used so much in the past, we spent a lot of time trying to help them get the numbers that we had.

The Rolodex that we were working from was a paper Rolodex, which makes it very hard, for a database, so we did spend some time trying to figure out the best database. We had one that was not necessarily the best way to share information, and replicate, or the way that you would want to try to go back later and figure out. We had this one that somebody in the Governor's office had set up, but it had a notes section. There were all these weird keywords in the notes section, which was a way that to search and find the person, because that was my biggest struggle, trying to find people. Or I would know that I talked to somebody two years ago or something, and try to find who that person was who could then help me piece together whatever weird thing I was trying to piece together.

The phone part of it, and then being able to access that when not in the office was a very big component that was challenging at the beginning, but I don't think it would be at this point. It changed so much.

**Perry:** You were between technologies at that point, in 2001.

**Kavanaugh:** Yes, exactly.

**Perry:** Two things I'm thinking about. One is in the briefing book, the standard orientation that Andy Card would give to people, and the last point I remember was to take time for yourself if you have family; the President cares about that. How realistic is that, though, when you're coming in and getting into the office by six thirty, and you had said that you often didn't leave until eight-ish, when you felt like that would be the end of the day, because he was an early-to-bed person.

**Kavanaugh:** Right.

**Perry:** That he would then not be calling, typically. Really, were you there more than twelve hours a day?

**Kavanaugh:** Yes.

**Perry:** And on part of the weekend.

**Kavanaugh:** Yes. It's not super realistic, but it also wasn't unreasonable. If you had a commitment— There was a women's Bible study that met on Tuesday mornings at seven o'clock, a group of ladies who were all there. I told him about it, and he said, "Yes, go."

**Perry:** These were women who worked at the White House?

**Kavanaugh:** In the White House. We had had one on the campaign, and so melded from that. He was a hundred percent, show up at seven thirty, okay. We met at six forty-five, so I had that 45 minutes and he never asked. Same with if he knew that I had dinner plans or whatever. I just had to tell him and be honest. I wouldn't have wanted to do it every day, to take advantage of his good will, but at the same time, he understood. And there were times that he would call and he'd

have called four times or whatever, so you would sit there, waiting for him to call, and then he would call and he'd say, "What are you still doing there?" I'd say, "Well, you keep calling me." Then he'd say, "Go home, go home."

And he did that with weekends. He'd tell people, especially senior staff, "Go with your family. Don't worry about this. Don't come in today; we'll work on that later." He really tried. It's just that some of the stuff doesn't stop, so you can't just leave. You wanted to be more—

**Tenpas:** What about Christmas or major holidays that you want to be with your family?

**Kavanaugh:** Many times, I rode the plane home with him, Air Force One, and then either would have somebody, my parents, pick me up in Austin, or Crawford, and drive me home for Thanksgiving, and then Christmas. I went home with the plane sometimes, maybe came back with it. There were different things. He stayed here through Christmas. Thanksgiving, he would go to Crawford.

You were never expected to be here. You didn't leave early or anything [*laughter*], but it was your job, so everybody has a job and is not allowed to take much vacation.

**Perry:** Your answer to my question about time away, and the Bible study, raises an interesting question about the President's strong religious beliefs and faith. Did he ever talk to you about that? Or particularly, when you said you wanted to have this Bible study, did that prompt a conversation about faith?

**Kavanaugh:** In the Governor's office at some point, I don't know how he knew, but it was clear that he knew. I saw him at church one time. For some reason, we'd missed the Episcopal service, and went to the Methodist service, and went to the balcony. Sure enough, two seconds later, he came in and sat behind me. It was when I was an intern. He said, "Are you Methodist?"

I said, "No, I'm Episcopalian." So at some point, he knew that I was a person of faith, and that was a connecting point when we were in the Governor's office, and part of the reason that it was a good fit. But no, we didn't have conversations. At times, when it was stressful, there were ways to give him space.

**Perry:** I think I recall reading that he was reading scripture in the mornings. Did he typically do that in the Oval?

**Kavanaugh:** He, at times, had his Bible, but then I think he did it most of the time upstairs. Sometimes he would go to his little private study off to the side, and he might have done more stuff there. When he was in his office, unless he was asking for me, because sometimes I just left him alone.

**Perry:** This is, I think, the first time I've had a chance to ask this question, over some eighty interviews. I think two times during the Bush 43 administration, I had gone, for various reasons, on those West Wing tours, where you go when the President is away. You go in the evening and you peek into the Oval Office. It was a thrill for me, a political scientist studying the Presidency, just to be in the West Wing and look into the Oval Office. One thing that struck me was that the desk was completely clear.

**Kavanaugh:** Oh, yes.

**Perry:** So I had a question about that, because some Presidents— You see Kennedy's desk, you see FDR's [Franklin Delano Roosevelt], and then they redo those desks at the Presidential library, and they're just filled with Presidential tchotchkes, with memorabilia, and for FDR, there are little miniatures of Fala, his dog, and there are lots of family photographs. You get the sense that that's how they kept their desks. I'm sure the paperwork was neat, the blotter was clear, but Kennedy famously had the coconut that had been used to save him in the South Pacific during World War II, on which he wrote the SOS [international distress code] message that ended up being carried by natives, to the Australian coast watcher, and scrimshaw.

Did this President, Bush 43, have a rule about how he wanted to keep his desk, and did he keep it that way in the Governor's office? Indeed, was it always cleared except for the things that you would bring him? You said you would bring folders or correspondence for him.

**Kavanaugh:** In the Governor's office, he had stuff on it. Yes.

**Perry:** Souvenirs and photos?

**Kavanaugh:** No. He would leave his papers out and you would stack them in certain places. In the Oval, since there were tours and since there were things going on, we picked up anything that was left on the desk every day.

**Perry:** I do remember thinking to myself, *Of course you don't want to leave out papers of state, top-secret papers.*

**Kavanaugh:** Sure, yes. We would go through what was on his desk and if there were things that were clearly trash, we would trash it. Or not trash them, because you couldn't—

**Perry:** You have to save everything for Presidential records.

**Kavanaugh:** You kept everything, yes.

**Perry:** But get them off the desk.

**Kavanaugh:** I could go through, and then some of the stuff he would leave for me and then I would go collect it and piece through it: This is for me; this is for you; this is for So-and-So; we'll pass this back to staff sec. With the other stuff, I would decide. We sent the daily briefing back down to the Sit Room, and then some of the stuff I would pick up and put in the safe every night, and then put it all back on the desk for him the next morning.

**Perry:** But while he was there working during the day, he just had the things he was working on for that moment, a briefing book or a file. He didn't keep a lot on the desk? I find that interesting.

**Tenpas:** Did you need any security clearances or anything?

**Kavanaugh:** Yes. We went to an FBI briefing and all that before. I remember my neighbors in Abilene and friends from college were all interviewed by the FBI for different things.

**Perry:** I'm thinking now, again prior to 9/11, he took a vacation, to go back to the ranch at Crawford, in that August of 2001. This was also the time he gave his speech. I think it was the first major televised speech about stem cell policy.

**Kavanaugh:** Stem cell, yes.

**Perry:** In reading about that, we come across people who say—usually, it's high, senior levels who were talking to him about it and what he was going to do, and the fact that he was focusing on that. He clearly wanted to make that one of his first decisions and one of his first speeches, but he was asking many people about their positions on stem cells, stem cell research and the ethics of it and the science of it. Were you aware that all that was going on, and were there lots of people in and out of the Oval about that topic?

**Kavanaugh:** Yes, there were lots of people, and he would ask many people. He would ask random people, "What do you think about this?" But then he had a very robust, I would say, back-and-forth with different people. He listened to a lot, and that was a long process. It wasn't as if it happened overnight. Experts for one side would say this, and then other people were saying that.

**Perry:** Did he ever ask your opinion?

**Kavanaugh:** He did not on that, no.

**Perry:** But on others?

**Kavanaugh:** He would ask us different things. But not on that. It was clearly something he gave a lot of thought to, though.

**Perry:** Then, what was that time like for you when he was on that, what I guess was the first extended time away that he had had, for 2001?

**Kavanaugh:** Days that he was not in the office, I would come in at seven forty-five or eight. It depended on the time zone too. If he was somewhere like Crawford.

**Perry:** It would be Central time.

**Kavanaugh:** Central, so he probably would not call before six forty-five. I could feel pretty safe about seven forty-five. And then, he was an early riser, so he called. It was quiet, obviously, not a whole lot going on. I could bring some people down, could do early tours, things like that, but it was my time to catch up on paperwork, so it wasn't as if it was my time to go on a vacation or something. *[laughter]*

**Tenpas:** Shopping.

**Kavanaugh:** I might have lunch in the Mess.

**Perry:** When I asked about the paperwork process on the desk, you brought up the staff secretary, and that position would become very important in your life.

**Kavanaugh:** Yes.

**Perry:** But prior thereto, in terms of the person who was in it, it started with Harriet Miers, right?

**Kavanaugh:** Harriet, sure.

**Perry:** Tell us a little bit about how that process ran in the Bush White House, like how you worked with her, I presume, and coordinated.

**Kavanaugh:** I worked very closely with the staff secretary, but the staff secretary in our White House was supposed to see every piece of paper that he saw, so they got copies of everything. If the Sit Room did something that went directly to him, then they got a copy of it beforehand. Speeches went through several drafts and iterations to get to the point where he saw it, and the staff secretary had to get the blessing on that. Obviously, the other advisors were included. It was just a staffing process: Did we get comments from Karl? Did we get comments from Karen? Did we get comments from Andy, or whoever the policy expert was on it? But they also reviewed letters and mundane stuff.

**Perry:** That is the staff secretary?

**Kavanaugh:** Gift thank yous and proclamations went down through there.

**Perry:** So everything that went out and everything that came in at some point had to loop through?

**Kavanaugh:** They were in charge of record keeping. We would bring it all down to the staff sec at night, all the papers, and they would then log it with the Records Office. They were in charge of that part of it, but yes, he would say: “Where’s my speech? Where’s the speech?” I’d call down to the staff secretary and say, “Where’s the speech? Where’s the speech?” “We’re getting it,” they’d say.

**Perry:** How much in advance did he want to see speeches, before they would go to—

**Kavanaugh:** It depended on what the content was and whether it was a big speech or a routine thing, but he wanted to see them. If he had an event, he wanted to see it the day before. If it was an event that was a big deal, he wanted to see it several days before, so it all depended.

**Perry:** And did you see, either because you would look in at his desk—Once the speech came in and you knew it was in there, did he make lots and lots of changes and revisions?

**Kavanaugh:** Yes, but it depended on the speechwriter. There were definitely some that got his voice right away and some that he would say, “I wouldn’t say that,” or different things. Sometimes, he would X out certain things and say, “Why would I say that? I’ll just say this,” so yes, he wrote all over, different things, and he kept notes over different conversations.

He was very involved in the process. I would sometimes send him a draft of a speech at the residence—as I said, he would sometimes work out and then have lunch, and he’d get the draft over in the residence, like it would be waiting for him or something. And then he would call while eating lunch and say, “Get [Michael] Gerson on the phone,” and then he would go through his edits with him then and they could do the next version of it, get it back to him that afternoon, things like that.

**Perry:** It sounds like a well-oiled machine, even in those first nine months.

**Kavanaugh:** I do think, partly because of so many people working in his dad’s administration, him having some access to that, it was much better. It would have been, I think, very difficult on somebody who had not had that available to them, especially after the recount, to get the turnaround quickly. It worked pretty well and then the key players all wanted it to work, too, so they worked well together and were pretty respectful of the process and didn’t try to go around it. Every once in a while, someone would come in with a folder, and I’d think, *They can’t bring that in.*

**Perry:** I’m sorry, what did you say?

**Kavanaugh:** They would bring in something they wanted to show him and I’d have to say, “Did you run it through staff sec?” That was, I feel like, the hardest part. Almost harder than turning somebody down from going in was, at times, making sure they weren’t showing him something they weren’t supposed to be showing him. It wasn’t often, but sometimes they were trying to get something approved for a press statement or whatever, and that needed to be routed through the right channels first.

**Tenpas:** Everything is supposed to go through the staff secretary.

**Perry:** So he shouldn’t have seen any paper until it had—

**Kavanaugh:** He could see movie selections or different things, what the campaign buttons say, which do you think? That kind of thing was fine, but not other things.

**Perry:** It does sound very disciplined. That’s the impression, certainly, that we all get from reading about it, it sounds very disciplined. That’s very helpful too, what you just said about the team that he had worked with in Austin, the combination of that and the people from his dad’s administration, including people like Andy Card, in such important positions. That’s very helpful for this first-year project, to think in those terms.

**Kavanaugh:** Everybody has to buy into it, but then Andy was an excellent Chief of Staff, because he allowed everybody to have a chance. He did not block access. He was willing to share in everything, so he was very upfront. He would tell people, and that was part of the reason things worked very well for a long time too, because he was good with us too. He gave us a lot of information, because it’s hard to do your job if you don’t know why you’re doing certain things, and he was good about telling us ahead of time, certain things, and trusted us to not want to know too much, or different things.

**Perry:** Right, right. Press? You mentioned that somebody might want to run in a document that they wanted to use for a press statement, but did you have any dealings with the press?

**Kavanaugh:** No.

**Perry:** Did they have any access at all to your office outside the Oval?

**Kavanaugh:** Photographers, at times, would be in there, who were doing “a day in the life” or something like that. We had a few random interviews that they did for after 9/11, “day in the life” things, but not for the most part. That was not our job, to invite the press. We wanted to stay away from the press at all times.

**Perry:** Right, but if they did have these things scheduled, then they would come through your office?

**Kavanaugh:** We knew the photographers pretty well, and they were all good guys—not to say that the reporters aren’t—but they know the drill, they know what they’re doing. They’re not trying to snoop and get in your business or listen in, so they were pretty helpful. Some of them would sit just outside and we’d call them in real quick and say, “Hey, he’s going to meet with So-and-So.” The reporters had a sort of handler with them at times, but unless they were going directly in for a reason, they didn’t sit right out there with us, because there’s too much to see. And then he also left his door open so often that it was not a comfortable situation.

**Tenpas:** You talked about how he had a schedule, so you knew what was coming each part of the day. Would you receive that from the Scheduling Office?

**Kavanaugh:** We got that from the Scheduling Office as part of the daily briefing. We would get different drafts of it throughout the day. All their major events were more set, and had been, again, through a process, to get on the schedule. But if I looked at the schedule and thought, *I know he’s going to need time tomorrow to look over his remarks and do whatever*, I could call down and say, “Okay, can we build in 15 minutes before this, and shift this around?” I worked *really* closely with Melissa Bennett, who was Andy Card’s assistant for the beginning of the administration and then became the scheduler. We were good friends.

She just got it, I think partly because she had been Secretary Card’s assistant, and she’d worked for Rob Portman. She understood that if we could give them 15 minutes here and push back on the event part here or something, that was going to be worth it in the long run, instead of having somebody who felt stressed out because they didn’t get the time or something. That was hugely helpful, because I feel like on the campaign at times, the campaign is such a different machine in that it’s tiring and exhausting. It’s hard the first time. The second time it was easier, in part because you have access to a lot more transportation. [*laughter*] I still think that first time, it’s grueling. That was the biggest issue, not having any real downtime for him, because everybody wanted something. You know, “If you’re going to be there, can you do this quick stop-in and say hello to these people?”

There was one woman who had worked in the Scheduling Office, and she really got it and got him, and got how upset he would be. Then there would be people, though, who were newer and hadn’t seen him, or he hadn’t gotten upset.



**Perry:** So Scheduling and you, obviously too, have to have a real sense of the person's likes and dislikes and rhythms, and how they want to have their day, and their energy level.

**Kavanaugh:** Yes. He was pretty consistent with a lot of things, but then we'd also at times be wrong. Sometimes I'd read him wrong and think, *He needs a little time*, and then he'd react with, "I don't need time!" Okay. But I would rather err on the side of getting in trouble a little bit for that than overbooking.

**Perry:** Right.

**Tenpas:** That's probably another good example though, of how, having worked for him before, in the Governor's office and in the campaign, you had a sense of what his rhythms were.

**Kavanaugh:** Definitely.

**Perry:** Back to the press. I've only met the President once, and it was in 2007. He had come to the University of Louisville, where I was a fellow that year, and it was for a Mitch [Addison Mitchell] McConnell event. McConnell was running for reelection in '08, so the President came to do a fundraiser. Senator McConnell had founded a study center for students; his archives and papers were there. As part of that center, we all—there were forty students and about five faculty—we spent, in a room not much bigger than this, in a hotel in downtown Louisville, an hour and 15 minutes with him, while he gave an overview of what he had done as President, and then took questions from the students.

I was so impressed with him and his personality and the fact that he was elegant and eloquent and witty and fluid. And the fact that—They had said he'd take a photo at the end, and I thought, *Oh, how nice of him, all forty-five of us will stand around him*. But no, he took a photo, a grip-and-grin, with every individual. And he would often remember the question that that student had asked, so when they would approach him, he'd say, "Oh, I really liked your question on baseball," or whatever. He wasn't ever going to run for reelection again. This was 2007, he didn't need to do any of that. Obviously, part of it was a favor to Senator McConnell, but my point in relating that is that that is not the impression that I know many people would have of him from television. If they only saw him on television, they wouldn't have that sense of his personality and his intellect and his fluidity.

My question to you, and I have to say, I've asked a number of people this, is what was it about television? First of all, did you have that same sense, that maybe he wasn't as fluid on television as you knew him to be, I presume, and even more so, since you knew him in much closer circumstances and over a longer period of time? Did you notice that difference and was there something about television that either changed him or he changed in front of television? Or vice versa, was there something about that camera there that made a difference in how he was perceived?

**Kavanaugh:** Yes, he's different in person than he is on TV, but part of that was unavoidable. You have to be pretty disciplined on TV and not accidentally say something that could be totally harmless, but perceived the wrong way. That was the biggest issue. It wasn't that he was being filmed. It was more about being aware of what he was supposed to say, and keeping on track

with that and not making a mistake and stepping into something that he don't want to step into. That makes anybody not as liberated.

**Perry:** They can't be themselves.

**Kavanaugh:** They can, but they can't, you know?

**Perry:** Right, right. Because he seemed so relaxed, and therefore different, in person, and in this rather small, intimate setting.

**Kavanaugh:** It's unfortunate.

**Perry:** But it also helped me understand how successful he had been in politics.

**Kavanaugh:** He really, and Mrs. Bush as well, they are *so* gracious. They go out of their way to do the right thing, and the above-and-beyond thing. That's just the way he is. He sets the tone too, so people in his administration wanted to do the same. I feel like he did that with the transition. He went out of his way to make sure the transition from them to President [Barack H.] Obama was as seamless as could be. He did that time after time with friends. He had to have been tired, or want the night off, but he would find out somebody was in town and say, "Hey, let's have dinner." He did that over and over again, so he truly is a nice guy. He's very funny too. I mean *very* funny.

**Perry:** That's what I noticed as well, but it's in a self-deprecating way.

**Kavanaugh:** Yes. I worked for his brother Marvin [Bush], out of his office. He was one of the three-person board for the library, so I got to know Marvin pretty well, and I got to know Marvin pretty well at the White House. They're very similar, it's a Bush family trait.

**Perry:** It is a family trait, it seems, and people always talk about Bush 41 in those terms.

**Kavanaugh:** His dad is literally—When we got married, his dad sent us an e-mail that could not be nicer. It's ridiculous for him to even take the time. And then he is so kind, and not that President Bush, George W. Bush, is not as kind, because he is, but he's different. He has a little edge to him that makes him really fun, so they're a little bit different on that front.

**Perry:** It seems like Bush 41 is a little softer in his personality. Did you see him on visits, when he would come to the White House? How often was that? Did he come to the Oval?

**Kavanaugh:** He would come semifrequently. Many times he didn't come over, but he would be in the residence. But when he was there, he did usually take the CIA briefing with President George W. Bush, and so he would come over. Sometimes he would walk around to say hi to people, good for the morale. He definitely was not a presence there all the time. I think he purposely did not want to overstep, but President George W. Bush would say, "Dad, come on. Come take the briefing, let's do it." And that was a neat thing that they could do together.

**Perry:** Given that his dad had directed the CIA, it would make sense to have him be involved in the briefing. Listen, Ashley, we owe you a break.

**Kavanaugh:** Okay, I can do it.

**Perry:** All right, thank you. This is just wonderful.

[BREAK]

**Perry:** We're back on after a little break. Anything else then, to report to us before 9/11? Any event or process or observation that you might have?

**Kavanaugh:** I don't think so.

**Perry:** Katie, do you have any other questions along those lines?

**Tenpas:** I don't.

**Perry:** Okay. Well, we'll pick up then, with 9/11. The President had gone off to Florida, to give a talk in Sarasota, leading up to No Child Left Behind and the importance of reading.

**Kavanaugh:** Right.

**Perry:** We presume, given that you were left behind, as would be typical during the travel time, that you were having what would have been a routine day for you, with the President on the road, on the morning of 9/11/2001.

**Kavanaugh:** Pretty much. We were in our office, and Logan was there that day; he had not traveled. It was Blake Gottesman, who was Secretary Card's aide, but he had also been on the campaign and had dated Jenna [Bush Hager] in high school, so they knew each other. Logan, I think, had a sinus infection and couldn't fly, so he was home. We had a TV in the outer office that we would turn on at times, most of the time just when he was gone. Sometimes when they were in a meeting, we would turn on either the news or the stock market, things like that. The receptionist for the West Wing came in and said, "Did you all see that?" and we turned on the TV. I remember seeing the first tower being hit, and we thought, *Hmm, that is odd*. And then when the second—

**Perry:** Did you see it live, the second plane hit?

**Kavanaugh:** Yes, and when that happened, I remember the Vice President came in. His office is very nearby. I heard a bump in the Oval Office, and no one goes in the Oval when he's not there. We would go in every once in a while and pick up papers, but we didn't go in unless we had a true purpose, and didn't let other people go in. They had to check in with us, and it was a privilege to go in. I heard a bump and thought, *What is that?*

I looked and saw the Vice President with the Secret Service agents. To me, it looked like they were almost lifting him, like underneath his arms and scooting him along, and he was going to

the PEOC [Presidential Emergency Operations Center], I guess, which was still foreign to me. I assumed there was something, but I wasn't sure what was going on, except that they definitely were moving fast and it was not a routine thing. That was when it occurred to me that this was not an accident, that this could be serious. Then our phones started to ring more, with different people. For the life of me, I cannot remember who called. I remember somebody from New York. It was either the Governor or it might have been the mayor. I can't remember.

**Perry:** You said it might have been George Pataki, the Governor?

**Kavanaugh:** It might have been the mayor.

**Perry:** Rudy Giuliani.

**Kavanaugh:** Someone was looking for the President. I remember trying to get them through and not being able to do that.

**Perry:** At this point, you hadn't heard from anyone traveling with the President in Florida?

**Kavanaugh:** No. Then, it was, I think Scott Sforza, who helped with the setup for speeches and tapings and different things. He did a lot of the background, making sure it was the right look and helped with the tapings. He came through and said something about a plane. I swear he said there was a plane overhead or something. He said, "We need to get out of here," and we agreed.

Then at that point, somebody came through, maybe one of the uniformed guards. It was a little chaotic. It wasn't chaotic because it was quiet, but it was definitely not normal. We didn't have anybody senior there to tell us, "This is where you need to go and what you need to do," but that person wanted us to go to the Mess downstairs. We transferred our phones. We were concerned about leaving our phones, because you weren't supposed to do that, so we transferred our phones. We decided to transfer them to the Sit Room, because there would be people in the Sit Room.

**Perry:** Just for people who don't know the lay of the land, that's right near the Mess.

**Kavanaugh:** Yes, right near the Mess, and there's always somebody there. We transferred into the Sit Room, went down to the Mess, and they had the TV on in the Mess. At that point, I think the Pentagon had been hit, so they had the pictures of that on it.

**Perry:** What were people saying? These were all staffers?

**Kavanaugh:** Again, people were asking, "What's going on?" This was scary, but I wasn't even thinking that. I was just—

**Perry:** In shock, as everyone was.

**Kavanaugh:** A little bit in shock, yes. Then somebody came in and said, "You need to evacuate the building."

**Perry:** Did they say why?

**Kavanaugh:** No, but we figured it, knew that it was—

**Perry:** They didn't say, "We think a plane is headed for the White House"?

**Kavanaugh:** No, no, definitely not, but we assumed we could maybe be a target.

**Perry:** Something bad was going to happen.

**Kavanaugh:** I do remember a lot of going back and forth: should we leave, should we not leave, because of the phone thing and whether that was going to be the right thing to do, but then deciding—

**Perry:** And no BlackBerrys at this time?

**Kavanaugh:** I don't think so. It was just my cell phone. I'm pretty sure it was just my cell phone. So we ended up leaving, because people said we needed to. I remember vividly seeing Carl Truscott. He was normally the President's head Secret Service detail chief. He was home for that day, he wasn't traveling for some reason. I remember him saying, "You need to run. You need to take your shoes off." Because I had high heels on that day, of course. I never wore high heels and I had worn high heels. So I took them off and we ran out the gates. Then they were telling people not to stay together, not to stay in clumps, to take your badge off, because they weren't sure if there could be somebody outside the gates waiting for everybody to exit or what, and then to keep going.

**Perry:** One thing I wanted to clear up for the record is that some of the accounts say that you went across Pennsylvania Avenue, to Lafayette Square, and met up with or were evacuating with some colleagues. Did you go and stop in Lafayette Square and meet up with people or did you avoid Lafayette Square and head to H Street?

**Kavanaugh:** Everybody was running together. I happened to see my now-husband, who I had had my first date with the night before.

**Perry:** Your first date was September 10, 2001.

**Kavanaugh:** September 10, 2001.

**Perry:** And at that point he was—

**Kavanaugh:** He was in the [White House] Counsel's office at that point.

**Perry:** That's right, he was not yet staff secretary.

**Kavanaugh:** We saw each other as we were being evacuated. Then my brother worked in the EEOB, so I was wondering a little bit where he was and what was going on with that. I remember going to about H Street.

**Perry:** So you don't remember being—or did not seem to go to Lafayette Park?

**Kavanaugh:** No. I read something and that was not what happened.

**Perry:** Right. There are a couple of accounts, and it may even be right now in the timeline, because they're taken from the accounts that are printed. We can always change that.

**Kavanaugh:** I went to, I think, H Street. I somehow ran into Linda Gambatesa; I can't remember, but we ended up going to the GM [General Motors] office.

**Perry:** GM or Chrysler?

**Kavanaugh:** It was where a good friend of hers, Debbie Dingell, was.

**Perry:** The daughter of the Congressman?

**Kavanaugh:** The wife. They let us in and I remember I called the Sit Room. I got the phone transferred back, somehow, to a line there, and then the phones were so messed up. Everything was out of whack, so I think we ended up transferring them back. Then most of the calls at that point were going directly from the White House Military [Office], because it was the secure lines, so people weren't calling on the regular lines. Anyway, that was where I was. Bob Marsh was there too. He was in Congressional Affairs at one point in the White House. I don't think he was at that point, though; he was still at GM. He was somebody who knew Andy Card and Linda well.

We were there and watched one of the towers fall, and that was when things were so awful. Then we ended up going to the Chrysler building, where Tim McBride was. I'm not sure how that happened or how we ended up knowing to go there, but we did. Then they had a little one-floor—It seemed to be taken over by staffers. I remember Ken Mehlman and Logan was there, Brad Blakeman, and I can't remember who else, and they had computers. They told us to look up things. Some people were looking up other kinds of events, tragic events, different things, and how Presidents had dealt with them. Some were looking up speeches.

**Perry:** Internet searches.

**Kavanaugh:** Searches for the schedule and how they had handled things. I think Mehlman orchestrated that somehow, and so people were doing that. They came together, putting together a schedule of how to proceed, how others had proceeded before, to see if that would be relevant. People were trying to find something, a way to help. It was a good idea, but of course it was all thrown out the window.

**Perry:** Do you know if that got passed along?

**Kavanaugh:** I don't think so. I'm sure Mehlman probably passed it on to Karl and then maybe some of it fit in, but we just were figuring out. We watched his statement. I want to say I was still at the GM building when we watched the statement from Omaha maybe?

**Perry:** Barksdale?

**Kavanaugh:** Yes, where he was in the—

**Perry:** In Omaha, and then in the bunker.

**Kavanaugh:** In the bunker. We were there for a while. Then at five, they had senior staff go back to the White House, and we were supposed to go back with them. I remember walking across Pennsylvania Avenue with uniformed guards and guns and gas masks and stuff, and it was so quiet; there was nothing around. But then getting in there about five, five thirty, and then we were waiting for him, the President, to arrive. They started setting up the Oval Office for an address. Any time they had an address in the Oval, you were there, watching over people, cameras and the setup part of it, and then answering questions.

The President arrived on the lawn, in the helicopter, and I remember watching him walk across. There were some people who were going to meet him and then didn't end up meeting him, and he walked, by himself, to the Oval. He got in and said something like, "All right, let's go," and then the different people came in—Karl, Karen, Andy, Al [Alberto] Gonzales, maybe Josh, maybe Ari Fleischer—and then they went back and started—because they'd been working on the speech, looking at the speech. They went to his back dining room, though, I think, to do that.

**Perry:** So when he came in and said, "Let's go," he meant let's get to the speech, let's get through it.

**Kavanaugh:** Let's get the people in here so they can stop and talk. Then, if I remember correctly, once he was through with that part of it—the speech was going to be maybe eight o'clock, eight thirty, I can't remember—he went back to the residence and had a little bit of dinner and changed. We talked to him at some point, about the speech and where it was, that kind of thing. He was all business, understandably.

**Perry:** How did he look to you, close up?

**Kavanaugh:** He looked good, but I would say "determined" is probably the best word. He looked like he had his game face on. He was serious, understandably, again, but he was together completely, and focused. Then he gave the address, went back to the residence, and they cleared out all the camera equipment, all that stuff. We watched the address. We could hear him, though, because the way the cords were, they had to leave the door slightly ajar. We could see him and we could hear him, but we couldn't turn the sound on.

**Perry:** The sound on the television.

**Kavanaugh:** So we watched him and listened from the outer. And then he went home. Then Secretary Card came down to our office and talked to us for a while. More than anything, he was asking what we'd done, what had happened. We all talked about our different stories, shared those, and then we were asking what time do we need to be here in the morning, that kind of thing, very logistics-type things. He told us not to come super early, the same time as normal, get some sleep, whatever.

I went home that night, because I lived, at the time, on Ordway Street, with several girlfriends, in a house that we had rented from some people who were with the World Bank and were living away for two years. We were in the flight path for the helicopters and things going over for the Vice President's residence. I got home and all night long, I could hear that.

**Perry:** But he had been taken off to Camp David, as it turned out, had he not, the Vice President?

**Kavanaugh:** The VP, yes, but I still think they had things going over the city. Anyway, the next morning we came in early and it was people in and out all day. At one point that morning he called me in and said, “What happened to you?” I said, “Well, not a whole lot, basically.”

It turns out that there wasn’t, at the time, a real set plan for how you were supposed to proceed. While it got better, there’s still not really a plan. Maybe there is now, but it never got set when I was there. We came to the realization that we worked in a place that could be a target and that if it was our time, it was our time. That’s a little fatalistic, but at the same time it was liberating to think of it that way, instead of spending too much time dwelling on it.

The one thing I remember was that I did not want him—because he knew that I was 26, young—to have to worry about me in any way. I wanted to be up to the task, so I looked at it that way. Really, it all was happening so fast that it wasn’t until he would leave the office or we would be there that we would worry. We had so much security there. We had these French doors that were behind my desk and French doors behind Logan’s desk, and there were guards out there. They were the ones with equipment. They had the gas masks and whatever, and I’d think, *I don’t have a gas mask. Should I have a gas mask?*

**Perry:** So these were French doors—

**Kavanaugh:** That look over the Rose Garden.

**Perry:** To the Rose Garden.

**Kavanaugh:** Over the next couple of days everybody was very uneasy, not knowing what the deal was. But he was great.

The memory that stands out the most to me around 9/11 had to do with the call that he had to Mayor Giuliani and Governor Pataki. The press was there covering it, in the Oval, so it was going to be a live call. First of all, I ended up having to be the person connecting the call during the actual press conference. Everything felt off a little, and I was nervous whether it was all going to come together as it was supposed to, since it was going to be on live TV. We got it off, he started talking to them, and then Mrs. Bush stopped in. She’d been at Walter Reed or maybe to the Pentagon, one of those.

**Perry:** That’s what the report says.

**Kavanaugh:** She was going to stop in and see him, but then figured out this was going on, so she sat with us in an empty chair. There were two chairs by the TV, and then our two desks. She sat with us and watched him, because you could hear him through the door, again; you could look in. That was the one where he was talking and then he said he was going to come to New York.

He had said he was going to come to New York, but I just don’t think he truly told everybody he was going to New York on *this* day. So everybody was ready to get started on making sure that



happened correctly. Then they asked him how he was doing or something and he said, “I don’t really think about how I’m doing,” or something; it was super emotional. [*voice cracks*] He said, “I’m a loving guy,” or something, and he was talking about praying for the kids, and his voice cracked. It was tough, but that was the one show of emotion that he had, and so we knew he was—and she was—it was interesting to watch her watch him. Tough.

**Perry:** And her reaction, I’m sure, was—

**Kavanaugh:** She was stoic, but I think that that was what she wanted to be for him.

**Perry:** So it was the very next day or that would have been Wednesday, I guess. Then Friday was the big prayer service at the National Cathedral, and then up to New York. Were you involved in all of the arrangements and the phone calls?

**Kavanaugh:** Many phone calls. He was doing a ton of phone calls with foreign leaders, because everybody wanted to call and say, “I’m sorry. We’ll help.” That happened a lot, but those were all through the Sit Room. As I remember, he was doing a lot of prep on the prayer service speech; he wanted to have that. Then there would eventually be the address to Congress, which was pretty close after that, wasn’t it?

**Tenpas:** Yes.

**Kavanaugh:** There were many different speeches, and then the logistics for everything. For the Secret Service, it was their nightmare, to take him to New York, but he felt like he needed to go and be there.

**Perry:** Were you at the prayer service?

**Kavanaugh:** I did not go to the prayer service.

**Perry:** You had to be fielding all of the phone calls.

**Kavanaugh:** Well, yes. Yes, there was an option to go, but it didn’t feel like it was the right way to do it. I watched that, though, on the TV, and then, of course, when he went to New York.

**Perry:** Did you see all that live, on television?

**Kavanaugh:** Yes, from there. I feel like that one phone call, for whatever reason, was the biggest impact about 9/11, but then, just after he got the little emotional crack, he was right back. That was how he was, and he was steady from then on. That’s how everybody was. It was like he gave everybody permission, for a moment, to admit, “This is tough,” but then at the same time, “We have to do our job.” The days after all run together, because they were all so busy. It was different obviously, but nothing really changed.

**Perry:** Compare and contrast with those eight months up to that point, where you had developed a routine and a process and a normal—suddenly the checkerboard was thrown up into the air and all the pieces were strewn about. Did you talk to Andy, for example? Did the staff secretary, did others involved in that process, Linda, operationalizing the Oval, did any of that change? Were

there any conversations about that or was there just more of everything: more people coming in, more meetings, more phone calls?

**Kavanaugh:** It was more of everything. The good part was that we already had a very good system that worked well, so it wasn't unmanageable. If anything, there were fewer different subjects coming in. It was all one subject, so it was somewhat easier to manage, because there wasn't anything—an event here or there—that wasn't 9/11 related. It was more of a singular focus. He was just there all the time, there was no travel really for—I mean there was some travel, but it wasn't like it had been before.

**Perry:** Did his hours stay the same, in by six thirty?

**Kavanaugh:** They stayed the same, but they—

**Perry:** Stayed longer in the afternoon or evening?

**Kavanaugh:** No, because anything he could do in the Oval, he could do at the residence. People went to the residence instead, so he had an office up there. There were definitely longer hours than they had been, but they weren't necessarily in the Oval.

The CIA, the FBI, they had been present. I definitely remember, in July or early August, times when they came in and Director Tenet, I could tell, was disturbed by overnight chatter. He's kind of a gruff guy, and they would tug back and forth. I could hear a little. I obviously had no idea that anything like *that* was going on. I knew that they didn't know, but that they were concerned that there was more of something going on. Or not even being able to know. Chatter is not coherent in any way.

**Perry:** The so-called dots that couldn't be connected.

**Kavanaugh:** It would be very hard. I felt like afterward, we would get pieces. I didn't try and read the threat report, but I would get pieces. I felt like I got years off my life back when I left and I didn't get the pieces, because I knew that the pieces of the chatter and talk were coming in. I would fill in the details, which were probably not even close to correct. But there was so little information and weird back-and-forth that it was tough to piece together. I don't know, it was almost better not to know.

**Perry:** So you had a wartime President as of 9/11, and then the active war began about a month later, with our invasion of Afghanistan.

**Kavanaugh:** And that was on a Sunday. They told us that we would need to come in on Sunday. They didn't tell us why, but you could infer that something big was happening. He wrote a letter, I remember, to Jenna and Barbara, explaining his decision, and that it was a tough—

**Perry:** Did he dictate that or handwrite it?

**Kavanaugh:** No, he handwrote it, two different ones, one to each of them. Then we were in charge of getting those to them.

**Perry:** Did you know what was in it at the time?

**Kavanaugh:** Oh, yes, I read them, because I read all his correspondence with them, yes, because I would sometimes, every once in a while, catch some sort of error.

**Perry:** Oh, so he would have you read them?

**Kavanaugh:** I could diplomatically say, “Sir,” and then he would write a new one sometimes.

**Perry:** You would diplomatically say, “There’s an error here”?

**Kavanaugh:** Yes. He wanted to know. Anyway, I remember that Sunday, going in for that.

**Perry:** If I remember correctly, was it not the weekend after 9/11, what turned out to be the war Cabinet meeting at Camp David? I remember reading that one of your duties was getting people to and from Camp David, helping to coordinate that. Did you have to do that for that particular meeting?

**Kavanaugh:** I would coordinate with the camp staff, to let them know what time people were arriving. A lot more back-and-forth went into people who had never been there before, what to wear, the general idea of what the weekend would be like, that kind of thing. But that particular weekend, it was more talking to the camp staff and making sure that they knew that Director Tenet planned on arriving at eight fifteen, this person was coming at this time, and that they’d meet in this room and they’d be there a certain time. The timing, how many people to expect for lunch and dinner, that type of thing.

**Perry:** It’s common knowledge, now, that the Vice President and Mrs. [Lynne A.] Cheney were staying there most of the time, and perhaps at his own—Partly at his own request, because of his involvement during the Cold War, in the decapitation strategies: what if the top members of government are lost in a nuclear attack. But was he also coming back during the day and being in his office at the White House?

**Kavanaugh:** He definitely came in for certain things. I remember him being at the Observatory, I think.

**Perry:** Did you see more or less of him coming in and out to see the President?

**Kavanaugh:** For a little while, less for sure.

**Perry:** Anybody from his office stepping up into that—not to be the Vice President, but in his absence, anybody taking his place to come in and out, or to shuttle questions back and forth?

**Kavanaugh:** I don’t remember. I assume Secretary Card was talking to Scooter [Irve Lewis] Libby, who was his Chief of Staff at the time, and keeping him up to date. I’m sure they were having their own briefings.

**Perry:** Once the war in Afghanistan began, then again there were still maybe more meetings or more people, but not a major shift in the processes that had been put in place in 2001 and the post-inauguration period.

**Kavanaugh:** No. We just did more now. We definitely used the secure phone more than we had in the past, although they eventually upgraded the system. The system needed some upgrading at the beginning. And then they did more meetings in the Sit Room, because they needed a secure place.

**Tenpas:** A video maybe?

**Kavanaugh:** And then the videoconferencing. There were many upgrades of technology that happened quickly.

**Perry:** I remember Joe Hagin had a major role in that, particularly because the communications with Air Force One had been so abysmal and spotty. You found, then, that the upgrades were better and were—

**Kavanaugh:** They were definitely better. It was not ideal, partly because it's much easier to pick up a regular phone and call somebody, and the transfer works a lot better than this big old phone.

**Perry:** Cold War era-looking phone?

**Kavanaugh:** Yes.

**Perry:** Interesting.

**Kavanaugh:** He was around a lot, but then he would be in the Sit Room often. Then there were many phone calls overseas to different people, a lot of SecDef [Secretary of Defense], a lot of Secretary [Colin] Powell.

**Perry:** So [Donald H.] Rumsfeld, Powell, Dr. Rice at that point, again presumably coming in and out. Members of Congress, leadership, were coming in and out, or you were being asked to put in calls to them?

**Kavanaugh:** Call them? Not that I remember. At one point, he had breakfast with the four leaders for a little while, which was something he had done in Texas. He had worked with Speaker Pete [James E.] Laney, and then Bob Bullock, who was the Lieutenant Governor. They had regular breakfasts and it was great, because they got to know each other. They worked well together because of that. We had regular breakfasts, and if I had to contact them, I would. D.C. is just different. It wasn't the same; it didn't work that same way.

**Perry:** Anything you could put your finger on, as to why it was different?

**Kavanaugh:** I don't know. Maybe they're not—it seemed to me that you would be in the room—I don't know. I don't want to get into it. *[laughter]*

**Perry:** It's helpful, even as just duly noted, because, again, we think of what experiences are helpful for a President coming to Washington, coming into the White House.

**Kavanaugh:** He definitely thought that it would be harder, for sure—he wasn't naïve—but that he'd had much success working across the aisle in Texas. Part of it was personal diplomacy, being able to sit down with people and have breakfast and get to know each other. That wasn't the same. It just didn't work the same way here. There were some members that he definitely was buddies with.

**Perry:** I'm thinking of one in particular, Ted [Edward M.] Kennedy.

**Kavanaugh:** Yes, of course, with No Child Left Behind.

**Perry:** No Child Left Behind. In fact, the Bush Library, in its documents section online, has a handwritten note from Ted Kennedy featured, thanking the President for having the Senator and his family come to watch the movie *Thirteen Days* within the first couple of weeks of the new Presidency of George W. Bush.

**Kavanaugh:** Right.

**Perry:** That's one that does come to mind. It seemed like that was working.

**Kavanaugh:** Definitely. If we'd had more time, maybe, it would have, although it was a tough start, too. There were a lot of hurt feelings.

**Perry:** More time, that is pre-9/11?

**Kavanaugh:** More time pre-9/11, to focus on other things.

**Perry:** On the domestic side and outreach. Nick Calio, at this point, was the head of legislative affairs, certainly an outgoing, kindly figure.

**Kavanaugh:** Definitely.

**Perry:** Were you involved with him at all, in terms of working through him and his office to do these outreaches?

**Kavanaugh:** Most of those were set up in advance: Hey, we would like for him to call these four people. Usually there was enough lead time that they would have a briefing paper saying, "President Bush, we'd like you to call So-and-So, ask him for his support on this," and then have some other talking points. That came from the staff secretary, with the phone numbers. They wanted him to make the call at some point in the next two days, that kind of thing. That's not to say that there weren't times that he would call from the Hill.

**Perry:** That is, Nick Calio called from the Hill.

**Kavanaugh:** Nick, yes, and he'd say, "We need him to call, right now," this person. I would say, "All right, call Secretary Card first."

**Perry:** You wouldn't put that request immediately to the President?

**Kavanaugh:** Sometimes I would say okay, and then ask if they'd talked to Secretary Card, and take the note down to talk to Andy about it: All right, he's asking this; do you know about it? He'd say yes, and I'd agree. Not that Nick didn't have the ability to do that. But it was a checks and balances system, to make sure that everybody was aware.

**Perry:** I like that. That's a new approach to checks and balances, the Hill versus the White House, in a different way. Katie, any questions or anything you want to add before we break for lunch?

**Tenpas:** I'm good.

**Perry:** Okay, excellent, thank you.

**Kavanaugh:** Great.

[BREAK]

**Perry:** We are back on after our nice lunch here at the Mayflower. We had come to the end of the immediate post-9/11 period.

You had talked, Ashley, about what that was like in terms of the security, when you came back to the White House and you could see the armed guard standing sentry outside the two French doors that went from your office outside the Oval, to the Rose Garden. And we read, of course, that post-9/11, all the feelings were different, that there was always that sense of could this happen again, and always keeping a wary eye. I know the anthrax scare came along not too long after that, especially bad on Capitol Hill. There was also, though, a biological warfare scare at the White House. Were you involved in that? Did you have to evacuate?

**Kavanaugh:** Not that I was aware of. We did have all the mail that used to come through one central location, now was funneled to somewhere else far away.

**Perry:** An offsite location.

**Kavanaugh:** Offsite location.

**Perry:** For screening.

**Kavanaugh:** For screening. That was a little maddening, because we would get it weeks later, instead of a quick turnaround. We had to send the FedExes to different places, so that was a problem, because we didn't get those immediately, because the Secret Service had to go through those.

**Perry:** So it disrupted, then, all your mail flow?

**Kavanaugh:** It disrupted that. That was definitely an issue. If there was something that we were trying to get through urgently, we told people to fax or e-mail. Most people didn't want to, but we said if they wanted him to see it quickly, that was the best way to do it. There were people who sent things to our houses, if they were friends that we knew from a long time.

**Perry:** Ones you could trust?

**Kavanaugh:** Yes.

**Perry:** Any other thoughts about unnerving moments that might have happened? You said that there wasn't a set plan that was put in place on 9/11 for evacuation of the staff. Were there any kinds of drills or anything then, after 9/11, to prepare in case something else came up or that there was something suspicious?

**Kavanaugh:** They had some system that was supposed to alert people quicker. It was either a phone call or some type of loudspeaker, but I don't think we used it. We did it a couple of times, maybe. Then, even when we had little scares along the way, it didn't go off. More than anything, we realized it's a difficult thing to do, to have a system. There were so many other big components, not that that wasn't a big component.

I remember the President asked the Secret Service, soon after 9/11, "What happens if we're sitting in the office and something happens? Do we get carried away?" They said, "We'll take you, sir," down to wherever. He said, "Well, what about these guys? Are they just sitting ducks?" "Our job is to protect you," they said. He said, "That doesn't mean they shouldn't run right after us," or something. It wasn't as if we were totally sitting ducks, but we knew a little bit that unless he was there, there wasn't protection. It was what it was.

**Perry:** It was part of the job, as you said. "Assuming the risk," as the lawyers say.

**Tenpas:** Was that something you actively worried about, or did it go into the recesses of your brain. Maybe this could happen, but I'm not going to fret?

**Kavanaugh:** You know, I had one little pullout drawer that I used. Right after 9/11, I had a couple of Bible verses on a little sheet of paper, taped to my thing, [laughter] and if I had super worked myself up or something, I could pull those out and get it together. For the most part, I was very busy with my job and then I realized I couldn't worry about it. Life is full of unpredictable things [laughter] and the chances of— It was just, whatever.

**Perry:** At some point, some personnel began to change. Karen Hughes, for example, decided to leave and go back to Texas, but continued to keep a hand in things. Harriet Miers then left the staff secretary position to go into policy, and someone named Mr. [Brett] Kavanaugh was put in her place. You had mentioned that you had had your first date with him on September 10, 2001. Did that carry on? Did you continue to see him, and was that carrying through to when he became the staff secretary?

**Kavanaugh:** Yes. We dated. It wasn't a secret, but it wasn't—

**Tenpas:** Widely shared? [laughter]

**Kavanaugh:** Widely shared, for a while. Then Mrs. Bush's aide [Sarah Moss], who was also a friend of mine from college, called me one day and said, "Okay, I need to tell you something. I think I messed up." I said, "What is it?" She said, "Well, they were having a Yale dinner, so all the Yale graduates were invited and they were having this singing group that Yale has."

**Perry:** Whiffenpoofs.

**Kavanaugh:** The Whiffenpoofs, yes, exactly. They were to sing, so it was a dinner on a Saturday night.

**Perry:** And the President had gone to this?

**Kavanaugh:** They were having it at the residence, and they were inviting the Yale people who were in the administration to come and do stuff. Brett was invited because he went to Yale, and Mrs. Bush was asking why people on this list weren't bringing guests, because many of them said they'd come, but then weren't bringing any guests. She said something like, "This Brett Kavanaugh, why isn't he bringing someone?" Sarah said, "Well, Ashley is out of town this weekend," or something like that. Then Mrs. Bush said, "What?" Sarah then told me, "I told her everything."

**Perry:** So she didn't know, and the President didn't know?

**Kavanaugh:** No, they didn't know. It wasn't as if we were hiding it, but at the same time, you know.

**Tenpas:** Trying to separate professional—

**Kavanaugh:** Yes, exactly. That was on a Friday night or a Saturday or something, and he had already left the office. The next Monday, from the moment I walked in, he was asking: "How was your weekend? What did you do? Who did you do it with?" It was obvious. I knew exactly what he was doing and finally said, "Sir—" And from then, he would say things like, "The Counsel's office is coming today—" They'd come in for meetings, and he'd call me in. "Ashley, I need you in here," and I thought, *Please stop*. I felt worse for Brett, because he felt like ohhh.

Then, when they were looking at him for staff secretary, they thought he was the right person for the job, that he was qualified, whatever. But Andy Card did come and talk to me about it. He said, "I want you to know." I don't think it would have changed had I said, "I don't think that's a good idea." You know what I mean?

**Perry:** Right.

**Kavanaugh:** But at the same time, he said, "I want you to know that we're looking at this. We're thinking about it. It's probably not going to be an issue." I said, "It won't be an issue." We definitely worked very closely.

**Tenpas:** As you did before, with Harriet Miers.

**Kavanaugh:** Yes, exactly. It's just the way the job is.



**Tenpas:** No matter who it would have been, you would have to rely on them.

**Kavanaugh:** But he, then, traveled a lot. He traveled every time the President traveled. They always had a staff secretary person traveling with him. He didn't always do it. If there was a big speech coming up and they were trying to get everything together, sometimes he would stay to do that, but for the most part, he went to the ranch when they went to the ranch, for all of August, or went to Crawford on Thanksgiving, things like that. But it worked.

**Perry:** I would think that would be convenient, because when you're working so hard and so long, it would be very difficult to have a relationship outside of that.

**Kavanaugh:** Outside of that, sure, yes.

**Perry:** So except for the times that he was traveling with the President, I'm sure that that was somewhat comforting.

**Kavanaugh:** Right. Yes, I obviously saw him a lot more than I would certainly any other boyfriend, so yes.

**Perry:** Well, we're glad that it all worked out well, so well.

**Kavanaugh:** It all worked out.

**Perry:** So is there anything, then, in addition to any other changes that you wanted to mention? Again, I'm thinking of people who were key to this process that was ongoing, of paper flow and organization and communications.

**Kavanaugh:** Those were the same, it was just Brett instead of Harriet. Then Karen left.

**Perry:** Were you surprised when she left, since she had worked so closely with the President from the Governorship onward?

**Kavanaugh:** No. That is one of the hardest jobs in the White House.

**Tenpas:** The staff secretary?

**Kavanaugh:** It could be harder timewise, or at least it was in our particular administration. I don't know that that's always the case in other administrations, but it is a time-consuming, all-the-time, anytime job. If there's a flood in Mississippi, then you have to do a Disaster Declaration, that *all* has to be reviewed.

**Perry:** It's all about communications.

**Kavanaugh:** Yes. That all has to go back through the staff secretary's office, who then has to have him sign, or designate areas for FEMA [Federal Emergency Management Agency] relief, things like that.

**Perry:** They do say that Harriet Miers was so good at that, because she devoted all of her time.

**Kavanaugh:** You do devote your entire life. It's not a job that you can *not* do that.

**Tenpas:** While we're still on the subject of 2003, I think it was March of that year that the United States invaded Iraq. I remember at that time there was a scare that there were sleeper cells that were going to be activated once we started the war. Was there higher anxiety or anything unusual in the run-up to that?

**Kavanaugh:** I don't remember being any more nervous or feeling that, no. Around 9/11, in those next couple of months—maybe I got numb to it a little bit, but those were the most extreme highs and lows. Around that? No. Not that Afghanistan was not, but it was obviously a big deal. There was a lot around it. The meetings and his mood; it was intense.

**Perry:** Tell us about that. Tell us about how the process was working through your office and through you—the telephone calls and the meetings and the schedules—and how the President was dealing with it. That had to be a lot of pressure, obviously, for him, to make this decision and then to go.

**Kavanaugh:** Well, he had a lot of free time, kind of, on the calendar, because there were many meetings and deliberations going on, and that was, obviously, the most important thing they were doing at the time. He spent a lot of time with Dr. Rice, who would then either bring certain people in to talk to him as well, or he would call her. He talked to Secretary Powell. He talked to Director Tenet a lot, but then also he would talk to Andy. He would talk to them. They were all involved. Then he and Secretary Rumsfeld had many Situation Room meetings, briefings, talking about how this would work, with the commanders.

When he came up and had made the decision that they were going to go for it, he took a lap around the track, the track around the back, not a running lap, just walked around with his dog, Spot, following him. You could tell that it was very tough and weighing on him, what he was going to do.

**Tenpas:** During that period, was there a decline in the constituency-outreach types of things, like fewer groups coming through for tours? Do you know what I mean? If there was more time taken up by the decision to go to war, what gave? What were the things that were no longer on the schedule?

**Kavanaugh:** We didn't have tours for a long time, because they closed the residence, and then the others even were less. Those were only when he was not in the office, anyway, like West Wing tours.

**Perry:** But the public tours were stopped, as I recall.

**Kavanaugh:** He definitely had fewer fun meet-and-greets.

**Tenpas:** Less travel?

**Kavanaugh:** Less travel. There was still domestic policy stuff going on, but the focus was on foreign policy for a long time.

**Perry:** It's well known through all circles and contemporaneous books and memoirs that have come out since, about the tensions that were flowing among the foreign policy defense people, with Dr. Rice and Colin Powell, the Secretary of State, and Don Rumsfeld, the Defense Secretary. Did you have a feeling at all about that, either by virtue of people who were asking for meetings with the President and/or what their demeanor was when they would appear on the scene? I presume the door would close when people would come in for meetings like that?

**Kavanaugh:** It depended on what type of meeting it was. If it was a very set, scheduled meeting, many times the door was closed. If Dr. Rice came in and started talking to him, a lot of times I would hear—I overheard plenty. *[laughter]*

**Perry:** Define “plenty.”

**Kavanaugh:** I could definitely gauge that not everyone was of the same opinion, and that they were trying to come to some agreement and there were different people weighing in. As far as I could tell, it was not unlike the stem cell discussion, where there were a lot of people weighing in. Not a *lot* of people, because, truly, it's not for a lot of people to make that decision. *[laughter]*

**Perry:** Right.

**Kavanaugh:** He had time with each party and then he was the one to make the decision in the end. There were times when we got calls and people wanted to see him in the residence maybe, a little more under the radar, and those were all things that—

**Perry:** From that group that I just named off: Dr. Rice, Powell, Rumsfeld. Cheney?

**Kavanaugh:** Sometimes.

**Perry:** The Vice President?

**Kavanaugh:** All of those things, I was able to give to Secretary Card and say, “All right, this is what's going on.” Obviously, when the Vice President calls and wants to talk to the President, it's not for me to say, “Oh, let me talk to Secretary Card,” but at the same time, I could transfer it.

**Perry:** But for anybody other than that, you would tend to go back through Secretary Card.

**Kavanaugh:** I would transfer Dr. Rice over to the President, and Secretary Powell, but I would make sure Andy was aware, so that he could follow up and have the conversation soon after, if needed. It gave us a lot of support. We knew that we had Andy.

**Perry:** Yes. That had to be helpful.

**Kavanaugh:** Usually, if there was someone who should not speak to the President before, or without others present or whatever, in a private situation, we were usually given a heads up, or had been able to figure out on our own, with little bits and pieces here and there, that maybe we needed to call somebody in and make sure we did not put him in that position.

**Perry:** You had said, when we started this morning, about getting the impression sometimes from then Governor Bush, that he could be impatient or a little sharp in his wanting something when he wanted it or not wanting something when he didn't want it. I'm not saying, now reveal *all* that you heard going on when those doors were open or even when they were closed, but I'm also thinking of—I just heard Justice Stephen Breyer has a new book out, and he was saying on a talk show just last week: "I've never heard a voice raised in anger at the Supreme Court, in our secret conferences. Everyone should know, we all get along and I've never heard a voice raised in anger." I love the Court and I want to believe that and I will choose to believe that, but did you ever hear the tension flowing out of the office through—I can't imagine people would be raising voices in anger, but even just that impatience. Could you tell by the tone of the President's voice, how a meeting was going, or if there was tension in that meeting or not?

**Kavanaugh:** Definitely. No one was ever screaming or yelling or anything, but I could tell people were shorter with each other or I could tell that it was contentious at times.

**Perry:** Did he ever pop out after people had gone, as sometimes colleagues will, and roll their eyes about a meeting that's just happened, or say, "Well, that wasn't very pleasant," or "I hope we don't have to do that again"? Did he ever share, even just through his mood, through his comments to you, about someone coming around?

**Kavanaugh:** Yes, he definitely would make comments here and there, after a meeting that I could tell was not fun. But most of the time, when he had a meeting like that, he knew it was going to go like that before it ever happened, because it wouldn't have ever gotten to that point, to see him, unless he was aware of there already being an issue. Yes, definitely, he would come out, and not necessarily to us, but sometimes to us, but sometimes other people would be sitting there waiting. We could tell. We heard everything is the thing, we heard a lot, because we were right there. We heard the people talking to each other before they went in to talk to him, and so we were generally pretty aware of what was going on.

**Tenpas:** To switch gears away from the war, or the invasion in March of '03—

Also in '03, you had the run-up to the reelection campaign. Can you recall when the preparations started, or when all of a sudden people started to step down from the White House staff positions to set up the reelection campaign, and when Bush had to start to be involved in meetings for that? So you were going from two very different worlds.

**Kavanaugh:** Right.

**Tenpas:** One is a very tense world of warfare and terrorism, and then switching over to thinking about another four years in office.

**Kavanaugh:** Karl would have been, obviously, pretty involved in most of those discussions, and since he was so clearly the right one. There was a much clearer line of what Karl could be involved in and what he had been involved in, in the past, or weighing in on other domestic policy issues. He wasn't involved in many foreign policy issues. That just wasn't in his job description.

**Tenpas:** He was the political—

**Kavanaugh:** Not that he would not have been able to give excellent advice.

**Tenpas:** From the outside, he was portrayed as being the political eyes and ears, taking the political temperature of how things were going.

**Kavanaugh:** Yes. That's fair to say.

**Tenpas:** But do you remember a point when there started being real momentum?

**Kavanaugh:** I don't really remember. It wasn't like I remember at the Governor's office, the buildup and the momentum, when you could feel like, *This is coming, we're close*. It was less, because there was so much day-to-day real work. He had other people thinking about strategizing and the best way to go about things, and he gave that to them.

**Tenpas:** And there was never any doubt that he would run for reelection?

**Kavanaugh:** No.

**Perry:** Any speculation about the Vice Presidency that you heard?

**Kavanaugh:** Not really.

**Tenpas:** Can you recall any—Was there any disruption, from your perspective, because usually the third year is noteworthy for many staff people moving, going out, and new people coming in. Did that ever move its way up to your level, where some of the staff changes affected your ability to do your job, or anything like that?

**Kavanaugh:** Many of the people who took over positions, like, for instance, Dan Bartlett became more involved. He already was very involved, before, even when Karen was there, and filled a little bit of a different role, and his relationship was different with the President than Karen's was. He stepped up and did her job. That's one thing.

**Perry:** So there were people you already knew who were fulfilling these roles?

**Tenpas:** For the most part. Or people who had been around. There were very few changes. Cabinet Secretaries, that was a different thing, because many of them had not been—Secretary [Paul] O'Neill resigned, and then Secretary [John W.] Snow came in. Those were very different personalities, who hadn't been involved before. He hadn't spent much time with them before that. Cabinet Secretaries have their own agency and things that they're doing, and they're not at the White House all the time. Most of the time they dealt with Josh Bolten, or somebody else who was, whatever their policy.

**Tenpas:** The Cabinet Secretary person?

**Kavanaugh:** Yes. Not that they didn't have access to the President, because they obviously did, but everybody has their own serious day job.

**Tenpas:** So you would notice the White House turnover much more than you would at the Cabinet level?

**Kavanaugh:** Definitely.

**Tenpas:** It seemed like there was more promotion from within—

**Kavanaugh:** Yes, for the most part. I'm trying to think.

**Tenpas:** Which is probably less disruptive? I don't know, I'm guessing.

**Kavanaugh:** Most people, if they were going to leave, left after the reelection, and then I left, so I can't speak to that. Josh eventually came in, but even that was easy, because Josh was already there.

**Perry:** Right.

**Kavanaugh:** So no, it wasn't disruptive.

**Tenpas:** Compared to '99, it seems like a very different atmosphere. Ninety-nine was probably filled—Well, you were already at the campaign, so it was a different entity.

**Kavanaugh:** It was. That was a merging of Texas people and D.C. people, so there were many new faces that became very familiar faces very quickly. Josh was new, I remember he worked out of Karl's office for a little while. Jack Oliver was totally new, he worked out of Karl's office for a little while. But then they became old hands and so, no.

Probably some people think, for better or worse, he's very comfortable with people he's known. He did bring in people who brought in different views. But part of it was that he already merged worlds on the campaign and people were fresh at that point and still able, so they were willing to either stay on for two terms or—

**Perry:** That's certainly another tense situation involving personalities and perspectives, and something that just cropped up in the news again. Just last night I was reading about it, the famous Andy Card going with Al Gonzales to the hospital room of Attorney General [John] Ashcroft about the reauthorization of the NSA [National Security Agency] program. That then had a component in the White House, with parties including Jim Comey, and then the FBI Director, Bob Mueller, coming to the White House to meet with the President. Were you there and on duty when that was all happening, both the decision for people to go to the hospital room to see Attorney General Ashcroft, and then a contingent of Jim Comey and Bob Mueller coming to the White House and having, what I presume were, rather tense conversations.

**Kavanaugh:** Yes, I was there, and was aware, to a certain extent, of what was going on, but for the most part, we were going to Andy, saying, "Okay, this person is calling," and he'd say he'd call them back. We were definitely playing our role of gatekeeper at that point, a little blindly.

**Perry:** Right, because, for this top-secret program, you couldn't have presumably been very into that.

**Kavanaugh:** Right. But you knew enough to know, I don't think this is okay. And Andy had given us enough information to know that if this person calls, you need to call me immediately, that kind of thing. I definitely remember the next morning, when the FBI Director and—but they were there for the FBI briefing anyway, after the CIA briefing.

**Perry:** Oh, so Jim Comey and Bob Mueller would have been there anyway?

**Kavanaugh:** Yes, they were there anyway, for that, but it definitely morphed into a longer meeting.

**Perry:** Right. As I recall, the President even went off to his private study with, was it Mueller, I think, and maybe Jim Comey, to talk. Did that happen very frequently, when you would have let someone in, through your office, and they'd be going in either for a routine meeting or someone coming in for something else, that there was a little problem that had to be discussed, or a big problem, and then you weren't hearing the President's voice anymore, because he's not in the Oval, he's gone off to the more private study, to talk with people?

**Kavanaugh:** Well, the CIA briefing and the FBI briefing were all closed door, so I don't know. I don't think he did that very often. Sometimes people would step out and they would stay in, but I don't know. The CIA briefers and whoever else was attending the FBI briefing, which was usually the Vice President, Andy Card, Dr. Rice, stayed in the Oval, and they stepped back.

**Perry:** We talked a little bit about speeches and that process, about how the President liked to work with the speechwriters or do his own revisions, and at what point in the process he would receive the speech. We didn't talk specifically about the State of the Union, but did that involve a different process, particularly because you have so many voices that want to be heard and have their positions reflected in that speech?

**Kavanaugh:** Yes. It was just a bigger process—the same process, but much bigger than the other speeches. They had meetings about it beforehand to flush out what was out there and what they thought they wanted to be discussed. Then they would go to him, talk about it, see if he had things he wanted to add to it. Then, Mike Gerson and then John McConnell, Matt Scully, they would all meet. Gerson sometimes started on his own and then would go and talk to them, and they would pow-wow for a while and then come back with a draft of some sort. Karen was involved in that, when she was there. There was more time put in, for sure, and a lot more back-and-forth, drafts. That was all coordinated through the staff sec, though, so it was a big time when that was happening. They would do practice speech prep in the theater, over at the residence, which was funny.

**Perry:** Did you go?

**Kavanaugh:** I did not, but there were many people who wanted to. Everybody wanted to go, because it's fun to be involved in the State of the Union, but everyone had ideas. He would sometimes come back and be in a state—"Ahhhh"—because everybody would say things like, "Mr. President! Say it like this." He would respond, "Really?" and be so funny about it. But yes, they would do the teleprompter practice, things like that, so it was obviously a big speech.

**Perry:** Right, absolutely.

**Tenpas:** Can you recall other big speeches, where there was a lot of buildup?

**Kavanaugh:** I definitely remember the stem cell speech was big, obviously the prayer service.

**Perry:** You mentioned the Congressional speech after 9/11.

**Kavanaugh:** Yes, the speech in front of Congress for that, and there was an AIDS [acquired immune deficiency syndrome] speech. Most of the time, if they were going to roll out some big policy that they'd been working on for a while, it was an effort. But the State of the Unions, other than the 9/11 speeches, were the biggest.

**Perry:** We started talking about the 2004 reelection campaign. Anything remarkable to report in addition to that? If not, shall we go to the actual day, Election Day 2004, leaning over then, into the day after?

**Kavanaugh:** I can't recall. It was a lot of travel and they were on the road a lot. We also got married in July of '04, in the campaign year.

**Perry:** That's right.

**Tenpas:** You got married during a campaign year?

**Kavanaugh:** We did. When he was traveling, that was when I did some wedding stuff.

**Perry:** Yes, how did you find time to plan a wedding, given your hours?

**Kavanaugh:** We did a lot on Saturdays.

**Perry:** And Brett was having to travel, presumably, on the road a lot.

**Kavanaugh:** It was good. We made everything work. We got engaged at Christmas and then once we found a date and place and all those things, everything else fell into place. It was nice. It didn't give you a whole lot of time to go back and forth. You just made a decision.

**Perry:** So then you were married in 2004, but leading up then, to actual Election Day, which I know everyone was hoping, number one, that the President would be reelected, but two, that there would be certainty, preferably by that evening, so that there could be an actual celebration.

**Kavanaugh:** Right. He traveled that day, and came back. We got our first exit polls, which weren't good. I remember Karl calling down and saying, "Where is he?" Because he'd gone maybe to exercise, and he couldn't find him, and he stopped by the Oval Office. He didn't go in the Oval, he came in our back little doors.

**Perry:** That is, Karl came in?

**Kavanaugh:** No, sorry, the President came in. I don't know where he was. He was on the lawn, exercising somehow, or maybe he was upstairs, I don't know, and then Karl came down and said, the polls weren't good.



I remember he was very frank. He said, “Well, they may not want me and that will be okay.” He felt that it would work out, so we were all feeling, *Okay, it will*. Then of course, things came back. That night, they had set up a war room of sorts, upstairs at the residence. Israel Hernandez was there, Susan Ralston, both worked for Karl, I was there, Brett was there, who was our legal.

**Tenpas:** Was he a judge by then?

**Kavanaugh:** He was not a judge by then; he was still staff sec. The President was upstairs with friends, they had friends over.

**Perry:** And were his parents there?

**Kavanaugh:** They were there, but they never came down. He came downstairs and was in the room with us for a while. Tony Blair called at one point.

**Perry:** To say what?

**Kavanaugh:** It was close to when they were—I think Blair called him. I remember him talking to Tony Blair right behind me. Bartlett was there. We were all watching the news, like everybody else, getting different precincts and different things reported through Karl and through the campaign, Mehlman.

**Perry:** Meanwhile, there had been a rally, a headquarters, established in the Reagan Building, if I remember.

**Kavanaugh:** Right.

**Perry:** And they expected the President would come over—

**Kavanaugh:** Expected everybody to come by.

**Perry:** If there were clear results.

**Kavanaugh:** Right. I remember they got to a point where it wasn't—It felt like it was going to work out, but Senator [John] Kerry was not quite ready and wanted to see it through and not do what had happened the time before. Everybody got it and no one was pushing for him to, you know, and to properly wait until he was ready to concede. But at the same time, especially after what had happened before—trying to figure out what was the right way to go about staking claim to victory, without staking claim to victory. It was decided, I guess it was—was it Secretary Card who went to the Reagan Building?

**Perry:** He did. He went over to the Reagan Building.

**Kavanaugh:** They went back and forth, deciding who was the right person to go over, so he went and said, “We feel good. We're going to wait until tomorrow.” Everybody finally went home very late and then got there really early the next morning.

We were getting reports from different people who had friends or people they'd worked with or were friendly with, on the Kerry campaign, that he was getting close. We were at the point where we knew it would eventually happen, but until it happened, [laughter] nobody was going to breathe a huge sigh of relief. And then we got the call from Senator Kerry. It came to my desk and he was in the Oval Office, so I put it on hold and went in, told him, "Senator Kerry is on the line," and he conceded. He had a lot of people in his office at the time. I feel like there was Karl, Gerson, maybe Dan Bartlett, Andy. It was who happened to be there at the time, because it wasn't as if we knew at this time that he was going to get a call.

**Perry:** What was the reaction then, on the President's part, on receiving that phone call?

**Kavanaugh:** He—we all did—felt how hard this was and it's such a long thing, so everybody felt bad for Senator Kerry, because it has to be hard to put that much time in and then, you know? So, he was appreciative that he took the time to call, obviously, and felt bad for him, but then relieved and happy, just relieved more than anything. It's just exhausting, so it was a relief, to know that you were done with it.

**Perry:** And had you already begun to think about leaving? Had you timed it according to the reelection?

**Kavanaugh:** I had thought that I was ready to move on. I hadn't talked directly to him about it, but he knew, and he said to me, "Ashley, when you're ready and if you want to move on, I will support you. I'm not telling you, 'You need to move on.'" [laughter] And then he said, "But I want to help you find the right fit." I had just gotten married, as I said, and I was leaning toward going to work for, and had talked a little bit to, Margaret Spellings, about going to work for her in Education.

**Perry:** By now, she was Secretary of Education.

**Kavanaugh:** But I wasn't sure what I would do or how we would make it work. There were lots of different random jobs that people would propose: "This could be fun," or "What about this job?" There was one that did a lot of travel and people said it might be fun. Then one Saturday in December I came in—I was the one on duty that day—and he called me in and said, "All right, let's talk about what you want to do. If you want to be—" I think his words were "a super career woman who has a huge job," he said, "I will support you a hundred percent." But then he said, "But I also think you will be a great mom." He was really cute. "I just think," you know, with a filter. He wanted me look at it all, "Don't feel like you're boxing yourself in." I was okay with that. Then, randomly, that day, I went home and it turned out I was pregnant, and I was like—yes!

**Perry:** A very knowledgeable President, I must say.

**Kavanaugh:** It was very weird, and I felt, for me, it was okay, this is my answer. I should not be worried. I also knew that any job I did, at least for a little while, I wasn't going to be doing wholeheartedly if I wanted to have a baby or do whatever. There was just a personal choice. I didn't feel good about going to Education and then leaving immediately, so it worked out.

Well, I didn't tell him I was pregnant for a while. I waited like seven weeks or something, and we finally told him and said not to tell anybody, because it was so early still. Of course, within five minutes he was saying things like, "Hey, little mamma, come in here," or something, and everybody said, "What?" [*laughter*] He wasn't very good at secrets.

Then he said, "I have a proposal for you. I want to get started on my library and I need a staffer. It would be part-time, but I think that could be a good fit for you." That felt perfect, so it ended up that I got to work with Marvin Bush and Craig Stapleton, who is his cousin, and then Secretary Evans again, who I love, so it was a *great* job.

**Perry:** And you could stay in Washington?

**Kavanaugh:** Yes.

**Perry:** And if you needed to travel to Texas, you could do that.

**Kavanaugh:** Yes, and until he left office, most of what we were doing was all here in D.C., and people came to us. Not until he left office was there a lot going on in Dallas. It was a great fit and lots of fun. It's a neat, neat project, because it goes over political boundaries. Everybody wants to help out each other in the library circuit. It was fun. We got to do the RFP [request for proposals] process for it and design, and I did a lot of research on what people had done in the past for libraries, and it turns out, it all depends on how they left office. You know, 41 made a pretty quick decision, because he wasn't planning on leaving so soon. Some people knew exactly where they would have it, because that was the only place to have it.

It was good. We had a process, like most everything in the Bush operation, and we said what we wanted with it. We then gave the RFP to anybody who wanted to apply, then they all submitted their proposals, and they were vetted. We had a ton of meetings with different places that wanted to do it, and Mrs. Bush was very involved. She sat on the board and she spoke for him. Yes, the library job was good.

**Perry:** There have been some fascinating books done about the library process and what Presidents want to get from them and how they set them up. What was she saying and speaking for the President, and presumably herself? What was she contributing about how they wanted to do it and where they might want it to be? Can we presume, because she was an SMU [Southern Methodist University] alum, that that's partly how they ended up there?

**Kavanaugh:** After talking to other library presidents and frankly, being with 41's, we knew that it was key to sustain traffic through the library, to be in a larger city that had access to an airport, because if you want to have good speakers, you have to make it easy. There were many things that we learned along the way, that we kind of knew but had reaffirmed by people, so SMU was a good fit. Baylor was also; they had a very strong proposal, Texas Tech had a great proposal, that had so much heart. It was just that Lubbock was tough to get to.

Anyway, SMU was always probably the insider thought process, and they were willing to really work with us. It was the hardest because of the land tract. It's obviously right there in the middle of a big city, so there wasn't much land, so they were working with contingencies to try to take over: We have this possibility, different things, in the way we could put it and have the size

library he wanted, and the parking needs, all those things. University of Dallas had a great option, because they had a ton of land, so that made sense, because they'd lived in Dallas, but it came down to SMU felt like the right fit.

Then they both wanted it to represent all of who they were, not just who they wanted to portray, and try to take into account the good and bad parts of the Presidency. But they also wanted to think ahead and be able to use it as a space for what they—he was a young President, one of the younger Presidents—for things that he wanted to accomplish post-Presidency, and the same for her. So they have the women's initiative and they have the freedom stuff, and they still do all the AIDS in Africa stuff, and that was the biggest piece. There was a lot of thought that went into how that would come about and who was the right person to lead, things like that.

She has a great eye for design, and she was very involved in the architect selection. We interviewed different architects and we interviewed different landscape architects, and chose two different ones, who had to work together. We had lots of meetings in New York, and they did huge models. That part, the process, was fascinating, and so it was fun. The landscape architect tried to re-create the Rose Garden in Texas, but with Texas grass, and they had to learn all about Texas grasses, instead of what was up here. They wanted to make sure people, when they came, got a little taste of what it's like to be in the White House. But it's different, it had to be. And they didn't want a huge building or an imposing building that didn't look like them, and didn't want anything like a monument to him. Everything was very well thought through.

**Perry:** Tell us about what you learned from your husband's nomination for the D.C. Circuit.

**Kavanaugh:** It was a long process. That part is the ugly part of politics, I think, because people are really put through the wringer. There are many good people willing to serve. That was one of the hardest things about the administration in general. You have friends who are just trying to do their job and they are vilified for something. Not necessarily Brett, although there were people, but good friends who just had a tough time. It's not a fair process, so that part is sad.

**Perry:** But all was well that ended well.

**Kavanaugh:** All was well.

**Perry:** After how many years?

**Kavanaugh:** It was three years.

**Perry:** Three long years.

**Kavanaugh:** We got engaged, married, and had a child, before he was confirmed, but we were thrilled that it worked out, surprised frankly, but then at the same time, he would have been fine if it hadn't.

**Perry:** Right.

**Kavanaugh:** So, we were lucky.

**Perry:** Well, the harder you work, the luckier you get, as they say. Anything else, Katie, to go over?

**Tenpas:** No, you covered it quite well.

**Perry:** Oh, one last point. You went back for the welcoming ceremony for Queen Elizabeth, in 2007.

**Kavanaugh:** Oh, yes.

**Perry:** Tell us about that, because the Bushes, compared to some Presidents, didn't have as many state occasions, state visits, state dinners. I'm sure much of that was—In the post-9/11 period, it wouldn't have seemed appropriate or been appropriate, security issues and all those things. But if you're going to have a state visit, why not the Queen of England?

**Kavanaugh:** Right. They had [Vicente] Fox and we went to the dinner with the Indian [Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh]—when I was pregnant with Margaret [Kavanaugh] and had left; it was about three weeks before I was due and I was *huge*. But yes, we went to that. It was lovely. It was such an honor to meet them, and it was so nice to be included, but it was big and fast.

**Perry:** And over.

**Kavanaugh:** Yes, it was great.

**Perry:** I want to pin down the exact date of your departure, because on the bio that we have in the briefing book it says 2005, but the timeline says 2004, so I wanted to be sure to get that right.

**Kavanaugh:** It was '05, February, officially.

**Perry:** All right, so we've clarified that. Anything else then, before we end for today? We always have this segment of the Bush Presidency in retrospect. You've talked about most of these things, I think, in putting them into context, which is even better, but is there anything that you want to leave history with, about President Bush himself as a person, about his Presidency? Things, either from the time or even now, that you think that maybe the press doesn't get right or maybe historians aren't getting right? This is your chance to have your say.

**Kavanaugh:** For the most part, it all will eventually right itself, anything that might have looked one way. People will understand, when they get to see. More than anything, with President Obama, I do my best not to be quick to judge the different things, because I don't have the access or know what information they have. It's a very difficult job.

President Bush did his very best, with what he had at the time, with different issues and then 9/11 was a really difficult thing. I don't think people put themselves in his shoes, when your country has been attacked, and trying to take steps to make sure it doesn't happen again, and not having enough information. When you have this fog of information that you're trying to sift through and see what's right, what's wrong, people love to point fingers and say, "You should have known this. You should have known that." It's easy to say that now, and it wasn't.

He kept us safe, and most people would not have thought that would be the case shortly after, so I feel like it's only going to go up for him from here, as far as how he's viewed, and when people look back on what's there and the documents are available, and all those different things. He'll be okay, he will sleep at night just fine if they don't change their minds. So that's about it.

**Perry:** Well, it will take the documents a while to be processed and come out, and that's why we think it's very important to do these histories of the folks like yourself, who were there and were seeing history up close and personal. We not only thank you for that, but we thank you for your public service and your spouse as well, and we consider this part of an extension of your public service, because it really is a service to historians and political scientists and teachers and students and the general public, who will take the time to go through this material and learn so much from it, as we have today, so we really appreciate you taking time.

**Kavanaugh:** Of course.

**Perry:** Thanks so much.

**Kavanaugh:** Sure.