GEORGE H. W. BUSH ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

TRANSCRIPT

INTERVIEW WITH TIMOTHY J. MCBRIDE

November 5, 2010
Charlottesville, Va.

Interviewers

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Riley: Are you ready for us to get started then?

McBride: I am. Should we talk ground rules? Do you encourage me or discourage me from being completely candid?

Riley: Normally we have this conversation before we get started. The idea is for you to be completely candid in the interview because the audience is not just us, it's people who want to come back to this document in future times and understand the President as you knew him and this White House as you knew it.

To encourage you to speak candidly, we provide you with a copy of the transcript of the proceedings. It will take us a few months to get this and clean up the "ahhs" and "uhs," but it still maintains the spontaneity of the spoken word. That transcript comes to you and that becomes the authoritative record of the interview. That means, rather than editing yourself into the tape recorder, you'll have a chance to edit yourself once you see the words in print. At that point you'll have the right to bracket passages that you feel are particularly sensitive and you can hold on to those as long as you like. You can even redact those if you want. The full transcript would become available in something like fifty years.

We're working right now with Roman Popadiuk on the big release of the main archive at about this time next year. What we're encouraging everybody to do is to get the document in shape so that you wouldn't mind people looking at it by the end of 2011. But don't allow that to serve as an inhibition on your speaking candidly here, because we're obligated to hold on to whatever you feel is sensitive for as long as you want to hold on to it.

McBride: There are some things that relate to certain individuals, of course, and circumstances, and I just assume you ought to know the real story and will figure out how to deal with that.

Riley: This is par for the course. My colleague Jim Young started doing this work in 1981. I can honestly say we haven't had a breach of confidentiality in the entire time that we've been doing it.

McBride: Let me ask you another question. In preparing for this I found a transcript of an interview I did with Martha Kumar as it relates specifically to the period—most specifically around the position I held as Assistant for Management and Administration.

Riley: Right, this is the transitions project.

McBride: Right. I have that transcript. She ended up doing a report that drew from the transcript but most of it wasn't reflected in the report. Are materials such as that transcript of interest?

Maybe you have it.

Riley: No, we don't. My understanding is that Martha was working with the Library of Congress to get cleared versions of those things, but I've never been completely clear on whether she had followed all of the standard procedures for oral history work. The body of law governing oral history is different from journalism interviews or book interviews. We're obligated to have deeds of gifts from people. We're obligated to have signed releases from people because you retain ownership of your work until you pass it to us.

McBride: We can look at it but I think there was a deed of gift.

Riley: Let me put it this way: That, and any other documents or photographs that you have that we could reproduce, simple photocopies to give a researcher an idea of what we're talking about—all of those things we readily accept as appendices to your interview.

McBride: Okay. I did bring some photos, mostly to remind myself—I never kept notes, for some good reasons we can talk about or not, but the photographs that were basically casual shots or pictures in which I happen to be in the photo remind me of certain circumstances, so I brought those to be able to tell stories or recall some things that went on.

Riley: Okay. I didn't look at the schedule.

McBride: You have me as long as you need me.

Riley: Okay, we'll do that and hope that we can get everything done that we need to get done.

This is the Timothy McBride interview as a part of the George H. W. Bush Oral History Project. When we first started this project in '99 or 2000, we didn't have to worry about those distinctions but the environment is a little more complicated now, particularly since we're doing a project on the next President Bush. Thanks for coming to Charlottesville. We appreciate it. We had a conversation about the ground rules, but the most important thing is that we're doing this under a veil of confidentiality and this is to encourage you to speak candidly to history.

To aid the transcriber, I'm Russell Riley, the chair of the program.

McBride: I'm Tim McBride.

Riley: The specimen.

McBride: The victim.

Perry: I'm Barbara Perry, Senior Fellow here at the Miller Center.

Riley: You are originally from Michigan, is that right?

McBride: My father was in the Marine Corps. I was born in California. We moved around a fair bit. He got out of the Marine Corps when I was in second grade. At that time we moved to Michigan where both sets of grandparents were. I grew up in Michigan, think of Michigan as home, still have family there in Michigan. We have a little cottage there. Michigan really is home even though I've been away a very long time.

Riley: Was your family particularly politically active or interested?

McBride: Absolutely not. Interested in public events, in politics, in what was going on, but not political. My mom was an occupational therapist, and later became a school administrator for a school for orthopedically-impaired children. My dad was a commercial airline pilot; he flew air cargo. As a retired marine, he had very strong feelings about service but he was not political at all. I became interested in politics really when I went to Eastern Michigan University.

Riley: How did that come about?

McBride: Acting on the interest came about through the introduction to a gentleman who lived in Ypsilanti, Michigan, still does, who was the Republican national committeeman for Michigan, a gentleman named Peter Fletcher. He was national committeeman at the time. I was introduced to him and expressed this interest in getting involved in Republican politics. I had voted in the '76 election, and I was interested as a new voter, as a senior in high school. Mr. Fletcher said—This was the fall of '77—"If you're interested, why don't you help Congressman [Carl] Pursell's campaign, by being the coordinator for his campaign on campus?"

I thought, *Gosh, that's a big deal*. "Sure, I'll do that." I became his coordinator and before long the campaign team for Governor [William] Milliken, the Republican Governor from the state at the time, asked if I would coordinate campaign activities for his campaign. I thought, *Wow, this is pretty exciting*. They were happy to have anybody do it, particularly Republicans on a college campus. So that got me active. I became a precinct delegate back home in western Wayne County where my parents lived at the time, not that far away. That started my interest and activity in Republican politics.

Riley: Had you thought about a career in politics at the time?

McBride: No. In fact, in the fall of '78 I was starting my sophomore year, my second year at Eastern, active in these two campaigns. Both candidates won. Congressman Pursell was reelected; Governor Milliken was reelected; and, as far as I knew, that was it. That was great. In two more years or four years I would get involved again. Someone called me, either Mr. Fletcher or someone else, and said, "Why don't you run for third vice chairman for the Michigan Republican Party?" I said, "What is that?"

Riley: May I ask, what was that?

McBride: You may. The Michigan Republican Party was organized in a way that there was a chairman and five vice chairmen. Each of the five vice chairmen had a particular slice of the population, with the idea that each would encourage activism, participation, among his or her slice. The third vice chairman was the so-called youth vice chairman. Someone under 25 had to hold the position. It was a two-year term designed to help encourage greater participation among

young people in the party. I was green enough to say, "Okay, that sounds like a good idea," not really knowing what that entailed, but again, enthusiastic about Republican politics.

Most of my classes were in the morning. In the afternoon I'd get in my car and drive around the state and meet county chairmen to build support. There was going to be an election at the state convention in late January. I had to announce that I was running and get in my car and drive and try to get some support before the convention. That's exactly what I did, without really knowing what was involved.

As it turned out, the first county chairwoman to endorse me ended up being the mother of Senator Spencer Abraham. I didn't know Spencer at the time. He later became a U.S. Senator and in fact worked on the Vice President [J. Danforth] Quayle staff when I was working for President Bush. But anyway, his mother endorsed me. I thought, *Well, this is good*. I would spend most of the afternoon and evening driving around, meeting with district or country Republican organizations, telling them why I thought they should vote for me and support me at the state convention. I had a couple of fundraisers to raise about a thousand dollars to pay for gas.

Riley: No TV, no ads or anything?

McBride: No TV. I think we used some of the money to make posters for the convention and then got some of my college friends at Eastern to help me at the state convention downtown at Cobo Hall in Detroit. Ironically, another good friend was working on the other side. State senator John Engler was the nominator for my opponent at the convention. I didn't know John at the time. I wound up winning by a rather sizable margin at the convention, so that began a two-year term as third vice chairman of the Republican Party. The job really involved finding opportunities to be in front of young people to encourage participation. It was a bit of a distinction between joining the college Republicans or joining the Young Republicans. There, the party's and my own philosophy was, rather than getting involved in those groups and the politics of those groups, to be taken seriously as young people involved in the adult party.

Riley: The Republican Party.

McBride: Right, in the party. If you have a role to play, just play it. So often in the College Republicans or the Young Republicans it all becomes the politics of who is going to lead those organizations. My own philosophy, the state party philosophy, was "Let's just involve young people in the party." That started a two-year term, which did lead to other opportunities. Because the Republican National Convention in the summer of 1980 came to Detroit, and I was a party official (and a college student with summers off), I was able to use that to say, "Hey, is there somebody who can help me get a job with the convention?"

Again Mr. Fletcher was influential in reaching out to somebody on the arrangements committee, a guy named Jim Baker, not the Texas [James A., III] Jim Baker, but Ohio Jim Baker, who was responsible for logistics of the convention. As often happens he shows up with the arrangements committee in a town and is told by the locals, you have to hire some guy. We got on famously. I worked hard for him. I worked on other occasions for Jim. It was a great opportunity for me to spend the summer downtown Detroit preparing for the convention.

I was also—I forget when the primary was, maybe in June—By then, George Bush, Ambassador Bush, had won the primary in Michigan, which meant that a large proportion of the convention delegates from Michigan would be committed to George Bush. I was an alternate delegate for George Bush. I had committed to George Bush and was also an alternate delegate at the convention, in addition to being on the arrangements committee staff.

So that started my interest, awareness of—

Riley: Can you tell us what it was about George Bush that made him your candidate? In 1980 it was Ronald Reagan's year, although in '79 and '80 there was a pretty open season, right?

McBride: Yes.

Riley: It's easy to sort of have Reagan's Presidency distort what seems to be the inevitability of his nomination when, if you go dig back into that period, there was a lot of uncertainty.

McBride: Particularly in a state like Michigan, which was thought of, and still is to this day, as a more moderate Republican state. Bill Milliken, the Governor of the state, is thought of as a moderate Republican. George Bush represented for me a less conservative view of the political spectrum than, say, perhaps the Reagan wing. I also was impressed very much at the time by his experience. This was a guy who had done a lot. He had come to the nomination process having worked in many important positions in government, in public life. Without over-thinking it, that was pretty impressive to me at the time. He won Michigan, and there was a lot of enthusiasm for him. His views, his demeanor, his view of governing seemed to be consistent with a political view there in Michigan.

Perry: Had you read up on George Bush? Did you know about some of the stands he had taken in his previous campaigns for Senate, for Congress?

McBride: I'd love to say, "Yes, I was terribly studious about it." But no, it really had to do more with the information I was gathering in public, influenced by friends and his public statements.

Perry: Had you seen him at this point giving any speeches, on the campaign, in person?

McBride: Yes, I must have seen—I undoubtedly had in the campaigning in Michigan. I knew his field rep, who is today Attorney General. I had met him at our Mackinaw Island conference, which would have been in the summer of '79. So I had encountered him, and knew some of his field representatives and people that I was impressed with.

Riley: Tim, is it fair to say that you didn't consider yourself what a lot of people would have called a "movement conservative"?

McBride: No, I was not part of that. In fact, years later when my wife, who came to the White House with President Reagan, and I were married, it was somewhat thought of as a mixed marriage. I'm clearly identified as a "Bushie," or someone who is thought to be on the more moderate side, which isn't necessarily a positive thing from some of our Republican friends.

Riley: All right. You went to the convention in '80?

McBride: I went to the convention. I was credentialed as an alternate delegate but most of my activity was working for my boss on the arrangements. We did the seating, we built the platforms; we did all the construction-type things inside the convention hall. It was terribly exciting. I had a great time, and then the convention was over and I went back to school. This was now the fall of 1980.

I was invited by this same Jim Baker to come to Washington after he was assigned to work on the arrangements committee for the 1981 Presidential inauguration. I convinced some teachers that I could make up tests and be gone for three weeks into January, because school would have already started. So I went to Washington and worked with him for about a month on the arrangements committee. He was again doing construction. We were building the reviewing platform, parade seats—physical construction. That was also very exciting.

Perry: So when they talk about party platforms, you were really—

McBride: Real platforms. In fact, one of the less grandiose parts of the job was that all the bleachers—the seat numbers had to be spray-painted on every bleacher seat that was going to be sold. We had to make sure that if we were selling a seat number 25, that there was in fact a 25, not terribly glamorous.

Perry: You did your degree in business administration?

McBride: I did.

Perry: Not political science?

McBride: No, it's the funniest thing, actually. I first went to Eastern Michigan, at the time maybe because I was the third of four kids, or maybe it was just the times. There weren't these grand tours of all the universities that one might possibly apply to.

Riley: I think it's the times.

McBride: I didn't know where I wanted to go, didn't know exactly what I wanted to do. Eastern was a good state school. Money—We were not poor; we were a middle-class family. Two brothers had gone to college, so I didn't feel that I had the right to say I want to go to a really expensive school. I chose to go to Eastern, thinking eventually I'll figure out what I really want to specialize in. I decided it was business. They had one of the finer undergrad business programs. I was very happy there. It was twelve miles away from home, even though I lived on campus. I was Resident Advisor for all five years to help pay for the room and board. But business was what I studied. Please don't ask for my transcripts. Please don't look them up. I hope my children never ask.

Riley: We'll allow you to redact this for family purposes.

McBride: That is one thing—There's a lot about my college career I would have done differently. By the same token, I was extremely distracted in what I was really enjoying, which was the politics.

Riley: And it sounds like it paid off.

Perry: Yes, things worked out.

McBride: It led to a certain career path that I couldn't have imagined at the time, so it is what it is.

Perry: Were your parents Republicans?

McBride: They were. I grew up in a Republican household.

Riley: So, you finish school…

McBride: I finished school in '82. I was behind a year. I attribute that to how busy I was, serving this two-year term. I decided not to run for reelection in what would have been January of '81, thinking, *I just need to finish school*. So I did not run for reelection, and finished school. I still didn't know what I wanted to do. I knew I enjoyed the politics but needed a job. There was an acquaintance in the Detroit suburbs who was starting a quick-printing franchise down in Florida. He asked if I would represent his interests there. He was going to be an absentee owner. I moved down there for two years, learned the quick-printing franchise business, and put some of what I learned about business to use. He wasn't a terribly interested business owner in terms of the investments I thought were needed, and it wasn't really what I was enjoying.

By the early summer of 1984, I said I'd had enough of that. I'd been there about two years. What I really wanted to do was go work on another convention. So I called some of the people I had met, including folks on the Bush campaign in 1980, to ask this Jim Baker, "Can I come work for you at the '84 convention?" We did more construction in Dallas and I joined him again driving around on golf carts and handing out radios and building convention platforms. That took me through early August of 1984.

I then left Dallas, without a job, and went back to Michigan. It was still summer. I went to my grandparents' cottage near Kalamazoo, wondering, *What am I going to do about a job now?* I received a call from somebody on Vice President Bush's campaign. Each President and Vice President had his own campaign staffs. An advance man I had first met in 1980, and had seen again in Dallas, called me to ask me if I would be interested in going out on the road as an advance man for Vice President Bush. He said, "It's a volunteer position, but we pay $30 per diem." At the time, I was just thinking about the economics, as opposed to, *Won't that be really exciting?* $30 was a fair amount at that time, and I wasn't eating $30 a day in food so I thought I'd try that. It sounded pretty exciting. They paid all the expenses. You just go out there.

Riley: That was critical. I was wondering if they were expecting you to cover your hotel bills.

McBride: No, they paid the hotel bill. There would be no possibility—it would be a really bad idea.

Riley: You would have had to be hard up for a job if you took that one.

McBride: No, they paid the $30 a day—

Riley: Plus expenses.

McBride: Plus the airfare, your hotel room, and you're working all day as a volunteer. My first trip was to New Orleans. There was the World Expo at the time. Vice President Bush—I'd never done advance before, although I'd worked logistics jobs. It was the start of the season, where you're handed the assignment: "You're flying to New Orleans. Here's your team. Look for them in the hotel. There's going to be a rally in four days." Your job is to build a crowd, figure out where the plane is stopping, literally, where you're going to find the motorcade cars. You need to borrow cars. There need to be drivers for those cars. Your team is planning every minute from the moment the plane stops until the V.P. gets back on the plane and he takes off. That's going to be eight hours, two days—Whatever it is, that's your team's assignment.

This fellow who had called was the lead on our team. He asked me to go out on the road with him, so I did. It was terribly exciting. I met one guy on that trip who is one of my best friends to this day. What was really exciting was when the Vice President actually showed up. This is really cool. I'm seeing the Vice President this close. At some point he may have shaken my hand and thanked me as it was all over, or not. But it was just very exciting to execute on this, to put the trip together, see it come off, and see them go.

By then we may have gotten our assignment, the fax from the campaign that says, "Now you're going to Iowa and you've got a rally in four days and we need a crowd of 2000 people. Go find them." We'd race to the airport and get on a plane. What do they call that show on Sunday night?

Perry: *The Amazing Race*?

McBride: It felt a little bit like that. We've got to get there. "You get the car; I'll get the bags." And away we go. You call meetings of the locals, and so it was terribly exciting. About a month into the campaign I was asked to take a team out on my own and become a lead advance man and they were going to pay me $1000 a month. I thought, *Holy cow, now I'm rolling—Not only do I get more responsibility and that's fun, but I'm getting paid for doing this*. Really by then I was hooked on the excitement of doing this.

Riley: But you're good at it too.

McBride: I thought I was pretty good at it. I paid attention to detail, and worked well with the team. Somehow, either because of the training or my instincts, I also knew that how we treated the locals was a reflection on the Vice President. If we came in and were ugly or rude to the locals, that reflected poorly on the campaign. I think I did well on that, as well.

Riley: Did you have any blowups or any bad experiences at this time?

McBride: You know, they probably seemed bad at the time. The crowd wasn't as big—Then the campaign team would arrive. The Vice President would go through the motions. Then you'd have your bosses, the campaign staff who were on the plane, and they thought the banner was going to be over here and you had it there. The crowd had 5,000 people, which would have been big for us at the time, versus, "We expected a bigger crowd." But I don't remember any particular blowups, any particular problems.

Part of that, though, was that there was a tone set by Vice President Bush and by the Bushes themselves. I came to really appreciate that as I worked more and more for them. They wanted to be remembered for doing things in a certain way and with consideration for people. I think that that filtered throughout the organization. It was expected—I'm not sure that anybody ever said it—that how you did the job was as important as the execution.

Perry: Now you're getting to see Vice President Bush up close on the campaign trail. What are your perceptions of him and his working with people and working with crowds and those kinds of things?

McBride: I would see him only for a couple of hours every four to five days. But he was animated. He was articulate. The crowds responded well to him. It was all very exciting and it encouraged my participation in the campaign. It was something I enjoyed doing and I was satisfied that I was working for the right guy. Of course by then he was a very loyal Vice President, so I didn't think of this as his own venture but rather reinforcing the Reagan-Bush team.

Perry: Did you have any thoughts at that point that four years hence maybe he'd run in his own right and that would be something you would want to participate in?

McBride: I don't think I actually thought that far down the road at that point.

Riley: You did this for just a few months, right?

McBride: I did it all of September, all of October. The election occurred in the first week, the first Tuesday in November 1984. By the middle of October, all the advance people are beginning to think, what do we do next? We're like itinerant workers. I felt myself as one of them. I wasn't really thinking, all right, I'll go back to Michigan and find out what job I'm going to find there. Although everybody was thinking, what job can we possibly get? The actual thought was, okay, once we win, we can all go work on the inaugural committee. I was lucky because my friend, patron, former boss, Jim Baker, was going to work on the inaugural committee again. I called him: "Can I work on the inaugural with you again counting bleacher seats?" He said, "Absolutely."

Riley: You told him the going rate was $1000 a month?

McBride: I took whatever—I think the inaugural pay was actually a little better than the campaign, as I recall. That was contract work so we agreed on some contract price, which I don't even remember but it was fair. By then one of my brothers, who was in the Marine Corps, and his wife were living in Virginia so I had a place to stay. But I'm still thinking about what is next. I understood the temporary nature of the inaugural committee work but didn't really know what would happen next.

I worked until January 20. Because we were in arrangements we also had to deal with the teardown of our construction. We actually got to stay on a little bit longer, a few weeks beyond.

Riley: This is the one where it was like 10 degrees below zero on inauguration day?

McBride: No one used our bleachers. No one used our reviewing stand. All that stuff we built went unused. We were sitting in a trailer in Lafayette Park, which was our office, just sitting there, nobody using any of our stuff. Then we start tearing it down. Disappointing.

Riley: All right, but through no fault of your own.

McBride: It was God's will. I didn't feel—I didn't go to any of the indoor events, or the thing that they did—I don't know what they called it at the time—the indoor arena they had somewhere in the area. They invited all the parade groups. The inaugural committee did their best to satisfy all those groups that had been invited, but it didn't have the same appeal for me at that point.

Riley: Okay, so we get you to 1985 and you're looking at the back end and you're thinking you're not going to back to Michigan and probably not to Florida to the printing business.

McBride: Right, I knew I didn't want to go into the printing business. What little network I had—I hadn't created much of a network at Eastern, again, one of the things I might have done differently. Even if I had, it would have been in business and right now I'm hooked on politics. So I asked my friend Jim Baker, "Is there anybody you can introduce me to?" He had done some consulting work for 3M. He got me an interview with 3M and they invited me to go to Minnesota. I had a great interview, and felt really excited about the chances of working for 3M. They offered me a position doing state government sales in North Carolina. As I recall, the money was probably pretty attractive at the time.

I turned it down because that wasn't really what I wanted to do. I didn't have anything else, but I did know that the RNC [Republican National Committee]—the Vice President's office was going to hire one advance person to be put on the RNC payroll to do political advance: campaigns, fundraisers, non-official events.

Riley: Sure.

McBride: I turned down the 3M job in the hopes that I could get that one job, knowing that there was a whole bunch of us who had come off the campaign and would be competing for the same job. There must have been interviews, I don't exactly remember, but somehow I got the job and was put on, essentially the Vice President's staff, but on the RNC payroll. I had a White House pass. I worked out of the Vice President's offices in the OEOB [Old Executive Office Building] but I was on the payroll of the RNC. I was doing those non-official events that were paid for by the campaigns.

Riley: Tell us about coming to Washington and finding your office for the first time. Do you have any memories of your first experience there? Is that too distant?

McBride: No, I really don't. It was all pretty thrilling to be working in the Old Executive Office Building. Some of the people who were on the Vice President's staff—Shortly after I arrived, there was a transition and we can talk about that. I was hired in January, early February of 1985. Admiral Dan Murphy was the Vice President's Chief of Staff at the time. He used to give a speech to new hires and I got that speech and it was, "Don't screw up. You're representing the

Vice President." That was enough to scare me and reinforce everything I thought I knew about working there. I do remember the Admiral Murphy speech.

Riley: A frightening speech.

McBride: A frightening speech. I knew some of the people who were on his staff because they had been assigned to the campaign. So some of it was familiar to me. I'm not even sure I remember what kinds of events I did or what particular events I did. Already I'm being a little ambitious, and I'm thinking, well, I've never really traveled overseas; I'd love to get on the official payroll so I could do advance on these international trips. The Vice President in early '85 was doing a lot of international travel, which I could not participate in being on a political payroll. So I would do other things.

Sometime maybe in March or April of 1985, Admiral Murphy left as the Vice President's Chief of Staff, and the Vice President hired Craig Fuller as his Chief of Staff. The general assumption, whether I was told this or we all talked about it or just understood it, was that the Vice President was beginning to think in terms of his own political ambitions. To your earlier question, he was now—We were thinking about '88 and what should he be doing to prepare for '88.

Admiral Murphy was not political. I think they'd known each other in intelligence circles. The idea of bringing Craig over from President Reagan's staff was to closely align with the White House staff, and also Craig was somebody who could bring more political insight. Craig brought a group of his own people into the Vice President's office, and frankly I wasn't sure I was going to survive that transition. I was one advance guy on the Vice President's staff with a new Chief of Staff. Would I survive? Somehow I did.

Riley: Who did he bring with him?

McBride: [redacted]

McBride: Yes, and we can talk about that later as we talk about Craig Fuller and how that may have contributed to some challenges.

Riley: We definitely want to hear about that.

McBride: Tom Collamore had been a volunteer on the Vice President's 1980 campaign. Tom and I continue to be good friends to this day. Craig brought Tom over, and a woman named Kathleen Shanahan to the staff secretary's office. Dave Ryder was now the new head of the advance office, so my new boss. Part of what Craig appeared to be charged with was creating a more buttoned down, more systemic, assistants-driven Vice President's office—more responsive. Let's get this ship in order, for you to try to run for President yourself. That was the impression.

Riley: Bush had known Fuller how?

McBride: Fuller was Cabinet Secretary under Reagan. I'm not sure how they would have—I think their interaction was limited to White House interaction. Now at the time Craig was married to a woman named Karen Hart. I had first met Karen in 1980 at the Republican National Convention in Detroit when she was married to someone else. In 1985 she was married to Craig, so maybe that contributed to the fact that I survived this transition. Somehow his wife may have put in a good word.

Riley: I keep thinking that if you keep dropping Jim Baker's name, that can't hurt you.

McBride: Right, hopefully they'll be confused. Which Jim Baker? So I survived that transition.

Riley: Do you have any recollections of specific activities that you were working on? You had already said that fairly quickly your attention turned to whether you could get on the Vice President's staff.

McBride: Yes, and sometime, I want to say within probably four months or so, there was an opening on his Senate payroll. His Senate payroll paid for most of the Vice President's budget. The White House budget for the Vice President is only one part of funding the office of the Vice President. The Vice President is also President of the Senate. There are Senate appropriations that also help fund the Vice President's office.

Perry: What percentage, do you know?

McBride: Gosh, I don't know. It was not insignificant. I went on the Senate payroll. I became a Senate employee after leaving the RNC payroll, but I held a White House pass. I had an office in the White House. I don't think I ever went to the Senate unless it was to accompany the Vice President. There were a number of us on the Senate payroll, others on the official White House payroll.

Riley: In practical terms, which payroll you were on had no effect on what you were doing in the Vice President's orbit?

McBride: It had an effect on what activities you could engage in. If you were on an RNC payroll you were limited to non-official events. If you were on an official payroll then you were limited in terms of the political activities, although the Senate payroll gets a little different. The way we treated it is once I went on the Senate payroll, which I think happened four or five months later, I then could travel in an official capacity and represent the V.P. on official events.

Riley: But there was no distinction among the official community? There was no slicing of the roles?

McBride: No. When I showed up at the office, people might have known what payroll I was on but there was no indicator on my badge.

Perry: You said you now had an office in the White House?

McBride: In the Old Executive Office Building. Most of us had offices in the Old Executive Office Building, considered part of the White House. My office was there.

Riley: And you're doing advance work.

McBride: I'm doing advance work, official trips now. Under Dave Ryder, who was the director of VP advance, I became officially, mostly in title, the deputy director of VP advance. What that really meant was that occasionally I would travel with the Vice President and the party, rather than Dave, to make sure that the execution of the trip went as the advance people had planned. You're there to make sure everything goes well, to answer questions if the Vice President has them as you're traveling. So now I'm having slightly more interaction with the Vice President. Occasionally I'm on Air Force Two with the Vice President. He sort of knows who I am at this time. I suppose he would have known my name but it wasn't intimate by any stretch.

Riley: Do you have supervisory capacity over the field advance people?

McBride: Yes, but most advance people are volunteers.

Riley: Even for official travel?

McBride: Even for official travel. In fact, oftentimes the entire team of advance people will be volunteers. What some administrations, including our own, would do would be to borrow federal employees from other agencies—Schedule C appointees. They would be sent out, if it is official, to go do advance for the President or Vice President, to be on the road. You're getting your Department of Labor salary. You're away from your desk at the Department of Labor but you're spending four days or ten days on the ground making preparations for the Vice President or the President's official travel on the ground.

At most you might have one or two of those government employees, but you're relying on local volunteers that you met during the campaign. So somebody working at an insurance agency says, "My boss will let me spend the next five days, because this is really cool." You're in charge of helping get the cars, doing all those things. You still rely on many a local dealership to loan you cars for the motorcade that day because there aren't official funds to pay for all these things.

Riley: You said that these were Schedule C people?

McBride: They might be, or they might not be, political appointees. A Schedule C would be a political appointee.

Riley: I'm still trying to figure out how one would come to be doing this. I mean you were deputed to Interior, or whatever, and the Vice President would borrow—Is the same true of Presidential advance?

McBride: Yes, to this day, I'm certain. It would be surprising to those of us who don't know about it from the outside, but it is quite well understood. So the Cabinet Secretary probably came from campaign circles, whoever he or she was, and understands this: "My trusted young lad or young lass here—Oh yes, I understand that the White House needs him or her for another week to help out." It's not uncommon.

Perry: Does there have to be a separation between an official trip by the Vice President, as opposed to a fundraiser?

McBride: Yes.

Perry: For example, if he is going out and fundraising, he wouldn't be allowed to borrow those Schedule Cs.

McBride: Should not. If you think of the campaign travel the White House would have been engaged in, the Vice President's office or the President' office in the last month or so, for anything that is campaign-related, really great care should be taken to separate those activities.

Riley: That's what you were doing previously, right? You said that you were—

McBride: Right, I would do the political stuff—

Riley: With the National Committee. There is a separate team—

McBride: Yes. In that case, though, I was a paid advance guy, so I suppose I would be the big shot on the team, but I would have assigned to me—I would have to find, identify, and get volunteers who would help me, even though I was on the RNC payroll, because I would need somebody to do the motorcade, somebody to help with the political rally. Maybe the campaign is loaning me somebody for the week. Ideally you're finding somebody in this vast network of George Bush advance people over from the '80s and '90s and you say, "Okay, now we're in Lexington, Kentucky. Who do we know that either is in the area or could fly in for a week to join the team?" A big part of the job of managing an advance office is how to build the team that is necessary to support all the travel.

Riley: Right, okay. So at this point you say that you're beginning to have some occasional interaction with the Vice President.

McBride: Yes, now that I'm deputy director of this advance—

Riley: You're traveling with him.

McBride: I'm traveling with him occasionally. I can also do international travel at this point in '85.

Riley: Do you remember your first international trip?

McBride: I remember China very well, which occurred sometime in September of '85. It may well have been my first international trip. I recall China for a number of reasons that we'll get into. It was really exciting. I was going to be out for at least two weeks, maybe two-and-a-half weeks. This was 1985. I did not know any of the fellows who were on the team, I don't think. One of the guys on the team was just elected U.S. Senator from Ohio, Rob Portman, who later served in the administration in a number of positions. He was a lawyer in Ohio and joined the team, got assigned.

We flew to Beijing. The Vice President was going to be visiting a number of cities in China, maybe four cities. We had Beijing, which was the first city he was going to visit, and then we were coordinating all of the schedules throughout his time in China. Everything was going to come through Beijing. I was on the staff, so in some ways I was lead for most of the China trip. It was challenging in many respects because at the time the big job was to create the schedule. What is the Vice President doing from the moment he arrives until the moment he leaves?

You're working with the embassy, the National Security Council. We don't get to invent it all. There are certain objectives that come from the trip, but then it is our job to help execute that. The Ambassador might have one idea that is completely different from what you're being told the Vice President wants to do, and it's not quite as simple as saying, "Okay, Mr. Ambassador, whatever you want." A big part of the job was trying to negotiate and help everybody feel good about this.

Perry: What were you told the Vice President wanted to do on that trip?

McBride: I'm not sure I remember exactly, but there were the usual tensions. He'll want to spend time at the embassy with the embassy community. That was very important to him whenever we traveled internationally. "I was a liaison to China. I was an ambassador. I know what it's like to support trips like this. *Let's go pump up the embassy staff*." So there's that.

Then there are official visits. He also had been in China ten years earlier so there was a tie that he had emotionally to China. We visited the Beijing Jeep plant. I think we were trying to highlight economic ties and business ties with China at the time. There is usually the official banquet and meetings with the government officials and that's what I remember.

What I remember most of all, though, were the technological challenges of actually—not only preparing the schedule, because we were using typewriters at the time, [IBM] Selectrics. They were not word processors. Dan probably doesn't even know what a typewriter is. Then you had to get it put into a form by somebody at the embassy who actually could load it on a secure computer, send it via secure computer from the embassy in Beijing. And of course at the time, security was a huge issue. We were using secure rooms in the Embassy to talk about the Vice President's schedule, and then a secure communication would go from the embassy to the State Department, and would be somehow cabled, handed, walked over, driven, somehow gotten to the Vice President's staff who would look at this and say, "No, this is all wrong," or "This is right," or "We don't have an hour—Where is his time to exercise?" We're on the other end, saying,

"How do we reconcile all the things we're trying to get in, in the two days or one day or three days he's in Beijing?"

Then, because Guangzhou, Shenzhen—I don't know if there were other stops—didn't have a full-blown embassy, we were trying to coordinate a collection of their schedule information from Beijing and get that back to the staff as well. As they're getting close—Part of why they need the schedule details is that they're going to print a small little copy of the schedule book. I brought an example of that; you've probably seen them. There is a little trip book that describes everything that is going to happen, every minute.

The plane is going to land at this time. You have to fill in all those holes. In order to print it they need the information. Some of it is still falling into place while they're getting ready to get on a plane. That was the pressure. Then he lands and you're trying to execute everything you said was going to happen, and hopefully it does.

Riley: Did the trip go okay?

McBride: Beijing went very well. We can talk about what led to other things for me, related to that China trip. The Beijing trip went very well. I remember the Vice President being very pleased. I remember him being excited about being in China. There was clearly a draw for him and Mrs. [Barbara] Bush, having lived there even ten years earlier.

I was just in China last week. Even in '85 it was a very different place than it is today. I can't imagine what it was like ten years before that when they lived there. They rode their bikes. They found a way to become part of the community there in China in a way that continues to this day to capture the imagination of Chinese people.

[redacted]

About three weeks or so go by and there are all sorts of rumors about who will become Personal Aide. The fortunate thing for me, ultimately, is that because Sean left abruptly, there was not time for Craig or the Vice President or friends of the Vice President to lobby on behalf of their son, or for them to think about some more orderly transition. There was a need. The need exists today. We need an aide; we need somebody to do this thing. That was fortunate for me. I'm not

from a political family. There was no one calling the Vice President, saying, "Hire my son to do this job." I had some familiarity, some reputation on the Vice President's staff. He knew me a little bit and I had some ability to be considered for this position.

It was a Friday. I don't know if I was on a trip somewhere or in my office. I received a call from Fuller's office, or from Craig himself, who said, "On Monday the Vice President is going to New Orleans. I want you on the trip." I wasn't scheduled to be on the trip because my boss was going to be the tour director managing the trip. He said, "No, no, we want you on the trip anyway." I said, "What am I supposed to do?" He said, "Just be helpful. Be on the trip."

Okay, so we fly to New Orleans. I'm trying to be helpful without presuming anything, just sort of on the fringes being helpful. On the flight back on Air Force Two, a C9, not terribly fancy, glamorous at the time, I get invited to come meet with Craig Fuller and the Vice President. The Vice President had a table, one seat here and two seats here. That was about it. That was the accommodation.

I was asked to sit down across from the Vice President. He was very relaxed. He must have introduced the subject somehow. I don't remember that, but he said, "I'm looking for an aide." What I do recall him saying is, "How would you like to try out to be my aide?" I said, "Yes, that would be great, I'd like that." By then I was over whatever hesitation I had had. "That would be terrific, I'd love to do that, sir." He said, "Why don't we give this three months? Let's talk again at the end of three months and decide if you like me and I like you." I'm thinking, *I know I like you, so I guess I know what this is about.* I said, "Yes, sir, that would be good."

We started right away. One of the points both he and Craig made—I don't remember exactly how they said it, but two things were clear: One, they were reformulating the job so that it involved more attention to supporting the Vice President in Washington and on the complex at the White House. It was really beginning to think about the position as managing his daily schedule on the complex and around Washington, as opposed to just a travel aide.

The other point one or both of them made was they wanted somebody with some political experience or background, knowing that we were going to be going into an election cycle in '86 that would be very focused on supporting Congressional candidates and an eye towards whatever he decided to do about his own campaign for the Presidency in 1988. I certainly fit that bill and the job became infinitely more interesting that I'd be supporting him on the complex.

That helped Craig, because Craig says he found himself having to say, "Okay, now you're going to go in this meeting and here's what you need." Well, Craig needed to be engaged in other things so he needed somebody he could trust to help manage the Vice President. We began figuring out what that meant.

Riley: It sounds like it is a much closer parallel to what the President's personal aide does.

McBride: Exactly. Some of it may have been formed by observing Jim Kuhn or Dave Fischer, who was probably a reference. Fischer was Reagan's aide, and the Vice President had some fondness for them and observed how they had interacted. I think he may have even asked me to go see Jim Kuhn at some time and talk to him about it. So he had that in mind.

Perry: What were the duties, then, particularly as related to helping the Vice President around the White House complex and beyond?

McBride: It was a different job when we traveled. In the complex, there were other dynamics. So now you have this aide who thinks he's supposed to be around the Vice President. We also have administrative assistants or secretaries who think that some portion of that has been, at least for the first four years, their job. So there was the professional dynamic that I had to wade through, which is how do I make sure that these people know I'm not a particular threat, but do the job that I've been asked to do? There was that element, working closely with his executive assistants, his secretaries. That was tricky at times. But essentially my job was to make sure that he kept his appointments on time, to make sure he knew exactly who he was meeting with. Did he have the materials he needed for that particular meeting?

When he was Vice President there was a lot of bouncing back and forth between the Old Executive Office Building and his West Wing office. He had an office in both buildings. Depending on who he was meeting with, or if he was speaking to a group in some meeting room in the Old Executive Office Building, he would be moving around the complex. I had note cards that represented a speech he was to give, or a briefing paper, keeping all that straight even as we walked over to the meeting.

That's one thing the secretaries or assistants weren't doing. It was, "Okay, here's your speech," but there was no context. He didn't understand, "Am I seeing these people? Why am I doing this?" So it was to try to add color, to make sure he was prepared, that he had what he needed, the information, the physical materials, that he was there on time, he was in the right room, he knew how to get to the room. There were agents with us even on the complex, but it wasn't their job to tell him who he was seeing. That was, over time, the role that I developed with him on the complex.

Perry: How did you prepare for going in to see individuals or groups and giving him that color commentary and context for him?

McBride: It was up to me to understand who we were seeing and what the event was about. I would speak to the White House aide responsible for the meeting or event to get information. Sometimes I'd physically walk to the room to make sure I knew where it was so that I didn't look like I didn't know what I was doing either. I'd seen the room. If I wasn't sure what was going to happen when he walked in the door, what would the room look like? Would it be set up theater style? Would it be set up as a big long table like this? It seems like a small thing, but when you walk in the room and you think you're talking to a theater-style room and it is set up quite differently, he looks confused or unsure of what's happening.

I don't whether anybody told me to or not, but I adopted this role of being very well prepared on what, exactly, he was going to do and see, and trying to prepare him as best as possible, but also to do it in a way that was calm and not frenetic. At least this was the style I developed.

Perry: Punctual.

McBride: Punctual. It was clear to me that timeliness was important to him. I had learned that, doing advance for him. Unlike some other Presidents or public officials, being on time counted

for a lot with him. He views that as a sign of consideration and respect for others. It was clear to me that part of my job was to keep him on time, or to understand that if we deviate from the schedule, are we keeping somebody waiting? Are we being inconsiderate? Where do we have room in the schedule?

There was a project office, a person responsible for each meeting. For instance, Mr. Bush was in charge of the drug interdiction task force for a time when he was Vice President in that second term. Phil Brady was the staff person dealing with that issue. So if I wasn't quite sure about something related to the meeting, I would call Phil. I'd see the briefing paper and I'd say, "Phil, what's going to happen? What do we need him to do? Is there anybody in particular he needs to recognize or pay special attention to in there?"

That may all be in the briefing paper. He may not read it. So as we're walking into the meeting I might say, "Mr. Vice President, we want to highlight Admiral so-and-so's role in this effort." Little things like that helped him to appear that he knew exactly—It wasn't trying to make him be or do something he didn't want to do; it was helping him prepare for the things that came naturally to him. This was what George Bush would want to know. Who do I need to thank here? Who has been particularly helpful? The problem was that, in the course of a day, given all he had to do, it was hard to focus on every detail. My job was to help him to be the person that I understood him to want to be, and to recognize, have the time for, and give attention to people.

Perry: Just to follow up on that, his style going into these things—Did he relish this part of the job, meeting with all sorts of people? He didn't do it as a task or duty?

McBride: No, he loved it. He lit up. He is not perhaps as natural as a Bill Clinton, in terms of really having a magnetism that I think is unseen anywhere else. But there is a sincerity about how enthusiastic George Bush was to be with you in the room at this meeting. That was always very important to him no matter what the task. I don't ever remember him thinking of his daily schedule as drudgery. There were days when he was tired, but he didn't complain about the intensity of the job.

Riley: We'll want to focus a lot of attention today on his personal characteristics, his style, working with him. Let's get to the White House years and focus on that a little bit more. You said that you had a three-month try-out. Did you ever worry that you were going to flunk out?

McBride: No, I didn't worry about that. I just did the job as sincerely and as earnestly as I thought it needed to be done and I frankly didn't worry that it wasn't going well. I felt it was going well. He also appreciated hard work and effort. Maybe I didn't get everything quite right in those three months. If I didn't, he never said so. We never actually had the three-month review until about three-and-a-half years later when he asked if I would stay on as his aide at least the first year of his Presidency.

We would go through this—I learned to recognize this—I suppose like any relationship, for about two weeks out of a year we would fall into this routine where he would exert some sort of independence that suggested, "I don't need an aide," without saying so. Over time I managed to recognize this and back off a little bit, let him see less of me, while ensuring nothing fell through the cracks. But it was a very close relationship. We began to recognize each other's moods. He

just needed space for about two weeks every year and I would just back off and do the job in a way that gave him more space. During this time period, he didn't have to see me quite so much as he did during the rest of the year.

Riley: I'd like to ask you about your perceptions of the relationship—two interrelated relationships: One was President Bush's relationship himself with President Reagan, and secondly, the relationship of the Bush staff and network with the Reagan staff and network. You're coming in at a time when you're going to see changes in this over time. Part of it is just, I would assume, the natural progression into campaign mode. But you've got the Iran-Contra thing that is creating a complication. Let me just sort of throw that out for you.

McBride: Let's start with what I observed between Bush and Reagan and his relationship with President Reagan. He had immense respect for President Reagan. I can't overstate how much he respected, liked, genuinely thought President Reagan was funny, enjoyable to be around. I just can't overstate how much he cared for and appreciated the opportunity to be his Vice President. I'm coming in as his aide in the fall of '85, so I've never really seen this. This is my first look at exactly how he reacts as he's going to a meeting with the President.

He was very deferential, that's one word I would use, when it came to getting in close around the President's orbit. It was one thing for me to be with him on the complex; it was another thing to be with him getting close to the Oval Office. There was a certain place where I just stopped walking and he continued on to the Oval Office. It was about how he showed respect for the President's turf. This is the President's province. I only talked to the President's aide if instructed to do so by Vice President Bush. We stayed pretty clear.

A couple of months after becoming the Vice President's aide, around Christmastime, I get this call from the V.P. I'm over in the OEOB office; he's over in the West Wing. His secretary calls and says, "The Vice President wants to see you at 10:30. Come over here. Have your coat." So I meet him in his office in the West Wing. He says, "Come on, we're going out shopping." Okay, this is weird. Where were we going shopping? "We're looking for a Christmas gift for President Reagan."

It gets worse. We go about three blocks from the White House. Of course, this involves the agents, a motorcade, our going out in the V.P.'s limo, and we pull up on Vermont Avenue in front of Al's Magic Shop. *You've got to be kidding me*. He explains, "The President has the best sense of humor of anyone and we're going to find a gag gift here for President Reagan for Christmas." He took great care on what to get the President. He said to me, "This relationship is very important. I want it to be just right." Like we all do with people we care about—What's the perfect gift? He put a lot of thought and energy and humor into it.

I'm thinking, *Geez, I'm not getting this*. It's not what I would have thought, Al's Magic Shop. I don't know. He ended up with one of those Magic Eight Balls, the decision-maker eight balls. The perfect gift. That was his Christmas gift for President Reagan that year. But it said a lot to me about this friendship, this respect, the admiration, adoration—Adoration is too strong a word, but it is something short of that. It isn't blind adoration, but almost going to the last limit to show this respect and friendship for him.

I would stop well short of George Will's referring to him as a "lap dog." He had a relationship with President Reagan in which he believed he had the opportunity to speak very directly with him. He looked forward to their one-on-one lunches every week. Rarely were those changed on Vice President Bush's account. If they were changed, it was because of the President's schedule. It was really important for the V.P. to have that time with the President.

Perry: And those were in the Oval Office?

McBride: Those were in the little dining room just next to the Oval Office. There's the Oval Office, a little office and then a dining room next to that. They would spend roughly an hour every week, typically, if one of them wasn't traveling.

Perry: So you would walk him to that each week but then stand back as he went on in?

McBride: Yes, if he was there in his West Wing office, it's ten or twenty yards away from the V.P.'s office, so I might not even leave his office. I'd just say, "I'll see you this afternoon," or "I'll be back later."

Perry: Afterwards did he seem energized by those? Excited about the opportunity to speak?

McBride: Yes. He seemed very satisfied to have that time with the President. It was a chance for him to talk about things that were important to him, things that he thought the President needed to hear, to give his advice to the President in a way that wasn't dealing with staff.

By all accounts, the President's staff was deferential, respectful of the Vice President, but, going to the second part of your question, there was a pretty big divide between the White House staff and the Vice President's staff. There was a pretty big gulf there. Probably a lot of people on the President's staff had a hard time forgetting that this is a guy who ran against the boss, President Reagan. This is a guy who referred to his economic policy as voodoo economics. It was hard for some in the White House to move beyond some of that.

And yet, notwithstanding what some staffers may have thought, the Vice President and the President seem to have developed a very close working relationship. The Vice President knew how to say, "That was a campaign. I am now the most loyal Vice President you're ever going to imagine. I'm going to give you my advice; I'm going to give you the benefit of my experience; but I'm going to do it in a respectful, quiet, loyal way and not criticize you."

It makes getting to the separation and running on your own much more difficult, and we struggled with that. He struggled with that. He had his own personality, a tendency not to talk about himself. Then he had the burden, the obligation, to be loyal to the President. How do you define who you are, who you will be, without contrasting in some way to the guy you've worked for, or without bragging about himself, which he was admonished not to do?

Riley: The staffs generally—I want to go to the point that you just raised, that there was a pretty big division. I suspect that there is some of that in a lot of White Houses. But do you get a sense—Was there a sense of competition? Was there just a sense that they do what they do and we do what we do and those are two different things?

McBride: No, I didn't sense that. I think there is a fear of competition by many Presidential staffs that in some way a Vice President will try to outshine the President. There is competition in that sense. There can be an anxiety, jealousy, or concern that the Vice President and his staff don't know their place. I think that's very common. I don't think it's unique. It was very present; at least I observed it when I came in.

Strangely, I had friends on the President's advance staff. They were friendly to me. I got along okay with some of those folks on the staff but that was the exception. At least, I felt it was the exception. There was a big gulf there. It gets complicated if you're former political opponents too. Do you really get over the mistrust or whatever was said during a campaign?

I believe both President Reagan and Vice President Bush clearly got over that; I don't think Reagan held any of that. But among staffs, who think they're doing the right thing protecting the prerogative of their boss, I think it was harder for staffs to get over that.

Riley: Did Vice President Bush ever find it necessary to address this issue with the staff?

McBride: I don't remember specific circumstances, but he would constantly remind us that we had an obligation to toe the line, to defer to the White House staff. He'd say, "The White House will drive this. We're not going to do our own thing."

I also remember quite often the Vice President saying to Craig Fuller, "Make sure the White House knows this." "Make sure you check with the White House," meaning the President's senior staff, or he may have said the Chief of Staff. For a time, Howard Baker was there, Ken Duberstein—I've forgotten who else was Chief of Staff when we were there. The Vice President was very sensitive to the notion, particularly as we got more into the campaign, that there be a lot of coordination with the President's staff. And I think that was one of the roles that the Vice President imagined for Craig, as he looked at his own future. How do I ensure there is this trust that things I will be required to do if I want to run for President don't add to any misunderstanding or mistrust among the staffs?

Riley: The one name that you didn't recall was Don Regan.

[redacted]

Riley: Okay.

McBride: My impression was that there was a great deal of protectiveness over her husband. I'm not sure she ever got over the 1980 campaign. Many spouses have this tendency to be hypersensitive as it relates to people we care about. That same warmth that Vice President Bush seemed to get from President Reagan, I don't think exuded from Nancy Reagan.

Riley: You use the word protectiveness. Was there a sense that he was doing things that might not have been in the President's best interest? Or is it just this general sense that—

McBride: Anything he might have had to say in running for President. I'm sure that if you're looking through the lens that this is somehow—that every utterance is meant to create a distinction between you and the guy you've served for eight years, it would be easy to read into any of that that you're breaking free. I don't know that there was an active concern about that. I think it was quite the opposite. The White House was quite satisfied—the White House being the staff and the President. But it was more tense. I'm not sure that Vice President Bush would ever say that, but it was my impression that it was.

There wasn't social interaction. I'm not sure that the Bushes had been upstairs in the living quarters prior to the traditional visit of the President-elect. Barbara Bush had about six weeks, eight weeks, to figure out how they were going to live up there. You would think that in eight years there would be a fair amount of that. I think the Vice President had been up there on a handful of occasions, but there certainly wasn't a lot of social interaction. There may have been one time while I was an aide that President Reagan and First Lady Nancy Reagan came to the Vice President's house for dinner but I'm not even sure that's true. Maybe I dreamed that up.

Riley: Well, they're a very private couple.

McBride: Yes, a very different kind of couple from George Bush and Barbara Bush. They were protective of their time together, even, some might argue, to the exclusion of their own children. So they were a very different couple. We can talk about Camp David, the use of their time together at Camp David, polar opposites from how the Bushes treated it.

Riley: Let me go back then and ask about Don Regan, because you said that you sort of lumped him in, mentally at least, in the category with Nancy.

McBride: I hadn't thought of him for a very long time.

Riley: It's no surprise to me, given generally the history of the White House, that there might have been some tensions between anybody and Don Regan, so let me just throw that out. You gave a reaction that indicated that maybe that wasn't a great relationship.

McBride: I'd be interested to know, to be reminded when he was Chief of Staff.

Riley: I remember it was a job swap. Jim Baker, the other Jim Baker, was Chief of Staff, which by the way suggested there was a kind of a strain of political forgiveness, because Baker had been—

McBride: Yes, he was brilliant by all accounts in building trust on the team and demonstrating his loyalty to President Reagan and to the staff. He was well regarded, well respected by Reagan's staff.

Riley: I'll look in the briefing book, it may be in here, but my sense is that this would have been early, 1985, almost immediately after the re-election, that the job swap had been devised.

McBride: So he was Chief of Staff when I became the aide. I guess I don't remember much about it. I remember the tension around his leaving, but I don't remember any particular negative interaction between Vice President Bush and Don Regan; I just don't.

Riley: Okay. I had raised the issue of Iran-Contra as a potential complication in the relationship. I don't know if you have any light to shed on that or not.

McBride: Maybe not as it relates to the relationship as much as to the tension it created inside the Vice President's staff. The Vice President was concerned that anything he may have done—I remember him being concerned about it in the context of reflecting poorly on the President during the White House. In that respect there was a lot of focus on what was going on. I don't remember a lot of details on it, but when articles would come out, clearly we were focused on those—who did what, when.

Actually I never really intersected with—You'll recall that in Jerusalem he was to have met with somebody that supposedly was some arms dealer or somebody connected in some way to all this. This was in '86. We had made a trip to the Middle East. We spent an unusually long period of time in one place. We may have spent three nights at the King David Hotel, which is longer than we generally stayed anywhere. We did meetings, cultural things, and tours of the city.

There was about a three- or four-hour period of downtime one afternoon. The Vice President said he didn't need anything; he was just going to be resting, so the photographer and I got a car and went to Bethlehem. It's five miles away. We said, "Let's go tour this. We're never going to be back." So we did. It turns out later that the Vice President had actually met with somebody loosely connected to the whole situation. I couldn't figure out when on earth this could have possibly happened. Well, it turned out he had seen somebody while I was gone. I was first of all annoyed that there were meetings going on and I wasn't there.

Riley: Sure.

McBride: Then I was delighted not to have been anywhere near.

Riley: But what you're saying is that there was a scheduled meeting that—Or was it unscheduled?

McBride: It was unscheduled. There was nothing on the schedule. Now, whether someone from the White House asked him to see somebody—I was told later he was asked to take a secure call. I think that's how it unfolded. There was no secure phone in the Vice President's room, so he was taken down to the Secret Service command post to take the secure call. He took a call, met with somebody. That's vaguely what I remember.

Riley: Barbara, did you have anything you wanted to ask on this?

Perry: I wanted to ask about other trips abroad. The famous "You die, I fly" line.

McBride: Yes.

Riley: And Barbara Bush saying later on in her memoirs that these were really important trips. They weren't strictly ceremonial, because they gave the Vice President a chance to meet with other heads of state or people who might become heads of state. Were you on those trips, the state funerals?

McBride: Yes. Most of the funerals were over by the time I arrived. All the Soviet leaders had died, so we didn't do—There was one famous trip in early '85 where he was in Africa, and then they had to stop in Switzerland to buy parkas because they were going to [Leonid] Brezhnev's funeral, or somebody's funeral, and then on to Russia. The "You die, I fly" period was really before I became his aide, but we did a lot of international travel.

Some of that was a function of reinforcing U.S. policy by sending the Vice President. Some of it was a function of anticipating his own future plans. For instance, we took this trip to the Middle East in '86. In '86 we went to Israel, Jordan, and Egypt. There were some complications with that trip we can talk about. Another trip to Bahrain, Oman, and Yemen, which was quite interesting. There was a lot of international travel. For me, I'm thinking this is really exciting. I've never heard of Yemen, I thought that was pretty cool, seeing a lot of interesting places.

In many cases the Vice President, it became clear to me, knew some of these leaders from his days at the UN [United Nations] or was building an amazing network and interacting well with these leaders. It was part of who he was, what was interesting to him, particularly building on prior relationships. It was clear this was something that gave him a lot of energy.

Riley: Let's take a break.

[BREAK]

Riley: When you're working as the Vice President's personal aide, you're beginning at this point to get a pretty good feel for this guy. You were saying that you discovered in the first year that there were about two weeks out of the year when he needed some space. Tell us about the person George Bush that you're now beginning to spend your hours with. What's it like working with him? What were his defining personality traits? How was he to work with? If there were warts as well as golden strands, we'd like to hear about both.

McBride: Let me see if I can come up with any warts. It might be helpful to understand what I was doing for him. In town, it's fairly obvious. There are a lot of folks who want to help, secretaries and folks. I'm with him in-between meetings, as he moves between offices. If he had an event in the evening in town or nearby, it was usually just me and the photographer. Even the military aides, the doctors, had no particular interest. You couldn't get anybody to go out of their way. It was a very small motorcade. There were no flags, seals. It wasn't even like it is today, some of it driven by security. We had no interest. There was me, and the photographer. That was it, usually.

Increasingly as '86 came around we were traveling a lot for the Congressional mid-term elections. There was a lot of foreign travel, and his own travel. A lot of my job was defined by the preparation and the travel out of town. I dealt with a lot of the mundane things, getting his bags from the car onto the helicopter and from the helicopter onto Air Force Two. That wasn't his concern, even for his briefcase; that was mine.

Riley: Was he a light packer or a heavy packer?

McBride: Thank God he was a light packer, because I was usually humping my bags and his bags at the same time. Who was worried about his bags? I was. Who was worried about making sure he had time in his schedule to eat breakfast, eat lunch, eat dinner, see his brother in St. Louis? Is he getting a massage that day? Is he going to have time to work out on the exercise bike? Where is the bike? Do we have a bike in the suite? What time is he going to bed? How much time before we have to get up the next day? I was worrying about a lot of these things. As Vice President we didn't travel with stewards. By law he was allowed a doctor, a military aide, a personal aide and a secretary. Well, the secretary was usually Craig Fuller's, who was responsible for typing up speeches and all that. It wasn't necessarily to worry about these things.

There were security issues around: Where's the food coming from? Did we order it in his name? No, we'd order it in mine. What does he want to eat? Was it delivered? When he became President there were stewards who were down in the kitchen dealing with this. When he was Vice President there was none of that. I was dealing with a lot of that.

Then also we were working with the advance team, so at night I would talk to the advance teams to go through the schedule for the next day to understand exactly what it was the Vice President was going to be doing. I would literally visualize every step of the trip based on the schedule they would have prepared. The plane stops. He's walking off the plane. He gets off the plane. Who is standing at the foot of the stairs? Who is going in the limousine with him? How long is the drive? Well, we left three people not in the limo; what car are they riding in? Are they going to ride and be with him on the next stop? Because he really likes these people. We would go through all of these details.

So to your question, he liked things to be well prepared. He wanted things to be executed well because a lot of it went to the consideration for people around him. Part of staying on time meant we minimized the disruption to local traffic. If we're just taking our time maybe traffic has been held up fifteen minutes longer than it should have. Who did that inconvenience?

He actually charged me with keeping us on time. That wasn't always easy to do. Sometimes I'd say, "Mr. Vice President, we've got to go. Agents have blocked traffic." That was enough to get him into the limo, to race to the vehicle. That's all he needed to hear. I'd try not to overuse that line. It was about his consideration for others. But, like all of us, you want your travel to go well. You're tired. The demands on him, particularly as he was running for President, increased. You had the campaign saying you need to do "this"; yet, he still was Vice President. There were a lot of pressures on him. If a trip wasn't well planned, if he didn't have time to exercise, to rest, then by his own words he'd say, "I'm grumpy." He would be grumpy. So my job was to push back on the schedulers, to try to think about what he needed personally to stay going at the pace that was expected of him.

Riley: How much sleep did he need?

McBride: I'm going to say six hours or so. There were often times it was midnight or one o'clock before he'd get to bed. When we traveled we would share a suite. He would be in one bedroom and a parlor, and I would be in the other bedroom, which would allow me the access to

the suite, to wake him up, knock on the door, make sure he was awake, get his stuff. We would typically keep that arrangement even if Mrs. Bush was traveling with him, but of course that's a whole different level of sensitivity.

Riley: Sure.

McBride: That meant I had to be even more sensitive when Mrs. Bush was with the Vice President. It was a different dynamic when she was traveling; not a bad one, just different. So he didn't require a lot of sleep. Normally in the morning he would wake up on his own unless it had been a very late night. I would try to get up an hour or so before he would be expected to be up, to shower, get dressed, go through the schedule, and pack my own clothes, make sure his bags were packed, get them all down to the limo, and get back up to the suite before the Vice President was ever due to leave. If the V.P. wants to leave and is walking out the door, and I'm somewhere on an elevator in between, I'm going to run the risk of missing the motorcade. So there was stuff I had to manage around him just before and after the published schedule.

Riley: Was he a morning person?

McBride: Yes, I thought of him as a morning person. He wasn't a night owl. He didn't like to stay up to all hours. President Clinton by contrast is very much a night owl, existed on a lot less sleep, really liked being up late. That wasn't necessarily so for President Bush. But I also didn't think of him as—like the stories you heard about President Reagan, who wanted the lights out at nine. That would have been strange for George Bush. But he wasn't a night owl in the sense that he liked to thump around at night.

Riley: What about his eating habits? Was he particular about what he ate? Did you have to be particular about what you had for him?

McBride: A lot of times we were ordering room service and it would come to my room in my name but I'm ordering what it is that he wants to eat. He liked cheeseburgers or the usual bad food.

Riley: Not pork rinds?

McBride: This was one of the things I learned when I was doing advance on the campaign. Somewhere someone had decided that he liked pork rinds. I don't know if he liked pork rinds or not, but every time an advance person would get to a town, they'd say, "He loves pork rinds. Be sure to have lots of pork rinds, and Dr. Pepper." One time, years later, he said, "What are all these pork rinds?" "Everybody thinks you like pork rinds." I don't know where that started. I'm not sure I ever saw him eat a pork rind.

Riley: Did he have to have a big breakfast when he started the day?

McBride: When we traveled he would pack his own clothes, unless while going through the suite I would find things that didn't get packed that I'd throw in his bag. Before we left Washington the stewards would help him, but otherwise he would generally pack his own clothes. I didn't pack his clothes. I would call him the night before to make sure he knew, "You're going to have time to work out. We're out for five days." He would have the schedule

but it would just be another way to remind him. "We have a black tie dinner one night; you need your tuxedo. You're going to have time to exercise three of those days so you want to bring workout clothes; casual one day, business suits the others." He would pack his own clothes.

One of the things he would pack is this little portable plug-in water heater. He would travel with low-acid instant coffee and he would make himself coffee in the morning no matter where we were. So typically he would have coffee. The agents would have thrown the newspaper in the suite either as he woke up or before. I would often find him in bed, his hair a complete mess, in his PJs, reading the newspaper, drinking his coffee, with the TV on. Typically we'd order granola and yogurt, a very light breakfast. He liked to exercise. He knew that he needed to eat carefully.

Perry: He certainly kept his trim military bearing and figure.

McBride: He did. But the exercise was really important, as it was for his son, mentally as well as physically because of the schedule demands on him.

Riley: What kind of exercise?

McBride: Typically the simplest would be to have an exercise bike in the room. His preference was to go for a run locally. I would usually work with the agents to decide if that was something that was easily arranged. When he was campaigning, we might find a local high school to go to and run with the high school track team or a military group. Sometimes it was just too complicated to take him out. Then I would make the decision, "No, we're not going to go out. We'll stay in." What the agents were worried about is whether we needed local resources to get us from the hotel to a running site. We'd have to identify the running site. We'd have to keep the site secure. That involved more preparation.

So they were always prepping me. The advance guys wouldn't know, because it would always depend on either someone asking the VP, which they weren't going to do, or me. I would either make a decision on his behalf, which he would either be happy with or not. I'd say, "Sorry, sir, there wasn't time." And that was it. That came with experience and getting to know him and how we would take care of him so that I would have the confidence to say, no, we cannot manage getting him out, getting him back. It also came down to how much time he has to clean up and get ready. There's going to be an event. Is that the way he should spend his time? Should he rest? I started to learn how he liked to execute his day.

Riley: Swimming? Weights?

McBride: I don't remember him swimming, or doing weights. If it was swimming it was recreational because he was in Maine or at their pool, but I don't remember him swimming laps.

Riley: Maybe this changes from one period to the next but I would guess that most of this is true for the Vice Presidency as well as the Presidency: Did he need a lot of downtime during the day? There are very few people who can come in after a busy day and put their head on the pillow and go to sleep.

McBride: Right.

Riley: Did he need downtime? How much downtime? What was downtime for him? Was it reading a novel? Was it watching Johnny Carson on TV?

McBride: Sometimes the downtime was as simple as time to prepare for the speech, which for some of us isn't really downtime. An hour-and-a-half is about what we'd try to block out, particularly if he was going to run off site. He would change, get in the car, run, get back and go. Occasionally he'd just need to put his feet up. But he was so active that down time for him meant doing something other than giving a speech.

He would get frustrated if the schedule was too demanding and he couldn't get his exercise in, or if there wasn't enough time to prepare and go through the speeches he was expected to give. And there might be two or three in a day. It wasn't as simple as going to the word processor and changing a few words here and just printing it. We were changing speech *cards*. If you change one card, the other cards change. So he felt some pressure not to change the speech too much or there wasn't going to be time to get new cards done. It was not easy to do.

He would be frustrated at times with Craig Fuller. Craig would take more of the blame for that than I would, for the scheduling operation. As opposed to me being the object of that, he would express that frustration to Craig if he didn't feel he had enough prep time.

Riley: But in terms of his own relaxation, this was not somebody—to go back to Clinton, people talked about how Clinton was always playing cards, reading books or something. Did the President—

McBride: I don't remember. He would occasionally have a book with him, because I'd worry about making sure the book was packed. But I don't remember him reading much. He thrived on the company of friends. When he was President, it sort of morphed and maybe there was a little more time for that, strangely enough. However, if we were going to be somewhere in an evening, he'd say, "Where am I going to go for dinner?" I'd say, "Where would you like to go? Is there anybody in this town you know that you'd like to see?" He'd say, "I'd like to see so-and-so who was my campaign manager ten years ago." Or, "I really like this person. Call them, get them 'on board.'" His relaxation was being with friends, maybe having a dinner out, when we were traveling.

Riley: Did he prefer to travel with Mrs. Bush, or was that a complication in having her along?

McBride: No complication. I think he loved it. I just think it wasn't always possible for a lot of reasons. She had a different schedule. Some Presidents need the presence of their wives to execute even better; the performance is better, the experience is better. I wouldn't say that was necessary, but he certainly enjoyed her company, thrived on her company. There was great humor that was exchanged between the two of them. He enjoyed that.

In preparing the schedule, we didn't rely on making sure Mrs. Bush was on a particular trip because it was a really important trip and therefore we needed Mrs. Bush. [redacted]

Riley: Did he make an effort to have—You had said he liked having friends. Did he invite friends to go on trips with him, or was that too much of a complication?

McBride: I don't really recall that so much when he was Vice President or as he was campaigning, more perhaps when he was President. There was an annual trip that he would do with friends when he was Vice President. It may have carried over when he was President. Before I came on board he would do it without his aide. I said, "No, I want to be there. You can't do this without me." Or I said, "No, sir, I'll be on this trip, I'll stay out of your way, but I'll be there."

Over time, he usually relented on that and understood the intent. My goal was to be there. I wanted to find ways to be indispensible but also to understand that was the Vice President's "guys' trip" and I'm going to be sensitive to that. He would go annually to Islamorada, Florida and stay at the Cheeca Lodge with Fred Zeder, who had been Ambassador to Micronesia; Nick Brady, who had served in a number of roles, U.S. Senator from New Jersey and other things, a good friend; and Alan Simpson was the fourth. The four of them—right there you can imagine. Who wouldn't want to be there?

We would fly down in Air Force Two into either Islamorada or Miami, and motorcade down. Typically on a trip like that the doctor and the military aide would go, and the agents. Invariably, particularly as he was getting into '86, if some kid went up to the Vice President's table in the middle of dinner, someone would have to deal with that. Increasingly my job was to do that. I helped him to see why it was important for me to be along.

These guys stayed in a beached boathouse on the property that was part of the grounds of the Cheeca. The four of them would stay there in this accommodation. Then they would go out fishing all day.

Riley: Wives?

McBride: No wives. They would go tarpon fishing one day, bone fishing another day, maybe be there two or three days. They would stay up late and cut up—Zeder was a character. Brady was the most sedate of the lot—telling stories. They'd go out fishing and I'd wander around and hang out.

Riley: You didn't go out on the boat with them?

McBride: No. One time Nick Brady had a spot in his boat. His partner wasn't coming until a day later—I forget what it was—and Nick invited me to ride in his boat and we went tarpon fishing. By then I had learned to be basically invisible, helpful without standing on the dock looking forlorn. My job wasn't to—I wasn't the Vice President's friend or his fishing buddy. It was being helpful and facilitating things. I relished the job. I relished being around, and also the time with the agents. Over time I became very close to the Secret Service detail.

Perry: Was he competitive? We read so much about his athletic skills in high school and college. So in fishing, did he have to catch the biggest fish?

McBride: In a good-natured way, yes, but I don't ever remember him being in a foul mood when he didn't catch the biggest fish or have the best golf score. He loved sports, he loved competition, but he wasn't driven to be the best, to win all the time. He enjoyed the fun of sport and competition without the need to be the winner every time.

Riley: Do you have any other specific recollections of these periods in Florida that you can share with us? I would think you could probably spend an entire day talking about Alan Simpson.

McBride: There's no one funnier; he's just the best. The Vice President loved Simpson's company. That goes to 41's sense of humor. He loved to laugh. He loved to make people laugh. He loved to be entertained by people like Alan Simpson. He liked to be around people who would make him laugh. He and Mrs. Bush would make each other laugh. You see more of that since they've left the White House. But that was going on daily behind the scenes. He liked to have fun. He has a great sense of humor. He is funny. That's why he liked folks like Alan Simpson.

Riley: Tell us about his sense of humor. Is he a storyteller? W is sort of famous for—

McBride: [redacted]

Riley: Some say he is a yarn-teller. But that's not really George H.W. Bush's—

McBride: A yarn-teller, yes. I guess he's more quick-witted. He found humor in just about everything. He loved jokes. He loved people who could tell jokes. I don't remember him being particularly good at it, or having a collection of jokes, but he loved joke tellers. For instance, his good friend Lud [Thomas Ludlow] Ashley just died, former member of Congress. Lud was a storyteller, a joke-teller, and the President just loved Lud's company. Others may disagree, but I don't really remember 41 being the joke-teller, the joke collector, but he found humor in and could laugh about things that—He could find humor in most circumstances.

Riley: I interrupted you because I asked you to scan your memory and see if you had any more stories from these Florida outings that you could share with us.

McBride: I really don't. He looked forward to it every year. That was the only guys' outing I remember in those five years I was his aide. Certainly the annual sojourn that they planned—I don't think they did it every year; there were some years it didn't work. But it happened two or three times during the five years I was Mr. Bush's aide.

Riley: Do you remember, did they ever say how it got started, how that group of four people constituted the bunch?

McBride: They must have but I don't recall, I'm sorry.

Perry: Did he enjoy adult beverages?

McBride: Oh, yes.

Perry: Libations at these retreats?

McBride: [redacted]

There's a funny story that has absolutely nothing to do with anything except alcohol. We were in the Vice President's house once when he was hosting some President of a Latin American country, a Central American country. There was a reception—There's only a small party, a dozen, maybe fifteen people. One of the Filipino stewards comes up and is taking orders for drinks, of the guests. The President of this country, I don't recall which, turns to his wife and says, "Margarita." The next thing you know, Romy is walking around with a tray of margaritas. "Margarita, margarita." Somebody says, "That looks good. I'll have one." Before long there is a run on margaritas. It was his wife's name. He didn't order a margarita. Anyway, it has nothing to do with anything except adult beverages but I always loved that story.

Riley: We get later stories about his golfing.

McBride: Yes, speed golfing. He would play a very fast-paced game. I think the lure was he could play a round of 18 in under three hours. It was usually without consideration to the normal protocol of golf, which is to let your partner hit his, or let the women in the foursome hit—No, it was swing, swing, swing. "Excuse me, you're in my way." It didn't matter.

Perry: Playing through.

McBride: Yes, even if the foursome were to hit. When he became President, I remember many outings. I guess when he was Vice President, I wouldn't have to go along, or I'd wait at the clubhouse. When he became President, it became in many respects more complicated. There would be more agents on the course. There would be a golf cart that would usually have the doctor, the military aide. The photographer and I would be in a golf cart.

Why did I have to be along? Part of the challenge related to—If the White House operator, Secretary of State, or somebody is looking for the President at a particular moment, the person they would call would be me. I would have to sort out whether this is worth interrupting him in the middle of a round of 18 holes. But we got sort of ridiculous. We would do figure eights on the golf course and try to goof off and entertain ourselves out of view of our boss, right? He's up ahead playing. We would try to endure the three hours of 18 holes he's playing by goofing off in golf carts.

Perry: I did have a question about a summer event—I have July 13 of 1986, when I understand that Vice President Bush was acting President for those hours that President Reagan had colon surgery. Were you with him them?

McBride: Yes, I was. Before I became his aide, the aides usually didn't go to Kennebunkport, but I said, "I'm going. I want to go, this will be fun." So I was there. He was as cool as anybody on that. I think it happened one other time when he was in Washington.

Perry: His routine did not change that day?

McBride: His routine did not change and he took particular care that it not change, and nothing suggested he thought any differently about his role. Nothing other than the President will be out this morning, and there was no indication that the Vice President thought it was his big opportunity to shine, to do something, at all. That wasn't his makeup at all.

Perry: He was always very good about that, even going back to the assassination attempt. He wouldn't land on the—

McBride: "Only the President lands on the South Lawn," he said. He had all the right instincts. A lot of it related to: How does how I conduct myself reflect on my relationship with the President, my respect for the Presidency, respect for my role and the appropriateness of my actions? He always had the best instincts.

Perry: You talked about a couple of weeks each year when he would draw back from you and you got that message. Was that when he would be at Kennebunkport and he wanted to just be himself and not have people—?

McBride: No, it would really relate to our daily routine. It might include in-town activities or travel. In Kennebunkport, if he were there for two or three weeks I would try to take one week during that time and he was very supportive of that. But I also liked being up there. He was entertaining a lot, particularly as it got closer to his own run for the White House. He was entertaining potential political supporters. I understood that in a very small way I was an extension of him so I took my job to be not just for him, but to reflect positively on him. If I'm friendly to these guys, that reflects on his esteem for these people.

Riley: Kennebunkport, I would assume, must have been something he looked forward to. Did he do this every summer also?

McBride: He looked forward to it. I think he said every summer of his life he spent there except when he was in World War II. It was the place he looked forward to being. His mother was still

alive until just before he left the White House (died 11/19/1992). She was an extraordinary woman. The President was very devoted to her, very close to her. He would see her in Kennebunkport in the summertime. It was a place of rejuvenation for him.

For me it was semi-vacation. I was working but wearing relaxed clothes. I didn't stay on the Point; I stayed in a hotel room. I had a car. We would do work, we'd take phone calls but he was out on the boat, he was golfing, he was going out to dinner with friends. That was free time for me. We all developed our own relaxed routines, whether it was in Kennebunkport or in Houston, where the famous Houstonian was his residence. We all had our own rooms, our favorite restaurants, and he had his routine where there was a much longer leash. He didn't need me around all the time so I wanted to appreciate that, too.

Riley: Did you go out on the boat with him?

McBride: If invited. Sometimes I'd go out on his boat, or the chase boat with the agents, separate from him. He's off sleeping and they're taking his boat out, or taking the chase boat. They'd say, "Come on, let's go drive the boat." One time I went waterskiing out there with his nephews. By then I'd come to know his siblings, his nephews. I was, for better or for worse, a constant figure around him. It was also a way for them to know they could get to him, through me, if they couldn't find their brother, uncle.

Riley: What are you finding out about his relationship with his family? You mentioned his wife and his mother. Let's delve into that a little bit.

McBride: His own family—his wife, his children, his mother—His children were everything to him. He thrived on their company. I really came to appreciate that when I became his aide. I was around a lot, so I saw that. I was trying to be invisible, trying to understand that I'm not the family; I'm just his aide here. But one observes a lot. He really drew strength, energy, had fun with the family. Humor is an important part of their interaction with each other. They liked to dig at each other; they thrived on that. But also there was great sincerity about their interaction.

It was very common—There's a famous picture of him and Barbara Bush in bed in Maine, and the grandkids running around. That was not staged. It didn't happen one day; it happened all the time. With their own kids—Doro [Dorothy Bush Koch] would climb in bed with them. They'd sit in a room. Barbara and George Bush would be in bed, having woken up, and people would bring their coffee in. That was the gathering spot for their family.

Perry: You mentioned before—I think in your visit here to the Miller Center previously, and you've written about—the relationship between George H. W. Bush and his mother, but could you talk a little bit more about what you observed between them? What was she like and what was their relationship like?

McBride: Between George H.W. and his mother?

Perry: Yes.

McBride: She was the sweet, kindly lady. When I first met her she must have been in her mid-70s. She was a bit frail, but gentle. Much of what I know is based on what I've heard from him.

The admonitions, "Don't brag about yourself." Competition—He writes about competition being instilled in him at an early age. She was quite a competitive tennis player herself. Sport, being active, was something that she encouraged among her own children. I probably shouldn't say this, but I would liken her to a nice Rose Kennedy. One has this image of Rose Kennedy as the sweet little old matriarch, but my impression is she was sort of a tough old bird and maybe not terribly loving.

George Bush's mother was a loving gentle woman, from my observation and everything I've ever heard about her. She was loving to her grandchildren and her children. She was kind to me in the interactions I would have—just a sincerely kind gentle lady, but tough. She had raised her children well and lived to see her son become President.

I remember, somewhat related to this relationship—I bet he was President by then—We were going to go visit Dorothy Bush at her home in Hobe Sound. We had an event or something in Palm Beach. We flew into the West Palm Beach airport. A small group of us were going to take a motorcade to Hobe Sound. Like always, I thought, *You can't do anything without me*, so I'm into that motorcade, and the rest of the team were splitting off and going to the hotel or something.

The President was a bit preoccupied with how many cars we were going to have in the motorcade and what kind of disruption this would cause. Hobe Sound is a tiny little island and he didn't want his mom getting in trouble with the locals because he made too big a fuss. Now I don't know if that was instilled from the mother, or the local birds there on the island, but he was really quite fixated. Here he was, President or Vice President of the United States, and it's going to take three cars or ten, or whatever it is going to take, it is going to take. No, he wanted to know exactly how many cars we are going to have in this motorcade. He calls ahead to his Secret Service detail, "Now when we get to the island there, I want some of these cars breaking off. We can't be making a big disruption. I don't want to make things bad for my mom." This is really weird.

Riley: I want to ask a general question, an observation from you. President Bush was unusual in the sense that he had kind of two geographic poles, if you will, that were important in his life: the sort of tony New England side, and then Texas. Very different. You get the sense in talking with people that the son has absorbed mainly the Texas piece.

McBride: Yes, the Texas piece.

Riley: President Bush—As you knew him, was he more the New Englander or was he more the Texan, or was there genuinely a combination of the two?

McBride: As it played out in the campaign, the critics didn't buy that he was really a Texan. They thought that was a bit suspect. "The fact that your residence is the Houstonian Hotel hardly qualifies." So on the face of it to the critics, it would appear that this was a concoction. Texas was his home. Texas was where his family got its start. Texas is where they lost their daughter, and where their children grew up. I do believe there is sincerity in that Texas is where he's from, what he has adopted, what allowed him to become his own person, and it is important to him.

You can't take away; however, that Kennebunkport is extremely important to him as part of who he is. I don't think Greenwich is who he is, and I would draw a distinction between the life of Greenwich and the East Coast in that respect, versus Maine. Yes, they have a magnificent compound there, and the house by all accounts and observations is pretty terrific, but it is less about the compound, the surroundings, the trappings of Walker's Point, than what is the draw of Maine: the coast, the water, the ties to his mother's ancestors. That's what drew him there, the connection to family, which is extremely important to him. But I don't think it diminishes the degree to which Texas represented his life with Barbara, and his becoming who he ultimately was.

Riley: You already indicated that there were times in the year where he felt drawn to Florida and drawn to Maine. Was there an equal draw to Texas? Was there an emphasis placed on his going back to Texas?

McBride: Yes. We needed to be back in Texas. Even during the campaign, '87, '88, there were times where we might be out for a week, two weeks (one time 18 days) at a time, always with a day or two in Texas. It was home for him. It actually became sort of home away from home for the rest of us. I'm not particularly fond of Texas. It's a little too hot and humid, but at least it was a familiar place. For him it was home. It was the place where his friends dropped in. His base was the Houstonian and that may have been hard for some to understand.

Riley: I don't understand it. How do you have a home in a place like that?

McBride: You don't. It's a hotel room. When he's there, that's his room. When we were there, my room was the one right next to it, adjoining. The Houstonian is a hotel complex. There is a room on a lower floor that is his, but there may be other guests staying in it when he's not there. But that represented home. That was a complex on the grounds of the hotel. It was what we would all think of as a hotel room.

Riley: But it was his room. Did he keep stuff there?

McBride: I don't think so.

Perry: Had they sold the home they lived in, in West Texas?

McBride: They must have—They lived in West Texas a long time ago. When they moved to Houston—They did not own a home in Houston while he was Vice President, or during the time I was with him. They claimed Houston as their residence. He voted there, and for purposes of an address it was the Houstonian. They eventually bought property not far from the Houstonian, and when they would take the cynical reporters there, they would say, "That's just a lot. How is that your home?" It's hard to appreciate when there isn't a house that says that's your home. But Texas, for him and for a lot of people who are proud about being from Texas, is more a definition of who you are than "Where's your house in Texas?"

Perry: But that's where he had developed his identity apart from the family roots in New England.

McBride: He broke off from that. He talks about it in his biography and in his speeches. He said, "I'm going to make my start somewhere else." Sure, he relied on what we all do, a network and family connections. "Is there somebody you know? Can I get a job?" I think he started in California and then moved to Texas. But it was about his making his own way with his new wife and saying, "We're going to do something different." I think he said, "I'm going to make that break." He could have easily gone to work on Wall Street and never left Greenwich, but that wasn't who he was. He decided that he was somebody else. "I'm going to go make my own way and take some risks."

Riley: We've talked about his mother. Did he ever talk to you about his father? Ever make any references about his father?

McBride: No. We never talked about his father. My assumption was that the father, probably like a lot of fathers in that era, worked hard, was away a lot, and the real strength of the parental relationship was with his mother.

Riley: When you were his personal aide as Vice President, or later when he became President, were there occasions where on the plane you would prop up your feet and just talk about family? Or was that inappropriate familiarity with somebody that you were working for?

McBride: I was very careful not to presume I was more than what I was.

Riley: Sure.

McBride: He might say to me, "You're like a son to us." But I'm still his personal aide; I'm his staffer. It is very easy, with them in particular, to take them at their word and say, "You're treating me really great. You really like me, you really do. I guess I'm going to start acting like I'm your son." Well, I'm not. I was perhaps overly cautious not to step out of a role that was clearly defined as his aide.

There were occasions but those would be initiated by him. In particular, during 1988, most of that year my dad was sick with pancreatic cancer. He made the point to encourage me to—He would ask about that. He had met my mom and dad on one or two occasions, not very often, but he would ask about them. He would make sure that I took time as a son to drop off the campaign, even for a brief period of time, to be with him and spend that time with him. So there were occasions.

One time—It's a small thing—we were flying over Kalamazoo where we have a family cottage and I was making a fuss on the plane to the agents. "There's my grandpa's lake there. There it is." And they're like, "Wow, look at that." The Vice President said, "What's going on back there?" I said, "I'll show you. That's my grandpa's lake." But that's about as far as it went. I was pretty careful not to offer my opinions unasked for, unrequested. It didn't seem my place most often. There was one occasion I did and he didn't take my advice anyway.

Riley: Would you care to tell us?

McBride: [redacted]

[redacted]

Riley: What about temper? Does he have a temper?

McBride: There was one time I remember him being really, really mad. I can only think of one, and it related to—It must have been in '87. The primaries hadn't started. Campaigns didn't quite start as early as they do now. So it was sometime maybe spring or summer of '87. He may not even have announced his run for Presidency yet. It didn't seem to happen as early. We were flying to Texas and he was going to be giving a speech. It was on the schedule. He knew we were going there, he knew it was a foreign policy speech, but somehow on the flight on the way down it became clear to him that Craig Fuller, [Robert] Teeter, the campaign aide, had somehow built this up as a major foreign policy address to the press and to those who might want to cover this speech.

He was mad as a wet hen over that, because, one, he wasn't prepared for that, and didn't think that speech lived up to the hype, and he was really angry with the staff for getting far out in front of him. He was really angry and he really let them know it. I was glad it wasn't me, and that I had nothing to do with it.

Perry: How did he express his anger?

McBride: Loud voice. He may have thrown the cards on the table. "This is not a major address! This is not what you all billed it to be. How did this happen?" He was quite agitated and not holding back, sharing it.

Riley: But you're suggesting that he wasn't prone to a lot of anger otherwise.

McBride: You probably know this—Bill Clinton is said to be famous for four or five temper tantrums a day. It was just his style. He'd blow up, usually at some unwitting, unsuspecting, some unlikely aide, and let the steam off and then go back and say, "I'm really sorry. I didn't mean it. We're friends again." Bush never did that. It was not his style. In fact he was overly cautious just to make sure everybody felt appreciated, from the agents to the least of the staff, to the volunteers, to anybody he might encounter. Every night, he said thank you to me and the agents as he's walking into the hotel suite. Okay, you don't have to thank me every night but okay. The agents were excited, they were satisfied; they loved working for him. He engaged with them.

Perry: Did he ever talk to you about his wartime experiences?

McBride: No, and yet I was able to piece together, either from the speech preparation, and seeing his friends, I learned how important it was to him, but not because he sat me down and said, "Tim, let's talk about this." He would be very emotional when we'd see some of the shipmates from USS *Finback* (SS-230) who rescued him. As we were preparing for the run in

’88, that famous footage of him being rescued was used quite often. As he struggled with how to talk about that experience, it was clear that he felt, and feels to this day, I’m sure, great distress about having lost his fellow crewmen on that airplane. That was clear in all the data I could collect and pick up, from his public statements to the private interaction that I would see, but he never said, “Tim, let’s talk about it.”

Perry: And he is known for being emotional and not being afraid to let those emotions show even to the point of tearfulness.

McBride: One of the first times I saw that really up close—I hadn’t been his aide long. You would know when *Challenger* blew up—Was that early ’86?

Perry: That was January of ’86.

McBride: So I’d been his aide only a few months. We actually happened to be sitting in his office watching. It was still a very big deal, these space shuttles taking off. We were in his West Wing office watching this when it exploded. Within a couple of hours we were on Air Force Two, flying to Florida to be with the *Challenger* families. He was very emotional in expressing his grief, the country’s grief, in a way that was very different from what President Reagan was able to do to rally the country and to capture the emotion of the country. President Bush’s emotions are much more on his sleeve, hard to conceal, and often he’s not really trying to. He didn’t feel any embarrassment about that. Whenever the displays of emotion would come out—

Riley: But there was a sense too with Reagan, at least in the people we talked with, that Reagan, for all of his ability to communicate to large audiences, was very much an introvert, and if you put Reagan in a small room under normal circumstances, had he not been President of the United States, he would be the guy in the corner sipping on his drink not talking to anybody. You get the impression President Bush is a very different kind of person.

McBride: Oh, yes.

Riley: Much more sociable.

McBride: Very sociable. He wanted people around, I’m sure to Barbara Bush’s great annoyance on many occasions. She must have thought, *Can we just have an evening alone? Do you really have to be planning to invite twenty people over tonight?* That often happened at the White House when he was President. During the afternoon he’d call Laurie Firestone, the social secretary. “Hey, Laurie, come on over.” She had been their social secretary for eight years during the time he was Vice President. “Laurie, what do we have going tonight? Can you get a movie? Let’s have some folks—I should have some folks from the Congress over here. Let’s get some of the buddies over.” Before long he has just filled the schedule for the evening. They’re having dinner and the chefs are going to town on that and there’s a movie or something. He loved it.

There were many times—particularly in Maine I would see it more often—when he would just be inviting hordes of people, and I think it would drive Mrs. Bush crazy. Increasingly as they’ve gotten older she has been able to control it a little bit, but some of that is driven by age in slowing it down. He just wants people around.

Perry: He's genuinely gregarious.

McBride: He is. He likes the company of people. He likes to be amused by people. He's a great audience. He finds, as I said, humor in everything, so having a big group around—There's a great incident. It was the Governors' Dinner or some dinner at the White House. He called Laurie over and said, "I have this idea for entertainment for the dinner." She said, "Really? What's that?" He said, "There's this chainsaw juggler who is supposed to be fantastic." *Are you kidding me?* I think the chainsaw juggler actually appeared sometime.

Riley: That's the Texas piece of him.

McBride: Are you kidding me? Really? Chainsaw juggler?

Perry: Speaking about his sense of humor, you mentioned he was the first to laugh at Dana Carvey's impersonation. He really wasn't put off by that, or offended?

McBride: He wasn't, he really wasn't. He found it really funny. I think probably others around him thought it was not as amusing. He laughed about that. It was genuine; it wasn't just an affectation.

Perry: It didn't make him self-conscious to avoid the very characteristics that Dana Carvey was exaggerating?

McBride: Did you ever see the *Saturday Night Live* episode shortly after he had left office? He and Dana Carvey? "Never once in my career did I say 'Na ga da.'" He was just a good sport, ready to laugh at himself. I loved that piece. There have been a lot. Since he has been out of the office a long time, there have been various out-take reels of him and Barbara Bush when they've been taping some message and they get to laughing at something one of them said or did and there are these hysterical tapes of them trying to tape a serious message and just cracking each other up.

Riley: I was going to take us back because we sort of jumped off the chronology, which is fine. We had you there for the first couple of years, and then you're starting to think about the campaign, and I'm wondering how your life changes as the campaign season is ramping up and if you detected notable changes in any way, in President Bush's approach to his job, or how he is spending his time at that point?

McBride: The campaign—Let's talk about '87 and '88. Early '87 I don't think much was—It would have been the November elections. He resisted the idea to do much very early. That summer we hosted (I'm certain in the summer of '87) a lot of reporters up in Kennebunkport. It must have been then—big tents—with the idea of building on the network. He did a lot of entertaining. He had created the Fund for America's Future several years earlier as a political action committee to raise money to host things like this and build this national network. It started raising money.

In the middle of '87, things were very focused on campaign. Lee Atwater was very much a part of things; Nick Brady, Jim Baker, Bob Teeter. The contrast I would draw to four years later was that, even though there were a myriad of roles played by close friends and long-time associates,

there didn't seem to be any conflict, any uncertainty of the role various individuals would play. I think we were hurt by that in '92. It was quite different. But at that time, all these people, many of whom had worked with him in '80, saw the chance to help get him elected. Everyone was pulling together for the same purpose.

[redacted] It is about that time that W (George W. Bush) started to spend more time, and eventually moved his family up to D.C. I, and others referred to him as the "loyalty police." And David Bates played an important role in being a bridge to the old family friends. David was an adored aide from back in '79 and '80. He was part of that link to the people, the personal side of him.

We started to spend more time on the road. We did a lot in Iowa that summer. Iowa was brutal. We ended up being in a motorcade that would go eight hours in a day and stop in three or four cities. I came to appreciate the role of the primaries in how we select a President. [redacted]

We'd be gone a long time. We seemed to travel during the campaign much more, at least in the primary season, with Barbara Bush. At that time, I started dating Mrs. Bush's aide, if you can call it that. She was the closest thing I'd had to a girlfriend, since I was never at home anyway.

Riley: Was that Anita [McBride]?

McBride: No, Anita and I were acquainted. This was Casey Healey [Killblane] who was Barbara Bush's personal aide.

Riley: Forgive me.

McBride: Okay, so we were on the road all the time trying to build up support in anticipation of the primaries. The dynamics changed with certain people traveling with him. We'd go to some regions, and you'd just know the regional campaign directors started to drive what was going on, on the ground. I'd be frustrated with some of the advance guys because something seemed a little loose, and they were dependent on the campaign regional directors to come up with something that made more sense. So there was a tension between what you needed to do to campaign, the looseness, the flexibility required, versus what by then we were used to as Vice President. To be fair to Craig, there had to be this adjustment. Life is a little different as a candidate, even though you're still Vice President, than it is when you're just running around as Vice President.

Riley: Did you find that the Vice President—Did he enjoy campaigning? There's sometimes a question about people who are in politics, that some of them just thrive on being out among the people in a campaign, and there are others who view it as—

McBride: I think he did. He definitely did in '87, '88. It's less clear to me in '92. There are a lot of questions raised about that.

Riley: Sure.

McBride: I think he really enjoyed it. He knew these people. We'd land somewhere, and I'm supposed to be telling him, "Now, you know this person is your supporter. He helped you eight years ago." He knew it before I could tell him. These were friends. He had a collection of friends all around the country. He enjoyed being with them, the plane stopping, going out to dinner, having fun. He liked the campaigning.

Again, this is the conflict between this image of him as the Eastern elitist versus the Texas homespun guy. We'd get into Iowa and he can mix it up with anyone. He was not Mr. Fancy around the farm in Iowa. There is a sincerity that came across. It's not the same magnetism that Clinton has to draw people in. But there is a sincerity, a warmth, a genuineness about him that was conveyed when we campaigned. It became more difficult and more awkward for him in big speeches, audiences. Sometimes the instincts were a little more awkward as a mass communicator. But there's no one who didn't walk away from an encounter with him thinking, *Wow, I love this guy*.

Perry: So did you think that you would win the Iowa caucuses?

McBride: Yes, and we didn't.

Perry: How did he handle that?

McBride: With urgency. We were on the plane that night. It wasn't what he expected. Maybe some of the pollsters and others had told him and prepped him for it. If they did, I wasn't expecting it. I don't recall expecting it. The urgency was that we win New Hampshire or it's over. We left that night. I think we arrived in the middle of the night, at three or four o'clock, in New Hampshire. This is where the flexibility—You may be used to doing life a certain way as Vice President, but we were now in a campaign for your life. You're either in this or not. It will all depend on what we do for the next week.

I remember Craig basically turning over the schedule for the next seven days to John Sununu, who was Governor of New Hampshire at the time. We're going to do what Governor Sununu thinks we ought to be doing, how we should be spending our time. We'll do whatever it takes. You'll be out to all hours. He was prepared to do that. We were going to win New Hampshire.

Riley: In this period when he is out on the campaign trail, are you still expected to be his daily personal aide?

McBride: Oh, yes, my role didn't change. There was no campaign person doing my role. My role continued in exactly the same way, regardless of what our schedule was. I was still worrying about the food, and did he eat and did he rest.

Riley: So every campaign event he goes to, you're going to as well?

McBride: I'm with him every step of the way. There was a different tension. While I might say, "Come on now, he doesn't have an hour-and-a-half of exercise," there was also this realization that this may not be the week for exercise. Some of what was necessary in a normal course of life

seemed to be trumped by the necessities of campaigning. Although, things like, "Guys, you're putting him in a debate. He needs two hours before the debate to collect his thoughts. Let's keep the drama, the attention, the activity around the suite down." Where's the quiet time? It is identifying what is needed but under different circumstances.

Riley: Are you finding, particularly among the campaign people who are coming on board—Do you have their respect?

McBride: Yes. Part of it is by now I've been his aide two-and-a-half, three years. It's clear that I have a relationship with him that no one else has. I can read his mood. I can get him out of a room with the raise of an eyebrow. It just had developed into a very close relationship. Many would seek my advice: "Is this a good time? We have to deal with this." Including the Chief of Staff and others who would say, "We need some time with the Vice President. When is the best time to do it? How can we deal with this issue?" There was no issue on which the campaign staff didn't appreciate my role at that point. It had evolved. A lot of it was that I had gotten to know Lee Atwater and Bob Teeter, Nick Brady. They all appreciated the role I played.

Perry: Just one question before lunch about Lee Atwater. He's such a colorful figure.

McBride: Yes, a great guy.

Perry: What were your thoughts about him?

McBride: I loved Lee Atwater. He was completely missed in '92. I think that's one of the key factors. The President missed him personally. I'm not sure we really know how much we missed him politically. I think he had a great deal of influence over the selection of Dan Quayle, [redacted] he had influence in the sense that he helped the Vice President to imagine the baby boom generation as important to go after. That was a transformational idea for the Vice President. [redacted]

There is a lot we can discuss about Lee Atwater, but what I noticed after Mr. Bush became President was that Lee would come to visit the President—I think he was RNC chair at the time. He would come into the Oval Office and just sort of let the President have it on some issue. "You're wrong on this, you need this, this, or this." Lee would get literally thrown out of the office, "Get out of here. Forget it." The President would call Lee up later and say, "You know, you're right. Let's figure this out."

Lee had a great deal of influence over the President (the Vice President)—*on* him, not over him—and had the ability to speak very directly and very frankly, which is something many Presidents miss. Most Presidents don't have that, and I think increasingly George Bush didn't have it after Lee's death, particularly on the politics. He had more of that with [Brent] Scowcroft but that's a different issue. But in the politics it was missing, and it was completely absent in '92. Lee would have made a difference, I'm sure.

Riley: That was an odd pairing, wasn't it? I mean generationally, temperamentally?

McBride: Yes. He was W's age, his son's age. Temperamentally he was a funny guy, in many respects outlandish, really, Lee Atwater was. But George Bush had the ability to recognize that he was helped by many points of view, many perspectives. He wasn't of the mind in all things that if it's not like me, if it's not comfortable, that it must be wrong. I think that's what Lee demonstrated.

Now, he had to earn his trust. He won the primary, got through the primaries. Lee had built the South Carolina strategy as the road to Super Tuesday. Lee had been the architect of that. He had demonstrated success, so that trust was built. Generationally he was very different on so many levels. Lee wasn't afraid to just tell it like he saw it. That is a challenge for many Presidents. Without that, you can start to believe your own stuff, and that's where they run into trouble, and we ran into trouble in '92 as a result of that.

Riley: Okay, why don't we break for lunch.

[BREAK]

Riley: You said you had a story?

McBride: Mr. Bush is President and one of the things we do in the course of the day is organize farewell photos for various staff, for the military office staff, and they're invited to bring their families in. We do pictures, the President thanks them and gives them trinkets, and off they go.

One afternoon, an Air Force woman, who was on the White House military office staff and is leaving the White House, brings her husband and children in. I'm standing in the Oval Office while the photographer is taking pictures. The family is lined up and I happen to notice that the President's fly is open. This is not good.

Perry: Did you have a signal for that? An eyebrow?

McBride: The problem is there's no signal I could have given him that wouldn't be obvious to everybody in the room, your fly is open. So this is not good. Of course these are the cherished photos that this woman wants. I said to the photographer as he's leaving, "I need to see those photos before you send them anywhere." We were looking for a little strip of white you might find in there. I'm not sure how we solved it and how she got her photos, but it was one of those embarrassing moments.

Riley: That was before Photoshop. I remember when Johnny Carson came out with his fly open after he had been on air 25 or 30 years. I was with my parents and I said, "His fly is open!" The crowd was just roaring. He came back after the break and he was beet-red.

McBride: He realized what had happened.

Riley: Yes. In fact he said that the last thing—There's a full-length mirror, when he would come through the curtains there was a full-length mirror at the end of the hall so he could always check himself and this time he didn't.

You brought some notes with you. Maybe we should stop here since we got ourselves to about election time to see if there's anything from the Vice Presidential period that you wanted to talk about that we didn't get to.

McBride: This was just part of my exercise to make sure I covered things. We'll see a photo that relates to this: One time at Kennebunkport, Vice President Bush was asked by the State Department to host a group of African leaders for a dinner. He was going to be up in Maine. "Can you see this group? We'll bring them up there, we'll have a dinner, and then we'll get them out of there." He said, "Absolutely."

It's a sunny afternoon. They arrive. Many of these were leaders he knew from the UN days, and he recognized them. He knew them, but he had a difficult time attaching the individual to these African names and he didn't quite know who was who. He knew who he wanted to have sit next to him but he didn't quite know how to figure that out. So he instructed me to go grab his SX70 Polaroid camera, which was the rage at the time, and "Let's go around and take pictures of all the guests and that will be their place cards." I'm like, "Really?" He said, "Yes, it will be fun, come on." So I'm now going around—They're all having cocktails. "Hi, we're going to get your picture for you. This will be your place card." Then he was able to say, "This is the guy right here. I have no idea what his name is, but let's put him next to me."

Riley: He got through it.

McBride: He got through it, it was fine, and everybody had a fun time. No one was offended. But that was part of his charm.

Riley: Anything else that you've got there? We must have done a good job.

McBride: You did. Again, I don't know that they relate to anything other than how I developed a relationship with him. Probably not even a month after I had taken over as his aide, we went to the Army-Navy football game. We took the train up. It was a big deal, as a Navy guy himself. We were in the stands. I remember being very cold. I don't remember Barbara Bush being with us. I'm not sure who his guests may have been. Maybe I didn't know them at the time because I was still pretty new.

I received a call from the agents. We had these two-way radios, and I received this message from the agents—I don't think there was other staff with us at the time—that his good friend former Justice Potter Stewart had just died that day. This is my—I'm not on the job a month. I'm trying to decide, do I tell him now? What do I do? Would he want to know? I don't really know who Potter Stewart is. I'm sort of new at all this. I did lean over and told him that his friend had died. Within a week or so there was the funeral service. Again it was me trying to figure out what's too close, what's expected. I was with him during that day in the schedule, in the motorcade going to the funeral, and he spoke.

There was another time when he was Vice President still: We were in Kennebunkport in the summer for some period of time. It was in July. A naval ship was anchored offshore, and we had scheduled a reception for the Vice President to come out to the boat, greet the sailors, say hello to the crew, have a nice little reception and go back to the house. While we were there I got a call—Again, it must have been via radio because cell phones weren't that common at the time, in '87—that [Howard] Malcolm Baldrige, Jr., Secretary of Commerce, had died, a very close friend of his. So that was the second time I had to pull him aside and let him know that someone he was very close to had died. We immediately left the ship. Barbara Bush stayed on. She was with us. She stayed on board and we went back to the house and called Mrs. [Margaret] Baldrige.

Riley: A lot of time on the water—Are you okay on water?

McBride: I'm fine on water. There was the "Seasick Summit" in Malta.

Riley: Yes, I was going to get to that eventually. Why don't you talk about it?

McBride: My perspective on Malta was—I saw it from a different standpoint in terms of how we picked Malta—I think Scowcroft is still wondering how we picked Malta. I think it had to do with the fact that Sally Novetzke was our Ambassador there. She had been a campaign chair in Iowa and, "Doesn't Malta sound great in November?" Well, it turns out that Malta in November is not that great. It's not the best weather for November—cold, windy, terrible seas—so all the planning that went into the summit with [Mikhail] Gorbachev there was a bit undone.

Riley: There's a theme here. You put all this effort into an inaugural that didn't happen, now there's a summit that—

McBride: I had nothing to do with it. I was just along for the ride. That was a funny one, by some accounts a real mess, but they figured it out. The teams figured it out. Again, I was just along for the ride. They met on the cruise ship that was docked onshore. Meetings went well by all accounts. Then he stayed on board the naval ship. The challenge, you may recall, or you may have seen the photos—It was very difficult landing the launch back on the ship. Jim Baker probably talked about getting completely soaked. The ladder was underwater. It was a real mess. George Bush thought it was fantastic. Everything about it was great.

Riley: That was why I asked the question. I can't get on a paddleboat without getting a little queasy.

McBride: I said, "I'm staying with you. I'll be there." I was there. He can't do without me, except for the two weeks every year when he wants to. So I stayed with him there on board the Navy vessel. Later we can talk about going off to Mogadishu just before he leaves the White House. We stayed aboard a ship there, and that was just Scowcroft, the President and I, at that time.

I have another Gorbachev story: Mr. Bush is not quite President yet; he's President-elect. I'd forgotten this. I was digging through some stuff and I forgot until I saw this account. He's won the election. That's actually a very interesting period, those few weeks while he's President-elect. One of the things Reagan does is he holds a summit in New York with Gorbachev. President-elect Bush was invited to come up and meet them at Governor's Island, I think it was.

There's a photo-op there with the three of them overlooking Manhattan from Governor's Island. President-elect Bush had told me to bring a copy of his book, *Looking Forward*, which was the book that had been published in anticipation of his running for President. I should bring that so we could give it to Mr. Gorbachev, he said. There on Governor's Island there was lots of commotion, lots of people, and I said, "How can I get this to him?" He said, "Just get it to his aide over here." So in my best English and his best Russian, I said, "This is for President Gorbachev from President-elect Bush." Then, President-elect Bush has an opportunity to—He says, "I can give this to Gorbachev myself. Get my book back." So I go back to this big tall Russian security guy and say, "I need that book back." "Nyet, nyet, nyet." "I need that because my boss wants it back." Finally Bush comes over and says, "It's my book," and then gives it to Gorbachev.

Riley: Okay, anything else from that period?

McBride: No.

Riley: I was going to ask you about the campaign. We talked about Atwater and the unusual match between these two people. President Bush ran an aggressive campaign in 1988. I'm wondering if you could help us understand the connection, or the fit, between that campaign style and the person we've been talking about all morning who is a very—patrician may not be the right word, but somebody who is concerned about—

Perry: Fair play.

Riley: I guess that's it. You understand what I'm getting at.

Perry: The sort of prep school–Yale concept of fairness.

Riley: Is there an inconsistency here or not? Can you help us understand that?

McBride: I suppose on some level there is. It's hard not to think there isn't. Some of it may be explained by a trust in his campaign team that says, "I'm willing to play tough but let's make a case. Let's play fair." There was a lot of deference, a lot of trust in his campaign team.

This is a bit disconnected but it goes to the beginning—You recall the interview with Dan Rather? I was with Roger Ailes and Vice President Bush up in the Senate office getting ready for that interview. Roger prepared the Vice President for that interview. He knew exactly what he was going to be prepared to say, expecting a tough interview. I think he did what he needed to do to be prepared for what was expected to be a very difficult, tough campaign. He trusted in the people around him to help guide him in that. Now if looking back, some think the Willy Horton stuff was hitting too hard, or may have created other dynamics, I don't believe that was an intention of George H. W. Bush. I think he was playing tough in a game that was clearly being played tough against him and he was willing to stand up and campaign in whatever style was necessary to compete.

Riley: I guess you put your finger on exactly what I was trying to get at, which is his toughness. I'm thinking about '87, '88, where the wimp thing—

McBride: The wimp factor. I'm certain it was painful, distressing, disturbing. He was undoubtedly pissed off; we all were. That was an unfair characterization for a guy who has worked hard to be a good Vice President, a loyal Vice President, who by definition doesn't get to run around and spout off every time he disagrees with the President.

There was a lot stacked against him going into a run that historically was going to be a long shot. Vice Presidents don't necessarily become President. It had not happened very often in American history. He was up against a lot during that period and he took the best advice from somebody he admired a lot in Lee Atwater. He appreciated his advice and counsel. It was probably not the campaign he would have designed for himself, but he wasn't a campaign manager. He knew how to say, "I'm not a campaign manager. That's not what I do. What is it going to take to get this done?"

Riley: But if his campaign manager was telling him there is a need to display toughness and this is how you go about displaying toughness, he's willing under those circumstances to put himself in the hands of his managers?

McBride: Yes. Not to suggest that he was their handmaiden. He had plenty to say about what he thought was appropriate and what was not. I believe, as I think back on that time, there were times when he might have been uncomfortable with various strategies or tactics. But he also trusted a team to help him get across the finish line.

Riley: Do you remember any specific instances where they may have pushed him to go further than he wanted to go?

McBride: Other than to say that the Willy Horton was a challenging, troubling chapter in the campaign—George Bush is a gentleman, and so the kinds of things we've just been through in this campaign, what he had to go through—Drawing contrasts between his leadership style, or what he would do and what Mr. [Michael] Dukakis would do, was part of the tough job, the difficult job of running for President. Sometimes those characterizations, those distinctions, we can all imagine, stretch one's imagination—That was the part that was, I'm certain, challenging for him at times. What does it take to become President without completely ignoring one's principles and decency?

Riley: It's almost hard to remember this now, but going into 1988, very few Americans knew Barbara Bush, and probably wouldn't have recognized her by her picture. I remember there being claims from members of the family, who said Barbara Bush is the secret weapon going into this campaign, that when people got to know her they would be more impressed with the Vice President than they were before. Do you remember any sense of willingness or unwillingness to push Mrs. Bush out into a much more public role at this time?

McBride: She had the same concerns the Vice President had as it related to his role. How can she support her husband without trying to usurp the role of the First Lady? So the things that she was active on—literacy, lighting the Christmas tree, putting the star on the tree on the ellipse there—Those were things that weren't exactly competing with Nancy Reagan's role as First Lady. I think they were careful about that too.

I don't remember—Certainly there was a desire to highlight the importance of family to George Bush in the campaign. That started with, of course, his wife of many years, sweethearts when he went off to the war. There is a compelling story there. In the course of the campaign we looked for opportunities to help define for the American people who George Bush was, where he drew his strengths from, and that was about his family. Increasingly, Barbara Bush would do some travel on her own during the campaign, and then in the general election there is probably a lot of that. But in the primaries it seemed we were together a lot.

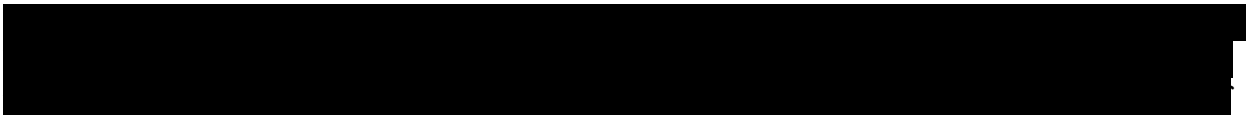
Riley: Do you have any specific stories or recollections from either the convention that year or the debates? They're sort of the benchmarks during the course of the campaign. You may have other recollections of the campaigns.

McBride: I don't remember the first debate. I remember LA. After LA, where Dukakis seemed to stumble on the question of, "What would you do if Kitty Dukakis was raped?" That felt, to our team, like a turning point. We felt that the mood on the campaign, while hopeful and optimistic up until then, improved even more after that debate. It felt like we were in very good shape following that. It had been a turning point for the campaign.

When we left Andrews to head to New Orleans, I don't believe anybody on the senior team had been told who Mr. Bush's pick was for Vice President. I knew that Bob Teeter and Lee Atwater had a lot of influence on the Vice President's thinking about the generational shift to the baby boomers. How do you tap into this young voter bloc? Lee talked about that a lot—baby boomers, baby boomers—The President was impressed by that.

Riley: Do you have any speculation about who he might have been thinking about? I think you're right. My guess is that it would be unlikely that Atwater would be pitching this idea unless he had a face or two—

McBride: Right, he must have had a face. He clearly felt strongly about it. He talked a lot about the need to look toward the next generation, which goes against going to a [Richard] Lugar. Lugar represents the old guard. You've got to make this shift. You've locked the grown-up block here. How do we signal that we understand that there is this generation behind you? I don't recall even who was in the mix, talked about at the time, but I have the impression that Quayle was probably Bob Teeter's candidate.



There was a lull between the primaries where we're all together all the time, and now we have the nomination. I don't remember the same degree of interaction and the parade of candidates. I don't remember any of that. I just don't.

Perry: Do I remember correctly that there was some stiffness in the rollout?

McBride: It was a mess.

Perry: That body language wasn't very—

McBride: First of all, in wanting to keep it a secret, to show independence and leadership and all that, the rollout wound up being rather botched. Dan Quayle was stuck on the other side of security. He was told to show up at the XYZ Park. "We're going to have an announcement. You're not allowed to say anything more than that." Maybe Bush himself told Dan Quayle, "Don't tell anybody."

So he makes his way to this XYZ Park, and security won't let him on. "I'm a Senator; I need to be there." "Forget it." He looked shell-shocked. It's not the way, I'm sure, he would have wanted to have been presented as Bush's choice, and probably not the way we should have presented the President's choice for Vice President. It was botched all along.

Then we went to the suite afterwards. We made it to the hotel and we were in the suite. The Vice President was completely shell-shocked. The family was there, the kids were there, his parents were there. It was like they had just been dropped in from another planet and had no idea where they were.

Riley: You said the Vice President?

McBride: Dan Quayle, the future Vice President.

Riley: Not Bush.

McBride: No. He was saying, "This is going to be great, Dan. You'll be terrific. You'll be fine. We'll get through this. I know it's a lot to take in." But it was deer-in-the-headlights for the Quayles, understandably. They had just been dropped into—Their life had changed instantly. I'd say the unveiling wasn't terribly successful. Within 24 hours or so, the Guard stuff started coming out. Maybe it was after the convention; I've forgotten.

Riley: It was almost like the first reality show, wasn't it? We're going to pluck some family out of obscurity and put 24-hour television on them.

McBride: That's what I think it felt like. Every VP nominee struggles with this. How do I exert my own independence on this ticket? I want my team. Who are these people who are running my campaign plan? I've never seen them before. Who are these snot-nosed kids? Sarah Palin wrote about this. Now if you're the candidate and you've gotten this far, you want to have something to say about how you get to November. They were landed smack in the middle of it.

The convention itself I think went well. The Bushes loved it, by everything I recall. They had their family around them. The night of his speech was fantastic. He was upbeat, confident, and thrilled with how everything went at the convention.

Riley: Beyond that—You're with the Vice President every day. Do you recall much about his attitude or state of mind about the Quayle situation as it unfolds over the next week to ten days? Does he become shell-shocked? Is he angry about it? Is he confused?

McBride: I can't say I recall anything specific. I guess I'd have to look back, but it strikes me that he was very defensive of Dan Quayle. The decision was his. I think there was an ownership of this. "We'll make it through this. We'll make it right. He's the right guy."

Riley: Are there any other episodes during the course of the campaign that you can recall, particularly with respect to the debates? You already mentioned that you thought the Kitty Dukakis thing was sort of a turning point.

McBride: No, I don't remember much else about the general, other than we were out a lot.

[redacted]

[redacted]

Riley: During the course of the campaign there was an effort, understandable, to distinguish Bush from Reagan. First, do you have any observations about that? And second, were you getting feedback or pushback from the Reagan people that they were uncomfortable with the extent to which—I don't think the "kinder, gentler" stuff comes up until the inaugural address.

McBride: Yes, it was at the inaugural. No, I would not have gotten it; it would have come to Fuller if there were specific problems. It occurs to me that there was an occasion or some event that signaled President Reagan's recognition that the Vice President may have to draw some contrast. I don't remember what it was. Maybe somebody wrote about it. But it seems to me that something gave him a little bit of a green light to say it's okay now to do what you need to do to draw contrast if that's necessary. I don't recall what that was. As I think back, I have this sense that something gave him a little more freedom.

Riley: But your inference is that the Reagan people were sort of giving him the green light to say don't worry about us; we're fine. Do what you need to do.

McBride: Yes. Don't say, "The guy was a bum," but if you have to draw some contrast on how you might have handled something, or do something different in the future—As I think back it feels like the President had—There was some conversation he had with Reagan, some signal that you should do what you need to do here.

Riley: [Lawrence] Walsh—There are indictments, which are brought the last week of the election.

McBride: Isn't that '92?

Riley: Yes, of course, forgive me.

McBride: Trust me—that, I remember. We can go there if you want.

Riley: Eventually we'll go there. But I thought there was something in the final weeks, a surprise in '88 as well.

Perry: Something around Iran-Contra?

Riley: That would have been a piece of it.

McBride: I don't remember. What I remember is feeling pretty good about the LA debate, and then being on the road and heading to Houston, but feeling good going into Houston.

Riley: There's nothing in the timeline that indicates—My memory is faulty. We haven't done a lot of the Bush interviews in a while. My timeline is a little fuzzy.

Perry: This is my first one.

Riley: I was a little flawed on that. Okay, so you have debates, one in September and one in October.

McBride: Where was September? Do you have that location?

Riley: No I don't. Then it just says, "November 8, Bush easily wins Presidential election over Michael Dukakis yet Democrats maintain the House and the Senate." Were you with him on Election Night?

McBride: Oh yes, in my little room right next door to his at the Houstonian.

Perry: Back home.

McBride: Yes, absolutely, the family was coming and going all day. The family was there. We did a rally the night before in Houston at a shopping mall, the Galleria maybe, with an ice rink in the middle. It was a big to-do. His family was all with him, his Texas friends. It was a great homecoming for them.

We jogged on Election Day. They went to vote, then we went for a jog, which was fairly common for us to do in Texas, to go for a jog in Memorial Park or just run along the edge of the park and the agents would follow alongside in their cars. I would usually run with him when he was running with the agents. I don't remember what else he did that day. Then returns started coming in. I'm certain he had a good sense from Teeter and others that it was going well.

They went to dinner. I must have gone with him but I don't remember much about that. I think he started to get word during the evening that it looked good. What I really remember is being back at the Houstonian. At some point we went to the convention center that night and did a victory speech or something. A lot of calls started coming in from world leaders. A lot of those calls would ring to me. I was in the middle of it, figuring out how he is going to take these calls. I don't remember who it was that may have called. But it started to say to me that things are about to be a little different now.

Perry: By my calculations, the now President-elect is now 64?

McBride: He would have turned 64 in June.

Perry: Of the election year?

McBride: Yes, June 12th of that year.

Perry: It sounds like he's in great shape if he's jogging around. You're not seeing any slowing down as he's aging into his 60s, from when you started working for him?

McBride: No, I'd been his aide for three-and-a-half years.

Riley: How about you? Are you slowing down?

McBride: I'm slowing down. This was longer than any of his aides ever served. For me, the job kept changing. When I first started, it was all very new. We were doing foreign travel the first year or so. Then we were going into campaign mode and he's going to run for President. Of course I'm excited about that because the job felt different. Then he gets elected and it's not entirely clear to me whether I'll be staying on in that role with the President but I was very hopeful that I would.

But also, I'm then 30 years old. I've been doing this the better part of the last four years. I may still have been pseudo-dating Mrs. Bush's aide, but it was unreal in many senses. It was not a normal dating relationship. I'm starting to think about my future as well. Physically it is a demanding job. But I wouldn't have traded a minute of it.

Riley: But you're pretty sure you're going to be taken care of?

McBride: Knowing what I know about George Bush, yes, but I really didn't assume anything. The world was now very different. Would he want the same aide? Would he want a different aide? I didn't really know. I was mildly confident but it wasn't assured by any stretch until we had that conversation. There were a lot of people on that team who were there on Election Night who thought they were going from the Office of the Vice President to the White House with him that didn't.

Riley: We definitely want to talk about that, because it is a surprise to people from the outside. I've been dying to ask you this question. You can issue a "no comment," if you want to. You're a young, single guy out on the road in a very prominent situation. Are there political groupies?

McBride: No. First off, my incumbency in that job is formed by how I got there. [redacted]

Riley: Okay.

McBride: So I'm careful about my own conduct. No matter how often George Bush or Barbara Bush says, "You're like a son to us," I'm not believing it, or I'm certainly not acting on it. "I'll see you at Thanksgiving dinner, Mom and Dad." So there were no relationships. There were no groupies. There were no anonymous folks. First of all, I was working too hard; and secondly, any indiscretion would have reflected badly on him and on me. Really, it didn't occur to me. Occasionally when I was back home if we had a day or two—I tell my wife this all the time. She and I were acquaintances. We weren't dating at the time. But I would see her at a party. She would be at two or three other parties, going here and there, and I was thinking, *So this is what young people do*. I had no idea.

There were not groupies so much as people who thought they knew me. I was familiar, because I was always with Mr. Bush, and that was elevated when he became President. So there was an amount of attention that I didn't necessarily look for but that just came with the fact that, "Oh yes, that's McBride. He's been with him forever. He's his personal aide, so he's always there." But that is just a function of my being there.

Riley: But I posed the question *before* you go into the White House with the President, because my assumption is that the constraints become much more severe. Maybe not. Maybe they're exactly the same constraints as before.

McBride: I think everything becomes illuminated by the attention that is put on the President, versus the Vice President. There was a lot of attention on him and on us as a candidate for President, but there's nothing quite like the flood the next day when he actually is President-elect. It's going to be very different.

[redacted]

[redacted]

What he would do and I'm certain he did do in many cases, or if asked, was to be supportive of opportunities for those same people, maybe not in the White House. I have said that I think transitions from one party to another are much easier than transitions within your own party. When your team wins, there are countless fantasies about the role that each of us hoped to take on in the new administration. Those fantasies for the most part go unfulfilled, and that's exactly what happened with many people on the V.P.'s staff. We all spent a lot of time traveling all around the country helping get this man elected. He's elected. Now what do I get to be?

Well, unless the new Chief of Staff is asking you to do it, or the new Secretary X or Secretary Y is asking you to do it, your fantasy probably won't come true. Now it's easy when the other team wins: I'm not getting a job there; it's done. But the transition—a lot of the Reagan people were upset. Why? It's Bush, I'm a loyalist, I've been part of the Reagan-Bush team. Why can't I keep my job? They were wiped out. The Reagan types were extremely unhappy throughout the government. But Bush wanted to bring his team in. He gave a lot of latitude to his Cabinet Secretaries and others.

My situation was slightly different because there was one guy who was going to decide whether I was going to take on that job or not and it was George Bush. He wasn't going to decide, okay, Tom you're going to go in this Assistant Secretary job there, or you're going to be this aide in the White House, because that was for the Chief of Staff and others to sort out. He wasn't going to stand in the way of it, but he wasn't going to put people in slots from the Vice President's office over to the White House. My case was a bit of an exception.

Riley: I would also think that if you're a new incoming administration, probably the entire scope of jobs available to you in the government look equally attractive, whereas if you've been in a Republican administration for eight years, you've done the junior-level White House thing. You don't want to stick around to do that anymore, when you might have taken that job as a newcomer.

McBride: And it is also difficult to make the transition to be somewhere other than the White House. These folks had worked in and around the Vice President, now the President-elect. It is a different environment. There's a sense of shared purpose that doesn't exist in most other jobs, in most of the other agencies. That in itself is a transition. I expect some of those people thought, *Well, if I can't be in the White House I don't want to be anywhere*. The truth of the matter is, there are a lot of challenging opportunities elsewhere in the government, but it was difficult for many of those folks to see.

I think the director of advance stayed on as director of advance for the White House for the President, and he took some of those same people. But for the most part there weren't many of us who stayed on and did the same jobs. Boyden Gray became White House Counsel. The President

had something to say about that. He asked him to go from Vice President Counsel to the White House Counsel.

Riley: During the transition period, how quickly are you approached about taking the job?

McBride: Not until after the first of the year. My dad died in December. The campaign ends, and we go to Florida. He goes for a break in Gulfstream. That was another one when I said, "Of course you need me. I'm going." So I went. By then he couldn't say no. It was useful. I have a funny story or two on that. Then I'll get to your question.

It was useful because, again, the world had changed. The attention on the President-elect is increased dramatically over what he knew as Vice President. He's staying at the home of his friend, Will Farish. I'm at a local hotel, I guess. I don't remember where I stayed. I would see him in the morning. We would jog in the morning on the golf course and then he would go surf casting out in front of this very nice house in Gulfstream, Florida. Then they saw some friends and had dinner. I gave him a lot of latitude but was around if he needed anything or if calls were coming in.

One morning—We were there maybe two or three nights, not much more—the President-elect is going for a jog. I'm there to jog with him and the agents, and this female reporter, who was somebody who had covered with us—I'd venture a guess on the name but I'm probably dead wrong, so I won't say a name. The President-elect said, "Oh, you want to come jogging with us?" Not entirely unusual. She said, "Yes, sure." She gets this exclusive: "I'm now jogging with the President-elect." We jog on the golf course across the street from this home, which is also along the Atlantic coast. We'd usually run two or three miles.

We end up back at the Farishes' house, and the President-elect says to the agents, "Hey, you know that Navy vessel offshore? I want to go see the sailors out there and thank them." It may have been a Coast Guard ship, or Navy ship, somebody out there helping to protect the President-elect, keeping a perimeter there offshore. He said, "I want to go out there. Hey, marshals, let's go see the sailors." He would refer to the Secret Service agents as "marshals," affectionately.

Somehow they figure out a way to get him out to this vessel on one of the Zodiacs, the motorized rubberized crafts. He said to the reporter, "You want to come with me?" She's like, "Yes, sure." So she is now getting this major exclusive with the President-elect. They go out to the ship. I don't go with them. He says hello to the sailors, Coast Guardsmen, whoever they are, and then he decides he's going to swim back to shore and she's going to swim, too. They're both swimming back to shore. As he gets closer—She's still in the water—he starts yelling to me, "She's in a T-shirt. I need a jacket or something for our friend here," lest he be pictured walking out of the surf with some woman in a wet T-shirt. I'm like, *You've got to be kidding me.* I don't remember how we solved it.

Perry: Just for the record, when you say she was wearing a T-shirt—

McBride: She had it for jogging.

Perry: She had something under it?

McBride: Undoubtedly. But she was dressed in jogging gear, not necessarily—None of it was good, right? He realized this wasn't going to look good. Here we are coming out of the surf.

Riley: How did the story come out?

McBride: It didn't.

Riley: I'm not talking about the—

McBride: Oh, we got her covered up.

Riley: She must have written something nice.

McBride: She must have. I don't think she mentioned the part about coming out of the surf in a T-shirt.

The other thing that I remember—two other things about that: He kept sending me back to the local bait store to get bait for him because he was casting and he needed bait. I said, "Well, what do you need?" He said, "I don't know. Find out what they're biting on here." So I'm going in the bait store, "Hi, I'm surfcasting out in Gulfstream and what should I get here?" "Well, what are you using?" I said, "I don't know. It's for a friend. Can I have some bait?" Finally after about two days of visits back and forth and nothing working, I said, "All right, it's for the President-elect. What have you got for me?" He still never caught anything.

The last piece was, you may recall, Sununu came down, had dinner with the Bushes, then flew back the next day. I think that was the signal. I don't believe there had been any release or formal announcement, and everybody figured at that point—There had been a lot of talk about whether or not Sununu would be the pick for Chief of Staff. He flew back with us from Palm Beach up to Andrews Air Force Base whatever day we came back.

Riley: Was it his foreign policy team that he announced almost immediately?

McBride: Yes, that wouldn't surprise me, but I don't remember that.

So we're back. It's now the middle of December. My dad dies on the 23rd of December. I go home to Michigan and stay there. His funeral isn't until the 26th or 27th. I stay there a few more days. I come back. I still don't know if I have a job after the 20th. Then, I don't remember whether it was at his home or in the office, but somehow he asked if I would be willing to stay on for at least a year. He said, "You know me very well. I need your help in this transition in my new job." I thought, *Yes, your new job is a pretty big job. I'll help you if I can*.

We then talked. He was cognizant that I was now 30 years old, and I needed to have my own career. By then it was clear to me that I was leading a really exciting life; it just wasn't mine. I think he was aware of it too. He said, "Let's talk in a year. Let's talk next spring, and identify some opportunity in the government that you can go to, but I really need your help now."

Riley: Had you, before that time, been thinking about trying to find something that you could move into in the government?

McBride: No, I hadn't. I was really hopeful that I would get to remain on as his aide, because it was a great job. I loved being around him and Mrs. Bush and doing this job, but I also wanted to do this job for the President. Now it's going to get really cool. I'll fly on Marine One and Air Force One. It's all going to dial up a notch or two and be pretty cool, pretty challenging—just an awesome opportunity. I was hopeful he would ask. I hadn't thought about what I would do in the absence of that. So he asked me to stay on, and that started—then being able to work for him as President.

By then it is cementing this notion that, whether intentional or not, I have a lot of influence around how his day is structured. I reported to both him and the Chief of Staff. That was not always easy and sometimes it's like going between mom and dad here. But it was an extraordinary opportunity. We were going to Camp David most weekends. Of course I decided I needed to be there, too. No, I don't need any time off. I don't need anybody covering for me on the weekend; it will be fine. It was pretty extraordinary.

Riley: One of the key people who comes in with him that he had a very log affiliation with is Texas Jim Baker.

McBride: Yes.

Riley: What were you finding out, or had you found out about by this time, about his relationship with Jim Baker? I'm trying to remember, did he have a role in the campaign in '88?

McBride: I think he was as important to '88 as any other times. I don't remember specifically what the role was but he was clearly extremely important, at least in my mind, either formally or informally. By then it is clear to me that George and Barbara Bush were very close to Jim and Susan Baker, and were close to his first wife who had died. But it is a very complex relationship.

[redacted]

Riley: Any surprise that he (Baker) was put in the State Department?

McBride: Entirely expected. That was not a surprise. By then, those who—Did he ever leave Treasury? I don't think he ever left Treasury.

Riley: I don't think so either. That's why I was wondering whether he had a role in '88 at all because I don't remember that he left Treasury.

McBride: He occasionally traveled with us. This was a guy who understood how Washington worked. He had a team of loyal people, from [Robert] Zoellick to Margaret Tutwiler, and they knew how to play the Washington game.

[redacted]

Riley: You then bring John Sununu into the equation in a very prominent way. How well does Sununu get integrated into the network? Or is it just because you're now moving into a completely different pool?

McBride: It's new. It's a whole new chapter so everything is going to feel a little different. By everything, I mean that all the friends, the family—the issues that Craig had to worry about in care and feeding of the friends are less John Sununu's problem. That was not his issue. Most of the team is new at the White House, from Fred McClure at Legislative—A team is being assembled that is necessary to help George Bush be President without regard as to whether they were on the VP's staff, except for Boyden Gray, where he wanted him. They had a close relationship and it was not unusual to bring counsel that you're very close to.

For the most part it is John Sununu assembling the team. He selected Andy Card to be his Deputy Chief of Staff. Andy had been in the Reagan White House but also had a good relationship with Bush, knew a lot of the political types, and maybe had a gentler side than Sununu does, although Sununu thinks of himself as gentle. We can talk about that too. [*laughter*] I think he calls himself a pussycat. I have a theory about—I think things went badly in '92 because John Sununu wasn't there, strangely enough.

[redacted]

[redacted]

Riley: Okay, tell us about what's different now. In particular, is George H.W. Bush different? Are there any material changes in him or his working style because he's now number one?

McBride: Not different, but he seemed from day one to sort of come into his own and be able to fill the chair and fill the office. This is his new job and he's ready for it. He was well prepared to be President. He seemed to understand what that meant. He understood the significance of things.

He made it clear—I don't remember exactly how—that we weren't to be in the Oval Office without a suit jacket on. My office was right outside of the Oval Office and I was in and out twenty times a day. I would take my jacket off when I walked out, and when he buzzed for me to come in I put the jacket back on. It just wasn't appropriate, wasn't acceptable, and he didn't do it. Maybe we'd have a sport coat on a weekend, but there would be a jacket on.

Not much changed about him but there was a different level of media attention. One day during the transition I was riding in the limo with him from the Vice President's residence to the White House and he said, "Bar and I are going to miss this house; it really feels like home. I don't know what this is going to be like, living there in the White House. It won't feel the same." Over time, or maybe very quickly, they adapted to life at the White House just fine, but I think there was a sense that we have a home here. What's it going to be like living above the office with a different level of scrutiny, agents just off the vestibule here, a lot less privacy?

Riley: Did he worry about the loss of privacy?

McBride: I think only to the extent it might interfere with his family and what they enjoyed doing, but not particularly; I never had that sense. They liked Camp David because you could walk out your door when you wanted to, and not have to say, "We're going to leave to go to the deli in 20 minutes." Of course there was no deli when you were in the White House. Maybe they missed some of the things they used to be able to do, but if he did I don't remember him mentioning it.

Perry: I have a question as to what you referred to as the "media death watch" and how that was so obvious a change from working for the Vice President to working for the President.

McBride: Yes, there was an understanding—Some Presidents since then have sort of snuck out of the White House and ignored some of that, but at the time there was an understanding with the White House Correspondents' Association that if the President were to leave the grounds that we had to notify the press, and accommodations had to be made to bring a press pool with us on any activity.

Probably the chief proponent of that was Marlin [Fitzwater], because those were the rules the media insisted upon. It meant that you had to plan out things more. If he wanted to go on an ill-fated shopping trip to Mazza Gallerie, you had to let someone know you were going. I think that

was the whole point. Sometimes they would go to a restaurant in town, and the media was going to go with you. What if he had a heart attack and had to go to the hospital while they weren't there? Their rationale was, we have a right on behalf of the American people to be able to know if he has left some location he said he was going to, and gone to a hospital, or he's died; if something has happened to the President. That's where I got the name "death watch."

As I say, some administrations since have tried to stretch that or find different accommodations, but at the time, that was the tradition. Does that make sense?

Riley: Anything else on the transition?

McBride: I told the story in the thing you sent, on the inauguration day, the coat. Most of it is contained there. It sort of happened just like that. As I say in the article, even on the day that is the biggest day of his entire life one might argue he's worrying about, *I can't look more robust than Ronald Reagan and I need my coat*. I said, "I don't have your coat. This is one event that is going to be on time. When Congress says it's time, the Constitution says you're going to be sworn in. I can't get your coat and be back up here on time, so try mine."

Perry: And it did.

McBride: It did. We're 44-longs. He put it on, it got him out there, and my coat is the one lying on his chair while he is being sworn in.

Riley: That picture is downstairs, I think.

Perry: As you come in the door.

McBride: Depending on the angle, I think you'll see a coat lying on a chair and it's mine. It's a lot more about him than it is my coat but it was amazing to me. Well, there are two things: One, he didn't have his coat with him. I screwed up many times in the course of doing my job, and that wasn't exactly a screw-up because it was pretty nice weather and he didn't want his coat. But then when he saw that President Reagan was bundled up—

Perry: I think you said the temperature that day was in the 50s.

McBride: Yes, it was pretty nice by Washington standards, but Nancy Reagan was concerned for President Reagan, and even on that day, he's worried about outshining President Reagan. I thought, *After three-plus years, I'm still learning*.

Perry: Given that President Reagan was now the oldest President to leave office, I'm sure he didn't want to draw that contrast. By the way, speaking of the age of the outgoing President, any thoughts ever on President Reagan's strength of mind at the end of his Presidency?

McBride: None that anyone ever expressed to me. We did do things—When I was the Vice President's aide, I would carry a metal case full of trinkets and his speeches, our schedule, and a copy of the Presidential oath of office, because, God forbid it was needed, if somebody didn't know where the hell the oath is, what is he supposed to say if he's sworn in?

Riley: As we later learn, a verbatim recitation of the oath is necessary.

Perry: I think they did have to scrounge a Constitution up in Dallas in 1963.

McBride: They did. That was part of what I learned. Again, it's not like the Vice President's staff or any of us were fixated about it, but I'm always there. If somebody is looking for a copy, I might as well have a copy.

Riley: Now the military aide is with him with the "football" [metal briefcase with nuclear codes] at all times. Do you have any football stories?

McBride: It seems to me that on more than one occasion these guys lost it, or forgot it. I wouldn't feel real comfortable—I'm kidding; it isn't quite that bad.

Perry: "The biscuit." Is that not what they call the card that has the code on it? There have just been some stories in the paper that President Clinton—

McBride: Yes, President Clinton lost his for months at a time.

Perry: It went to his dry cleaners.

McBride: The former Chairman of Joint Chiefs under Clinton wrote about it. They kept saying, "All right, it's time to change it out. We need your old one." He kept stalling. "We'll get back to you."

Riley: [Henry Hugh] Shelton?

McBride: Maybe so.

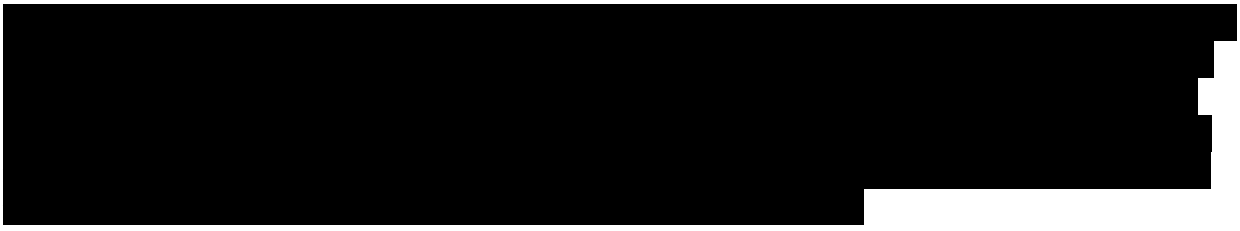
Riley: Was it? Why didn't he tell me this story? Maybe he did and I forgot it.

McBride: "We'll get back to you. Sure, sure, I'll get that to you."

Perry: "My aide has it."

Riley: But you're saying there were some follies with the football in your experience?

McBride: I can't point to any particular one, but they were there all the time; that's true for the most part. One military aide would stay over, would sleep in the complex. There was always a—and this goes to military working in and around the White House. They get confused. Active duty military often work in the White House—they like the proximity. They like the politics of the White House, but they're ill equipped for it, and frankly, shouldn't be involved with it.



Brent Scowcroft had served in a number of administrations, was extraordinary—a retired Air Force general. Brent is one of my favorite people of all time, but he is more the exception than the rule. If you're in uniform, forget it. It's just a difficult place.

Riley: Since you raised Scowcroft's name in this context, that's another very important relationship and we'd like for you to tell us about what you saw of that, how these two men got along.

McBride: I don't remember Brent before inauguration day. George Bush must have—We must have encountered him. I must have been in the room with him. Somehow we must have been together, but I don't remember that. From the first day as National Security Advisor it's clear that the two had a very close friendship and professional respect for each other. Brent is amazing.

Then Bob Gates—Gates, Scowcroft and Bush would spend a lot of time together. Gates had Scowcroft's confidence and he had the President's confidence. Oftentimes, the three of them would be cutting up something fierce. They found great humor in just about anything. But it was clear that President Bush had deep affection for Brent Scowcroft and that continues to this day in a way that is very warm. In some ways it is a little different from the Baker relationship. It doesn't replace, doesn't compete, but is just very different.

Riley: How so?

McBride: [redacted] After Lee Atwater died it became clear there were very few who could fill the role of honest advice to the President. When we traveled—Lee rarely traveled with us, so even Lee didn't fill this role because they weren't contemporaries. When we would travel long on the road, fly back to Washington, Brent was the one guy the President would want in his cabin, feet up, both having a drink and talking about whatever. And it wasn't just restricted to national security matters. They were peers, contemporaries, and Bush just liked his company.

Riley: So he'd talk about domestic politics?

McBride: Just what's going on. "I've got this problem," on this or that. I don't think there was anything that the President didn't feel comfortable talking to Brent about. Not that he was looking for his advice on what to do about this or that, but—

Riley: Sometimes you just need somebody you can talk to.

McBride: Who is just listening without even reacting.

Riley: And know that it is not going to get out.

McBride: [redacted]

Perry: I have a question as we go along in the chronology. Talking about the football and a vestige of the Cold War, you're there when the Berlin Wall falls.

McBride: Extraordinary.

Perry: What was that like, and what did you observe in the President?

Riley: Start early. This is an important story throughout.

McBride: I almost have to start a little earlier than that. It goes to [François] Mitterrand in the spring of '89. Mitterrand becomes the first invitee to Kennebunkport, the first formal foreign guest to come to Kennebunkport—I'm pretty sure that's true. That's a pretty big deal. "I'm inviting you not to the White House, not to Camp David, but to my house." Many in the White House were scratching their heads, saying why on earth would you invite our French friends to Kennebunkport, to your home? This is your first visitor? The President understood that that was a relationship that needed help and that the way to do that was to appeal to—

Riley: Gallic pride.

McBride: Yes, Gallic pride. And God bless him, it went swimmingly. Later, in the two-plus-four talks, the role of France became important, and accepting the reunification became important. George Bush was somebody who understood how to make connections. He had no idea, I don't believe, that years later he would need him for talks on reunification. But he understood that the world is a complex place and making friends and finding the way to enhance these relationships was critically important to his success as President. That proved out in the two-plus-four talks.

I don't remember a lot of the specifics of the events, but there was a lot of disruption in Europe as things were heading toward the fall of the Wall. What I remember most of all was the time right around the fall of the Wall. There was a great deal of pressure on the President to get on Air Force One and fly to Europe and take credit on behalf of 40 years of U.S. policy, and on behalf of America, our role in conquering the evil East. George Bush resisted that, and was criticized greatly on the Hill, on both sides of the aisle. Where's our President? Why isn't he there?

He understood that if he had done that, he would have provoked a different response from Gorbachev. He understood about, How do we help Gorbachev save face and unwind this thing in a way that is responsible and doesn't require him to get his back up, doesn't push him up against a wall and invite some response other than a peaceful unwind of this thing? It was challenging inside the White House even among his own aides, who may or may not have admitted to telling him at the time, "You need to get over there. You need to take credit for this."

But he understood differently. He understood the reaction that would cause, and didn't do it. Consequently, most people identify the fall of the Wall with Reagan and some of his messages. I would argue that the reunification of Germany, and the peaceful unwind of the Cold War, is probably the signature, the most important contribution President Bush's Presidency has made to history. That could have gone many different ways and I think it was his leadership that led to the unwind of that.

Riley: There is within the scholarly community a long-going and active debate about the role of individual personalities in diplomacy and the role of friendships between leaders and personal

relationships. You mentioned the meeting with Mitterrand and also an earlier meeting with Gorbachev.

McBride: Yes.

Riley: I wonder if you could talk a little more about what you saw of the interpersonal relations between President Bush and these other foreign leaders. The ones that I'm thinking about in particular would be [Helmut] Kohl, who would have been important, [Margaret] Thatcher, who is—

McBride: Thatcher was there. Remember, she said, "Don't go wobbly on us."

Riley: Exactly.

McBride: That was the time of the invasion of Kuwait.

[Brian] Mulroney I can speak to. We spent a lot of time with Mulroney, both while he was Vice President and while he was President. We were off at these international meetings when he was Vice President. Many of us became close to Mulroney's staff. There was a real warmth. They had become familiar while Mulroney was Prime Minister and Bush was Vice President. After Bush became President there was a very natural affinity there and they remain close to this day. Kohl, I don't remember. Mulroney was a frequent guest at Kennebunkport, the Mulroneys were. They were friendly with the wife, as well.

Riley: You say that goes back to Vice Presidential days?

McBride: Yes. I don't remember why. Maybe it was at OECD [Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development] or other meetings that we would find ourselves at, where it was appropriate to send a Vice President of the United States and Prime Ministers of other countries, but we'd inevitably end up in the same holding rooms with the same crowd and it was always the Americans and the Canadians. Some came to my wedding. I went to some of their weddings and we just became very friendly over time. It was also reflective of a close relationship between Mulroney and Bush.

In late '89 the Wall comes down. Then during that winter, the two-plus-four talks start. Then Bush has Kohl to Camp David. I don't remember when it was. I was still in the aide job, so sometime in the winter of '90, because it was cold. The idea was to spend some time talking about the talks and how to bring this reunification about. The Bushes like to hike and jog and do all these things at Camp David that were somewhat foreign to Chancellor Kohl. It is snowing out and Bush says, "Let's go for a walk." A walk for George Bush means more like a forced march, and Kohl is probably triple X size and he had no clothes for walking through Camp David. The Navy personnel who run the camp come up with this parka that is probably large or single X. It barely covered his shoulders. Kohl is miserable. George Bush is dressed up in something, just marching along. Barbara is along, the dogs are running around, and Kohl could not be more miserable. It's a wonder we still had a relationship after that.

Perry: He was both cold and winded a little bit?

McBride: Yes, he wanted to be anywhere but walking out on a cold evening with the President. But President Bush had a sense of how to open up and develop very close personal relationships, and he thrived on this. There were some significant domestic policy contributions that he made, but I think his real love is foreign policy. We can say it's different but that just is what he thrives on, and he has a natural affinity and talent for that.

Riley: And he was serving as President at a time when that was—

McBride: It turns out that was needed and he did pretty well at that.

Perry: So his preference in meeting with these foreign leaders was in informal settings of Kennebunkport or Camp David and not formal state dinners at the White House? Did he do his share of that?

McBride: He did his share of that but he would find ways to put a personal twist on it if he thought the relationship warranted it. For instance, the official visit of Gorbachev at some point in the spring of '90 included a day at Camp David, just the four of them: Raisa [Gorbachev] and Barbara, Gorbachev and the President, spending a relaxed day there.

I have a couple of actually very funny stories about Gorbachev. Back at the White House there is a state dinner. Before the dinner that night there is a press conference, the usual press conference between the two leaders. We're standing in the Green Room, and they're going to walk out of the Green Room and make that dramatic walk down the Cross Hall into the East Room where they're going to have their press conference. The press office says, "We've given the two-minute warning to the networks," which says that in two minutes they'll go live. It gives them time to do their last ads and whatever.

My job was to make sure President Bush didn't go early, but he wanted to go when he wanted to go. I had learned—now I'm with him for more than four years. I physically block the door, and I'm standing between him and Gorbachev and the door. The President says, "Can't we go?" I say, "No, sir, they're not ready yet." He says, "We're ready. Can't we go now?" I say, "No, sir, they've given the two-minute warning. We need just a couple more minutes. They'll tell us when they're ready." Then Gorbachev says something to his interpreter and his interpreter says, "President Gorbachev says you must be German." [*laughter*] Because I was so particular about the time.

There was the state dinner with the Soviets—They were still Soviet Union then. The practice was, at an official banquet like that, not wearing tuxedos. He wore a business suit. But that night, Bush wore a tuxedo and the Soviet guests would not. That was fairly typical during the Soviet era. They wouldn't wear tuxedos, for the proletariat or something, I guess.

Before the state dinner, before they came down the stairs, the Bushes—and maybe the Reagans, had this practice—they would have a small reception up in the living quarters of the White House for the visiting guests and their spouses, a few of the top—the Vice President of the United States, the Secretary of State, and a few other senior folks from each delegation. Then the guests would go down, and the four of them would follow the Honor Guard down the stairs. There was a little bit of a ceremony that would go into this, unseen to most people. They'd march down the stairs and the band would play.

That particular night President Bush says to me, "Tim, why don't you brief President Gorbachev on what is going to happen." This was very unusual because typically he would just tell them. It was his way of saying, "Hey, I'm going to give you a chance to chat it up with President Gorbachev here." At least that's how I interpreted it. So I talk him through, tell him what is going to happen, all through the translator. There's a very funny picture the photographer took of Gorbachev looking like, *What on earth is this guy saying? Are you kidding me?* But it was typical George Bush. At least that's how I interpreted it. "Why don't you go tell the President? You can tell him what is going to happen."

Riley: Thatcher?

McBride: No particular recollections of Thatcher. I did see her—She was with us at the Economic Summit in 1990 and I left from the Economic Summit to go back to Washington for my hearing and then didn't return as personal aide from there. So I don't have particular recollection or observation there.

Riley: In your experience, were there any foreign leaders that, I won't say he just didn't like, but who were not his cup of tea?

McBride: That's a great question. There must have been, but I can't recall a single one. No one stood out as particularly meddlesome, or he just couldn't take being in their company.

Riley: I was looking through the administration timeline just to check to see what was going on. In the middle of all this, the Tiananmen Square happens in June of that first year. Do you have any recollections of President Bush on China, and that episode in particular?

McBride: Yes. We were in Maine when Tiananmen Square happened—I may be confusing this. Either we were in Maine then, or we were in Maine when he sent Scowcroft and [Lawrence] Eagleburger to Maine. I think we were there when Tiananmen Square happened. I remember him doing a press conference in front of the fishing shed there, or speaking to the press on that.

What I recall was a lot of pressure on the President to act in a very strong way. What I also recall is his understanding that the relationship was complex and that it was tragic but that the entire relationship could not be defined by—We could not afford to let the relationship be defined by that tragic incident. We had to find a way to engage, to allow face-saving. That was very unpopular among many in Congress and many in the White House, in the administration. That was difficult. The beauty of it was that it felt like it was being handled by somebody who really knew China.

That may have been a test for some of the more conservative friends who thought he didn't act strongly enough, but in the President's defense, he understood China better than anybody else in government, certainly than anyone on the Hill. So when a secret mission to China, by Scowcroft and I think Eagleburger went with him, was later revealed, I certainly had the impression that, well, he understands China and I guess we're lucky that the President knows how to deal with this.

Riley: You mentioned members of Congress. Let me pose the same set of questions about his relationship with members of Congress. Were there particular members that he really liked

personally and got along well with, and do you recall stories about their visiting the White House? Conversely, were there members of Congress whom he just could not abide?

McBride: Certainly the ones he liked—Most of his closest friendships in Washington in the Congress were a result of his term in Congress in 1966. That was a time in Congress when members moved with the families to Washington; House members even. They lived there. They went to church together. Their kids went to school together.

He often said it was difficult to go to the floor of the House or the Senate and rail against somebody your kids are going to school with. That's what is lost in this environment today where members are spending one or two days a week in Washington, taking key votes, and then going back home and bashing each other. They don't live in the same communities. They don't share churches and schools. This acrimony that exists is a function of, in some part, how we view each other. If we're friends at church, even if we disagree politically we're likely to be at least respectful, friendly, find a way to work together. That doesn't happen anywhere near the way it did in the '60s or '70s.

So Dan Rostenkowski, Chairman of the House Ways and Means, turned out to be somewhat problematic when it comes to the Andrews tax summit. But he liked Dan Rostenkowski and it may have caused some fits for some of the staff. [Gillespie] Sonny Montgomery, Lud Ashley, who wasn't in Congress long—I'm not sure how long he was in Congress—from Ohio, one of his dearest friends. Many of them were Democrats. Sonny Montgomery was. I think he's gone now.

A lot of these friendships—He would go up to the House gym and play racquetball or tennis with members up in the Senate or in the House. Definitely in the Senate he would play tennis. That may be going back to VP days. He understood how to woo members as well. He invited many of them to the White House and started right after he became President, including inviting members of Congress and all his guests up to the private living quarters of the White House. A lot of the entertaining was done in what had been, up to that point, private quarters. He's taking pictures of his guests sitting on the Lincoln bed, with his famous SX-70 Polaroid camera. The Lincoln bedroom is open; the Queen's bedroom is open. Come see the White House. And he did this on both sides of the aisle. Members were frequent guests. I don't remember any other than the ones I mentioned who were particularly close to him. Alan Simpson of course in the Senate. He was still in the Senate at the time. It doesn't speak necessarily to how he felt about the member but it speaks to how the staff felt about a member; it informs all of us how we were to treat Congress.

In February or March, after he is inaugurated, we're making a trip up to Maine, early on. An hour or two before, we're to fly up from Andrews on Air Force One, from Andrews to Pease Air Force Base, and then take a helicopter to Kennebunkport. We used to motorcade from Pease. He wants to see the manifest of who is on the plane. He often did. He wanted to know what the traveling squad is like. "Why do all these people have to be here?" "Why are we taking so many people?"

He looks at the manifest and asks, "Where's Senator [George] Mitchell?" Senate majority leader at the time, Senator from Maine. I said, "I don't know, sir." He said, "Let me call Fred McClure." He calls, I assume, Fred McClure, John Sununu—He went crazy. He was extremely

upset that here he is, the President of the United States, flying to Maine, and did not extend the courtesy to the Senate majority leader to fly up with us, at least as far as New Hampshire.

[redacted]

Perry: So did he come on that flight, or other flights?

McBride: A call was made. I don't think he came. It was probably too late. At the very least an invitation was always extended. I'm not sure I even remember a particular occasion where he did, but an invitation was extended.

Riley: This would have been before the Andrews summit?

McBride: It was before. I was gone for the Andrews summit.

Riley: So I wonder, your sense is that the invitations were still extended after the Andrews summit?

McBride: I think so, but maybe not after the Andrews summit. Who knows?

Riley: I will say that one of the most illuminating features of doing these interviews at the outset was discovering the extent to which Mitchell—the animosity.

McBride: [redacted]

Riley: He doesn't look vicious.

McBride: He looks like a kindly old fellow, God bless him.

Riley: There's a certain cohort of baseball players who share the same—

Perry: I have a question about the new Vice President. Since you'd been on both sides, having been the aide to the Vice President, and now to the President, and now you're looking back to the new Vice President, what kind of relationship did you see between the new President and the new Vice President?

McBride: Very warm. The President scheduled the same weekly lunches with the Vice President. They were included in all the things they should have been included in socially. Both George Bush and Barbara Bush went out of their way to help make them feel included. The President signaled that we should do the same on the staff level. Ultimately it is like a lot of those relationships—I wouldn't call the Bush staff particularly close to the Quayle staff.

Perry: But they did get included in social events?

McBride: Oh, yes.

Perry: In the residence?

McBride: In the residence, and they would invite the kids. The Bushes were also cognizant that the Quayles had young children at the time, and found ways to involve the kids. Every courtesy was extended to them socially to help them feel a part of the team. I'm sure that got more difficult as you got closer to the reelect and people are talking, "Dump Dan Quayle," but Bush himself never participated in that, never encouraged it, in fact discouraged it. He had been Vice President himself and knew what a difficult role it was. At the end of the day, he was the one who had to be satisfied with the relationship more than anyone else.

Riley: Anything else on that? You brought stuff with you and I want to make sure—We're still in good shape on time but it is not unlimited.

McBride: Some of this stuff we've talked about. These are trip books, on the plane—That one is a little more historic. You'd get on the plane, and every minute of the day is sorted out, what you're going to do. Three countries, that's three days. We went to Mogadishu and Somalia. The miniatures are handy because you can put them in your coat pocket or a purse. I don't know if they still do them or not.

Riley: They probably do it electronically.

McBride: Yes, a lot easier. As advance people we had to build that schedule. These are signature cards, as we called them. These were pre-printed engraved cards for the Vice President and the President. I would carry a stack of these cards. He would sign twenty, fifty, on the plane, before we would arrive at a stop. I would put them in my bag, and a few on my person. As we're walking along a rope line, a person says, "Can you sign this?" He would say, "Tim, give him one of these." The trick was, once everybody else saw that, everybody wanted one, so we tried to do it quietly and secretly. These were always signed by the President himself.

I also would follow him on the rope line because if somebody handed him something, the agents would immediately hand it to me. I was responsible for dealing with it. I'd go through it later. Pictures, if somebody said, "Can I get a picture?" The President would say, "Tim, take our picture." I became an expert at snapping the picture with someone else's camera. I don't know what the pictures ever turned out like.

These are just some photographs: This is Lech Walesa. We can talk about, if you're interested, me going to Poland while Bush was still Vice President, hadn't announced he was running for President, but we did some things with Lech Walesa. This is—He is President by now and this is an official visit. Walesa is President by then. This is just a fairly typical situation where someone is walking through the receiving line. Nothing interesting about that. We talked about the Gorbachev state visit: This is them going into the East Room in civilian dress. The puppies. I'm supposed to keep him on schedule. These blasted puppies are born in April and this is not going well, not going well at all.

Perry: To Millie [Mildred Kerr Bush]?

McBride: Yes, Millie's puppies.

This is the African leaders. "Get pictures."

Riley: "I want to sit next to the guy in the windbreaker."

McBride: That's just inauguration day. He had made a point—We were at a common event—I think it was the Reagan Library—and the Vice President in typical fashion made a point to bring me over there and introduce me to President Reagan.

This is a troop event. He's signing something for some troop's mother.

Riley: I thought you were trying to break into the football there.

McBride: This actually looks like the football; it's just my metal case of trinkets. This is Mrs. Bush's aide, and this is me: We're running to a helicopter with the President's bags. These are all his.

Riley: You've got about six bags under your arms.

McBride: This is Potter Stewart's funeral.

Perry: That's at the Court?

McBride: It's actually at the National Cathedral as we're about to go. I'm like, "Do you want me to go with you to Arlington?" He said, "Yes, of course."

Perry: Did they know each other from Yale? Is that how they became friends?

McBride: I think that's what it was. This was that Governors Island summit where we were playing tug-of-war with the copy of *Looking Forward*.

Riley: That's the interpreter?

McBride: Yes. This is one of the occasions where I screwed up. He's President now. He's just done a press conference in the Rose Garden. They're to turn around, walk up—this was [Eduard] Shevardnadze, Baker—They're to go into the Cabinet Room and have a meeting. The problem was I didn't unlock the Cabinet Room door. Now he's telling the press, who are all assembled for the Rose Garden ceremony, "It's okay, we'll be fine." I'm frantically racing around the other direction, saying, "Oh, my God, I've just screwed up."

This was of course the Reagan ceremony. He was very careful in how he conducted himself as Vice President. He was very concerned not to do anything that would overshadow him all those years.

Riley: [George] Shultz here. And Mrs. Reagan.

McBride: August 18—This may have been the day of the announcement. That's a convention badge I'm wearing. That's Quayle's father. The Pope in '87. He was very respectful of one's religion. He knew I was Catholic, so whenever we would see the Pope or some Cardinal, he'd say, "Tim, come here and meet the Pope." This one: About once a year we'd do a white tie event when he was Vice President, and the agents would come in and say, "Hey, we're all dressed up, do you think the Vice President would take a picture with us in our white tie?" "Yes, we can arrange that."

Perry: This is the Observatory?

McBride: This is the Naval Observatory. We also never used what I'd call flags or seals. The car usually traveled incognito when he was Vice President, except on a fancy occasion like this. The agents liked to do that.

This is off the coast of Somalia. This is his last foreign trip. We went to Mogadishu. That was really focused on humanitarian relief at the time, before things really turned badly. He's on the phone, maybe with Mitterrand, in fact. We're staying aboard this ship. I'm now in charge of management and administration, but his personal aide has also left so the President says, "Well, look, Tim, you're going to be on the trip anyway, why don't you do both jobs?" So that last six weeks or so I did both. This is just a typical campaign event. My job was to make sure he knew what he was doing the last minute before we went into port.

This is fishing in the Tetons. This is closing in on the end of the campaign, November 7, '88. Most of these people didn't go to the White House.

This is that briefing for Mr. Gorbachev. It's was like, *are you kidding me?* This is the 25th of January in '89, right after the inaugural. "Come on up. Let's go talk to him."

Riley: Taking of people perched on the Lincoln bed.

Perry: You said this is a Polaroid, so it shoots out the picture.

McBride: Shoots it out and he hands it off to his guests, "Here's you in the Lincoln bedroom, a souvenir."

We were often playing horseshoes. He put in this horseshoe pit in the back, behind the White House. He was always looking for a tournament or game. Here we are playing. That's some sweater he had on. He was often poorly dressed, as Mrs. Bush would say.

I was his personal aide, and this is the last few days of being his personal aide. This is somewhere out in the Tetons in Wyoming.

Perry: Is he walking, or shooting?

McBride: I don't know what he's doing. He was fishing, probably, and this is a way to get a secure call out at the time. This was communication, and this would be an Army guy. It's a little early for the Kuwait invasion, so I'm not sure what might have been going on. It may have been about the time I was getting worried that my hearing was getting scheduled.

This was Air Force One on the eve of the loss in ’92. People were looking not quite as upbeat. This is Air Force Two.

Riley: That’s a nice picture.

McBride: That was during the campaign. This actually relates to this. *National Geographic* did a story on the enigma of time. One of the responsibilities I had after he became President was to keep a diary of what he did every day. They wanted a photograph of what that schedule looked like, and then the notes that I would make. Basically this would go to the White House diarist. She would marry that up with any phone calls that were made, other events he did, and from all that they had a fairly complete picture of what went on in a given day for the President.

What happened not long after that is that Clinton started making his own calls, so you might lose what calls the President placed. There’s no telling what kinds of records are lost.

Riley: These are now available online.

McBride: Are they?

Riley: In the library. Actually, the Miller Center site has a link to it.

McBride: That’s a letter he wrote to me when I left as his aide. He typed it himself. You can read it if you’re interested.

Riley: Sure.

McBride: This is my little office in the West Wing. Somebody had hooked a rug in his likeness and as a gag somebody put it on the wall so he was looking over me. More horseshoe, Rose Garden, more Pope. I was arrested, or apprehended, in Martinique—We can talk about that if you’re interested. I got glass in my foot. I was doing something I shouldn’t have been.

Riley: That’s a basket.

McBride: Yes, as people give him gifts, he would toss the stuff at me.

Perry: Is that Jerry Tarkanian?

McBride: Yes, I think it is.

Police officers—How shall I say this? He didn’t like anybody holding an umbrella over him. He thought that men who used umbrellas were—

Perry: Sissies.

McBride: That’s a nice word. [redacted] So we rarely held an umbrella over him. This is with some troops and this is fairly common. We’d be visiting some troops and somebody would have a camera, “Here, Tim, take a picture.”

This is the—if you’re interested in the transcript from the interview with Martha Kumar—

Riley: It might be helpful—I can have somebody copy this while we're meeting and we can append it, or you can send it. It would be helpful, knowing how we are on time, to know we've got some additional stuff on the period.

Let me just go through the timeline here and as events occur, ask you if you have any recollections, or if it sparks anything. We already mentioned the Berlin Wall falling. The Malta summit—Was there anything else that you wanted to say about the summit in Malta?

McBride: No. We pretty much covered that. He was at Camp David, and you would know the date, it was on a Sunday when we got word that [Nelson] Mandela was released from prison.

Riley: Yes, that was coming up in early '90, February 11 of 1990.

McBride: Yes, he was quite moved by that. I don't remember if he made some other calls but we were in his cabin when the call came in. I may have taken the call. Baker or somebody was calling with that news. He was pretty moved by that.

Riley: [Manuel] Noriega surrenders to U.S. forces in Panama of that year. Anything about military action?

McBride: Not unique from anybody else's. What I do remember is—He kept an office at Camp David and we would often work there on Saturday mornings. Often we'd fly up Friday afternoon, and Saturday morning we would meet at the office about eight o'clock, work for several hours, and then if he had guests he would go off and play or do whatever.

One of the troops in Panama found a cardboard cutout and had either written on it "Bush," or somehow had indicated that that was a target, for target practice for Bush. One of the troops recovered that. It was ultimately sent to the President, and he kept that up in the office in Camp David. There is a fairly exact replica of his office at the Presidential library. He eventually put in a pseudo Oval Office, because that's what people expect at a Presidential library. What he really loved and took comfort in was his office at Camp David and that's the thing that got a lot of attention to detail when we built the library. That's the thing that gave him great pleasure.

Riley: The library is very nice. I was there again in March after the new sets of renovations.

McBride: It's even nicer since the renovation.

Riley: I think that they've done a very nice job of threading the needle on it, in terms of making it very accessible but at the same time having a lot of content, particularly in the interactive parts.

McBride: That was an improvement over the original version. We got a lot of it wrong the first go around.

Riley: I think it is a model library as it exists now.

So in June of '90 that—but it must have before then—it started percolating for you.

McBride: Early in '90 he said, "Why don't we look for something? I'm worried about you." [redacted] It's hard to leave that job and find one's way. As I said, it's an exciting life; it's just not yours. The temptation would be stay and do that until the end, but then how do you make a living after that? He was very cognizant of that, and I was. And I was physically getting tired too. The demands of the White House—We didn't have cell phones, but the pager was going off all the time.

Riley: In many respects, the physical dimension of your job is more difficult than the President's, right? You don't have people taking care of you in the same way as he has.

McBride: I wouldn't say that.

Riley: The physical dimension.

McBride: My weekend started at three o'clock on Sunday afternoon and it ended when I woke up Monday morning. Now, I could have said that someone else should do Camp David weekends. I didn't want that. I enjoyed being part of it. It also helped in my effectiveness. If I know what calls to place or what he was doing over the weekend, I'm smarter about doing my job during the week. If I know that he talked to the same person four days ago as opposed to—but it was physically very tiring.

I also was by then 31, almost 32, and I have to think about my life. The President was concerned about that. We didn't have anything in particular in mind but we agreed we would look for an opportunity. Sometime, I want to say in April or May, I became aware that the Assistant Secretary for Trade Development position was going to come open or had opened up.

Riley: Do you remember who your predecessor was?

McBride: Michael [Skarzynski]. I did not know him. The trick was, I was hopeful for a Senate confirmation position but I also was cognizant that, while I had this extraordinary job, not everyone would see that as natural qualifications for a position of that importance. Yet I wanted to be able to leverage what I had done. I was going to get one shot for the President to say, "Here's my guy." Let's make it for the right thing at the right level.

Maybe that was egotistical but it seemed like a good fit for a Secretary I knew well and a portfolio I could manage well. So I became aware of that. On a trip from somewhere, I went into the President's cabin. I didn't very often ask for anything for myself or even initiate conversations like that, but I said, "Mr. President, I'm aware there's going to be an opening at the Commerce Department that I think would be a good one for me." He asked what it was. He immediately sent a hand-written note over to Bob Mosbacher, saying, "I understand this position is going to be open, and I'd very much like Tim to be considered for it. If you agree, let's move forward on this." I'm sure Mr. Mosbacher probably knew what the right answer was and was very enthusiastic.

The White House moved quickly to put together the nomination. Again, this goes to the perceived closeness, or in fact the closeness of the relationship. The White House staff worked to put together the nomination. It got sent up quickly. We didn't know when the Congress would

act on it. We were at the economic summit in Dallas. I've been nominated by then but a hearing has not been scheduled. We get word while I'm in Dallas for the summit with the President that my hearing has been scheduled for two days later, three at the most. That meant I was flying back that night, spending all the next day in preparation at the Commerce Department for a pretty significant portfolio, and with the Senate confirmation hearing the day after. That's what I did.

Perry: How did you prepare? What did you read?

McBride: I had the materials that outlined the scope of the department. I prepared by doing what they call a "murder board" all day on that next day, or the day before the hearing. I had already asked Congressman Pursell, the guy whose campaign I worked on in '78, to introduce me. Senator [Donald, Jr.] Riegle from Michigan was chairman of the committee. He also submitted a letter of introduction. So in many ways we had enough of the right pieces put together for it to go well. But I'd be embarrassed to read the transcript today. I got through it. The Senate acted pretty quickly and by August 3 or 4, something like that, I was confirmed and started the job right away.

But it also was serendipitous or fate that I left prior to the invasion of Kuwait, because it would have been difficult to leave during the middle of that. As I said, I was physically tired. It was time to do something else, both physically and emotionally, and to have stayed during that period would have been pretty taxing.

Riley: Did you have withdrawal when you left the White House?

McBride: I missed seeing the President so much, yes. But I also knew it was the right thing. It wasn't difficult but it was a transition in many respects. The difference is I'm now running a bureau of 400 people, and in many ways I knew how to do the job based on having observed Mr. Bush for five years: how to treat people, how to manage, how to make decisions. So even though my résumé at the time may have suggested I wasn't quite ready for the job, in fact, having worked so closely with him all that time suggested something different.

He saw that, and what I really needed was somebody like him to say, "I believe in this guy. I know enough about him and I'm confident he can do this job well." And I did. The first thing I did was meet with everybody in my bureau, each group. Some of these people had never met their Assistant Secretary before so that's a big deal. It turns out it came pretty naturally based on all I had learned from President Bush. It was intellectually challenging, it was fun, it was a great portfolio, meeting with company officials who were trying to expand exports, leading delegations overseas.

Perry: But it's also a crucial time in the world, isn't it? For the United States and trade, because of the fall of the Soviet Union, the breakup of the Soviet empire. Even after the Gulf War, you have Kuwait. I see where you visited Kuwait.

McBride: We had Kuwait. I led a telecom mission to Germany, trying to take advantage of the telecom opportunities for U.S. companies after the reunification. Yes, there were a lot of really interesting opportunities.

Kuwait was a big one, having the opportunity to help advance the country's position in the reconstruction. We made a visit with Secretary Mosbacher, Georgette [Mosbacher], and some other officials, but then my team and I were responsible for a trade show, trade mission, identifying contracts for U.S. companies. It was terrific. It was exciting. That is a case where some of my success came from the fact that every one of the people I met with knew where I had come from. Real or perceived, there is a presumption about the blessing of the President on this guy. I was aware of that. I didn't overplay it but I also didn't run from the fact that he and I had a very close relationship.

Riley: Were you given any marching orders when you left the White House? Did the President say anything?

McBride: He said, "Do well. I'm proud of you. Thanks for all your help."

Riley: But no substantive directions?

McBride: "When you have a chance, go tell the Russians.…" No, there wasn't. I never presumed—"Be my secret envoy"—none of that. I'm sure that would have been very exciting.

Riley: Let's take a break here and we'll come back and finish this afternoon.

[BREAK]

Riley: All right, we're still going here. Tell us—We won't park a long time on the Commerce spot because it takes us out of the President's orbit.

McBride: I tried to find opportunities where I could make a difference and do things that were meaningful. It included missions to Japan on liquid natural gas. Russia was still the Soviet Union at the time, on medical, and food processing equipment. The most interesting trip of all, frankly, was a bit of an add-on to my schedule. I was going to be in the Soviet Union for two weeks and on the weekend between, I said to our commercial officer, "I really want to get to one of the Republics. What have we got going?" He said, "Down in Azerbaijan we're in the early stages of trying to identify opportunities for American companies on a pipeline that will eventually get built."

I said, "Good, let's go see if we can't go see the folks in the Republic." I had a meeting with the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan. It was really challenging, fascinating, interesting. They had never had as high level an American visitor before. It opened some of the first doors to consideration of American companies for a pipeline that ten years later was actually built. [J. Ray] McDermott / AMOCO were at that time American companies that were eager to invest there. For me that was really interesting and challenging, a little scary when the President said, "I'd like you to take one of our helicopters out to the countryside for a cookout tomorrow." I said, "Yes, Mr. President, okay." So we get on this horrible-looking—

Riley: Not Marine One.

McBride: Not Marine One, but a helicopter, and out into the countryside we go. I assumed it was an opportunity to bump us off or something. We had a lovely barbeque and back we went.

Riley: Barbeque what?

McBride: That, I don't know. Anyway that was a really interesting visit and that was one I was able to report back to the CIA and others what was going on, what I saw, what the opportunities were. About five years ago, some researcher called and said, "I uncovered that you'd made a trip." It turns out that it was one of the first U.S. engagements with Azerbaijan on behalf of this pipeline. "Tell me about it." I was proud to have some interesting—It was an interesting mission to have been on.

Riley: Did the inside of the bureaucratic department, or executive department, conform to your expectations of what things would look like? What political life would look like from that perch?
McBride: Yes, it was exactly what I expected. It just needs a different kind of care and feeding. The bureaucracy, and I don't mean that in a negative way—They're not bad, they're not lazy, they're not insolent; they just are motivated by different things. When you're in the White House, there is a shared sense of common purpose. It will last four years, or it will last eight years, but you have a very brief period of time to get done everything you hope to get done. That feeds on itself and that keeps you going around the clock.

You don't have that necessarily in the agency, and so you have to find other ways to motivate the people who work in that bureaucracy whose real job it is to outlast this group of political leadership, and the next one, and—I'll still be here and eventually I'll retire. But there are things that do motivate them, that help them to feel part of the team. Some of that for me came from seeing how George Bush treated people at all levels of the government and society, just respecting the role and the contribution that people throughout the government made. I enjoyed it and it didn't take a lot to motivate a crowd that had been largely ignored in the past by political leadership.

Riley: Did you miss the proximity to the energy of the Oval Office?

McBride: Sometimes. My office looked out on the Ellipse and when I'd see the helicopter fly out on a Friday afternoon, I'd be thinking, *Wow, wouldn't it be nice to be in my cabin in Camp David?* But shortly after I left and went to Commerce, I actually asked my wife out on a date. She was still working at the White House. We started dating. So it was part of moving on and creating my own life.

Riley: And you had more control over your schedule?

McBride: Absolutely. I traveled a fair amount, but I controlled my schedule and it wasn't anything like the White House.

Riley: Did you have your own personal aide at the time?

McBride: I had a Schedule C appointee that I hired who joined me, but he was really more to help with the substantive stuff, no personal aide.

Riley: Were there any specific issue areas in which you had ongoing contact with the White House?

McBride: No. I just understood the White House objectives, particularly post-Gulf War—That Kuwait stuff felt very connected to the objectives of the White House.

Riley: You don't stay over there all that long.

McBride: No, and it was one of the things that I was supposed to commit to in my hearing and I think I did commit to. In August of 1991, I'd been on the job a little more than a year. I get a call—I think I was back in Michigan again at my grandparents' cottage. I get a call from the White House operator, saying that Governor Sununu is looking for me. I call him back. He asks to see me when I get back from vacation.

A few days later I go in to see Governor Sununu. He asks me to come back to the White House to be his Executive Assistant and Deputy Assistant to the President. That just describes rank within the White House structure. Executive Assistant was the functional title. He was in the middle of his travel difficulties. The criticism of Governor Sununu had begun over the abuse of government assets. I was well aware of that. Part of what he indicated was that he thought I could help with getting him through all that.

Riley: And presumably staying on the good side of the people who were going to be in the White House from thereafter?

McBride: Some attributed that as his motive.

Riley: [redacted]

McBride: [redacted]

I met with the President right after that. He was aware that Sununu was going to ask me to come back. Like a father, he said, "It's entirely up to you. Don't do this for me; do it for you. If that's what you want to do, if you want to stay, I understand, and I support it." I was perhaps naïve in thinking that if I could help Sununu through this difficulty that that would ultimately help President Bush, to whom I owed everything. Staying at the Commerce Department, doing my job and not helping if somebody thought I could, seemed to me to be selfish. I thought I could help Sununu, and go back. I elected to take the job and started the end of—I had a visit to Japan or something.

The White House announced sometime in September that I was coming back, and I finished out in Commerce for the balance of September and then came the first of October. [redacted]

[redacted] Six weeks later he announces he's resigning, based on a whole lot of events that led up to that, including some that George W. contributed to. But it was clear it wasn't going to last. He resigns and now I find myself without a job, or on the verge of being without a job.

Riley: Because you're working for him?

McBride: I'm his Executive Assistant. We moved to the Aloha Suite. That was the nickname for a suite of offices that were at one time Nixon's hideaway office. When Bush was Vice President, just before he was inaugurated it was his office while the office of the Secretary of Navy was being redone. When Bush becomes President and moves into the Oval Office, that suite of offices remained intact as a suite of offices for senior folks coming or going, hence the name Aloha. You're either saying hello or goodbye. We were saying goodbye.

So Governor Sununu and I and maybe his executive secretary or others move over to the Aloha Suite and I'm now trying to figure out what the heck to do. By then I had been dating Anita for some time. She's Director of Personnel in the White House.

Riley: That's handy.

McBride: I had actually wanted her approval to come back to work for Sununu. She's much more private and was a little bit uncomfortable with the idea of working together at the same "company." Now I'm in the process of moving out. She was responsible for personnel function inside the complex. The head of Presidential personnel that makes all the appointments outside, the rest of the government, asked if I wanted my old job back at Commerce. They hadn't filled it. They hadn't nominated anyone. I can't possibly do that. That didn't feel right on any level. So I said no, I couldn't do that.

Riley: Would you have had to go back through a confirmation?

McBride: It's possible, maybe not. I had been confirmed. I don't know. It's hard to say. Either way it didn't seem right.

Riley: I think you're right, but it was just more of a legal question.

McBride: So I'm trying to figure out what to do. Sam Skinner is named the President's pick for White House Chief of Staff.

Riley: This is December of '91, is that right?

McBride: Yes.

Riley: There's also the reelection campaign around the corner.

McBride: Yes. And I think maybe even while Sununu—I forget when we announce his team; that's a whole different disaster. The team is announced. It's a nightmare from day one.

Sam Skinner called. He's named Chief of Staff. He's still Secretary of Transportation. He calls me over to Transportation and asks if I will take on the job of Assistant to the President for Management and Administration. I'm flattered but I say, "No, I can't, because the woman I'm dating is the Director of White House Personnel and that would be inappropriate. But thank you, I'll figure out what's next." A day or two later he calls back and says, "Look, everyone knows you, and everyone knows Anita. You'll be professional. Figure it out. You need to take the job. The President and I want you to have this job."

The President at some point raises it as well. I talk to Anita and we decide I'll take the job. So she is now working for me, even though we're dating. Actually it was terrific. She's very good at what she does so it was a great opportunity. I then took on the responsibility for Assistant to the President for Management and Administration. What made the job easy in many respects, and natural, was that I had worked so closely with the President. I knew most of the functions of the White House. I knew how the place was run. Most importantly, I knew how he wanted the place run, what was appropriate and what was not. So the job in many respects came rather easy, and it was a big management job.

Riley: Who was your predecessor in that?

McBride: It was open for a long time. The first person, [J.] Bonnie Newman, had it for a year or two and then it stayed open for a while. So I took that on, starting shortly after the first of the year. I had the Advance Office. I had basically the portfolio that is now the Deputy Chief of Staff for everything other than policy.

Riley: I'm not sure that I've interviewed anybody who was in that position. What are the key parts?

McBride: This will give you a lot.

Riley: This says, by the way, that it was supposed to be available a month ago.

McBride: There you go.

Riley: It looks like there may be a typo in the line below, which I would assume would say it was the same date—

McBride: So who knows when it was available? It is the White House office so it is about 400 personnel within the immediate office of the President. It is the Office of Administration, which is the administration office, the library, the drivers—It's a lot of the administrative functions of the White House. It's the messengers, the mailroom. It's the White House military office, which is the most sensitive and probably the most challenging component, composed of about 2000 active duty military personnel. It's Air Force One, Marine One, Camp David. There is some continuity of government programs that are highly classified that proved to be inadequate on 9/11.

Perry: The residence?

McBride: The White House residence, the ushers, all those things—just keeping the place running: budget, personnel, and then liaison with the Park Service, which managed the grounds. It was a terrific job. Through the military office, either I or one of my deputies would travel on all the trips with the President to support the White House. Part of the big function in a campaign year is to ensure that, as the President is traveling a great deal more than he might otherwise, we needed to have the assets available to support the President, whether he is campaigning or not, including communications, which meant hard-wiring a lot. It was still hard-wiring lines every time we were going to stop somewhere. Do we have enough aircraft? Do we have the helicopters we need? Do we have the limousines? Have they been flown in to where they need to be?

Riley: Now there is a big change in the organization of the White House at the time that you're taking this job. You've got Skinner coming in. The teeing up of the campaign operation at some point is going to transpire. You addressed this a little bit in your remarks here in '99 at the Miller Center but I wonder if we can get you to talk a little bit more about that, in terms of your perceptions of what happened when Skinner came into the post-Sununu environment.

McBride: I've forgotten what I said. So start with the campaign announcement. There was great effort to show everybody who had a piece of it. Unfortunately I couldn't tell you to this day who was in charge of the campaign. That set the campaign on a very rocky course. I still have this mental picture of nine or ten of these very senior folks trying to stand up on a platform in the press room and you can't fit them all on. Who knows, to this day, who was actually running that thing? It's not clear to me.

[redacted]

Riley: You touched on this and some of the stuff is in the briefing book, but I wanted to ask you about your own sense about President Bush's health and his focus when you come back in late '91. Obviously you don't have the same degree of interaction with him. Are you detecting somebody who is, to your eyes, visibly different from the man that you had left a year or so before?

McBride: Tired. I think I said this in the Miller Center speech. I'm not sure I would have attributed the lack of the "fire in the belly," or whatever caused him to appear to be someone different from the candidate in '88, as a chemical imbalance or anything else. That's a little too dramatic for my thinking.

Riley: But he did have Graves' disease.

McBride: He did have it. Who's to say whether that had any impact? I have no idea, but he seemed to be more tired and clearly not displaying the same zeal that he had during '87, '88, leading up to the campaign. It's hard to dispute that. Even casual observers asked the question, "What happened to him in '92?" He didn't seem to want it. He didn't seem to have the fire in the belly. It's like he had given up. I can't dispute that but I also don't know why that would be.

Some of being tired—One has to imagine that there is a certain dejection that comes with doing the job well and it not being recognized. I may be projecting my own theory on that, but I have to imagine that had to be a bit discouraging. He'd gotten the country through the Gulf War, liberated Kuwait and was widely recognized for that. He was about to pay a big political price for doing what he thought was right on the economy but wasn't getting any of the credit for it, or it wasn't going to become apparent until it was too late. My guess is that had to be in some ways disheartening. So maybe it is some of that, or maybe it is something we don't understand.

Riley: Who would have provided the—You did say in the Miller Center comments, and you actually said earlier here today, that you felt Lee Atwater's absence was very noted. But he wasn't running the show in '88. He was more of an engine; he wasn't driving the engine. What you're suggesting is the absence of a pilot or a driver.

McBride: Yes, I think that's correct. He was not running the show; he was the engine. But he was missed in that there was no one to say, "This plane is really off-course; we have got to switch out the pilot here," or "Your pilot has just had a heart attack; we need to do something." There was nobody saying that, or if they were—Maybe someone was, that didn't carry the same weight with the President. I think it's more likely no one was saying that. [redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

Riley: You were away by the time of the Andrews agreement. As a closer outsider on the periphery, did you look at that and think, boy, they've screwed that up?

McBride: No, but I was worried about the impact of squaring the circle around "no new taxes." That was a fairly definitive statement, and while it was the right thing to do, and I can imagine the President being convinced it was the right thing to do, the politics would argue that's not going to be so easy to explain.

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

Perry: You say that it was a perception gap, that he wasn't that far removed, or he was just as far removed as any other President by necessity because he has a personal aide and somebody to do all these things.

McBride: Yes.

Perry: And looking at the watch during the debate—

McBride: That was not good.

Perry: Again the perception was not helpful.

McBride: Most of us would interpret that, by anybody in any situation, as *I want to be anywhere but here.* I'm saying to you, "Really, is this going to keep going on?" That's what he signaled, and it suggested that he really shouldn't have to be going through this, or didn't want to be going through this. The other side exploited it well. That was their job, to find the opening and drive a truck through it, and they did.

To be fair, we didn't understand the depth of the concern and feeling over the economy. I knew—During the Skinner period there was a lot of focus internally on communications. I will warn you, if you're talking about communications and you think you only have a communications problem, your problems are much deeper. That's what is going on in this White House right now. They don't have a communication problem; they have a substance problem, and yet they're wrapping it and excusing it as a communications problem. They're very effective at it.

We had a substance problem *and* a communications problem. We had both, but it wasn't just "Let's have another communications meeting every afternoon at four o'clock and we'll all talk about the schedule and what we're messaging. Won't things turn around tomorrow?" They won't. We had bigger problems.

Riley: Were you a participant in the senior staff meetings?

McBride: Yes, I was a participant in the senior staff meetings and the communications meeting. Some of that had to do with the portfolio itself. White House advance reported to me for most of '92. (Halfway through the year we took that out of my group.) And the military office. So between advance and military office we were supporting the daily schedule.

Riley: So most of the important daily meetings, you're involved in.

McBride: Yes.

Riley: How contentious were these meetings, going through '92?

McBride: [redacted]

Now you could say, couldn't you do something about it? The answer was no, because it is so far off—It is the Chief of Staff. Is one of us going to go say to the President—Maybe we should have, maybe all of us should have said, "This is a disaster. This is a debacle. You need to change your team," which is probably what had to happen and eventually did. By then it was late in '92. Jim Baker did his best, but he rarely traveled with us. [redacted]

Riley: One of the complications in this period is Ross Perot.

McBride: Yes.

Riley: You made only a brief reference to Perot when you were here before. That's an odd situation. You've got a man from Bush's home state who is challenging the sitting President of the United States.

McBride: But for that, he would have been elected, I expect. Perot took a lot of those votes.

Riley: The dynamic of the race was very different. My sense about that—I've looked at the polling evidence. It seems to indicate it was about a 50/50 split. That doesn't account for how Perot affects the race. Pulling out before the Democratic convention and saying the Democrats have got their problems fixed basically endorses Clinton at a time when he's dead meat almost.

McBride: Yes, that was problematic, everything about that, even how we responded. How did we get to that? Was there anything the White House, the campaign, should have done? Is there anything the President should have done? Were we in a position to consider every circumstance that presented itself? My guess is, without studying it or looking back terribly carefully, we just weren't functioning well. If curve balls were coming at us, I don't think we were prepared for any of them, and that was certainly a big one.

Riley: Do you know what the root of the disconnect between Perot and Bush may have been?

McBride: I don't.

Riley: Were any thoughts given to trying a new Vice Presidential nominee?

McBride: If there were, those conversations were very private between Baker and the President. There may have been some who polled it. At the end of the day, though, that's probably a risky

venture for a guy whose character is built around the characteristic of loyalty. It might have seemed a strange move. I'm not sure. As much as the media liked to poke fun at Dan Quayle, changing out Dan Quayle—By then you've sort of solved the question. Okay, we're willing to accept Dan Quayle as next in line for the Presidency. What are you actually achieving by making that change four years later?

[redacted]

Riley: I think so. We haven't really said anything about W. He was a presence.

McBride: He was a presence in '87, '88. As I said at the Miller Center, I don't remember exactly what role but he clearly had a role in the removal of, or the departure of John Sununu. Whether Andy said, "You're out," or George W. said, "You're out," I'm not sure I exactly know. One of your other respondents may know or 'fess up to it. But clearly the message was delivered. George W. was a part of that and knew it was the right thing for his father's reelection.

W played a very important role in '87, '88. He gave his father great strength. He appreciated the contribution of W coming to Washington, being part of the campaign and helping to solve some of the disconnect that the friends and the family and the long-time supporters had felt around the election in '88. I think he was desperate, like a lot of us, for something that would work in '92. He was at the campaign. I heard stories of him trying to pump folks up at the campaign in '92, much to no avail.

Perry: You commented a little bit in your remarks at the Miller Center on the difference in personality and the political instincts of [John Ellis] Jeb Bush and his brother, W. Could you say a little bit more about that?

McBride: I should note that my wife and I read that carefully. Now what exactly did I say? Did I say anything that would get me in trouble? I was either very insightful or very lucky. At the time, I knew both sons. I knew all the children of my boss. I had worked around them, been around them quite often as a result of working for their dad. [redacted]

Jeb has an easy-going style, in some ways more like the father's political style, campaign style. Jeb also has a real fondness for policy. He's fascinated by policy issues, discussions, and considerations, more so than President Reagan or President George W. Bush. They're motivated by broad principles that they want to advance through policy. Bill Clinton is a student of policy. He likes the substance of policy. I think Jeb is much more like that. I probably avoided that question all together. I didn't mean to.

Perry: No, you didn't, and I think what you're saying is what most people did say in comparing and contrasting the two brothers at that time, before it was clear that W would make a run for it.

McBride: But also politics wasn't foreign to him. He had run for office; he had lost. He had been around his father. While it wasn't apparent to us that he had this ambition, I suppose it shouldn't have come as a big surprise that he has gone back to run for Governor. This is a guy who had run for Congress 15, 20 years earlier and lost, and had been around his father's political campaign. So it shouldn't have been a surprise, I suppose, to many of us, and to some it was, because we didn't know he had that ambition still.

Perry: The family business.

Riley: Was there any debate prep involved? The other piece of the campaign would have been the convention that year. Did you go to the convention that year?

McBride: Houston? I was on that. I would have been involved, again from the military support, liaison with the security. My role became a little more official, less about the politics. Advance had moved out of my arena by then. I was there. I don't remember much about the convention.

Increasingly, I traveled with the campaign. Anita and I got married in September of '92 so we had our own activity level after that. We took about three days after the wedding and then I was back on the campaign, traveling most of October. I was rather delusional; I was probably one of the last ones in America to think we might pull it off. I'm sure I had blinders on. Then the Walsh announcement took the wind out of our sails, but even that probably wasn't enough.

Riley: But the gap was closing.

McBride: The gap was closing. The trend was going in the right direction until that announcement. [redacted]

Riley: And you're traveling with the President when this was going on?

McBride: Yes, quite often. I remember in Grand Rapids we had some doozies. The challenge for me was that my duties were quite different than they were before. I'm not the personal aide, I'm not in his circle the way I was at one time. I'm running the operations supporting the White House but I'm still a member of the senior team.

Riley: You're somebody who has had a lot of experience with him. Is this a function perhaps of his not getting enough rest? Are you worried that he's being over-scheduled or that he is being put in a position where he doesn't perform at his best?

McBride: I don't necessarily remember that, because I would have been in a position to say something. I could have clearly said, "Based on my experience, this schedule isn't working for him. If we do these three things I think it would be better." I didn't say that. I don't necessarily believe that was it. I don't know what it was.

Riley: Well, you suggested that they were getting to him a little bit.

McBride: Yes, he was clearly getting rattled. Was it polling numbers? Was it debate prep? Whatever.

Riley: His sense about Clinton—?

McBride: You may know that he did a Governors' summit on education here at the University of Virginia while Mr. Bush was President. Bill Clinton, Governor of Arkansas, widely recognized as an expert on education, was somebody we all sort of took note of, an interesting guy. I don't know what the President thought of him, but he was admired in the country as someone who had taken on education in a state with difficulties.

What I told myself, but I don't know if others shared it or not, was that this was a guy with some real character flaws. He clearly had some issues with women, girlfriends, bimbo-eruptions, whatever you want to call them. I thought this good man, who has been a good President, will be rewarded on Election Day. What I told myself was when people go into the polls to pull the lever for President, they won't be able to pull the lever for Bill Clinton, because they so admire George Bush. They're just not telling the pollsters this. That was all pretty irrational. The polls didn't suggest that, but that was quite satisfying during the campaign to tell oneself that.

There was a sense that this is a guy whose character can't stand up to George Bush's and therefore that will come through, eventually. The light will go on as voters cast their votes and they'll cast their vote for George Bush. That didn't happen.

Riley: We know that the two of them have become close, at least publicly, in the post-Presidential era. Is it fair to say that President Bush had a fairly strong distaste for Clinton during those waning months of 1992?

McBride: Yes. I don't think there's anything much he admired about him at the time, other than maybe the effectiveness of their campaign. That relationship that has emerged took a number of years and certain events that caused them to be together and age—Bush 41 has later said, because we've asked him, "What's that about?" He said, "I'm an old guy. I like to listen, he likes to talk; we're a perfect match." God bless President Clinton never shuts up. President Bush is at a point in his life where he's happy to just sit there and glaze over, I guess.

Riley: How did he take the defeat?

McBride: It was very difficult. I think it was difficult for a good part of the year following his Presidency. He worried about the staff. He blamed himself. He felt he let down his supporters. It was a tough thing. It was hard to imagine it feeling like anything but a rejection after working hard for four years, putting yourself out there, and then losing to Bill Clinton. He lost his mother not long after that. She passed away. It was a very difficult period for him for the most part of a year or so. After that, though, he seemed to move into a rather satisfying post-Presidency. At various times his health has been better than Mrs. Bush's, but for the most part they have had a very happy time following the Presidency.

Riley: You've stayed in touch with him?

McBride: Yes. We traded e-mails just the other night after the World Series game, which was as sweet as can be, that picture. We trade e-mails, Blackberries—He uses a Blackberry. He e-mails. We call. I had more occasions to see him when W was in the White House. I would often go over and see him in the White House when he was visiting his son. Anita and I were with him this summer. Anita was just with him a few days ago down in College Station. So yes, we stay in touch. I've had a chance to tell him on a number of occasions how much my working for him and being close to him has meant to me. Particularly as I lost my father and he found ways to play a special role in my life.

Perry: I just have one question that just occurred to me as we were talking today. Do you remember President Bush's eulogy for President Reagan?

McBride: Yes.

Riley: If you could just talk a little bit about what you think that revealed about President Bush and his relationship with President Reagan.

McBride: I just remember it being very sweet and very heartfelt. That's what stuck out more than anything else. What struck me too was the ceremony around the funeral, and I can imagine a bit of a contrast in what we may see when he goes on.

Perry: By that you mean the grandeur, for example, of the burial at sunset with the sun going down behind the mountains?

McBride: [redacted]

Riley: I find one of the most moving aspects of going to the site, going to the library, is not going to the library but going to the grove out back where the cemetery is, where his daughter is.

McBride: They moved Robin [Bush] there a few years ago.

Perry: That's where they are going to be?

McBride: Yes.

Riley: It's hard to walk down there without breaking into tears.

McBride: A couple of years ago after it was done, we were there for a meeting for his library, with the advisory board. "Come on, let's go down to the cemetery." He was so excited. "Don't hurry up too much, guys. I'm not ready yet." Now he doesn't move quite as sprightly but that gives him great comfort. I actually don't remember being there at the cathedral for the funeral for President Reagan, as much to support my wife as—Ours is a mixed marriage. She's a Reaganite; I'm a Bushie. I don't remember.

He gave a very moving eulogy for Lud Ashley just a couple of months ago. His good friend Lud Ashley died. I knew he loved Lud very much and enjoyed his company, but what I didn't know is that Lud had been a friend who was at the hospital every night with Barbara and Robin when Robin was sick. George Bush was flying back and forth from Texas. Lud was just a devoted friend. He gave a very sweet eulogy for his friend. Afterwards he said to me, "I'm reminded of Phyllis Diller's line, 'All my friends are dying off in alphabetical order.'"

This summer we were with him and he was talking about whether he'll go first or Barbara will. He's in a chapter of his life when he is very satisfied but he is thinking about that.

Perry: You mentioned to us, in showing us the photographs, that he was always interested in other people's religion or respectful of other people's religion. Did he talk about that with you? Did he compare his high Episcopalianism with your Catholicism?

McBride: No, we didn't have a thoughtful conversation, but one of the things he took great pride in was Jeb's conversion to Catholicism, a pride in the sense that it was important to Jeb and therefore it was important to him.

On more than one occasion we were with Cardinal [John] Kroll in Philadelphia and would attend mass in Cardinal Kroll's private chapel. That was considered a private event. I wouldn't presume to be involved but he would always say, "Tim, come on in and join us." Often Jeb, or his grandson George P. [Bush], his oldest grandson and in many ways the one he has great fondness for, who's Catholic—He would have George P. along for something like that. It was very important to him. We met Mother Teresa once on the grounds there at the White House. He was very moved by her example. He is a man of great faith, who has respect for all religions.

Perry: But not wanting to wear it on his sleeve on the campaign trail or even in the White House.

McBride: No. Overt displays of fundamentalism that have at various times been present in American politics made him uncomfortable. I don't need to go and run out and talk about my relationship with Jesus or God in order to convince others that I'm a person of faith.

Perry: Did he ever comment on W's seeming conversion to a more fundamentalist, evangelical branch of Christianity?

McBride: No, if anything, he just had great respect and appreciation for faith and how faith sustains people regardless of what that faith is. That's what I recall. There are a number of occasions where we'd have events in the White House with different faith leaders.

Riley: I'm going to ask because it's almost five o'clock: Why don't you review your notes, because there are some things you came in wanting to talk about and we want to make sure we've included those.

McBride: We covered most everything.

Riley: Amazing.

McBride: The only thing I would add is on inauguration day—

Riley: Coming in or going out?

McBride: Going out. His aide has left. First of all, this has absolutely nothing to do with inauguration. There are two stories that are somewhat interesting. Again, the White House was very different in a number of ways from how it is today, most principally in technology. We were just starting to use e-mails, and the White House was grappling with what to do with e-mails as Presidential records and communications. We had very little of that reliance on e-mails. We didn't have cell phones; we had pagers. We may have had those brick cell phones at the time. We were still using typewriters, maybe word processors to a degree.

That was a very different environment—including on Air Force One. I remember when the 747 came on line there were computers. There hadn't been before. That was very new. Also, women were sent home on more than one occasion if their skirts or dresses were too short. We had hemline police. My wife actually delivered one of those messages once.

Riley: She was not the object.

McBride: She was not the object.

Perry: By virtue of the President's wishes?

McBride: By virtue of somebody's collective thinking that, if you were going to see the President or be around the White House, a skirt that short was inappropriate, particularly if you were going into the White House. I can think of one occasion on which one particular woman was due to see the President later in the day in the Oval Office, and she was sent home to put on a longer skirt or dress before she went to see the President. Isn't that great?

Perry: They didn't have to wear patent leather shoes?

McBride: They didn't wear pants, either, by the way. Women wore skirts or dresses at the time. That changed when the Clintons came in.

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

Then finally, on inauguration day, General Scowcroft and I were to go over to Blair House. We did go over there to meet with President-elect Clinton to tell him exactly what was going to happen at 12 noon with the codes. He was going to be taken into a room in the Capitol after the inauguration, and told what responsibility he now has for the nuclear codes, and how that would all work, and the role of the military aide. We briefed him on those programs, General Scowcroft from the national security perspective, I from the perspective of managing the continuity of government programs and the military aides. That was a really fascinating visit on that morning. I was really impressed with Mr. Clinton. The first words out of his mouth were, "Brent, thank you for your service to the country. It's amazing. Thank you for coming over here." I was really quite impressed with that.

Then I continued on. Because the personal aide had left about six weeks earlier, the President just had me do that all that day. That was a great way to wind up my career with him in much the way it had started four years earlier. It was a great end to the four years working for him, or eight years really.

Riley: I told you earlier that some of my favorite interviews are personal aides and you've certainly lived up to billing. This has been a fascinating excursion for us.

McBride: I hope it's helpful.

Riley: You have painted a fascinating portrait of this President and it adds colors and contours and dimensions that people don't have. It is the kind of thing that will endure as future generations try to look back and figure out how we managed to get through whatever times that we had here. So we're grateful for the preparation that you've put in. It was fun looking at the pictures, but looking at your notes and seeing that you devoted that much time to reflecting on it was very helpful. The fact that we covered these things through the course of the interview is encouraging to me that we managed to get to most of the stuff that we needed to.

McBride: It was my pleasure.

Riley: Your public service continues today and we appreciate it.

McBride: This was a service to me. At various times I tried to keep a diary and never did because I feared it would interfere with the relationship. And there just wasn't time. A lot of this is just jumbled around in my head, or in different cartons, so thank you for forcing me to focus on it.

Riley: I want you to go home and debrief your wife on everything that happened today, because she's going to get the same treatment by us, or others.

McBride: She's eager to do it, and she has a lot more cartons than I have.

Riley: Then what we'll do is we'll get the full day-and-a-half with her in closer proximity to her service.

McBride: There's a lot to be said for doing it closer.

Riley: We did the best we could. We try to have some urgency in getting the folks and we hope that in the next four or five years it will be done. So thanks.

McBride: My pleasure.