GEORGE W. BUSH ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

FINAL EDITED TRANSCRIPT

INTERVIEW WITH NORMAN Y. MINETA

March 4–5, 2014
Washington, D.C.

Interviewers

University of Virginia
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Russell Riley: This is the Norman Mineta interview as a part of the George W. Bush Oral History Project. For the record, we had a conversation before the tape started about the confidentiality of the proceedings. You're the only person in the room who is allowed to talk about what we talk about. I'm pleased to say we've been doing this kind of work since 1977 and have an unblemished record of maintaining confidences.

Norman Y. Mineta: How many of the Cabinet Secretaries have you had a chance to—?

Riley: Bush or over all?

Mineta: President Bush.

Riley: For President Bush, probably in the neighborhood of six to ten. A lot of people in the national security area. In any event, this is an opportunity for us to capture your recollections about your experience for purposes of history.

Because of the time constraints, we can't deal with your enormously rich personal history, but I wanted to ask one question to set the stage. That is, why did you become a Democrat?

Mineta: I was a Republican until the [John] Kennedy-[Richard] Nixon election.

Riley: Is that right?

Mineta: That's when I changed my registration. Partially that was because of what Nixon had done to Helen Gahagan Douglas and the appeal—and I was in the Korean War, came out of the service in '56. I was in Korea in '53, in Japan from '54 to '56 and came home. I wanted to volunteer in Republican Party activities. When I went to the county central committee, they weren't that interested in my volunteering.

Barbara Perry: How did you pick the Republicans at that point? Had your family—?

Mineta: Being in business with my dad. He was an immigrant from Japan. Couldn't become a citizen because of the Oriental Exclusion Act of 1924, although he was partial to [Franklin D.] Roosevelt. But I was thinking more along Republican lines. In 1952 when General [Douglas]

MacArthur came back and was fired by President [Harry] Truman, a bunch of us went over to the San Francisco Airport to see General MacArthur when he landed and stayed there for a few hours to get a rest and refueling of the plane. I had more Republican tendencies then.

My first experience with trying to be active I got sort of rebuffed. They were more interested in how much money I had to donate than how much time I had. By that time also there were other things like housing issues, civil rights issues. I just felt that they weren't changing with what was happening and I was. So in the Kennedy-Nixon election I reregistered as a Democrat and worked in the Kennedy campaign. Then I worked in the insurance business with my dad.

In 1962 we had a young Japanese American lawyer appointed a judge by Governor Pat [Edmund] Brown. He had to give up being a commissioner on the Human Relations Commission. So when I was at the investiture for Judge [Wayne] Kanemoto, the then-mayor of San Jose said, "Norm, Wayne had to resign from the Human Relations Commission. Would you like to be appointed to fill his vacancy?"

I said, "Mayor [Paul] Moore, I don't know what the Human Relations Commission does. Let me find out and I'll get back to you." I looked into it and talked to the city clerks' office, talked to the chairman of the Human Relations Commission, the executive director, and I came back and said, "Sure, I'd like to be considered for that vacancy." I submitted my name for it and the council personnel committee then took it up and I was appointed to fill that vacancy.

The following year, I got engaged to get married and was looking for an apartment. The two of us would drive around looking at the newspaper and we'd walk up to a door and the lady would say, "I think we rented that, but let me check. Honey, did we rent the apartment?" The guy would come out to the door, look at me, and say, "Right, we have."

So I'd say thank you, get in the car, go to the corner gas station, call up the number, and say, "I see you have an apartment for rent." They'd come back, "We do." So I'd say, "OK, I'll be right over." They'd say, "Great, come on over." I'd show up at the door. He'd say, "I just told you ten minutes ago that our apartment was rented." I'd say, "Yes, but I called on the phone and you said, 'Come on over right away.'" I'd hear, "Oh, *you*."

I saw this pattern. Then in '65 the federal highway was building an interstate right through San Jose. As with most highways, they try to figure out the cheapest way to do it. And that happened to put the highway through where the Hispanic population lived. At that time, the rent for that area was about $55 a month. The going rate for the balance of the city was about $150, $160. The Highway Assistance Program only gave you relocation assistance if you owned your business or owned your residence. If you rented, you were out on the street. This impacted 1,600, 1,700 families representing about 12,000 people. So a bunch of us went to the city council and said, "We think you ought to form a housing authority under the Housing [and Urban Development] Act of 1965 and provide assistance for these people who are being displaced by the highway."

After their hearings and everything they decided to form a housing authority. Then they said, "All right, you five busybodies who convinced us to do this, you're going to become the housing commissioners."

I was one of them. I told my dad, "I'm going to take a short leave of absence to be the acting executive director until we hire someone and get this thing really going." I did that for two or three months to get it put together. Then in 1967 we had our first directly elected mayor. Up to that point, the mayor's position was moved each year among the members of the city council. In 1965 or '66 there was a charter change on the ballot that provided for a directly elected mayor. So a member of the city council ran and became the mayor. That created a vacancy on the city council.

The new mayor and two incumbent council members came to me and said, "Would you submit your name for the council?" I said, "I'm in business with my dad, so I'd better talk to him." When I talked to Papa about this city council possibility, he said, "You and I can make our arrangements on how we run the business. In Japan there is an old adage that if you're in politics you're like the nail that sticks out of the board. You know what happens to that nail? It always gets hammered. Can you stand being hammered by your friends, your neighbors, your constituents?"

I said, "Papa, it's only for a two-year unexpired term of Ron James. If I don't like it after two years, then I won't run in 1969." I enjoyed it and I was still able to help run the business, so I ran in 1969. I couldn't say "Reelect Norm" because I hadn't been elected in the first place, so we used the phrase "Retain Norm." I was able to win city council.

I had a four-year term starting in 1969, and the mayor at the end of his term decided not to seek reelection. By that time I was vice mayor of San Jose and people said, "You ought to run, you have to run." One of the most vociferous was a guy by the name of Halsey Burke who was the chair of the Republican Central Committee. I said, "I don't know about a full four-year term for mayor."

He said, "I'm going to be your campaign manager. And Jim Wiesler is going to be your campaign treasurer." Jim was also the treasurer of the Republican Central Committee, so I always said I used Republican monies and Democratic workers to get elected. In California local offices are all nonpartisan. Party affiliation is not designated anywhere on the ballot.

So in '71, I always said that unemployment was so bad there were 14 or 15 people running for mayor, which was a break for me. I was able to win in the primary with over 50 percent of the vote—

Riley: Without a runoff?

Mineta: Without a runoff. The fact that there were so many, they all peeled off a certain number of votes and I was able to get over 50 percent in the primary and win. At that point San Jose had a population of 320,000, but it was changing in character from being an agriculture-based economy. And there was one big company, Food Machinery Corporation. That was a hometown corporation. Eventually with acquiring more companies it became FMC in 1973. They moved their headquarters from San Jose to Chicago. It was during the transition from being an agricultural community to becoming Silicon Valley.

I was doing a lot on economic development and planning for the future. We had a population of 320,000, and in the four years I was mayor it went up to 580,000. We knew we had to be

planning for a community of at least a million.

Riley: Were the boundaries growing or is this the same—

Mineta: Yes. Very aggressive acquisition. Annexation.

Riley: So part of it is the population is growing in the existing boundaries—

Mineta: Because there are people coming in.

Riley: But you're also acquiring.

Mineta: We had to make sure the city grew gracefully and without warts. How do you have money and the grants to build libraries and fire stations, increase the sewage treatment plant capacity, as well as going from secondary to advanced secondary to tertiary? There was a lot of planning as we were trying to look to a city of a 1.5 to 1.7 million. Today it is about 1.2 million, and I think it is closer to 300 square miles of territory.

One night I was riding with a police officer. He was going from one side of his precinct through the city at Cupertino to the other side of his precinct. This was Cupertino. I said, "That doesn't sound right." Analyzing costs like this, we decided to dis-annex this portion and cede it to the city of Cupertino because it was costing us too much to police and have fire and other services out in that area. Eventually we set up a ring of urban transition and urban reserve, so there was to be no building in the reserve area and we'd do the infill in the urban and in the transition area.

We had to make sure that the cost-benefit ratio was to the city's benefit. Also, although this was a no-build area, there was a cost-benefit study that permitted it. There was one situation where I was told by a very prominent attorney in San Jose that someone was going to be coming in to see me. He came in to see me about building a 300-acre research and development site here. He wouldn't tell me who it was or who he represented or worked for.

We went through our studies. If we were to build the road out to this site and the PG&E—the Pacific Gas & Electric—and the San Jose water works and others found it was going to be to their benefit, then we would allow it since it was still part of the city of San Jose but not inhabited. So we did approve it. It turned out to be an IBM [International Business Machines] research lab. I remember the fellow saying, "These are not going to be ordinary people out there. They're going to have long hair, long fingernails." We ended up with 2,500 people. On top of that they built two more labs in the transition area. So we must have over 10,000 research and development people working in San Jose now.

I used to go to Japan regularly to try to get Japanese companies to come into Silicon Valley. It was really an exciting time to be able to put these kinds of things together.

In September of 1973 I announced that I was going to seek reelection as mayor. In the third week of January 1974 my phone rings at a quarter to six in the morning. My name as mayor was listed in the phone book. I didn't think it was anything unusual. I pick up the phone, "Hello."

"Norm, have you seen the paper?" I said, "Jim, are you kidding? It's a quarter to six in the

morning on Sunday. Of course I haven't seen the paper." He said, "Charlie Gubser is not going to seek reelection." He was the incumbent member of Congress and had been there for maybe 26 years. I said, "Jim, I've already announced in September that I'm going to seek reelection. In October Tom Bradley, the mayor of Los Angeles, came up and did a fundraiser for me. So I'm running for mayor in the November 1974 election." He said, "This is a chance for you to go to Congress." I said, "Jimmy, I'm going to go back to sleep. I suggest you do the same." I hung up on him.

At seven o'clock that night the doorbell rang. I went to the door and this fellow is standing there. I said, "Mike, what are you doing here?" He said, "I don't know. Jimmy told me to be here at seven o'clock." Jimmy had called 20 people: "Be at Norm's house at seven P.M." Never talked to me. He took a chance as to whether or not I'd even be home. We had to figure out whether or not this Congressional district would send a Democrat to Congress.

Riley: The incumbent was a Republican?

Mineta: A Republican and the one before that was a Republican. It had been held in the Republican circle for 40-some years. But we had a black superintendent of public instruction. He had been through three elections, been reelected twice, three-term superintendent. Then in 1964 we had a fair housing amendment on the statewide ballot. There were about ten of these critical election issues over the years. Jimmy had brought everybody together to go to the clerk of the elections board to find out how this Congressional district voted on these critical issues.

There was a trend that showed it was possible for a Democrat to win. In the second week of March of 1974 I declared I was going to run for Congress. The primary was in June. I took all the money I had raised for the mayor's race and sent it back to everybody. Of course I said in the letter, "I'm returning this money because I'm not running for mayor. Now I'm going to run for Congress." It turned out that I received more money back than we had mailed out.

I ran in the June primary. There were two other Democrats. There was a Libertarian candidate and something like three Republicans. So I did win the Democratic primary. The person who won the Republican primary was a fellow by the name of George Milias, who came from Gilroy, a town about 20 miles south of San Jose. A well-known Republican, really a good person. We had a great campaign. It was aboveboard, George was terrific. And in November I won.

George had been the Assistant Regional Director for EPA [Environmental Protection Agency]. Then they pulled him to D.C. as the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Environmental Affairs. They said, "Go out and run for Congress. If you make it, fine. If you don't we'll make sure we get you a job."

So I win in November and George returns to D.C. looking for a spot. In January I get sworn in and the thing that helped me really was August of 1974 things blew up. In January of 1975 I became chairman of the freshman class. There were 75 Democrats elected, 16 Republicans. So I became chair of the 75 Democrats. By April or May they still didn't have a job for George Milias. I said to the head of Congressional Relations, "You guys owe him a job. You have to place him somewhere." So he became Assistant Secretary of Interior for Environmental Affairs. Then President [Jimmy] Carter won the election and I think sometime in December—

Riley: Seventy-six?

Mineta: Maybe even into ’77, I found out that George had been diagnosed with cancer. I said to Cece [Cecil] Andrus, “Cece, could you keep him in that job, because it is not a good prognosis?” George died just before Thanksgiving. His wife, Mary Ann [Milias]—I talk to her, see her to this day—she thanks me for having done that. But it was really Cece Andrus who said, “I understand” and kept him on.

That group of 75 was rambunctious. Here we were new members, and in ’74 the Democratic caucus had changed the rules so that they were now going to be voting on committee chairmanships. All of us were freshman members, we didn’t know any of them. As chairman of the new members’ caucus, I wrote to all the sitting chairs saying, “Being new members of Congress we want to cast an educated vote, so we’d like to have you come before the caucus for interviews.”

Letters were coming in saying, “Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for your invitation. However, I’m so busy, I really am. I’m not going to have time to meet with you.” As I started to show everybody these responses that were coming in they said, “Screw them. Tell them we’re going to vote en masse against whoever doesn’t come before the caucus.” So I wrote a letter saying we would vote en masse against anyone who didn’t come before the caucus. “Dear Mr. Chairman, when would it be convenient to meet?” It was just amazing.

At the end of those interviews and in consultation with the senior members of Congress we decided to target four people. They were Eddie Hébert, Armed Services, Louisiana; [John William] Wright Patman, chairman of the Banking Committee, from Texas—I forget the third. The fourth one was Wayne Hays from Ohio. A curmudgeon—Wilbur Mills.

In the case of Banking, the next person in seniority—I’ve forgotten who it was but we skipped and went down to Henry Reuss, number three in seniority. The best one when we were interviewing was Eddie Hébert from Louisiana. Gladys Noon Spellman was a new member from Maryland and during the course of the questioning she said, “Mr. Chairman, I have a question. Patricia Schroeder, member of Congress from Colorado, became a member of your Armed Services Committee. But I understand that you wouldn’t expand the dais to include Ron Dellums and Congresswoman Schroeder. Then when Speaker [Carl] Albert designated Congresswoman Schroeder to represent the U.S. House of Representatives at the NATO [North Atlantic Treaty Organization] meeting, you would not approve a travel voucher for her and it was Speaker Albert who had to authorize the travel voucher from his office.”

I was sitting next to him and you could see those little hairs start to rise and his face was like a thermometer. The red was coming up. It was so funny. He finally stood up and said, “All right, boys and girls, let me tell you what it’s like around here.” It was just downhill—it was great.

We targeted these four. Three were voted out. Wayne Hays was not voted out on the floor with the whole Democratic caucus. I remember calling my aide, “Lock the door before he comes and takes all the phones and desks out of our office.” It was just a wonderful time with these new members. It was Chris Dodd, Dick Ottinger from New York who sought the Senate in the ’72 election then came back in ’74, Ab Mikva of Illinois. It was a class of top people.

We had people like Toby [Anthony John, Jr.] Moffett from Connecticut, and the youngest member was Tom Downey from New York. On November 4 he was not old enough to be a member of the House. He had a birthday; I think it was in December. We get sworn in in January, so he was 25 and was eligible to be a member of the House. Tom and all of us were coming in for a vote in the House. As he was walking in with everybody else the doorkeeper stood up right in front of him and said, "I'm sorry, members only." He said, "I am a member."

Frank Annunzio was chairing—I think maybe it was House Administration—just boom walked right into Tom Downey who was wondering what was happening. Tom turned around and said, "Doorkeeper says I'm not a member." Frank, in his inimitable way, said, "You dumb son of a bitch. He's a member, can't you tell?" That's when they created the members' pins for identification purposes. The first one we had looked like a commissar's pin; it was really big and ugly. We got them to tone it down a little bit. It was great chairing that group. We had Tim Wirth, Colorado, really fine people all the way around.

We didn't know what kind of rules had to be changed, but people like James O'Hara from Michigan, Billy Ford—from Michigan, Phil Burton, and Don [William D.] Edwards, all these seniors who knew the kinds of things that had to be changed. So we became a sort of army of 75 for those folks who knew what changes had to be made. It was an exciting time and I had the privilege of being their chair. It always reminded me of a cap I had that said, "I'm their leader. Where did they go?" I was chasing behind them, trying to catch up. It was a double-billed hat. It was a great group.

Riley: You were there for 20 years?

Mineta: Eleven elections.

Riley: Any close calls?

Mineta: Probably the first one, I think it was something like 53-43 in the first race. The next in the mid-50s. After that it was always in the 60s.

Riley: Pretty solid.

Mineta: I think one time it even got to the 70s. I used to go back three weekends out of the month. It was a Republican district and the population growth was like this. These are all new people. They didn't know Mayor Mineta, they didn't know anything about it. So I used to fly in on Friday, hit the tail-end of a dinner or some other function Friday night. Saturday town hall meetings, other kinds of meetings. Sunday go to the various churches and then take the red-eye back Sunday night, ten o'clock at night out of San Francisco and get here at seven in the morning.

Riley: Did you have family at the time?

Mineta: Absolutely.

Riley: Did they stay—

Mineta: The election was on Tuesday and on Thursday my then-wife and I flew out here. Her purpose was to look for a house. Mine was to find out what the hell I'd gotten myself into. So our object was to buy a house by the Tuesday before Thanksgiving and then go back for Thanksgiving dinner, clean up the house, pack all the goods, and come back. We actually drove cross country, starting from San Jose, starting on December 22. Our five-year-old son at the time said, "Is Santa Claus going to find us out here?" We were in Albuquerque on Christmas Day. I had packed away one of these folding Christmas trees and left it on the table in the room, with milk and cookies of course. The two kids woke up, the milk and cookies were gone, and their presents were there. First thing, "Santa Claus did find us!"

Then we got here and moved into the house.

Riley: Your family would normally stay in this area when you're going back and forth?

Mineta: Yes, I went back and forth. They went to school here, graduated T. C. Williams High School in Alexandria.

Perry: That was more the norm, was it not, for people to move their families here?

Mineta: Yes. And now, housing being so expensive, they generally stay home. Plus the workweek starts on Tuesday, ends on Thursday. So members don't know each other. We used to fight, scrap in subcommittee, full committee, on the floor, slap each other on the back, and say, "Come on, let's go have dinner" even if we were fighting all day long. They don't do that now. They don't know each other.

I remember in 1995 Alan Simpson—whom I met when we were both 12 years old—called me and said, "I want to see you." I said, "Fine. Why don't you come over tomorrow, two o'clock?" He said, "I'm sorry?" I said, "Why don't you come over tomorrow, two o'clock?" He said, "I'm a U.S. Senator. You're a mere Representative in the House of Representatives. I think it is really more your duty to come over and see me." I said, "Oh, you imperial bastard. Yes, I will." I love Alan.

So I went over and saw him. He said, "Ann [Simpson] and I are going home on Thursday, and on Friday I'm going to announce that I'm not seeking reelection." I said, "Why are you doing that? You're in the majority now, you ought to stick around." This is June of 1995.

He said, "No, the civility of the place is starting to go, and I want to get out of here before it changes." Oddly enough in October 1995 I left. I had been chairman of the Public Works—that's a correction in here. It says I was chairman of the T&I [Transportation & Infrastructure] Committee. The T&I Committee is the *new* name. It used to be Public Works and Transportation Committee.

So in 1994 when the majority changed—it was really funny, we knew it was going to be a tight election. My chief of staff, John Flaherty, said, "Stay here in D.C." I said to him, "John, you stay here in D.C. and get the results and call them to us in San Jose." So in the evening he'd call us and say, "We've lost 13 seats." I figured we were going to lose about 25 or 27. He called and said, "We've lost 13…19…21…29." I said, "John, quit calling me if you don't have any good news." We lost 49 seats that night, so we lost the majority.

In January 1995 we got sworn in, and I'm waiting for the new chairman who is the ranking Republican under me. I was the chair, now I'm the ranking Democrat and he's the chair. The first week I was waiting for a phone call. No phone call. I'll wait a second week. No phone call. The third week I called him up and said, "Congressman [E. G.] Shuster, Bud, when are we going to get together to talk about the agenda for at least the first session but for the total Congress?"

Perry: This was January of '95?

Mineta: Yes, '95. He said, "Oh, Norm, I'm sorry, I should have called you. The Speaker said that we're now in the majority and if we decide anything, we don't have to discuss anything with you."

I said, "Bud, this committee has always worked on the basis of the big four—chairman of the full committee, ranking Republican on the full committee, chairman of the subcommittee, and ranking Republican on the subcommittee." The subcommittee, depending on the subject, can be highway, aviation, maritime, whatever, but in any event the big four would decide everything.

He said, "No, Speaker said *we* decide everything. We don't have to consult with you." So I'm twiddling my thumbs in February, March, April. In June Lockheed Martin came to me and said, "We're thinking of putting together this transportation company that we have been experimenting with. We think we can make a go of it and we'd like you to consider coming to be the CEO [chief executive officer] of this company."

I said, "Excuse me, I just won an election. If I leave midterm I'll get fried politically, so I can't leave." July, August go by. In August I call him again. I said, "Say, that company we were talking about, have you found the CEO?" They said, "No, we haven't." I said, "Then come back and talk to me."

They came back to talk to me and I said, "I can't negotiate with you, but I want to know what you're going to do with this company and whether or not I can fill the role. If I think I can, I'll resign and I'll negotiate." Right after Labor Day I announced I was going to leave effective October something. I left, negotiated, and then joined Lockheed Martin in November of '95.

Riley: Had you been approached by the Clinton administration before that time about taking—?

Mineta: Secretary of Transportation.

Riley: Would that have been in '92 when he first came into office?

Mineta: When he first came into office. Warren Christopher was doing the search for the Cabinet members. Chris came to me and talked to me about it. I said, "Chris, I've been a member of the House for 18 years and I'm about to get the brass ring—chairman of the full Committee on Public Works and Transportation. As much as I would love to be Secretary of Transportation, my brass ring is as chairman of the Public Works and Transportation Committee." And I said that to President-elect Clinton, "As much as I would love to be a member of your Cabinet, I really want to be chairman of the full committee. I can still be helpful to you in the Congress."

Chris called me back just before Thanksgiving, I was in San Jose. He said, "Where are you going

to be December 1?" I said, "I'll be back in the district." "Good," he says. "You can come down to Little Rock, the Governor wants to talk to you about Transportation. I said, "Chris, I'm not going to Little Rock. I don't want to have my arm twisted. I want to become the chairman. I know that if I go down there I'll be tempted."

He called back 20 minutes later and said, "He won't talk to you about twisting your arm." So I went down there and met with the Governor in the library of the Governor's mansion. We sat down by a nice fireplace. The first thing he said, "So why do you want to be the Secretary of Transportation?" I said, "Damn it, that's the very reason I didn't want to come down here."

He started laughing. He said, "Yes, I know, but I need to talk to you about Transportation." So I did.

Riley: Had you known him before?

Mineta: Not really. Then I ran the company, did the E-ZPass in New York in 1996. We then did it for the whole East Coast. If it is Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority, Florida SunPass, if you have an E-ZPass you can use it in Massachusetts, Florida, all of them. I did that for three and a half years. Then Vance Coffman, CEO of the company, said, "I want to pull you into headquarters." So I became senior vice president of Lockheed Martin on strategic initiatives.

Riley: Did that mean a physical relocation for you?

Mineta: No, their headquarters is in Bethesda and my office here was at 12th and K. I had a commute, but we were living in Alexandria. In '95 we bought a house out near Chesapeake Bay and we used it only on weekends. Then in '97, my wife said, "Would you mind moving out to the Bay house?" I said, "Let me find out what the commute is like." At that point it was 40 minutes country and open driving, 20 minutes dodging the potholes in D.C. So I said OK and we did that.

When I got pulled into corporate headquarters in Bethesda, now it was 20 minutes country and open driving, one hour on the Beltway. I was about to leave the office at about six o'clock and the phone rang. I had all my stuff packed in my briefcase, and I thought, *Should I answer this call or let it go? Well, I'll answer it*. I answered it and it was John Podesta, Chief of Staff for President Clinton. He said, "Norm, the boss gave me a short list of names for Secretary of Commerce. Bill Daley is leaving to run the [Albert, Jr.] Gore campaign. Would you be interested in being considered?"

I said, "John, you want me to crawl through the telephone wire to your office right now to give you my answer?" He said, "OK, I'll put you down for yes." That was Tuesday at six o'clock. Thursday morning the President calls and says, "Norm, I'm sending your name up to the Senate for confirmation, nominating you for Secretary of Commerce." So those two calls were the extent of my interview for Secretary of Commerce. But it was only from June to January of '01.

Then I was home the end of December, I think it was the 29th, a Friday. My stepson was a Delta pilot, but he was living with us. He said, "Norm, the President-elect is talking about putting a Democrat in the Cabinet. He hasn't named one yet and I see the Secretary of Transportation spot is still open. Any chance he'd be calling you about that?"

I said, “Bob [Brantner], what have you been drinking or smoking?” That was 10:30 in the morning. At one o’clock the phone rang. He picked it up. “Yes, sir. Yes, sir, he’s standing right here. Yes, sir.” He cups the phone, hands it to me, and says, “It’s the Vice President.” I take the phone and say, “Al?”

“No, Norm, this is Dick Cheney.” I said, “Oh, Dick, I’m sorry.” He said, “No, no, that’s all right. I’m calling to ask if you would consider coming on board as Secretary of Transportation for us.” I said, “Dick, you have to be kidding.” He said, “No, we’ve given this a lot of thought and we would like to have you come on board as the Secretary of Transportation.” I said, “Dick, jeez, I don’t know. I don’t want to be diminished as a Democrat in a Republican administration, nor do I want to be considered a turncoat by the Democrats.”

We talked for a little while. Then he said, “Andy Card is going to be calling you.” Andy was going to be the new Chief of Staff and had been Secretary of Transportation under President George H. W. Bush when I was the chair of the House Committee on Public Works and Transportation. We had worked on a lot of stuff together, including helping settle the rail strike in ’92, ’93. So I knew that Andy was pushing.

When he called I said, “Andy, I can’t talk to you on the phone. I’ve got to talk to you eyeball to eyeball, so where are you?” He said, “I’m ensconced in some office here.” I said, “OK, I’ll drive in.” I came into town and spent three hours with him. Got home, told my wife what was going on, and she said, “You’d better call President Clinton and Vice President Gore.” I said, “Oh, yes, I’ll do that.

When I called President Clinton he said, “My inclination is you ought to do this.” I told him, “I don’t want to be diminished as a Democrat or be considered a turncoat.” He said, “No, we can take care of that.” Then he said, “Look, we’re going up to Camp David, so call me on Sunday. I want to think about this some more.”

Then I called Vice President Gore and Al said, “Norm, I want to encourage you to do this. I know I won the popular votes last election. Not enough to get the proper mix for the Electoral College. I didn’t like the process I went through, I didn’t like the Supreme Court decision, and I’m still chafing from that whole experience, but I want to encourage you to do this because you could be very helpful in the healing process.” We talked about that for a little while. He was terrific.

Perry: What did you say to him when he talked about a healing process?

Mineta: The big thing was, how do I help in that? He said, “Just by accepting this you’d be helping. And all of us, including President Clinton, backing you on this will help in terms of the—” There were bitter feelings across the country and within the party ranks. He did say, “We’ll just have to sit down and work out some details.”

That Friday and Saturday I talked to probably close to a hundred people, anywhere from 33 of the 37 members of the Congressional Black Caucus, because they’re all friends of mine and I didn’t want to have them pulling the rug out from under me. Every one of them said, “Take it.” Eleanor Holmes Norton really put it in perspective. She said, “Norm, we can’t slam the Bush administration if they don’t have a Democrat in the Cabinet, and at the same time we can’t be

dissuading every Democrat from joining the Cabinet. We can't have it both ways. You know the subject matter. You were the chair of our committee. You used to always tell us there were no Democratic bridges or Republican highways. So you have to take the job."

Then I talked to people like Marlin Fitzwater, President George H. W. Bush's Press Secretary.

Riley: Was he a neighbor of yours?

Mineta: No, he was someone we just saw at occasions. I can't say he was a good friend, but he was a person I talked to a lot. He said, "By all means you have to do this." So on January 1, I called Dick out in Jackson Hole and he said, "Fine, let's get together tomorrow. I'm flying back this afternoon and I'll be in the transition office tomorrow. Give me a call and we'll set up the time."

I said, "We're on the phone right now, why don't we just go ahead and set up the time?" He said, "OK, let's do it at ten o'clock." I said, "Fine, where do you want to meet?" He said, "Come on in to the transition headquarters." I said, "Dick, why would I want to go to the transition headquarters? There are reporters, photographers, TV film crews all around there. I don't think I want to be around the transition headquarters." He said, "No, it will be OK." I said, "Dick, I'm going to call Andy and let him know that you and I have had this conversation." He said, "Good."

So I called Andy and said, "I just talked to the Vice President and we're going to get together tomorrow at ten o'clock." He said, "Oh, that's good. Where are you going to get together with him?" I said, "At the transition headquarters." He said, "Why are you going to the transition headquarters?" I said, "Andy, that was the very same question I had of Dick." He said, "No, no. I'll call you back."

About an hour and a half later he calls me back. He said, "I want you at Signature Flight Support at Dulles Airport tomorrow morning at a quarter to eight. The Vice President will get there and you guys will leave at eight o'clock and fly down here to Austin." I said, "You want me to bring Deni [Danealia Mineta], my wife?" He said, "No, that's all right, come by yourself." Then he called back about 15 minutes later and said, "Bring Deni." I said OK.

We went to Signature Flight Support at Dulles, got on the plane, and flew to Texas and had a chance to talk about it. I was interested in three things, of course—personnel, budget, and policy.

Riley: Dick Cheney was somebody you had known for a long time in the House, right?

Mineta: I had.

Riley: Is he somebody you had a good professional working relationship with or even on a personal basis were you friends?

Mineta: Yes, and he knew that. I said, "You know, if I were still living in Wyoming I don't know if I'd vote for you."

Perry: Of the hundred or so people you phoned, you told us of people who said, "Go ahead and

do it," on both sides of the aisle. Did you have any dissenters in the hundred or so people you consulted with?

Mineta: Not really. "Why would you want to do this?" kind of thing, but no one ever said, "No, I don't think you ought to do it."

Perry: Was the reason for most of them that it would heal the wounds of the 2000 Bush v. Gore conflict? Would that also have been a reason why you might have held back from it? Did you want to get into the midst of—?

Mineta: It wouldn't have bothered me to be in the mix. No, I really didn't have anybody who just said outright, "You ought not to do this."

Perry: Your willingness to do it, do you think it was—the way you started our conversation today about having had a foot in both camps or two feet in one camp at one time and another in another, and your record in Congress was to work across the aisle—

Mineta: Very much so.

Perry: From your explanation of working on the committee, you must have felt very comfortable in that sense.

Mineta: Yes. I didn't know the President; I'd never met him.

Perry: This trip to Austin was the first time?

Mineta: The first time. We flew down and we talked about the job. Then we're in the motorcade from the airport to the Governor's mansion and my cell went off. I picked it up and it's Bob saying, "CNN is reporting that Jennifer Dunn, Congresswoman from Washington, is going to be the next Secretary of Transportation." I said, "That's interesting."

I hung up and said to Dick, "That was my stepson saying that CNN is reporting Jennifer Dunn is going to be the next Secretary of Transportation." He said, "Good." I said, "What do you mean *good*? What's so good about that?" He said, "It means the press doesn't know what's going on."

On this side of the street are photographers and reporters, and as we drive into the driveway up to the mansion, we then drive into a tent. They zip up the tent and we get out of the car so nobody can tell who is coming in and out. Andy is on the steps up to the mansion. We go in and about ten feet in the President-elect was standing there. It was the first time I'd ever met him. I introduced him to Deni. He said, "Come on, let's go talk."

So we were walking down the corridor and there was a sitting area. Deni started to peel off and say, "I'll wait here until you guys get through." He said, "Absolutely not. You're part of this, you're coming with us." So we went into the library, the fireplace is going. There are chairs for the President, Vice President, Deni, me, and Andy.

Perry: Can we presume that Deni is a Democrat?

Mineta: Yes.

Perry: How did she feel at this time about your taking this?

Mineta: She was enthusiastic.

Riley: Enthusiastic?

Mineta: She was willing to follow my lead on it, she was supportive. Her mother is a Republican so she thought, *By all means.* Her father is a Democrat. He said, "What the hell are you doing wasting your time going to Austin for?"

So we get into the conversation, seated, and the President-elect says, "Norm, I know nothing about you except two things. My dad supports your candidacy, as does Andy. So talk to me about Transportation." I said, "Where do you want me to start?" He said, "Wherever you want."

That was my introduction to President Bush.

Riley: You said you spent several hours talking with Andy.

Mineta: Yes.

Riley: On the phone or in person?

Mineta: In person.

Riley: Were your discussions with him mostly policy based or were they the political problem of being a Democrat in a Republican administration?

Mineta: The discussion I had with him, as I did with the President, was surrounding personnel, policy, and budget.

Riley: So both of them. So you really weren't dealing with the potential awkwardness of being a Democrat in a Republican administration?

Mineta: No, Andy sort of put me at ease about that.

Perry: According to the briefing book there were some ground rules that you had about fundraising, for example.

Mineta: Right, I was the envy of—because I didn't have to do any fundraising.

Perry: But you said that up front with Andy and the President-elect.

Mineta: Right. I said, "I'm not going to do any fundraising." He said, "I don't want you to do any fundraising for the Democrats either."

Riley: Fair enough.

Mineta: Good enough for me.

Riley: So the discussions were personnel, policy—

Mineta: On budget he essentially said, "You have to line up with everybody else and arm wrestle with the Director of OMB [Office of Management and Budget]. I'm choosing you because you're a subject matter expert." Again, I was talking about personnel and policy. He said, "I will lean in toward you on policy and personnel. But I don't want you hiring all Democrats in the department."

I said, "No, I'm going to work through the PPO, the Presidential Personnel Office." We did get a fair mix of Democrats. Then there was one fellow I remember, a dear friend now, he was a district attorney down in Tennessee. When he went to see the people at the White House Personnel Office, they said, "With your background, you probably could find a role at the Department of Transportation."

Then when he looked into it a little more he said, "Jeez, what did I do wrong in the campaign that they're sending me to this Democrat who is going to be the new Secretary of the Department of Transportation? He's not only a Democrat, *he's from California*."

John Bobo was just a kick. He was a terrific person. At first he thought, *What did I do wrong that I get sent to a department headed by a Democrat, and especially a Democrat from California?* But it worked out well.

Riley: You don't recall any conflicts over personnel?

Mineta: We did have some pushback on certain members who were maybe too visible, too vocal during the campaign. I said to the President, "You know I was one of the six regional co-chairs for Vice President Gore." He said, "We know that. We looked at your record during the campaign. None of it was personalized, so we're comfortable with that."

Perry: That goes back to your theme again about having friends on both sides of the aisle.

Mineta: And you deal with policy.

Perry: Right, so you say you fight tooth and nail on the floor or in committee but then say, "Let's go have a drink." That's what people say it was like in those days. It's good to hear that it really was.

Mineta: It was.

Perry: You didn't personalize the politics or the policy.

Mineta: People like Congressman John Paul Hammerschmidt, Republican from Arkansas. In fact, the only election Bill Clinton ever lost was running against John Paul Hammerschmidt. To this day John Paul and I are the closest of friends. And there was a fellow by the name of Gene [Marion] Snyder from Kentucky.

Perry: He was my Congressman.

Mineta: Is that right? He really knew the rules of the House. For whatever reason, as a Republican, he took me under his wing and taught me a lot of the more arcane rules of the House that could be used for different reasons. He was just terrific. I was on a subcommittee where he was the ranking Republican. We'd get together all the time and he'd tell me about rules of the House. I'd say, "Gene, how is it you know so much of the rules?"

He said, "Look, when you're in the minority, the only thing you can use to get your way is the rules." I found that to be the case because my second term I chaired a subcommittee of the Public Works and Transportation Committee, and other senior members said, "Holy cow, you're a two-termer and now you're a chairman of a subcommittee?" I was asking John Breaux, who was senior to me, sat to the left of me, and he gave up taking a chairmanship on the Public Works and Transportation Committee to take a chairmanship of a subcommittee on the Merchant Marine and Fisheries Committee. I said, "John, why did you do that?" He said, "When you're a chairman in the subcommittee on this committee, you only get to name two staffers, and where I'm going to be, I get to name seven." I said, "Oh, is that how it works?"

I found out later on when I passed a bill to make Union Station a rail station, bring the rails back in and get it all gussied up. I had the support of the subcommittee. We reported it to the full committee. On the day of the markup in the full committee I had some of the proxies from my subcommittee members, but I hadn't gotten all of them. My bill came up and the chairman said, "There is an amendment at the desk. Will the clerk please read the amendment."

The clerk read the amendment, and it struck everything after the enacting clause and substituted this new bill to make Union Station a visitors' center for the Department of Interior. I thought, *What the hell is this?* As it turned out, he had all the proxies of our subcommittee and got his bill passed in subcommittee. As soon as that happened I went to Jim Wright, who was on the Public Works Committee and was the majority leader at the time. The majority leader puts the stuff on the agenda for House attachment. I went to Jim and said, "Jim, this is terrible. We can't take Union Station and make it into a visitors' center. It has to be a rail station." He said, "You're right." So he never scheduled that bill, even under great pressure.

Toward the end of that session—anyone could get up and say, "Mr. Speaker, I ask for the unanimous consent and the consideration of HR1234." So I stayed on the floor and anytime those kinds of opportunities came up for three days running, as we were coming to a close of that Congress, and Dick Sullivan, the staff director, would look in, I'd be sitting on the floor. [Harold] Johnson, the chairman of the committee, would look in. He'd be there, looking through the glass and I'd see him.

I kept him from getting to the floor. That was in 1980 and Johnson got caught up in that. He was defeated for reelection. He had been maybe a 15-termer. It was that Reagan landslide. Even he lost. So then I didn't have to worry about a bill from the chairman of your own committee to make it a visitors' center and turn it over to the Department of Interior. That year I got the bill passed to authorize the monies for the transformation of Union Station.

Riley: For which we're grateful. We both love Union Station.

Mineta: It's beautiful.

Riley: It is a beautiful building.

Mineta: Actually it was Drew [Andrew L.] Lewis, who was then Secretary of Transportation, who helped to bring in the investors to put up the money for the gold leaf and all that.

Riley: It's lovely. Were there discussions about any more Democrats joining this Cabinet? Did you make a pitch?

Mineta: No, I didn't. In fact, about an hour and three-quarters into that interview President Bush said, "Mr. Secretary, I'd like to offer you the position of Secretary of Transportation in my new administration." I turned to my wife and she goes—

Riley: Nods her head yes.

Mineta: When she used to complain I always said to her, "Don't give me that, I consulted with you." I then turned to him and said, "Mr. President, it would be my honor to accept." He said, "Would you excuse us for a minute so we can have some further discussion." So Deni and I went out to that sitting area that she had seen earlier. When they came out, he said, "Let's have lunch."

We were having lunch and I said, "Incidentally, when are you going to announce this?" He said, "At two o'clock." It's 1:27. I said, "I have to call my family and staff and put a statement together." He said, "Yes, I guess you do." I asked, "Are you going to announce any others?" He said, "Yes, I have Linda Chavez[-Thompson] for Secretary of Labor and Spencer Abraham for Secretary of Energy."

To this day I still don't know what I did, but he then said, "Something wrong?" I said, "I have to be up front with you. Linda Chavez was chair of the Civil Rights Commission in '82 and '83, and she and I went eyeball to eyeball, toe to toe. She doesn't like me, I don't like her, but as a colleague I'll treat her with respect." He said, "What's the matter?" I said, "She has no principles, she tends to just pick at things." It was funny because when we were going up on the dais Linda was first, Abraham next, Cheney here, Bush here, me here. I was the farthest away.

Riley: Good staff work.

Perry: He made the announcement at the Governor's mansion?

Mineta: Right. Then when she was going through the vetting process she ran into a nanny problem. Then she *lit into* the senior staff, Karen Hughes, Andy, and at one point she even took on the President for not coming to her defense. The whole thing just unraveled and she withdrew her name. The President called me and said, "Boy, you sure called that." I said, "Mr. President, I didn't call it. She blew up on her own, she just immobilized on her own." But it was sort of funny.

Riley: Were you worried at that moment that maybe everything was going to unravel because you were—?

Mineta: No, I figured I was safe regardless.

Riley: I didn't know whether the President was concerned.

Mineta: At the time of the announcement I think he was thinking, *How do we handle this as a continuing issue?* But it never got to that point because she blew up.

Riley: Did you have any policy differences? Were there things that you—?

Mineta: Not really.

Riley: At this early stage. We'll talk later on as we get into it.

Mineta: I've always treated transportation as a nonpartisan, bipartisan type of subject matter. He even went on talking about pushing the envelope about subsidies to transit, what are they now, how did they get here. In the ISTEA legislation, that was the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991—Intermodal was the first time it had been introduced. What this bill also did was to give more authority to state and local governments on what projects they would do and the amounts they would spend on each, rather than the federal government saying, "Now hear this, now hear this" and then directing everything. ISTEA was the first rewrite of the National Interstate and Defense Highways Act that President [Dwight D.] Eisenhower signed in 1956. This was considered landmark legislation. I had a billion in there for something referred to as "intelligent transportation systems."

The problem was that by 1994, as I'm thinking about reauthorization of this bill, I had put in a billion dollars for ITS [intelligent transportation systems]. I said, "I'm not sure what I have to justify the billion dollars that has been spent on ITS." Because to me the transportation community uses a billion dollars as sort of their own piggybank to take money out to do a lot of R&D [research & development] projects, but not really deploy stuff for use in the system. Then the Intelligent Transportation Society of America had a big demonstration of all the kinds of things that had been done. This was in San Diego in 1994. I remember being out there, seeing all these things being demonstrated.

There was one where they had seven cars and we were going around the track at 70 miles per hour, all within four or five feet of each other. I was in the first of the seven cars. As we were going around the track at 70 miles per hour, a highway patrolman said to me, "Mr. Chairman, you ought to look back there and see what you see."

I turned around and looked and I said, "What's so unusual about that? I see that on the Beltway every day. How much did we spend to come up with radar to control the brakes and all that?" I wasn't really too impressed with the ITS community and what they had done.

In any event, there weren't too many policy differences. The other thing was to me President Bush is like an executive who would delegate to the different people he had selected. As he said to me, "Norman, you're my subject matter expert on transportation so I'm going to be leaning more toward you on personnel and policies, but I don't want you hiring all Democrats in the Department of Transportation."

I said, “No, I’m going to use the White House Presidential Personnel Office for that. On policy issues we’ll be working with the Domestic Policy Council and the National Economic Council.” I did get to know people like [Larry] Lindsey and others in the policy area. So I didn’t cross any bounds with the President.

I remember we were putting together the reauthorization of ISTEA, and the federal gasoline tax had been 18.4 cents since 1993. I wanted to increase it. I got approval, I talked to everybody—Karl Rove, Andy, Mitch Daniels—Mitch Daniels said he didn’t like the idea. What I was going to do in the six-year bill, the first year raise the gasoline tax two cents, in the third year two cents, and in the fifth year two cents. Everybody said yes. Nick Calio was head of Congressional Relations and he said, “Sure, I can get that through Congress.”

The day we went for the briefing with the President we had a 14-page or so PowerPoint presentation and we’re going through the booklet. After the presentation he said, “Norm, I want to go back to page three.” He said, “Those gasoline taxes—get them out, I don’t want any gasoline tax increase.”

I was telling how the monies, even though they’re going down as a percentage of what was being spent is going down, and there is no inflation factor since this was first put together. Anyway, we went back to the drawing board. I had no tax increases but in that third year I put a CPI [Consumer Price Index] inflator on the 18.4 and made the presentation to the President. He said, “Norm, get that CPI out. It’s a gas tax increase, it’s a tax increase.” I said OK.

Then I took the unobligated balance in the Highway Trust Fund, took it down to $1 billion and used the balance of it to come up with about a $278 billion bill. Maybe it was a little less, $274. Congress kicked it up to $278. This is the bill that we submitted to the Congress, taking the unobligated surplus, leaving a billion in there. Today the Highway Trust Fund is bankrupt. Our needs are still increasing and our revenues are decreasing even though we have more cars on the road, more vehicle miles traveled. But the problem is the fuel efficiency of the cars is such that it is generating less revenue than it did before.

Perry: When you took these presentations to the President, was this after his tax cuts had already gone through in Congress?

Mineta: I think this was the first legislation that would have called for an increase.

Perry: But again that was his line.

Mineta: His principle was “no tax increase.”

Perry: No matter where.

Mineta: Sort of like “read my lips.”

Riley: He didn’t quite say that.

Mineta: Daddy did.

Riley: Daddy did. You had said earlier that from your perspective it wasn't a Republican or a Democratic policy.

Mineta: People would ask me, "Did being a Democrat in a Republican administration work to your disadvantage?" I said no. The fact that I had a D after my name wasn't as bad as being from California in a sea of Texans. [*laughter*]

Perry: What was that like?

Mineta: I bought a pair of cowboy boots for the first Black Tie and Boots Inaugural Ball. I went out and bought a pair of boots and I haven't worn them since.

Riley: What about mass transit? You get the sense—is there a Republican—

Mineta: This was a struggle, and even more of a struggle was Amtrak. What I did in 2003 or '04 was to put together an Amtrak reform to give states a little more power on the establishment of what happens within their states. The President really was not enthusiastic about Amtrak. He thought it ought to be privatized and let it go at that.

I said, "Even in Japan it's split. The capital part of it is done by the government and the operational side is done by the company. So when they build something the government pays the cost of all that capital. The operating company takes all the income and runs the system based on that income. The fact that they don't have to be paying for those large expenditures, rails and rail cars, engines, the electrification, is a big difference. France does that, Germany does that, Japan, and China is building 17,000 miles of high-speed rail right now."

In the first five years of the program they built over 4,000 miles. Last year I rode from Beijing to Shanghai, which used to be an eight-hour ride. Now I think it's two-and-a-half. When you're on the train the water in your glass isn't even moving. You ride Amtrak—

Riley: Let's take a break.

[BREAK]

Perry: Before we get too far away from your first meeting with soon-to-be President George W. Bush, did you have a perception of him garnered from the campaign and seeing him on television, and then did that differ from what you saw? And what were your first impressions in meeting him in person?

Mineta: I thought that he ran a good campaign. It was only after he was in office that the press started treating him like a doofus. In my dealing with him, I didn't think that was the case. The second year was during the time period when the Vice President and people like Don Rumsfeld and others had much more influence in terms of the policy considerations. The President is really like a CEO. He was delegating to the Cabinet Secretaries the ability to run their own departments

and make policy considerations. I think he could care less about what HHS [Health and Human Services] was doing, DOT [Department of Transportation], and a lot of others.

His interests were really with the Department of Defense, the State Department, and the Department of Homeland Security when it got created in 2003. Now I cried on March 3, 2003, when I had to turn over the Coast Guard and TSA [Transportation Security Administration]. "Andy, what are you doing? You can't do this." He said, "Norm, there is no discussion. It's done, this is the way it is going to be." I said, "OK."

After '01 they had the idea of putting the Department of Homeland Security together and they were eliciting everybody's thoughts and advice. But the divergent opinions were such that they knew they couldn't reach out; they were going to have to do it internally. So they did it in a close, closed circle of what the DHS [Department of Homeland Security] would be.

The problem was that here you brought—I've forgotten, I think it was 24 agencies together that were warring with each other before. And now that they're under the same roof, they were still warring with each other. Customs and Border Protection disputed the ICE [Immigration and Customs Enforcement] part of it. They didn't do very well. Tom Ridge tried at the beginning and it was just too much of a problem.

Now Janet Napolitano having just left, I think she was able to keep the lid on that place with her strong management and administrative capabilities. But that place is just seething with all kinds of rivalries and battles within the department. Janet was able to pull it off. Michael Chertoff also did, but he's so smart. He was able to keep people within the umbrella, but others I think have had a tough time trying to do that.

I didn't have that problem at DOT. Also there was a personal relationship that started to build between President Bush and me. It was sort of funny because it was around baseball. Whenever he had to go and throw out the first ball at a stadium, he'd call me up and say, "Hey, Norm, I'm going to Milwaukee. Can you and Deni join us?" So Deni and I would be on Air Force One going to Milwaukee, St. Louis, San Francisco.

Perry: Because he knew of your lifelong love for the game.

Mineta: So we'd go. I'd say nine or ten times probably. For whatever reason I'd accompany him on those. I got to really know him and like him, but as I said, the press and a lot of people treat him as a doofus. In the long run, like Truman was vindicated, I think he will be vindicated as well.

Now the issue of the influence of Dick Cheney and Rumsfeld, [Paul] Wolfowitz and [Douglas] Feith and Dick's Chief of Staff, David Addington, very bright but really very conservative and held a lot of sway on policy issues. I remember when Tom Ridge was leaving DHS and Rich Armitage's name was coming up. I got to know Rich Armitage through Tony Principi, who was Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs in the first term. He and I worked together at Lockheed Martin. I knew Tony very well. But Armitage and Tony Principi were roommates at the [United States Naval] Academy all four years. I got to know Rich through Tony.

From a policy perspective, their influence, Rumsfeld and others, was getting to be much more—

Even people like Alan Simpson would call me up and say, "Norm, whatever happened to the good old Dick Cheney we used to know?" We served in the House together, got along very well. I didn't know that really conservative side of him. When he was writing his book, he would call me and ask about certain things. Then his daughter Liz [Cheney], who really did a lot with the book, was calling me about things. When Liz decided to run against Mike Enzi, that just tore into Alan. I guess she said something about, "I understand why you're doing this. You can do this quietly. You really ought to shut up about your support for Enzi."

Well, you don't say shut up to Alan Simpson. He had a few choice words with her about that. Now that Liz has withdrawn from the race, there is still a little bit of the hangover from that, but at least he doesn't have to confront that.

Perry: You did not see that side of Dick Cheney in Congress, but you think that is something—

Mineta: I knew—

Perry: Something he always had with him—

Mineta: He had a conservative side, but I wouldn't say it was as extreme as I saw during the Bush administration.

Perry: Did it surprise you, given what you said about President Bush being a chief executive type, should he have had more control over what Cheney and his minions were doing and the schism that was being created?

Mineta: I would think so because it sort of gave a—"I'm their leader. Where did they go?" He was coming in behind.

Perry: How did you see it manifest other than the one example that you gave? Were there other times that you saw this happening? Were there times in Cabinet meetings?

Mineta: No, that was one thing about the Cabinet meetings. Those were pretty well agendized. It is really for the President to do that press conference at the end of the Cabinet meeting when they open the doors and have the press come into the Cabinet Room. The President would then have four or five minutes of remarks. He would know that he is to call on Chuck Todd from NBC [National Broadcasting Corporation] or someone else to ask a question. As soon as he answered those questions the person from the Press Office would say, "Lights out." The TV person would turn off the lights and they'd exit.

In comparison, when I got to the Clinton administration I got there in July. There had been an earlier meeting in July. I think I came on the 21st or 26th, somewhere in there. But the previous Cabinet meeting had been February. Then we had one in August. That was really Bob Shrum telling us what the message would be coming out of the convention, how they were packaging the message.

I don't think we had a meeting in September. October we did. I think it was the October one, it was supposed to be a ten o'clock meeting, but President Clinton didn't come in until about 10:45 and then he went on for an hour and a half.

He did that all through. I saw him at the first convention. I was off to the side, just behind. All he had was a 3x5 card with four words on it, and he went for one hour. I was chairing the Democratic National Convention in Atlanta when Jesse Jackson's name was put up for President. We had a set format of what had to happen on the stage. Everyone had 15 minutes. At 13 minutes the red light goes on and at 15 minutes it starts flashing.

Reverend Jackson had five speakers. They wrapped it up in 18 minutes. So I go back up to the dais. I say, "Now to put the name in nomination, the Governor of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, the Governor of Arkansas, William Jefferson Clinton." So Bill comes up. He didn't use a teleprompter; he had some papers. At 13 minutes, I said, "Turn on the light."

The stage manager said, "I can't turn on the light. He's nominating our Presidential candidate for the Democratic Party." I said, "You know the drill. At 13 minutes the light goes on." He said, "Well—" I said, "If you don't do it, you're the one who is going to talk to Reverend Jackson about why we didn't follow the rules." He goes, "Oh, OK" and turns on the light.

At 21 minutes Jim Wright comes to me and says, "What are you doing to get him off?" I said, "He's not using the teleprompter." On the teleprompters we've got, "Time is up. Please quit." He keeps plowing on.

At 27 minutes he comes in and says, "What else are you doing?" I said, "We could lower the podium, but he'll probably go down with the podium." So Jim Wright then goes out on the stage, out of view of the cameras. We had those columns up there and he's going—

Perry: Throat slashing. Cut.

Mineta: Governor Clinton kept going. Every so often Speaker Wright would come to me, "We've done everything, there's not much more we can do." When he said, at 44 minutes, "And in conclusion," 17,000 people stood up clapping. As he was walking back from the dais and I'm walking, all I said was, "Thanks a hell of a lot." Thank God he has never remembered that.

Perry: Or if he did, he didn't hold it against you.

Mineta: His speaking style is such that it really brings you in to him. He's not talking at you. He is the only person I've seen who has that kind of capability. I don't know what it is, but I know I don't have it. I'm working off a script when I speak. If I'm ad-libbing a speech I tend to go all over the place, but President Clinton really knows the points he wants to make and will go right down through them. President Bush is also a scripted speaker.

Riley: What else are you finding out that is a noticeable contrast between the two Presidents when you're going from one White House to the next, and are there some similarities?

Mineta: On the agendas for the Cabinet meetings with President Bush it was all lined up. If he said the meeting was going to start at nine or eleven or two o'clock, you know it is going to start nine o'clock, eleven o'clock, two o'clock. And in one hour it's over. As I said, with President Clinton we had that meeting that was going to start at ten but he didn't come in until 10:45 or so and then he carried on a discourse for an hour. With President Bush you go down the agenda. It would start with a prayer, then his remarks, and then the Attorney General, State, and then

Defense.

He would pick maybe two other Cabinet members on a rotational basis to give four, five minutes of what they're doing. So maybe every three months you get five minutes at the Cabinet meeting. Then they would call the press in for five, six minutes, "Lights out" and that's it. We only had two meetings that went over an hour. One was right after September 11—that was the Cabinet meeting that had the House and Senate Republican and Democratic leaders in on the meeting.

On 9/11 I was having breakfast with the Deputy Prime Minister of Belgium, who also was the Minister of Transport, and Jane Garvey, the head of FAA [Federal Aviation Administration]. The three of us were having breakfast in my conference room. At 8:20 or so my chief of staff came in and said, "Mr. Secretary, may I see you."

I excused myself and went from the conference room into my office. As I moved into my office, at the other end of the office is a TV console. Obviously, it is the World Trade Center, black smoke pouring out. I said, "John, what the heck is that?" He said, "We don't know, we've heard GA, general aviation, into the building. We've heard the possibility of a commercial airliner into the building, and we've heard the possibility of an internal explosion."

I went up and started looking at it. I said, "John, I have to get back into my breakfast but keep me posted." I went back in and explained to Jane and the Vice Minister what I had just seen on television.

John came back in and said, "Mr. Secretary, may I see you." I excused myself and went in. He said, "It's been confirmed it was a commercial airliner." I went up to the TV and as I'm watching the television I see this gray thing go across the screen and disappear and then this white-yellow billowy cloud coming from the left side of the screen. I said, "Holy cow," or words to that effect, "What the heck was that?" Then I was really glued to the TV set. I watched it for maybe seven, ten minutes and said, "I have to go in."

I went in and said, "I don't know what's happening in New York, but I know I'm going to be involved somehow. Jane, you need to get back to the operations center of the FAA. I'm sorry, I have to excuse myself to take care of whatever is going on." By the time I got into the office, someone had called from the White House saying to get over there right away. I grabbed some papers, put them in my briefcase, went down to the garage, and got into my car.

As we were driving in we saw people running out of the White House, running out of the Executive Office Building. I said to my driver and security, "Isn't that strange? We're driving in and everyone else is driving away."

We got to the White House and the guard said, "Mr. [Richard] Clarke is ready to brief you in the Situation Room."

Riley: Did you know Dick Clarke before?

Mineta: Yes, I did.

Riley: From what?

Mineta: He was the executive director of the cybersecurity program that Sam Nunn and [Conrad] Burns were chairing. I was a member of that task force.

Riley: So when you were on Capitol Hill you knew him. Did you have dealings with him when you were at Commerce for any reason?

Mineta: I did. But mostly it was from the cybersecurity.

Riley: But you knew he was a White House staffer for—what he was doing.

Mineta: Yes, so I went into the Situation Room and he briefed me. It wasn't much more than what I had already seen on television that morning. Then he said, "You have to be in the PEOC." I said, "PEOC? What's the PEOC?" He said, "That's the Presidential Emergency Operations Center." I said, "I have no idea where that is."

There was a Secret Service agent standing there. He said, "I'll take you down." So that's the bunker under the White House. I got there about 9:20.

Perry: What is going through your mind at that point? I know you don't have anything definitive, but was your mind racing to—now that it is two—

Mineta: Trying to figure out, get a grasp of what is going on. There is really nothing to give you a hint of what to do.

I get down to the PEOC. There is a long table, must be 30 feet long, 10 to 12 feet wide, chairs all the way around it. Between each pair of chairs there is a phone. So I got in the middle of the table. This phone I hooked to my office and said, "Don't hang up, keep the line open." This one I hooked up to the operations center at the FAA. The person on the other side of the line was Monte Belger, the number two at FAA. Monte had been a professional air traffic controller and rose up through the ranks and was now the deputy administrator of the FAA.

A military assistant came in and said to the Vice President, "There is a plane coming toward D.C." I said, "Monte, what do you have on a plane coming toward D.C.?" He said, "We're tracking this one plane. The transponder has been turned off, so we're just following the blips on the 11-second sweep of the radar."

On an airplane they have this transponder and I had a monitor on my credenza. It shows an outline of the 48 states, Alaska, and Hawaii, just a lot of dots peppered all over. I would take my mouse and put it on a dot, then it would come up with a flag and it would say UA 123, United Airlines Flight 123, ME732, Boeing 737, series 200. PDX [Portland International Airport] and the number of navigational points, ORD [O'Hare International Airport], and that meant it left Portland going through these navigational points and its destination is O'Hare Airport. Then it would show compass direction of the airplane, speed, and a number of other indicia about the airplane.

I have two sons who are commercial airline pilots and I always tell them, "I can put my mouse on your flight and send you off to Canada." I couldn't do that, of course, but it was fun to tell them that. So here Monte is saying the transponder has been turned off and they're following this

plane by where the dots are. It's hard to look at a radar set and then try to project it to a place on the ground. So I say, "Where is it now?" He said, "Somewhere in the middle of Pennsylvania."

Every so often I'd ask him, "Where is it now?" He'd say, "It's probably near Baltimore." I'd ask, "Where is it now?" He'd say, "Between Great Falls and Roslyn." I'd say, "Where is it now?" He'd say, "Somewhere between Pentagon City and National [Reagan National Airport]. Oops." I said, "Oops what?" He said, "We just lost the bogey." Just lost the target. I said, "Where'd you lose it?" He said, "I don't know, somewhere between Pentagon City and National Airport."

About that time someone breaks into the line and says, "Mr. Secretary, we just got a call from an Arlington County police officer saying he saw an American Airlines plane go into the Pentagon."

I said, "Monte, this is the third strike of a commercial airliner being used as a missile." In the military they have something called a stand-down, where everything is brought to a screeching halt and they try to figure out what they're involved in and how they extricate themselves from this mess. I said, "We've got to have our own stand-down. We've had two commercial airliners go into the World Trade Center. Now we've got one that went into the Pentagon. Al-Qaeda used to tell us that they had three icons they'd always talk about: a military icon, an economic icon, a political icon. They just hit the economic icon, the World Trade Center. They've now hit the Pentagon, and there is a political icon to deal with. We'd better bring all the planes down so we can find out where we are."

Monte said, "We'll bring all the planes down per pilot discretion." I said, "Monte, screw pilot discretion. I want the planes down. Find out where we are. I don't want a pilot over Albuquerque thinking, *My destination is LA [Los Angeles]. I'll just keep going on my own and that way I'll be able to sleep in my own bed tonight.* Screw pilot discretion. I want *all* the planes down."

At that point there were 4,638 airplanes in the air and in two hours and 20 minutes they were all on the ground, without incident, safely. We got all the planes down. Still didn't know about the plane that went down in Shanksville, Pennsylvania. When I heard about it I turned to Dick and said, "Dick, did we shoot it down?"

He said, "I don't know, let's find out." He called in a military assistant. "Check with the Pentagon and see if we shot that plane down." It was about 10:30 that the question was asked and the direction given to find out about it. They must have scrubbed that information 12 ways to Sunday to make sure they had the proper information because we didn't find out until about 12:30 when they called back and said, "No, we did not shoot it down."

Riley: Twelve-thirty in the afternoon or 12:30 at night?

Mineta: Twelve-thirty in the afternoon. That was one where they were under terrorist control. When that plane crashed it didn't go in like this, it went straight down. The hole was not that big where that plane went down. The pilot just decided, "This is it; we're going to take it in." And the brother-in-law of the copilot of that plane was from San Jose. Boy, he just—it was a clean entry into the earth.

I couldn't go up for the memorial service for that, but my wife went. As it turned out she knew

one of the flight attendants who had been on that flight. That was a tough day. We'll never know whether or not that plane was headed for the Capitol or the White House, so I will be eternally grateful to everyone on that airplane for having made the supreme sacrifice. Tragic story, but one that makes them all heroes.

Riley: The first time you mentioned the Vice President in the room was when you turned to find out whether we had shot the plane down. Had you had conversations with him before? When you entered the room is everybody working the phones or is there a conference?

Mineta: When I went into the PEOC there was only Vice President Cheney, Mrs. [Lynne] Cheney, some of the handlers in the room itself. It turned out that the fellow in charge of the PEOC was a Navy captain at the time. I got to know him well. Oddly enough his mother was a war bride from Japan. We got to talking and when he retired from the Navy last year he asked me to come and speak at his retirement ceremony. I went down to Norfolk and did that. That was Admiral David Boone.

It wasn't until probably closer to eleven or twelve o'clock when the PEOC started to fill in with people. I saw Mary Matalin and Karen Hughes.

Riley: Condi [Condoleezza] Rice was there.

Mineta: Yes, Condi came in. After that there was a full complement of people.

Riley: Do you remember any conversations with the Vice President before this?

Mineta: Only early on, about 9:30—no, it was later. There was a conversation. I remember Dick turning around abruptly and saying, "Have you heard anything to the contrary?" The person said, "No, sir." He said, "Then those orders stand." I took that to mean that there was a discussion between the Vice President and the President about the shooting down of airplanes. We had an airplane that had left Miami and was going up to Boston. Going up to Boston from Florida it would have been sort of a straight shot up to Boston.

Riley: Off the coast.

Mineta: Off the coast. But this one was coming more this way—

Perry: Over land almost.

Mineta: And coming toward D.C. They scrambled some planes out of Norfolk. It was somewhere between Norfolk and D.C., and the plane finally went up toward Boston. In that conversation is when I heard this, because I had two phones in my hands trying to talk to—

Riley: Did you have any direct communications with the President or with Air Force One that morning?

Mineta: No, that call is one that wasn't—I said to Monte that we were going to have our own stand-down and bring the planes down.

Riley: That was your call, there was no instruction from the President to get the planes out of the air.

Mineta: No, and Dick Cheney writes that in his book, as does the President. Then my testimony to the 9/11 Commission. The fact that those planes were able to get down safely and without incident was to me a real accomplishment. The professionalism of the air traffic controller body and the flight deck crews, captains, pilots, and copilots, as well as the flight attendants in the cabin area preparing their passengers to land at a place they hadn't intended to be. "My ticket says Austin, Texas. What do you mean we're landing in Kansas?"

Perry: So when you gave the order, not only stand-down, land, not at pilot's discretion, that meant that all those planes were to go to the nearest airport that could accommodate their equipment.

Mineta: The airplane has equipment on it that tells you these are the airports, given the size of this plane and capabilities of this plane, it can land at these places.

Perry: Were the pilots being told by the controllers what had happened and why they were being ordered or did they just—

Mineta: Most of them didn't know.

Perry: Just a system-wide stand-down, land. I have a technical question because you had been concerned about the congestion of air traffic and ground traffic. How did it happen so smoothly in such a small window of time?

Mineta: That's why I say the professionalism of the air traffic controllers and the flight deck crews—

Perry: Just working hand-in-glove to make it happen, again without the pilots necessarily and probably not knowing—

Mineta: Oh, they didn't know.

Perry: Just to take on faith.

Mineta: Very few knew why they were doing it. There were a lot of questions from the crews and the passengers. "What are we doing landing in Resume Speed, Iowa?"

Riley: At that stage were you completely preoccupied with air transportation or was there also some consideration given to what was happening—?

Mineta: The question was—I brought them all down that morning. By afternoon I was getting calls from the CEOs of the airlines saying, "When can we go back up?"

I said, "Not until we get a security regimen going." That morning, right after ordering the planes down, I took three to five people out of CAS, Civil Aviation Security, out of FAA, and pulled them into my office to start working on a security regimen for the airlines to follow.

They came to our office that morning to start working on the security regimen. Then we had a Cabinet meeting. That was the one where we had the House and Senate Democratic and Republican leaders present. Toward the end of that meeting Congressman David Bonior from Detroit said, "Mr. President, we have a very large Arab American population in Michigan, and they're concerned about all the rhetoric about banning Middle Easterners, Muslims, from airplane flights. There is even some talk about rounding them up."

The President said, "David, you're absolutely correct. We are equally concerned about all the rhetoric going on, and we don't want to have happen today what happened to Norm in 1942." You could have knocked me down with a feather when the President said that.

We had been up to Camp David with them and we'd talked about that, about the evacuation and internment during World War II.

Riley: This was before 9/11?

Mineta: Way before—we came in in 2001 and nine months later this thing happened.

Perry: Did he broach the subject with you?

Mineta: Yes, he wanted to find out about what I had gone through. "Were you involved in that?" I said, "Yes, I was 11 years old so I have very vivid memories of everything from December 7 on and what happened." Then all of a sudden during this Cabinet meeting he said, "We're equally concerned, and we don't want to have happen today what happened to Norm in 1942."

The following Monday he went to the Islamic Study Center on Massachusetts Avenue and met with a large group of Arab Americans and Muslims. He said, "We know who did that last week. They were not loyal Arab Americans or faithful followers of Islam. They were terrorists and we're going to go after them."

Toward the end of September, out in Arizona there was a person who owned a gas station and mini-mart who was shot and killed. When they apprehended the killer they asked him, "Why did you kill that person?" He said, "Because he looked like the enemy." He was a Sikh.

In October the President had a large group of South Asian Indians and Sikhs to the White House and told them, "We're going to go after everyone who commits these kinds of hate crimes."

That's my context of knowing him and getting to know him. I just had a great deal of respect and frankly to this date love for President Bush and Mrs. [Laura] Bush.

Riley: You mentioned when you were going through your account of 9/11 that your thought process was Al-Qaeda is aiming at three targets. Was that the thinking at the time? Were you already thinking Al-Qaeda when you were in the PEOC? Or had Clarke told you?

Mineta: Every morning at 7:30 I'd get an intelligence briefing from Admiral [Thomas] Hayward.

Riley: You did, as Transportation Secretary?

Mineta: Yes.

Riley: Did you get a briefing when you were Commerce Secretary also?

Mineta: Yes, I got a briefing there as well.

Riley: I sort of understand Transportation, I'm not sure I understand Commerce. Is it just a courtesy to all Cabinet members?

Mineta: I think so. Because I remember Ann Veneman, Secretary of Agriculture, would call me and ask about something. I said, "Yes, I heard about that." She would, at the end of the conversation, be obtuse but then there were things she was interested in and had heard about.

Riley: In any event, I interrupted your main answer about your knowledge of Al-Qaeda.

Mineta: This was a continuing intelligence briefing. My briefer would always talk about the philosophical background of what they were trying to do. So when 9/11 occurred it was sort of like "Bingo!" And yet there were probably a whole bunch of things I had heard; it was really the question of who was connecting the dots. I don't think there ever was a connection of the dots that would come to a conclusion that something would happen on September 11.

I have this one guy who is always chasing after me. He is part of that conspiracist group that thinks President Bush and all of us knew a 9/11 was going to occur. The first time he came to the house and wanted to see me, to join in a lawsuit against President Bush, I said, "I'm not going to do that."

Riley: Were you still Secretary?

Mineta: Yes, when I was Secretary. Then after I left at least once a year he comes back somewhere here in the Maryland area to visit his sister. One time I was on my way home and this fellow came to the house.

Perry: He comes unannounced, just comes to your door and knocks on it?

Mineta: Knocks on the door. The first time he did this, he—while you're talking—

Riley: He's nervously fingering a piece of paper.

Mineta: He said, "Is the Secretary home?" My wife said, "No, he's not." By this time I was at Hill+Knowlton [Strategies]. I had a driver and car. So she called the car and said, "The guy is sitting in our driveway waiting for you." We have two driveways into our home, a lower driveway that goes into the garage and an upper driveway that goes into this part of the house. Generally I come in and get let off here, come into the kitchen. She said, "When you get here, stay in the car, let Oceda get out first." Oceda is 6′3″, 270 pounds.

Riley: Perfect.

Mineta: "Let him get out of the car first and come and get you. And he'll see you."

As soon as we drove in, he gets out of the car and comes running up toward the upper driveway. He said he had this lawsuit and wanted me to join in the lawsuit. I said, "I have no idea what your lawsuit is about. I have no reason to join you in your lawsuit." But every year when he comes by to see his sister he spends 20 minutes or whatever it is, he drives over to our house.

Perry: Is he angry? Does he threaten you? Is he civil?

Mineta: He's civil but he is also one of these very nervous, sweaty kind of people. I just tell him no. He leaves. Two years ago I called the Anne Arundel County police and told them. They did a fair amount of background checking on him. They just say, "If he writes or calls let us know every time."

Perry: But they are on the alert.

Mineta: So he was by last year in December.

Perry: You have almost another year without him let's hope. Let's hope he stops, that that was the last.

Mineta: Another son of ours lives in Tennessee and there are a lot of conspiracy types there. "Oh, yes, the government knew it was going to happen."

Perry: That's whipped up now by internet and talk radio, lots of outlets for that unfortunately.

Riley: You had settled in your own mind as early as the morning of September 11 that this was probably an Al-Qaeda—?

Mineta: Plus we were seeing—here are the people who boarded the plane in Boston on the American Airlines—that was maybe the next day—who they were able to trace coming through the Boston security clearance. We got their names.

Perry: Wasn't one of them [Mohammed] Atta, the ringleader?

Mineta: Yes.

Riley: A few minutes ago I asked about other than air threats, so you had begun thinking fairly soon about the entire—

Mineta: When you're under this sort of gun you have to think of all the possibilities that could occur. What about ports, railroads, how are we going to beef up the security? To this day I don't think our trains are protected, our ports are not protected. Airports and aviation is pretty well covered. There are other modes of transportation that are totally unprotected. I've always felt that the Israelis—every container that goes on a ship coming into Haifa or anywhere in Israel is prescreened before that container goes on.

I went to the port in Savannah, Georgia. There was an Israeli ship. They had a backscatter radar. The truck would come right through the backscatter radar and they'd be able to "see" into the box and know what was in there and be able to identify any explosives. I used to laugh because

one of the ways we tested our explosives detection systems, EDS, was to put a slab of salami through the EDS because meats have a preservative, some kind of nitrites, and that's what's in salami. We'd use salami to test our machines. I'd always say, "That's good salami wasted in some damn machine." It is still the most effective way to test the machines, as funny as it sounds.

Perry: In those hours and days following 9/11 when you had to gear up for getting airports open and planes back in the air, but not before you had a security system in place and that very moving story that you told of President Bush in the Cabinet Room saying that we didn't want to happen to Arab-Americans what had happened to you and your family in 1942. In your own mind did you wrestle with that? In other words, how did we protect Americans from a group of people who had acted as they did—how did we protect without racial profiling? Or in that case national or religious profiling?

Mineta: You have to take a look at security regardless of how you feel about it. You have to look at security through protection of civil rights. I went through an incident in 1942 where it was all security and the hell with civil rights. I remember when those placards came out: "Attention, all those of Japanese ancestry, alien and nonalien." What's a nonalien? As a ten-year-old kid I'm wondering, Alien? That's my dad, that's Mama. Who's a nonalien? That's a citizen. My own government is not even calling me a citizen.

Then in March of '42, my brother is nine years older than I, but he and I shared the same bedroom. He was crying. I said, "Al [Mineta], what's the matter?" He said, "Here is my old draft card, 1A," which means fit and able to serve. "I just got this new one today and it says 4C. I didn't know what 4C meant so I just called the draft board. I found out it means enemy alien." Here is a kid who was born and raised in San Jose, California, a sophomore at San Jose State University wanting to become an MD [medical doctor]. He says, "I'm an enemy alien."

I've only seen my dad cry three times. Once was on December 7. He was an immigrant from the country. He came as a 14-year-old all by himself. He came to love this country. I saw him cry for the first time on December 7 because he couldn't understand why the land of his birth was now attacking the land of his heart.

The second time I saw him cry was May 29, 1942, when we had been put on the trains to leave San Jose to go to Santa Anita, the racetrack in southern California 400 miles away. The third time I saw him cry was June of 1956 when my mother passed away.

When we were being evacuated on May 29, I had my Cub Scout baseball glove and a baseball bat. As I was boarding the train the MPs [military police] confiscated my bat because it could be used as a lethal weapon. I went crying to my father about the bat being taken and he said, "That's all right, we'll get another one." That whole evacuation and internment—we could only take to the camp what we could carry.

I remember my dad bought a Packard Clipper in November of '41 for $1,100 and by March of '42 he sold it for $300 because he had to get rid of it.

Perry: Did you lose your house?

Mineta: No, we were lucky. There was an attorney in San Jose by the name of J. B. Peckham, and there was an alien land law that said if you're not eligible for U.S. citizenship you can't own land. There was a law like that in Washington, Oregon, and California.

When my dad bought land in 1928 to build the family house, he couldn't own it in his name but he bought it with his money and our attorney kept the land in his name. If you looked at the property rolls of the '30s and '40s, you'd see J. B. Peckham all over the place. You'd say, "Wow, this guy owns a lot of land." What he was doing was holding it for Chinese, Filipinos, and Japanese.

Perry: He was like a trustee for all the property.

Mineta: Yes. In our case when my oldest sister turned 21 he changed the ownership to her name. When we went off to camp he sort of became property manager and found a university professor at San Jose State to rent our house. So we didn't lose our house. A lot of people lost their homes.

Perry: And businesses.

Mineta: Lost their businesses, farms.

Perry: Your dad kept his business?

Mineta: It was an insurance business and on February 12, 1942, when the Executive Order 9066 was signed, the state of California terminated all the insurance licenses. My dad was part of that group. Of course if you don't have an insurance license you can't do anything, so he lost his business. When he came back after the war—he was primarily life insurance—but when he went back to the casualty, the fire insurance companies, they wouldn't sign him up as an agent because there was so much World War II anti-Japanese feeling.

They were afraid that if there was an accident in an intersection the juries would always go against the Japanese. So he couldn't get a company to sign him up as an insurance agent because they didn't want to be selling automobile insurance. On the other hand they didn't want to be selling house insurance, fire insurance because there were places like Fresno and Reedley, other places, where arson was occurring. In San Jose it wasn't occurring because for one thing the *San Jose Mercury News* editorialized in those early days of '42—"These are our neighbors and friends so please don't do anything untoward." Then in '45 and '46 after V-J [Victory in Japan] Day and they were returning to the area, again the *Mercury News* had editorials on "These are our friends and neighbors coming home, so please don't do anything untoward." It worked out very well.

There was a National Guard unit in Salinas that got wiped out in the Philippines during the Bataan Death March. There were *really* tough feelings against the Japanese Americans in Salinas. That was about 50 miles away from San Jose. A lot of the people from Salinas, Monterey, Pacifico, moved over toward San Jose. Most of them were farmers. There was abundant farmland. There was a big cooperative for strawberry growing put together by the Driscoll Farms. A lot of the Japanese Americans became tenant farmers with Driscoll.

Perry: I still buy their strawberries.

Mineta: You go to Costco and you'll see Driscoll berries.

Riley: I wanted to get you to elaborate on President Bush's personal sensitivities about these questions of equality. I think it may be an area where his—contribution is not the right word but it is the only one that comes to mind right now—contributions are probably underappreciated. His Cabinet certainly had highly positioned representatives of minority communities, but you didn't get the sense that he was finding a slot and saying, "OK, I'm going to put somebody in this to fill the slot." Let me just stop there and ask you to reflect a little bit about your experience with the person George Bush and his own commitment to equality.

Mineta: During the campaign they used the phrase "compassionate conservative." I really think he meant that. That was not a drummed-up phrase. He really believed in conservatism as well as being compassionate. And that there wasn't an exclusive interpretation of either phrase. He is a fun kind of a guy. I think most of the public doesn't know that side of him. Not only fun, but a person who is engaging when you're in a conversation with him.

He is very principled. On the other hand, I don't think—I remember one time when they were joking about him going to Yale he said, "Yale? No, I meant *jail*." He throws out stuff like that and you just laugh because he is a fun person to be with. Those baseball trips we'd take were just great. I love a good laugh as well.

Perry: Why do you think people didn't see that side of him?

Mineta: I'm not sure that he let it be known. As personable as he is, I think he is also sort of a shy person. He's the kind of person you want to have sitting around this table having a beer. Not that he drinks, he doesn't drink. But he's a fun guy to have around the table talking about—you can join in the conversation regardless of where the conversation goes. But he is also not one who would—he would go out to associations, groups, give his speech, get in his car, and go home. By nine o'clock he is darn near in bed. He is not a real social animal. What's that expression about hail-fellow-well-met? I've always found him fun to be with, and also Mrs. Bush. They're both down to earth. They don't have airs about themselves.

I think one of the things about her that was never—she had an interest because of her background as a teacher and librarian—I don't think people really got to know that side of her. She liked Deni, so occasionally she'd call Deni and they would get together when they were in the White House.

Riley: You already said you went to ball games. He knows baseball?

Mineta: Oh, yes. Then I got to know Tom Schieffer really well. Tom was the U.S. Ambassador to Australia and then he became the U.S. Ambassador to Japan. Knowing Bob Schieffer from CBS [Columbia Broadcasting System], I got to know Tom.

Riley: Tom is what relation?

Mineta: Brother.

Riley: That's also a baseball connection?

Mineta: Tom Schieffer was the general manager of the Texas Rangers.

Riley: Were you a Giants person?

Mineta: While I'm here I have the Nats [Washington Nationals] but my basic team is the 49ers, not the Redskins and same thing with the Giants. So when the 49ers come to play the Redskins every three or four years, I go to the game and I'm torn—I'm not really torn, I'm still a 49er fan.

Perry: What colors do you wear to the game?

Mineta: Blue. No, if I go any louder than [*whispering*], "Go Niners," I'll get beat up around here. I've enjoyed my 82 years so far.

Perry: You had a good run this past season.

Mineta: They did.

Riley: You've already talked a little bit about 9/11, which will preoccupy most of your time afterward. What did you think you were going to be spending your time on when you accepted the position? I know there are the reauthorizations and keeping the department intact, but what were the policy area initiatives that you thought, *OK, this is what I'm going to dig into and invest my time in over the next few years*?

Mineta: The biggest issue was probably congestion. With less money being available, the question is, how do we deal with congestion because congestion can only be relieved by building and land-use policies. There wasn't a lot of interest to do anything at the federal level about land-use interests. So you do things like TOD, Transit on Demand, so that you reward local communities to have higher density around transit or train stations. But this is very slow in trying to get developed. To this day I'm working with some people on transit-oriented development. Localities still haven't glommed onto it as a technique to try to deal with congestion, especially in places like California. People are so married to their automobiles that you just can't—trying to get them out of their cars to take public transit—and now with less money available it makes it even tougher.

So you try to come up with—are there other things we could try, like public/private partnerships? I remember I was working with Credit Suisse [Group]. Credit Suisse had a $1 billion pot for transportation projects for public/private partnerships. The unions fought the P3 [public/private partnership] program because they thought that meant—

[interruption]

Riley: I know that if a telephone went off in President Bush's presence you were—

Mineta: Banished to Siberia.

The whole issue of trying to come up with policies—how much leeway did I have on policy issues? I can safely say that whatever thoughts we had—if we took that either to DPC [Domestic Policy Council] or the National Economic Council and got, "Yes, that's a good idea but no, don't do that" or whatever. But there were very few where we were turned down on trying something different, especially this idea of the P3, the public/private partnership. If that meant less tax dollars and more private money—the reason we were using it is that the public dollars were going down and we needed money from the private sector. But the unions were objecting to it.

My good friend Jim Oberstar, Congressman from Minnesota, and Pete DeFazio from Oregon were leading the charge against P3s. Today I think there is recognition of why we need P3s, because there aren't enough public dollars to do it.

One of the things I've done recently is to engage the unions through their pension systems to invest in public/private partnerships. These are construction jobs that give their unions a vital job market plus the pension system. If Carlisle were to do something they need 12–15 percent on the return. Pension systems can do it on 4–6 percent. So there is long-term patient capital in these pension firms. The first one I did this with was IBEW, International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers. That was five or seven years ago. It is starting to catch on but still has not gotten traction. I think it is getting more and more interest.

I know the Denver, Colorado, RTD, the Regional Transit District, is using P3s to build their transit system. Florida is using P3s to build their highway system. Most of their roads down there are toll roads. Texas is not—even though in Texas they have these regional toll road authorities, they really haven't caught on yet in Florida. I remember when we were going to do something in the Dallas area with toll roads, Karen Hughes said, "Norm, we like our gasoline taxes. We don't like toll roads."

On the other hand, Allen Rutter was the head of transportation policy for Governor Bush and I brought him on as FRA, Federal Railroad Administration. We were at a meeting at the White House and the President saw Allen and said, "Rutter! What are you doing here?" The President said, "Mr. Secretary, I'd see him right across the street from the Governor's mansion waiting at the transit stop for the bus to come in. What did you make him?"

I said, "Mr. President, you appointed him as head of the Federal Railroad Administration." He then had some choice words about Amtrak. He would just see people, "Rutter, what are you doing here?"

I don't know where we're going to go in this country right now frankly. President Obama talks about high-speed rail. He talked about it in the State of the Union a couple of years ago and no one—and he pledged $50 billion toward it in his budget, but none of it has been spent. I don't know where we're going to go with it. The problem with high-speed rail, it is so expensive in terms of the construction, and especially in California where they have this screwy system where now in central California, from Bakersfield to Modesto they decided this is going to be our IOS, initial operating segment. There are more cows than there are people in that area on a per capita density basis. To me those are the kinds of examples that become bad public policy programs that don't magnify or show off the best part of transportation.

Perry: Is some of the reason for the nonexpenditure of funds that states like Florida, for example, said they didn't want the money and they didn't want to build—?

Mineta: Governor Scott Walker in Wisconsin—I'm trying to think of the present Governor of Florida.

Perry: Rick Scott?

Mineta: He was willing to fund the rail. He's going to run for President in 2016 or is he running for Governor again?

Perry: I think he's running for Governor. You mentioned unions, interest groups. As Secretary of Transportation did you have other interest groups that you had to think about?

Mineta: Ten thousand of them.

Perry: How did you deal with that?

Mineta: It was fun. Here we are in 2005 trying to put a new Surface Transportation Bill together—maybe it was 2003. We were through with ISTEA and we now had the successor, T21, and I was one of these believers that you don't just talk to Congress about legislation. You put together your own legislation and submit it to the Congress and they can play around with it or adopt it.

The one we put together was SAFETEA [Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act]. Worked with Don Young from Alaska, who is chairman of the newly called Transportation and Infrastructure Committee. So we got all the elements of this bill together including how much was going to be spent. He said, "Norm, I want my wife's name in it," which is Lu.

I said, "It's going to be called SAFETEA-LU? What does the LU stand for?" He said, "That's for you to figure out." One of our folks came up with "A Legacy for Users" so that's how the bill got named, LU, Legacy for Users.

Riley: You know we don't teach that in the political sciences.

Mineta: Naming of bills is very important. At one point it was "reform"; all the bills were reform, education reform, health reform, whatever.

Riley: Yes.

Perry: We don't teach that in political science but when did that happen? They started to make acronyms that meant—like the Patriot Act [USA PATRIOT Act: Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism Act]. Was that while you were in Congress?

Mineta: Oh, yes.

Perry: That wasn't the way when you started or was it? The New Deal had alphabet soup.

Mineta: People would try to come up with clever names. Let's say the word "DEAD" and then they'd figure out—

Riley: I don't think that's a good example, Mr. Secretary.

Perry: Abolishing the death tax.

Riley: It could be.

Mineta: Now they just put more emphasis on the name of the bill and what it stands for.

Perry: Is this where your Congressional background really did help, that you knew exactly how you wanted the bill to be written and what would be looked at?

Mineta: There's no question. And being able to deal with these former colleagues. I'm out of the executive branch and now I'm working with the legislators. They couldn't pull the "You don't understand how it works around here." Today that's true though, today I don't know how it works. [*laughter*]

Riley: It doesn't work.

Mineta: I think the biggest issue to deal with was just the dollars were lessening. Then when they got into this whole sequestration, that has really—I would hate to see the budget for '14 and '15 with all the cuts that are going to have to be made. The problem I still see is that in ten or 15 years we're going to have our trousers around our ankles saying, "What happened?" because our economic competitors are not taking their foot off the gas.

I don't care whether it is Brazil, Germany, Russia, China, India, they're all pushing forward, and they know the importance of infrastructure. Infrastructure is not just physical infrastructure, but it's health programs, education, whatever it is. Other countries are building it. It's like when the Russian trawler got stuck down in Antarctica. Who said, "I'll come and rescue you"? It was China. I was wondering, *What the hell are China and Russia doing down in Antarctica?* They're out there looking for precious metals or oil or whatever.

China right now in Africa, they're just tying up the resources. They're not asking for anything, but they're getting agreements. They're spending a lot of money there for Kenyans or Nigerians or South Africans to develop their precious metals. Ten, 15 years from now they'll have their hand on where those precious metals are going.

Perry: So what happened in our country and in our system of government to cause us to take our foot off the gas? Because you've seen it from both ends of Pennsylvania Avenue. What was it?

Mineta: The word is spending and people don't want—First of all, I don't know how 60 to 70 or so can get a group of 535 people to do what the 60 or 70 are doing. But right now people are so concerned about spending they cannot distinguish between spending that is an investment and spending that is consumption.

Perry: When did you see that take hold?

Mineta: Probably within the last five years, seven years maybe. I just don't see us making those dollars in investments because they think all spending is B-A-D.

Riley: Because of your experience in California with Proposition 13 there—the spending part of the equation seems to me to be the other side of the coin of the taxation.

Mineta: Governor [Jerry] Brown on the ballot—is it two years ago—put a tax increase measure and *he got it passed*. Now that is going to generate something like $30 billion. I know that the University of California system is now down to 12 percent of their budget coming from the state. Had this not passed, it would have gone down to 9 percent, and I'm on the Chancellor's Advisory Committee at [University of California at] Berkeley. One of the things we're doing a great deal of is P3. In fact we just got approved by—it doesn't happen until the April Regents' meeting, but we're putting together a residential housing college based on a P3. We raised close to $70 million to do seismic retrofit and modernization of a residential hall that was built in 1929. We got all the elements approved just last weekend. I think it is now Grace [Graciela Flores] Napolitano who is putting it on the agenda for the Regents for the April meeting.

Riley: But the Governor's ability to get that sold in California, if I'm not mistaken, was partly a function of the public's recognition of the vulnerability of the education system. So do you have to wait until—

Mineta: Disaster?

Riley: Well, disaster or near disaster before people are willing to—

Mineta: The problem is, if you wait that long, how do you put Humpty Dumpty back together again? I think the thing that really hit the nail on this tax issue on the ballot was that the K–12—it was considered something like number 47 of all the states. I used to think high school graduates here are leaving with a fourth-grade reading ability. That's crazy! Graduating high school? What do businesses have to do? What do colleges have to do? Big remedial program for incoming students. You must see that at UVA [University of Virginia].

Riley: Sure.

Mineta: I wonder too, with everybody texting, they can't write a whole sentence. [*laughter*]

Riley: Can't spell a word.

Mineta: They can put together 140 characters. Spelling and everything, thanks is "THX" or whatever it is.

Riley: Let me bring this full circle then because you've already told us that in your proposals to present to the President you came back with gas taxes, which seems to me a reasonable—did you detect within this Republican administration any receptivity to tax increases?

Mineta: No, that's why we had to go to other alternatives, public/private partnerships. People

are harpooning me about taking the Highway Trust Fund down and leaving only a billion in there, saying, "Our financial resources of the future are being plundered right now." But sometimes you have to take care of the now and hope and pray for tomorrow. So we've done stuff on a short-term basis.

Although I just saw an article the other day that Dave Camp from Michigan, who is chair of the Ways and Means Committee, is talking about—and this is his last term as chairman, so he is increasing some taxes and dedicating it to infrastructure. It does require the T&I Committee to undertake some reforms of their own. So he is saying, "This will be available *if* the T&I Committee does this," but it was a positive sign.

Riley: A hypothetical and then maybe we'll wrap up for today. Would life have been better for you as a Transportation Secretary under Al Gore?

Mineta: I don't know if financially it would have been any easier to get some of these things done. Al probably had a better handle on the big picture of government. It would have been interesting on a Gore-[Joseph] Lieberman basis, I don't know.

Riley: But there would not have been a kind of reflexive opposition to—

Mineta: Well—

Riley: Maybe there would be.

Mineta: The Tea Party influence would have been there anyway.

Perry: Oh, that's a thought. So the Tea Party we see rise up in response to the Affordable Care Act and—

Mineta: I think they're trying to shove them back into the box.

Perry: They, the Republican Party.

Mineta: Yes.

Riley: I think you're right. But the opposition—it's a fascinating question for us to hear from you about, because you were in California when I think most people track the development of the anti-tax fervor back to—

Mineta: Absolutely. [Howard] Jarvis was all over the place.

Perry: And Prop [Proposition] 13.

Riley: Is that an enduring component of American political culture, or is it a phase or a period?

Mineta: I think it is something that came up and there are so many—one of the parts of Prop 13 is that it froze your property value at a certain point. This is fine for the long-term older resident, but it's unfair to the newer people coming in because they're paying these higher, inflated values on their property while these folks are getting off from not having to pay their fair share.

In growing the city of San Jose I had to purposely say, "Look, we need more streets, we need more sewage treatment capacity, we need all these things. But I'm not going to put the load on you as the resident of the city today. I am going to put it on those who are developing and moving in tomorrow." But trying to sell that and getting the developers to know that they were going to be paying the bill, even in the face of Prop 13, was—I forget the percentage limit that we put on the new development. But it used to be we would be building 7,000 or 8,000 single-family residences. I bet today they don't even build 500 in a year. Those are usually the $2 million homes. Most people now are going to townhouses. Cities like it because of the increased density, but it's getting more and more difficult.

Riley: The fundamental problem is resources, correct?

Mineta: Oh, yes.

Riley: It takes money to solve problems. If it is a public problem it takes tax money. You started your political career in a state with a reputation for anti-tax fervor, and you served your last years in the White House with a President who by your own words was not in favor of gasoline taxes.

Mineta: I think he saw what happened to his father and he was not about to repeat that. His father said, "Read my lips" and then—

Riley: That was it.

Mineta: Went against it. And yet the resources are as badly needed now as they were then.

Riley: So if you were to pose a question to him his answer would be—I would guess he would say I've got the equation wrong, you have to manage your resources better? Would that be his response? You have to do more with what you've got?

Mineta: And be innovative. Out-of-the-box thinking. I've never understood out-of-the-box thinking. Whose box?

Perry: It's like pushing the envelope.

Riley: That's a good place to stop because it will allow us tonight, as we're in our slumbers, to contemplate out-of-the-box thinking and pushing the envelopes. Maybe we'll have an answer for tomorrow morning.

Mineta: Or the expression, "It is what it is."

Perry: Or you might know this, from the German, "What is not can still be."

Riley: OK, we'll meet at 9:30 tomorrow morning.

March 5, 2014

Riley: I wanted to ask you about your staff and your senior appointments. If you could tell us about who you staffed your office with and who the main deputy secretaries were and a little bit about them, that would help us to flesh out this important question about who is serving in the administration and your working with the White House in filling these positions.

Mineta: When I talked to Dick Cheney about the possibility of becoming the Secretary, of course I started to think about who I wanted with me. When I was at Lockheed Martin running this little transportation company, I had hired a fellow by the name of Michael Jackson from the American Trucking Association as my vice president of marketing and business development. I said, "Michael, I need you to come back to work for me." He said, "In what capacity?" I said, "As deputy secretary." He said, "I'm not sure it works that way" because he had been in the George H. W. Bush administration at DOT. "You just don't get to pick your own people."

I said, "I think I'll be able to pretty much pick my own people. I'd like to have you come work for me." We did get him cleared as deputy secretary. I brought my own chief of staff from when I was a member of Congress, John Flaherty. He had been first my press secretary for about three years and then about five years as chief of staff.

I called him and said, "Would you be willing?" He was working for Congresswoman Anna Eshoo as her chief of staff at the time. So he said OK. Little by little I started thinking about the different modes, and between me, Michael, and John we started putting together lists of people we thought we might want to approach. All this time I was working with Clay Johnson who was head of PPO and with a young woman, Dina Powell, who was very good. She was Lebanese by background, very good.

Riley: In Clay's office?

Mineta: In PPO. Pretty much who we wanted. It wasn't one of these where they said, "You have to take these people." When I talked to the President-elect in Austin on January 2, I said, "I understand you have obligations to someone who worked on your campaign or whose father donated a great amount financially to your campaign. But I do want people who are knowledgeable about transportation, especially in the key, higher positions."

That's when he went back to that, "You're my subject matter expert. I'm going to be leaning toward you to be making these recommendations."

We were able to put together a team of our liking, of our wants. I worked principally with Dina Powell and John Flaherty and Michael to put together a team of people who really were very good in working together. Individually they were very competent, but more importantly they were able to work as a team.

Riley: How many assistant secretaries did you have?

Mineta: There must have been eight or nine. Assistant Secretary for Budget and Programs and

Assistant Secretary of Transportation for Policy and Assistant Secretary for International Affairs and Aviation. Then there was one position, I recruited a fellow by the name of Jeff Shane, whom I've known for years. I said, "I want to bring you over as Assistant Secretary for Policy."

He said, "Norm, I'll take the job on one condition and that is the position be renamed Under Secretary of Transportation for Policy and that it would then overlook the Assistant Secretary for Policy and Assistant Secretary for Aviation and International Affairs." I said OK. So he left Hogan & Hartson and came over to us. It took me close to two years to get the legislation to make his title under secretary. I kept seeing Jeff just about every day. I'd say, "Jeff, it's going to happen, I can't tell you when." He was really good about it.

He had a person working for him at the firm by the name of Karan Bhatia, and he said we ought to bring him in on the international and aviation. He was terrific. When we started we had 56 Open Skies agreements with different countries. In the close to six years I was there we increased that to 81, and the last one was the Open Skies agreement with the European Union. When I proposed that Jim Oberstar opposed it. And Jim is a very good friend of mine. We sat next to each other for 22 years and we went through everything, through his wife dying of cancer, my divorce, and everything.

But he had some very strong feelings about certain things. He thought that the provision I had put in about expeditious handling of the Open Skies agreement was contrary to the position of having foreign pilots flying in the United States. There is a term for that and I can't think of it right now. He opposed it on that ground. When I left he was opposing the European Union Open Skies agreement. About two years later they had tweaked it enough that he was willing to accept it.

We added about 26 countries when we brought the European Union in under the Open Skies agreement. The first one was Vietnam. I said "Karan, Vietnam is a Communist country. What is it going to be like going to my boss and saying, 'Hey, boss, we've got an Open Skies agreement.' 'That's great, who is it with?'"

It was fine because even before September 11 we had signed a maritime agreement with Vietnam. I figured he wouldn't object that much to the first being Vietnam. The Vietnamese really love the United States of America. We call it the Vietnam War; they call it the American War.

I was there with President Clinton in 2000, and we landed at Hanoi Airport around 11 o'clock at night and then motorcaded into town. Along the country road going into town, people were waving from the side of the road. Then we got into Hanoi. As we were getting closer to the airport, people were 15 deep. There were 100,000 people out to greet the President.

The next night we left Hanoi to go to Ho Chi Minh City. Same thing. That night in Hanoi as we were driving in he said, "Norm, you notice anything about this crowd?" I said, "Yes, they're all young people. But it's 11:30 and all the old folks are in bed." He said, "No, the average age in Vietnam right now is 27." I said, "*Really*?"

Anyway, we get to Ho Chi Minh City the next day, same thing, but this time *200,000* in the downtown area as we were inching our way in to the hotel. He spoke at the university to 75,000

roaring students. Then we went to the city of Ho Chi Minh to be briefed by the mayor about what they were doing. He had a fellow open up the curtain that was hiding the screen, the wall. Across the top was a banner that said, "Ten-Year Development Plan of Saigon City." [*Whispering*] "Mr. President, do you see that? 'Saigon City'?" We never did get an explanation of why it said Saigon City. I think the romanticists or some of the people really wanted the city to go back to Saigon.

Karan is now the vice president for global affairs for General Electric. A very bright fellow; I loved working with Karan. But that was true of all of our folks, whether it was Mary Peters over at Federal Highway—it was just great.

Riley: Did you have any occasions where there was friction with the White House over filling any of these positions?

Mineta: No. We had a woman who was the White House liaison. But I never really got rejected on an assignment. There was some question when they sent a person over for a job and we thought instead of this position she ought to be over here, but nothing where we outright got rejected on somebody we wanted to bring in or where we said no to someone they suggested.

Riley: I understand.

Mineta: As I said, working with Dina Powell was a real joy.

Riley: You had an Assistant Secretary for Legislative Affairs?

Mineta: Yes, very much so.

Riley: Who was that person?

Mineta: That was Shane Karr who later became I think it was deputy chief of staff. And then Nicole Nason. We made her the legislative. Eventually she became the administrator of the National Highway Safety Administration.

Riley: Something occurred to me to ask you that I wouldn't have thought about until you mentioned this trip to Vietnam. Did any of the Presidents you served ever inquire as to your interest in going abroad as an ambassador?

Mineta: No.

Riley: Would you have been interested if they had raised it?

Mineta: At one point I was interested when the Ambassadorship to Japan opened up. Deni and I talked about that. Oddly enough, one of the nights we were at a Chinese restaurant and I opened up the fortune cookie and it said, "An exciting new adventure will be opening up." I go, "*Yes*!" but it never came.

Riley: Never happened.

Mineta: Never happened. At the beginning of the Obama administration there were some feelers out for that, but by that time I had decided I'm 79 and I just thought that the desire and my energy level and whatever, I just wanted to stay at home and boat and be with the grandkids and do the work with Hill+Knowlton, so I took that off the agenda. I would have liked to have done that.

Riley: Were your relations good with Howard Paster and the folks in the White House Legislative Affairs shop? I would have thought that given your position in the administration and your long-standing experience on Capitol Hill, as well as your familiarity with the Democratic Party, that you would have been an invaluable asset to Paster and his bunch.

Mineta: I did. That's how I got to Hill+Knowlton because Howard was at WPP, the firm that owns Hill+Knowlton. So when I was asked about what I was going to do when I left I said, "I really don't know." It might have been in the paper.

Then I got a call from a friend of mine who had been the former CEO of Hill+Knowlton and he said, "Would you consider coming as vice chairman of Hill+Knowlton?" What happened was Paul Taaffe, an Australian fellow, was with Hill+Knowlton and he was president of EMEA, Europe, Middle East, and Africa, for Hill+Knowlton, working out of London. Then he became the CEO of Hill+Knowlton and moved to New York. He was in the job about two years and he said to the former CEO, "I have no entry into the executive branch or the legislative branch in D.C. If I create the position of vice chairman, could you find someone to fill that position and be resident in the D.C. office?"

So Tom Hoag, this friend of mine, called me and said, "I want to have lunch with you." I said OK. I was still at Transportation. We had lunch and he outlined this whole thing. I said, "I can't do any negotiating while I'm in the job, but if you think there is a good possibility I'll just go ahead and announce my retirement and resignation."

I did that in July of '06. I'd been there about five and a half years. Then I negotiated—I didn't do it, it was Bob Barnett, an attorney here in town, who did the negotiating. So I went to work with them in November of '06 as vice chairman of Hill+Knowlton housed in the D.C. office. I was there until August of last year.

Riley: I had marked some things on the general timeline to ask you about just to get your observations. I think the briefing book indicates that you served on the Energy Task Force, the one that the Vice President led. I won't represent your facial expression to the tape, but I would ask you if you could elaborate on your service and that task force in 2001.

Mineta: It was really made up of some very fine people. We were meeting in the EOB [Executive Office Building]. In the room were people from Exxon—they were right there. I thought, *This is really strange. We're trying to put together an energy policy and all the major players are sitting here in the room*. They weren't just taking notes. They'd say, "If you're going to do that, would you consider—listen to this." They were active participants. I thought, *I'm not sure that this is how we ought to be putting policy together.*

At DOT I would always reach out to the stakeholders, but they were not in the conference room as we were putting together legislation or policy positions. But these people were sitting right in

that room that whole time we were there. At one point all of the Secretaries—I think I was the only one who probably participated in the Energy Task Force all the way through, the others just said, "Screw this, I'll send Russell or Barbara and let them handle it." But I stuck it through all the way. I did get to know Dick Cheney in terms of a closer working relationship.

Riley: What was his operating style at these meetings? He was chairing the meetings?

Mineta: Yes, but the person who really ran it was his Chief of Staff, David Addington. When you're in a position like that, you see the bull coming toward you and you step aside and figure, This is it.

Riley: But you didn't raise any objections privately or publicly?

Mineta: I did to Dick Cheney at the time, about them sitting in the meeting. I said, "I've never really sat in—" or at that high level. I've done it in Congress where you're putting legislation together. Of course you always want to get the opinion of the stakeholders. I was always calling the general contractors association, General Motors, Ford, whomever, Firestone when we were doing the TREAD [Transportation Recall Enhancement, Accountability and Documentation] Act.

Perry: So you spoke to the Vice President just one to one after a meeting? What was his response to you?

Mineta: That this was the way to get the input.

Perry: When you said all the major stakeholders were there, but that was just in the energy business, so the heads of the major energy companies, but I presume no environmental stakeholders were there.

Mineta: No.

Riley: No Sierra Club.

Perry: There was a public issue about the meetings not being open, as I recall.

Mineta: In a way that I could understand. As you're formulating stuff you don't have to have everybody in the neighborhood sitting at the meeting. But at some point, in terms of transparency there still should be something. But that was pretty much a closed—not closed, but it was open to all the energy companies being there. In terms of public policy it wasn't open until the report had been finally shipped in.

Riley: Did you get the sense that you were under scrutiny in these meetings?

Mineta: That was one of the reasons I stuck it out. The others begged off and said, "I'm too busy, I've got other things but I'm going to send the deputy secretary." But this was early on and as the lone Democrat in the Cabinet I didn't want to be treated like dust, I just wanted to be a participant.

Riley: Did you ever have follow-up conversations with outsiders about your discussions there? In other words, were there members on the Hill that you would talk with off the record? Would you talk to reporters off the record?

Mineta: I never talked to any reporters about it. There were inquiries about it, but I never talked to them about it. I did talk to maybe Tom Foley or somebody about it but—

Riley: Would Foley have been gone at that time? He was not on the Hill anymore. He left to go to Japan.

Mineta: He went to Japan and came home—I think he was there.

Riley: So you would talk to him.

Mineta: He was at a major law firm—he was the former head of the DNC [Democratic National Committee] from Texas. Bob Strauss.

Riley: Sure, OK.

Mineta: He was at Akin Gump Strauss [Hauer & Feld LLC].

Riley: So you were talking to him.

Mineta: I mentioned it to him. Tom and I worked very closely together while we were in the House.

Perry: So what did you think about the report that the energy group put out in the end?

Mineta: I probably agreed with about 80 percent of it. As you mentioned, there wasn't enough attention given to the environmental issues and more emphasis on conservation than on financial incentives to the gas and oil companies. But about 80 percent of it I agreed with.

Riley: Let me ask you more generally about your ongoing contacts on Capitol Hill. Were you used by your friends on the Hill as a window onto the administration? Were you often getting calls from people not about transportation issues?

Mineta: Mostly just about transportation issues. One time they did ask me if I would help on what came to be known as the Patriot Act. I was on the House Intelligence Committee in 1997 when we put the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act together.

Riley: FISA.

Mineta: In that we had a three-judge tribunal that requests to spy on U.S. citizens went to, and they were probably handling 1,000 to 1,500 requests a year.

Riley: Before.

Mineta: Under the new act they eliminated that three-judge panel. When they asked me to help on the passage of it I said, "No, I can't, because I think that three-judge panel has to be there to

protect the U.S. citizens and to inquire of the intelligence agencies the basis for their request." They said fine. They didn't come back and say, "Can you do this or do that?" That was generally true across the board.

Josh Bolten, Andy Card, and then Zee [Ziad] Ojakli who handled the House side would consult with me on certain things. But I didn't get any requests to do stuff on the Senate side. Nick Calio would call because he was the head of the whole Intergovernmental Operations. Most of it was from Andy and Josh or they would work through Michael Jackson or John Flaherty.

Riley: Right.

Mineta: So after about two and a half years, Michael Jackson said he was going to leave. I said, "Why are you leaving?" He said, "Lockheed Martin built the house but they never furnished it. Karen [Jackson] is on my case about getting the house furnished, so I have to get back into the private sector and earn some money to furnish the house."

In early December of '04 Deni and I had dinner with Michael and Karen, and they were talking about having just bought a horse for their daughter as a Christmas gift. Then about the 15th he called me back and said, "I may be coming back into government." I said, "What are you talking about coming back into government? You were just complaining about needing to furnish the house. What are you coming back to?" He said, "I can't tell you." He came back as Deputy Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security.

I said, "For criminy sakes, Michael, you're going from the frying pan into the fire."

Riley: You raise something and forgive me, I don't know if there was reference in the briefing book to your service on the Intelligence Committee, but were there other—?

Mineta: There was an Intelligence Committee. I think it had about 60 members, Democrats and Republicans. Ron Dellums was the chair. Tip [Thomas O'Neill] thought it was leaking like a sieve so he did away with the committee. Seven or eight months later he announced he was going to put back—the anomaly of the term is Permanent Select House Intelligence Committee. A select committee is by definition temporary. So here is a Permanent Select House Intelligence Committee. Oh, OK. It was going to be nine members, five Democrats, four Republicans.

Tip called me up and said, "Would you consider serving on the committee?" I said, "I'd be more than happy to serve on the committee, but I don't want to just be a rubber stamp for whatever they're doing." And Eddie Boland, his roommate, was going to be the chairman and Congressman Kenny [J. Kenneth] Robinson from Virginia was going to be the Republican. So I said, "Let me go talk to them about their plans. Then I want to talk to Senator [Barry] Goldwater and Dan Inouye over on the Senate side." They were very strong on not being a rubber stamp.

I went to visit Tip and I said, "Look, after talking to Goldwater and Inouye and Boland and Robinson, I've decided to go on the committee and I really appreciate your extending this invitation to me. But how did you know that I was a military intelligence officer in the Korean War?"

"The hell you say." [*laughter*] So he didn't know. It was a tight operation and it was a good

operation. It was really interesting because when Reagan came in he had—who was the general counsel at ABC [American Broadcasting Corporation]? He was always fast and loose with everything. A friend of mine was the Deputy Director, John McMahon, a career CIA [Central Intelligence Agency] person. Then they had a young high-ranking, I think he was not number two but number three at CIA, I can't think of his name now. He would always wear these suits and I would say to John McMahon, "John, he is a lying SOB [son of a bitch] and I don't think it serves you or CIA very well to have him coming to testify because none of us really believe him."

That person was eventually involved in the Iran-Contra deal. So the Director of the CIA would come and testify and Bobby Inman, Navy Admiral, would come and testify. Whenever Bobby thought—I can't think of the CIA Director's name—whenever he was lying Bobby would reach down and pull up his socks. I said, "Bobby, you have a terrible poker face."

Riley: The tell.

Mineta: Right away, you're sitting there—"I am?" When I told that to John McMahon he started laughing but it was so obvious. Let's see, what was his name?

Perry: Under Reagan?

Riley: The guy who had been in his campaign who mumbled all the time.

Mineta: Absolutely and he mumbled with food in his mouth. Oh, he was terrible. William Casey.

Riley: This is an avenue of your experience that I was unfamiliar with. Did you become involved in any debates within the administration about the vast intelligence capacity that has to develop after 9/11 or more directly about the desirability or not of Congressional oversight?

Mineta: One of the things we did was, in Transportation there are different levels of security briefings. We were getting something down here, not the full briefings that Defense or State would be getting. But I was able to push it up close to that. The Coast Guard had never been part of the military, of the intelligence, security clearances, with all the other services. I pushed and got them to be part of the military intelligence system. In fact, I was watching the Super Bowl in 2002 and when the Armed Forces honor guard came in, there's Air Force, Navy, Marines—no Coast Guard. They're a military service, they ought to be part of the honor guard.

Manson Brown was my military assistant, so I called him up and said, "Manson, I'm watching the football game right now." He said, "Yes, so am I." I said, "Did you see the honor guard come in?" He said, "Yes, sir." I said, "What was missing?" He said, "I don't know. They had rifles, they had flags." I said, "The Coast Guard is missing." He said, "Oh, you're right, Mr. Secretary."

I said, "Manson, we have to make sure that by the next Super Bowl the Coast Guard is part of that honor guard." They had to change the regulations to make the Coast Guard—they did it by September. They were recognized. From then on, whenever there is an honor guard there is always a Coast Guard presence.

Riley: Were you involved in any discussions about Kyoto, the early decision not to continue?

Mineta: Never approached on that.

Riley: Have any recollections about what I would guess was internal turmoil after Jim Jeffords decided to switch his party allegiance?

Mineta: Jim was a good friend of mine. Jim Blanchard from Michigan, Jim Jeffords from Vermont, and I were the coauthors of the Wind Energy Systems Act to allow the wind turbines to generate electricity. I used to describe my role with that with Deni, "I'm the piano player downstairs. I don't know what's going on upstairs. I just play piano down here."

Riley: How were the tips? Did Jeffords approach you before his decision to jump ship?

Mineta: He did not.

Riley: Were you aware of his frustrations?

Mineta: That was pretty public. There were others that surprised me when President Obama was approaching a Republican for a position in the Cabinet. I thought, Wow, he's a real partisan, he's not a person who has been playing in a very—why would he—maybe because he was knowledgeable in that subject matter. But I thought, *Man, if he got to the point he would be a real thorn in the side of the administration.* In the final analysis the person turned down the position. I can't think who it was now, it was a prominent Republican.

Riley: By the way, Bill Casey was the CIA Director—I had to look it up. I should have known that.

Mineta: I was quoted in a book as saying Bill Casey wouldn't tell you if your coat was on fire. [*laughter*]

Riley: We need to do another one of these interviews at some point and just talk about your years on Capitol Hill.

Did any piece of the anthrax scare cross you other than just as a member of the department and having to be aware of this?

Mineta: When they were setting up the procedures on how to handle these things, I was involved. I had this fellow John Vogel from Tennessee be part of that whole system. Then we had tabletop exercises on handling anthrax, SARS [severe acute respiratory syndrome], different things that would come up. The administration was trying to make sure that they had adequate procedures for these things that could have disastrous impacts. Even though it's health, it would still be a security issue.

During one of those meetings on SARS or something, some immediate question came up about whether we could get transportation available to us on an emergency basis. Of course DoD [Department of Defense] says, "Yes, we've got all kinds of planes." I said, "I have three jets." Michael Leavitt, former Governor of Utah, is sitting next to me. He says, "You have three

planes? You ever rent them out?" I said, "No, but when they're not in use that is a good idea. Maybe I can generate some income to offset our costs on those planes."

So we set up a program where people like Michael would call up. I'd say, "Talk to our Aviation Department, talk to our pilots." We made those planes available to other Cabinet members who didn't have a plane. Most of them, like State, Defense, AG [Attorney General], had planes within their department somewhere. But HHS, Labor, and others did not. But it was so funny when Michael said, "You've got planes?"

Riley: Were you routinely circulated on the President's speeches or maybe just State of the Union messages to give input?

Mineta: Not really. For six years I tried to get the President to say one word in the State of the Union Address: transportation. Never got in. I talked to everybody. I talked to [Michael] Gerson who used to do the speechwriting, Josh Bolten, Andy, the President.

Perry: What would they say to you when you'd say, "Could you put this in?"

Mineta: "There's only so much we can cram in." It wasn't like with Obama or with Clinton where they'd go for over an hour. He'd get in there and go 37 minutes, get in and get out.

Perry: I sound like a therapist, but how did that make you feel? Seriously though, in terms of their priorities.

Mineta: "Doctor, I need some help." It used to frustrate me. Michael Jackson, who is a Republican through and through, would try. We'd all get rebuffed at every level.

Riley: Andy would have been sympathetic.

Mineta: Sure, he had been Secretary. Could never get the speechwriters to consider it. On the other hand, then comes Obama and he's talking transportation all the time. Now he hasn't done as much as his rhetoric, but—like high-speed rail, he has put $50 billion into the program. We haven't seen much of it, partially because we have such a disjointed, fractured system. When you think about the whole United States and you have Portland to Seattle to Vancouver, and then you have San Francisco down to San Diego, then you have D.C. to New York to Boston. There was some talk about doing something in Texas, some talk about Florida, but those Governors said, "No, we don't want to do anything."

So we don't have a national system of putting together high-speed rail. I think what we have is a concept of regional high-speed rail but nothing to really connect San Francisco to Portland or Seattle to—You know we used to have the old Seattle to Minneapolis-St. Paul to Chicago.

I remember in the '40s, maybe after World War II, Robert Young was the head of New York Central [Railway]. He would say, "Pigs don't have to transfer in Chicago. You do." My dad used to subscribe to *Fortune* magazine, so in the '30s I loved to read *Fortune.* He would have these big ads about pigs not having to transfer in Chicago, but you do.

I used to tell Allen Rutter when he was FRA head, "Do something about this." Chicago to this

date is still a real choking point. From Seattle to Chicago to New York, Canadian Pacific [Railway Limited] starting in Vancouver can get across country faster to Boston and New York, than BNSF [Burlington Northern Santa Fe Corporation] coming across country. I think that's a black mark on our capabilities.

Perry: What caused the Bush administration not to place as much emphasis as you would have liked to have seen, and was that a partisan difference in terms of how they viewed transportation?

Mineta: No, I think their sense of government was security, so that would be Defense, Justice, State Department, and Homeland Security. The President concentrated on those and let the rest of us sort of do our thing within certain bounds, and the bounds were probably tied more to the money than to policy. Because on policy he would say, "You're the subject matter expert. If you think that's the way we ought to be going, I'll support you on that."

Perry: As long as it didn't cost much money or require new taxes. That's where his line was.

Mineta: At one point I wanted to put I think a billion and a half into Amtrak, and he said absolutely not. So I said, "Then I'm going to put together a reform of Amtrak, put legislation together." Part of that was to let the states and localities have more voice on how Amtrak operated within their jurisdictions. We would still have the overall picture to give it the national coordinated availability, but to have states have the responsibility.

At one point in the '04 budget I asked the President not to put anything in for Amtrak. Michael Dukakis, a very good friend of mine, was on the board of directors of Amtrak. He got so mad. I had to hold the phone here—"Yes, Michael, right."

Riley: Holding the phone at arm's length.

Perry: And you could hear?

Mineta: I could have been in the next room. He was yelling at me. I think he is still mad to this day. I said, "Michael, the only reason I'm doing this is because Congress isn't going to put together the reform act, and I can't get the billion and a half to run the place adequately." I guess it was '03 I put in zero. In '05 Congress passed some aspects of the reform act and I put in $1.3 billion for Amtrak, and the most they had had before was maybe $900 million. But Michael was still mad that I did that.

Perry: When you said that you would go to all of these different people in the White House, including the President, to see if at the very least they would put the word "transportation" into the speeches, could we ask how you went about meeting with the President? What was the process for doing that? Was that one to one and how often did you do that?

Mineta: I'm trying to think, who was the Press Secretary?

Riley: Ari Fleischer?

Mineta: That's right. Anyway we did everything. I tried everything. Michael Jackson was

probably as well connected and with the kind of credentials that he had—We got nowhere for five and a half years.

Perry: But back to when you would approach the President himself, would that be after a Cabinet meeting? Or would you ask Andy for time?

Mineta: It wasn't—

Perry: It wasn't an official meeting.

Mineta: No.

Perry: Did you have those? Did you have many one-to-one meetings with the President?

Mineta: All Cabinet Secretaries met with him at least once a quarter. That's the amazing thing about the present administration. I think the Cabinet Secretaries are not being utilized. There are czars within the White House, and I think they carry more weight than the Secretaries do in terms of determining—I think they're there to run the department. I've seen cases where—the Department of Justice got into it on this American Airlines/US Airways merger. I was thinking and I called friends of mine, "What the hell are they doing in this thing? It's not their business. It is the Department of Transportation's. If they're not doing their job then the Secretary ought to be called into the President's Office or Domestic Policy or somewhere and find out what are they doing."

In that instance the Department of Justice swept in and said, "You're going to lose 47 slots at Reagan. You're going to do this and do that." That's really the department's responsibility, and if someone had done that to me I would have been on a soapbox yelling and screaming.

Then in December Toyota was putting together a panel of prominent people—Secretary [John] Snow, me, Dr. Sue Bailey, who had been the administrator of the National Highway Safety Administration during the Clinton years, and then Dr. Jeff Runge during my time. The four of us were put together as a panel by Toyota to look at what the Department of Justice was doing on a previous recall of Toyota cars.

Now under the Motor Vehicle Safety Act the maximum fine that the Department of Transportation can assess is $350 million. In this instance, they had one death and 16 injuries of which five were serious and the other 11 of lesser degree. But the Department of Justice got into it and they fined Toyota $1.9 billion and started a criminal action. I thought, *Hold it.* That's the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's job. Why is the Department of Justice coming in overriding what the Department of Transportation and NHTSA [National Highway Traffic Safety Administration] have done? I've been just wired ever since I heard about this case. Toyota has put this panel together right now with John Snow, me, and the two former administrators.

In the Department of Justice program they have also set up a monitoring agency to look over what Toyota is doing. That's NHTSA's job. On the other hand, if they're setting up one for Toyota—it was funny. Early on I said, "Are they going to do one for General Motors? Are they going to do one for Chrysler or for Ford whenever something pops up?" Then a month ago General Motors got hit on a recall. I said at one of our meetings, "Is the Department of Justice

going to set up a monitoring platform to oversee what General Motors is doing? What does that do to NHTSA? Congress gave them the responsibility to do traffic safety responsibility."

Anyway we're in the midst of this turmoil right now. I don't know why the Department of Justice jumps in, and especially on this one, to criminalize it. Companies in the future will say, "No, I'm not going to cooperate with NHTSA." Yet what is happening now is not the work of NHTSA, it's the Department of Justice. It is an aggressive U.S. attorney out of the Southern District of New York pushing on this thing. Just generally the U.S. attorney out of the Southern District of New York, Rudy Giuliani—there have been very prominent, highly visible political types who use this as a stepping stone to further advancements. Here Toyota is getting hit with a $1.9 billion fine and the maximum under Motor Vehicle Safety—and I've been questioning what is the value or what is the basis for the $1.9 billion, especially since there has only been one death, 16 injuries, five of which were serious. These are the airbags that just go off.

Riley: My sense of timelines is not very good on this. Were you serving as Secretary when the Madrid train attacks occurred?

Mineta: Yes. That was a real wake-up call.

Riley: Exactly and I wonder if you could—you said you were having trouble getting the administration's attention on transportation issues, that they're interested in security. So you're spending a lot of time on airport security and so forth. That presumably is sort of buckled down by early 2002.

Mineta: September 11 occurred, and on November 19 the President signed the Aviation and Transportation Security Act. There were 36 mandates in that law. One of them we had to meet by December 1. I said to our staff, "There are 36 mandates in the law, but there is a 37th and that 37th mandate is the Mineta mandate that says we're going to beat the 36." The two major ones, November 19, 2002, we had to have transportation security personnel in all 429 commercial airports. And the other one was December 31, 2002, all the airports had to have explosives detection systems, EDS. The company with the best machine was a little company in Mountain View, California. Their production rate was something like eight or ten a month.

When the law came out and I was going to need at least 3,500 of these things, I called Jeff Immelt at GE [General Electric] and said, "If I could get a licensing agreement from Envision, could you help produce these machines in numbers so I'd be able to meet this December 31 law?"

He said, "Let me take a look at it." He had a team go out to Mountain View and take a look. I didn't realize it at the time but essentially the machine was doing the same thing that CT [computed tomography] scans were doing, same principle, so he said, "Sure." He came back and said, "Yes, we'll be able to do it." We were even able to meet the December 31 deadline for EDS.

We gave three waivers. Seattle was one, Los Angeles, and maybe the third was Chicago, O'Hare, because they were doing major reconstruction of their airports and they wanted to put these Envision machines in line. These machines were a little larger than a Volkswagen. They weighed probably 4,000 pounds, so most of the airports didn't have the floor loading to accommodate

these machines. We had to do a lot of engineering work for the airports.

It was really interesting. When we were setting up TSA we didn't know anything about how to set up lines. I called up the Disney Corporation and said, "Could you help us?" Richard Bates was a staff person for a member of Congress and then he became head of government relations for Disney Corporation. I called up Richard and said, "Can you guys help us out? You guys know how to set up lines."

They sent three people to us. The head of the three-person team said, "Mr. Secretary, I've found out one thing on this assignment. Once you've seen one airport you've seen one airport. You can't take that approach and apply it to Dallas, Chicago, LA, New York, wherever, because every airport is different."

They ended up sending 12 or 15 people to help us on how to set up lines. The biggest thing is you don't set up lines that are like this—so you have people moving all the time. This way they're sort of inching along—

Riley: Not straight lines but the—

Perry: Almost serpentine, squared-off serpentine.

Mineta: That's right, that's what you do. People have a sense of movement.

Perry: Less frustration.

Mineta: They were terrific. Then as we were building the workforce for TSA and bringing in—we went from essentially three people to 67,000 by November 19, 2002. I asked Marriott Corporation to help on training our people on customer service. Again they volunteered their personnel to do that. The only people who said no were Hewlett-Packard from my own backyard in Palo Alto. They were going through this Mark Hurd, Carly [Carleton] Fiorina—they were having a big feud at HP [Hewlett-Packard] and they said, "No, we're not going to do anything on that," so they didn't. But everybody else came forward, Marriott, Disney.

A friend of mine, a Chinese American fellow, had a company called Solectron. He came from Taiwan and went to Rice [University] and got his PhD, joined IBM. He eventually came to San Jose and then he hit the glass ceiling. In 1984 he left IBM and set up his own company. Then in 1991 he won the Malcolm Baldrige Quality Award. He was then about an $800 million company. I knew Malcolm Baldrige as Secretary of Commerce, and of course I knew the founder of Solectron. In 1997 he won the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award again. But now he was a $1.8 billion company.

I said "Winston [Chen], you must have done something right to have this growth and at the same time win the National Quality Award. I need you to send your quality assurance person to help us on this." He sent Dr. Tom Kennedy. Amazingly Tom spent four to six months with us. I said, "Tom, don't you have to get back to Silicon Valley?" He'd go home on weekends to do the work for Solectron and come right back to us. He was doing it all on Solectron's dime.

We had a lot of people who volunteered. There was some question out of that as to whether or

not we should be doing that. But they finally cleared us to do it.

Riley: I want to go back to Madrid because it strikes me—You used the phrase "a wake-up call." What was the immediate reaction and does it elevate the importance of your portfolio in the administration at that time because of the implications for domestic rail travel?

Mineta: The biggest problem was that there was an admission or a willingness to deal with the issues but again, if it is going to cost money I'm not sure we want to do something about it. So I'd always say, "The alternatives are even more costly." We did things like CCTVs [closed-circuit television] at tunnels and bridges, but to this day ports and trains are really vulnerable.

Yesterday I mentioned that Israelis backscatter every one of their containers going on a ship to Israel. We don't do any of that. So someone could put some kind of weapon inside a container. Nowadays, with these new—I forget what they call them but the Maersk shipping company has these huge ships that carry 12,000 containers. We used to think of a ship with 8,000 containers as a really big ship, but the new ones are coming in at 12,000 to 13,000 containers. Trying to find what's in there and where it is, is like looking for a needle in a haystack and we're just not prepared for that. Now there are ways of detecting nuclear devices and we have that on bridges. We have a lot of that, but that's relating to trucking and rail, not shipping. That's still a big question.

Riley: Were you able to initiate any immediate—?

Mineta: We were. We were able to put in closed-circuit TV cameras, but that was it.

Riley: The other big question that I had from the timeline is [Hurricane] Katrina. I don't know how big an issue that was for you.

Mineta: Very big. Because I-10 [Interstate 10] across the southern part of the United States, Florida, all the way through Mississippi, Louisiana, to Texas was wiped out. The force of water is something. To see these 200-ton slabs of concrete floating on water is just amazing. Those highway plates got dislodged from the highway and they're floating in the bay. We were down there right after Katrina. I then took about seven people and designated them as Secretary's Representative, a Secretary's Rep for Transit, for Highways, for Aviation, and said, "Whatever you see that has to get done, do it. Don't call me and ask for permission. It's easier for me to ask for forgiveness than to ask for permission." The morning after Katrina we put them all on a plane and sent them down to New Orleans.

Riley: Were you doing that on your own authority or were you in consultation with Andy or the Vice President or the President?

Mineta: No. The only call I got from Andy, "Are you ready to deal with this?" I said, "Andy, I think we've got everything in place."

Riley: Was there anything in your portfolio related to preparation in advance of the storm?

Mineta: Only when the weather service said this would be hitting us at this point.

So I sent them down there the day after landfall, after it hit. Brigham McCown was Secretary's Representative for Hazardous Materials and Biplane Safety. He's calling from FEMA [Federal Emergency Management Agency] headquarters in New Orleans. He has his hand cupping the phone and he's saying, "You can't believe where we're at. We're at FEMA headquarters and there's only one person here. That's Michael Brown and he's watching the news on the TVs that are hanging from the ceiling. He just said, 'Make yourself comfortable, do whatever you have to do.'"

During the course of this whole thing the pipelines from Louisiana to Texas all come to a point called Collins, Mississippi. From there it comes to the east, to the mid-Atlantic area. Then from here it goes up to Boston or down to Atlanta. This was on Wednesday, and by next Tuesday they'd be running out of Jet A fuel in Boston. Then the pumps in Collins, Mississippi, weren't working because there was no electricity. Brigham found three very large megawatt generators. One was in Florida, another Ohio, another out of Minnesota and all coming to Mississippi.

He is a Reserve Navy Captain, so he contacted somebody in the Mississippi National Guard to pick up on these generators as they came into Mississippi to accompany them to Collins because FEMA was looking for very large generators. [*laughter*]

Perry: Just what you needed.

Mineta: I said, "Don't let anybody confiscate or commandeer these things." It was really funny because Brigham thought about getting the National Guard to escort these generators in. Michael Brown did call me. I said, "Michael, we have to get the pipelines up and pushing oil across the country. We found them, we transported them here, and they're ours." He said, "Can you let one go?" I said no.

Perry: By "ours" you meant these are DOT generators, you found them, they're yours now.

Riley: Possession being nine-tenths of the law.

Mineta: So we got the generators up and operating and oil flowing on Sunday. There was an uninterrupted supply to Boston, we made it. We were able to do things like that. We had a guy by the name of Frank Holt doing the FAA stuff. He was really tremendous.

There was another thing. I came home Thursday night around 11 o'clock and my wife said, "Al Gore called and wants you to call him back."

I called him back and asked what was up. He said, "I had routing numbers from FEMA for these planes to go into New Orleans. You know my son was nearly killed in an automobile accident, and the doctor who saved his life is now the head of St. Mary's Hospital in New Orleans, and the water is up to the second floor. I've chartered"—on his own dime—"two American Airlines planes to get these patients out of New Orleans. Some of them are going to Houston, some are going to Chicago. I have these routing numbers for the planes to come into New Orleans and pick them up."

On Thursday we had gotten another set of generators. We had New Orleans Airport operating, but we could only fly in and out during daylight hours. So he said, "All of a sudden they

canceled my routing numbers. Why did they do that?" I said, "I have *no* idea." When I called FEMA they said, "We were afraid of the publicity that Al Gore may try to get in moving these patients from St. Mary's Hospital in New Orleans." I said, "How can you make that assumption? Right now, for cripes' sakes, give him back his routing numbers." I said, "Give it to me and I'll tell him these are his routing numbers." So they said OK.

Friday night he calls again and says, "They've canceled my routing numbers." I called them up and they said, "Those are daily permits, so we didn't really cancel them, we just never issued the second set." I said, "For criminy sakes, get those routing numbers to him." The guy said, "It's too late to bring the planes in, because we're only operating during daylight hours."

Then I said to the guy, "Have you seen any publicity about the first plane coming out of New Orleans going to Houston?" He said no. I said, "Then for criminy sakes, give him the damn permit." So they did. Al Gore did that on his own dime, chartered two planes from American Airlines to get patients out of New Orleans.

Perry: This is an obvious question and may have an equally obvious answer, but it was 2005, the President had been reelected. Why was FEMA worried about Al Gore and publicity?

Mineta: Small minds. So we got them out. But we had a great team. Mary Peters had I-10. We went down there and saw—

Riley: How soon did you go down? [interruption]

You said that your team worked very well and that you were proud of the way that they performed. I want to expand on the reverse case because the overall impression of the administration's response to the storm was that it was subpar. To what do you attribute that?

Mineta: That's why they brought in General [Russel] Honoré and Admiral Loy to oversee that whole operation. I was there when the President turned around and said, "Brownie, you're doing a hell of a job." I thought General Honoré and Jim Loy were going to drop their teeth on the floor when he said that. Those guys were such gentlemen they weren't about to say anything.

I think that's where FEMA and especially Michael Brown did not respond to what was facing them. All the other departments that had some operational aspect of it did. I just know that we did, so I was very proud of our team.

Riley: The default setting for this kind of emergency management would be in FEMA's court?

Mineta: It would, the primary responsibility. But even on 9/11 you have contingency plans within the department. I had set up a crisis management center at DOT. We used to have some drills on how to do this. On 9/11, by 11 o'clock in the morning I was in the bunker at the White House, but they commenced activating the crisis management center. That was manned around the clock.

Riley: FEMA's existence is to handle exactly this kind of problem. Or is it the case that something of this dimension inevitably requires White House intervention and direction?

Mineta: It shouldn't. Everybody has their areas of responsibility. If they overlap then the President or the people in the White House have to sort of clear the air to make sure no one is stepping on each other's foot. Our team, from the time Brigham McCown called me from Director Brown's office, "You can't believe where we are, there's one person here and he's watching TV."

Riley: In your experience that would have been the person in the driver's seat.

Mineta: Absolutely. James Lee Witt, when I was chairman of the—[interruption]

The Loma Prieta earthquake was in my Congressional district. I was at a dinner and got a call from Secretary Sam Skinner and he said, "I'm going to leave at 11 o'clock on my plane. Are you free to go with me?" I was in a tuxedo but I said yes, went back to the office, changed, and met him at Hangar 6 at Reagan Airport. We flew out and landed at Moffett Naval Air Station at two in the morning and stayed right there at Moffett Field. Northridge was the other one.

Perry: That was '95.

Mineta: That was Secretary [Federico] Peña, and I happened to be in San Jose. It was Martin Luther King Day. I had given a speech at a breakfast that morning. Deni's son, who was living in southern California, calls Deni here in D.C., in Alexandria, and says, "I don't know where that earthquake was, but it was a big one." He was sleeping in his waterbed and got ejected, kicked out of his waterbed. That occurred at 5:10 in the morning. Deni called me right away saying, "Mark just called me about this earthquake in southern California."

I said, "I'm giving this breakfast speech at a Martin Luther King breakfast. I'll get hold of Secretary Peña." He was in Atlanta giving the Martin Luther King Day speech down there. I said, "I'm heading down to LA as soon as I can." He said, "I'll fly from Atlanta to LA and meet you at the Coast Guard office there at the LA airport." I said OK. Everybody's set for these kinds of emergencies that come up. They know what to do.

Sam Skinner said, "I'm leaving at 11 o'clock tonight, are you free to go with me?" I called Peña and we arranged to meet in LA. You have processes with the department.

Riley: And in the case of a hurricane you have some notice, unlike an earthquake.

Mineta: You're tracking.

Riley: With an earthquake you—

Mineta: The funny thing about the earthquake on Loma Prieta, as I said the epicenter was in my district, 55 to 60 miles south of San Francisco, but all the concentration was on the bridge that fell, the San Francisco–Oakland Bay Bridge, another highway span that dropped in Oakland, and the apartment house that collapsed and sank into the sand near the marina in San Francisco. The major damage was down in Santa Cruz, but that means an hour-and-a-half drive for those TV folks, and they're too lazy to do that when you've got apartment houses and bridges down in the Bay area.

Riley: We've reached our appointed hour. We always say we never exhaust all the possible topics of conversation but we do a pretty good job of exhausting the person.

Mineta: Just let me know if you want to get together again.

Riley: Barbara and I will put our heads together and figure out what we have left to cover. I can't imagine that it would take longer than a few hours if we can find some time when you're available.

Mineta: The big message I have is that the President was underrated, and he did delegate to us as Cabinet members the responsibility to make things work. We went through September 11, Katrina, [Hurricane] Rita—there we knew it was going to hit Galveston. Our folks were saying to the Texas Division of Emergency Management, "Are you ready for all this? Here we are." They essentially told our people, "Butt out. We know what we're doing."

Then I'm watching on television and they have these eight-lane highways, four in each direction. These four lanes have no traffic, these four lanes are full. I said, "Why don't they take one lane and keep it for that direction and take the other three to supplement the traffic?"

"I haven't heard anything about it."

I said, "Check with them, for criminy sakes." That's when they told us to butt out, they knew what they were doing. This was on national television; you could just see it. Then as people were evacuating from Galveston it got backed up because it ran into the traffic in Houston. All that traffic backed up into Galveston and it was a mess.

Riley: I remember.

Mineta: Then the Texas people said, "Houston, we need your help."

Perry: "Houston, we have a problem."

Mineta: "D.C., we need your help."

Perry: So we've come full circle. You started with congestion and we ended with congestion. How appropriate.

Riley: You've been terrific to give us so much time.

Mineta: It's been fun recounting.