GEORGE H. W. BUSH ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

TRANSCRIPT

INTERVIEW WITH JAMES P. PINKERTON

February 6, 2001
Washington, D.C.

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Milkis: …ground rules, Jim, and you may be familiar with these but I'll just go over them again briefly. Nobody is to say anything about what goes on here today. Give your identity to me, your affiliation.

McCall: James McCall, Bush Foundation.

Lee: Beatriz Lee, University of Virginia.

Riley: I'm Russell Riley, also with the Miller Center at the University of Virginia.

Milkis: Sid Milkis, Miller Center, University of Virginia.

Pinkerton: Jim Pinkerton, victim. [*laughter*]

Milkis: Okay, now we can put the blindfold and the handcuffs away. [*laughter*] Well, where shall we start?

Riley: Other than logistics, I guess we're prepared to plow right in. Usually, the way we do these things is beginning with a simple chronology, and so I guess the first question is just to think back to your earliest recollections of your exposure to George Bush.

Pinkerton: Do you want earliest as in the White House, or earliest, earliest?

Milkis: Earliest, earliest.

Riley: I would say earliest, earliest.

Milkis: You can go back to Reagan.

Pinkerton: Yes, exactly, that's just what I mean. Remember, I spent my first—I graduated from college in '79, well, I actually graduated in '80, but I left school in '79.

Milkis: Stanford.

Pinkerton: I had one paper left over to do, which I finally got around to getting them a year later. Anyway, I was out of school in '79, started volunteering in the Reagan campaign, where

it's fair to say that we all sort of thought that we would lose to John Connally in the primaries, and when it was clear that we weren't going to lose to him, we thought we'd lose to Bush. So we spent, my entire first memories of Bush, as anything other than just a—I vaguely remember, circa 1971, '72, as a thirteen-year-old kid watching the UN [United Nations] vote on Taiwan, whenever that was, and Bush sort of giving sort of frowny, whiny faces as he voted yes on Taiwan, everybody else voted for the PRC [People's Republic of China]. I sort of remember—that's really the first time I remember him, was him sort of looking unhappy as we lost the vote in the UN, whatever year that was.

I didn't have any idea that he was RNC [Republican National Committee] chairman during Watergate, none of that made any impression on me. The China thing didn't make any impression on me. Late 70s, running for President, mortal rival to George Bush, and we spent all our time sticking little pins in little George Bush dolls at the Reagan campaign headquarters in Los Angeles, circa '79-80. He was just the antichrist as far we were concerned. I remember I went to the UCLA library in spring, summer of 1980, and said, "Okay, now get everything you can on Don Rumsfeld, because he might be the vice presidential pick." So I just Xeroxed everything in sight and things like that.

Anything was on our mind except George Bush and it just—fast forward to the convention—the [Gerald] Ford thing, we all thought that was great, because we thought it would help win. Again, Bush was just sort of the worst we could think of, and then they picked Bush of course. So I showed up at the Reagan campaign in Arlington, Virginia in August of '80, and there was like ten of us Reaganites, all wearing sort of polyester suits, and then about fifty Bush people, all wearing, you know, three-button suits from Savile Row, you know, something like that. They were just culturally so different, some were just rich, nitwit preppies and the other were sort of like spooks, who—I remember there was a coup in Liberia in like September of 1980, and these guys were all sitting around and they talked about it like, if so and so and so and so and so and so, and yes, I know him. It was a cultural clash between right wing Reaganites who were car salesmen and college kids, and these Bush types who were all trust funds and CIA [Central Intelligence Agency] and blue chip pseudo-wise men and Brooks Brothers types and so on.

Then of course, the Bush team sort of seemingly took over the Reagan—Jim Baker in the White House and so on. I don't even know when I first met Bush. I really can't remember. It obviously wasn't—it really might not have been through the '84 campaign. I met George Bush, Jr., [George W. Bush] in the '84 campaign, but I don't think I met George Bush, Sr., until somewhere in '85. So, '80, Reagan White House, Reagan campaign. My boss was Lee Atwater for most of that—I mean Marty Anderson had been a Reagan '76 guy, so he was clearly death on Bush and Ford and Jim Baker and all these people, and they were conversely not too keen on him either. Lyn Nofziger was another big—I mean all these people I was growing up—was working with were all militantly anti-Bush, and anti-moderate squish, as we called him, and Atwater had been sort of cannier.

Lee Atwater had been cannier about getting along with these people, he understood Baker was a lot more important in the scheme of things than Ed Meese or Jerry Carmen or some of these other Reaganites that were sort of floating around. He had, during the '83-'84 period, had sort of come to cultivate Baker, come to cultivate this, and he could sort of see that Bush was going to

likely be the next Republican nominee somewhere along here, as opposed to Jack Kemp, who sort of had the affection of all the kind of Reaganites and so on. So the ’84 election happens, I remember I was sitting around in Lee’s office, a week or two after the election, still sort of celebrating, and Nick Brady called Atwater. I remember Roger Stone was in the office too, Roger Stone, a Reaganite type, and Atwater said, “Gee, I wonder what Brady wants.” Stone made the mordant point, “Call him back and find out.” [laughter]. The point was that Brady said, “I am speaking for Vice President Bush on his political future and would like to talk to you.”

Riley: This was?

Pinkerton: November of ’84. Late—post election November ’84. I remember—Lee and I—I was in no sense a peer of Lee’s, but we were certainly tight, and we talked a lot about this and I said—I was very historical, my whole shtick was to write historical memos, it was sort of give some gloss to what ever the hell you wanted to do.

Milkis: Did you work—if I could step back on second, did you work with Martin Anderson?

Pinkerton: I worked for him in the domestic policy office in ’81 and ’82. He was sort of my boss, not that he really knew who I was, in ’80. In ’81, ’82, he did know who I was, although he didn’t assess me that highly, but nonetheless, I was just a kid, and then when he left in April of ’82 back to the Hoover Institution, I sort of made the jump to Atwater. I was in the political affairs office ’82-’83, where again, we had a lot of dealings with the Bush OVP [Office of the Vice President] about trips and endorsements and videotapes and whatever else. I don’t think I ever met Bush in that time. I probably saw him in the Indian Treaty Room at some event or something or other in ’82 and ’83, but other than that I don’t really recall.

So Atwater’s ideological heart was clearly in the Kemp wing, but he didn’t think that highly of Kemp. He sort of felt like Kemp was already locked up with Charlie Black and Roger Stone, and here was Bush who had had a terrible ’84 campaign. One of these guys like Lichter, Robert Lichter, did some study about the press coverage in the ’84 campaign and found that Bush has literally zero percent positive press in the ’84 campaign. If you remember, it was just sort of a terrible campaign; he was always getting into pissing matches with the reporters and whatever else. He had the thing where he had the tax increase thing, remember he went to the ranch to meet Reagan in the summer of ’84 and said there might be a tax increase and then he had to say no, there wouldn’t be. I mean he just was always wrong, sort of six and seven’s with the Reagan and the Reaganites and the press and everything. I remember Lee telling me, he said, “Look, the problem that Bush has is he has—” I mean Lee always had a quasi-Bolshevik mentality about how to take a [undecipherable 109] power and—

Milkis: Quasi-Bolshevik.

Pinkerton: Quasi-Bolshevik. He was a Republican Bolshevik—

Milkis: Just declaring it for the record. [*laughter*]

Pinkerton: He said, "Bush does not have a team that is capable of taking over the country," and I said, "Yes, you are sure right." I knew these people like Admiral [Daniel] Murphy, I don't know if he floats around your circles yet, he's just some old—again, he was a distinguished—he's probably some three-star admiral or something like that, some distinguished guy in some previous existence, but just an old drunk by the time he got to the White House. Who was the press secretary? Pete Teeley was some sort of temperamental—you know, the guy was just mad all the time, they were just zeroes. They certainly had no clue about how to run a campaign. I don't know, they might have been the best darn Vice President ever and the best darn terrorism policy and whatever else, but boy, they were certainly stuck as politicos. Lee said there has to be big change in everything going on there, and Lee, not that I was there, he went, took all this to Brady, and Brady, I guess, just basically agreed. He said, "Yes, we've just gotta change everything."

So in the course of '85, I mean I'm sure you've got your personnel stuff all figured out, just virtually the entire OVP turned over, except for maybe Don Gregg or something, but everybody else did. Bush hired Craig Fuller, he hired Fred Khedouri, he hired Marlin Fitzwater, I've forgotten who else, Tom Collamore. That began the relationship between Atwater and Bush, as the Fund for America's Future opened doors at 1200 Eighteenth Street, I forgot the date, 1200 Eighteenth Street, Eighteenth and M, in probably April or May of '85.

Riley: So Atwater initially, the inference you make is that he might have been more philosophically into Jack Kemp, but—

Pinkerton: Oh sure. But he was more power attuned than anything else, so power easily trumped ideology. I think the realization, the chance to get in there with Bush, who was the Vice President, who was, history—we talked, I remember I wrote a memo, I said look, I made the point that since Richard Nixon, every Vice President has been a political player automatically. Alben Barkley was the last Vice President who was just totally a creature of the Senate, and was like older than Truman as I recall. Before [Richard] Nixon in '52, Vice Presidents didn't even have an office in the White House, they were just the 101st senator; the chain thing was some amusing sling back to some part of that at least, but nonetheless, since Nixon, [Lyndon] Johnson, [Spiro] Agnew pre-criminality, all of them were political players. All of them wound up getting the nomination or damn close, they just were all—the Vice Presidency had changed enough, that it became important to the White House and important to midterm election campaigning and so on and so on.

I said, look, Bush is likely to wind up with the nomination. The way the things are going, he's likely to lose, but he's likely to get the nomination, which puts him ahead of Kemp. So that was sort of what we—and again, it was clearly him more than me, but I was certainly there to help distill these thoughts. I wrote a memo, the first thing I ever wrote for Bush, and I actually tried to find this since, and I'm sure it's floating around at Texas A& M or something, but I wrote a memo for Atwater to give to Bush, it was on Gary Hart. It was called "Gary Hart's Long March." It was dated, funniest thing, it was dated February 4, or February 6, 1985. It said, Gary Hart didn't get the '84 nomination, but he did a good job, he impressed a lot of people, he has definitely got this new ideas thing going and he is hard charging and he is likely to be our rival in

’88. He is working a lot harder and smarter than Bush is. That was like five pages of stuff to try and fear-monger Bush into listening to Atwater more, and I thought it was a good memo.

I confess, I have no idea whether Bush read the stuff, but Atwater thought it was important enough to sort of—it’s like this, you put this together, people take you seriously, the avoirdupois school of merit, here. [*laughter*]

Milkis: The ’84 campaign aside, had your estimation, or Lee Atwater’s estimation of Bush changed at all, from when he was the antichrist to the—

Pinkerton: Up from the antichrist, yes. I mean Bush, just to jump ahead here, I came to really admire Bush as a human being, and I think he’s a wonderful guy, and knew my name, and was—good kids and so on. He never impressed me that much just as a political being, and I remember, jumping ahead here now a couple of years, Atwater saying in the middle of fall, circa—it must have been like ’87, ’86 maybe—you’ve got to remember—it’s him talking about his general situation, you’re dealing with a stubborn, stiff, not too smart guy, and okay, yes, all right, I kind of agree. I’m a Republican and I wanted him to win, and I wanted the Democrats to lose, but at no point did I ever think, gee, this is some guy who’s going to change the world. I was wrong about that, in some ways I was wrong about that, but that’s later, that’s chapter six.

Milkis: Just as a footnote, what were your thoughts about Ronald Reagan?

Pinkerton: Well, you know, it’s funny. I literally just wrote a column today, I don’t have it with me, but Newsday.com, our newspaper, on Reagan. All the way through, again, part of the occupational hazard of being a politico, in a White House or anything, is you tend to sort of get a kind of ingrained cynicism, even contempt for who you are working for. It probably happens to all staffers, “He’s an idiot, I’m so smart, he wouldn’t get anywhere without me.” That’s probably a hazard of the whole business, you know, no man is a hero to his valet, no man is a hero to his political advisors. So Marty Anderson, who co-edited this book on Reagan, his stuff like that, had always said, “Look, Reagan’s a smart guy”—I was careful enough to say that I think I might agree with Clark Clifford, that Reagan is “an amiable dunce.” I would never say that, but I would sort of nick around on those kind of questions and say, “No, no, Reagan’s really smart, he really is.” I’d say, “Okay, you know, he works for him,” and whatever. So the people around, certainly Jim Baker, certainly Dick Darman, certainly Craig Fuller, the people around Reagan were always happy to say, “Hey, Reagan’s not very smart, he needs me.”

This *Reagan in his Own Hand* book, I think does—when he is predicting the failure of communism in 1975, the week after the Vietcong take over Saigon, he is saying, “No, it’s not capitalism that will fail, it’s communism that will fail.” So my opinion of Reagan rises as time goes by. It’s like Eisenhower or Truman, sort of one those guys. He’s a dork when he leaves office and boy, you think thirty years later, hey, he was pretty good.

Milkis: That’s why I write political history, it’s a lot safer. [*laughter*]

Karaagac: I just have one little question, what did Bush think of Atwater? Since we can take the other—

Pinkerton: Hired hand. Not overly to be trusted. Remember, the cultural gap between Greenwich, Connecticut, Yale, U.S. Navy, oil business, Trilateral commission, UN, stripey pants club, and Atwater as South Carolina, Strom Thurmond, Newbury College, guitar, rhythm and blues; that's a pretty wide gap. I think Bush, to his credit, could see that people like him didn't have a lot of natural feel for the country, that's certainly a fair statement. I mean Bush wouldn't have needed Atwater's help getting elected Greenwich town selectman, but would have had trouble, as he knew, as he discovered, getting himself elected to anything larger.

So I don't think, I mean there is sort of a famous Esquire magazine article circa 1986 by David Remnick on Atwater, there is a profile of him. It was so horrible, because—it's a picture, they put Lee on the cover of Esquire magazine with his pants down. He's wearing underwear, he's wearing jogging shorts, so it wasn't obscene, it was just sort of—but to say 'pants down' you assume the worst. So there he is, on the cover of the magazine, maybe it's not the cover, but certainly there is a big picture inside, and it's full of swearing and all this stuff like that. I remember I typed up a letter to Mrs. Bush, Barbara Bush, apologizing for this horrible article, and Atwater copied it, in his own hand, and mailed to Mrs. Bush. [*laughter*]

Milkis: Does that answer your question?

Karaagac: Two more clusters of questions related to that. Atwater had run a, if I am not mistaken, a pretty tough primary campaign against Bush in '80, didn't he? South Carolina?

Pinkerton: Yes, I mean it was—the primary campaign in South Carolina was more against Connally, as I recall. So I mean certainly to get to South Carolina, I mean, Bush was Trilateralist illuminati, bilderberger. I mean sure, yes, absolutely, I think the main focus of the '80 campaign was against Connally, that was Connally's big state. Formal General [William C.] Westmoreland had endorsed, Strom Thurmond had endorsed Connally, if Connally was going to win anywhere, it was that. So Bush was sort of an afterthought in South Carolina, but in a sense, they're all satanic, other than Reagan, yes.

Karaagac: Who in the Bush family circle—was anyone in the Bush family circle pushing George Bush toward Lee Atwater?

Pinkerton: I don't think so. I think—I mean, I was not there, but Atwater had some meeting at Camp David with the Bush family, in there '85, some place like that. Junior was there, as we all called him back then and—President Bush I mean—it is, back to contempt, to do it everyday, it is sort of hard to fathom sometimes. Junior took the lead for the family and said, "Now how do we know we can trust you," this kind of stuff, and Lee said, or quoted himself to me saying "I told them, well, if you don't trust me, get me out of here, but if you do trust me, you've got to stick with me." That's a meeting worth dredging up if you already haven't. I think that Bush just looked around and said, "Who is competent? Who's got Reagan credentials and who's competent?" If you boil down those two ways, that leaves out people like Ed Rollins and Lyn Nofziger, who flunked the competency test, and people like Rich Bond who was competent, but flunked the Reagan test.

Riley: It would not have been a surprise that a call like that came from Nick Brady.

Pinkerton: I don't think I knew who Nick Brady was. He was just some fat cat, that was all I knew, some Bush—he was just some Wall Street guy to me. I always make the point to people about Brady; when he took over Dillon Read in 1965 it was the fourth largest firm on Wall Street, and when he sold it in 1989, it was fifty-fifth, or something like that. So in other words, it doesn't mean he was poor, but he just was no great genius.

Milkis: Can you tell us a little bit about what went on at the Fund for America's Future?

Pinkerton: Well, I always—I guess the statute of limitations has expired. I have always been sort of astonished—the theory of a Fund for America's Future was a multi-candidate political action committee. Fine, okay, and if you look the FEC [Federal Election Commission] law, and it means you're supposed to give the money—you raise money to help elect and reelect Republican candidates.

Milkis: What we call a leadership PAC.

Pinkerton: A leadership PAC, yes, sir. I think in 1986, we raised like ten million bucks and we gave away something like five hundred thousand to Republican candidates. This makes Jesse Jackson look like Mother Teresa in term of helping out the needy. [*laughter*] We sat there and just did nothing but sort of plot and scheme to get Bush elected in '88. They say, look now, you've got to remember the allocable rules, if you start spending money on helping Bush get elected in '88, it counts against his '88 totals and so we've got to be careful about that. So okay, fine, we'll call it something else, we'll call it Anna Banana.

We were two, three blocks away from the *Washington Post* and Tom Edsel came trooping through and we were just sitting there shamelessly doing nothing but help plot and scheme to get Bush elected, and nobody seems to notice. Obviously, if somebody could have written an article in the *Post* saying, "I am an '88 Bush campaigner," happily nobody did, but they didn't put anybody under oath, or subpoenaed anybody—we all would have cracked. I mean we're not like—I'm not going to go to jail to get Bush elected President. It was just—I'm sure the data must exist someplace. It was me, a guy named Ron Kaufman who was running it for a while. Then he didn't really pan out and then they brought in a guy named Bill Phillips, who is now at Vanderbilt, not academic, he's like an administrator at Vanderbilt, and a guy like Rich Galen, who is so full of—you should definitely talk to him about this. All of them were—sort of had the title of executive director of the Fund for America's Future, and I remember they all didn't work out for various reasons. I remember Galen who did have a good sense of humor, looked at Phillips, and I guess Kaufman wasn't there at the moment, and he said, "We're going to start a little group, we're going to call it NADED, the National Association of Deposed Executive Directors." [*laughter*]

I was the director of research and I think—I sort of did whatever needed to be—I had been the director of research in the Office of Political Affairs in the White House. I was it, I was the entire staff, I directed myself. I thought it sort of sounded like a good title, and I knew that it wouldn't threaten anybody in terms of, it's not deputy political director or assistant anything. I was just

sort of—nobody cared what I was doing, so I was sort of alone. I wrote memos about the Gary Hart thing, or about Richard Nixon's Vice Presidency or the role of the Vice President in general, or the gender gap, or Hispanics, or whatever. Again, Atwater would bum these around and give them to people and stuff. I really worked hard, it was—the building was called the Ring Building, I don't know what it is called now, it's at 1200 Eighteenth. It was the only building I could remember, circa 1985-86, that had elevator operators, which was fine, except on weekends and holidays and stuff it got it a little tough. Even on the weekends they had a guy sitting there, but on holidays—

I remember January 1, '86, I was desperate to get in to write some memo on something or other, and there was nobody there, I guess, if any day you're going to take off, right. So I remember I had to call Honeywell security and make them send somebody down to let me up. It's only three flights up, and I could have taken the stairs, but the doors were all locked and we didn't have a key, so I get them there so I could get back to typing away. It was definitely a case where you worked hard just because there was so much to do. There was just so many—there's fifty states and three thousand counties, and Bush knew a lot of people and I spent a lot of time writing letters to people and so on.

Part of the problem that you have, and I'm sure this is what hurt [Albert, Jr.] Gore too, was if you are in town, you just get more than your share of lackeys and wannabes and so on like that and they all have to be dealt with in some way. And Bush, because, this is the upside of Bush, he was a nice guy and had a lot of friends, they all sort of—oh, I knew George from somewhere, Yale or Andover or Navy or CIA. They're everywhere, and then I, again, I grew up in Chicago, so I never quite got the full WASP-Yankee thing, and I remember this fellow came in and said, "I want to help George." Ok great, I mean I—he was very nice, he didn't say it impolitely, he said very politely, "I want to help George." I remember his name was Norbonne Berkley, he says, "But you can call me Bunny." [*laughter*] I remember thinking to myself, you were probably really good in the OSS [Office of Strategic Services].

Milkis: As you were scheming and having conversations in the Fund for America's Future, what did you see as the biggest challenge?

Pinkerton: Part of it was—I remember one of the memos I wrote was, the four layer cake, '85, '86, '87, '88—and '85 was entirely, get Bush back off his ass after the '84 campaign. Get a team together that is competent, begin to rebuild your relationship with the press. I mean this is the kind of stuff that seems brilliant when you describe it and then it never really works out, but that's okay, because you buy your way in credibility-wise with the memo. Then you simply get in there and even if what you are then saying is completely a reverse of the first thing, they say fine, I'm happy with you. Certainly, the political challenge to Bush was to sort of reconnect with the conservative base, not have them hating him. That was probably number— number one, restore confidence; number two, reconnect with the Republican base; three, deal with your main rival, who at first seemed to be Jack Kemp, and then seemed to be Dole. I guess that was sort of—in that kind of order is what I spent my time worrying about. The rebuild the White House—the OVP office was—I didn't have anything to do with that, other than make fun of them all the time, but that helped and I was happy to do it.

Riley: Was there much of an interrelationship between, I mean on an informal basis between this operation and—

Pinkerton: Oh, yes, tons, tons. They were changing people all the time. Bush hired a guy named David Bates, David Q. Bates, who was a great guy, and that helped a lot, and after a while, I remember Atwater just—Fuller just sits there with the little temple of bureaucrats shoving papers all the time. Again, I don't know if you guys have worked in government or not, but now of course, if you talk to anybody in this White House, they remind you that for all we know, they are taping the fucking phone calls and all emails are logged. Just go ahead, say whatever you want, but just remember that everything you're saying is going to wind up in some special prosecutors hands in a year or two.

How Fuller could sit there in whatever year it was, '86 or something like that, and Amiram Nir, remember him, the Israeli arms control—Iranian arms exporter type, and Fuller would just take careful notes about, yes, here we are, here is our plan to send Hawk missiles to the Iranians and the Ayatollah. It was just—I just couldn't imagine why a guy would sit there and want to write this stuff down and obviously I wouldn't be talking this way if I had any aspirations at all to work back in the government, I don't care. I've swallowed so many poison pill on this, but aspiring to be chief of staff of the White House or something like that, and sitting there writing all these detailed notes on stuff is just nuts. So Atwater never had a terribly high opinion of Fuller. Bates had no aspirations to be chief of staff, he was just sort of a functionary who would just simply get stuff done. I dealt with him a lot. Somewhere in there a guy named Phil Brady got hired, and I have sort of forgotten when that was, but he was another sort of deputy to Fuller type and he was pretty good. I became pretty good friends with Fred Khedouri, if you run across him. He's at Bear Stearns now, in New York. Anyway, he is a very able smart, guy, and I actually learned a lot from him. He had worked for [David] Stockman in the Congress, and then at OMB [Office of Management and Budget], and became the domestic policy advisor. A guy named Lehmann Li, I don't know where he is, Citibank or something. So I had a fair number of those kind of lateral contacts there, and the speechwriters, who were the speechwriters, I can't remember, but anyway.

Riley: But you were coordinating, then, the development of the campaign with the people that were working for the Vice President, in terms of his travel schedules, or—

Pinkerton: I didn't have a lot to do with the travel, but I had a lot to do with the speeches and an example was the—again we're jumping ahead a little bit, was the no tax increase pledge. Again, I could see, from my own Reagan days, the tax, and I mentioned before about Bush going up to the—it was kind of an important moment, and Bush went to see Reagan at Santa Barbara, and Bush said, well, there might be a tax increase. He just sort of fumbled around on that and Trent Lott and Kemp and everybody went nuts and they had to take it all back, and things like that. Bush had always been seen as squishy on taxes all the way through and I remember saying to Lee, look, we can't have Bush, Bush has got to take the anti-tax pledge.

Grover Norquist who is a Republican activist here in town, had, in the mid-80s, developed this thing called the Reagan, not the Reagan—the no tax increase pledge. You can go on their website, it says it right there, it's like thirty words, "I will not raise taxes," said a couple different

ways. I said, "How can we get through the New Hampshire primary, how can we get through the primaries without taking the no tax pledge?" Fuller and these guys all had reasons why they couldn't do it and whatever, whatever, and I said look, that's nice, if Fuller wants to end his life working for a Vice President, then fair enough. So they started coming up with reasons why they couldn't do it, well, Bush is Vice President and Vice Presidents don't take pledges. They just—they're special, just put their name on the list in-between Dan Burton and Henry Hyde and so on.

So Grover is a pretty good friend of mine, so I said, "If Bush writes you a letter, using exact identical, comma for comma, word for word language of the tax pledge, will it count as if he signed the pledge card?" And Grover said, "Sure." So finally we got Bush to write a letter to Bob Dornan, then Congressman, circa April '86 saying, "Dear Bob," and then he just used, as you know, I am a fervent opponent of the tax increase, and used line for line, the entire thing. It was just a paragraph. Bush signed that, we mailed out probably fifty million copies of that, conservatively, to anybody we could think of who would help on the Republican activist thing. It just became part of, it became the core, really, of the New Hampshire campaign.

People can go back and look at the New Hampshire ads, that you know, Bob Dole, raise your taxes, that kind of stuff, it just became critical and central to our campaign. So that was probably the most useful—albeit completely fraudulent on the American people, given where Bush headed in 1990. But it was a great idea, and I personally, intellectually, and ideologically still believe that, and I certainly think that Bush wouldn't have gotten nominated. He certainly would never have gotten past—he wouldn't have eliminated Kemp so quickly and he wouldn't have had a wedge issue against Dole, if he hadn't had it on the side.

Milkis: When you were writing these memos—I know you are interested in history—did you give some thought to the special challenges of an incumbent Vice President?

Pinkerton: Oh, yes, we talked about the [Martin] Van Buren curse all the time. I mean I deconstructed that carefully. I argued it two ways; one was, hey, you're in a tough spot here. A lot of what you have done in your life is wrong for what has to happen now, just in terms of you just can't really skate through to being President with all your Nick Brady type friends, that was argument number one.

Milkis: Did you put this in memos? This kind of stuff? Or did you—

Pinkerton: Yes, there must be archives. I would be kind of crushed if I found out that every time Bush got one of these he sort of—[*laughter*] I'm sure Judge [Lawrence] Walsh has a copy. Call Jeffrey Toobin. The other argument that I make is that, on the other hand, the Van Buren curse is sort of a loser because there have only been—as of looking prospectively toward '88, there really had only been four tests. It's true that nobody had been elected, but the—Nixon in '60, [Hubert] Humphrey in '68 and the only other one, as I recall, was John C. Breckinridge, or something. He was Vice President in 1860 or something, and ran and lost. In other words, there really hadn't been a lot of tests, and my whole point was that because the Vice Presidency had only really emerged as a phenomenon, as a political player—if you go back to like [Woodrow] Wilson and people, they would have a Vice President for the first term and then get rid of them for the second term, I mean—Lincoln. It just wasn't a job—it was just a patronage job as opposed to

some sort of serious launching pad for anything. So I said, okay look, having made the argument, you've got to change everything, now I made the argument, look, it's not so bad because really only three people have tried, and oh for three isn't so bad. In fact one for four, or I guess now with Gore one for five, or one for four and a half, depending on how you want to—[*laughter*] So yes, I was very historically minded. That gave me kind of a comparative advantage because if there is one thing political hacks in this town are, is ahistorical and yet, if you can sort of get the jacks to—over that first hurdle of, well yes, there might be a certain truth in this, then you're home free.

Milkis: To put a finer point on this, did you discuss how Bush was to position himself versus President Reagan, I mean first was he to be an heir apparent, present himself, in other words, he would distinguish himself somehow?

Pinkerton: Yes. Certainly the Gary Trudeau—I mean Bush is touchy about this kind of stuff, so he had to be careful of the manhood and the blind trust kind of thing and so on, but we definitely talked a lot about defining events. I remember Atwater said one time, what you really need to do is find a way to go up to the UN and kick Muammar Gaddafi in the balls. In that spirit, I remember proposing that Bush put himself in charge of the Chernobyl Commission. We created a commission on the Chernobyl accident in like April of '86, which probably wasn't a very good idea. The other one I had was the Challenger Commission—that was a great idea. This is a wonderful chance to sort of be part of the healing process or whatever, all the o-ring stuff and it would have been huge. They put William P. Rogers—what was he running for?—instead as chairman of that commission.

So we spent a lot of time looking for things that would distinguish him. I'm not really sure what we came up with, but at least we—again we kept them engaged. Because the problem that a Vice President is the natural sort of tractor beaming of the White House. In a second-term White House, let's face it, the White House people, the presidential people in the second term, they're all lame ducks, they're all doomed. They have nothing better to do than sit around and dream up their next job or go work on their legacy or something like that. They don't have the political issue ahead of them, so all their orientation is to sort of make deals and whatever else; it's the vice presidential people who have to be thinking about the next campaign, not the greater glory of the current President. Trust me, it's just terribly hard to do that. It is terribly hard to be sitting there in the OVP, sort of a clear number two, second-class citizen, and to stay focused on the next election, as opposed to when somebody in the West Wing says, "Hey let's go over and do some fun thing on education or health care or something like that." It just is terribly hard to keep them focused on the prime objective of winning an election. That's why we were valuable, or at least—certainly the role we had was, all we cared about was getting Bush elected.

Milkis: Should we go to the '88 campaign? Does anybody want to ask a question before we get there?

Karaagac: I just want to ask one question about the primary, since it falls into the cultural divide. What did Atwater think of Kemp, but more importantly Dole, and what did Bush think of the two, because they did come from different worlds.

Pinkerton: Atwater liked Kemp, concluded, certainly as the campaign went along, that Kemp was just sort of flawed, and wasn't really going to get anywhere.

Milkis: How so?

Pinkerton: Just a bad candidate.

Milkis: Just a perceived wisdom, [undecipherable 537].

Pinkerton: I remember Atwater asked Roger, I was sitting there, Atwater and Roger Stone and Charlie Black were very, very good friends, and Atwater said, "What about all this, so Roger tell us, is Kemp gay?" Stone said, "I don't think so, I think he's screwed a lot of secretaries and stewardesses in his time, he's probably not gay." Not the most ringing assurance for a candidate.

Milkis: I think this wouldn't [undecipherable 548].

Pinkerton: As for Dole, Atwater would have—Atwater had no problem with him. I was much more anti-Dole, on the tax stuff, I was much more in the [Newt] Gingrich wing of things, tax collector for the welfare state. Atwater had no real personal animosity towards Dole. Bush probably thought that Kemp was just some lightweight—bearing in mind, Kemp probably wouldn't score too terribly high on an IQ test, but Kemp was brilliant in terms of associating himself with every sort of significant idea the Republican party had for fifteen years, tax cuts, gold standard, Christians in Eastern Europe. You name it, Kemp was all over it. Kemp had a smart team around him. Kemp was much more like George Junior, in terms of nobody ever accused him of being a brain surgeon, but he understood the power of ideas, understood that ideas are a tool that help persuade activists and voters and intellectuals and everyone else to like you. Bush Senior was sort of dismissive. He said, "It is what's in my heart that matters, and if you know me, you'll like me," and things like that. That's a great argument if you're Henry V, but it's not such a great argument if you're trying to get demotic people to vote for you.

So Bush probably would never—I don't think I ever heard him talk directly about Kemp. I think with Dole, he just sort of thought Dole was a rival, and didn't really have a personal—I mean he didn't have the kind of ideological distaste for Dole that I had, and stipulating that Dole and Bush Senior did more for their country when they were twenty-two then I have in my entire life, I mean full stop. But then having said that, it didn't mean I had to like him when he was sixty-five, you know. You oil import fee increaser, you. Bush probably had enough of that World War II—so to answer your question—Bush probably had enough of that World War II thing in him to think Dole was okay, but just understood he had to win. Bush was a very competitive guy and didn't want to lose.

Riley: I guess that's one other area—

Pinkerton: Let me get some more coffee.

[BREAK]

Milkis: Shall we go to the, unless there is something else you want to tell us about the pre-'88 campaign days.

Pinkerton: No, that's all I can think of.

Milkis: So, if we could just get to where you joined the—tell us about how you joined the campaign—

Pinkerton: Well, the campaign entirely morphed. It was just, literally we just woke up one day and we were now—we moved, we moved from 1200 Eighteenth street to 733 Fifteenth street, and that was probably February of '87, it just became George Bush for President, GBFP, I guess it was. It was the same gang of idiots, me, Atwater, Ed Rogers, went from the White House to us, Edie Holiday, these people you've probably run across, Rich Bond. The one thing I should say back on this, is that the thing that '86 was the Michigan delegate selection thing, that was again—and how we got away with it, mostly because nobody asked. It was just a total case of the purloined letters sitting right there in front of us, in front of everybody. The '86, campaign, there we are, spending, I'm sure the numbers are out there somewhere, millions in Michigan on that stupid Pat Robertson delegate thing. Occasionally—oh yes, don't forget to put the sign in saying, help the Republican Party, as opposed to Bush for President. I was just so awful. So that was '86, and then '87, mercifully they have done away with that process since, but so there we are in '87, I guess Iran-Contra had happened, I guess that was, what like November 4 of '86 or something like that, right?

Milkis: Right, right after the election.

Pinkerton: Yes, that was a tough time, because that was when the beltway decided that Reagan was senile and there was like three or four months there of, again you all look like you remember this kind of stuff, but in terms of—back then it really mattered who the President was. It really was sort of he was a mystical figure and does Reagan really know what is going on, and is Don Regan clipping the newspaper for him in advance so he doesn't see any articles and stuff like that. It was just really was fear about some things sort of coming out. Now, I sort of—[Bill] Clinton, I mean you know, who cares, you know. It's just not really like, the President's not—it's becoming sort of a nineteenth century Presidency, I mean this is standard wisdom, but I kind of agree with it.

Anyway, it was a big traumatic, wonderment time, as we said, gee, is Reagan going to resign or kill himself or be impeached or whatever, and so that was, I guess that was the only thing, and it was unclear what Bush had to do with that and so on. I didn't know. I think I told you this little tale about the FBI [Federal Bureau of Investigation] investigators, that was my entire brush with that. I came to know a fellow named John Schmitz, who you must have interviewed, John P. Schmitz?

Milkis: No we haven't.

Pinkerton: He was Boyden Gray's deputy in the second—he's definitely a guy to talk to, and he was thick, thick, thick in the Iran-Contra stuff. Not, I emphasize, that he was pushing AK-47's

out the back of an airplane, but in terms of the legal stuff. I mean I think he probably spent—he's at Mayer, Brown and Platt now here in town—and I think he probably spent most of his four years in OVP from '85 to '89 working on Iran-Contra stuff. I would say, again, you walk down the street and get hit by lightning and you say, wow, that's bad luck, or you get run over by a bus, and you say wow, that's really just unlucky, and for every one of those, you say well, that's a pretty shitty deal. You get something else, like Don Gregg, who skates away through this entire Iran-Contra thing without getting a nick on him, and you say how did that happen, and it's just sort of like George Washington getting three horses shot out from under him and bullet holes through his armpit and things. I remember Schmitz showing me this memo that said, from Max Gomez or one of these guys, saying, on the agenda with the Vice President today, "Aid to the Contras." Don Gregg, who was a spook and nearly can lie just by looking at you, said, "No, that was a typo, the secretary mistyped it, it was actually supposed to be aid to the choppers." This is true, I'm not making this up, and it was that choppers were just sending repair parts to help some of these helicopters. The Senate bought this, and Don Gregg didn't get himself indicted or anything. Then he got confirmed as Ambassador to South Korea, by a Democratic Senate. I just was—wonders never cease.

Schmitz is definitely an interesting guy on this kind of stuff. So I had no real role in helping on that stuff, I just was there, sort of over lunch kind of thing to talk about.

Riley: What was the lunch chatter? I mean obviously somebody like Atwater's got to—

Milkis: Got to [undecipherable 59], got to see this as a problem.

Pinkerton: Yes, we just didn't know what to make of it. Again we were still sort of—and I was young, I was like 28 or something like that, you know, I didn't have a perspective on this. Bob Teeter always said, you know, he'd begin things on this scandal, "Remember you're talking to the guy who got through Watergate without ever getting called by the Ervin committee." In other words, so Teeter, who I think is a wonderful guy, but just understood trouble and don't go—I want to be in this meeting where you're going to talk about breaking the law, just invite yourself out as opposed to invite yourself in. So we just really didn't—I mean all the way through '86, '87, '88, we certainly were always hearing rumors, somebody would call you up the Washington way and say, "I know for a stone-cold fact that Bush will be indicted next week by Judge Walsh." The first three or four times you hear it it's like crying wolf, you know, oh shit, I better pack my bags, call my mother and say I'm coming home. After a while you get kind of blasé about it, you become your normal beltway man cool about this. But the first few times it was kind of rattling to be sure.

I guess it really didn't have any effect on us other than we sort of knew something was wrong and we always were sort of—there was a land mine or two that we could just step on—

Milkis: There wasn't much you could do about it.

Pinkerton: There wasn't much we could do about it and—yes.

Milkis: So you stayed focused, pretty focused on the—preparing—

Pinkerton: Yes, other than the usual pathological fear of your own job. We stayed totally focused, cool and focused.

Riley: The transition from the political action committee to the campaign itself, was there a large increase in staff—

Pinkerton: A big increase in staff, I can't remember what it was, but yes, certainly it was. As I tried to get across, the psychic transition was zero, the physical transition was some and the ramping up of activity was fairly substantial, I guess. I remember the kind of things we worried about was, Bush, because we had this letter now, the Dornan letter. Bush gave a speech to the Middlesex Club in Boston, I don't even know what that is, I assume it's yankees. Anyway, April 15, '87, where he just gave a total ringing denunciation of tax increases, and somewhere along here John Sununu started to matter to us in terms of being the New Hampshire governor and chairman of the Bush campaign and things like that. I had some contacts with people like Andy Card and so on who were working in New Hampshire or thereabouts, so the notion that we were the anti-tax candidate and we were just going to beat that to death started to become a major preoccupation. By then I would be reading all the speeches. Now who the hell was the speechwriter? I'm trying to remember his name, I can look at him and see him.

????: [inaudible]

Pinkerton: No, for the White House, OVP. He works at Russell Read now, it's a consulting firm, Russell Read, it was fundraising consulting and things like that. I can't remember his name, but I dealt with him everyday and he was one of those—my job was to help kind of shape him into, turned out he was trying to shape me, but in terms of the anti-tax mantra, you know, we don't care about—our job is not to plug whatever great initiatives some Cabinet Secretary nobody has ever heard of—I mean that's the danger, you sit in the OVP all day and they say, don't you want to come to an important meeting with cool White House people where you can talk about our agriculture policy? No, I only want to talk about New Hampshire or Iowa, but you just don't want to get sucked in to this general crapola of whatever the White House overall is doing.

Milkis: Bush was very cooperative in taking that posture? Avoiding—

Pinkerton: Yes, I guess so. I'm sorry I wasn't—I didn't have a lot of contact—here's an indicative story though. For a while there, again in '86, I was sort of—I ultimately became sort of the opposition research guy for the '88 campaign, but in the '86 period, there was sort of the director of research portfolio floating around, and they were trying to get the Vice President briefed on issues. Now Bush knew his stuff on foreign policy, and again, I had nothing to do with anything to do with foreign policy other than the peripheral on like Iran-Contra—but nothing to do with anything and no successes, but they were helping him on issues. He was Vice President so anybody would be happy to talk to him and so on, so I would sit there and we would bring in some guy from HCFA [Health Care Financing Administration] or something like that, and Bush didn't care about this kind of stuff and again the debates, if anybody had asked him,

"Mr. Vice President, what's the difference between Medicare part A and Medicare part B?" I mean he wouldn't have known.

We had a session on drugs one time, and so the meeting was in the OVP—in the EOB [Executive Office Building], as opposed to the West Wing. Two sort of nice blue-haired ladies from Texas and Alan Keyes, who was then the UN Ambassador, not the UN Ambassador, but the UN Ambassador for international organizations—assistant secretary of state for international organizations. And so, again, this is the part of Bush—he's a very nice guy and pleasant and so on, but he had a natural affinity for blue-haired ladies from Texas. So these two ladies are sitting there and they are talking about their little drug programs, you know, their daughters had overdoses—and I'm not minimizing this but—so they were sort of running noblesse oblige kind of drug programs or something in Houston or Dallas or wherever, and so Bush was just talking about this, and of course they knew everybody and what about your daughter and Hailey, and Sarah and whatever, and blah, blah, blah. So the conversation drifts along, and Keyes is sitting over there and nobody is asking him anything, and I'm just there to take notes. I'm just there listening, and Keyes is like that, and so Bush is going on and on, and an hour with the Vice President is fifty minutes, on the top of the hour to fifty—to ten till the next time around, so at like ten till—this guy Tim McBride, you've probably run across him, he was a personal aide, always sort of stands there, and he just opens the door and stands there to let you know that it's time to roll on. Bush is sort of chewing on his glasses, and looks up and being polite, Bush says, "Well, Alan, is there anything you'd like to add?" and Keyes—

Milkis: The deluge followed?

Pinkerton: Yes, he took off like a rocket, and honest to god didn't take a breath for forty minutes. I'm dead serious, like half an hour at least, just nonstop, and it's all good stuff. Keyes, there's nobody more fun to listen to, as long as you don't have to vote for him, there's nobody more fun to listen to. He just did all this stuff and whatever, and nobody moved. So Tim, the deal was Tim would stand for a minute or two, and when it was clear nothing was going to happen, he'd go out, smoke a cigarette and then come back ten minutes later, ten, ten, ten. Like the third or fourth time, Bush says "Ok look, Tim. I've got to go." So, anyway, '88 campaign, that was proto-'88; that was like '86.

Milkis: How did you come to this position as director of opposition research?

Pinkerton: I was director of research, I had the exact same title. It just became clear that there was more than anybody could do, and I didn't really know anything about domestic policy anyway, so they probably, you could look it up, they probably brought in Debbie Steelman as issues advisor for sort of domestic issues, I really can't remember, somewhere in '88. Remember they always had Fred Khedouri and then he left, and they replaced him with this guy Charlie Greenleaf, did you run across him? Anyway, not surprised. Those guys came in to sort of do this kind of stuff so I was pretty much focused on Kemp and Dole after that. I don't even remember anyone even telling me formally, it just sort worked out that way.

Milkis: Can you tell us a little bit about the kind of things you discovered and used and how it was used?

Pinkerton: I guess by the summer of ’87 it was clear that Dole was our problem, and so we just, I had—do you care about these names? Do you care about these people? Okay I mean I, that is—I sort of had a little core group working for me; Austen Furse, who was sort of a Bush cultural peer type from Houston or someplace; a guy named John S. Gardner, who now works back in the White House, in the staff secretaries office—I just talked to him yesterday—a guy named Lloyd Green who came later, who were sort of my three—a guy named Brett Wacker, there were four of them, I guess total. We just sort of said, look, let’s just build notebooks on [Paul] Laxalt, Kemp and [Pierre] du Pont and [Alexander] Haig, Rumsfeld I can’t remember if there were many more; but let’s really work on Dole, and so let’s make the case that Dole is a tax collector for the welfare state, that’s pretty devastating in public circles. I don’t know where all the stuff—

I didn’t really necessarily know the names of all those people, but I probably had one hundred people working for me downstairs. It was a big building, it was a Fifteenth Street building, it was big and we had a whole sort of half a wing kind of to ourselves. Brett Wacker really was sort of the foreman of the place and kept all the volunteers happy and we had—I'm sure Gore had the same thing—he had no shortage of people willing to volunteer full-time for a presidential campaign. They may not be helping, but they’re not—and we were doing sort of things inside, like this woman named Emily Meade, who actually would be interesting to talk to because she was sort of a Bush—in her seventies and sort of a Bush-type.

I said, “Let’s make a list of every Bush promise,” and this is all paper, this is pre-computer and stuff, or essentially pre-computer, somewhere in there. We had all this stuff on the oil import fee, Dole was sort of floating around with Louisiana and Texas on this kind of stuff, and we had whole chronologies of Dole’s tax increases and TEFRA [Tax Equity and Fiscal Responsibility Act] and all these other attempts and so on like that. The debates—I guess a big issue in this time was the debates. Bill Buckley, back when National Review was still sort of a dynamic, vital magazine, wanted to set up a debate with all the Republican candidates, in about April of ’87 and I'm sure—he and Bush are about the same age, and went to Yale together. I don’t necessarily know they were pals, and certainly they weren’t ideologically sort of in the same realm, but they certainly must have bumped into each other a hundred times, a thousand times over the years. So Buckley wrote Bush a letter in April of ’87, “I want you to be part of this debate,” and Bush said no.

The theory was that we didn’t want to debate. So this is again, this is where, even though you might conclude Atwater and I didn’t have the world’s highest opinion of Bush, in a funny way, we had a higher opinion if Bush than Nick Brady did, and a higher opinion of Bush than Bush had of himself. Because we said, look, if you just get up there and say you’re against tax increases, you’re going to be fine in the debate. This is not that hard, if you know your material. It’s like teaching, right, if you sort of know your stuff, you can’t really do that badly, right? I’m dead serious.

Milkis: That’s my theory.

Pinkerton: I used to teach part-time at GW [George Washington University] and you know your stuff, and they’re going to ask questions, “Sorry, we had no idea what you just said.” Well, say it

again, that'll work. Bush had this idea, "Look, I'm the Vice President and who are these pissants," and so on and that wasn't really Bush, that was really more like Brady and Fuller and these guys. So they said, "Well, we can't let Bush debate, it will be bad for him." I said, "Well okay. It's one thing to turn down Buckley the first time, okay fine." Buckley, I'm sure someone filed it someplace, wrote two or three letters to Bush saying how about June, how about August, or whatever and we kept saying no. It was so sort of like catch me if you can, we don't want to debate, and so on.

I remember we had all these reasons why—we couldn't debate until we announced, that was it. So Bush announced on October 12 of '87, and so Buckley wrote another letter, and I remember telling Atwater—Brady was there for some reason—and Atwater and whoever else, and I remember saying, look, now we're mousetrapped. The term was, we said we wouldn't debate until we'd announced, and now we've announced, and now they write and invite us again. So we're sitting here getting hammered in the Washington Times every day about this, Bush is a chicken and so on. So the entire question now is this, how much are we going to bleed before we say yes? Because we will say yes. That sort of helped carry the day, I think, and so Bush debated on October 28th in Atlanta. I actually went down there for that. Where was the debate? I was in Atlanta, watching one of those knob-turner, little focus things. I really can't remember where the debate was.

Milkis: Was it a focus group?

Pinkerton: I was a focus group-er as it went, knob-turner people. I remember I learned something in that debate, which is, word choices matter. So if you're in a debate, you want someone to keep happy up words and I am going to help make America great again. This is what Reagan was so good at, make America great, never saying negative words. Haig was there saying, "I've seen war, I've seen men blown up in pieces and put in body bags," and that knob just went down below zero. That's where I really learned those knob-turning things. You academics are too refined for this kind of stuff, but those things really do work. People really do turn the knob, as you might expect them too, if they sort of heard the word body bag and blood and guts and viscera and whatever else.

So that was—and there are probably five or six of those debates in '87-'88.

Milkis: Did you help prepare Bush for—

Pinkerton: I prepared briefing books, all that stuff. I think I probably went to quite a few of them physically.

Milkis: But did you help prepare the—

Pinkerton: Oh, yes, yes. We did all that stuff. They brought in a guy named Craig King, who's an [undecipherable] in Austin, to help on that. He was sort of a lawyer type, didn't really have any substantive knowledge, but was sort of organized. He was in charge of margins and things like that. We were helping generate all the substance for this, sort of pro and con.

Milkis: You were reporting mostly to Atwater?

Pinkerton: Yes. I guess. Yes. I'm certain nobody else. That's right. But I spent—probably because Lee, if I can say so, trusted me, most of my time was dealing with OVP stuff; you know Lehmann Li and Charlie Greenleaf on—and the speechwriter's name escapes me. Fred Khedouri, most of my time was sort of them, and then my own internal staff of Wacker and all those guys.

Milkis: Could you tell us something about the primary process, about what happened. The events in Iowa and then going to New Hampshire, and were you involved in—you had to recover from Iowa and—

Pinkerton: I was there quite a few times in '87, I actually went with—it must have been like June of '87. I went with George Bush, Jr., to Iowa. They cooked up nineteen stops for him in like two days. I was about to say cities but it wasn't really cities, it was just nineteen stops; it was Maquoketa, Manchester, Fort Dodge, and we had some little prop plane. I said Iowa, prop planes, let me think about this, you know, the word Buddy Holly mean anything to you? I remember saying to George, I said, "Let's just call this the Buddy Holly special, we'll just get the hex on the table now, and we can't be killed." Actually I found out there is a word for that, apotropaic, it means you put it off first by mentioning it. So we went out there for all that. George is pretty good; he would just go out and talk about his dad and all these old ladies would clap and so on, and I was just there to sort of help out. So I did a lot of that kind of stuff.

Let's see, Iowa caucus. I was there in Des Moines, I guess, when we came in third, and that was definitely, as somebody said tension city for the next—was it ten days or something? Then I remember I just went straight to New Hampshire and it was there—

Milkis: Did you get on that plane with that—

Pinkerton: Pardon?

Milkis: Did you get on that plane and went right to New Hampshire?

Pinkerton: I think I went back to Washington first, but I was definitely in New Hampshire the last week or so, sitting at that Claremont Hotel, in, where ever it was. It was a little crenulated castle things at the top and that was just entirely, that was—by then I really didn't have that much to do with it. We had done the ads, I spent a lot of time with Roger Ailes. That was where he and I kind of bonded. Again, I really can't remember when he started showing up there full-time, but all the way through, all those ads. The ad that really did in Dole, I believe, was that one, the straddle ad. It was the oil price increase, the oil import fee, raising prices on the Northeast, the tax increase and the INF [Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty] missile thing as I recall. Those are the three things, and as you know, we put together one of these, for a 30-second ad, in terms of just documentation, documentation, every word, every everything, just up ways, down ways. Ailes and I are gonna make no pretense of having created anything, but I knew how to do this part for him.

I always remember, it must have been one of these debates, like we were staying in Holiday Inn, we would—to beat the spending limits, you'd stay in Vermont and then drive over to New Hampshire so they wouldn't count it, the FEC stuff is so porous. It must have been like December of '87, we were at White River—we had some meeting the next morning. So I flew in that day, and I had some meeting that night then the next morning, so like midnight, you know, you're a staffer, you're always paranoid about this kind of stuff. Can I find the room where it's going to be? It's the Ticonderoga room or something like that, it's—Murphy's law carries in and you think, oh shit, I won't find it. So I remember at midnight I'm sort of walking around trying to make sure I know where to be at 7:00 AM the next morning, and there is this little coffee shop there and there's Ailes, sitting there by himself. I don't know if you've ever seen him, he is—

Karaagac: He spends a lot of time in coffee shops.

Pinkerton: Lot of time in coffee shops.

Milkis: And donut shops.

Pinkerton: And donut shops. So he is sitting there, and I was a little shy, so he said, "Yes, come here, come over here." So he's sitting there; he's got a milkshake, a cheeseburger, french fries, and I sort of looked down at his food, and he looks at me—sort of figures it out and says, "You know, the thing about me is, I could eat all this, and it doesn't show." And I said, "You're right."

So that was the sort of—again, the heroics of that campaign were, the New Hampshire campaign that is, were Bush running around hard campaigning, Sununu personally muscling all these ads on the radios and the TV stations in New Hampshire and me kind of sitting there kind of cheering him on.

Milkis: Do you remember what the reaction was among Atwater and the rest of the staff after he lost Iowa?

Pinkerton: Oh, yes. Just total, total—Atwater—Rich Bond had won, or has gotten credit for winning Iowa for—it might have been this guy George Woodcraft, did you run across him? He was the Iowa chairman in '80 and '88, he sort of, for some reason, didn't seem to be interested in coming to Washington after that. He was in Cherokee, Iowa. Bond had gotten a lot of credit, and deservedly so, for Iowa, and so once—

Karaagac: In 1980?

Pinkerton: '80, right. Then I guess there was a straw poll in Iowa, in like August or September. The Ames Straw Poll, the big one, that Bush had come in third in that, and I said, holy moley this is—it was Dole, Robertson and Bush. I mean that was pretty clear where we were headed, and so Bond then just went out there full-time for the next four months and just parked himself there. I remember I was, some Sunday, maybe two Sundays before Iowa, it would have been like early January of '88, Ed Rogers and I were over sitting at Lee's House, just watching, just talking about the news and reading the papers and stuff. Bond called and said, and I remember Atwater saying, "So you really think we're going to lose?" That was like two weeks before, so we kind of

were full panic whatever mode. If Bush had lost New Hampshire, I'm sure he would have lost the nomination.

Milkis: Do you remember anything about the regrouping process in New Hampshire? Did Atwater rally the troops? Did Sununu rally the troops?

Pinkerton: Sununu probably did more than anybody. We just pounded away, you know. Dole will raise your taxes, Dole will raise you taxes, and we won, and that was certainly good news.

Riley: I can't recall, did he sign the pledge?

Pinkerton: There was a debate. Again, this is political history here. One of those debates, St. Anselm College in Goshtown, New Hampshire, I remember, because we had the pledge. I mean we were white with the Republican party on this issue.

Milkis: I think it's in Manchester, New Hampshire, but I'm probably wrong, St. Anselm. I interviewed there one time, in one of my many job interviews. Anyway, it's not important.

Pinkerton: It's not important, right. It's St. Anselm College, it's in New Hampshire and there's a debate. The problem is, I understood even then, I said, "Look, we've got Bush in this no tax increase thing, and this is where he has to be to get through the Republican primary." I was under some illusions, not complete illusions, that Bush really believed it. My theory was, as a young ideologue, was if we get Bush to say it so many—it's like Lord Jim, if you hear yourself saying it enough times, if you think you're a hero, you're a hero. If you—you know, Catholics, fake it till you make it, in other words, if you just simply hear yourself saying no tax increase, no tax increase, maybe it will stick.

The problem is Bush didn't really, because he in his heart of hearts didn't really believe it, he didn't really have the offensive capacity on it. So we were sitting there in this debate, I mean I wasn't, but they were, and Pete DuPont says, "Here's a copy of the tax pledge," and Dole, it was like DuPont, Bush, Dole, and DuPont sort of reached across and said, "Bob, why don't you sign this." Yes! It was so great for us, I mean we knew DuPont wasn't going anywhere, but we knew he was taking on Dole right in front of us, and it worked. Bush just sort of sat there and chewed on his glasses and was happy.

Karaagac: There was some reluctance, wasn't there, on Bush's part to go with the "Senator Straddle" ad? Didn't he need some convincing?

Pinkerton: Oh probably. I wasn't there for that kind of stuff. I mean yes, I'm sure there was. I mean Bush, Brady, these guys, they just weren't—Ailes and Atwater, I believe, got Bush elected, and Sununu, and Sununu. As much as I dislike Sununu, I would have to say he got Bush elected. Brady and Fuller were sort of negatives, and Teeter was sort of for it, whatever it was, he was for it, and I don't know who else I am leaving out there, but Ailes and I had the idea of aggressive, in your face attack, and that's what it takes in politics.

Riley: Once you got over the hump in New Hampshire, from that point—

Pinkerton: Yes, it was pretty easy after that, we won South Carolina. I remember we clinched—effectively clinched the nomination at the Illinois primary which was March 15, you could look up the dates, whenever, that would have been only five—but we knew after New Hampshire that we were going to win.

Milkis: After you clinched the nomination, what did, did your—did your attention shift towards the general election?

Pinkerton: Oh, yes, we totally switched. In there somewhere we totally—and I mean pretty quickly, probably—it was Illinois, so we probably, looking back, I said quickly, we probably were still pretty much focused on Dole through Illinois. I can remember Gore and the Democrats, all Democrats, debated in New York on like March 11, or so of '88, and I just remember—okay, so I guess we're paying attention to stuff, now I've got to start wondering what the Democrats are up to. I'm reading along, reading along to this transcript, it was on Nexis or something, and Gore is sitting there talking about weekend passes.

Milkis: Obviously the *New York Times Magazine*.

Pinkerton: Yes, the *New York Daily News* debate, and I said what's a week—and I had no idea, I had never heard of this. I really knew, I had never heard—I had no idea there was such a thing. I knew what parole was, I had no idea what a furlough was, never heard of it.

Milkis: You actually heard Gore talking about it.

Pinkerton: I didn't hear it, I read it.

Milkis: Oh, you read it. I'm sorry.

Pinkerton: I read it, and I said, "Wow, this is really weird." So I called Andy Card, you've probably heard of him, and—

Milkis: Could you spell his second name [*laughter*]

Pinkerton: Who was from Massachusetts, had been a state legislator in Massachusetts, knew Dukakis and all these people well. Remember, it wasn't—we had no idea who the Democrats were going to nominate. [Dick] Gephardt seemed plausible and whoever else, Bob Kerrey, I can't remember, [Bruce] Babbitt, I mean whoever they were. Dukakis was not in any way special to us. We had no great insight into this, but Card said, "Yes, this has been a huge thing up here, this whole prison furlough thing." We started talking about it, and I think he was in Puerto Rico, because he was working the Puerto Rico primary or something like that, and so we've got to get on top of this. Because this was a killer, this was—this had been the—the *Boston Globe* had run stories on this, the *Lawrence Eagle-Tribune* had run something like one hundred thirty stories. They won a Pulitzer Prize in there somewhere for this, but they had run one hundred thirty stories and nobody else had heard of it, it was just sort of totally hiding in plain sight. Just like our Fund for America's Future, nobody was paying attention.

So we got somebody to just Xerox them all, or something like that and bring them all down or fly them all down or FedEx them to Washington. I remember with Wacker and everybody used to say, oh look at this—I remember the first thing I said was, "We've got to make lots of copies of this, just keep one in a vault someplace. We've got one hundred thirty stories here which have everything Michael Dukakis has ever done wrong as governor on the crime issue." Then it was just a question of sorting though it. Let me tell you that was hard work, because it was entirely, none of us—we had a guy named Stu Gerson, who was—you should definitely talk to him. He became a surrogate for Dole in the debate, he was a debate—probably you should talk about debate preps and things like that, but we would go to Bush's house and prep debates and do these what they call murder boards, and Q's & A's and pepper drills, and whatever they called these things. But anyway, that became a major preoccupation, of finding lawyer types to explain to us all these different kinds of furloughs. Prison furloughs and transfer furloughs and all—so arcane, and again, the *Lawrence Eagle-Tribune* had done all our work for us, it was just like discovering gold.

Milkis: You started working on it that early, in March or did you just register—

Pinkerton: We were registered in March and were probably on top of it through April and then Bush first started talking about it—I think the first time he ever mentioned furloughs and maybe Willie Horton, I can't remember both—certainly furloughs was used at the Texas convention on June 9 of '88 as I recall. Maybe it is written there someplace. So that was—it took us that long to kind of—remember, we were still sort of horsing around with, we had all, whatever, I can't remember what we were doing, it's probably in here someplace. But anyway, it took us two months to sort of process this stuff.

Milkis: Did you have any role in the events leading up to the convention, and the preparation of the convention speech?

Pinkerton: Yes, I—not in the convention—Peggy Noonan and I had conversations back then and so on. I guess, not a lot. I think my main thing was the oppo stuff, you know, and so on. The convention speech as I recall was pretty close hold. They would circulate all the speeches around, I was definitely reading on the distribution list for all the Bush speeches. But I was down there, I went to the convention in New Orleans, probably two weeks before the convention actually started for work on the platform and stuff like that. I mean it was all this sort of crapola stuff, and the platform was a big deal back then. It was entirely to make-work operation, to keep people busy and things like that, and a big waste of time. But it's still hard work because you've got to sit there and deal with three hundred people all in one, argue over a comma or a paragraph or sentence or something.

So I don't really remember having much to do with the convention speech, the acceptance speech. I remember we'd sit around and I know I saw it beforehand, but I mean we'd sit around, and this guy Red Cavaney—does that name ring a bell? He was at American Paper Institute, he's now someplace else. Old Nixon, Reagan-type hand and his title was like director of proceedings for—it was a volunteer job just for the convention, and we would be sitting around in this Marriott in New Orleans, and we would have all the speeches everybody was going to give for

the convention. And I emphasize this is something where you've got a town full of lawyers and trade association types who all want something to do, so they all sort of volunteer for this and that and whatever, so they write speeches for people they never met and so on. So then the people would get them. I remember Haig's speech, I'm sure Haig did his part for this country somewhere, again when he was twenty-two, I'm sure he was dying to fight communism, and I was sitting there watching cartoons, but nonetheless, by the time I got to know him, he was just vile. He had some speech where he said the Democrats are like bats, they hang upside down in caves in their own guano or something. The fact that that still—

Riley: The dials were going—

Pinkerton: Exactly, plummeted. It was so awful. I know damn well that we spiked the entire speech and I know damn well that he pretty much gave it verbatim. I'll quote him anyway, in the convention. Because so much of the work you do on these things is so—it's like nobody reads it. You do all this work, and nobody cares, and they do what they're going to do anyway, and it just—but it's incredibly time consuming if you're on the inside of a staff.

Milkis: So you didn't have anything to do with the "read my lips" line?

Pinkerton: Oh yes, I had tons to do with that. I don't think the line itself, but as I said, probably the biggest single thing I had going all the way through that was that no tax pledge. But I don't think—I had nothing to do with the actual phrase, I don't think. I'm pretty sure I didn't.

Riley: But you said that you were communicating with Peggy Noonan—

Pinkerton: I was, but I don't remember the—I don't remember reading that line, and saying, "Ah, this is great." But definitely, that was my shtick, was to make sure that in every speech we would have something about the no tax increase pledge all the way through that time.

Milkis: So you must have been pretty pleased in the way the nomination process went, because Bush sort of got focused on the issues you wanted him focused on.

Pinkerton: He did, right. We weren't talking about—yes. I mean I always figured you've got to stay tight with the right on something, and abortion is an issue that will help you with the Republican primary, and hurt you in the general election. The issue that was sort of—SDI [Strategic Defense Initiative], whatever, the issue that has the—I always say you can—ultimately, if you put a gun to the head of a liberal and say, "I want to cut your taxes," they'll say okay. You say, "I want to protect a woman's right to choose," say right to life, they'll say no, you can shoot them before they'll agree on that. So you have to find some issue that they find halfway acceptable, and the tax increase was that. It has sort of that libertarian thread running through it that reaches all the way over to the left on some cases. So that was my own personal ideology, plus what I thought was a good reading of the political situation, led me to that.

Milkis: Anybody—any more questions we want to ask about the nomination process before we get to the general election?

Karaagac: One quick question. What was your reaction to the implosion of Gary Hart? Did you see this as a tremendous gift?

Pinkerton: Yes, Hart. Hart was a big threat we thought, so we were pleased to see him out of the race. I think we were happy.

Karaagac: Do think Hart could have beaten Bush without the [Donna] Rice?

Pinkerton: No. I think Bush by the time, by the time Bush was on the right side of peace and prosperity, I think we would have won against almost anybody. Bush won pretty big, fifty-four percent of the vote, and if he hadn't had Quayle it would have been fifty-six. I mean it would have been a big victory I think.

Milkis: Speaking of Quayle, were you surprised?

Pinkerton: Yes. One of my jobs was to sort of—I was director of oppo, but I was just sort of research. I had people's confidence such that they could lie to me and feel good about it, and so one of my duties was, in that time, was to pull together sort of briefing books on all these sort of vice presidential wannabe types. I now realize this was in the best CIA tradition. I was sort of the cutout, you do all this work, sit over there, it's like the entire mythical first army on "Operation Fortitude" on D-Day that's going to invade Calais, as opposed to Normandy. You know, I was the phony balloon tanks, and I had all these poor bastards working for me, staying up all night Xeroxing things, to put—and hole punching and everything like that, and all which was just sitting there gathering dust some place. So we did Carroll Campbell and Dole and Pete Domenici and whoever. Quayle was not on my list—I barely knew who he was, other than he looked like Robert Redford, that's all we said about Quayle at the time.

So we get to the convention, and again, I have been working like a dog for ten days on just Al Haig's guano and so on, and I remember I got a call from Stu Gerson, who is a good guy and you should definitely talk to him on this kind of stuff. It was like 2:30 in the afternoon, and I was taking a nap, which believe me was entirely needed in that circumstance just to do the hours we were. So 2:30, Gerson calls my hotel room, wakes me up and said, "Jim, I just heard, it's official, it's going to be Dole." I said, "Oh great, Dole's plausible, he'll be okay, he's of known quantity," and whatever. So now I'm awake, I turn on my TV, sort of putter around the room for a little bit, it's three o'clock or whatever it is. There's the vote and Bernie Shaw or somebody says, "It's Dan Quayle" and I was literally that level of surprised. I had just been told authoritatively, and one of the many times I have been told authoritatively, look, Bush will be indicted, it will be Dole, whatever, just wrong, wrong, wrong.

So there's Quayle—George Bush—I remember that on the landing there at the marina, and so okay, we've got to get a plan here, we've got to get something together. So I go—in the hotel, we had this sort of room, like a big open room, we set up desks and type and drape things and whatever, and there's a hundred Bush politicos sort of milling around, wondering what to do and so I say, okay, and I'm supposed to know everything, right? So I remember I sent this guy, a guy named Dylan Glen, who now works in the White House, in the economic policy area, he was an intern then. I said, get to a bookstore, get the *Almanac of American Politics*. So, forty bucks, take

my credit card, go get the book, Dylan brought the book back, they happily had it in the store, and to one hundred people, Lanny Griffith and all these people floating around, I started just reading, "Well, Dan Quayle, born February 4, 1947, DePauw University BA"—

Milkis: Without honors.

Pinkerton: Without honors. We knew nothing about him. We knew nothing. That was probably an hour, like up to 4:30 in the afternoon. 6:30 that night is Dan Rather clobbering him on the draft and everything like that—that was definitely a mess.

Milkis: Do you remember Atwater's reaction to it?

Pinkerton: I think Atwater was for Quayle. I think Atwater, Teeter and maybe Ailes were for Quayle, and Teeter denied it all time ever since. Atwater sort of knew—Atwater was hung up on this baby boom thing.

Riley: The generation shift.

Pinkerton: The generation shift, and so—

Riley: Gender? Gender gap?

Pinkerton: No, I mean yes, that was an issue too, but I think Atwater's theory was that the baby boom was going to be big and he had been sort of talking about that a lot and I had written memos on all this stuff. The Cato Institute had some kind of conference on baby boom politics and how they are all libertarians and things, and so I don't remember Atwater really trashing Quayle because he's sort of been in on it. It was so absorbing in terms of—you know, it's funny, I didn't even think about it. All we could think about at the time was just, oh shit, we've got to get all this stuff out there and the AP [Associated Press] reports that he's worth $600 million and you know all that stuff that's still floating around. I mean Quayle, as I understand it now, there's money in the family obviously, but it skips over him and goes to like his grandkids or—so that he himself is just living in some tract house in McLean or something, he wasn't rich. But nonetheless, all this stuff, unbelievable amount of misinformation, and we were just completely flatfooted because we were hearing it for the first time ourselves.

Riley: How do you explain that?

Pinkerton: I think that Bush, Senior now, again he didn't like to be handled. He didn't like the feeling he was being handled, he didn't really like political people that—I think he came to like Atwater and respect him. Atwater, I'm sure—I know he was, Camp David and horseshoes, and all this kind of stuff, just wasn't Bush's group and I think that he, Bush, wanted to make sure everybody knew that he was calling the shots, and making the—it's a lot of this Gore stuff, this sort of Gore-Clinton oedipal whatever stuff. You know, I don't want him campaigning for me. I think identical feelings on both sides and this whole sort of—it's been eight years sort of brown-nosing somebody and you finally get your chance to be your own man and things like that, it pops up in weird, even self destructive ways.

I think Bush liked the idea of a surprise. I think he sort of bought into the generational shift and new ideas and exciting. I remember Peggy had this line about Quayle, from the middle of the country and the middle of the century. All this stuff just seemed so important, that Bush had been—when did the Strauss and Howe book come out about generations or something like that? We were all reading stuff like that back then, you know, about new ideas and new blood and GI generation—it all sort of seemed like—I think now, looking back on it, of all the different variables on how you vote, you know, sex, age, wealth, race, whatever, generations is sort of weak. I don't think baby boomers are too terribly different than war babies or—I mean I don't think that really is a very high coefficient or whatever you say, but at the time it seemed sort of cool and hip. So I think Bush did it to himself. I think Bush simply wanted to keep it secret, and they had this whole other parallel vetting operation, this Bob Kimmitt thing, and I'm not saying I would have done a better job, I'm not sure I would have jumped all over this stuff either, but Kimmitt was in charge of the vetting—

Riley: The vetting for the Vice President.

Pinkerton: Right. I had the phony operations, Kimmitt had the real operations.

Riley: Okay, but he was basically doing, supposed to be doing the same kind of background research that you were.

Pinkerton: Right. Yes, exactly. You don't go to a meeting, who knows what you get.

Riley: Dan Quayle.

Karaagac: Where was Baker in all of this, you haven't mentioned him.

Pinkerton: Well, Baker was at Treasury all this—this was, a funny story. Baker was a looming presence in this, and was at Treasury and was very prestigious, and everybody thought he was just the coolest guy and so on, and I remember probably '86—We were so proud of ourselves because we had this guy Rich Galen had a computer, which just put him way ahead of everything, you know. Some laptop that was like fourteen pounds or something, and he could actually printout spreadsheets, which we thought that was the coolest thing we'd ever seen, you know. So we were so proud of ourselves that we used to print out spreadsheets just to look at them, just to admire them, on budgets and things.

So we had this spreadsheet for the Fund for America's Future budget. We had people we hired to do things and there's a guy named Bill Harris, who isn't really worth talking to because he was not really that much in the campaign, but pleasant enough guy. Atwater, he was a friend of his from Alabama, Atwater's from South Carolina, but a friend of his from Southern politics, and we had a line on him on the budget, you know, five thousand a month for Bill Harris to do convention work or whatever. He's just some friend. Baker is going down the list—Baker came over, the Secretary of the Treasury comes over, you know, guards, security detail, the whole sort of pomp and circumstance of this kind of stuff and he was all well dressed and they just exactly sort of much more highly regarded, in a funny way than he is now. So he pulls out the printout,

and Baker's kind of a detailed guy and he paid attention to stuff, so he's sort of going through it and he says, "Bill Harris? He's an idiot. What's he doing on here?" Atwater, remember this was all set up, this printout, we were all so was proud of this printout, and all this sort of stuff, Atwater said, "Typo." [*laughter*].

So Baker had been around, popped up a time or two in this, I didn't have much contact with him in '86, '87, other than that one meeting. There were others like that but not much. Then I guess he showed up to work full-time at the campaign, like after the convention as I recall, or maybe immediately before, I can't quite remember. He of course was shameless about, "Hey, Quayle was somebody else's idea, that was before I got here." That was a big part of the problem Quayle had, because one thing that does you in is internal friction and internal feuding, and Baker just never hesitated to let everybody know Quayle was entirely somebody else's idea. I think Baker did a good job for Bush on the whole, but that certainly was the price you pay for Baker. To get Baker is to get everybody knowing exactly what he did right and what everybody else did wrong. That will come with the package.

Karaagac: In a related question, just to pull at this stage, everything we've heard before, there was a lot of talk in some of the work about the G6. Was that—

Pinkerton: That wasn't that important. There was actually a G7 for a while. It was Fuller, Teeter, Ailes, Dean Birch, for a while, who was FCC [Federal Communications Commission] chairman and then Comsat or something and then died, went to Comsat and left. Brady, I can't remember, was that five or six, I can't remember what that comes to. That was sort of more for show. I mean it's definitely, you couldn't get—you couldn't lie to them, but you couldn't tell them everything, they just simply had—everything's fine we're doing great, okay, thanks. What really mattered was Fuller and Atwater and to some extent Brady, but the formal meeting is sort of—wasn't that critical.

Milkis: Should we shift to the general election?

Pinkerton: Okay.

Riley: Well, actually, I want—

Milkis: Go ahead because we're going to take a break pretty soon so—

Riley: One quick follow up, and then maybe we can break before we get into Dukakis, and that was, Sid I thought you were going to pose the question about whether Quayle was perceived to be a kind of guardian on Bush's conservative plank. I mean there was some of that in the atmosphere.

Milkis: I was going to ask if at first blush, after you read about Quayle in the almanac, whether you were at least pleased that he seem to be a pretty conservative kind of fellow.

Pinkerton: I always thought that Bush would, my idea for Bush's Vice President was Sam Nunn. I always figured, once you get the nomination, then you've got to worry about the other

eighty percent of the country that's not right wing. I just figured, I remember I told George Junior that, I said look, "Sam would be great," and again I'm a full of history, right so, I say, "Listen, you know Lincoln had Andrew Johnson, a Democrat," I talk about Roosevelt's Cabinet with [Henry] Stimson and Frank Knox, whatever his name is, Henry Knox. I mean I knew that. But I could probably get away with, oh you know, back then, Joe Knox, they didn't know. I was always was citing the—by my reckoning, Quayle didn't add a thing, and Bush didn't need help with the right, he needed help with the left, or the center as it were, in '88.

Again, I was born in '58, and I lived in college towns, so I was acutely hip to the Vietnam War in the sense of like, I always joked, I knew protest, I never knew anybody in the—I didn't know anybody who had been killed in Vietnam, I didn't know anybody who'd been injured in Vietnam, I didn't know anybody who was in the military. Everybody I knew was in grad school or my parents' friends and things like that. So I didn't take offense in the way that Bob Dole would take offense at a guy like Quayle, who was a hawk who had been a National Guardsman or something like that. I just sort of thought, well isn't that what everybody does in terms of this kind of stuff, which is why I now have this sort of yuppie guilt respect for people who actually did volunteer to serve. But it meant that just sort of—the idea that Quayle was some sort of defense expert cause he was for SDI, that didn't mean anything to me.

I came to like Quayle, but we'll get ahead of that, he wound up in the OVP, but I certainly never thought he had anything. I'm satisfied that once the Dan Rather thing had happened, let's just get this guy to Napoleon, Ohio, and keep him there, in terms of low media markets.

Karaagac: On that point, didn't the Senator and Mrs. Quayle lobby for that position? Didn't they put on a type of charm offensive for the Bushes?

Pinkerton: Probably. Again this was—I was betting on Dole. I think that Quayle is not dumb, you've got to say it the right way. But I mean he's not, in a sense—

Milkis: Don't get me in mid [undecipherable 93] with things like that.

Pinkerton: I'm sure he would have gotten an A in your class, probably pretty sure he wouldn't, but you just cant get elected in politics if you are really just a nitwit. Quayle had a sense of the main chance. I'd never really—I read all the '84 campaign books, but by '88 I had enough of this, and I didn't, I really read none of the '88 books at all in terms of—so if there is stuff in there, that would be sort of interesting for me to find out, is did Quayle—but I definitely think Quayle would get it. And I think Marilyn Quayle, who I think is extremely sharp, they would definitely understand yes, there is a way to wrangle around a thicket here through a charm offensive.

Karaagac: There's a couple.

Pinkerton: Whatever it takes, yes. I mean I can see that, I can see that happening.

Riley: But it still, without belaboring the point, your birthday was March 11th?

Pinkerton: Yes.

Riley: You were born four days before I was, so we are almost perfect contemporaries, and it was for me, shocking how little attention was given to this question of service, in advance of—in the vetting process. I mean that would have been one of the first questions that would have come to my mind about somebody coming out of this generation. Maybe the vetting had happened and it just didn't, it didn't matter.

Pinkerton: Well you know it's—you were born in '58?

Riley: Yes, March 15th.

Pinkerton: So in other words, part of it was in the 70s and 80s Vietnam was in such ill humor. Everybody who came back from Vietnam was a baby killer and a psycho and so on, that the people who were in Vietnam hadn't really sort of, at the level of just courage, gotten their own due for being courageous guys who went, and this overlay, was sort of the people who had been to Vietnam were sort of ashamed, and the people who were draft dodgers or Quayles or whatever you want to call them, you know, my TAs [teaching assistants] in graduate school, those kind of types, they weren't really proud of it, but they certainly didn't feel bad about it.

The shift—am I wrong about this? The shift now of—I mean like the respect for people who just went, post-*Saving Private Ryan*, just whatever, it just has sort of mushroomed and I remember the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. That was '82 as I recall, right, that's when it was dedicated, I think. I remember just reading the paper about Chuck Robb, who did his part, you know, went over there and stuff, sort of gave a speech where he talked about—and I think Reagan went over there too, I know he did for one of those ceremonies, and I remember sort of thinking, hmm, you mean there's—I mean I was a Republican, but I was sort of born out of a liberal Democratic family. I was sort libertarian kind of a dove, and I remember thinking, so, '82, now, you think there's something nice to be said about Vietnam veterans? I remember I was sitting there in the Reagan White House sort of saying that. I mean just sort of—so I think that the thrushing out process, where yes, Vietnam was a mistake, and yes we lost, but boy it was certainly a gutsy, horrible thing to do, and volunteer for it.

I mean take Joe Klein's book *The Running Mate*, he says this book is—now Joe Klein is like a boomer. I'm sure he was born in '45 or—I know he was born in '45, so he's definitely in that group, definitely of Boston-Phoenix type protester and whatever, and he says this book is dedicated to the six men in the Senate who served in Vietnam. You know Max Cleland, Chuck Robb, Bob Kerrey, John Kerry, I've forgotten who else, [John] McCain. There's another one in there someplace, [Charles] Hagel, and it's just that, nobody would have written that fifteen years ago. So I just don't think in that sense—now I think by now, because of the Quayle experience, somebody had to be the goat to sort of get there in the first in the slaughter pen—same thing with the marijuana thing with Doug Ginsburg, somebody had to be first. So you smoked dope in whatever college, and you've been spiked, and then Al Gore, Bruce Babbitt, everybody else said, "Oh yes, we smoked it too," and nothing happened to you.

So it's just sort of, an interesting point, because Vietnam as a—what we say in politics, a cut through the cross hatch, a new thing, this demographic group of 18-29 year olds, or left-handed housewives, or whatever. All of a sudden Vietnam veteran is just simply now a red line running through anybody of that generation, where were you in Vietnam? How did you serve or not serve? It just wasn't really a variable. Again, I would have to say that I'm probably just happy that Kimmitt did the vetting on this, because I'm not sure I would have really—

Milkis: Picked up on the—

Pinkerton: I'll edit that out when the transcript comes.

Milkis: You want to show complete perseverance. Well, let's take a short break.

[BREAK]

Milkis: So shall we—tell us about the general campaign, the Dukakis wars.

Pinkerton: Well, see I always say, look, you know, if you ask people, do you think you should let convicted murderers run free, they tend to say no. This is a case of getting that point across the country. I make no apologies for the whole thing, I think—talking about the changes in the country in the last fifteen years, the tough on crime thing has sort of settled in, I think people don't like being raped and murdered, and Willie Horton was a rapist and a murderer and Dukakis let him and 261 others run free. It made no sense and the theory of furloughs is as way of transitioning back in society and I think I can marginally accept that, but if you are sentenced to life in prison the whole point was to never let you out again, the entire purpose of furloughs therefore is defeated. It becomes a—furloughs, in fact, in Massachusetts were a combination between liberals who simply want to let criminals run free and prison wardens, who want to understand the value from a prison management population perspective of simply, commit your crimes outside of the prison so I don't have to worry about, don't do them in here, save them up and commit them when you're out there. The Willie Horton thing was just astonishing, it was a smoking gun, and the American people agreed.

Milkis: Did you have any of—that said, did you have any nagging concerns that the campaign being so negative was not laying the groundwork for something like a "New Paradigm" program, a sort of guide to the White House, or something like that.

Pinkerton: This time I didn't. I definitely felt, I mean I turned thirty in '88, so did you.

Riley: Thanks for remembering.

Pinkerton: You got my card right?

Riley: Yes.

Milkis: I wish I did. I'm not even going to tell you guys when I turned thirty.

Pinkerton: I definitely felt like, well, enough of this. I mean I definitely felt like I didn't want to do it anymore, but that's my own internal yuppie thing going on, as opposed to—I didn't think that Bush really had a lot of positive stuff to say. I wasn't interested in foreign policy then, do I didn't—whatever Bush had in mind, the "New World Order" and whatever, the Cold War, even in '88, it wasn't obvious to me that the Cold War was going to end a year later. So I figured Bush would just sort of say we can at least keep, we can keep the welfare state under control by keeping the throttle on this—spigot, throttle, whatever, on the tax thing. That was about as far as I got in my own thinking in '88.

Milkis: Could you shed any light Jim, on the Willie Horton advertisements, one I know was part of the campaign, one was at least ostensibly done by an independent group. Could you shed light on that, your reaction?

Pinkerton: Yes. This is a case where, if I said to you, "Well, you know, Virginia Tech, you ever seen Virginia Tech, what's the difference?" You would say, "Well, actually they're different schools and they're idiots down there and we're smart"—

Milkis: One has a great football team and other one doesn't.

Pinkerton: Yes, exactly, and I would say, "Oh, sure, whatever you say." I dismiss it, oh sure, it's all the same thing, you're all getting paid for by the Commonwealth and whatever. I had never met Floyd Brown this whole time. My whole objective was to have an issue that was so resonant with the country that people picked it up themselves. You see that all the time in the '80 Reagan campaign. Campaigns that have genuine enthusiasm for him. People printed up their own bumper strips, they printed up their own buttons, and not so much part of an ideological love, but also because they wanted to make money at it. You go to the Republican convention, ninety-nine percent of the buttons you see for sale are not official buttons, they're just simply some guy with a little machine, you know, cranking them out all the time.

So I was personally delighted to see Floyd Brown, who I never met, doing this kind of thing. I thought it was great, well fine, because it's in the public domain, and it's all information that they want to clobber Dukakis. This *Reader's Digest* article—Robert Bidinotto wrote a piece on the furlough thing, and again this is the killer of this, we didn't invent it, we didn't discover anything. All we did was rehash what was in the *Lawrence Eagle-Tribune*, and to a much lesser extent the *Boston Globe*, and this *Reader's Digest* article from, I've forgotten when it came out, but Robert Bidinotto, who I think I finally met two or three years later, and this is what we said, "Okay, you decide." We had peace and prosperity, we had no tax increase, we had all sorts of stuff going for us.

I certainly remember thinking to myself—back to the Van Buren curse—you don't win third terms on positive messages. Gore wasn't trying to win a third term on positive messages. After the '86 election, '86 now, the Republicans tried to run, "Hey, we've done a great job, now reward us" and they all lost in the '86 midterms. So that was a sobering experience in terms of what are the chances you're going to get credit for good things you've done in the past? Zero. Since, just by definition, it's like a game of cards. In other words, you come in—I'm not sure what card game this is, going back to my youth. You get good cards, you get bad cards. You play

your best cards first, your kings and aces, and after a while you run out of kings and aces and you're down to eights and nines and then you're down to threes and fours. It's clear from an agenda point of view, stop inflation, keep the country from going off a cliff under Carter, that kind of stuff. By the late 80s, and I forgot to mention the stock market crash, was whenever that was that was certainly—I remember walking into a staff meeting—

Milkis: October '87.

Pinkerton: Exactly. I remember we had a staff meeting—that was like a Monday—I think, and Tuesday morning I walked in and said, "Well, the good news is the market was twenty-two hundred, now it's seventeen hundred, this can only happen for another two and a half days at five hundred points each." So there wasn't a lot of positive stuff. Remember the late 80s were Paul Kennedy, we're all declining, the Japanese are going to take over. It wasn't like a lot of positive stuff to say, it was much more just keep Dukakis from wrecking it.

Milkis: Without belaboring the point, I'm not meaning to, but there was one important difference between those ads. One—you talked about before cutting through cross tabs, one was a law and order, clearly a law and order kind of ad with the revolving door—

Pinkerton: Right, that was ours.

Milkis: The other had strong racial implications.

Pinkerton: That wasn't us. Again, I can't say that I was really upset to see the other one, but it was, we ran a campaign that said, "Look, do you want people like this running free, and Dukakis will let them free and we won't." I have no hesitation or apology for that. Did it set a negative tone? Sure. Did it help Bush win? Sure. I took my job seriously then.

Milkis: In the midst of the '88 battle, I understand how you were focused on opposition research, but did you have anywhere in your head some sense of what a Bush administration should do domestically? Did you have a thought about—I don't want to jump ahead, but the "New Paradigm" at that point.

Pinkerton: No. The "New Paradigm" hadn't hit me at all. I had always been kind of a libertarian, so I'd always been sort of for school vouchers and whatever else, but hadn't really thought much further than that, and I remember just to jump ahead a little bit, Polly Williams and Lauro Cavazos, was the secretary of education, I think Reagan appointed him first.

Milkis: That's right, and John Sununu fired him.

Pinkerton: Right. But in like December of '88, just jumping ahead a second, I remember first reading about public school choice in Minnesota. I remember sort—just anytime I see a new concept I sort of scratch my head, what do they mean by that, it's one newspaper story, hard to figure out. So the notion that the Milton Friedman vision of vouchers from 30 years before had sort of begun to sort of insinuate itself into this public discourse, sort of second hand, through public school choice under Governor [Rudy] Perpich in Minnesota. I remember sort of I had a

struggle with that. But in the ’88 campaign, per say, no, I was just, I mean, I understood the argument about “kinder and gentler” and I kind of got that and okay, fine. I was always sort of a closet Kemp fan. Again to know him is not to be a fan, but to read about him is to be a great fan. His ideas, his thoughts, as articulated by people around him. He always had a smart staff, he always had friendly reporter-book writer types and so on. That was sort of where I was ideologically, and I said, well we can try and push Bush into that, although it was far from clear to me in the ’88 campaign where I’d even be working in two months.

Milkis: Anybody else, you guys want to ask any questions about the ’88 campaign?

Riley: Actually the—

Pinkerton: Actually, I should tell you one story, because it is relevant to this. Again, I’m sure if you—have you interviewed Sununu?

Milkis: We’re not allowed to say who we’ve interview.

Lee: Yes, we’re allowed to say that.

Riley: We’ve talked with him, yes.

Pinkerton: Fine, fine. I’m sure his feelings about me are—if you got down to my level, I don’t know, who knows. I don’t really care, I’ll enjoy the book some day. I really don’t care, but I’ll throw this in the mix just for fun. In—it must have been the summer of ’88, Sununu and I had gotten to be pretty close in the New Hampshire primary because you know, Craig Fuller would sit up there in the front car with Bush. I mean Craig Fuller was sort of famous for sort of doing this kind of stuff. He always wanted to ride with Bush and so he put George Bush, Jr., like his own son, like four seats back in the bleachers in some baseball game, he just really had a somewhat bloated view of himself in terms of his power.

So in New Hampshire, when Sununu is doing all this work to actually help Bush win, Fuller who’d done nothing except sort of write memos that were incriminating, that became feasts for Bob Woodward books and stuff like that, was sitting up there in the front car and Sununu is four cars back. So I would be back there with Sununu, kind of just in the third class section of the New Hampshire campaign, and this guy’s the governor of the state. So he and I got—and we were definitely eye-to-eye on the tax issue and that kind of stuff, in June of ’88, Sununu called me from like North Dakota, there was a National Governors—Republican Governors Association meeting or something there, and he says, they have passed—who’s they?—a resolution decrying a Palestinian state. Got to figure this out, what it was. But it was like AIPAC [American-Israeli Political Action Committee] or somebody had gone and said look, we want every state legislature to pass a resolution denouncing a Palestinian state, and he said, “This is a personal attack on me,” and I said, “Well, I’m not sure it is, no offense.”

But Bush was supposed to agree to it or something. Bush was supposed to sign on to sign on to it, Bush was to have his own resolution saying yes, you know, this was sort of a no-brainer from an AIPAC point of view, and Sununu said “I’m going to resign” and I said, “Governor, you can’t

do that." Part of it was just sort of human, like you're a pal, don't quit on me, but, I do remember thinking to myself, Sununu's got a future in this, as a matter of fact, Sununu had sort of nominated himself to be Bush's Vice President, I remember that. He sort of explained to me, explained to Atwater, he was a universal ethnic. He was Lebanese, actually Palestinian, but he didn't really say that; but his mother was something and his father was something, and his brother, every ethnicity, he sort of explained how he is actually—his parents were born in Cuba or Panama or something like that. I mean he had all this stuff going on, so he'd be a perfect Vice President for Bush. I didn't find it totally persuasive, but I found at least, this guy will wind up somewhere, so I shouldn't let a guy who likes me quit in a huff over this, so I spent like half an hour on the phone with him, some pay phone [undecipherable 330]. I wonder if he feels the same way about me, but I really helped keep him from, not getting fired, but quitting in a huff in the middle of the '88 campaign.

Milkis: Did you also develop a relationship with Andy Card during the '88 campaign?

Pinkerton: Yes. I had known him—he had been around. I guess he was in New Hampshire or something through '86, yes we got to be pretty close, just in terms of pals, and Kaufman I knew much better, because Andy Card and Kaufman are in-laws. So Kaufman I knew extremely well from over the years, back in NADED, the National Association of Deposed Executive Directors, and so I guess I knew him too, but I can't really remember of any great revealing point other than just in a meeting.

Milkis: You didn't ask him to not quit the [undecipherable 342].

Karaagac: Card goes back with the Bush people, way back to '80, you didn't feel about Card the same way you felt about some of the other Bush people, the trust fund issues.

Pinkerton: No, I mean Andy is very blue collar. I don't know where he's from. I mean I know he's from Massachusetts, he no—I'm no enemy of elitism by a long shot, I just sort of could see them, I could see that noblesse oblige plays poorly in demotic politics.

Milkis: Could you—at least I am, sort of fascinated by Lee Atwater and the role he played in the campaign and then we can talk about what he did before he got sick and after the election. Could you shed any light—I mean you've told us some things about him, about him, about his activities during the campaign that would help us understand why he was such an effective campaign manager.

Pinkerton: He had—and he always said this, he had a bias for action. When in doubt, do something. Fuller, I don't mean to pick on him, although I guess maybe I am, had a bias for inaction. There is a mode of behavior which says, if you are solid and steady, you can sort of radiate confidence and people sort of trust you and whatever, and Bush and Brady definitely had that, they definitely had that, they definitely had the idea that look, there's nothing you can say to me that will knock me off my game, I'm going to be—a firm handshake. The point is, that's perfectly good for being a trustworthy neighbor. You can always count on old George to be out there mowing his lawn and whatever, watering the grass or whatever, every Saturday afternoon, but when you come to discontinuities, well, hey, what do we do now, or some just big change,

you know, an airplane just crashed into your house, what do you do now? Then you've got to do something.

Campaigns are sort of like a constant convulsion, and if you're sitting there saying well, we've got to be unflappable here, when you're being flapped by external forces, then you really have to move. And again, it's not to say that Bush was incapable of this in fighting World War II and dealing with his daughter's leukemia and stuff, but he sure as hell didn't have an instinct for, you know, the state chairman from Michigan says we've got to do something, or whatever. They just didn't have a sort of jump off, ride to the sounds of the guns kind of quality or just simply go over there and start fighting, and Atwater did.

Atwater was very Civil War oriented, and Stonewall Jackson—I mean not that he really, these people, in terms of history or something. Just in the general sense of you win wars by fighting. Craig Fuller was kind of a [General George] McClellan type and sort of we win wars by sort of looking nice, and good cologne, and stay on good terms of Mike Deaver and that kind of stuff. It was just the wrong everything, and so Atwater was so always sort of aggressive and we're gonna kick 'em in the balls and cut their nuts off, he had that sort of quality to him which is what you need, you need somebody who's gonna start shooting. So whether it was attacking Kemp or attacking Dole or attacking Dukakis, I mean that's what he wanted to do. He just simply wanted to get things done and wanted to get it done now, and I mean we were there at 7:00 a.m. every day for ten years. I worked for him directly from '82 to '89, in the White House and the Reagan campaign and then the Bush thing. It was just hard work, you know, you just get it done.

It's funny, because in the '84 campaign, I was just an Atwater flunky. I had the job of helping dream up the seating—the hotel room plan for the Anatole Hotel in Dallas, which is where the Reagan—the convention was, and we had the floor plans and stuff like that, and it was a case of just simply put—I was smart enough to know, put Atwater in a corner suite and Rollins, and [Robert] Mosbacher and [Richard] Wirthlin and whoever else up there. We had two floors. I said well, okay—and I was smart enough to put me nearby, and I've got that part figured out and I figured the rest we'll sort of do kind of alphabetical, whatever. So it was Atwater, and I had next to him me and then Joe Alba. Joe Alba now is one of the iron triangle with Bush Junior. and is now the director of FEMA [Federal Emergency Management Association] and he'll be a much more influential guy, because the plan they have for FEMA is to make it much more of a heroic photo opportunity for Bush at every flood and tornado kind of thing. But then he was sort of the number two regional political director for the Southwest.

I remember Atwater saying, looking at this chart and says, "Joe Alba. What's he doing on my floor, let alone next to me?" He said, "Jim, what was going through your mind?" Just ran barbed wire up through my nostrils and out my ear and something like that, just made me understand that this was not to happen anymore. You're not going to get guidance, you're only going to get yelled at if you fail. But that pretty quickly in a good Stalinist way, kind of makes the point across, either the memo is here the next morning or all the phone calls are returned or every sign up for the steering committee for Iowa or not. There's just no tolerance. I mean that Atwater just had a—and I always said he had the greatest leadership motivational skill of all, fear. Fuller, and these OVP people just were not like that at all. Bond was like that, if you've met Rich Bond. I

mean he was very much Sicilian, kill, kill, kill, and that's what you need in a campaign, its just not for the faint-hearted.

Riley: I want to ask a more general question, and I fear asking this now, because it causes us to move ahead just a little bit, but there has been a lot commentary about the distinct differences between the first campaign and the reelection campaign. A lot said about Bush's own demeanor in the first campaign and the then the second campaign too, and I wonder if in your own mind, you attribute that to Atwater's presence in the first campaign and his absence in the second.

Pinkerton: I attribute some of that to that, I also attribute it to just this phenomenon of the tractor beaming of the White House and just who wants to be sort of a low blue-collar campaigner, when you can be a high, white-collar, nice cufflink guy having meetings with the Japanese Ambassador. We always used to joke, even in the campaign—and it's like, oh, here comes the Swedish Ambassador who wants to come and talk about playing tennis, and it had nothing to do with getting anybody elected, but they'd show up. They've got to write a report back to Stockholm or whatever, saying I met with so-and-so, you know, Japanese TV, all this stuff. The pressure, again back to Gore, the same thing, the swamping of your own court, by courtiers and Ambassadors and bootlickers of all kinds and things like that, is just unbearable. You can't really say no to them, because they are not bad people, they just have their job to come in and show their credentials and whatever, but it just swallows you in terms of time and psychic energy and things like that, and so Gore is better off being in Nashville.

The Bush campaign in '88 had Atwater, and we had George Junior, we had George Junior to sit and do that kind of stuff. George Junior could be sort of—meet with all these people, the Bunny Berkley's of the world who just had to kind of do this kind of stuff, leaving Atwater alone to just simply plot and scheme and back stab and whatever. The '92 campaign just suffered from that kind accretion of idiots floating around town. They had all been somewhere—somehow they had earned some way in or just played in. So if you don't have an Atwater and you are not constantly fighting it, you just drown in deals and sort of networks and associations and just people just cluttering up your life, who have nothing to offer except a free lunch at the Palmer or something like that.

Riley: Was there was another Atwater out there?

Pinkerton: There was not another Atwater, I guess. I mean Fred Malek, Bob Teeter, were not Atwater. I suspect Malek in his prime was sort of Atwater-like, at least in toughness, but remember Atwater was smart too. Malek was sort of ruthless, okay you want me to name all the Jews in the Nixon administration, what ever that was, remember that case? Okay, fine, no problem, I'll find them all and we'll check their teeth and have them on a train to Auschwitz in two seconds. I don't think Malek would hesitate at that, in his youth, but by the time I knew him which was twenty years later, he was just some sort of a statesman and going to AIPAC dinners and whatever, he was completely different.

Actually, he was in the '88 campaign. He was there for a while. Remember that? They named him deputy chairman of the RNC in like August of '88 and then there was that stuff about the Labor Department and George Shultz and whatever came out and he resigned like a week. In that

time he came and went so quick, I don't think I—I did know him then, he was a manager of the '88 convention, and I got to kind of like him there. I knew he was some tough guy from the Nixon days, and then a week or two later after that, he was named the deputy chair of the RNC and then he was just gone, poof, and I didn't see him again for three years, then he popped up in the '92 campaign. But by then, he was definitely on his nicey-nice behavior then. So every Israeli bond and tree-planting operation in Israel he was there to do and things like that, but that didn't make him very effective as a campaigner.

Teeter was sort of a nice, pleasant guy who was better off as a professor or—I mean a pollster, professor, but not running anything. I'm going to kick you out of my office now so I can get some work done, that's what you needed and Atwater had that famously.

Karaagac: Then Mosbacher, why don't you give us a—

Pinkerton: Yes, Mosbacher, was just—I had no idea what he did other than meet with the Swedish Ambassador to talk about tennis. You know, Fortune 500 CEOs want to come and talk about the big picture, you know, about global trade or something like that. It had nothing to do with the campaign, you go talk to Bush about that, don't talk about—it's just you need people who want to talk about state chairman and ads and why doesn't our computer database work, and why don't we have twelve million pieces of direct mail smearing our opponents out there. That's what you need, and none of those guys in the '92 campaign had that in them.

Milkis: Did you have any role in preparing Bush for the debates during the general election with—

Pinkerton: Oh yes, I did all those—back to the briefing books. By then I guess, well '88 the fall campaign, Debbie Steelman had been sort of layered by Bob Zoellick. I did a lot of work for Zoellick—and again another briefing book, page kind of stuff, and I was over for all those, we called them pepper drills back then. We would sit in the OVP mansion, or the Vice Presidents mansion or whatever and they just simply—we had fake lecterns in, Stu Gerson I think was playing Dukakis, but we would do all this, yes, I was all for that kind of stuff. We would just simply ask him obnoxious questions and whatever else. Margaret Tutwiler was there for that, this was Baker, now we're getting to big time of all these people, but I had been sort of grandfathered in to that from the primaries, so I was still there for that.

Milkis: Did you anticipate, were you concerned at all about the debates, did you think Dukakis might be a more formidable debater or—

Pinkerton: Again, I am one of those types who believes if you have something to say, you're going to be all right. Bush's problem was not that he was unlikable or that he was even—he wasn't a great speaker, he wasn't a really bad speaker, his problem was that his natural instincts were to sort of talk about nothing, to acknowledge everybody in the audience. I know you, and he would know their names, he would remember them. I know—and he would sort of say, oh, so-and-so. That's actually pretty good for the person getting recognized out of a crowd of two thousand. But it is not so great for TV and it is not so great for sort of getting a message across. So that was, again, Bush in his heart of hearts, [undecipherable 540] all this stuff and I see Junior

doing it too, although Junior is much better, it would be—it's what's in my heart that matters. If you knew what a noble soul I was, and how clearly better I am, not so much than you, but clearly the better person I am, you'll obviously vote for me because I am divine right and whatever. That's just a lousy way in a democratic country to proceed.

So it is constantly, talk about issues, talk about stuff. Talk about something concrete that will actually register in the mind of some voter some place, and that was damn tough. But, over time, Bush got good about it, he'd say, we're going to cut taxes, or hold taxes and be kinder, gentler, whatever it was we were saying, and Bush was able to kind of keep that discipline through I guess the '88 campaign.

Riley: Tell us about those prep sessions, the debate prep sessions. What were they like? Who would attend, how many people were there, were they on videotape, did the President watch himself taped, did he hate the—

Pinkerton: Yes, I guess, let's see. Ailes would be there kind of running the show, Atwater would be around, Fuller would be there, he would be standing around doing whatever he did. He had one of these little things, this is [undecipherable 561] but he had one of those little Reuters pager things, Reuters news service things, and that was a big deal back then, that was kind of radical, and so he would be sitting there playing with it all day. But it was kind of fun, to get AP stories about Iran-Contra figures you'd met. They would have Bush standing there and they would have sort of a pseudo, mock debate thing, just in the living room there on the first floor, and it would be me and Debbie Steelman and Margaret Tutwiler or something just asking questions. You know, Mr. Vice President. Again, this stuff, does this stuff exist someplace where they kept all this? I don't even know, I don't even know what happened to the '88 campaign materials. I have been to Texas A & M, but I have never seen the new library since it opened.

This is funny, I went to the Ford Library one time, and they are showing off the bulk of all those papers and things, I've never been to the new one, but the Ford one is pretty impressive in terms of wow, this is the real stuff right. So I was there with Daniel Boorstin and Richard Norton Smith who was the director of the library—

Milkis: He's the director of the Ford Library?

Pinkerton: Of the Ford Library in Grand Rapids, but then he was in Ann Arbor or something, I can't remember. But so they said let's go, for fun, we're all here sort of sitting around, let's go look up D. Boorstin in the archives, and Boorstin kind of thought it was great. So we go look up the box and pull it out and open it up and we realize that Daniel Boorstin was like the twelfth choice to be the Librarian of Congress. [*laughter*].

Milkis: [inaudible] turned you down.

Pinkerton: Exactly, so we can't like whoever they wanted, they want all these names first. Oh I guess we're stuck with Boorstin. So be careful what's in there.

Riley: But did you find that the President was a willing student at the time?

Pinkerton: Yes, he was fine. He wanted to win. Atwater just had to kind of grind him and for the purpose of the election. I mean Bush was the kind of discipline and compartmentalized guy, that once you sort of understood, okay, here's the mission, we are going to help me get elected President, he would say, okay, I need these, these, I need this team over here to do that. They may be a little below my social class, but I will be nice about it and gracious, and invite them up to Kennebunkport and all this kind of—you know, all this kind of stuff to make us all feel like we were part of a team here somewhere, and then once the election is over, well, okay, that's that, and now we will put Atwater in charge of the RNC. In that sense, that's how he got—again, you can't get to these kind of jobs unless you have some capacity and Bush had capacity to sort of follow orders or follow instructions or follow the plan for a while if he agreed to it. It was slow coming to it, and he was so stubborn about it, but it worked.

Milkis: At the same time he hated being managed, he would slouch in the direction you wanted him slouch in.

Pinkerton: Right, and that's where Atwater is just persistent. Bias for action, just pure civil war. We're just going to keep fighting. Just everyday it was a struggle. I mean Atwater really had the, he was doing it for his own yuppie scum ambitions, but nonetheless, Atwater worked really hard in that four-year period to get Bush elected.

Milkis: That's for sure. Did you have anything to do with the environmental stuff in that campaign?

Pinkerton: No net loss of wetlands.

Milkis: Well, the Boston Harbor.

Pinkerton: Oh yes sure, that's actually—the negative stuff, sure.

Milkis: Could you tell us about that?

Pinkerton: You know, remember we started out—all we knew about Dukakis circa 1986 or '87 or whatever, was "Massachusetts Miracle" and stuff, so we spent a lot of time pretty much wasted, trying to deconstruct, you know okay, yes unemployment is 2.6 %, but actually, they are losing manufacturers, I mean it was all sort of just completely dead-end stuff about trying to slice numbers different ways and stuff like that. Furloughs, pledge of allegiance, card-carrying member of the ACLU [American Civil Liberties Union], I remember I read that myself. I own the credit for that one. I was reading New York Magazine. Joe Klein column from whenever that was in '87 someplace, Dukakis is a card-carrying member of the ACLU. I Xeroxed that and gave it to Wacker and I said this is another one of our things. Somewhere, I know it exists, I actually, myself, typed it on a little 3x5 card, all the key things about Dukakis I think were rotten. Back then, typewriters—I could never do it on a word processor but I could do it on a typewriter—you could move the pitch around to go from twelve to ten to get more stuff in there. So I actually typed on a little 3x5 card, here's everything that's wrong with Dukakis, furloughs, whatever,

oppose every defense program know to man, I managed to get it all into one card and know that became something of a useful document in terms, as they reproduced it various ways.

I think I mentioned, I used to teach part-time at the graduate school, political management, aspiring hacks at GW. Some kid who worked at the DNC [Democratic National Committee]—they all had jobs in the day and took the class at night—actually found this little 3x5 card. I don't think it was the actual one I typed, I think it was a rendition of it, but it became in some DNC briefing book they had about, well you see, here's a honed, crisp opposition research message, because if you can get it on a 3x5 card, you know there's a chance you can get it into a TV ad into the minds—

Milkis: It was in the DNC files.

Pinkerton: The DNC had it—this is what those evil bastards are up against, this is what we'll do to us since we have to do it to them. So there was a lot of that kind of stuff, a lot of reworking the material to hone it down and tighten it down. Again, this furlough stuff was so damn complicated, in terms of—it wasn't like they were making it easy for us, so we had all these lawyers running around trying to explain it to us and keep our furlough category straight. We made one mistake somewhere, we like, it was 262 and we said 263 or something. We had some number wrong, obviously you know, it all worked out, but it was not easy in terms of massaging all that material.

Riley: You never got the impression that Bush was uncomfortable with the tone? It was a part of the mission—

Pinkerton: Part of the mission, part of the plan.

Milkis: Were you at all concerned that the taking on Dukakis on the environmental issue—

Pinkerton: The Boston Harbor stuff I don't even remember other than simply the ocean load of stuff we had on it. I don't really remember beyond just—this is great, the place is polluted and they vetoed the plant or whatever it was, but beyond that I don't really—when you said environmental, I remember these other guys were coming and talking about kinder, gentler stuff. I mean this no net loss of wetlands was something they cooked up during the '88 campaign as some campaign pledge, which is just infernally complicated and I really never understood it.

Milkis: Did it give you any pause that Vice President Bush was running as the environmental President, the education President, did any of that concern you?

Pinkerton: I didn't really believe it. I thought—

Milkis: You thought it was good politics?

Pinkerton: Yes, I put it in the kinder, gentler category. Okay, we're going to take—I mean I was a Reagan guy first, and in my heart of hearts, obviously still am, and so I figured okay, times have changed. In 1968, Hubert Humphrey didn't really have anything different to say than

Lyndon Johnson or in 1960, Nixon didn't have anything different than Eisenhower. You want to win, you've got to get a third term, you've got to have something new to say, I understood all that and so I was for it.

Karaagac: Where was Reagan in all this? Was he a presence?

Pinkerton: Not really. Back in the early 80s, Atwater came back from some meeting, state chairman, whatever, with Reagan and Reagan, Atwater said, in the Roosevelt room or something. Thirty-five people in the room and the only guy in the room who wasn't a player was Reagan. [*laughter*] Again, Reagan was secure and serene in his own place in history. We were going to beat the Soviets, we were going to cut taxes, and the rest of it, who cares. Looking back at it I sort of find myself adopting that view myself. Who cares. I mean not to take offense to this project here but nevertheless. At some level it just doesn't matter. Those people work for you and if you don't know their name, that's fine, because they know their name and as long as they get to work to help you then that is all you need.

So, I mean, we always had the feeling that Don Regan didn't like Bush. I mean, the problem, it gets back to being Vice President. Does the boss's wife ever like the executive vice president? There is always that sort of Freudian deep feeling of, well, so you do well when my husband dies? Okay, so this somewhat colors my opinion of you even no matter how polite and correct you are, and Regan, Don Regan and Howard Baker and even Ken Duberstein, we never got the feeling that they liked Bush that much. We always got the feeling—in Regan's case there was a dislike of Bush on just general principles. You know Boston Irish versus Boston preppie. In Baker's case we always thought he was for Dole. Duberstein same thing. So we never really felt like the Reagan types really even cared whether Bush got elected after him and Nancy Reagan same thing.

Milkis: I don't remember, and correct me if I'm wrong Jim, but I don't remember the same kind of tortured relationship between Reagan and Bush that we saw between Clinton and Gore in this last campaign. I mean Bush seemed, again, correct me if I'm wrong, Bush seemed a little more comfortable with the idea of being Reagan's heir apparent.

Pinkerton: Yes, he was, but it was, at the micro level there was plenty of tension. Look, Reagan was a wonderful optimistic guy and Bush was a decent optimistic, not so optimistic, but decent enough guy so they got along fine. But certainly I read, I read, so it must be true, that Reagan never invited Bush to the residence. That, you mean, again, in the large scheme of things who cares, but in the micro scheme of things it means if the chairman of your department, maybe you are the chairman, I don't know, didn't invite you to your own party. After a while it will rankle you a little bit. And Bush, again, was always nice. Bush would invite anybody into the residence. He was much better at that kind of stuff. It wasn't a big thing but it was enough.

Remember, there was a serious rivalry inside the party. You go back and look at where Howard Baker and Dan Crippen and not Ken—these guys had worked, Tommy Griscom, they don't—I'm sure they all knew Dole very well from the Senate and it wouldn't be a surprise if they liked him better. So it wasn't so much that Reagan and Bush have some vast gap, it was just the fact that the staff was much more ridden with old loyalties in a way that since Gore really didn't have

much of an opposition, there wasn't, there wouldn't be any kind of tension. I mean if David Pryor had been running against, or just some other governor had been running against Gore in the primaries, Gore might have been thinking to himself, hmmm maybe have some other DLC [Democratic Leadership Council] type person out there rivaling for Clinton's affections, but that wasn't really the case. That wasn't the case with Gore and Clinton, it was the case with Reagan and Bush; Vis-à-vis all these other people floating out the '88 nomination cycle.

Milkis: Are there any other questions we want to ask about the election or were there any other things that we haven't prompted you to talk about you think you ought to talk about with respect to the election?

Pinkerton: It was just—I remember in Los Angeles, one of those debates, we sort of figured out okay, the trick here is to get your stuff out by two seconds after the debate ends or even ten minutes before it ends or something like that, so we—to show the state of the technology—we had all these, what you now think of as macros on a computer, of Xeroxes and stuff. Bush killed Dukakis today in the debate on "blank," and then we sort of typed that in. We had all that stuff, like fifteen different forms, we cooked up in advance, Xeroxed with blank spaces there to be filled in and just typed in. And that the sort of thing I think about in terms of what were those kind of—you know, whoever invented the, there's a term for it, the notation for dance, laucherette or something like that where you have to—before cameras, how did you communicate what a dance step was to somebody else, you had some elaborate notation. Now it is a completely lost art because you just videotape it or photograph it at least. Back then you actually had to dream up a notation to cover whatever. All this technological stuff we dreamed up with the proto technology of typewriters and Xerox machines and stuff like that. I don't think I'm getting enough credit for this. [*laughter*]

Milkis: You were typing on a 3x5 card in a typewriter.

Pinkerton: I didn't have a typewriter. I remember, I had a computer which had some kind of weird orange color type font on it or something like that and I remember I could kind of type on it but I couldn't print so I'd make this guy John Gardner who is now some big shot in the White House, I'd make him, "Come here and print this for me." I mean, it just was, it was tough back then, a transition period. Anyway.

Riley: I bet you couldn't find a typewriter in this office.

Pinkerton: I bet you couldn't, yes. They'll still so handy for forms and envelopes and stuff like that, but there is always a period when the old technology is really better but you really can't use it because it is embarrassing. Like, for example, it was quite a while there in the seventeenth and eighteenth century when bows and arrows were still better than muskets, but you just simply couldn't have a credible army with bows and arrows, so we wound up using muskets even though it takes twice as long to shoot one, or ten times as long, but you know, you've just got to move with the time. We'd be probably better off with a typewriter here but who would want to show it hidden down here.

Milkis: Do you remember spending a lot of time looking at polls and surveys during the campaign?

Pinkerton: Oh yes, we did all that stuff. Teeter was right there. I mean Teeter was the pollster and I had spent a lot of, didn't claim any great insight into them. I take them seriously. I don't disrespect polls as an indicator of things and so on and so we certainly would use them to bolster our case on whatever it was, taxes for example.

Milkis: In addition to the dials.

Pinkerton: Dials and focus groups were revealing because they really do—you know, it's like conversation. You learn a lot from just how people react. Again, the thing I remember, words matter, just keep it positive.

Riley: But that technology was just developing about that time too, wasn't it? It hadn't been in use that long.

Pinkerton: I don't remember it from '84 at all. Not to say they didn't have them, but I don't remember them. So it probably was mid-80s.

Milkis: First time through, interesting.

Riley: Was there anything that you encountered in your researches, your opposition research that you considered too incendiary—

Pinkerton: No. [*laughter*]

Karaagac: He says honestly.

Pinkerton: I said that.

Milkis: I wish you'd be a little more candid.

Pinkerton: I suppose, remember Howie Carr, columnist for the *Boston Herald* had this thing where he said, "If Michael Dukakis can't police Kitty's medicine cabinet, how can he police the drug war?" I remember laughing about that. I guess, take back, we probably didn't use much of that. I mean, we—

Milkis: The psychiatrist.

Pinkerton: The psychiatrist, the cripple stuff, we never used that. But then we didn't have proof. I think probably if we had proof we would have done something with it.

Karaagac: [inaudible] Kitty Dukakis and the state trooper, or was that rumor.

Pinkerton: That was, I mean, we had, we knew we had to prove it. That we knew. Look, we understood full well that the left hated the Willie Horton stuff and furloughs and everything like that, and the press would be after us. We knew all that. Again, we had, we put a lot of emphasis on getting, like Arlen Specter did a lot of stuff for us in '88 on this furlough thing. It was really hard work to kind of get it right and stuff like that, and the fact that there are forty-four other states that also had furlough programs and that South Carolina actually had a furlough program like Massachusetts' and stuff like that, including first-degree murderers getting out. It was just tough sledding and we knew we had to be right, and so back to the incendiary. If it was incendiary and true we'd use it. If it was incendiary and we couldn't prove it, we wouldn't.

Karaagac: On that point, there was one little minor problem when Donna Brazile came up with some allegation about President Bush and she was fired immediately. Was that a moment of stress for you?

Pinkerton: No, I didn't care. I mean, in the sense of that, like well, it just—again things, affairs, it just didn't register. The *New York Post* had a big story on it as I recall in '88. I remember looking at it at the time.

Riley: Did you have your own oppo research doing Bush stuff?

Pinkerton: No, you don't want to hear about that. I really think they tell that to reporters just to bullshit them. I really don't think that you would ever have a filing cabinet full of your own stuff. I just don't—it is just too loaded, it is too explosive. I mean, I can see you want to keep track of it for bimbo eruptions or whatever, but I just can't imagine digging on your own guy. I mean, I don't know, you're married and you say, here's the worst stuff about me, I'll put it in a filing cabinet and honey don't look at it. I mean, it just doesn't work that way. [*laughter*]

Riley: Well, when you put it that way. Should we go to the transition?

Milkis: We'll move you now forward to the transition and you were Director of Policy Planning in the transition?

Pinkerton: I think planning wasn't there yet, I think it was just Director of Policy.

Milkis: You were just Director of Policy?

Pinkerton: I really don't know what my title was, I think it's in here someplace.

Milkis: Yes, it says Director of Policy. That doesn't matter.

Pinkerton: Yes, the policy planning came later, remind me to talk about that, but—the transition you're in the same, I was in the '80-'81 Reagan transition, that was a big deal. Everybody was new and that was—that's somebody else's oral history, but '88-'89 was not that big a deal in terms of, well, how much change there was going to be. It was just down the street here, 1825 Connecticut I think, just below the Hilton, and I sort of understood that the issue here was just to sort of look good doing this and I put together reports. All anybody was really doing was

scrambling around looking for a job. To sort of cover that you had to kind of put together a briefing book on Energy Department, Education Department whatever—

Riley: And you were sure you want to go in?

Pinkerton: I knew, I knew that I didn't want to be in politics, I knew I didn't want to be in campaign politics any more, I knew that. I did get wrapped in the '92 campaign but I told Teeter, "Look, I'm not going to do anything." He said fine. I didn't want to be responsible for anything. I knew that. I thought, well yes, I'll probably wind up getting in here someplace because I had—all of a sudden Sununu emerged. I can't remember exactly when Sununu emerged as the big player, but I remember being really delighted because that was, I knew he liked me and Ed Rogers was one of my best friends and so I knew I was well wired on that score.

Riley: And you'd worked with Andy Card in New Hampshire?

Pinkerton: I'd known Andy well and Phil Brady, all these people who would wind up there I knew and—

Riley: The Sununu relationship obviously pre-dated the conversation you had with—

Pinkerton: It goes back to New Hampshire.

Riley: And it was all New Hampshire.

Pinkerton: It was all New Hampshire. I don't think I ever even saw him in D.C. The only times I knew him, ever met him in my life before December of '88 would have been in New Hampshire.

Riley: I'm sorry, I interrupted your train of thought—

Pinkerton: Well, I sort of figured out that they weren't going to make me Assistant to the President for Domestic Policy, I figured I'd get in there somewhere or something, communications, something. I just knew I'd get in there somewhere at that point.

Milkis: In the transition, were you writing memos about a program or were you dealing with personnel, how the policy position should be—

Pinkerton: I think the main thing was to just put together these briefing books. I'm sure nobody ever read them, I'm sure it was simply, here's the lay of the land on the Energy Department, Education Department, whatever. We had all this stuff dreamed up, transition tics and tocs we called them, you know, transition organizing committees or—tics and tocs, I can't remember, we just joked about this kind of stuff you know. Dumb little acronyms you invent sort of on the spot to mystify everybody else. I'm a tic and you're a toc, well that settles that. We had this woman, Emily Meade, she put together—

Milkis: Promises, right. Campaign promises—

Pinkerton: A good thing on promises and then I had to do something which was all the Bush campaign promises in the order in which he promised them, so there were things he would do on day one, first minute on the job, 12:01 pm on January 20 he would—go on a hiring freeze as I recall. Things he would do with laser-like speed. I mean, first month, first year, first whatever, by end of the decade. Everything we could think of we sort of had it all kind of laid out as promises like that. It was actually a pretty good book. I'm sure it, you know, who knows where it is, but it was actually, that struck me as useful. But then a lot of times it was just simply—we had all those ethics people—you know the Energy Department was just swamped with people who all worked for the Petroleum Institute or something like that, so you had to sort that out. I remember, I had this guy, Lloyd Green, an orthodox Jew, very fatalistic, very anal, very careful and I remember he'd come to work for me in June of '88 and just totally trusted him, still one of my best friends. And sort of looked like—"I'm not signing anything unless you look at it first" in terms of this, I don't want to sign anybody's ethics waiver, anything financial, anything, anything, unless you've read it. I want your initials on it before I even see it and I want you sitting there with me while we talk about this and like that. So I didn't sign much frankly, because I figured this guy is going to live longer that way.

But I was sort of theoretically responsible for, you know, I don't know, a couple of hundred people who sort of, a lot of them I never even met who would—they would be in charge then of going to the Transportation Department and being briefed on whatever they were doing and things like that. I would have to sort of, you know, put together in a box, or notebook and this—I just started naming Cabinet Secretaries and I would sort of go meet with them and talk with them about this kind of stuff. It was really a lot of paper shuffling sort you, you know, for nothing, but we had two months. It's like Perkins law, you got two months to burn, you burn two months. The only thing I really remember is Arnold Schwarzenegger showed up at the transition—

Milkis: At the office one day?

Pinkerton: Yes, he showed up. He had an appointment with Bob Teeter or something and Teeter and Fuller were busy on this sort of rumble someplace over who is going to run the place and so on, and I guess neither of them wound up doing so—Sununu is a survivor. So Schwarzenegger has this appointment and there's nobody there and so somebody says, "Why don't you meet with him." Okay. So we sit there and like, "How you doing?"

Milkis: What did he want?

Pinkerton: Exactly, what do you want. So he said—fortunately I'm a big movie fan so we could talk about *Terminator* and *Predator* and whatever else he'd been in. He was making a new movie, he was making *Total Recall* at the time as I remember, and he wanted to be on the President's Council on Physical Fitness. And I figured, I better look like I know what I'm doing. Are you a citizen? Yes. Have you taken steroids? Yes, but I don't do it anymore. Okay, you know. So we had a nice chat and we actually sort of became friends, at least for as long as I was in the White House. After that he kind of dropped me. I remember, it became one of my little projects. Bush was a fit guy and a jogger and all this kind of stuff, so it made sense. With Bush

and me pushing Schwarzenegger to become chairman of the President's Council on Physical Fitness, it only took a year to get it done once we got in the White House.

Milkis: Why, why did it take a year?

Pinkerton: Because everything takes a while and there was already an incumbent, Bob Mathias, the former Olympian whatever, decathloner whatever, former Congressman. He wanted the job, he wanted to stay, and he had so-and-so helping him and whatever. We kind of want you to quit but you don't send in your resignation so they've got to fire you so it just takes—

Milkis: A year.

Pinkerton: It takes a year. The transition was just sort of—Jim Cicconi, now where did I meet him? He was a Baker-type in the first Reagan term and then went off to some law firm. He was one of the people, the people who, if you haven't tracked him down in the campaign, who were very helpful. I should mention Jim Cicconi and Richard Breeden were both two issues-types who were volunteers, pro bonos, worked like dogs. I did my best to take credit for what they were doing, but nonetheless they were very valuable and I think they both obviously went on to big jobs inside the Bush—Breeden went to the SEC [Securities and Exchange Commission] and Cicconi went back inside the White House. Cicconi wound up being, I guess, staff secretary then. I remember, we sat in the Roy Rogers in the basement of that transition building saying now, look they're going to name—we don't yet know who is going to be the domestic policy advisor, it is going to be somebody, it won't be you.

Milkis: You said you knew it wouldn't be you.

Pinkerton: I knew it wouldn't be me.

Milkis: You just too young, or—

Pinkerton: Too young, thirty. Frankly, I would have been interested but I didn't know enough and I realized, what you don't want to do is get a job and get pushed out of it. It's one thing not to get it, but to get fired is another thing. So the logic of the way the White House works is, the assistants are theoretically just sort of sitting around with the President and sort of watching the movement of the clouds and so on, and then the deputy is sort of, the Deputy Assistant to the President is sort of a give away, to kind of call him director of the office. So as Assistant to the President for Politics, or for national security, then to be the Deputy Assistant to the President and director of the office which is sort of the theory behind it. It's sort of nonsensical but in terms of the director thing, you might as well be, if you're in charge you might as well be directing as well. So Cicconi said, well we'll make you Deputy Assistant to the President for Policy and director of the office.

Even then I was sort of smart enough to say wait a second; a, I'm not sure that I really can do this, and b, they're going to bring in Mr. Big, whoever he is, and he's going to take one look at me and say, well, I really like you Jim, in which case you can be director of the office or, he is going to say, I don't like you at all in which case I'm going to push you out because you have all

these titles cluttering up my line of command. So make me, I said, I've always had this, obviously, new ideas historical thing in me even if I didn't have any new ideas yet, and so I said, well make me policy planning. I knew that George Cannon had been the Director of Policy Planning for the State Department, that seemed like kind of a cool job and all sorts of interesting people had that job over time and so on like that. Policy planning sounds kind of fun and think tanky and—

Milkis: Yes I was going to say, think tanky.

Pinkerton: So, don't make me director of the office, don't make me policy development which is the line thing, make me policy planning. That way, give me a little dotted line thing there so I can sort of float around more and let the guy put his own trusted crony underneath him and if I make it then great, we'll be fine, just my own—but don't put me on a line thing. So I actually got hired to be the number two in the domestic policy office before the number one got hired. That was Cicconi, me and Cicconi working that out.

Milkis: At Roy Rogers.

Pinkerton: At the famous Roy Rogers meeting, which doesn't seem to have gotten quite as much attention as the meeting at the Tulsa Bridge, but after this book comes out I'm optimistic.

Milkis: Were there any names, Jim, floating about who would be the policy? Had Porter's?

Pinkerton: Yes, Roger Porter, I definitely heard his name as that and there must have been—I think they talked about keeping Dan Crippen but it didn't really last, then they brought in Bill Roper and I'm not sure where Porter found him from, I mean he was a HCFA, but he was, I don't know how they came to know each other.

Milkis: But Roper didn't come in before Porter.

Pinkerton: Roper came in afterwards. Roper was not there on the first day at all.

Milkis: Did it give you any pause when you heard Porter's name mentioned. At that time did his name register with you at all or—

Pinkerton: Yes, he'd worked in Reagan OPD [Office of Policy Development], sort of a big shot, big cheese back then. He'd worked in the Ford White House. He was actually sort of a respected figure because he'd worked in the Fort White House and he was a bureaucrat who was kind of important. When he came to the Reagan OPD in '81 or '82, whenever it was, he was not only director of the economic policy council, but he was also counselor to the secretary of the treasury. He had this cool dual title thing going that made him seem like pretty well wired in. He and I always got along well. He certainly never treated me badly. I don't think he was the world's greatest guy in his job but he was always nice to me so I can't—

Milkis: When he was named, did you guys get together and try to work out a *modus operandi* or—

Pinkerton: Yes, we did.

Milkis: Tell us about that. That meeting or meetings, were they at the Roy Rogers too—

Pinkerton: No I guess we must have probably moved out by then.

Karaagac: McDonald's.

Milkis: Wendy's.

Pinkerton: Might have been at the White House. I'm not sure we really met much during the transition. I really don't think, I think he was—

Riley: Roger was a late appointment.

Pinkerton: He was always grading papers, like for the first six months he was still grading papers and stuff like that. He was a very hard working guy. I don't know how you can do without drinking coffee, but he really was up all night, working all the time. So I don't really think we really *modus operandi*-ed until inside, post January 20, that sounds about right.

Karaagac: You didn't have any dealings with George W at this time did you?

Pinkerton: Yes, I knew him very well.

Karaagac: He was with the scrub team at this point, he was vetting people for loyalty.

Pinkerton: Oh, in the transition. No, I'd known him, remember, he worked in the campaign from '87 to '88, so I was across the hall from him for a year. I talked to him all the time. By scrub team times I didn't have anything to do with picking people, I was doing useless paper shuffling while other people were actually getting picked, so, in that sense no. He and I kept in pretty close touch but just on whatever I was doing as opposed to what he was. You know, as opposed to should we pick Bill Bennett or so-and-so for drug czar. It was not—solicited my opinion on that.

Riley: I guess I have to chase this now. Any recollections from, you're across the hall with Junior?

Pinkerton: Yes, he was, he basically told me all the story about the drinking and the Christian, finding God kind of stuff, and I liked him a lot. He was fun and he sort of got it. He was more in the Atwater bias reaction kind of thing as opposed to the—he was, he looks like his father and so on but much more of a boomer, and I mean that pejoratively. In terms of his being sort of small and sort of ordinary and unheroic and so on and—you know, he would be sort of candid about, you know, I can remember when I showed up drunk at the White House and spitting tobacco juice. He said one time he spit tobacco juice on somebody's purse at some dinner or something like that. Stuff he was not proud of but he was honest about and he definitely wanted to win and

he sort of understood, he understood, when his father never did, issues matter. Issues are—issues matter because they matter and even if you don't care about them, they're still a tool. You win elections because you bamboozle those people out there into thinking about the issues. And if you actually care about them on top of that fine. That part he completely got and that was showed very much all the way through his own career as governor when he had Myron Magnet, Marvin Olasky and these people sort of floating around his orbit. You kept Larry Lindsay, David Dulio, these were all people who I greatly respect and if you have them on your team then I respect you more. And I think I'm not alone in that.

Riley: Did he have the bug then, I mean, to run himself?

Pinkerton: I know I should say, "Oh of course, I knew it then, and actually I was the first one to mention it to him." No, I think I thought of him as a Sunbelt businessman who would do well in business. He met this Roland Betts guy who was always floating around and his big fundraiser, silver screen partners. That was a big thing back then; he was talking all the time on the phone. Bush would bring in, these people were sort of, this was even before the [Texas] Rangers. I can't remember when he bought the Rangers but it was sort of in there. It must have been post '88 because he sure as hell didn't have any money when he was working at the campaign. It was just always weird about that.

Yes, I would say he had, and this is not quite Bush Senior, a woman named Debbie Dunn, Debbie Romash, who worked in the visitors' office in '88, in the Bush White House. She had a—Debbie was sort of Junior's assistant and Debbie had an assistant named Amy Schwartz. Amy V. Schwartz, "babe-licious," just total Pamela Anderson type, and Junior never looked at her. I mean, I really give him credit for that. I mean, Atwater is staring at her all the time, and Rich Bond is staring at her all the time, and Junior walked right past. I mean I really respected him on that score, as being a reformed, cleaned up guy, but never thought of him. Gee, if things had bounced differently in Texas. If that guy Clayton Williams had won in 1990 and beaten Ann Richards, then 1994 would have come around and it would have been Clayton Williams running for re-election and you know Junior would just be some guy owning a baseball team. I'm not saying he wouldn't have won ever, but he certainly, history bounces in odd ways.

Riley: W. was there, not at the PAC but—

Pinkerton: At the campaign. He must have showed up, being there a fair amount. Must have shown up full time October, November of '87 that's about right, and for the rest of the year, for the next twelve months.

Riley: He spent a lot of time on the road?

Pinkerton: Went on the road a lot, yes.

Riley: You talked about the Iowa trip—

Pinkerton: That was before. But yes, he was there a lot. I don't really think he had a job, you know, at that point. Maybe he was on the board of the Department of Energy or something or Spectrum Seven, I can't remember all these names sort of floating around.

Karaagac: Where was Doug Wead?

Pinkerton: Wead was—he was our liaison to Christians and—

Karaagac: Who found Wead, was it Atwater?

Pinkerton: I remember Wead got Ron Kaufman some gig to speak at some Amway convention, like five grand, which was real money back then. You know, Kaufman, anybody back then living on sixty thousand a year with three kids or whatever, two kids or whatever, two kids, whatever, five grand is a lot of money to go make a speech to the double diamond Amway people or something. So I don't really know where Wead—Wead found Bush or Bush found Wead or whoever, Kaufman, but I know that sort of in there somewhere. I think Wead played a constructive role. He had this *George Bush, Man of Faith* book that was out there, we had copies of that, we still have some I'm sure. That won't be hard to find, if you dig around the archives. You know, Wead was one of those guys you could never really tell what he was up to, he was sort of mysterious and kind of, you know, doing this, in a very Christian way of course, but I'm doing this and I'm doing that. I thought he was useful, but he certainly always seemed to have evangelicals around to sort of come and meet and talk and whatever but I couldn't really put a quantification on him and his contribution.

Karaagac: He wasn't as necessary after the primaries was he?

Pinkerton: Certainly not as necessary after the primaries, right, right, but again, if you went back and sort of were to read whatever indicia of conventional wisdom there were in 1984-85 about Bush's prospects for getting the Republican nomination, they would have been low. He had a terrible campaign. Kemp was sort of the Reagan heir to the party and Bush was sort of Trilateralist appendage that every true Reaganite hated. Not hated, strong word, but distrusted, absolutely distrusted. So all those Doug Weads and Craig Shirleys and so on were critical to sort of helping, I won't say critical, certainly seemed critical. I mean, looking back at it, who knows, but certainly those guys were precious back then.

Riley: I got you off on a tangent with Junior and—

Milkis: After the Porter meeting?

Riley: Yes.

Milkis: That's where we went off the road. It was a good detour though.

Pinkerton: Porter takes a lot of notes. I'm sure he's got much better memories of this than I do. I sort of, by then, '88, I had enough swagger to kind of talk my way into things. I made it clear to Porter that I wasn't going to get in his way on stuff that he cared about and I was going to help

and we got along fine. We never really, in three years, never really had a cross word. I mean, I think it was clear we sort of had different, and it became very clear after a while, we had different sort of worldviews and so on like that. But I really, you know—it was sort of like somebody sort of, know in the office, you never had a bad conversation with, you never really came close but you—you do your work and I'll do mine and it was fine.

Karaagac: What is his worldview?

Pinkerton: Process. I think a sincere commitment to public service. He had, some quote from him which I used to sort of treasure, "I love government" or something like that, which is not really the phrase. He said that somewhere in one of his profiles or something like that. He's a—he wanted to do the right thing and he wanted to sort of be orderly and be fair and he'd written books on the subject of presidential decision making and stuff and he sort of, all these sort of phrases like "honest brokering" and "ad hocercy," he [undecipherable 461] down and I don't think of him as any great ideologue. I think he has a kind of basic sort of Mormon bias toward freedom and out on the range. I remember Dick Wirthlin explaining to me once that the Mormons and the US government were sort of at war for ten years in the 1850s some place. In other words, you can't have that kind of experience in your sort of racial genetic memory and then be entirely happy when you see park rangers come by or FBI agents or not to mention black helicopters. But I mean, Porter wasn't in that group, it was just part of his general orientation of Utah and so on, but he'd been, I don't know where he went to undergrad, BYU [Brigham Young University] or what—

????: [inaudible]

Pinkerton: That's right, but he'd clearly been to the east coast and stuff. He was very respected.

Milkis: He went to Harvard, got his Ph.D. at Harvard under [Richard] Neustadt I think.

Pinkerton: So—

Milkis: So there was no sense in your meeting with Porter that he had the feeling you were cluttering up his design for the—messing up his design for the—

Pinkerton: Oh probably, but that was his problem, I got hired before he did. Not many people saw the movie, what was it, Zulu?

Milkis: Oh sure, it is one of my favorite movies.

Pinkerton: Remember early on the captain gets killed like the first ten minutes and so it is Michael Caine and Jack Hawkins—

Milkis: And a medic or something.

Pinkerton: And they say, "When were you commissioned?" April '96, well, I was March '96, so I'm in charge. [*laughter*] So I always had that going for me, I mean, I was wired into Sununu and I was wired into a lot of these Bush people and so—

Milkis: And you were part of the campaign.

Pinkerton: Part of the campaign, and Atwater was there at the RNC, so he knew—I just understood quickly and early on, that if I didn't get in Porter's way, and I sort of saw myself as sort of a politico and whatever, we had a natural sort of division of labor and so on and so on, so we got along fine.

Riley: During the course of the transition itself, before the inauguration, you were meeting with some of the more senior principals to divine what the domestic program would be—

Pinkerton: I really wouldn't meet with them, it was like this tics and tocs—Rob Quartel, if you've run across him, Richard Breeden, Jim Cicconi. Rob Quartel, was a Bush guy, lives in town here someplace. He became head of the Federal Maritime Commission or something under Bush. Those guys would do all the work. I would just sort of sit there all day and kind of like put notebooks together. Sounds kind of pedestrian but somebody had to do it and just make sure that everything was reading right. I had Lloyd sitting there. I mean, I was so obsessed with not going to jail over—because you had five hundred lobbyists doing the transition work. It was Texaco and the Energy Department, it was, I was full of dread about—this wasn't Iran-Contra but I just didn't want to be on the wrong side of some Rita Lavelle or the Energy Department thing had blown up, Fernald, Ohio had just erupted and all this stuff.

There was this guy, William F., Bill Martin, William F. Martin, another one of these guys who helped in the Bush campaign. Wonderful guy and somehow got hired to be Deputy Secretary of Energy, sort of in the tail end of the Reagan administration and so he shows up there sort of determined to do a good job, firm handshake, good smile and clean up his in-box and the first day on the job is this Fernald, Ohio thing. It was one of these, if you don't remember any more, it was some power plant some place that leaked energy and radiation all over the place and it's your fault, right? You're the Energy Department and it is your facility. You never heard of it until the day before, but nonetheless now you've got kids dying of leukemia on your hands and that's what I didn't want to do. I didn't want to sit there and say, write a memo saying everything is A-OK at Fernald, Ohio and ten days later you get Chernobyl. I mean, that's not what I wanted.

I don't remember leaving the building much. I think I also sort of realized part of it was just simply stay close and don't be taking a cab ride over to the Energy Department when you should be here in the office making sure nobody gets appointed. Remember, this was the time when they were starting to name people too so you had press releases going out and all this stuff to sign off on and Bush was making speeches. I'm sort of still in the speech—I never left the Bush speech-writing loop. I probably read every speech before Bush gave it from '85 to '92—that's time consuming. And I was getting interviewed. I remember David Shribman came in, I had a nice profile in the *Journal* and all that.

Milkis: He was writing for the *Wall Street Journal*—

Pinkerton: Yes, exactly. A very nice profile, I sent it to my mother. There was a lot of that.

Milkis: [inaudible] consult you because [inaudible].

Pinkerton: No, she became—I sort of dragged her along ideologically with me but, yes, she voted for Bush in '88 and she is probably the only known person who voted against Bush in '92, she may have—because of the Gulf War. Only vote that Bush lost was over—she was always a dove and so she figured, well, how did he know it was going to work so well in the Persian Gulf. You know, she'd read Ed Luttwak article saying there would be twenty thousand Americans killed in the Persian Gulf and that sort of stuck with her more than the actual results, so she sort of became—she voted, she didn't vote or something like that. I know she didn't vote for Bush in '92.

Milkis: Were there any discussions during the transition about the Congress and what you faced in the Congress with Bush.

Pinkerton: Yes, we all sort—

Milkis: How you were going to deal with that—

Pinkerton: One hundred day plan, we were all that stuff.

Milkis: The weakest support, I think partisan support of any elected President since early in the 1800s right?

Pinkerton: For a newfound President that's probably true, yes, yes. We sort of new that and we did all that sort of, not to any great effect, who'd they name. Fred McClure was around. These people, we did all that stuff. Darman was a big—I hadn't mentioned Darman. Back to prepping all that debate stuff, he was in there, I forgot about him, he was, and he's not a small figure.

Riley: How could you?

Pinkerton: How could I, exactly. Darman and I worked together pretty closely all this time.

Milkis: In the campaign—

Pinkerton: In the campaign and the transition and stuff. Again, briefing books. I remember him saying to me, don't take a job in the White House until you talk to me first. And I thought about it, wait a second, I can get a better job in the White House than I can with him. So I took the job in the White House and then said to Dick, they just drafted me, they just handed me this and I signed it. He and I were actually pretty tight back then.

Milkis: Tell us about him a little bit. What was he like to work with? What kind of impression did he make on you?

Pinkerton: Smart, very smart, knows his stuff. Wants to make sure you know he knows his stuff. Has a sort of bravura to him, which makes an impression. Had this mystique, this Baker mystique and so on, "We saved Reagan we were all through this in the 80s." And so we got along fine and I respected him, but I do remember, even in January of '89, the transition or someplace—remember I was—my natural as you might have guessed sort of speechwriter types, communicator types, sort of my message, get it out there kind of things. So speechwriter types were sort of, any speechwriting office I concluded is sort of a natural hotbed for ideologues. People who live by words want the words to matter, they want the words to sort of punch through, so Peggy Noonan, Tony Dolan, Dana Rohrabacher these kind of people were always my friends and sort of hung out together.

I also figured that I was more likely to effect policy by getting Bush to say it than I was by plowing through some interagency meeting where I really didn't know anything about some highway act or something. It wasn't really my—so we always figured we'd sort of do it through the speechwriting process and do it at the top end. The process would come up this way and we'd sort of layer on some words that would be, frankly, done properly more important than the policy. I mean, if you've listed to Bud McFarlane—parenthetically, Bud McFarlane tells the story about SDI. I had lunch—I know McFarlane pretty well and I had lunch with him several times on this—says Reagan had the idea for SDI and so he'd say, I want to build this missile defense thing whatever and Shultz and [Caspar] Weinberger say yes, yes. Shultz you knew would be against it, Weinberger kind of was too, it sort of drooled money away from tanks and ships and things like that and so they would—Reagan would kind of say what he wanted to say, Shultz and Weinberger would sort of go off and do this kind of stuff. McFarlane was there too, who said he was a big supporter of SDI, and I kind of believe him. McFarlane sort of gives himself credit for helping conceive of the idea as a strategy for dealing with the nuclear freeze on the U.S. end and the Soviet rising on the other end. So if you can't cut Soviet missiles and you can't increase U.S. missiles, the only thing to do is sort of cut the Soviet missiles by some other X-factor I guess. Makes sense.

So they had two or three meetings where Reagan would say missile defense and then they would come back, the speech draft would come back, not in there or so hedged and fudged not even noticeable and McFarlane said, "Look, Reagan just wrote it in, I will build this missile shield," whatever it was. And I said, "So you mean if you go to the Reagan library and there's some document there with Reagan's little script saying that." And he said yes. Now, I've never checked that but it would be sort of a fun thing—the point is, it is a reminder that if you get the last whack at something, on the speech end of things, you can often times drive policy no matter what three months of interagency meetings had done prior to that. Now, it didn't work on the tax increase thing, which I'm sure we'll get to later, but it was a good gamble.

I don't care how much Darman and these people want to raise taxes, Bush is so staked out on this surely nobody is so stupid as to break a pledge like that. What do I know? But, I remember in January '89, all of a sudden the tax pledge, the "read my lips" kind of thing sort of disappearing. We put it in, like Dan McGroarty was there, and Rick Davis? Bill Davis?

Milkis: Davis, but I can't remember his first name.

Pinkerton: Davis, right. Mary Kate Grant, Mary Kate Curry, these people were all my friends. We'd sort of gotten to know each other during the transition and the campaign and things like that. Anyway, we would always say, we're going to keep loading it up with anti-tax stuff, we're going to stick to—and Darman would start taking it out. That's when I knew the wheels were in motion here. Again, I don't want to give myself too much credit, but I just knew something was up, that's all I knew, in January of '89. At that point I started to say, wait a second, this is, I mean—I'd known OMB well from the Reagan days and I knew sort of where they came from budget-wise and so on like that and I knew that they would naturally let everything get driven by the budget. I'd seen how OMB had crushed OPD in the Reagan days. The budget drives policy thing, so I knew full well that OMB would be more of a player than OPD would be and I was, since I was working at OPD, naturally I started to think I've got to start getting some counterweights here in my own little mind and that meant speechwriters and politics and Atwater and so on as opposed to—so Darman and I had a little bit of friendship there in '88 based on mutual respect and hard work, definitely with him superior. But nevertheless, by January of '89, I knew we were not going to be on the same team.

Milkis: Besides going along with the territory on OMB, did you get a sense of why? I don't see why he would say these things to you that he was viscerally anti-ideological, that he resented, not resented—

Pinkerton: I'm not sure he was, I mean.

Milkis: That's the way he's described, maybe that's a mis—he's described sometimes—

Pinkerton: I think he definitely has a market orientation. I think he definitely believes markets work better than bureaucrats. I think he—he clearly disliked William Riley, EPA [Environmental Protection Agency] secretary or whatever he was—

Milkis: EPA Director.

Pinkerton: He was no liberal. But I think what was more important to him was the sort of *tour de force* opportunities, the cover of *Time* magazine. I'm the big shot, the master of the universe. I mean the master of the universe would do anything, right? If the deal helps Goldman Sachs or hurts Goldman Sachs sort of it's him, it's him. And if you have to quit Goldman Sachs to lead his own boutique firm, that would be fine.

I think of him as sort of ideologically amoral in that sense, but not to say, that's not immoral, he knew what it was, he just sort of would deviate from it when it suited him. And if he thought it would help him with the *Washington Post* and the *New York Times*.

Milkis: We're going to take a break for lunch pretty soon but, do you want to say anything about, before we take a break for lunch, the hundred day group that is—

Pinkerton: Yes, I saw it in here—

Milkis: Is that fiction or?

Pinkerton: Well, a lot of the stuff—

Milkis: I notice in some lists you're in the list and in some you're not. I think Shirley Warshaw I think didn't have you as part of the hundred day group but—

Pinkerton: Who didn't?

Milkis: Political scientist from Gettysburg, Shirley Warshaw I think—

Pinkerton: What does she know?

Milkis: Not much, no, no. I'll do my oral history on the political science field some other day.

Pinkerton: I sat through all those kind of meetings. I won't pretend to be central to this but I was around for this kind of stuff.

Milkis: Is this again where you felt like you were pushing papers? Were those discussions eye openers or stimulating in any way?

Pinkerton: This is my book, I don't know, did you get it here, my opening scene in the White House. I saw you had my thing here, I figured—

Karaagac: Big sleep?

Pinkerton: Big sleep, yes, that was my eye opener. Remember we've already—my active enthusiasm for Bush peaked about a year before this, right where we are now. I mean, because the big sleep was sincere in that sense of, I said wow, this is going to be not what I was expecting and that was January 29 of '89. So we're about done here. [*laughter*]

Riley: I don't think so.

Pinkerton: In terms of my career as upwardly mobile, bright lights, big city, kind of, boy this is going to be fun, exciting, we're going to win, win, win, you know. We're on the down slope pretty quickly because I just started to, I began to get ideas, I began, I think I remember this school choice article in the *Washington Post* or something, it must have been like December because Cavazos had these conferences on public school choice and Minnesota all the way, through like October, November, December '88. I don't know why they were scheduled like that but they were, and that's when it sort of began to dawn on me, hey, there's got to be, if we're going to do this "kindler, gentler" and we're doing the no new taxes thing, then we're going to create a crucible here of less money and more goals and you've got to sort of make that work, and it almost had the kind of Cato Institute, Libertarian take on it.

I always knew these politics existed, I mean, there's a guy named Doug Bandow who worked in the Reagan White House who was one of my best friends who had been at the Cato in the 80s. We'd always kept up, so I was always aware of new policy departures and things like that, never

really, and I remember, some of these memos, I'm sure in the 80s I was always—I would be pushing things like school choice in some vague way but not really, more as a political tactic as opposed to anything else, but I definitely remember, this was a subject of many memos going back into the mid- to late-80s now. I said people like Nelson Rockefeller always did well in terms of the perceptions because he had smart people around him. In other words, the brain trust, and he simply—if you make the effort you can get smart people to hang with you and like you. John Kennedy had Arthur Schlesinger and whoever else, [John Kenneth] Galbraith and just smart people who you—gave you sort of a quantum fuzz, the people around you. Oh, he can't be too stupid because of all those smart people. It is like Kemp, it worked for Kemp perfectly. It worked for Nelson Rockefeller. Nelson Rockefeller was dyslectic, right? Nelson Rockefeller couldn't read and yet people always said, oh he's so bright, he has all these visionary ideas for an atomic energy commission for New York State and a space program for New York State. All this stuff. That's what Bush ought to have. That's why Clinton—Clinton sort of kept himself with sort of Robert Putnam types of the work, keeping a little leavening of brainy people and Bush never got that at all. He just never saw the value in a bunch of professors and stuff.

Bush Junior does. Bush Junior totally gets it. He's got Magnet and Olasky. I mean, you know Bush Junior—and I even take some credit for that in terms of saying to Junior, "brain trust people." It is intangible but nonetheless has weight, to simply say, ah yes, smart people out there doing stuff, whatever—

Milkis: That's interesting.

Pinkerton: Anyway, that's—what point was I getting at here?

Milkis: The disappointment that you met immediately at the 100 day—

Pinkerton: Yes, exactly, when I realized this was just a bunch of bureaucratic functionaries who had no more institutional memories than the Labor Department. [David] Demarest worked at the Labor Department. I'm not saying he was a bad guy but they had no perspective. I mean, call me a snob, but you want some sort of new—they tried this under Roosevelt, they tried this under so-and-so. Now Porter did, Porter had a kind of historical depth to him in terms of, from sort of more bureaucratic—

Milkis: More bureaucratic management, the Brownlow Committee and all that.

Pinkerton: Exactly, exactly. Porter would have all that kind of stuff cold, and I would just simply, I remember, I would, this is just something, if this could be found it would be fun. I wrote a memo, I said, this is going back a few years, but this was sort of the stuff I did always in my mind, politics is sort of a have, have nots kind of thing, right. So when things are good, people give the haves credit and so they side with the haves, so that's when the Republicans win. When things are bad they sort of side with the have nots, so the key category here is what I was calling, the hopeful have-nots. I mean, if they are upwardly mobile, so they sort of—the question is, do they think that the economy is rising enough such that they should side with the haves, in which case they'd vote for us, or is the economy bad in which case they'd side with the have nots and vote against us.

So we've always been sending a signal of sort of upward mobility. It all boiled down to things like fifty thousand different ways to say no tax increase but still I said, if you say it clear, you're not going to raise taxes on the aspiring middle class and so on—I remember I used to, I had all this Kemp, Reagan, kind of supply-side stuff. I remember I had to explain to Lee Atwater what a marginal tax rate was. Not that he was dumb, but this was just not his thing—

Milkis: Government thing—

Pinkerton: Yes, it is not just cutting taxes, it is cutting tax rates. You may get revenue feed back, you may not, but it is a qualitative distinction opposed to just simply—and this is the kind of thing, Bush spat on, going back to 1980, I mean, it was simply, their idea was just simply rebates and whatever. We had this sort of Marty Anderson kind of Christmas on a marginal rate, a rate of return and Jude Wanniski and all those people sort of floating around. This was Reagan days, that kind of stuff, I could just tell they didn't care, it was Greek to them and so, there is a scene in the Richard Wright chapter in *The God That Failed* about how he'd been, you know, the black author, *Native Son,* he's this 30s and he's becoming a communist. He's read all of Marx and whatever else and he shows up at some Communist Party cell meeting in Chicago in 1937 and he's full of stuff about the dictatorship of the proletariat, all this intellectual stuff and the other people in the room are just a bunch of hacks, you know, "kill the bosses." He feels like he's come in with too much language for them and wasted on them and that was when he fell out of the Communist Party.

So I kind of fell out of the Republican Party when I realized I had sort of been carrying all this ideological freight with me, at my own expense because it wasn't like anybody cared, and I walk in and now I really am somewhere. It's not like the Reagan days when I was just some peon who was lucky to be there or the Bush campaign days when I was just working their campaign, campaign, campaign, kill, kill, kill. Now here's my chance to actually sort of do something and I'm the only one sort of talking like this.

Riley: I was going to ask, given what you said about your prior relationship with Sununu, was that somebody you felt free to consult with about this, or did you feel like he was one of the parts of your problem.

Pinkerton: Sununu shifted. See Sununu got seduced by Darman and went over to the dark side, in their somewhere. Sununu definitely would have understood, would have kept up with everything I just got through saying, but then just, two things, Darman just totally conned him, I believe, and two, and I said this at the Hofstra conference. Are you familiar with that Hofstra conference?

Milkis: Oh sure, I am. I was invited to give a talk there and I couldn't go.

Pinkerton: Do you have the transcripts? Are you going to get them?

Milkis: I think there's a book coming out.

Pinkerton: Great, great, great. I said, at that Hofstra Conference with Andy Card, Sichan Siv, maybe Porter, I can't remember, Sununu sitting in the front row, on the Bush domestic policy four years. I said, "John Sununu had something sort of rare." He had genuine bureaucratic courage. Sununu was sitting in the front row, sitting right there and I said, "He genuinely immolated himself, and everything he believes, and everything his credibility as governor of New Hampshire and a New Hampshire Republican to help Bush get the tax increase thing through." I believe that. And that's simply, it is one reason I'm not in government any more, because I can't imagine throwing away everything I believed because I'm so devoted to Sid that I want to help him get his program through.

Milkis: Well, I was going to bring you to Virginia, Jim, but the deal's off.

Riley: This happens, the tax thing happens two years later—

Pinkerton: Year and a half, sixteen months. It is like April or May of '90—they're building up, I mean, they kept saying, you know—

Milkis: It is all disappearing from the speeches—

Pinkerton: It is disappearing from the speech and they say things like, it was only the first term, the first year, all this sort of bullshit coming out of OMB at the time. And Sununu I think, just simply, again, Darman got to him. He thought he was doing what Bush wanted to do and like Darman he sort of liked the idea of well I'm so smart I can pull it off. Oh, it's like Barak and Clinton, they're both smart guys, we're both off the charts like you guys, so we can make the Palestinians like us and we'll sort of explain to Arafat why it is good for him. Well, some people are tougher sells than you think. Democrats, country, the Republican right, wasn't quite as easy to get bamboozled by all their locutions about tax revenue increases as opposed to tax increases that they were trying to come up with.

Milkis: I wanted to ask you just one more quick question before we break for lunch and to follow up with this notion of having people around you with ideas and it is sort of ironic that Vice President Quayle did gather staff—

Pinkerton: That's right, that's exactly right. Again, that's a good point. Bush, Quayle, Bush Junior that is, it doesn't take great brains, you've just got to simply—it's like *Mission Impossible*. I used to say this, it's the *Mission Impossible* thing, you just get a bunch of pictures and say, okay, he looks smart, bring him in, put him on—I remember a friend of mine wrote an article about Thomas Jefferson—John McCloy, worked in the Reagan White House, you don't care, it's the wrong administration, so put Jefferson on your lapel. That's what he said, he wrote this op-ed somewhere on Jefferson's birthday, April 13, you know. That's it, just festoon yourself, like medals. Oh, Marvin Olasky, Jude Wanniski, Milton Friedman, but it sort of works. I always tell interns, I say look, whatever profession you're going to go into, go find the old geezers in your profession and talk to them before they die and then you can say oh yes, so-and-so told me and such-and-such and whatever, and this is anecdotal empowerment. Just go say, I talked to so-and-so, distinguished journalist or distinguished military general or whatever, just get them, talk to them, they'll be dead quick enough, but you will then be able to say for the rest

of your life, which means you'll miss them after that, you'd have to say, as so-and-so told—in other words, if I said to you, you know, as Richard Nixon told me once, we must have a generation of peace—it is a lot better than if my mother told me once. [*laughter*]

Milkis: On that note, lunch is served.

[BREAK]

Karaagac: I guess the question would get a little bit back to Sununu and Darman. Can you elaborate a little more on that?

Milkis: The seduction.

Karaagac: Precisely.

Milkis: Going over to the dark side I think—

Karaagac: One gets the impression that there is more to that story or more to that—

Pinkerton: I can only piece that together second hand. I don't know enough about how, and I just haven't read all the books, such as they are, on the Bush Presidency and so I don't really kind of—all I know is what I saw as opposed to—results of what I saw, as opposed to seeing it. I just remember Sununu going from somebody who totally got the no tax pledge thing in the New Hampshire ad and so on and so on. I remember that one had opposition. I mean, Nick Brady, Bob Teeter, these guys weren't for the Straddle ad. They were just sort of either along for the ride, they didn't think it was important. I've seen Teeter quoted since saying, what really won it for Bush was that "Ask George Bush" session we had the night before the New Hampshire primary. I mean, they have their own theories as to why Bush won the New Hampshire primary. I guess they are as self-serving as mine is. I think mine is, I think Roger Ailes and Lee Atwater would agree with me on my theory, that was their theory too. Sununu just started talking, you know, well, I was actually in, I think I was in the Soviet Union on some junket. Porter was always nice about letting me—hey Roger, I'm going to be gone for three weeks—Okay.

Milkis: Why don't you go away for three weeks?

Pinkerton: I was not central. That's ahead, that's 1990. The big sleep thing, let's go back on that because it does—had me just thinking, from about January, February '89 on I said, look this is sort of decadent. This is just people saying words, and it's not really going to lead to anything. It is not going to give any consequence, and so how excited can I get about it. So that really was sort of my midlife crisis at the age of whatever it was, and, thirty, so at that point I stopped getting so excited about what they were doing, and sort of saw clearly that something else was out there, whatever that was. I mean, it took me a while to get around—I thought of Kuhn in January or February of '89 and I'm sure it took me a while to get the book, it just wasn't like the next day, it was probably a month or two before. It rattled around in my head and things like that.

I don't mean to say that I just like went on strike, I just sort of would sit there and say, you know, "This can't possibly be the way things work. You can't, people sitting around here putting boxes and underlines. That can't really be a translation into actual, a kid actually learning how to read or something like that." It didn't make sense to me. So at that point I really sort of didn't worry as much about what was going on with these people. I knew I was secure in my place and—I knew enough about the White House and had been there before. I knew I could sort of just keep your head down and pay attention and play but don't get too worked over, you're going to be fine. That was sort of the mode I adopted fairly early on without really thinking about what I'd do with it next.

Riley: Would you attribute any of this to fatigue? I mean, eight years in office, most of the players were coming in—I don't know most, but a lot of the key players have had—

Pinkerton: Would I attribute it to fatigue on the whole administration? Absolutely. Just to jump ahead. I always say the three reasons Bush lost in '92 were: one, end of the Cold War, just took away the national security rationale. I remember all the stuff we went through, for example, in one of those debates, in the '88 campaign. Now Bush had a certain reputation, not unjustifiable as sort of knowing his way around national security kind of stuff and in one of those debates he said, "Well then we destroyed our INF missiles," or something like that. He was attacking Dole and Al Haig came out of nowhere and said, "Mr. Vice President, you don't know what you're talking about because the INF missiles weren't destroyed, they were something—" and we had no idea, I mean, none of us knew, and Haig was right. The missiles weren't destroyed, they were sort of dismantled. I mean, there is a technical military term there distinguishing there and Bush had just clean gotten it wrong. Everybody hated Al Haig and so that was—but in the '92 campaign, if anybody had ever asked Clinton or let alone Ross Perot, "Hey, what do you think about missile defense and nuclear weapons and first strike," who knows what Perot would have said, right? And we would have done a lot better.

I always say about the '92 campaign, I voted for Bush and I'm glad he lost, but nonetheless, as a matter of study though you'd say, Bush, Cold War, clearly undercut Bush's thing. The second thing was the tax pledge, we'll come back to that. I'll beat that to death before you're done. But the third thing is, the dry rot. And I wouldn't call it exhaustion, I would call it dry rot. I would say that just if you're in power, you play your best cards, you play your kings and your aces first, and then you play your eights and nines and then you play your twos and threes and we were down to twos and threes. Going back to Mahan we lacked the capacity to identify, I don't think I did, I think they did, to identify new fresh ideas that would put juice back; the empowerment, Kemp, school choice, whatever, welfare reform, public housing, whatever Kemp was talking about, enterprise zones. Bush just didn't care about that kind of stuff. He was much more wrapped up in the Phil Zelikow end of things anyway and Sununu and Darman got wrapped up in the budget deal and taxes and that kind of stuff and so nobody really cared about—

Karaagac: Is that the fault of the sovereign or the sovereign's court?

Pinkerton: Sovereign. He got elected, nobody else did. Again, Quayle would have been all over this. Quayle was in everything, everything that we're talking about here Quayle could have

stolen. David McIntosh, Al Hubbard, Spence Abraham. All these people. Quayle had a great staff.

Milkis: Yes, yes.

Pinkerton: They all got it. Bush just didn't care. And Bush let Sununu and Darman wrap around. I always said look, political science, the take away on political science, forget ideology, political science says, if you make one big promise in your campaign, keep it. I said Bush could have surrendered to the Soviets, had mandatory quotas for AIDS victims going into convents, whatever it could have been, anything you could dream up, as long as he kept the tax pledge. He said—we could have talked away—we surrendered to the Soviets but there was a good reason for that, blah, blah, blah. Yes, we had mandatory quotas for AIDS victims, but we kept the tax pledge. The one thing that anybody can figure out is if you lie to them or not, that's not hard. And that's what Bush did. That's having your domestic policy be breaking the only promise anybody ever remembers, that's pretty bad. You can say what you want about the deficit, but that's just dumb. And that was—I mean, I think Sununu and Darman, Darman seduced Sununu and I think Sununu and Darman kind of seduced Bush. But obviously at some point consent matters.

Karaagac: But to be seduced one has to be—the seductee has to be part of the game as well.

Pinkerton: And I think Bush was never on board on the tax thing. I knew that at the time, I think I said it earlier. I think—I never thought Bush was one hundred percent, going back to the '80 campaign, back to the '84 campaign, Bush was never hard-core on the issue. I just figured that we'd just trap him, that we could create an exoskeleton around him that would keep him, that would say, as much as I'd like to raise taxes and sell out to the bureaucrats I can't because I made this damn promise that asshole Jim Pinkerton made me make. Fine.

Karaagac: What was in it for Sununu then, sort of going against his New Hampshire roots?

Pinkerton: Intellectual arrogance. And serving Bush. He thought he was serving Bush.

Milkis: He took that job as chief of staff and he—

Pinkerton: He was willing to piss away his own future career, and again, if Sununu wanted to be Vice President under Bush—I'm sure he wanted—I'm sure if you'd asked him fifteen years ago he wanted to be President. He's said I'm an ethnic, I'm a Catholic, but I've got all these ethnic groups, I got everything going for me, I'm smart, I'd be a great President. I can win the New Hampshire primary, and now he's just nothing.

And so that, again, at the level of why you have to respect—anytime that you, I'm sure there's lots of moral argumentation. You serve somebody else and you sacrifice yourself for somebody else, there's a certain nobility in that, but it also ends you sometimes.

Riley: As I recall and I might have this wrong, in some of your writings about Sununu and when you visited New Hampshire you said he liked to take you around and show you all of the things that had been accomplished on his watch there. Which buildings—

Pinkerton: He was the Governor. I mean Sununu was not the Cato Institute, he was a Governor, he sort of liked to do things, he was an energetic guy, so this goes back to how he, he sort of—this is the project, we're going to do this, we're going to have some grand plan. It's like Iran-Contra, you can just of see how this is cool and once you get into it every step makes sense along the way. The next thing you know you're there with the Ayatollah and a cake. [*laughter*]

Milkis: You said that in January '89 you could already see some things with Darman, when did you sense that Sununu had joined Darman in an alliance that was moving away, moving in a different direction than you wanted to move?

Pinkerton: Probably, I didn't really see it until not long before it happened. Speech was a big thing and it will come up again and again. I don't know whether—it would be fun—I don't remember ever obviously checking whether—but as an exercise—make somebody go look through all those Bush speeches and see what was said. I mean, does anybody know? I mean, what they were saying on taxes. I wonder to what extent any of it survived in Bush rhetoric. I just don't remember whether a Bush speech of January '90 would have stuff in there about no tax increase. I just don't know. I remember it being an issue, I just don't know what the ultimate fruit was.

Because often times, I could take the speeches and then they'd never really, you just didn't have, you didn't really see speeches the way you do now. You turn on CNN and there's always speeches. It wasn't like that back then, so you wouldn't really know what Bush was actually saying, and the speech texts were never—they always had excerpts from, so you never really knew what was actually getting said out there. It didn't really matter unless you were getting nailed on it but it was just sort of something that you'd hope, that's not the right word. You just wouldn't know for sure and life was going on, there was something else to worry about so reading the text after it was delivered, and you weren't even sure it was the right transcript, this wasn't a very valuable exercise.

Milkis: Who, if anyone, oversaw the speechwriting process in the Bush White House?

Pinkerton: I guess it was Demarest. I guess he was head of communications, and there is a woman named Chriss Winston, Chriss with two "s-es." She was sort of like his deputy and I dealt with her a lot and she was downstairs. Demarest was over in the West Wing and I was in the second floor of the EOB and Chriss was on the first floor. Then I just had good lateral relationships with Dan McGroarty, Mark Davis, Mary Kate Carey, Grant back then—The other speechwriter, the guy with the book on baseball, Curt Smith, okay, interesting guy. Curt Smith was a speechwriter there, fun guy, he wrote a book called *Voices of the Game*, it was about baseball announcers. Again, I'm not a big sports fan but to people who are, it was sort of meaningful. I dealt with him directly and so we'd go back to—

Milkis: The perceived wisdom on the Bush speechwriting, I think, I remember Mark Davis telling me this, that speechwriting, in and of itself, the whole shop was downsized, it wasn't taken as seriously.

Pinkerton: That's true, that's true, they took themselves seriously. They knew that. So they knew they weren't a Peggy Noonan—

Milkis: Did they feel beleaguered—

Pinkerton: They did feel beleaguered, they felt all that stuff. But they were still ideologues and they still did their best. I don't know, their poetry can be—I remember, I wrote, how did I get to doing this—for some reason I wrote a draft of, I had sort of pretensions, when the USS Iowa got blown up in '89, the gun turret, remember got killed inside there. I wrote some speech about empty bunks. And I really, I was crying myself as I was writing it. They liked it too, they used it and then Bush wouldn't give it because he said it was too much, too—

Milkis: Too emotional.

Pinkerton: Too emotional. That was enough, a few signals, and they had a lot more signals than that, would say okay, look don't bother, just get the words out. I mean, somewhere in there, this fellow, Curt Smith, I mean Bush gave a speech on the "New Paradigm" in room 476, I was there for that, in room 476 in EOB. I didn't know Bush knew what he was talking about, but it nonetheless was all our "New Paradigm" this and our "New Paradigm" that. Again, stuff slipped through, so I wouldn't be surprised if some of the anti tax language survived in the final text just because it is a busy time and a guy like Darman or Bob Grady or somebody wouldn't necessarily be paying attention to every last speech and every last statement or something. So this whole "New Paradigm" speech went into the public domain in probably April of '90 or something.

Milkis: Did you develop—I guess at some point you did—but when did you develop a relationship with some of the people in the Quayle office, people like Kristol, and did you—another person I wanted to ask you about who hasn't popped up yet but would seem to be a potential ally would be somebody like Boyden Gray.

Pinkerton: Yes, I knew Boyden pretty well. I remember, John Smith as I mentioned before. Boyden was John Smith's boss so I knew, Boyden and I were, had a good relationship all the way through that time He used to typically lunch himself at the Metropolitan Club just off campus as we'd talk about whatever and Smith would usually be there too and we'd just talk about stuff. Boyden was mostly an ally on sort of limited government, anti-tax stuff. He had this sort of quirky stuff on ADA [Americans with Disabilities Act] and things, so he wasn't a pure play, but we got along pretty well on all this kind of stuff and we had a kind of similar take on things. Then when the whole "New Paradigm" thing erupted he called my attention to some style section profile on him, from before, where he'd cited Kuhn, he was sort of buying into my stuff.

Milkis: Kuhndites.

Pinkerton: He sort of mentioned something, again, maybe it is one of those things, if you'd gone to college in the 60s or 70s, probably even now, and not come across Kuhn—and so he'd mentioned it somehow in there, about ethanol or something like that and, who was the other guy you mentioned, Boyden Gray, was there somebody else?

Milkis: Kristol.

Pinkerton: Yes, Kristol and I had a good time. Remember, it is interesting pre-figuring, you know, "Jim, one of the things we're worried about here about Quayle often is brilliant pebbles." That was an SDI program back then. I wrote the usual Jim Pinkerton ten-page memo on that, which I'm sure now is, who knows where it is, garbage cans or something like that, land fill. But nonetheless, I wrote some big memo on brilliant pebbles that nothing really happened with but Kristol and I had a nice pleasant relationship, but not—again, what I said before about Ps and OVPs, it just wasn't that. They were—Kristol's room was large enough, so you say obviously Kristol is a big shot, but at the time he was just Quayle—Kristol wasn't Kristol yet, Kristol was still Dan Quayle's side kick or Dan Quayle underling.

Milkis: Yes, yes.

Riley: There were a couple of major domestic initiatives going on early on. The most prominent one I guess was Clean Air Act. Did you have—

Pinkerton: No, no, the only funny line, it might have been in the Charlie Kolb book, every time George Mitchell smiles at Roger Porter it costs us $25 million dollars. [*laughter*]

Riley: Roger's activities in that area were going on then completely independent of yours—

Pinkerton: I don't—

Riley: Sort of mutual agreement that you—

Pinkerton: But that was probably what, summer of '90 or something, summer of '89, whenever that was. I had nothing to do it, I can't remember. If I can get within a year of when it happened, that tells you something.

Milkis: How about the education?

Pinkerton: Education stuff, well, I was always sort of involved in that.

Milkis: Did you go to the Charlottesville conference?

Pinkerton: No, I did not, but I remember they had a big meeting in the Roosevelt Room about it and stuff. You know, Porter was pretty conscious of—that's one thing he realized, what Porter cared a lot about was face time, so you never wanted to crowd him on that. I said, I'm fine and Ollie North proved, Ollie North didn't have a blue pass, didn't have mess privileges. You get a lot done sitting there on the third floor of EOB just saying this is Ollie North in the White House.

What I realized early on was I would get along fine with Porter if I never crowded Porter on face time with Bush. So I never went, I think I rode in Air Force One once in the whole time I was there. Fine. Porter desperately cared about that. This has been reported. You know, the tax increase summit stuff at Andrews Air Force Base, eventually they threw him out of the room. Not because he was a bad guy, just because they wanted it small and tight so Darman and Sununu could get bilked directly by Mitchell and Gephardt as opposed to with people watching. And so, but Porter would sit outside in the lobby and sort of mill around, rather than admit he wasn't in the room. So he would come back the next day and say oh yes, I was there at Andrews and sort of leave us to think that he'd been in the room with them, he was out there sort of in the ante room.

Milkis: Did you write memos that you gave to Porter suggesting policies like—

Pinkerton: Oh, all the time. Planting trees was a big one, oh, we're talking about education. Yes.

Milkis: We can talk about the planting trees.

Pinkerton: Oh, I don't know, I probably did. I just, again, you see, I went to, by the fall of '89—the Central Park jogger thing, when was that, April of '89. That was a big deal to me because I said, okay, this Central Park jogger case, here you are, in the citadel of the welfare state, do-gooder liberals in New York City and this horrible crime happens. That was when I really started turning around on welfare reform, empowerment, whatever, whatever, whatever, and the Nick Lemann book came out somewhere in there, *Promised Land* and stuff. And I was just chewing on all that. So, by then, I really said if there is a meeting on campaign finance reform I don't care.

If there's a chance to meet Polly Williams, I do care. If there is a chance to bring her into the White House, have lunch with her at the White House mess—we set up this little thing, sort of the empowerment group, when was that, '90, '91 in there someplace.

Milkis: The empowerment breakfast group.

Pinkerton: When was that, do you have a date for that?

Milkis: We do. 1990 something.

Pinkerton: In there somewhere we started doing this and a guy like Richard W. Porter, have you run across him?

Milkis: No.

Pinkerton: He was in the Domestic Policy Council under the Cabinet Affairs Office—

Milkis: September of '90, does that sound right? That's the economic empowerment task force.

Pinkerton: No, no, we had this thing, we met in the ward room

Riley: Here we go, just below that, "Administration officials including Pinkerton, Kristol, and Kolb also September—

Milkis: Same date, September 1990.

Pinkerton: Maybe that's right. At that point I just realized—I spent a lot of time with Gingrich in there, and so on and just used to show up at his meetings on healthcare reform and whatever he could be doing and whatever. Mostly Gingrich was talking about—who is that guy who died? Deming? Dr. Deming and this guy named Jevins or something?

Karaagac: Management guru? Deming?

Pinkerton: Deming was one, W. Edwards Deming was definitely one. There was another guy named Jarvis or Jarvick or Jevins or something like that who was, who Gingrich was quoting all the time. Because he was around. He was like some friend of Gingrich's. That became much more absorbing to me, a chance to go and sit in on Gingrich's sessions and workshops. I actually went to Georgia as Gingrich's guest and talked to high school kids or something like that a couple of times. That was much more—I figured okay, Porter and I have definitely reached a sort of a separate bedrooms kind of marriage and—

Karaagac: Was that looked askance at the White House? You being interested in what Gingrich—

Pinkerton: I didn't brag about it. I guess I could sort of smell—if you'd asked me in 1990 if Bush was going to get elected, I probably would have said yes, but I could smell I wasn't going to be part of this much longer, I just knew that. And so I figured, I'm going to find new constituencies and new friends and new things to think about, outside of this and that was probably in my mind, mature enough as of '89.

Karaagac: On this very point, not to go back to something we've covered before but just this chronology I think is important. Where is Lee Atwater? I mean he is at the RNC now?

Milkis: Thank you.

Pinkerton: That's another thing I spent a lot of '89 doing, was helping him. I mean I would be over there a fair amount just, you know, Atwater had, as Mary Matalin said, you know, she got over there and she was the manager of the Lee Atwater Personality Cult. I mean that was part of the job of sort of just—we would have things he'd want to get done and speeches he wanted to do and he'd bring me over to just sit in his office and talk about it whatever, and met with Mark Gooden who was the communications director back then, the first year or so at that time. He'd get in trouble over something like the Howard University business and stuff. It would be things to sort of come and sort of worry about with him and I sort of sensed: a, I was loyal to him and liked him and interested in what he was interested in and b, he was definitely a power base. He was a key ally. I could say, "Hey, Roger, I can't come to your dumb meeting on something that I'd rather do with Atwater," and Porter would say, "Ok, fine, no problem."

Riley: You didn't say dumb.

Pinkerton: I didn't say dumb. But, I mean, again, I don't want to dwell on this Ollie North thing because to my knowledge I don't think I did anything criminal. I certainly never met any Ayatollahs when I was there, but if you, it is a big building and there's lots of people and you can just do a lot on your own. Whatever it is you want to do you can do on your own. So if you don't, I make this point only because it is sort of illustrative, in the EOB—there is the Situation Room in the West Wing. There is a room in the EOB called "Room 208," it is literally "Room 208." When I got there in '81 it was just "Room 208" and then the White House historical preservations came in and said this is a former Secretary of State's office, we're going to call it the Cordell Hull Room. A little plaque saying Cordell Hull. Okay.

Then Ollie North and this guy Richard Beale who was a sort of planner type, Wirthlin's sidekick type, said, well we need another sort of situation room. So they created "Room 208" as an entirely parallel sit room from the White House. Well, guess what happens, all of a sudden you don't have the Sit Room where everybody is walking, sees who is coming in and out, the national security advisor is right next door to it and things like that. You've got some place in the EOB which is Siberia as far as the West Wing is concerned, and yet all the kind of levers of cool phones and maps and prestige of Sit Room accrue and Ollie North operated out of there. And you had a, like a, parallel Miller Center. Imagine what it would be like if there were two Miller Centers at UVa. Who knows what would happen, right? Eight-tone music and who knows.

Milkis: We actually have something like that—[laughing]. You guys have formed a parallel universe.

Pinkerton: It's trouble, it's trouble, right, and you're always looking for a chance to poison their coffee, right, so that only makes the point. So North could do this only because he was operating outside of the normal conventions of gatekeeping. And same thing with me. Once you sort of get over there, you simply—look, I'm not getting in trouble, I'm not getting my name in the paper. Who cares about that, I'm just not in their way. Just to jump ahead. When the style section wrote the big piece on me in like December of '90 I made a point, I just sat in my office all day. I said, I'm not going to go walk around the West Wing so that Fitzwater and Sununu could say, hey asshole, cut that out. I just sat in my office, nothing happened. I mean, I got lots of phone calls from friends. I don't think anybody from the White House, the White House being the West Wing, chewed me out. They just said, "Ok, well, it is a big place," and I'll say this about government, it's not your money.

If I'm coming out of your pocket then you care what I do. If it is her pocket, you can be sort of philosophical about it. So that's sort of the way it worked. Think of it as tenure if that helps.

Milkis: Works for me, I don't know if it works for anybody else in this room, I'm the only one that can really feel that.

Pinkerton: You know what I'm talking about.

Milkis: I want to follow up John's question about Lee Atwater. In a sense, one could see it as a disadvantage that he was at the RNC rather than the political director in the White House, but you've just laid out a scenario, well maybe it was an advantage. I'm just wondering, what was his relationship with the President and the White House when he was in the RNC?

Pinkerton: I think he had nailed down the turf as George Bush's political advisor, because Bush was compartmentalized and disciplined, that was fine, and that was perfectly happy with all concerned. Then Lee got sick. He had a seizure on March 5, 1990, and I guess was sort of out of action probably pretty quickly after that.

Milkis: Did that make a difference. I mean, you talked about January of '89, you already saw trouble. Did it make a difference when Lee got sick and wasn't there? Because they took a long time to replace him and—

Pinkerton: It did, it did.

Milkis: They got [Clayton] Yeutter—

Pinkerton: They never did, they never did, they just had some guy.

Milkis Sununu kind of took over political operations after that.

Pinkerton: Right, right. People ask me a million times, if Lee Atwater had not been sick, would the tax increase thing have happened. And I say yes, it would have. I say that Atwater would not, the momentum in the Darman-Sununu, I guess you have to say Brady, cluster was such that it would have happened no matter what. But, once it became the fiasco it was, Atwater would have moved in to discredit those guys and say, look these guys have screwed up so badly in the spring of 1990, you can't go into Republican primaries and re-election with these idiots calling the shots. There's got to be some change.

Milkis: Those idiots being Darman and Sununu.

Pinkerton: Yes, he wouldn't use those words but he would have said, listen—I talked to George Junior during this time and they new they were in a swamp, they knew it—and Atwater would have said, okay, this proves something about who has failed you Mr. President. We used to joke about, you've seen in the paper the last few days the Rumsfeld rules, the Rumsfeld rules were always like be honest and straightforward and things like that. We used to joke about Atwater's rules which were things like, kick them when they're down, stir the pot, suck up the power. [*laughter*] I mean, so Atwater's rules would have been, look, these guys were bad news and you're not going to get re-elected. I mean Atwater was never a Reaganite to the end of his life to know better than to break a promise on the tax pledges and things like that.

So the tenor of the '92 campaign would have been much, much different. Again, bias for action. Whatever it was, let's just do something, let's not just be here and be shlumps, let's get up and do something. So that was a huge. I, this, illustrative of what I'm talking about, to me, Atwater had so much sectional density, to use that term from physics. You know what I'm talking about?

In ballistics or whatever you call it, the reason why a spear goes through you is because the point hits your body and that stops right there that micro- or nanosecond. What pushes it through is the fact that there is a shaft ten feet long or four feet long going a hundred miles an hour, that's what drives it in. So Yeutter and—these guys had zero sectional density, Atwater had enormous sectional density.

I mean, Bush respected Atwater enough, he hadn't gotten elected President—Atwater had real power. Bush didn't care what Clayton Yeutter thought. At all. He cared a lot about what Atwater thought and once Atwater wasn't there—but, again, he cared more about what Sununu and Darman thought, so what had to happen was Sununu and Darman had to fail visibly, like this, with Atwater making the case. I mean Atwater would always—I'd help him on this—he always knew the value of getting paper in front of the boss, it was always memos he was writing, papers, clips, anything like that. A stream of stuff. I'm working. I don't know what those other guys are doing, they may be just jerking off but I'm here working hard for you Mr. President, or boss, or whatever it was.

We would have papered Bush under with *Wall Street Journal* editorials and stuff like that saying, these guys are idiots and they've screwed up and spending is going up, not down, and whatever, whatever, whatever. I don't know what Bush's actual information flow would have been, was in 1990, but victory in all fronts, we're conquering Oceania, Eurasia and East Asia all at once, like in 1984. I mean, I don't know what Bush is hearing. I know he got some bad news, because I certainly told George Junior, but Atwater had been sharing a lot more. This has been a failure and your Presidency is about to get ruptured here, but it didn't happen.

Karaagac: There's a chain of causation that is interesting here. I mean, if you assume that President Bush doesn't like to be handled, and if you assume if he doesn't like really too brainy people or overly intellectual people, it is a little astonishing that he put his Presidency in the hands of Darman and indirectly Sununu. What was it about Darman? It is almost like a seduction of Bush here.

Pinkerton: Of course Sununu and Darman would sort of—Darman especially was a bureaucrat first. I mean Darman wouldn't walk into Bush talking theories, he wouldn't be talking principles, he would be talking, here's how we get to [John David] Dingell. I mean, in that sense Darman was sort of more Machiavellianly virtuous, in that sense. He would be a smart guy who could talk politics with politicos and I just know that from the way he operates. So he wouldn't be saying [Friedrich] Hayek said this or [Georg Wilhelm Friedrich] Hegel said this, he'd be saying no, Dingell and [Robert] Michel say this, and that worked.

Again, Bush didn't mind competence, what he minded was excess intellect in the sense of like, my professor, he didn't want professors, I know that. I mean, this is history, I don't care—meet Charlie Greenleaf. If you're a guy who would hire Charles R. Greenleaf to be your domestic policy advisor, as you're preparing your presidential campaign, then you really don't care about issues. He's floating around somewhere in Michigan or Indiana or something like that, I mean, he's from there somewhere and I'm telling you, he is just sort of a total firm handshake, good cologne kind of guy who knows nothing. And if that's your pick, I mean, whereas Fred Khedouri

who is an interesting guy, you should definitely talk to him on the ’85, he was there from ’85, is a genuinely smart guy and they pushed him aside for Charlie Greenleaf.

Riley: We keep bouncing around the budget deal. Should we just start at the beginning and—

Pinkerton: Well again, a lot of it was just sort of a surprise. I remember it was April or May of ’90 or something and it happens and, April I think, May, might have been May. I just sort of woke up with the paper one day and there they are talking about—now, they knew they’d done a bad thing because the phrase, “the budget deal break”—as I remember, they didn’t even release it, they just sort of posted it. Remember this was back in the pre-internet days and you had to sort of take bulletins and post them, thumb tack them on walls like that so people would see them. And they had this things about, “Bush says we do tax revenue increases,” and that was, whatever that was.

Look at the phrase, “tax revenue increases.” So Sununu for a day or two—I remember we had an article in the Moonie *[Washington] Times* the next day or something like that saying, well we didn’t say taxes, we said tax revenue. The capital gains tax cut, which everyone knows would increase revenues to the government, that’s a tax revenue increase, that’s what we’re talking about. If the Democrats want to be for tax increases, fine, we’re for tax revenue increases. And he thought, you know, Sununu—you can have an IQ of 250 like Sununu or something like that—the cumulative IQ of the Democrats in Congress is greater than yours. And if all of them sit around plotting and scheming to beat you, they will mouse trap you on the chess game or the bridge game or whatever it is and that was Sununu’s problem—so Sununu thought, they really thought. Again this is where Darman seduced Sununu because I think Sununu didn’t fully understand, on day one, what it would be on day three. Darman did and Sununu—maybe Darman didn’t. I think Darman is smarter than that, but Sununu’s intellectual Peter Principle came lower than Darman’s, that’s for sure. So by about day three they realized they’d signed on to a tax increase and at that point the roof caved in because they’d given away their hole card on negotiations.

See, Reagan, I do believe, and this is where Reagan was good, he’d say, of course we’ll never have a tax increase, but then if there is an actual deal to be had—you mean you’ll really cut spending by forty percent on this, this, and this, okay, tax increase. TEFRA was like that in ’82, Tax Equity and Fiscal Responsibility Act or whatever it was. Reagan was capable of this kind of stuff but Bush just gave away the store in May and it took—we spent five or six months bleeding on the stupid issue until the deal came with the Republicans—the Gingrich guys hating us and me feeding them, and just getting Bush in the press every day. There’s a headline in the *Post* today about—I’ve got a hangnail there. Hangnails in my case turn into bleeding wounds, I’ll make it, I’ll live. The headline in the *Post* today is, what is this, this is the kind of stuff we had all the time back then for six months. Oh yes. The headline on the web site last night was different. “The payroll tax, the burden untouched.” The headline on the web site last night was worse than that. The headline on last night’s *Post* was “Bush does nothing about tax burden” or something like that. It was worse than this. They changed it in the cool light of day.

But that’s what we had for six months, was, “Republican tax plan wants to give away to the rich” and so Larry Lindsey, whom I’m sure you’ll run across, would show up every morning then that

entire six month period saying, "Here's a memo outlining the distribution requirements, the distribution effects, our way as opposed to their way about how it really helps capital gains," and blah, blah, entrepreneurship whatever. And Porter would just sort of rub his chin, take Larry's memo, put it in his briefcase for his next book and never do anything with it because the whole part of the plan was and seeing how not to fight back. Every day the *Post* would have some article about how the Democrats were saving the poor and the Republicans were raping the poor and we would never respond because we were trying to keep the deal process—like [Ehud] Barak and the Palestinians, trying to keep the deal process alive at all costs. It was just a disaster. I don't know, is Barak the ex-prime minister of Israel by now? Probably—

????: [Inaudible].

Pinkerton: Anyway, I'm getting ahead, that was the desire to keep the deal alive was so desperate that they wouldn't even fight back in the press for six months. And that was the killer of it.

Milkis: What do you mean when you say that you were feeding Gingrich?

Pinkerton: By then I was getting pretty close to Gingrich and Bob Walker and people and we just simply saying, but—it wasn't like, I didn't have any treason, I certainly was thinking treason but I wasn't—any actual treasonous information. It wasn't like I knew some secret they didn't know, but I'd just simply say, yes, that these guys are idiots and—

Milkis: Not support them—

Pinkerton: Support. And by then—

Milkis: Were you publicly saying this? Did you go off the reservation publicly?

Pinkerton: I gave an interview to some White House bulletin, not THE White House bulletin, some other White House Weekly or some interview like that where I said, "Bush is getting a spectrum of opinion," that was my phrase, spectrum of opinion, on this issue. Like Darman says it's great and Pinkerton says it stinks. I didn't say that but spectrum of opinion got in there and that got me in trouble. Sununu yelled at me for that or something like that, but—

Milkis: Called you on the carpet?

Pinkerton: Yes, just called me up and said don't do it any more. Fine, whatever you say. By then I really was sort of deeply alienated from the process. I said, these guys have really, again, I was always respectful enough of, "he got elected President I didn't," but nonetheless, I spent two or three years working the tax pledge thing and it had all sort of been booted away for nothing and that did irk me some. And then the "New Paradigm" stuff, I can't remember when it started, my World for Future Society speech when was that like March of '90 or something?

Milkis: Something like that, yes.

Pinkerton: By then I was kind of in my own little universe of new ideas and 21st century that and whatever.

Milkis: Yes, February 1990, World for Future Society.

Pinkerton: So then I really had—

Milkis: You were in the midst of this as the deal—so you were already—

Pinkerton: Going my own way, exactly.

Milkis: This just reinforced it.

Pinkerton: All of a sudden my enthusiasm for helping Roger Porter work on the Ag bill—

Riley: Where is Kemp in this?

Pinkerton: Kemp is sort of where I was, sort of ambivalent, I mean deep opposed but sort of too chicken to quit over it and so contented himself with muttering to me or muttering to whoever.

Riley: Bennett the same?

Pinkerton: I don't remember. I don't remember Bennett sort of, he is not as much staked out on economics stuff. I mean if Bush had said legalize drugs or something like that, that would have been more Bennett's problem. But certainly the Kristol, Quayle types were all kind of quietly muttering, you know, mutter, mutter, mutter around the halls of the EOB.

Riley: Did you give consideration to leaving yourself?

Pinkerton: No. I thought I might get fired. It occurred to me. But you simply behave yourself. I had good contacts with Andy Card, Ed Rogers, these people around. Sununu even kind of liked me, for a while.

????: [inaudible].

Pinkerton: For a while, I think, by the time, got tired of me, but it took him a while to realize that I really thought he had been hornswaggled on this kind of stuff. And I think Bush kind of liked me, Junior kind of liked me. I was okay. As long as I was content not to be powerful, but I understood the bully pulpit concept. I understood my own little micro bully pulpit that I just could do more stuff here and I was learning the stuff, seeing, I was going on junkets all over the place. The tree-planting thing got important to me and that was kind of absorbing, and I went to—

Somewhere in there I had lunch with John Schmitz once, during the Clean Air Act time. And he said, global warming was an issue and climate change. I was sort of involved in that kind of stuff, intellectual curiosity, and Schmitz said, "One thing we're thinking about doing on the

global warming thing, our way of dealing with this is tree-planting. You know, carbon sinks and all that kind of stuff." I said okay, so you could plant trees and that would help deal with global warming. But then you could take all the black kids off the streets, and hire them in a Civilian Conservation Corps to plant trees. That just sort of all came together in my mind, that would be great, a CCC to plant trees to solve global warming and help the underclass, perfect. So I got interested in this sort of military stuff and so I got the army to fly me down to Fort Jackson for like four days of basic training. I really can't remember when this was, '89 maybe, or maybe '90. So I was just out there watching basic training. I had a blast.

Karaagac: You didn't participate in it?

Pinkerton: A little bit, not much, no. I remember—were you in the military?

Karaagac: Sure.

Pinkerton: Did you go through basic somewhere?

Karaagac: Yes, Fort Bragg.

Pinkerton: Submarines, Army?

Karaagac: I did something at Fort Bragg, I was ROTC.

Pinkerton: Right, right. Remember one time you had this grenade throwing thing, hardest thing in grenade throwing, is to get the guy to duck. There is nothing more visceral than desire to see your own grenade blow up. Right. And to think that's dangerous, and to sit there and watch, as the fragments come back your way. I remember this drill sergeant just grabbing the guy and saying, get down asshole. That was my, I mean, we talk about space and things. This is the absolute opposite end of the military which is, this is the sociological value of imprinting discipline into young men and giving them something to live by and so on which I find terribly moving and important to me. That's just the same. Bush signed the National Tree Trust Act or whatever it was, I can't remember, in there, 1990 or someplace. I had met, we created the National Tree Foundation and stuff, whatever it was, and Trammel Crow and I was kind of busy on that kind of stuff, again, without ever once going to a campaign finance reform meeting.

Milkis: When you talked about establishing a CCC of the 1990s did some people like Darman say, oh that's a New Deal idea—

Pinkerton: Yes, they definitely hated it. Darman said exactly it was a New Deal idea and sort of Bolshevik and remember, Darman was no liberal, he just was a different stripe than I was.

Milkis: Wanted to balance the budget.

Pinkerton: He wanted to balance the budget and I didn't really worry about that very much and I thought it more important—yet politics would say, what is Bush going to campaign on. You go back and look at the '92 campaign platform such as it was, the stuff we were bragging about was

stuff like "proposed legislation for this," "proposed legislation for that." We didn't even pretend we'd passed anything, so you've got to create something you can actually point to. Look, I remember during the LA riots, if Bush could be walking through the burned out ruins of Los Angeles with a bunch of kids wearing green tee shirts that said, "Project Green" on them, looking useful and legal, NRA [National Recovery Act] kind of like, that would be great. This visual alone is worth a lot more than another zero on some sort of bail out project for HUD [Housing and Urban Development] or something like that.

This stuff is—my trip by now was, I had a bunch of ideas they would think, *That Pinkerton guy has a lot of ideas so maybe we should keep him around, or at least not fire him, even if we never do any of them*. So I always had, had another trip, what's that Beatles' song, *Paperback Writer*: "I'll be writing more in a week or two." I always had something sticking up and that kept me going, I guess. Including, to the point, I guess, obviously I had good enough relations with people like Bob Teeter and stuff that they hired me in the '92 campaign, so they wanted me back. That was somewhat to my surprise, but there I was. And I felt loyal enough to sort of want to do that to help out although as I said I wouldn't do anything.

Milkis: We'll talk about that—

Karaagac: I have a question, I don't know if this is the time, I want to explore into "brother, can you paradigm?" that tension. I don't know if that goes later.

Milkis: I'd like you to take us through the whole "New Paradigm"—

Pinkerton: Okay, so I give the World for Future Society speech and it sort of clicks with my crowd of Newt Gingrich to this guy Richard Porter to Hans Kuttner, I don't know if these names register on you. Those guys are—Kuttner is at the University of Michigan now and Porter is a lawyer at Kirkland & Ellis at Chicago. They would be thoughtful types on this, so there is enough stuff to talk about and do and think about. We'd bring in, if we didn't start the formal empowerment breakfasts until September, but we certainly had people around, Polly Williams and anybody else we could think of sort of interesting—this guy Michael Sheridan from Washington University did this thing on assets, a book on *Assets and the Poor*. We'd bring in people like that, get us all stirred up and things like that.

So, I kind of ran around talking about the "New Paradigm" to whoever would listen and we got Bush to—Curt Smith put in the Bush speech and that sort of made me feel pretty good about that. Then the budget deal kind of climaxes and happens, and Desert Storm, Desert Shield was happening too, so it was a busy time. The election happens and then Darman gives a speech. By now Darman knew I was his enemy and Sununu kind of did too so there were no illusions any more about that.

So Darman gives his speech, I remember having lunch with somebody, it was at the Sheraton Carlton on Sixteenth Street and I come walking out and a guy named Steve Hoffman who was a Labor Department sort of thoughtful type there, sort of worked for Lynn Martin before, sort of a thoughtful ally in the empowerment stuff said, "Darman just gave a speech blasting you." And I went back to my office and got on top of this and whatever and I said okay, well this is it, this

really—make a note to myself to back up on something—but I said, okay, "I am now under attack." I can sort of see this, now he has shot first. There was an earlier time at which I had held my fire, we'll talk about that maybe it was later, I can't remember, anyway, I remember I talked to John Buckley who had been a friend from the Reagan campaign in '84 and had worked for Kemp in '88 and is William Buckley's nephew I guess. He's the son of, not James Buckley, there's another brother, some Buckley type, but definitely in that family.

So we worked out sort of laboriously what am I going to say when they call, the Pinkerton call for comment, Pinkerton said what. So I think it was—Dan Balz called. So Buckley said you can't fight back, but you've got to be sort of humorous and ironic about it, and so Buckley really helped me on this. Balz calls, "So what's your comment on this, Jim, Dick Darman has attacked you in this speech and things like that?" and I said, well, and this is pretty close to a quote, "After the success of the budget deal, it is good to see Dick returning to the dialogue of ideas." The success was obviously intended to be ironic and Balz howled on his end because he thought it was ironic and I didn't say war of ideas because I didn't want to make anything sound martial, I wanted dialogue of ideas. That got printed. I think it was a Friday as I recall.

I remember the next day I got like forty-two messages on my machine, it was just sort of one of those things where I knew something had clicked. It was in the *Post* on Saturday morning, in the business section of all things. Darman speaks to council government, gives his whole thing and I understood, this is fire drill time. I can't for my own sake and for the sake of sort of this empowerment, Jack Kemp, no tax increase kind of pledge torch, I can't let myself just get squashed like a bug. I can't just be some laughing stock where Dick Darman gets the last word on this. At that point I just went all out and people like Boyden Gray who was helpful in this and Gingrich in there pretty quickly called for Darman to resign—that was pretty good.

Milkis: That's what I'd call support.

Pinkerton: It was, it was. It just became sort of a firestorm for like a month.

Riley: Where was the President in all this?

Pinkerton: Never heard from him. Remember, this was Desert Storm. I mean Bush, by now Bush would say look, my Presidency now rests on unification of Germany and Phil Zelikow kind of stuff and Saddam Hussein and who cares about this other stuff. I'm sure that's what Bush was thinking. And Sununu and Darman didn't dare fire me because by now I'd managed to get above the level of just simply get fired and nobody cares. Now it would be kind of a *cause célèbre* and by that reckoning maybe I should have quit. Enough of this disrespect, I'm out of here. But I sort of enjoyed what I was doing. I was in 216 in the Old Executive Office Building. If you've ever had a tour of that place, one of those corner offices was the size of this floor. I mean, people would say this is bigger than the President of Israel's office, bigger than the President of South Korea. I mean, it was a great office and a balcony and history and whole library up there to help you and stuff. Now you have google and you can find anything you want, but back they you had to actually ask somebody to get it for you. It was just a lot of stuff to stay for. It was history.

Milkis: Did you really have a twenty-person staff?

Pinkerton: No.

Milkis: I saw that a couple of places, another article they said you had one person.

Pinkerton: I had a secretary and a guy named Austen, this Austen Furse fellow I mentioned before. I mean he was sort of working for me. He was sort of his own version of me. He was doing his own stuff whatever it was and a couple of interns. I had like five people sort of total. It wasn't bad. Enough to sort of, I remember, I had three interns at all times, that wasn't standard, you know big place, a lot of room, no shortage of people who want to volunteer to work at the White House. A lot of what I used to talk about as part of the "New Paradigm" I'd sort of work it out sort of focus group like with these interns. If this made sense to them then I'd say well I can't be totally on the wrong cracker. No, I certainly didn't have twenty people. I mean, I had this enormous empire in the '88 campaign, but again, a, I didn't have the option, and b, I had no desire to recreate it.

Milkis: When Darman attacked you, I mean there are two ways to think about this. On the one hand you could have been upset. On the other hand you could have seen this as an honor.

Pinkerton: I saw it as an—

Milkis: Plan B, take him on—

Pinkerton: I saw it as an opportunity.

Milkis: Did this publicize—

Pinkerton: Remember in '86 or so, when the tax reform was going on, Reagan tax reform, Mario Cuomo attacked Pat Buchanan, who was then working at the White House. I remember thinking to myself, hey, that's pretty cool. From a Republican point of view, get attacked by ace liberal, Mario Cuomo, it would be great. So I was totally on board on, as Dan Quayle said, "I wear their scorn like a badge of honor." I totally got that, but I said, I made sure I didn't get fired, that was the thing.

Milkis: How much of this followed from the budget agreement and the heat Darman was taking on the budget agreement.

Pinkerton: That's what it was all about. Exactly. I think, people like Bill Kristol said to me since, well look, the problem is that Dick didn't think of this, the whole "New Paradigm" thing. He put all his chips on the budget deal and failed to sort of create some intellectual structure. He had all the stuff like the now-nowism and things. He had all the stuff that I'll say in all modesty was sort of bullshit and didn't take, and I had a sort of a concept and a term and a little bit of thought to it and a few footnotes and whatever that sort of was a plausible intellectual structure to explain what was going on. Darman would be talking about now-nowish and goo-gooism, almost baby talk.

Darman is a smart guy but go back and look at it, now-now and Pac Man, like he was deliberately trying to play faux-dumb, like some intellectual running around with a score card just to sort of prove he is a regular guy; like George Will being a baseball fan. You know something like that, and he didn't have the right—Darman if you remember one time went out with Bush in a monkey suit—you remember that? This is a true story, it was on TV, Bush got off the helicopter and there's Darman in an ape suit, you wouldn't even know it was him until you read it later. You remember this? It was on TV. Ask him about it. He was out there sort of frolicking with Bush. This was not what Bush wanted to do as President, to have somebody in a gorilla suit.

Karaagac: What was the point?

Pinkerton: Ask him. I'm just going to put this drop of poison in your ear, now you—seriously ask him, "Dick, what was going through your mind?"

Karaagac: Could you have gotten away with that?

Pinkerton: I don't think so. I don't think Darman got away with it, in terms of, this is just bullshit. There's a way to behave and if you're trying to be—in the same way that Bush failed when he wanted to be a country music fan and a pork rind eater and whatever else. I mean, please, and Bush talked about being a born again Christian, I mean, you gotta be—Fred Khedouri always said that the essence of the wimp factor for Bush wasn't that he had stripey watchbands and said "splash of coffee," the essence of the wimp factor with Bush was that he was saying stuff he didn't believe. And your eyes are shifting around and stuff like that. That's just, and I think that's exactly right. Fred Khedouri, Bear Stearns, really worth talking to, he's a smart, smart guy. Darman trying to be like a regular guy, clowning around, wasn't going to work.

Karaagac: One point early in the Presidency, Darman, didn't he present something, some kind of paper about Americans not saving—

Pinkerton: That's what I'm talking about, the now-nowism and stuff like that. And he got no response from Bush, none whatsoever. He got lots of response from like newspapers because he was a big cheese, but nobody is going to walk around saying, we must fight against the plague of now-nowism. It is not going to work. I mean you're not going to get distinguished professors to say now-nowism. You're going to get them to say "New Paradigms," you're not going to get them to say now-nowism, it was just a misfire. And this was Kristol's point, he said you thought of what Dick should have thought of and he hated you for it. Fine.

Karaagac: Do you think that Darman's offensive against the "New Paradigm" was a way of diverting criticism that was aimed at him?

Pinkerton: I think it was just, okay, now I've got to clean up, we've got to mop up the operation here. We've got collateral damage; we've got left over bits and pieces of stuff that I haven't been able to get control of in my effort to grip the White House so we'll take Pinkerton on.

Karaagac: You're implying that he is almost de facto chief of staff.

Pinkerton: There's a big enough trip to go around. He and Sununu could both be powerful together.

Karaagac: Co-regents.

Pinkerton: Co-regents. Name Clinton's last OMB director, quick, quick, quick.

Milkis: What's his name?

Pinkerton: I rest my case, see. Jacob Lew. Nobody knows anymore, nobody cares. In an era of surpluses, nobody cares any more. Ten years ago, OMB was the hottest job in the country and Darman had it and he was going to be the lynchpin of the universe was right there with him and he decided Sununu could be White House chief of staff and Darman would be everything else and that would be fine. They'd be co-regents of domestic policy together and there's nothing wrong with that, from their point of view.

Riley: But eventually Sununu is not there.

Pinkerton: Right.

Milkis: Before we get to that, I just want to ask you to tell us about that meeting, I think Darman showed up to one of your—

Pinkerton: That's right, that's what I wanted to talk about, right, right. I guess it was, I really can't remember the chronology here, this must have been after—we're having one of our little empowerment groups, and this is Kemp and Kemp is, I think Kemp is a wonderful guy, completely ineffective as a presidential candidate obviously, Peter Principle on politics. Okay, good congressional candidate, good Congressman, good surrogate, terrible presidential candidate, fine. Utterly helpless in meetings and bureaucracy, had no sense of—there are certain skills, as Roger Porter would tell you, there's a certain skill involved in getting your shit together for a meeting. Kemp had none of that.

So these empowerment groups, task forces, whatever, you can look it up. I'm sure it sounds much more impressive on paper than it actually was. Oh, you know, we had the secretary of this, the secretary of that, they didn't care, it was just crap. And so Kemp would get in there and say, what are we going to do about empowerment and everyone would say, well I'm for helping the poor. Okay, good, that's good. And I'm for helping the poor. You too, okay. Sort of went around the room and Kemp one time said, well let's get all our stories, let's communicate our passion about empowerment and tell Bush. It would be like saying, you telling the chairman of your department, I'm going to give all my theories about little league baseball and tell the chairman of my department. You know, you have about five minutes before he completely loses interest if he doesn't throw you out. So Kemp was just hopeless on this kind of stuff. Well-meaning, but hopeless. There was no real anything to do anyway.

So we're sitting there in the Roosevelt Room one time and Kemp is going on and there's like twenty people in the room and Darman walks in. Sits in the back, this is a figure of menace in terms of power, not just in terms of me but in terms of—if you go back and read all the clips, they say, Dick Darman kept some Cabinet Secretary waiting for an hour outside his office. This kind of power move kind of stuff in Washington. So we're going on, maybe Kemp wasn't there, maybe it was Charlie Kolb who was chairing the meeting. K-o-l-b. But I know it is one of those eccentric pronunciations. So Charlie said, "Well, Dick, would you like to say anything?" It's like an Alan Keyes thing. And Dick says—Darman launches this tirade against empowerment. Have we thought of all the things in the Nixon administration and blah, blah, blah, nothing new here and whatever, whatever, whatever. Then he sort of got personal. And some people say the "New Paradigm" is this and I say it is nothing and blah, blah, blah. I thought to myself, *Okay, what am I going to do here?* Because if this emerges, it will be in the *Post* tomorrow morning. If this emerges that we had a shouting match between us, I'm a peon, he's a big shot. I can't afford to be in a shouting match with him.

So, the only way I can guarantee that nobody can say that I'm in a shouting match, that I'm not in a shouting match, if I say nothing, zero, zilch. So I just sat there and kind of wrote it all down. You know, I remember calling Maureen Dowd later that day. There must have been a story in the paper the next day or pretty close to it. I know it was in the *Post* and Darman just ranted. And I was perfectly satisfied after twenty minutes of him just ranting that everyone in the room thought he was a jerk and that I had just held my fire, played rope-a-dope with him for twenty minutes. That was the meeting—that was probably the last time the empowerment group ever had any meetings, I'm sure. Darman had the power to sort of kill that. By then, I think we got kicked out of the Roosevelt Room, again, back to consequences. By then we were sort of meeting in the Indian Treaty Room, not the Treaty Room, 476 which is next to the Indian Treaty Room on the fourth floor of the EOB. That's, you know you're a loser when you're having your meetings on the fourth floor of the EOB as opposed to the West Wing.

Milkis: Was that the same meeting where Porter was addressing the group?

Pinkerton: Maybe Porter was chairing. I can't remember. Maybe Porter was there. I know Porter being Porter never said a word in response. He'd sit there and listen.

Milkis: Well, Kolb was there because I was just saying I read the comment he made to Darman as he was leaving, saying if I'd known you were coming I would have sold tickets.

Pinkerton: Yes, that's the meeting, that's the meeting. What does it say, Porter may have been there—

Milkis: Porter may have been an invited speaker or something at that meeting.

Pinkerton: Porter might have chaired it and then Kolb was there.

Karaagac: Actually, it wasn't clear, was it, in the Kolb book it was a little ambiguous who was heading the meeting.

Milkis: But I think Porter was there speaking and then Darman—

Karaagac: He implied that Porter was going to be the chair of the meeting.

Milkis: Half way through Porter's comments he—

Pinkerton: It was great. I knew it was, again—

Milkis: So was there a great reaction when Kolb made that comment?

Pinkerton: Well, you know, Bobbie Kilberg—you run across her? Public liaison. She would be good to talk to on this. She lives around here, she's still in town. She's head of the Northern Virginia High Tech Council or something like that. She was, I remember her sort of gasping.

Milkis: Did you and Darman ever try to make up? I mean the—

Pinkerton: Yes, we did, we did. I knew, I have to say I played this part pretty well. After about a month this had been going on I said, now the *Washington Times* was all over it and Ralph Hallow and his people were writing an article all the time about this and trashing Darman. It became a big, big stink and I said okay, I'll write Darman a note saying, "Dear Dick, we've had our differences but we must unite to help the President." I remember, it was a Saturday. I remember, I wrote the note on my own letterhead and I Xeroxed it to keep it and things like that and I walked down to his office and he was sitting there, talking to a reporter, talking to Mike Duffy from *Time* magazine and I just knocked on the door. Saturday, everything is empty, no secretary, just Darman and Duffy sitting there in the conference room next to his office and I sort of put the note, in a sealed envelope on his table and said, here, this is for you. Walked back, sort of waited around. Half an hour later the phone rang.

Darman came down and we kind of had a correct meeting where we sort of agreed not to—I didn't really admit to anything—

Milkis: Just you two.

Pinkerton: Yes, just the two of us, in my office, on Saturday, blue jeans or whatever the equivalent of blue jeans would be back then. So that kind of—so now I kind of figured okay, but you can't fire me because I made an honest effort to heal our differences. It worked all the way through the rest of '91.

Reilly: Now we were talking about the consequences of the budget deal. Eventually there was some shakeup, whether it was related directly to the budget deal or not, I don't know, but one of the things we're always interested in doing is getting a picture of kind of the differences in White House operations from one chief of staff to the next.

Pinkerton: I don't think the budget crisis had any impact at all on the internal workings of the White House. I think it crippled Bush's Presidency, but I don't think Bush knew that. I think the Pat Buchanan primary challenge, the Ross Perot challenge. I mean, Pat Buchanan clearly on the

ideological thing. Pat Buchanan now is just known as a sort of a protectionist back then, he was—the '92 candidacy he was just a right-winger. I mean Bush broke his pledge. Ross Perot saying you can't trust any of them, they're all liars, that's pure, you know. George Bush is a much bigger liar than Bill Clinton was in the '92 campaign in terms of this kind of stuff. But, if anything, Darman had successfully squelched Porter, [Michael] Boskin, whoever else, inside the White House. Sununu getting booted out over, the following November, over the stamps and chauffeurs and whatever, well, and Darman had more power than ever inside the White House after that. In part because again it is back to sort of dry rot. After a while you simply say screw this, there's got to be a better way to make a living and other things to do and things like that.

I think Kemp was sort of looking ahead to whatever his own future would be and stuff. I think people clearly sought, the word that comes to mind, decadent. When it is decadent you may think about going someplace else but you don't necessarily think about reforming it, especially when Caligula is still in charge. You wait for him to go and then you start thinking, let's change something here. But, you know, there was never a post-Caligula time for the Bush administration. I mean Darman was still running the show. Let's jump ahead, Novak wrote a great column, Bob Novak wrote a great column on this. That Bob Woodward's beginning of a book on the Bush Presidency. Woodward always has got who ever is in charge is allegedly working on a book on the inside stuff there and the book on Bush never came out because Bush wasn't President. If Bush had gotten re-elected, Woodward would have had a book on the Bush Presidency, which he never wrote, why bother. But there was a series in the *Washington Post* sort of October of '92, inside the Bush White House, whatever, whatever, where Darman is calling Nick Brady a dolt and so on and like that. This is in the *Washington Post* and Darman is blaming everybody for everything and something like that. This is like a month before the election.

I was quoted in there somehow, I remember, just trashing Darman. But then it just didn't matter anymore, it was sort of too late, and nobody cared. I remember, really thinking, about October 17, 1992, should I—they might really fire me tomorrow. They might just say okay out of here. So I remember taking cool stuff out of my office I took home that night, from the building at 1020 Fifteenth Street and nothing happened. Again, decadent. They didn't care. Nobody. The vandals were over there but we're here drinking out of our lead-lined goblets or something. But, the fact that Darman would be then sitting there calling—look at that series—because Darman really was on the record. I don't think, I think Woodward burned him. I think Woodward said, look, it will be after the election, not before the election. But, as Novak said, the surreal scene of Darman briefing Bush for the debates with the stuff sitting in the *Washington Post* that morning where Darman is trashing everybody in the Bush operation. This says volumes about sort of the oddness of it all and the sort of weirdness of Darman running the show after it ruined Bush.

Riley: [Samuel] Skinner's presence—

Pinkerton: Skinner is to the White House what Clayton Yeutter was to the RNC. No sectional density. By that reckoning yes. To follow through there, if Sununu didn't lose power inside the White House and had terrorized his opposition into silence, Sununu and Darman didn't in '91, then with Sununu gone in '92, that left Darman.

Riley: How long were you there after Skinner came in?

Pinkerton: Skinner came in like Thanksgiving '91. I started the Bush—Teeter got me on the Bush campaign probably almost on the dot of January 1, 1992, within a day or two. It was like a weekend. Teeter said look you come over here without portfolio, I need your help. We've got to get through this somehow, come over, and that was like December 28 and I started the next Monday or something, whatever that was.

Riley: What was the hallway talk about Skinner?

Pinkerton: The only thing I can remember—this answers your question. One of the few things I can remember about Skinner was that David Letterman, when Skinner first got picked. And I'd known Skinner. He was not a bad guy. He was the Illinois chairman for Bush in '88 or the executive director or something for Bush in the '88 campaign, so I knew him a little bit then. He was sort of a politico type, whatever. When he got into the transportation secretary in '89, Letterman made jokes about his name, Samuel K. Skinner. He just thought it was a funny name for somebody to have. He just made jokes about it, whatever. "And your Secretary of Transportation, Samuel S. Skinner, is—" whatever Letterman joke you could tag on to the end of that or something like that. Top 10 things about Samuel K. Skinner. That's about all I can remember about him, if that helps. [*laughter*]

I'll tell one tale about what happened in his office, that is, in April of '92. I just want to, principal political science lesson. We're having a meeting on the roll out of Bush's fifty-fifth economic plan, twenty-ninth or forty-seventh or whatever it was. The "New Foundation" or the "New Freedom" or whatever we were calling it, and it is the West Wing and it is Skinner, Henson Moore who was a deputy there, Andy Card, Ede Holiday, Cam Finley, whoever was there and to talk about this roll out and the idea was that Bush had this big economic plan and we were going to sit there and figure out where to send surrogates. So we'd sit there and say, should Lynn Martin go to St. Louis or Chicago. Again, this is all, like Hitler moving his army around in April of '45. Okay, we'll recapture Moscow now and then we'll recapture Paris. I mean, this was not connected to reality.

I remember, again, you're sort of—it takes a while to get your feet on the ground. You walk into a meeting, see what they're talking about, realize what benchmark we're talking about here, what the level is. So about a third of the way through I said, wait a second. Are we talking about rolling out the Bush economic plan that was in the *New York Times* this morning and we're going to make this a surprise to people out there? I remember Andy Card said, well that's just Dick being Dick. I mean, Darman had leaked the whole damn plan to the paper, not that there was anything to leak, I mean who cared, a cut in the capital gains tax. Not that it was going to happen. Remember, the whole point about every Bush initiative in '91, '92 was, Bush could announce it. It was never going to happen. There was no support for it, nobody cared, nobody took it seriously, it was just words.

So the entire Bush '92 campaign fact sheets were: proposed legislation on this, proposed legislation on that, as if that mattered. So we're sitting here trying to milk surprise out of a plan that has already been in the paper and we think that is a big deal. They sort of looked at me like,

you don't want to play then do you. Okay, we're all here to do important work of deciding whether Lynn Martin should unveil this thing in St. Louis or Chicago and you're just a big party pooper. So again, this was, Andy Card is a wonderful guy and this is really not so much to trash him as just, if you want to play on a team, you've got to do what the team does. If you lose the first half eighty to nothing you've still got to play the second half, right?

Milkis: You can't try and catch up all at once.

Pinkerton: You really don't have the—if you want to be on a team, you really don't have the option of saying look, this is ridiculous, we're not going to win, let's just go home. You don't really have that option. You've just got to wait until the score is going to be one hundred sixty to nothing. That's just sort of the way it works and that's what they had to do and that's, and I remember thinking there is surely some irony meter here that has just gone off the charts, but nonetheless.

Riley: There is one episode earlier that I've forgotten to ask you about and that is the Sununu speech where he basically declared victory and said it was time to go home—

Milkis: We don't need any more legislation—

Pinkerton: That was sort of, again, my Atwater training would say, you never sort of announce in advance, I'm not going to do a thing. You just don't ever give, don't ever declare this to be sort of the end of history like that. That was an idea that was circulating in the air then, but you just never surrender, never consider the idea you're not going to do anything. You never put down all your cards, you never empty out your wallet. You always have something like the Arabian Nights principle. I'll have another great story for you tomorrow night; don't kill me. I mean, you've got to have something going on that just keeps people interested and for those guys to just simply talk like that, I remember. I talked to Sununu. I said, "We have no more need for domestic policy? And we solved the deficit problem? What if there is a recession?" I don't know, October, November '90.

He said, "Well, there won't be." Okay. That solves that. I mean, I remember, Sununu was given to saying things like, "Governor, we should do something about homelessness. I've analyzed the homelessness issue there, there's nothing to it." [*laughter*] I mean, I guarantee he had a better analysis for why homelessness wasn't an issue than I had for why it was, but still, this accumulative intelligence of the universe that says it is an important issue and all those other people who say it isn't, who haven't had the privilege of hearing Sununu discourse on it personally. They might not be persuaded quite like that and it took more than that and you sort of become, if you let your own brain become the choke point for the entire operation, you're likely to get drowned.

Karaagac: I'm a little interested in that speech that Sununu gave which I think was after the disastrous election?

Pinkerton: Yes, it was November, December or something.

Karaagac: It was the hostile conservatives. It was on Capital Hill that they, at the Hilton or the Holiday Inn or whatever.

Pinkerton: I wasn't there for the speech so I don't remember, but yes.

Karaagac: He got a standing ovation though at the end, he must have done something. He must have been doing something right to appease the right wing, which was hostile.

Pinkerton: That's again, that's like Darman was no liberal and Sununu was a conservative. It was just sort of, look, the Republican party—and probably the Democratic party too—the Republican party is certainly hierarchical enough that your average Republican is just sort of for the Republicans and he's our President and we've got to support him and that's that. I remember some woman from the '92 campaign, doesn't even matter who she is, saying, "I wish we could just stop talking about issues and just talk about politics. Let's get on with campaigning."

I mean, there are plenty of people, arguably most, on both sides, certainly in both parties who just want to beat the other guys and they have tee shirts and hats and dangling earrings of elephants and whatever. They don't want to talk about stuff, they just want to simply go team go. And, for those kind of people, they'll cheer at anything. Again, Sununu had a pretty good career, I think, ahead of himself if he hadn't taken the White House job. He'd just been governor of New Hampshire and got elected to the Senate or something like that. I think we'd be talking about him with serious vein as a presidential candidate or Cabinet Secretary, you know. He is a smart, smart guy, I mean he just had that kind of brain where he could simply pull stuff out of his head, calculations and dates and things like that. Its not my story, but Ed Rogers' story, that Sununu was the one that figured out, "If we stop the Gulf War now, it's a hundred-hour war." Just like that, pulled it out of his head—pretty good. Again, its not like curing cancer but in terms of being a trick its not bad.

Milkis: A lot of this did have to do with the opposition. You haven't talked very much about Congress, and you don't have to, but it seemed that a lot of the problems Bush had did follow from the fact that he had no support in Congress.

Pinkerton: Well, and he threw away his one good card—the tax thing. Look at now, this Bush is staying on the right side of taxes, just pounded away at it, one thing, there will be a recession if I don't get my tax cut. It's like Reagan in '81, and it has worked. You know, he is going to get his thing. Now you can argue about the policy but you can't argue about the political science of it.

If Bush had said, "read my lips," whatever, whatever, he might have even gotten a deal somehow, but it would have been a deal as opposed to just getting bilked. The thing to bear in mind is all the way through, the conservative movement circa 1990 was such that the *Journal*, the *Washington Times*, the whoever, the *American Spectator* whatever, they were just full of articles saying the budget deal was just a fiasco. I mean, spending went up, not down. All these caps, all this arcane that nobody cares about anymore. They were full of articles taking it apart and saying, look this has been a big boon dock, big illusion, spending—I think on its merits, in terms of did this actually control spending? No. And that just was, every conservative in the

country, every Republican reading this was saying, what is going on here? This can't be good. Let alone sort of the elemental Biblical injunction, whatever commandment it is, not to lie.

Karaagac: Don't lie to New Hampshire.

Pinkerton: Don't lie—it became the country, it just became the whole, you know, read my lips. How many David Letterman jokes and Jay Leno jokes were about that. It was just a year's worth of stuff right there.

Milkis: Before we go on, I guess we have the '92 campaign to sort of get into, but before we do that, could you just talk a little bit about your relationship with Elaine Kamarck and the DLC and whether you came across Clinton in those days, and whether you took the chance to take his measure—

Pinkerton: Yes, I met Elaine in like '85 or something, we just became pals. She worked on the Babbitt campaign in '88 and we were just friendly during all that time. I remember, we had dinner like the night before the Iowa caucus in '88 and, not, sometime the week before or whatever it was and we sort of both wished each other luck. Bush came in third and Babbitt came in sixth so [*laughter*] we weren't much good for each other. We created—she and I cooked up what we called the "New Paradigm Society," which was sort of, sounds much more august than it was, it was just sort of an intern with a Rolodex and we were calling up people. We had Hernando DeSoto, and Kemp and Gingrich and David Osborne, anybody we could think of who was an empowerment type—that was '89. We did start doing that in '89. We did it at the old [undecipherable] or something, the basement room there. Dutch treat. Nothing fancy about it. So, we just kept up pretty closely during that whole time and I remember, she was writing the column for Newsday that I write now, and interpreting the White House mess and then she totally screwed me because she called the White House afterwards and said, "I have to do a story on the White House mess, I had lunch there with Jim Pinkerton." And that's a no-no, you're not supposed to bring reporters there.

I hadn't really thought of her as a columnist, just a friend. The next thing I know I'm getting blown up by Rose Zamaria that old battle-axe. She still alive?

Milkis: I don't know.

Pinkerton: Rose Zamaria?

Karaagac: Oh Rose Zamaria, I think she is.

Pinkerton: Too bad. [*laughter*] Anyway, Clinton registered on me—Heritage and the DLC put on some conference called left and right—

Milkis: Remember that.

Pinkerton: With Bill Bennett and whoever there. When was that, '90, '91, in there someplace. I went to that and we just carried on back and forth. And so, I remember by the DLC, the

Cleveland Convention, was it May of '91? I remember thinking to myself, *they're on to something here*. This is a lot of our stuff or what should have been our stuff, and whatever. I remember thinking, to some extent that I was still worried about Bush's political well being, I said oh-oh we better not let this guy get nominated because, we can handle Cuomo and Gephardt and whoever else. These people weren't running, but hypothetically were in the race, but Clinton really is different. So, and then you had the [Richard] Thornburgh election, what was that, November '91, so we sort of smelled we were—I at least smelled defeat in this. And I was full of historical theories about how you just don't beat incumbent Presidents running for re-election and things like that, but it does happen—as Bush proved.

Milkis: When you heard Clinton give his October '91 speech at Georgetown, the "New Covenant" speech—

Pinkerton: The three of them.

Milkis: There were three of them, but one in particular, the domestic speech I'm thinking of, where he announced, I think, he was going to run for President, I think, but anyway, it is somewhere on here. I remember Elaine Kamarck calling me and telling me that he was going to give this speech and it was sort of a call for a departure from the New Deal. I mean, did you get a sense like that's my guy or did you see some flaws in the "New Covenant." I mean, what's the difference between the "New Paradigm" and the "New Covenant?"

Pinkerton: I was for private school vouchers for one, and it wasn't—I guess my critique of the "New Covenant" would have been much more, do they really mean it, and will the Democrats just hijack it back to the old stuff, which is sort of the same critique Will Marshall would have. So in terms of what was actually there, I wouldn't argue that much with it. To some degree it is a different team. If you see a good idea you want your team to do it, not their team to do it. But I certainly understood the issue—I remember, I explained it back to Elaine. They lost three straight elections. When you lose three straight elections you reform yourself. I said look, all the way through '90, '91, '92 we'd have some idea for this, or some idea for that and say no, we can't do this, we can't do that, whatever. Some deal, some arrangement, some something, some understanding.

I said, "If we keep this up we're going to lose." Losing is like going bankrupt. Now that I'm bankrupt I don't have to pay you any more because I'm bankrupt. Sorry, you're free and clear of all debts and obligations so why don't we declare bankruptcy now, before we've lost so that we can sort of get out from under all the stuff, the stupid stuff we've agreed to. That was somebody else's deal, sorry, he's gone now. You can't hold us to that agreement. So that we can sort of liberate ourselves to do stuff. That's the kind of thinking, when you start to realize the people around the room with you are already looking for their next job and just don't care anymore and sort of—I was looking for my next job too, but at least I sort of prided myself on also having intellectual energy, intellectual if not deep loyalty, at least intellectual energy. Just for the sake of it, let's—like the Jack Nicholson scene in *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, baseball. Let's all play baseball and all the guys are sitting there slobbering on the floor and stuff while Jack Nicholson is trying to get them to throw the ball. I had that kind of quality to me at all times, and these other people are saying no, well okay, we're going to lose. But we're losing as Lord Kean

said, “For most people most of the time it is better to lose in a familiar way then it is to win in an unfamiliar way.” And that was certainly—losing in a familiar way was what these guys were all about back then.

That’s back to this thing about intellectual exhaustion. I didn’t get the feeling of so much tired as simply slothful.

[BREAK]

Milkis: You’re joining the ’92 campaign. Tell us about that? You’ve told us a little bit but maybe you could elaborate a little bit. Your stimulating experience in the campaign.

Pinkerton: This is my fourth one of these now. There is one thing I knew, I knew at least what not to do. I figured I had a tight relationship with Teeter and a certain amount of left over respect and so on, and I’d sort of always been involved in—like when they hired David Tell to run the research operation. He came and talked to me. I had enough status, talk to Pinkerton, get his thoughts on this, that kind of stuff. So I really don’t sort of remember, what I did. I read the speeches, that kind, the usual kind of stuff. I remember I put a lot of effort into getting Bush to repudiate the tax increase. That was one of our major objectives and it had nothing to do with getting Bush elected, but a lot to do with satisfying—actually it did, I take it back, it had to do with both.

If you go back and look at the New Hampshire primary, whenever that was, and thereafter, there was a ramping up of Bush saying things like, “The tax increase was a mistake.” Before the Georgia primary, I don’t know why this happened this way but it did, we got Bush to come pretty damn close, he said it in public, to saying the tax increase was a mistake. That was a big victory in terms of—because by then I really was conscious of, look, we’re going to—we may win this campaign, we may lose this campaign, but we’re sure as hell going to bury Darman and that whole “ism” forever out of this. And that was where Gingrich and I had sort of an unstated but nonetheless blood commitment plus all this sort of empowerment, the Kolbs, the Richard Porters, the Hans Kuttners, Austen Furses of the world, to make sure these guys never came back, Darman and Brady, whatever. This is pure Teddy Kennedy, Jimmy Carter, 1980 platform fight stuff, but that the grudges last forever afterward kind of thing and—then the LA riots happened.

Again I went through the whole thing, planting trees. I had a plan, I said, look, if you’re for the Pat Buchanan style, machine guns, crackdown plan, or you’re for the urban Marshall plan, you’re not going to be satisfied with what Bush is in. Bush is just doing nothing. This is sort of walking around. There’s no visual, there’s no anything here. It is just sort of zilch and of course, that’s what they did, zilch, nothing, you wouldn’t know it what they did, either way, what it was, pro or con. And that was sort of the story, that’s when I really did think Bush was going to lose. That’s one thing. The Thornburgh election in November had sort of been an early indicator that we were in trouble, but the LA riot and sort of non response of any kind, good or bad, up or down to that was just enough to tell me, we just lack the capacity, in a Toynbee-esque sense, we lack the capacity to sort of have a dynamic response to crisis. We’re here just sort of getting punched, who cares any more. There’s no energy in our own group, there is no enthusiasm. Yes,

I remember going to sort of Bush events and clap a little bit and that would be the end of it. I mean, that's just what happens after twelve years. I'm sure it's the fate that Al Gore suffered a little bit in '88 and, you know, was one of those people—ideological, worse or better point of view. I wouldn't have been that unhappy if Gore had won this year, same sort of thing. Just because I know what would happen to the Democrats if they had been in power for twelve years, they would have gotten massacred in the '02 midterms and it is the fate.

As long as, to talk about alignments and realignments, as we have today, the Congress and the Presidency tend to move in opposite directions, certainly in the mid term stuff. Sort of take your choice. The prospect of Bush getting re-elected in '92 and losing seats again, probably, or not gaining seats and then having the '94 mid-term being some holocaust. That was just no good. So I just sort of figured, okay, fine, these guys are clearly content with the way things are and they don't really want my input and I'll sort of do the best I can but there is nothing else to do.

Milkis: In terms of getting the President to repudiate the tax deal, was there, can you tell us something about how that took place. I mean did somebody have to go to him and persuade him to do this?

Pinkerton: Yes, I think it was Gingrich, I think it was the Georgia primary, I think it was Gingrich who simply—Sununu was gone, Skinner was more neutral. Skinner hadn't been associated with these fights.

Milkis: And Darman was still there.

Pinkerton: Darman was there but it, you know, by then, it was so clear that something had to happen, that it wasn't, I mean, it wasn't me personally making the pitch to Bush. I don't think I really set foot in the White House much after January of '92. A few times, but nothing to get excited over. I think it was probably the Congress. I think in this case Bush was just weak enough now that he sort of—I mean, I'm sure that Newt Gingrich was probably happy to see Bush lose. I know he was. But at the same time he didn't want to get blamed for Bush losing and he didn't want to be seen as—again, the ideological avant garde wants one thing, the flying wedge of people wants one thing, the masses want the other and they don't really perceive the logic of, if we lose in '92, we'll win in '94. That wouldn't make any sense to them at all. Gingrich got that completely, I got that completely.

So Gingrich was posing as Bush's best friend. I think giving him sincerely good advice. If Bush had done everything Gingrich wanted him to, he would have done better if not won, but it was probably Gingrich saying, look, you've got to do this to help in the Georgia primary.

Milkis: There was some sense that Bush was upset with Gingrich for sort of leaving the reservation in the face of the budget deal, but there was a reconciliation of sorts between them as the '92 election approached? I heard the White House was furious—

Pinkerton: I know damn well that I was the only person, Gingrich had a primary, or was it a general election in '90, it must have been the general election in '90. He had a tough race, by really close, by a couple of hundred votes. I know damn well I was the only one in the White

House who wanted Gingrich—I won't say the only one, I know damn well that Sununu and Darman were dying for Gingrich to lose in 1990 and I wanted Gingrich to win. I remember sort of telling people I want Gingrich to win, ha, ha, ha, what do you think about that? And they were all—

Milkis: Did you give him a contribution?

Pinkerton: I think I might have, look it up, I think I might have. I know I came down and campaigned for him, so how's that. So I think I might have even given him money too, just to throw it in, have these little victories, like putting up a picture of some, you know, on your wall, just to piss them off. So it wasn't so much, I think Gingrich just tactically understood and he didn't really care whether Bush liked him at that point. He wasn't doing it for Bush, he was doing it for himself, and the thing to do for himself at that point, was pose as ultra-Republican loyalist.

Bob Dole and Bush. I mean, how could Bob Dole possibly have liked Bush, given everything. And yet, all the way through the Presidency, there was Dole praising Bush to the skies and—was that after the election that Dole, that they had some dinner after the election, like December of '92 where Dole praised Bush to the skies or something like that. I think it was, said good-bye George kind of thing and Dole said, oh, Bush is so wonderful, Bush is so wonderful. We'd done nothing but screwed Dole every which way, the campaign and so on like that. And Reagan too. The whole Reagan-Bush crowd was nothing but Dole enemies in terms of the two, the '80 and '88 campaigns and there's Dole praising Reagan, I mean, praising Bush. That was just pure tactics on Dole's part to position—here, ninety-eight percent of Republicans just want their guy to win it and if you show the slightest bit of disloyalty to the Republican party, then they hate you because you're disloyal.

The two percent, of Jim Pinkerton, Newt Gingrich empowerment types were all for our own little Bolshevik world where we're sitting there trying to get the Mensheviks but that's not the realm where, average Republicans want the team to win. So Gingrich and Dole were both saying win-win-win, help-help-help even if they both had private dislike, contempt, disdain, whatever for Bush. That's just the way it works.

Riley: Your theory seems a little bit complicated by the fact that Pat Buchanan gets more than two percent of the Republican—

Pinkerton: That's a fair point.

Riley: So I guess as you're working through the campaign apparatus in the winter and the spring of '92, tactically you're in a terrible situation. Tell us a little bit about how you were trying to deal with the Buchanan threat when I suspect that you may have been somewhat sympathetic to some of the things—

Pinkerton: No, I didn't like Buchanan. I said earlier that Buchanan had a little bit of the tax outrage in him but I believe that was—hostility and revulsion to Bush over the tax pledge was a big part of it, but Buchanan campaigned on protectionism, anti-immigration, that kind of stuff,

all of which I was opposed to. But again, I mention the Georgia primary. The only reason there was a primary in Georgia was because of Buchanan, so that's where we had a chance to sort of settle our differences with Darman, not settle, but at least get back a little bit of the historical record the way we wanted it to be, using Buchanan as an excuse.

Somebody could have said, no, what Buchananites want to hear about is not anti-tax increase, they want to hear about textiles or something like that, but we weren't offering that as a solution to their problem. We were offering as a solution to their problem, our solution, not necessarily the solution they needed. That was, one thing about being the insiders, you get to put your own agenda on there. Right, Buchanan was getting more than two percent of the vote back then, but on the whole, so it is ten percent, twelve percent, whatever it is, but on the whole, Dole and Gingrich both had to be loyalists, you just can't get the institutional party on your side.

It is why I always tell people, and I say, listen, I voted for Bush—as long as I am a Republican, I'll never vote non-Republican, because as long as I vote Republican—it is like Ben Wattenberg said this to me about Democrats. Ben Wattenberg, it has been a long time since Ben Wattenberg thought a good thought about the National Democratic Party, right?

Karaagac: Right.

Pinkerton: But, he told me, and I haven't talked to him, he told me this ten years ago. He said, I voted for Dukakis in '88. I said why? Because you can't get rid of me this way, I've got standing in the party. One thing, if you don't even vote for the guy, why would they listen to you. If you're a Democrat and you voted for the Democrat then we have to listen to you, and that's my theory on this, and so, you have to buy your way in and Gingrich and Dole both bought their way in by being loyal to Bush without every thinking much of Bush, in '92, by being loyal.

So I don't think they had a reconciliation, they just said, Gingrich is here helping me all of a sudden. Oh, okay, I want to win so I need him. Not that Bush probably had a terribly high opinion of—I know that. They didn't like Gingrich. But they're sort of stuck with him, that's what politics is, nothing but, Reagan and Bush going back to 1980. I mean, how tight Reagan and Bush were. I mean, every book, and I used to read those books back then, every book about the '80 campaign would say, look, Reagan didn't like Bush at all in 1980, he was weak and so on and so on. But they picked him.

Riley: What were you trying to do tactically—my assumption, I don't remember this—my assumption is there must have been some efforts to keep him out of the race to begin with. Were there channels that you were working towards those ends or was this taking place?

Pinkerton: He must have announced in like November of '91, does that sound right? December probably? I was still in the White House I didn't have much to do with it. This was again where Atwater would have been infinitely effective.

Milkis: It was before that I think, but it wasn't too—

Pinkerton: It was definitely the late fall. So I didn't really have much, didn't—

Milkis: You weren't there yet. When did you go to the campaign again?

Pinkerton: Like the first day of January '92. And, I guess, again, I definitely saw a chance to rework the tax thing—that was my big ideological cause back then. And I would argue by the way. If they said, "Well Jim, are you just here settling your possessions with Darman and the tax increase and the general philosophy of limited government?" Well, probably. But I would also say, "Look, this is good politics. You got to get Bush right with the party again. That's the key to the primary." So if it is in my interest and Bush's interest simultaneously, that's certainly a good deal, so let's do that. And I think that to some extent was vindicated.

I think the fact that we did squelch Buchanan pretty quickly and stuff. I mean, you could say it would happen anyway but I don't know. Things have a way of getting away from you. Ask Lyndon Johnson.

Milkis: Was Bush's performance in the '92 campaign as slothful as the press—

Pinkerton: Take the obvious point—

Milkis: Was there a huge difference between '88 and '92 in that respect?

Pinkerton: Yes, there was. But it wasn't, I mean, Washington in '92 was full of rumors, oh Bush is dying, Bush has this horrible sick disease and whatever. Obviously the guy is incredibly robust. Ten years later he is doing fine. He had no physical problem to speak of. I mean, medicine was off—I won't, not trying to be funny about that, he—maybe a little needle tweaked on his Graves' disease or something like that, but he was fine. He just had a decadent operation and no message and he shot his credibility. That doesn't leave you with much. And history hadn't really swung around on—history as opposed to emotion had really swung around the Gulf War and the Cold War. That stuff was sort of whatever and he just lied, he lied to the American people in a big, fundamental, in your face kind of way.

Karaagac: On taxes.

Pinkerton: I'm under no illusions that the average American is as worked up over taxes as I am, but they don't like being lied to. That's something everybody can get. Every husband and wife, every kid and parent can have that kind of conversation. Hey look, Junior, you lied to me, now go to your room and sit there for a month, you know. That's a big thing. And Bush just made this horrendous mistake on his own terms.

Now Bush's answer of course would be well, I shouldn't have made the pledge in the first place. Well, I'm not sure you would have been President if you hadn't made the pledge in the first place. I'm not sure you would have beaten Jack Kemp, or Bob Dole. I'm sure they'd argue that but, that's why I'm here, to spin my side of it.

Milkis: Was it during the '92 campaign Jim when you were writing a memo or some memos about Truman and trying to make parallels with '48?

Pinkerton: I definitely was doing, I mean, I had the Truman thing on the brain. I wrote my first Truman memo in '84—how's that? So I was definitely—no, I've been totally on top of this, and it is not because it was like, the dynamic was, President of one party, opposite party of the other and you've just got to put it in their face. If they're your mortal enemies, you can't be dealing with them, you've got to fight them, you've got to confront them, and it is not so much that you have to fight all the time, but you've at least got to, before you make a deal, you've at least got to get the high ground. If you could deal from the low ground—it is like fighting a battle from the low ground, you're just going to lose. So you have to make clear to your voters, whoever you are, what you stand for and you use conflict to illustrate that. We are the low tax party, they're the high tax party. Now, maybe they make us make a deal, that's what Reagan did in '82, they forced us into this horrible deal, whatever, we didn't want to do it but we had to. Okay, fine. That's not the same as what Bush did, where you begin by surrendering.

So Truman—I'm sure I had a version of the same, word processing makes this easier now as time goes on to update the same memo and recycle it again. But yes, I was definitely talking that line. We did train trips for a while, we were doing train trips in '92 weren't we?

Milkis: Yes, I think you were [inaudible]

Riley: David McCullough's book—

Milkis: That was your idea?

Pinkerton: Probably, we had, the McCullough book came out somewhere, I remember waving it around and saying see, see, you know. It was all about challenge the Congress to do something popular and all of Bush's instincts weren't bad. Bush's instincts just didn't—as an aristocrat, Bush did not have the idea of mobilizing the people on his behalf. He was not a velante general kind of guy, he was just of a, well aristocrats—pre-French revolution kind of military as opposed to post French revolution.

And my idea is definitely mobilization, artillery, clobber them. His idea was more Battle of Blenheim kind of stuff, two armies piddling around. I was definitely a total war.

Milkis: He wasn't that way in '88 though.

Pinkerton: He didn't think of it, we thought of it.

Karaagac: Atwater commanded.

Pinkerton: Yes, we had the levy on that, it was Atwater, Bush was just there.

Riley: So he was active in '88 because somebody else had defined the mission for him.

Pinkerton: And the tactics and everything else and handed it to him.

Milkis: The mission then wasn't defined.

Pinkerton: What was Bush's message in '92? Re-elect Bush because what? He kept his word? Economy is booming? What were we going to say? Ended the Cold War? The Cold War thing, now you say it is huge. But again, and I, this I can say was full of historical stuff, I say, look at [Winston] Churchill. There he is, wins World War Two and his reward for that is out of office first chance they get. I mean, he was at Potsdam negotiating with Stalin and he had to go home, can't get much worse than that and that was very much on my mind.

Milkis: Interesting.

Pinkerton: And that's why—and back to Truman. Truman beat that. Truman had three years thanks to his term before the post '45, he had a chance to sort of put some new stuff in between, but the fact that Truman overcame the obvious post war okay you guys won, now out, jinx, proves in that sense, what a virtuous political candidate Truman was.

Karaagac: Related to that, how would you even define in a sentence or two, the Bush domestic policy?

Pinkerton: They would say, "kinder, gentler," and if I would have said we're going to engage in modest domestic reform, but that, we used to talk about "operation domestic storm." That was like a phrase buzzing around the time, that was the way we talked, circa 1990, 1991. That was just light years away from the way Bush—that was the way we talked, it wasn't the way Bush talked, and it was a tribute to our isolation from genuine influence that we would come up with a bunch of language that Bush was just incapable of.

Karaagac: So basically he didn't have a domestic message that could fold into '92, just didn't exist.

Pinkerton: Sununu said it, no domestic policy. I mean it is just stupefying that they thought like this but you read about other historical examples, but I think what was going through their minds when they did that.

Milkis: Maybe Harry Truman was more enthusiastic about the New Deal than Bush was about Reaganism.

Pinkerton: Oh yes, read Truman's speech—maybe you've done this already.

Milkis: I've done it.

Pinkerton: Truman—

Milkis: The Fair Deal speech is basically Roosevelt's '44 State of the Union message.

Pinkerton: Truman believed this stuff. Gluttons of privilege. He really burned with outrage at Wall Street and whatever—

Milkis: Vetoed the Taft-Hartley Act.

Pinkerton: Yes. And I used to talk about that example all the time. I said, listen. Truman was overridden on the Taft-Hartley Act 331 to 108, something ridiculous, just totally slaughtered, and yet, [Clark] Clifford and these guys said, look, we're sending a signal. There's an anti-labor wave passing over the country that we've got to just deal with and we veto and stand our ground, and the fact that still a third of the country is unionized, and so we will—the unions will wake up one day and realize that we're the only friend they've got left. And we tried to make that argument and they came on, like the Supreme Court and whatever else, it just didn't really take, but nothing wrong with an honorable, principled defeat.

And that's where Bush would not have gotten it. Bush would not have understood, you lose a battle now, it is an ideological point for the future. Bush would say no, you lose the battle now, you've lost. Didn't have that understanding of lose now, win later. Ideologues think like that. Okay, the April revolution in Russia was a failure, we'll do it in November, and do it right. That's the kind of stuff they wouldn't—ideologues get that immediately: 1905 was a prologue to 1917. I think like that, Gingrich thinks like that. Bush says, oh well, we lost, that's bad. What am I going to tell the people at the tennis club. You need both obviously, but you can't really succeed. Eventually the ideologues have to win and eventually the pragmatists have to figure out the value of losing.

Milkis: How about Perot? For all the things you've said, if Perot doesn't enter the race, doesn't that change the dynamic pretty dramatically?

Pinkerton: I don't know. And that's an endlessly discussed subject isn't it, whether Perot—I don't know, maybe. I wouldn't bet on it. I think the polls and data are sort of inconclusive on it. Maybe you're better versed on it than I am in terms of how Perot voters would have voted, and I don't remember the papers reaching some obvious conclusion in November of '92 on that score. I certainly think that Perot hurt Bush more. I certainly think that Perot was a reaction to Bush and the general, they're all liars and deficits and whatever.

Milkis: Maybe he summoned up that kind of opposition.

Pinkerton: I think that's right. So you could argue—it serves me better to say if Perot hadn't run than Bush would have won, I don't know. Dry rot, dry rot, that's what I keep thinking.

Riley: Let me back up a little bit before we get to the general election and let me ask you about the convention itself which created a lot of controversy. Did you have a role in the production of the convention in '92?

Pinkerton: I must have. But it really wasn't much. By now I really was, I was going to write a book and all that stuff.

Riley: Maybe I should ask you this as a preface to that, could you tell us sort of what your portfolio was?

Pinkerton: I was counselor. And I had one sort of assistant secretary and I had one aide person working for me, Ruth Shalit, notorious writer, whatever. And I don't know what I did. I told them in advance, look, I don't want to be in charge of anything and they said okay. I just was there to kind of—remember the quality of discussion by now was so bad in terms of, this late in the campaign, Clayton Yeutter, he was, was it the RNC or someplace, I don't remember where he was.

Milkis: He came to the White House as domestic—He sort of pre-empted Porter, right?

Pinkerton: Wasn't he in the RNC after that? Then they kicked him out.

Riley: Then Baker came, Chief Surrogate.

Pinkerton: The RNC or whatever. Anywhere, in there someplace, he came to one of our meetings and said, "Why don't we post billboards? Clinton is going to be someplace, get billboards saying 'I hate the military' Bill Clinton. Or, 'I loathe the military.'" Now, a, that's not what Clinton said. I'm no fan of Clinton's but he—and maybe you can say that quote, that famous letter to Colonel so and so, Kirby or Higbee or whatever his name was, it was "the things that have led some of the brightest people in America to loathe the military." It is not the same as "I loathe the military." You can say Clinton is playing Clinton, but strictly speaking, again, you've got to be accurate, you can't put stuff up, back to the opposition research days—if that's your idea of a campaign, signs saying "I hate the military," Bill Clinton. That's like high school. And this is a sixty year-old man talking like this. Then you know we're down to the short straws here in terms of our campaign arsenal. So what was I doing? I wasn't that dumb. Whatever I was doing, at least I was sort of trying to be useful as well as saying dumb stuff, and what did I do?

Milkis: You didn't do the scheduling for the convention so that you had Buchanan give a prime time address and Reagan give an address after eleven o'clock.

Pinkerton: I was there for the platform and I did all that stuff, whatever there was to do on that, I can't remember, but I remember, we'd sit around and try to dream up some way to explain why the Civil Rights Act of '91 wasn't a quota bill and something like that. By now I really had just entered into the realm where I've—there's got to be better ways to make a living than this and—in case you haven't noticed, I mean, what I kind of value now is intellectual freedom. You know, I don't have tenure anyplace but I feel like I can say anything I want to anybody and I'll stand by it and people can love me or hate me whatever, but I just, that sense of liberation, for thirteen years in politics, from '79 to '92, that was the number one thing I felt, just a load off me. Say what I want, think what I want, take my chances, whatever, and just to be out from under all those people.

Even in the '92 campaign. You can look at the—I was pretty disciplined. I don't think I ever said anything in the papers that was bad about Bush prior to the election. I mean, maybe I did, but I really don't think I did. After the election I had one comment, but before that I don't think I did. I just, okay, this is their show and this is as—you know who Franklin Spinney is? What's his name, he's at the Pentagon, one of those whistle blower types. Frank Spinney, strange name, talk

about Pentagon waste, fraud and abuse. Well, if it keeps going on they must kind of like it after a while. Right? After a while you sort of realize that if this is the sort of the way it works and it never changes, they must be kind of comfortable in it right? It is just some sort of low slough of existence, but nonetheless, if you're happy there then okay, fine.

As I said about iron triangles before, I'm no, I'm under no illusions that things just get crisp and good just because you want them to, you've got to take it as it is and just assume. Even if you don't like it you assume the people inside it are happy with it and that's sort of the Bush story of that period. For as long as it lasts, they'll have meetings, that's just Dick being Dick. Oh yes, we're here, he's there and he does his thing and our thing. Sociology, right? You have some sort of dysfunctional family or company or organization where they're doing dumb stuff, but it's not your money, so, and you're not in charge so you say okay, maybe it will work.

Milkis: What did you do right after the campaign, where did you go?

Pinkerton: The thing I was alluding to, again, I was thinking historically. This campaign is full of twenty-one year olds, the '92 campaign now, who didn't get a good break out of this. When I was twenty-one I got to work in the Reagan campaign and no thanks to me whatsoever, Reagan had a big victory and I got to be in the White House and all this cool stuff. So I sort of felt bad for these kids. They, like British soldiers on the eve of the Seine; they didn't do anything wrong, but they're just over the top with you and so I, and I had sort of become a little bit of a figure of young Turkism to them and—there's a place called the Post Pub. The Bush campaign headquarters was across the street from the *Washington Post*, 1020 or 1050 Fifteenth Street, and there is a place around the corner, the Post Pub. So I said, look, anybody who wants to talk about the campaign and what happened, this was like Wednesday night after the election, we'd lost.

I just got up and said listen, you know, all of you tried hard and that kind of stuff. The fact that Bush, the incumbent President with a ninety percent approval rating managed to lose to a draft dodging, pot smoking, womanizing, whatever, says something about—

Milkis: "New Paradigm" Democrat.

Pinkerton: I didn't give them that, I stated the case the other way which is to say, sleaze ball.

I said that. You can look at the statement. I said, there was a guy there who had worked for me, one of the many people who sort of volunteer in campaigns, presidential campaigns, Mac LaFollette, he'd be interesting to talk to. He's at Suisse First Boston. Went to Harvard. One of his roommates from college was a guy named David Hilsenrath who is a *Washington Post* business reporter and he said oh sure, show up at this meeting. So I really, honest to God, I know it sounds faux, but honest to God it is the truth. It was just a bunch of people in the room, like thirty people, I didn't know who they were. Mac and this other guy who was sort of a little older than the average, maybe, and he's planning to be a *Washington Post* reporter, and the next morning in the paper there I am saying, "George Bush lost to a draft dodging, womanizing sleaze ball." So I managed to take down both Bush and Clinton in the same sentence. Our new President is this but Bush lost to him, so what does that tell you. And again, I was under—I think Mary Matalin attacked me. She was more of a loyalist and stuff.

After that I had sort of became a Fellow at the John Locke Foundation, in North Carolina and then the Manhattan Institute and then started doing the *Newsday* column and whatever. Started writing a book, so everything was fine. But, again, that intern little speech is much more just to them, to their own purposes, little did I know it would be in the *Post*. I admit, when I saw it there I was kind of thrilled, but I really did not know in advance, just one of those things that I'd never convince anybody but it is true.

Milkis: You said that ideologues don't care about, oh they care, but they are not destroyed by temporary losses and—

Pinkerton: Right.

Milkis: When I told my students yesterday I was going to interview Jim Pinkerton I said that he's the guy who came up with some of the ideas that evolved into the "compassionate conservatism," that if you want to look at the origins of a lot of this stuff, that's where it is. Was I giving you too much credit?

Pinkerton: No, I—

Milkis: Do you feel vindicated somewhat by "compassionate conservatism"?

Pinkerton: No, I feel vindicated by both, in large measure by both Clinton and Bush. I really do. I feel like, and again, it is not so much that they were reading me, it is just the zeitgeist was clearly emerging. The biggest influence on me in the 80s was reading all these sort of Tom Peters' *Searching for Excellence* kinds of books and he says, okay, we really want this organization to succeed do we—well we really have to measure results and we've got to kind of empower people, let them make their own decisions. This is the sort of stuff that was sort of self-evident. It is self-evident now but it was relatively fresh and sort of stimulating in 1982 or '83. I remember sitting with Atwater saying look, there is interesting stuff about how the thing is going to work and maybe we run the campaign like this and who knows. And Atwater was sort of interested. Atwater was one of those guys who understood that people like me were useful to him in his plans and that's just the crucial distinction. And Jim Baker understood that. Smart people help you and if you play it right they'll never crowd you—they'll try to crowd you but you're the boss. You'll slap them down if you have to, fire them if you have to, humiliate them if you have to, but nonetheless, they will work to make your greater glory.

So all the way through the 80s this was happening and it was sort of a creative destruction process and maybe more people saw the destruction process than the creative process but I saw the creative process. Companies were emerging. This isn't even computer companies. This is sort of Frito-Lay and all those companies that Peters and [Robert] Waterman were talking about back then. So this is sort of where the world is headed and there's got to be sort of an arbitrage here from all this sort of progressive thinking in the business community about how things get done and innovations get made to what we're doing—we're not doing any innovations. I think I put it in the chapter there, we're just a giant exercise in negative metallurgy, turning gold into lead. [*laughter*] That was what the government was back then I think. And I think Clinton and

Bush Junior both understand that. Now, they're not as radical as I am and maybe, not as—maybe I'm not as radical today as I was ten years ago, but nonetheless, just that freshness, something to talk about, something to entertain people, right, I mean a professor doesn't get anywhere if he doesn't keep the kids entertained. You certainly don't. I forgot what I was saying, I'm so in love with my words I forgot where I started. You have the transcript.

Karaagac: Clinton and Bush Junior.

Pinkerton: I said, I was one of the first to say, in official Washington, there's got to be something better than what we're doing now. And I only said, "Listen, if you just simply break the ice, if you just simply let loose a process." Okay, we're going to try. Bill Bennett—and I don't know where Kristol was at this precise time—that there was a big series in the Chicago Tribune about the Chicago public schools, circa 1986 or '87. They said, we're spending, in 1986 dollars $5,000 a kid and nobody is learning anything. The schools were the worst in the country and Bill Bennett had some study on this and I said wait a second, there's got to be some better way to run a school than this. The plan can't be to hire teachers who don't know anything and have no schools don't know anything. There's just got to be any other sort of organization.

You know, the Peter Drucker question. If you weren't doing it now, would you start? Anything is better than this. And I remember, at the White House, I brought in the head of the Philadelphia Public Housing Authority, not the head, but he was some sort of inspector-general or something like that. I said, tell me how this works, you've got forty thousand people in the Philadelphia public housing and you spent $12,000 per person on maintenance? How do you spend $12,000 a person on maintenance? It was such absurd figures of waste, fraud and abuse and stupidity. I said, anything, you throw it up in the air and let it land again, it is going to come out better than this. And that was the sort of the—I said, if you begin a process like that.

You were saying it before, if you have a goal and you accept a goal, then it is just problem solving after that. The trick was to get your arms around the challenge of okay, we really want every kid to have a good education. Now, is the current status quo getting us to a good education? No, it doesn't seem to work, okay so let's change. Let's try this, and this, and this and change it. Now, out of that comes school choice. Now I have no illusions that vouchers are really sailing off into reality land, but school choice certainly is. The reality that every kid in the country is going to have a hundred different curricula to chose from, on line in a year or two is certainly happening. I mean, the notion that the kid is no longer some pawn for Judge Garrity to move around in the school bussing system in Boston but the notion that the kid is going to have to pick his own fate, or the parents will, that's an utter flip from twenty years ago or twenty-five years ago in terms of school ideology. I just noticed even the Century Foundation has got something on public school choice now.

It is just that kind of stuff, I believe I was there ten years ago, early on. I think there is a reason why Elaine Kamarck is my best friend in politics and we've kept up ever since and I think there is a reason why Bush Junior is so much different than Bush Senior, is much more effective.

Milkis: How would you answer, well in a way you already have begun to answer this question, but how would you answer the skeptics who would claim that the "New Covenant" and

"compassionate conservatism," that's not really a "New Paradigm," that's just splitting the difference between liberalism and conservatism.

Pinkerton: I would say that take, just for—Kristol clear on this—thirty years ago, the critical issue in education was more funding and school bussing. With no thought given to results on the funding thing and the school bussing was the child was a tool of the state to meet our racial categories and judges like Garrity in Boston, or St. Louis, or PG [Prince George's] County here or whatever would just do the stuff and that would be that. And splitting the difference from that to where we are now is not half school bussing and half not school bussing, that is splitting the difference. The "New Paradigm," the "New Covenant," whatever, is a complete reversal of that. Instead of having the judge or some racial bureaucrat in the Justice Department pick, the kid picks. Now, even liberals like Robert Kahlenberg would say, if that works—we can make it work through magnet schools and choice and whatever to still get integration, but it is a complete reversal of this. That to me is the argument I would use and that would be the argument that says, listen, there are some things that are splitting the difference and compromise but there are some things that are decisively radically different.

Welfare reform from thirty years ago of guaranteed incomes to where we are now with the state's controlling it is just a universe of difference. Some might say, yes, but they're spending more money, fine, but it is all the difference in the world whether the governor of Wisconsin or Maryland or Texas or wherever is responsible for getting the welfare rolls under control and things like that and it just becomes the Feds. That's a huge difference and I will take some small credit for at least putting that in the discussion at the federal, national level. I don't claim having original thoughts on this but I said I could at least arbitrage what people were saying to me and try to halfway get it into—

I mean, things I'm proud of—Hernando DeSoto, do you guys remember who he is? The Peruvian free market economist guy. He came to Washington, he wrote the book *The Other Path* about third world development, something like that, and I got Bush to write the blurb for his book. Oh, I know what it was, Bush, the blurb on his book is a Bush speech and I got—Bush was giving some speech at the IMF [International Monetary Fund] or the UN or something like that, in there someplace, and I put in a paragraph, in the speech writing comments process, about Hernando DeSoto. So if you go back and look at the dust jacket of *The Other Path* there is something about little brown people never heard of Adam Smith, nonetheless have recreated Adam Smith out of private property.

His point was that DeSoto had recognized the kind of Hayekian spontaneous order, desire for private property, Lockean, mixed labor with kind of stuff, out of people who had never come out of that tradition at all. And that was Bush's—I guarantee Bush didn't know who Hernando DeSoto was and I guarantee Dick Darman knew but didn't care. But, Kemp and me, and those other guys did and we got it in the speech and we gave DeSoto that little fillip of legitimacy that comes from having the President of the United States recognize who you are. That's not splitting the difference, that's genuinely something new on the table.

Back to DeSoto just so everybody knows, DeSoto saying the whole third world development model of the World Bank funding nuclear reactors and airports and defense contracts and

whatever. To go from that where we were forty years ago under [Robert] McNamara and whatever, or twenty years ago, to private property rights as the basis for development, that's not a split the difference, that's a one hundred eighty degree shift. Starting to feel good about myself.

Milkis: That's our job, that's our job, to make you feel better.

Pinkerton: Well I'm a Virginia taxpayer, so yes, this is—

Milkis: We aim to please. So where are we, do we just want to do a bit of a retrospective and wrap this up?

Riley: I think so, I don't know whether you have anything—

Pinkerton: I talked you all to death? I talked myself to death?

Milkis: We usually finish up by asking the person we interview if I am to write the history of the Bush Presidency, what am I supposed to write? I have a chapter, or half a chapter on Bush in my textbook. How would Jim Pinkerton write it, how I write it is irrelevant.

Pinkerton: But I get to tell you what to do, right?

Milkis: Yes.

Pinkerton: You promise?

Milkis: We got this on tape.

Pinkerton: I would say that Bush was a fine man and had he been President—I mean, you could squint and sort of imagine Bush getting elected President as early as 1968. Dynamic John Lindsay kind of guy. If he had been elected to the Senate in '64 somehow, whatever. And now he is sort of this forty-five-year old Kennedy-esque, John Lindsay kind of figure being President and I think because he is a good guy and honorable and all this stuff, he would have done fine on—take '68, say he got elected in '68. He would have withdrawn from Vietnam somehow, maybe at the same pace [Henry] Kissinger did, who knows, and he would have sort of been cool. If he had had Kissinger he would have said, oh yes, that's a good idea, go to China, that's cool.

He would have had no time for Watergate whatsoever, he would have said get out of here, I'm going to call the cops myself on you guys, [John] Mitchell and [G. Gordon] Liddy and so on like that. I mean, he wouldn't have been taping things, he wouldn't have had enemies lists. He would have been just a good Cold War President who would have listened closely as—what did we say at the beginning of one of those Cuban Missile Crisis meetings, they said McGeorge Bundy says, correct me if I'm wrong, we must conduct ourselves as Colonel Stimson would want us to. And that sense of tradition and legacy and we're going to be responsible, we're not going to be idiots, we're not going to blow up the world, but we're also just going to solve this problem in a kind of constructive, Cold War wise man kind of way. I think Bush would have been totally into that.

And I think if he had been elected in ’76 some how, I think he would have been fine in that kind of score. The fact that he got elected in ’88, it was just too late in the cycle for him to be effective, given the sort of intellectual tool set he has as a foreign policy, Atlanticist kind of guy. Now, he still was effective on foreign policy, but too effective for him to be President that way. Hence a one termer. The Cold War ended—again, if the Cold War hadn’t ended, I’m sure Bush might well have gotten re-elected, and that’s the thing. As long as that lasted, he was in that tradition. I believe that Bush did a good job but not a spectacularly better job than Truman or Eisenhower, whoever. Better than Johnson, but nonetheless.

In that vein. The thing is, that sort of the domestic paradigm sort of collapsed under Bush and sort of the legitimacy of it all and the legitimacy of the federal government kind of collapsed and Bush was sort of clueless about this kind of stuff. I mean Bush was not—this is, about George Junior, same thing. If George Junior is confronted with being honest and ethical, he’ll pass. If he is confronted with Tom Daschle wants this and Tom DeLay wants that and we gotta sort of have to split the difference and give them both credit and then have some new ideas on top of that he’ll do fine. If we get loose nukes, we get somebody cloned, we get, you know global warming, drowning, Bangladesh in the next few years, we’ll have real trouble there. Not to say that Gore would have been better but just because ah, this is a discontinuity. To use Kuhn, this is an anomaly all of a sudden, what do we do with anomalies? If you’re not smart, and most people aren’t in that sense, you sweep it under the rug and hope it goes away and kick the can down to the next guy. Well, Bush ran out of can, Bush ran out of road, the old Bush. And who knows what will happen to this Bush. That’s the issue here. And that’s true for anybody. I’m not sure that Gore would have been any better at this kind of stuff. I mean, Gore certainly poses as a much smarter guy.

I’m not really sure Clinton did a good job at this, I’m not really sure that, people say, well did Clinton really address entitlements? Did he really do a good job on Russia? I don’t know. China? We’ll find out, too soon to tell.

Milkis: Balkans.

Pinkerton: Balkans, yes, I don’t know. Too soon to tell. Had some dinner last night with Michael Mandelbaum who has this scathing critique of Madeleine Albright, on the Kosovo thing. Who knows. So I say, Bush is, I used to say that, back to World War One, I said, used to be lots of guys like Bush. Honorable, decent, chivalrous, not terribly smart guys. They all got killed in World War One. Certainly on the British side they all did. And Bush is sort of a survivor of that kind of stuff. It is an honorable place but it makes it hard to make leaps. You don’t expect General Haig to take you over the next—to tanks and airplanes. It just wasn’t going to happen.

Milkis: Is there anything he did domestically that he deserves credit for, like the banking, repairing the banking system?

Pinkerton: I don’t know. To me that’s just sort of again—would Bill Clinton have done differently on banking?

Riley: That's a good question.

Pinkerton: Would Bob Dole have done differently on banking. There is stuff which is just simply handy. In other words it is like my choice of getting home today. I have a choice between a subway and a cab. Okay. Big decision. Not really sure you care.

Milkis: Of course we care.

Pinkerton: That's nice, thank you. The tree-planting thing would have been fun, that was small, that is the best I can come up with. Actually a friend of mine who died, unfortunately he drowned a few years ago, was in a speech writing office, a guy named Bob Simon. Some tree issue came up or something like that and Bob sent me a fax which I actually still have on my little bulletin board at home. It says, "National Tree Trust," Bush's one domestic policy achievement. Thanks to you. Maybe there's some list of, I'm sure Roger Porter has some list of—

Milkis: Clean Air Act, ADA—

Pinkerton: I'll give him Clean Air. ADA is just bureaucrats to me and lawsuits. That's the right-winger in me coming out.

Milkis: Why would you give him Clean Air? What is there about Clean Air that is more acceptable?

Pinkerton: I believe the pollution issue is serious, I believe that that is a serious thing and that is sort of an collective problem. It is. It is one thing to sock it to some guy who owns a small business and say, "Look, you've got to spend $40,000 on ramps for your thing," but it is another thing to go to every baby that just got born and say, "Look, you're going to get emphysema, statistically more likely."

Riley: In other word the market mechanisms [inaudible].

Pinkerton: Yes, I think that was good stuff. I think I put that in my original "New Paradigm" speech. I think I put that in there, emissions trading, whatever it was. That's all fine. My judgment of somebody as beyond just sort of, did you, if you—back to Kuhn, if—everybody's read Kuhn—if you're just a normal scientist, as Kuhn would say, solving puzzles, and you exist within somebody else's paradigm, you exist within the Copernican paradigm, the Ptolemaic paradigm, whatever, then by definition, there is kind of a ceiling on how much credit you get. You can get credit as being, well you're honorable, adherent to this tradition and you push the needle one inch forward in the course of your career. You refine the quality of metal, or discover two more plant species or something. Okay, put that in your textbook. Okay, he was a normal politician trying to advance a paradigm and did a good job on foreign policy, advancing the paradigm slightly and a not so good job on domestic policy.

Notice, I have no critique on him on the Gulf War. It is not really my field anyway. So for example, somebody says he should have taken out Saddam Hussein. I was there for that and can

tell you it was not so—just from reading the paper and watching TV, it wasn't so obvious that it would have worked as well. I mean, you have to think about [Douglas] MacArthur and the Yalu River and stuff. I have no real bone to pick with Bush on that and certainly, so those things I just leave to others and history and whatever else But I think in terms of—I would just say that John Foster Dulles, or Dean Rusk, or Henry Kissinger would have been able to pull off German reunification if the opportunity had presented itself. If something like the Soviet Union collapsed right in front of your nose, would—I give Reagan a lot more credit than probably the average person would. Then, okay, it's not that hard. Helmut Kohl probably had a lot to do with it. I try to judge people on are they really adding value to the process.

Milkis: Let me just ask a question about Reagan because this is a question I always struggle with. How would you describe the Reagan Presidency? That is, would you say it was transformative in the sense it set, it prepares the ground for a lot of the things that you would come to call—

Pinkerton: I would call it—

Milkis: Is he a Roosevelt of the right?

Pinkerton: I would call it transformative in that, as an example I mean, I was at some dinner at the Carnegie—this is Ronald Reagan—

Milkis: We care about that too.

Pinkerton: Ok, fair enough. I was at some dinner at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace circa 1990, 1991, in there someplace, and a guy name Vladimir Lukin was—he was then the chairman of the foreign affairs committee of the Russian, or maybe it was still Soviet parliament, or something like that. He has since been Ambassador to the U.S. So he is a heavyweight in Soviet-Russian diplomacy. He's not some goof ball. And all these sort of liberal Carnegie types were all sort of buzzing about Azerbaijan or something like that, of interest, as if they know and as if [Boris]Yeltsin and Bob McFarlane, ghostly figure from Iran-Contra, survived his brush with suicide and whatever else, gets up and says, "Mr. Lukin, in 1983, the United States engaged in a policy of economic challenge to the Soviet Union, it was called SDI and could you tell us please about the effect of this policy on the Soviet Union." And Lukin said, "Well, when that happened, it was [Yuri] Andropov who was President and they said, 'Well, we need to study this, see what the Americans are up to.'"

So they commissioned two studies, one for the Russian military, one for the Russians' sciences department, Academy of Sciences. And they came back two years later with their report. Now Andropov had died, [Konstantin] Chernenko had come and gone and died and it was now [Mikhail] Gorbachev and both reports came back and said, "You know, we don't know for sure that the Americans are doing this but if they do, we can't match it." And so Gorbachev said well, obviously we have to make changes. We can't let them get this huge strategic advantage over us without responding. So he said—so the Glasnost, acceleration was the first thing before—before Gorbachev had any idea of being a good guy, he tried to be a bad guy, he tried to be a Stalinist again for the first year or so, if you remember back in '85. And they failed at that and they tried

all this other stuff, and that failed too. So Lukin said that SDI accelerated the decline and fall of our country by five or ten years.

That's pretty good. I was so excited by that. Back to winning the ideological battles. I called Paul Gigot at the *Wall Street Journal* and said you've got to do a column on this, you've got to get it on the record, this guy talking like this, and Gigot did. You can look it up in the *Wall Street Journal*, circa '91 or so. And I'm telling you now. I've since then, this was, that's when I came to know McFarlane. I really hadn't known him from Iran-Contra days before that. We talked a lot and this is the whole thing about Reagan putting the line in the speech and stuff too. This to me was—and I was sort of a dove and a skeptic at the time but looking back on it, I am now fully on board of SDI. Sort of cracked the engine block of the Russians. Maybe they would have cracked anyway, the metal was already fatigues. So to me that's transformative.

On economic issues, going back to 1979, '80, all the presumptions you had, all the Lester Thurow types saying oh no, we're doomed, steady state, decline and drift and you know whatever, 68 degrees and cardigan sweaters and stuff like that. That's was just what everybody thought in 1980. It was all sort of defeatism and pessimism and sort of, you know, lose gracefully, this is Carter, Kissinger types all sort of thinking like that all through the 70s. Reagan transformed that too. I could argue—you could argue on the environmental stuff, there's another paradigm shift to come on global warming. That's somebody else's Presidency to worry about, but I believe that Reagan thoroughly transformed the country on defense and economic policy, leaving—and sort of broke the spirit of the left in terms of using government and bureaucrats to sort of solve all problems, leaving kind of nothingness all the way through the 80s which I then tried to fill some of that little gap on "New Paradigm" stuff ten years later.

Reagan didn't do everything right, obviously, but he did those two big things right. He stopped communism and he stopped socialism is the way I put it. Communism abroad and socialism here and leaving us all—the stock market fifteen times higher than it was when he took office—and that's pretty good and everything else equivalently much better. So yes, I have infinite respect for Reagan. I worked for him and I'm under no illusions about Iran-Contra and whatever, but those things are so small in history that I believe Reagan was not a normal politician, he was abnormal, in the good sense of the Kuhnean paradigm-shifting kind of way.

Lee: Isn't today his birthday?

Pinkerton: Yes, I have a column on him today in *Newsday*.

Milkis: We're really appreciative, we enjoyed it immensely.

Pinkerton: It was fun.