WILLIAM J. CLINTON PRESIDENTIAL HISTORY PROJECT

TRANSCRIPT

INTERVIEW WITH RODNEY SLATER

May 4, 2007
Washington, D.C.

Participants

University of Virginia
Paul Martin, chair
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To cite an interview, please use the following general format: [name of interviewee] Interview, [date of interview], William J. Clinton Presidential History Project, Miller Center, University of Virginia.

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INTERVIEW WITH RODNEY SLATER

May 4, 2007

Paul Martin: My name is Paul Martin, and we're here with Secretary Rodney Slater. It's May 4, Washington, D.C., at Patton Boggs. Why don't we start with your first meetings with then-Governor Clinton, or perhaps he wasn't even in office at the time you met him?

Rodney Slater: It might be best to phrase it this way: when I entered law school in 1977, 30 years ago, he had just left the law school. He had left, Hillary Rodham had just left, and another friend of theirs who became a friend of mine as well, George Knox. I mention the three of them because entering the law school, there was still a buzz about this trio. They called them the Mod Squad, which was a pretty popular show at the time. But the real point to be made is that they talked about them as individuals who really challenged the law students to think beyond just being lawyers in the traditional sense, but how they could actually use their legal training to influence policy. That was quite interesting to me. It was a novel concept in the context of a lawyer, because generally you think about property, contracts—you're thinking about the various areas of law and the role of a lawyer as a practitioner. So I was intrigued by that.

I was also intrigued by the fact that he had taken a number of his former students to Little Rock to join his staff as attorney general. So he left because he had run and won the race for attorney general. The fact that some of these young lawyers had just graduated, were preparing to take the bar, the fact that they would have that opportunity was something that was exciting to me as an entering law student beginning to think about what I might do professionally in the years to come. So I knew then that I wanted to meet with and hopefully get to know this individual, and really the three of them in some way as well.

Then, some years later, I joined the staff of the Arkansas Constitutional Convention, which had been called by then-Governor Clinton as a part of his role as Governor. It was designed to rewrite the Arkansas constitution. I was joining it as a staffer. He was Governor. One of my favorite professors, Professor Robert Leflar, was the chair of the convention. So this was law school and politics and government coming together in a way that was just fascinating.

During this period, I was introduced to Governor Clinton by my father-in-law to be, who was a member of the General Assembly. His name was Henry Wilkins III. He was an interesting individual, because he was the first person I recall having a conversation with about the prospects of Bill Clinton becoming President. He was very active in not only state but national politics. He had attended a number of conventions and so had been in a position to take the measure of individuals who had offered themselves in the past and who had actually become President. So I found that very fascinating. As far as an early political mentor, he clearly played that role. But that's how I first got to know then-attorney general and then later Governor Clinton.

The first of the two that I actually met may have been Senator Clinton, because she was with the Rose Law Firm, and I remember interviewing with her as I was preparing to exit law school. I'm not altogether clear about that, because one may have happened in '79 and the other still in '79 but a little later. But it was just fascinating.

Darby Morrisroe: Fairly close in time.

Slater: It was just fascinating to get to meet the two of them separately, though within a relatively short time frame. Then, by the time I left the law school, I did go to the attorney general's office, but it was for a different attorney general. His name was Steve Clark. The interesting thing about that period was that you had President Clinton, who was Governor. He must have been 32. Steve Clark, who was attorney general, was probably 33; and the Secretary of State was a gentleman by the name of Paul Reviere, and he was probably 34. I mean, they were all just right together in age. Again, as a young law student and then young lawyer, I could just see the closeness in age and the vigor and vitality and the hope for the future that they all represented, clearly along with others who were part of the state scene at the time. So it was a very exciting time.

During that Governorship, the thing that excited me most was something that had been represented in those early conversations: how you use a law degree. Although law or thinking like a lawyer, the Socratic method, whether you are subjecting someone to it or whether you are respecting people who have their own questions about their lives and you're responding to it, all of that was quite fascinating. And to see someone using those abilities in that way was clearly something that got my attention, something that I respected a great deal.

Then in 1980, as a young lawyer on the attorney general's staff, though I was not working for then-Governor Clinton, I did participate in his campaign basically as a precinct worker—a little work here and there. Fortunately my precincts came in pretty well, but others didn't, and he lost. It was a surprising defeat because no one—there were issues, whether it was the raising of the car tax, the tax. He jokes about it now. He said, "Every year that someone had a birthday, my action brought their objection to that action to bear on their birthday. It was just a constant reminder. Because many people have different birthdays and talk to many friends, it wasn't even limited to their birthday. Whenever a member of the family who had a driver's license and owned a car had a birthday, they were all just reminded of my action." So he jokes about it and says, "It was bound to have an effect," and it did, and he lost. But fortunately the terms were two years, and he was able to come back in 1982, and the rest is history.

You always wonder, if it had been a four-year term, would his having been out of office been enough to make the hurdle higher and more difficult, even though you had a number of gifted individuals in that race in '82? Would they have been able to position themselves as stronger candidates had it been a four-year period since his absence? Those kinds of things, I think, come into play. But the good thing was that he was able to start running almost as soon as he lost. Now, I don't know that he did that. I think that that defeat was pretty numbing, and I think it really forced him into a period of personal examination. I think he really had to think about whether he could do what had not been done before, and that was to win it, to lose it, and then come back, because that was a big issue in '82.

So why don't we just jump to '82, because that really ties us together? I was on the attorney general's staff. It could easily have been around this time of the year when there was the decision to be made. He had to make a decision as to whether he would run for Governor. He decided not to do so. Then President Clinton had to decide whether he would attempt to do it again, running against a crowded field in the primary and then, too, the person who had defeated him in the general. He chose to run.

As he chose to run, he was looking for staff members. Fortunately for me, I had three older lawyers who were friends and colleagues, who were friends of his and who had either worked in his campaigns, or I think one had been a part of his administration. They had been appointees of his. But they were a little senior in their practice, and they were not in a position to join the staff. So they were in a position to designate someone who would be good to join the staff, who would then interface with them and work with him and hopefully have good things result. That, coupled with my father-in-law's relationship with it and my knowing the two of them, really put me in a position to be the person selected. But I was quite young and a little green when it comes to the interface with the political apparatus of the state and being able to provide the kind of return that you have to have, especially when in a tough race. So I acknowledge that it was my first major test, but it was a great opportunity.

The thing that sold me, as far as my interest, was the fact that not only had I been impressed with the moves that he had made and the people that he had again taken with him—when I say people, I don't just mean people in a general sense. I'm talking about young law students—energetic, visionary. They may be naïve in some respects, but that just means you don't know what's impossible; you think everything is possible. That's where I was, that's what I believed, and I thought that kind of attitude was required to take the kinds of risks, to give the state the kinds of things that we needed to have as a state.

Then the mix of that group was mixed. That was the other thing. Because Arkansas, much like, probably, Virginia, at the time was southern through and through. So you're talking about a new stream of opportunities for people to come into the forefront. That's women, minorities, and others. So that always impressed me.

Again, the other substantive issue that impressed me most was the commitment to education. That's really what I wanted to lock in on. Because coming into this reengagement, the effort to regain a political foothold, he made education his principal issue. He talked about doing something that would give students across the state the opportunity to have rigorous courses, demanding courses, competent teachers, and the kind of investment in education necessary to take a southern state to the median, and hopefully to the forefront in many respects, in the educational arena. That was what I wanted. I wanted to be a part of that effort, especially for my area of the state. It's the delta region of Arkansas, near Memphis, but mostly farming. I'm sure you saw a lot more about this delta focus that would develop over time.

But for me, the thing that connected me initially was the commitment to have a significant number of course offerings that would be basic for any student, any place in the state. That was great. You might not be able to get the 100, 150 courses that might be offered at a central high school, one of the premier public schools in the country, much like Thomas Jefferson, right here in this area. It's that kind of an institution. You might not have that, but you're sure going to have much more than the basic offerings that are just enough to maintain accreditation for graduation, which was so much the rule in most communities across Arkansas. So that got me excited.

Long story short, I told the attorney general that I was going to work in the Clinton campaign, leave, do that full-time. It was not a good conversation. His position was, “This is our team, and I’m going to run for Governor as well. We’ve had a great time together.” Basically he didn’t have to say a lot, because I’d already walked through this in my own mind. I mean, I could not have had a better experience as an assistant attorney general. I was given some of the highest profile cases early on and just a wonderful docket of cases to try at all levels—claims commission, state court level, federal court level. It had just been a great experience. I could not have asked for more—a great group of people to work with. So I was clearly a key member of his team, which is what any person would want.

He was basically saying, “How can you make a choice like this when I’ve afforded you every opportunity here?” I said, “You are exactly right, but you’re not running. I would hope that we could have a shot of regaining the Governorship, and Bill Clinton is running, and I think highly of him, and I want to do this.” We talked about it a little bit more, and he basically made two comments. He just said, “I don’t believe he will win. And he’s basically a loser, and you’re going to make this choice. This has never been done. It’s not going to happen.” He then basically said, “If you leave, you can’t come back.” I said, “I understand that. I think that’s fair too. I don’t have any problem with that. But if we don’t win, and if you run, then I think we should revisit this question of my support for you, because I do think very highly of you.” So we parted, and we’ve remained close, but that was a tough period. For me, making a decision on the promise and the hope was enough. I did not have to have the certainty.

Morrisroe: How did you weigh his chances for success at that point?

Slater: Maybe because I measured victory in a different way, I saw it as a no-lose. My position was, the current Governor was not going to make education his top priority. The current Governor had not done the sorts of things that Bill Clinton had done with law students coming out of law school and touching people in the way that he had touched them. I recognized that a campaign, in and of itself, can achieve some of those ends. So that’s the way I viewed it. I mean, the end result was the end result. I was definitely not making a decision to give up security for insecurity with a desire to accept a loss. No, the objective was to work for a victory, but I also valued the process itself. I knew that he could and would raise issues and deal with things that would be good for the state, even if at the end of the day, for whatever reason, we did not get the most votes.

Martin: Could you talk a little bit about building a multiracial coalition in Arkansas at this period of time?

Slater: That’s exactly what I wanted to get to. If I can say this, though, because it’s interesting—I was just talking about this yesterday with a person—my first integrated event in Arkansas was actually a political event. That, to me, is the power of the potential. It was an event that was actually sponsored by Win [Winthrop] Rockefeller, who was our Governor then. He was one of the Rockefeller brothers, who probably left New York because its light was brighter for other brothers, more so than himself. He found Arkansas. And because he found an Arkansas, then led by Governor Orval Faubus, that was in need of and willing to embrace progressive leadership but only if it could self-finance itself, because all of the political infrastructure, the money resources, were dedicated to the power that then governed the state. That's just the power of incumbency. People lock in, for whatever reason, because it is what it is.

So there is that seed, because his victory led to a [Mark] Pryor, led to a [Dale] Bumpers, which naturally led to a Bill Clinton. So you have that progressive ladder that leads then to a plateau. But in this 1982 race, there was also a golden boy whose name was Jim Guy Tucker. He had been in Congress, a member of the Ways and Means Committee. He was about the same age and had as much claim to this mantle as did Bill Clinton. So that was the race, and it was a very difficult race. The race issue became a part of that question. I'll talk a bit about that now.

Two things quickly: One thing that the candidate Clinton did that in the beginning caused me some consternation and really some question, just because I didn't fully understand it, was that he basically said, "I'm not going to go to eastern Arkansas for any more segregated events." Eastern Arkansas is my home. That's all we have, segregated events. So number one, how am I personally going to be effective if we're not going to go to segregated events in the area of the state where I have the greatest potential for being of value? And then, secondly, how do you put in question a part of the state that you have to win in order to win? I mean, you've got to win this part of the state by a significant majority to counter the loss in other parts of the state.

Martin: Can I just clarify for those folks who might not know Arkansas geography or politics on the ground, when you say, "no more segregated events in eastern Arkansas," are we talking all-white events or all-black events or—

Slater: I'm talking about both. Again, you need both communities to do it. Just to hurry to the end to make the point, what he was saying was, "I don't need to just win; I need a coalition for governing. I don't need to win by adding the two of you together at the end; I need the two sides to come together in the beginning to give me the real lift that is needed for us all to win, because our interests then become common interests, and our ground becomes common ground." But again, that was not something that was clearly apparent, even to me, at the time. So people said, "OK, he's got to have us. He'll come to us on our terms," and he just didn't.

Eventually a couple of people who were bigger than the issue started to talk among themselves. One was the sheriff and then Dr. Robert Miller. It was Sheriff Hickey if I'm not mistaken. They finally said, "OK, let's do this." But where do you do it? If you do it at the public school, even though it's many years after *Brown* [*v. Board of Education*], it's pretty much all black. You definitely can't do it at the academy because that's, after *Brown*, pretty much all white. If you go to the courthouse, well, there's a mix there, but on one side of the bar, it's principally all white—the prosecutors, the judges, the staff. On the other side, it's principally all black. Now it's not all, but my point is, it's pretty much all. If you go to this church or this synagogue, it's just, how do you work this out?

Morrisroe: The logistics were more complicated than the premise.

Slater: Exactly. So eventually they decided to hold this event at the airport hanger. You land, and that's it. This is no one's real territory. The challenge is, can we build a crowd, though? Because it's not a place where people normally go. It's not like it's a big place. Helena is a small city, so you've just got a few planes that even use this airport. You don't have any commercial carriers. So you've got to build whatever you build. At any one time, there are probably, at most, ten people there—the seven flying in, the person who might be walking his or her dog or whatever. So that's it; that's Helena. But they did it, and we had hundreds of people there, and they had a great time. They saw something. We all saw something that was special. We knew we wanted more of that.

Martin: Can you talk a little more about the logistics of getting people to this event? I mean, at this point, you're on the campaign staff. My guess is that you're tasked with getting people to the event, and other people are as well. Who do you talk to? What are the negotiations like?

Slater: Once they decided they'd do it together, it's pretty easy. You talk to the people. You talk to the judge, the mayors, the elected officials. You talk to the community leaders. You talk to the people. And you're talking to them individually, but now they've decided to do something collectively. So it happens.

But at that time, even though I mentioned that my father-in-law was in the General Assembly, that was only a small pocket of people, about four at best. It was before actions that would start to take form during the Clinton years that resulted in double-digit numbers of African Americans and women serving in the General Assembly. In this part of the state, there were none serving at this time. It was really during his term, with the appointments of women and minorities to all state boards and commissions, with a staff that "looks like Arkansas," all of this, a Cabinet that looks like America. All of that was taking root then. It was germinating then with those actions related to a state that would ultimately define an administration. Once they decided to do it, then it became easier.

Another gentleman I worked closely with at the time was Carrol Willis. And then Bob Nash and others, we started to just pull it together. We were able to do it, but they had to decide to do this event together, because we could have had events absent this one. It's just that they would have been just events. There wouldn't have been the magic of the audience when it's a different audience. It's an audience that is coming together for one person, who is probably the only person who could pull it off.

Morrisroe: What about Clinton allowed him to pull it off?

Slater: I think it was the genuineness that had built over the years. In the African American community, they knew that he had taken the students to the attorney general's office. We knew many of those students who were then young lawyers, young professionals who were active in their communities, doing things to move the state forward. So it was that. It was his own persona, his own energy, commitment to the state, the way he talked about what he wanted to do in the state, the fact that it was something that could resonate with anyone, regardless of your situation, because you wanted that for the state too. He was talking about a bigger pie. He was not talking about how you figure out how you cut up the ever-decreasing pieces of a shrinking pie. He was talking about a bigger pie and how the efforts of all would be necessary to bring that about. “If you work with me, if we work together to bring it about, then it’s all of ours to share in.” So it was that kind of message.

Martin: President Clinton would have been maybe 34, 35 years old around that period of time.

Slater: Yes.

Martin: It’s hard to imagine a Governor at that age now. Was there a sense from the communities, both black and white, why should we trust this young guy to lead us when there are older, wiser people around?

Slater: It’s interesting. He may have a better take on this. I do think that when he won in ’78, it might have been a race that just didn’t get a lot of attention because everyone was focused on a big Senate race that involved David Pryor, Jim Guy Tucker, and Ray Thornton, who later served on the supreme court and had been a Congressman. I just think that, even though the position of Governor is an important position, that all of the attention might have been focused on that race. So he was able then to position himself where he had competition, but he still was able to pull it off.

It may be that trying to do so much in that period where he had an opportunity to serve and not really engaging the populus in a way that would build the trust and the sense of security, that when they had the opportunity to vote, you might have had people who said, “Let’s send him a message that we don’t want him to lose, but we want him to know that he’s got to do things a little differently.” Then you probably did have some who were saying, “Who is this upstart?”

Because Frank White, though not much older, did appear to be a lot older. He was a banker at the time, and he was more in the tradition of—he was a businessman, though. At that time, actually, as I recall, a lot was being made of people in business coming into government and shaking it up and dealing with the waste of government, all of those kinds of things. That was swirling there, but I think, more than anything, Frank White was in a position to enjoy the inexperience and the overreach of a young, less than fully mature, political politician, government servant. So you probably had some of that at play.

But what’s interesting is that there was enough good will—that’s what I think Steve Clark was saying to me, and what Bill Clinton knew to be the real challenge in ’82, the fact that he had to wonder whether there was enough good will there, trust there, to believe that if given a second chance, he would do those additional things necessary—not just acting on his own sense of what the needs of the people were, but actually talking to them, actually taking the campaign where you’re appealing to them and really making that a part of the day-to-day governing experience, where you’re engaged, and you’re in constant touch. If you notice, that’s really the way he campaigned. But in that two-year period, maybe it wasn’t necessarily the way he governed. Maybe he got tied up in the job itself and doing the job as best he could and not continuing to stay in touch.

Even now and even during his Presidency, there was that constant effort to just stay in touch, to really take the time to listen to the stories and then to play that back almost as you talked about why this particular policy was important—not because it’s a grand idea that my team and I thought up, but as we have listened to you, our program is a reflection of the concerns, hopes, desires, dreams, aspirations that you have brought to us. There is the partnership, and it's a partnership that is developed over the course of a campaign, but that is solidified during the period of governance. That's what it was.

In the beginning, when he started out in '82, he actually started with an apology. The request was, "If you just give me another chance—"

Martin: What did he like to do on the campaign trail, in terms of his preferred mode of campaigning?

Slater: Well, I think it's just engagement. I really do. I think he likes the speaking part. He likes being there. But if you notice, he hangs around. That's sometimes the difficulty with moving to the next event. He knows that the real magic is in what you're going to pick up. What can you take to the next event that really humanizes your presentation? A lot of times the Ivy League-educated, Oxford scholar, Rhodes Scholar, and all of that, that can be a problem. So how do you take that which is an asset—and it is—and make it useful to people? You can't do that without hearing their story and without taking their story and using it to explain what you can bring to that story when it comes to shaping policy.

It's interesting how he talks about his Uncle Buddy [Henry Oren Grisham] and how he talks about his grandfather and how they used their life experiences and interactions with people to serve them—his father's store and how he dealt with all people with respect and how he would listen to them. It's interesting how he goes back to those early experiences that he observed to find the lessons for his role as a leader in first hearing those stories, and then responding to them with the programs and the policies that he would seek to formulate and then to implement. That became the theme, really, over the course of his tenure. He still, frankly, operates from that mode as he does his foundation work. But that's what I would highlight.

I want to go back a second to make one other point about that race that I thought was very significant and then actually relate it to 1992 with the Presidential race. Once we got into the throes of that race, remember, he had brought the communities together. Then you've got to deal with the mechanics of turning out the vote and making it all work for you. There was one event that was held at a place in the delta region. It was a place called Crumbly's Barbeque. [Jack] Crumbly is actually now a member of the Arkansas Senate, which is quite interesting. He was an educator, but he also had this business. It was *the* place for the gathering of politicians and the like.

Anyway, when we started getting to the election season itself, meaning the primaries are upon us—

[BREAK]

Martin: We were at Cumbly's Barbeque.

Slater: Crumbly's is in eastern Arkansas as well. It's in Forrest City, which is one of the larger cities in the area. We got the people there who were going to really help us move this vote. But they're also meeting with others too. Jim Guy Tucker was one of the people that they met with. President Clinton actually talks about this in his book. But I was there, and it was something. Jim Guy had come in before we got there. He did a great job.

We were there, and a young lawyer got up and basically said that Bill Clinton was a great Governor and was a really good attorney general—great guy, strong civil rights record, all of that—but he has lost. He is basically a loser. So you get this loser piece again. This is weighty because his first race, he lost running for Congress. Then he wins two, attorney general and Governor, then he loses. You follow me?

Martin: Batting .500.

Slater: That's right. And the thing about the Governorship that is so much a downer is that it's one thing to lose a race where you're running against a strong incumbent who is respected. You're running in a very difficult part of the state, northwest Arkansas, so you lose it. In that race, it was actually a victory because people were talking about him as the golden child and someone who is ultimately going to realize his potential bright political future. Then you do that with two wins, and then you lose that. It just makes that question mark bigger, that hurdle higher, and all of that. So the weight of this is being felt before you enter, but then, over the course of the race, it's being felt and dealt with.

Then you come to this setting, and this statement is being made in your presence: all of this is good, but a loser. Jim Guy Tucker, on the other hand, all of those things as well, all of this upside, but he hasn't lost to Frank White, and he's just as good. Then he sat down. So that's the tenor and the tone of this meeting. Then all of a sudden, a guy in the back of the room gets up—one point that I didn't make was that this was after the Governor had spoken. So he really is not in a position to defend himself, because he's already spoken. These are comments being made afterward. I think, in one sense he's surprised by it, because we're just sitting there. Then this statement is made.

Then there was another person who got up. His name was John Lee Wilson. He was the mayor of a city called Haynes, which is in this area, but it's the classic community with just the one store, that kind of thing. But you've got a little community on the side. He gets up. He's not as polished, his dress is not natty, he's not any of that, he's not lettered, he doesn't have these masters and law degrees and all that. He just gets up, and he says something to the effect that, "I don't really know. Bill Clinton has lost. I don't have any idea how this election is going to turn out. But I'm not sure that elections are about standing with winners anyway. I think they're more about standing with people who have stood with you. All I can remember is, when I was mayor of my town and my kids had to walk on streets that didn't have sidewalks and that actually had waste along the streets because we didn't have an adequate sewer system, that there was one person who came to my town, and that was Bill Clinton. And with his help, we got our sewer system."

He said, "So now my little babies, they don't walk with the sewer. Now, we still don't have everything we want. We don't have all the sidewalks and everything, but I think elections are about standing with people who stood with you. So Bill Clinton may be a loser. We may lose this one, but I'm willing to stand with the person who stood with us. We may go down together, but that's where I stand." He said it. It was actually much more poetic, although it was as he would say it. It was just the most powerful thing I'd seen because he was not intimidated, which could easily have been the case. The tide had turned, and he did it.

I think that's really the lesson in being there with people. Bill Clinton knows that lesson. He knows that when it really gets tough, those are the people you can count on. So it's all about, I think, always searching for those people, because they're out there, and they're the people who have their stories. Whatever their station, if you honor that story, you're honoring them and the people they love and the things that they believe in. That's what builds the bond. That's what I thought about when you were saying, "What is it? Why did they decide to do the integrated event? Why did John Lee Wilson stand up? Why, why, why?" I think that's it.

So we ultimately won that race. I think it was the lesson of how you win a race like that. It was the humility of knowing that however capable you are, however committed you are, that ultimately your fate is in the hands of the voters. If you're comfortable with that, then it can be a great thing. So that's what we had.

Now let's jump to '92 because I just want to show some connections if I can.

Martin: Great.

Slater: In '92 then-Governor Clinton was basically viewed more as a regional candidate than anything. He was much like one or two of the people of the eight, or of the ten, as we've seen the candidates present themselves over the last couple of weeks, except some of the bigger name candidates were not in the race because they didn't think that President [George H. W.] Bush senior could be defeated. So you still had them on the sidelines, and people were saying, "When are they going to get in the race?" You had the seven dwarfs, and you had all of that stuff. But the point is, he was at least finding some room. The spotlight was giving him an opportunity to demonstrate his capability, feel for the issues, connection with the crowd, that kind of thing.

Well, it was always known that if you could do pretty well in those early caucuses and primaries, and if we could get to Super Tuesday, that would be the bump for us. But then once you come out of Super Tuesday, you've got to get to the Midwest, so Chicago, Illinois, becomes very important. The state of Illinois, but also Michigan becomes very important—so those two states in particular. With Michigan, you have the bellwether county there, Macomb County, which is the home of the [Ronald] Reagan Democrats.

So what happened was, he basically told the press, "I'm going to do something that I don't think anyone else can do and I don't think anyone else is willing to even try. That is, I'm going to take one message, and I'm going to talk to all of society. I'm going to talk to all of the interests but with one basic message, and I'm going to demonstrate it in Macomb County, Michigan, on one day. Then I'm going to the heart of Detroit the next day." He did that.

I mention it because it's almost the "I'm not coming to two segregated events" thing. It's just done in a different way in Michigan. The result was basically the same. People liked the fact in '92 that there was a candidate who was not going to be limited by the Left or the Right, management or labor, liberal or conservative. He started talking about that Third Way, that you would have someone who would seek common ground. Again, I think that that was good.

But I think the lessons were learned, many of them in application, in ’82. I think that they were learned, but you probably had to go revisit them much earlier. In the grandfather’s store, talking to Uncle Buddy and having him say, “Everybody has a story. The key is just hearing their story.” That’s how you connect, by hearing their story. He was telling his young nephew that most of the time, people aren’t communicating. They’re just waiting to talk. They aren’t hearing a story, which is then the foundation for communications. They’re so inwardly focused that they don’t really embrace the other person.

If you ask people, if you say, “What is it?” they say, “He’s in this big crowd, and I just feel like, for that moment, he’s talking directly to me. He’s listening directly to me.” I do think that that’s a special trait. If you can have people across the various stratas of society feeling that way, there is the possibility for a powerful thing occurring when all of that is mobilized toward a given end.

Martin: Were you at those two events in Michigan?

Slater: Oh, yes.

Martin: Anything you remember in particular about how the audience responded or—

Slater: First of all, I think the response of the audience—they were both very attentive. In Macomb, you can’t really run from the central city. So it’s a message that could be delivered in any collar county, collar community, suburbia, anywhere in the country. You work; you enjoy entertainment in these core cities. There’s a lot there to be enjoyed, but then at nightfall or whatever, you’re just gone and there’s no connection. Then, for so many people who live in the urban areas, you can’t build walls. You can’t say that just because someone is white that they’re this or that. It goes both ways. You can’t make assumptions either; and that’s really what the message was to both groups.

We’re talking about people who want a good job so that they can provide for their family, so that they can send their kids to college, so that they can maybe have an opportunity to eat out here or there and go to a movie. People who want those kinds of things, they’re the same things that you want. The promise of America recognizes that, and the hope for a more perfect union requires that. That’s the kind of thing that he was doing. Then you’re putting people together. As a Democrat, you’re not limited by some of the issues that can cut you off from appealing to the broader society. So that’s really what he started to argue, that opportunity for all, responsibility from all, a sense of community among all. I mean, that was basically it—one America. Those kinds of themes did take hold, they did resonate.

Martin: When he goes into Detroit, here’s a Governor from Arkansas who knows the black community in Arkansas, but the black community in Detroit doesn’t know Bill Clinton.

Slater: Oh, but they do.

Martin: That’s what I’m trying to get to. How does that introduction work?

Slater: Well, Reverend Jones was from Arkansas. I think the name of the church was Pleasant Grove, but I can get all of that for you. But let me use the most stark example to make my point.

In 1986 we hosted what was called the sesquicentennial of Arkansas, so we celebrated our 150th anniversary. I was put on the sesquicentennial commission. As I started looking at all of the events, they were all great, but I had this idea. I talked to the Governor about it, and he gave me the OK to move on it. It was to host what was called a Salute to Greatness dinner. The dinner was designed to invite people back to Arkansas who were native Arkansans who had gone off and done well. I knew of a handful of people, like Ernie Green, who is here, who was one of the Little Rock Nine; Wiley Branton, who was a protégée of Thurgood Marshall and a distinguished Arkansas lawyer. But once I started to dig into it, I realized that there were many more. So we ended up with about 25 people that we recognized.

Let's just use Chicago as the example. John Johnson, the founder and owner of Johnson Publishing Company, was from Arkansas City, Arkansas. He left the state when he was in seventh grade because there was no high school. So his mother moved the family to Chicago. John Johnson is a multimillionaire, and most people just don't know that he's from Arkansas. But just, again, Chicago, Congressman Danny Davis is from Arkansas; Cecil Partee, who was the city attorney, from Arkansas; Timothy Evans, who is a member of the city council, from Arkansas; Glen Johnson, who was a member of the court of appeals, from Arkansas; A. R. Leak, big funeral director, from Arkansas. I started to put all of this together.

Now, the interesting thing is that I knew a lot of this, but I didn't know all of it, because there was a guy by the name of Bill Bowen, who was the president of a bank in Little Rock, and he had what he called the advisory council. It was made up of distinguished Arkansans who lived in other places. John Johnson was on that group, that advisory board. So I knew that, based on that. Also, there is an event that is held in a small town, which gave me insight about other events. The town is called Cotton Plant, and every year they have a Cotton Plant homecoming.

So A. R. Leak is always there. [Newton Jackson] Ford, his first name is escaping me, but he's the grandfather of Harold Ford and the father of Harold Ford Sr., always there, because they're friends of the person who was the mayor at that time. But over the years, I would see this, and start to wonder about these connections. Then you start to visit other communities, and you find out that there are actually hundreds of these homecomings all over the state. When you go there, you find out about [Barbara] Hendricks, who is an opera singer in London. Or you go to Camden, and you find out about [Gretha] Boston, who is an actor. That's how you do it, though. That's what I'm getting to. So basically once you see it, then you know it's there.

In 1992 we knew that when you circle out of the South, you're coming right into the Midwest. There are two principal cities that are critical: Chicago and Detroit. If you can tap those in a personal way—with people who have their credibility because they're there—and they're able to talk about a southern Governor in ways that resonate with people, that help you then deal with the aura of a, let's say, [Mario] Cuomo or a [Bill] Bradley or anyone else who was around at that time who had a presence that was based on people having seen them on television, having seen them champion major causes. But if you're from Arkansas, you're out of that spotlight, even though you've been doing some of these things.

So how do you get into that spotlight? You do it by having people who are third party verifiers. That's basically how that was done. It was pretty much [Jimmy] Carter's Peanut Brigade. But most of those individuals were from Georgia who went out. In this instance, we had the Arkansas Travelers, who were from Arkansas, who went out. But there was also this other overlay, and that was people outside of Arkansas who had built their own circles of influence, who would then bring you into those circles and talk about this young Governor who has been doing all of these things in my home state that I love dearly.

Now, Johnson went farther than that because he had a vehicle. He had magazines that was read by literally millions upon millions of people. One was monthly and one was weekly. We made enough news to be in those magazines a lot. It was almost like being in the family room, the living room, or whatever, of the families, households, reading this magazine.

Morrisroe: I don't think we've ever heard anything about the relationship between John Johnson and President Clinton. That's interesting.

Slater: And Johnson was a man of immense stature. He's passed away now, and his daughter, Linda [Johnson Rice], leads the empire. Johnson had never been honored by his home state. This dinner was the beginning of that.

Morrisroe: The sesquicentennial?

Slater: The sesquicentennial. Over time it was the Business Hall of Fame. In his hometown, they've built this wonderful—they took, really, a replica of his home, built it out, turned it into a nice little museum. The University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff, which is the historically black college, has named a business structure in his honor—so finally, in his later years, he's being honored in his hometown. Most of the people wanted that. They just couldn't have it in their home. They had to go out for opportunity. He was just one example of that.

Martin: It's ironic to some degree. It seems like you would be advantaged running from a state where people left, because they're everywhere. It's almost like you have an Arkansas diaspora.

Slater: That's exactly right. I think that's actually the way to talk about this. Arkansas is roughly 3 million people now. Then it was about 2 ½ million people. Logic does not tell—an Ivy League-educated, Rhodes Scholar, scholarship recipient, a person who is interested in a political career—logic does not tell you to go to a state with a small number of electoral votes. But if that's the only place you can go—also, if you believe that light anywhere can deal with darkness in a lot of places and that it ultimately will come to the attention of people, then it's not a bad choice.

Being able to convince another very bright person, who has no personal ties to this place, to join you is quite a feat as well. That's their story. It's really quite fascinating in many respects. It allowed you to really grow professionally but to grow closer in a way that helped you to hone skills that allowed you to then grow closer to people even in a bigger arena, rather than growing distant with the assumption of more and more responsibility. You end up being isolated and served by a smaller group rather than remaining connected to an ever-growing, broader group. So it's quite interesting.

The other thing I think we should probably note here is that in 1992, a lot of the African American, civil rights, and organizational leadership was not in the Clinton camp in the beginning. Early on it was basically John Lewis, Mike Espy, and William Jefferson. They were all southern Congressmen. That was basically it. Then it started to grow. Maynard Jackson was the mayor of Atlanta. He was very critical because he was also a leader among mayors. Clearly everyone now knows of the relationship with Vernon Jordan and how important that was. But it just gave credibility. Then, once you meet a person and once you're here, it's, "Oh, you've done that? Oh, this person, Mahlon Martin, was your first appointee to your Cabinet in Arkansas in '82, and he was the head of Finance and Administration—" which is basically the Treasury. "He was African American. Hmm, that's interesting." Then you had women doing this. They're just carrying that forward.

Martin: So do you think it's the credibility of what he did in the '82 campaign and his teaching post, leverage in '92?

Slater: Definitely. I think though too, what he did the first year out of his teaching post and as an elected official in, I guess that would have been '76, as attorney general, started it as well. But it clearly became more obvious as Governor in '82.

Martin: When you were on the sesquicentennial committee, was there a political foresight that you're building a national network incidentally to putting together this committee, or did that come later when you realized *Hey, we have this great little network*?

Slater: No, it started to come later. What you're doing is building primarily from where you stand. So you say, "Hmmm, didn't know about that." But it's not like you then immediately step from here to there. No. It was, "Having this relationship is good for today. We'll come to the other later." As I recall, it was probably around '84 when my father-in-law said, "He has that ability." For me, that meant watching how he would do this or that, more so than—because I personally could not step into '91, '92 at that point. I had never worked in a Presidential campaign or anything like that. You're just building from the knowledge and understanding you have.

Now, as you go to southern Governors meetings, as you go to national Governors meetings, once you start doing that, then you do start to see the bigger piece develop. But it takes a little time to get there. Initially you're just seeing it as a person who is from eastern Arkansas, who finally gets to Little Rock where you've got the state capital, who recognizes that the place where you went to law school in northwest Arkansas, that all of this has to come together in support of that person to be elected to a statewide office.

Then you do start to look at the region, because the delta piece started to come together at that time, and you see the connection with Arkansas, Louisiana, and Mississippi. All three happen to have young, progressive Governors. They feel willing and able to start talking about the underbelly, the fact that everybody is not benefiting and that all roads are not paved and all communities don't have sidewalks, that there are open ditches, that there are places where you have sewer systems that aren't operating, and there are places where the school systems aren't up to par. And that is exciting because most people aren't going to talk about that. They aren't going to address that. So that’s why this whole period was so exciting for me. It was a world that was opening up.

The one thing I remember about the early times with the Governor that were insightful to me personally was this book bag. You’re saying, “Three and four and five books at a time. That’s interesting.” Because you just start with one, get through that, go to another. It’s not like you aren’t reading; it’s just that you don’t have five and six at a time. So you find that that’s interesting. Then you’re riding from one location to another, and it’s five minutes. Rather than, “Uh, glad we got through the last one,” getting something to eat or water or whatever, he pulls out a book and reads two or three pages. You start to see how a person has really taken stock of the little pieces of time—that’s really what I’m getting at there—and how, over the course of a day, it’s an hour, but only if the five is added to the ten and the ten is added to the five. Those are the little lessons that I remember.

So that’s how you get that constant stream of information that is then used as you’re writing your speech on the back of a napkin or whatever when you’re in a setting. The bulk of what you’re going to talk about, you’re getting it interfacing with the people. But then you have to have a little more than that, right, to flesh it out. That’s what you’re getting as you’re interfacing with the scholars or the writers or whatever—or the poets. That’s what you’re getting with these books. It’s the same thing that you’re getting with Miss Jones or Mr. Smith, but you’re synthesizing it all.

I’ll tell you one other person who used to do that. There are a number of people who do it, but I think if you really pay close attention to Dr. [Martin Luther] King’s speeches, you get that. You get a lot of the common, everyday language, whether it’s a “promissory note that we’ve come to cash” or whatever. But then he’s also quoting some of the greatest thinkers of our times. The audience is not turned off by this. The audience is connected because he will take the common phrase and add it to the profound to help everyone understand what is being said, just in two different ways. President Clinton does the same thing, which is quite interesting.

So those are some of the smaller lessons you pick up. You really start to respect that it’s not just that a person is bright, but it’s that a person works hard. They’re working with the listening; they’re working squeezing in the three pages of reading when you’ve got a minute here, a minute there, all of the debriefings, all of the notes on the side of the margin, the drafts and redrafts and all of that. It’s not just effortless; it’s not just the magic of the moment; it’s really preparing to make the moment magic, where preparation really meets opportunity, being respectful of the people who are coming to hear you and knowing that they’re making an investment, so you should be making one as well to be ready and prepared to give them something. The only way you can give them something is to know them.

Martin: I’m trying to get the timeline straight in my head. Between ’82, ’84, are you with him on subsequent campaigns?

Slater: Yes.

Martin: Because you’re executive assistant—

Slater: I’m on the staff, but I’m still doing some other things.

Martin: Then you transition to being on the highway commission.

Slater: Yes, but that's an interesting story in and of itself as well. You take a leave of absence for the campaign, that's how that would work. I did that from '82—I then went into the administration. So from '82 to '87, I was on the Governor's staff—five years. I held two principal jobs. One was Special Assistant for Community and Minority Affairs, I believe. Then the other was an Executive Assistant for Economic and Community Programs, something like that. A lot of it was maintaining the interface, taking the outreach of the campaign—where you're making the appeal—taking the work of the administration just back to the individuals as well. That was pretty much my job.

Martin: So it had both a policy and effectively a political aspect as well.

Slater: Exactly. And I think this was a valuable lesson too. I think this is what really gave my role meaning and value. People would talk to me. They could never get enough of the Governor's time, although I could get his time. The key is, if I can talk to him longer, it just happens to be with this person, and it goes somewhere, meaning I'm not answering that question; I'm getting them an answer for that question. So I'm not a buffer. I'm a facilitator. I'm a means. I think that was quite valuable.

Also I'm saying, "Now, is that really what you're asking? Suppose you knew this, this, and this. Would it help clarify what you really want, what you're really interested in?" So as a person with knowledge of the process and the play of things, the state of things, really helping to create a moment where when the two of you are together, that minute is worth something. So that was pretty much the kind of role that I played. I never tried to stand between, but merely to facilitate. First, my youth required that. But I also think that it was a valuable role, meaning you're the leader; you're the one with the followers.

What you want to do is to be effective as you engage. It's not just pleasantries where, then, when you leave, you think you missed an opportunity, although you do have your photograph. So in one sense, I've got things that I can point to that say, "I'm in, but we don't really have enough time for that." This is a short period, even though it ended up being a little longer than we thought. But it's a way where you have to make every encounter count for something. I think that's where my role was important. And it has to be that for him as well, meaning the Governor, the principal, whatever the title. If you're meeting with a bishop, if you have a better sense of the breadth of his ministry, then is there a way to make that education initiative really relate to him, his parishioners, and what he's doing? So it's that kind of role—and it's work.

One other thing that is magic about it—I would always look for people who were on the periphery, who were glad to be there but weren't quite sure that they could come forward. You follow me? They're glad to be there as a spectator, as a citizen who recognizes this as a civic gathering, but who don't know that what they really want is of value enough to the person that they're thinking about bringing it to that it would justify that kind of engagement. "No, he wants to talk to you. This is exactly what he wants to hear. Yes, he wants to hear that your daughter is doing this, and in college, and that you're working this job and this job, and that this program that you've heard him talk about is important. That's exactly what he wants to hear. He doesn't want me telling him that. He wants to hear that from you. Come on. I'll take you up there. We'll work our way. Now, be patient, because we're going to do this in a way where we're going to be respectful of everyone else, but if you trust me and hold on long enough, we'll get up there, and you'll have your moment." So it was that kind of role. To me that was an important role. That was not a role that was demeaning to me as a Special Assistant to the Governor. That was *the* role.

Martin: You're in a great perch to watch him develop as both a campaigner, an executive, an administrator. How would you describe his evolution during this period? Anything that grabs on to you?

Slater: We talked a lot about '82 and that period. I think that was a wonderful period. You don't have that period unless you lose. You don't have that experience without the loss in '80. It's hard to come to grips with that sometimes. The loss was hard, and he would often talk about how he'd be walking down the street and people would just cross to keep from having to—

Martin: Because he's a loser.

Slater: He's a loser.

Morrisroe: It's catching.

Slater: Exactly. So that was a tough time. But that's also the time, see, when Chelsea [Clinton] was born. There were those other things that were happening that—you talk about just personal growth. Also, connecting back with those years where it was good to live through them, but the question is, was I really in a position to learn something in my grandfather's store? Yes. You know what? You can use it not only in engaging a potential voter but when you're sitting across from a head of state. Those kinds of experiences come into play as much there as anyplace else. I think that those were the kinds of lessons that were learned—and knowing that you could take a blow and not be knocked out.

We used to often, even in those times, talk about this scripture from Galatians: "Let us not grow weary in doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart." So the reward is in the effort itself. I think that's what was developing—and trusting people. It takes a lot of trust to apologize and then know that you can—because to apologize, most people will think that it shows weakness. It's only with maturity that we realize that it actually shows strength. But those are the things we learn as we go forward. I think that apology allowed people to really connect with him because he was asking them for something then. And they were happy to give it. Those were the things that come to mind when I think about it.

Morrisroe: Were there strengths and weaknesses as a manager of people or as a manager of an executive administration during the gubernatorial period that are important for understanding when he becomes President?

Slater: I think that Betsey Wright, as the chief of staff, was very helpful from '82 forward because Betsey knew what he wanted. She was just tenacious in staying on it, because he was busy. Everything that we've talked about takes time. I mean, it takes time to lock in on a person. It takes time to take the minute to continue to learn. All those things take time. So who helps you deal with the other things that have to be dealt with?

Part of this is about the difference between a leader and a manager. I do think that they're two different things. One person can possess the traits of both, but Bill Clinton is a leader. I think, to the degree you can free him from the nuts and bolts, you get a much better return. Now, the nuts and bolts, he's going to come in and come out, I mean, in dealing with that. But when he comes back two days from now, he doesn't need to be picking up where he left it. The staff really has to carry it, and they have to do it knowing that they've got the freedom to really do it and to do it in a way that clearly is consistent with the overarching themes. A couple of examples there that I think just jump out.

With Katrina and the way the current administration responded—technically, if the President announces a state of emergency one or two days prior to the actual event, when CNN [Cable News Network] is in the eye of the storm, the President personally does not have to be there. But his FEMA [Federal Emergency Management Agency] administrator has to be there. And if his FEMA administrator is there, then he is technically there. If you've got a Northridge earthquake and the freeway is down, by nightfall the President doesn't necessarily have to be there, but Secretary [Federico] Peña does, and your Federal Highway Administrator, Rodney Slater, they've got to be there. So it's that.

All I'm saying is, you have to have both; you have to have the principal, who is there on the issue and who is also there enough that there's no question about whether he or she will be there. But at the end of the day, since you can't be everywhere, your staff has to be there. Going back to your issue, I think Betsey Wright was a chief of staff who ensured that the pieces were there. She was in constant communication with him. Then you'd have the Cabinet meetings, the staff meetings, and that's the way that played out. So that's the way I would describe that.

I do think that in the first gubernatorial set up, if I'm not mistaken, there may have been some kind of a—

[BREAK]

Slater: Also good on this was Dick Atkinson, who came and stayed, later became dean of the law school but a couple of years ago passed away. But they just had quite a group. They were probably—

Martin: That's a name I hadn't heard before.

Slater: —28, 29. They were all just very young. They were as young as the students almost. So they really had some good times on the campus during that period. But George, if you want to reach out to him, I've got his contact information. He's in Miami. He left, became a prosecutor there, and is now in private practice, a leader in the community, really good guy.

Morrisroe: We should probably mention that at some point, you may get contacted by the University of Arkansas, who is focusing on the oral history of the pre-Presidential period in great detail.

Slater: Oh, that's good.

Martin: Starting from childhood. They're right now interviewing people who knew President Clinton when he was five.

Slater: Is that right?

Martin: And there are a lot of people, even at that age.

Morrisroe: And they're doing the post-Presidential period as well. So you probably at some time will get contacted by them as well.

Slater: OK, very good.

Morrisroe: So prepare yourself. Why don't we start where we left off? We were talking a little bit about the management and staff as Governor. You talked about Betsey Wright, and then you were starting to describe the organizational setup, perhaps, and the management of the government.

Slater: Right. I think this was the first office—the first time around, I don't think there was one central position; there was some sharing among three people, I believe, and they were all very bright. But ultimately I think there was an issue with that. But Betsey was a strong chief of staff who really stayed on top of things and did a great job.

Martin: So would you have to go through her to get to then-Governor Clinton, or did you have direct access?

Slater: Well, there was the formal structure, but much of my access was outside of the office. I didn't need a lot of time, so I never had an issue. If we had 30 seconds, we could cover our business, that sort of thing. And it was out in the field. He moved around a lot. Generally, you're interfacing with him through that office. There were so many other ways, at least for me, to interface with him, but most of that was outside of the office. I was not a member of the Cabinet. You've got the central Governor's office staff. I was not at that level. So my office, I remember, we were on the same floor, different ends of the building, that kind of thing.

Morrisroe: At what point did Clinton's staff get a sense that he was interested in making a run at the Presidency, perhaps even as early as '88?

Slater: Well, '88 he almost—

Morrisroe: Right. When did it become clear that he was considering the '88 run, or did it?

Slater: It did. I remember the day of the announcement. In '87, I left the Governor's office. So I'm a member of the highway commission, and I'm living in Jonesboro, Arkansas. There's an interesting little story about that. The highway commission was a five-member commission, ten-year terms. The objective was to make it beyond the political influence of any one Governor. But when you serve 12 years, that is minimized a bit. But the appointees are constitutionally independent. I remember—and this allows me to say a little bit about his leadership style, mine, and this particular post, but it also deals with the '88 period.

After I left, clearly I was not there on a daily basis. I had moved into a different relationship with him. I had moved into a different environment for my own personal development. It was a great experience, all of it. But the highway commission is probably the most coveted and powerful position beyond just Governor and the other constitutional offices. The reason for it is because you are deciding where the money is spent. It's really not the Governor's policy that is directing it. You, as a five-member commission, you with your colleagues will select the executive director, and you're making that decision. So it is one of the best examples of just raw power.

Then you've got other posts that fit within that constellation of high profile and very important posts. You would have your university board of governors; you would have the racing commission, because racing is a big thing in Arkansas, a major pastime; Game and Fish for the same reason. There had been very little diversity on any of those boards—probably with the exception of the university—because there had been some representation there over the years.

But I remember on a Thursday being asked by Betsey to put together a list of five people that the Governor could consider to appoint to the highway commission. She said that he had asked that I do this and wanted me to hold it in confidence because what he did not want to do is have people campaign for the post. We were in the middle of a term, because the person he had appointed had only served for two years but decided to resign. I said, "Sure, I can put that together." So the next day, I put it together, shared it with her. She then passed it on.

Later I was called to visit with the Governor about it. He said, "This is a great list, good people. They've all been my supporters, and they fit, businessmen and women, people of means, all those sorts of things." The only thing that was a little different was, I did have a college professor on the list because the college professor was from my hometown, and I just wanted to at least have someone in the mix like that because this area covered a significant swath of the state. But that was the best thing I could come up with for that area.

Anyway, after he looked over the list, again, all positive things, but he came back and said, "I'm just interested in doing something different here. For most people this is a capstone of a career, so they're generally older. They've already made considerable contributions to the state, and it's really a reward and all of that. Also, because it's independent, a lot of times, as soon as an appointment is made, those who get it remind me that it's independent, which is fine. It's just that it's also a public position; it's a public post. There is some duty owed beyond just the power brokers who you're interfacing with and the people who have a direct interest. There is a public interest here that goes beyond. So I'm trying to get that understood and realized more."

Then he started talking to me about what he thought the person should possess. He went down the list. He said, "I want someone who is very interested in interfacing with the community, who recognizes that the real power of this post is to be taken to the people we serve," and all of that. I'm then racking my brain trying to fit the people that I had selected. I said, "Well, Dr. So-and-So fits that."

Anyway, he finally gets to the point where he says, "Look, I'd like for you to talk to Cassandra [Wilkins Slater]." Then I'm personally quite embarrassed at that point, because I'm thinking, *I have just missed the mark so much that he wants me to talk to my wife, then basically come back with a better list*. [*laughter*] This to me was a pause that was just so pregnant with personal disappointment that I thought it lasted this long. But he was really in the middle of a sentence, because he said, "And then over the weekend, I'd like for the two of you to talk to your parents. On Monday morning I want to announce you as my nominee to the highway commission." So much so that he gets to the end of his sentence and I'm still locked on. But I'm conscious enough. I'm hearing more than I'm feeling maybe. I said, "Really?" He said, "Yes." So that's what we do.

Long story short, the day that I was appointed, one of the members of the commission took me to the department, and as we were going out, he said, "I'm going to tell you the secret to being on this commission." I said, "Clearly I'm here to learn secrets. Tell me what it is." He said, "The secret to success is being able to count to three." I said, "What do you mean?" He said, "If you can count to three, meaning if you can get two other commissioners to go with you on what you want to do, you can pretty much do what you want to do. That's basically the way it works." I remember at that moment just thinking, *So this is what the Governor was telling me about*.

If you think about it, there was nothing wrong with what he said, right? That's what democracies represent. But from my perspective, there was something wrong with it, and that was, with the need to represent a poor area of the state that had never really gotten its just due, I needed to win more often than that. I mean, I just couldn't do that enough and win enough, because let's face it, if I do that, then I want—and I just couldn't do that. So I said to myself privately, "I'm going to always try to count to five." Didn't say that to anyone else because I knew that that's what he was talking about.

Then the second thing I picked up was, after I'd been appointed, we had what was called a bid letting. The night before, you have a reception for all of the contractors who are coming in and people who have business before the commission. It was a wonderful reception. For me, since it was so close, we gave it a dual purpose. It would be the opportunity to introduce me, so it would be partly in my honor and then partly because it was the night before. So I thought this was great. It gave me a chance early in the process to meet a lot of the people that I'd need to meet. Frankly to meet people that I knew, but to meet them in a different way, because now I'm no longer just a member of the Governor's staff, but I had been given this unique and special and important responsibility as his nominee and confirmed by the Senate and all of that. It was great.

When I went to the reception, I just started moving around and introducing myself. One of the very important staff members came to me and said, "You've got this all wrong. If you were to stand anyplace in this room, by the end of the evening, everyone will have found their way to you." Now, that was not bad advice, because I probably was going to miss some people as I was going to them and they were working their way to me. But there is something that's interesting about the concept. I just said to myself, again privately, "I'm getting a better sense about this. As much as I can, I'm never going to put people in a position where they have to come to me." So that was the attitude that I took to the post. It led to all kinds of strategies for getting people involved and getting them engaged. I was still independent. I was still going to follow my own conscience about these things, but it was just a way of looking at power and its use.

It was just an interesting period for me. Without the experience, I don't know that I would have had to work through my own mind about how you make those kinds of choices. This was the first time when I was not a staffer with that kind of responsibility. Even as Secretary and all of the—you probably read something about the road tours and the multimodal tours; all of that sprouted from the seed of going *to* people and taking the power of the office, and also the resources of the office, to them to aid them in the kinds of things they were trying to get done. Now, it's also about helping them lift their sights, seeing their community in the context of a whole, their being connected to a national system and an international system. But again, it is going to them where they are and understanding first and foremost that this highway is much like their main street. It leads to everything of value to them. How do you address that from their perspective? So I just offer that.

Martin: When you're in this position, you're independent, but is he advising you? Do you have any formal interactions with the Governor's office in terms of where the office would like money spent?

Slater: Not really.

Martin: Off on your own.

Slater: Now, you may interface with him when it comes to the issue of money, because we did need to pass a major transportation bill during that period. That always involves an issue of taxes. With him, if you experienced the downside of a car tax increase in '80 and then you're now talking about a gasoline tax increase, how do we sell this? Now, if you've been out talking to people about what their needs are and you come to the point where in order to do this, we've just got to have some more resources, and in order to have more resources, we've got to take a program to the Governor's office, to the legislature, to the powers that be to try to get this passed, that's different. Then you're actually building a political, a community support base, support for the program. So we did all of that. It was set up, really, to take you out of a Governor saying, "Banker Jones or community leader Smith asked me to do this. I promised them that I would build that road." I mean, that's what the change brought about.

Martin: So one of the best tools for distributive politics is out of the hands of the Governor and in the commission's hands.

Slater: Right, and especially if you've got—but see, I think there should be some connection. I'll tell you what we did when I was Secretary and we were dealing with the President's agenda. You remember I told you that I'd had this back-and-forth with Erskine [Bowles] about how I could get this in the measure? I admit that I was talking to Erskine about it, because I kept saying, "Well, the President said that transportation was an important bill. It's about jobs and all of that. What I want to do is to come up with something that is consistent with what he has said. Plus this bill is going to pass, and if it's going to be $200 billion, it needs to be our $200 billion. It needs to be our program because the Congress is going to deal with this." So we finally came to an understanding.

But see, that little phrase that he gave me was enough for me, because one thing I realized the first time around, when the staff was so disappointed when we read the State of the Union address, was that there's no mention of transportation. I joked—there was the Bridge to the 21st Century. You remember he used that as a metaphor? I said, "Come on now, the whole speech is about the Bridge to the 21st Century."

As I said that to my staff, though, something dawned on me that we employed the next two, three years, and that is, we would take the President's State of the Union address, and we would do a side-by-side. We would take his State of the Union address, and it's on the left side. Then you've got that line down the middle of the page, like lawyers do. Then on the right side, we would plug in our programs. When we did that the first year, you had his page, his side, that was full. Because remember, we just took the State of the Union address. On our side it was just—I said, "There's more here, guys. Come on now, think about what you're doing as relates to education. Think about what you're doing as relates to security. Think about what we're doing as relates to the economy." Then we just kept pounding away at that. Eventually we came up with our own formulation of transportation as about more than concrete, asphalt, and steel—access to jobs, the means to an end, all this kind of stuff. We talked about [Robert] Frost and his two roads. We talked about everything.

Eventually we put together the language, we put together construction, we put together a totally different way of talking about transportation. So much so that when the Transportation bill passed in '98, Carol Browner said it was the most significant environmental bill to pass that year. Donna Shalala talked about the significant resources for welfare-to-work money. We would follow [Madeleine] Albright around, and every time there was a breakthrough diplomatically, we would move right in and talk about Open Skies, improved access between our ports. Sometimes we would work with some of these international organizations to build bridges and roads. In most of these conflicts, those are the first things to go because they want to cut off communications. So that's what we did: we just followed them around.

I'll give you an example. With Open Skies—those are the most liberalized aviation agreements—[Samuel] Skinner had one, Peña had nine, and we had forty. Now, clearly there's some momentum that's being built. That's how you get to that big opportunity with forty. Then you had to have a President like Clinton, who was tearing down barriers—whether it was NAFTA [North American Free Trade Agreement] or whatever—and talking about the global community. So you've got to have the right rhetoric and the right policy. But then you have to seize that opportunity.

We were establishing Open Skies Agreements with countries where we didn't even have direct service, because they knew that that policy change created a direct relationship. So now we worked toward the service. We'll get direct service to the African continent at some point, but now we want Open Skies with Nigeria because they've got a new President who is talking about democracy. And we want a more liberalized relationship with South Africa. That's what we did. But that's taking transportation out of the narrow confines of concrete, asphalt, and steel. Also the road tours helped with that.

With federal highways, it is like the Arkansas Highway Department: it's just raw power. It's an organization of 5,000 employees and a department of 100,000, but it has an office in every state, and it accounts for half of the budget of the department. So if you are really working that, then you're helping a President who is interested in tying a nation together with his policies. You're doing it with investment. So you're on the same page; there's no need to talk. What you're doing is, you're taking the substantive side of a program and just laying it right into the rhetoric, the theory, the overarching policy. That's pretty much the way we did it.

So once we did the first run through, over time our page was as full on our side as was his. We could, from any number of vantage points, say to him and say to Erskine and other members of the staff, "This is how we relate to you. This is why the Department of Transportation is relevant."

I think that's especially important for some of the, you might say, less prominent Departments. State doesn't have to do that; Treasury doesn't have to do that; the Attorney General, Justice, doesn't have to do that; Defense doesn't have to do that, because they're just, by their own bulk, there. But if you're in some of the others, you've got to take it beyond even the special interests that a principal might have. A principal might have a special interest in Transportation or a special interest in Health and Human Services, but if that's the only way you're relating to them, then you're only relating to them when they've got that special interest and it's front and center. But if your collection of activities and policies and connection with the broader governmental apparatus, private sector apparatus, is hefty enough, then you're interfacing all the time.

I remember being tasked to go to India before—I wouldn't say before Secretary Albright, but clearly we wanted to go in and have a little common ground on things that we were in sync with before she would then go and prepare the way for him before he would go. Then you had the problem with India and Pakistan. My trip was canceled. By the time we got back around to it, with so short a period of time remaining, then Secretary Albright was going in and the President, as you know, was able to do that near the end of the term. We were able to have that invitation reciprocated.

Nigeria, when [Olusegun] Obasanjo was elected, he comes over as President-elect, and he says, "Mr. President, there is one thing that just bothers me to no end, and that is the signs that are in your airports saying to travelers to either be cautious or that there is a ban on coming into Nigeria. I would like to have those removed. I think that it would be one of the most significant things that we could do that would talk of a new era and a new relationship between our countries. That's what I want." We've already briefed the President on, "This is one thing that you can offer. We think that there's an interest. But if you offer it, these are the kinds of conditions that you have to put on it. These are the security reasons and all of that."

The President is then saying to President-elect Obasanjo, "I would love to see that done. I agree with you that it would speak to a new relationship, but there are certain things I need or that we would need. And to the degree you're willing to commit to those things and to put your personal commitment behind it—" because there are questions about fees and where they're going and people getting—well, you can't really move once you get off the plane unless you're participating in a system that's just not right. They talk about it in different terms. "We want all of that cleaned up." "You've got my personal commitment." So within six months, it's done. President Obasanjo said, "I'd like to have this done by the end of the year." That's really why the six months.

But you get it done, and we make a commitment to invest in the security equipment and the training and all of that. It's really something that has more of a diplomatic benefit than—that's really what I'm getting to. So that's how we were able to, I think, be major players in a process where really our issue is over here, especially if we talk about it narrowly. But then we can put it over here if we talk about it as it relates to the economy, as it relates to national security, as it relates to ties that bind nations together and that kind of thing.

Martin: It seems like you're also sitting at the cornerstone of potential coalition building with transportation bills and distributive funding for members of Congress and Senators wanting that highway to be perfect in their state, and they're trading deals back and forth. Can you give us some sense of the political side in dealing with this, especially in the first term?

Slater: The first term. Well, it's interesting. In the first term, see, I think it's the way you do that. I think that, to the degree you know about those kinds of opportunities out there, because you've gone to see them, because you've worked with the office to put together a road tour—your first one is 14 days, 14 states, 3,500 miles. You're doing it in the context of the passage of NAFTA. So you know that if you start in Buffalo, New York, you're in the space of that. If you end in Laredo, Texas, you're in the zone when it comes to the broader policy implications.

So as you are playing that out in the marketplace, it becomes less of a trade, a pork barrel, quid pro quo kind of thing when you're nearing the end of the appropriations process and you need a vote here or there. I think that's the benefit. The other thing it allows you to do is, it allows you to weed out some of the stuff that just should not be there, because you're dealing with members early on about what's important to them and their constituents. You're also taking it beyond the given interests of a member, because when you go to Buffalo, you're talking to the mayor; you're talking to the county judge—the same people that I was dealing with. I mean, I basically wore a state DOT [Department of Transportation] hat as Secretary of Transportation. I dealt with the same people that I dealt with when I was a member of the commission.

It's interesting. I went to Memphis, Tennessee, and Mayor [Willie] Herenton was the mayor at that time. He said, "The one thing that I would ask if you could help me on is the fact that we just don't get enough from the state when it comes to investing in our roads. Their focus is mostly rural and the highways that connect communities rather than, as we would think about it, our gateways and our connection to the broader state. Also we think we deserve more because we're the major population center, at least in this part of the state and probably across the state. As you know, all of this power resides in the state DOTs. How do I influence that?" We said, "Now, Mr. Mayor, there are what are called MPOs, Metropolitan Planning Organizations, and this is new under the bill that passed in 1991. As a mayor, you're a part of that group. And that's where the planning occurs, and the planning drives the money." He said, "You know what? I was just elected chair of the MPO. I was about to let it go because I was wondering how I would have time to do that." I said, "Mr. Mayor, that's a chairmanship you need to take."

Because again, you're out there with them, and you're helping to address issues from where they're sitting, rather than them coming to Washington and saying, "OK, if we're going to Washington, we can't talk about everything. So what are the top three things we're going to talk about?" Most of the time, because they're going to Washington, they have to be the top three things that are the national things or the things that may cost the most money or the things that have the highest profile. But if you're going to them where they live and work, they'll get to those things, but they'll say to you, "From where I sit, the real thing that—now, this may be small for you as Secretary or as an administrator, but this is where I have my greatest need and my greatest problem." If you're in their space, they're more likely to give you that. If they're in your space, they're more inclined to think that they have to give you what you might think to be the most important. Because you're sitting up there, and you're dealing with hundreds of millions and billions of dollars, when really, sometimes, it may be a $500,000 issue that they need addressed.

If it's the President, it's the same thing. If you're in the Oval Office, you're just not as inclined to think that this is where I deal with that. You're dealing with the big stuff with the big dollar amounts, and it may not be just the most important to you. It's amazing, just that change in venue, because you're home in your own venue. You're thinking clearer in your home venue, and it's much easier to focus on just what is really important to you. And if a person is coming to you in your venue, they're more inclined to say, and to really mean it, "What's important to you?"

What would happen is, a lot of times when I'd come back, I'd have a catalog of things. So if I'm in communications with the President or with Vice President [Albert] Gore, with whom I dealt a lot, or with Erskine, I would be able to say to them, "Look, Mayor Herenton is really concerned about this. I think Congressman [Harold] Ford is there with him as well. This is probably something that we can help them with. I'm sure, either you've been asked about this, or you're going to be asked about it." So it just puts you in a much different position if you are engaging all of these players. So I would say that that's probably where it came into play most.

Morrisroe: Before we get too far into your service as administrator and then Secretary, I think it would be useful from a vantage of those looking at this in the future to understand a bit about your role during the '92 campaign and your selection as administrator.

Slater: I'm trying to think of how exactly it occurred. I actually did not come on the campaign staff early '92, but it was a time when things were probably the rockiest. I think the decision for me was basically, the Governor is out here, and it's tough now. This is when you really need people who believe in you. Are they willing to give up a comfort and hit this trail with you?

Morrisroe: Do you recall, is this before New Hampshire or—

Slater: It was right around New Hampshire. I was not traveling with him at the time, but it was before we could claim to be a comeback kid. It was pretty tough during that little period. It was really a short period of time, though, right?

Morrisroe: Compressed.

Martin: Compared to now.

Slater: Right. But at that time, it was like months and days and days. Because I first started out just in the office in Little Rock. I got a leave from the university. I was at Arkansas State University. So I just started helping out. Then ultimately the decision was made that I would actually travel with him. I think that was good for a number of reasons.

Martin: Was that your decision? Who decided that you would travel with him?

Slater: I really don't know. I just remember having a conversation maybe two weeks to a month in that I should travel with him. I think it served a number of purposes. You know a person, and then, two, a lot of what I've talked about, about people on the periphery and bringing them in, and also being on the phone and letting people know that we're going to be in the area, he'd really like to see you, those kinds of things. It's one thing to do that from Little Rock. It's another thing to be on the plane and doing that. So clearly I think that was a very important role to play. It was a tough role because you're just constantly traveling. But that's what I did. I was eventually one of the deputy campaign managers, so I was interfacing with everybody. Early on, Bruce Lindsey was a part of that. Then it started to grow. Bruce Lindsey was there—

Martin: Frank Greer maybe?

Slater: Frank was in and out. It was—I can't think of her name.

Morrisroe: Nancy Hernreich?

Slater: No. She ended up being head of the public—

Martin: Mandy Grunwald?

Slater: No, Mandy was part of the strategy group and all that—

Martin: [Dee Dee] Myers?

Slater: Dee Dee Myers, yes. I could see her, but I couldn't—we were all together. Early on, there were probably three, four. Sometimes [James] Carville and [Paul] Begala would travel. Sometimes [George] Stephanopoulos, but we were the constant.

Martin: So a core of fewer than ten people?

Slater: Oh definitely, in the beginning. Yes, we could all fit into a pretty small plane. Then you just grow from that.

Morrisroe: How would you describe him as a campaigner during this period? What were the things that he liked to do on the trail? Did he have any things that were particularly challenging for him or that you wanted for him?

Slater: No. He'd always try to run early in the morning. It was good for him—clear your head. I'm trying to think. All of those run together. You remember the movie *Primary Colors*? You remember the scene—it's the New Hampshire primary, and he's on the street shaking hands. The polls are basically closed, and they're waiting on the returns, and he's out there. That's the way it was. He was always working. He was one of the hardest working individuals I've ever seen.

And by the way, Betsey Wright is that way. We used to have an unspoken challenge, at least I did, and that was to beat Betsey into the office. It seems like she lived there from early in the morning until late at night. They met in Texas during the [George] McGovern campaign. They'd known each other for years. But just a hard worker. He's just working. That's his deal. There are no wasted movements. If we're having lunch, we're working. Just working, we're on the phone. If we're riding someplace, and if he's reading, you're dialing. It's that constant kind of motion. He could take short catnaps, he's good at that. He just closes his eyes and [*snaps fingers*]. Then you're ready, that kind of thing. Quick study.

You have your marks. You know the three points that you want to hit. You've got the message of the day. You've got all of that. But I think what he liked was, if you hear a story—see, that's the good thing. That's why the stories are important, because that's the freshness. That means that you've got those three points, but if you can talk about a given family and a given location that you just met, it gives a freshness to that story. It personalizes it. If it's a community that is this community or one like it, then that helps it to resonate. So I think he's looking for that sort of thing. It was great when you could say, "Thirty years ago today—" That's good because most people aren't going to know that. That's good. Either he's saying [*impersonating Clinton*], "Thirty years ago today—"

Morrisroe: Not a bad impression, for the record.

Slater: And I'm saying, "No, I didn't know that."

Martin: One of the reports that we got—and I don't remember where we came across this—suggested that one of your jobs was to calm him down when there were crises or other things like that, that you were particularly good at it, or something along those lines.

Slater: That's hard to say. I guess what I'm saying here is, I think he enjoyed my being around. "Governor, we're making history. This is a good thing," that kind of thing. Then the stories. If that is calming him down, then that's what it is. But it's not like I had so much influence over another person. I don't want to say that at all. I think that what we shared was a sense of the mission—we had signed up to do that years ago, and we're doing it. It's that kind of thing, I really believe.

If it's a slight here, well, it's just a slight. We're moving because we're focused. We've got our eyes—and the "we" is not the two of us. The we is the bigger we. Because the we could be, again, the person that he talked to who had the personal story. That person needs you to be sober and engaged and in control of the frustrations that might result from this slight or that slight, or this thing or that thing, whatever might frustrate us in a given moment. That's why, again, this Galatian's piece, have you seen reference to that?

Morrisroe: Not that I recall.

Slater: "Let us not grow weary in doing good"? We probably talked about that a thousand times if once. Because there was always an opportunity to not grow weary in doing good.

Martin: It's a long campaign to suffer through.

Slater: Exactly—and series of campaigns. I just think I was a familiar face. I think that's more of it than anything. I'm pretty calm about things.

I remember—this is an interesting thing. I thought he was great in this moment. We were in New York, in the Flatbush community. It was still tough in New York at the time because Jerry Brown was still in the race. There were some other—you've got a lot of activists in the New York community, and this is a southern Governor. I can't emphasize that enough. Southern Governors were having a tough time at that time. Carter couldn't just give us the glow of being a southern Governor who knew what to do and when to do it. [Lyndon] Johnson, they just weren't helping us out, even though they've got their rich histories. It's just that, "You're a southern Governor, and we just want to know why you're running for President. Why do you think you should be running for President?" So that was happening, and we're in New York.

We decide to walk down this street in Flatbush. We get out of the limousine and all of that. There's this guy and a woman, and they're saying something to the effect that Bill Clinton is a racist. Go back to Arkansas. When they first said it, it was so out of the ordinary. I just never heard him referred to in that way.

Morrisroe: Now, who was referring to him?

Slater: There were two people. They were activists. They were there to send us home. Again, "Bill Clinton is a racist. Go back to Arkansas." I looked at him. It was just momentarily, but we saw one another, and it looked like he had been hit in the gut, really. It was just that raw. He then just turned away and kept moving down, trying to get people to come out of their shops, trying to engage them. People would do it, which was interesting because they didn't seem like they were at all fazed by this, although the crowd started to get larger and larger.

So we're walking. Security tightens in on us, and he's still shaking hands going down the street. After we do this for maybe five, ten minutes—it may not have been that long, but it seemed much longer because it was a very tense situation—the voices were becoming more numerous, and the crowd was getting larger. You could feel the weight of it getting larger and the roar of the voices getting louder. At that point, we didn't look at one another. At least he didn't look at me again. He was focused on the people. Now, I was focused on him and the people, but principally—because I'm saying to him, "Governor, I think we've made our point."

I'm looking at security, and they're clearly looking around because they don't know what's happening. This was not long after LA [Los Angeles] and during—there was no suggestion that that would happen there, because what prompted the LA situation was the Rodney King and all of that. But still the intensity of the moment was somewhat akin to that. That's what I'm saying. But anyway, security finally says, "Governor, we should probably exit." I'm saying, "Governor, I think that's right. I think the point has been made. I think this has been very good, but we should probably move on," because we were getting to a point where the crowd had basically just stopped. Initially they were trailing us, but then it got so large that it was hard to move the crowd.

We got to a corner, and we could still move to the cars pretty freely. We then finally get back into the vehicles, and I'm in a vehicle that is maybe one or two behind his, and we've got security in there with us. Anyway, we're moving. And the staff, we're in the vehicle saying, "Boy, that was something. Why didn't we anticipate that? Why didn't we know about some of it? But boy, the response was so intense and so strong. Had you ever heard him referred to like that?" and that kind of thing. So we're all talking about it. Then we're all happy, though, to be out of that, the press of the mass.

All of a sudden, the vehicles stop. What's happened? Did someone throw something, hit the vehicle, or whatever? We see, then, security. They burst out of their vehicles, and they're running forward to his vehicle. So then we got out, and we started walking forward. Lo and behold, he's giving high fives to Dr. Robert Miller from Arkansas and a number of other people. What had happened was, the Arkansas Travelers bus had stopped, because they had come to New York. Their whole job was to basically say, "We know this guy." Again, it's the Peanut Brigade for Carter; it's the Arkansas Travelers for us. But what's interesting is that he's in the middle of all that commotion, and in that intense situation, he spots Dr. Miller. Remember, I mentioned Dr. Miller earlier, in '82, who later went on to become mayor of the city. But he's there as one of the Travelers. It was just a remarkable moment.

At that point, I just said, "This guy has got more gumption than I knew. It's like this is the gauntlet, and if it's a gauntlet that he's got to walk, he's prepared to do that." I was very impressed with that, very impressed, because it was a tense situation. He easily could have said, "And Rodney advised me to do it. We left. We got our photo op, and we left." But he worked that crowd. It was, I think, one of those key moments. The cameras caught all of this. They caught the people who were coming out of their shops. You watch it and you say, "I don't know whether the majority is for him or the majority is against him, but you sure have people against him, even in the face of a very vocal opposition. That's interesting."

Martin: That campaign is interesting because Clinton winds up putting together a biracial coalition again, but there's a lot of controversy along the way. You have the Rainbow Coalition, the Sister Souljah incident, and other things along those lines. There's actually been some academic writing trying to figure out how one puts together a multiracial coalition, such as 1992, when white folks have a lot of racial animosity still. There's this open question about, can you actively recruit the black population without alienating, especially in the South, white southerners, mainly white men. I'm curious what your sense was of how he juggled in 1992.

Slater: Well, I think that he had the advantage of having done it in Arkansas, so he tested it. What I like about the testing is that he tested it when the outcome was not certain, when his political future clearly was in the balance. That's why I started with the story of Helena. It's one thing to do that when you're an incumbent, when if it doesn't turn out OK, you're OK, or you may be able to manage. It's another thing when you've got your back against the wall. And maybe it's really at those extremes when you can do it—either when you've got your back against the wall and you don't have anything to lose, or you're in pretty good shape, you've got the power of incumbency, and you can say, "I really don't have much to lose. I think I can manage this." I think it is much more daring, extraordinary, and significant when you just really don't know.

I think also you can say, "Boy, if I can make this work in '82, I may be able to do something with it in '92." Well, people don't have that benefit. He could never have envisioned '92 being another opportunity to play that out. I just think that at a gut level you say, "If we pull this off, it's important, even if we don't win." I think that's how you get to it. "It's something that's so important, I need to know whether I can do it or not." That's the way you get to doing it. You just need to know whether it's possible, and that's where he was.

I actually think southerners have a better ability to do this, because you're moving between those worlds all the time. You're just back and forth, back and forth. You're probably in the best position to know that I'm hearing the same things. Do I have the scope and the reach to pull this together, and the inclination to do so, and maybe even the need to do so? If you can answer those questions in the affirmative, then I think that helps you in doing so as well. So I think he knew in his heart that his native South would be better if he could pull it off and pull it off successfully. I think he also knew that it would be better if he tried, and maybe if he didn't achieve it, help someone else find the way. I think he was fine with that as well.

But I tell you, I think we've got a little of that in the current conversation, whether it's Hillary or Barack [Obama] or even an interesting, newer twist with [William] Richardson. I think it's fascinating. I've got my favorite here, but I just think it's fascinating that you've got this going on. I think the country is going to be better because of it.

Morrisroe: Did your portfolio during the campaign include any special responsibility for liaison with African American communities?

Slater: Oh yes, always.

Morrisroe: You have that network in the South already and then with the Arkansans among us elsewhere in the country. How do you start developing that network for Clinton beyond that? Or if you're going to a state on the campaign for him, just to get a picture of how that develops.

Slater: It was a lot easier for me because I was traveling with him most of the time, and you're able to deal with people who are there. If you're there, you're going to figure out a way to—you want to know why you're there, and they want to know why you're there.

Morrisroe: You're sizing each other up.

Slater: You're going to figure out a way to connect. Once you connect, you're just building. Have you heard the name J. B. Hunt?

Morrisroe: No.

Slater: J. B. Hunt is a big trucking magnate in Arkansas, great guy. He passed away not long ago. I was at an event in Rogers, Arkansas with him. He pulls up in this big stretch limousine, and he jumps out, and his wife jumps out. Then Marilyn McCoo and Billy Davis jump out. Then he looks at me. He comes over and he introduces us. Then he puts his arms around me and turns to the side and said, "You thought you knew me, didn't you?" But it's that kind of thing because J. B. wears a cowboy hat. He wears his boots. He's Arkansas through and through, but he's got these friends who are every bit the Hollywood type. And they're friends. So I think it's that kind of thing that President Clinton likes doing all the time in any number of circles. If you're with him, then you're picking up on that. Also, if you're with him and there are people on the periphery, right, you're bringing other people into that.

I remember, I used to read—I'm now on the board of the Joint Center, but I used to read their publications, *Focus* and others, because that would give me a better understanding of the players out here, the people who are movers and shakers and the like. If I've got their number, or if I'm calling to get their number and I'm traveling with the Governor of Arkansas, who is running for President, then there's the opportunity, if you're really working it and mining it, to bring those individuals together. If you've got good contacts, like a John Lewis and a Mike Espy and Jefferson, as I mentioned, they've got their circle. So it's just layering; it's building. And over time, once you move through this gauntlet, it becomes a force of its own. You get a lift. It just has people. They're coming to you because you've started to take off. But in the beginning, it's a little tougher.

And one thing I have not mentioned is, you also have these wonderful networks like the AME Church. That's the African Methodist Episcopal Church. Well, I'm AME; Carrol Willis, whom I've mentioned, is AME; Bob Nash is AME. Then you've got the structure of that church, and the bishops, and they're everywhere. You've got a network. So when you go into LA and it's maybe a day after the riots or whatever, you go first to AME, and you're right there with Reverend Cecil Murray. It's that network.

Then the next day, when you pop out of that in public light, you're there with Congresswoman—well, she was a state senator then—Maxine Waters. Because you've had these moments with Reverend Murray pulling together the people—John Mack with the Urban League—pulling together the people who are there to tell you what's happened and what the problems are. Then, when you pop out the next day in public view and the cameras are there, you're ready to start to talk about this because you moved in quietly and you've got the relationships that help you move in and navigate that terrain. So by the time you're on the street the next day, you're familiar with those streets. You're comfortable with the streets and with the people who are with you because of the work that's been done—before you got there, to be sure, but also the night before while you're there.

If you recall on that, President Bush didn't get there for a couple of days. We were more nimble. He had to turn Air Force One. I mean, he had to do all of this. We could just cancel one thing, move in the night before. You're out there the next morning. You're walking the streets. By the time Bush is coming, it's over at that point. His coming is going to make a point that he doesn't want to make and that is that we've been there. It's just that kind of thing.

But the AME Church is very important. CME [Christian Methodist Episcopal] Church, Church of God in Christ, all of the religious groups, they had their seed in Arkansas, because that's where we started dealing with the AME Church, the CME Church, the Church of God in Christ, the Baptist Convention, and all of that. You just start there, and it's a part of a national network, and eventually you're out here. When those church organizations hold their district and regional conventions and they happen to be held in Arkansas, well, we're doing things that just don't happen in larger states. But we're inclined to it. You're our friend asking us to do it, and we do it. Over time it just gives you a network that is just not obvious.

Martin: A big piece of the puzzle hasn't fallen into place, and that's Jesse Jackson.

Slater: Yes.

Martin: Want to talk a little bit about how the campaign perhaps courted Jesse Jackson, tried to get his endorsement, and the politics that play out through that period?

Slater: I think that there is a natural connection between the two. They're both about the same size physically, and they're both very good at connecting with people and explaining things. I think that President Clinton followed Reverend Jackson's races very closely, and he respected him for being able to do the things that he was able to do. He won Super Tuesday—when he was able to win states like South Carolina and Virginia, as I recall, during that period, and just a recognition of the power of that vote, his ability to connect to that vote, and how that vote could turn a primary race in particular, which is the first race you have to run.

So I think that they had a natural connection. I think it was as much a part of coming to that recognition and never having to face one another. That was a good thing, really, for both, because they never faced one another. Even if you see something in someone who is a potential adversary, you can acknowledge it and appreciate it, because you don't have to deal with the downside of it from your perspective. If he's good at turning a phrase, or at taking something complicated and making it simple, or at not only touching the minds but the soul of an audience, that's what these two have in common. I think that, over time, it just played out really quite well.

Interestingly, and I don't mean to put the two in the same vein, but I think he had a good, though competitive, relationship with Newt Gingrich. I guess what I'm getting at here is, I think that, friend or foe, talent is something that President Clinton respects and admires. If it's in an opponent, it just means that if you ever have to engage, you'd better be sure that you're ready for that. But he's never going to really underestimate anyone. I think that's because he has recognized that one of his advantages, at least early on, was being underestimated. President [George W.] Bush has had that advantage as well when you think about it.

I remember, when Gingrich stepped down, we were in Arkansas. We were with a lot of very close friends. He said, "I'm not sure that this is a good thing," because while they fought, he respected his intellectual ability, and he also, once they had the standoff with the closing of the government, they just realized that their interests were more aligned. They then were able to work out any number of things. So I just mention—for some reason I thought about Gingrich in the same context.

Martin: Clashes of titans?

Slater: Yes. All I'm saying is that whether it's two Democrats, or in this case a Democrat and a Republican, and the two of them on different ends of the spectrum, President Clinton could really respect and appreciate the talent, the importance of the relationship, and the capability of both, and his relationship with the two of them. There were clearly others, but again, Gingrich just came to mind as I was thinking of Reverend Jackson.

Morrisroe: In the aftermath of the Sister Souljah incident, how did that affect the campaign and the campaign's relationship with the African American community?

Slater: Well, for a short period there, it was a little tense. I really think so. Over time, it worked itself out, but it was a little tense there. It's interesting. There was just discussion about the whole issue of lyrics and what they say and the kind of actions that they might trigger. I think you've got the same debate going on right now.

Martin: Can you talk about any discussion within the campaign about the decision to speak against Sister Souljah? It was at the Rainbow Coalition.

Slater: I can't.

Martin: Fair enough.

Morrisroe: Should we go on to the successful election and your selection as administrator? How did that come about?

Slater: I was in the throes of making a personal decision at that point. I did not work for Governor Clinton to join a Washington administration. I just wanted him to be President. This is somewhat understandable when you think about it because I then was the chairman of the commission. For my part of the state, that was very important. Also, when it comes to being able to interface with the entire state, it was very important. As commissioners, you represent a segment of the state, but once you become chair and vice chair, then technically you can interface officially and quite justifiably with a broader sweep of the state. To me that was a great opportunity. It was one that I looked forward to because then it's easier to count to five. You aren't being magnanimous counting to five when you're the chair, because that's really your responsibility. It was something I was looking forward to. I'd never had a leadership opportunity quite like that. I knew all of my fellow commissioners, had a great relationship with them, and had just looked forward to that. So that's my dilemma.

We've just won. It's great. I get a chance now to go to Washington if I'd like, meaning to visit and all of that. The other thing was that Cassandra was six months pregnant, so I'm not even really thinking about Washington so much. I mean, I'm elated that our daughter is going to be born in this new year of a new administration, and hopefully many of the things that we've seen occur in Arkansas will be happening across the nation. And isn't this a wonderful time to not only be adding to our family but to have her come forth? So I'm thinking about that. But that's basically it.

Except one other thing: The Governor becomes President, and the Lieutenant Governor becomes Governor, so there's a special election for Lieutenant Governor. There is a wonderful new possibility to think about, and there is the recognition that there are many more advantages than disadvantages when it comes to thinking about this, because you are connected with a successful effort to elect a President. You've had this wonderful experience as a commissioner to give people an opportunity to get to know you, where it's just a different relationship. You are having a discussion about things of value, and you're integral to that. It's just a different kind of relationship.

Having said all of that, the thing that really turned it all was a call from Ambassador Andrew Young. He said, "Rodney—" and this was in February. So this is after the administration has been sworn in. This is after all of the inaugural festivities that we immensely enjoyed. We were here for the swearing-in and for everything. He said, "Rodney, a lot of your friends in Atlanta have been talking about you, and we understand that you've decided you're not going to go to

Washington. I just felt it incumbent upon me to give you a call, because you've been very helpful to me and—" he mentioned Mrs. [Coretta Scott] King.

He said, "We really connected with President Clinton in a very positive and important way because of the way you facilitated our interaction, the calls that you would help to set up, and the advice that you would help us relay to the Governor, all of that. I played a similar role with Jimmy Carter. I was just so proud to see you play that role." Then I remember interjecting and saying, "And helping me play that role, because it was something special for me to be able to say to Governor Clinton, 'Ambassador Andrew Young is on the phone,' or, 'I've talked to Ambassador Young,' or whatever."

That was then putting me in a different position of importance as it relates to this new thing that he is attempting to accomplish. I remember saying that to him. But I'm still very taken by this call because Cassandra and I were actually in bed. I remember I was rubbing her stomach and feeling our daughter kick. So I was really at a different level and thinking about that evening, and then this happened. And she's there; we're listening together.

Anyway, he said, "I just wanted to share with you something that might help you think through this if you haven't fully decided what you're going to do." Very few people ever have an opportunity to work in a Presidential administration. It's even rarer to have the opportunity to work with someone you know and who knows you. So I think you should maybe think about this from that perspective. And I'm telling you, I never had this conversation with anyone. The other thing is that I know that you're thinking about maybe running for political office yourself." We had talked about that. He said, "I know that there may be something that you're concerned about, but I want you to know that I believe you can go home again, and you can go home a better person—if you're lucky, now—because of experiences that you will have that you can never have in Arkansas. I'm telling you from experience."

He said, "I had a little rough time in Washington, but I would do it again as quickly as I would do anything. I know that part of my opportunity came from my relationship with Dr. King and that relationship with Georgia and Carter's desire to say something about himself. That's what he was doing when he said, 'This is what I want this person to do for me at the UN [United Nations].' That was significant at that time, and I was there to play that role. But it was bigger than any of that. I think that Bill Clinton needs you in Washington."

I didn't think it at the time, but I think I know what he was talking about now. He went on, "You're going to have a lot of people who are part of the administration because they just have the talents, the abilities, and you would be remiss if you didn't have that talent and ability as a part of your administration. Oftentimes people are too insular to add those numbers, people who just know what it means to be here and how you operate here. You've got to have that. Whether you have a personal relationship with them or not, you've just got to have professionals doing the work of professionals. But you also, at the end of the day, have to have people who you know and who know you. Otherwise it is a very lonely place. I think you should think about this." Well, I thanked him for calling. He had put it clearly into a different perspective for me, totally different—actually caused me to think a little less selfishly about it, really. I was thinking about it in the right way, but I was just closing that door rather than at least looking at it.

What happened was, by the time I got here, everything was pretty much taken, all of the White House positions of any significance. And we just accidentally got to a place that I knew. I remember talking to Vernon once I started to make this transition, and he said, "A lot of people come to Washington, and they don't leave with anything. They just come and they're in the political stream of things. They don't do anything where they enhance skills or develop expertise or whatever. You're a lawyer. You should look at Justice or all of the legal departments and agencies." Then he said, "You're on the commission, right?" I said, "Yes." He said, "You should definitely look at Transportation." I didn't know about a plum book; I just didn't know. I'm serious. Because I hadn't started to measure drapes or look for a position before it was over. I just didn't do that, because that was not really my thinking on the subject.

So I started looking at DOT, and I remembered that when I would go to the national AASHTO meetings, the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials, that one year the Federal Highway Administrator had been quite kind and invited me to a luncheon that included the head of GM [General Motors]. I thought, *Hmm, that was the Federal Highway Administrator who did that*. His name was Tom Larson. I just started thinking about it. I talked to one or two people, and one was Bill Clark in Arkansas, who was on the commission with me. Even Bill knew well enough to say, "If you could do something like that, that would be great." At that point, I knew at least what I might ask for.

So I did have a conversation. We talked about that. I talked to Mack [McLarty] about it. Mack said, "I think that we've got a recommendation for that position, but if that's what you want to do, let me mention it to the President." Then I happened to see the President that afternoon, mentioned it to him. "Let's look into that. You talk to Mack," and all that. Anyway, that's the way that came about. It just couldn't have been better. It was a great organization. Once I got into it, I recognized, really, the full breadth of it.

When you think about it, if you want to become Secretary, and if you're really thinking about this strategically, that's the best position from which to do it, because you're dealing with all the states. You're dealing with a relatively small number of employees, 5,000, but a huge budget. Our budget was about $15 billion at that time. You're interfacing every—not only do you have an office in every state, but it's in the capital city. You've got a staff. They're larger or smaller, based on the size of the state, the number of state highways there. It just amazes me that I had not thought about that.

Mary Peters, the current Secretary, had the same route. Before the two of us, the only other person who had done it was John Volpe out of Massachusetts, who was Federal Highway Administrator, Secretary. What happened was, actually, after I became administrator, once we got to the second term, all of the people that I had worked with, that I was working with in the states, they were the ones who actually started talking about my considering being Secretary. Before I knew it, they were the ones who were really promoting it.

I mean, the President was my friend. I was not going to ask him to—I'd never do that. I'm so loyal in that regard, I would recommend someone else. Actually not in this instance, but early on, I had recommended someone else. But it was a great experience to have him say at the announcement of my selection that, of all of his appointments, he had never gotten as many requests. That's much better. As I said, I never would have—I would have given him another name, much like I gave him the additional names for the—because I think that's what a good staffer does.

Morrisroe: Did he start off the conversation when you were named asking you to go home and talk to Cassandra? [*laughter*]

Slater: No, not in this instance.

Morrisroe: Had you known Secretary Peña?

Slater: I knew of his work in Denver, but I really didn't know him. I knew mostly of his work on the transition because that's what happened. He was the transition lead on Transportation. So I had some minor dealings with him. I remember when he came to Little Rock. I met him, we shared pleasantries. I believe that I had seen him on the campaign trail when we were in Denver, because he was the mayor at that time. But I knew [Henry] Cisneros better, just because he was always around. They were in the loop together, he and President Clinton and Senator Clinton. But I knew him better. But Federico I got to know. We didn't know each other that well when he was Secretary and I was coming in as Federal Highway Administrator, but we worked together very well. I really enjoyed working with him.

Morrisroe: It was probably somewhat advantageous for him as well to have somebody as administrator who had a preexisting relationship with not just the President, but with many people who were around the President, I'd imagine.

Slater: I think so. It's interesting. Let's just talk about that issue from a general perspective. In the Reagan administration, President Reagan and his team basically made all of the decisions, so not just Secretary but all of the other decisions.

Morrisroe: Cabinet members.

Slater: That's right, all of them. And in the Carter administration, President Carter basically selected his Secretaries but didn't do any of the other—I mean, they weren't intimately involved, so they allowed the person who was the Secretary to select his or her team. There are advantages and disadvantages to both. What happened was, in the Carter administration, once he started to have the difficult times, he really didn't have the core group that was loyal to him. He basically had Secretaries who knew that he had selected them, but the people who were really in the bowels and who do the work, their loyalties were with the Secretaries, not necessarily with him.

With Reagan, if you're making all the choices, you actually have Secretaries who are there because you've not only selected them, but you've selected their deputy; you selected all of their administrators. It just doesn't give them as much of an ownership in that team. So what President Clinton did, with the direct assistance of Vice President Gore, was to have a give-and-take. They both worked very hard to select the Secretaries, and then the Secretaries would come with names, and they would have names, working generally through the personnel office, because you've got all these people who have worked in the campaign. Then it's a back-and-forth, give-and-take. That's why it took a little longer. But at the end of the day, you get, I think, a lot more loyalty.

If you think about it, other than Jefferson—and they've always said this—President Clinton—I think it was Jefferson's second Cabinet—they always talk about how they were the most loyal, the most dedicated. They stayed for the entire duration. You didn't have a lot of coming and going. And you had people like Donna Shalala and Secretary [Richard] Riley. You had certain people who were there the entire eight years. I do believe that that was very helpful in some of those difficult periods. So that's the way that played out. I will say this. I think that in Secretary Peña's position, he had to know that I would be loyal to him as well. Sometimes having someone who has a relationship with the principal, sometimes that may or may not work.

Morrisroe: For fear that they'll circumvent the Secretary.

Slater: Exactly. But again, I really liked Secretary Peña. He was a mayor. And probably as an official, I may think more like a mayor, because that's where the rubber is really meeting the road. That's where you're generally more inclined to work directly with people, unless you're a Bill Clinton type where it's just your nature. But when it comes to just the official structure, a mayor's office lends itself more to that kind of interaction. Someone like Bill Clinton, whether you're Governor or a President, if you're predisposed and inclined, you're going to do that. So I just say that because I think that explains it.

Also, the other thing that intrigued me about Secretary Peña and Secretary Cisneros and others was just, for me, a growing fascination of the important role that the Hispanic community was beginning to play in American politics. For the most part, my experience had been a black-white experience, although we had a strong LULAC [League of United Latin American Citizens] chapter in Arkansas, and it's one that's growing. Arkansas now has one of the per capita largest growing Hispanic populations in the country. But then my experience was principally black-white. So working with the President and having that opportunity to be exposed to a Peña, Cisneros, Bill Richardson, and others was, for me, just a personally rewarding experience. As you're having that experience, there's a respect that grows from that.

One experience bears this out. I remember we were in Northridge after the earthquake. By that time, James Lee Witt had been clearly recognized as *the* point person within the administration for homeland security kinds of matters. But we weren't saying homeland security at that time. It was just any kind of emergency, man-made, natural, whatever. He was the point person. The position was around that time being elevated to Cabinet status. So you knew that that was very important. This was after the Midwest floods, which, as things go, that challenge was very important to us.

Again, what Bill Clinton is saying is that government can be a value-added force. His election was coming on the heels of a philosophical dominance that suggested that government would mess up a one-car parade, that government was the enemy. He was saying that government is a force for good, working in partnership with the private sector and with others. That was what he was trying to prove. He gets elected, and then he's trying to get his sea legs, and there's problem after problem. So before you know it, you're on your heels, and you're into your 100 days. You're into your period of governance, and you aren't able to show much.

Well, you get this flood, and people are hurting. And it's a broad sweep of the country, and everybody's attention is on it. You just take your government from Washington, and you put it right down in the middle of that flood. You've got people like Mike Espy and others. You've got this government now that is looking like America, that is responding to America's need, and it's right in the heart of the country, and you perform well. People see you there dealing with a nation that is suffering because a big swath of its citizenry is suffering. Also, because it's an emergency, you get a chance to do something he likes to do and always wants to do, and that's to break down those silos.

To say to someone, just because you're in Human Services doesn't mean that you don't have to understand how that relates to—and just because you're in this, we've got to mix it up here. You've got to be intellectually inquisitive enough to want to understand where your team members sit and what their strengths are so that we can minimize our collective weaknesses. We can make this thing work. He's very comfortable in that setting. He's trying to pull out the best thinking of people in that kind of a setting. He has no problem with the chaos of that kind of experience, because through the chaos, you can come to a better, higher, in most instances, end, rather than having one or two people dictate what the group is supposed to do—even if he is one of the one or two people.

I mentioned that, but I was getting off on something because what I really wanted to do was talk about Northridge. What happened was, James Lee walks up to the mike and gives his speech. We all, one person after another, come up and give our speeches, and we tell people, "We've got a 1-800 number." You go through all of the mechanics. "If you have this need, this need, or this need, call this number. Do this, do this. We're going to get back with housing," and all of that. Anyway, it just kind of dawns on you that two groups of people are there. You've got the people who have come in close, and then you've got the people on the periphery. You don't really notice it until—you notice it, but you don't notice it. Let me just say it that way.

Then, too, I'm not quite as free as I am generally, because usually I don't have a speaking part. My part is to be around that fringe. But if you're up front and you've got to say something, you're just speaking to try to project, to draw people near. Anyway, you realize that there are limitations to that, probably even for the best communicator, like Bill Clinton, some limitations, especially if there is what is the case in this instance.

It dawns on you when you close it out and Peña and Cisneros say, "We would like to speak again, and we want the press to just stay with us for a few minutes." Then they start to speak in Spanish. Then the people start to walk in. They start to come close. And there it hits you. That's why you need an administration that looks like America. It just hits you like a two by four. You're saying to yourself, *I am so pleased to be a part of this*. Not for me personally and the personal honor that comes from it, but I'm proud to be here with Henry and with Frederico and with Janet and with Donna and with everyone else. You start to look at the whole. There is so much more reach here because of this. If there is the reach, then there is the potential to connect. And if there is the potential to connect, then there is the potential to inspire, to serve. That was early. I believe that may have been '95?

Morrisroe: I think '94.

Slater: And when was the Midwest flood?

Martin: Ninety-three.

Slater: Was the Midwest flood ’93?

Martin: Yes, before Waco.

Slater: Oh yes, Waco.

Martin: So you have a whole lot of crises that you have to deal with. In ’93 you have the flood; you have Waco; then you have the World Trade Center bombing; then you have the earthquake; and then you have Oklahoma City.

Slater: Oklahoma City, right.

Martin: Then you have the Pacific Northwest floods.

Slater: Right, OK.

Martin: Lots of things to deal with.

Slater: A lot of things. And by the way, I think that Oklahoma City was another very difficult issue.

But I really wanted to make this point because we had talked about Peña in particular. I just wanted to say that that was a time when I felt proud. It plays out, because that’s just one instance, but time and time again. In that instance, what I really want to say here is that whatever was coming out of Arkansas just wasn’t enough to deal with that. You’ve got your core group that’s coming out, but you have to supplement that. That’s really the rewarding experience that I think Ambassador Young was talking about when he said, “You won’t be the same. There will be things that you will experience, people you will come to know, a family that you will be a part of that goes beyond anything you’ve experienced at this point.” After a while you see that. You see its value in and of itself. So I think that’s an important point to make.

[BREAK]

Martin: We figured we would ask about the appropriations bills that went through, especially after you became Secretary.

Slater: OK.

Martin: In this period, especially after Gingrich takes over in ’94, ’95, Appropriations bills were being used as vehicles for policy, abortion riders, and the like, and those sorts of things were happening. Coming to a point where Bob Livingston starts yelling at Newt Gingrich to get all this stuff out of the bills so that he can actually pass them as Appropriations chair.

Slater: Really?

Martin: Your bill is clean. To some degree it's the dog that doesn't bark. So I'm wondering if there's a story behind that, or what would explain why, of all the bills, transportation sails?

Slater: First of all, we talked earlier about Federal Highways just being a great position from which to move to the office of Secretary. Well, that's true when it comes to people who might come forward and say good things about you. But I think it also holds when it comes to the members as well, because as Federal Highway Administrator, you're dealing with all of them. One thing that I noticed early on was how well the chairs and the ranking members got along, how well all of the members got along. I mean, it's really probably one of the more nonpolitical areas. Now, that's not to say you don't have conflicts, but they're generally urban-rural; they're generally donor-donee states, what states give more, what states get more than they put in. So it's more that, and to the degree you understand that, and if your inclination is not to be a hard-core partisan, you can really flourish. You can really have a great experience in that environment. So it couldn't have been a better fit for me.

I also mentioned Jane Garvey earlier. Jane gave me the experience of working with someone who was from Massachusetts. She had been the head of the airport there, and my airport experience was very limited. Also she had been the head of, I believe, Massport, but it's the more surface side. So we worked very well together. She was also very good at the whole issue of innovative financing. That was an interest area of mine as well, but my experience had been principally pay as you go. Since she had had the experience of working with the authority, they had the Big Dig project that they were trying to work through. She just had a background that was great for us with that. So we were doing that as well.

We made a pact that we were going to test the new law to the fullest extent. That gave us the opportunity—and this was ISTEA [Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act]—so that gave us a chance to do things that were exciting and that were pressing the edge of transportation finance, transportation thinking. It was just a wonderful time. The sweep of it was big enough where you could capture the sentiments of liberals, conservatives—just all of the people you had to deal with.

One experience I had early on that really shaped my entire experience with the Department was being invited by a transportation infrastructure codel [congressional delegation] to go to—I think we ended up going to Russia, to Germany, maybe one or two other countries. But where we were going was of small importance. What was really important was that I was dealing directly with the chairs and the ranking members and their spouses. I cannot tell you the value of that experience. Once it was over, they knew me, I knew them. Anytime there was an issue, you could just deal with it. Anytime there was a question about where they stood or where I stood, there were no assumptions. We would just communicate it.

So that couldn't have put me in better stead, not only with the administration, because it's one of the largest committees—this goes back to a point you alluded to a little while ago about how was your work beneficial across the board. I think it was clearly beneficial in that regard because we had maybe 50 members on this committee initially. Then when [E. G.] Shuster became chair, it was 80 because he just added to it. He knew what was going on. But you were dealing with really great people like Shuster; you were dealing with [James] Oberstar, [Norman] Mineta, [Thomas] Petri, Frank Wolf—I mean, a lot of really good people.

And you couldn't have better relationships. They were people who would pop up on other issues. So if Bruce or someone were able to say, "Mr. President, I think Rodney has a good relationship with Senator So-and-So," or whatever, that was always good. That was my experience, and that's why I think we were able to avoid a lot of that. The other thing too is that the members knew that I had a good relationship with the President and with the Vice President. So that was also good for me, because a lot of times they might have an issue that they wanted to raise or present or whatever.

Martin: Was that common, for them to try to go through you to get to the President?

Slater: I wouldn't say that. I think that's overstating the case. But knowing that there was a good relationship there, though, that was positive. I'll say it that way. But no, I was a facilitator. Again, it's not getting in the way of, but it's helping to facilitate. I was not a power broker.

Martin: How about Richard Shelby? It seemed like, reading through the briefing materials, he was the wild card on the committee, at least for House and Senate relationships.

Slater: I wouldn't say that. To me, he, and Senator [Trent] Lott are a lot alike. They just always have things that they need to work through. You just work through them with them. I had a good relationship with him. It's interesting. I don't know why I put them together. But it was a good relationship. He added the Black Belt to the delta zone. The delta was southern Illinois down to the Gulf. As chair, he could add the Black Belt of Alabama. They're similar, but it's over here. I think it's a part of the Appalachia regional area as well. But I didn't have a problem with that. I think that's basically it on that.

With appropriations, it's just about money. Now, this is a place where my relationship with the President did come in. If it's about money, it's about the budget, right? We would use the budget process to push policy. We did that too. Even though that initial budget comes out that might not have your numbers the way you want them, at the end of the day, you know that if you're dealing with someone who has a relationship, that they can probably work that out. You don't want it to come to a stalemate where it's just mano-a-mano. You really don't want that. You want to be able to work those numbers out where you're in the same place or near the same place. That's the case with policy as well, with authorizations. But it just happens every year with the budget.

A lot of times, if you aren't keen on this, especially when we got to the point of cutting the deficit in half and then balancing the budget, when you put that first number out with the budget, a lot of times that's just the beginning of the debate. That's all about saying, "This is what that bottom line has to be. Now, we can work through the priorities and how they relate to one another in the negotiation, but at the end of the line, we want that budget total to be this." Well, if you're dealing with someone with a good relationship, that means that you've got a shot at being able to come to common ground on that. Now, someone else may get hurt. But depending on what committees you're on, you're probably saying, "That's their problem," if you're in the Congress. That's the administration's problem when it comes to its whole package.

I'm concerned about transportation. That's where our broader definition of transportation helped, because if I could make transportation also a health care discussion and also an economic development discussion, then I could connect with Commerce; I could connect with HHS [Health and Human Services]; I could connect with Justice, Welfare to Work. What's the tube between Welfare to Work? Transportation. It's the connection between welfare and work, because without transportation that gets you from the suburbs to the inner city, or from the inner city to the suburbs, wherever the jobs are, there's no connection.

So once we started doing that, it really gave us a shot to significantly increase our budget, even as the President was saying that he wanted to first cut the deficit in half and then ultimately balance the budget. That's how I played my role, let's say it that way. Also, connecting our budget with the President's State of the Union, that's how that was helpful too. Because we were talking his language, not our own, saying we need more money for highways. Well, how does that relate to the bigger agenda? I think a lot of departments made that mistake.

Morrisroe: Going back to your service as administrator, after the budget stimulus package and health care, the next big issue the administration tackles is NAFTA, of which Transportation should have a pretty significant—

Slater: A big piece of it.

Morrisroe: Can you talk a little bit about your involvement and Transportation involvement, especially Shelby in that? Your trip to Mexico with the President?

Slater: Sure. First of all, that was a very thorny political issue, as you know. A lot of our friends were on the other side of that issue. But I think that it probably took somebody like Bill Clinton to get that done. As you know, it was not an issue that we started. But because it was one that he was willing to complete, it helped to position him as a new kind of Democrat, which was very important to his overall service, to reposition the party, to really give us a shot at winning Presidential elections, and to also, in some respects, shake up the policy debate. NAFTA played that role.

I mentioned my trip from Buffalo to Laredo. That was all a part of building support for NAFTA and dealing with the realities of NAFTA: the border crossings, the choke points, the need for the improved infrastructure, the whole issue of trucks and their movement across the border. We also had events where we dealt with the whole question of drugs and all of that as a part of areas of concern. So I was very involved. On our trip, we invited labor to be a part of a number of our events. I worked very closely with President [James] Hoffa, with the Teamsters, because they played, probably in my area, the most significant role from a transportation vantage point. At the end of the day, we were able to work out compromises where you have periods of time before trucks are able to move freely, putting in place safety regimes and those kinds of things, helped to address the political dynamics of all of that. I was very much involved in that. The trip to Mexico was a really good trip.

Morrisroe: What were your observations of Clinton's—to the extent you observed them—interactions with the President of Mexico and others? That was a newfound and blossoming international relationship in the first term.

Slater: That's true. It played out in a big way when the President and Secretary [Robert] Rubin and others dealt with the financial crisis. I just think that that was probably one of the—other than Haiti, Bosnia, some of the military stuff—that was probably the most potentially, I don't think devastating is the right word, but if that had not gone well, that would have been—

Morrisroe: It would have been catastrophic to the Americas.

Slater: Exactly, that just would have been—I don't know if we could have survived something like that actually, because it would have had a significant impact on our economy, and it was an action that was an executive action.

Morrisroe: It was risky. Had that not worked, Rubin and Clinton would have been in a difficult position.

Slater: Exactly. You wouldn't get the benefit of your friends being supportive, because they didn't want you to do it anyway. Then, for those who would see the political advantage of it, your adversaries, they don't care that you're moving on a measure that they wanted. They just see the opportunity to—so it would have been very difficult. One other person who played an important role in that was Bill Daley, who really, I think, did a great job orchestrating that. But I thought it was dealt with well. I think that that move really was the kind of thing that helped with the relationships, because it showed that we were willing to risk something for their benefit, and we don't do too much of that. It's usually always, the calculated upside is our upside. There's nothing wrong with that, but in this instance, it was doing something for a partner that really needed help.

I think that that really paid off in spades over the years. Even though Arkansas does a lot of trading with Mexico, it's not as if we were a border state, so there wasn't a rich history there. I mean, I think President Bush enjoys that history. That may be why a lot more was expected to result from that relationship in his personal friendship with [Vicente] Fox and that kind of thing. But so much for that. I think that was a calculated risk, and it turned out well. It will be interesting to see how it plays out in this election. It hasn't been a real issue thus far. But it could be as more jobs move south and that kind of thing. Hopefully, our economy is not a problem, so it shouldn't be. You know that. But that's my thinking on it. I can't think of anything else about it that would have been relevant.

I had a good relationship with Carlos Ruiz. I remember being invited to Mexico by him and then being treated just wonderfully, even though we had disagreements, because we were arguing about the trucks in particular and the opening of the border immediately. As you know, even with the NAFTA rules in place, we delayed the opening of the border. So we had those issues to hash out. But he did extend a very kind gesture to me, inviting me to Mexico. We did a lot there together. I then invited him to the U.S., and we did a number of things together here. I think that over time, that helped break down some of the barriers.

Morrisroe: Whether it's the Open Skies issue or these types of issues, did you have a lot of interaction with State on these international issues?

Slater: Yes. Actually the Department of Transportation works closely with State. We've got a small group that will work together. They work together all the time on all of these issues.

Sometimes there would be the interface between Secretary Albright and myself, but most of the time, it would be at another level.

Morrisroe: Subcabinet.

Slater: Yes.

Morrisroe: Are there any persistent conflicts or different perspectives on the issues you deal with between Transportation and State?

Slater: Not really. State, no. I think that Secretary Albright was a pretty—and Ron Brown was very instrumental in this as the Commerce Secretary. You remember the whole theme was "It's the economy, stupid"? So we came into office recognizing that at least a third of our GDP [Gross Domestic Product] was coming from international trade and that in order to continue to build on that, we needed to be doing things that integrated to a greater extent the U.S. into the world economy. So trade agreements clearly come into play there. But also, the ties that bind: the roads, the ports, the air lanes, that kind of thing. If that's coming from the top—

That was the thing that I was trying to get my team to see when we took the President's State of the Union address and started talking about what we do. My point was—and this for me started with trying to get mentioned and realizing how hard that was, and also realizing that I personally did not like that. How can a President put together a speech that resonates as it should? It should be a 30,000-foot speech. You should mention specifics only to the degree that you're trying to outline or identify particulars that relate to the general. But this is not a speech to Congress. This is a speech to the American people. So you're doing the specifics enough to connect it with them, but more than anything else, you're trying to lift with that speech.

I think it's a disservice to the President, with that responsibility, to be concerned about your special projects. Now, if your projects relate to that overall message, that's a different thing. But you don't know that until the message is produced. You don't know that on your own motion. You can suggest, but you don't know that. More often than not, you're going to get turned down. More often than not, you should be turned down. The problem is, when it comes to your staff and their belief in you and your own juice, let's say, it's just a no-win situation. I promised myself that I would not get into that situation, that I would try to figure out another way to play that, I won't say game, because I don't think it's a game. I think what matters at the end of the day is how deeply tied, not given mention here or there.

So as I said, with the side-by-side, after doing that a couple of times, there was no question in our group that we were in—and in ways probably the department has never been in. The new generation vehicle—that's EPA [Environmental Protection Agency], that's the environment—that's the way we started to do it. We also produced a document at the end called "The Changing Face of Transportation." It's still on the website. We attempted to look out 25 years and deal with the transportation thinking and policies for the future. We hosted an international transportation symposium here in Washington, D.C., and we had roughly 100 countries attend. We're doing it not through an international organization, but we're doing it, and people are coming at our invitation. I remember working through that with my staff. I said, "This is not just a chance to talk. This is a chance for us to listen, because certain areas are doing certain things better than we are—high-speed rails and all of that sort of thing. We aren't doing any of that, and we need the interface with others to do it."

I remember some of my staff members asking if this was being done just for the show of it? It takes a lot of effort. What's the end? Those, I thought, were justifiable questions. So my point was that some of it is to show, in the sense of bringing light to an issue, but also it's to bring light to a product that, but for the light, is assumed, and if it's assumed, it has no value. The only time you have value, the only time people notice you is when there is a problem. Either there is a crash, or there's an accident, or the plane is late. You follow me? Left to its own existence, that's really the thought that people have of transportation. They don't think about it, we don't think about it, but it's essential.

You get to Katrina and you have the Ninth Ward, the Eighth Ward, that's all about transportation in many respects: notice and getting people out. It's about transportation when the airlines are ready to actually fly people out, but they can't get approval to go in, or when the Amtrak trains go back and forth, and they're empty, and people are in the Superdome. Norm Mineta is just saying, "I can help," and no one's listening. My point was that—James Lee and I had this understanding—Transportation is the first emergency response. Either you're trying to get emergency and first responders in, or you're trying to get people out. It is function number one. So those were the kinds of things that we were highlighting with all of our colleagues across the administration.

By the way, Senator Clinton was very much involved in a lot of the emergency response stuff. When I say that, I'm not talking about directing. But her position was, "The first challenge of government is to be ready when there is an emergency." So she was always saying, "Have you tested this or tested that? Do you know that your group is ready to respond?" It's quite interesting that she was thinking about those things at that time, and I don't really know how that came to be the case, other than maybe just some intellectual understanding. I mean, maybe with some of the things that she and the President dealt with in Arkansas, that might be it. But she always emphasized that.

Morrisroe: Arguably, one of the most significant pieces of transportation legislation was the reauthorization of ISTEA in '97, '98. What's important for us to know about how that legislation went through and the extent the White House was involved?

Slater: There are a couple of things. One is, I thought that was going to be the achievement of '97, because that's when it was up. We got close, but we didn't get it done, largely because we didn't have enough money at the end of the day to make it big enough. But also, there was something else that was going on.

I mentioned ISTEA and how it changed the paradigm, how it actually was a piece of legislation that originated in the Senate, and then the House came along and how—we haven't talked about this—[Daniel Patrick] Moynihan was so instrumental in playing a lead role in the Senate, [Frank] Lautenberg and others—in producing this very visionary piece of legislation. It was the first piece of legislation where you could flex, meaning you could take money from highways and put it in transit. There was a lot of focus on enhancements. There were innovative financing opportunities that were suggested, and over time fully developed. Jane and I sought to test every piece of that legislation, which gave us successes to point to during the reauthorization process. All of those trips across the country gave us projects. They gave us the stories. That's basically what it was. So again, '97 should have led to that—it didn't.

But the great victory in '97, though, was Amtrak reauthorization, because we had to effectively work out a deal for a big infusion of resources. The high-speed rail, all of that stuff was put in place at that time. We got the administration to go along with it, and it worked over a weekend, because we just called all of the people in, and we kept everyone there. That's what pulled that off. That was good for me because it was the first thing that I'd led that had the potential for going south. I remember just deciding that we were going to stay until we get a decision and how important that was. Lawyers often do that when you're in negotiations.

Martin: Lock the doors.

Slater: Exactly. That was the personal experience that caused me to take that chance. I also knew that if we didn't get it done, then it was something that could easily fall into the President's lap.

But '98 and ISTEA reauthorization, I think that the significant victory was probably threefold. One, not only did we get record-level investment for highways, but we got it for transit as well. We got that with the threat of a veto, which a President had never—that was a pretty big thing for the President to step in on that and to say, "Transit record level, if we're going to do record level for highways." That's the kind of trading that—because we definitely wanted to do it for highways, and all of the interests wanted to do it for highways. Well, he was able to—and we were, with his help—able to leverage it for transit as well. Secondly, we were able to do a better job on the whole issue of equity, so the donor-donee state. That's the reason we called it the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century. So you had better equity as it relates to highways and transit, because it was record for both, and better equity when it came to donor and donee states, and that was good.

Then the final thing is that we were able to retain all of the good stuff that was in the first bill. I don't think it's an overstatement to make that point, because it's one thing to put a new philosophy in law; it's another thing to test it out and to be able to retain it. You'll recall that with the NHS, which was the National Highway System, in one sense it was new thinking, but in one sense it was old thinking. It was old thinking in that it was a principal focus on highways, and most people wanted that to be the new interstate system. But it was new thinking because what we started to do was focus on the "intermodal connectors." That's what Jane and I emphasized. We said, "It is not highways for highways' sake, but it's an investment in highways which then will serve as the lynchpin for all of the other modes, whether it's airports, or rail lines, or seaports, or whatever, military instillations, all of that." So that's where we put the principal focus, and we were able to hold that.

So I think that those were the victories, holding all of the good of a new and visionary piece of legislation that was passed in 1991 with strong opposition to doing that. Because what a lot of people, principally focused on surface transportation, wanted to do was to go back, in every respect, to where we were before ISTEA and make it principally a highway bill. We were able to retain all of the good stuff, to bring a better sense of equity, and to really set up for the first time—and this was what I would consider the good stuff, because I said threefold, and the two, equity on transit highways, equity on donor-donee, and then retaining all the good stuff.

One of the specific things about the good stuff was really going forward on innovative financing. Most of our investment in the past had been grant reimbursement, so it's all pay as you go, rather than things like state infrastructure banks, the whole TIFIA [Transportation Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act] loans that are now very much in play; the RRIF [Railroad Rehabilitation and Improvement Financing] loans, now very much in play; all of those things. Being able to get those added to the law in specific terms may in fact be the most significant contributions, because at the end of the day, there's just so much money, raw dollars.

But if you've got the ability to leverage a significant amount of that with input from the private sector, then you technically raise that amount. That's why you can say it's a bill that is for $200 billion, but in actuality, if you're playing out the innovative financing provisions, it could be in the neighborhood of almost $250 billion. Right now, with these committees that are studying transportation investment for the future, they're just trying to figure out more of that. All of the work that's being done now dealing with either leasing or selling transportation assets, all of it has its genesis in this kind of thinking, and we have to figure out how far we can go with this.

By the way, a number of these projects are in this area. You've got the Pocahontas Skyway Project, I think, in and around Richmond; you've got the HO/T [high-occupancy/toll] lanes project in this area; and then there's going to be a major beltway project in this area. The ones that have gotten the most attention, though, are the skyways project in Chicago and maybe one or two others. But all of this is just very interesting transportation policy. A lot of that we were able to get in this bill. So I feel very good about that. From the staff's perspective, it's about the policy, and it's about the money. I think that we left the staff feeling good that we really fought the good fight on the policy side. But we didn't leave them with just that. I think we also doubled the investments during that period. Even with the last bill, they were able to keep that going. What else?

The two other things that we did, because we had the luxury of doing it once we passed Amtrak in '97, reauthorizations, T21 in '98. I think we passed Air 21 in '99. So all that was aviation, which was basically everything. Then, with another year or so, we started out on this effort to put together the 25-year piece, looking to the future. That was an important undertaking because some of the stuff that we talked about we actually have in some of the legislation that has come since then.

The interesting thing about all of that is that Secretary [William] Coleman had done a similar thing during the [Gerald] Ford administration. His period was from '75 to 2000. I didn't even know that the document existed. What I did was, I said, "In '97, we're 30 years old. Why don't we start thinking about the next 30 years?" So that's how I phrased it and positioned it. Once we got into it, we found out about the document that he had put together. So my thinking then was *Let's look at that document and view it in the most positive light so that we can applaud them for what they did. Then let's take the risk of trying to think out 25 years so that you've got that 50-year block that you're looking at*. So that's what we did, and it's still on the website. We involved a lot of people to help us think through that. So I think it still is a document that has some value. For me it's all about the Bridge to the 21st Century and thinking beyond your moment of service, and as the President would often say, thinking about those things that are timely but also timeless.

Martin: Sounds fair enough.

Martin: One of the things I wanted to ask about was Clinton's Initiative on Race, the study circles, and those sorts of things. It seemed like you were heavily involved in that. You were named on the task force and that. Do you have any memory of how this came about, how it was kicked off, the politics behind it?

Slater: I'll have to think about it. Part of it may have grown out of the whole affirmative action debate and the "mend it, don't end it." I'm pretty sure of that. I think what the President wanted was not to get limited by the declared interests who had taken a position on this question and not to become polarized by that, but to do something that was more important, which was to have an honest discussion about where we are and where we need to go. Then you can better discuss the means by which you get this done. So I'm inclined to think that it really grew out of that. Professor John Hope Franklin was the chair if I'm not mistaken. Also I think that the President recognized that he was probably uniquely prepared to do that sort of thing, to encourage that sort of thing. As I recall, that's how that started. That's pretty much it.

Morrisroe: Do you have any recollections from your service on the task force?

Slater: Yes, I went to a number of venues and led discussions dealing with the issue. I remember St. Louis in particular, but I think I went to Dallas—probably had four or five places where I went. I think this also was consistent with his, "I want an administration that looks like America." He was able, when he called his entire force of Secretaries and administrators and the like to help with this cause, to show that, and because of that was able to go places and have voices lifted up that were not always heard.

What's interesting is that now you've got this whole discussion going on in boardrooms across the country about the issue of diversity and its importance when it comes to business. I think that springs from that. You've had the Michigan case, and frankly that case, while it was about Michigan, it was also about an institution like the University of Virginia, some of your academic leaders, and how the institution makes decisions about who and all of that. So you all were very much in the mix of that whole discussion.

I think people were a little surprised that so many interests came out to say that there is the need for this kind of dialogue so that we can figure out how we navigate this terrain. So you had leaders of Fortune 500 companies, you had former Joint Chiefs of Staff, just a number of people offering their voice on this issue, some of the same people that we were reaching out to, some of the people who are now dealing with these issues in the boardroom. That's what I remember about it. I probably need to look at that a little bit more. But I think you had the President who felt that he was, again, called upon and was able and willing to lead this effort.

Martin: We should probably release you from your obligation. You've been a very generous participant, including feeding us lunch.

Slater: Thank you. The time actually went pretty fast. What I'll do is, I'll continue to think about this. I will say this, that this was very helpful in many respects, because I hadn't thought about this for a good while. Just going back, the thing I found really helpful was the timeline. Just very good. So I appreciate this for my own purposes.

Morrisroe: We have a great graduate staff who do the preparations.

Martin: They're very labor intensive. The average book takes 100 hours.

Slater: Just good stuff. I see you mentioned my Garrett Morgan effort.

When it was being discussed that I might become Secretary, I talked to Secretary Coleman about that. I said, "What's your thinking if an opportunity like that comes?" He said, "I just want to know, why would you give up the most powerful job in the Department for the weakest?" I said, "What do you mean, Mr. Secretary?" He said, "First of all, you know what I mean. Your little operation at Federal Highways," and he started laying out figures that I've given you. And he said, "You just don't have a lot of worries there. They're good people, dedicated people. You're seldom in the news for bad stuff. It's just all about money and getting it to the right places and cutting ribbons. That's a great job. Why would you want to stay up at night worrying about what's happening at the FAA [Federal Aviation Administration] or at NHTSA [National Highway Traffic Safety Administration] and all of that?"

He said, "What's the budget of the FHWA [Federal Highway Administration]?" and I told him. And he said, "What's the budget of the Secretary's office?" I said, "I really don't know." He said, "It's no more than about $300 million. You're basically talking about a holding company and a shell. And most of the line authority, direct authority, is in the modes. So as long as you understand that, then I think you can have a good time, because at the end of the day, it's all about policy, and it's all about vision. If you can deal with those two things, you can manage the effectuation of that. You can manage what happens on the line." I thought that was very insightful. He said, "I'd do it." But I had not thought about it in that way.

Martin: It's the only Department that is structured so that there is such a major entity within it that seems to have most of the money separate.

Slater: Right, that's true. Well, if you noticed, we started talking about one DOT, which includes that pot of money and all that you're doing in Federal Highways. I think also, knowing Federal Highways was good, but FAA is tough as well. You've got 52,000 employees. That's over half the employees of the Department. Jane Garvey going there was very important. Then NHTSA is always in trouble with something because they're always looking for trouble. That's their job. So you can have the—what was that, the Ford and the Firestone tires, remember that issue?

Morrisroe: The massive recall.

Slater: Right. So there are all these issues. But it was a great experience. I wouldn't trade it for anything in the world.

Morrisroe: Sounds like Andrew Young was right. You came out with some skills and expertise you wouldn't have if you'd gone on board and ended up in the White House probably.

Slater: That's exactly right—and fewer scars.

Morrisroe: That's for sure.

Slater: This just came to me about the John Kennedy Jr. plane crash. The only thing we had was a signal when he took off, and we knew basically where he was going. But we didn't know anything else. Basically we had to use just the intellect of the FAA and the Coast Guard to put together a flight plan and to construct that, because he was not in communications. I think he may have had communications one time. We should probably check that to be clear about this. But they reconstructed this flight path and schedule and the plan, and basically allowed us to ultimately put the Coast Guard where they needed to be to discover what had occurred. But Senator [Edward] Kennedy was the leader of the family and its interface on this. From our end, Jane was the point.

I just thought it was interesting that she was from Massachusetts. She knew the family, and she was the FAA administrator. All of this was playing out, and the nation was—you remember that—just was glued to the television set trying to get word here and there. But she did a great job in dealing with not only the pressure of this, because this is family back home and they're saying—they aren't saying it, but people are saying, "We should know. Just tell us something." You're dealing with all of that pressure. She did a super job. But that was very difficult because we just didn't know what had happened. That was probably the most difficult as Secretary.

The most difficult as Federal Highway was the bombing in Oklahoma City. We lost, I think, 11 people. That was just tough. Then, I think my first week on the job as Secretary, we lost some Coasties, maybe in Washington state. I don't remember. But those get to be the difficult moments. But all in all, just a great experience, and as you said, the Ambassador was right.

Morrisroe: Thanks very much.