GEORGE H. W. BUSH ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

TRANSCRIPT

INTERVIEW WITH JOHN H. SUNUNU

June 8-9, 2000
Charlottesville, Virginia

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Young: All right, we're ready to begin. We understand that this recorded session of the Bush Oral History Project is conducted under strict ground rules of confidentiality. We don't report what is said in here outside the room, and the transcript of the proceedings goes first to the respondent, Governor Sununu, who will determine the uses of this transcript for research purposes and for archiving purposes. We do this in order to encourage candor and to assure you that we are not journalists looking for a story or running out to write a book, carrying words out of the room. That's your privilege—you can report what you say here to anybody, but we cannot. With that said, let's begin. If you'd like, you can start us off, John Sununu, or we would certainly like to hear early today about how you came to join George Bush in the administration and how you thought things should work there and tried to make them work in the White House.

Sununu: Let me start at the early end of the chronology. I met George Bush in 1980 when he was running for President against Ronald Reagan. In New Hampshire everybody meets everybody running for President at least once or twice. It so happened that my wife was chairman of the Republican Party in New Hampshire at the time, and so we got to meet them all under very warm and intimate conditions as they tried to convince us to break the rules—to convince her to break the rules of non-commitment in a primary and somehow signal her support. I was a Reagan supporter and if any rules were broken they were broken on my part, by giving advice to the Reagan folks, and I suspect Nancy [Sununu] also leaned that way, but did a much better job of hiding her preference and maintaining her neutrality.

We got to meet George Bush, we got to meet Barbara Bush and the clan and I liked them, although I really felt at the time that ideologically and on issues, Ronald Reagan was a better choice for the Republican Party in 1980. I went on to run for the U.S. Senate. I was one of a field of eleven running for the U.S. Senate against John Durkin. Frankly, I wanted to run because I always thought the bumper sticker I would use was "If you want to keep a jerk in, vote for Durkin." Everybody knew Durkin was vulnerable, so we had the attorney general of the state, Warren Rudman, we had former Governor Wesley Powell, we had, I think, the Senate president and the speaker of the House and the former Senate president and a former speaker and a couple of key legislators and an encyclopedia salesman named Smith and somebody named Sununu who decided to run.

It was interesting because Wesley Powell the former Governor was from the same county I was in, the second largest population county at the time, Rockingham County. I ended up coming in

second to Warren Rudman by about 3,000 votes or something like that and Wesley Powell took 25,000 votes, I think, and most of them from our county, so I managed to scare Warren. And then, since he was the only liberal in the primary, I agreed to serve as his state chairman and try and hold the Republican conservatives, because in those days we had a three party system in New Hampshire: the Democrats, the liberal Republicans, and the conservative Republicans. When a liberal Republican won, the conservatives sat on their hands and vice versa. I told Warren I'd be willing to serve as his chairman, we held the conservatives and Warren won.

I bring that up because there is a lot of New Hampshire politics in what we are going to talk about later and that's an important period of time. The next year I thought I had had my glorious political experience, coming in second in a Republican primary for U.S. Senate. I went back to my engineering consulting business and teaching on the faculty at Tufts and they all came—not all, but Jimmy Cleveland in particular, who was the sort of senior Republican in the state at the time. He was a Congressman and asked me to run for Governor against the incumbent Democrat Governor, and I said it sounded like too much work. It was not going to be a good Republican year, and I thought Governor took too much time. Finally they convinced me. I ran for Governor. I won a very heated primary against the Senate president and then came into—our primaries are in September, so I came out of this heated primary exhausted and broke and ready to run against an incumbent Governor and needed to raise money quickly.

So I picked up the phone and called a gentleman I had met about a half a dozen times in 1980 and asked him to come up and do a fundraiser for me; the Vice President of the United States, George Bush. This was like the 10th of September, it was the primary, I don't remember the exact date. He agreed and eleven days later we held what turned out at that time to be the largest single fundraiser ever held in the state. We raised $200,000 to $300,000, which was significant money in a New Hampshire gubernatorial campaign at the time, and I actually went on to defeat an incumbent Democrat in '82. I think I was the only Republican to defeat an incumbent Democratic Governor in '82. So, you remember somebody who on short notice came up and made a difference for you. You develop a relationship, you get to know each other well over a period of time. I was serving then as Governor, he was the Vice President of the United States. Governors interact with the President and Vice President often.

New Hampshire Governors find their phone calls returned quite quickly (laughter). I took full advantage of that.

Milkis: Why is that?

Sununu: The Vice President was gracious. He and Mrs. Bush entertained Nancy and me when we went down there. A couple of times we stayed with them in the vice presidential residence and we developed a good personal relationship. I found out that on critical issues of economy and free enterprise in the market, George Bush was actually a lot more conservative than I had perceived him to be originally. Frankly, we just evolved into a relationship where it was, at least in my mind, almost a foregone conclusion that I would support him if he chose to run for President in 1988.

I'll apologize now for what I've described to you already as my senior moments. I don't remember the dates quite well and we might have to go back and check dates, but I believe in October of '86, Lee Atwater came up and talked to me. I had gotten to know Lee over the years and he had committed to run the Vice President's campaign for President. Atwater came up to basically ask me to support the Vice President in a formal way as early as possible. I told Lee I would do that if we could put a strategy together that made sense to win the nomination. So over a period of phone conversations and meetings, Atwater and I put together what was really a Governors-based strategy.

It was the first time, I think, that anybody in Washington put that kind of strategy together. The conventional wisdom is that the political power of America was in the Congress, in the Senate in particular, and that Senators ran their states so to speak. I don't know why. Everybody has now discovered how foolish that is, since Governors live amongst the constituents and dispense all the patronage. That's what politics is all about, working with constituents and, to be very blunt about it, sharing the rewards of the political process with those who like to be involved politically.

Anyway, we did that. I was either about to be or had become—and I don't remember what had happened, chairman of the Republican Governors Association—so Lee and I decided to use that as a vehicle to work all the Republican Governors. By the time it became obvious to Bob Dole what was happening, George Bush had lined up virtually all, if not all, but one or two Republican Governors as endorsers. In particular, he came out to an RGA, Republican Governors Association, meeting in, I believe it was Albuquerque, New Mexico. There Atwater and I shoveled, one at a time, two, three, four at a time, Republican Governors over to the Vice President's room at the hotel and locked up the endorsements. So that process evolved, got involved in trying to set the stage that way. Then of course he asked me to co-chair with Senator [Judd] Gregg the New Hampshire effort for the primary.

They went—and I'll try to short cut it and then you can ask the questions you want—into Iowa. They were running the Iowa campaign with the old Washington operatives. It worked in '80, where they did extremely well in Iowa because nobody paid attention to Iowa and anybody who did anything had two legs up. But the same people just had no nose for the politics at the grass roots in the state level and when it was an even playing field. The process they used in '80 just did not work in '88. The Vice President came out of Iowa, as everybody knows, I think he came in third. Pat Robertson came in second and Dole won. But again, you guys are making the facts correct, I'm not here to present the facts.

Young: You got it right.

Milkis: Finally somebody who understands it.

Sununu: And he came into New Hampshire exactly where New Hampshire Governors like their candidates to come in, wounded and ready to be saved. I'll give you a couple of anecdotes because I really think they begin to explain part of the political process and George Bush and perhaps our political involvement, my political involvement. I'm a great believer, even at the national level, in what I call "see me, touch me, feel me" campaigning. You have to create a

personalized, if not personal, relationship with the voters. The master of that is sitting in the White House today. Let me give a context to that.

Governor [William] Clinton was chairman of the National Governors Association when I was the vice chairman. I then became the chairman the next year; he chaired the executive committee. I know the President quite well. I know how good he is at local politics and I know how smart he was at taking local politics to the national level. We can talk about that later. But anyway, I tried to bring to the Bush campaign, in the year before the primary, an understanding that campaigning in New Hampshire in particular—even though I believe it applied everywhere, it was particularly true in New Hampshire—you had to connect with the voters. The New Hampshire voters take their responsibility very seriously. And they want the candidates to take the campaign seriously. Not themselves seriously, or life seriously, but the fact that this is a serious business and they're there to make a decision and they want you to be available to them to evaluate.

Our goal in the year before was to get George Bush to shake as many hands as possible. We estimated that he shook about 60,000 hands in the year before the primary. We estimated that we took about five to seven thousand Polaroid pictures of the President and somebody. It is based on my personal theory that if you have a picture of yourself and the Vice President on the mantle, you'll work awfully hard to make it a picture of yourself and the President. And believe me, that's what politics is all about. So we did that. We did a couple of things that seemed really strange at the time that in retrospect were probably the best things we could do.

On New Year's, in cold Concord, New Hampshire, and it was cold that night, we borrowed a furniture store. Concord has a First Night kind of a structure where people wander around the streets to different events. We took a furniture storefront and moved all the furniture around so that it looked like a homey living room and set up a hot chocolate line. People could come in and have their picture taken and shake hands with the Vice President of the United States and his wife and a couple of his kids and daughters-in-law and so on.

That night I believe the number is correct, about 3,500 people came through. The Governor of the state was out front handing out hot chocolate and the Senator was handing out hot chocolate and everybody got their picture taken with the Vice President that night. It was cold. People stood in line for a long time, but I think it established a warm feeling that this is where George Bush spent his New Year's Eve. We went out at the State House steps at midnight, watched the fireworks. In the Reagan vision of photo ops, it was a great photo op.

The second thing that might give you a feeling for New Hampshire style politics and the feeling I have that politics is a process of investments of time and effort and commitment that eventually, in unseen ways, produce results. In ways you may not anticipate when you do it. Some time in, I believe, early January of the primary year, the President was in Kennebunkport, after they came in on New Year's Eve. We wanted them to come down, I think the next weekend, to do an interview with Channel 9. It really was an hour and a half ride and he wasn't very excited about doing it. He wanted to spend time with his family, and, in ways that state chairmen are wont to do, I insisted.

So the Vice President came down with Mrs. Bush and I think a couple of the kids came, although I'm not positive. As is his style, he was warm and gracious, walked around the TV station, shook hands with everybody, did not only the half hour interview, but gave them some extra interviews for the news that night and just was George Bush—gracious as he really is, of all the political people I've run into, just the warmest. After we left, he said, "Now tell me again why I did all this?" I said, "Mr. Vice President, I don't know, but one day I will tell you."

If you go through the analysis of that difficult primary, you will remember that it came time to put what was known as the straddle-ad on television. That decision was made, I believe, late Friday, and all the TV stations, particularly channel nine in New Hampshire, had closed their books for the weekend. Well, I picked up the phone and called David [Zamatch], the general manager, who had brought his grandchildren in to have their picture taken with the Vice President and whom the Vice President spent time talking to, and giving out vice presidential pens or whatever it is to the grandchildren and so on. I called David and said, "We've got to re-open the books and put on a new ad on television, can you?" And David got in his car, drove down to the TV station, allowed us to put the ads on Channel 9, which was the most important television station for this weekend.

After we finished all that and the ad started running, I had a chance to be with the Vice President and I said, "Oh, by the way, you asked me last month why you came down—that's why." And he nodded his head and understood immediately that again, investing some of his time and his charm and his real friendliness to people made a difference in a way that is hard for people to identify at the time but in retrospect is easily understandable.

Anyway, we developed a very strong relationship. I think he developed a lot of confidence. He came into the state really feeling down. I sat down with the Vice President and Mrs. Bush and my wife, and I said, "Mr. Vice President, relax, it's in the bag, it's an eight to ten point win. Go to sleep and we'll go out in the next few days and make it happen." And, as Mrs. Bush was gracious enough to say later, it really made her feel like it was going to happen.

What he did in the next five or six days, again, was typical George Bush. We put him in a context where the personal warmth and all the personal "see me, touch me, feel me" context of the past year were merely reinforced in people's minds. So they saw that the man that they had met over the past year really was that man and not the man as reported out of Iowa. I think the press talked about it. We put him in a 12-wheeler, we took him to two or three breakfasts a day at Wendy's and McDonald's. The press, the Washington press corps and all the Washington consultants were there saying, "This is crazy, there are only five or six or ten people in McDonald's. We've got to get him out amongst big crowds." And our message was, "No, we're taking him just to New Hampshire places." We went to a couple of malls, we did town meetings, the whole gamut. But it was an effort to just re-convey the warmth of the Vice President to the people who had already met the Vice President.

Hargrove: Can I ask you a question?

Sununu: Please do.

Hargrove: I've used the word authenticity for what you're talking about. It's hard to pin down, but it's the sense of: "I'm a real person."

Sununu: Yes.

Hargrove: "You can connect with me."

Sununu: But it's not enough. Authenticity is not sufficient because—I shouldn't say that, it's not necessary. And I'm going to say something that sounds snide, but I don't mean it. There is authenticity that has permanence—

Hargrove: Right.

Sununu: —and there is an authenticity of the second, in which somebody creates an authentic empathy for that second and five minutes later it's gone, they're off to something else. President Clinton is a master of the latter. The instant authenticity, the walking down, seeing the cameras are on him and putting the tear in the eye. You know when, I forget, that famous TV clip of the President showing remorse and sorrow, instantaneously on and off? That's authenticity. People don't understand it. For that split second, Bill Clinton wasn't faking sorrow, but he's able to turn it on and turn it off.

With George Bush it's a permanence of empathy that quite often is both his greatest strength and his greatest weakness. And we can talk about that later on in terms of some of the personnel, but with Bill Clinton its shortness is a great strength, without the attendant weakness. It's an odd phenomenon that is, in my opinion, an important difference between the two of them, and yet not often understood.

Anyway, we developed a good relationship. We had talked about a lot of the details of what we had to do and why we had to do it and what the net effect would be and, "Mr. Vice President, this is the kind of campaign you have to run for the next week." For example, we had made the poor Vice President go to the rural parts of New Hampshire more than other candidates thought necessary. In fact, there was a snowstorm in New Hampshire in the middle of that primary season and we drove to Wolfboro, I believe it was Wolfboro, for a big three or four thousand person rally at the high school, through the snowstorm, stopped at an ice fishing competition that the press thought we were really loony about, and then drove up to Wolfboro to meet these three or four thousand people and back. Of course, the Washington press corps thought that was the dumbest thing they ever heard of, but that's okay, we got there. If you go back and look at George Bush's margins, county by county, he got 38 percent in New Hampshire; but in the north country he got between 40 and 50 percent. In fact, his margin of margin all came from the north.

So it didn't have that many votes, but it had that many incremental votes that made the difference. Contrast that with Bob Dole in '96 coming into New Hampshire and never campaigning more than a half hour away from his hotel in Manchester and losing heavily to Buchanan in the north country. You will understand that the campaign was right, but more importantly, George Bush looked at all these strange things and had a feeling, I think, that here were some people who understood politics. And Atwater reinforced everything. I had a great

working relationship with Atwater. In fact, I mentioned last night that I think Atwater's death in the analogy of the nail in the shoe of the horse of the rider probably changed history more than any incidental event I can ever think of, and we'll talk about that at the appropriate time.

Young: Yes, we really should.

Sununu: I bring out all these details here though because it really provided an opportunity for the Vice President, to his credit, to accept the fact that somebody else was going to be responsible for this set of issues, if you will, the campaign. Explain to him how it was going to happen, why it was going to happen and what was going to happen, and I think he was rather pleased and satisfied that the results came out as advertised. You know, people say, "How did you ever end up being Chief of Staff?" Well, you know, the conventional wisdom is that we delivered New Hampshire. But the point I want to make it is not that we delivered New Hampshire, it is how New Hampshire was delivered that I think meant a lot to George Bush.

If we had predicted he was going to lose by one point, if we said, "We can only hold the loss to one point and this is how it's going to happen," I think it would have had the same effect. What he was looking for was technical competence in a task.

Milkis: Especially coming out of Iowa, because the campaign was in such disarray at that point.

Sununu: Well it wasn't in disarray; it was only arrayed in the wrong place. Disarray is not the problem in politics; it is being completely organized and arrayed wrongly that is the problem. They sent Bond up to—

Hargrove: Chris Bond? No, no.

Masoud: Rich Bond.

Sununu: Rich Bond had done a great job in '80 in Iowa, went up and tried to do again in Iowa what he had done in '80, and it was just the wrong campaign at the wrong time. Pat Robertson and Dole went in there. Robertson ran grass roots politics, retail style, in Iowa. Went out and touched everybody's hand, organized on a personal basis, found an issue that a chunk of Iowa cared about and controlled the caucuses. Dole had a geographic affinity there that cut off a lot of the personal relationships that had been established because nobody else had gone up there in '80 except Bush. It's easy to establish personal relationships when nobody is competing with you, but Dole had this geographic affinity of Kansas and Iowa. People said, "How come Dole winning in Iowa didn't make a difference?" And I said, "Iowa picks corn, New Hampshire picks Presidents."

Karaagac: Where was Atwater in New Hampshire politics?

Sununu: Lee was there all the time. Lee understood everything that was going on and if Lee needed reinforcing to put on ads that identified the difference between the President and Dole at that time on taxes, I reinforced that. If I needed Lee to reinforce the fact that he had to jump behind a 12-wheeler or go to three breakfasts or go north on a snowy day, Atwater would support

that. Atwater understood. Atwater probably was the best political mind in America of his generation.

I can give you an Atwater anecdote. After Atwater became chairman, I went down to his office one day, he was RNC [Republican National Committee] chairman and I walk in and the television is on and there are two guys in a ring wrestling on television. I say, "Atwater, why are you watching that stuff? That's fixed." He said, "What do you mean?" I said, "You're watching wrestling." He said, "I'm not watching wrestling." I said, "You've got two half naked guys in a ring, groping each other, that's called wrestling." He said, "I'm not watching wrestling." I said, "What are you doing?" He said, "See the audience? That's the swing vote in November." And he really believed that the wrestling audience and the stock car racing audience epitomized the swing vote in America. And this is a guy that understood, maybe only Bill Clinton understands as well as he did. And maybe only the three of us believed in "see me, touch me, feel me" politics as much as Lee. But he understood completely what we were doing in New Hampshire and really just reinforced everything.

You have to give George Bush credit. George Bush came into New Hampshire tired, exhausted, and beaten in Iowa. And all of his other Washington pollsters and consultants thought that they had to run a campaign that catered to the Washington press corps. Atwater didn't. I certainly didn't. Judd Gregg and Hugh Gregg certainly didn't. The New Hampshire people certainly didn't. And he has to make a decision, "Whom do I go with? Do I listen to the non-conventional wisdom or do I go with all these expensive Washington consultants?" And George Bush made the right decision.

Hargrove: Can I interject once more?

Sununu: Yes.

Hargrove: I get the impression he did not insist on being his own strategist. That he relied on—

Sununu: He insisted on understanding his own strategy and if there were components in it he didn't like, he voiced his concerns. For example, he argued vehemently for a long time against the straddle ad and then accepted the recommendation—particularly Atwater's recommendation at that time and I supported Atwater—that this would be okay to run. The key to that was Barbara Bush finally came in and said, "I don't really think it's that bad," and so we went with it. But he wasn't, neither as President nor as candidate did you just hand him something—

Hargrove: No, I understand.

Sununu: He wanted to know why. "Why am I coming from Kennebunkport to do this?" I had to give him an answer. I honestly couldn't give him an answer and I said, "Mr. President, I can't tell you why, but it's the right thing to do." That was okay with him. If I had made up an answer it wouldn't have been okay with him. In fact, he was probably pleased that I didn't know why, but he was riding my gut instinct and taking it. That's the way he did a lot.

Hargrove: Later on.

Sununu: Later on too. Tell me why, ask a question. Like the answer, don't like the answer. Can be moved and changed, never rigid, but once he became rigid, stayed rigid. Okay, but like good Jell-O, you can move the fruit around in it until it became solid, but once it became solid, you ruined the dessert by moving the fruit around. Anyway, I bring all of that up because I really do think that year and that week established between us a respect that made me comfortable when he asked me to be Chief of Staff. I knew the kind of person I'd be working with, and I think made him comfortable. I'm trying to remember some of the incidences if I can.

There were incidences where he disagreed on things we would do and finally, when he said, "No, I don't want to do it because—" I said, "Okay, fine, we'll find another way to get the same result." I didn't come back to try and twist his arm to do something that he finally made a decision that he didn't want to do. We found another way to achieve the same result. I think that was important for him, that here again, in our relationship—I'm trying to define the relationship for you—here was somebody who felt strongly about things but if he finally indicated, "No, it isn't going to be that way," moved on to find another solution to the same problem. I think that was very important to him.

Young: Can you give us an example of that?

Sununu: Yes, the process of going after Mike Dukakis. As you know, Mike Dukakis loved to brag about Massachusetts. Poor Governor Dukakis never realized that of all the six New England states, Massachusetts was the poorest performer, not the best performer. In fact, nobody realized it. The press in Massachusetts just—and I finally came up with all these statistics that identified the laggard nature of Massachusetts in the New England economy. I had a pretty tough set of presentations. The Vice President let me know a couple of times that he didn't mind my communicating the data, "but let's do it in a kinder, gentler way." And I did. I notched it down until he felt comfortable with what I was doing and then went on with that. And the point is that after he notched it down to where he liked it, he noticed it never went past. In other words, we found an accommodating level of aggressiveness that was consistent with what he wanted the campaign to be seen as. And he felt very confident, I think, that once he drew the line, the line would be respected.

Anyway, that's how I developed two very important comfort factors—the Vice President I think became comfortable with my full commitment to his agenda and I really felt very comfortable with George Bush's agenda. And secondly, I became comfortable that here was somebody who was smart enough to know what he had to do and wanted to do and if he felt he couldn't do things one way was smart enough to say, "Now go find me another way I feel comfortable with and let's do it." And we did it.

Milkis: How did you understand his agenda at that point in the campaign?

Sununu: George Bush really had two agendas. One is he understood completely the criticality of the point in history the world was at, and really and truly felt that it had to be handled by somebody who understood what was happening, that what was going on inside the Soviet Union at the time was so complicated—and it was complicated—that it needed an understanding hand.

Not necessarily that he thought he was the only one who could do it, but he thought he was the only one who could pick a good enough team to do it. And frankly at that time, I think the Vice President had in his head that it was critical that the Bush, [James] Baker, [Brent] Scowcroft, Tower team—and I think he had John Tower in mind—was the team that had to deal with the international transition that was taking place. That was his principal agenda.

But his second agenda which he had in mind—and I will argue executed better than any other President of the twentieth century except [Franklin] Roosevelt's first term—was a domestic agenda to put into place legislation that dealt with critical needs—the environment, education, the role of the government vis-à-vis the states, the change in technology that was influencing energy policy. A whole host of domestic issues that he understood were timely—perhaps in some cases, like clean air, overdue—and if we let the pressure build up, would be done in the wrong way. George Bush had a very strong commitment to the capitalist free market structure of this country. George Bush came out of a business environment, understood and had a very deep commitment towards the fact that there were people in Washington who didn't understand and were moving government policies in the wrong direction. And that was a very big part of why he wanted to be President.

Milkis: Did you get a sense, Governor Sununu, about his feelings towards the Reagan Presidency, its accomplishments and his role in history compared to that?

Sununu: He was one of the few people who understood how historic Ronald Reagan's Presidency was. He kind of bristled at people's perception of Ronald Reagan as the actor in the White House. He had a tremendous respect for Ronald Reagan as a leader. He understood Ronald Reagan's style of simplified leadership: identify big issues, target on them, give them an image, and characterize them for what you want to accomplish. And repeat, repeat, repeat, repeat until everybody follows.

Hargrove: Was that reciprocated, that response?

Sununu: Yes. I got to know President Reagan quite well as a young man. In fact, he came up two or three times to New Hampshire. Ronald Reagan was deeply in debt to New Hampshire as you know the story. Mrs. [Nackey Scripps] Loeb is a great friend of Ronald Reagan's. So, I had great entrée to the Reagan Presidency and got to know President Reagan quite well. When I was making up my mind what to do, I had been up there to talk to President Reagan about some gubernatorial problem and I told him I was probably going to support Vice President Bush for President and his response was warm and enthusiastic and made it very clear to me that this was what he wanted. So I had no doubt about that, no doubt at all.

You know, Ronald Reagan understood, and George Bush understood, and most people after they're President understand, that the most important thing you need out of the Vice President, beyond their capacity to serve in that role, is loyalty and commitment and support and, believe me, when that goes in both directions, it establishes a bedrock of a relationship, and it was there.

Where am I?

Hargrove: Well, go to Washington.

Sununu: Let me talk about the process of selection. I honestly—

Milkis: Are you going to talk about the general election?

Hargrove: Oh, well, yes.

Sununu: Let me go ahead.

Milkis: That's a big jump. And they only have your support. They don't need the other states.

Sununu: How many are there, 49?

Hargrove: And they all grow corn.

Sununu: No, no, no, they pick corn. By the way, I'm not pretending to be neutral here. As you know, the campaign was a tough campaign and I made a commitment to the Vice President and I tried to live up to it. I went down to Washington about a day a week, had an office in the campaign down there, talked to Atwater four or five times a day, and frankly Atwater, [Roger] Ailes, and I developed a very close political relationship. And frankly, as immodest as it sounds, I think the problem in '92 is that Atwater had died, I had left, and Ailes had gone on to be president of—NBC?

Masoud: No, it was Fox news.

Sununu: And really, there was no sensitivity to the voter left in the campaign. It was a sterile campaign in the sense it was being run by people who had never had to shove their hand in front of an unwilling voter and ask them to vote for them, or had never had to position a candidate to do that or had never had to cut an ad to convey the warmth of the candidate to people, it was all gone.

Hargrove: You're talking about '92?

Sununu: Yes. I'm saying that's the difference between '88 and '92. So the three of us conversed almost on a daily basis. I conversed with Atwater on a daily basis and with Roger almost on a daily basis, had an office down there. Again, the general election was built on the Governors' strategy. Let me jump ahead. One of the things missing in '92 was that we had laid the groundwork for a Governors' strategy in '92 before I left. We worked our tails off to get [John] Engler elected in Michigan, to get a Governor re-elected in Illinois, to get a Governor elected in Ohio.

That election and this coming election—by the way, and I'll tell you ahead of time, this election is going to be decided in five states, Illinois, Michigan, Ohio, Missouri and Pennsylvania, and whoever wins three or four of those states is going to win the election. It was clear to us we built from Michigan all the way down to Texas, a road block, if you would, of Republican Governors

in the heartland. The strategy was going to be again a Governors' strategy based on the theory that politics is based on constituency contact and patronage in the nicest sense of the word. Governors have that access.

I'll give you another anecdote out of New Hampshire. Other than the U.S. dollar, the second most important currency in the state of New Hampshire are license plates, low digit license plates: two-digit plates, three-digit plates, and four-digit plates. When I became Governor, I sat down with the commissioner of motor vehicles and I said I wanted none of those issued without my personal signature. And I accumulated, over five years—again, not knowing why but instinctively—a collection of two-, three-, and four-digit plates that were un-issued. You only get them when somebody dies and they come back into the package. As we were putting together the Bush organization we would run into somebody who wanted to be town chairman who wasn't quite decided between Bush and Dole, but if it's Bush and a three-digit plate, there's no question.

But that's what politics is all about, and that's why Governors have currencies, in the plural, that make for political strength in campaigns. That's why we recognize that this north to south roadblock of Republican Governors was a tremendous asset in the '92 campaign. The guy that used Governors best in '92 after I left was Bill Clinton. The Washington focused campaign in '92 couldn't even name the Republican Governors, that's an aside.

The '88 election comes; we use the Republican Governors really quite, quite well. California was tremendous. In a quiet way, but again, using gubernatorial tentacles behind the scenes is what makes a difference. The issue in '88 really was Dukakis riding high up through June with this image of a miracle maker in Massachusetts, and the campaign really was all about saying, "Hey look, they're a poor sixth out of six in New England. All Dukakis has done is ride the tide of New England prosperity." And eventually, if not the specific facts, the sense of there's no magic here, was really, to me, the heart and soul of the change that took place there.

Again, with all due respect, I think the press gets it wrong. They all talked about Willie Horton. Al Gore brought up Willie Horton. Al Gore found Willie Horton in the Lawrence *Eagle Tribune*. Two young ladies wrote an article on Willie Horton and won the Pulitzer Prize for it, attacking Mike Dukakis, his policy on releases. Gore brought it up and an independent group, not even our campaign, cut the Willie Horton ad. I don't think it made that much difference in the sense that I really do think that Dukakis really sowed the seeds of his own destruction. The tank ad, if you remember that, was self-inflicted.

I did get overruled in the campaign by Lee Atwater and Roger Ailes: I wanted music in that ad, I wanted them to be playing in the background "Tanks for the Memories." But I lost. I do think that the campaign identified the weakness, stressed the fact that you're not getting a miracle maker out of Mike Dukakis. George Bush has the experience, the world is poised to deal with a historic set of occasions, and the priorities at that time for the Presidency still had foreign policy at the top. That's how it was won.

Hargrove: He articulated those themes, the positive themes.

Sununu: Yes.

Hargrove: Primarily foreign policy, less domestic.

Sununu: No, he articulated domestic themes too. We took, if you remember, his commitment to the environment and went to the Boston harbor and made the Boston harbor environmental speech and incidentally reminded people that Dukakis did not start to clean the harbor up until there was a federal court order. There were positive themes on what he was going to do but always hooked to a Dukakis failure on domestic items. Almost always.

On jobs we pointed out that the Reagan administration had created—and again, I'm going to give you a number I'm not positive of—three and a half million manufacturing jobs in America, and Massachusetts had lost 4% of its manufacturing jobs at the same time. I'm not positive of either of those two numbers, but it is basically the context. So he emphasized, "We are going to keep growing our manufacturing capacity. We're going to do this for the environment. We have a commitment towards deregulation." We talked a little bit about that. It was a lot of gubernatorial—health care proposals, we talked about that. Restructuring the health care system, a lot of Medicare issues, he talked about giving the states more flexibility. It was a federalism oriented—

Hargrove: Yes.

Sununu: In spite of Neal Peirce's probably the third or fourth dumbest political article I've ever seen, one of the ones you sent me, Bush ran—

Masoud: We tried to choose the stupidest.

Sununu: No, I'm glad you sent that one, it reminded me. I had read it when Peirce wrote it originally and it reminded me how absolutely stupid the man is, because he belittled the fact that the Governors at that time were talking about devolution of power back to the states and a federalism approach, and that's exactly what both Bush and Clinton have committed themselves to. Clinton was absolutely committed to that. In fact, there's an interesting anecdote, [Mario] Cuomo tried to—I was chairman, I had selected federalism and came out with a bunch of federalism resolutions. Usually, the last meeting you chaired, the National Governors Association endorses them on a pro forma basis and sends them on as an agenda for Congress.

Cuomo thought—since I was chairman of the Bush campaign by that time (he still had visions of perhaps running at that time)—he'd stick it to Bush and got about a dozen of the Democratic Governors to start protesting on this thing. It probably would have lost if a Democratic Governor didn't stand up and enunciate his commitment to the federalist principles, and that Governor was Bill Clinton. It's an interesting—

Hargrove: I don't want to rush ahead, but "no new taxes" was a part of the campaign.

Sununu: And it was part of George Bush's philosophy. He really believed that the tax structure was too high at the time and—

Hargrove: Were you present when Peggy Noonan and [Richard] Darman had a little tiff?

Sununu: I wasn't present but I knew about it. And that's a very important tiff, because when we come back and talk about the breakfast meeting, the [George] Mitchell, [Thomas] Foley, Bush, Darman, [Nicholas] Brady, Sununu, breakfast meeting, remind me of that.

Hargrove: Yes, we will.

Sununu: I think there is a historic legacy of that tiff that screwed George Bush. But anyway, it was taking issues like Medicare and healthcare reform, the environment, deregulation, and incentives for job creation. There are some secondary issues that he talked about and actually delivered on child care, concern about agriculture reform and reforming the federal subsidy structures. They were all touched on, and yet touched on I think in ways that reflected the Governors' perspectives. We had two or three meetings in Kennebunkport while he was there during the summer, where we brought Republican Governors in to talk about domestic issues. Really, the President bought into what I would call an RGA agenda, a Republican Governors Association agenda. The RGA had a list of its goals and we basically built on that. And he campaigned state-by-state, being embraced wherever we had a Republican Governor by the Republican Governor, on the issues as enunciated for that state by the Governor. I've lost where I was. Oh, the campaign.

We go through the campaign. Somewhere in May I decided I couldn't afford to be Governor any longer, to be honest with you. I had served three terms. There had only been two other three-term Governors in New Hampshire, we only have two-year terms. Nobody had ever served four terms. The ego says run for a fourth term, popularity was very high, the pocketbook says don't. I made my announcement.

When the press said, "How come you're not going to run for a fourth term?" I said, "When you send $20,000 a year to MIT and $20,000 a year to Stanford and $20,000 to the IRS, it doesn't leave much room in a $60,000 salary." So I was going to go back to the private sector. You think about going to Washington and I had made the decision, unless it was something that really was an opportunity to make a difference, I wasn't going to go down.

About October, I had come down to Washington for a briefing, and for some reason that particular briefing had a big foreign policy component to it. Scowcroft was there. I think John Tower came in for a few moments. Afterwards the Vice President asked me to stay and he said, "Look, I haven't made up my mind yet, but if I decided to ask you to be Chief of Staff—I don't want you to give me an answer, but I want you to think about it."

I said, "Well, I have to go home and get permission, but I'll let you know." About November first, he asked me again if I had talked to Nancy and I said I had. He said, "Well, how are you leaning?" I said, "I think I can get a note," and so I said okay. Never made a commitment per se but basically said that.

After the election he was in West Palm Beach at Will Farish's home in Palm Beach and it just so happens my mother was living in Del Ray. I think he knew that and he called me up and he said,

"Why don't you come down and visit your mother and oh, by the way, when you do that, stop by and see us at Will Farish's." So obviously I did. I knocked on the door at Will Farish's and the President and Farish opened the door. The President turned to Will and said, "I'd like to introduce you to my Chief of Staff." So that's how I knew the President had made up his mind.

Masoud: This was shortly after the election?

Sununu: Yes, maybe the weekend after.

Karaagac: That was one of Bush's favorite famous surprises, was it? Announcing things sort of in line with the kind of—

Sununu: You know, I've heard that phrase used before but we've never, from the inside, never thought of them as surprises. His processes in selecting—if you remember the climate in Washington was that there was going to be a troika—[Robert] Teeter and [Craig] Fuller each wanted to be Chief of Staff. Deciding that they couldn't be Chief of Staff, and now in the way that is peculiar to Washington, the only people who really thought there could be a troika were Fuller, Teeter, Ann Devroy and David Hoffman. And that is the process of creating this. The President never had it in his mind, never thought about it, never considered it, never evaluated it, had told them both that they weren't going to be, had made up his mind, and yet the stories persisted.

Basically all I did was just ignore them, because when the President looks you in the eye and says, "That's going to be it," that's going to be it. But it's a very good example of Washington thinking for about a week that there were discussions of this nature taking place, and there were none, none at all. The only people who had this in mind were Fuller and Teeter. And they would sit down with their favorite reporters, Hoffman and Devroy, and put it out there and so Maureen Dowd has to pick it up and they all pick it up and they all call, and the Fuller friends and the Teeter friends are in on it. So Teeter says, "Well, don't just believe me, call so-and-so," and you have a story created out of whole cloth.

The only discussion I ever had about it was that I offered Teeter the position of Deputy Chief of Staff, subject to the President's approval. He thought about it for a week and Hamleted about it for a week and then decided not to.

Masoud: You had also been considered, or at least you had been proposed, as a vice presidential candidate.

Sununu: I never took it seriously, for two reasons. One, whether I believe or don't believe that my birth in Cuba disqualifies me—I was born of American parents. By the way, so was Lowell Weicker, he was born in Paris and tried to run for President. George Romney was born in Mexico City and ran for President. So there is this question, and I suspect with all the kids born of American servicemen overseas, the Supreme Court would say that natural born means that you're born of American parents. I could have argued that till I was blue in the face. I was also smart enough to know that when you raise an ambiguous issue in a presidential campaign, it does nobody any good. So I never took it seriously, but I was certainly flattered by it.

Milkis: Were you involved at all in the selection of Senator Quayle?

Sununu: No, because as one of the ones in the mix—

Milkis: Oh, I see, you couldn't.

Masoud: But had you given any thought as to where you would want to be in this administration?

Sununu: Yes, I would only have gone down for Chief of Staff. I wouldn't go down for anything else.

Masoud: No Cabinet position?

Milkis: I thought I read that there were two positions you were willing to take.

Sununu: I may have said two, but really only meant one. You know, if I said only one, they would have said, "Which one?" One out of two, one or two is an honest answer that has enough softness in it.

Hargrove: It's a big job, but did you also think it fitted your talents?

Sununu: Yes, I had been Governor. I'm not a modest person. I know how to make things work, I mean, I made a living making things work for people. I was a consultant to Xerox, to General Motors, to Westinghouse. I only came in on crisis jobs where they'd spend a lot of money and a lot of time so that I could charge exorbitant amounts of money for a quick solution, and made a nice living out of it. And as Governor, I made a commitment to take a state with a deficit and not raise taxes and turn it into a surplus. In a year we went from an 8% deficit to a 6% surplus. So I believed I could make the trains run on time and do it in a way that understood the political needs of the people and responded to a political agenda and made the system better. You know, you can make the trains run and not make the system better. I knew the difference between just making the trains run and making the system better.

Hargrove: Because you had become a politician. Engineer first, then politician.

Sununu: Yes, look, I took a state that was in serious trouble and by the time I left, it may be a Michael Dukakis statistic, but I think the unemployment rate was under 2%. We had the fastest growth rate in New England. We stole tons of businesses from poor Mike who didn't know what was happening. We had a huge surplus in the state. I had the last term literally struggled to find one-time spending items to put in the budget so there was not a momentum for spending for the future. We bought tons of land, created a rainy day fund, all these things to stash money away because it was coming in faster than I could hide it and I didn't want the legislature, Republican as it was, to spend all of the money.

So by that time I thought I understood the nuances of government and the role of the executive branch. I also thought I was beginning to understand the process of making decisions in the public sector versus the private sector, which is the hardest thing that you have to learn, by the way. In the private sector you are rewarded for being able to make quick decisions and implementing them quickly. In the public sector you have to drag out the minuet so that everyone gets a chance to dance and lead the band.

Sometimes when you know what the decision is going to be, it's agonizing to sit through the consultations. So I developed what I called the spaghetti theory of decision-making. You get everybody who wants to be in on the decision, you get them in the room, you let them talk for as long as they want and eventually, at some point in there the spaghetti criss-cross is exactly the way you want it and you say "Okay, I'm going to take your recommendation, that's exactly what we're going to do," and you go on. That's an art form that took a long time to learn.

When I was first Governor I made a lot of mistakes about doing private sector kind of decision-making rather than public sector kind of decision-making. We have a unique institution in New Hampshire called the Governor's Council. It was always told to me that previous Governors hated it. I came into it hating it as an institution because I could make no decision without approval of council. No contract gets issued without—there's a public meeting once a week, or maybe once every two weeks, two or three hundred items on the agenda. You go through them all, every contract in the state, every appointment in the state, every promotion in the state, and it has to have three votes out of five. There were days in which the council would vote no on everything the Governor asked for, so you're stymied.

I went to the council and suggested to them that it was really the Governor and the council against the legislature. I reminded them that we ought to work as an executive branch and in an effort to convince them—as you know, highway patronage is one of the great patronage tools in state politics. State legislatures put highways where significant legislators want them. I created, by fiat, the Governor's highway commission, which consisted of the five councilors and the Governor, and we put a ten-year highway plan together, held public hearings around the state, got tremendous support for our highway plan. In essence dictated to the legislature where the highways were to go, gave these councilors whose only contribution in government was saying no an opportunity to say yes, and frankly, created a whole new working relationship with the council.

I became the councilors' favorite Governor. Some of them had served with three or four or five Governors and they just loved it. Frankly, I think it is one of the great tools in America now. It requires a public hearing for everything, it's what keeps New Hampshire government so clean and open. If somebody is going to get a contract and some citizen doesn't like it, they come to that hearing room and stand up and protest the contract. It's agonizing to go through, but it's an amazing system and I had to learn how to use it. I had to learn to be open. I had to learn to share power with these councilors. I had to learn that they care about their district and I'd better distribute my appointments accordingly.

Hargrove: How are they chosen?

Sununu: They are elected district wide. It's the last vestige of colonialism, but boy, I think it is fantastic, I really do. The hardest job you have as Governor in my opinion is pardons, and the Governor and council approve the pardons. I have to tell you, nothing I did as Governor was harder than dealing with pardons. You don't know whether you are being conned. You don't know how to be empathetic. You don't know how to be generous. You don't know how to be tough. You don't know how to be strict. But the council was in on that and we worked out a set of ground rules that made them comfortable and made me comfortable. But those were the kind of power sharing things in public life that I thought I had learned, that I was willing to take down there.

And I also knew I liked this President. This was a guy I believed in, in terms of his capacity to make a difference in the word, whose agenda I agreed with, and who was sometimes just too nice a person to be President. I figured if I went down there I would have to serve a role in which I probably had to be the tough guy in the administration.

Hargrove: Did he perceive that, do you think?

Milkis: Did you guys talk about that? The role of the Chief of Staff? What Sherman Adams did?

Sununu: No, but I did talk to every living Chief of Staff and I read Sherman Adams' book. I came to the conclusion, I didn't really sit down and discuss it with the President, the role of Chief of Staff is a very simple role, it is whatever the President wants it to be. If you want to be a good Chief of Staff, that's what you go down to do, you do what the President wants you to do. Sometimes he tells you, sometimes you get it by osmosis. If you can't do that, you leave. And there is nothing wrong with leaving.

Milkis: With President Bush, did you get it mostly by osmosis since you didn't really discuss this explicitly?

Sununu: No, we didn't discuss that, but my relationship with the President, as Chief of Staff, was the following: I never, never freelanced a single thing, and he knew it and was comfortable with that. Now, in order to accomplish that I had to ask him questions, sometimes important questions, like, "Are you for or against civil rights?"

Milkis: What was the answer?

Sununu: And sometimes trivial questions like, "Can so and so use the tennis court?" because we had a spat or something. But I asked him everything. We had our morning meeting, which we will get into, in which 90 percent was decided, and then probably 30, 40, 50 times a day I would go down the hall and ask him. Nothing was too important and nothing was too trivial. And I think he appreciated the fact that when I didn't know, if it was trivial and I didn't know, I didn't guess. To this day I think he understands that there is not a single thing that I did as Chief of Staff that I freelanced. We never talked about it, but that was our implicit contract and the way we functioned.

It's the same way I ran the campaign. I never put out stuff in the campaign, or Atwater never put out stuff, which we didn't tell him. We got his feelings on things and tried to live with them. As I said earlier, when he draws the line, you don't go beyond the line, and he had confidence in that. So that was basically it. I would go to him and say, "I'm going to do this, and I'm going to do that." If he didn't like it he'd tell me. If he didn't care, you wouldn't get an answer, just go ahead and do it, and if he did like it, really liked it, he might say, "Do more of this." But it was always, always, always—the structure of the White House, the process in the White House was very simple, we did what the President wanted and we made sure we didn't do what he didn't want.

I got that rule from having been Governor. I want my Chief of Staff or my staff to do what I want and I don't want them to do what I don't want. And if I put an envelope around something, don't you dare step outside of it, because I, the elected official, have to report to the people and so on. That's what your job is. And I really believe that the Cabinet officials should have functioned that way and so on. I also understood the problem of the executive and it is the following problem. If he doesn't want to have coffee with Bob Mosbacher tomorrow, and he doesn't mind Mosbacher knowing it, when Mosbacher calls and asks, he tells him, "I can't have coffee with you." But if he tells me, "I can't have coffee with Bob Mosbacher tomorrow," it means, "Hey, I don't want to have coffee with Bob Mosbacher and I don't want Bob Mosbacher to know I don't want to have coffee with him, so **you** get me out of this, and **you** take the blame."

He doesn't say that, but that's what the job is. I knew that, not because he said it, I knew that because I'd been Governor. And those are the kinds of things—I wanted to be the Chief of Staff to George Bush as I would have wanted the Chief of Staff to serve me. And that's basic ground rules, and that's basically—we never discussed it, never discussed process or personnel. There were some people he wanted in positions and so, by definition, they were there. He wanted [Marlin] Fitzwater to be his Press Secretary, he wanted Brent Scowcroft to be his National Security Advisor, he wanted John Tower to be Secretary of Defense, Jim Baker to be Secretary of State, Nick [Brady] to be at Treasury. But there were some he didn't care about, so the process of selection came to him with recommendations.

Milkis: How about your staff? Did you have carte blanche to put your own staff together?

Sununu: Almost. He wanted Tim McBride to be his aide to begin with. He wanted Gregg Petersmeyer to be in and so we found a position as director of Points of Light. There were some people he wanted to bring in and you don't have any problem because frankly good people can do almost anything and you assume he's going to appoint good people.

Young: Boyden Gray was—

Sununu: Sure, Boyden was there by designation so to speak.

Hargrove: Roger Porter told me that he had accepted the job in Treasury and you called him and asked him to come to the White House instead.

Sununu: I really wanted somebody who'd been around a while to lead the domestic policy side because frankly, you'll hear me say it over and over again, this President wanted certain results

domestically and I wanted somebody who was smart enough to go and sit down and work out details. I knew the devil was in the details of the legislation. I'll give you an anecdote: I got elected with a huge deficit in the state. I convinced the legislature that I was crazy enough that they should give me **my** budget because they were convinced it wasn't going to work and didn't want to share the blame with me.

So I'm convinced this budget is going to solve things, but I'm looking for insurance. New Hampshire had the lowest tobacco tax in New England. As you know, we have no sales tax or income tax in New Hampshire, so we have a lot of interest in revenue sources. We were tied with Vermont as the lowest tobacco tax and a lot of people used to come from out of state and buy tobacco in the state. I'm looking for insurance. The next highest state was about 20 cents a pack, we were 13. So as a rider I convinced the legislature to tack onto the appropriations bill, at the very last moment, two hours before I accepted what the committee in conference was going to bring in, a provision that said New Hampshire's tobacco tax stays at 13 cents unless Vermont raises theirs, and up to 5 cents of increase in Vermont, we will match their increase. Now the Vermont legislature had adjourned and gone home, so they figured this Governor is insane.

I knew Dick Snelling was smart and I knew Snelling was having revenue trouble, so I convinced them to put this in. I signed the bill. Two days later, I never talked to him, Snelling called his legislature back, raised the tobacco tax 5 cents and I had my insurance.

[BREAK]

Milkis: Before we proceed ahead with your role as Chief of Staff, we slid over the convention so quickly, and I wanted to give you an opportunity to put more that's important on the record. Perhaps you would want to talk more about the Quayle selection and what followed—

Masoud: Your role in the convention.

Milkis: You said you didn't have a role in selecting him, but you certainly were there as a witness to the reaction.

Sununu: I have to tell you, I think Dan Quayle is the smartest politician in terms of policy implementation, policy and dealing with in Congress and in America today, and I supported him for this nomination. I know he gets a bad rap in the press. I thought he was an excellent choice then. He was a great Vice President for the President. Again he brought to it all the loyalty that was important, but functionally he was a great Vice President for the President. When we had a problem in the House or the Senate, the go-to guy was Quayle. When we had a tough political discussion, the guy who got into it and said the hard things was Quayle.

It's amazing to me that that is such a difficult thing today. I didn't know him well, I had met him two or three times before he was selected. I was as surprised as everybody. I got the official call that it wasn't me about an hour before the announcement—it wasn't a surprise. Everybody got it like that. I wasn't told who it was, watched it on television and then wandered down and met him

after the nomination. I met him, I spent about two or three minutes with him just before that tough news conference and then a little time with him afterwards, and let it go at that.

Masoud: Did you play any role in the convention at all?

Sununu: Yes, I was in charge of the platform. I did the platform. And it was going to be a convention in which the press said the abortion issue was going to divide the Republican Party, that there was no way the Republican Party could take the Reagan position on abortion. Then there were four or five other issues. But I ran that and basically tried to run a hearings process down there in which you just let everybody talk themselves to death. We did that and got exactly the platform the President wanted.

The only issue we had trouble on was one foreign policy issue. It had to deal with missiles and one of those arcane missile issues but we finally worked that out in a back room as is always done, with some ambiguous language. I don't remember what the issue was. John Tower had to come down and work out something with some of the Republicans who wanted something different. But basically, with everything else—

And afterwards, one of the nice moments for me, because I was very strongly pro-life and the President wanted a strong pro-life client, is we got that with Nancy Johnson and Lowell Weicker, who were leading the charge against. They came up and thanked us all for the process and thought they had an opportunity to speak their say and didn't feel it was stacked against them. They were gracious enough to go out and make those sentiments felt and it turned out to be a nothing issue at the convention. I talked to Lowell, I talked to Nancy, I talked to the others and said, "If you tell me whom you want to speak to, as long as you don't filibuster this thing to death, take all the time you want. You can raise any of the issues you want, you can have any motions you want." They gave me a list of about five or six and I said, "Why don't you combine these two?" You know, we worked out the agenda ahead of time on how they would do it and what they would want. They got everything they asked for in terms of procedure and opportunity to raise it, and it just went smoothly.

We included all those things we talked about, the environmental commitment, the civil rights. I don't remember the platform. But all these things that were supposedly so controversial, the President got exactly what he wanted and we moved on. I think that was another reason he felt very comfortable, because what was supposed to be a huge—the press was down there, ready to take prisoners and it turned out to be bland and dead.

Masoud: Do you have any insight into the President's commitment to the pro-life position?

Sununu: The President came to his pro-life position late and is absolutely committed to it, and is committed to it primarily, I think, because of the death of his daughter. He says that, "You know, if somebody had told us she was going to die early and we could have an abortion and avoid it, I would not have given up the opportunity to have her." I think it was a true, deep commitment. I think he is troubled by the political difficulty the commitment causes. He doesn't like the conflict generated by that position, but there is no ambivalence on the position. We'll get into it later. One of the toughest issues we had to sustain vetoes on were pro-life provisions—pro-choice,

pro-life conflicts in legislation. He never lost a veto while I was Chief of Staff. He lost one after I left.

Milkis: What was that? Cable TV?

Sununu: Right. But even with that loss, it is the most amazing veto sustaining record. Nobody ever had a record like that and I'm just irritated that two of his fat, soft, pitch down the middle—we could have figured out a way to do it. It may have cost a few equivalent license plates or something, but that veto should have been sustained. Just to keep a clean record. But his personal commitment to the issue is pretty strong and sincere and I have talked to him about it.

Young: The second convention.

Sununu: I wasn't there.

Young: I know, but that was by contrast, very much of a contrast with the first.

Sununu: Look, the President had a campaign run by the people who wanted to run the President's campaign, and the majority of them would have trouble running a one-car funeral.

Masoud: Go back to the last question about Quayle, the last question I have about that. If you read the [Herbert] Parmet biography of President Bush, there is a quote from President Bush's daily diary—

Sununu: That's taken out of context. What the President was referring to was the mistake in the handling of the reaction after the selection. I know that. I can tell you that unequivocally.

Masoud: Would you care to elaborate, what did the President think should have been done and what was done incorrectly? Was it the surprise springing of the selection—

Sununu: I don't know whether he has an idea of what should have been done, I just think he obviously looks at eggs and eggshell on the floor and says, "We shouldn't have dropped the eggs."

Hargrove: Quayle never recovered, I don't think.

Sununu: No, I don't think so. It really is part of the problem that he has and I think he would have recovered. I think it would have been an interesting race this time if he had had enough money to go through New Hampshire. I can tell you that I'm 99.9 percent sure he would have been endorsed by the *Union Leader*. I am 90 percent sure he would have won New Hampshire. He would have been [John] McCain in New Hampshire, with the advantage that he had an agenda and a philosophy and appeal to Republican voters which McCain did not have. McCain forgot he was running in a Republican primary and Quayle would have had that momentum going into South Carolina, which would have been ideal for him. So it could have been a very different structure. The only way he could overcome the image of not winning was by winning and that's what would have had to happen there.

Milkis: Can we go back to the—

Masoud: Entering the administration?

Hargrove: I had one question which I forgot to ask you. When the administration was putting together the White House office and the Cabinet, was there much discussion about the relationship between the White House and the Cabinet, whether in this administration there was going to be more emphasis on the Cabinet than previous ones?

Sununu: Those things don't get discussed. I don't care who, in retrospect, ever tells you those were discussed, they're not. What you're interested in doing at that time is getting people that have talent to serve in the office, loyalty to the President and a similar agenda, at least a sufficient overlap in the agenda that it is tolerable. I mentioned some of the positions that were kind of lined up. The hard position—HHS [Health and Human Services] was very hard. The President wanted Lou Sullivan. Lou was going to be in charge of the agency that would have the greatest impact on the pro-life, pro-choice issue.

Lou had never been involved in politics, did not understand that the press would take three words of a phrase to make him believe the story, and so, trying not to appear dogmatic on a couple of presentations, he made it sound like he was waffling on the life issue and all the conservative groups got up in arms. I had to go and talk to Lou and see where he really stood, then convey that to the conservative groups. I finally got that calmed down and got him to the point where conservative Republicans in Congress, in the Senate, gave him their approval and support. But those are the kinds of things you go through, not, "What is our general philosophy of interacting with the Cabinet?"

Quayle and I lobbied very hard for [Jack] Kemp and [William] Bennett, because I really wanted the President to have a comfort factor with the conservative wing of the party, and he had no problem with accepting it. He was a little bit concerned about Kemp and probably rightly so, but I thought we could handle Kemp and we did for the most part up until the end. Trying to remember some other Cabinet—what were the tough Cabinet questions.

He had Lynn Martin and Mrs. [Elizabeth] Dole, to provide some women in the Cabinet. He had black representation in the Cabinet. I mean he really was a President who believed in both being and being seen as being an administration that was open.

Masoud: Education, was that—

Sununu: Lauro [Cavazos] was a hold over. The President wanted to hold it open. What happened? Let's follow that down to its completion. Lauro never was ready to take the lead on some of the transitional things that the President wanted to do on education. He wanted to talk about and focus on K through 12. Lauro had come out of the university environment at Tufts with me. I knew Lauro from Tufts. He was Dean of the Dental School while I was Associate Dean of the College of Engineering. Eventually the President kind of felt Lauro wasn't doing a good job and I had to convey to my old friend the fact that the President wanted his resignation.

It was one of the hardest things I ever had to do. Lauro got very upset. From that meeting to this day I have not seen Lauro Cavazos.

Masoud: Was this just a general impression the President had built up over time or was there a precipitating incident?

Sununu: No, it wasn't an incident, it was a lack of incidents, a lack of—we wanted to have the education summit, we wanted to do a couple of things and lead with them. Lauro would put out news releases but not create the resonance that the President wanted on the issue and didn't pick up the slack on education, and it was an issue the President cared a lot about. And Lauro—look, Presidents don't come to those conclusions alone. Roger Porter had a disillusionment with him. The domestic policy group wasn't getting out of Lauro what they thought they had to deliver for the President on education so they conveyed their feelings.

You know, the President doesn't sit alone in a corner and say, "I need a replacement." He gets a consensus of feeling, so that he finally says, "You know, you're right, we have to get somebody else." So we went out and got Lamar [Alexander] and recommended him to the President. The President met with Lamar, he knew Lamar. Lamar was aggressive and articulate on education and I think did a great job.

Masoud: When you were appointed Chief of Staff, was there any going over of flow charts and thinking about how you wanted to organize the White House staff?

Sununu: No, the White House staff is organized the way the President wants it to be. But it must evolve, because the President doesn't know day one what he wants the structure to really be. So you start with a structure and you curve it slightly as you go along. What we did know was the general organization of the Reagan White House in terms of major responsibilities.

The Reagan White House had a troika. Jimmy Baker didn't become Chief of Staff until about the last year of the first term. He was only Chief of Staff for ten or eleven months before he switched with Don Regan at the end of the first term, he became Secretary of Treasury and Regan became his Chief of Staff. But it was [Edwin] Meese, [Michael] Deaver and Baker. And I think the President knew that that's not what he wanted. He saw all the problems that caused, the infighting. That's why I can tell you that troika of Fuller and Deaver had no chance.

So he knew he wanted a Chief of Staff. He knew he was going to have to have someone limit flow, because there is no way he can do everything. So he, I think, picked two people he trusted. That he felt would not alter his agenda and would do only what he wanted done and not do what he did not want done. That's why Scowcroft and I—the major component was Scowcroft's selection and my appointment, and then from that, the next layer was basically the same as the next layer in all administrations before that, the Press Secretary, somebody in charge of communications, somebody in charge of the Counsel's office, somebody in charge of the administration of the White House, I forget that whole list but you can go through it. So that was it.

Now, did the President have in mind that everything would go through the Chief of Staff? I don't think he ever thought about it. I recognized my responsibility to the President to make sure that what he wanted got done and what he didn't want to get done didn't get done. There was only one way I felt that that could happen, and that was to have everything come through a single point. My Deputy Chief of Staff was Andy Card, somebody who'd been with the President all along, whom the President trusted implicitly and whom I trusted implicitly. So basically I said, "Look, we're going to have to handle it. If we can't, we'll add in this office. But everything will have to come through this office."

Remember, in a White House, what you have to do is negotiate competing interests. The Secretary of Treasury wants this, and HUD [Housing and Urban Development] wants that, and you have to negotiate the difference. The last thing in the world you want to do is take every tough decision and have the Secretary of Treasury sit here and the Secretary of HUD sit here and the President have to say, "I'm with you on this one and I'm with you on that one." You find out what the President wants the result to be and then you make the result go to where he wants it. The only way you can guarantee that is by requiring all decisions to come to the place that knows what the President wants.

Now, if the President wants to share his feelings with ten, twelve, fifteen people, that's one thing, but that wasn't this President's style. Because if you're sharing your feelings with ten or twelve people, this guy will know that the President picked him this time and the President picked him that time or her this time and that lady that time. You can't do that. The art of the job is to make sure the President gets credit for everything good that happens and everything that everybody is happy about, and to make sure that everything that everybody is angry about is blamed on the Chief of Staff. That is the job.

Milkis: And this is the job you wanted?

Sununu: If you're really going to take a chunk of your life and go through the agony of the job, you want to do something important, and that's how you do something important, and yes, that is.

Milkis: Did you have any sense of—you knew you were going to make enemies.

Sununu: I suspected I'd be there six months. I think I figured out the half-life of the Chief of Staff was ten and a half months. Baker was there a year. Sherm Adams was actually the most successful Chief of Staff, he was there over a term. But after Sherm Adams, I don't think anybody was there over two years and I think the half-life is about eleven months. I figured I would be there about six months. I thought I could get everything organized and everything put in place correctly and a process that would have some momentum, and, if I got lucky, a little longer. But I knew the definition of the job was that eventually, unless I got awfully, awfully lucky, somebody else would be in there. That's history. You resign yourself to that and go on.

Hargrove: You are the custodian of the President's choices in the sense that you want to be sure he heard a diversity of points of view.

Sununu: Oh yes, right.

Hargrove: But to what degree can somebody in a job like that also be an advocate for positions?

Sununu: To the degree you can get away with it, and the President lets you get away with it, and the President wants you to get away with it. Look, this President knew that I came with some very strong feelings about issues. New Hampshire had been the first state to pass acid rain legislation—he knew that I had a commitment to the environment, but in a way that was consistent with his commitment. You do good environmental things without destroying the economy and you don't let environmental issues become surrogates for anti-growth.

He knew I had very strong feelings on education, that the keystone to education is the parent-teacher-student relationship, and he believed in it, and that money is not a solution to education. He heard all the statistics, that if you really do a statistical analysis of performance and funding in education, for other reasons, you will find an absolutely negative correlation. Why? Because the most expensive schools are in New York City, Detroit, Los Angeles, where the results are lousy. It is for other reasons, but if you just do a statistical correlation, you can't convince yourself that money solves education. That there is an incentive process and in parental control, he'd like that educational policy.

On issues of energy, America ought to become more energy independent, that deregulation was hurting the system. He liked where I was coming from. So on the issues that he felt I might stick my nose into with a personal agenda, it was his agenda and he knew that where he told me no, I wouldn't do it. So I wasn't doing anything he didn't want done and I wasn't doing anything in a broad sense that wasn't the process he wanted.

Hargrove: The press sometimes didn't get that right, for example, global warming. Here's this scientist who thinks he knows everything and he cuts this off, don't you remember the stories? They were unfavorable.

Sununu: Sure I do, and let me tell you how silly it was. I asked the global warming people to come in. They said, "We have these predictions from these computer models." I said, "Gee, I like modeling, let's talk about it." They had these two-dimensional weather models that were designed primarily for short-term predictions that they were using for long-range predictions. Now, I raised one issue. I said, "Gee, global warming is associated with the thermal response of the atmosphere. There is a thermal capacity of the atmosphere. Let me do a calculation." I said, "Gee, how is this model coupled to the oceans?" Well, it's not. I said, "Gee, the thermal capacity of the top meter of the ocean is equal to the thermal capacity of the entire atmosphere. Now, we know the top hundred meters of the ocean are well coupled thermally to the atmosphere, so you are ignoring something which dominates by a factor of 100 the thermal response of the system."

Those idiots put out that I thought that by putting a simple one-dimensional model that included the ocean, it was as good as theirs. The point was, their model was garbage. And garbage in, garbage out. I said, "You want us to make trillion dollar decisions based on using the wrong model to do the wrong thing and ignoring the most significant parameter?" Now, they have since put models in there, but they don't know which is cause and effect. But that's the kind of

discussion we would have. In Washington, if you force somebody to get to the point where they admit they don't know what they are talking about, they merely attack the one who has asked the question. That's what happened on global warming.

By the way, [James] Hanson has since changed his mind on global warming, and that was the original NASA [National Aeronautics and Space Administration] scientist that pushed it. I haven't pursued the global warming issue. I saw something very interesting about six months ago which correlates the droughts and the hot spells in the country to the sunspot cycle, and we are going through the worst sunspot cycle in ages now. But my point was, you don't make trillion dollar decisions using hoaxed up models. And we increased the funding for global warming studies by—again I'm not sure of the number—I think three hundred million dollars, saying that if you're going to make these decisions, you ought to know what you're doing. There was never immediacy. You know, you ought to do something but you didn't have to do it in a year or ten years, you had to do something, sometime, if it would change. And you would ask such simple questions as, "Gee, the bulk of the heating in this century occurred before the emissions got too high." Well, you're not supposed to ask those questions.

So, yes, on the wetlands there was an issue of no net loss. The law was written and the congressional history of the legislation that had no net loss in it discussed the fact that compensatory provisions would be allowed. That if you took this piece of wetland, you could go and create a compensating piece of wetland. But the environmentalists and [Bill] Reilly wanted to write regulations in which the compensatory piece was not permitted. But when you questioned that, you were accused of being anti-environment.

I knew that the President's feeling was that if the law said compensatory, you included compensatory. And he wanted somebody to go and argue his position and maintain his position. He didn't mind anybody fighting for his position. Whether it happened at the Chief of Staff level or Roger Porter—and Roger did a wonderful job in dealing with these issues—or their staff, or the congressional staff going to Congress, didn't make any difference. It had to be dealt with by his White House, and if I happened to have enough interest and experience in an issue that I could argue it, he never minded that, never minded that at all.

Masoud: What were some of the other issues that you took a special interest in?

Sununu: Well, let me do it this way. This President, as I said earlier, got more domestic legislation passed by a factor of ten to President Clinton and more than, I think, any other President except Roosevelt's first term, and, if you want, the all encompassing one or two pieces of legislation that Lyndon Johnson got passed for the Great Society. He passed a clean air bill that had been stalemated for thirteen years and did it in such a way that it has worked magic. I'm talking about the childcare bill that was based on vouchers and built into the legislation. The civil rights bill—his way. A crime bill that really was the first comprehensive bill that started to recognize the focusing of resources back to the communities with discretionary spending by the communities. Energy deregulation, which is the heart and soul of the reduction in energy costs in this country, electric bills going down and so on. An agriculture reform bill that for the first time made significant reductions in the subsidies without hurting the family farmer. The Americans

with Disabilities Act, a piece of legislation that as originally drafted was absolutely impossible to administer and the President said, "Go in and fix it," and he got it done his way for the most part.

Even in the heated budget bill, we restructured the congressional budgeting structure with constraints that put discipline into the system that is still there. And, in fact, I was reading the material you sent me, I'm quoted in an article saying that with this, by about 1993 or 1994 there'd be a $65 or $70 billion surplus, so I was off by about $20 billion.

Hargrove: Now, in many of these cases he worked with Democrats in the Congress?

Sununu: Sure, he had to.

Hargrove: Necessarily.

Sununu: A hundred and seventy-four members of the House and forty-five members of the Senate were Republicans.

Milkis: Historic lows.

Sununu: Historic lows. To work the legislation agenda he wanted, domestic legislation agenda he wanted, it included the first chunks of welfare reform, which were very important. It included an expansion of the responsibilities for decisions to the states being devolved from the federal government, the federalism aspect. Certainly the legislation on fixing savings and loans fast, and taking the political consequences. That was his domestic agenda that was passed. When I asked the Clinton people what their domestic agenda is, they point to two bills, the Family Leave Act and the tax increase in '93. They don't call it that. But that is what Bill Clinton has managed. He has signed, after vetoing twice, the welfare reform bill, but that's not his bill.

Hargrove: No.

Sununu: He didn't craft it. So I maintain that George Bush has had the best domestic record of any modern Presidency, and doesn't receive credit for it.

Hargrove: Were there disappointments, particularly in dealing with the Democrats?

Sununu: There were nuance disappointments in the legislation. We would have liked to have fixed the budget issue better. On the tax side, we were disappointed in not getting a capital gains tax cut. I'm trying to remember what else, you tell me.

Milkis: Were there any concerns about the Clean Air Act agencies, nuance disappointments?

Sununu: There were nuance disappointments, but the biggest problem with the Clean Air Act was the rules and regulations written, trying to be written by EPA [Environmental Protection Association] to recapture what had not been included in the legislation. The Clean Air Act as it finally came out was a pretty good bill. It included provisions—you know the market trading on emissions, which is probably one of the best things we ever did and something that Porter and I

just fought Congress for the President's sake over and over and over on and finally got in there. It was estimated—again, my numbers may be wrong—but it was estimated that to get a ton of emissions would cost a thousand dollars and they were traded at about a thousand dollars. I think they're trading at eighty dollars or ninety dollars now, because it has really shoved the reduction of the emissions into the cheapest solutions, and so we are getting a tremendous bang for our buck nationally out of the Clean Air Act. The deregulation on electricity—big, big—undid some of the constraints that had been imposed by PERPA [Political, Economic Reporting and Public Affairs] under the Carter administration. The President knew the energy side cold.

Disappointments? He was very disappointed in not being able to do anything about ANWR [Arctic National Wildlife Refuge] and opening up the mineral exploration to some of the areas that had been shut off. I think he really sensed that the country was cutting itself off in the long run from being a major oil and gas producer to some extent, and that we were tying our hands unnecessarily, that technology was there to do things in an environmentally sound way and we were just reacting and over-reacting. I think that was a disappointment.

Hargrove: You think you won on civil rights? All of the fuss about quotas and so on, or was it really just a—

Sununu: I have to tell you, that is the hardest issue for me to judge, because it is a lawyer's gambit issue. I tried very hard to understand the nuance of the language that [Richard] Thornburgh and Boyden [Gray] were battling for. Let me tell you something interesting. I developed a group of very interesting friends. Probably one of my closest friends in the Senate now is Ted Kennedy, and we battled civil rights and ADA [Americans with Disabilities Act] to a fare-thee-well, some real shouting matches and so on. But he always came prepared, he always knew what he was talking about, and he always knew enough about the issue to try and sucker you into winning. And I don't have a problem with that.

I bring that up in this context because it was a language issue. Ted would always come with two or three variations of the language and he understood how to play with the words to try and win it. And I respect—I have no problem, absolutely no problem with it. I never understood all the nuances involved in every perturbation of that language. Boyden finally told us that they had come up with some language that made it a non-quota bill. And that's what the whole battle was—to have language that would not be interpreted by the courts as allowing a quota structure to be implemented in the system.

I have since been told by some folks like [Bradford] Reynolds that maybe the language wasn't everything that we thought it was, but at the time we thought we got what we wanted, we thought we found a compromise that made sense. I don't know the answer. It is the one piece of legislation, I have to admit, that is going to be decided by legal nuances that I don't understand.

McCall: I'm going to actually ask the same question. We're talking a lot about—

Sununu: Excuse me, let me just go back to that point, because if there is something that I am going to keep emphasizing, it is how successful Bush was domestically.

Masoud: And we have a lot of questions to follow up—

Sununu: And to me, the most important contribution you can make on the historical side is to help us identify the factual basis associated with all of that.

McCall: This actually goes into that. What we want to ask is, we're talking about the individual trees in the forest of the domestic policy. Clean Air, ADA, et cetera.

Sununu: Yes.

McCall: What I want to get into a little bit is the rhyme and reason to it. You talk a little bit about divining what the President's intent was in terms of what his agenda was, in terms of individual policies. Did you ever figure going in, about where this was coming from, where his priorities were going to be and why? For instance, why ADA? You talked a little bit about abortion and a couple of other things—

Sununu: This is a President that believes in a set—and it is very much reflected in what George W. is doing—of fundamental conservative principles of minimizing government involvement, of free market, capitalism-oriented economy, of an unleashing of the growth potential of the country, of not over constraining it, of fixing problems, and of a kinder, gentler (remember that phrase?) set of policies that deal with individual needs and recognizing that different people have different needs. That was the President's broad philosophy. It is embodied in what we did in the Clean Air Act, fixing the environment without handcuffing the economy. It is embodied in what we did in the energy bill—deregulating so prices are cut without creating a system that destroys the strength of the energy-producing side of the country. It is embodied in ADA, recognizing that a segment of our society wasn't able to participate because of handicaps and trying to give them an avenue to participate without creating a club or a sword that is used to hamper the capacity of the private sector to function.

A civil rights bill that addresses a slice of a problem that was not addressed by previous legislation but does it in a way that doesn't create this quota structure that is anti-growth, anti-expansion and anti-fair, that combination of commitment to minimizing the role of government while using government just enough to protect the rights of individuals and to help people as individuals.

McCall: Where does the resonance issue come in—one of the problems has been, in talking about the Bush domestic record, is it wasn't always that—

Sununu: But it's all woven together, it really is. It's woven together on the economic strength and opportunities side. The Clean Air Act fixes a problem while keeping the economy strong. The energy act does the same thing. ADA takes care of a personal need without going so far as to have an unintended consequence associated with it. Same thing with the Civil Rights Act. All of them are designed to solve problems, but have in them a recognition that you can over-empower government and begin to have unintended consequences. Go and fight that the change is taken right to the line and no further. And he took unfinished issues—the Clean Air bill had been hanging there thirteen or fourteen years: "Go do it. We can do this, we can make it work, we can

meet our own conditions and find a compromise with Congress that meets our agenda and their agenda." I think that's the theme. He took all these unfinished issues and really brought them to a head and closed.

Young: And all of them were done with Democratic majorities.

Sununu: All of them were done with huge Democratic majorities, run by two nice men, Foley and Mitchell, who were the most partisan congressional leaders the country has ever seen. Absolutely partisan. No question in my mind that George Mitchell created an environment that allowed Bill Clinton to win by being so partisan.

Young: That also has something to do presumably with the passage of legislation and statutes.

Sununu: Oh yes, but most of that was done with committee chairmen.

Young: I'd love to get into how it was done, because one of the questions that you put your finger on—

Hargrove: Could I ask a question before that that might be germane?

Young: —is that you have an opposition Congress, and a very effective domestic policy, which I think is already more recognized than you realize.

Hargrove: You remember Jimmy Carter was criticized for being too diffuse, not having priorities. The Reagan people learned from that to do a few things. Did the Bush people have a first year strategy?

Sununu: Yes. The first year strategy for the President was to do what had to be done, to take advantage of what was happening in the Soviet Union. That was his absolute first priority.

Hargrove: Okay.

Sununu: There is no question about that. But on the domestic side, there were two things that were a priority: Number one, let's start doing something about the budget and the deficit, had to get a hold of that. And number two, start to create the interactions on issues like clean air, like energy deregulation, like the crime bill, like civil rights and ADA, that gets us to the point where we get them passed. We may not pass them this year, but you have to start this year. And we started getting our groups together in the White House and in the departments and the agencies developing those themes. I had many meetings with Reilly trying to define the envelope in which the environmental legislation would be acceptable. Many meetings re-defining the envelope in which the environmental legislation would be acceptable, and then a follow up meeting defining the envelope in which environmental legislation would be acceptable. That was his agenda, and it was clear, and we were trying to do it all at the same time.

Karaagac: You talk about Boyden Gray's and Thornburgh's finessing of the issues in legal terms—

Sununu: It was only five words. That whole legislation was tied up over five words and I don't remember what they were.

Karaagac: Business necessity was one of them—

Sununu: Yes, business necessity and how you define it, but five words. So it was finding a phrase to replace this handful of words that were battled over that met everybody's needs. I mean, 40 pages of legislation and five words is the fight. So they would propose "the cat is big" and we would say "the dog is small" and you go back and forth, and I don't know the difference between "the cat is big" and the "dog is small." I've got to get the five civil rights lawyers at the Justice Department to come in and parse it. You ask the question nine times and you get nine slightly same, but slightly different answers, and so you say, "Boyden, go up and do it. I can't sit there."

I mean, I would go there when they had an impasse and I'd sit down with Kennedy and I'd say, "Senator, let's try and do this," but I could never do it without either Boyden or Thornburgh at my side. I'm smart enough to know what I don't know. And so they would say da-da and I would very modestly turn to Thornburgh and say, "Dick." And they would come back and Kennedy's guys would say, "Don't you understand this and this and this?" And I'd say, "Dick, can you do this. I mean, you try and negotiate it." You try awfully hard to do it. And then you pass papers back and forth. But we were negotiating five words.

Karaagac: In some sense is that symptomatic of something about the Bush administration, that you people passed a lot of really technically accomplished and sophisticated things that somehow were in some ways perhaps, hard to mesh with the larger presidential agenda?

Sununu: It's because we were overshadowed by two minor events such as the collapse of the Soviet Union and the Gulf War. I mean, that's not hard to imagine. Heaven forbid that as important as ADA was, that ADA becomes more visible than the collapse of the Soviet Union. I mean, that's what it comes down to. And by the way, the President wasn't just witnessing the collapse of the Soviet Union, and we'll go into that in a while, this was an artfully managed, tempered, controlled, hour-by-hour reaction, determined process. And so that took a lot of time.

The amazing thing is that while the Soviet Union is being artfully taken apart, you are putting together the resources that did two things. One, addressed the immediate need of saying this aggression will not stand, and getting Saddam [Hussein] out of Kuwait, and number two, never talked about any more, eliminating forever the post Vietnam syndrome. Where would the world be today with one superpower hobbled by a perception in the world that the country is unwilling or unable to project power? That is the most important single result of the Gulf War; that a single superpower no longer is perceived by every tinhorn in the world as being unable to project power. The world could not function as it is functioning today if there had not been the Gulf War. And that's why all these domestic issues, probably rightly so, took second and third seat. But second and third seat, if you put a play on Broadway and it's second to Hamlet, it's not bad.

Masoud: The interesting question here as you described it, the very impressive domestic agenda, but—

Sununu: Domestic performance. Everybody can have a good domestic agenda, not everybody can have good domestic performance.

Masoud: Why didn't anybody know about this, though?

Sununu: Because as I said, for the election, because it was written by the wusses of Washington, it was run by the wusses of Washington. The *Washington Post* says foreign policy isn't important, so they don't run on foreign policy. The *Washington Post* says the President has no domestic agenda, so they run no ad. I wrote three ads for them describing these domestic accomplishments. They never cut a single ad saying, "By the way, this is what George Bush has done domestically." Never cut a single ad and never wrote a presidential speech that talked about that. Why? Because these guys were more concerned about running a campaign that the *Washington Post* and the *New York Times* would be proud of, than winning for the President.

Milkis: There is also an issue of the priority of how the President is going to articulate—

Sununu: Excuse me, let me give you one more answer. And the other answer is destiny. Let me explain it. I think I mentioned this last time I was at the Center. Think about who was in charge of the major nations of the world when the Berlin wall came down and think about what happened to every single one of them but one the next time they went either to their party or the ballot box. [Mikhail] Gorbachev lost. Mrs. [Margaret] Thatcher was kicked out by her party, [John] Major lost, [Francois] Mitterrand lost, [Brian] Mulroney lost, the Australian prime minister lost, the Japanese prime minister lost and they eventually changed ruling party for the first time since World War II. Five losses, six, seven, eight losses in Italy, I've lost count of the losses in Italy, and Bush lost. The only one that didn't lose was [Helmut] Kohl. He won by that much and then he lost. So the point is destiny. They all got Churchilled.

[Winston] Churchill goes to Potsdam. One man saves one country and the world by the strength of his personality, 99.7 popularity rating or whatever the poll showed in England at the time, and he loses his election. So it is partly ineptitude, but ineptitude that made it easy for destiny to be fulfilled.

Hargrove: Yes, it wore itself out. Mrs. Thatcher was the first, then Reagan, so it wore itself out.

Sununu: What happens is that people immediately adopt a new political psyche. When a major burden is removed from their shoulders, or their concern, and they wake up thinking about different things the next morning. And frankly, they wake up unprepared to think constructively about the second through twelfth priority when the first priority is immediately removed. When the threat of nuclear holocaust is gone, they're willing to take on a President that they wouldn't have touched with a 20-foot pole the day before.

McCall: But what about the issue of the President's desire or willingness to articulate sort of a cohesive domestic performance?

Sununu: They brought me back in to do Ross Perot during the debates, they even brought a pair of ears. And when I was doing him—each time we did him twice—I sat down with the President for about 15 minutes afterwards and I went over what his economic accomplishments were, what the real economic statistics were, the growth data that was available, the domestic successes he had had and I begged him to demand that his campaign do it, and it never happened. I gave memos to people in the campaign, unsigned memos, and blank pieces of paper so that they didn't even have to give credit to anybody. They just had their own vision of running this campaign, and all they cared about was being the ones who were running the campaign.

Hargrove: Whom are we talking about? [Fred] Malek?

Sununu: Fred and Teeter, primarily Malek and Teeter and Mary Matalin, I mean, none of them understood.

Hargrove: This goes back to one of the first questions I asked you, though. Maybe he is not a great strategist himself, he relies on others—

Sununu: And he relied on them to the point where—look, what happened is that by June or July it became evident to the President that it wasn't working, and he got frustrated with the campaign, to the point that he began to lose confidence, and that's what I think people saw. A lot of people have interpreted as saying, "Did he want a second term?" He wanted a second term badly. He knew in his heart that he had laid a foundation for a lot of things to happen. You'd have to be foolish not to—you know, to plant the corn, you water it, you raise it, you want to be there for the harvest, and you want to shape the way the world is going to react to the post-Soviet Union environment. He wanted that. But when you see what's going on, day to day, and the chaos that existed all of a sudden, a campaign that's going nowhere, and all of a sudden chaos inside the White House. It's very debilitating, especially when you're not used to seeing the chaos inside the White House.

McCall: One of the things about articulation, because this goes back, when you think about the State of the Union address, the first State of the Union Address.

Sununu: The first? '89?

McCall: Yes, '89.

Sununu: Great speech.

McCall: Yes, but it's goal focused and doesn't have anything to unify it. That's what I'm asking about, is his willingness to articulate a unified front.

Sununu: Tell me, what was John Kennedy's unified vision? What was Bill Clinton's unified vision? This vision thing is crap. It's a concoction of a small-minded press who wouldn't know vision if it poked them in the eye. What is vision? Vision is best articulated in retrospect. You know, everyone says, "Where are the Reagans of today running for President?" They're there.

You know they're Reagan and Roosevelt only afterwards. You don't elect Reagan and you don't elect Roosevelt as such, and vision is in the hindsight, not in the foresight. I can't think of a single, lofty agenda that any President has ever articulated and fulfilled. I can think of some they articulated and never fulfilled because it was BS, and I can think of some that were fulfilled that were understood in the long run. Honest, Jim, I just don't know.

Hargrove: All right, now let me ask you, though. I think one of the problems that Al Gore has is that he does not have good intuitions about what is really worrying people.

Sununu: Okay.

Hargrove: When he first went to Congress he took a whole bunch of technical issues and rode to town on them.

Sununu: Al Gore is the perfect example of what was wrong with the Bush campaign in 1992. Al Gore has never lived anywhere outside of Washington. What was wrong with the '92 campaign was that it was a Washington campaign. You don't win modern Presidencies by running a Washington campaign.

Hargrove: But now hear me out. I'm not sure that Bush in '92 presented, talked about the things that were really worrying people, a recession being the chief.

Sununu: With all due respect, the answer to that mood had to be what we did to Dukakis. We hammered real data until finally, in August and September, people understood the difference between the perception and the reality. In 1992, the growth rate in the last quarter was 5.8 percent. The growth rate for the year was almost 4 percent. It was the highest growth rate of the recovery that started in March of '91 and which has continued to today. Except for one quarter, and one year, it was the highest quarter and the highest year, I believe, of all this great recovery.

Hargrove: It's all true, but that was not the public psychology.

Sununu: I know it. But they had to talk about the data and had to hammer it home so that the public—the public was being told every day by Clinton and the press that they were miserable.

Hargrove: I got your point.

Sununu: Nobody was out of a job. They were worried about their neighbor losing their job, because the press was telling them. In that whole recession, even before the '91 recovery started, the unemployment rate in America never got higher than 7.8 percent. The unemployment rate never got higher than 7.8 percent. It lingered around six, five and six percent, which is not bad even for good times. There was no great unemployment in America.

It's really one of the paradoxes of the time that that administration in '92 let the lie stand and never, never found an effective way to contradict it. The way they should have done it, in my opinion, is started hammering at the beginning of the year with the real data and people would

say, you don't understand, you're not empathizing, and you keep hammering at the real data and hammering and hammering and eventually the real data will communicate itself.

Hargrove: All right, George Bush listened to his economic advisors and they all counseled, things are going to be all right.

Sununu: Because they were looking at the real data.

Hargrove: But he didn't have the political creativity to do it, that's what I'm asking.

Sununu: Atwater, I, and Ailes were gone. That's what the problem was.

Hargrove: He needed political help.

Sununu: He needed somebody who straddled—

Hargrove: And Baker lost interest, didn't care.

Sununu: Baker was busy. Baker was busy dealing with the collapse of the Soviet Union, and [Eduard] Shevardnadze and Gorbachev.

Hargrove: By the time he came back it was too late.

Sununu: Too late, this had to be started in January and February and March.

Karaagac: He needed someone who straddled?

Sununu: Who straddled the two areas, the area of understanding, like the economic advisors did, that the data was good, and who understand the political need to help the public understand that the data was good, and it never happened. I mean, I have never seen such terribly off-the-mark political philosophy in ads as I saw in the '92 campaign.

Karaagac: Could you talk, if it's okay—

Sununu: He asked a question I didn't answer. What was the question?

Young: I was talking about the Democrats, the opposition party. In other words, what you're saying about the problem here, of doing the political work of saying "touch me, feel me, I feel your pain," or "things are getting better, but I'm with you," that never happened during the second campaign, and it should have started probably much earlier.

Sununu: Should have started in January, February, and March, and the intention was to start dealing with those issues that way, to remobilize the Governors, to use the Governors as spokesmen for how good things were.

Young: Did the President get no advice?

Sununu: Yes, he got advice.

Young: To do this? No other voice.

Sununu: He got polling data. He got people who were so euphoric at now being involved where they wanted to be involved, in the way they wanted to be involved that they forgot to do their job. Sam [Skinner] was a very nice man who should never have been Chief of Staff.

Hargrove: That's true.

Sununu: Teeter, a good friend but he cannot run, as I said before, a one-car funeral. Malek has the political sense of a doorknob. And we're calling a spade a spade. And Mary Matalin was Atwater's deputy, but she never took the time to listen to what Atwater was talking about in terms of politics. She was spending all of her time with her about-to-be husband who I'm sure played her to a fare-thee-well, finding out what was going on. [James] Carville was brilliant. You couldn't plan a campaign structure that was worse than the structure they put together.

Young: But you see, stipulating that this picture is correct, then the puzzle that a lot of people in the future are going to be asking is: Bush had had the experience, the President had had the experience of your kind of campaign and what it had done for him. You were technically competent in that. He understood why that was done and if he didn't, you explained it. And yet, all of those things seem to have been lacking as he moved into the second campaign.

Sununu: He underestimated the loss of Atwater, the loss of Ailes and my involvement to the point where he thought that in the Teeter et. al. crowd he could replace them. And discovered that all the concerns that I had had and others had had that these guys could not cut the mustard in the big leagues was real.

Young: He didn't try to change it or it was too late…

Sununu: It was too late. He made a change; it takes three months to see what's happening. He has in the back of his mind, I think, that the safety valve is on, *I can always bring Baker back in.* But Baker doesn't want to come in. *But if I need him he'll come in. It's a learning curve, these guys will be okay in another month, give them another month.* Whoops.

Let me just tell you. In June of '91, or May of '91, I convened a political meeting in the White House. The last thing we did is everybody went around the table and said whom they thought was going to get the nomination on the Democratic side and everybody was saying Cuomo, and I said Clinton. And they said, "Who is Clinton?" And I said, "If Cuomo runs in the primary against Bill Clinton, Bill Clinton will eat his lunch. He has a passion for this politics." And anyway, we had three or four meetings, I kept sticking to my Clinton predictions and they kept sticking with their Cuomo. That's how out of touch they were with the real threat that was there. None of them ever thought that Clinton would be a real threat. Remember, Clinton, they were thrilled that he was getting the nomination when he finally got it.

And I called a couple of them and said, "You have a real problem. Here's the line to use, and I've used it. You just have to remind people that this is a guy who took Arkansas from a weak 49th to a strong 49th." I mean, that's the line to use. Just talk about the statistics. They never did it until too late. They should have Dukakised Clinton from the start and talked about Bush's positives. They should have cut a Clean Air ad. They should have cut an ADA ad. They should have cut a civil rights ad. Instead they ran on nothing. They didn't talk about foreign policy and they didn't talk about domestic policy. They didn't know what to talk about.

Masoud: I don't think there was a Gulf War ad.

Sununu: There was nothing.

Young: Again, it's the question of whether the President himself was very kind toward this mismanagement.

Sununu: He was kind, he was preoccupied. This was a President who had become very used to Scowcroft doing everything that needed to be done and saying, "Mr. President, today I'm going to do this, is that all right? And tomorrow I'm going to do that, and we ought to do this long term. Is that what you want? Yes? I'll go do it." And he did it. And I would come in and say, "Da, da, da, da, da, da." He had gotten used to saying, "I want this done," and getting it done. And I think he expected, and unfairly was not given, the same response.

McCall: On that same day, you at one point prepared some kind of briefing.

Sununu: One piece of paper. It wasn't heavy. Political messages—if it doesn't fit on a bumper sticker or two, ain't worth it.

Karaagac: What was the message?

Sununu: Weak 49th to strong 49th.

McCall: Earlier than this, you prepared, didn't you, to start thinking about the next election cycle?

Sununu: Yes, but 95 percent of that was here, in talking to people, in lining people up. What happened, I mean, do you really want to get into this? To me it's water under the bridge and it sounds like I'm just carping. I would rather do the important things.

Hargrove: Let's do it at the end again.

Young: I want to hear it.

Sununu: I'll do it very quickly. Teeter still wanted to be in charge of something, he wanted to run the campaign. I suggested that like all presidential re-election campaigns, that's fine, they can have campaign chairmen. Final decisions on where the President goes and what the President says are going to be the White House, because he is still the President and he is President first,

candidate second. Teeter didn't like it. There was a trip that Teeter and Mosbacher wanted the President to take to Japan in which they would take the heads of the automobile companies and stick it to the Japanese. Teeter was a consultant to Ford and was pushing for this.

I thought it was a crazy idea for the President to do at the time. It just had a structure—Scowcroft I think agreed with me that it just wasn't the thing to do, why go in and embarrass—anyway, Teeter finally got pissed off at that. I personally feel, and this is just my viewpoint and I cannot prove it to you, this was very much a part of fueling the opportunity that was created by my travel situation, and I think Teeter was one of the primary fertilizers of that problem. I think he wanted to run the campaign in an unfettered way and succeeded in doing that. I think Bob Mosbacher became an unwilling partner to that. He thought he was going to be co-chairman out there and he wanted to show that he had political acumen, and Bob's a dear friend but not a politically astute guy. Malek was supposedly a political guru and understood this stuff, but he had never really, in my opinion, been outside of Washington and as you gathered from me, I don't trust anybody politically that hasn't either run for sheriff, run somebody for sheriff, or lost running for sheriff.

Karaagac: Except Atwater.

Sununu: Atwater ran people for sheriff. I said run somebody for sheriff. Atwater ran local campaigns, and that's how he started. He understood the value of—what is it? Not Foley—

Masoud: O'Neill?

Sununu: Tip O'Neill. All politics is local. He understood it. These guys don't believe all politics is local. They believe all politics is national TV. They believe all politics is "Meet The Press." You know, there's a difference and the President, I don't think, had taken the time to judge the differences in that. These are professional people, Teeter is a national pollster, worked for Reagan. Mary Matalin was Lee's deputy. And remember, one of the reasons I was there was because he didn't want to do these things on a day-to-day basis. So he brought somebody in, said, "Go do it, this is what I want done, go do it." And they didn't.

And how do you recover from that? I mean, I'm not being self-serving here, I'm just saying I would have been thrilled if he had filled the breach that had to be caused by my leaving with somebody that could do it. I would have been thrilled if he went out and said to John Engler, "John, come on in." Or you know, somebody who had been out and fought in a campaign and lived, bled, and died by the success.

Karaagac: Following on some of these questions, it sounds inescapably as if you're saying that the President was very comfortable at deputizing people to do the things that sometimes we associate Presidents with, in terms of doing the—

Sununu: You associate Presidents with it but it ain't really how it happens. Okay, it ain't really how it happens. This is true of every administration. Which President would you like to use as an example? FDR? Harry Hopkins.

Milkis: Clinton.

Sununu: Clinton may be a close exception to the rule in that Clinton—for his political skills I admire this President greatly. I disagree with him on a lot of other things, but he is probably the most skilled politically and most willing to do the hard work of the Presidency. Nobody is better at raising money, for example. George Bush hated to do that.

Hargrove: But Clinton is good at retail. He took Dick Morris to give him a strategy to win.

Sununu: I don't think so. Dick Morris is full of baloney.

Hargrove: I know that.

Sununu: Dick Morris is breaking his arm patting himself. I know Bill Clinton. Bill Clinton understood exactly what he had to do to win. Bill Clinton may not have known, automatically, that economic carping was the route to victory, but he came to it pretty quickly. He tried it once. When Carville says, "Try it," and he tried it once, it worked. If that one hadn't worked, he would have jumped on environmental dissatisfaction or too much money for the war effort. He would have tested 15 messages and he would have had the ear to pick up on what the right message was. You know, these things don't happen by some brilliant *a priori* analysis. There is an experiment in politics and Bill is a great experimenter. And he will experiment maybe first on three people in the White House or three people in the state house, and then he'll go down and have breakfast at Wendy's or at Honey Dip Donut, or whatever it is, and he'll try it there. Give the guy credit, he's a master, and he would have done that. President Bush trusted other people to do it.

Hargrove: He didn't have the same political skills then, faculties, Bush, less political experience really.

Sununu: No, he had more political experience in a different arena. Foreign policy and service, which were important. Not everybody can be everything. I would not ask George Bush to run a campaign for me. I would ask Bill Clinton to run a campaign for me. I would ask George Bush to run a business for me, I wouldn't ask Bill Clinton to run a business for me. I'd ask George Bush to be my President, I wouldn't ask Bill Clinton to be my President. I'd ask Bill Clinton to be my Chief of Staff, if I could trust him. But I mean, do you understand the difference, there are different strengths. And it is so important. Let me go back to what you said. I think we talked about this earlier.

My view of history has changed dramatically by being involved. Let me give the example I gave earlier today, because it's an important one. When you're involved and see things from the inside, if you really look—and I really look at things. I mean, I like to know why. I may not be able to change things but I'm a why guy and people don't like it. I'll ask the third, fourth, fifth, and tenth question and I'll irritate them. I came into the White House thinking that the Vietnam War had been lost because Lyndon Johnson and Congress did not give the military what they needed to win. I came out of there with a very different view. I'll explain.

If you read Colin Powell's book, he has a slightly different version, as I mentioned to you, but this incident occurs. Colin Powell never wanted the Gulf War, never wanted to prosecute it, never wanted to go forward, never wanted to do anything that he loves taking credit for now. He came to George Bush to frighten him, in my opinion, my word, out of making the decision to go in. And I don't remember the numbers, I'm making up numbers here but you can get them. He said, "Mr. President, do you realize you're going to need 550,000 men, 25,000 airplanes, 15 carrier groups, 150,000 tanks—" or 15,000 tanks, whatever it is. "You may have these casualties and you need all of these resources." The President looked him in the eye and said, "General Powell, you can have all of that and if you need any more to do the job right, you come back to see me." And that's when I learned an immediate lesson.

Johnson and the Congress gave the military 95% of what they asked for and they gave him an excuse not to win. George Bush, in essence, gave Powell 101% of what he asked for and took away his excuse to lose, and that's the difference of what leadership is all about. And that, to me, really was the first message that historical perceptions, as ingrained as they might be, aren't what they are in reality. And a lot of what you are hearing from me today has been trying to watch from that day forward, all of those nuances, trying to record them in my head and trying to review, posthumously, so to speak, after the fact, what went on and how people have analyzed it.

I said it at the beginning today, I am astounded that George Bush is perceived as not having done anything domestically, at one point he was perceived. I am astounded at that. And I feel an obligation to be here today, and tomorrow, to put something in writing to reinforce the reality of what's there. I feel this as an obligation, because in four years this man did more internationally and domestically than any other four-year period in history. If you take the Roosevelt first four years and the Roosevelt four war years and add them together, you get the same. But there was no paired domestic international performance of equal magnitude in American history. None. Not even [Woodrow] Wilson, with all that he succeeded. And to me, it is sort of my mission now, if I can make enough money so that I don't have to worry about putting food on the table, in my private life, to go back now and fill the void.

Hargrove: But we can't get you to say that Bush was lacking in the articulation skills that would have been needed to sell himself.

Sununu: He was, let me tell you what his problem was. This President was so nice, and so modest, that it pained him to talk in the first person. Okay? That's what his problem was. And he had to be told by his advisors that he had to emphasize his success. He was always—

Hargrove: Mother—

Sununu: He was always intent on giving credit to somebody else. All right? So I started at the beginning today and I used the phrase that his greatest strength was how good he was to people and with people, and it was his weakness. This is an articulation of that weakness. In politics there has to be a slice, as you have noticed at the table today, a slice of immodesty.

Hargrove: Hunger.

Sununu: And George Bush had to have somebody around him who cared about him enough that would push him to do what he was uncomfortable doing. When he did it, he did it well. Somebody asked during the break whether he liked retail politics. He hated retail politics, but he did it well. You just had to take him to the crowd and let him loose. I mean, nobody likes going into a crowd anonymously and saying "I'm James Smith and I'm running for Congress." But you force yourself to do it. It's easier when you're Vice President running for President, but even then, he didn't like doing it. And you literally had to go, you take him, took him to the New London Fair the summer of '88 and said, "Mr. Vice President, we're here for an hour, you better have fun." And you say, "We're not leaving for an hour, go shake all the hands you can and don't keep looking at your watch." And he does it well then, and he poses for the pictures, and he talks to the little kids, and he empathizes, truly empathizes with everybody he meets. But if he had his choice, he'd rather be home watching a baseball game.

Hargrove: But his mother did instill in him modesty.

Sununu: Yes, and it's a virtue and his weakness. He is really the most empathetic, nice, modest, self-effacing man I've ever met. And yet, in '92 he had nobody to compensate from his strength.

Milkis: I just wanted to shift gears a little bit because I didn't hear your discussions last night about this, but I wonder if you could just tell us for the record some things about your view of the role that Atwater performed as head of the Republican National Committee and why it was so difficult to replace him. I understand some people replaced him, but that was a bit of a debacle.

Sununu: Yeah.

Young: And you had also mentioned that Atwater's sickness changed history.

Milkis: Yes, changed history.

Sununu: Atwater was a very dear friend. We became political soul mates probably starting in '85, '84, '85. I didn't know him well before that. But as I started going down to the Reagan White House I ran into Atwater and it became clear early that he probably was going to be involved with George Bush. As I've said, I don't know when I came to a decision, but I never really entertained supporting anybody else except George Bush, seriously. So we talked a lot. In a way, the problem with Atwater's death and why he was so irreplaceable is that he looked like—because he was young—he wasn't going to have to be replaced for a long time. So you burned some bridges that you had the luxury of burning when somebody is going to be there for a long time. Atwater was going to be there for eight years. So you ruffle a few feathers.

For my part, I counted on Atwater protecting the President's back politically and I counted on him protecting my back politically. I didn't have to worry about the political side. When Atwater died, there had been nobody brought into the process to be groomed for number two, hadn't looked actively around the states to bring a new one in. We were under the gun in terms of what was happening in Washington, and I think we have a reasonably good solution in Bill Bennett. So we go down that route, saying no to a lot of other people who wanted it. Bennett takes it

verbally, goes home, and his brother convinces him that he can make a million dollars making speeches every year and he may not be able to do that as chairman, so he comes back and turns it down. And the fact of giving it to somebody and their turning it down alienates five other people who might have come in to do it. So it gets really messed up.

Lee brought an understanding of what retail politics were, a sense that America was drifting to the conservative side. All the conservatives in America should be thrilled, because our entire agenda has been implemented by a Republican Congress and a President that's been forced to sign conservative legislation. We now have a surplus. We've got issues of welfare reform coming forward, and everybody talks about downsizing government, it's wonderful. But Atwater understood that drift. What I told you about him looking at the wrestling audience and the stock car audience.

He understood two things, that the swing vote in America can be characterized that way, and there is another way to slice it. The swing vote in America can be characterized as the conservative Catholic vote. It's the Poles in Gary, Indiana. It's the steel worker. It's the Irish Catholic vote in New York and in Boston. It's the Hispanic swing vote that you can get out of California, whatever percentage you can get of the Hispanic vote in California that will change California. It's the conservative, or slightly conservative, Catholic vote that traditionally votes Democratic. That's a different slice. It's another group that he understood was there and we talked about that a long time.

He was a great scholar of the demographic makeup of the population and what were really strong issues for the demographic groups and what were fad issues for the demographic groups and how to turn on your fad issue and blunt the other side's fad issue. There are short-term issues that rise in the campaign and then disappear. To a great extent, when he died, it really unraveled—if he had been around, my leaving the White House wouldn't have made one ripple in the process. He would have made sure that if someone were screwing up in the White House, the President knew it, and he'd tell the President to get somebody new in there. Whether the President did or not, I don't know, but he trusted Lee.

And secondly, the campaign would have never taken the wussie route, never. If Lee had a problem at all it was occasionally he enjoyed being a little bit excessive. Ross Perot would have been nailed between the eyes the minute he opened his mouth. Can you imagine this campaign letting Ross Perot get away with what he said and then going down to his convention and Baker and I forget who, Skinner I think, standing on the platform of Ross Perot's convention and saying nice things there to him? It's insane. Atwater would have had the battery cables across Perot in about 30 seconds.

That's the difference. You don't have to stop a 40-ton snowball if you stop the pebble before it starts. Ross Perot was a pebble and Ross Perot should have been stopped as a pebble. It makes me feel unpleasant just thinking about it. Incompetence creates an unpleasant feeling.

Milkis: There was some additional political capacity within the White House, Ed Rogers and Jim Pinkerton, they performed—

Sununu: Rogers is pretty good politically in the sense that he understands the constituency groups. He is certainly nowhere near Lee in understanding how to attract them. But he at least can identify them. Pinkerton has a tin ear politically as well. Pinkerton in an odd sense is too much of an ideologue. It's going to sound strange for a conservative ideologue as I am to say that Jim's problem is that he is a conservative ideologue who makes no concession to try to accommodate anybody else besides the conservative ideologues of the world. So I think he was part of the problem, not part of the solution.

Hargrove: Now I have three big stories I have to hear, one is budget deficit, one is Soviet Union, the third is the Gulf War. Pretty big stuff, but I don't know when you want to start that.

Young: I think they're going to bring lunch in about 25 minutes

Sununu: So we have time for some war.

Young: But not all of it.

Hargrove: No, no.

Young: We haven't talked about, I'd like to get a bit into one of these things, get a bit into dealing with Congress. That might include also the Tower nomination, [David] Souter—you were the one who placed his nomination in play—and also legislative business. Getting down to the point of how should people understand what created the successes, the workings behind it.

Hargrove: And working with the opposite party, the Republicans never happy with that, it's a classic situation.

Young: And as a prime example of that you have the budget, and Quayle, in the administration.

Sununu: Okay, let's talk about congressional. The public perception is that there was always a battle between Republicans and Democrats. In reality there is a second issue always at play. And it is the tension between the executive branch and the legislative branch, always. My second term, I got three quarters of the House and three quarters of the Senate elected Republican. It was the hardest term I ever had. Because with such majorities, 75 percent in House and Senate, nobody felt any obligation to party loyalty, they all wanted to freelance.

So you learn very quickly that sometimes the hardest negotiation you have to do is with your own party. Having said that, I believe the numbers in the Bush first term were 174 Republicans in the House and 45 Republicans in the Senate. You go in and you look at those numbers and you just barely can sustain a veto, much less get legislation passed, unless you do something either very smart or very clever or capitulate, and capitulate is not an acceptable alternative.

The President really did want to deal with some issues. The first one that he thought he was going to deal with was the budget, domestic. I say "thought," because in fact, about ten days after the election and we started talking to people, this giant wart shows up called savings and loan. First you just saw the little head of the wart and you figure two little Scholl's pads will take

care of that. The first formal briefing was probably the first week in January when I went over to Treasury with Darman and Brady had [Charles] Dallara, Assistant Secretary Dallara, come in and talk to us about this issue. I didn't even know savings and loans from a commercial bank. I mean, I just never thought of it as a separate segment. Dallara came out and started talking to us about this issue. In the discussion it became clear to me that what had happened was that there was this midnight change by the chairman of the banking commission from Rhode Island, I forget his name, the guy who was a bartender.

Hay: [Ferdinand] St. Germain.

Sununu: Thank you. St. Germain changed the insured level from $10,000 to $100,000. It sounded like an innocuous change but it created this hot money market for savings and loans to get huge amounts of savings and market themselves all over the country, and it created a level of savings that had to be invested and therefore reduced, in my opinion, reduced the level of scrutiny applied to loan structures. And fueled a tremendous explosion in real estate speculation. All of this was coupled with a lot of other things, but this is the way they slowly introduced this problem. And you're listening and waiting for the shoe to fall. They finally get to it and Dallara says, "And we think there may be as much as an eight or ten billion dollar problem out there." And eight or ten billion dollars hits us like a ton of bricks. We're scraping for a billion dollars in the budget we're putting together.

So we listen to it and we go back and I'm talking to Darman and I said, "Do you really think it's that bad?" He says, "I have no idea. I've heard it's a really big problem." We come back a week later and it's a 20 billion or 30 billion dollar problem. We came back two weeks later and it's an 80 billion dollar problem. Well, as you all know, by the time it all winnowed out, it turned out to be a couple of hundred billion dollars.

I went to the President with Brady and Darman, after I had gotten up to speed on what it was, and I conveyed the severity of the problem to him, and Brady described how it got there to the President and all that. Frankly, in the long run, this turned out to be the heart of what the Bush economic problem, and the perception of the Bush economic problem, turned out to be in my opinion and I'll get to that in a second. But Brady describes it to the President and to the President's credit, he recognized two things. One, this problem had been lingering for a long time and, in my opinion, the real culprits are the Bill Seidmans of the world over at FDIC and the guy who was running FSLIC who was the Utah staffer for Jake Garn.

Hargrove: Danny somebody.

Martin: Danny Wall?

Sununu: Danny Wall. They had been hiding the problem—not hiding the problem, that sounds as if there is something nefarious—but they had just been hoping the problem would cure itself if it didn't become too public, that things would swing around, and it just got out of hand. We couldn't get Dan to really understand the magnitude of the problem that he had to take some aggressive action and so on. We go to the President and tell him it is a serious problem and there are two or three ways to do this, you can do a quick solution and bite the bullet and try to fund

the problem, one way or the other. You can try to stretch it out in a long solution, but make a commitment to fix it, and sort of drip the solution into the veins instead of just immersing the body into the solution, whatever it is. To his credit, the President said, "Fix it and fix it fast, and I don't care what the political consequences are." So we tried to go over there and implement and fix it.

Now, let me tell you what the political problem was. The political problem was Don Riegle was chairman of the Senate banking committee and a very close friend of the President. Henry Gonzalez was chairman of the House banking committee and Henry did not understand what was going on. Riegle, the President thought he was a dear friend and Riegle was, in my opinion, exploiting the issue, holding hearings and scaring the hell out of every regulator in America that he was going to bring them up on incompetence charges or something. So what happens?

There is a reaction in the regulatory community that every loan now has to meet ultimate standards, and so all of a sudden every loan in America is in default, or half the loans in America are in default, even if they're performing. Even if they are paying off the loan, on schedule, and have never missed a schedule, the loans are being re-analyzed as if they had never been issued, and they are deemed un-issueable. Then they are being forced by the regulators to be called by the banks because they are being classified as non-performing, or whatever the correct technical term is. This is raising havoc, particularly in California. It's killing people all over the country, but Texas and California are certainly carrying the brunt of this.

So Brady goes back and has a meeting with the regulatory structures and says, "Look, you have to move into this with a little bit of sense and you have to work the loans out." And they all agreed to go back and do that. But Riegle is scaring everybody and there isn't anybody visiting a bank in America that's not afraid that the chairman of the Senate banking committee won't personally call him up and embarrass them on public television and accuse them of malfeasance. So this squeezing is taking place everywhere, no matter what. I believe I am correct on this, to the point where Brady issued new regulations to everybody who was enforcing these laws, these rules, not laws, and required them to sign a declaration that they would use the criteria as given to them to make the evaluations. And even with that, they were going out and over squeezing the turnip.

It created chaos for Bush for a year and a half, two years. It caused, in my opinion, the downturn. It created the perception, amongst his best supporters, because a lot of the successful real estate industry, particularly in California, were major supporters of the Republican party. They all had access to the President and to Brady and every time he went to a fund raiser ten of the real estate guys came up and hounded him and told him what a terrible job was happening, the country was going to Hell in a hand basket. To the point where we started inviting groups of this community into the White House, and I suppose I have myself to blame for asking the following question all the time. I would ask, somewhere in the meeting I would say, "Okay, we recognize the problem, what should we do?" And their answer was "fix it."

And I'd say, "Okay, what should we do? It's your business; you know it better than we do, tell us what we should do." There was never an answer. And it was always perceived that that obnoxious Chief of Staff wasn't listening to them. You're begging them to tell us what we

should do, and the reason is they didn't know what to do. There was no solution to a speculative bubble that was popping.

So it created a long-term problem. It created problems with Brady's perception of what was going on economically. It bothered the President no end. We were trying to fix it as fast as we could. To Congress's credit, I think we got an S&L piece of legislation signed in June of '89, someone can check that but I believe that is correct, and in essence served as the basis for the future pieces of legislation that followed. Part of the mandate was to set up this RTC [Resolution Trust Corp.] structure and so on, and they would develop a process where they would bring in the troubled banks, they would separate it into a good side and a bad side, they'd take the package of troubled loans and create a structure where people would acquire them at discount and try and work them out.

The problem was that FDIC under [William Seidman] decided that, in my opinion, they wanted to be the largest real estate company in the world, and they would take in the loans and never put them out. It was squeezing the hell out of the system, and Seidman finally got to the point where Brady wanted him out, the President agreed to it, and then I don't know how Brady did this, but he convinced the President that instead of Brady firing him, I had to fire him.

Finally, I shifted it back to Brady but the Brady people were pretty clever, they told Seidman that I wanted Seidman out and Brady was going to get rid of him. I don't know Seidman from a hole in the wall, but there is a great legend and Seidman wrote in his book that he got removed and dragged his feet on leaving because he wanted to prove to me that I couldn't get rid of him just because I wanted to get rid of him.

I couldn't care less who Bill Seidman was, but his hanging on too long created a real problem in the solution of the S&L crisis. To Bush's credit and to Congress's credit, I think it ended up costing us two hundred billion. There is absolutely no way the economic recovery that started in '91 would have either the depth or strength it has now without the financial system of this country being fixed. And it is one of those very small, quick, important decisions that I think made all of the difference in the world for the country and he hasn't gotten enough credit for it. What else?

Young: Congress.

Sununu: You deal with a legislative body by identifying what it has chosen for itself as a legislative body to be both its operating rules and its operating customs. Congress, when we were there, was an institution in which the power of the chairman was almost absolute. Chairmen really had wide-ranging prerogatives under the Democratic leadership. They could block bills for years if they wanted. They could bring bills with almost no hearings. They could insert amendments almost at will. They would go through the formality of a committee vote—which rarely voted against the chairman—so we recognized pretty early that we had to deal with them.

Fred McClure was brought in to be legislative liaison. Fred had been involved in the political side before and had been lobbying Congress. He knew the political structures quite well. His deputy was Nick [Calio], and Nick was superb. Between them they went and started working and

identifying the chairmen who were going to be important to the agenda. Certainly, under the Clean Air bill—who was in charge of the environmental committee?—[John] Chaffee was the ranking Republican Senator, the Democrat was—oh God, I'll never forget what's-his-name—environment was Senator [Quentin] Burdick, was rather tough dealing with that Senator. He was in his last years and he was hard.

Let's just take for example ADA and civil rights. That was Kennedy's bailiwick and I spent a lot of time going up, really, talking to the Senator, trying to tell him we had an agenda that was geared to success. We were going to have differences, but let's try and negotiate them out, and I think we really developed a very good working relationship. We argued a lot, we got hot under the collar a lot, but to this day, I probably respect Ted Kennedy more than most Republicans respect him. I think he did his homework, he was always prepared, he was smart and articulate for his side and really was willing to give and take to get results done. I think it created a relationship between us that when the going got tough on those two bills and they could have been killed and never passed, it gave us enough confidence to cross the extra last 50 yards that were involved.

Energy reform was important to the President. I knew Bennett Johnston from my old days in the energy field and I went over and talked to Bennett and the Senator from Alaska, the Republican Senator—

Milkis: [Frank] Murkowski.

Sununu: Murkowski. They were both good friends and we talked about the fact that over a period of time we were going to have to develop a way to deal with, for lack of better words, the foolishness of the energy legislation that passed during the Carter years when the oil crisis was so bad. And we were talking about ANWR, trying to get ANWR in the bills and all that. Murkowski was big on ANWR because of Alaska, but the focus was really deregulation. And that, plus the nuclear waste side issues, which really never got resolved, that's one of the failures that we had. We were unable to really reconcile the nuclear waste issue. I had to be careful that I didn't press too hard for that because I had been perceived as an advocate of Seabrook in New Hampshire and it would make an easy target if it started to get successful. So the easy way to undo something was to find a foil and I didn't want to be a foil.

But the President's big issue was deregulation. Bennett understood that and we just worked, almost at a distance, because we were both on the same agenda. We would basically just get progress reports back and forth and if he needed help moving a certain Republican Senator we would move him this way, or making sure the House was receptive, we would move him that way. But Bennett took the lead on that and did it very much according to the outlines that we had originally talked about.

ADA. On the House side, Tony Coelho was a strong advocate of the rights of the disabled. In the Senate, Kennedy was there. The first ADA bill looked like it had 110 Senators supporting it out of a hundred. Nobody had read anything but the title and how could you vote "no" for a piece of legislation called the Americans with Disabilities Act? But the first bill was terrible, the first draft. It created about a hundred new entitlements, slight exaggeration but only slight, and really,

all of the problems it caused added to none of the real benefits that the disabled would get. I asked Dick Thornburgh to really have his people go over it and identify the problem areas. We got our legislative guys together and the first thing they did was go up and present the President's version of the bill and tried to get Republicans to support it.

We finally did that. It was a very special kind of legislative battle. It was a very hard kind of negotiations because at no point did we ever think there were less than 90 votes for it. I'm very serious. I'm not exaggerating now. So almost anything would have gotten 90 votes and we're struggling to build into it provisions that the business community was desperately coming to us with concerns about. But over time it evolved, and it evolved primarily because of the chairman, Kennedy, and his relationship, and the fact that he could have almost anything he wanted from his committee. And that worked out well.

Boyden Gray did a lot of the work on that. Roger did a little bit, not that much. A lot of that came out of the Justice Department and Thornburgh, because Thornburgh has a particular interest in disabled rights.

The civil rights bill was Boyden Gray's baby. Ninety-five percent of the bill everybody agreed to. The business necessity issue was a critical one and there was one other, and I can't remember what it was. The one other was resolved rather quickly and then it came down to the handful of words on business necessity. We must have had 15 or 20 sessions that either I went to, Boyden went to, or Dick Thornburgh went to, or all of us went to, with staff and with a Senator. Finally, it was basically just begging Boyden to find a package that would give a little bit but protect, take 95 percent of what you want but give up 5 percent so to speak.

Finally they came up with a package that made some sense and it got passed. But again, it was up to Kennedy to say this is okay, and it was up to Boyden and Thornburgh to tell the President that the language was okay. Neither the President nor I understood the nuance. He understood what he wanted in principal, but didn't understand the nuance of the words, as neither did I to achieve what he wanted. He wanted a bill that addressed the concerns that people wanted, not to have quotas in legislation, but also addressed the reality of equality in employment across the board.

Clean Air bill. Very interesting. Languishing in Congress for thirteen years. The environmentalists had proposed a piece of legislation that was rather extreme. The President's Council of Economic Advisors had estimated tremendous economic negatives to it. It was one of [Michael] Boskin's real concerns. I thought, having gone through the problem of putting environmental legislation together in New Hampshire on the acid rain bill, I really thought that there were ways of making this thing work as a win-win situation. Roger Porter and I sat down and outlined a number of—what's the right word—policy themes, that if they were incorporated could make it a tolerable bill.

One was the ability to trade the emission rights and benefits in the public market. The other was to target the emissions in not a uniform blanket kind of thing but to have some geographic differences, make allowances for older plants and newer plants, make state-by-state allowances which would allow us to have, where it was really required, slightly more stringent, and where it

didn't make that much difference, slightly less stringent requirements. Incentives for fuel utilization, and for reducing dependence on certain forms of energy. All of these things were built into a whole list of give and takes and the one that spent the day-to-day time on it was Roger.

We'd meet after he came back every time and I tried very hard to keep the President apprised of what was happening. He was very pleased that progress was being made on it. It was one of the things he wanted to get. Frankly, it came down to a couple of hard negotiations with some Republican Congressmen from, I think, primarily Ohio and Illinois, and there were a couple of changes here and there and changes in the allowances. It passed surprisingly easily, the way the President wanted it, within the constraints that had been laid on it. And really, for something that had languished there for so long, I thought it was a tremendous win for him and something he really appreciated.

I'll do the budget agreement last. Tower: Another example of the power of a chairman.

Masoud: Nunn.

Hargrove: Sam Nunn.

Sununu: John Tower was really a very astute practitioner of the art of legislative oversight of the executive branch prerogatives in defense. He had been chairman of the committee for a couple of years, I believe. Even in his afterlife from the Senate, stayed involved in the arena, had a couple of appointments with some of the international institutions, was a close friend of the President. We had a number of meetings after Election Day, between the day I was named Chief of Staff and inauguration day. The President, Brent Scowcroft, myself, and Tower, talking about what was going to be the inevitable change in the direction of defense spending. And Tower really was excellent on identifying the approach that could be taken to make reductions in defense spending without severely impacting the defense readiness of the country. Really was very, very impressive in his understanding of how to do this. So the President really wanted John Tower as Secretary of Defense. The nominations get sent up early. I think the President sent the whole package up in one package if I'm not mistaken, but I may be wrong on that, but I think we sent the whole Cabinet up, named the whole Cabinet.

The Cabinet was named in stages, but when it was sent to Congress, I believe that there was a public announcement formalizing the announcements. You know, you make the announcements in a preliminary way and then the package, the President says, "This is my Cabinet." I think there was an introduction of the whole Cabinet one day and Tower was there. Sends it up. There is no inkling of a problem to begin with. Then, and again, I'm not positive this is the correct sequence, but I believe it is, John Warner calls me and tells me that he'd like to talk about John Tower's nomination. I think I went up to Warner's office and he indicated, and he never mentioned Sam's name at the time, but that some of his Democratic colleagues had some reservations, or had been hearing some things about John Tower and we should be preparing for harder hearings than we might have thought. Nothing that it's not going to pass or anything, but we really should work hard on this.

I go to John and I ask him whether he knows what the problems might be and John in general terms says, "Well, you know, a lot of my colleagues think I may have drunk too much and liked the ladies too much. But I don't think that affects my performance." And he's trying to think of what it might be. To make a long story short, it becomes clear over time that Sam Nunn just does not believe that John Tower should be Secretary of Defense. We're doing a vote count all along, and we thought we had about 70 votes at one point. It keeps drifting down. Kept offering John the option of having his name withdrawn or being voted on. My recollection is that they actually took a vote, right? And he fell three or four votes short?

McCall: Yes, 57-43.

Sununu: 57-43, okay, seven votes, eight votes short. All these things kept coming in literally over the transom. You never knew who was providing the information. I personally think it would have passed, he would have been confirmed, if Paul [Weyrich] had not testified and turned off a number of the Republican Conservatives who were the bedrock of John's support. I think he lost four or five votes there and at the end there were probably three or four votes we could have had if they would have made the difference between success and failure.

Hargrove: What did he say, I don't remember that.

Milkis: What did Weyrich talk about?

Sununu: I think it was his drinking, and maybe a little bit of the women, but I think it was mostly the drinking.

Milkis: In congressional testimony?

Sununu: In committee testimony. Boy, I hope my recollection is correct. The fact that you don't remember bothers me.

Hargrove: Well, this was in the press all the time, the drinking.

Sununu: I'm pretty sure Weyrich testified in public against him, I don't think it was a letter or anything.

Hargrove: And Tower promised not to drink.

Sununu: Promised, promised. Tower promised not to drink. Tower went up and met with his colleagues.

Masoud: By the way, it was 53 to 47.

Sununu: Okay, four votes, that's what I thought, four votes would have made the difference. But anyway, Tower went up, talked to his friends, was quite contrite. Even the ones that were voting against him I think acknowledged that he would have been a good Secretary of Defense, but

nobody wanted to cross the chairman. Not nobody, but a lot of those who voted against did not want to cross the chairman, and so he lost.

Masoud: How early could you see the writing on the wall? When did you think, *Let's cut our losses and have him withdraw*?

Sununu: I never had a problem with the President riding him all the way. I don't think there's anything wrong with loyalty, and I wasn't one of those who said you couldn't have a loss. And the press played it up as a big deal, but I don't think it hurt George Bush one iota.

Masoud: Weren't you all on an overseas trip when the vote was taken?

Sununu: I don't think so, no. Maybe we were coming back when the vote was taken, but the minute the vote was confirmed, I went to the President and said, "Mr. President, you have to send a nomination up in 24 hours." And he said, "Whom?" I said, "I'll come back to you with a recommendation in about three or four hours." That was in the morning. I called Quayle. I said to Dan, "My personal recommendation to the President at this point, if he demands a quick recommendation, is Dick Cheney." I had been doing a little bit of homework and then honing it down. He said, "That's funny, I'm having lunch"—this must have been a Thursday—"with the President today. I'll bring Cheney's name up because I agree with you; it's the right choice."

So he goes in and talks to the President at lunch. The President likes it. I don't remember whether it was the two of us or the three of us got together after lunch. The President says, "Find out if Cheney will take it." I called Dick. I said, "Would you come over?" He came over. I posed it to him. I don't remember whether he went home and said yes, but I said, "You've got to have an answer in an hour or two and before the end of that night." The President had virtually agreed, if not finally agreed, that it would be Cheney and I think we sent it up the next day. It went right through. It was a good choice.

Young: Wasn't there some question of checking up on his health?

Hargrove: He had had a heart attack, I believe.

Sununu: I don't know if he had had it before that.

Hargrove: He had.

Sununu: Okay. I think he had to bring a note from his doctor.

Masoud: Was there any concern—

Hargrove: The way I heard it was that the President was concerned about the heart attack, as was Brent and Brent called and looked into it.

Sununu: I went to Brent after the Vice President's lunch and told him what we had talked about and he supported it. He said that's a good choice, I like it, and maybe that's when he brought that up, I don't know, I can't remember.

Masoud: Had there been any concern that taking somebody like Cheney out of Congress—I mean, in retrospect, in hindsight, one could argue that it cost you, that it opened the way for somebody like [Newt] Gingrich, taking that very person out who was in line to become—

Sununu: Yes and no.

Masoud: You hadn't thought about it?

Sununu: No, we had thought about it. We thought about it more in terms of, "Will a Republican win the seat?" and the answer was yes. Bob Michel was not being seen as leaving soon. We didn't have problems with the Republican leadership yet. Gingrich wasn't perceived as a wild and loose cannon yet. No, Cheney was the right choice at the right time in the sense of the President taking what had been a negative news story, the defeat, even though I didn't think it was a real problem, the news story, and dealing in a city where that perception is important, and giving them a very positive nomination to send up.

Masoud: Why did you choose Cheney? You had probably spoken to him when you became Chief of Staff.

Sununu: I knew him a little bit. There was a list available of people who sent in names to be considered. You go to that list and his just kind of jumped up. I thought that after the Tower problem, it would be easy to get him through the Senate. He had almost, not quite, but almost the qualification credentials of Tower, without any of the personal baggage. And that's really what you wanted. You can't have said, "We want somebody who has this knowledge," and then not send somebody up with that knowledge. I mean, you almost needed to match the Tower positive qualifications without the negatives, and Cheney is a very natural fit to that.

Karaagac: And you felt that he was in accord with the Tower idea of not build down, but—

Sununu: If there was any doubt, that's the only doubt, but I also thought that Cheney had been in the executive branch before, and would be a team player. That's why I felt comfortable making the recommendation. I talked to him. Brent talked to him.

Let me give you a story about appointments, it especially applies to judicial appointments, but all appointments that you have to make as a chief executive. When I was Governor I named judges to the Supreme Court and the superior court. One day I had three judges I had named. One of them I think was going to be chief justice of the Supreme Court, and the other a Supreme Court justice and a couple of superior court justices. We thought we'd have the swearing in ceremony all together at the same time. We have this very large room, which is the Governor's Council room, remember I talked about that. So they all were able to invite their friends and family to the swearing in.

I'm standing up, I have to stand up to do this, I'm standing up introducing them and saying what wonderful people they were and what the qualifications are for being appointed a judge in the state of New Hampshire with this Governor. I look over and I realize that they are all about this high or shorter. So I go in there and I say, "And, of course, you've probably noticed that you cannot be taller than the Governor and be a judge." I go back to my office and the staff says, "Did you see what happened when you said that?" "Well, yes, everyone was nice and they laughed." They said, "No, every lawyer in the room went and ducked down."

Hargrove: We can tell that story, can't we?

Sununu: The point is, that when you appoint people, of course they fit what you're looking for in terms of discussions and interviews and what they said. It's so hard to get what you think you're getting. But anyway, the President sent Cheney up and it went through and I think it was very important for him to react that quickly. I think it was very smart of him to realize what he had to do quickly and do it and be able to make a quick decision. You know Cabinet decisions usually take weeks and they get vetted 19 different ways and he said, "No, let's do it." He knew Cheney.

Hargrove: But Cheney was giving up a political career probably, hard choice for him, wasn't it?

Sununu: It's not a hard choice to go from the House to the Secretary of Defense. What's hard is going from Governor to Chief of Staff. You don't want to take that step down.

McCall: Two things, first, in the period during the Tower struggle, there's a vacuum with policy from DoD [Department of Defense]. In other words, this is the first three months of the administration—

Sununu: Not really. I don't think so. Let me tell you what I think was happening at DoD at the time. They were preparing their budget. You know the DoD budget is a 22,000-pound mess. They'd been preparing their budget for the last year. They're honing it down; we're sending messages to the powers that be over there. There is a residue of assistant secretaries from the Reagan administration that are still friendly, and we're basically sending the messages over there as to what we think the numbers ought to be and that's really the only policy you're chasing at the time. So I don't think there was a vacuum. There might have been a psychological vacuum, but in terms of reality, it wouldn't have functioned any different with—you know, Tower had been talking to people and laying out an agenda, informally, or sending recommendations. So when it looked like he was going to lose, between the day he lost and the day Cheney came in is a week's period of time where there could have been a real vacuum, which is nothing, I don't think.

McCall: Is this the time also when the first glimmers of troop cuts and what not were going on?

Sununu: Well that's different, that was primarily a State Department issue. With all due respect to DoD, they could come in and argue till everybody was blue in the face and nobody was paying much attention to their assessment of the difference between a 100,000 and 130,000 troop cut. You let them have their say, but I don't think George Bush was being influenced one iota by

the nuances that were there. I shouldn't say that. I shouldn't be so quick with that. I think he listened to it and listed it, but he was much more—let me jump ahead. I am absolutely convinced that of everybody who was in on those discussions, the only one that knew how far he was going to go was George Bush. It's one of the few times, I think, he was sitting there and listening, but if you didn't make an argument that went "ding" with him, he wanted to hear another argument. He wanted to hear as many arguments, pro or con, as he could. But if it wasn't something that was registering as a real problem, he really wanted to hear more of something else that was an argument against it.

I think he had this vision of triggering this thing and moving it forward, in the back of his head, for at least six months or a year before that. I don't think he knew what he was going to do, but I am convinced in his heart he thought that what he had to do was something bold to trigger this process. And the troop cuts I think he latched onto about November or December as being the horse to ride. Baker, to his credit, began talking more and more aggressively about what could and couldn't be done and touching base with Shevardnadze on how this, I think it was Shevardnadze at the time—

McCall: But that's also later in the process–

Sununu: But I think there were preliminary discussions. There was somewhere an indication that this—You wrote the book, so you tell me.

McCall: Well, we don't have to go down that path. Basically it's a question of how to address the Soviet troop presence in Europe. And that is the debate that's brought in, that's why I was asking about DoD, because the notion is "How do we get the joint chiefs in line on this early on?" It's neither here nor there for our discussion here.

A different point I want to ask, though, is the repercussions of the Tower defeat in terms of relations with Congress. Was there a lingering ripple of this? Was there hostility?

Sununu: Only in, I think, the Senate armed services committee—isn't that Nunn's committee? Because there was a real intensity in the discussions. Remember, a lot of these guys were very close to Tower. A lot of them really didn't like Tower. And a lot of them didn't like having to vote. And I think they wanted us to withdraw it more than anyone else.

Karaagac: What was Nunn's—

Sununu: The residue was there that we forced the vote in that committee and in the Senate, but it doesn't last long.

Young: Were the relations with Nunn okay after that?

Sununu: I think Nunn was in his Hamlet stage. Nunn was thinking he might be the next Democratic nominee for President and if he wasn't thinking that, his genes were telling him that, and I think there was a lot of that whole chemistry in the process. In an odd way, I think it

actually made things a little easier for some of the changes we wanted to make in the budget. That Nunn was much more cooperative, having had his victory.

Young: Cheney got in okay.

McCall: The next sort of loggerhead to think about with Nunn is over the Gulf War though. I mean, I don't see a correlation between the two. I think it's a different—at the hearings at the beginning of the Gulf War.

Sununu: Let me finish the congressional relations in general and then go to whatever you want. One of the problems we had in congressional relations is that George Bush thought that his friends cared about him as much as he cared about them. I think he thought Don Riegle would be more constructive on savings and loan than he turned out to be. Not that he had to cave in or anything, but agree to his hearings. Brady would come in and point out what Riegle was doing and I think the President felt, *Oh gee, he's a friend, I don't understand why you think they're bad hearings,* instead of *Oh my God, they're bad hearings, why is my friend holding them?*

I think he expected more from Rosty [Daniel Rostenkowski] in terms of supporting the budget agreement and didn't get it. He hoped that John Paul Hammerschmidt could have done more for him on some of the budget issues than he did. He never expressed it, never said anything but positive things about him, but I can tell you that as a friend of his, I was disappointed that his friends weren't better to him than I think he deserved in terms of what he gave to them.

Karaagac: Did that go both ways? Didn't Rostenkowski feel that Bush on capital gains had gone around him? Mitchell the same?

Sununu: Mitchell hated capital gains? Mitchell just killed capital gains out of partisan spite. But Mitchell wasn't in his list of friends. I don't know about Rosty's feeling on that but I don't know how we went around him. I don't know the answer to that.

There were a few others that he had been in Congress with on both sides of the aisle that I think he expected to be more supportive than they turned out to be.

Relationships with Congress. There was a group of Democrats, conservative Democrats, that we worked with fairly well. We tried to give them as many perks as we could, tried to convince them to switch parties. Eventually got a couple of them although they switched after we left: Louisiana, Buddy [Charles] Roemer eventually switched and ran as a Republican for Governor. So we worked that hard. Because we only had 174, we needed all we could get. Since a lot of the vetoes were anticipated, the pro-life issue vetoes, there were about two dozen Democratic Congressmen, for example, that were strong pro-life that we isolated as a block to work on. There were the budget conservative Democrats, Texas' Charlie Stenholm was kind of the leader of a group there.

Milkis: Tim Penny, was he…?

Sununu: Yes, I think so. Some of the Louisiana Democrats were the environmental conservatives. So we had an idea in our heads of blocks of Democrats that had affinities on certain issues and we worked them. You know, McClure and Calio asked me to give them time and I gave them time. We gave them meetings in the White House, spent time with them. Rides on Air Force One when the President was going places. And the trouble you have, and it's so hard to balance, you're trying to cultivate a few extra votes and every Republican then that doesn't get to ride on Air Force One resents the two Democrats that did ride on Air Force One. You can't be right.

But you just have to say, "This is the strategy we're going to take, we're going to take our lumps, we're going to take our criticism, but this is why we're doing it and you tell the President you're going to get phone calls from Republicans complaining about this." And the President, again was such a nice guy that he hated hearing anybody not getting half of anything—"have half" I think was his old nickname. He wanted everybody to have half. I remember, he really got angry with me one day.

My good friend from Ohio, Ralph Regula—Ralph really promised us he'd vote on something, made a big deal about it, and then decided at the last minute, for some silly reason not to vote for us. So the next day he comes in and asks for tickets to the presidential box at the Kennedy Center. I said, "Ralph, you voted no and now you want tickets? I'm not going to let you have the tickets." So Ralph goes to the press and there's a big story in the press, the evil Chief of Staff, which is now redundant. And the President got so angry. How could I be so petty with his good friend Ralph Regula that I didn't give him the tickets to the President's box? I said, "Mr. President, he voted no, we needed three votes and he voted no." And he just, "Well we don't do things like that." And I said, "Okay Mr. President." But that's what you do, you have to do that. You give a couple of Democrats tickets to the presidential box, it's what I call the patronage side of politics. It's there. It's the license plate equivalent.

Milkis: I understand that some of this had to do with perks and balancing, I'm not denying that, but did it also have to do with the fact that you were trying, in a way, to put together a centrist coalition at a time when the parties in Congress were becoming more polarized?

Sununu: We weren't really trying to put a centrist coalition—we were putting a conservative coalition together. We were looking for the Democrats who should have been conservatives.

Milkis: But you had to work with Kennedy.

Sununu: On issue by issue. What we tried to do is know more about every issue than anybody we had to deal with, and we had the horses to do that. We had Darman, who knows more about everything including God. We had Porter, who knows more about every domestic issue. We had Scowcroft, who knows more about every foreign policy issue. And we really worked hard to be as knowledgeable as we could when we went out there. It was an exercise we went through. And I had those meetings in my office. When those folks came in to talk about global warming, they came in with five or six of their people and I guarantee you they went out shaking their heads.

When they came in to talk about wetlands, we knew the laws, we knew the customs, we knew the specifics of the law they were violating, we knew the old regulations, we knew the new regulations, everybody was there. Usually the bureaucrats who do this all day long are used to coming to the White House and overwhelming them with knowledge. Didn't happen. It didn't happen. We worked hard to make sure it didn't happen. We did our homework. We spent time on it, we prepared. And I think that was as much of a reason for our success as anything else. And the President was willing to stand firm. I'll give you one other example.

We fought for childcare. We fought for vouchers in childcare. Now, we fought for the vouchers to be acceptable for not only the business of childcare that's out there, but for church-based childcare and family-based child care. And we got an agreement. The ally I got on that was Tom Downey of New York, Rosty's number two or three guy, and it had to go through Ways and Means, so that's how we worked it. And we got an agreement on that. It's part of the budget package. The budget package is distributed at two in the morning and it is put on the desks of all the Congressmen. Remember, the vote took place God-knows-when. One of the guys comes in, Republican Congressman or Republican staffer, I don't remember which, and he says the voucher that we agreed to is not in here.

I go to Tom Foley—it's 2:30 in the morning—and I say, "Tom, we agreed to this voucher. The President said he would veto the budget bill if the voucher agreement wasn't there." It was one of four or five items. He said, "Well, we'll have to put it on a trailing bill." I said no, "The President will veto the bill." He says, "It's 2:30 in the morning. The President is not going to veto this bill." I said, "Tom, come to the telephone." I got to the phone, called the President, got him out of bed. I said, "Mr. President, you told me you would veto the budget bill if the childcare provision wasn't in it." He said, "That's right." I said, "Would you please tell this to the Speaker?" He told it to the Speaker. The Speaker said, "Thank you, Mr. President." Somewhere, there is a hand-written version of the childcare provision being written around the margin of the page and inserted in the budget that's put on the desks of everybody.

And 2:30 in the morning, the President of the United States gets out of bed and tells Tom Foley it is part of the agreement, it should be here, and he expected people to live up to those agreements. We have people, we worked them and worked them, and you know, attrition is a great part of the process. You just keep working it and working it and working it and then it happens.

I got off on a tangent.

Milkis: Well, I just asked about the coalition you were putting together. I'll ask as a follow up—goes back to some questions James asked earlier—if you went down the Clean Air Act point by point, your argument would be that you were so effective in dealing with Kennedy that at the end you got a bill that—

Sununu: No, he wasn't on the Clean Air Act.

Milkis: I'm sorry, the ADA.

Sununu: Yes. I would say this. We got as much as we could get out of ADA. ADA was one where we were always on the defensive because there were 90 Senate votes for it no matter what. We weren't going to be able to fix this thing anywhere else but there and so, even though we negotiated aggressively, we had to take whatever they'd give us. We got what we wanted but we knew that we were not in a position to negotiate or say we'd veto, because with 90 votes against us, there's no way to sustain that veto.

Milkis: How about the Vice President's office and the people who sat on the Competitiveness Council. How did they weigh in to some of these regulatory values?

Sununu: Let me take it first in terms of legislative methods. When we got stuck legislatively, the guy I went to all the time and said, "Mr. Vice President, whom do you know in the House? We need five votes in the House, here's where we are." And he would always find two, three, four, five guys he knew, jump in the car and go up. Invariably he would come back with the votes we needed. Senate, same thing. He said, "Why don't you try this or have somebody do this? Or have somebody from the district call this guy." He had dealt with these guys before and just was very much a proactive part of the legislative returns.

The Competitiveness Council. Bureaucrats in Washington long ago learned that once Congress passes legislation, nobody reads the rules and regulations. So, they take the rule that they want to whatever limit they want it to be and they do whatever they want. Then they cross the line a little bit in an ambiguous way and hope that in the enforcement, they'll take another 20 percent. It's reality. We wanted to take hold of that. So the Vice President proposed this Competitiveness Council and would accept the responsibility of reviewing the regulations that had normally been done by the Porter shop. Roger didn't have any problem with doing that and provided the support for it.

Milkis: OMB [Office of Management and Budget].

Sununu: OMB did a lot of it. And Darman was all for it. So we put the Competitiveness Council together. All it ever did was ask that the rules and regulations that were being written conformed to the laws. Well, for a lot of these shops, this was anathema: "Requiring us to live under the laws that had been passed? This is the EPA, we can do anything we want." That's why we ran into trouble. But nobody ever, ever demonstrated that anything they asked people to include or take out was not consistent with the law. They groused about it, they complained about it, but they never said, "They're asking us to do this contrary to the law." Never.

Milkis: Were there any warnings from people like [David] McIntosh who ran the Competitiveness Council at one point, or Bill Kristol, about some of that legislation? Were they worried that agencies were going to be able to take advantage of the ambiguity?

Sununu: We knew. We were fighting. I mean, there was never a warning in that respect. They were part of the team that was deciding what we were pushing for. It's not that they were on the outside warning us. They were on the inside participating.

Hargrove: You and Darman worked together.

Sununu: Let me give you this, an overall, personal bias. We worked very hard to have a White House that worked well together. I had seen the headlines of the Reagan administration. We actually had fun. This was a White House that laughed a lot. Mrs. Bush makes reference to the raucous laughter that she hears coming from the Oval Office at two in the morning meetings. And it was a tone set by the President and I'll talk about that in more detail in a minute.

Darman is a very smart guy. Darman does his homework as well as anyone I've ever seen. Darman understands the Washington process as well as anybody around. He doesn't understand the politics of what goes on, but in terms of the operations of government, he is superb. Knows the budget up and down, in and out. He has a lot of good friends in Congress. Lot of people who aren't his good friends but is as immodest as the Chief of Staff was supposed to be, suffers fools as badly as the Chief of Staff supposedly suffers them, and sticks his foot in his mouth the same way as the Chief of Staff. So everybody thought that this was going to be one hell of a clash. What they forgot, what nobody understood, is when two people are committed to working hard, willing to do the homework, understand what has to be done, they're also smart enough to know that one and one makes three. Ted Williams would love to play in the same outfield as Joe DiMaggio. We had a ball, we really did. And it wasn't that we sat down and said, "We're not going to argue," it's just that it worked and we found out very quickly that we could each win by reinforcing the contributions of the other.

We had a hell of a lot of arguments over the budget. Dick Darman is not a non-taxer. The only thing I ever faulted—there are two things I fault Darman for, one is I really do think in retrospect, I didn't think it at the time, but I have over the years talked to people who talked to Dick and I do think Dick orchestrated the meeting on the budget agreement in which the draft was written, hand draft. I think he had that wording all written in his head at least before the meeting, and I think if not explicitly, there was an implicit agreement between himself and Foley and Mitchell that that would be an attempted coup and I think Brady was a party to it. Basically it was an effort to try and get me in a position where my anti-tax commitment, because the President had said, "Read my lips, no new taxes," would somehow get softened and that's about the only thing I ever really had a direct problem with Dick on. I can't prove what I just said, it's just a feeling.

He was a tremendous asset for the President and I think he helped put the rules together for the budget agreement that give teeth to today's capacity to hold down spending. He understood the arcane process there as well as anyone. Knew where the rules had to be tight, knew where it didn't make any difference if he made them tight or not. Helped us find the kind of savings we needed at tough times.

Hargrove: A little later on he was very critical of the so-called "New Paradigm." Gingrich was not so vocal in these years. Kemp was a more "New Paradigm"—

Sununu: "New Paradigm" was second and third rate staffers like Kristol and Pinkerton wanting to get a little bit of publicity and claiming that they had been shut out of the process, and then finding the satisfaction and pleasure of public debate with the Director of OMB. It's fun to be arguing. And Dick took the bait and wrote that silly speech of his, or inserted that silly line in the

speech of his. ["Brother, can you Paradigm?"] The speech was pretty good actually, and took them on publicly.

One of Dick's assets was his relationship with Bob Byrd. He had a very good relationship with Bob Byrd; and one of Dick's biggest weaknesses for the administration was his relationship with Bob Byrd.

Hargrove: That go back a ways?

Sununu: Yes, I think so.

Hargrove: The Elliot Richardson years and all that.

Sununu: I don't know. I have a lot of respect for Dick Darman. I may be one of the last of the Bush administration that really retains that respect for Dick, but I think he did a wonderful job for the President. If he had stuck by the President on the "no new taxes," I think we would have—

Young: I'd like to hear more about that. I've never heard an account of those meetings.

Hargrove: I've never heard—

Young: Start from the very beginning. Step by step. You told me to ask you—

Sununu: Darman was livid that Peggy Noonan put "Read my lips, no new taxes" in there. He thought it bound the President. It's what I call a post Stockman residue in Darman. Darman I think had read Stockman's book and believed that the only way to address the budget was with taxes. If not new taxes, an increase in some taxes. And since he was going to be responsible for the budget, he thought that that line put him in a straightjacket as well. So he was really livid. I wasn't there. I didn't see the exchange. I've heard third- and fourth-hand accounts and I'm also smart enough to know that third- and-fourth hand accounts may be exaggerated, but the point is, he didn't like it.

Okay, now we go into dealing with the budget, and the budget is a crisis. Not just the crisis people perceive. But Brady comes to the President, just the three of us one day, and Brady tells the President, basically, that all the people who are buying treasuries, the Japanese and the Europeans, really require a multiyear budget. That it won't do to just have a one- or two-year budget. It has to be a multiyear budget, a la the kinds of things that were coming out of Gramm-Rudman, and it has to have constraints in it and discipline and move towards a balanced budget and all that. And if we don't get a budget in a timely way, whatever timely means, the financial markets are going to have real problems. So the imperative is, "Go get me a budget."

The President turns to Darman, turns to me and says, "Go get a budget." Mitchell and Foley knew this. Whether they heard it from somebody at Treasury or whatever, in my opinion, they decided that George Bush, if he wanted a multiyear budget, was going to have to pay the ransom,

and the ransom was to break his no new taxes pledge. That's the whole purpose of the exercise from their point of view. And in retrospect, they were brilliant at it, absolutely brilliant.

The first budget cycle wasn't so critical. It was post '89; you're in essence kind of going through the transition. We came down to the end of the year and the only thing separating us on the budget for that short period was capital gains and a couple of other things. We were within three or four votes on the Senate side, which was what we needed at the time, to get capital gains deleted. It's coming close to the Christmas holiday and a couple of the Republican Senators who were with us want to go home and Dole doesn't want to antagonize the. So Dole, who had been supporting us on capital gains, caves and says, "There's not going to be a capital gains cut on the budget," and in essence comes in and tells the President that we have to give in to Mitchell and take the budget his way. So we ended up caving in and getting people home in time for Christmas. In time for Christmas is about a week ahead of Christmas.

So okay, we thought, *That's the first budget, we don't get capital gains tax cut, we don't get the package we want, we'll do it next time.*

Hargrove: The capital gains was seen as a way to stimulate the economy, make it work more efficiently?

Sununu: That's right. And, as the Democrats said, may produce a short-term revenue gain, but they believed would be a long-term revenue loss. We thought it would be a dynamic—we said, if you do dynamic scoring—This is the old argument, when you analyze the impact in a budget, you do what's called static scoring or dynamic scoring. Static scoring is merely adding or subtracting the effect of the law change on that issue alone. Dynamic scoring says you can treat the stimulus of the economy as part of the scoring and thereby look at the net benefit.

Milkis: Well, the rules of the game were static scoring at the time, so they would always win, since they controlled the CBO [Congressional Budget Office], they controlled the rules of the game.

Sununu: So we come back and we start putting the budget together for '90, in '90. It's clear it's going to be a bloody mess. The Democrats don't want to hear about anything. We start going up. They play the old dead on arrival with the package the President sends up there. We go up and start to talk to them and boy it's clear they're digging their heels in for a real long battle. We try to negotiate stuff and it always comes back to, "What taxes? What taxes? What taxes if revenue is needed?" We said, "Well, what taxes do you want?" And they would say, "If revenue is needed, the President has to propose it." If you go back you read all that kind of stuff. So it's clear that this is going to be a bloody, bloody mess. And I went to the President. I said, "Mr. President, this is going to come down to a battle, a political battle. This is not going to be a logical battle, this is not going to be a battle among statesmen, this is pure, raw, unadulterated politics." And he just couldn't believe that Mitchell and Foley would risk the financial stability of the system. Just couldn't believe it. Said, "Go back and try again." So we kept trying. And it goes nowhere, as you know better than I.

In a last desperate effort, we propose this Andrews Air Force base "let's lock ourselves in until we get it" kind of thing, and that's fine. But the problem, which we didn't anticipate, is that we have Darman and myself and the OMB staff, which is about a dozen, two dozen key people. The Democrats have twenty Senators, twenty Congressmen and each one with twenty staffers. And boy, it gets to be long and drawn out and so we put the group together. I don't remember everybody who was on it. I do remember [Robert] Packwood, I remember Gingrich. I remember Phil Gramm, I remember [Peter] Domenici, Dole.

Hargrove: Who were the key Democrats?

Sununu: Byrd, Foley, Mitchell, [Jim] Sasser. There were only two key Democrats, Foley and Mitchell and Byrd. Even Sasser, Chairman of the Budget Committee, to coin a phrase, was irrelevant. The committee chairman was Bob Byrd. So we go there and the Democrats, to be very partisan in my comment here, were just dawdling along, they couldn't care less, it's going nowhere. And Packwood and Domenici are trying and they're coming up with all kinds of variations, and we're coming up with all kinds of variations, and, nothing's happening.

Finally, after a while, we begin to get a little nibble here and a little nibble there. They wouldn't give in on a couple of things. They would not yield on capital gains at all. So we thought we needed a growth stimulus, we were desperate for a growth stimulus. We finally come up with a package that has the following, among other aspects: One, an investment credit. You know, a capital gains tax cut was a stimulus because it creates a sale incentive that you hope results in an investment. We said, "Let's put the incentive right on the investment side." So there was an investment incentive. It was an R and D credit that had been not available, that was going to be put in.

There were four or five economy stimulus pieces in the package, and, it included three features: An increase in the gas tax. An elimination of the bubble. The bubble was 28 percent up to a certain point, up to 33 percent for some more of your income and then back down to 31 percent. We traded the bubble that went up to 33. We pushed the 33 down. I'm sorry, let me say this right—it was 15, 28, 33, 31 and then down to 28 again. So it was 28, 33, 31, 28. We settled for dropping the 33 to 31 and stretching the 31 all the way out and raising the tail of 28 to 31. So we dropped from 33 to 31, the highest rate was dropped. And more Americans were in the bubble that was dropped, by far, than were in the tail that was raised. I think the difference was 400,000 in the tail and 4,000,000 Americans in the bubble, I think it was ten to one. I'm not sure of my numbers. So, we thought, okay. It raised a lot of revenue, and it raised a lot of revenue because in the tail out there, the 400,000, the 400,000 make a lot of money. So they're going to hold the country hostage. We need the budget, the President is saying, "Where's my budget, where's my budget?" What can we do.

We got the incentive for investment, we got the R&D tax credit, we got some of the real estate stimuli back in, all of it. I personally go to Phil Gramm, to Newt Gingrich, to Pete Domenici, to Bob Packwood, and all the members of the core group and I had promised Gingrich we would accept nothing that he vetoed. Gingrich accepts what we have. Phil Gramm accepts what we have. Everybody said yes, face-to-face with me. I go back and I report to the President, we have a package. We call a meeting at the White House with these guys.

Milkis: He had no problems with the details?

Sununu: He trusted us. I mean we went over them. He said, "You guys happy?" Darman says yes, Brady says yes, I say yes.

Hargrove: At what point had he made the statement about revenue?

Sununu: This was earlier—

Hargrove: Much earlier.

Sununu: I'll come back to that. I'm sorry, I left that out. Okay, he accepts the package. We call a meeting at the White House of everybody. The President sits in the Roosevelt Room with just the Republicans, says, "I want to thank you fellows. Does anybody have any problems with what's here?" Nobody says anything. Gingrich doesn't object. The President then goes out and meets with the Democrats as well, thanks them for it, goes out to make a statement in the Rose Garden. I think it was the Rose Garden, I may be wrong, but I'm pretty sure it was. I look out the corner of my eye, Gingrich hangs around inside the White House and doesn't come out onto the lawn. I said, "Uh-oh. He doesn't want to be in the photo op." Everybody wants to be in the photo op. Gingrich goes back.

Now, speculation on my part; the Jude Wanniski crowd gets on the telephone, starts calling Vinnie Weber, Newt Gingrich. I don't even know if Kemp was in on the calls as Secretary of HUD or not and I've never been able to prove it, and I've accused him to his face of it two or three times and never gotten an absolute denial. And it is one of the reasons I said the President might have had problems with Kemp.

All of a sudden they start whipping themselves up into this frenzy. Wanniski says, "It doesn't have a capital gains tax cut and therefore you can't accept it." It was not that taxes were increased to begin with, and he says, "This investment credit is not the equivalent of a capital gains tax cut and you should have held out for a capital gains tax cut." And then it gets whipped into, "And by the way the President said 'no new taxes, read my lips'" and there is added revenue from the gasoline tax.

Well, here's what happens. The Democrats now hear about this Republican revolt, so they decide they don't have to live with the agreement. So they took all the things that they gave us, for our side, in return for the tax adjustments, such as the incentives on investment and the R&D credits and I don't know if they all got thrown out, but I know the big ones got thrown out. Strip it out of the package on the floor of the House and, in essence send this now piece of garbage legislation, except what we kept were the rules on the budget changes, thank God, that made it worthwhile, and in essence sent now what is a tax increase with no saving grace for economy stimuli in it and it goes through. And I called Gingrich and I said, "You agreed to this." He said, "Well, I hadn't read all the details." And I said, "Newt, that is the most unbelievable thing you've ever done."

Hargrove: Did he have troops behind him whipping him up, or was he whipping them up?

Sununu: I think Wanniski whipped him up.

Hargrove: I mean people in the Congress, Republicans.

Sununu: No, no, he might have had Weber whipping him a little bit. Wanniski got a hold of Weber and a couple of other guys. I don't know. I think it was mutual whipping up. I think he was shocked that people wouldn't accept it just because he accepted it and he retreated rather quickly. I think he followed his troops fast. Rather than having to be whipped up he just saw the direction they were running. Anyway, that's what happened with the budget agreement. It passed without the stimuli. I think part of the problems over that short period of time was that the economy really did need a jolt. And the psychological negative of the Gulf War wasn't a long enough war to have an economic stimulus. It wasn't a "let's increase production" kind of war. So it just had the uncertainty in the energy markets that created chaos.

The other thing is that with the euphoria of the war, I personally think that if [Alan] Greenspan had cut rates at the end of the war, the combination of the euphoria of the war and cutting of rates, that economy would have taken off like mad. But he didn't.

Let's go back to this meeting. Boy, I've got to tell you. I don't remember if it was before or after Andrews. I guess it was before; it was the incentive for Andrews. Foley and Mitchell asked for, I think they asked for—maybe we suggested it, but my recollection is they asked for it and I stand to be corrected—a meeting to talk with the President about how difficult this was and how crucial it was, and I think they were vulnerable. They were there to say that the issue of taxes was the key sticking point.

At the breakfast, the conversation starts in which they say, "Mr. President, there is no way to move towards a responsible budget without an increase in tax revenue." That's the phrase, an increase in tax revenue. Then they go on to make the argument that we've been stubborn and haven't moved on the tax issue. And that, "Mr. President, we know you made a promise, but, for the good of the country, take a look at that promise because there is no way I, Tom Foley or I, George Mitchell, can get a budget through my House or my Senate, with my Democratic control, without there being taxes in it. And that's just reality, Mr. President, and there has to be an increase in tax revenue."

So the President says, "Well," and looks to Brady and Brady sort of shrugs his shoulders and looks to Darman and Darman says he understands what they're saying. All of a sudden I'm listening to Darman and I expected him to draw the line. Because we had initially in the conversation drawn the line about the Democrats not cooperating. All of a sudden he quickly moves and I look at Dick. Then the President looks at Brady and Brady shrugs his shoulders again and so the President says, "Well, if it has to be, we'll come to the table and we're open to discuss all issues."

And Mitchell, I believe, I'm not positive, says, "Then let's put a statement together to that effect." And Darman whips out a piece of paper, grabs a pen and in 11 milliseconds, has this three-sentence or four-sentence communiqué put together. I look at it and I believe, and I may

have the wrong words in mind, but it had something in there like "increase in tax revenue would be considered." The distinction I'm making is not new taxes, not an increase in taxes, I think he said "increase in taxes" and I suggested revenue and he put it in there. So the statement as written, revenue enhancement—

Hargrove: That was banged around, I'm not sure it was in that statement, it was bandied around a lot, but that was in—

Sununu: But the phrase as written does not lock the President into a tax increase, okay.

Hargrove: I see.

Sununu: I struggled to put some word in there that did that.

Hargrove: But you could have revenue without having any tax increase and I think they used the word revenue.

Sununu: Yes, I put that in there. I thought I could save—the communiqué was out. For the next two or three days, I'm struggling to emphasize that this doesn't say a tax increase. I didn't realize it then, but the press office, Fitzwater and company, are struggling to tell everybody that even though it didn't say it, it meant a tax increase. Why? I don't know. I asked the President if he wanted to go that far, he said no. I said okay. I'm on the plane with Mrs. Bush someplace. My favorite *Washington Post* reporter, I think it was Anne Devroy, is on the plane, it was either she or Hoffman, they're twins, they're virtually indistinguishable. Hoffman didn't shave as often as she did. Asked me to talk to her about this on background—on background—and I said okay, I will. I go through this very detailed discussion of what the wording is and that there can be revenue increases without changes of the tax laws. That we think a good package will create growth and that we will stimulate the economy and increase the revenue.

The news story comes out in the *Washington Post* the next day, on background, that a high Bush administration official on the plane with Mrs. Bush said so and so. And then, it says, of course, the only other high administration official that was on the plane with Mrs. Bush was Chief of Staff Sununu. So, I mean, there were real zingers. They violate all the rules under which this was done and I found out later that that was approved by the press office. For some silly reason, our press office bought into the idea that the President should be perceived as willing to increase taxes. And part of George Bush's problem was the press often quite considered itself independent of the operation and spun things the way they wanted. In fact, I found out later that the two biggest leaks in the White House were Bill Kristol and Fitzwater. Fitzwater could leak without having to be corroborated. In other words, most of the responsible press looks for a source and a confirmation. With Fitzwater they only needed one because they considered that that was coming through an official channel or whatever it was.

I bring that up here, by the way, I should have mentioned it earlier. Somebody asked why the President was not perceived as liking domestic policy. The reason, in my opinion, and I have gotten this after having been on Crossfire and become social drinking buddies with the press side

of the world, I soon discovered that their perception of the White House is defined by what they get from the press office.

Hargrove: That's right.

Sununu: Marlin Fitzwater loved to brief foreign policy. He didn't like briefing domestic policy, so on an education issue he told the press to go interview the Secretary of Education. So the White House press corps' perception was that the only thing the White House ever did was foreign policy. I have struggled with this question and finally come to the conclusion that he was as much done in by his press office as anything else in terms of global perception.

Masoud: Isn't there some truth to the fact that the President certainly enjoyed foreign policy?

Sununu: He talked in his press conferences as much about domestic policy as foreign policy, but his Press Secretary didn't. Ninety percent of what comes out of there comes not from the President's mouth, but from the Press Secretary's. And I never realized it while I was there.

Milkis: It was much more dramatic—

Sununu: And it's the same thing we talked about earlier, but there was a reinforcing that I never understood while I was there, and I wish I had understood that because I might have been able to do something about it. That's all hindsight on my part.

Young: But the press spun this as the President being willing to accept tax increases. Couldn't you go to the President and explain—

Sununu: I did, and he said, "You know, we'll just have it straightened out," and we couldn't. But he didn't want to retreat from what he had said, and it was one of the hardest—he said, "Well, they'll see what I said, my statement stands for itself, keep pointing to the statement." It just doesn't work. It doesn't work, and he wasn't willing to have a press conference in which he went back on what he perceived was his broad commitment to Foley and Mitchell.

Milkis: Was there any discussion about vetoing the legislation which was stripped of a lot of the agreements? Why was it not—

Sununu: At that point we perceived we needed a budget.

Hargrove: But you do claim credit for the budget in the long run.

Sununu: We claim credit for the provisions in the budget that set the rules.

Hargrove: That's what I mean.

Sununu: But I wish we had gotten the whole package with the stimulus. Frankly, I wish the Republicans who had supported it didn't run to the excuse of increasing taxes as the reason they

didn't, because I'm convinced that they didn't support it initially because of this "we've got to have a capital gains cut" crowd whipping them up. It's a very odd aspect of the whole thing.

Young: Wouldn't the Republican defection on this issue do a great deal of damage to the President in the public eye?

Sununu: Oh sure, it did.

Milkis: Because they are the ones that in effect carried the message that he had betrayed his—

Sununu: Right, and it became a real crisis because it was right before the '90 election. And Ed Rollins jumped on it. I'll tell you a little story, Ed grabbed me at Laxalt's party this last Christmas and Anne Compton from ABC was there. He grabs me and he says, "Anne, you ought to stay and listen to this," and he apologizes to me for all of the things he said in the press in '90 about the budget agreement, and he says, "You know, with all the grief we gave you, you never really came back and attacked me viciously. What we were saying was unfair to the President and unfair to you. In retrospect, I don't understand why we did it." I said, "Rollins, this may be the only time in your life you've ever said the right thing." I couldn't believe it. Even Rollins now.

Milkis: He advised the Republican candidates to distance themselves—

Sununu: Absolutely. They had this polling data.

Young: You didn't have any sense of this potential defection.

Sununu: Oh yes, I did. Not until it happened.

Young: I mean before.

Sununu: No, it is all in a day or two. I got the agreement from Gingrich. I thought everything was copasetic.

Young: You didn't think anybody was double-dealing?

Sununu: No, he came to the White House meeting and didn't disagree with it. It wasn't until we walked out and I saw him out of the corner of my eye that I had an inkling, and then it all happened the next day.

Hargrove: Is this the beginning of a new populism, Gingrich inspired, which was finally consummated in '94, which is very different from the way you approach government.

Sununu: No.

Hargrove: You don't think so, okay.

Sununu: I'll tell you what it was the beginning of. In a way it was the beginning—they weren't standing on populism at the time, that's why I'm saying no. Populism came in '94, as you've defined it. But between what we're talking about in '94 is four years; there are two elections, '90 and '92, before the '94 election. And so, there is a great deal of buffering in between in which this thing evolved. All this started was a coalescing around Gingrich.

Hargrove: Yes.

Sununu: And if you will, a hinting to Bob Michel that he ought not to run again. That's what it started. Now, the problem was twofold for the President. One, it was an internal revolt of Republicans. Two, it created this image that he backed down on his promise, despite the warnings of his Republican friends, which is not true. I can tell you the only other person who was anti-tax—I mean, it's just crazy—Quayle and I were the only two anti-taxes in the White House, everybody else saw merit in going this way, nobody saw the political risk. You know I grew up in "ax the tax" New Hampshire. I take the pledge kind of thing and live with the pledge and there are no subtleties to it.

There are two issues in America that can elect or defeat any election, still, I think, if you handle it right. One is taxes and the other is electric rates or auto insurance. Either one of those, if you handle it right, people don't realize it. That's what killed [Jim] Florio. That's what killed Mel Thompson in New Hampshire. But it's true. Those are the—that doesn't mean everybody who enunciates a position is going to win, they've got to be handled right. But they are very deadly issues because they affect the paycheck stub you get every week. And it hurt Bush more than he ever understood, because he never got the statesman's credit for the statesman's act. All he got was the burden for breaking his promise.

Now I think that Dick took a lot of satisfaction in getting this changed because he had lost to Peggy Noonan in the speech back then. He won't admit it and I don't rub it in that much.

Young: Earlier, when you were talking about Dick Darman—

Sununu: By the way, I have never said publicly that I didn't support the President, and I've talked to him about it since then, so it's okay. But this is probably the first official statement on my part that I was opposed to the tax increase. That Quayle and I were the two guys who recommended to him that he not—

Hargrove: But you could live with the bubble change, you could live with those modifications?

Sununu: No, I would not have gone to the bubble change. I could live with it. Wait a minute, here's the point. Once George Bush told me what he wanted, it made no difference what I wanted. That's my point. George Bush wanted a budget package and he was willing to live with the tax increase mode. I went and got him the minimum tax increase I could possibly get and get him a budget. But I wasn't happy with the bubble change. I think we should have squeezed. I would have squeezed Mitchell and Foley and I would have made Mitchell and Foley suffer what the Gingrich Republicans suffered when they shut down government. I would have done it—but

it would have required the President to stand up there and point at them, which he did not like doing.

Hargrove: It was not his nature.

Sununu: But Foley and Mitchell were the ones that took this country to the brink of financial crisis and the President did the statesmanlike thing in changing a political position that was really the third rail kind of an issue for him because he perceived that the country needed a five-year budget. And, as I pointed out to the press when I was interviewed, it generated a projection that by 1994 we'd have a $68 billion surplus.

Young: You haven't made any reference to the perception. You talked about inside Washington, but what about the perception, was there any thought to how something that might include revenue enhancement or tax increases might be presented?

Sununu: We tried. We thought we had come up with a package that was presentable. We were going to argue that we'd cut the highest rate. We were going to argue that we got the equivalent of a capital gains tax cut. We were going to argue that we got an investment tax credit cut. We were going to argue that we got the R&D tax cut. You know, for the two days we thought we had something.

Young: You had a plan?

Sununu: We had a plan. I had a plan here. I don't think—had Lee died by then, or was he ill by then?

Milkis: He was ill.

Sununu: So I hadn't talked to Atwater I don't think. But I had a vision in my head and believe me, in New Hampshire I learned the tax rhetoric very well. I mean, I knew how I was going to repackage and spin it in the nicest sense of those words and try to salvage for the President as much as we could, and I thought we were going to have a Republican Congress cooperating with us. So I was going to have 174 spokesmen out there in the next five weeks running for re-election, using the same language we did. I went up, and I admit, I was livid at Gingrich. I went up to the Republican caucus to try to explain to them why they should support the President and he had them whipped up and some Congressman from Michigan said, "Well, you're up here and you want us to endorse this and what's the President going to do for us?"

I said, "Well, do you want the President to campaign for you?" He said yes. I said, "Are you going to vote against the President's position?" He said yes. And I said, "Why do you expect the President to stand on the same platform with you running for reelection when you're opposing him?" And that caused a firestorm in the caucus. "You're threatening us that the President isn't going to campaign." This was before they decided they didn't want him. "Sununu is threatening us," and this and that and this and that. And I said, "Oh God, now I did stick my foot in it." But it was a firestorm meeting.

Young: You had said earlier that Darman—you made this comment that Darman, among all of his assets, didn't understand the politics. Was that possibly one of the sources of difficulty in this question?

Sununu: No, he thought—see, you have to give everybody credit for what they thought. I think he thought that the success of getting a budget that would work, instead of a Stockman budget that didn't work, would have great political positive repercussions. I'm sure he thought that. He's not doing anything to stick the President.

Young: Oh no, I didn't mean that.

Sununu: He's thinking he's doing the right thing.

Young: There again, there's the public perception that might fix on the taxes part.

Sununu: And let me say this, we worked hard. I really thought that given the fact that we were being forced into taking this route, that what we came up with was very artful. It really was. We could argue we cut the highest rate. We could argue that—and I think the number's right—four million Americans got a tax cut, while 400,000 had to pay slightly higher taxes. You know, I felt all the arguments were there to make it as palatable as possible. That didn't mean that I thought everybody would buy everything, but at least we could make the argument. I could craft the campaign speeches to deal with the issue and if they were artfully presented, we might get away with it.

Milkis: So the Republican defection then got the Democrats—

Sununu: The Republican defection got them off the hook. I mean, Rosty salivated on the floor when he saw Gingrich. Rosty hated the R&D tax credit and the investment credit, he hated them. Foley made him take them.

Young: That's why I say, it called those deals off.

Sununu: It saved them. It saved—we had really gotten everything we could get out of it and it saved them from that.

Karaagac: Do you think the President could have stanched it if he had gotten up front aggressively, quickly?

Sununu: At what point? When?

Karaagac: At the first glimmering of Gingrich defection.

Sununu: He didn't know. You weren't lighting a bunch of leaves, you were lighting a can of hydrogen—whoosh, you had no chance to put it out halfway.

Karaagac: You're blindsided.

Hargrove: And Domenici and others were quite responsible over the years, weren't they, on budgets, but they're Senators, they had no influence any other place.

Sununu: No, Phil Gramm, the former, Gramm was a hero to most of these guys, he had no influence back there.

Karaagac: McClure and Calio, they had no inkling.

Sununu: Once Gingrich, who was the whip—wasn't he whip at the time?—once he goes and the Vinnie Webers of the world go, this is a small group within a group. I mean there are about 20 or 30 of them that are lunch buddies.

Milkis: Conservative Opportunity Society.

Sununu: Yes, COS. And look, I went up there trying to do what I could, but I obviously added gasoline to the fire with that meeting, but there was no way I was going to win one or two. I had to win them all or none because a small defection was as bad as a big defection. You lose the bill, you lose the bill. So I tried to use everything I could, but it was terrible.

Milkis: Didn't the President go on and make a speech just before the vote? I'm pretty sure he did but it was not—I'll have to go back and check.

Sununu: I honestly don't remember.

Milkis: I have it in my notes that he gave a speech the night before the vote.

Sununu: There was no vote, nobody's vote to change, we knew. Maybe he did but I don't remember.

Young: It just evaporated.

Sununu: I wasn't used to that. I had never had a legislature in New Hampshire tell me that they were going to vote one way and not at least come to me and say, "Look, I told you I was going to vote and I've just been back home and I'm going to have to vote the other way." They always had the courtesy—the two or three times that it ever happened, I never got blindsided. I had a change in votes, but I never got blindsided. This was unbelievable because I looked them in the eye and asked them—he was the second one I went to. I went first to Phil Gramm and then I went to Gingrich. I wouldn't have gone to the others if they had said no. I went up from the least likeliest and Phil wasn't least likely, but of the two, I needed him in the Senate and Gingrich in the House for the conservatives. I gave the Senator the benefit of the doubt to be first and Gingrich to be second, and I worked my way back up. So I looked them in the eye and asked them the question. Then in the Roosevelt Room he had a chance to object and he didn't. That's what I mean by blindsided.

Young: But then he said he didn't have a chance to read the details or something like that.

Sununu: Dingleberries—that's with two g's.

Masoud: I think it's actually with one.

Sununu: But in his case. We've stayed friendly over the years and I just have never understood that, never have. Never have. And it was recoverable even after the vote. After the vote it was still politically recoverable if they had handled it right.

Hargrove: But if it had been done your way, Bush would not have been appearing to violate his pledge.

Sununu: That's correct.

Hargrove: It was the appearance that really hurt him.

Sununu: You can't get slightly pregnant.

Hargrove: His polls started to go down about that time.

Sununu: You can't do that. And as I say, the only two that were vocally opposed were Quayle and myself, and maybe Boskin, but I'm not sure. I think Boskin was like an economist: "on the one hand and on the other hand." But maybe I'm not being fair to Mike. He probably was opposed, but Brady and Darman were the keys and I don't think he would have yielded if they hadn't.

And their arguments were brilliantly wonderful. Remember, I brought up the 1989 situation because we had a confrontation in which Congress caved on the capital gains. Now this was another confrontation in which our congressional friends claimed the President caved. And again, I really think that the first trigger of displeasure was not the tax increase by Gingrich, it was that they were inspired by somebody who was a little bit upset, a lot upset, that there was no capital gains. I can't prove it, I don't have evidence, I'm giving you my opinion on who I think caused the firestorm.

Milkis: Was there a feeling by the Wanniski crowd that this was Darman's doing, that Darman never bought the whole supply side thing and as a matter of fact—no?

Hargrove: This is something that carried the Darman—

Sununu: An albatross.

[BREAK]

Sununu: Let me talk about the process, because there are two things that I think it's important for you to understand. How a President functions in the White House—I can talk about how this President functioned and I can guess at how some of the others did. It's important because the hardest thing in the world for a President to do is to have established a process that is somewhat contradictory, that lets him know everything and doesn't so saturate his time with minutia that he can't handle the important issues. And processes evolve and adjust, so what you start with isn't always what you finish with. What we started with was very much what was in place when I left, with some very minor modifications. Again it was done with sort of the understanding that, you know, "Let's try this, Mr. President, and if you want some changes you tell us what you want" kind of thing.

Part of the dictating conditions is when a President wants to wake up and when a President wants to go to sleep. George Bush used to get up fairly early, work in the residence of the White House and then come down to the White House. The day started with Andy Card and Ed Rogers generally getting to the White House about 6:00 or 6:15. I would get there about 6:30. They would have prepared for me materials that reflected news clips, CIA messages, and whatever came in overnight from whatever source to say, this is what's going on that wasn't going on yesterday and that you ought to know about and tell the President about, or we ought to talk about and let the President know or get a response from the President on.

I had an open door policy. I would get there about 6:15 to 6:45. After I would talk to Andy and Ed for about 15 minutes to find out if the world was going to end that day or whether we had another day, my door was basically open to anybody in the 18.5 acres of the White House—which is the EOB [Executive office Building], and anyone would come in and see me from about 6:45 to about 7:10, 7:05. Every day one or two people would come over. For the most part I would listen for a couple of minutes and if it was something that was worth following up on I'd say, "Come back at such and such a time or make an appointment with Jackie to come in," or "Go tell Porter"—or Boyden or Demarest or somebody—"that I said they ought to spend some time with you and then you can come back to me." So, I thought that was a very important thing.

In the afternoon people knew that they could probably catch me from between 5 and 7, really, it was a wide open door. People would come in. It was a good way for me to hear about things but also to let people feel comfortable about coming in. It makes even those who aren't in the loop feel they are in the loop.

All right, so we met from 6:30 to about a quarter to 7. While the door was open, everybody was coming in. Darman would come in early, Boyden would come in quite a bit. All the people who were going to go to the 7:30 meeting. At that 7:30 meeting, there were about 15 people, all the people who were assistants to the President: myself, Brent, Andy Card (my deputy), Boyden Gray, Marlin Fitzwater, Bonnie Newman (in charge of administration), Demarest (in charge of communication), McClure (in charge of legislative liaison), Cicconi (the President's staff secretary), Roger Porter, and others. There were about 15. In that 30 minutes, from 7:30 to 8, we would go through everything to define what we were going to do for the day, because at 8:00, I would go in to see the President.

We would hear from Marlin what happened in the press, hear from Roger and McClure what might be going up as legislation, hear from Brent who shot whom and who invaded whom, or whatever, hear from Boyden whether there were legal issues to address, from Darman what his problems were. It was a bang-bang-bang-bang-bang. For those of you who are historians, what has been preserved is the agenda to those meetings that would be prepared by Andy and Ed Rogers after we talked at 6:30, a quarter to seven. Everybody's name was on there and a slot for them and then there would be the special items I would raise. They're probably cryptic but good to find out what was talked about on that day. So I suggest to you that if you go to the library you'll find those.

I would then go in and see the President, at 8 o'clock. Brent and I go in to see the President. CIA briefer comes over at 8. If there was a problem—by the way, there was another open door relationship that was very unusual and that was Brent and I. I am very proud of the fact that Scowcroft and I probably never had a cross word in the process. It doesn't mean we didn't argue issues. I wandered down to his office uninvited, any time. He came down to my office, uninvited, any time.

Hargrove: Where was he? You were in the big corner office, I guess, where was he?

Sununu: This is the front lawn of the White House, the National Security Advisor was here, the Vice President is here, the Chief of Staff is here and the Oval Office is here. What made it awfully convenient is the men's room was next to Scowcroft's office. So every time I went down to take a leak I stopped in to wake him up off the couch.

Young: Drinking a lot of coffee.

Sununu: But really, this is very important. It was a raucous White House and I think it was one of its most importantly positive ingredients, even in the tough times. I would go down to say something obnoxious to Brent, Brent would stop in and say something obnoxious to me. My secretary Jackie [Kennedy], who had been with me as Governor, and Flo [Florence Gantt] who had been with Brent for 30 years. If I was getting crotchety Jackie would go down and get Scowcroft. If Scowcroft was getting crotchety, Flo would come down and get me.

It doesn't sound like a very big thing. But I remind you of the Kissinger-Rogers, Baker-Meese, that kind of a tension in the White House, and it was very important when we got to the Gulf War. It got forged by the crisis on the Tower nomination probably. We got to know each other certainly during the campaign, I got to know Brent after the election, after I'd been named Chief of Staff, as we started to prepare. But I stress that because it made things a lot easier for the President that way. He never had to worry about dealing with staff tensions, which I guarantee you is the most debilitating drain on the President's time, when there is a conflict amongst the two key people that he has in the White House.

Our staff meetings were held in the Roosevelt Room. Those of you who know the White House, the Roosevelt Room is here, there is a hallway here and there is a white door, we call it the Monica Lewinsky door, the Oval Office here—

Milkis: I didn't know you were…

Young: Unless she was a fixture in the Bush White House.

Karaagac: Okay, now we're talking legal problems here.

Sununu: So I would get through the meeting in 30 minutes, from 7:30 to 8:00, and Brent would get through it in 30 minutes, and then it would hang around in pieces in which the interacting pieces would then stand around and make appointments basically to deal with the issues that had been raised. But it's very important to understand the role of that meeting and the meeting with the President in that White House. That meeting set the agenda for the day. Marlin told us what he thought had to be done in terms of press work, we then made assignments, go get so-and-so to do this, go get so-and-so to do that. Everyone who had an issue that would interact with anybody else raised it quickly, and immediately we either set up a resolution to the problem or a meeting in which the resolution would be developed. And it worked. It really defined, if you will, the work assignments in a live, dynamic way.

I would then go in to the President. CIA comes in and briefs for 15 minutes. This President was briefed every single day by the CIA. I cannot imagine a Presidency that isn't and yet I understand the last administration stopped that and has it less frequently. We would get briefed by the CIA.

Hargrove: Were they illuminating or were they—

Sununu: Yes, they were artfully done documents. They would come in with a document of about eight or ten pages, I think that's the right amount, multicolored, nice diagrams, nice maps. In the days before the world was comfortable with color copiers, it was great to see what they had over there, little maps of areas, bulletins on what was happening country-by-country, feedback on intercepts. Whatever it was that the President should know is going on around the world came from the CIA briefing. We would sit down with the briefer, the President would ask questions, Scowcroft and I would ask questions as we went down this checklist, and it again would define what the President wanted more information on, and get back to him eventually, through Brent. CIA stuff would come back through Brent and would be discussed at a later meeting.

Briefer leaves. Sometimes Bob Gates, who was Brent's deputy, was there for that part of the meeting, stayed for the foreign policy stuff. The meeting then starts off with the President, Brent, myself. Brent going over either what we had just read from the CIA report, after the briefer leaves, or talking about any of the other foreign policy issues that have to be addressed that day, the results of whatever got done the day before, what we have to do that day. If he has any hill lobbying issues that are associated with foreign policy, Brent talks about them there. Then Brent and I go with the President over the overlap areas, like the defense budget—is it a domestic issue? Nobody knows. We go over the issues that are of mutual need. If we have any differences, if Brent and I could not reconcile an issue between us, in essence, we turned to the President and said, "What do you want? Give us instructions." The President says that's the end of the argument, and we go.

In each case, on every item, the whole purpose of those meetings is to find out what the President wants done on what and what he doesn't want done on what. I then would start talking about the non-foreign policy issues. Brent would stay for most of that, sometimes, most of the time for all of it, but sometimes he had to leave, sometimes these meetings went quite long. At some point in there and I don't know why it was traditionally done in the Bush White House this way, but I think it had been done in the Reagan White House and the President continued it, the President and the Vice President got separate CIA briefings. When the Vice President finished his CIA briefing, he came in, sometimes before ours was finished, most of the time after ours was finished, and just about when Brent was starting foreign policy stuff.

I then went through the results of the meeting I had just had with the staff. "Mr. President, these are the important news items, you're going to hold a news conference today on such-and-such, we want to focus on education, there's a statement going out, you may be asked the following questions, we'll have the briefing papers on the news conference sent to your desk by 2 o'clock, the conference is at 4. I'll come in with Darman and Porter and talk about—whatever it was. This is your agenda, Mr. President, these are the issues. I'm having trouble with Sam Nunn on the budget. Bennett Johnston wants to see you. These are the guys you want to see. These are the guys who have asked to see you that I have said I can't give you a yes yet, let me think about it. Which ones do you want to see, Mr. President, which ones do you not want to see? Do you want me to tell them you don't want to see them, do you want me to tell them I don't want you to see them. How do you want to handle this? The Governor of California has an emergency request. I'm passing it through the normal process, you may want to call him and express your concern or whatever it is."

From the most significant, "Noriega is shooting at U.S. troops" to the most trivial, "So-and-so wants to bring his mother in." You quickly get a feeling as to which ones he wants to hear about and which ones he doesn't like to hear about. That went, by schedule, from 8 o'clock to roughly 9 o'clock. In fact, it usually went to 9:15 to 9:30, sometimes 9:45. That's why we never started making presidential appointments, unless we had to, much earlier than 10 o'clock. If there was going to be a Cabinet meeting, we went over again the issues that he wanted to stress at the Cabinet meeting. "Mr. President, Kemp is going to come in and talk about the fact that he needs more money for HUD. How do you want it to lean? Do you want me to argue that he should get it? Do you want me to argue that he shouldn't get it? Where do you want this to go? Give me my cue card, coach." It's shorthand. And it went down. Again, because the whole idea of what we do is to give the President a set of functions that does exactly for him what he wants done.

Okay, that process goes through. The last 15 minutes to half hour was generally myself, the President, if Brent stayed, fine, the Vice President, talking about the political side. Not saying, "Now let's talk politics," but it inevitably got to the political side of what was going on, whether there were elections coming up, or whether so-and-so was having an election in his state, or whatever it was, or the campaign side. It inevitably drifted in to a little bit of a political flavor. So that meeting really dealt with four pieces: number one was the critical CIA briefing: "Mr. President, this is the most important thing happening in the world today for you to pay attention to," the broad foreign policy issues, the broad domestic issues and the political issues.

Now, again for you historians, I would go into that meeting, I had a piece of paper with maybe 2-inch boxes on the left hand side, and when I was in the other meeting and before I went in there, I would write in each box a topic and on the right-hand side I had a space to write the notes of the discussion. I had two or three of these when I went in and then I would take notes on the side here as to what he wanted done, what he didn't want done, what Brent wanted done, what the Vice President wanted done, whatever it is.

That unfortunately, or fortunately, is my best and only daily record that I kept. I probably only wrote two or three memos as Chief of Staff in the White House. It might be called the post Ollie North syndrome. I refused, as much as I had been credited with introducing a fully computerized structure in the State of New Hampshire in which I had a terminal on my desk and I could watch live, on-line transactions in any department, I refused to use the email at all on the system and I urged the staff not to, to be blunt about it. It is the most—to anybody in public policy, I will state even today, don't touch the damn machine, unless you know how to erase, erase, erase and under the new systems you not only have to clean your own disk.

And it's not that you're going to do anything wrong. You don't get in trouble in this world in public life for doing something wrong, you get in trouble for doing something right in a way that somebody else can argue was the wrong way to do it. And I really mean that. I may be paranoid on it and I'm telling you this because you have a historical interest and more and more people I think are drawing my conclusions. As historians, you better think of how to deal with this issue. I deliberately did not keep a diary.

I must tell you, I have acquired what I consider the public life tour-de-force and that's the CD of Haldeman's diaries. Having been Chief of Staff, let me tell you, that what that man did every night, in going home and having the discipline after the exhausting days he had, even through the toughest of days, and recording what went on is to me the most unbelievable thing I can think of. I kept no diary on purpose. I kept no notes on purpose except a bare minimum. And I will tell you the most effective, efficient people you will run into in public life are probably leaning my way rather than the other way. I think it is a historic issue that somebody has to think of something to deal with that. I left no paper trail in the process.

Young: That's one reason—

Sununu: And I think it's important, but I just wanted to say it. That document, as sparse as it is, is the most contemporaneous record to reference. Now, I probably would have trouble deciphering the notes of the time. I mean, I'm notorious for keeping shorthand—not shorthand, but one word, two word things to convey the Constitution of the United States. They're there, but that's another thing you can look for if you're trying to do it and they are very, very complete.

Masoud: I'm sorry, those notes that you made are at the library?

Sununu: I'm pretty sure they're at the library and I have a set of copies. I asked for and received a set of copies of those before I left the White House.

Masoud: I don't think…we did a preliminary search and didn't find anything like that. Now that we know, we'll go back.

Milkis: Are your papers at the library? Are these under your papers?

Sununu: I don't know.

Masoud: See, most of the stuff associated with Governor Sununu—

Sununu: I shouldn't say the library. I gave them to the archive structure, I don't know if the library got them.

Masoud: I don't know; we'll do a good check on those.

Sununu: But I'm interested in those because that's my best source that I will use to find out what happened, are my daily schedules, the President's daily schedules

Masoud: We have that.

Sununu: And these documents. I don't know of any other way for me to reference what I did with the President in the White House.

Okay, now it gets to 9:45. Ten o'clock the President's meetings start, and you know what President's meetings are, they're everything, from the chicken of the month club, Ralph Regula coming in complaining about not sitting the President's box, to Gorbachev or [Yitzhak] Shamir, it's a variety of things. And the President, from each one of those meetings, has had prepared, through Cicconi's office, a document saying, "Mr. President, you're about to meet the chicken queen of Arkansas. She was elected by such and such a vote and she will probably ask you for a pardon for her uncle who is in jail in Philadelphia." Whatever he is going to get hit with you try to have him prepared for. There are people who work this very hard.

And I see all of it before it goes to him. I skim 90 percent of it, because you've asked people you trust to prepare it, but you're looking to catch either the big void or the big mistake, so the President doesn't get blindsided. He's got these documents, he gets them, Cicconi brings them in or hands them to I guess Erlinda Casey who was originally his secretary, no—

Masoud: Patty Presock.

Sununu: Patty has those and she brings them into him at the right time, she goes over it with him. He'll say, "What does this mean?" He'll say, "Go get Sununu." She runs down the hall, she gets me. He says, "What do you mean her brother is in federal prison? Why am I seeing her?" "Mr. President, Senator Locke wanted you to see the chicken queen." So that he's prepared. The worst thing in the world is the poor guy goes into one of these—most important meeting in the world for the person seeing him, least important meeting for the day for him—and yet he has to, and I remind you of this, because it's part of what the Presidency is. It is not always being on the

phone with Mr. Gorbachev. And some days you have six of these, and then you have to make the phone call to Mr. Gorbachev.

So you go through this. He'll say, "I'm not going to meet with her without Sununu here. You go get Sununu, I want him to sit through this too." So I'm sitting down there, reaming the hell out of Bill Reilly and she comes in and says, "The President would like to see you." "I'll be right back, Bill, hold onto that thought, I have to see the chicken queen," and I run down the hall.

Let me give you the geography of the White House as George Bush had it: The Oval Office, the door, the men's room, down here, the little private office, the Monica Lewinsky office, you go through a little further there is the little kitchenette and the dining room.

I bring those up because, to a great extent, President Bush spent most of the working day in the little office next door to the main office. Okay, he goes through his meetings. I will look at his schedule and see he's going to meet with so-and-so, and I would have told him this when we had our meeting, "Mr. President, you're meeting with so-and-so, I'll be here for that one, I'm here for this one. Any other one you want me at? Any one you don't want me at?" So I'd go to the meetings he wants me to, I don't go to the meetings he doesn't want me to, although that really turned out to be very rare, or I get dragged into the meetings that he didn't want me at that he all of a sudden decides I better be there to kill the chicken.

But that is how the White House functions, and I stress that because there is this legend that White House Chief of Staffs either let or don't let people see the President. Anybody who wants to see the President, I find out from the President whether he wants to see them. And whether he wants me to kill the deal or he wants to kill the deal. And I can't believe that that's not the way it happens in every White House. Legends to the contrary.

Okay, now I'm in the middle of a meeting with Bill Reilly, for example. And Reilly says, "The last time I saw the President he said we didn't have to do this on emissions, that we could move in this direction and write this." Under normal circumstances I would wrack my brain and say, "Gee, I don't think that's right Bill." He would insist it is. I would ask him to wait while I ran down the hall and I said, "Mr. President, what do you want to do on CO2?" And he'd say, "I don't know. What do you recommend?" I said, "My viewpoint is this, Bill's viewpoint is that, and I think Boskin has said this." Then 90 percent of the time he'll say, "Let's go with this." And I go back to Reilly. Because there is nothing more debilitating to process. If I told Reilly, "Come back to me in a week and I'll have your answer," he would have 15 people preparing a paper over there. I'd have to have 92 guys preparing a paper over here and we'd have a duel. When he really just needs to know what does the President want. We functioned a lot like that. I'd go back and forth into his office, 10, 20, 30 times a day with trivial questions or significant questions.

Hargrove: Now, would he ever say, "I want this staffed out"?

Sununu: Sure.

Hargrove: Put Tom on it.

Sununu: Sure, he'd say, "I can't decide that now. You and Bill have to come in, make an appointment and we'll work it out." Or the infamous, the duel between Bennett and Kemp. It turns out that, as you know, committees have assignments for more than one budget and sometimes the budget allocation process gives a total budget for two departments and then the committee has to decide which department gets which piece of that allocation.

It turned out that HUD and the drug czar were under the same allocation. I'm sitting in my office listening to these two great budget cutting conservatives squealing like little kids for their piece of the pie. And so, eventually, you get it down to a very small piece and then you go into the President and say, "Mr. President, this is what we come down to, which way do you want to go?" But you try and avoid making the President—every time the President makes a decision, he makes one friend and one enemy. Every decision in life makes a friend and an enemy. So that if you can reflect what he wants without making him have to make one enemy each time, then you've done your job. And that's the way I perceive the responsibility.

Hargrove: But if Scowcroft has to manage the NSC [National Security Council] process.

Sununu: He wanders in, too, on his own.

Hargrove: But there's a lot of formal paper preparation debate. I don't know whether Roger did that much of that as well.

Sununu: No, no, no. For Scowcroft or for others.

Hargrove: No, I mean for in his own—

Sununu: In our shop, Roger did tons of papers. I need a paper on education, Roger. I come out, the President wants to know what is this flap over minority scholarships. So Roger would go and get three or four papers, I'd go through them, and it was a mess. You know the minority scholarship issue, and I would hone it down and beat it back and forth and I'd come in and say, "Mr. President, I have good news and bad news," or whatever it is. We'd go over it, and I'd say, "What do you want to do?" Of course, he'd say, "Gee, I don't want to have quotas, but we have to give the minorities scholarships." I'd say, "Mr. President, what do you want to do?" You go back and forth and I'd say, "Let me get Porter in here." And I'd say, "Roger, tell the President what you told me about," or I'd go call Boyden. I'd say, "Boyden, I can't explain to him why he can't have this and that." You know, it was a close enough group that nobody was uncomfortable, in my opinion, in coming in quickly and coming out quickly.

Hargrove: So it was informal though, you didn't go sit in the Roosevelt Room and—

Sununu: Sometimes we did.

Hargrove: You did sometimes, you had a more formal meeting?

Sununu: Sometimes, I'll give you an example, what do you call the trade sanctions, 301? Was it called 301S, where you identified a trading partner that has acted in a predatory way, whatever

the wording was. We would have meeting after meeting on those because it would affect Scowcroft's shop, it would affect the domestic side, 17 layers of nuance. There'd be tons of preparation and then there would be, almost inevitably, a formal Roosevelt Room meeting with the Secretary of Treasury, with Darman, with somebody from Baker's shop, with the trade—

Hargrove: Would Bush be there?

Sununu: Yes, and he would listen to everything, and usually thank them and say let me think about it, or tell them why don't we do this, why don't we do this. You know, as always, you can probably balance out half, three-quarters, 80%, and then get it down to two issues and say now go back and if you guys can't decide between this, come back and see me. Yes, there were various levels of complexity, but the point I'm trying to make is, the greatest number of decisions was made in a generally informal way and they generally had to do with nuances. You want to make sure that even the nuances lay the way the President wants them.

Milkis: So Cabinet members must have been trying to do end runs.

Sununu: All the time.

Milkis: Were there any in particular that were obstreperous?

Sununu: Yes, and I'll tell you which ones succeeded. The ones that succeeded were the ones the President wanted to succeed. The President wants Baker to feel that he can come in any time, so Baker can come in any time. But there were some times when the President doesn't want to see Baker and so you create a situation in which it is difficult. Brady almost as free as Baker. But that was about it.

Masoud: Mosbacher didn't have any special—

Sununu: No.

Masoud: Cheney?

Sununu: No, Cheney would get in whenever he wanted, but he wouldn't wander—Baker would almost deliberately come over without an appointment, just not wanting to have the record show that he was there or something.

Karaagac: Minor digression, what was your relationship with Baker?

Sununu: Very good. I don't think the President would have appointed me without Baker.

Karaagac: He wanted Fuller initially.

Masoud: There was an allegation that Baker wanted…

Sununu: I don't think so.

Masoud: It was well reported that way in the press.

Sununu: Baker understood, more than anyone, that the President needed somebody who had been elected or in politics, in real politics, and somebody who was willing to, somebody who understood what the role of the Chief of Staff had to be. I think Baker understood that Fuller was too close to the press.

Masoud: To the press.

Sununu: Some of them.

Masoud: Because the news stories that you must have seen, Fuller was—

Sununu: Oh yes, the news stories. I will tell you that those stories had two sources, Fuller and Teeter, and I don't blame them.

Masoud: More on the relationship with Baker. Have you seen Baker's book? He talks about the Gulf War and talks about you. Do you have anything to add about those things?

Sununu: Have to ask me particulars. The only time Baker and I had a disagreement, a real disagreement, and it's mentioned in his book, is where he accuses me at one point of wanting to make sure the President gets credit instead of Baker, and he's absolutely correct. I forget what the incident was. But there was an incident in which it looked to me like the State Department was trying to get all the credit and not give it to the President, and I made sure the press understood that the President made the decisions. Maybe somebody can look it up.

Masoud: I can look it up tonight.

Sununu: And ask me about it. He was absolutely right. And I plead guilty.

Hargrove: Was there an inner Cabinet—

Sununu: I never had a problem with Jim. There was one other incident, I did have a problem with Jim and Mosbacher after, well, while Gulf War fires were going on, the Kuwaiti ambassador, who had been a friend of mine before I got into politics, kept calling me and asking me to get certain messages to the President, so to speak. Mosbacher got livid because here was an opportunity for the Commerce Department to somehow be involved in this great Gulf War victory, and when that persisted Mosbacher called Baker and said that I was trying to cut around the State Department. Baker got upset that I was talking to an ambassador without the approval of the State Department.

Young: Is that [Edward] Gnehm, the ambassador to Kuwait?

Sununu: Their ambassador. It was Jabir al-Sabah and he mentions that in his book. And I acknowledge that. But it was just an odd situation with a guy who had been coming in almost

every day during the Gulf War, would just initiate conversations instead of doing it through the State Department. But those are the only two incidents I can think of where even slight cross words.

You asked about people bypassing. The only time it became a problem was when the President was in Kennebunk. I would go home to Salem, New Hampshire, and drive up every day, which is an hour and a half. And in that hour and a half a great deal of mischief can be done. Usually it was Secretary so-and-so just happened to be—

Milkis: Would just happen to be in Kennebunk…

Sununu: That's okay, the President knew what was happening, and I knew what was happening, and he would tell me so-and-so came. I said we would take care of this, would you make sure it happens. Nothing ever serious. And frankly, a lot of people just looking for Kennebunk, and a golf game or horseshoes.

Hargrove: If a paper came over, say, from Agriculture, would the CEA [Council of Economic Advisors] people look at it?

Sununu: Yes. Everything got staffed out. I'm not trying to imply that it didn't get staffed out. I didn't see anything until it got through a whole process. I saw it—people were clever enough, Darman, Porter, all of them, were clever enough to come in early. As I went to the President and said, "Mr. President, we're going to do Clean Air, what do you want it to be?" They would come in and say, "We have to do a spotted owl paper, where does the President want this to come out?" And I'd say either, "Let me find out," or, if I thought I knew, I would tell them and they would do a couple of drafts and bring them in and you'd go back and forth like that.

Hargrove: But Cabinet officers sent stuff over in hopes they could get it to the President—

Sununu: And it always went to the President.

Hargrove: But it got staffed before it came, didn't it?

Sununu: Yes, with a little memo clipped to it saying, "Mr. President, here's Agriculture's view of what the farm problem is." Darman would say, of course, "They're asking for too much money," Boskin would say, "This is socialist farming," and so on. I would have a note at the bottom, "Boskin's right, Darman's wrong, in my opinion, what do you want to do?" Then we would talk about it and he would mark on it, "See me." I would come in and see him and he'd tell me what he liked and didn't like. But you never keep anything from the President. You try to get it to him efficiently. You try to give him 50 words so he doesn't have to read 5,000 words. Now, he may chose to read the 5,000 words, but they're attached to the back. So, he can chose to read the 50 or the 5,000. What George Bush would do quite often, if he wanted to make somebody know that he read it, he would mark on it and put a question on it and send it back to them and they would have the President's comments on their paper and they would be thrilled.

Hargrove: Did he take a lot of work home at night?

Sununu: Cicconi and I worked out a process where the things for signature, routine things for signature would be given to him at the end of the day and he would take them upstairs, read and sign. I tried to keep to a minimum, particularly during the Gulf War kind of cycles, the amount of reading he had to do. So we spent a lot longer on saying, "What do you want here? We're doing the ADA bill, we're still stuck on this, do you want me to tell Boyden to give up on this?" A lot more was done verbally at the morning meeting, just to save him reading.

Look, what a President has to do is not decide the detail, but decide the overall policy. There are times, though, when you have to ask whether the detail fits his vision of the overall policy that you bring to him. But for the most part, you learn over time, and he trusts over time, that you are doing what he wants you to do.

Milkis: How about major speeches?

Sununu: Oh God.

Milkis: Sorry about that.

Sununu: There are two black arts in the White House, and they are so hard to deal with. One is speechwriting and the other is the scheduling and presentation of the President in politics, and they are art forms. Each President has his own preferences on speechwriting and every speechwriter thinks they know more than the President on policy. It's the hardest thing in the world to do. Let's take the most complicated of all speeches, the State of the Union address. The State of the Union address has an input from 237,000 federal employees. Every one of them thinks that they have the most important—all they want is 12 words in the speech, like "I support free shoes for Poland." And now it's changed, because sometimes instead of having 12 words, they want to decide who's sitting next to Mrs. Bush, so it's gotten more complicated in modern times.

State of the Union address—sometime in November you ask around for the major departments to send in their recommendations. I'm sure every Secretary then goes to his 16,000 employees and starts the process and it comes up through there and each Cabinet officer then sends in their list of 20 priorities, each one of them absolutely necessary to be addressed in the State of the Union address. You gather all of these and you sit down with a group. The best speechwriters in Washington for the President, aside from his speechwriters, were Darman, Scowcroft—not so much in terms of word crafting, but understanding what had to be in there as a message—Darman, Scowcroft, Andy Card—Andy had a great political sense.

Cicconi was good at editing. You had to watch Jim because every once in a while, about halfway through the process, something new would show up. He would cross out shoes for Poland and it would be bread for Southern California. It would be a minor edit. But Darman was very good. Brent. You sit down with three or four people like this having honed the obviously inappropriate from the departments and you go and sit down with the President and you say, "Mr. President, these are the things people are looking for, what do you want in the speech?" He would say, "I want to emphasize where we are in the commitments we've made to Europe, what we're doing

in terms of increasing or decreasing defense, our education initiatives are certainly important, we ought to talk a little bit about the impact the Clean Air bill is having." So he talks about what he wants.

Then he goes over these and he indicates some preferences, and sometimes he may even craft an outline, although I think George Bush probably did less of that than other Presidents. Then you take this and you assign a head speechwriter to do the first draft. And they do the first draft and it's an unwieldy kind of thing, slightly disjointed, no effort made for segue, but you start with that and it goes to the President. Usually, we would usually take it through two or three passes through this small group of four or five. I gave Brent a copy, I gave Darman a copy, I would take a copy and mark it up, and among the three of us we would try and take the speechwriter's version and put some emphasis in there that we thought gave it a coherent thread. Maybe sit down again with the speechwriter and get another draft in and then get that to the President.

This is the document, then, that is reflecting the priorities as established by the President, what he wants to emphasize and the best recommendations of his best and brightest advisors who are taking into account the issues of the day, what the President has stated as his agenda for the year in private conversations or public speeches, and taking advantage of the large audience that you are going to get for the State of the Union. You go over it with him and then he tells you what he really likes and what he doesn't like in it. And sometimes you have the speechwriter there for that draft, sometimes you don't. But let's assume you do. So the speechwriter comes in. The speechwriter is writing frantically, trying to keep the notes of the details, and he hears the President say a nice phrase about this and a nice phrase about that and if the speechwriter is any good he will capture some of the President's spontaneous phrases on issues, because he wants to capture him into the speech.

Milkis: So Bush wouldn't actually sit down himself and do any editing.

Sununu: He would, and there would be lots of marked up things on the draft, but he's talking to him [the speechwriter] about what he meant when he marked this up and what he meant when he marked that up. "And I really want to emphasize local control in education, I mean we've got to get the parent and the teacher and the student involved in education," even though he hadn't written that down, he just wrote local control. The speechwriter is frantically writing "the parent, the student, the teacher," and it goes on like that.

So you finish that and the speechwriter goes back and now comes back and probably for the first time you have a speech draft that is close, not close, that's not even the word, that has any semblance to what the President has in mind himself for a State of the Union address. The President gets a copy of that and now he's really doing a serious edit, marking things down, worrying about phrases, and now everybody is competing for words. Darman is in there doing his bit, Cicconi is in there doing his bit. Dave Demarest now has a copy, the communications director, Marlin Fitzwater has a copy. Now it's a decent enough copy to go to maybe ten of the key staffers and they share it with anybody on their staff that is appropriate for them to do so. And it comes back.

All the time, I'm keeping a checklist, if you will, Agriculture's got two goodies in there, Labor has one goody. I want to make sure that no Cabinet officer feels left out by the President. Now I have to balance for the President happiness amongst the Cabinet. As well as getting his message across, this still has a scorecard of psychological stroking for the Cabinet and so you do that. Depending on where you are in the process, sometimes it goes through four, five, six, seven, eight, nine versions.

And then you really start counting for time, you now start editing for time as well. You find all the places you can shorten it because you never have a speech that's too short, you always have a speech that's too long, so the game is how do you shorten it, how do you shorten it, how do you shorten it. Then the really good speechwriters can handle the President's cadence pretty well. You can see that they're doing that, or whatever his favorite things to quote from. Is it Yogi Berra or Aristotle, or both. As Yogi told Aristotle—all that comes into play. And this is really a two-month process for the State of the Union, maybe a three-month process for the State of the Union.

Then it's almost finished and you have to have it vetted by the people whose stuff you put in there. Now, what do you do, do you send the whole speech over to Agriculture? After a while we learned. We sent over the Agriculture paragraphs to Agriculture. Or some you send this and some you send that. Some you bring in and you read it to them. But you want everybody to touch it. To touch the close-to-final version. Then when you finish you have to make sure Cicconi hasn't changed it, or Darman hasn't changed it. Now they've been waiting, they have just three words they want in there—"enhanced revenue opportunities." You read it, you line up the words and you say, oh my God, the first letter of each line spells out enhanced revenue opportunities. I am only slightly exaggerating the bargaining and the negotiating and the pleading for words that take place in here.

Now Brent in the meantime has taken the foreign policy sections and having the same war between Brady, who wants international economic policy emphasized, and Baker, who is no longer Secretary of Treasury and doesn't understand why Treasury is even mentioned, and Brent, who is trying to send a signal to Iran that we are tilting, and all of these things are nuanced in here. Every State of the Union address gets so edited it becomes almost sterile. It loses its vitality.

Milkis: No wonder they turn out to be laundry lists.

Sununu: They do. They turn out to be laundry lists. It's a scorecard of an agenda for the future and a pat on the back for the past and a signal for the world and an embracing of new constituencies and a thanks to the old constituencies. It's everything for everybody in there.

Milkis: What was President Bush's attitude regarding rhetoric? Was this all nuisance for him? Did he see speeches as an important opportunity? What did he think about rhetoric?

Sununu: I think he felt less comfortable with it than Ronald Reagan. Perhaps more comfortable with it than Jimmy Carter, and in a way he felt he couldn't match Reagan, and therefore he didn't

try. What he wanted was good meat and potatoes rhetoric rather than the flowery, but he was very particular about what he said.

You know, if you said something in there and you tweaked Congress, he generally found it and untweaked it. He was a kinder and gentler rhetoric kind of guy. That's the reason why when you asked about speechwriting, every speechwriter thinks that they know. I used the phrase earlier, they want to "put the emph**a**sis on the syllable" they want it to go on. And it's real. You know what I'm talking about I'm sure, it's a very hard part of the process.

McCall: Would you ever rehearse speeches?

Sununu: He would rehearse them to himself.

McCall: He wouldn't do it in front of you guys?

Sununu: No. He would read a paragraph or a sentence, but he wouldn't go from top to bottom, very rarely. No, he didn't even do it with the Gulf War speech.

Hargrove: Did he know how to use teleprompters?

Sununu: Yes, he had used it in campaigns. He did pretty well with that.

McCall: Did you find him self-conscious and a little bit inhibited; was that part of the reason why he didn't want to rehearse?

Sununu: We did a couple of rehearsals on State of the Union speeches, come to think of it. I think we went and set up, yes we did, we set up something in the theater on a couple of the State of the Union addresses, and he went through the whole thing. He did, or almost the whole thing.

Karaagac: This is not a State of the Union question but it's about speeches in general. Was there someone who coordinated—"this would be a good venue for this speech, this would be a good image"?

Sununu: That was done by Dave Demarest, communications, the Mike Deaver equivalent. Steve Studdert originally but after about seven months we got Demarest in there. And Andy did a lot of that in my office. Andy had a good political nose and I would tell Andy, "Go and make sure that these guys know what they're doing, this is an important whatever it is." And I probably have not done justice by Andy Card in the discussions I've had here. Without a doubt he was a superbly attuned political alter ego in the process, but Demarest had the responsibility. The people we would trust inputs from, certainly Andy; Andy had carte blanche to do whatever he wanted to do in terms of that and was smart enough to pick and choose where he should.

For all his political difficulties, Darman had inherited from watching Deaver a good eye for backgrounds and had some good suggestions for venues. Cicconi always had a suggestion. By the way, I'm teasing Jim, I liked Jim, I think he did a superb job. It's just he was smart enough to know that he was sitting at the end of the food chain.

Hargrove: But there was no Deaver-type operation. Send the President out—

Sununu: Demarest. Demarest would pick venues, put him in front of Mt. Rushmore, we've got to do this, and he would be part of the discussions and Dave would come in once a week, once every two weeks and say okay, here's the schedule for the next three months and here's what I suggest.

Milkis: What about Rogich, Sig Rogich?

Sununu: Sig did part of that too, Sig did more the media piece of that. The political—I won't say the political advertising slice of it—but the slice that would be equivalent to the political advertising piece of it. Demarest was there to communicate to the nation the message, Sig was there to make sure that the nation got the political spin on the message, in the best sense of the word.

Young: You refer to the two sets of black arts. One was speechwriting; the other was scheduling the President's appearances. Dorrance [Smith]—

Sununu: Dorrance came in to help in terms of the communications side of the operation. I brought Tony [Snow] in from the *Washington Times* to supplement the staff, particularly when the President was getting a little bit of grief from the right side of the—you can say the same thing two different ways. One way you get applause from one segment of the constituency and the other time you get boos. So we had to have—

Masoud: So Snow was a speechwriter.

Sununu: Speechwriter, came in to be a speechwriter. The reason I said the two went together is you would have the same arguments. We're going to put out the President's position on auto emissions. Is the backdrop the production line in Michigan or the pristine waters in front of Mt. Rushmore, or the pristine air in front of Mt. Rushmore, or the Grand Canyon, or New England where acid rain is killing—and people would argue these venues. Then, in the nuance of the argument, yes, the Sierras are nice, but they're in California. Do we have to go to New York this week and do the Catskills instead of the Sierras or are we going to Texas to do so and so? There's seventeen agendas associated with where he's been, how many times—and oh, there's a Democratic Governor in that state, or oops, this Senator didn't vote with us on this bill, and oops, you're going to have to give so-and-so a ride on Air Force one out there, or don't go to California, or the real estate crowd will beat the hell out of you again.

I was accused of not having him go to California at one point. It wasn't that we didn't want him to go to California, I didn't want him to go back to Orange County where—I won't mention the guy's name, but there were three or four big real estate guys who were getting killed with the S&L crisis who were just being rude and obnoxious about the whole thing and made it an unpleasant trip for the President.

You take those things into account. All of it. They are the two things where there is a public impression of the President. You have to keep an accounting of all the pros and cons of what you're doing and how you're doing it, of where he says it and what he says and who he talks to and who he has lunch with and who he sees before the meeting and who he sees after the meeting and how long does he stay, and how do you get in there? If you're going to New York, can they helicopter to Central Park or do we have to drive and block traffic from LaGuardia all the way in to the Waldorf where he's making the speech? And does New York City then have to pay 12,000 cops eight hours overtime and argue it cost them $380,000 because the President drove?

I mean, I'm trying to give you the whole gamut. And all of these things are different collections of issues in different venues at different times, and they have different impacts. And they have political impacts, and you always, always, every time you make a decision, make a friend and make an enemy. Sometimes your friends aren't vocal for you, but always, your enemies are vocal against you. And again, you have to make sure that it looks like the President didn't say no to anybody, that some clown in the corner in the Chief of Staff office is the son of a bitch who said he's going to go here instead of there. And I considered it very successful. It almost nowhere ever said the President didn't want to go someplace, they'd always blame me. I never said the President didn't want to see so and so, and I guarantee you that we were not freelancing decisions.

Young: Preparation for press conferences was by this standard less complicated.

Sununu: Very interesting thing. If you remember the last few Reagan press conferences, they were East Room extravaganzas in the evening, to get the highest audience. I thought that showcased the Helen Thomases and the Sam Donaldsons of the world, so I changed the policy. I decided, with the President's approval, that the news conferences would be in the afternoon, on CNN, so to speak, so they could be seen live by Mr. Gorbachev and the Europeans as well as the American public. And we started using CNN so that people could see him live. The other way, there was actually a very small audience and all they saw was what the networks chose to put on the news. This way we were on CNN and anybody who wanted to see the President without being deluded by the press corps could do it. I personally think it was one of the luckiest, good decisions I made in the process.

Hargrove: And you made it in the White House press room rather than…

Sununu: Yes.

Hargrove: That's continued.

Sununu: And in the White House press room the press doesn't go out and get their hair done that day, or a new wig or a new dress or a new suit, they're there sweating and they're just ordinary grunts and the star is at the front of the room. Whereas in the East Room, Helen got a new dress, Sam got a new wig, and they're sitting in these elegant chairs in an elegant setting, and they are as much a star as the President is. I really think that was important. And I have to tell you that I was astounded when I left that Sam Skinner went back to that silly evening East

Room format. I said, "It's over, he doesn't understand what he's doing." I really thought that it was important for George Bush to be the star and be seen live by as many people, including his peers, around the world. Everybody was watching, I used CNN, but everybody—maybe everybody was watching CNN. Gorbachev had CNN on. The President went on, he watched it.

Hargrove: This may not fit, but Bush used the telephone a lot, didn't he?

Sununu: Yes. That's an important point. When we came in and I asked for statistics, I don't know what the right statistics are, these might be interesting for you to get. It was something like—there was one head of state to head of state phone call every week. By the time we left, we did two things, One, we put in a much more secure phone system, which turned out to be a great asset, by the way, in the Gulf War. And I really had to press Admiral [Tom] Moore or some of the other people to do that.

When I first came in I said what are the secure phone structures, and they had these God-awful STU-1's, I think, which you got a hernia if you tried to move and if a bird was flying by and reflected the signal, somebody could intercept it. I'm exaggerating of course. We worked hard and pressed and accelerated them to use new technology and there was a whole new phone system. So literally, by the time the Gulf War came, Powell could pick up the phone and call [Norman] Schwarzkopf on the front lines any time he wanted and communicate absolutely securely. And the President could talk to Schwarzkopf from the Oval Office if he wanted. But there were secure phones put in and it really made it a lot easier for the President and Mrs. Thatcher, for example, to converse almost as frequently as they wanted. I don't know the statistics, but it would be an interesting statistic. I'm guessing that it went from one a week to four a day.

Hargrove: How did they handle translations?

Sununu: Simultaneous, third phone translator. Each party sometimes had their own translator, depended on what they wanted. We wanted our translator, they wanted their translator. So, while Gorbachev was speaking the President's translator is on the phone there and the President is listening to the translator and the translator is telling, virtually simultaneously, what is going on. Sometimes the translator may be at a third station, might be over at the State Department and the President is listening to the translator.

Karaagac: And these calls were monitored by…

Sununu: Note takers, a note taker taking as verbatim as possible, and, I believe, in some cases recorded.

Karaagac: And how were the monitors chosen?

McCall: No recordings.

Sununu: No?

McCall: They weren't recorded, they had to be written out, which is one of the reasons the transcription had to be as quick as possible afterwards.

Sununu: I thought in some cases there was a recording of it, maybe not.

Karaagac: How were those monitors chosen?

Sununu: I honestly can't tell you, that was a State Department function. That was a Baker function and a Scowcroft function.

Milkis: Depended if it was a scheduled phone call or not, who would be assigned—

Sununu: Sometimes we scrambled like mad to get a translator.

Hargrove: But otherwise, he called people around the country, he called friends, he called members of Congress, is that right? Mostly on his own initiative?

Sununu: Mostly not. Mostly on an, "Okay Mr. President, here are ten phone calls, people you have to call today to change their vote. We got you the first 230 votes, you've got to get the last ten." But that didn't mean that he didn't make a lot of phone calls on his own initiative. All I'm trying to say is we gave him—unfortunately, part of the Presidency is doing the assigned phone calls. Members of Congress, "Brady's nose is out of joint because Baker won at the last Cabinet meeting, give him a call and give him a stroke, why don't you call Brady and invite him to lunch," that kind of thing.

Karaagac: Did he like that?

Sununu: Yes, call Governor so and so. He loved to reach out. As long as it was a positive phone call he loved making it, loved talking to people, loved working with people, and he was good, even on the tough ones, the "I need your vote" kind of thing. They're hard to do but nobody else can do them. You get to a point where somebody is not going to change their vote unless the President asks them.

So I would think the bulk of the recorded calls were the scheduled calls, which we'd talk about in the morning meeting and I'd give him the schedule. But he made a lot of unscheduled phone calls.

Hargrove: He had a lot of friends everywhere.

Sununu: Yes, and I would come in the morning to this meeting and he would say, "I hope I did all right because I told so and so we'd be in California next week." You know, I'd get those, and then go fix it.

Young: I was going to ask how you knew what he was saying.

Sununu: Oh no, he was very good about that. If it was private and personal I never heard about it. If it was something that interacted with the process, I would find out about it at that morning meeting. That morning meeting was the mother meeting of the day. We held another less formalized meeting at 5 o'clock, almost 100% but not quite 100% of the time, in which I'd stop in about 5, 5:30, 6 and get an end of the day interaction. What happened? What did he have to do? What kind of problems do we have? Just sort of a review.

Young: But you could go in anytime.

Sununu: Forty times a day, without exaggeration.

Young: What about getting the calls through to the President? All the paper that went to him went through you. I presume the phone calls did not.

Sununu: No, Cicconi. Cicconi's job was to work the paper flow and Patty Presock and Cicconi controlled the phone calls in and out. I mean Cicconi knew that today there was going to be a call from the Governor of California and a call from Mrs. [Dorothy] Bush, his mother, and a call from the President of Ford and so and so. These are the calls that he is going to get externally that he should put through. Any other calls to the President he ought not to. I mean, the White House number is 456-1212, at least it was then. You ask for the President's office and you could get to Patty Presock exactly like that if you knew what the extension was. So you get to Patty Presock and you say my name is Governor Smith and I'm calling the President of the United States. She's got to check her list, is it scheduled?

Young: Well, what about colleagues in Washington, Secretaries, Cabinet members.

Sununu: They would call and Patty would take a message and give him the fact that so-and-so called, if she recognized it as a Senator or Congressman. If Jim Smith, the owner of the ABC Casting Company in Spokane, Washington, calls and said, "I'm a friend of the President," she'd probably give me that and say, "Do you recognize him?" because she doesn't. And I'd say, "Gee, I do recognize him, he's really a close friend and a good contributor, let me find out from the President if he wants to return the call or if he wants me to return the call or the Secretary of Commerce should return the call. Did he say what the message was?" She says, "No, he wants to talk to the President." So, on a lot of those I may end up calling the guy and saying, you know the President is tied up but he asked me to find out what's going on. If it sounded like something, the President should call him. You have an informal process.

Young: So you know something about calls.

Sununu: If nobody knows him, you try to have—the White House gets x million pieces of mail a year and x million phone calls. I'll tell you my favorite phone call. We had what was known as the Silver Spring monkeys. I don't know if you remember this. These were monkeys that had been used for medical research and the debate was, some of them were infirm, do you—what's the right word?

Masoud: Euthanize.

Sununu: Do you euthanize them? And there was a big debate. And there was a group out there that would start calling the White House about six in the evening saying spare the Silver Spring monkeys. And every once in a while if I was working late, one of these calls would come through to my desk. I picked up the call one night and this poor lady says, "Oh please, please, save the Silver Spring monkeys." I don't know what made me say this but I said, "Oh, I'm so glad you called because tonight the calls are running about 12 to 1 against."

Masoud: What did she say?

Sununu: There was dead silence. She said, "Oh, I'll wake everybody." That call has always stayed in my mind. But those are the kind of things that happen. By the way, the way the President made a phone call in our administration, and the way I made phone calls and everybody on the staff, there was the most fantastic group of operators in the world. The President would say, "I'd like to talk to Harry Brown in Podunk, Illinois," and in five minutes these operators would have Harry Brown on the phone. I have no idea how they did it.

You get to know them by their voice and you know, I'm at home calling in the middle of the night. I pick up the phone and it's Grace and I say, "Grace, this is John Sununu, please get me so and so," and she'd say "Oh, how's the family and how's this?" They were a wonderful group of people. I have to tell you, when I left the White House, one stop I made, which I guess I had made once or twice around Christmastime before, I went to say good-bye to the White House operators. I have to tell you, it was the most tearful good-bye I had to go through. These ladies were really, really amazing people.

Hargrove: When you first hit the White House, though, you don't know how to do all these things, do you?

Sununu: No, but you sit down with the former Chief of Staff and say, "Kenny, where's the bathroom?" Or, "Duberstein, come spend the day with me and tell me what's going on." And you get the secret handshake, you get your membership card and you talk to previous Chiefs of Staff.

Milkis: You said you talked to all of them.

Sununu: I did. I talked to Duberstein, Don Regan, Howard Baker, Jody Powell, and Hamilton Jordan, because I couldn't figure out which one was really Chief of Staff.

Hargrove: Neither.

Masoud: Cheney?

Sununu: Talked to Dick. Read Sherm Adams' book. I didn't read Don Regan's book.

Hargrove: It's a better book than one might think.

Sununu: Have you seen Don's paintings?

Hargrove: No.

Sununu: He is really a great artist. I mean, he's not Grandma Moses, but he's really good.

Karaagac: What does he paint?

Sununu: Cape Cod scenes, house scenes, flowers. I mean, he is really—it is really well done.

Milkis: Did you talk to anybody from the Johnson administration?

Sununu: I didn't know…

Hargrove: There wasn't any Chief of Staff…

Sununu: No I didn't, the Kennedy administration I didn't either.

Hargrove: Rumsfeld, you must have talked to Don Rumsfeld.

Sununu: I talked to Don Rumsfeld. Let me finish up a little bit with the process. That meeting with the President had another aspect to it. When George Bush set the tone, a personality talking to his administration at that meeting. He always had two or three jokes that somebody had told him the night before on the telephone. Always had a funny comment about something, always working hard to keep it light, and really and truly it ended up, I used the word raucous two or three times, but it did. Mrs. Bush would walk Millie and the Oval Office has these glass doors which look out towards the Rose Garden, and every once in a while she'd knock on the window…and Patty Presock would knock on the door telling us that she could hear it in the press room, keep it down, or the secret service would knock. It really was raucous…

I'll give you one example how the President was. One day he was sitting there and I'm sitting, I usually sat in front, Scowcroft sat on the left side of the desk, the Vice President came and sat on the right side of the desk, the President was here and Gates was there, I'd kind of move over, he'd sit next to Scowcroft. I think the four of us were there one day with the President speaking and the President had a notorious bladder, every once in a while he had to jump up and go to the men's room. And we're in the middle of this discussion and he jumps up and says, "I can't wait any longer," and he runs to the men's room. You know, the White House photographer is everywhere. As he leaves, the four of us are like this and the photographer takes a picture of us talking to an empty chair. The pictures are magnificent. I don't know how they do it.

He comes back to us with this and I said, "Bring us that picture." So the next day he brings the picture in, already framed, and we signed it. I don't know if you remember, Doonesbury was running the President Skippy things, the invisible President, and here's this invisible President in the chair. So we wrote on it "To President Skippy from the staff who sees through you all the time" and the four of us signed it and the President took it and everybody is laughing. He's laughing. He jumps up and he takes the picture and he runs into the pressroom with it and shows

it to the press saying this is what my staff thinks of me. And he got away with it. There was very little printed about that in the press.

He kept that tone and that tone was reflected in the half hour meetings. The next day I would tell a couple of things that the President told as a joke and then Don would always come in and Brent would have something. I stress this because it really created a climate that moved closer and closer because of that. Everybody ended up feeling a lot more comfortable about what they were doing.

Another thing that we did was to discourage people from working on Sunday, with the approval of the President. In Washington, everybody shows how important they are by having to go to the office seven days a week, 24 hours a day. I really tried to convey the feeling that you really shouldn't be there on Sunday and maybe Saturday afternoon wasn't so good either and it was really for two reasons. One, I really think you get 15-20 percent more efficiency out of people the other six days if you don't work the seventh so you're ahead of the game, and secondly, if you don't do that, when there's a crisis, you don't have any slack. This way there was slack in the system so when we got to the real crunch time we had slack that allowed us to do what we had to do and the new stuff as well. And the President really encouraged that. Let me emphasize that. He really wanted people not to lose their family life.

Hargrove: But the days were long, 12-hour days.

Sununu: Days were long, and that's why this was all the more important. I went and told this to the incoming administration. You know they asked me to talk to the people who would be involved, [Mack] McLarty and those guys, and they really never understood what I was saying. About two weeks after they were in office I saw that Domino's was delivering pizzas at 3 in the morning on a Saturday night and I said, "They're going to have problems." They really ended up with no slack when things got tough.

Hargrove: That was Clinton's style however, continuous meetings.

Sununu: I know, but I think that's part of the problem.

Hargrove: What kind of energy level did you have to have to do this day in and day out, year after year?

Sununu: The excitement of what you're doing keeps the adrenalin going, and if you're enjoying it, you get up in the morning and you want to run to work. It's what I talked about, the climate and the atmosphere was very much an answer to that question. That's what did it and you really enjoyed it. And you tried to get out of there. The hardest part in terms of time was state dinners. The hardest thing in the world is to go through a day starting at—you leave the House at six in the morning and then you start a state dinner at eight at night. Your wife comes and meets you and you put on a tux and you go in there, and trying to avoid sleeping at the third course is hard.

Young: I think any of you who have read the literature know about the Scowcroft awards. Did you ever get one?

Sununu: I was in the running once but I didn't win.

Masoud: You weren't able to—

Sununu: Scowcroft won the first one, Cheney won the second one. Who won the third one? I think Scowcroft came in and won the third one.

Masoud: Did Bush ever win one?

Sununu: Oh, we put him in. Scowcroft and I caught him at entertainment one night, really sleeping and we turned him in and he called his daughter in as a rebuttal witness. But you know, this is something people don't understand, and they used to make fun of Reagan sleeping at meetings. You prepare so intensely for these meetings, both the President and his staff and his Cabinet, that when you get to the meeting, you're exhausted. And since you've prepared so well, you know everything that's going to be said. So it becomes a meeting at which you're tired, which becomes redundant by its taking place, and you can't wait to get out of there and throw cold water on your face.

Again, what George Bush did is a sign of leadership. He took what somebody else would have treated as an insult or a negative and said, "Hey, I understand why you're tired. I'm not going to knock you for sleeping, but you're going to have to take the brunt of being in the running for the Scowcroft award." But that's a very important act of leadership. It's consistent with what I'm talking about, creating a climate in which people's energy was maintained because they had fun coming and doing it, and it really was an important part.

Young: Burn out too? Years of this can take a toll.

Sununu: There was an erosion of safeguards and you got to a point—at first you started doing things because you wrote a checklist for yourself about what you had to do. I have to tell you there wasn't a time I walked into the White House that the hair on the back of my head didn't tingle. That's part of why I'm so angry at Clinton. George Bush wouldn't drink coffee out of a Styrofoam cup in the Oval Office. Everybody, including the President, went into that office with a suit and tie on. That was part of it. And so, as you are in that atmosphere initially, you're trying so hard to do everything precisely right, so you almost write yourself notes: "Don't forget to wear a tie in the office." All these things.

Then it becomes second nature to you to do those things correctly. Then you reach a stage where instead of being second nature, people start sloughing off, and that's when you begin to get turned off. That's when you need to get new speechwriters in to revive that process, you bring in a Dorrance Smith to add to that. You're refreshing and renewing. There is a process of refreshing and renewing that's necessary.

Milkis: If you had stayed and Bush had been re-elected, do you think you could have taken a second term of that kind of—

Sununu: I could probably have taken another year or two but I don't think I would have taken more than a year or two for a couple of reasons. One, the natural toll. But two, it would have been selfish not to let somebody else be Chief of Staff and I would have liked Andy, for example, to have moved up to that role. I would have stayed for another year or two, gotten things well on and thought maybe Andy would have stepped up and been Chief of Staff.

Masoud: Would another job have interested you?

Sununu: This was the job for the President at the time for me. It was the right job with somebody I respected and loved working for in a time that was so historic and so exciting to be there.

Masoud: Going back—

Sununu: I never had political aspirations until I moved to New Hampshire in 1970, couldn't care less about politics. Voted all that time, was politically opinionated on a liberal, academic campus during the Vietnam war, Tufts University, there were probably three people who didn't vote to expel our ROTC [Reserve Officers Training Corps]. And I as Associate Dean invited them to be part of the Department of Engineering when the Department of Arts and Sciences voted them off campus. So, you're opinionated politically but I had no interest in politics.

Young: How did you develop that interest?

Sununu: I moved to New Hampshire. New Hampshire is a very different state. It is the most self-governing state in the country. I got involved on the planning board as soon as I moved there. I became chairman of the planning board, served there for nine years and—

Masoud: Planning board of your county?

Sununu: Of the town, Salem. My wife served on the school board, sort of a process of tithing, that's how you give back to the system, and it's a very different structure where local government is quite important, 85% of the school funding comes locally, at least until this Governor ruined the state. Then got involved. I served a term in the legislature; it's $100 a year. I was teaching at Tufts, an Associate Dean at the time, and served in the New Hampshire legislature. In six months I put 40,000 additional miles on my car driving back and forth but I wanted to see what the process was. Ran for Governor's Councilor when Mel Thompson was running for his fourth term, and he got blown out of the water. Then ran for the U.S. Senate primary and thought that was going to be the high point, had a ball, and then they asked me to run for Governor. Like most things in life, I enjoyed that a thousand times more than I ever would have enjoyed the U.S. Senate. Figured I was done.

Hargrove: When you got beyond the tithing, something else caught you.

Sununu: It was fun and in New Hampshire it was fun. I became Governor in New Hampshire; I kept my phone number in the phone book.

Hargrove: You enjoyed…

Sununu: And you know, what I liked about it the most was that contrary to the press's bitching and moaning to the public, you can do something. I made a commitment to become Governor and not have the state have to adopt a sales tax or an income tax. We did it. I rebuilt the whole prison system. I rebuilt the whole mental health system, put a new mental health hospital in. I put a new highway structure in the state, a ten-year plan with my newly adopted partners, the Governor's Council. Re-did the highway structure of the state. Rebuilt all the infrastructure of the state. Put community mental health hospitals in it.

And I said, "Holy smokes, everybody says you can't do anything, I'm having a ball. This is wonderful." Have I irritated a few people? You bet. And I love every single one I irritated. I made a lot of friends. You know, three quarters of a million people in the state gave me a favorable rating—that's out of a million people. It was fun to do that. Did I want to do it the rest of my life? Hell no. I wanted to go back to being an engineer. I wanted to die an old engineer, not an old politician. I was ready. Three terms. I need money. I've got to go back. I'm slightly in debt, I better go back and earn a living.

Then the President says, "You've got to come down to Washington." Nancy says, "Go do it for a while." We did it. She took a job because we have to have two homes, we didn't want to sell our house in New Hampshire. It was fun. I had a ball doing it.

Hargrove: The family went with you, didn't they?

Sununu: Just my two youngest. I have eight children.

Hargrove: I wondered in the notes, there was a graduation from grammar school in New Hampshire, somewhere in the notes, wasn't there? One of your sons was graduating from grammar school.

Sununu: Was I Governor?

Hargrove: No, you were in Washington, so I wondered where the family was.

Sununu: Christopher came down and started—well, yes, he graduated and then came down and started high school down there. That's right. He graduated from grammar school in '89. Then he went down there and got into Thomas Jefferson School down there. And I actually stayed in Washington after I left Chief of Staff, we lived in Washington one more year because I gave him the choice. I said, "You can either finish your fourth year of high school here, or we move back to New Hampshire. Whichever you want." He chose to stay, so we stayed.

Hargrove: He was the baby.

Sununu: No, he was the next to last. The baby was in grammar school at the time. I didn't mind shifting grammar school, but I didn't want to shift high school.

Hargrove: So you commuted for the television business every week?

Sununu: After I moved back, I did. I would come down every other week, Monday through Friday. I have an office in Washington which I kept and had my business down there. I would stay, do Crossfire Monday through Friday night, go back and do my business travel and live in New Hampshire the other week and it got to be too much after six years. It was the regularity of it that killed me. Irregularity would be okay.

Milkis: You alluded to this in your various comments. There's not too much time before we're going to break for dinner, but we wanted to hear you talk a little bit about your consulting for the Russians and your setting up of the Presidency. I know that came here and you went there, and so we thought you could regale us with some of those tales.

Sununu: Well, there are a lot of interesting slices to this. When Gorbachev came to the U.S., on that first trip, and I don't remember exactly when the first one took place in the Bush administration, but we were flying to Camp David, I think, from the White House. As we were in the helicopter—it is the President, Gorbachev, and myself, and Scowcroft and a couple of the Russian staff members—Gorbachev is looking out the window. He had been here before so I never understood why he was so surprised, but he seemed so surprised about the real estate that was there, the size of some of the houses, the tracks that had a house on every end and the agriculture that he saw out the window. And he started talking to the President about it, about how real estate is bought and sold in the U.S., who decides what they plant and what they don't plant, the marketing of the stuff, how do they make money, do they not have—

And I'm absolutely convinced that it was a couple of those trips that convinced Gorbachev that this was a losing battle. I really mean it. It's the way he was looking out the window. Not just the questions. Not just what he saw. It was like somebody who had been taught to say that you have just put on this show for me, and in his heart he knows you can't be putting on that show. And you know the landscape from Washington to Camp David, it's got very attractive real estate, very attractive farms. Anyway, he became very interested in the way things were done in the U.S. and would always ask these kinds of questions.

At one point, they had now made the transition to an elected process, and basically he said to the President, "You know, it is going to be different." I think the President said something like, "Yes, you'll have to answer your mail, return phone calls," or something inane like that and Gorbachev had seen the President's schedule and the process in the White House and the briefing papers for the President and all. I guess they don't have as formalized a structure over there. So because of that, in combination with the realization that a democracy is different, he asked the President if I would come over and talk to his people about the administrative side of operating an executive branch in an elected government, as contrasted with a dictatorship.

And my recollection is the President said, "It's interesting, Sununu can give it to you either way." But anyway, we organized the trip and I went over with half a dozen of the senior staffers from the White House and a couple of the wives. An interesting thing I did is I got the CIA to translate the Federalist Papers into Russian. I took a few hundred volumes of these bound

Federalist Papers in Russian, most of the Federalist Papers, not all of them, and everywhere we went, aside from talking about process, we would give these out.

It was amazing, they would take them home at night and come back the next day and they were astounded that all the issues in there are what they are arguing about. The role of the central government and the distributing governments, who taxes, who controls the army, who controls the bank, who issues currency, the role of large entity government, small entity governments—all the Federalist Papers issues are what they were arguing about and what they are still arguing about, by the way.

Milkis: That's amazing.

Sununu: And they want to know how these were resolved. I have to tell you, it astounded them when you talk about the fact that our Constitution was written one hot summer in Philadelphia. And I told the ones that could read English that they ought to go and read a book called *Miracle at Philadelphia* by Catherine Drinker Bowen. I said, "Because you will be amazed, having gone through what you're going through, you will be amazed at how this was done." So we left hundreds of these volumes all over Russia and I'm sure it created chaos. I will tell you why the [former] Soviet Union is screwed up though—

Milkis: It's the Federalist Papers.

Hargrove: So now we know.

Sununu: You don't know yet, I'll tell you why. We got to talk to the Duma people as well, the legislative body as well as the executive branch. And I, having suffered through many dealings with a legislative body, I really talked to them about the fact that they should create a committee oversight chairmanship and that the legislative body should have oversight authority over the executive branch in many areas. When I came back I told the President I had done my duty for Russia and they never again will be a superpower. You know, I've been watching and I think I did it.

Milkis: Did you suggest that to the President? If things get tough just…

Sununu: But it's funny, they understood the words but never heard the music. It was even evident then that they thought capitalism was just the right to do things with almost no control at all. This is a country that unfortunately had nobody whose grandfather remembered a market or had any institutional memory of a market structure. They are really screwed up on the economic side, and it's that chaos, in my opinion, that has inhibited their political development. It's the chaos of the economic side that has not created a structure for political order, and I think it's getting worse.

But anyway, we went over, we talked to them, went to St. Petersburg, Leningrad, [Anatoly] Sobchak was mayor at the time and I think [Vladimir] Putin was his assistant. I met with all of them. I don't really remember discussions with Putin but I know he was part of the process. Came, talked to Gorbachev, his people here. They were curious but most of them weren't

interested in hearing about how we do it. He was but they weren't. They also at the time just had technical problems in the sense that they had no—they don't have a phone with 12 extensions, they have 12 phones on the table. They are still paranoid about access and talking to people.

We talked to them about speechwriting and the discussion we had wouldn't make any sense to them. We tried. Cicconi was there, talked about paper flow and I was there to talk about policy development.

Hargrove: So how was Gorbachev's inner chamber run?

Sununu: Can't tell you. To this day I can't tell you. The gentleman who came over to visit who was supposedly his Chief of Staff, when I went over there was gone from the system. They didn't have the title of Chief of Staff. They had ministries that were so autonomous that there was no thread to the structure. They really weren't ready for what we had. You know, we gave them all we could, we talked to them as much as we could and I think Gorbachev felt we had fulfilled his request but—

Hargrove: The party, as the glue, had disappeared.

Sununu: The party as the glue had disappeared and the idea that they were going to have to enact new policies hadn't quite hit them. The policy side had not hit them. They were worried about procedure before policy. They needed to know about policy first. It just had not—they hadn't gotten to that point when we were there. I don't know what else to add to that. It was certainly a pleasure to go over there and see things the way we saw it and we got access to everything inside, but you walked away thinking that you hadn't done them any good.

Hargrove: Interesting.

Sununu: Except for leaving.

Karaagac: I have a question, but I'll ask it tomorrow because there are some debates about the Soviet Union and what about reform, pitting people like Brady, Cheney, et cetera, and I want to know where you come out, but I'll ask you that tomorrow.

Hargrove: What was your estimate of Gorbachev? How did you read him as a human being?

Sununu: I think he deserves a little more credit than he's getting over there. I think he was willing to spend his political capital fast to move change forward and in doing so burned it up fast.

Hargrove: Smart guy? Very smart guy, you think?

Sununu: What you'd call street smart, survivor instincts. Smart enough to be quick across the table. Smart enough to be baffled by the differences that really existed. I mean shocked by the differences. He was, I think, the first Soviet leader, to wake up one morning and realize they couldn't compete. And have the burden, because he had the knowledge now, have the burden for

trying to figure out "My God, what next?" All the other guys seemed to have been able to stay in denial, and all they compared was MIG-25s to F-14s and say we're close, instead of comparing the refrigerators, as Nixon told them to. If they'd only listened to Nixon they would have woken up earlier. You know, if Khrushchev could have come over and looked at the Pepsi-Cola vending machine that he saw over there and realized that it was on every corner, instead of thinking it was just manufactured for the fair in the Soviet Union. They never did.

Karaagac: Would President Bush have had the same assessment of Gorbachev? Did he think that way?

Sununu: He liked Mikhail Gorbachev. I think he respected him. I think he understood his dilemmas. George Bush's handling put just enough tension on the line. You know, it's like catching a 10-pound bass on 3-pound line, you've got to have enough tension in there because if you let it go too slack it snaps the first time there's a pull, and if you have too much tension you can snap it. He handled it exactly right and that was the art at the time; to give them encouragement, to drag them along slowly, but not to pull hard because you can break the string. It was really an artful, artful dance. And everybody's conventional wisdom was it would have happened anyway. I don't believe it. I don't believe it at all.

Hargrove: We can do more of this in the morning.

Sununu: If there is anything worth filling in tonight.

Masoud: Should we briefly go over some of the other outstanding issues we want to talk about?

Milkis: You know what I wanted to ask about, if you don't want to answer it now you don't have to, but you've alluded quite a bit to not having Washington experience and the advantages and disadvantages of that. I wonder if you would reflect a little bit. The good things and the bad things about not having Washington experience.

Sununu: The biggest disadvantage is that you are perceived as and don't get over for a long time, being perceived as not being a Washington insider. And there is an odd, strange bedfellows network in Washington which is made up of longtime conservative Republican Senators and old time *Washington Post* owners and 35-year *Washington Post* reporters and 40-year Washington bureaucrats and restaurant owners and basketball team owners and football team owners and senior staffers and this whole network that accepts each other as a Washingtonian first, who really, as in any small town here in this country, resent somebody coming in and being successful in a business from the beginning. And the business of the city of course is politics.

I never really appreciated how many people were angry that somebody from the network was not made Chief of Staff. And how could this person who doesn't even like politics that much, you know, this isn't anybody who lusted to be political all their life, to be Chief of Staff. Never really understood it till near the end. How that circle really, I won't say rallies around and protects their own, but supports their own to the exclusion of outsiders. So to me, I never understood that that would be an issue I would have to deal with. I did towards the end, but probably not well enough.

The advantage of coming from the outside is that when you get into a crowd of real people you understand what they're saying. You take 90% of the talking heads on television and you take them to the mall in Salem, New Hampshire, they just won't understand them. They won't understand that somebody could be so upset that maybe somebody is going to put an income tax in their state. They make enough money in Washington that they're happy to pay their share. Can you imagine the selfishness of not wanting taxes? They don't understand it. Or their perception is that it's a wonderful privilege to be an American and how come these people need to have insurance against Mother Nature. I mean, it's Mother Nature, don't they know it?

I don't necessarily accept other people's positions on some of these issues, but I understand where they're coming from. In Washington, what astounds me is they sometimes accept it but don't understand where they're coming from.

Hargrove: Is this an argument for legislative term limits?

Sununu: No, I vacillate on term limits but I've come to the conclusion that—I'll give you the only argument for term limits that's left in my head. It's not that term limits will limit terms, but term limits will encourage people to do something else first. If you can't be a Senator for 40 years, you might as well go out in the private sector for 12 or 15 and then become a Senator. It is that aspect of term limits that I think still has value, not cutting you off.

Milkis: Or getting involved in state or local politics, which is what they did in the 19th century.

Sununu: I think the disease in Washington is not serving too many terms, it's serving for more than three months a year. It was originally intended that you go to serve for three months and then you have to go and live in the mess you've created.

Hargrove: That's Howard Baker's thesis.

Sununu: That's Howard Baker's theory, that is exactly right. We have lost the fact that our legislative bodies have the obligations to be citizens at home as well. For most of these people home is no longer home, because they're in Washington 12 months. That to me is the issue, not so much the term limits issue. And I don't know how to solve it. I can only identify the problem.

Masoud: Actually it's not really Howard Baker's thesis; it is Jim Young's. I just wanted to make that clear, he wrote the book.

Sununu: That's really what it is, you see. It was originally intended that it would be a legislature in which a butcher, a baker, a candlestick maker, a lawyer, a salesman, and a farmer would show up and argue the differences on legislation because they came with a variety of backgrounds and would hone a common denominator solution.

Hay: From your experience, who on the Republican side and the Democratic side were the most effective? You've talked about Kennedy…

Sununu: Now, or when I was there?

Hay: When you were there.

Sununu: Most effective in terms of legislators?

Hay: Yes. In Congress.

Sununu: I think Bob Michel was underrated. I think he did a wonderful job without the numbers. I think Dole was magnificent as Republican leader when they weren't in the majority. Just accepting the responsibility and doing things right.

For their agenda, I think Foley did a great job for Foley's side so to speak, and Mitchell did a great job for Mitchell's side, they really did. I think Bill Archer was a sort of a quiet hero from the ways and means committee, now he's chairman as ranking member. He was able to keep a lot of silliness from getting through even though he didn't have the numbers.

Bennett Johnston, Ted Kennedy for the Democrats, both very, very effective in what they did. In a very parochial sense—in terms of bringing the bacon home to his state—Bob Byrd; nobody porked the process any more than Byrd, or more effectively. While I was there Jim [McClure], ranking member of the energy committee, did a good job.

Actually, Packwood deserves a lot more credit than he got for being an effective chairman, he wasn't chairman, ranking member. Pete Domenici. Boy, it's so hard to do this without seeing the roster.

Masoud: Within the White House you talked about there being turnover. Were there any people who were ineffective and you had to get rid of them?

Sununu: Yes.

Hargrove: There you are, there's your list.

Milkis: Let the record show that John Sununu said yes.

Sununu: I think if you looked at the people who left, who were not there at the end of the first year, that would probably tell you, because nobody wanted to leave.

Masoud: Cicconi left but that wasn't—

Sununu: He didn't leave.

Masoud: Cicconi didn't leave as staff secretary? No, I guess he replaced somebody. No, I'm pretty sure Cicconi left well before the end of President Bush's term.

Sununu: He left after three years maybe.

Masoud: Not after the first year.

Sununu: No, I think he was there through the end.

Hargrove: Who made the subcabinet appointments? That's always a bone of contention between Cabinet officers and White House.

Sununu: And those Cabinet officers that had the President's full confidence made their own and those that didn't, the President did.

Karaagac: And they knew it.

Sununu: They knew it. Baker made all of his. Cheney made most of his. We gave some strong inputs to Education and HHS from the White House, the President's choices.

Milkis: What about HUD?

Sununu: 50/50.

Milkis: No kidding.

Sununu: Jack had his own agenda. He developed the art of the 99% speech. He'd give a speech 99% in support and 1% criticizing, knowing that the headlines would only cover 1%, and we always kid about—Jack and his wife Joanne and myself. I would call Kemp after every speech and poor Joanne would answer and she said, "Oh God, what did he do now?" Towards the end, Jack was playing to a different drummer. Jack was playing to history instead of the President.

What else can I tell you about the personnel? For the most part, personnel were quite stable at the White House.

Hargrove: You kept the permanent staffs there, by and large, the administrative people. Of course, they'd been Reagan people.

Sununu: They'd been Reagan's people but it was George Bush's style anyway. I think they could have been Clinton people; he would have kept them. There's a pretty accurate memo in there that I sent to Kenny Duberstein basically saying we're going to keep the Reagan people as long as possible, they don't have to rush out, as long as they accommodate us. In essence it was, "Look, when we want to make a fresh appointment, we'd appreciate cooperation and accommodation." We didn't do that too quickly. There was about a three-week period where there were some leaks coming out of the White House about people criticizing Reagan people and I came down hard on that. I don't remember exactly how I did it, but I got Andy in there and I said we've got to figure out—if we can't figure out who is doing this then I have to make a blanket statement at one of the staff meetings, at one of the morning meetings and I tried to communicate that. We're not taking over from the Carter administration, these are…

Milkis: It could be described as a friendly takeover.

Sununu: Yes.

McCall: A lot of the Reagan people didn't see it that way though, did they?

Sununu: All they wanted, I think, was not to be booted out. All they wanted was a little consideration and frankly, for some, they wanted to prove they could fit in with the new administration. And you want to keep a lot of those people, but there is a paradox. Number one is you can't find enough good people, and two, you have too many people looking for positions. And that's the art of trying to deal in a politically constructive way with the transition. Not enough good people and too many looking for positions.

Milkis: I guess another thing is that President Bush wanted to establish his own mark on the country, as much as he respected Reagan. I know Gore is quite uncomfortable with that.

Sununu: It's a hard thing to do.

Friday, June 9, 2000

Young: What about hearing a little bit more about the Souter nomination, and maybe the [Clarence] Thomas nomination.

Sununu: I think I mentioned yesterday that judicial appointments are the greatest nightmare any Governor or President has. I know of nothing you do where you are truly less informed in terms of the decision you are making. What I mean by that is that judicial appointments have a funny nature to them. You are usually selecting from a bunch of a people who have wanted all their lives to be a judge, or on the case we're talking about, a justice of the Supreme Court, who have pretended they don't and who implored all of their friends to put their name in. They have worked all their lives anticipating the time when they might be right for such appointment, and whether they admit it or not they have colored their judicial philosophy to fit what they think that coincidence or intersection is going to be. Then you make an appointment that has a lifetime tenure, and the chameleon changes.

You can ask Eisenhower about his appointment of Chief Justice [Earl] Warren, and you can ask about his appointment, is it [William J.] Brennan, did he appoint Brennan?—you can ask Nixon about his appointment of [Warren Earl] Burger's dyed in the wool conservative Republican, hard-nosed conservative Justice [Harry] Blackmun. You can probably in two or three years ask Clinton about his appointment of his friend from Harvard, [Stephen] Breyer, who I think will end up being more and more conservative as he gets as he gets older. It happens.

It's inherent in the character of what you're doing and the process makes it worse because the accepted rule of the game is that you can not ask, or should not ask, the judge if such and such a case comes up, how would you rule. You ask these roundabout elliptical questions to discern whether or not you are getting somebody who has, at the very least, a general flavor of what you think the constitutional responsibility of that court is. That is really the bottom line equation, that if you are doing it correctly, you look at it as a President or a Governor, or a staff member to a President or a Governor.

Having said that, there is an added reality in that the confirmation process has become a very important political event. It started with a couple of other confirmations but came to a head with the [Robert] Bork confirmation process in which an effort, a very partisan effort I believe, was made to define party positions on political issues in the hearings, and then to use preferences one way or the other to either support or disapprove the confirmation. And as we know, Bork was rejected. That was the environment in which the next Supreme Court appointment came up for George Bush, and the President obviously wanted to make a positive impact on the court and yet, at the time, really did not want to go through a contentious hearing process on his first Supreme Court nomination.

At the starting point, Boyden Gray was in charge. He was the counsel to the President, and Lee—a really sharp lady—

Hargrove: Lieberman.

Sununu: Lee Lieberman, thank you. Another senior moment erased. Lee Lieberman was really his chief aide in the vetting process, although two or three people in that office were involved. Lee and Boyden are really true blue, dyed in the wool conservatives and I don't think the President had any question that he was going to get a very conservative set of names to select from.

The starting point was the old Reagan list that had been used in the past with a couple of names added to it. Let me pause at that point and give you a little bit of history on Souter as it relates to me because it will give a context of some of the things that happened and didn't happen. or it might give a paradoxical context of some of the things that happened and didn't happen.

I was Governor of New Hampshire. David Souter was attorney general under a predecessor, Mel Thompson. Mel Thompson was probably the most conservative Governor New Hampshire ever had, the most conservative Governor America ever had, and a great admirer of David Souter. An opportunity came for me to appoint a judge to the superior court. We have a municipal court, district court structure, a superior court structure and a state supreme court and I was lobbied very hard by Governor Thompson and by Warren Rudman, who is probably David Souter's closest personal friend, and others. David had a very good record and I didn't have much problem in appointing him to the superior court. I appointed him. He did very well there. He became known as a very strong, for lack of a better term, law and order judge, a very academic judge in the sense that his decisions were not only a decision but he took great pains to create a legal structure for the decision that frankly a lot of the court admired.

An anecdote. I told it last night at dinner. I will try and tell it quickly. I inherited a very large deficit as Governor. State employees had not had a raise in three or four years. The previous Governor, a Democrat that I defeated, had promised the state employees a 9% raise the previous year and reneged on it. Before he left office he said he would make it up by giving them a 9% raise in addition to a retroactive raise the next year if he was elected. It was part of his campaign rhetoric I think, and he lost. So I am negotiating a new contract with the state employees and they are demanding the 9% retroactive and 9% in the future and I said, "I am not going to give you anything retroactive and we will negotiate a fair number for the future and we will go from there."

They threatened to strike. I said, "It is against the state law to strike." They said, "Well, we may go on strike anyway," and I told the leadership in the union that if they did that we would make sure the law was enforced and enforced expeditiously. At 9:00 one night I am driving home from an event. As you know Governors have a state trooper driving them, a radio in the car. We had a radio message to have the Governor stop and call the attorney general. We didn't have cell phones in those days. I stopped. I called my attorney general. The attorney general says the state employees have called a strike for tomorrow and no one is going to show up for work starting at 7:00 a.m. tomorrow. I said, "Steve, meet me at my office." We get there about 9:30-10:00. I said, "Now you go find a judge right now. Get him out of bed if you have to, get him into court, and get an injunction getting the state employees back to work without any losses. I don't want to lose five minutes of state employee time."

So Steve goes back to his office, prepares the documents that are necessary, rustles the judge out, gets the judge into court at 1:00 in the morning. The union officials are called in. They get there about 1:30 - 2:00. They plead before the judge that poor state employees have to go out because this crazy Governor isn't negotiating fairly. The judge takes it under advisement, goes into his chambers, comes out 15 minutes later and rules that the state employees have to go work but not only do they have to go to work the next day, but in order to assure that they are there, the officers of the union—and there are 10,000 some odd employees in the union—have to personally call every state employee and keep a record of the phone call and deliver it to the judge before 9:00 the next morning to confirm that every state employee was personally called, notified and told to go to work. So the 20-some odd officers of the union split this list of 10,000 and go to work. The next day not an employee missed a minute and the judge that did that was David Souter.

So, the Supreme Court appointment in the state comes up and David manages to get that appointment and he is an excellent, excellent Supreme Court judge in New Hampshire. Again, very conservative in his decisions. He had one decision that went against the Governor on a tax issue, put me in an embarrassing political position, but frankly, it was the right decision and it was written well and it was written so damn well I had no way to avoid it and we solved it legislatively.

Now I am in Washington. They bring this list in and it has about five or six names and the names I remember on it are Edith Jones of Texas. I don't remember the other very high contender, and David Souter is on this list—

Zelikow: I would like to interject. Was Clarence Thomas on the short list?

Sununu: Clarence Thomas was on the semi-long list. He was on the list of about five, six, or seven. He did not make the last three.

Milkis: So there were three names on this—

Sununu: It started with a list of seven or eight and then got honed down to maybe five and then honed down to three, but by the time it got back down to three it was Souter, Edith Jones, and someone else whose name you would remember probably before I do. The one that was really pushing very strongly for David was Boyden. Lee had read his decisions and if anybody who is a conservative goes back and reads his decisions, in spite of his history adjustments to the contrary, David was a very conservative New Hampshire State Supreme Court judge. The issues were not the issues he would run into at the federal Supreme Court but on the issues that he did deal with, he was a strict constructionist.

Hargrove: That's your definition of a conservative?

Sununu: Yes. No legislating from the bench and very meticulously tightly written, you know these are nice, classic—if you're a historian of the law, David Souter's decisions, even when you disagree with them, are written very nicely.

So we are going back and forth and the issue that kept coming up was how was this going to be received in the confirmation process. The President was clearly concerned about another Bork type effort. It finally came down to the President, myself, I think the Vice President was in on this meeting, and Boyden, and I'm not sure if Lee was there. The President said, "Okay, I've got to make up my mind. I want everybody to go around the table and give me their views of all of the individuals that are there." I had gone back to New Hampshire and called Mel Thompson. As I say, a very conservative Governor and Mel gave a wholehearted endorsement to David Souter, and I raised all the specific issues that you like to have an inkling of how the judge will go on and amongst them was the abortion issue, issues associated with the prerogatives of the executive branch in particular, issues associated with the roles of the executive and legislative and all that and Mel said that he had known David as an attorney general. He had watched what he had done in court and was absolutely convinced that he would be right.

Milkis: But he wasn't on the record on these certain issues, right?

Sununu: No, no not on the record because—the closest was the tax issue that he came down against me on in the state and frankly it was a very strict interpretation of the law and the constitution and so, in an odd way I may not have liked his decision as Governor but it was the right decision.

Then I called Steve Thayer. Steve Thayer was another judge I had appointed to the state supreme court, extremely conservative. Steve said that he had had brown bag lunches with Souter 90% of the time for the last two, three, four years, whatever the time that they had both been on the court. They had talked judicial philosophy all the time and so Steve didn't mind giving an

extremely strong endorsement to Souter. Now Steve, again, let's talk about the issues that have the conservatives set and there are these interpretations—strict interpretations of the constitution type of issues, certainly the right to life issue. I asked Steve specifically about a list of three, four, or five issues and he says, "Look, we have talked about all of those and he is absolutely right on every issue." I said fine. I said, "May I tell the President that you said this?" and he said yes.

So we go back and now we're sitting at this meeting and he comes around. Frankly I was leaning slightly towards the advantage of appointing a woman to the Court because I didn't want the President to have to appoint a woman to replace a woman; it was possible that the next one who was going to leave was Sandra Day O'Connor and I did not want the President to be looking like he was slotting seats. Also Thurgood Marshall was about to leave, and I knew that there was going to be a strong pressure for the President to appoint a black. It was going to be Clarence and I didn't want him to be stereotyped as a President who was slotting seats. I thought if he was going to appoint a woman it would be better to appoint a woman now and a man later rather than a man now and a woman later. So I had a slight instinctive preference for Edith Jones. As close as I felt to David I thought David was going to get his chance very quickly because Marshall was quite ill and who knows how the process would work.

We vote on the table. Boyden was very strongly in favor of Souter. I gave my arguments on Edith Jones first and then I gave the arguments on Souter, what I knew about Souter. I said, "He would be a great judge," and then I mentioned what Thayer had said. The question came up again, which had come up many times before, as to whether or not Souter had any public positions on these issues and Lee said she had found none. I guess she was there. I have to be careful. Maybe she wasn't there, and Boyden went out and got the information from her. I don't remember but in essence, Lee was the source of the information that he had no public positions on these things. Boyden then made the point that, "Gee, that's a plus because they can't attack it in the confirmation process." So the President then said, "All right, give me a few moments." He thought a little bit, and I don't remember whether he made the decision at the desk that we were at then or whether we went in his office and told me a little while later but he came down and said it's going to be Souter. And we went from there.

Again, they had interviewed Souter. The President said, "It's going to be Souter. Bring him in and let me meet with him and if the meeting goes well I will give you the final decision." But he always did that that way on his judicial appointments. He made a 99% decision and then we brought them in.

Souter came in, and as usual Souter in his own New Hampshire dry charm made the President feel very comfortable and the nomination went up and sailed through. So the President got what he wanted, a confirmation that was well received publicly, well received at the Senate level, and a well processed confirmation. From the needs that he had at the time, it was the right decision.

Interestingly enough, the very first right to life decision came up rather quickly. I think it was a Pennsylvania case—

Zelikow: Case of Pennsylvania parenthood.

Sununu: Right, and Souter voted the right to life position in that case and then he has never again voted for the right to life position on any other case.

Milkis: Was Senator Rudman a big supporter of Souter?

Sununu: Yes, I got calls, I get calls. When something like that is done I get 30 calls a day from him. You know, we're old friends and I love talking to him, we have a good time. But Rudman was trying to tell me how conservative David was, and David's history was conservative. To this day, any time I go to a conservative meeting 15 people come up and hit me with a Souter two by four across the forehead.

The "black" seat—the Thurgood Marshall and Clarence Thomas seat—became unfortunately perceived as that and it was the biggest reason why Clarence might not have gotten it, because the President did not want it to look again like there was a woman's seat on the court, a black seat on the court, a Northeast seat on the court or whatever. But Clarence had been the darling of the conservatives and anybody who was not somehow opposed to the thought of a conservative black, with an excellent record, who had been on the appeals court in Washington, prestigious court, and had done very well there. Boyden was very high on Clarence and any of you who have ever sat down and talked to Clarence in a relaxed atmosphere, this is a man with a wonderful personality, warm and engaging, with a personal life history story that is so inspiring that that was exactly what fit the kind of profile that George Bush felt very comfortable with.

Hargrove: And John Danforth was always calling you too, right?

Sununu: Danforth was a strong supporter.

Milkis: He worked for Danforth, Clarence worked for Danforth.

Sununu: There was almost no controversy. Having gotten a smooth confirmation with David, the President didn't have that albatross hanging over and so nobody ever thought there would be a controversy in confirming Clarence Thomas.

I told another story last night that I'll tell again. Clarence really has a wonderful sense of humor and we flew him up to Portland because the President was at Kennebunk. I drove up to pick him up and we were coming back down and we're talking about what the President might say. I was trying to relax him and he was really as tight as I have ever seen him. We get very close to the entrance of the compound and I say, "Clarence, there are going to be about two dozen, three dozen, five dozen, 100 reporters there, you know, because they know something is up and we want to get you in without them recognizing you." So I took off my glasses and I said, "Put my glasses on so when they look in the car they'll think you're me." He looks at me for about a minute and bursts into this huge laugh, and he was relaxed from then on in. But you know, of all the appointments a President or a Governor has every made to the Court that I have been intimately aware of, I have to tell you, that Clarence Thomas has performed on the Court exactly as his appointer thought he would perform on the Court.

I remind everybody all the time that when the confirmation hearings were over, and I think these numbers are exact, 65% of the country supported Clarence Thomas, 25% of the country supported Anita Hill and 10% was undecided. It was the press over the ensuing year that really turned those numbers around.

Masoud: When you made these judicial appointments was there any—

Sununu: I didn't make them.

Masoud: I mean "you" in the plural, was there any vetting of these candidates' personal lives?

Sununu: Oh sure, oh sure.

Masoud: And nothing had come up?

Sununu: Nothing had come up. But fiction never shows up in the vetting and I am absolutely convinced in my heart that Anita Hill had said something in the past, I can't remember the lady judge that became her—the one who pushed her into this cauldron—and it just snowballed on Anita Hill and what was fictional became fact in her mind. There were enough other nonconfirmable incidents and events and data from her participation—she had Oklahoma, which really absolutely convinced me in my heart that whatever might have been there was an absolutely trivial situation that she had blown into a monstrosity.

Masoud: When she made these accusations, did you have to go back and research this?

Sununu: We sent people to Oklahoma, we sent FBI everywhere. This was absolutely vetted top to bottom as intensely as any—that process is automatic on one of these things. Absolutely automatic. Let me remind you of what really swayed us. When we talked to people who knew only Anita Hill, some of them supported Anita Hill. When we talked to anybody who knew both Anita Hill and Clarence Thomas, unanimously they supported Clarence Thomas. Not a single, single, person who knew them both, in the contest, supported Anita Hill.

Hargrove: This is before she ever appeared?

Sununu: Before, during, and after.

Hargrove: Okay.

Sununu: To this day, there is nobody who was truly acquainted with both Anita Hill and Clarence Thomas who supports Anita Hill.

Hargrove: But her name came in early, in other words.

Sununu: No, you said before, we heard before she sat on the stand.

Hargrove: That's what I mean.

Sununu: Yes, but, like a day before.

Hargrove: Oh no, I see. She didn't come into the early vetting.

Sununu: No, no, no, no.

Hargrove: Okay, I got you.

Sununu: No, no, no. No, when she was coming in we got Senate staffers calling us and saying there is somebody going to be put on who is going say—

Hargrove: I see.

Milkis: You were completely blind-sided just the day before?

Sununu: Either one or two days, but nothing more than that.

Milkis: Who made the decision to have Ken Duberstein coach so to speak for those hearings?

Sununu: Probably Boyden. I'm sure I was in on the decision. I think it was a great decision. Duberstein understood the process well and somebody told me about a movie in which Duberstein came off as a heavy, that's not Kenny's style. Kenny had done a lot of this for other appointments. I think he may have even done Souter.

Milkis: He did do Souter.

Sununu: He might have, I'm not positive, but I think he did.

Hargrove: Was it clear in your minds a difference between constitutional thinking and strict construction in public policy? You're thinking of a long generation of issues warring on that you conservatives didn't like.

Sununu: Yes, yes. They were both part of a collective basket of prerequisites, some overlap, but some differ.

Hargrove: That's when it's hard to predict because constitutional thinking is not partisan, it's tough.

Sununu: Absolutely difficult, and the President—you know, Boyden prepared some questions for the President and the President was very meticulous in not crossing what he considered the bounds of not asking specific questions. I talked to David for 40 minutes in my office, and I tried to live up to what the President's general approach was. But I asked the same question 19 different ways and got the right answers from David. There was not a single wrong answer in the discussions and he knew what he was trying to convey. You remember my little anecdote about the lawyers and the swearing in ceremony—

Young: All becoming shorter.

Karaagac: How does that connect to what he was trying to convey?

Sununu: He knew he had to be a conservative to be on the Court. In all his life, in all his judicial life in his attorney general life, in all his legal practice life, in all his superior court life, in all his New Hampshire Supreme Court life, in everything, he was absolutely perfect for the job, until after his fifth or sixth decision.

Milkis: Can you tell us a little bit about—

Sununu: In terms of what the appointer wanted on the Court. Go ahead.

Milkis: Can you tell us a little bit about your work with the Congress in the wake of the Anita Hill—

Sununu: No problem, no problem.

Milkis: Did you work with the Congress?

Sununu: Yes.

Milkis: Who talked to southern Democrats? I know some of those critical votes did stay with him, in the wake of that.

Sununu: Stayed with—

Milkis: Clarence. A lot of those southern, I think 10 southern Democrats voted for him. There was no—none of them wavered?

Sununu: No. Oh, we talked to them constantly but believe it or not, there was almost an eagerness on the part of some of the southern Democrats to cast their vote. He provided a very nice vote for them when you really think about it. Those were not the problems we had. Our problems were the more liberal members of the committee.

Young: Did Dan Quayle—

Sununu: Quayle worked tremendously. He went up and—there's a little Vice President's office in the Senate—kind of lived there and spent time there. But you know, it wasn't so much lobbying as it was being available to answer their questions. It wasn't arm twisting. On an appointment like that, so much of it is personality driven, and personality issues are either fact or event driven. Then you're trying to provide the information and the data for a rebuttal rather than saying, "You've got to do this one for the President," or, "What can we do to help you?" It really is that you are answering questions. I don't know if I still have any of the file folders but it is

amazing. The package of material that we had on everything that she said, which the FBI had provided for us and the investigators had provided. It was just amazing.

Karaagac: How crucial was the committee chairman, [Joseph] Biden was behind Thomas I think, wasn't he?

Sununu: No. No.

Karaagac: Didn't you feel blind-sided by—

Sununu: I think he abandoned Thomas.

Milkis: He abandoned Thomas, yes.

Sununu: And when he abandoned Thomas it then became a partisan vote. And Danforth by the way was a tremendous asset in the whole process.

Young: Kennedy stayed out of it, didn't he?

Sununu: Kennedy said almost nothing. His questioning as I remember it was absolutely bland.

Hargrove: In contrast to Bork.

Sununu: But he voted against it.

Milkis: Yes, he voted against it.

Young: But he didn't partake.

Milkis: Sexual harassment is not his thing.

Masoud: But in the White House there had never been any thought given to abandoning Thomas?

Sununu: No, no, not at all. There was anger in the White House. Anger.

Milkis: The President never had any doubts.

Sununu: None at all. I mean, I have to tell you. There is not a person involved in having intimate access to the data in the files, who did not think that Anita Hill was an out-and-out abject liar, and there was anger in the process that she was getting all of that out and influencing votes.

Young: Should we move on?

Milkis: Sure.

[BREAK]

Young: You had mentioned a few things yesterday on the Gulf War and now is our chance to hear more.

Sununu: The context of the Gulf War is often forgotten and it really is very much a part of the presidential decision making process. This was the summer of '90. The President had made his bold initiatives on NATO [North Atlantic Treaty Organization] about a year before. Proposals on NATO that had been an evolving process. His trip to Eastern Europe had taken place about a year before, the crumbling of the Soviet presence in Eastern Europe was well underway. There was a significant deterioration of the Soviet stewardship of some of the Arab states.

The President had in mind a strong desire to move towards what eventually became the meeting in Madrid. We didn't have that specific meeting in mind but something to move things forward, we had been very aggressive in trying to find a formula for solution in the Middle East. I think he felt he had enough initiatives underway in foreign policy on the big issues like Europe and NATO and the Soviet Union, that had gone through Panama's modest projection of force for the U.S., which was really the first time the U.S. had even burped in that way since Vietnam. I think the President had an instinctive sense that the world had been perceiving the U.S. as a paper tiger—I guess that was the phrase everyone was using—as a timid superpower, and was uncomfortable at the recklessness that such a perception could provoke around the world.

All of these things were never articulated as specifics but somehow, when we had discussions about things in general, this sense existed. Now we get this invasion August 1, 1990, after some rumblings and so on, and most of what was really going on was confined in terms of detailed discussions over its state. We did have a couple of presentations at the morning meetings about the kinds of things that were going on, the CIA reports in the previous week indicating movements of Iraqi force assembling on the border, you know, things like that, so this wasn't an absolute surprise.

Saddam moves into Kuwait. The President gets on the phone. I think he called Margaret first or a couple of others first. He has his consultations and then obviously we talked a little bit about what he has to do. Brent comes in with a couple of drafts of issues that have to be looked at and then the President decides to make a firm statement. He does that and the process moves forward.

At the very beginning there was a very difficult assessment of what we should do, what we would be invited to do, what we could do that would be acceptable to the Arab states, particularly Saudi Arabia. It was compounded by what I perceived. Let me give you a little more background. I am an Arab-American. I have known the Arab-American community all my life. I have been involved in Arab-American political lobbying for years. I knew most of the Arab ambassadors from a previous life, so having talked to them before I became Chief of Staff, I was very sensitive to it. And I sensed in the President the same sensitivity, that there was perhaps a distrust of U.S. commitment when it got involved in issues there. I have since found out that

Saudi Arabia was particularly concerned about some things that had happened 10 or 15 years earlier where the United States made a gesture of support and then kind of soft pedaled it after a while. In fact, I think it's mentioned in some of the material you're sending.

So there was this question of having to find a set of minuet steps that would allow the U.S. to involve itself, if that was desired, in a way that was acceptable to all the countries of the region, so that the U.S. would not be perceived as an intruder, but as a supporter, and it was not as easy to see the path then. Something that is not mentioned in the President's book and in Baker's book is the fact that Bandar [Al Saud] came and I sat down and talked to Bandar at length about the need for a minuet. Someday maybe Bandar will be willing to put out the script that we created in our mind. It was then implemented in the discussions that other people have there, but Bandar and I sat down and said, "If the King does this, the President can do that, and if the King does that then the President can do this, and if the President does that the King can do this." We had a very quick meeting of the minds that this kind of a sequencing was necessary.

Masoud: Was this before Cheney's trip to—

Sununu: Yes, well before that. This was right after the invasion. As soon as we got back from Aspen.

Zelikow: I just thought I'd work through the chronology a little more tightly because I was on that trip to Aspen. Right after the invasion there was an NSC meeting on the morning of Thursday August 2, early morning, before the departure to Aspen. Were you at the meeting?

Sununu: Yes, then we all ran to the helicopter.

Zelikow: The general account of that meeting is inconclusive and somewhat frustrating. Would you have shared that judgment at the time?

Sununu: No, I don't think inconclusive and frustrating are the right words. I think the right word is sensitive to the issues I have just raised, and there is a big difference. Sensitive to the fact that we don't know exactly what we should do, and the reason we don't know has a lot of antecedent concerns and those antecedent concerns are the ones I listed to the U.S., which was viewed suspiciously by the Arab world as being a pro Israeli power. Many of the Arab states in the region, and Iraq was one of those, had been nurtured in their military relationships with the Soviets. Other Arab states were concerned that by receiving half-hearted U.S. participation, they would expose themselves to the wrath of Iraq. We had been in an odd position as tilting towards Iraq instead of Iran in the Iran-Iraq conflict.

The Dole phone call from Baghdad, which took place two weeks before, where Dole and the [Howard] Metzenbaum, is it Metzenbaum? No. Dole, Metzenbaum, and, you're straining my memory.

McCall: [Alan] Simpson?

Sununu: It might have been. Three of them were there and calling us and giving us a sense that Iraq wanted to temper its edge. That call came into the President's small office by the way. Remember I described a small office. The President took it there and I was there when it came on. I think Brent came in eventually. But all of these things complicated history, conflicting little inputs that created a sense of caution, not confusion, but smart caution saying this is still a bowl of spaghetti, we have not lined everything up to identify where this thing goes and comes from. I think that is really a very important distinction in what was going on.

Zelikow: Did you speak up during the NSC meeting?

Sununu: I don't remember, I'm sure I did. I never keep quiet. I don't really recall.

Hargrove: In the first day or two after the Korean invasion it was clear, even on Sunday afternoon, that [Harry] Truman thought it had to be faced and repelled. Was George Bush—

Sununu: Well, we didn't know if Saddam would run out the next day, **s**o the President didn't come to that conclusion yet.

Hargrove: Okay.

Sununu: Because frankly there was no sense of a permanence of the occupation yet. Okay?

Hargrove: I see.

Sununu: All right. It was a day old, and Saddam was so erratic that he could have gone in and gone out, you know. In fact that would have been the smartest move he could make.

Zelikow: So you went out to Aspen—

Sununu: So we go out to Aspen—

Zelikow: You sat in on the meetings with the prime minister?

Sununu: Yes.

Zelikow: At Henry Catto's house.

Sununu: Margaret Thatcher was there. We had the meetings.

Zelikow: Did you take notes?

Sununu: No, no.

Zelikow: Because I was in and out and I saw Brent's notes but I don't remember that you were there.

Sununu: No, I didn't take notes.

Zelikow: Then you come back—

Sununu: Margaret Thatcher, and there is a residue in the Middle East, remember. Historically the Arabian peninsula was the British zone of the international arena. For most of the Emirates, in particular, it was the British political advisor that ruled, not the Emir, and when the British political advisor wanted to replace an Emir somehow there was a little uprising. So this was their turf and there was a residue of this in the thinking process at the time. I think Margaret Thatcher felt not compelled, but perhaps impelled to be a little bit more direct in her recommendations because it was that region. If this had happened in West Africa or something it would have been a French prerogative to be a little bit more aggressive, but it was the British prerogative because they had a history of knowing the region much better than we did. She didn't say this but I felt in the discussions there was a little flavor of that.

I'm trying to remember, we stayed two days, the second—the afternoon and evening of the second, came back the evening of the third. Is that correct.

Zelikow: I don't think it is. You were planning to stay overnight at the Hotel Jerome and then decided not to stay.

Sununu: We didn't stay overnight? We came back? Okay, so we came back then on the 3rd—

Zelikow: On the 2nd—

Sununu: On the evening of the 2nd and there is another meeting on the morning—

Zelikow: There is a meeting later—there is a meeting on Friday the 3rd and there were successive meetings on Saturday.

Sununu: And then Bandar goes in to talk to Brent. I don't know if you saw the President that morning, I think you did, and then the President starts his telephone conversations with Fahd back and forth. They go fairly well according to the sequence. Now as I have been able to understand, what went on in Saudi Arabia at that time is Fahd and Abdullah [Bin Abdul Aziz] had some very long discussions, and Abdullah was a little bit more reluctant than Fahd to invite the U.S. into it. So the Saudis had to go through this very protracted consensus generating process. And the phone calls back and forth gave Fahd, this is now my personal interpretation, the inputs that he needed in that consultation process to reinforce the strength of the U.S. commitment to what they would do and provide. I think he felt he needed to provide specificity as to what it would be and at that point he was then able to make the invitation.

Hargrove: John, were the Saudis actually worried about invasion of Saudi Arabia?

Sununu: It was certainly part of their calculations. What probability they gave to it I can't tell you, but they viewed Saddam as eccentric enough not to rule it out. I think they took comfort in the fact that historically, Kuwait is an artifact of a border dispute, and therefore the Saudis had been participants in many border disputes of their own, particularly with Yemen. So they were

comfortable in the fact that it wasn't completely irrational and unreasonable for the "border dispute" to have escalated into an action, but only in the area of dispute. So even though they didn't take it off the list of possibilities, I don't think they initially assigned a high probability to Saddam invading Saudi. I think as his rhetoric built up, and the anger of the region built up, they began to think that he was doing an economic arithmetic that said, you go a few more miles and you're sitting in forty percent of the world's oil supply.

Hargrove: The U.S. thought at that time was defense of the Saudis, not repel the invasion.

Sununu: No, George Bush's primary objective was always to get the Iraqis out of Kuwait. In order to do that properly, you've got to provide the defense structure for the Saudis; but the objective was as stated.

Hargrove: OK, from the very beginning in other words. Public rhetoric was defense?

Sununu: Public rhetoric and the private discussion. Because again there was also this—

Zelikow: The public rhetoric was not defense. As soon as the President began—

Sununu: When I say defense, I mean defense of Kuwait. Getting them out of Kuwait. What did you mean?

Hargrove: I had thought that when the first troops went, the public rhetoric was defense of Saudi Arabia. I'm wrong about that.

Sununu: No, no, noo.

Zelikow: Well, you start with the UN resolution.

Sununu: "This occupation shall not stand."

Masoud: It was called "Desert Shield," so wasn't there a defensive notion?

Zelikow: I agree with Governor Sununu, and have information of my own on this, the President's goals were the goals of the UN resolution. And as I've said in other settings, what baffled me sometimes is that people didn't understand that.

Sununu: Let me restate that. The UN resolution was written to reflect the President's goals.

Zelikow: Thank you.

Sununu: I admit it was. No, it's very important.

Zelikow: It is, you're right, and the question was, there was an initial military deployment, but the President was always determined that there would be more. The initial strategy was "we will defend Saudi Arabia and use sanctions and diplomacy to expel him from Kuwait in this phase,"

but from very early on, people are beginning to think, albeit vaguely, but with more specificity with each passing week, as to what else we will do should sanctions and diplomacy fail with the expulsion. But the goal did not change.

Hargrove: But I asked John a while ago, was it analogous to Truman in Korea? On Sunday afternoon, Truman said, "We can't let the UN down," said it over and over.

Sununu: Yes, but I thought I answered saying there was no sense that military action would be required because there was a feeling that this guy would perhaps just go in and get out.

Hargrove: So the decision moved him forward in five days or so. In other words, we're talking about a quick period of time.

Sununu: The feeling was that if there was a presence established, it would be an incentive for him to move out.

Hargrove: Okay.

Sununu: In other words, if the U.S. showed its seriousness, then Saddam in his musings at night would say, I'd better get out of here.

Zelikow: Although by the time Cheney takes off on Sunday, August 5th, with Gates, a lot of both explicit and implicit determinations have already been made. Even as to the strategies. I mean, Cheney, I think, would attest—

Sununu: Excuse me, Cheney went over with options on strategies. My recollection was that he was to brief the Saudis on what we preferred, but to indicate to them that if they have variations of these that make them more comfortable, please communicate them to us. There was an explicit part of the discussion before he left that he should make sure that they don't feel that we are dictating a strategy to them, that we are coming with a strategy in mind that we think is a good one, but we are consultative partners in this. We are open to their modifications to what we present as a first order of suggestions.

There was a tremendous concern to allow both the perception to exist, and the psychological comfort to exist, that it was always a consultative, equal partner decision-making process in place. And that was so important to King Fahd, in order to get the support of his [inaudible] that was involved in the whole thing.

Zelikow: Let me go back, instead of my offering assertions, to asking you questions. The President did end up giving the first full-blown public articulation to the American people, which was the televised address on Tuesday, August 7th, if memory serves.

Sununu: I don't remember—

Masoud: August 8th, when the first 82nd airborne troops landed.

Sununu: Oval Office address.

Zelikow: I actually wrote one of the drafts for that but mine was not the only one and what I could not see was what was happening to the drafts in the hopper and what arguments were going on about what the President should say to the American people. Surely you were privy to those discussions and I'd be grateful for your recollection.

Sununu: That speech was handled a little bit differently from other speeches in that Brent was the master of the final draft, so to speak, rather than our office. I think Brent collected drafts, cut and pasted a draft out of it, edited that, took that edited draft in to the President. The President had given Brent some of the things he wanted in there. So Brent took those cut and paste pieces that corresponded to the President's list of what he wanted in there. I think the President edited that draft, gave it back to Brent. Now—was there a section in there that we talked about? I don't remember what the section was. I think most of the speech was okay and almost finished, but there was one section that sort of kept going in and out, in and out, in and out, and I can't remember what it was. I'd have to see the speech to remember that.

But whatever agony there was over the speech was not over the bulk of the speech, it was over one or two paragraphs, sentences actually, in one or two paragraphs. There was a parsing discussion going on as to how they should say these one or two things. That was the hardest part of the whole thing, just a very small part of the speech.

Zelikow: As you think back over the discussions in these first few days, culminating in the speech, what did President Bush and his advisors think were the biggest issues they had to resolve for themselves, after he returns from Aspen and before he delivers that speech?

Sununu: To create a climate in which the American public was comfortable with the first significant protection of U.S. allies since the Vietnam War. That's the issue of the day. The President and I and Brent and the Vice President, and Jimmy Baker were all extremely sensitive to this post Vietnam syndrome. It never got articulated as such, but will the Congress, will there be support for what you do if you have to do something significant, and don't start something that you can't finish. You know, it's been articulated, eventually, as the build up, as the Powell Doctrine, but it certainly was as much of a discussion that whatever we do, we've got to do it right and whatever we do, we've got to be able to allocate enough of whatever it is to do exactly what we want.

Karaagac: Were there specific references to other administrations, specifically the Johnson administration?

Sununu: No. Not in that context, not that I remember.

Zelikow: So, let me just say what I'm not hearing in that answer. Let me make sure that no false inferences are drawn. You did not say we had a big argument over whether or not military means were appropriate as opposed to relying only on diplomacy.

Sununu: Let me nuance that. The discussion I think always included—probably from the first NSC meeting—discussions of the possibility of needing military force in the process. And as an ancillary part of that discussion, there was a recognition that if it came to that, it had to come about only after the President created a support for that amongst the public and the Congress. Not necessarily talking about a congressional vote at that time but amongst the political powers that be, it's better that I say it that way than the Congress. That there had to be support in the political environment and in the public, if it came to the need for use of force. Therefore, that was always a parallel part of the evaluation of each step.

Hargrove: Sanctions were another option, I suppose?

Sununu: They were the primary option to begin with.

Zelikow: As the issue developed—

Sununu: And that speech was in that context more than anything else, not just to inform you why the planes are leaving the U.S. kind of speech, but to try to begin the predicate of establishing in the minds of the public that this was the right and appropriate thing to do and that whatever follows is part of the right and appropriate path that we've taken. Again, that's why I started the way I started. Remember when this took place.

Zelikow: As the issue develops, were you engaged at all in the question that was argued out about whether to rely on the United Nations?

Sununu: It was argued out. But you have to remember, this was a President who right from the beginning had a commitment to leveraging U.S. foreign policy by using international institutions, and he was a strong believer in using the UN resolutions on anything like this to both give the moral support and, if you will, the embrace to whatever the U.S. was doing. He was very specific about that. That, in fact, is 50 percent of the reason we didn't go after Saddam at the end—go in, chase him throughout Iraq—because the UN resolutions had a box to them. They really, if you read them carefully, they do not include chasing Saddam up into—

Zelikow: You don't even need to read them carefully.

Sununu: It's because of that point. That was a very important point to the President.

Zelikow: What do you think back on after the initial intense flurry as the next major phase that engaged you in—

Sununu: The next thing that happened, and I can't remember the date, Hussein comes to Kennebunk—what was the date?

McCall: That's August 14, 15, somewhere in that time.

Sununu: That's the next chunk of something that happens. We can't understand Hussein's—

Hargrove: This is King Hussein?

Sununu: King Hussein's support of Saddam. Oh gosh, I've got a sense of a problem, but I believe prior to the visit, there was a phone call to [Hosni] Mubarak, in which there is a long discussion between the President and Mubarak about Hussein's support for Saddam. Then Hussein asks to come and visit the President. The President says, "Okay, come see me at Kennebunk." And Hussein comes.

And it is a very funny King Hussein who comes. I've known him for a long time and I think he came believing he was going to be able to talk George Bush into somehow doing something. He comes to explain and does not do a very good job of explaining Jordan's position. And almost has no really good recommendation for what he wants the U.S. to be—he wants us not to do what we're doing. I know he walked out of there extremely frustrated. And it was an important meeting because I think the President was hoping that Hussein would have some interesting equation to put on the table, and he didn't. I think after that meeting the President felt that the course of action he was going to take was clearly going to originate in the Oval Office and no place else.

He at one point was hoping for an ally-inspired set of recommendations on what he might do. He was still thinking, he was still "I'm the listening George Bush," at this point, and I think after Hussein's meeting he realized he had heard about all the good information he could get on it and now he was going to have to start projecting decisions. That's why that was an important milestone.

McCall: When you talk about context, part of the context here also is that Mubarak and others are still advocating an Arab solution and that's part of the context for the Hussein visit. I was going to ask you if you remember much about that, and the other aspect is that there had been an Arab resolution a couple of days before about sending forces, about condemning the invasion, and some other things.

Masoud: And the Arab league resolution.

Sununu: The Arab league resolution condemned Saddam.

Masoud: Right.

Sununu: I don't remember that being before or after the Hussein meeting.

McCall: Before. Obviously that's part of the context, if you remember anything about the Arab solution discussion with the President.

Sununu: No, I really don't remember its impact. The Mubarak phone call was an important part of the input process, the Hussein meeting because of its lack of input was an important part of the process. Then, I think it was after that meeting, I thought the resolution came after the Hussein meeting, but anyway—

McCall: There's more than one. There's one that's about condemning and there's one later about military.

Sununu: I think it is after the second resolution that the efforts to try and build the coalition with a broad Arab nation support really get underway. I think that's probably what's confusing, the second resolution, and that's when the President and Baker and Fahd start making their phone calls and consultations with the countries. I think the surprisingly key one that joins is when Syria joins it. I can remember, everybody was pretty impressed, surprised and pleased by that. No love had been lost between [Hafiz al-] Assad and Hussein.

McCall: Could you talk a little more about handling the reaction to projecting forces, and, also because this is the time of the Nunn hearings too.

Sununu: Of the what?

McCall: The Nunn hearings were not that long after this.

Sununu: Well, the two initiatives were one, trying to keep the President from saying things about this in all his speeches, and if you looked, there's a pretty consistent set of language that got inserted into almost every speech, almost to the point where the press started making fun of the President being repetitious. The second piece was consultation with Congress. Phone calls to members of Congress, bringing them in groups, bringing the leadership in a couple of times. We had those meetings with the congressional leadership. It basically, from that day on became constant communication and talking with Congress, not necessarily with a lot of peaks and valleys, but a pretty steady process. Hoping that what the President was saying directly to the public and what the members of Congress were saying to the public on the issue would begin to create support.

McCall: The Nunn hearings are a problem relative to the state of the administration. Do you remember trying to deal with that?

Sununu: Why am I going blank? What did we not like?

McCall: Nunn organized a series of hearings about the use of force basically, and there was parade of people like Admiral [William] Crowe and others, this is the body bag counts.

Sununu: I bet there was more anger at people like Crowe than there was at Nunn, a feeling that Congress is always going to hold its hearings. Crowe as you know was extremely timid about involvement with the U.S. and Panama. I think that experience inspired less than flattering side comments inside the Oval Office when Brent and the President and myself—but I think any concern about the Nunn hearings was mostly targeted at what people were saying at the Nunn hearings rather than the fact that Nunn held them. At least, that's my recollection. I don't know, we may have discussed it.

McCall: This is also the period where the President is getting increasingly frustrated with what he sees as the inability of the sanctions to take hold and also the more or less stripping of Kuwait. Do you remember talking with him a little bit?

Sununu: Now remember what's happening. The Kuwaitis are doing their own public relations effort. I think they actually hired somebody to do it and the ambassador is coming in with his personalized tales of atrocities and the incubator story comes in at that time and the testimony of some of the young Kuwaiti ladies before Congress. And the President is moved by those. Whatever anger he had at the invasion to begin with, just gets intensified and just hardens his commitment to bring this thing to a solution. It's all building up and there are lots of pieces being put together. Now that I'm remembering, it's part of this dealing with the public support issue. [Steve] Solarz comes in and we put the group that Solarz and I can't remember who else chaired and there was a meeting down in, I think it's the map room down on the first floor of the White House, a big meeting with a lot of the leadership of that group. The President addresses them and again it is structured in a very bipartisan way, broad geographic representation, representation from different administrations and different viewpoints and they in essence put together an ad hoc commenting committee to go out and stimulate public support for this and to also, if they could, work on Congress. I think it turned out to be a very effective group. I can't remember who co-chaired it with Solarz.

McCall: This is also the run up to the '90 elections. What was—

Sununu: Remember, the overlay on top of this is the damn budget agreement, and that's redundant. And you know, we're running out to Andrews at the same time and for a while that was even more important than what was going on in the Arabian peninsula

You come to October and the Gingrich defection and all, so all of that is pasted on top of here. So the congressional issue was not so much the Nunn hearing, the Nunn hearing gets hidden behind the budget battle and that's probably why I don't have any sharp recollection.

McCall: One thing you did have some—

Sununu: There was more displeasure with Foley and Mitchell over the budget by an order of magnitude than there was over the Nunn hearing.

McCall: One thing you did have some sharp recollections about was the issue of military timidity. Would you like to comment on that.

Sununu: There was a frustration in all of this that as the President asked the Department of Defense and the Joint Chiefs to begin thinking about what might have to be done, that it was Panama all over again. It was Admiral Crowe all over again, with Colin Powell. There was a reluctance to really gear up the planning process. When the President asked them eventually to come back with recommendations for the kind of action we would take, we went downstairs, I forget what they call the room, a really secure room—

Zelikow: The situation room.

Sununu: Was it the sit room? I guess it was the sit room in which presentation was made by Schwarzkopf's deputy as to how this should go. I mean, in retrospect I am absolutely convinced that they picked a scenario that had the maximum capacity for casualties in order to try and dissuade the President from deciding to take any action. The military was absolutely—and I don't have a problem with them being fundamentally reluctant to send men and women into action, but once the President is saying we have to do it, I was surprised that there wasn't an initial desire on their part to find something that minimized rather than seemed to maximize the horrors of the process.

Hargrove: You think they were afraid they wouldn't get the support they eventually got?

Sununu: I don't think that was it. Now, the first time this presentation was made, the President, Scowcroft and I just looked at each other and I swear my recollection of that millisecond is that the three of us—our jaws dropped and my personal recollection is I really thought that the presenter—and I guess it turned out to be General [Hansford] Johnson—was making a bad joke. I thought this somehow was a joke and now here's the real plan. The upshot of the first meeting was the President sent him back and said, "You have to go back and do better." My recollection is that there was a second presentation which was almost as bad. Finally Scowcroft had a real heart-to-heart with somebody over there, other than Powell, and said, "You have to have a little art form in this," and they finally came back with what they called I guess the left hook and air power and so on and it made some sense. The first time they came in it was just a shocker.

There was a very strong reluctance on the part of the military to get involved. My recollection of the famous meeting when Powell comes in to see the President and tells the President what has to be done, and again, the numbers I don't remember, 500,000 troops, 20,000 airplanes, 25,000 tanks, 3 carrier task forces or whatever it is, and the potential of this problem and that problem. I'm absolutely convinced that General Powell thought he was going to make this sound so difficult that the President wouldn't do it. As I mentioned, I think it was one of the great leadership moments in history and he said, "General Powell, you can have all of that to do the job and if you need anything more to do the job right, you come see me." Contrast that with Vietnam where I think Lyndon Johnson only gave the military 95% of what they wanted, and so he gave the military an excuse for failure. George Bush looked Powell in the eye and said, "You can have all you need to do the job right, go do it right." He took away the excuse for failure, that was the difference.

McCall: Where was Cheney in this?

Sununu: Cheney was the leader of the Department of Defense and so he would come over and communicate the DoD consensus and then go back to DoD and convey the President's directives. At first they weren't coinciding, but over time the Commander in Chief begins to influence the process over there and they begin to coincide and eventually they understood what the President wanted and went and did what the President wanted. It was a constant process of the President having to tell them what he wanted and to go and do it right.

It started with the gang of four, we'd have these discussions and be a little bit concerned about what seemed to be an awfully slow response. Even when it was the gang of eight, a lot of the discussions were targeted at go do it, go do it, go do it.

Hargrove: Baker was positive here.

Sununu: All the time. Baker was a very active, leaning forward, co-architect of the process.

Hargrove: At what point did Bush get on the telephone to Thatcher?

Sununu: Day one

Hargrove: Western Europeans?

Sununu: Everybody. When he left office his index finger was an inch shorter.

Hargrove: He got a lot of praise for his ability to assemble this coalition.

Sununu: This is the difference between a President and a Presidency that works. Lots of people get elected President. This is a Presidency that recognized how things have to be done in this new environment. Remember, the coalition included the Soviet Union, he didn't get a veto out of China. It included virtually all the Arab world, and in fact, the biggest problem the coalition had was keeping people from being active members of the coalition. You know, the Cheney discussions with Israel.

Hargrove: Yeah.

Sununu: And he worked it constantly. This wasn't just okay, he got a commitment and forgot about it, he was on the phone all the time, advising, keeping people informed, making sure that people got visits from certain people, through the State Department, through the embassies. He and Baker and Scowcroft worked this to a fare-thee-well.

Young: Could you talk about the run up to the congressional vote?

McCall: And the newspaper publisher you want to include—

Sununu: I can't remember his name.

Hargrove: Now John, before the election, the President decided to use military force.

Sununu: The President decided that if he needed to he would use military force. Remember, we were always, up until the last meeting with Tariq Aziz hoping that we wouldn't have to, but his strategy was to do all the preparations so that if we have to use it, we are so well positioned that this is going to be done right, "right" meaning not like we did Vietnam.

Hargrove: And that's the context then of the resolution.

Sununu: Again, we talked about building up public opinion and this post Vietnam syndrome. And in that equation, the President's feeling was he wanted a vote of Congress to do it, and even if he didn't get a vote of Congress he was going to do it. And again, it is hard for a President to be asking Congress for their vote and letting them know he's going to do it even if they don't vote for it. Yet you don't want to surprise them and do it anyway. So it's a very fine balancing act in the process.

Our first count showed that we were in reasonably good if not very good shape in the House. But in the Senate, I believe our first count was 35 or 37 votes. It was that way because Mitchell decided to make this a partisan issue and Mitchell was absolutely partisan on everything, including foreign policy. If anybody wants to know how the principle that party differences ended at the water's edge soured—let's forget about Vietnam, it started then of course, but now there was a sense that maybe things had been patched up—Mitchell's partisanship in my opinion was really a poisoning of the water that shocked everybody. We were astounded that he was going to be as partisan as he was, but he was. So then we do a vote count. We have about 35 to 37 votes. And we realize we have to do an all court press.

The five of us who really took the responsibility were myself and Scowcroft and Gates and the Vice President and Baker. That's where the principle lobbying efforts came from. Of course the President is the weapon of last resort on all of this. But the day-to-day effort was the five of us. And we obviously targeted southern Democrats who have always been more nonpartisan in their perception of what should be done in foreign policy and defense. But we worked everybody across the board. And sometimes we had to have one-on-ones, the President with somebody who was wavering. Sometimes we had to bring them in in groups of three or four so they could see each other supporting it.

The unsung hero, in my opinion, of all of this is my good friend, the publisher of the Nevada—God knows what paper—I can't remember, who was a former Governor of Nevada, a former Democrat Governor of Nevada, who lost his leg in Korea. The old patriotic, gung-ho kind of guy, who had been a friend of Bill Loeb. When I was Governor Mrs. Loeb asked me to visit this guy when I went out to Nevada for a Governor's conference, and I did. I had visited him and extended the Loebs' regards, and as Governor talking to an ex-Governor we swapped "don't we hate the legislature" kinds of stories.

Now we're in this battle and it's coming down, about ten days before the vote, we're doing the arithmetic and it all keeps coming back down to—it was more than ten days, it might have been two or three weeks—to [Harry] Reid and [Richard] Bryan out of Nevada as being very important votes. So I call my good friend what's his name—so embarrassing I can't remember—and I say, "Look, we need your help," and he says, "What is it?" I said, "The President really needs the support of Senator Bryan and Senator Reid, what can you do?" I had already ascertained in the first part of the conversation that he supported the President's policies. He said, "I don't know, but I'll get to work on it." He called me a little while later. He said he had let them know he was interested and he had begun to write some supportive editorials in the paper so that they knew they had that kind of support. He said, "I'll call them every day and I'll work it."

About a week before the vote he said, "Well, I have either good news or bad news." I said, "What is it?" He said, "I've got them both to agree that whatever they do, they'll vote together. That's important." "Gee, that's either good or bad." He calls again a few days later. He says, "I think they're coming along okay." About 24 hours before the final vote he calls up, and the last two votes that we had no record of are Reid and Bryan, and he says, "Reid and Bryan will support the President," and we got 52 votes.

Zelikow: 53.

Milkis: 52.

Sununu: 52.

Zelikow: Do you remember the circumstances surrounding Senator Gore's decision?

Sununu: It was typical Al Gore.

Milkis: What does that mean?

Zelikow: I asked the question obviously because there's a story in here and—

Sununu: The story is absolutely true, only worse. Contacts were made with Gore. Dole said he would work Gore. You know Senator Dole is an active part of the log in process. He would work Gore. And Dole called. I don't know if he called me first or Brent but we got in a phone conversation and he says, "Well, I think we're going to get Gore but he's holding out for 15 minutes." We didn't understand what he meant. I said, "What do you mean 15 minutes, with the President? Does he have to come over and talk to the President for 15 minutes?" He said, "No, he wants 15 minutes of the best television time that we allocate on the floor so he can speak."

I said, "Well, what is good time versus bad time?" He said, "He wants it at a time when he'll have maximum television exposure to explain that he's supporting the President." I said, "I don't know, it's up to you Senator, you do what you have to do and if you think you can get two votes for five minutes and ten minutes from somebody else—" Anyway, we left it in Dole's hands. He just called back later on and said we had had Gore's vote. I guess the negotiation was between him and Gore as to whether or not Gore would get the prime time.

It is my understanding that he didn't get 15 minutes. I don't remember what he got. Dole was pretty low key. I mean he was kind of laughing at it, that anybody would stoop to negotiating a vote on sending of U.S. troops on whether or not they got on prime time—and you know Dole's wit is so dry and he usually uses it when he's serious about something, so you know he's serious if he's joking about it. I guess eventually we got Gore's vote but it was one of these things.

Hargrove: I think he had a minute or two, I remember seeing it. But not a long time.

Sununu: I've forgotten what the final resolution was.

Hargrove: Not long.

Young: Was there a debate within the administration about going to Congress for a vote? You said a moment ago the President wanted it apparently from the beginning, but was there a debate within the administration?

Sununu: We had a rough indication from our congressional guys that it would be tough in the Senate. The question came up, if you're going to lose a vote, do you go and lose a vote and do it anyway? Or do you not get a vote and do it anyway? That was the context of the debate. Eventually the President's desire to try and get the vote won.

Hargrove: War powers issues, Gray didn't make an argument that the President is free to do what he likes?

Sununu: There were war powers discussions, but I don't recall anyone in there suggesting that we ought not to do it because of the war powers issue.

Hargrove: Okay, it's interesting.

Sununu: I think there was a strong enough feeling that there were enough precedents out there for taking an initial action. There was certainly a feeling that we might need, under war powers, something to stay a long time—

Milkis: Eventually.

Sununu: But there certainly wasn't anything for the build up, and frankly, I don't recall anybody in Congress seriously pressing the war powers issue until Mitchell decided to and then it came up in the discussions.

Milkis: Who were the strongest voices for going to Congress? Do you know?

Sununu: The President really wanted to go to Congress. I think Baker wanted it all to go to Congress.

Masoud: Quayle?

Sununu: Tarek just showed me something in there where I'm quoted as saying the President can do anything he wants. Either go or not go. And I don't—

Milkis: In terms of this context or—

Sununu: I don't doubt that I used that phrase at some point, but it wasn't a battle about going to Congress. It was a discussion of what's the best route to take. See, in these groups of four, the gang of eight, or the gang of four, or five or six out of that eight, when there were discussions, people had no qualms at all about arguing all three sides of an issue so that an issue would come forward. I don't remember anyone being in an argumentative mode on the issue. I remember a

lot of discussion taking place. You know, it was sort of "on the one hand this and on the other hand that" kind of discussion, trying to give the President all sides. This President wanted to know everything about an issue when he was making a decision. If nobody was going to take one side or the other, somebody always took one side or the other so he could see it. But it wasn't one of these, where four guys were sitting on this side of the room saying "go" and two guys on this side of the room saying "don't go."

It was, "Are we better off going and winning? Of course. "Are we better off going and losing versus not going" was the issue. Once we got the votes it was easy to do.

McCall: The President put this sort of in an envelope, within the parameters of the Gulf of Tonkin resolution.

Sununu: Yes.

Milkis: This is how you get everybody on board, behind, and unified behind what he felt was necessary. So, it becomes his decision because he's the one—

Sununu: Yes, but remember, he wants Congress's support so that he gets the public's support, that's what he wants. And perversely, in terms of political, just elections, if he had known how wonderful it was going to be, you could argue with hindsight that he might have been better off politically if Congress defeated it on a partisan basis and then he goes and has the decisive victory and it's all his and makes the Democrats look bad. But life is too complicated.

McCall: How do you feel about that decision and what wound up happening, in terms of precedence for future Presidents?

Sununu: It really is one of the hard issues in a democracy, in a modern world, where time is important. Particularly with the constitutional requirement for Congress having the authority. In the days where I had just come out of being Governor and was a young Chief of Staff, I probably would have argued for the absolute executive prerogative on those issues. Having seen an administration that was surprised that the Balkans were balkanizing themselves, it occurs to me that maybe the absolute perspective I had in the past has to be adjusted slightly, but not very much.

I'm still of the opinion that for the United States to be a credible superpower, it must be perceived as not having either a psychological impediment to the projection of power, nor a constitutional impediment to the projection of power. And so I still lean quite strongly in the direction of having the executive be able to do whatever they want in a timely way, although I would listen more patiently than I did in the past to those who would argue otherwise.

[BREAK]

Sununu: There was a reporter and a lot of comments like that about the press, but they are not so much Baker's as they are DeFrank's.

McCall: Tom DeFrank?

Sununu: Tom DeFrank. When he comments on the press being surprised. You'll probably hook up with Ann Devroy.

Masoud: She died.

Sununu: Almost feel guilt occasionally, but not really. I'll tell you an Ann Devroy anecdote. I went to Washington, I had been Chief of Staff about two weeks, and David Hoffman and Ann Devroy came to see me. They wanted me to give them—the way the said it, "Tell us when you want us to come in each week so you can tell us what's happening in the White House." And I said, "I don't do that. You may have had a leaky White House in the past, but I'm not going to do it." They said, "You don't understand, we're from the *Washington Post* and this is the way it has always been done, and we remind you that the *Washington Post* can make or break you."

I said, "Is that right?" She said, "Yes." "The door is over there. Out." And they left. I get a call from Mrs. [Katherine] Graham, she wanted to come see me. Mrs. Graham comes to see me and she says, "I know you're Governor from New Hampshire but this is Washington, D.C., and what my reporters said to you is really something you should pay attention to." I said, "Let me get it straight, Mrs. Graham. You're telling me that if I don't leak to the *Washington Post* reporters, the *Washington Post* is going to somehow do something that I will be sorry about." And she said, "Well, I wouldn't use those words but that's about right."

"Mrs. Graham, that's blackmail, that's out and out blackmail." She says, "Call it what you will." I said thank you very much and without hesitation she left. I went right into the President and I said, "Mrs. Graham just tried to blackmail me. I have never, in all my life, heard anything like this." Sure enough, this big page and a half exposé of me as Governor about a month later in the *Washington Post*. I was seriously thinking when I left the White House of suing the *Washington Post* for blackmail, that's how seriously I took her threat. About 20 milliseconds of that thought. But the point is, I was talking to Don Regan about his paintings one day, and I mentioned this conversation and he jumps up and says, "Did you read my book?" And I said, "No, I didn't." He mailed me a copy—a paperback copy, cheap bastard—of his book, and his book describes the very same meeting with David Hoffman and Ann Devroy, in which they came in to blackmail him.

Hargrove: Had it ever been practiced, do you know in fact?

Sununu: I do know that most White Houses were leaking from my office. Jim developed the art of a self-serving leak to a level that had never been practiced before, but I was astounded that it was that blatant and that Mrs. Graham would come in to be the enforcer.

McCall: Did you mention this to Baker or to anybody else?

Sununu: I mentioned it to the President and I mentioned it to Marlin Fitzwater, I mentioned it to Andy Card. Basically nothing the *Washington Post* did surprised me.

Zelikow: Did you talk to Baker about the job of the White House Chief of Staff before you took the job? Did he discuss with you his strategy of managing the press on behalf of the President?

Sununu: Basically all he said about that, because it was clear that Fitzwater was going to run the press office, he just commented that Fitzwater is capable of doing that. I don't think he would have liked a Chief of Staff managing the press the way previous Chiefs of Staff had managed the press.

Karaagac: Meaning?

Sununu: If that were happening, it would give the White House an advantage over the State Department that they didn't want it to have.

Hargrove: Could you wrap up the Gulf story very quickly?

Sununu: But let me talk about foreign policy in a slightly different way, because there is a very important point I'd like to make. Again, I remind you of the climate when George Bush came in. Not only did we have the post Vietnam syndrome, but the relationships between the U.S. and its European allies were not very good either, particularly France. One of the things that George Bush wanted to do was, having perceived the fraying taking place at the edges of the Soviet Union and now becoming more than just fraying at the edges, he correctly understood that NATO could be a tool in nurturing some of the changes that might be promoted to take place in the Soviet Union. I think he understood immediately how critical it would be to have unanimity in NATO for whatever it was that would take place, and sensed that that could not happen without France's support. In a very deliberate way, he went about trying to make sure that he had a meeting with Mitterrand in an environment where they could establish a personal relationship.

Hargrove: Kennebunkport.

Sununu: And so the invitation was extended to Mitterrand to come to Kennebunkport. And Mitterrand arrives dressed as a French President should be dressed, with the proper shoes, proper socks, sharp crease, starched cuffs, and cufflinks, to the teeth. And George Bush is not quite—not too bad, not at the Bush extreme, but certainly—

It is a very interesting weekend and to watch rigidity become flexibility is just unbelievable. But Mitterrand arrives and about the time, I think, I can't remember whether Bush actually got him in the cigarette boat or not. I think he refused to go in the cigarette boat. I know he didn't go out for a trip, but I think he got in and walked around it and then got out. Getting into that damn boat is not an easy exercise either.

Milkis: Especially in the shoes.

Sununu: The point is, that by the end of that weekend, Mitterrand and George Bush had an absolutely comfortable working relationship, without which I am absolutely convinced nothing that was done with NATO could have been done, and without that the scenario in the Soviet Union, I believe, would have been a completely different scenario. Again, it is the President's instinct in identifying the crucial small interaction that is necessary to facilitate the movement of the large object, really. It was very much the magic.

Hargrove: That's his gift for friendship.

Sununu: And also understanding the importance of friendship. We never, from that day forward, had any serious problems, always had the usually expected problem, but no serious problems with the French in the process.

Hargrove: Did Mitterrand speak any English?

Sununu: He understood it, he spoke a few words, but he always operated through a translator, even in informal situations. At least, that's my recollection. I don't know if during private meetings—

Karaagac: Mitterrand was known for his grand Kissingerian sense of history. Did Bush humor him or was the President genuinely interested in that?

Sununu: He was interested in it. After the Presidency there was this meeting—where was it?

McCall: Euro Disney? The one in Europe?

Sununu: No, no, with Bush, Mitterrand—

McCall: Oh, Colorado Springs.

Sununu: Colorado Springs, right. And I have to say that Mitterrand that day at Colorado Springs was absolutely magnificent. I think he knew he was dying, and he addressed retrospectively this transition that took place. I was there and watched this thing and if you really want to get a sense of—You know, the big issue became the unification of Germany. Mitterrand was opposed to it and Mrs. Thatcher was uncomfortable with it and Bush was supportive, somewhat, as a necessity rather than anything else, not as something that he would have liked to have happened the way it happened, at the time that it happened. But listening to these giants discuss their personal recollections of what went on I think is as wonderful, for you junkies, as wonderful a set of readings—

Hargrove: In a published form?

Sununu: I don't know, must be.

McCall: There's a film of it.

Sununu: Is it full film?

McCall: Probably television filmed it, we'll talk later about it.

Sununu: I would love to see it—I mean, I was just enthralled, absolutely enthralled. Anyway, that meeting with Mitterrand is certainly not a very headlined meeting but to me historically it was very significant. It allowed the President to feel bold in making his decisions on NATO. Without that, I think he would have felt he had to be a little bit less aggressive in cuts in the organizations. What else?

Hargrove: We finished with the Gulf War.

Sununu: I think you have.

Karaagac: Can I just ask one question on the Gulf War, quickly. Reading through the lines of the President and General Scowcroft's memoir, there is some feeling that maybe Baker was freelancing a little bit toward—

Sununu: Let the record show I merely chuckled

Young: And then laughed.

Sununu: But not a hardy one. I would say that the Bush-Scowcroft book was very careful in its writings in both what it conveyed explicitly and implicitly and quite accurate.

Hargrove: John, could you talk—

Sununu: Excuse me, let me object to the word freelancing. I don't think they felt that. I think they felt that Baker was committed to their overall strategy but that at times failed to tell the President beforehand about all the things that he was doing to implement it.

Hargrove: There was a lot of talk about instability of purpose, rhetorical purpose in the Gulf War. Baker says jobs, Bush compares Saddam to Hitler, there was uncertainty. How do you speak to that?

Sununu: I think everybody was looking for language that resonated and generated public support. I don't think it was conflict; it was political testing, trial and error. Constructively done by different members, not conflict, but looking.

Hargrove: It may have given an impression of uncertainty.

Sununu: It's better than latching on to something that doesn't work. I think that's all that was.

McCall: Did you want to address the issue of trying to balance the Gulf crisis over domestic agenda?

Sununu: Again, two things are happening simultaneously that are important in the Bush administration. One is the budget battle, and the other is the Gulf War. Frankly, from my perspective, I think it's very important to recognize how efficiently and effectively the White House handled both simultaneously. Part of it was we had booked our slot for the time as I talked about it yesterday. There was never a real sense of, oh my God, we're working 40 hours a day. Secondly the President was able to focus when needed on one or the other, and frankly, the staff on the congressional side, on the budget thing, just went out there and continued to function until we had an answer and came in to the President. As we talked about, the climax was rather compressed in a five day, ten day period there and really didn't distract him that much from the decision about the Gulf. So it fit in quite well and I think if people go back and look at whatever level of detail they want, they'd probably be a little bit surprised that it was almost business as usual for one or the other crises and that the two crises did not crunch each other in any way that impacted the outcome of either in any way at all.

Karaagac: By contrast, did you feel that Mitchell and Foley had a two-pronged attack, attacked you on body bags and breaking pledges?

Sununu: Mitchell and Foley were absolutely partisan on both issues and I think history, which hasn't yet tweaked either of them on it, will eventually do so. I think they were irresponsibly partisan on both issues.

Masoud: After the Gulf War, there was a sense, if you read the Parmet biography, Rich Bond was quoted as saying that there was a kind of decision that was inspired by John Sununu to totally disengage from active politics after the Gulf War. This was your decision that the administration has this great success of the Gulf War, we really don't need any domestic agenda.

Sununu: Rich Bond, as usual, has no idea what was going on. Rich Bond is one of these typical outsiders who wanted so badly to be an insider, and eventually became an insider and chairman of the RNC. Even then he did nothing except match his defeat of Bush in Iowa in '88 with the defeat of Bush across the country in '92. That's ridiculous. I remind you, since the question is what my views at the time were, that I was the one that was convinced that Clinton was going to be the nominee. I understood what a political animal Bill Clinton was and I was scared to death that Bill Clinton would come out invigorated.

I thought, at that time, having defeated Mario Cuomo in the Democratic primaries, I thought Mario was still going to run, and having had that scalp on his belt, Clinton would be perceived as a giant killer and be entering the battle against the President on an elevated plateau. It would be the last thing in the world—Bond is hanging his hat on a quote where I was asked did the President need Congress to pass legislation to go into the election, and my answer was, "We don't care whether Congress passes it or not, we're ready to go into this election and fight."

As usual, small minds have small perceptions on small issues and that's what you're getting from Bond.

Masoud: Was there any kind of restructuring of priorities?

Sununu: I don't want to be too subtle on that.

Masoud: I was wondering how you really felt about it. So there was no reordering of priorities after the Gulf War.

Sununu: Not reordering. The priorities were still there. Go back to what we ground out. We ground out a Clean Air Act, we ground out budget legislation, child care legislation, the energy reform bill. Virtually all of these were signed afterwards.

Hargrove: But there was a public sense that the press articulated, a sense of disappointment that the President didn't come forward with a more robust program.

Sununu: Yes, everybody kept saying we needed a domestic Desert Storm and, with all due respect, I will bore you to death with the articulation of the ten major pieces of domestic legislation that were produced, more than any other Presidency in modern history. Every time we tried to talk about it they were looking for this grand vision thing. And with all due respect, I'd ask anybody to tell me, either then or now, any other President's grand vision thing that was either articulated or survived. Talk about small minds! The only minds I can think of smaller than Bond's are the press's. I don't understand to this day the perception that George Bush didn't do enough domestically.

Young: You said nothing unexpected to that question.

Sununu: I was trying to give you a nugget to remember.

Young: You made a very enlightening exposition on this whole thing earlier.

Sununu: I'll just go back to what we talked about most of yesterday. Energy deregulation. We wouldn't have lower energy prices without George Bush's legislation. The Clean Air Act, childcare, agricultural reform, ADA, the Civil Rights Act. Not only legislation he signed, but also legislation he forced through and that was his agenda and he got it done.

Zelikow: Perhaps a little more deeply than you did yesterday into the way you organized the White House for shaping the domestic policy agenda. I mean, I understand different people were mentioned, more or less in the context of one or another substantive illustration, but, in abstract, how did you want the Cabinet, the staff secretary, Roger Porter's job, Darman, how did you envision all of this working together to produce a domestic policy agenda for the President?

Sununu: The President's broadest agenda was defined in the campaign of '88 as the President selected the issues he wanted to focus on. It was developed in a broad context by giving the President the opportunity to select from ideas presented to him primarily by Republican Governors in visits to Kennebunkport. And Dick Darman was present at a lot if not most of those meetings.

Zelikow: These are meetings before he took office or after?

Sununu: Before, during the election of '88. This is campaign. What are we going to campaign on as domestic issues? He campaigned on the environment and he took environmental issues, as I mentioned the other day, to Boston Harbor. He campaigned on reinvigorating a firm commitment to dealing with crime aggressively. He campaigned on family and child care. He campaigned on recognizing that the United States had energy issues and we needed an energy policy and program that dealt with modern energy needs. Campaigned on a concern for all Americans and out of that concern for all Americans grew, I think, his commitment to the civil rights bill and the ADA. Campaigned on recognition that we had a mess in agriculture and we had to look at weaning the agricultural structure from heavy subsidy without damaging the family farm structure that was there.

All these pieces were part of the 1988 campaign rhetoric. That's the framework around which a domestic agenda is created when you get in. Roger Porter comes in to run the domestic side of the shop.

Zelikow: You asked him to?

Sununu: Yes.

Zelikow: Had you known him earlier?

Sununu: I had known him in passing. Yesterday it was mentioned that Roger told me that he was going to go over to Treasury—

Hargrove: And you called him.

Sununu: Now, to be blunt, functionally, how were domestic policy recommendations developed for the President? Porter, Darman, and I wrote a list for the President, went in and suggested that this was the list that he had committed himself to in the campaign and we thought we could make legislative recommendations that could deliver on his commitments. The President said go to it. That's it, it's not very complicated. The President said, "I'm in favor of clean air," and so he gets a clean air bill. The President says, "I'm in favor of strong commitment to dealing with crime," he gets a crime bill. The President says, "We have an energy problem, I care about energy and I know energy—" The only thing we didn't get in the energy bill that he wanted was ANWR.

Zelikow: The Alaskan National Wildlife Refuge.

Sununu: But we did get deregulation, we did get—

Hargrove: Did Roger have a staff that was central to this?

Sununu: Yes, Roger had a staff, I don't know the numbers, maybe 15-20 people.

Hargrove: Analytic kinds of people.

Sununu: Yes, he had a deputy and he had a reach into departments and drew on them for pieces. How did we communicate this to the Cabinet? "This is the President's agenda." Sometimes Darman, Porter, and I, sometimes Porter and I, and sometimes Darman and I, would sit down with the appropriate Cabinet officer. The more interesting ones were where I would sit down with Roger and try to explain to Bill Reilly that the President's environmental agenda did not include spending $773 billion for saving spotted owls. So that quite often you are trying to articulate down an agenda and then, in other cases like education, trying to articulate up an agenda. In education, if you remember, the President's commitment there was to focus on excellence. We had—

Zelikow: The Governors' summit.

Sununu: The Governors' summit here—I may now regret it but my recommendation to the President was that he establish a co-chaired structure with a Governor who was interested in education by the name of Bill Clinton—and it worked well. We articulated a commitment for the first time between the Governors, the state programs in education and the federal program, a coherence in objectives, a commonality of agendas and lobbying commitment and so on. But in education we had to expand it because at that time the Department of Education wasn't really looking to expand.

Zelikow: Was the expansion of that agenda part of the reasons why Cavazos was replaced?

Sununu: Yes.

Zelikow: You needed a bigger man in that job?

Sununu: Lauro was more focused on higher education, the college side. He had been Dean of the Dental School at Tufts, and perhaps more appropriate to the specific agenda of the Reagan administration, which was more interested in the Department of Education interacting at that level. The President started to recognize the role of the federal government might be to give the states the financial tools or pulpit kind of support to deal with K through 12 needs. And that's what the education summit was all about. Lauro was not that comfortable with K through 12. He'd never been an educator or involved in education policy making at that level.

Zelikow: So the decision is made—where do Lamar Alexander and David Kearns come from?

Sununu: Well, Lamar Alexander was a Governor, and when you want to do things right you always call the Governors. That's exactly where that came from. Lamar was a Governor interested in education, whose involvement in his state matched what the President wanted to do nationally.

Hargrove: Porter made a big deal to me that he was going to be both domestic and economic—

Sununu: Yes, yes.

Hargrove: Now did that play out? Did he play a role like [Gene] Sperling plays in this White House?

Sununu: I don't know Sperling's role. Porter's role was central to the economic side. There are two historic clashes in any administration and they both have to do with Treasury. One is Treasury versus State on international economics, and the other is Treasury versus everybody else on domestic economics. The domestic economic tension is the chairman of the Council of Economic Advisors pulling on one end of the rope—he owns 50 percent of the turf, the Secretary of Treasury owns 50 percent of the turf and in the Bush White House, Roger Porter owned 50 percent of the turf. And yes, Roger had that portfolio, the President listened to Roger on that portfolio, but yes, Nick Brady was Secretary of Treasury and yes, Michael Boskin was chairman of the Council of Economic Advisors. So Roger had a role in that, Roger knew and we talked about it when he came in, I was very blunt with Roger. I said, "Roger, I recognize why you want this portfolio, I recognize that you've got this portfolio, I'm only reminding you Nick Brady, the President's longtime friend, is Secretary of Treasury and that's real."

Young: Do you want to talk a little bit about how you think a second Bush administration after re-election might have looked and why.

Masoud: Really quickly before you get to that, I'd just like to ask one last question about domestic policy—on the foreign policy side you had the Deputies Committee which I guess was quite effective. Did you have a similar structure on the domestic side, and if not a similar structure was that—

Sununu: We did not have it. Andy Card, who served on the Deputies Committee, functioned for me in an informal way with specific deputies and specific departments that we were building a policy on. There was somebody—I forget who the deputy of education was, for example, that really cared about K through 12.

Zelikow: David Kearns, I think.

Sununu: David was number two, he cared about everything. But underneath David—

Zelikow: Diane Ravitch.

Sununu: Yes, Diane was one of them, but it was lots of one on ones, rather than a broad committee, because frankly, it's too broad for that to happen. There's enough of a concentration of interest on foreign policy that you can have a Deputies Committee focused on issues. And frankly, Porter, Darman, and I used to make a very efficient process. We brought about whatever had to be done and didn't want to waste time going through the niceties of entertaining things that should not be included. I mean, we were in a hurry because the President did have, repetitious as it sounds, a very broad domestic agenda, and I didn't want Reilly's deputy going up to negotiate Clean Air, I wanted Roger Porter to do it. I didn't want a third- or fourth-tier person in education sitting down with the Governors negotiating it. I wandered over and did that for the President.

In terms of ADA and civil rights, I didn't want fifth- and sixth-tier guys from Justice doing it, I wanted Thornburgh to do what the President wanted to do and be responsible to the President for it, or Boyden Gray to do it, because the whole thing was so nuanced as we talked about yesterday, that this needed first-hand involvement. And if you go the other route, it loses in the translation and they get overwhelmed by the numbers of congressional staffers that are thrown at this. The only way, in my opinion, for a White House to overcome the resource might of Congress in writing legislation, is to send the first team over. It forces the negotiation to be done with a Senator or Congressman and that's the only way to get things done.

Young: Want to talk about a second Bush administration—

Sununu: I didn't even last through the first one.

Milkis: We're trying to ease into that.

Sununu: I don't know, in this sense: If it's a second Bush administration that would have come out of running the '92 campaign the way it should have been run, that's one thing. If it's the second Bush administration that would have existed if they managed to win the '92 campaign the way it was run, that would be another. The only place I can comment is, let's say I had stayed and managed to be part of a victory in '92. I think, for the most part, he would have kept most if not all of his Cabinet. I don't think there would have been major changes. I think his sense of what had to be done was to re-write the rules around the world for how you dealt with foreign policy in what was a slightly less dangerous but more complicated environment.

What do I mean by that? Less dangerous because the threat of nuclear exchange was significantly reduced with the fall of the Soviet Union. More complicated because in the old days the sides were always the same: the U.S., Great Britain, France, on one side, the Soviet Union on the other, and whether the issue was big or small, you didn't have to figure out who was where. You only had to figure out what you were going to do vis-à-vis the other side. More complicated because now on every issue, you build a new coalition. Sometimes Great Britain is with us, sometimes they're against us. Sometimes France is with us, sometimes they're against us, sometimes we and the Soviet Union, sometimes they're against us. Every issue requires new coalition building.

It's my sense that the President would probably have continued what was his rehabilitation of the UN and other international institutions as instruments of international interaction and probably would have built on their success of revitalizing the UN through the Gulf War.

Hargrove: Some Republicans in Congress didn't like the UN.

Sununu: They didn't like the UN as before. I think what he was beginning to do, and then it died, was to explain to those members of Congress who saw the UN as a one world government instrument, that it wasn't really that and that it was a good way to provide umbrella structure for U.S. policy. I think Bush could do that, I'm not sure many other Presidents could do that and therefore I think the UN is going to continue to wither relative to what could have been a revitalized role.

Domestically he would have had the benefit of the economic recovery he started in '91. We might never have had a Republican Congress in '94, so the divided government may have been still second nature to the public and you would still have had him struggling, but I think he would have been struggling with better numbers. And if we had 195-200 members of Congress, we could have passed almost any legislation we wanted. He had enough sway with some old Democrat friends that he would have had a working majority with 200 in the House and 49, 50, 51 would have been a majority in the Senate. But I think he would have gotten 49 or 50 in the Senate and around 200 in the House and really have a chance to undo 40 years of growth of bureaucracy.

The real challenge for a President who finally gets control of Congress as a Republican is to be aggressive in dealing with the process of rules and regulations, were the Democratic Congress encouraged to take place. There is a rule—there is governance by rule and regulation that goes, in my opinion, well beyond the intent of law in many cases and that can't be undone without a President and Congress being on the same side.

Hargrove: Need some kind of omnibus regulatory reform bill?

Sununu: Sunsetting rules unless they're re-authorized or something like that. Sunsetting, lose ten and save one.

Milkis: In the scenario you described, it's hard for me to envision welfare reform and the budget act of '97 passing. The '94 Congress made that work.

Sununu: Sometimes, as I said yesterday, the agony for most conservatives around the world is that we have seen everything we wanted done get done by people we don't like.

Hargrove: Can't stand prosperity. There's one exception to that and that's what happened to John Sununu.

Sununu: I told you yesterday, I went down there expecting about six months and anything beyond that was gravy. Let me explain to you what that whole travel thing was about.

About the second week I was in the White House, Brent Scowcroft wants to go to Utah, to do a speaking engagement or something, I forget, and wants me to authorize the use of a DoD plane. I said, "Gee, Brent, I don't know, am I allowed to do this?" He said, "Yes, yes." Anyway, I hemmed and hawed and he flew commercial. When he came back—Brent and I had never, never had an emotional disagreement in the White House, but that might be the only time we did. He let me know that he was a little disturbed that he had to do this since in the Reagan administration the National Security Advisor and the Chief of Staff had access to those planes. I said, "Gee, let me find out from the President."

So the next morning, we were both there and I asked the President. I explained what had happened to Brent, he said, "Well, go find out what was done in the Reagan administration and we will continue exactly what they did." So I went and I asked for the records and the records

showed a Reagan directive that the Chief of Staff and National Security advisor were prohibited from flying commercial, were prohibited, with an attached memo from George Shultz explaining to Howard Baker that prohibited meant prohibited and that he damn well better—with language almost that strong—utilize the aircraft that were available through the Department of Defense. So I apologized profusely and then went through the process of finding out how to do this. The process is basically you have to pay first class fares and use the plane.

I still felt uncomfortable and about a month later I'm going home to New Hampshire and I for some silly reason ended up making a connection in Newark and the President was looking for me and they couldn't find me. So when I come back from that weekend, Major [Charles] Krulak, who eventually became Commandant of the Marine Corps, asked to see me with Bonnie Newman, who was in charge of administration. Krulak, as he is wont to do, tore me a new one, telling me that that directive was there for a reason, like the reason that occurred that weekend, and that I could not make the choice of flying commercially. So starting then I started utilizing the G3s and G4s to go home; each time, asking for an evaluation to be made of what the fare should be and paying for it.

Atwater dies, or gets sick. I have to pick up political responsibilities. I get a little nervous about using the plane for anything but government stuff. Still, I have Cheney come over with his—I don't know the right words—transportation people and we have a meeting in my office reaffirming the guidelines under which the evaluation of cost shall be made, including the evaluation of cost going to political events, and who shall pay, me or the political event, or whatever it is. And so we operate under those guidelines.

Now, what's included in the trips I take? I take one trip to speak to a trade group in New England, making a political speech for the President. The speech is in the afternoon. I go up in the morning and go to my dentist. That's the famous trip to the dentist flight, and I pay my full first class, or I have the group pay the full first class. I don't even know who paid it, I shouldn't say, but the fare was paid as it was on every single flight. Another one, as Governor, I had sponsored the Christa McAuliffe ski race every year in which we raised money for the Christa McAuliffe foundation. So I flew to New Hampshire to continue that another year. That's my trip skiing.

We go through all this. All the time, absolutely convinced that we have responded to the demands of the Reagan directive, the President saying do it exactly the way the Reagan people did, Krulak making sure that I understood that the President's directive and Shultz's memo meant no choice, having brought DoD in to help us define in the unusual circumstances of doing things that had a little bit of political flavor, non-Chief of Staff-ish per se. And I go along, fat, dumb and happy, until somebody writes a news story that I'm using it too much. My question is, what's too much? If I have to go to these events, it's more at the convenience of public service that I'm back in time to work the next day. Well, the rest is history.

The first report from Boyden says we did it right. I suspect there were people—this thing really got hot and heavy in the summer of '91 when a lot of folks were concerned that I might be running the campaign instead of them. A lot of fueling goes on in terms of our good friends in the press, and I naively thought it would go away. I probably, in retrospect, should have hired a

lawyer and let him argue my case behind the scenes, because I never was smart enough to argue my case explicitly. The only time the presidential directive got mentioned was once in the press in paragraph five and never got mentioned again no matter how many times we brought it up. I think the press office was kind of enjoying my discomfiture and fueled a lot of what was going on.

Masoud: They didn't help you out?

Sununu: No, not at all.

Zelikow: Marlin?

Sununu: Marlin was always more concerned about being able to get a job after being Press Secretary than anything else. And since the press loved what was going on, Marlin was a great fueler of the fire. It was disappointing, I didn't realize it at the time. I mentioned yesterday, one of the dividends of being on Crossfire is you get to sit down and have a few beers with the press guys all the time, and that's when I found out what happened to me. I was fat, dumb, happy, and blind. I really was. If there is anything that identifies non-Washingtonian naiveté it was how I didn't understand what was being fueled behind the scenes, what was happening.

Karaagac: Who were your allies?

Sununu: Andy, just about everybody were allies. In Washington, when something like this happens, it's amazing how people may be your allies but they don't engage. It's an odd process. You become a pariah instantly.

Milkis: You felt that.

Sununu: Yes, yes. And Boyden, I think Boyden got very nervous about everything. As I say, his first report quite proved it.

Zelikow: Then there's that second report.

Sununu: Which undoes everything the first report said.

Zelikow: But given the directives that you've described?

Sununu: I have no idea. To this day—I thought all of this was being put into the equation. I have since found out that it was all shoved aside. Krulack writes me a nice letter a few years ago saying, in essence, how guilty he has felt all along because of this and—you know, how wonderful he thought everything I had done was, nice words in the letter. Bonnie Newman, who was in charge of administration, had left by then, but she tells me she had never been interviewed or asked about this, and I always assumed that she was part of the discussion. I never knew how narrow that analysis was.

Masoud: How about the President?

Sununu: The President was getting his feedback from people like Marlin that this is a hot potato. You know Marlin first goes out and said I had to fly, and then all of a sudden starts deciding not to commit on that, even though I personally went in and showed him the documents. Hey, this is the risk of being Chief of Staff. If they didn't get me that way, they would have gotten me some other way.

Karaagac: How about Mrs. Bush and George W.?

Sununu: Never anything but supportive. The conversation I had with George W. basically was one where I had been talking to Andy and Dan Quayle about "if I'm going to leave, it's going to be now. I want to stay but what do you guys think?" Frankly, I was leaning towards staying after conversations with Dan and Andy. George W. comes in—

Milkis: When were those conversations? October?

Sununu: It started in September.

Milkis: This was early.

Sununu: Yes, September, October. George came in to see me in November and I could see from him that there was family anguish. So, even though it was a rather broad conversation without anything specific decided on, I went from leaning towards staying to leaning towards leaving. I went in and talked to the President, talked to a couple of congressional leaders whether they though it was worth trying to stay or not and finally decided that this thing was going to get worse, not better and if I left maybe the lightning would follow me and not bother the President. Decided to leave. Talked to him and we agreed that I should stay on through the State of the Union and I think the budget solution, which I did stay on as counsel to the President. I left as Chief of Staff, I think, the first of December, something like that, and I left the White House in March.

Zelikow: I think a lot of people would agree with you that the airplane business simply provided a convenient catalyst for people, or factions, that were out for you anyway, including factions within the party and perhaps within the administration.

Sununu: Oh, the big driving force in my opinion was the crowd that wanted to run the campaign, without the White House being in control of it.

Zelikow: But how can you run a campaign for an incumbent President without running it from the White House?

Sununu: I have no idea, but they tried to do it even after I left. That's why they lost. That's why they lost.

Masoud: That Fitzwater story in his book is about you trying to lobby to stay, lobby the administration, lobby the staff.

Sununu: I had talked to Andy and Dan. The only two guys that would have any sway in the process at all and happened to be the only two guys whose advice I would take were Andy Card and Dan Quayle. I talked to Dole and Bob Michel. I talked to Mulroney and he told me you've got to stay, you've got to stay, you've got to stay. I mentioned last night to somebody, after I announced my resignation Mulroney calls me and says, "I hate to say this but the President is now not going to be re-elected."

Masoud: But you didn't talk to anybody on your staff or anything like that.

Sununu: I talked to Boyden, I talked to Andy, I think I talked to Cicconi. But all those conversations, most of those conversations, were probably after I had flipped from leaning towards thinking I was going to try and stay to thinking I was going to leave. The biggest outcome of those conversations was that I had to stay until the end of the State of the Union and the budget package. So I came up with this "well, let me leave as Chief of Staff but find a role so I can finish that out."

Zelikow: While you were embattled, did you sense that part of this was about the running of the campaign in '92?

Sununu: Yes, I sensed it was. I didn't sense who was doing it, but I sensed this was—I shouldn't say running the campaign in '92. I sensed this was about what the President was going to define as what he was going to do in his second term. And who was going to run the second term. And I sensed, not that they wanted to run the campaign, I sensed that they wanted the Chief of Staff job, same people, it was Bob Teeter.

Zelikow: While you were embattled, did you ever talk to Baker about strategy for the crisis?

Sununu: I talked to Baker. I think I talked to him after I decided to leave, but I'm not sure. But I did have a conversation with Jim Baker.

Zelikow: But certainly on the issue of how you run a campaign of an incumbent President—

Sununu: Absolutely.

Zelikow: Which he would have been totally in agreement with. I know when he came on board he felt that way.

Sununu: There is some question as to whether Baker wanted me in or not. I'll only answer this the following way: nobody knew more that the campaign had to be run from the White House than Baker. Nobody knew that if there was a crisis he was going to get dragged into something he didn't want to more than Baker. Nobody understood that in a campaign, my willingness to stand and catch the lightning for the President was going to be an important asset, more than Baker. So I've had a lot of people come over and tell me that Jim was part of the process trying to create the climate to leave.

To this day I haven't satisfied myself that that's true. I think Jim is pragmatic enough that if he had to make a decision one way or the other, he would have preferred to see me stay rather than see me leave. I know, since the results of '92—I shouldn't say since the results, from about August or September on, when they brought [Robert] Zoellick over to do some of the work. I talked to Zoellick a number of times and basically it was, "Get yourself back over here somehow, put on a nose and mustache and pretend you're somebody else."

Milkis: And glasses.

Sununu: This is hard to talk about, but things went to hell and they went to hell for every reason that people didn't like that they weren't going to hell. They went to hell because nobody was willing to catch the lightning for the President, nobody was willing to take the blame for things that went wrong. And frankly, nobody was willing to insulate the President from the petty arguments between Cabinet members that ruined the President's credibility amongst his own people internally. Not credibility—that's not the right word, that eroded the President's influence amongst his own people.

If you get Cabinet members who think the President has decided against them on something, they lose loyalty to the President, and my job was to keep them angry at me instead of being angry at the President. After I left, every decision that had to be made between two Cabinet members had to go to the President, and that meant on every decision he antagonized at least one Cabinet member, and that's bad.

Masoud: You mentioned that had you remained in office, you would have wanted to leave and maybe make room for Andy Card. When you ended up leaving, did you make a recommendation about who would succeed you?

Sununu: Yes, I said Andy should be my successor.

Masoud: You said this to the President.

Sununu: Yes.

Milkis: Did you know Skinner well enough to anticipate what would happen, were you surprised how inept he was as Chief of Staff?

Sununu: I wasn't surprised how inept Sam was. I honestly, in my heart, believed that if you have not been chief executive of something, you're not going to make a very good Chief of Staff. Now that means chief executive of a state or a business, you might even have been a committee chairman, but you would have had to exercise discipline someplace for yourself before you can exercise discipline for somebody else as Chief of Staff, to do it well. So I really thought Andy would have done a better job. Andy had been a deputy to whom I had given as much responsibility as he wanted to take and I thought he could do the job well. To be very blunt about it, I had trained him in the '88 campaign. And that's why I brought him in as Chief of Staff and he did very well. Andy was a very talented guy.

Hargrove: To get back to the campaign, is it a question of where it's run or who runs it?

Sununu: It's where it's run.

Hargrove: Okay, explain.

Sununu: Who runs it is also important, they're both important, you can screw it up in both places. But the necessity is where it is run. What is a political campaign? It is putting the President in front of the public to say certain things. Putting the candidate in front of the public to say certain things. If the candidate happens to be the President of the United States, you can't have a campaign controlling the schedule of the President of the United States. You can have the campaign that is run by the White House controlling the schedule of the President of the United States, but you can't have a functionary on K Street doing it.

Hargrove: No, I understand that. But it's also the political astuteness of the people running it.

Sununu: Yes, and you can be a klutz inside the White House as well as out there. So putting it inside the White House isn't sufficient.

Milkis: You said something before, you said it very quickly but I think it is interesting and important. When Atwater got sick you picked up the political stuff. That's a big thing.

Sununu: What happened was Atwater got sick all of a sudden. And I think I said it the other day, Atwater was young, nobody ever figured he wasn't going to be there for eight years. Lee had made no effort to groom anybody to replace him. And nobody had brought into the inner circle anybody that was going to be a good substitute. So I thought we had solved the problem by picking [William] Bennett.

Hargrove: Right.

Sununu: And when the Bennett thing fell apart, there really was not much of a politically astute alternative. I think we went to—

Milkis: Clayton [Yeutter].

Sununu: Clayton, but Clayton had never run a campaign. Bennett had never run a campaign, but Bennett was willing to articulate with edge, which was a good substitute for having run a campaign. But now there was nobody to articulate the political side with edge that had a podium to be listened to, and everybody who was raising funds all around the country wanted somebody to assist in that and Atwater wasn't there to do it. So that came into the White House and everybody was moaning and groaning about political positions and the Atwater buffer was gone. You know, the RNC chairman can be a magnificent buffer for the President. And that was gone. It's like Star Trek, when you knock down the shield, the photon tubes get through.

Milkis: It was just impossible to find, to keep searching, and it was pretty apparent right on that Yeutter was not going to be a good buffer. You just couldn't find anybody.

Sununu: There was nobody, nobody was an effective chairman for George Bush after Lee Atwater. Nobody.

Zelikow: Let me circle this back to the President himself. To be cold eyed about it, these are decisions of absolutely first order of magnitude as far as the President's future, for the nature of his campaign.

Sununu: But he doesn't necessarily see it that way, nor was he being advised to. Look, I'm not trying to pat myself on the back, the historic record is that I leave and chaos hits. Nobody predicted that.

Zelikow: But it was not unforeseeable.

Sununu: Sure it was, sure it was.

Zelikow: People would have foreseen that Skinner was going to confidently manage the problem.

Sununu: Yes, because the legend is that anybody can be Chief of Staff.

Zelikow: But Bush knows better, from personal experience.

Sununu: Yes, but Sam is his Secretary of Transportation, and he's run a department, and he's got stature and talking confidently about being able to do it and you can't predict that.

Zelikow: Did you know they tried to recruit Cheney?

Sununu: I suspected Card went over to Cheney, I didn't know that. I don't know why they would do it, with his heart.

Zelikow: Neither did he.

Sununu: Two points I have to make. I'm not upset at what happened from my point of view, it couldn't have been better for me. I now can wallow in the legend that if they had all been smart enough to keep me, George Bush would have been re-elected, and I can nurture that legend as long as I want, the rest of my life. I then get myself the wonderful visibility of going on Crossfire, and I get back to the private sector fast enough so I can start earning money for my family, and I weathered the storm quite nicely. But I weep in my heart every night for George Bush who deserved a second term. And I get angry at myself, only because of that, for not having been smart enough to realize how effective that Washington process of tearing somebody down with nothing can be.

Zelikow: But at one point, assume the President was being properly advised—

Sununu: But he wasn't.

Zelikow: You leave and Skinner comes in. Your argument is that the chaos that ensued was unexpected and unexpectable.

Sununu: But it was immediately determinable when Skinner brings in an efficiency expert to tell him how to structure the White House. I made a slight joke yesterday, which is how a White House has to be run. When Gorbachev asked the President to have me go over there and explain the difference between running an executive branch in a democracy and a dictatorship, the President said, "Sununu can take either side." And the fact is that there is no way to do it but dictatorships are efficient.

Zelikow: That's hard to top.

Young: Don't try.

Zelikow: But the fact that this was ascertainable. Then why doesn't the President understand what is happening and react?

Sununu: Because you can't get the toothpaste back in the tube. Once you let the lions taste the meat, nobody is going to bring order to that process. And what they did, when I left, all the infighting which is inevitable—I'm not blaming people now—by definition, infighting among Cabinet heads, department heads, is inevitable. Infighting amongst staff close to power is inevitable. People grasping for somebody else's lunch is inevitable. That's the reality of a process. Look, even the guys over at NSC were afraid of this guy in the corner office and it brought stability even to NSC. Brent has suggested to me that my leaving there created ripples of chaos in his shop because the tiger was gone. So nobody understood what had been prevented before until it had been unleashed, and once it's unleashed, you don't get the toothpaste back in the tube. There was almost nothing he could do after three or four months.

Zelikow: Did he understand what had happened? Do you think he understood what had happened, did you ever talk to him informally after you left?

Sununu: My chats with him, while he was President, after I left, were efforts to try and get him to focus on a campaign strategy that made sense. I tried to get him to articulate the reality of economic prosperity. I tried to get him to go after Clinton's record in Arkansas, or get him to get somebody to go after Clinton's record in Arkansas. As I said yesterday, all I would have done is put out in the public the slogan that here's a Governor who took Arkansas from being a weak 49th to a strong 49th and articulated all the data that supported that.

I tried early—I didn't go to him, but I did go to people in the campaign—when Perot started sticking his head up, I told them they ought to hit him with a two by four, and what they did instead is they went down to his "love fest" in Houston. So those were the three things I tried to communicate—I played Perot in the mock debates for the President and each time I went I tried to communicate some of this stuff to him and I chatted with him once or twice on the phone and that's it. But once you're out, you don't want to be accused of trying to keep your nose in the game, and so I didn't make any effort to denigrate the people who were there. I was trying to

give him information and that's it. It wasn't my job to tell him everything was crumbling and I never realized it was as bad as it was until afterward.

Zelikow: How do you evaluate Cicconi's role, the staff secretary's role, in this process?

Sununu: Cicconi did an excellent job—what process?

Zelikow: The process of agenda setting and staff management?

Sununu: I like Jim. He's extremely good, he's remained a close friend. I did a couple of things to make sure he did not get burned on a couple of occasions that I'm sure he has appreciated and I will not talk about them here. So I've gone out of my way to make sure Jim stayed as long as he did. But Jim was reared in the Reagan White House. And in the Reagan White House there was a gene splicing that took place that made it genetically compulsory to learn how to steal a little of the power lunch from here or the lunch power from there. Jim was very good at it. It wasn't a serious problem, it was a laughable issue.

I just had to watch as he did final edit—you know, passing of drafted versions of speeches into the President, that he didn't do his re-editing between the final draft and the time it got to the President. Jim always had something that he was worrying about, wanted to be his way. But once you started watching out for it, it wasn't a problem. I think he did a very good job. He understood the need for timely flow of paper and yet not taking every piece of paper into the President in 30 seconds. There was a time for the President to receive timely communications and he did that very well. He did his job superbly. I think he was very good.

McCall: Can I go to a macro question?

Sununu: Sure. We'll wind up pretty soon.

McCall: How will Bush be remembered in terms of the conservative, call it redirection?

Sununu: I'm sorry.

McCall: After 1980. How will Bush be considered in terms of this larger movement toward the right that you've been talking about the last day and a half?

Sununu: He suffered in the immediacy with the legacy of his personality—personal clashes, and philosophical clashes with conservatives pre-1980. In other words—I shouldn't say pre-1980, his 1980 campaign. His 1980 campaign was not conservatively focused. So conservatives perceived him as the liberal alternative to Ronald Reagan, the moderate alternative to Ronald Reagan. And the people that were involved then never lost that perception of him. Time goes by and the specificity of that personal interaction was no longer the issue, and new conservatives come and review what he did. This was a very conservative Presidency. Childcare vouchers that can be used in church-based child care, tremendous precedent for the conservative movement. His stand on right to life. His vetoes on right to life. His position on legislation in terms of market economy

and all that, fighting for the market rights on Clean Air and all those things. All the things that conservatives will enunciate as things they'd like to see in legislation, he got into legislation.

In terms of foreign policy and exercising power and standing up for what is strategically important to the U.S., they'll like that. The one negative will be, unfortunately, something that I'm associated with as we discussed, the Souter nomination. Clarence Thomas will certainly be a big positive for him and I think they will eventually recognize that he thought he was appointing a conservative when he appointed Souter. So I think he's going to get good marks with future conservatives.

Young: It's still—

Sununu: A lot of current conservatives are unwilling to give him credit where I think he is due.

Hargrove: You're talking about social conservatives on issues like abortion, right to life—

Sununu: And economic conservatives.

Hargrove: Supply siders, primarily.

Sununu: Well again, the read my lips and then the capitulation on the budget is something that they will have a problem with, yes.

Hargrove: Okay.

Young: I can't speak to what I think the conservative assessment will be, but some things are becoming pretty clear about what the assessment is going to be, and of the revision of the press images of the Bush Presidency as time goes on, and I think they will pay much more attention. This new, more informed person will pay much more attention to the congressional record, the legislative record, which has been neglected almost altogether in favor of concentrating on the world leadership record. It has been neglected and I think, even now, people are beginning to reassess that. So it is going to come out as a much more effective Presidency then it appeared to be on the domestic side.

Milkis: We've been talking about the last couple of days, there will have to be some debate and discussion about what the meaning of that legislation was, whether it really is conservative legislation, conservative governance, or whether it is compromised with a liberal Congress in such a way that free regulatory agencies can do things that conservatives hate.

Young: I think that debate and discussion will have to go on.

Sununu: The private sector's response to the Clean Air Act now, for example, the comfort that it generally has is really going to be the test. The benefits of deregulation in energy are going to be the test. The fact that the fears about the civil rights act—the arguing over business necessity that we talked about yesterday—have not materialized, is going to be the test. ADA has had some complaints, but they should have seen the first bill, and the second and the third. But at least it

was the best bill, by far, put together and it would not have happened if the President hadn't gotten aggressive. All of these things will be best measured by not analyzing them in the abstract but analyzing the specific results that were achieved.

Milkis: Yes. It will be fun to see.

Young: Well, we've come to the end.