INTERVIEW WITH PETER HANNAFORD

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Interviewers

University of Virginia

Stephen F. Knott, chair
Russell L. Riley

In attendance

Mrs. Irene Hannaford

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Knott: We’re very happy that you’re here. I talked with Mr. Hannaford a little bit about the ground rules and he’s satisfied with the rules and regulations, so I think we’re ready to go. Let’s begin by asking you if you could tell us about your early political activity in California.

Hannaford: First, there are three or four small adjustments in the biographical information that I’d like to note at some point. Is this a good time to get this item out of the way?

Knott: Absolutely, let’s do that now.

Hannaford: This has a bearing on what we’re about to do, on my timeline. These are small points, but just in the interest of history—on the first page of the Hannaford timeline under 1967 to ’69, the firm that’s referred to—at that point I was not working on any political campaigns. It was during the years ’64 to ’66.

Knott: Okay, all right.

Hannaford: In ’72, running against [Ron] Dellums—it ought to be noted, I think in parentheses, that he was the incumbent. And on the next page under 1973, working on the copy, the third item down, the proposition one campaign—it was not on the June ballot; it was a November special election. Then, on the top of page six, an extension of 1975—Again a small point, it’s [Michael] Deaver & Hannaford, Inc. The next page—we’re almost to the end—in February, 1977, Reagan’s Political Action Committee opens its doors, I think it’s worth noting in parentheses that it was headed by [Lyn] Nofziger, because he’s significant in several places.

Knott: Sure.

Hannaford: Then in November, on the 13th—as you’ve noted with some of Reagan’s other announcements—I was principally responsible for writing that speech.

Knott: Great.

Hannaford: Then at the bottom, under February, rather than following the New Hampshire primary, it was on the day of the New Hampshire primary. And, on the next page—that would be page five—under June, it says “Taiwanese government,” that really, correctly, should be “the
government of the Republic of China on Taiwan,” because it certainly wasn’t headed at that time by any native Taiwanese, that is Taiwan Chinese.

Then in November on that page, we did not view the election results at the Reagans’ home. We joined the Reagans and others at a Los Angeles hotel. It was the Ambassador, I’m pretty sure. But anyway, the initial viewing was at this hotel. In 1981, it says I formed my own firm. That’s not correct. Deaver & Hannaford, Inc. had its name changed to The Hannaford Company, Inc. We had opened our Washington office in 1977, and I didn’t make Washington the headquarters until 1984.

Riley: It will be on the tape record.

Hannaford: Then one last item: In 1987 to ’88, I was a consultant to the President’s Task Force on Privatization.

Knott: Great, this is very helpful.

Hannaford: In my selected writings, you cited one of my books, but there were four others. I’ve written five Reagan books, including the one you just got this morning. I’d almost forgotten about the oral history I did with Gabriel Morris from UC [University of California] way back in ’81 or ’82, but it was fun. I was thumbing through it last night, refreshed my memory about a lot of things. I guess that was everything, I don’t think there’s anything else. Anyway, I enjoyed reading through the book because it had a lot of fascinating things.

Knott: If we could start by asking you to talk about how you first became involved in California politics prior to Ronald Reagan.

Hannaford: Well, I guess the idea had been growing to get involved in politics in the late ’50s. When I was a student at Cal, I remember it was in ’52—I wasn’t old enough to vote, undergraduate—I went down to the west gate of the campus on a drizzly day, to hear Adlai Stevenson speak at a rally, or a meeting. And I thought that anybody who could parse the King’s English this well ought to be President, if not God. I was an English major.

I wanted to get active, to do something. I really thought this man was terrific, and I began to follow his policy ideas and so forth. I was writing for the student newspaper at the time, and somebody said, “Why don’t you call so-and-so?” It was a county supervisor. I did—and in those days, county supervisors actually answered their own phones—and I said, “How does one get active?” He said, “Call Pierre Salinger at the San Francisco Chronicle.” He was then a young reporter over there. I put in several calls, but I never did connect with him, so I never did anything.

But I had this impulse to get involved in things. And after two years in the Army—Irene [Hannaford] and I were in Massachusetts—we got back to California, and I went back to work for a small advertising agency where I’d been for a little while before the Army. I’d been there a few months, and the woman who ran it offered to incorporate it and sell me a small number of shares in it. It was a very small operation, we were all involved in everything, and shortly after
that, I began to realize what was involved in meeting payrolls every two weeks and paying taxes and all those things.

By 1958 I decided I better re-register as a Republican, and so I did. It was a terrible year to be a Republican in California. We lost the governorship, we lost the senatorial race, and cross-filing was abandoned. It was voted out. Cross-filing was a way by which Republicans—even when they were in the minority—managed to run the legislature. And that was gone. But I still wanted to get active and be involved somehow. So my first real involvement, in 1960, was in the [Richard] Nixon-[John F.] Kennedy campaign. I volunteered to be on a telephone bank, making phone calls to get out the vote. You call your registered voters and see if they’re planning to vote, need a ride to the polls, that sort of thing. That was all, just a volunteer.

Then I joined a Republican organization and went to their meetings. I found them rather boring and too ideological for me, and I didn’t do anything else until ’64. My senior partner in the firm, Helen Kennedy, had been in advertising in Oakland for many, many years, and was well known, and in a lot of civic activities. At the time we incorporated she had said, “Now, let’s promise each other one thing. We’ll never get involved in any political campaigns in this ad agency.” I said, “That’s fine with me.”

Well, in ’64, a well known and respected municipal judge, who’d often been the head of such things as the annual Red Cross campaign—not political things—made an appointment to call on me. He was an old friend of my then-retired former partner. He said, “You’ve got to help me with my campaign.” I said, “Well, tell me about this. I didn’t know you had a campaign coming up.” He said, “Yes, I’ve filed, and I didn’t think I’d have any opposition, but another municipal judge has filed, and it’s going to be a real campaign. You’ve got to help me.” I said, “Helen always said we’d never do this.” He said, “Well, this has to be the exception.”

We took it on. I had a very bright young copywriter, a woman who had just joined us, and she sat in on one of the meetings. She said, “I know what we’ll do. We’ll make him Eisenhower-esque.” The creative director at our ad agency was also a photographer, and we had the judge over one day and started talking about his concept of the role of the judiciary. Our guy was snapping all these pictures, and Rita was recording the whole thing. And she got these snippets that sounded majestic. Sounds funny now, but it was pretty serious at the time. He won in a landslide, and he died of a heart attack three months later.

But also that year, I had run for city council in the little town where I lived—a bedroom community—and didn’t quite win.

Riley: That was your first race?

Hannaford: That was my first race, yes.

Riley: Did you enjoy campaigning?

Hannaford: Oh yes, we had a lot of fun. It’s a town where everybody knows everybody else pretty much. And—in those days at least—everything was completely nonpartisan. The issues
were pruning the street trees and cleaning the gutters and things like that. I lost by a couple of hundred votes. But in those days at least, in that little town, the winners always appointed the losers to the various city commissions. So everybody got something to do, which was very nice. I was on the park commission for four years, which I enjoyed.

But during the course of that, I met our local assemblyman. He said he’d like me to come visit him, and I began to get involved in doing some things for him. I did volunteer work, essentially, communications-type work in his campaign that year. So that was really the beginning of it. In ’65, I met Ronald Reagan for the first time.

**Knott:** Could I ask you to step back just to ’64 again? You were a [Barry] Goldwater supporter, correct?

**Hannaford:** Yes.

**Knott:** You did not participate in his campaign at all?

**Hannaford:** No.

**Knott:** What was it about Goldwater that appealed to you and appealed to other westerners? This is a very important movement—

**Hannaford:** I’d fallen under the spell of Bill Buckley’s *National Review*, which was the first regular exposure I had to well-reasoned conservative philosophy.

**Riley:** And somebody else with a command of the King’s English.

**Hannaford:** And somebody else with a wonderful command. He and his staff were writing a lot about Goldwater in the early ’60s, and there was something about Goldwater’s candor that I liked a lot, and his view of government—that is, limited government is better. The two just kind of fit to me. He seemed to me to be—not the embodiment of everything Buckley was talking about, because his style was quite different, of course—but the one opportunity available at the moment. Nixon was washed up, we all thought at that point, after the disastrous gubernatorial race. Goldwater seemed to be the only person available who would provide a real counter to what I sensed, as others did, as galloping growth in government.

So we bought *The Conscience of a Conservative*—a lot of copies—and gave them to friends. I remember that fall we flew to Kansas City to meet good friends of ours. And the four of us drove from there to Cambridge to attend a conference of ad agencies we were members of, a three-day conference. We had a lot of fun on the way because our friends were for [Lyndon] Johnson. On their station wagon they had a Johnson bumper sticker on one side and a Goldwater on the other side. If you don’t think that confused the gas station attendants—but we all had a good time.

After the conference, Irene and I stayed on a few days. We were going to go down to New York. We were going to Washington, for a little vacation. We stopped in Wilton, Connecticut, to visit some friends for a couple of days, went down to see the World’s Fair. They had a cocktail party
one night for us. We didn’t know any of the other guests there, it was a neighborhood cocktail party. Almost every single person there was a Republican, and they were all astonished that we were going to vote for Goldwater. It was the first time I had—even though we’d lived in Massachusetts—first time I’d run into what today we call RINOS, Republicans in Name Only. They’re all in New England almost, or many of them are in New England.

Their view of things was very different from the western view, I must say. I got a taste of what it was going to be like in the election when so many Republicans voted for Johnson. At any rate, I never got active in the campaign. About a year and a half later when I was asked to go on the Republican county central committee and was elected to it, I suddenly acquired twenty enemies I never knew I had, because what was underlying everything going on in local politics out there was a constant rerun of the Goldwater-[Nelson] Rockefeller fight from ’64.

**Knott:** Which was very bitter.

**Hannaford:** Very, very bitter. I thought Rockefeller’s method of campaigning—or his people’s method of campaigning—was just way below the belt. It was bad. That was one of the reasons I was determined to support Goldwater.

**Knott:** Portraying Goldwater as an extremist?

**Hannaford:** Yes, crazy extremist, yes, just picking up on the Johnson line. At any rate, that was the subtext of what was going on in the county committee. I was on the county committee for eight years. I’ve since found, talking to a number of Democrat friends who have been on county committees around the country, and other Republicans—it seems to be the story of these county committees—they spend all their time fighting each other, and there’s no energy left for fighting the other side.

**Riley:** You had mentioned the Nixon gubernatorial effort. Always when we’re talking with the Reagan people, there’s a kind of Nixon subtext going on, of course, in the ’60s. Did you ever consider doing any work for Nixon? Or was he somebody that you didn’t—

**Hannaford:** No, I didn’t, because I didn’t really know anybody involved. At that time I wasn’t interested in getting into public service. I was building this tiny advertising agency. I voted for Nixon in ’60, voted for him in ’62, voted for him in ’68, voted for him in ’72. Every time he ran, I voted—except when he was running for Vice President. I voted for Stevenson in ’56.

No, I just observed all that from the sidelines. Nixon’s defeat, of course, had a bearing upon Reagan’s running in ’66 because it started with the men who ended up being called the kitchen cabinet, about a half a dozen men in southern California—all prosperous, successful business people who were looking around for somebody who would be a candidate who could really capture the public imagination and become a viable candidate against Pat Brown in ’66.

They wanted Reagan to run for Senate in ’64. He declined, but he did agree to tour the state if they put up the money to do it, or give him the transportation. So he’d tour, talk to Republican groups, various citizen groups, to test the waters. And that’s when I first met him. It was in ’65.
It was in February, the mid-winter conference of the state committee, in the San Francisco Hilton. A couple of friends and I—it was on a weekend, they always had these things on weekends—went over early Saturday morning to float a trial balloon for our friend, [David Donald] Mulford, the local assemblyman, to be a candidate for Lieutenant Governor. I don’t know where he got it in his head he ought to be, but he was the minority whip, I guess, at the time, which gave him a little bit of cachet in the legislature. He or a couple of pals put him up to this. He gave us a list of names of people to call who were wheel horses in the party. So we were to go around the hotel and talk to these people, see if any of them were picking up on this. They weren’t. We’d go up and down the elevators talking about this guy. We were a lot younger then.

We were waiting for that exercise to begin, and we went around to the commercial exhibits, you know, just to kill a few minutes’ time. There weren’t many people there. All of a sudden, we looked up, and there’s Reagan strolling down the aisle with a couple of aides in tow. He stopped and introduced himself. He didn’t need one. We introduced ourselves. We chatted for—couldn’t have been more than two or three minutes at the very most. And as he left, I remember thinking, What a nice man. It’s too bad he can’t be elected to anything. We thought that in order to beat Pat Brown you needed a seasoned, successful political figure. And the only one on the horizon was George Christopher, who had been a pretty successful mayor of San Francisco, and was pretty popular and just seemed to have the right credentials. Of course, it didn’t turn out that way.

I was in a volunteer group of business people in the East Bay called the Republican Alliance. What we did was provide breakfast forums for existing office holders—come around, give reports on what’s going on—and also for candidates in the primary season, to just have a forum. We didn’t endorse or play favorites. We just wanted to expose these folks. We had a session that spring, in ‘66—one for Reagan and one for Christopher—and got big crowds at both of them. I was very impressed with the way Reagan handled himself. Christopher was okay, but Reagan really had a certain charisma to the way he presented himself.

It was my first exposure to this technique of his—which he had been perfecting for quite a long time—of making a brief opening statement of principles, you might say, and then opening it up to, as he called it, “a dialogue instead of a monologue.” And for the next 45 minutes, I guess, people just fired questions at him, and he’d answer them. I was very impressed with the way he handled himself in answering questions. I didn’t understand at the time why he was so insistent on this format with his managers and so forth. It was because his critics dismissed him as just being an actor reading somebody else’s lines: “He just memorizes the stuff.”

I learned this later from him. He said, “The only way I could prove that I wasn’t doing that would be if I opened it to questions. I wouldn’t know what the question was going to be. Sure, from one city to the next you’re going to get some of the same questions. But I wouldn’t know from an individual questioner what I was going to get. And so if I answered the question satisfactorily, people knew that I was thinking about it. I wasn’t just reading somebody’s lines.” It worked very well for him, and he beat Brown by, I think, pretty close to a million votes. It was a stunning success.
Morrisroe: To what do you attribute his success other than this kind of ability to connect to individuals one on one?

Hannaford: I think in his case throughout his political career he focused on a few simple but powerful ideas and objectives, and he drove toward them with single-mindedness that was belied by his seemingly affable, casual, almost nonchalant exterior. This man had a resolve of steel, he really did. You’re often thrown off because he seemed sort of “aw, shucks” about so many things. So I think it was a combination of picking his objectives—a few key things that he wanted to accomplish—and then driving toward them with great determination.

Then his management style, which always, from beginning to end, was identify the job to be done, find the person you think is best able to do it, and leave them alone to do the job. And that served him very well with a few exceptions—a couple of big ones, but not many.

Riley: You said that you had this first encounter and you thought he was a nice guy, but “I can’t imagine he’d ever be elected,” and then a year later—

Hannaford: Well, when he made that performance to our group, I was very impressed. I still voted for Christopher. I’d made that commitment long ago. But I had no trouble voting for Reagan in the general election.

Riley: And it was at that point, during that morning presentation, that you began to think that this is somebody who actually had—

Hannaford: Oh yes, definitely, yes. I was much more reassured, because I thought, *If this man wins, that would be quite something. He’s got some great ideas.* And actually, he had real ideas. Christopher was talking mostly political talk, based upon his résumé, which is more standard politician strategy: “You’ve seen my record”—recites his record—”I know the ropes, and I’ll do a good job.” Sure, he would have. But Reagan came in with challenging ideas—change the shape of the government and redirect its energies and so forth.

Knott: Was Christopher a moderate Republican?

Hannaford: Yes, he was temperamentally conservative. He was not as conservative as Reagan, probably. I hesitate to use those labels, though, because it tends to put people in boxes, and I can’t put either one of them in much of a box. When people say, “Are you a conservative?” I say, “I’m a Reagan Republican.” That means I want growth-oriented tax policies, a strong, secure national defense, limited government, and maximum individual liberty within that context. I don’t find a lot of people disagreeing with those things. Some do, but not a lot.

Morrisroe: Reagan was a relative newcomer to politics in California. He’d given the speech on behalf of Goldwater, and he’d gained some notoriety for that. How did the Republican establishment, the various elements of it in California, respond to Reagan’s success in the primary? Other than with shock.
Hannaford: No, no, not with shock at that point. The response was like the one the Republican establishment gave George Bush after he won for the second time as Governor of Texas. All of a sudden, “There’s our man.” Because what do they want most? Win, they want a win. Democrats are the same way. They smell a winner, they’re all going to rush to the winner. That’s just the nature of politics.

Of course, Reagan then became a great unifying factor within the party. The state chairman at the time was a physician, Gaylord Parkinson. Reagan is often identified as the author of this, but he’s not. Parkinson invented the so-called Eleventh Commandment—with Reagan’s, I’m sure, complete acquiescence, because he used it over the years. It is, “Thou shalt not speak ill of another Republican.” The theory behind that, in California at least, was, “We’re in the minority in registration. We can’t afford deep divisions because we’ll never win with that. We can’t win without independent and Democrat votes, and we’re not going to get those if we’re fighting amongst ourselves all the time. So, in other words, if you have something bad to say about another Republican, stow it.” That worked quite well.

He also, with one exception while he was Governor, stayed out of any primary races among Republicans, because he knew how divisive that would be within the party. There was one time where he made an exception. As President, I think, he did that also. He followed that dictum. That’s now considered to be an almost nationwide unwritten rule of Republican politics. It doesn’t always work, but it’s worked pretty well.

Riley: I suppose I should go ahead and ask you now when was the exception, and what were the circumstances, if you recall.

Hannaford: It had something to do with Newt Russell, our state senator from Pasadena. As we talk it may come back. It was a long time ago.

Knott: So during the Reagan years you were a member of—is it the Alameda County Republican Central Committee?

Hannaford: Yes.

Knott: And you’re running your own advertising, public relations—

Hannaford: Yes, that’s right.

Knott: Tell us how you got drawn into the Reagan circle.

Hannaford: A good friend of ours who was from Oakland had been with the [Henry] Kaiser Companies. He then went to work for this assemblyman I mentioned to you. In ’64? When did [Donald] Livingston go to work for Mulford?

Mrs. Hannaford: I don’t know.
**Hannaford:** Anyway, he was a good friend of ours. And in ’66, when Reagan won, this chap was appointed as the executive assistant to one of the Cabinet secretaries—Agriculture and Consumer Affairs—which was under the Ag department then. He and several other friends of ours went into the Reagan administration, and we stayed in touch with all of them. But this chap in particular called Irene one day. Sixty-seven? Seventy maybe.

**Mrs. Hannaford:** Seventy, I think.

**Hannaford:** He asked if she would like to be the Governor’s representative on the Furniture and Bedding Board, later called the Home Furnishings Board.

**Mrs. Hannaford:** It was for fire proofing and fire retardation and mattresses, pillows. And what do I know about that? Nothing.

**Riley:** Were you the person responsible for holding me accountable if I took the tab off the pillow?

**Hannaford:** That’s right. She wore a badge, went around, checked to make sure you weren’t tearing that off.

**Riley:** I’m guilty, I admit it.

**Mrs. Hannaford:** A good part of that originally was the percentage of duck down to goose feathers in a pillow. Apparently it was just shockingly abused. They said California was the leader—and still is, I guess—in many of the home furnishing products. They set the standard. If you say it’s 10% goose, and 50% duck—and whatever the difference was in something else—that would be not only California’s standard, but for the whole United States.

**Hannaford:** They had an actual laboratory that tested these things.

**Mrs. Hannaford:** We’d go to different places, Sealy mattress in San Francisco, and a number of other places. I was not involved with the industry, obviously, and everybody else had something to do with what the commission was all about. I was just a public member. It was an interesting experience.

**Hannaford:** I think they’ve cut them way down, but California used to have about twenty of these licensing bureaus for particular trades and industries. They were made up partly of members from those industries, partly of *ex officio* government officials, and then some public members, so that you had a balance on the thing. They worked generally pretty well. Irene said yes to that, and she became the public member. Right after that, we went to some reception, and this local assemblyman of ours who had met her many times—

**Mrs. Hannaford:** I’d walked the streets for him.

**Hannaford:** We’d go to a party, and he’d fall all over me, turn around to Irene and say, “Hi, there.” Well this particular night, she got the appointment from the Governor, we walked in, he
fell all over her and turned around to me and said, “Hi, there.” He was a great politician. Anyway, that was kind of our first getting into the Reagan orbit. That was the beginning of it. A year later, late ’71, I was asked if I’d like to be on the Governor’s Consumer Fraud Task Force. I said I would, and I was appointed vice chairman of that.

This was the last of, I think, eight task forces that Reagan had set out to have in his governorship. The first big one was right after he was elected. He got a lot of large corporations and accounting firms to send accountants and auditors, efficiency specialists—on short-term assignments—for free, no charge to the government—to audit the work practices of every department in state government. They came up with a very long list. It was something like 1,600 recommendations. Many of them were very small, but you add them all up, and quite a lot of money was involved. They did things like standardizing the size of file folders in all the different agencies, and the length of the paper and that kind of thing, the trays that they used in the cafeterias. He put into practice, through executive orders, as much of that as he could. It saved quite a bit of money, and it caused quite a splash, too.

Riley: He was relying on volunteer help?

Hannaford: These were volunteers.

Riley: Business consultants? Accountants?

Hannaford: Yes, it would be like accountants, different people for different functions, efficiency experts, systems managers, office administrators. Oh, they had two or three hundred of these people. They were all donated for just a short time—sixty, ninety days—and then rendered a report. It was a precursor to the Grace Commission that he had during his Presidency. That was really modeled after that California example.

At any rate, this Consumer Fraud Task Force was the last of the bunch. Here again, I was very impressed by his approach to the whole thing. This was a very diverse organization. There were about fifteen of us on it. There were two or three business people. The chairman was the regional chief legal counsel of Sears, Roebuck. We had a consumer affairs specialist from a radio station. The only ex officio was an assistant attorney general. We had Republicans, Democrats, blacks, whites, Hispanics, Asians, men, and women. It was just a real cross-section of the state, different perspectives, different backgrounds, different outlooks.

We went around the state on several different trips, to meet with people and look into areas where consumer fraud might be a strong possibility—selling products, and that sort of thing—and made recommendations. We also made quite a few recommendations in the interest of consumer education. One of the recommendations was that social studies classes in the public schools ought to have a segment, at least a couple of hours, devoted to teaching kids how to be consumers. You know, reading the labels and the guarantees, and how to reconcile a checkbook, that sort of thing—the basics that everybody ought to be equipped with when they become an adult. Not once were we told what to come up with, not once, only told to go out and identify potential consumer fraud where we saw it and where remedial action should be made.
I was very impressed that we came in with a single report. There was no majority, minority report. We were of one voice in making our recommendations to the Governor, and he adopted as many as he could. We sent the rest to the legislature, some of which they adopted, some they didn’t. We presented that to the Governor, I think it was in May of ’73, about fifteen months later. And of course that was the end of it. We had a tiny staff—a staff director and a secretary—and it all disbanded.

I went down the hall to the appointments secretary after we made our presentation to the Governor, and I said to him, “Well, our job is finished. What do you do with people whose jobs are finished?” He said, “If we like the jobs they did, we find them something else to do.” I said, “If you like the job I did, I’d like to do another one because it was terrific. I was very impressed with the group, with the assignment. It was a lot of fun, it was interesting, and I felt that we were contributing something.” He said, “I’ll let you know.”

He called me a while later and said, “How would you like to be the Governor’s representative on the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency governing board?” This was the bi-state compact that Congress had approved between Nevada and California to oversee the preservation and the development of the Lake Tahoe basin. The Lake Tahoe basin at that high elevation looks tremendously rugged, but the ecology is really quite fragile, and it will sustain only a certain amount of human activity before it all breaks down. Hence they had this set-up. But you can imagine the recipe for controversy and argument over that, because you had people already there with summer homes, and in the Nevada portion you had casinos and hotels and all of this, and people wanting to build more of them. So there was a lot of tension.

I said to the appointments secretary, “That’s wonderful. I’d love to do it. Why me?” He said, “Oh, we’ve been looking for somebody who is a strong supporter of the Governor and a member of the Sierra Club, and we think you’re the only one in California.” It wasn’t quite true, but it wasn’t too far off the mark. Irene and I had been members of the Sierra Club for fifteen, sixteen years at that point, and we spent most of our summers in the High Sierra camping and hiking and mountain climbing. What I didn’t tell him was that I’d been getting so disaffected from the Sierra Club I was about to resign. I waited for a while.

Riley: That’s probably the perfect combination.

Hannaford: I waited for two or three years. At any rate, it was a fascinating experience.

Knott: Was Paul Laxalt the Governor of Nevada at this time?

Hannaford: No, he’d gone on to the Senate. But he and Reagan were the ones who put the whole thing together, and that’s really how their friendship developed. It was a very strong friendship, during their days as neighbor Governors. Again, I found that not once was I asked to vote a particular way, to try to quash anything, try to introduce anything. I was never told what to do, and I was very impressed by that fact. Here I was the Governor’s vote on this thing, involving often millions of dollars of potential development and so forth. But this was like the task force job and like Irene’s job—these were not paying positions. They paid you a per diem for going to the meetings, like $25, and reimbursed you for your transportation costs, and that
was all. The Tahoe thing could almost have been a full-time job because I was getting lobbied furiously all the time. You had to do a lot of reading, a lot of studying, boning up to be informed at the meetings. But I was fascinated.

The Secretary of Resources of California, a man named Norman Livermore, was ex officio on this board. Each Governor had one appointment. Everybody else was ex officio. Every jurisdiction around the lake had a representative. There were three California counties, two Nevada counties, and one incorporated city on the California side. They each had—one of their governing board members was appointed. The Forest Service had an appointment. The resources secretary of each state was an appointee, and then one public member from each state. It was a fascinating experience. I enjoyed it thoroughly.

**Riley:** You’re doing this on a part-time basis—

**Hannaford:** As an appointee, not as a professional. I wasn’t making any living at it. By then I had run for Congress and not won, did not go back to the ad agency where I was working. They encouraged me to hang out my own shingle on the PR side of things, and they would send me all of the PR business from their advertising clients, which they did. I had a very busy time running my business, but I was running it out of home and doing my Tahoe work at the same time. It was a very busy year.

At the end of that year, I was asked to go to Sacramento to become Reagan’s director of public affairs and assistant to the Governor for his final year in office. I wasn’t going to do it, because I had this little business that was off to a good start. Irene encouraged me to do it. She said, “If you don’t do it, you’ll always wish you had.” She was right.

**Knott:** Can you talk a little bit about the race against Ron Dellums?

**Hannaford:** Sure. I had been doing all this volunteer work—I was on the county committee, the state committee. I had worked as a volunteer for the communications director on several campaigns. Professionally, I had my company handle the advertising for a number of campaigns. I’d managed a couple of campaigns. And I began to think to myself, this must come to some conclusion. There’s got to be some purpose in all of this, and not just slipping in the bathtub at age 80 and have the obituary read, “Mr. Republican Dies.”

So I took a good look at this, and I thought, if you’re ever going to do it, the time to do it is to run for Congress in ’72. Dellums had upset a rather traditional, liberal, long time—that is six, seven term—Congressman, Jeff Colehan, union Democrat. He had upset him in the primary in 1970 when the whole anti-Vietnam and counterculture thing was at white heat, particularly around Berkeley. It so stunned Cohelan’s supporters and energized the Republicans—they were running a young, totally unknown Vietnam veteran as a sacrificial lamb, I guess, and with almost no campaign he came within about 12,000 votes of Dellums in a district with a pretty strong Democratic registration advantage.

Dellums was elected. And I thought to myself, the only time you’re going to get a guy like this—he’s very controversial, very confrontational—you’ll either get him the first time out as an incumbent, when he still has a lot of his own party angry with him, or twenty years later when
he’s forgotten where he came from. That’s the formula you always think about because it has happened so many times in so many places.

So, in the fall of ’71 I spoke to my friend Mulford, the assemblyman, and he said, “I think it’s a good idea. You ought to give it a try. It’s uphill, but it’s not impossible.” We had about 35% of the registered voters, and we knew from experience that, while that’s a stretch, Republicans at the right circumstances can win with that split. He said, “You’ve got to go around and talk to all the party leader types, volunteer groups and everything.” I learned that what you do is you go around and ask their opinion. You say, “I’d like your opinion, do you think I should—?” But what you’re really doing is saying, “Will you support me?”

He gave me some very good advice about how to approach folks, and he was right. He said, “Talk to the people that you think are not going to support you,” these party leaders—we knew who all these folks were. And that was good advice, too. He said, “Even if they don’t commit themselves to you, they’ll appreciate the fact that you sat down and talked to them. It’s flattering to have their opinions sought. And they’ll be much less likely, if they don’t go for you, to come out strongly against you, if you’ve sat down and broken bread, so to speak.” And he was right about that. It’s true.

Well, I thought I’d pretty well cleared the field, which is the first thing you have to do, by talking to all these folks, and I got very good responses from them. I knew the next step was to have a luncheon downtown, inviting certain people from the business and political community to the luncheon, where you talk about your chances, how you see them, what your strategy is going to be, and so on. Then you say, “What do you think?” And if enough of them pull out checks at that point, and write them, you’ve got a green light. We’d been through this exercise with many other candidates. So two or three friends who were orchestrating this with me and I did that, and it was quite satisfactory.

So, we launched the campaign. There was one guy whom I hadn’t managed to discourage, a very conservative black man from Berkeley who was also on our county committee. He was a decent fellow, but he was very hard right ideologically, and I just didn’t think he’d be any problem under the circumstances. There were very few black Republicans, and Democrats weren’t going to vote in the Republican primary, and all the activists knew this guy was way, way off in the clouds. But then a strange thing happened. I was just about to drive through the tunnel one day in from Orinda, and I was listening to a CBS news broadcast announcing that a federal judge had just approved the redistricting plan for congressional seats in California, but turned down the plan for the state legislature.

I soon realized, the very same day, that this threw a slice of the next county into this district I was running for—a slice of Contra Costa county—that was four-to-one Republican. I also quickly ascertained that it represented 15% of the population of the changed district. In other words, it really didn’t change things a lot. But suddenly three guys who lived in one of the towns in this little slice thought, Wow, our county is in this district! We can win this seat. And they all jumped right in. It changed the dynamics quite rapidly. They had not looked very closely at the demographics, because it would have told them that it’s a very steep hill to climb. Adding this
little number of people sure helps, but it isn’t going to change the basics any. It’s basically an Oakland, Berkeley, Albany, El Cerrito, Piedmont district.

We had a very lively primary, and it’s a good thing we did, too. It was quite gentlemanly. Nobody threw any brickbats. We were each out saying how we see the district, and why we think our program is going to work best. The big difference that I had between mine and theirs—and I think the thing that led to my winning the primary pretty convincingly—was that I talked about the diversity of the district.

It was a tremendously diverse district, in terms not only of its demographic composition, but the things that go on in it—universities, large businesses, industry, farms. There’s just a little bit of everything in there. I ran essentially on a program of expanded stock ownership—or ESOPs as they’re often called—showing how if you can build capital ownership into workers, you have a recipe for building estates into almost every family in America, if you made it large enough. And you provide a never-ending source of capital, sound capital, for businesses to grow, thus to create more jobs and so forth. At the same time you reduce tensions between labor and management, because they all have the same objectives—that is, to grow.

My more troglodyte friends on the Republican side thought this was extremely dangerous, radical stuff to talk about, which gave me all the more reason to think it was the right idea. The kind of economics they wanted to talk about hadn’t been selling for 30 years. And I was convinced it was right. I’d met Louis Kelso three or four years before, at a conference—he was the author of this—and he was a passionate prophet. I liked his ideas very much, and I adopted them. And that was the core of my campaign in the primary. I got a majority of the votes in the primary.

All of us were careful not to beat up on the others. So after the primary, I got the other guys, except the black guy—he would never endorse me. But all the others not only endorsed, but helped out with the campaign. They were all good troopers. They were great. In the general election, my advisors persuaded me that rather than spend most of my time on my economic theme, I should turn my attention more to the incumbent’s shortcomings. There were two things: one, he had a quite poor attendance record. He was out campaigning on his radical ideas all the time. Secondly, I discovered that on matters in the Middle East, he was voting anti-Israel on almost everything. I had a number of prominent Jewish people active in my campaign, and they drew my attention to this. We started researching his record and found that it was pretty poor.

So I hammerered on these things. I was running against “the politics of the empty chair.” In other words, we used that old stunt where you give your presentation, and you have an empty chair where he’s supposed to be, that sort of thing. He didn’t take me seriously at first—until one day we had an impromptu debate. I got a call one weekend from a woman who was active in my women’s volunteer group. She was the head of the sisterhood at one of the temples, and she was outraged because she had learned that the rabbi had permitted the Dellums’ campaign to schedule a press conference in the social hall at the synagogue. She said, “There should never be a political event in the social hall, ever, but as long as he’s letting it happen, you’re going to be there, because I’m going to introduce you.” I said, “Okay.”
You approach this particular temple by a wide, high swath of steps. There must be a hundred steps to this great wide staircase going up. When Dellums arrived in his car at the bottom, I was standing at the top and shook his hand as he came up. He was quite surprised. There was an Episcopal priest who in those days wrote a weekly column for the *San Francisco Examiner*. He was extremely inflammatory. For some reason, he took a shine to me. I ran into him rather impromptu when I was handing out cards one day on Solano Avenue and ringing doorbells and things. We fell into conversation. He liked me, and he was at this press conference. And he began to bait Dellums something awful. Everything he said was true. It’s just that he was so confrontational. He got Dellums all flustered, and they insisted that I get a chance to answer all the same questions. So we had this kind of impromptu debate. Dellums did take it seriously after that. We had quite a lot of fun at that event.

We did have a couple of formal debates, and they were perfectly gentlemanly. This one was quite spontaneous, but I didn’t win the election. I gave it everything I had, wanted to win, and didn’t make it. I had a third party candidate whom I didn’t pay enough attention to. There was something called the American Independent Party in those days, way off on the right, and they had a primary. They had about 400 registered voters in the district, and this druggist in one of the towns in the district was well known in his community. He was their candidate. He was a regional supervisor for the John Birch Society, and I just dismissed all of this out of hand as way far out and not to be paid attention to.

What, of course, I forgot was that it isn’t 400 people in his primary that count, it’s his being on the ballot in the general election. I was always looking over my right shoulder, so to speak, on all of these things. It was a real tightrope walk because I’d go to general candidate events and be challenged, “Who are you going to vote for for President?” “I’m going to vote for President Nixon.” “Why?”

You know? I’d have to give them the reasons why without inflaming those people who weren’t going to vote for him. On the other hand, if I were too critical of him, the people on that side could say, “The heck with this guy. I’m going to vote for what’s his name.” So it was a bit of a tightrope walk. I never had to sacrifice any principles. I just had to say things with care. Anyway, I didn’t win. George McGovern was the “president” of that district that year. I ran about 10,000 votes ahead of Nixon and way ahead of my registration, but it wasn’t enough.

I pretty well got it out of my system at that point. We raised a lot of money. Remember, this was a long time ago, thirty-some years ago. I had a lot of support from the National Republican Congressional Committee that year, and I was told by them, toward the end of that campaign, that mine was the best-funded challenger campaign among Republicans. We raised about $160,000. Today a campaign like that, in a district like that, very urban district, would probably have to raise pretty close to a million to be competitive, I would think. At the time, we were stunned it was so big, but it’s peanuts today.

Quite a few of my supporters had said, “Look, you might not make it this time. Are you willing to go a second time?” as many candidates are if they come reasonably close. I said, “Yes, of course I will, if I can make a decent showing, and if it’s not futile. But I’ll let you know. If I don’t win, I’ll let you know exactly a year later.” Because that’s what you need, about a little
over a year to do it. Well, by fall of ’73 when I had to make that decision, I couldn’t have predicted Nixon would resign, but he sure was on a slippery slope. Everybody knew that. And if he’d done poorly in ’72, in his landslide year, how were things going to be in ’74? I said to the county committee people, “I’m not going to be a candidate. I’ll turn over my records to you. You can have all my fundraising files, everything. Give them to whoever wants to run.” That’s the end of that story.

Mrs. Hannaford: Peter stayed up ’til the wee hours, and many of us stayed up even later. He was asked to go over to San Francisco for a radio program. It looked as if it were a sure thing that Peter was going to make it. But one of the last precincts to come in was Berkeley, a university town, where there was a question on some parts of how many students voted at home and also voted in the district.

Hannaford: Yes, they never settled that. In those days, at least—I don’t know if they still do it that way—in California, most of the counties counted the absentees first. And the absentees always tended to favor the Republicans. All of that’s changed. Democrats are about as good about getting absentees out as the Republicans were then. And in many counties they don’t count the absentees until everything else is done. But in those days those came in first, and it often gave you a little false boost.

Knott: You mentioned the John Birch Society. In some of the other Reagan interviews that we’ve done this comes up. This was a problem or a factor that Ronald Reagan had to deal with. I’m interested in any observations you might have about why the Birch Society was this presence, particularly in California.

Hannaford: Yes, particularly in California. They had strong chapters, particularly in southern California. But as I found out, they also had some not so visible ones—but they were plenty active—in the north. For people who were totally disaffected by the government and by the system, there was a place to go, and that was the Birch Society, which, you know, wanted the United States to get out of the UN and wanted all these very cut and dried, all black-all white solutions to all problems. And I guess people who want to see nothing but all blacks and whites in life were attracted to it, because it seemed to have solutions to problems. It didn’t really. But it did attract, not large numbers, but some highly energized people, and some with a fair amount of money, who would put money into these pamphlets and fund this sort of activity.

When Reagan ran in ’66, it was still a big enough factor to cause trouble if you got anywhere near it. He was asked—I think it was in a press conference—”Would you accept the support of the John Birch Society?” He was prepared for the question, and he said (I’m paraphrasing), “As you know, I’ve been laying out my program over the last sixty days” (or whatever it was), “and pretty clearly. Here are the main points of it. Now anybody who agrees with that program is perfectly welcome to vote for me. I can’t tell them how to vote when they go into the polling booth. If they like that program, want to vote for me, that’s fine. I’m not buying their program. They’re buying mine.” End of question, end of issue.

But of course the press, always seeking a good story—not necessarily from a partisan point of view, but just a good story—would have loved it if he’d said something stupid like, “Why, I’d
welcome their support along with everybody else’s,” which would have caused him no end of trouble. But the Birch Society, as far as I know, is pretty close to being extinct now. But I don’t know. We lived in Pasadena for several years, and in San Marino, which is right next to it, they had a storefront that was always very neat and clean and attractive, just like a Christian Science reading room.

Knott: Was the Communist element a part— What was the driving force behind it?

Hannaford: Anti-Communism was, to a great extent. That seemed to be what really energized them the most. We had a dear friend—she’s now deceased—who in turn had a good friend who lived in San Marino, not too many blocks from where we lived. Our friend would come down and visit us from the Bay area, and we went and visited her friend a few times. She lived in a nice house and seemed to be a nice, friendly lady, but the minute you’d get into anything that was anywhere near politics—she was a Bircher—she’d just go off like a Roman candle. She was a conspiracy theorist. You have them on the left, you have them on the right. The personality types are identical. It’s just that the matrix is different.

Knott: Can you talk a little bit about your role in the campaign for Proposition One, which I think you undertook in that last year?

Hannaford: Yes, I took it on as a business assignment, really. I was for it. In the spring of ’73, Reagan had Dick Wirthlin, his pollster, do some polling—this could have been late ’72, don’t hold me to the date—at any rate, some months before the thing became a campaign. He had this idea that we ought to have a constitutional amendment to limit the percentage of the people’s income—the gross state product, I guess you’d call it—that the government could take in any given year to run its affairs. This would be an automatic kind of check against government excess. There were caveats, provisions, in there. He wanted provisions in there, so that in case of calamities or emergencies you could override it temporarily. It could be changed by a two-thirds vote of the people. There were various checks and balances in there. But the idea was to put discipline into the state legislature.

Wirthlin did some polling on that and found the concept was very popular. So, they decided to get an initiative petition up and get it on the ballot. As it turned out, the only practical time to do it, for various factors, was fall of ’73, when there was no general election. So it was a special election, a one-issue election. There are some political dangers in doing that. One of which is that the cost of it becomes an issue for the opponents to play against. The other is that it focuses everybody’s attention, pro and con, on the thing, and the cons, usually on anything like that—on an issue, rather than a person—are better able to mobilize their people.

At any rate, it was far ahead in the private polls, so he decided to go ahead and do it. Mike Deaver, who was one of the senior assistants to the Governor, took a leave in August, for the duration, to run the campaign and asked me to take on the coordination of ten northern California counties, getting public officials to support it, getting publicity, doing a variety of tasks to build support for this thing.

Knott: Had you had contact with Deaver prior to this? Where did that relationship—
**Hannaford:** I knew him through my friend Livingston, who was another one of the senior assistants to Reagan. I met Deaver through Livingston a year or two before. So he asked me to take this on, and I did, driving all over northern California that fall. I called on newspaper editors, county supervisors, mayors, supporters, party activists—to get them to get their groups out. I gave talks, set up speakers’ bureaus, all those things.

What we didn’t realize when we started the formal campaign in September was that all summer long, the opposition—and the principal opponents were the state public workers, who saw that the trough wasn’t going to be overflowing any longer if this happened—they and various of their allies started quietly going around to city councils and county boards of supervisors, getting them to pass resolutions against this on the grounds that it would impinge upon county and local tax bases. They had a scheme of logic all worked out. It really blindsided our people. We didn’t realize until after it happened, so we had to play catch-up.

The other problem that it faced was that in order to be airtight and have the necessary caveats with which to answer policy questions, and to prevent loopholes—it was about 7,000 words long. It was quite long, and the opposition started playing the tactic of “rather the devil you know then the devil you don’t.” Anything to do with taxes, voters ultimately will vote for the devil they know. So if you have anything to do with taxes, it’s got to be very simple. And it’s hard to do anything simple in taxes, in terms of a ballot issue or a campaign position of the candidate. If people are asked to vote on taxes, and they don’t like the present system, they’d rather vote for that one—at least they know how to deal with it—than something that might be a big mystery down the road. So we were beaten.

I believe that in the back of his mind, Reagan’s plan was to win that and to ride it to the nomination in 1976. He reasoned at that time, in late ’72, early ’73, that Nixon would fill out his term, and that he, Reagan, would be the logical one to be next in line. Republicans are very great on voting on the “his turn” basis. And it was particularly strong in those days. By then, he reasoned, it would have been his turn.

**Knott:** Did he aggressively campaign for this proposition?

**Hannaford:** Oh yes, very much so. He campaigned up and down the state. But, a funny thing happened on the way to the Presidency.

**Knott:** Do you recall how lopsided the vote was?

**Hannaford:** About seven points. It was convincing, but not super heavy. I don’t remember the exact vote, though. It was in that range.

**Riley:** Did this provide the seeds for the Proposition 13 battle that came later?

**Hannaford:** Yes, I think so. I think that was the inspiration for Howard Jarvis and his sidekick [Paul] Gann. I’m sure that was the inspiration for that. Of course, by ’78, the water in the kettle was really boiling on the whole tax issue, because there was a lot of public frustration about the
growth of taxes. Property taxes had just been growing and growing and growing. Yes, I think it was a direct descendent of Prop One.

[BREAK]

**Knott:** We’re up to the point where you become a member of Governor Reagan’s administration. If you could tell us how that came about, your appointment as Director of Public Affairs.

**Hannaford:** Reagan had a Secretary of Health and Welfare, a physician named Earl Brian who decided he wanted to run for Senate in ’74. And when he told the Governor his decision, he said, “I have to resign from my position.” That was, and probably still is, the biggest unit within state government, had the most employees, Health and Welfare. Reagan decided to shift to Jim Jenkins, his Director of Public Affairs, over to run that agency for his final year in office. And he did, which opened that particular slot. Under Reagan there were four assistants to the Governor. One, the most senior, was the Chief of Staff—that was Ed Meese. The other three were the Assistant to the Governor and Director of Administration. That was Deaver. Then there was the Assistant to the Governor and Director of Programs and Policy. That was Don Livingston. Then there was the Assistant to the Governor and Director of Public Affairs, which is the job that they asked me to come in and take.

Deaver had been there from the beginning as a young assistant, and then moved up over the years. Meese had started as the Legal Affairs Secretary to the Governor, and succeeded Bill Clark as the Chief of Staff when Clark went to the state Supreme Court. Livingston succeeded George Steffes, who left to become a lobbyist. He’d been in the administration from the beginning. He’d been in that slot, I think, about four years. Deaver’s operation ran scheduling, the advance squad, security. Programs and Policy dealt with the legislature and the constituency groups.

Public Affairs oversaw the press office, the Office of Community Relations—which were basically minority relations units in various cities—the Office of Speech Research, with one full-time speechwriter, and Office of State Information, which was an information conduit for all the departments of the state government. It dispensed press releases and radio actualities on purely factual stuff. This had nothing to do with politics, or the legislature, or policy. It was purely advisories like Highway 40 will be closed because of snow, that kind of thing. Or, there’s an outbreak of citrus canker in Riverside County—purely statistical stuff. I was asked to come fill that job for Reagan’s last year in office.

So I went up there and took a studio apartment in a big apartment house two or three blocks from the capitol. I would drive up very early on Monday mornings and come back after work on Fridays to Piedmont, about eighty miles away. I’d spend the week in the office or moving about with the Governor. I wasn’t quite sure what it would entail until I got into it. I talked to Deaver and to Livingston and Meese and said, “What should we focus on?” One of them said, “Why don’t you sit down with the Governor and find out some of the things that he’d always wanted to do while he’s been Governor but never had the time to do. After all, he’s not running for re-election. As he promised, he’s only going to finish out two terms.” Now there are term limits, but
there weren’t then. “So he can concentrate on pushing a few policy things he really cares about and doing a lot of other quasi-ceremonial things that he never had the time to do.”

So I made an appointment to sit down with him. I’d gotten ideas from some of the other people. I ticked off a few, and that triggered his memory of other things he wanted to do. We came up with a list of maybe twenty things, and we ended up doing about half of them. I saw them as good PR, and I’m sure he did, too. But he saw them more as dotting the i’s and crossing the t’s.

The most memorable of the events of that kind that we did was going up to Round Valley, in Mendocino County, in summer. It was a gorgeous summer day. Round Valley was a ranch valley, and most of the ranchers were Indians. They were members of a tribe that had been relocated there by the army in the 1870s. So they’d been there a long time, a hundred years.

In the late 60s, the Corps of Engineers and the Bureau of Reclamation wanted to build a huge new dam, called Dos Rios dam, which would have flooded Round Valley, flooded out the ranchers. Of course, they would have been relocated, but it would have flooded them out and flooded out their burial grounds, too. They called on Reagan when this issue came up and asked him to save their valley for them. Under the law, the Corps of Engineers and the Bureau of Reclamation were not obliged to seek the approval of the Governor for building a federal dam, anywhere. But, by custom, long tradition, they never built one over the objections of a state’s Governor. You can imagine the kind of controversy that was going on.

The water fraternity was lobbying furiously to build the dam because they saw this growing need for impounding more and more water. They were sincere. It was just that on the other side you had the allies of the Indians, but they seemed not nearly as numerous. There wasn’t a big constituency for the Indians. But Reagan was very taken by their plight. He studied this issue very carefully—he kept everybody on tenterhooks for quite a while, because he wouldn’t reveal his thinking on the thing. He just kept asking a lot of questions and hearing from a lot of different sources. One day he simply wrote a letter to his Secretary of Resources directing him to work with the Corps of Engineers and the Bureau of Reclamation to find an alternative to the dam, which, in effect, killed the dam.

The Indians were so grateful that they presented him—now, this was before my time that all this happened—but he had on his wall in the Governor’s office—as you walked out, it was just to the right on the wall there—a wooden plaque that they had made, that had laminated into it an aerial photo of Round Valley. They had written down there, “In Grateful Thanks to Governor Reagan for Saving Our Valley,” and the names of the tribal groups. He considered that one of his most prized mementos.

I remember, when we were talking about these things to do, he said, “You know, the Indian ranchers have given me a standing invitation to come up and visit them in their valley. They really want me to come see their valley, but I’ve never been able to do it. Is that something we could do?” I said, “If you want to do it, that’s what we’re going to do.” So we did, one day in July. He had a Cessna Citation, a small eight-passenger jet, which took him back and forth around the state, and we flew the jet in there—to this day, maybe the only jet plane that ever
landed in Round Valley. I’ll never forget it, as we landed, lining both sides of the runway, were all the residents of the valley, cheering him. It was a wonderful day, and very nostalgic for him.

There was a rancher in the valley—Richard Wilson, very active—I think he was on the Stanford Board of Trustees. He was a Stanford graduate, anyway. He had taken the Indians’ position throughout this and had lobbied very hard for them. He was very persuasive. I remember meeting him before we went up to Round Valley. He had a very attractive ranch there. He was growing vegetables using the French intensive technique, which produces a tremendous number of vegetables in a very small area. He had this rather quirky guy—(aside to Irene) remember Alan Chadwick, the vegetable man from UC Santa Cruz?—who was teaching the kids, all these interns, how to do this technique. It was quite impressive.

They had a big banquet for Reagan. Then they took him into the little town, where their public health clinic had just had a fire and been seriously burned, and asked if he would appeal to President Nixon—or just federal authorities—to get them some extra money to rebuild, which he said he would do. I don’t remember what the outcome of that was, but it was a very sentimental day.

It’s funny, the very same day, the Secretary of Agriculture, who was from Modoc County—which is a very sparsely populated ranching county up in the northeastern corner—had persuaded Reagan to promise that before he left office, he would open the Modoc County Fair one year. So after that, we flew to this tiny town called Cedarville, where they had the Modoc County Fair, an old fashioned county fair. He snipped the ribbon, and he judged the potato sack race. It was quite a day. And funny, on the trip between the two events, on the plane, was a former Lieutenant Governor who had verbally launched some attack against Reagan on some policy years earlier, and was very much in the dog house with all the Reagan people. His name was Butch [Harold] Powers. He was on the plane going up. He was on there to apologize to Reagan and make amends. They did, and it all turned out okay.

We did quite a number of things that year. He also toured a nuclear submarine at the Mare Island shipyard. Gosh, I wish I could remember all the things we did.

**Knott:** Did he enjoy this kind of activity?

**Hannaford:** Yes, he did. As long as he wasn’t over-scheduled, as long as he didn’t do too many things back-to-back and didn’t have a chance to get his notes organized and his thinking organized, he liked to do that sort of thing. He’s a gregarious man. He liked being with people. Most successful politicians do. Nixon’s a great exception to that. He was extremely shy with people and very uncomfortable with small talk and things like that, but not Reagan. And Reagan also had this marvelous storehouse of stories, which came out of his various careers—radio, and film, and television and so forth.

He had a way of presenting these stories that was just so funny and charming at the same time. He loved to tell them. He never tired of them. I’ve heard a lot of those stories from him many times, and I laughed at them every time, not because it was a ritual to do it, but because they were always funny. He liked being around people, and people loved to hear the stories.
Oftentimes reporters who were following him around, their eyes would roll, because he’d start getting off into these stories about Hollywood days. People just loved to hear them, and the reporters think, *Oh God, do I have to hear that story again?*

**Knott:** What were his press relations like in that last year?

**Hannaford:** His press relations were generally quite good. One of the things he did—which I think was very smart, and I wish he’d done it more often as President—he had a weekly press conference at the capitol. He had other press conferences, but there was a fixed one every Tuesday morning at 10 o’clock, or 9:30. There was a press conference room right across the hall from the Governor’s complex. We’d just go out one door, right across the hall, and into the other. The night before, the press secretary would call around to some of the leading reporters and say, “What’s on your mind?” as to the issues and so forth. And he’d pull together a series of questions he thought were going to be asked, and he’d distribute that to the Governor and the senior staff, and the Governor would take it home and think about it overnight, and so would we. Then we’d have an early breakfast in the conference room of the Governor’s office the next morning, which was a rehearsal press conference, really. The press secretary played the role of the press. He would ask the questions, and then the Governor would start to answer. There were about eight of us, usually, maybe ten, and any of us were permitted to jump in at any time—if he had a fact wrong, or if we thought he was going down a wrong avenue that would get him boxed in somehow. We could say, “Well, I wouldn’t quite say it that way, because if you do it’s going to raise this other question,” and that sort of thing. So by the time he went to the press conference—which he did the moment this was finished—he was right on top of all of his current material. He would take Meese in with him to help answer technical type questions, back him up with technical data.

Occasionally, if we knew they were going to ask about some agency or office where you really needed the person running it there to answer technical questions, that person would go in, too. But he was always at the top of his form when he did this. My observation there was that for an office holder, an executive office holder, where you have to meet the press fairly often in any case, one way or another, it’s better to do it on a regular basis. They rely upon it. They know they’re going to get a story out of it. They can save up a lot of their questions. It makes life simpler and more efficient for the Governor’s staff, or the executive’s staff, and he’s on top of his information because he’s used to this routine.

He does a better job of presenting his side of the story when he’s doing it that way. If you wait too long, as I think they usually do in the White House, there’s a tendency to over-brief him before the press conference. If there’s eight weeks between, there’s this great pressure building up, great expectations building up, and your principal’s likely to be a little nervous. One thing with Reagan was you could always tell when he’d been over-briefed. He was trying to remember too much at any one given moment. It will happen with anybody, but you could tell at a press conference where he was having trouble dealing with the material because he was fishing in his memory cells. He had a fabulous memory, really a terrific memory—all the more ironic that he got Alzheimer’s, because he had such a wonderful memory. But if he was over-briefed, he could stumble.
That’s the way he did it then, and his relations were generally good. We had a lot of interviews granted. Particularly that last year, we had a lot of national reporters trolling through California, talking to various political personages and writing about it. We also had his last National Governor’s Conference up in Seattle in June that year. Livingston and I went up to advance that—Livingston for coordinating with political personages, me for coordinating with the media.

Deaver and I had had lunch one day in Los Angeles, just a few weeks before, with the late Tom Pettit, who was a correspondent with NBC-TV, who was always a straight shooter. We said, “People are talking a little bit that Reagan might run for President in ’76. He’s a major figure in any case. The press all want to get at him. What’s the best way to present him with the limited time available?”

Tom said, “If I were you, I’d have two press conferences while I was there. I’d do one in the morning, basically for your cameras, for the television crews, and one in the afternoon for the newspapers that will come out the next morning.” We picked two topics. One was land use policy, and the other was health care. As so often happens when you end up being too clever by half, you think you’ve thought of all the angles, and you’ve forgotten the most important one. We thought, This is a great idea. Let’s do it. So we talked to the Governor about it, and he said, “It’s okay with me, go ahead and do it.”

So we did. We worked up his statements and the press releases that we passed out. The press conferences were quite satisfactory and successful, and he got his point across, and they got well covered. But the national people, [David] Broder and [Robert] Novak—guys like that who were out there—wrote it up saying, “This is a sure sign he’s running in ’76. He had two press conferences at the Governors’ Conference.” It never occurred to us that it would be interpreted that way, that this was a trial balloon for a candidacy. Certainly it wasn’t Reagan’s intent.

Riley: 1974 was a very difficult year for Republicans. I wonder if you could tell us a bit about how Governor Reagan was absorbing the information, and what his sense was about the future of the party, and the same also for the staff.

Hannaford: Yes, it was a very difficult year, and we were on tenterhooks a lot of the time as things got worse and worse for Nixon. It really came to a head when that smoking gun, so-called, came out at the very beginning of August, just a few days before Nixon resigned. I want to say it was a Monday because Reagan was flying in from Los Angeles that morning, which meant he’d gone down to Los Angeles for the weekend to be at home. It might not have been a Monday, but that was the pattern anyway, and he was due in. The press were clamoring for a statement from him.

Riley: He’d been supportive of the President all the while.

Hannaford: Yes, he had been all through. He looked like a thundercloud when he came in the office. We briefed him—he’d just heard the outline on the news, but we briefed him on the whole thing. He was muttering about “the hunters had run their quarry to ground,” or words to that effect.
I remember one of us—maybe it was me—said, “Well, Governor, you’ve got to put out a statement. The network affiliates all want a statement, and AP wants a statement. We’ve got to get something out.” So he sat down at his desk with one of these pads, and he wrote the statement out, expressing his keen disappointment in the President. I don’t think he called for him to resign, just expressed keen disappointment. I have the original, I think, in my files, or I gave it to the Hoover Institution. That’s the statement that went out. He was pretty unhappy about the whole turn of events. I think he knew also that that was the end for Nixon. Sure enough, within a few days, it was.

Then, next, he put out some statement in support of [Gerald] Ford as soon as he was in. Then that fall he campaigned for a lot of congressional candidates, which is what he did every two years while he was Governor. He’d go out around the country, because he’d get a lot of invitations to do fundraisers. He never charged anything for these. He just went to do it. We did a lot of those in the fall, and it was a very tough campaign, as you can imagine. Republicans were really swimming upstream. One of the few we campaigned for who won that year was Henry Hyde, who’s still there after all these years. We campaigned for a Vietnam war veteran in South Dakota. He didn’t win. I can’t remember who all of them were. I went with him on that trip. It was about a ten-day trip. We were all over the map.

**Riley:** He enjoyed doing this?

**Hannaford:** Yes.

**Riley:** Or he felt like it was an obligation he had to perform.

**Hannaford:** No, he liked doing it, because he liked to help build the party. He felt it was part of his job, yes, but he really liked building the party. And I think in the back of his mind was that notion, *Well, if I ever get a chance to run, it won’t hurt to have all these friends out there.* Not a one of them, when he became a candidate, endorsed him, of those who became members or were members.

I remember one funny one. [Charles] Percy was running for re-election. It must have been that fall. Percy was up for re-election. Reagan was going into Elgin, Illinois, outside Chicago, for some House candidate. The Percy people got wind of it, and they desperately wanted Reagan to go to some event for Percy, or say something nice about him. And a lot of the people on the Reagan operation didn’t want to say “boo” about Percy. He was very unpopular with a lot of Republicans.

Reagan said, “No, I’ll do it.” And Reagan did it right. At all of these functions around Chicago—there were about four of them—he would say, “Now, Senator Percy is up for re-election. He and I have disagreed on quite a number of issues, but I want to tell you there’s something very important next January. When the House and the Senate convene on the first day, they count noses, and the side with the most noses gets to run it. So I urge you to vote for Chuck Percy.” It’s a good way to put it. It’s true, isn’t it?
Riley: I think this is a little bit extraordinary among politicians. I can remember in 1980, when he was running for President, he struck fear in the hearts of an awful lot of Democrats because he was very much a devoted party builder in a way that exceeded the practice of other politicians. I wonder what it was about him that made him so interested in the life of the party itself.

Hannaford: I think he believed very strongly in the two-party system, that it was a basic strength of the American representative democracy. You look at Europe, with all these fractionalized little parties, special interest parties, and the difficulty of keeping governments together. He thought that keeping the two-party system was important, and he’d come to believe that one party was closer to the truth than the other one. And if you believe that, then you ought to go out and work to make it prosper. He figured that there were people on the other side who felt the same way, and they’d do the same thing. It was as much a defense against slipping into European-hood as anything else, I think. It was the preservation of the American ideal. That’s really what was at the core of all this. He saw this as a vehicle for that. It wasn’t party über alles.

Riley: I had thought to ask you earlier about George Wallace. I’m from Alabama, so it’s not possible for me to think about the politics in the ’60s and ’70s without thinking about Wallace. I wonder whether Wallace was somebody who was being watched in California at this time—I guess by ’74 the assassination attempt had already occurred, he was pretty much a has-been. But at least in the earlier stages, do you remember Reagan, in particular, following Wallace? There’s been a fair amount written since that time about the kinds of impulses that Reagan was able to build on.

Hannaford: I can’t even recall a conversation with Reagan in which he talked about Wallace. By the time I was in his inner circle, although Wallace was still running again, his time had pretty well passed. I don’t remember. He had to be, in Reagan’s view, by then a marginal character. I don’t think in California, just as a political activist, up to that point, we ever thought of Wallace as more than a specialized candidate appealing to a rather narrow band of people, because his message didn’t resonate in California. I was, I must say, pretty California-centric in those days.

Mrs. Hannaford: I think so much of the south was so foreign to us in California. I remember driving with my folks in ‘46, to see designated bathrooms—well, what is this? That whole thing about segregation was so alien to our lifestyle.

Riley: That’s interesting, because there were, of course, pockets of significant Wallace support outside the deep south.

Hannaford: Oh yes, there were.

Riley: Evidently it didn’t reach into California.

Hannaford: I don’t think it did very much. The one phrase I liked of Wallace’s was about the pointy-head bureaucrats.
Knott: You mentioned Richard Nixon a while back, and Watergate. Could you tell us any other observations that you heard Governor Reagan make at the time about Nixon? What was his relationship with Nixon? Was it a good one?

Hannaford: Yes, he had a good relation—

Knott: I know he supported him to the bitter end, but did he have any misgivings about him?

Hannaford: None that he voiced to me. He didn’t know anything about the inner workings of the Oval Office and Watergate, any more than the rest of us did. So he thought all of the troubles that were erupting were a concerted effort by Nixon’s many enemies to get him. That’s the way Reagan saw all of that. I think he believed that almost to the very end, and he was really very disappointed at the end—

Knott: With the release of that smoking gun?

Hannaford: Yes, that’s right. Deflated. Half of his disappointment was that Nixon had let everybody down, and the other half was that Nixon’s enemies had won. But he and Nixon got on well. Nixon saw in Reagan a guy who could be very useful to his grand scheme. He sent Reagan on two or three foreign trips as an emissary of him, while Reagan was Governor.

For example, while Henry Kissinger was in Beijing making the initial arrangements for Nixon’s trip to China, Reagan was in Taipei massaging Chang Kai Shek, assuring him that we were—because Nixon had told him to say this—“We’re with you all the way. We’ll never let you down.” He called on [Ferdinand] Marcos in the Philippines. He was in Japan— [Takeo] Fukuda was the prime minister then. I don’t think he made any European trips. These were Asian trips. He was very useful to Nixon in that sense, because these people liked Reagan. They trusted him, and he put a good face on things. They got on quite well.

I’ll tell you an interesting story. I’ve been doing a lot of work on a Nixon book, tentatively called The Character of Richard Nixon. I talked to a guy who worked with us on the Reagan campaigns, a brilliant analyst who was part of Nixon’s bright young brain trust he put together in New York City in 1967, ’68, putting together the beginnings of his campaign. This fellow was very much part of the inner operation of Nixon in those days. He left after the campaign became a formal one. He talked to Nixon one day at length. He sent Nixon a memorandum, and then he talked to him at length.

He said, “In ’68, when you’re nominated, you should make Ronald Reagan your vice presidential nominee.” And he spelled out all the reasons why he should do it: Reagan had all of the campaigning characteristics that Nixon didn’t have and didn’t like. He could solidify the more committed party members that Nixon often had a hard time appealing to, so that Nixon could be going out and appealing to others at the same time. After eight years, he’d be a logical successor, the whole thing.

This guy told me all the details of this, and Irene has transcribed the whole interview, it’s sitting there waiting to go into my book. Nixon thanked him, and never did anything about it. Of course,
he ultimately picked [Spiro] Agnew. But my friend said he’s sure that the reason Nixon did not take—Nixon could see the logic of all of this, and listen attentively, and ask some questions, but the reason he turned it down was that he felt he’d be upstaged by his Vice President. And anyway, Reagan was taller.

Riley: Nixon would have been a resident of New York at this time?

Hannaford: Yes, he was living in New York.

Riley: Because there’s this odd constitutional question about sacrificing California votes.

Hannaford: He was living in New York at the time, and was so detached from California by then that I don’t think he would have even been thought of much as a Californian rather than a [New York] native. Although he’s the only native Californian ever to have been elected.

Knott: Could you talk a little bit about Edwin Meese. Did you report to him, or did you report directly to the Governor?

Hannaford: No, all three of us reported to Ed. But this was a very collegial operation, and we had day-to-day total access to the Governor. I saw him almost every day, privately. Of course, you didn’t see him unless you had something to talk about. You didn’t just go and say, “Hi, how are things?” But you didn’t have to go to Meese and say, “Can I go see him?” Never, uh-uh. But the reporting in terms of initiatives and planning and that sort of thing was always through Meese. You wouldn’t just burst in to the Governor and say, “Hey, I’ve got a great idea for you.” No, it would all be “round-tabled” as we called it. You’d go to Meese, you’d go to your other colleagues and test out the idea, and shape it, and form it. And if he thought it made sense, then you’d go in and present it to the Governor. Some of us would go in as a group. These things were always staffed up. But if you were in the process of something that was already agreed upon and you needed to see the Governor, you’d just go in and see him.

Meese was a pleasure to work with. I’m very fond of Meese. We’ve known him a long time and still see the Meeses quite often in Washington. Of all the Californians who went to Washington in the Reagan administration, the Meeses are the least changed of all. There’s absolutely nothing different about them in Washington than in California. Meese frustrated colleagues sometimes because he appeared to be disorganized. All of his offices have been the same. You go into that office of his, and the desk would have five or six stacks of paper that high. And he’s behind them, always. And the big joke was that their garage in Sacramento was so full of cartons of official papers and stuff, there was no room for the cars. It was one giant filing cabinet. I don’t know if things are still that way.

He has a terrific mind, was a great summarizer. Cabinet meetings go on and on and on, various sides of whatever issues. Reagan would listen, he’d ask for more information, ask questions and so forth, and debates would go on. Then toward the end, Ed would summarize the positions. He had a great way to synthesize all of this material and put it into a short series of statements. Then Reagan would either say, “Okay, I’ve heard enough. This is what we’re going to do.” Or he’d say, “I want to think about this a little bit. Send me over the papers on such-and-such. I’d like to
study them tonight, and we’ll take it up at tomorrow’s meeting.” And during bill signing, there were Cabinet meetings daily—and often twice a day—until the bills were all taken care of.

Meese was very good at that. He had a lawyer-like approach to it, where he would take all of this complex information and synthesize it and put it in easily digestible statements for all the participants. He was fiercely loyal to Reagan, and a good explainer of Reagan positions and policies to third parties. Still is.

**Riley:** Who else was in the inner circle when you first came in? Could you tell us a little bit about the roles each of these individuals played? You mentioned Livingston—?

**Hannaford:** Livingston, Deaver, Meese, and I were really the inner circle within the Governor’s office. But he had his Cabinet, which was Transportation, Finance, Agriculture—which included Consumer Affairs—Natural Resources, and Health and Human Services. The secretaries were all important, particularly Health and Welfare and Natural Resources and Finance. Finance was very important.

**Riley:** I wonder if you could tell us a little bit about the relationship between the Governor and each of these other individuals.

**Hannaford:** In the second term, Vern Orr was the Director of Finance, and he was crucially important to Reagan. He was a Pasadena businessman, and he was, I guess you would say, the most liberal Republican amongst the inner group. He had a wide-ranging interest in things and people, a good judge of people. He understood the politics of public finance, what was possible and what wasn’t possible. In other words, he didn’t just have a green eyeshade approach to it. He was a great advisor for Reagan. He became the Secretary of the Air Force in the Reagan administration. He was there for five years, the longest-running Air Force Secretary ever. He’s retired now.

Frank Walton was the Secretary of Transportation. He was an ardent Reaganite, but his relationship was more formal with Reagan. Jim Stearns was Secretary of Agriculture. He was kind of a good old boy rancher from up in the northeastern part of the state. He was not influential with Reagan on policy, but was well-liked by him. Jim Jenkins, whom I mentioned, was in the last year the Secretary of Health and Welfare. He preceded me. He’d been a staff member, so Reagan knew him very well. He would feel free to comment, to some extent, on things outside of the Health and Welfare area since he’d been a generalist before. All of them were important. Vern was far and away the single most influential person on the Cabinet with Reagan.

**Riley:** What about the relationships within the staff, the working relationships you had with Deaver and Livingston? What were their primary relationships with him?

**Hannaford:** All I could say is after the first day on the job, toward the end of the day, I went around to Mike’s office, and I sat down. He said, “Well, have you been around, met everybody, got the lay of the land?” I said, “Yes, this is like getting paid for having fun. You know, the thing that amazes me is these people are all so friendly with one another. They all get along so well.
This is just like a well-oiled machine.” He said, “Remember we had seven years’ practice. You should have been around here the first year.”

Riley: We’ve heard stories.

Hannaford: And of course, he was right. These things all change over time, but by then everybody knew what they were doing. There were no turf battles going on. It was a very smooth operation, very professional. They were good-hearted. I enjoyed all the people. They all seemed to get along well with one another. I don’t recall any tensions among any of the four of us that year, at all. I just can’t think of any.

Riley: I guess what I was fishing around for, you’ve sort of characterized Meese’s role—and we’ve heard this from a number of different sources—as being somebody who summarized and interpreted things at the ends of these meetings. I wondered if you had similar characterizations of what you yourself may have brought to the Governor, what it was that you felt like your strong suit was, and your particular role, and then maybe the same thing for—

Hannaford: Well, in my case it was working on message, writing and message development. That really was my strongest suit, positioning the statements, how you posture it, and maybe how it plays out. Then you work with your other colleagues, because everybody has a piece of all that, in a way. Livingston, for example, dealt with all the constituencies. So we’d talk about what are we going to do to get the County Supervisors Association with us, or the business community with us, or the mayors with us? Who are the natural constituencies for this particular thing, and how do we position the message for them? With Deaver, it was more political angles, and he knew that side of it quite well—

Riley: With the legislature or is this—

Hannaford: No, Deaver generally with politics. No. The legislature was Livingston. He worked with all the legislators.

Riley: So he would have been the principal liaison with them?

Hannaford: Yes, with the legislature. This isn’t like Washington, you know, where the congressional liaison office has half a dozen people dealing with the House and half a dozen people dealing with the Senate. This is one guy and a secretary. And we shared the secretary. Deaver brought a lot of experience, and he’d been there all seven years in various roles and knew the Reagans very well. He had a good instinct for what worked best for keeping both the Reagans, particularly the Governor, comfortable and happy doing what he was doing. He had a certain instinct for what would be best for them in terms of scheduling and all of that, kind of a generalist.

Riley: You mentioned the Reagans, plural. When was the first time you encountered Mrs. [Nancy] Reagan, and what were your perceptions?
Hannaford: I’d been on the job less than a week, I guess, when somebody took me out there—maybe it was Mike—out to their home in east Sacramento to meet her. We had a pleasant meeting. I guess it was Mike who came in to me and said, “Mrs. Reagan called and said ‘When am I going to meet the new man?’” The new man—me—went around the next day. We had a pleasant meeting. I don’t remember what transpired. It was a courtesy call, essentially. I began to have more and more dealings with her, but Mike had most of the dealings with her. It had to do with scheduling, and sometimes personnel matters.

She watched out, as she did all the years in the Presidency, to make sure that he was surrounded by people who were loyal and had his interests at heart. She also sensed if he was being over-scheduled and didn’t have enough space between events to catch his breath and think things through. Generally, her judgment on those things was generally good. She never involved herself in policy decisions as such, either in Sacramento or Washington, that I’m aware of. It was more people-type decisions.

Riley: The role that she played in the White House later on—for our colleagues who study the Presidency—is deemed to be a very important role, precisely on the dimensions that you talked about. She seemed to play a role that every President ought to have, which is somebody who is completely devoted to the President, who doesn’t have her own agenda, which is not always true of another staff member. And one of the things that we’re always interested in doing is finding out whether there was a precedent for this in the Governor’s office. You’ve covered that a little.

Hannaford: Yes, I think it was true there too. The scale is different, much smaller scale, but certainly it was there.

Morrisroe: You talked about relations with the state legislature. How would you characterize Reagan’s relationship with the legislature in general and how he chose personally to deal with them, Assembly or Senate leadership?

Hannaford: It was a fairly formal relationship. You’ve probably heard this from others. He was not the kind of politician who, at the end of the day, liked to call in a bunch of legislators to have a drink in his office, or something like that. He was not into camaraderie at all with other political types. It just wasn’t his nature. He wasn’t formal in the frosty sense, or distant. It was just that he was the Governor; they were the legislature. He often met with Republican legislators or with Democrat chairmen, but not with great frequency. He wasn’t given to just picking up the phone and having a chat with legislators. That was pretty much done through the liaison, or through his allies in the legislature, or through his Cabinet people, most of that.

One interesting sidelight—perhaps you’ve heard it from others. In the late ’60s, the welfare rolls were growing exponentially, and there seemed to be no way of putting a brake on this. It threatened to virtually bankrupt the state if not somehow reformed or checked. So he had a group of experts study this and come up with a plan to reform the system and tighten up the eligibility so that people who truly needed the help got it, but the people who just wanted a few extra bucks, didn’t need it, didn’t.
He wanted to give a speech to the joint session of the legislature to propose the plan. It was controlled by the Democrats, both houses. They denied him, which was a political mistake on their part. Because then he went up and down the state speaking to service clubs and civic groups. You’ve got the Town Hall, and the Commonwealth Club, and the Comstock Club, all of these civic forums, up and down—it’s a great state for civic forums. And he went all over the state giving the speech that was banned by the legislature. It was just like the book that was banned in Boston. Everybody wanted to hear what he had to talk about.

Then Livingston’s forces got letter-writing campaigns going from constituencies. And Bob Moretti, who was the Speaker of the Assembly at the time, made an appointment to come in and see Reagan one day. And in mock surrender, he put up his hands and said, “Stop those cards and letters. Let’s talk.” And the two of them then negotiated the reform package.

I wasn’t working there at the time, but as Reagan told me in ’74 sometime, “You know, if I can get 70% of what I want on a particular program, I’ll take it, because I figure it will work well enough that I can go back next year and get the other 30.” He got a lot of that package through, but he had to give up some, too. He didn’t quite get the other 30 the next year, but it’s true, he was wise to do that. He had to give some to get some, but he got a lot more than he gave, and the program worked. It slowed down the process, and it cleaned up the administrative procedures and made the whole operation more efficient. It became a model for many other states and was really the bellwether for his constant call as President for welfare reform on a federal level.

The welfare reform that was ultimately passed by the Republican Congress—or initiated by the Republicans in Congress and signed by [Bill] Clinton—is really a Reagan legacy. It comes straight out of the California welfare reform program.

Knott: Could you talk a little bit about Reagan as a negotiator? I’m sure you did see him in action in some of these.

Hannaford: Well, not in negotiation, no. I don’t recall any instance where I was sitting in on negotiating. I’ll tell you what he said about it, and I’ll also give you an opinion about it. When he was the president of the Screen Actors Guild, they went through some very tough negotiations with the studios, who had very high-powered lawyers doing the negotiating. For the Screen Actors Guild, it was Reagan and a couple of other officers and a lawyer. He said, “An interesting thing about negotiating I discovered was you’d go at it hammer and tongs. And one side would say, ‘We can’t possibly accept that proposal under any circumstances.’”

He said, “You’d reach some point—you could just sense it in the room—when the moment was ripe for a compromise. But the tempers had been so strong, and the declarations so strong, that you couldn’t do it right then and there. So somebody would say, ‘Excuse me, I have to go to the bathroom.’ And someone would go to the bathroom. Then somebody on the other side would go to the bathroom. And in the bathroom they’d say, ‘What do you think about so-and-so?’ And first thing you know, we’ve got the beginnings of a settlement.” He said, “You’d have to sense when the moment is to make the break in the tough position that you’ve taken and when the other side is willing to do the same thing. A lot of it is a matter of face—in other words, how it’s going to look.”
I thought that was very telling, and I believe that the skills that he acquired and demonstrated during those three terms when he was the president of the Screen Actors Guild, made him a very effective negotiator with [Mikhail] Gorbachev. He understood the psychology of negotiation.

Knott: During this final year of the Reagan administration the [Lyn] Nofziger group was formed.

Hannaford: Yes. I had forgotten we called it that until I re-read those notes last night. We had another one called the “M Group.” I didn’t remember that one either.

Knott: Could you tell us a little bit about them?

Hannaford: Yes. We met, I think, every week—maybe it was every other week—at the Sutter Club, for breakfast. Nofziger had been in and out of the administration—he had been out of the administration officially for several years, but he was a consultant in Sacramento, and he was on some kind of consulting contract with the party. He presided at these meetings. Meese would be there, and Livingston was there, and I was there. I don’t remember Deaver coming very often, but they had young kids at home, and this was awfully early in the morning. He was there from time to time, but I don’t recall him being there regularly. Verne Orr would come, the Director of Finance. There may have been others from time to time—oh, and Bob Walker. He was our political affairs director who often went to Washington and made the rounds of various activists and politicians.

We would have these meetings and get these updates on what various key people were saying and thinking about politics in 1976. Meese was always late at the meetings, and the reason was—it got to be a standing joke with us. He’d come in, and we’d say, “How’s Cap [Weinberger] this morning?” Because he’d always be on this early morning telephone call with Cap Weinberger, getting the latest scuttlebutt from Washington from Cap, who was then the Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare. We would just assay the situation and talk about it and monitor, I guess you’d say.

That was about all there was to it. In ’68, as you know, Reagan permitted a last minute effort to go forward to put his name in nomination at the convention. He was very reluctant to do so, but he permitted it to go forward. He did a few things, but not much. He had a growing number of people around him, a small national following. It was thin, but it was wide—people quite dedicated to the idea that he ought to become President. It had all grown out of that speech he gave for Goldwater in ’64. He didn’t want to disappoint these people, so he let them put his name forward. A lot of these folks were clamoring for him to become active, to seek the Presidency in ’76. This was in ’74. We’d hear from them.

Bob Walker was the political liaison in the Governor’s office. He would talk to all these people all the time, and he’d give us reports. He wanted Reagan to run, so all these reports were tinged with his agenda. We were getting more and more of these reports all the time that Reagan ought to run. So that was a component of our discussions. He urged us to talk to John Sears, and we arranged for Sears to fly out in July, or August of ’74, to Sacramento, and have dinner with our little group. Then the next day he was going to sit down and meet Reagan for the first time and
have a chat with him. It may have been with Mrs. Reagan in attendance. It may have been out at
the house. I wasn’t in on that meeting.

But we had dinner with Sears that night. He was drunk, completely drunk, didn’t make any sense
at all. That turned out to be a long-term problem, as things turned out. I was really disappointed.
I was expecting this brilliant guy—and he was brilliant, when he was sober—but he was drunk
that night. To me that evening was a total waste of time. I guess he acquitted himself better the
next day with Reagan, but I don’t think Reagan ever liked him. Reagan once said of John Sears,
“He doesn’t look you in the eye. He looks you in the tie.”

That’s the way he was. He was a very bright man. I don’t know what’s happened to him now. I
guess he’s still around Washington. Very bright man with a very good intuition about politics,
but he saw Reagan as a figure on a game board.

Riley: Was Sears the only person like this that was brought in? I guess everybody is looking to
’76. Were there other—

Hannaford: No, he was it.

Riley: I see. You figured if you got him then that was the—

Hannaford: He gained this reputation for being a very effective delegate hunter for Nixon in
’68. I’ve had other people since tell me that the reputation was not entirely deserved, that is, not
the extent of it. But anyway, that’s the reputation he had. The other thing was, the press liked
him a lot, because he managed to feed them enough stuff that it made for good stories. He
understood what they needed to be happy on a given day. So those two components, I think,
gradually persuaded us that—this took several months, and it didn’t happen until Reagan was
well out of office—but that he ought to be the guy to put the whole thing together for ’76.

Knott: Even after that dismal dinner performance. Didn’t that raise some red flags for people?

Hannaford: Yes, although he was just having dinner with the staff, so to speak. The next day the
meeting with the Reagans—I can’t remember what Reagan said about it, but it went reasonably
well. Walker had built Sears up to be a great personage, the answer to all possible problems. I
was so disappointed because he was drunk.

Riley: We’ve heard on occasions—and this might go back to what you were saying about
regional differences—that there was a bit of a western inferiority complex among some of the—

Hannaford: Very big.

Riley: Is that correct?

Hannaford: Oh, absolutely.

Riley: Explain that to me.
Hannaford: There was a reason for it. There was the notion that Reagan wouldn’t be taken seriously as a presidential candidate if all he had around him were Californians. You had to have a campaign guru or manager, or chief consultant, who was highly respected by the national political press. And that meant the Washington-based political press, and preferably an operator who had been involved in a successful presidential campaign.

Well, none of us had. Stu Spencer, who was kind of on the edge of the Reagan orbit by the latter stages of the governorship—of course, he and his partners had managed Reagan’s successful campaigns and ultimately, of course, came back in on the re-election in ’84, and some of ’80. They’re all Californians. But there was some thought that you had to have some figure from the East who was well known, particularly to the press, and that you couldn’t have a Californian. That’s why, when Walker touted Sears as a great catch if we could get him, we all thought, Yeah, that’ll solve this problem. Didn’t, as it turned out.

Riley: Did you get the sense that Governor Reagan felt the same way? Or was this occurring at the staff level— “We’ve got to get all of this resolved for the Governor himself.”

Hannaford: I think he sensed it. Again, I don’t recall ever having a conversation—and I don’t remember any of my former colleagues talking about such a conversation—with Reagan where he’d say, “We can’t—” First of all, he was not part of the plotting. We didn’t have conversations with him about “Now, if we do this, then this is going to happen for ’76.” The great mystery was, “Are you going to run in ’76?” All he did was permit us to go ahead and do a lot of things, like bring in Sears. Everybody knew what it was all about, but nobody talked about it.

Riley: He understood that the question was, how do you properly position yourself? And he was basically giving you the green light to go out and see what the answer to it was.

Hannaford: And find out. As Meese put it to me the day I reported to work, “We don’t know if he wants to run for President in ’76. But we don’t want to do anything that will cut off his options, do anything that will put him in a position if he can’t do it if that’s what he wants to do. That’s one of our jobs here, not to push a Presidency—we’re here to run a state government. But we don’t want to put him in a bad position, in case that’s what he wants to do.” And that’s the way we moved forward on everything. But he understood, and I’m sure Meese discussed with him, the reason for bringing Sears in. “This guy is well liked by the national press. He has a known record in a presidential election where he had some success. He contributed to its success. Let’s talk to him and just see what he has to say.”

Riley: Let me ask what may be a naïve question. Occasionally, when you see someone reaching the end of a governorship who still has political aspirations, they decide to run for the United States Senate. I don’t remember what the configuration of the Senate delegation was in California at that time. Was there ever any thought given to the fact that he might go to Washington?
Hannaford: No, no. There was a Senate seat up that year, because Earl Brian was running for it. Earl Brian lost the primary. I can’t remember who the candidate was that year, or which seat it was. It was so long ago. But no, there was no talk about that.

Riley: So it was clear at that point that his stature was such that—

Hannaford: Oh yes, it was the Presidency or nothing.

Knott: As someone who talked about never speaking ill of another Republican, it strikes me it was a fairly bold move for Ronald Reagan to challenge an incumbent Republican President. Why did he do that? What prompted him to do that?

Hannaford: He never spoke ill of Ford personally. Well, he took a long time deciding. He came to the conclusion at some point—it must have been by the summer of ’75—that Ford just wasn’t cut out to be the leader of the country. He was a nice man. He was a good man to heal after Nixon had left, because on the congressional side he got along well with the Democrats. But he’d been in the minority so long that he had a minority mentality about doing things and wouldn’t push for bold answers. There were a lot of specific policies on which Reagan disagreed with what the Ford administration was doing. Those just accumulated.

He was going around on the rubber chicken circuit all that year. One of the reasons Deaver and I formed a company the day after Reagan left Sacramento was, among other things, in the Governor’s office in ’74 we were getting a lot of letters from organizations wanting him to speak after he left. As Deaver said to me when he mentioned that, “All we can do is send a pro forma response saying, ‘You’ll hear from his private office.’ Of course, the joke is, there is no private office. And unless somebody does something about it pretty soon, come January 5 or 6, whatever it is, the mailbags are going to be tumbling through the door, and the phone is going to be ringing nonstop, with nobody but Ann, the housekeeper, to deal with it.”

And hence was born Deaver and Hannaford, Inc. That’s really the beginning of it right there. I had reported to Mike that I had just come back from L.A. where I had talked to Harry O’Connor, the radio producer, who had persuaded me that there would be a great market for a daily radio commentary by Reagan, conservative commentary. I’d already been in negotiations with Copley News Service—because they’d approached us—for a syndicated newspaper column, and I mentioned this to Mike. That’s when he talked about the speech thing.

So by January, Reagan was scheduled for about ten days a month out on the rubber chicken circuit. And he was just getting an earful everywhere he went about, “Oh, you’ve got to get in there and run,” and on and on and on. Then these friends all over the country were clamoring. It was growing. And he was uncomfortable with Ford’s brand of leadership.

I’ll tell you another revealing thing about Reagan, and what his mental attitude was. Right after New Year’s ’75, he flew back to Sacramento, on the second of January, toward the end of the week, Thursday, I think. Sacramento was embedded in one of those awful winter tule fogs, which is bone-chilling. You can hardly see a car length in front of you. He was scheduled for an exit interview at one of the TV stations. He was just doing a few mop-up things.
I went with him over to the station. As we got in the car, he said, “Ford called me last night.” I said, “Oh, yes? What did he say?” He said, “He wants me to join his Cabinet.” I said, “What job?” He said, “Secretary of Transportation.” And he laughed. I said, “What did you tell him?” He said, “I told him I thought I could do the party and the cause more good on the outside.”

I think he had a pretty good idea where he wanted to go even then, but he didn’t say. Ten months later we’re in Washington. Reagan flies in from Dallas, where he’d been giving a speech to some group. Deaver flies in from somewhere. Mrs. Reagan flies in. We’re all coming from different directions. I’d been in Washington for several days working on this announcement speech. They all coalesce at the Madison Hotel, and Deaver and I had arranged for the hotel to send up some champagne. Laxalt came over, and Nofziger was there. It wasn’t a big group.

When the champagne came, I said to Reagan, “Governor, we want to propose a toast to you, to success. But I have a question to ask first of all.” He said, “What’s that?” I said, “Are you going to run?” He smiled, and he said, “Well, of course.” “But you never told us you were.” That’s true, he never did. He just let it all happen. He may be the only politician in modern history who has worked that way. We all just kind of knew at various times it was okay to do certain things. That was the way he did things.

**Knott:** Now the radio broadcasts became very important.

**Hannaford:** Yes they did. They were very important, and they were big support builders, as it turned out. I must confess that at the beginning, as we were putting it together—because I had come out of a business background, advertising agency, then public relations, public affairs—I was thinking in terms of this as a business assignment. That is, if this is a big success, he’ll make good money at it, and he needed to make a living. We’ll be properly paid for the support work we do, and it will continue to be popular and build upon it. So I didn’t see it as building a volunteer army of campaign workers. I just didn’t think of it in those terms, in those early days. But it turned out to be just that. It was a huge recruitment device.

I think Nofziger sensed that it would be, because after the ’76 campaign, once the dust settled, it turned out we had about a million and a half dollars left in the bank. This is a huge contrast, because in mid-campaign we were poor as church mice. One day, on a trip that would end with the North Carolina primary, we were to fly from Los Angeles very early in the morning to—with the three hour time difference—end up in Salisbury, North Carolina, at about 10 a.m. eastern time. So you know how early we were getting off. We had a chartered United plane. And the plane wasn’t taking off. I said to Deaver, “What are we waiting around for?” He said, “We’re waiting around for the office in Washington to open the mail to see if there are enough checks to pay for the airplane today.”

**Riley:** This was when?

**Hannaford:** It would have been March ’76. So it was a huge contrast when, in the fall, the dust settled and all the reporting was ready to be done, and we had a million and a half dollars in the bank. Nofziger proposed to form something called Citizens for the Republic, which was formed,
I think, in February of ’77, or January. Citizens for the Republic would be a volunteer campaign training organization which would put out educational informational materials, too. But the real thing it was going to do was have regular campaign training sessions for political activists in cities around the country. Reagan would be the bait. That is to say, he would come in and give the keynote speech on a Saturday, and then you’d have these panels, all morning and all afternoon on how to do direct mail, how to do ads, how to run the telephone operations. The nuts and bolts. CFTR would bring in experts to conduct the panels. Reagan would be the chairman of this organization.

Reagan couldn’t receive any contributions from it, but it was, under the law, legal for them to pay for his airline ticket to come to the event and give the speech. It was a stroke of genius on Nofziger’s part, because what was he doing? Creating a volunteer army of campaign workers for 1980. And the radio programs and the newspaper columns were feeding the same process, particularly the radio programs.

I began to change my views from a marketing mode to a political mode, when—I guess by late spring and summer—Deaver took the first several trips with Reagan in ’75. Our contract called for one or the other of us to accompany him on all these trips, because you needed somebody there to sort out all the well wishers and political types who wanted to have a meeting with him. Deaver took the first several ones because I was in charge of the editorial support, and in those days, pre-computer days, your computer was two or three file cabinets. You couldn’t get very far from your database.

But then I started taking some trips. I remember, the first one I took, we landed, I think somewhere in Iowa, maybe it was South Dakota. After a while they all look alike. We landed in a small-town airport, and he was going to give a talk that night to the county committee or something like that. As it turned out, in most cities in those days, you’d have a little tiny motorcade of a couple of cars. It would be the local sponsor of the radio program who would provide the cars and the drivers, and he or she would be one of them, usually.

Then our advance man would go forward, and usually we’d get a policeman to volunteer to escort us into town. But time after time, the volunteer driver in the Governor’s car, which was the one I would be in, would say something along these lines, “Oh, Governor, I heard your program today, and it was terrific. You were right on target.” Or words to that effect. Others would sometimes say, “Governor, I’ve been with you ever since you gave that wonderful speech for Barry Goldwater.” It began to coalesce in my mind what was going on here. It was building that whole complex matrix of volunteers. It was quite impressive.

Mrs. Hannaford: Tell them about Reagan’s response to those wonderful accolades on the—

Hannaford: Oh yes. We recorded these radio programs fifteen at a crack, or three weeks’ worth, because they were on the air Monday through Friday. The producer sent them out on discs in those days, and he would just put in a cover sheet with a title of each one. But there was no restriction on how they used them. They could run them in any order they wanted. They didn’t have to run them one through fifteen, so in any given market, we didn’t know what they were running. If the driver said, “Oh, Governor, that was a wonderful commentary today. I just think
you were terrific. You made all your points so well,” we had no idea what they were talking about. So Reagan’s device usually was, “Oh, I’m so glad you think that way. Tell me what you think about that.” That way he’d find out what the subject was.

**Knott:** And the newspaper columns, how often did they run?

**Hannaford:** Well, it was weekly until he declared for the ’76 Presidency, at which time all of that stopped. It all stopped the minute he became a candidate. It resumed again a little while after the convention in Kansas City in ’76. When we started again, I moved it from Copley News Service to King Features, which was the biggest of the syndicates, and we went twice a week from then on. It was popular, it was well received. It didn’t have the impact that the radio had, because you’ve got his voice, reminding people all the time. But it helped.

**Mrs. Hannaford:** But you wrote most of them.

**Hannaford:** I wrote most of the newspaper columns. But he and I had frequent editorial conferences, I guess you’d call them, where one or the other of us would say, “Hey, here’s an idea. What do you think about it?” And he’d say, “Yes, I like that. I’ll do a radio spot. You do a newspaper column.” Or he’d come to me with one and say, “I’m going to do a radio spot on this. You want to do a newspaper column?”

**Riley:** Did that workload ever reverse? Were you ever responsible for any of the radio, or was it—

**Hannaford:** Oh, I did a lot of radio spots. I wrote a lot of the radio, particularly in the early stages. I probably wrote as many as he did. And we also had three or four outside people who would submit them from time to time. Nofziger wrote a few, John McClaughry wrote a few. There were two or three others. Chuck Hobbs may have written a couple on special topics. And then he would work them over. They would provide the draft. Yes, I did quite a number in the early days, not all of them, but quite a number. But after the convention in Kansas City, he wrote almost all of them from then on until they stopped in mid-November ’79.

**Riley:** Was there a reason for that?

**Hannaford:** He had the time. And he liked writing for radio. Remember, he had a lot of experience at it. Right after the convention, the day after— (July of ’76, on the last night of the convention, Ford had asked him to come down and speak to the entire convention.) The next morning the Reagans went around to their youth volunteers, to two or three of the delegations. It was very emotional, his farewell.

Then we went out to our chartered plane at the airport. The Reagans had the first row, and Mike and I had the second row. Once we were airborne and the seatbelt sign went off, the Governor got up, and he said, “Well, fellows, I guess we’ve got to go back to work now, don’t we?” I said, “Yes, sir, your first radio taping will be in two weeks, and your first newspaper column will be a week from Friday.” He said, “You didn’t think I was going to win, did you?” I said, “Well, we
wanted you to win, and we thought you were going to win, but one always has to make contingency plans.” He understood.

But he fell right back into it. All of us at that time—I’m sure you’ll hear this from others you talk to who were involved then—thought that elected politics was all over for him in that fall of ’76.

**Riley:** Is that right?

**Hannaford:** Yes. He’d given it his best shot. He was 65. He wouldn’t get another chance, or so we thought. If Ford won, he’d get a second chance, under the rules. It just looked like it was all over. And Reagan went out and did his usual campaigning: he had a lot of demands for his time. In fact, Mike came to me one day and said, “I see trouble brewing. We have all of these requests for Reagan to come out and campaign.” He was going to do, I guess, a two-week swing in the fall for a lot of candidates.

And he said, “I’ve told the Ford people, ‘Please get your requests in, when you want Reagan, how often you want him, and when and where if you possibly can, because we’ve got to block this stuff in.’” He said, “They haven’t given me any answer, and sure as shootin’, we’re going to start scheduling this, and then they’re going to make demands we can’t meet, and then they’re going to blame us for Ford losing.” It’s exactly what happened. He was dead on.

Reagan did several things for Ford and the RNC [Republican National Committee], but still, Mike was right about that. But anyway, throughout that fall, there was just no thought that Reagan would ever get involved in elected politics again.

After Ford lost, Reagan had a speaking trip not long after the election; a regular, commercial speaking trip. Mike went out on it. And when he came back, he said, “You ought to take the next trip, because there’s a real difference out there from before this campaign. Lots more people are coming up to him in airports saying, ‘Oh, Mr. Reagan, you’ve got to run again. You’ve got to do it again.’” He said, “Maids were lining up as they leave the hotel, all congratulating him and thanking him. The policemen were offering these escorts, and cab drivers would holler at him and say, ‘Ronnie, you’ve got to run again.’ I can’t put any number to it. It’s just a lot different.”

So I took the next trip. I want to say that was a trip down to Lafayette, Louisiana, Cajun country, and I sensed the same thing. Then Nofziger put this Citizens for the Republic together, and by the time that was formed, there was no question what the Reagans had decided. There is a tomorrow.

**Riley:** To what did you attribute the change? Was it just the accumulation of the—

**Hannaford:** Yes, and the fact that Ford had lost, and the Democrats had won. This was long before [Jimmy] Carter made all the many missteps that he made and the economy went further south. But I think Reagan felt that that was what was going to happen, at least on the economy. Now the field was clear, also. Who else was there at that point? At it turned out, there were quite a few others who had the same idea, but by the time he ran in 1980, he was way ahead in all the private polls.
Knott: Can I get you to talk a little bit about the primary campaign in ’76. It got off to a bad start—

Hannaford: Oh, did it ever.

Knott: As you said, things were grim. At one point you couldn’t even—

Hannaford: Well, the press set the bar pretty high for us. As you know, in New Hampshire, they decide who wins, if they want to. And they decided that Reagan had to win in New Hampshire, and that he probably would. We came—what was it—within 1%? It was a very, very narrow thing we lost. I think we all believed we were going to win too. We thought we’d win a close one, and then we’d just kind of roll on from there. It was quite a blow when he lost. And the press, of course, wrote that this was a “body blow” to Reagan, and so on.

Then we went down to Florida, where we had thought all along we’d win big, it was Reagan country. Our Florida chairman was an endearing guy, a Chevrolet dealer in Panama City, named Tommy Thomas. He was just a dear guy. But Tommy sometimes was a little too gregarious with the press. We were up in New Hampshire in the snow, slogging around. Tommy had a meeting with the press, and he said, “We’re going to win by two-thirds.” Immediately that became the benchmark in Florida.

After New Hampshire—Stu Spencer was advising Ford by this time. He’s one smart consultant. He had the Ford people doing these completely outrageous things like running ads in the paper saying, “Come see Air Force One. Come see the President. Come see the presidential limousine.” Because Ford would fly in, you know, they’d do all this pomp and circumstance. Ford was dispensing funds for hospitals, and roads, and all this stuff. It was pretty demoralizing. And the polls were showing that we had suddenly fallen way behind in Florida, way up in the 20th percentile somewhere.

Before our last trip into Florida, we were back in California for a few days, catching up. I was home in Piedmont, the Reagans were in L.A. Sears called me, and he said, “Talk to Pat Buchanan, and get him to help you with the opening statement when we land in Tampa,” I think it was, “and take off the gloves on foreign policy.” We wanted to do this. I had written a speech for Reagan in Exeter, New Hampshire, about foreign policy, which got very good reviews from the political press. Jim Schlesinger helped me with it. But that’s as far as Sears would let us go. This time he said, “Take off the gloves.” He said “Find some failures in Ford’s foreign policy, and get it in Reagan’s speeches every day.”

So Marty Anderson and I went to work to find them, and we found quite a few. We used various advisors out there, helpers, experts. I called Buchanan, who always wrote very tough stuff, and he helped craft something pretty tough. I had to soften it a little bit because I knew Reagan wouldn’t say it that way, but it was still strong, that we’d fallen behind the Soviets in defense and so forth.
He gave this, and it got a lot of attention. Then each day, he’d give his stump speech, but we’d put this insert in of some specific example. Then we’d tell the television crews, “Here’s what he’s going to say. This is the press release for the day, and he’s going to say it about five minutes or eight minutes into the speech.” They like that because they don’t then have to film the whole speech. They can just do that little snippet, and that gives them their outtake for the night. That worked pretty well.

We got down to Winter Haven, Florida, which was the training grounds for some national team—I don’t remember which one; a major league team. We were in the little ballpark there all filled with senior citizens about to watch the game start, and they came out to hear Reagan give this speech. He’s at the pitcher’s mound at this little podium. And that’s where we’ve written the speech that says, “If I am elected, we will have a new Secretary of State,” meaning get rid of Kissinger—which we knew would go over big with the conservatives. He’s giving the speech—he put it on his own cards, he liked to do that himself, the card system of his. And just as he’s about to come to the point, a gust of wind blew up, and all the cards went all over the place. We were all scrambling around to get them. He remembered enough of it that he said it, but it may have been fate, I don’t know. But he said it. So then we left Florida.

The last night we were in Florida, a television station in Miami had offered both Ford and Reagan a half hour of free time, to give a talk on anything they wanted to say. The Ford people turned it down. We accepted, and Reagan gave, in effect, his stump speech, which we elongated. My recollection is they didn’t have a TelePrompTer, and they had written the whole thing out on butcher paper, and they had to keep holding it up in the window of the control room. It was just a talking head at a desk. It was the most rudimentary set. But it was heartfelt the way he gave it, of course, because it was everything he believed in. It was concentrating on national security and foreign policy. That was the end of that trip, I guess.

The next trip was the one where we almost didn’t get the plane off the ground. We flew into North Carolina. We’d lost Florida in the meantime. We lost Illinois, which we thought we were going to lose. We went into North Carolina. When we landed, after the nail-biter about getting the money to fly, we landed in Salisbury, and they had a rope line for the local press. And the first thing we heard from the local press was, “Senator so-and-so said this morning that you made your point, now you should get out of the race.” Oh-oh, there’s another Stu Spencer special. He’d orchestrated all of these party leaders, saying “Governor Reagan’s made his point. He’s had a fine campaign, now he should retire.” Reagan was furious, steam coming out of his ears. He was congenial with the press, but, boy, was he steaming.

We went to a furniture mart in High Point, for lunch. He gave a talk. And Deaver came up to me as he was giving the talk. He said, “You know, I’m going to put Paul Laxalt in the car with him for this drive about we’re going to have this afternoon to four or five towns, to give speeches, and have Paul pump up his tires and tell him to throw away his cards and just speak from his heart.” And that’s what happened. He got his footing better. He really got into his speeches with a lot of passion. There again, we went by an airport runway where they were unloading limousines from a cargo plane for the President’s arrival that weekend, again with the ads. They showed us the ads: “Come see Air Force One.” “Free balloons for the kids.”
We got to this motel where we were staying for the night. Frankly it just looked like it was all over. We were so demoralized. I think Mrs. Reagan—her morale was pretty low—said, “This is about it. We better figure a way to get out.” He absolutely put his foot down, saying, “We are not getting out.”

We flew from there to Wisconsin. For some reason, we stayed in Racine. It was snow all over the place. It was very cold, and Reagan went out for the day, on the tour to various sites. Several of us stayed back because Sears wanted us to. We had a pow-wow, and he made a proposal. He said, “Look, I think what we ought to do is scrub the rest of our Wisconsin campaign”—and there was one other up in that part of the world—“scrub all of our appointments, not spend any more money. We’re going to lose them anyway. We should save our money, because when you look at the campaign calendar, if you can get through April and get to the beginning of May, all the territory looks very good for Reagan. So let’s hoard our money. Let’s go back to Los Angeles. Let’s see if we can put enough money together to buy a half hour of time on a network, and arch over all of these primaries to our national constituency, and see if we can raise enough money to go forward.”

That was an example of Sears’ brilliance, and that’s exactly what we did. We went from Racine up to La Crosse, where that night or the next night Reagan was supposed to give a talk to Ducks Unlimited. I hadn’t had time all day to work on drafting remarks for that night for him. And we got to the holding room in the back of this auditorium, and I said, “You know, we’ve had this pow-wow all day.” We’d presented that plan to him, and he agreed with it. I said, “I just haven’t had time to work on anything. You want me to try to work up something now?” He said, “Naw, a bunch of drunken duck hunters, all they want to hear is jokes.” Boy, was he right. He gave them a wonderful time. It was their annual night out. They were having a great time, and that’s all he did, give them a string of jokes.

Marty Anderson and Deaver and I and a couple of others were behind the stage and the late Frank Reynolds, who was an awfully nice guy, was the ABC News anchor in those days, said, “Have you guys heard you’re ahead in North Carolina?” And we said, “Come on Frank, no jokes.” He said, “No kidding, that’s what our people are telling us from the exit polls. You’re ahead. You’re probably going to win.” We got on our plane to fly back to California that night and, sure enough, the report came in that we’d won. That was a great turning point in morale for us. We were alive.

We went to California. We put that program on, I think it was NBC. I worked on the speech with Reagan. We taped it, and he did a beautiful job. I hired this team of guys to come in and produce it, and they were used to taping people a minute at a time and then stopping and moving another camera and that sort of thing. They tried that with Reagan for about three minutes, and he said, “This isn’t going to work.” He’s used to just doing it straight through. And he did, he did a wonderful job. It pulled in over a million dollars in small-dollar contributions.

And then, of course, the primary. Sears was right about the primary calendar. The May primaries all favored Reagan. I can’t remember precisely which ones he won—Texas was one, Indiana was another. But there were a lot of wins and very few losses. Then you move to California, which
we won. After that, we had a series of state conventions, mostly in the West, and we did well in all of those.

But by early July or late June, there was no more movement, and there was no way to seem to get any movement. It looked as if Ford, if anything, had just a tiny lead over us on delegate count. That’s when Sears came up with the idea of picking a vice presidential candidate. Sears had this watchword of his, which was “Politics is motion.” The person who is moving attracts the attention—of the press, and the public, the voting public. He was right about that. First of all, we specifically got wind that Lou Cannon was going to write a story in the Washington Post to the effect that Ford had a definite lead in delegates and that he didn’t see how we could get any delegates to head him off. This was three weeks before the convention.

Sears said, “If Reagan will agree to do this, it stops the clock. Because suddenly the press is going to talk about this vice presidential nominee and forget all about the other.” And indeed, Cannon didn’t write the story as a result because we got the jump on that. So that was a very bright stroke on Sears’ part. And he picked [Richard] Schweiker. Schweiker was Laxalt’s seatmate. Laxalt said to us, “He’s a lot more conservative than you think.” We all thought he was very liberal. He said, “He votes the Pennsylvania labor position on issues that affect them, but on everything else he’s very conservative.” Sure enough, he was. They flew Schweiker out to meet with Reagan. They hit it off very well. They spent half a day or so together, and that was that.

Then we all had to go about and call on some of our strongest supporters, conservative supporters, who thought that this was like consorting with the devil. We had to explain to them what his record really was like. We got enough of that done to take care of it, but then Sears thought, when you get down to the tactics, that Schweiker could be influential with Drew Lewis, who was heading the Pennsylvania delegation and could chip away some Pennsylvania delegates. But that didn’t happen. We didn’t need many, but it didn’t happen. There was a fight going on over the Mississippi delegation—it’s detailed in that book of mine. Some of our people broke ranks, and some of the Mississippi delegation didn’t stay with us. Sears’ next move was to pick a rules fight at the convention. He wanted to do that rather than a platform fight, because a platform fight was highly emotional and would open wounds that would be very difficult to heal afterwards. But that’s where we knew the red meat was. We knew our delegates would go crazy if we had a platform fight over Henry Kissinger, for example. Ultimately, we did something along those lines, but it was an anticlimax. So he picked this rule fight on Rule 15C, I think it was, with a straight face. The rule would insist that all candidates whose names were put in nomination had to declare their vice presidential choice before the nomination. Of course, we’d already done that.

The purpose of this was to one, be a proxy for a nomination vote; but two, to embarrass Ford because Ford had been saying for quite a long time up to then, “I think Howard Baker would make a wonderful Vice President. I think Bob Dole would make a wonderful—” And a long, long list of names of all the wonderful Vice Presidents, so you knew that if he had to pick one, all these nineteen other folks would be angry. All of us on the team were delegated to go out and buttonhole delegates and delegation chairmen, and persuade them of the importance of this fight. It was a very hard sell because a lot of them had difficulty understanding what this stood for and why it was important. What they wanted to do was argue about foreign policy.
We lost that vote very closely, and those of us on the inside of the operation knew that was the end of it right there. The next morning, which was the day—that night would be the nomination itself—we had a breakfast meeting with Reagan. And when it broke up, I went off to the side with him and said, “You know, I haven’t done anything about an acceptance speech. Do you want me to work on something in case things turn out right tonight?” He said, “Oh, no. I’ve been thinking about that a little bit, if I ever had to give one. Recently I was asked to submit a document for a time capsule for the city of Los Angeles to be opened on the 300th anniversary or something of the city. Barney [Barnett] and I were driving back from the ranch on one of our work days up there a while back, and I was looking out at the ocean and thinking about that and was kind of wondering what people would think fifty, a hundred, years from now about the way things turned out.” Then he, in effect, gave me a précis of the very speech that he gave the next night, impromptu, when Ford called him down to the floor. That was the very speech. And things played out the way it was expected.

The platform was voted on that evening, and the nominations. But in the meantime, Sears had given the green light to us to do a foreign policy plank—an amendment to the foreign policy plank, which Marty Anderson and I wrote on my portable typewriter in my room. Then we called Senator [Jesse] Helms and read it to him to get his all-out support, and he chuckled. He liked it. To use Bill Safire’s term, it was one of these “BOMFOG”—brotherhood of man and fatherhood of God—type speeches. It just thundered—all about the failures of the foreign policy and Henry Kissinger.

The head of the North Carolina delegation, who was Jesse’s guy, had rounded up enough delegates from five states. Under the rules then if you got the majority of five delegations, you could get a voice vote, a roll-call vote, on an amendment. But he’d been shouting so much during this convention he was hoarse. I was down on the floor with him that night, and he got a microphone, and he was recognized by the chair, but he could hardly croak, and the din around us was tremendous. Whereupon the permanent chairman—who was John Rhodes, as I recall—then called for a voice vote on this amendment. I don’t remember what the voice vote sounded like, but he said, “The ayes have it,” bang. That’s the end of that.

In other words, what the Ford people had decided to do, with the connivance of Sears, was to get a voice vote, accept it, swallow hard, and deep-six the platform, which is exactly what they did. Sears’ reasoning was, if you really had a huge debate and a roll-call vote on this, you would sunder the party in a way that it could never be put back together again. And he was right. But the interesting thing that happened, you couldn’t get a printed copy of the Republican platform that year for love nor money. We finally got one, and it was printed on the kind of paper the Congressional Record is printed on, newsprint. No illustrations, nothing. And they kept them locked in a drawer somewhere at the RNC. Well, it was pretty embarrassing. The press never made anything out of that, either. That’s pretty much what happened at the convention.

By prearrangement—[Richard] Cheney was Ford’s Chief of Staff then—the winner would call on the loser, late on the night of the nomination. So Ford came over to the suite, with Cheney, and they went into Reagan’s room. It was just the two of them. Afterwards, we asked Reagan about it, and he said, “Well, Ford wanted to know my recommendations for the Vice President.
And I didn’t want to do that, prejudice his— After all, it’s his choice. So then he began to roll out these names, and I had something nice to say about all of them. But I think I had a little bit more to say about Dole than anybody else.” So Dole got the nod. That was pretty much it.

At one point, Schweiker had said to Reagan—I think it was the morning after that rules fight—at this breakfast event, or post-breakfast event, “Governor,” he said, “if my dropping off your ticket would in any way help you tonight to garner some more votes, I’ll willingly do that.” And Reagan said, “Dick, we came here together. We’re going to leave together.”

[BREAK]

Knott: Would you be willing to just repeat some of what you said about the Reagan ranch?

Riley: Maybe to prompt you to go back, you said there were only two Presidents—

Hannaford: —prior to George W. Bush, who had ranches as their retreats. One was Reagan, the other was LBJ [Lyndon Baines Johnson]. Teddy Roosevelt had a ranch out in the Dakotas, but that was before he became Vice President, and he didn’t keep it. But these two had ranches as retreats, and they used them in very different ways. With LBJ, it was simply an extension of everything he was doing every day at the White House. They’d have political planning meetings. He’d have Cabinet officers down. They’d have media people, ambassadors, all kinds of things, lots of social activities. And they had, I think, three guest houses, something like that. And they were very busy.

With Reagan, it was just the reverse. It was to get away from public life that he had the ranch. And the staff was quite sensitive to letting the Reagans be by themselves as much of the time they were out there as possible. Now, he did his work everyday. As I note in the book, he had his daily national security briefing. He’d have telephone calls by top aides frequently on this, that, and the other thing, and make whatever decisions he had to make. But they didn’t go up and have a lot of face-to-face meetings there. And they didn’t do much social partying there. Once a year, two lady friends of the Reagans would organize this big birthday party for her, and they’d have roughly twenty couples up from Los Angeles, old, old friends. They’d have a wonderful gala afternoon.

Riley: Could you tell us who some of these people are? We’ve asked acquaintances of the President occasionally about his personal friends—

Hannaford: Well, there were Bill and Betty Wilson. She’s deceased now. Bill ultimately became Reagan’s ambassador to the Vatican. He was a businessman, a financier, and a long-time financial advisor to Reagan, still living. He’s the one who found the ranch for them, by the way. There were the William French Smiths. Bill Smith was his Attorney General, now deceased, and Jean Smith, his widow. Earle [Frank E.] and Marion Jorgenson, very good friends. Earle is dead now. Now, Earle Jorgenson was a great rider. They both rode, and they came up a few times for weekends at the ranch and went riding with the Reagans. But very few of their friends came up for weekends, even though they had a guest house, ultimately, a two-bedroom guest house. I’m not sure anybody ever slept in the guest house. Oh, Charlie and Mary Jane Wick. Charlie became
head of the USIA [United States Information Agency], and Mary Jane was a terrific fundraiser. They both were.

Mrs. Hannaford: The Linkletters?

Hannaford: Good friends, but more professional good friends than the social circle. I’m trying to remember some of the folks we had dinner with that night at Jimmy’s. Rosalind Russell and her husband—I guess both gone now—were good friends.

Mrs. Hannaford: The Tuttles?

Hannaford: Oh, the Tuttles, yes. Holmes Tuttle and Virginia. He’s deceased. I don’t know if she is. Holmes and Justin Dart in the latter half of the governorship were probably the two closest kitchen cabinet advisors to Reagan, both of them. Justin and Jane Dart. Justin’s gone now.

Riley: That’s close to twenty. Were the members of the kitchen cabinet likely to come up and see the Governor in his office?

Hannaford: No, not very often, now and then. No, because at least once a month they had a meeting in Los Angeles. It was either at the Los Angeles Country Club or the California Club downtown. I went to all of the meetings in ’74. Deaver never went. He didn’t like the meetings. I could see why. Livingston often went. In ’74, all these captains of industry—Dave Packard was in on that, too—would sit around at these meetings and talk about, “What are we going to do about Ronnie’s future, getting him some gainful employment?” They would talk about, “Oh, I talked to so-and-so who’s the chairman of this board, and he thinks Ronnie’s going to run for President next year, and he doesn’t want a board member to come on and duck out a year later,” or something like that, all this talk, on and on.

Meanwhile, we’re finding out that there’s this market for the radio program, and a market for the newspaper column, and a market for the speeches, all stuff that Reagan likes and knows how to do very well. I’ll never forget the day we were at the L.A. Country Club in this little room having lunch with all these guys. They were going on and on, about more of this stuff they were looking into, and nothing was happening. Reagan said, “Fellas, I have some news for you. I’m going to do it myself. Here’s what I’m going to do.” And that was that. So he didn’t have to rely on board memberships or sinecures from corporations or anything like that.

Riley: Deaver didn’t like the meetings because—?

Hannaford: Because they were much ado about nothing. I mean, these guys were important allies of Reagan, and they helped raise a lot of money, and he liked their advice on certain things. They certainly didn’t control him in any way at all, and he wasn’t their mouthpiece or anything, but they were important people in the business world, and he wanted to hear what they had to say. They were good friends, personal friends of his. But there was just a lot of talk.

Riley: They weren’t political people—
Hannaford: Not really. They weren’t. Deaver came in to me one day—I think this was after we left the governorship—and he said, “Holmes Tuttle just called, and he was all agitated about some particular issue.” I don’t remember now what the issue was. And Holmes said, “Mike, Mike, we’ve got to do something about the so-and-so issue. I’ve been out talking to the grass roots, Margaret Brock and Justin Dart”—two of the richest people in California. And Mike said, “I wouldn’t exactly call them the grass roots. I’d call them the palm trees.” That was Holmes’ take on public opinion. They were good people. But Reagan understood that you listen to them and gratefully accept their help, but that isn’t all you do. You do a lot of other things, too. They were good allies.

But anyway, to finish up on the ranch. That was a place to get away from the public spotlight. Reagan, when you think about it, almost all of his adult life was in the public spotlight. In the Depression, after burning up a lot of shoe leather, he got a job as a fledgling announcer on a small radio station in Davenport, Iowa. And he did well, was kind of a natural at it. And then they moved him to their clear channel station in Des Moines, WHO, which had listeners from a very wide swath. And he became something of a celebrity in and around Des Moines. He would broadcast the Drake Relays, and he was, of course, doing the re-creation of the Chicago Cubs games, so he was something of a celebrity locally.

Then he went with the Chicago Cubs in ’37 for spring training on Catalina Island off the California coast. He got a screen test at Warner Brothers while he was there, got an offer of a contract, went into the movies, was in 55 feature-length films and became a real celebrity. Then, as that began to wind down, he got the GE television program, GE Theater, which was a very big program in its day. Part of his contract called for him, as you probably all know, to make a certain number of trips to GE plants in the course of a year. He talked to the workers as they were coming off their shifts. As he put it, he quickly discovered they all wanted to meet the celebrity, but none of them wanted to hear a speech. You know, they were coming off shifts and they wanted to go home. They wanted to meet the celebrity and not hear a long boring speech about economics or something.

So he said he quickly learned that you just give a short opener, a short statement to set the stage, and then say, “Now I want to hear what you have to say.” That’s when he got this almost populist flavor to his rhetoric. These were ordinary working folks, and he heard what was on their minds. And it had a shaping factor on his political thinking, on his rhetoric. That’s how that device started, really, of the dialogue instead of the monologue, getting people to participate in the process, rather than talking at them. That’s where he really perfected that, in those GE years. He was in the public eye all those years. Then he was on the US Borax, “20 Mule Team” program, then he started to go into politics. Always in the public eye.

So the idea of getting away to the ranch was to get away from it all. Sure, you had your duties you had to perform. You always had to be on call every minute of the day, which he was. But otherwise, it was just the two of them. They could go riding, have a wonderful time, and he could chop wood and clear brush and have a great time. And as he said, he did some of his best thinking while he was out doing those things, because you’re detached from routines. Your mind can move wherever you want it to go. It played a very important role in his life, but not one where lots and lots of people came popping in all the time.
Knott: We keep hearing and reading that he was not a man who had a lot of friends, although you’ve given us a list of people who—

Hannaford: He didn’t have a lot of intimates, that’s true. They had this circle of social friends, and I’ve always been impressed by the fact that it was a very durable circle. They’d been friends for a long time, all of them. And they all seemed to like one another a lot because they would get together fairly often, socially. But he was not like Nixon and [Robert] Aplanalp and [Charles/Bebe] Rebozo. He didn’t have those kinds of relationships. Bill Wilson was a trusted friend and advisor, particularly on financial matters. He really respected Bill’s views. But going back to something we were talking about earlier this morning, Reagan wasn’t an elbow-bender. He didn’t say to somebody, “Why don’t you come on over tonight and have a drink, and let’s chew the fat on so and so?” It just wasn’t his way, wasn’t his nature. He was very friendly, but he didn’t have intimate friends to speak of.

He trusted William French Smith, heavily, on legal matters and good judgment on legal-like things. They were good friends, but not real intimates, day-in and day-out. Those are the two closest I can think of. He thought of them as very good, friendly advisors, basically. And all of us—the rest of us—were essentially staff.

Knott: Does that include William Clark? Did Clark sort of bridge that?

Hannaford: Well, he bridged that somehow. He was in a kind of special category. Reagan may have thought of him almost as a surrogate son, in a way. Bill was his Chief of Staff, and then he became a Supreme Court judge. And then he went to Washington as the Deputy Secretary of State, and then moved to the White House. Then he ran afoul of Mrs. Reagan and was sent to Siberia, also called the Department of the Interior. Then he was out, then he left, went back home.

I don’t think that estrangement ever healed between him and Mrs. Reagan. I’ve reason to believe that. But he occupied a special place with Ronald Reagan. I think he trusted his advice, had real affection, for Bill. And it was returned. When I was working in Sacramento, Clark would call in frequently and chat around to various of us. He liked to stay involved and just keep his hand in.

Knott: Was it a policy dispute with Mrs. Reagan?

Hannaford: Yes, basically. Mrs. Reagan had come to believe that her husband would go down in history as a great peacemaker if he’d ease up on the Soviets, and Clark didn’t agree with that. Clark wanted Reagan to be Reagan. And Clark was right.

Knott: Can we get back to moving chronologically. We were up to the convention in 1976 and that speech, of course, which lit the convention on fire—

Hannaford: Sure did. It was a tremendously emotional release for the convention. And it was a good healing thing for the party, because these two rivals were coming together. It was a smart
idea on Ford’s part. I do not think Reagan knew about it in advance. Mrs. Reagan knew about it because Cheney had called Deaver and told him that’s what Ford wanted to do. I believe Deaver. And he may have told her that, but I don’t think she told her husband. I think it was a genuine surprise to him. But he had this notion that he’d previewed to me the day before, quite by coincidence, and that’s what came out.

And it was the perfect speech for the moment. There was this hush in the room, you remember, in the auditorium there. The speech wasn’t very long, when you think about it. As I go back and read that speech, I don’t think it was more than about three minutes, maybe four. It was pretty short. That’s all that was needed, though. It was very emotional.

Riley: We wanted to ask you more generally about speechwriting, because that’s something that became a part of your portfolio. Could you tell us a little bit about how you became a speechwriter for him and what the process was in working with him on speeches? How easy was it? Did it come naturally to you, or did it take a while for you to learn his voice?

Hannaford: I wasn’t hired to be a speechwriter. We had a speechwriter on the staff. He was a former editorial page editor for the Oakland Tribune, whom I knew. In those days, even then, back in ’74, Reagan always liked to write his own political speeches when he’d go out on the stump. He would write it himself, and then he would put them on these 4x6 cards—they weren’t 3x5, they were 4x6. He had his own shorthand. You’ve seen them inserted in the [Martin & Annelise] Anderson-[Kiron K.] Skinner book. Essentially it consisted of taking vowels out of words and then writing the consonants in block letters. He’d take conjunctions and prepositions out and put dots in, because he knew what was missing. He could glance at it in a moment and not lose his place.

But when it came to what he called technical speeches—this is as Governor, when you’re going to talk to the California Association of Water District Directors, all they want to hear about is water policy in some detail. So you have your speechwriter work the speech up. Then he would add some anecdotes or some local color or something up front. But it wasn’t a speech to persuade. It was a speech to inform, basically. So those would be done, and he wouldn’t change those speeches very much.

I can’t remember what the first speech was I wrote for him. It may have just been a short statement for something. But the speech guy reported to me, and so did the press secretary. At some point, I wrote a speech for Reagan. I just don’t remember what it was. I remember I wrote the statements that he gave at the Governors’ Conference press conferences. I started by writing a lot of statements for him, and sometimes writing letters that required special handling for answers, that kind of thing. I simply can’t remember what the first speech was I wrote for him. I found myself writing more and more stuff for him, and particularly I did a lot more writing after he left office, where I was “it.” So I would have to craft speeches for him for special occasions, or he’d want to say something about some issue or other, and I’d work up an insert that he could put into his stump speech. He had a lot of inserts. I found I could write in his voice after a while, and he wouldn’t make a lot of changes in the stuff I gave him.
I learned words that he wouldn’t be comfortable with, and words that he did like, and things like that. I also knew what issues he wanted to touch and which ones he didn’t want to hit hard. It’s just a sort of synergy there. It’s hard to describe. There’s no formal process to it at all. I just wrote a lot of stuff for him. It’s hard for me now to go back and— First of all, I didn’t save it all, and second, even if I had, it would be hard for me to pull out now what I wrote and what he wrote. I don’t know. I have pretty firm views on a speechwriter’s role for public figures. I think the speechwriter should be heard and not seen. That is, it should be the speech that’s heard, and if the speech is a success that you’ve done for your boss, then you have to be satisfied with reflected glory. You know that—if it’s a political figure, an office holder—the people who need to know who did it—certain people in the press and certain people in the political community—know who did it, and that’s all that needs to happen.

I don’t think a speechwriter should go out and take credit for writing things for the principal. That’s why I was very critical when Peggy Noonan came out of the White House and wrote this book which, in effect, said, “Here was this empty suit, and I filled it with all this brilliant stuff.” To me that is dead wrong. Speechwriters shouldn’t do that. So to this day, I’m rather reticent to identify what I wrote and what I didn’t write. I wrote a lot of stuff for Reagan, a lot of drafts. Some he changed and some he didn’t, and I’ve forgotten what most of them were.

I was in charge of making the acceptance speech happen at the Detroit convention. That was my speech. I’ll say that. But it was his speech, ultimately. It was my assignment to make it all happen, and I’m flattered that he trusted me to do that. I drafted his two presidential announcement speeches. But again, it’s always his product at the other end when you’re through with it. I did a lot of other speeches for him, which he changed to various degrees. But it’s always his product in the end. If he likes your draft, it’s because you happened to hit a nerve with him that was consistent with his own views and in his voice. If you didn’t, you get a lot of these yellow pages back saying, “Well, I think I’d rather say it this way.” Happened both ways. Anyway, I was pleased to have that opportunity to work with him on a lot of these.

Riley: Obviously, in history, one of his great legacies is as the “great communicator,” and you wonder how someone who seems to have such a natural proclivity for delivering speeches, how easy is that person to work with?

Hannaford: Oh, he was a breeze to work with, just a dream to work with. He was just a wonderful guy to work with. There was never any problem. As we got to know one another well and he knew I would write in his voice, he would just say, “Pete, take a crack at this.” And I’d go off and do it. We wouldn’t have to have long meetings or anything like that. He was very easy to work with, and he was always so apologetic when he changed things. You’d get this draft back with several yellow sheets in between, and he’d say, “You know that’s good,” he’d write in the margin, “but let’s try this.” Heck, it’s his speech.

He had one great gift that I have never run into a politician before or since who had, because of the unique character of his background. Having started in the radio business, he wrote for the ear, not the eye. So many professional speechwriters were expository writers first. You know, they’re putting stuff on paper all the time. And almost none of them have experience on radio or television. And maybe one of the reasons why he and I connected so well is that coming out of
the advertising agency business, I had written a lot of radio copy—some television copy, but a lot of radio copy. So you have to learn what’s going to work to the ear. Even I was more a print writer than a broadcast writer, but he really thought in terms of the ear. That’s why the cadence of his talks is so good on the ear. He had that particular training and ability. It was a real gift by the time he became a politician.

**Riley:** Did you have to supervise any of the other speechwriting?

**Hannaford:** Well, yes. I nominally supervised the guy in the speechwriting office in Sacramento, but most of what he wrote were these things to the directors of the Water Works Association. They were not terribly interesting, and he was perfectly reliable, so we knew he wasn’t going to go off on some flight of fancy. I had to approve them, and I did. But I didn’t take a deep interest because he was a professional. He knew what he was doing. He’d been doing it for some time, and it wasn’t necessary.

Then when Reagan was doing the radio programs, and when we were campaigning for other candidates, I would sometimes “commission” other people to submit drafts to us. I recall in ’78 he was going to do a whole round in the fall of campaign things for candidates, and I asked Bill Gavin, who was Congressman [Robert] Michel’s chief writer for a long time and had been in the Nixon administration. Bill is a great writer, and he’d sat in on a number of our meetings with Reagan. I asked him to come up with a brand new stump speech for the fall.

Reagan had been working on the ranch all summer and had been pretty busy, and he hadn’t gotten around to doing a new stump speech. He said, “Well, I’ll just freshen up my stump speech.” But we thought no, you’re going to be a presidential candidate in 1980, you ought to have something brand new that will really get the attention of the press. Bill wrote this wonderful beginning to this speech which Reagan liked a great deal. It started with Thomas Jefferson and the sun sinking over Monticello.

**Riley:** Splendid for our purposes.

**Hannaford:** It was very touching, and a quote of Jefferson’s about “closing the circle of our felicities.” Deaver said, “Nobody knows what *felicities* means. We’ll have to change that.” But the speech worked. It was a good speech. And then Reagan added a lot of his own stuff. But we did things like that, bring somebody in who had a fresh look and his own rhetoric. Bill contributed another great thing to the acceptance speech—that was the “community of values,” people who shared work, family, country, prosperity. We were bridging the gap there between labor Democrats and Republicans, sort of a Main Street audience, straddling the two party lines. It turned out that whole theme, developed as it was throughout the campaign, was what created the phenomenon called the Reagan Democrats.

That was Gavin’s idea. We massaged it a lot, worked it in many different ways. His concept was that you’ve got a lot of second, third generations of immigrant families who moved out to the suburbs, and they’re all prospering. They may have come from union backgrounds where you’d think they’d be Democrats, but they’ve got two cars in the garage, a kid in college, and maybe a boat on a trailer. They have a lot to protect and to worry about, and their values are the same as
the Republican down the street. So let’s talk to this whole audience of people because they have the same values. They come at it from different directions, but they have the same values. That became a central theme of the whole campaign. And that was his idea. So we had different people helping us at different times.

When it became time to do the acceptance speech, we had three or four people submit whole drafts to us. I went through them all, and I’d pick a little here and pick a little there and use some of them. I ultimately was responsible for putting the whole thing together into a cohesive unit, but we had a lot of folks whose fingerprints are on that.

**Knott:** We’ve had some testimony that said that Ronald Reagan began the 1980 campaign that night in Kansas City, with that speech, that he was already thinking, “I’m going to come back.” Is that a bit of a stretch? At what point did he—

**Hannaford:** He may have thought that, but if he did, he sure didn’t act that way for the next three months.

**Knott:** He was down?

**Hannaford:** No, no, he wasn’t down. No, not at all, but he didn’t act as if he expected he’d be back in elective politics. Now, in his heart of hearts he may well have thought that, but he didn’t talk about it. Again, that would be characteristic of him. In so many instances, he wouldn’t talk about something. There was no need to talk about it. After a while, you just sort of knew that was the way it was going to be.

**Knott:** So could be?

**Hannaford:** Yes, could be.

**Knott:** The formation of Citizens for the Republic, fairly early in ’77—

**Hannaford:** To me, that was the signal.

**Knott:** That was the signal?

**Hannaford:** Yes, when he allowed that to happen. Because he knew what that format meant. It wasn’t just that he’d be the bait to bring people to an event. He understood the implications of the whole thing. So when he allowed that to happen, that said, “We’re going back in.” It was very clear by early ’78 that there would definitely be a campaign in ’80. I mean, the run-up and everything was completely different from what it was in ’75. In ’75 there was really a tug-of-war going on behind the scenes—not with Reagan—but behind the scenes with all the rest of us, between those who wanted to get him out front early and running, and those who wanted him to make the decision at the last minute. Deaver and I were in favor of the last minute.

**Knott:** Why?
Hannaford: To preserve Reagan’s income, to preserve his platform and his voice. If you’re going to run, and you announce—You’re going to run in ’76, say, and you announce in March of ’75, what are you going to do to get attention for the rest of the year? If you’re a private citizen speaking out on issues of the day, and you’re getting paid to do it, you’re getting a forum all year long. Those who wanted him to do it early were all connected with workers and volunteers, all of whom were very restless between campaigns.

I’m sure the Democrats are exactly the same way. The folks who come back year after year and get involved in campaigns, that’s their life, what they want to see is a campaign going. They don’t want to be idle, or think about it, or intellectualize. They want to do it. So there was a lot of that pressure coming on. Nofziger was hearing it in particular, because he knew a lot of these folks very well. A lot of these people were pressing very hard for Reagan to get out front and do this, do that.

Some of our conservative media people were doing the same thing. They wanted the void to be filled out there. But Reagan’s instinct was to wait. First of all, his idea was you’ve got to give Ford enough time to see if he can make things work. You shouldn’t jump on him now because he’s only been there three or four months. And the other thing was, as I said, not only was it income for him, which he needed—he wasn’t poor, but he needed a flow of income—and more importantly, he had that wonderful outlet available to him week in, week out, as we now know, building adherents, which he wouldn’t have had if he’d been a declared candidate.

Nowadays, for example, what is John Edwards going to do every single week to get attention? Or [John] Kerry? Kerry made his announcement what, three or four weeks ago? Have you heard much from him since? Uh-uh. It’s very tough for a candidate, who’s not an office holder with a platform—and if you’re in the minority, you don’t have much of a platform—to get out and do things regularly to get attention, very tough.

Knott: Has it changed? I mean, they’re probably going to be raising money, I would assume.

Hannaford: Oh yes, you’re out doing that. But to get attention for your ideas? Uh-uh, tough, very tough.

Riley: I was just going to say that I remember—and I haven’t mentioned this before—driving home when I was an undergraduate, and every day hearing these radio broadcasts. They came on 12:30 on WAUD in Auburn, Alabama, right after Paul Harvey. I also have another vivid memory, and I’ll bounce this off you, because I don’t know whether you were involved in this at all. He was on the Tonight show at some point. I don’t know whether he made frequent appearances on the Tonight show.

Hannaford: I don’t remember.

Riley: I have a vivid memory of lying on the floor at my uncle’s house with Reagan making this appearance, and hearing my uncle after the appearance say, “That guy talks a lot of sense.” This would have been probably before ’76. It had to have been ’74, ’75.
**Hannaford:** He might have still been Governor.

**Riley:** Could have been, but I think it was a little bit later.

**Hannaford:** May have been ’75.

**Knott:** Let’s start talking, then, about the build-up to the 1980 campaign.

**Hannaford:** Well, let’s see. We’ve done CFR [Citizens for the Republic]. That was the big thing in ’77, and that went on, that was an ongoing thing. I don’t remember how many times we did those weekend forums, but there were quite a few in various parts of the country. We had a group that was meeting, sometimes with him, sometimes between us. Meese, Deaver, Nofziger and I, sometimes Wirthlin, would meet for breakfast from time to time to talk things over, a little bit like that group we’d had in Sacramento. Now and then we’d have a meeting with Reagan, at his home, usually in the living room. We’d bring in other people. We brought in Richard Allen, who became his National Security Advisor. Brought in Richard Whalen, who was kind of a general guru. We brought in Gavin. There were others. They come to mind immediately. Different times, different people.

**Knott:** Was Martin Anderson part of this?

**Hannaford:** Yes, Marty and I were sort of partners in the ’76 campaign. We were the issues team out on the road. Between times, we stayed in touch, and Marty put some events together for us. He didn’t come down to these meetings all that often, but we were always in touch. And he may have been at some of them, but I don’t remember. He was part of the whole operation, but I don’t know that he— He didn’t come to the breakfast meetings, because these were L.A. affairs. But the meetings with Reagan in his home, which were often Saturdays, he may have been at some of those.

So we’d have these pow-wows with Reagan and talk over speech themes, message themes, the political process. Wirthlin was piggybacking some questions that were useful to us on the back end of polls that he was taking for various commercial clients, with their permission, and we’d pay for those. That’s a lot cheaper than commissioning a from-the-ground-up poll. You’d tack on, say, four questions on somebody else’s poll. He got some very good advice from that. I remember one session that he had with the bunch of us, in late ’78.

He said that his data were showing that Reagan shouldn’t spend a lot of time talking about national defense because he’s seen as very strong on this issue. He doesn’t need to prove anything to anybody. And if he talks about it too much, he’s going to veer over to the “too strong” side. Wirthlin had this chart where he has a line down the middle, and the waves go back and forth, too strong, too light, on these different issues. He demonstrated that to us.

He also showed us that at that stage Reagan was way ahead of the field in terms of popularity. And so we went forward. In ’78 we did two foreign trips. In the spring we went to Japan, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and then around to Iran. In the fall we did England, France, and Germany. The first trip happened—Dick Allen, who had become our foreign policy centerpiece guy after ’76—and became a close friend of mine—was talking up the idea of a series of foreign trips to
burnish Reagan’s credentials. And we were beginning to formulate ideas for which trips and
where and so forth.

Deaver said to me one day, “Mrs. Reagan has just accepted an invitation from Ardeshir Zahedi,
the Iranian ambassador, for them to go to Iran next spring.” This must have been the end of ’77,
or beginning of ’78. So he said, “If you’re going to do anything about one of these foreign trips,
you better do it now.” The Shah was on the slippery slope even then. The U.S. media were
climbing all over him, and the paper bag people were marching around Washington, “Death to
the Shah, Death to the Shah,” all day long. So he wasn’t exactly a popular commodity. I called
Allen and told him what was going to happen. We both agreed that a trip to Iran was not a very
good thing for Reagan to be doing politically, that he might be sympathetic, but he ought to stay
away.

So I talked to Deaver about it some more, and Dick formatted the idea. He said, “He hasn’t been
to Japan for a few years, and Japan is such an important country. Why don’t we go to Japan, do a
series of well-crafted things, so that he will come away with the Japanese being very impressed
about him so that when the American news people and others talk to their Japanese counterparts,
they’ll all say, ‘This man is very smart.’”

I said, “That’s a good idea, and by the way, he’s got a standing invitation to go to Taiwan, and he
feels very strongly about Taiwan’s security. So we could stop by there.” Irene and I had been in
Hong Kong the season before and met with—not the high commissioner, but the secretary
general, or whatever he was called. I said, “I think we could organize something in Hong Kong,
and then send him off to Iran. And maybe by then, nobody will remember they went to Iran.” So
that’s the way it played out, and it did work that way. The Reagans liked the idea.

Dick did a superb job. He had marvelous connections in Japan. Irene and I had been to Japan the
summer before for two weeks or so and met a number of people Dick had put us together with. It
was a terrific trip to Japan. Dick did all the briefing books and the in-person briefing, and Reagan
was a great student when he wanted to focus on something. He did it with a great intensity. There
were meetings with the LDP [Liberal Democratic Party], meetings with think tanks, interviews, a
meeting with [Takeo] Fukuda, who was again prime minister. It was a very intense, filled
schedule. Reagan brought it off very well.

We had one interesting by-play. Mike Mansfield was Carter’s ambassador to Tokyo. After we
had the whole trip formulated, Dick said, “Now we’ll call the State Department and tell them
we’re going.” The State Department was the enemy, figuratively speaking. Dick said, “The
reason you don’t tell the State Department up front is they will want to end up controlling the
schedule. Let’s do the schedule and then tell them.” And we did it, and Dick said to them, “Oh,
by the way, Governor Reagan would be pleased to call on Ambassador Mansfield, pay a courtesy
call while he’s there.” Well, they came back to us a day or so later and said, “No, Ambassador
Mansfield will call on Mr. Reagan at his hotel,” which was the Okura, right across the street
from the embassy.

We flew in from Honolulu, where Reagan stopped and had given a speech to some financial
conference. We flew in the next day to Tokyo. It was a Sunday. We got there about noon, and
Mansfield came around in mid-afternoon, by himself. He didn’t bring his wife. His wife had been invited, but he said she was ill. He looked as if he’d swallowed a pickle. The last place he wanted to be this afternoon was talking to this gun-toting cowboy actor. So they sat down and talked. And the Allens and we were in the room with the Reagans and Mansfield. I don’t think they’d been talking for five minutes, when the scales fell from Mansfield’s eyes because here was a kindred spirit who knew seemingly everything he needed to know about Japan and felt exactly as Mansfield did.

The other thing we learned was that Mansfield had been saying a lot of things to the State Department and the White House, and nobody had been paying any attention to him about how to deal with the Japanese properly. I don’t just mean from a protocol point of view, but how to deal with them on a policy basis. Nobody had been paying attention to him. He was highly respected by the Japanese. And here was Reagan singing out of the same songbook, which was a dividend we hadn’t expected. But the two got along famously.

By the time the hour was over, Mansfield said, “Oh, by the way, we’re having a little reception tomorrow for an American artist whose work we’re hanging at the embassy. Perhaps you could drop by at the end of your day.” Reagan said, “Thank you very much. We’ll do that.” Then he went out and had this excellent day. So we went to the embassy about 5 o’clock. Mrs. [Maureen] Mansfield was miraculously recovered. We went through the receiving line, and Mansfield said to Reagan, “My spies tell me you’ve had a very good day.”

During the transition—Dick Allen was in charge of the foreign policy transition, State Department transition—I went around to see him one day. He said, “What do you think about Mansfield to stay in Tokyo?” I said, “Ten strike. He’s the perfect guy. He knows the Japanese, he likes them, they like him. He and Reagan get along famously. You’re showing bipartisanship. It’s perfect.”

So Reagan called him late one night—I found this out from Mansfield later when I interviewed him for one of my books. Mansfield said Reagan didn’t realize it was 3 o’clock in the morning in Tokyo. After all, Mansfield wasn’t a kid, he was an old man. But he woke up, and he said, “Thank you, I will. I’ll stay.” I remember calling on Mike the last year he was in Tokyo, which was seven years later. He was still loving it. He was great. He died, you know, only about a year ago, and he was well into his 90s. He went to the office every day, wonderful man, terrific guy.

So we had that trip. We went to Taiwan. I guess he was the most important American to go to Taiwan since (Nelson) Rockefeller had gone to Chang Kai Shek’s funeral in ’75. As we drove in from the airport, the streets in the city were lined with people waving American flags—all spontaneous, of course. We stayed at the Grand Hotel up on the hill.

Mrs. Hannaford: They knew the ambassador.

Hannaford: We had a big dinner at the national guest house, and then the next night the President had a dinner for us up on the mountainside. It was quite a big thing, a big ceremonial thing. They were very grateful, and he gave a couple of talks. Mike and I were representing their government at the time, which was something Reagan had blessed. Let’s see, when did they hire
us? In ’78, no, late ’77. When they approached us, I said to Mike, “You and I have always said
we wouldn’t work for any foreign governments because it would compromise Reagan.” He said,
“Ah, but here’s the exception that proves the rule. Reagan was for Taiwan long before he met
you and me.” Which was true. So we went to Reagan, said, “What do you think?” He said, “Go
to it.” So we did.

That was a very nice visit, and they enjoyed it. Then we flew to Hong Kong. We were just there
a day, I think a day and a night. I’d arranged a luncheon at the Governor General’s palace, or
house. The Reagans and I did a fly-about over Hong Kong and the territories by helicopter. Then
we sent them off to Iran where the Deavers came around the other way and advanced that trip,
and they had a fine time there. I don’t think there was ever a word in the press about their being
in Iran. We trumpeted the Japan portion of the trip, and it worked.

In the fall we went to Europe in November. The objective was Germany. He’d never been to
Germany. Dick and I felt that he needed to get a real credential with the German leaders. Helmut
Schmidt was the chancellor then. We arranged a meeting with Schmidt, with [Otto] Lambsdorff,
who was the head of the FDP [Free Democratic Party], with [Helmut] Kohl, who was the new
head of the CDU [Christlich Demokratische Union]. The foreign minister, a think tank dinner,
some interviews. We went to meet Schmidt, who was a very bright man and likes to hear his own
voice for long periods of time. That meeting lasted a lot longer than it was scheduled.

Reagan listened a lot, but Reagan also talked, and I think Schmidt was impressed by him.
Reagan met Kohl for the first time. Kohl, of course, soon became the chancellor. We went down
to Munich and met the late Minister President, Franz Joseph Strauss; had breakfast with him. We
went to Berlin—we let the embassy arrange that for us, the consul put us in a car and drove us
through checkpoint Charlie over to Alexanderplatz, and Nancy Reagan looked for underwear in
this department store, which didn’t have any. Funny these little things that tickle you.

Dick Allen and I were standing out front of this department store, and just as we were coming
out, the polezei stopped a young man with a shopping bag in his hand in the plaza and made him
fish out his internal passport and credentials. Dick Bergholz, who was then the political editor of
the LA Times and a famous sourpuss, was standing by. And we said, “Hey Bergholz, come look
and see what your friends are doing with this guy.” He rolled his eyes. We were always teasing
one another. But it was an illustration of the way they ran things around there. It was quite
chilling. Reagan saw that, and he didn’t forget it.

In fact, they took us to the Axel Springer House near the Reichstag to meet with some executives
for a few minutes. And high in the building, you look right down over the Berlin Wall to a place
where not long before a young man had tried to go over, and they shot him and left his body
hanging there. It wasn’t still there, but it had happened not long before.

When Reagan heard this story, his jaw set. You could just tell he had it in mind we would change
all this one day. You could see it, hear it, in the things he had to say. That was an important visit
for him, that whole trip. In France, we were just there for a day. We had a number of meetings,
and in that evening—again, this is a little sidelight—the Reagans were meeting some old friends
for dinner, so the Allens and we were free. We learned that Nixon was in town, and he was going
to be on French national television that night with a three-hour program. So we had an early
dinner, went back to watch that.

When we’d heard about this a few days before, we suggested to the Reagans that we arrange a
brief meeting. Mrs. Reagan nixed the idea. She talked him and us out of it. She thought it would
be poisonous politically for Reagan. I don’t think it would have been, but nevertheless it wasn’t
worth having a fight over.

We went back to the hotel and watched on television, and it was a tour de force if there ever was
one. Nixon and his senior interviewer were in a salon in the Ritz Hotel, and back at the studio
were a young man and a young woman at a table and a window behind them. Behind the window
were two long rows of switchboard operators taking calls from all over the country for Nixon,
questions. And then young runners would come out with pieces of paper and pile them on the
table. At one point the lady hostess described this as un avalanche. Then they would relay the
questions next to Nixon, who answered them all with aplomb. And at the end of three hours, this
man looked as if he was ready to go for another three hours. He was relaxed and comfortable,
dealt with all the questions—including Watergate questions—very deftly.

Dick Allen, who had worked in the Nixon administration, had a fairly important position there,
said to us, “Mark my words, this man is going to go to every country that will welcome him—
and believe me, there are quite a few of them—and then he’ll come back, and he’s going to
surround us. He’s going to make us surrender.” Well, he was partly right, wasn’t he? Because
Nixon had quite a campaign to restore his reputation, and he ultimately became an advisor to
subsequent Presidents on foreign policy matters.

In England we met with Margaret Thatcher. That was the second meeting with Margaret
Thatcher. I accompanied Reagan on the first meeting, which was in April ’75. Reagan had been
scheduled to speak to the Pilgrim Society. That speech, we asked Bill Schneider, who was a
defense expert, to draft for us. It was a speech about the future of the alliance, the American-
European alliance, the NATO [North Atlantic Treaty Organization] alliance.

It was a very thoughtful speech. Reagan made some changes in it, but he understood this is one
of these so-called technical speeches where you want to lay down some markers to show that you
know what you’re talking about. It was well received in the press, which was the effect we
wanted to have. The audience was very polite and received it well. He wasn’t some gun-toting
blunderbuss kind of guy. That’s the image that we wanted to work against. It was a thoughtful
speech. It was right around the time Vietnam was falling, so foreign affairs were on everybody’s
minds.

The next day Justin Dart had arranged for us to call on Margaret Thatcher. She’d just taken over
the party, and she had an office smaller than this room. Her office and her secretary’s office,
between them, were maybe two-thirds the size of this room. Young Winston Churchill III, who
was then an MP [Member of Parliament], was invited to join us, and there weren’t any chairs for
him, it was that small.
But it was interesting. The two of them, neither one in office, had heard so much about each other. They fell into conversation as if they’d been friends for years. They were peas in a pod. The chemistry was perfect, and on policy they saw eye to eye. Then she’d arranged for him and for me to meet after—she had to go off and do something else—with Sir Keith Joseph, who was her mentor on economics, [Sir] Geoffrey Howe, who became her foreign secretary, Francis Maude, who was one of the leaders in Parliament, I think there was one other.

We met for another hour or so with those people on policy matters, and it began a correspondence with Thatcher and her staff that went straight on until he became President and then became more formal. It was a constant thing. We did call on her again in this trip in ’78, and by then she was on the verge of winning the election. We all thought she was going to become the Prime Minister. That was the expectation.

This time they talked almost solely about the Soviet threat and the SS20s that were pointed at all the capitals of Europe, which had a very strong effect on Reagan. His whole thinking was developing on this whole issue of how you deal with the strategic problem and how you solve it. At any rate, those are the trips that we took, and we tried to make the most of them.

Riley: I want to ask you to dial back just a little bit, because I think before these trips, one issue that hasn’t come up is that Reagan, as I recall, was a fairly prominent actor in this whole debate over the Panama Canal treaties.

Hannaford: Well, he was, up to a point. It’s a good thing you raised that. In 1974, when we were out on that campaign trip for candidates, one of the people he agreed to speak for was Jesse Helms in Charlotte. Jesse came to our hotel about half an hour before we were due to go to the arena for the speech, and we had about fifteen minutes to kill. We sat in the parlor there, and I was just the fly on the wall. They were talking, and Helms said, “It’s just a shame what”—this had to be October of ’74—“what Ford’s doing with the Panama Canal. And Reagan said, “What’s he doing?” And he said, “He’s giving it away. They’re negotiating to give away the Panama Canal.” Reagan said, “No kidding. I didn’t hear a thing about it.” Helms said, “That’s the problem. It’s almost done in secret these negotiations. Nixon was thinking about doing it, and Ford has his people down there talking all the time. They’re going to give it away if they can.”

Reagan said, “We can’t do that.” He began to read up on it. Helms sent some stuff, some articles and things to read—and I started a file on the subject. Reagan said, “I think I’d like to do a radio program on this.” He did a couple of radio programs on it, raising concerns about what might happen. Before long, we had a trail of media people calling on us, wanting to interview him about the Panama Canal. We had people who were against the treaty giving all their reasons. Tons of material—so it seemed—started flooding into the office on both sides. He became a principal opponent to the idea of turning the Canal over to the Panamanians. He had a pretty good line of logic for it. It wasn’t just thundering, but he did have this one line, “We bought it, we paid for it, and it’s ours.”

Then when he was talking about [Omar] Torrijos one time in his speech, the idea was he was supposed to call him a “tin horned dictator.” He called him a “tin pot dictator.” Forever after that he was always the “tin pot dictator.” Basically he had a line of reasoning that had to do with
national security. You can’t be sure of this in time of great national peril. We really need the control, the security of the locks. That’s what it was all about.

Then let’s see, Carter comes in and continues this. He’s got Ellsworth Bunker and Sol Linowitz down there negotiating this thing. Reagan is still the most prominent figure on the opposition side, and he writes about it a lot. And in his speeches he’s finding—talking to conservative groups, Republican groups—a great resonance on this thing. It’s a very popular theme.

Riley: You’re out traveling with him, and you’re seeing this?

Hannaford: Yes, we’re seeing it, yes. Of course, the cognoscenti in Washington had just the opposite view—that anybody who’s against this is a troglodyte. But we were used to that kind of response, and it never bothered Reagan much. All the years he was in public life, he never let needling by the media get to him. He’d just let it roll off his back. He’d keep plowing on with whatever it was he wanted to do and just not worry about it. Some politicians, you know, get hung up and take it all personally. But he didn’t, which is one reason I think he had good relations with media people. He could separate liking some reporter on a personal basis and disliking what the guy wrote, or what the woman wrote.

At any rate, that went forward. I can’t remember the precise chronology of it. But once Carter had signed the treaty, I recall we were in New York. Reagan was going to speak that night. He was staying at Justin Dart’s apartment at the United Nations Plaza, opposite the Secretariat building. He was going to speak that night to the Young Americans for Freedom, which was a red-meat student organization, who wanted a hell fire and brimstone, raise-the-rafters kind of speech. The White House had called and asked if Reagan would accept a briefing by Linowitz and Bunker. The only time we could make it happen was at that apartment that afternoon in New York.

So we bring them up to the apartment, and they do a very serious briefing of Reagan. These are a couple of very plausible men, and after they left, Reagan said, “What if they’re right?” He was serious. “They gave a very good accounting for their position. What if they’re right?” I said, “Well, they may be, Governor, but tonight you’ve got to talk to the YAF. What are you going to say?” He said, “I don’t think I’ll talk about it.”

That was wise on his part. He said, “I don’t want to go off half-cocked. I need to think about this, and just where we want to be on this. If I come out and denounce this two hours after I listen to these guys, it’s going to look like it was a set-up, and it just isn’t right.” So he worked around that. I don’t think the press had gotten, from either side, word that this meeting was taking place, so we didn’t have a bunch of people— Wait a minute. We did have somebody from ABC, that was it, one guy from ABC. But I think I took care of him by saying, “The Governor has listened attentively, and he’ll make an announcement at a later date, but it won’t be for a while. He wants to review this with his advisors,” or something like that. And that was satisfactory. And that was the right thing for him. His reaction was the right one.

But then, when it was time for the thing to go to the Senate, we sat down with Laxalt and some others and made a conscious decision that Reagan would not be the point man on this. We were
getting a lot of media calls saying, “Is he going to lead the charge?” Of course, what they wanted
to do is get him out there and hope that he’d say something stupid and irresponsible, and they
could make a monkey of him, which is good copy.

What we wanted to do is not get him in a position where he might be compromised. So the
decision was made, first of all, in the Senate, with the Republicans, they agreed that Laxalt
should be the floor leader of the opposition. He was well liked on both sides, conservative, but
everybody liked him, he got along well with everybody. He’d be a responsible leader for the
opposition. What Reagan would do was with Senator Allen, wasn’t he from Alabama?

Riley: Yes, Jim Allen.

Hannaford: Jim Allen was a conservative Democrat. He was chairman of a subcommittee at the
time, of the Foreign Relations committee. We worked closely with him and his staff guy. He
invited Reagan to come and testify before his subcommittee on the Canal issue. So the scheme of
events that we worked out was that Reagan would testify. I drafted the testimony for him. He
would testify before this committee, a very well-reasoned argument, mostly national security
argument.

We would do an article based upon that in Orbis, the Foreign Policy Research Institute’s
quarterly. He’d do a series of radio programs. He’d do some newspaper columns. In other words,
we’d use the tools that were available to us and then shut up. Which is exactly what he did. Then
the argument went forward, as it should, among the Senators and the media and everybody else.
But to this day, I think it was the right strategy, to back off at that point.

Now, flash forward to Japan, to Tokyo in April of ’78, the next year. We’re in Tokyo. We’re
having breakfast with Japan’s special trade representative, just the two of them and Allen and
me. I get a call from my office in Washington, and the manager of the office says, “The Senate
just voted in favor of the two Panama Canal treaties.” I said, “Thanks very much.” We were
scheduled to drive over to NHK, the television network, right after that and do a satellite hook-up
with, I think ABC, one of the U.S. networks, not on that issue, but on issues of the day or
something. It was prearranged. I didn’t say anything to Reagan. I went back in the meeting. I
didn’t say anything because I didn’t want to distract his attention from this conversation he was
having. And that ended properly.

We get in the car—Allen and Reagan are in the car. I tell Reagan, and the air is turning blue
when he hears this. What he had to say about the United States Senate at the moment is
unprintable. He doesn’t have a short fuse, he has a rather long one. He doesn’t stay angry very
long, but he was “blankety-blank Senate.” We get to the circle, and we talk over— “You’re
going to be asked about this since it just happened.” He said, “I know, I know.” We get to this
kind of circle in front. It was a beautiful day, and so the cameras and microphone are right out
there instead of going in the building.

He steps out of the car and a man says, “What do you think about the Panama Canal issue.” The
Governor says, “Well, as you know, I was against it for what I think are good reasons. But the
Senate has voted, and we’ll just have to hope it works.” Period. After he’d been steaming in the
car, this was the right thing to say. If he were able to deal with the issue today, I think he’d say it
turned out okay.

Quite coincidentally, a few months ago, the company I’m with, of counsel, APCO Worldwide—
it’s a large public affairs company—was invited to make a proposal to the Panama Canal
Authority to handle their public relations globally. We flew down to Panama to give the
proposal. I didn’t tell them about any of the stuff I’d written about them in years past. I will tell
you this, that is a very well run operation. It’s very professional. The people running it are first
rate, and unlike a lot of things that happen in Panama, where corruption is fairly rife, it isn’t so at
the Panama Canal Authority. It’s a very good operation. They’re bringing in their expansion
projects on time and under budget, and doing it just right. I was very impressed. We didn’t get
the business, but I can still say a lot of good things about them because they’re very good.

Anyway, that was Reagan and the Panama Canal.

Riley: Did your sense about his interest in leaning ahead into 1980 have anything to do with the
momentum and this positive feedback that you’re feeling about Panama? In other words, is that
the issue that all of a sudden—

Hannaford: No, it lasted for quite a few months, really from ’75 until ’78. I can’t remember the
precise time when we did that testimony in the fall of ’77. But once that strategy was set in
motion, that was the end of it as a barn burner, because he didn’t use it in his speeches any
longer; it had kind of used up its value by then. By the time the treaties were signed in ’77,
everything moved into a different mode. He just stopped using it in his speeches. But still, before
the Senate debate came, the media quite naturally came and said, “Well, is he going to lead the
charge?” He’d been such a known, prominent opponent, isn’t he going to lead the charge? It’s a
reasonable question to ask. The answer was, “He’ll have some things to say about it.” Then it
played out the way I told you.

Knott: Was he interested in foreign policy in general more than domestic policy? He had a
reputation.

Hannaford: I wouldn’t say more, no. His first interest was getting the economy squared away
and the role of the federal government in the life of the country. But he was quite interested in
foreign policy. Whether it was just through general experience, or reading, or impulse, or
intuition, he understood that certain foreign policy events could have a marked effect on
domestic affairs. He understood the connection between them. Some of our people in our
operation would say things like, “Well, there are no votes in Tokyo.” Or name some other
foreign place. But he understood there were plenty of “voters” in Tokyo and around the world—
folks who could do things that could help or hurt us. So he took quite an interest in that.

If you read through the Anderson-Skinner book—which only has a sampling of the radio
scripts—there are quite a number of these that are on issues that caught his attention on foreign
policy matters.
**Knott:** There’s been a lot written in the last few years about Ronald Reagan having this vision of toppling the Soviet Union, toppling communism. What’s your take on all of that? Is this something that went back well before he became President?

**Hannaford:** Yes. I thought it went back to the mid ’70s. I was wrong. It went back to the mid ’60s. When I interviewed Edward Teller for my book *Recollections of Reagan*, Teller really set me back. In this interview, he said, “Right after Reagan was inaugurated, 1967, I invited him to come to the Lawrence Livermore Laboratory”—Teller was director of the Laboratory at the time—“to have a briefing and see what our scientists were working on. It took some time before he could take the time to come down, but he came down one day later that year, and he spent nearly a day with us. We briefed him on what we were working on, which was strategic defense against intercontinental ballistic missiles.” He said Reagan listened very attentively, took notes and so forth, didn’t say much, but listened very attentively. Then Teller said, “So in 1983”—it’s like 17 years later, 16 years later—“when Reagan gave his speech in March announcing the Strategic Defense Initiative, he invited me to come to the White House and sit in the Oval Office while he gave the speech. After he gave the speech, I said to him, ‘Well, it took you a long enough time to come around to it.’”

So clearly, the concepts that Teller’s people were talking about were making a dent in Reagan’s thinking way back then. Then in ’79 another very signal event occurred. Reagan’s opposition to the Soviet Union and all it stood for, Marxism, was quite well known, and he voiced it very strongly, very frequently, in all of his forums. In the summer of ’79, there was a film producer in Hollywood who was a friend of Reagan’s, sort of a peripheral guy, but who called Deaver and said, “I’d really like to arrange a trip for Reagan to go to the NORAD [North American Air Defense Command] headquarters in Colorado Springs. It’s a real eye-opener. He ought to go there.”

I guess one of us talked to Reagan about it. He said, “Yes, that sounds interesting if we can fit it in on the way back from some speaking trip” or something like that. For some reason neither Deaver nor I could or would take that particular trip. I think it interfered with family vacations or something. It was something mundane like that. We just couldn’t fit it in comfortably. So Marty Anderson took the trip. They went to NORAD and Reagan was very impressed by the sophisticated monitoring equipment there.

He asked the general in charge, “So, if these monitors tell you that they’ve launched a missile against us, what do we do about it?” The man said, “There’s only one thing you can do about it. Launch ours.” I guess Reagan was aware of all this, but it hadn’t really sunk in on a truly personal level like this before, that that’s what MAD—mutually assured destruction—was all about.

I think it was that September, the Carter people had completed the negotiations on the SALT II [Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty] treaty, and they wanted to send one of their experts out from the White House to brief Reagan. I can’t remember the guy’s name. He gave a perfectly good briefing from their perspective. He did it in our offices on Wilshire Boulevard. I was there, and I think Dick Allen was there. After that, Reagan said, “I think we need to get a group of our
advisors together, experts—it doesn’t have to be political supporters, just people who are willing to talk—together, and roundtable this whole thing before I make any statements about it.”

So we got Albert Wohlstetter, Henry Rowan, Fred Ikle, Bill van Cleave—these were all people who had been involved—a lot of them were Team B people at the DoD [Department of Defense]. About half a dozen of them, very learned on these issues. We had an all-day session at our offices. Dick Allen was there, a few others. I was there. Reagan decided, after listening to all these people, that he would oppose the Salt II treaty publicly, not because it wasn’t better than the Salt I treaty, but because it endorsed increasing growth in missiles.

He said, “We should be going the other way. We should be reducing missiles, not increasing them. We should be having START [Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty] talks instead of SALT.” I don’t know if they used that START term then, it probably came later, but that was the concept. He said, “We need a strategic arms reduction treaty, not a limitation treaty, a limitation on the growth curve.” He became very serious about talking about that, and did. He was against the SALT II treaty and spoke out frequently on it, but more to the point, he spoke on what we needed to do, not so much what’s wrong with this, but rather what we need to replace it with. You know the rest of the story. It’s all history.

I think he began to develop a vision about that time. You go back to what Teller had to say about defense, and it made good sense to Reagan. If you could defend against these things, and if they could defend against them, then we could all live in peace and harmony instead of constantly building these gigantic cataclysmic arsenals. Then with the SALT II thing, coming out with an alternative to it, it was hard to argue with the logic of the alternative. Except that the arms control theologians in Washington had their careers invested in MAD, which I don’t think he’d counted on. Their opposition to the concept was very, very strong. Of course, when he brought the SDI [Strategic Defense Initiative] up, they tried to laugh him out of town. The amen chorus in the media tried to trivialize it by calling it “star wars.”

But again, none of this stuff deterred him. He just kept plowing ahead. I’m convinced that all of these ideas were beginning to coalesce in his mind by the late ’70s. In his mind. He never enunciated this to me, and I don’t know if he ever did to anybody else. He thought to himself, If I can become President, what we’re going to do is force the Soviets to come to the table one way or another, and work with us to reduce these arms until we’ve taken the scourge out of humanity.

I’m not sure he had any thoughts as to how you’d do it at that point, but by the time he was probably a candidate—I didn’t sit in on any of these—certainly by the time he was President-elect—he was getting official briefings which let him know that the Soviet economy was very, very shaky. He reasoned that if you could push them to the brink of catastrophe, just to the brink, they would come to their senses and sit down and talk. So he raised in the campaign the “peace through strength” concept and he said, “We will spend whatever it takes to make sure that nobody,” meaning the Soviets, “ever gets ahead of us. We’ll increase the Navy, we’ll bring the arms up to date,” all of these things.

Now he risked being called a war monger in this country by people who were nervous about that, by people who didn’t understand or didn’t see what he had in mind. And he couldn’t very well talk about that publicly, could he? He couldn’t say, “Here’s my strategy. I’m going to push these
guys to the brink until they sit down and talk” because they would know what it was. They would try to call his bluff some way.

You see markers along the way that were leading to all these things. After the opposition to SALT as a pre-candidate, and the “peace through strength” theme in the campaign, as President in ’81 he goes to Notre Dame, and he talks about “Marxism is going to end up in the dustbin of history.” The next June ’82 he goes to London and gives the Westminster speech, in which he enunciates what ultimately becomes the Reagan Doctrine, that is, if there’s a democratic impulse or movement in any country behind [the Iron Curtain] that’s not free, we’re going to give them all the encouragement we possibly can, in every way we possibly can, until they are free, which was the reversal of the [Leonid] Brezhnev doctrine. He was throwing down the gauntlet to the Soviets all this time, saying, “This is what we’re going to do.”

To me ’83 was one of the most significant years in his career. He gave the Evil Empire speech, I think March 8th in Orlando, to the evangelicals. The nuclear freeze movement was almost at its peak then, and they were debating whether this was a good idea and so forth. He gave a very strong speech there in which he called the Soviet Union the “Evil Empire,” and, of course, his critics back in Washington—the press and so forth—jumped all over him as being crazy. I’m sure the State Department people all quaked in their shoes, “You’re going to offend the Russians” and so forth.

Reagan, we now know, was right, and everybody else now knows Reagan was right. He was calling them what they were. Then about two weeks later, he gives the SDI speech which was, I think, a pivotal event, because in effect what he was saying in the SDI speech is, they know we have the assets to do this. We have the money to do it. We have the technical ability to do it in time, to do what needs to be done. What they don’t know is if we have the political will, and I’m going to tell them we have the political will to do it. That was the import of that speech. It was directed straight at the Kremlin. That was the audience for the speech.

Then, about two months later, Kohl’s government was still a young government in Germany. They made the very brave decision to station the Pershing cruise missiles. Meanwhile, the Soviets, as you recall, had orchestrated these huge demonstrations throughout Germany in all the big cities, of not only their sympathizers, but people who were worried about nuclear war and could be useful tools to their enterprise. It was enough to scare any politician. But Kohl stuck by his guns and deployed the missiles. Then all the other capitals of western Europe did the same thing. So what did this do? Checkmated the SS20s, which was what Margaret Thatcher had been talking about in ’79 to Reagan. I see all of these things as part of a piece.

Ultimately, Reagan was willing to talk to them at any time. But it wasn’t until Gorbachev came along, and Margaret Thatcher met with him and then said to Reagan that she thought—of course, she famously said publicly, “Here’s a man we can do business with.” But she’d said to Reagan privately, “I really think you’ve finally got the guy you need to start talking about these things.” So they had the meeting in Geneva. Reagan told me a few years ago that when they had that private meeting in the villa before the formal meetings began, he said, “You know, we don’t mistrust each other because we’re armed. We’re armed because we mistrust each other. And if we don’t find a way to sit down and begin to trust each other, we’re going to have an all-out
arms race, and Mr. Gorbachev, that’s a race you can’t win.” That’s what Reagan told me he said to the man. He said, “Gorbachev didn’t tell me he agreed or disagreed with that, but he listened carefully and he didn’t really answer. So I figured it sunk in.”

I think the climactic moment in the cold war—other people will say it was other times—came eleven months later in Reykjavik, where they had—on very short notice, about three months—a summit. At the first meeting they began talking about the “zero option,” where they would reduce everything down to zero. Ken Adelman, who was on the Reagan staff, told me afterwards that they were getting to that in earnest, and it was moving forward very well. They got to the last meeting on Saturday with the two principals, and Gorbachev said to Reagan, “I’ll agree with this plan, provided you put your strategic defense initiative strictly in the laboratory. Put it on the shelf,” which wasn’t expected.

That’s when Reagan said to George Shultz, “George, let’s go home.” And they left. Reagan was denounced for not coming to some kind of agreement, anything, you know. Both Democrats and policy analysts and arms control people—and, of course, the amen chorus in the media—were all jumping all over Reagan. But he was right. I think that was the pivotal moment, really was the end game of the whole process, because Gorbachev knew enough about his own economy to know that he couldn’t keep ratcheting up conventional weaponry as he was doing, and do a viable strategic defense initiative to match ours, without his economy collapsing and revolution ensuing. Hence we had glasnost and perestroika.

He may have known this, maybe not—he’d grown up in the communist system—but it seems to me that if you give people, say under glasnost, a little bit of freedom of speech, they usually want more, not less. So how do you ever put the genie back in the bottle? And perestroika was his earnest attempt to make the command system of the economy work more efficiently. But command economies don’t work, ever, by their very nature. So—the rest of the story was the end of the Soviet Union. I think those are the pivotal events. That was Reagan’s strategy. I think the strategy evolved, it developed, it accreted pieces as opportunities arose. He was opportunistic in that sense. But I think the beginnings go way back into the ’60s. Long answer to a question.

Knott: Why don’t we drop back to the 1980 campaign? One thing we hear a lot about is the Sears team being displaced by William Casey, and you talk about that at some length in your book. But I think it’s worth asking you about that again. Could you tell us about that again? Could you tell us about that?

Hannaford: Well, just to do a little background. Mike and I had decided—we had a lot of conversations about it—that once the exploratory committee was formed, which was to be in early March, or mid-March of ’79, our company would enter into a contract with the committee, which would provide about 95% of his time, and he’d be housed down in their headquarters, which was to be near the LA airport. It would provide about 5% of my time—we’d have liaison—and thus I would continue to manage Reagan the citizen, with his schedule and business activities and so forth. Then, when the campaign began, Mike would go off our payroll, go full time into the campaign payroll. Our contract with the committee would end, our contract with
Reagan would end—because obviously his media activities would all end—and I would continue to run the company. Mike would be on leave from the company.

That’s pretty well the way it worked at first. The last assignment I thought I had was working with Reagan on his announcement speech in New York. The Wicks were in New York by then, staying there for several months, putting together a finance operation. They had a big fundraising dinner at the Hilton Hotel. We taped the speech that morning on a sound set in Manhattan to be broadcast later that night on a network. We’d hired one of these media-buying companies to stitch together a network in about 80 markets. Then Reagan gave the speech live to the audience. I think it was even a black tie affair, but any rate, it was a big dinner.

The set we used for the broadcast was kind of Oval Office-esque. I met with the Reagans the next morning, with Mike and the Reagans and one or two others, and signed off on certain things. And then I left to go back to Los Angeles, and I thought that was it for me, except for volunteer work. Mike went off the payroll and into the campaign. Two weeks later—Sunday of Thanksgiving weekend—he called and said he’d just been called up to the Reagans’ house on rather short notice. Sears, and his two chief lieutenants, Jim Lake and Charles Black, were already there in the living room with the Reagans when Mike walked in. He didn’t know what it was all about.

After a few minutes, Sears said, “Governor, this campaign can’t proceed this way any longer. Either Mike goes or we go. We’ll all resign.” Well Mike was quite stunned by this. Sears had worked pretty assiduously to force the Californians out of the operation all year long. He had forced Nofziger out by giving him an impossible assignment, and then when he couldn’t meet the expectation that Sears had set for him, he, in effect, pushed him out. He angered Anderson, who withdrew. I had already withdrawn myself because of the responsibilities I had to run the company. Meese hadn’t withdrawn, nor had Mike. Sears didn’t like the fact that all of us had such access to Reagan. We all had access. We’d worked with him for a long time, we knew him well, and he liked us and knew us. Sears didn’t like that. He wanted everything to go through him, so he pulled this thing.

Mike was stunned, and he said—this is what he related to me—he said, “When I caught my breath I said, ‘Governor, you don’t have to answer that. I’ll just withdraw.’” Whereupon he did. He said he got to the base of the driveway and realized he hadn’t driven up there. I think he’d taken a taxi or something. So he said, “After all of that, my dramatic exit, I had to go back and get on the telephone and get a ride.” But, anyway, it really changed things.

Morrisroe: Can I ask a related question? Since these were pretty much the same cast of characters as the ’76 campaign, were there any seeds of this later conflict that were visible in the ’76 campaign?

Hannaford: There was a lot of discomfort with Sears in the ’76 campaign. His drinking was so bad that at one point we got one of Marty’s colleagues, Darrell Trent—who was with Hoover at the time—to travel everywhere with Sears and be his keeper, make sure that he kept down his intake. No, it was pretty bad. We recognized Sears’ brilliance when he was on target, but he was rather a controversial figure within the Reagan camp. A lot of Reagan’s key supporters and
friends who raised money didn’t like him, didn’t trust him. I don’t know that any of us did, but I think we recognized his importance politically to us. But it was a real problem.

And we didn’t want him to run the campaign. I should go back a step and say, in 1980, I don’t think any of us wanted him to run the campaign. We talked to some other people, and just by process of elimination of who’s available and who has credibility we ended up with the idea, “Well, we’ll bring Sears in to be the strategist, but we’ll all be equals.” Well, that didn’t last very long. He was more equal than everybody else. If you’re the strategist, you’ve got to be the one who—

Riley: At that point Stu Spencer’s name was mud because of what happened with Ford?

Hannaford: He was still on the outs. I don’t think we actively were angry with him. He just wasn’t in the picture. That came much, much later.

So, just sort of by process of elimination Sears was back again, and nobody was very happy about it. I think by then he had claimed to have stopped drinking entirely. At least, I remember seeing him in those days, and he seemed to always be sober.

Anyway, this thing happened, and Mike was out of the campaign all of a sudden. He was back in the office, which wasn’t anticipated. Since I had expected not to be in the campaign, Irene and I had accepted a longstanding invitation to go to South Africa and do a two or three week visit there. They had approached me quite some time before, wanting to invite Reagan to go down. I said, “You can invite him, but I’ll recommend he not go,” for reasons we all know. Then they finally said, “How about you?” And I said, “If I can get away, I’d like to go down and see for myself and come back and give him a report.” I would see the same things as Reagan would, but it doesn’t attract any attention.

So we did that. The Foundation took us down as their guests and gave us a very worthwhile, informative and interesting trip. We met people, literally, all day long. We were going from breakfast through dinner, meetings with people of all races, all walks of life, all political persuasions. It was very informative. I remember, we were in Johannesburg, and I saw in the Rand Daily Mail an item saying “Bush Beats Reagan in Iowa.” We were scheduled to go around to Taiwan, where I was going to call on our client for our annual visit, which we did, stopped in Hong Kong. I don’t think we went into Japan.

We came back to Los Angeles, and I called Ed Meese and said, “Anything I can do to help as a volunteer?” He said, “Yes, as a matter of fact, can you come up to New Hampshire next week and help brief the Governor for the nationally televised debate among all the Republican candidates?” I said, “Sure. I’m going to Washington tomorrow, and I’ll be there a couple of days, and then I’ll come up.”

So I went to Washington, and Dick Allen and I hooked up together and flew together up to Boston and drove to Andover, where they were staying. A peculiarity of the election campaign laws is such that the elections commission gives you an allocation of money you can spend state by state. I think it has something to do with the number of votes—it’s a formula of some kind. So
they were staying in Andover, just over the New Hampshire line, so that all of the hotel bills would go against the Massachusetts quota. They weren’t going to contest Massachusetts, and it wouldn’t go against New Hampshire, so we could spend real money up there in advertising and so forth.

I remember we got to a Holiday Inn, built around a courtyard. I got to the hotel, and they’d occupied half of one floor. The tension was palpable between the Sears camp and the Meese camp. This was on a Tuesday. We were to have dinner in a private dining room with Reagan and the team to brief him with. After we settled in, we went into the private dining room, and there were our two young research assistants, who more or less ended up reporting to me, had worked with Marty and me before. Then Sears and Black, I think, were there, and Meese was there. Reagan wasn’t. He was still coming in on the bus from the day’s tour-about, and Lake, who was the press secretary, was with him. They came bouncing in, and Reagan saw Allen and me, greeted us warmly. I hadn’t seen him for quite some time. It seemed clear he was the only happy person in the room.

Lake immediately launched a diatribe into one of our research kids about purportedly giving him some bum steer on the amount of oil reserves in Alaska. I sensed there was an agenda at work here. Then Sears said a few words about the nature of the debate and blah-blah-blah—talked for a few minutes and didn’t say much. Then he said, “Now, Jim, Charlie, and I have a meeting with a journalist tonight, so we won’t be able to stay for your dinner,” which again told me something else about them—they held this whole thing in contempt. And they left.

We had the dinner with Reagan, he was very up-to-speed on the issues. He didn’t need a lot of special briefing. We talked over a few things, tightened up a few positions and that was that. The next day I flew back to California, and Allen went back to Washington. That night, after the dinner, we go to Meese’s room. Casey has appeared in the meantime. He didn’t come into the dinner. He came when we were still doing that. We started talking. I had learned that Casey had been tasked by the executive committee, which is the old “kitchen cabinet” expanded, had been tasked by the executive committee to talk to all the key players and do a kind of a management audit of the campaign because there was a lot of grumbling about the way things were going. He did that. I remember saying to him, “Reagan seems to be the only happy person in this operation, and that can’t last for long. If everybody else is at swords points, it’s going to catch up to the client after a while. It’s going to damage his daily campaign morale.” Casey said, “Yes, I agree.” I said, “Would you take over the management of the campaign?”

He said he talked to Sears about possibly coming in and taking on the administrative side, because Sears was spending all the available money we had in this campaign and was banking everything on winning New Hampshire. He thought that would then cause a great influx of new money—a very risky strategy. Casey said, “Well, I offered to do this, but Sears was vague about what he was going to do and said he’d like to think it over. He didn’t know what he was going to do,” and so forth. So, that night, as we were talking, the idea hatched that we had to make a change in management. Casey agreed that he’d take it on if Sears were asked to leave.

From the next day forward, over the next three days—we were all in different places around the country—we did all of this by telephone, conference telephone calls—Deaver, Casey, Meese,
Wirthlin, myself. I think those were the only ones involved. Had a series of conference telephone calls and came up with a plan that on election day, before the votes were counted, Reagan would tell Sears that it wasn’t working and we were going to have to make a change. The idea was that Reagan wouldn’t know the outcome, therefore he could never be accused of being an ungrateful winner or a sore loser, because he wouldn’t know. Furthermore, the news itself wouldn’t become a big story because it would be swamped by the results.

We were going to tell the Reagans Saturday night. Thursday night was the all-candidates nationally televised debate. Reagan did very well, as it turned out. We were in California at the time. Saturday night he was to debate Bush one on one in Nashua at the high school basketball arena, which also served as the auditorium. So, it was decided that I’d go to Nashua to the debate and then stay on and become the interim press secretary, at least for the rest of that trip, once Sears and his guys left. We were going to take this up with the Reagans that night, lay the plan out, and get their agreement to it Saturday night after this Nashua debate.

I flew to Boston, got in a rental car. This thing was supposed to start at eight. I got to the high school just at eight, got in, and there was kind of a classroom laboratory room toward the back where they led me. In there were all these candidates and their wives. There was Howard Baker, John Anderson, Bob Dole. It seems to me there was one other, there were four of them. And all their secret service people. The Reagans were there. They were all kind of milling around, nothing was happening. A few minutes later, there was a knock on the door, it was a kid, a runner for the moderator of the debate who was the editor of the local newspaper. The kid says, “Mr. So-and-so says that if Mr. Reagan isn’t out there in three minutes, he’s going to forfeit the debate to George Bush, who’s already on the stage.” So somebody said—I don’t know who—“What are we going to do?” Nancy Reagan says, “I know what you’re going to do. You’re all going to go out there.” She just blurted it out.

And the next thing you know, there’s this great rush to the door. They’re all heading to the back entrance to this auditorium. Well, as you open the door, you’re looking up three or four steps to this stage where the tables were, and then there’s this flat floor with seats, and then a balcony with seats. I remember running ahead and thinking, *This is a delicious opportunity to embarrass George Bush*. So I got a kid to start handing me and another fellow folding chairs to get them up on the stage for all these candidates, so that once they were sitting down, you couldn’t get rid of them.

The genesis of this debate was that the *National Telegraph* was for George Bush. They reasoned—and so many people have underestimated Ronald Reagan over the years, it would be enough to have an army to invade Iraq—they reasoned that Bush would make mincemeat of Reagan in a one-on-one debate. So they were going to sponsor this debate. About two weeks before the debate was scheduled, the lawyer for the company that owned the newspaper suddenly realized that this was a gift of corporate assets. It was a corporate donation to two campaigns, and it’s illegal.

So they called Jerry Carmen, who was our chairman in New Hampshire, and said, “We’ve got to call off the debate because of this legal problem.” Jerry said, “The heck with it, we’ll pay for it.
You can run it, just as you’re planning. You moderate it and all of that, and we’ll pay for it.” He didn’t call Washington, didn’t ask Sears; he just did it. That was very much like him.

Anyway, Bush is sitting there, and these guys are clearly in Bush’s camp, this editor. Reagan goes in, the four other candidates waltz up on the stage with him, and they’re standing there in a row, I have a picture, I saw a picture just the other day of this, the four of them standing there. Reagan is at a microphone, and the moderator is there. Reagan’s tapping the microphone. He wants it turned on. That’s when the moderator says, “You’re out of order.” And Reagan says, “Mr. Green, I paid for this microphone.” Mr. Green’s name was Mr. [Jon] Breen. I don’t know whether that was deliberate, but anyway, “Mr. Green, I paid for this microphone.” It just brought the house down. Bush is sitting there looking straight ahead while all this is going on, probably thinking, *I wish I could be anywhere else but here. I don’t want to be here.*

Reagan finally got the microphone, and he said, “These gentlemen are all candidates.” I don’t know what he planned to say, if he planned to say anything, but what came out was, “They ought to have an opportunity to at least introduce themselves.” I believe it was Howard Baker who then came up to the microphone and said, “Well, thank you very much, Governor, but we’ll excuse ourselves now. We’ve made our point,” because they’d been clamoring all week to get in on this debate, saying it isn’t fair not to have all the candidates. They all left in an orderly fashion, so the seats didn’t do any good.

Whereupon nobody remembers to this day—the debate was essentially an anticlimax—but Reagan absolutely mopped the floor with George Bush. Poor Bush, he’s such a nice man, but he was totally flustered by this. I mean his grasp of the issues that night seemed poor. He was clearly just rattled. And Reagan was at the top of his form. As I said, it was an anticlimax because the next day on all those Sunday programs, what you got were clips of “I paid for this microphone.” And then the guests on most of the programs were the other candidates who were all saying how statesmanlike Mr. Reagan was.

**Riley:** Well, I couldn’t have told you that the other four hadn’t participated, as closely as we follow these things.

**Hannaford:** Because you think of it as all of them up there.

**Riley:** Exactly.

**Hannaford:** It was quite an evening. By the time we got back to the hotel, to our famous Holiday Inn, the adrenalin was pumping so hard that we just reasoned this is no time to talk about this detailed plan with the Reagans. Then we looked at the schedule for the next day—Sunday was going to have a light schedule, visit two or three places late in the day and end up at the TEKE [Tau Kappa Epsilon] house at the University of New Hampshire. Reagan was a TEKE in college, so he was going to go see his fraternity brothers. It was very relaxed and casual, and they sang a couple of songs, and we had coffee. We got back early to the hotel, must have been 8:30 or so. At that point Meese and Casey and I sat down with the Reagans. Dick Allen came in a few minutes later. He had just arrived, and sat in on part of it.
Meese started it by reviewing the situation and that it was a bad situation. Mrs. Reagan turned to her husband and said, “Honey, we can’t go on this way,” Whereupon Reagan said, “Do we have to fire Jim and Charlie, too?” It was so typical of him. Immediately, I understood what was going on in his head. He had been thinking about this for a long time, and he was waiting for us to come up with a plan. But, just as he always hated to fire anybody from a job, he never wanted to be the bad guy or the heavy. So he waited for the rest of us to come up with the program. He signed off on the program 100%. Ed said, “We have to let them go because they’ve threatened to quit two or three times. You can’t let the chief strategist go, the manager go, and leave two of his lieutenants here because you’re going to have a corrosive force inside the camp.” We all liked them personally, but we got the Reagans behind us.

The next morning was a campaign day. The balloting was on Tuesday. Yes, he was out all day on the campaign, and that night, campaign night, as is typical the night before a primary, the press corps goes out and has a big lavish dinner and quite a lot to drink—they can sleep late the next day because they’re not going to work until the end of the day. Part of the plan was that the Reagans would work their way from Andover up to Manchester, where we were going to do the evening thing, town by town, and stop near polling places and just shake people’s hands as they came out of the polls and thank them for their hospitality in New Hampshire. That did two things. It was a very nice gesture, and it also filled the morning for the Reagans.

Then they would end up at noontime in Manchester. The plan was that Mrs. Reagan would call Jim or Charlie and ask them to come and meet them for some last-minute planning over lunch. Well, she was told they couldn’t do that because they were having lunch with an important journalist. So she said, “How about 2 o’clock in the afternoon in our suite at the Manchester hotel?” And they said okay. So the Reagans were busy talking to voters, and Casey and Dan Terra—who was the national finance chairman—and I drove up in mid morning to Manchester. We got there in the late morning to look at the set of rooms that we had for our people for the night and see that the Reagans’ suite was all right. I had the press release about the change in my briefcase. In those days, I was still working on a portable typewriter. I wrote all this at the hotel in Andover.

One of the reasons we were able to keep all of this a secret—one reason—was that no piece of paper having to do with this ever got out to any other party. The big secret is you never let a secretary or an assistant touch any of these things because the impulse to talk about it to somebody is overwhelming. So all the drafts were kept in my briefcase instead of thrown in a wastebasket. I didn’t make any copies in Andover. I waited until we got to Manchester, and I had an assistant come up then and let him make all the copies because he was not where he could talk to anybody about it.

At about 2 o’clock John and his colleagues came to the Reagans’ suite. Only Casey was with the Reagans in the suite. Reagan said, in effect, “Well, John, and Jim and Charlie, you know we’ve had a lot of troubles and things just haven’t worked out. We all wanted them to, but they haven’t. So we’re going to make a change in management, and Bill is going to take over the campaign here.” It didn’t last very long, the meeting. I think they knew it was coming. John said, “Okay, I wish you luck” and so forth. They cleared the building within about thirty minutes. They had Jim’s assistant waiting outside for them. And in another thirty minutes, up comes the bus with
these hung-over journalists. The first thing that greets them is my bright young assistant standing at the door handing out a press release about all this.

Well, they went crazy, of course. Because when something like that happens and journalists get a press release, quite naturally, the first impulse they have is, “I’ve got to talk to somebody who’s involved with this and see what’s really going on to get the story behind the story.” It’s just the way they’re trained, and it’s quite natural. They wanted to talk to somebody. Well there wasn’t anybody to talk to because we’re all upstairs. That was about 3:15. At 5 o’clock they sent me down to the ballroom where it had all been set up for the night, for the anchors and all that. We had a live press conference on television at 5 o’clock for a few minutes. All I did was give them what was in the press release, but said it in a little different way.

At 7 o’clock we sent Casey down. They had a lot more fun with Casey because Casey had this reputation for mumbling. He was a tall guy, but he was sort of stooped over, and he hunched over this lectern. They would ask him a question, and he’d go mumble, mumble, mumble and say three or four clear words. They weren’t getting anywhere. Of course, he didn’t say anything that wasn’t in the press release either. Then some state senator, some operative in our campaign committee whom I don’t think any of us really knew, and he certainly didn’t know anything about what was going on—came in and bloviated for awhile. We had a lot of fun that night.

Then after the election results started coming in, we had a lot of interviews scheduled for Reagan, I was in the room, just off to the side. I can remember Connie Chung, I think Barbara Walters. Quite a lot of the big names in the media were in interviewing him. By the way, the night before, when we had had this meeting with the Reagans and outlined the plan, in the middle of that, Dick Wirthlin called. He was in California. His company was doing the overnight tracking polls. We put Reagan on the line, and he said to Reagan, “What would you say if I told you you were 17 points ahead?” Reagan said, “I wouldn’t believe it.” Dick said, “You are.” He won by 27 points, fabulous, just going away.

Looking back over it and talking to Wirthlin afterward, we found that a full week before, on Sunday, for the first time all the candidates appeared on the same platform—I think it was at an American Legion hall in Portsmouth—Reagan apparently did very well before the audience, and Wirthlin’s tracking polls showed him starting to move away from the pack after that. By the time he had the Thursday debate, which nobody remembers—it was nationally televised—he was moving well ahead. When he had the Saturday thing in Nashua, he just zoomed, and it just kept moving after that.

Casey came in to manage the campaign. He had to use draconian techniques to save money immediately. He cut a lot of staffers. He said, “As soon as things get well, I’ll make it right for you,” and he was good to his word. Everybody’s salaries—the top people’s salaries—were all slashed pretty sharply. He was good to his word. When the money started rolling in later on down the line, everybody got a check to make up for what they’d lost. But he did what was necessary, and the campaign moved forward. I found myself, then, back in the campaign off and on throughout the primary. I didn’t go on every single trip.
Mike, on the other hand, who was supposed to have been in on all of this, was not. The Reagans felt very bad about that, and I think Mike was stung more than he let on at first. He’d invested most of his career in thinking about the Reagans and their welfare, and I think he felt terribly let down. Mrs. Reagan sensed this. Reagan asked Mike to be his personal representative to this executive committee. Mike was quite skeptical about it when he first told me about it, that it had any meaning or anything. But I think he realized afterward that this was the first overture to getting him back in the operation, and it was. So, at the time of the convention, he flew in—I don’t know if he flew in with the Reagans, but he flew in at that time—and he was kind of the major domo for them during the convention. Then after that he went back into the campaign full time and on leave from our company.

As soon as the convention was over, I went back to the company and ran the company and did a few volunteer things throughout the campaign, but not much. That was that.

Riley: Spencer returned?

Hannaford: In the fall, the general election campaign. And he had a lot of good advice. He’s a very canny campaign consultant.

Knott: You go on to Detroit. You mentioned that you wrote that acceptance speech.

Hannaford: It was my responsibility to make it happen. As I said, a lot of people contributed to it, but the ultimate product I had to put together.

Yes, I went to Detroit, I think a week ahead. I was in charge of the whole research and writing operation for the convention. My personal assignment was Reagan’s speech, but I had to recruit a lot of speechwriters. I think he had something like 300 speakers of various kinds from one minute to twenty minutes, and they all had to have writers available to them, although some had their own writers. So I recruited quite a few writers for that, and that was a lot of fun. That was a great assignment. In subsequent years, I was one of the pool writers for three conventions and enjoyed that up to a point. It wears itself out after a while.

Knott: Were you surprised by the magnitude of Governor Reagan’s victory that fall?

Hannaford: No, not when it happened. I don’t know. I had this feeling all along. I look back and I read polling data and all that stuff that showed how nip and tuck it all was. I just had the feeling from the time he had the nomination on, he’s going to be the President, just a feeling I had. I just thought he had connected with the mood of the country.

First of all, I thought he was right. Maybe that’s what was driving me. But I thought he’d connected with the mood of the country, and it was going to work out. And Carter, a decent man, but such a miserable failure as a President. He could never get his hands around it properly. A lot of things that happened weren’t his fault, they were accidental, but they happened on his watch—but nevertheless, everything was going downhill. I didn’t see how the American people could buy that.
A man who says that the trouble with this country is the people—the malaise speech, which I heard on the radio. It’s your fault, folks. That doesn’t wash with the American public. People don’t want to think that. They want some sense of believing that tomorrow is going to be better than today, and be able to believe it, instead of “A lot of things are wrong and it’s your fault.” I just didn’t think he understood the voting public very well.

His economic policies weren’t working, and his foreign policy wasn’t working.

Riley: What were some of the special assignments that you had during the campaign? Anything worthy of—

Hannaford: No, they were all small stuff.

Riley: Were there things that you did after he was elected for him on occasions?

Hannaford: I was on Charlie Wick’s USIA public relations advisory committee for all eight Reagan years and all four Bush “41” years, twelve years all together. That was a very interesting thing. I was on the White House Preservation Fund board of trustees for all the Reagan years, and I was a consultant to the task force on privatization, the presidential task force, the last two years.

Ed Meese asked me to contribute a line or two to the Inaugural Address, which I think he used. I can’t remember now what line it was, but it was a line or a phrase. Now and then I would send Reagan ideas that I thought he might want to put in his own speech file, and he used some of them. The last one I could remember was, I think it was his last State of the Union, maybe the next to the last, the one where he had the big stack of books on the floor. I had come across this saying by Lao Tzu: “Govern a great country as you would cook a small fish. Don’t overdo it.” I knew he would like it. And sure enough, it was in the State of the Union speech.

Riley: I thought he said that, or maybe he just heard it personally from Lao Tzu.

Hannaford: I would send him stuff now and then, but I didn’t try to interfere.

Knott: You talked about Ronald Reagan’s strengths. Were there any weaknesses that you saw in Ronald Reagan? We’ve had some people talk to us about his aversion to dealing with personnel matters as one area where they wished he had been more engaged. Do you share that assessment?

Hannaford: You notice I mentioned before that he never wanted to play the heavy. He didn’t like the idea of firing somebody. He was very uncomfortable at staging anger. Now and then he would explode with something, He had a very high boiling point, but now and then something would really get to him. I mentioned a couple of them where he’d just turn the air blue. But it would go away quickly, too, and he’d get right back to normal. He never held grudges, but if he had to let somebody go and had to give them a very strong talk, he was very uncomfortable doing that.
Was that a weakness? I don’t know. I’m not so sure it was, in the greater scheme of things. I’ve been a manager a good part of my life, and I’ve had to hire people and fire people. It’s very unpleasant letting people go, but you have to do it sometimes. You try to do it in a way that’s not hurtful. He managed to hardly have to do it at all, and let other people do it.

The danger there is that if somebody is not doing the job properly, if you use that management team theme that I’ve spoken of earlier, and you discover that so and so isn’t doing the job properly and needs to be replaced, it takes longer to figure it out, or for the news to get to you and then to figure out a way to deal with it, whereas if he were more engaged on the personnel side, I assume he’d know that sooner. But the other side of that particular coin is that it tends to bring out the best in most of the people you have, because they feel so honored and flattered that you have relied upon them to do a good job that you burst your buttons to do a good job. So he had a high degree of loyalty from his people—not everybody, but almost everybody. And most people working for him—certainly in Sacramento and to a large degree in Washington—were people who didn’t have their own agendas.

Once he got to Washington, the government is so big, and there are so many appointments to be made, you had quite a few people—not that they ended up doing a bad job necessarily—but quite a few people who saw this as the road to their own success, not a mission, but rather a vehicle. That’s the nature of Washington.

Riley: Do you remember what your reaction was to the way that they had organized the White House originally with bringing Jim Baker in from the outside?

Hannaford: Yes, I thought that wasn’t a bad idea. I believed, perhaps naively, that once Bush had been chosen for the Vice Presidency, the two teams would meld, and they would all contribute to the whole, and that they would work toward a common purpose. I think in their own way they did. The style of operating is—well, Meese and Baker have very different ways of operating. Meese’s style was more what I was used to and what I liked, but Baker got a lot of things done. He’s a very smart man. As I said, by their own lights, they all did what they thought was right for Reagan. I thought a troika was a pretty awkward organizational idea, but I wasn’t a participant, so you’d have to find a better assessment from the three of them.

Riley: No, it was just interesting to know how people viewed it who were close to the Reagans.

Hannaford: Well Deaver—who has probably told you this already—genuinely felt that Meese was perhaps too disorganized to be the Chief of Staff. I think he would like to have been the Chief of Staff, but I think he also recognized he probably wasn’t prepared to do it. So Baker seemed to be the obvious choice. Then you had to give everybody a piece of the pie, and Deaver recognized that Meese was a very important advisor for Reagan. Reagan trusted what Meese would have to say on things, and Mike himself was a process man. You needed somebody as a process man along.

Riley: Exactly. We didn’t ask you, when we were talking about the convention, whether you had any light to shed on the vice presidential selection.
**Hannaford:** Well, I can just take you through the steps, because I was involved in the whole thing. On Sunday, before the convention started, Casey and I had a conversation. I remember saying, “What do you think about Ford?” Because they had all been talking about what ought to be. He said, “Oh, I don’t know.” Somebody gave me that idea, and others were just beginning to talk about it. He said, “I don’t know, maybe we ought to talk to the Reagans about it.” We all got into conversations about that, and it was decided—the Fords and the Reagans I think were going to arrive on Monday afternoon, from separate places, and I think it was Ford’s birthday, and the idea was that the Reagans would call on the Fords to wish him a happy birthday. Reagan took him a peace pipe as a birthday present.

I think it was at that point that Reagan raised the idea with him, said, “Would you be interested in talking about it?” or words to that effect. I think that was Monday, and I believe I have this in my book, the chronology of it. Ford said well, he’d think about it, wasn’t sure it would work, but he’d think about it. Then the two sides began to negotiate, and within a fairly short time we had a full-blown negotiation—with Henry Kissinger, and I think Alan Greenspan on the Ford side—and Ed Meese, and was it Wirthlin? certainly Meese—on the other side—maybe Casey, negotiating.

Before we knew it—thanks to Henry’s superior negotiating skills—we had a formulation where Ford would, in effect, be the Chief of Staff, and everything would come up through Ford to the President, who would be the Chairman of the Board. It began to sound very dubious, and I know Meese was getting very cold feet about it.

It was on Wednesday evening. I was going back and forth from my research and writing operation, which was the floor below the Reagans, back and forth up to his suite. I remember this was maybe 7:30, 8 o’clock, maybe 9 o’clock. There were various people in the suite—it was a large parlor—and Deaver and Nofziger and I just happened to come together at one point. Deaver said, “I’ve just been down to the—” Either he’d just been down, or got a report of the action on the floor. He said, “The tension’s really very heavy there. The place is going to go up in smoke if we don’t do something, because there are all these rumors about what’s going on.” The media were playing up this talk about Ford as a possibility, but they had no real knowledge of anything that was going on.

We’d watch these programs and think, *Where do these people hear this stuff? It has nothing to do with what’s happening here.* [Walter] Cronkite’s stroking his chin and all of this stuff, all speculation. Mike said, “It’s getting very serious. This place is going to explode unless we do something to break the tension. What’ll we do?” I think it was Nofziger who said, “I know what we’ll do. Let’s go upstairs right now where they’re negotiating and tell them that. You tell them that.”

We were right at the base of the stairs going up one floor to Ford’s suite. We walk out of ours, and Ford’s secret service guys are right there. They don’t want to let us up because Nofziger has his jacket off and doesn’t have his button on. So we had to vouch for him to go up the stairs. We go up there, and there’s Henry and, I think, Greenspan at one end and Meese—and maybe Casey—at the other end of this room that, as I recall, didn’t have any furniture in it. It was sort of an annex to Ford’s own suite. And Bob Barrett, who was Ford’s Chief of Staff at that point.
Mike got the floor and said the same thing to this group. Barrett said, “Excuse me just a minute.” And he went into another room where Ford obviously was, and he came back out, closed the door and said, “We’re going downstairs to talk to Reagan.”

Ford came out, they went downstairs, we followed them, went into Reagan’s suite. Reagan and Ford went by themselves into the dining room, closed the door, and a few minutes later they came out and shook hands. Ford left, and Reagan said, “He’s not going to do it.” So one of us—I think it was me, but I may not have been the only one—said to him a few minutes later when he was sitting on the sofa, “Isn’t it time to call George Bush?” And he said, “Yes.” I think it was either Alan or Anderson who placed the call to Bush at that point. Bush had been having a beer in the lounge in his hotel, figuring it was all over, and had retired to his room. He was astonished at this.

Then we decided—or recommended to Reagan, and he agreed—that he take the unprecedented step of going down to the convention. You know historically, at least in modern times, the candidate only appears on the floor for his acceptance speech. We recommended that he go down to the convention floor and break the news, and I drove down with him. He came out on the platform and announced it, and the place goes wild. They thought it was terrific.

Knott: This kills the Ford story—

Hannaford: Completely kills it. They said, “George Bush is going to be the choice,” and indeed he was. The next morning, the Bushes with Jim Baker, and Vic Gold—he was going to write Bush’s acceptance speech—came over to the suite, and we had a meeting in the dining room with the Reagans and Mike and me and Meese, talking over coordination of the two speeches that night, and what themes Bush would hit, and some liaison things. It was all very collegial.

But the Ford thing at one point took on a life of its own, it really did. I remember, after one of these sessions in there, going back to our office, and Marty brought in this young woman—Marty has very good judgment about most things, but this girl was off in outer space somewhere—who was to be an assistant in the operation. She had been pecking away on a press release—why on earth she was doing this, nobody told her to do it—announcing a “co-Presidency.”

I said, “You get rid of that paper right now. You don’t know what you’re talking about. There’s not going to be any such thing, co-Presidency.” This is the girl who ended up wearing a bunny suit to the Easter egg roll the next year at the White House lawn. That was the role she was destined for. But anyway, that was the end of the Ford story.

It was a serious effort, and it came close. But by the time you got into the real details of who was going to do what to whom, Ford quite naturally didn’t want to just be a figurehead after having been President. That’s quite natural, he wanted some role. On the other hand, what would that role be without impinging on the prerogatives of the President? And even if the two of them saw eye-to-eye on most issues, how would it work?
As things often do, it turned out for the best. Bush was an excellent Vice President for Reagan. He was loyal; a good soldier throughout. They met for lunch once a week and talked over things. He never tried to upstage, and it worked out for the best. And when it became his turn, it was his turn.

Knott: This is the point where we try to ask the big, universal questions. Is there anything that we missed today?

Hannaford: No, I think you’ve covered most everything. We touched on it in the last session this afternoon. I think the most important thing Reagan did in his political career was be the catalyst to end the cold war. He was the catalyst. And it was that strategy that had gradually developed beginning in the ’60s and growing—the theme I should say, the objective—around which he began to create a strategy. It’s not that he thought the strategy up first, he didn’t. A lot of it was opportunistic. But he had the objective, and that was clear. And he had the mechanism that he wanted to use to reach the objective, which was to force the other side to sit down and talk, and then to have an earnest negotiation. I think a lot of that goes back to—I mean, the belief that that would work—goes back to his days in the Screen Actors Guild when they had these tough negotiations. The scale was quite different, of course, but the stakes for those people were very high.

He learned that you can find ways, even when you’re adversaries, to work things out if you just get to the table and do it. I believe that always stayed with him. The way it played out means I think he should get a very large degree of the credit for it. His predecessors worked for it, and they all contributed to some degree. Most of the big events happened in George Bush’s term, but they were things that were all set in motion before him, as I think he would be the first to agree. So I think that’s the most important thing Reagan did.

The other big important thing Reagan did was, at a time when we were still coming out of the discontent from the Vietnam war, he gave people a sense of optimism again, a sense of confidence in the country and in themselves. Because throughout our history, so much of it has been a belief that tomorrow is going to be better than today, and tomorrow for our kids will be better than it has been for us. And that belief in a better tomorrow is, I think, so deeply ingrained in the American people, and is so much a part of our ability to make things happen as a nation—and to advance technologically and socially in every possible way—that when you have leaders who can’t project that—they may want to, but don’t know how—they become very unhappy with themselves and discontented as a nation.

Reagan brought that sunny optimism. It wasn’t Pollyanna at all, but he always really believed in the people, and he communicated that constantly. I think that goes back to his own ordinary and humble beginnings. But there was always a degree of optimism in his upbringing by his parents. They didn’t have an easy time of it, as you know. They were economically quite marginal, but somehow they always made it. And there was always something to shoot for. And then, his mother was very religious, because they came out of a strain of Presbyterianism, he may have just assumed he was predestined to become President of the United States.
Those are the big themes that I see coming out of his life. There are some themes like making government more manageable and all that—which is worthy—but those are two big, big things. The specific things he did in the economy were very important, and I see echoes of that in what George W. Bush is doing today. I see a lot of Reagan in George W. Bush. And I think he’s going to succeed. But that’s another story for another day. But those are the two big themes, restoring the sense of “we can do it” of the nation, and—Margaret Thatcher said, “Ronald Reagan won the cold war without firing a shot”—I guess he wasn’t around for the final winning, but I think he made it happen.

Knott: Well, thank you very much. This has been very valuable.

Hannaford: Thank you for having me.

Knott: Future generations will be very grateful you spent this time with us.

Hannaford: Thank you for being interested, and for inviting me to be with you today. I’ve enjoyed it very much. It’s been a good trip. I think your project is a very worthy one. I think the American Presidency is at the center of all of our lives, so studying it and amplifying on it and learning how it works and who the people are and how they work—it’s one reason I’ve gotten so interested in writing books about Presidents, more than Reagan. I didn’t think about that when I started writing about Reagan. But after this last book—my fifth Reagan book, therefore my last—

Mrs. Hannaford: You said that after your fourth.