Fortunately, the Miller Center has always understood and respected the goal of public service. That shows in the Center’s scholarly work, like the patient, ongoing project to chronicle the story of my administration. The documentary record is vital, but your scholars also add the human side that those papers can never capture. For my presidency, and for others, the Miller Center is a place that gets history and preserves it for future generations.

President George H.W. Bush
INTRODUCTION
Remarks by the program chair
Russell L. Riley

THE PRESIDENTIAL ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

LIST of INTERVIEWS

LIST of SCHOLARS

IN THEIR WORDS
- James A. Baker III
  The 1988 Presidential Campaign
- Brent Scowcroft
  Foreign Policy
- Robert M. Gates
  The Cold War's End
- Frederick D. McClure
  Congressional Relations
- Richard Thornburgh
  U.S. Supreme Court Appointments

EYEWITNESSES to HISTORY
A multi-perspective look at the Persian Gulf War

MEMORIES OF THE BUSH PRESIDENCY
Brief Excerpts from Participants' Interviews

MILLER CENTER ORAL HISTORY SYMPOSIA
It is with great pleasure that I announce the opening of interview transcripts for the George H. W. Bush Oral History Project, a cooperative endeavor of the University of Virginia’s Miller Center and the George Bush Presidential Library Foundation. These interviews provide an intimate portrait of the life and times of the 41st presidency drawn in the words of those who were a part of it.

Over fifty senior officials from the Bush White House and cabinet contributed their recollections to this Project, in interviews conducted by teams of scholars under a veil of strict confidentiality. The purpose of each interview was to create a spoken record of memories about the experience of serving with and for President Bush, and to reflect on lessons learned about politics and leadership for future generations.

These interviews normally ran for seven to ten hours of recorded time, permitting us to delve into both the day-to-day pressures of working for the President as well as the moments of high history that marked the Bush years. No questions were off-limits to our interviewers, and in most cases those being interviewed were exceptionally generous, welcoming our curiosity and patiently explaining both success and failure as they saw it. Their words add detail and texture to our understanding of President Bush, the team of people he led, and the unique problems of the world as they occurred.

What appears in this volume represents only a fraction of these transcribed interviews, a selection intended to provide some sense of the insights that can be gained from reading the collection. The complete archive of documents cleared by our participants is now available to everyone on-line, as a public service, at www.millercenter.org. Consistent with our on-going obligation to protect confidentiality, however, some parts of these interviews remain closed until future dates as requested by the interviewee.

In his 1989 inaugural address, President Bush observed, “I see history as a book with many pages, and each day we fill a page with acts of hopefulness and meaning. The new breeze blows, a page turns, the story unfolds. And so today a chapter begins.” We believe that readers of all interests will be richly rewarded by what these first-hand accounts reveal about that remarkable chapter in the history of our Republic.

Russell L. Riley
Charlottesville, VA
October 2011
The George H.W. Bush Oral History Project began in 1999—when the term “President Bush” could logically mean only one person—through the leadership of Philip Zelikow. He successfully brokered a partnership between the institution he was newly selected to direct, the University of Virginia’s Miller Center, and the network of his colleagues from the first Bush administration. As a former member of the National Security Council staff, Zelikow understood the insufficiency of the written record for capturing the complexity and nuance of White House decision-making. And as a scholar, he understood the unique worth of oral history for filling these deficiencies. The Miller Center subsequently began its systematic series of scholarly interviews with former Bush administration officials, funded through the generosity of the George Bush Presidential Library Foundation.

The support of the Bush Foundation merits special notice here for two reasons. First, of course, it has made possible the creation of an archive that will become a standard historical resource for anyone seeking to understand the 20th century American presidency. And second, the proven viability of the Bush Project as a model has resulted in the establishment of an on-going program in presidential oral history at the Miller Center. The Center’s oral history experience began with a unique, one-off interview project on the Carter Presidency, conducted in the early 1980s, but the emergence of a continuing oral history program can be dated to the Bush Foundation’s financial commitment beginning in 1999. Since that time, every outgoing presidential administration has partnered with the Center’s Presidential Oral History Program to capture the recollections of their senior-most officials.

Although Zelikow’s initiative was instrumental in bringing about the Bush Project, perhaps his most inspired act of leadership was in convincing Professor James Sterling Young, who had invented this kind of work with the Carter Project, to leave emeritus status behind and undertake the direction of the Bush Project. Aiding Professor Young in this effort over the years were Professors Stephen Knott, Tarek Masoud, and Darby Morrisroe, as well as Katrina Kuhn, Jane Rafal Wilson, and Beatriz Lee Swerdlow. We also benefited from very able teams of graduate students, whose individual contributions are noted on the briefing books they prepared, now archived on the Project website. And the continuing support of the Miller Center’s leadership, from Governor Gerald L. Baliles, our current director, and chairman of the Governing Council, Eugene Fife, has been indispensable.

Other projects from the Oral History Program are:
- Jimmy Carter
- Ronald Reagan
- William J. Clinton
- George W. Bush
- Edward M. Kennedy
- Lloyd Cutler

Symposia, including group sessions examining the Falklands War, White House congressional relations, White House speechwriting, and the presidency and domestic policymaking.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date of Interview</th>
<th>Name of Interviewee</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9.2 – 3.1999</td>
<td>Thomas A. Scully</td>
<td>Charlottesville, VA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.16.1999</td>
<td>Robert A. Mosbacher with Michael Ferran</td>
<td>College Station, TX</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.21 – 22.1999</td>
<td>Andrew Card</td>
<td>Charlottesville, VA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.6 – 7.2000</td>
<td>Edith E. Holiday with Daniel Casse</td>
<td>Charlottesville, VA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.29.2000</td>
<td>James A. Baker III</td>
<td>Charlottesville, VA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3 – 4.2000</td>
<td>C. Boyden Gray</td>
<td>Charlottesville, VA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.16 – 17.2000</td>
<td>Richard Cheney</td>
<td>Dallas, TX</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5.2000</td>
<td>Margaret D. Tutwiler</td>
<td>Charlottesville, VA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.8 – 9.2000</td>
<td>John H. Sununu</td>
<td>Charlottesville, VA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.19.2000</td>
<td>Richard G. Darman</td>
<td>Charlottesville, VA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.27 – 28.2000</td>
<td>Chase Untermeyer</td>
<td>College Station, TX</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.23 – 24.2000</td>
<td>Robert M. Gates</td>
<td>College Station, TX</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.22 – 23.2000</td>
<td>David Bates</td>
<td>College Station, TX</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.19.2001</td>
<td>Clayton Yeutter</td>
<td>College Station, TX</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.6.2001</td>
<td>James P. Pinkerton</td>
<td>Washington, D.C.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.22 – 23.2001</td>
<td>Phillip D. Brady</td>
<td>Charlottesville, VA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.8 – 9.2001</td>
<td>Sigmund Rogich</td>
<td>Charlottesville, VA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5.2001</td>
<td>William P. Barr</td>
<td>Charlottesville, VA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.17 – 18.2001</td>
<td>Barbara Franklin with William Clark, Jr.</td>
<td>Charlottesville, VA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3 – 4.2001</td>
<td>Edward J. Derwinski</td>
<td>Charlottesville, VA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.10 – 11.2001</td>
<td>Lamar Alexander with Rebecca Campoverde and David Kearns</td>
<td>Charlottesville, VA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.15.2001</td>
<td>Marlin Fitzwater</td>
<td>Washington, D.C.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.30 – 31.2001</td>
<td>Michael J. Boskin</td>
<td>Stanford, CA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.2.2001</td>
<td>Dennis B. Ross</td>
<td>Washington, D.C.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.13.2001</td>
<td>Nicholas F. Brady with Hollis McLoughlin</td>
<td>Charlottesville, VA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.20.2001</td>
<td>Frederick D. McClure</td>
<td>Washington, D.C.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.23 – 24.2001</td>
<td>Richard Thornburgh</td>
<td>Charlottesville, VA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.4.2001</td>
<td>Robert M. Kimmitt</td>
<td>Washington, D.C.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.11 – 12.2001</td>
<td>Roger B. Porter</td>
<td>Charlottesville, VA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.12.2002</td>
<td>J. Danforth Quayle</td>
<td>Phoenix, AZ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date of Interview</td>
<td>Name of Interviewee</td>
<td>Location</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.2.2002</td>
<td>James W. Cicconi</td>
<td>Washington, D.C.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.28.2003</td>
<td>Roman Popadiuk</td>
<td>Washington, D.C.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.6.2003</td>
<td>Ronald C. Kaufman</td>
<td>Washington, D.C.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.6.2004</td>
<td>Carla A. Hills</td>
<td>Charlottesville, VA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.12.2004</td>
<td>Craig Fuller</td>
<td>Charlottesville, VA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.27.2004</td>
<td>Richard Haass</td>
<td>New York, NY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.20.2009</td>
<td>Barbara G. Kilberg</td>
<td>Herndon, VA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.18.2010</td>
<td>David Demarest</td>
<td>Charlottesville, VA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.5.2010</td>
<td>Timothy McBride</td>
<td>Charlottesville, VA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.15.2010</td>
<td>David E. Jeremiah</td>
<td>Charlottesville, VA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.17.2011</td>
<td>James A. Baker III</td>
<td>Houston, TX</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.26.2011</td>
<td>Jean Becker</td>
<td>Kennebunkport, ME</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.24.2011</td>
<td>C. Gregg Petersmeyer</td>
<td>Charlottesville, VA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.6.2011</td>
<td>Robert Zoellick</td>
<td>Washington, D.C.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.2.2011</td>
<td>Robert D. Blackwill</td>
<td>Pacific Palisades, CA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Philip D. Zelikow, Tarek E. Masoud, James Sterling Young, and Henry E. Catto, Jr.
2. Phillip D. Brady
3. Edward J. Derwiniski
4. Barbara Franklin
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Institution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>David Alsobrook</td>
<td>George Bush Presidential Library</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James E. Anderson</td>
<td>Texas A &amp; M University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nancy V. Baker</td>
<td>New Mexico State University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spencer Bakich</td>
<td>Sweet Briar College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richard K. Betts</td>
<td>Columbia University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henry William Brands</td>
<td>Texas A &amp; M University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James W. Ceaser</td>
<td>University of Virginia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jeffrey L. Chidester</td>
<td>Miller Center, University of Virginia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martha Derthick</td>
<td>University of Virginia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matthew Dickinson</td>
<td>Middlebury College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George C. Edwards III</td>
<td>Texas A &amp; M University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Fortier</td>
<td>American Enterprise Institute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paul Freedman</td>
<td>University of Virginia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Erwin C. Hargrove</td>
<td>Vanderbilt University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charles O. Jones</td>
<td>University of Wisconsin—Madison</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Karaagac</td>
<td>George Bush Presidential Library Foundation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stephen F. Knott</td>
<td>Miller Center, University of Virginia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paul S. Martin</td>
<td>Miller Center, University of Virginia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tarek E. Masoud</td>
<td>Miller Center, University of Virginia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ernest May</td>
<td>Harvard University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James H. McCall</td>
<td>George Bush Presidential Library Foundation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daniel J. Meador</td>
<td>University of Virginia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martin J. Medhurst</td>
<td>Baylor University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sidney Milkis</td>
<td>Miller Center, University of Virginia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timothy J. Naftali</td>
<td>Miller Center, University of Virginia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bradley H. Patterson, Jr.</td>
<td>National Academy of Public Administration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barbara A. Perry</td>
<td>Miller Center, University of Virginia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James P. Pfiffner</td>
<td>George Mason University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William B. Quandt</td>
<td>University of Virginia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russell L. Riley</td>
<td>Miller Center, University of Virginia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leonard Schoppa</td>
<td>University of Virginia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilbur J. Scott</td>
<td>University of Oklahoma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colleen J. Shogan</td>
<td>George Mason University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David Shreve</td>
<td>Miller Center, University of Virginia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robert A. Strong</td>
<td>Washington and Lee University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kathryn Dunn Tenpas</td>
<td>University of Pennsylvania</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maris A. Vinovskis</td>
<td>University of Michigan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charles E. Walcott</td>
<td>Virginia Tech University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M. Stephen Weatherford</td>
<td>University of California—Santa Barbara</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brantly Womack</td>
<td>University of Virginia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James Sterling Young</td>
<td>Miller Center, University of Virginia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philip D. Zelikow</td>
<td>Miller Center, University of Virginia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fareed Zakaria</td>
<td>Council on Foreign Relations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1. Barbara A. Perry and Timothy McBride
2. Carla A. Hills and Stephen F. Knott
3. J. Danforth Quayle and James Sterling Young
4. James Sterling Young, Roger B. Porter, James H. McCall, and Sidney Milkis
5. Richard Thornburgh
6. Robert M. Gates
7. David E. Jeremiah
When George H. W. Bush ran for president in 1988, he had spent eight years as Ronald Reagan’s vice president. In addition, he had vast political experience prior to becoming America’s second-highest executive in 1981. Reagan had defeated Bush for the GOP nomination in 1980. Yet the transplanted Texan, with Yankee patrician roots, bonded with the Hollywood actor-turned-politician, especially in the wake of the assassination attempt on the president in March 1981. Upon receiving word that the president had been shot, Vice President Bush raced back to Washington from Texas, but he refused to land by helicopter on the White House’s South Lawn, asserting that only the president is entitled to that privilege.

Bush met weekly with Reagan over Oval Office lunches and served on two task forces, involving deregulation and international drug smuggling. The vice president also tended to the traditional duties of the second in command: presiding over ceremonial events and representing the nation at funerals for foreign heads of state. Bush famously quipped, “You die; I fly!” Yet his wife, Barbara Bush, correctly noted that such journeys gave her husband the opportunity to meet with dignitaries around the world, who would soon become the leaders of their countries.
In October 1987 George H. W. Bush announced his candidacy for president of the United States in his adopted home town of Houston. Although he seemed to be the clear front runner, the Reagan Administration’s Iran-Contra scandal presented a potential vulnerability for his opponents to exploit. In addition, Bush had to fight the stereotype that all vice presidents face of being viewed as a weak yes-man to the chief executive. Suddenly, the loyal party warrior and military hero of the Second World War faced the media’s improbable charge that he was a “wimp.”

Despite the illegal arms-for-hostages deal, and consequent dips in his approval ratings, Reagan remained an iconic figure in the Republican Party, presenting Bush with a complicated choice about how to position himself. After a shocking third place finish in the Iowa caucuses, behind Senator Robert Dole of Kansas and televangelist Pat Robertson, the vice president decided to hew closely to the Reagan-Bush record. Bush announced in 1988 his opposition to tax increases as a means to balance the federal budget. That strategy, along with his ability to garner southern votes, aided by tactician Lee Atwater, secured the presidential nomination for Bush.

The vice president would face Massachusetts Governor Michael Dukakis in the general election. Just after the Democrats’ July convention, Bush confronted a seventeen-point polling deficit. He subsequently mounted an aggressive attack on Dukakis’s liberalism, reassuring the country of his fundamental conservatism, although of a “kinder, gentler” variety. He fortified his “no new taxes” pledge in the convention acceptance address, prefacing it with a Clint Eastwood twist, “Read my lips . . . .” Yet his surprise choice of youthful Indiana Senator Dan Quayle for a running mate did not give the campaign the additional boost Bush had hoped.

The campaign’s assaults on the Massachusetts governor’s record, however, began to hit their mark. Dukakis’s attempt to portray an image of support for the armed forces led only to ridicule. A video of the governor, dressed in military headgear, riding on an Army tank, recalled the Peanuts character Snoopy, posing as a World War I flying ace atop his doghouse. The ultimate weapons against Dukakis were campaign ads that portrayed the governor as soft on criminals through his prison furlough programs, charges that were made more potent by an independent pro-Bush group that focused on a black convict, Willie Horton, who had committed additional violent crimes while on furlough.
Bush also made more effective use of the presidential debates, helped in part by a self-inflicted wound by his opponent. Dukakis’s dispassionate answer to the hypothetical question of whether he would change his anti-capital punishment stance if his wife were raped and murdered sealed his fate. George H. W. Bush swept to victory on November 8, 1988, winning forty states, their 426 electoral votes, and fifty-three percent of the popular vote. In so doing, Bush overcame formidable historical odds.

BAKER  We were about 17 or 18 points behind [Governor Michael Dukakis] in August. And the general thinking was we weren’t going to win that campaign. No incumbent Vice President had been elected President since Martin Van Buren. It just wasn’t done. And I must say that, looking at it objectively, we were rather pessimistic about our chances. . . .

And things began to fall into place, and President Bush clearly in my view won the debates, in fact all of them. . . . In prior campaigns, we always made a big issue of the debate about debates. I mean, that was an integral part of the campaign, and we played that pretty much for all it was worth. . . .

MILKIS  A lot of discussion about that campaign suggests that you played the role of savior, that the campaign was in bad shape, and you came back. I just wondered if you’d reflect a little bit about your thinking about the campaign before you came from Treasury over to it. . . .

BAKER  Well, I went to give a speech in Mackinaw Island in ’86. I went out there and spoke at the request of Pete Secchia, who was a big Bush man. And I remember being concerned about the degree to which [Jack] Kemp had organized out in Michigan. There were Kemp fliers on all the chairs and everything else. When I got back to the White House—I was Treasury Secretary—I called the Vice President, and I said, “I really want to talk to you about something, and bring Barbara.” The three of us met in his office, and I said, “You know, it looks to me like this guy’s really gearing up. I mean, I go out there, and this is a governmental event and everything—hell, there are Kemp campaign fliers all over.” It was something of concern to me. . . .

Shortly after this, the Vice President asked me to run the ’88 campaign for President. The Vice President and I agreed that I would approach the President [Reagan] and ask him to let me go over to the campaign to help the Vice President get elected. . . . And I did, and President Reagan was not excited about that prospect. He basically said, “Well, I think you can do him more good by keeping the economy going. We have it going well now, and you’re an essential part of that team, and I think it’d work better, perhaps.” But you know, it wasn’t one
of these things where he said, “Absolutely no chance that I’m ever going to be willing to cut you loose.”

So I went back to the Vice President and said, “It didn’t work, pal. It ain’t going to work unless you do it.” So he did it, and we ended up having a meeting…in the residential quarters with Vice President Bush, President Reagan, Nancy [Reagan] and myself. And the President ultimately said, “Fine. If that’s really what you want, George. If that’s what you think, and you think you really need him over there that bad, then I’m willing to let him go.”

BAKER Yes, but Lee [Atwater] was sort of the hired gun. Lee was someone with tremendous talent. We used him in ’84, brought him over from the political office of the White House, and he became the liaison between me and the Chief of Staff’s office and the campaign….

ZELIKOW And, of course, the TV watchers think this is a central man in the campaign.

BAKER That’s exactly right. And Atwater was the guy we really used. Atwater was the talent. But Atwater was not, you know, he was sort of the hired gun in this lash up with six or seven people. There really wasn’t one clear person in charge. You’re not going to get the others to say OK, Lee’s the man; we’re going to take our direction from Lee.

MASOUD Do you remember any discussions besides strategy about substance and how Vice President Bush would define the campaign, and in particular, how he would define himself in comparison to the Reagan administration?
Was he an heir apparent, or were there “kinder, gentler” discussions?

BAKER … I don’t recall a lot of discussion about how we were going to position ourselves vis-à-vis President Reagan. I remember the [Manuel] Noriega issue. There were obviously some other discreet and specific issues. But the truth of the matter is, we were quite content to campaign on the idea of a continuation of the policies of a successful two-term Reagan presidency.

ZELIKOW Well, how did you want to frame the campaign broadly, between the Vice President and Dukakis? What did you want the campaign to be about?

BAKER Well, we wanted it to be about the same issues that the Reagan-Bush administration had been pursuing. We wanted it to be about lower taxes. We wanted it to be about strong defense. We wanted it to be about the very same issues that we were pushing at the end of the second Reagan term. And we wanted to brand him [Dukakis] as a liberal, which we successfully did, and someone who had absolutely no idea about foreign and security policy, which we fairly effectively did with the tank ad.

…And we had a pretty good opposition research department. We had people who found the prison furlough stuff, but that wasn’t the only thing we nailed him on. We nailed him on a lot of other things, because he basically was a very liberal candidate. We were lucky to draw him. And he was a lousy debater. So he blew that lead.

MASOUD I’m thinking when you come onto the campaign, the convention’s a week later, and one of the first things you have to deal with is the Quayle selection. I wonder how much input you had in selecting Quayle.

BAKER … The Vice President made the selection. He made it clear he was going to make the selection. He made it clear he wanted to do it in a way that did not subject the potential candidates to undue prying or embarrassment or that sort of thing. So we compartmentalized the review process that Bob Kimmitt ran. I picked Kimmitt for that. He did a great job, I think. But nobody saw the material that the potential candidates supplied Kimmitt, except the Vice President.

And he didn’t make his selection until either the day before or on the airplane going down to New Orleans. He obviously was coming to that conclusion, but he didn’t really, I don’t think he really finally did it—I think he’s written it somewhere that he did it that morning. And he told us about it on the plane. We hit the ground, he told President Reagan. I think he only told me about it on the plane. Maybe he told a couple of others. But I think he told me then because he wanted to tell President Reagan. And then he met President Reagan and whispered it to him. Then we went to our hotel and he asked me to get Dan on the telephone, which I did.

MILKIS Do you remember your reaction when he told you?

BAKER Yes. My reaction was not negative, contrary to press reports. I’ll tell you what started all this was, my reaction was definitely not negative. I mean, I saw it as a— We had a generational issue in this campaign. And the feeling
People have written that I was lobbying for [Robert] Dole. I wasn’t lobbying for Dole. I wasn’t lobbying for anybody. And if you ask George Bush, he’ll tell you.

JAMES A. BAKER III

on the part of many of us was that Quayle—I’m not telling you that I was out there lobbying for Quayle, because I really wasn’t lobbying for anybody. People have written that I was lobbying for [Robert] Dole. I wasn’t lobbying for Dole. I wasn’t lobbying for anybody. And if you ask George Bush, he’ll tell you. He’ll say that I didn’t come down in one particular place or another. Because in the first place, I came to it late.

ZELIKOW Did he ask you for a recommendation?

BAKER No, not for a recommendation, but my views on the various—

ZELIKOW But not for a bottom line recommendation?

BAKER No. And I gave him my views on the various candidates, and what their relative strengths and weaknesses were. And then the night that the selection was announced, I was asked in a press interview if he was the most qualified person that was on the list. And I said something like maybe not the most qualified, but he brings other attributes that are extraordinarily important, which was an honest answer.

Because in terms of qualifications, you had other people on the list who were more qualified than Dan in terms of their experience and background. But I, and I marked the quote, because this is what, in my view, started the whole damn thing…. First of all, it says here in two places, it says that I floated Quayle’s name in an early news report in order to shoot it down. Baloney! That’s such baloney. I mean, that’s the kind of stuff that happens and then once it’s reported, you can’t ever get a retraction and it gets locked into the lore. I didn’t float Quayle’s name. Quayle might have floated his name. Somebody did. But it wasn’t me.

And then it says, “After Bush announced his selection, Baker offered this delicate assessment: ‘The issue is not who might have been the very best qualified to be President, the issue is getting someone who is extremely well-qualified to be President, and who might have some other attributes as well.’” Because the question I got on television that night was “Is he the most qualified? Is he the very best qualified to be President of all those under selection?” And I answered it honestly and correctly, I think. And from that time on, everybody reported that I was against the Quayle selection. That’s not true. I wasn’t out there flogging the idea of selecting Quayle. But it’s not true that I was against the—And if you ask the President that, I think he’d tell you the same thing.
ZELIKOW So the real candidates were Dole, Quayle, [Alan] Simpson, Kemp? Is there anyone else you remember as being an important candidate?

BAKER You don’t have Clint Eastwood on there. Make my day. Did you know that Clint Eastwood’s name was thrown out at one point?

MASOUD No, I didn’t know that.

BAKER When we were way behind. Honestly, it was suggested in not an altogether unserious—Well, he was a mayor. He was a Republican mayor. Anyway, it was shot down pretty quick. [laughter] But we were looking at an 18-point deficit.

ZELIKOW Now, this is in September that you’re negotiating the debates. What did you think the key issues were that you wanted to win? I mean, when you went into that negotiation, what were your—

BAKER First of all, we wanted to have the format be what it ended up being, and I can’t remember exactly what it was. But we didn’t want any of this free-form stuff the way we got it in ’92, which we couldn’t do much
President Reagan genuinely wanted—
First of all, he genuinely likes George Bush, and he wanted to see George Bush elected. And he wanted to do what he could to help.

JAMES A. BAKER III

about. We got what we wanted on the time—I don’t know whether it was an hour-and-a-half debate—two one-and-a-half-hour debates, which is all we gave them.

ZELIKOW They wanted more?

BAKER Oh, yes. They wanted more debates. And probably we got what we wanted on the format. What, did we have questioners? Yes. We had Bernie Shaw. And they weren’t allowed to address each other. We had a fairly closed debate that year—I mean, sort of a very sterile format.

ZELIKOW About the time you had the debates, were you still sure it was in your interest to have them at all, if you thought you were beginning to open up a lead?

BAKER Yes. First of all, they really wanted them, and if we’d said no, we’re not going to have any debates, they would’ve nailed us. You can’t just refuse to debate at all. You have to appear that you want to have a free-flowing exchange of ideas, whether you do or not. You’ve got to look like you do. And you take a lot of water when you don’t, when you’re not willing to debate

YOUNG Could you talk a bit about President Reagan’s role in the campaign?

BAKER President Reagan genuinely wanted—First of all, he genuinely likes George Bush, and he wanted to see George Bush elected. And he wanted to do what he could to help. But I’m not sure that his staff were as helpful sometimes as they could have been. Particularly right after I’d gone over to the campaign, we had some problems getting dates and times lined up. And I think they were probably—at that time, we were behind, and they may have been saying, “Well, we may not want to get too close to this.” I don’t know that that’s true, but I suspect it. But when he finally did, he did some events for us, and they were effective, and I think he cut some television for us….

ZELIKOW Was the campaign too negative, did the campaign cross the line from the kind of attacks that are legitimate?

BAKER No. No. Of course it didn’t. I mean, we didn’t do as much, and certainly no more than Al Gore had done in the primary campaign that year against Dukakis. We pointed
out that this guy had a prison furlough program when he was governor of Massachusetts that let killers out on furlough. People don’t like that. That is a legitimate policy issue. We never ran pictures of a big black guy with a beard looking very menacingly at the viewer. We never did that. We had a prison furlough ad that we constructed around my table that was quite legitimate. It had a rotating door—

BAKER The Pledge of Allegiance, yes. And we were criticized for that, for crying out loud. Unfair campaign. Pledge of Allegiance. Go into flag factories. But it works. I mean, if you’re patriotic, you like the flag. Most Americans are patriotic.

MASOUD Did you think the press was unfair during the campaign, the whole wimp factor thing, for example? The article in Newsweek.

BAKER Well, Vice President Bush sure thought that was unfair. But that was one article. Yes, that was unfair. Here’s a guy who was shot down over the Pacific, a war hero, Congressman, Ambassador to the United Nations. Tough, tough guy, courageous as I said to you earlier. Who the hell would get out there and do what he did in ’79? They call him a wimp? Come on. That’s George Will. Came right from George Will.

ZELIKOW Do you have your own kind of sense of what lines are proper? How you draw the line between what an ad should be—

Here’s a guy who was shot down over the Pacific, a war hero, Congressman, Ambassador to the United Nations. Tough, tough guy, courageous…. They call him a wimp? Come on.

JAMES A. BAKER III

BAKER I think it’s changing. There’s been such a reaction to negative ads that what used to be OK is no longer OK. In other words, I think contrast ads are fair. My line is if you’re contrasting policy positions, it’s fair. If you’re not lying, if you’re telling the truth and you’re being scrupulously honest and objective, to contrast policy positions is plenty fair. I almost don’t care how you do it. I mean, and that’s a negative ad, a contrast. I’m for cutting your taxes, he’s for raising your taxes. If it’s honest and truthful, what’s wrong with that?
George H. W. Bush assumed the presidency with arguably more experience in foreign affairs than any of his thirty-nine predecessors. Bush, who became the youngest aviator in World War II when the Navy commissioned him just days before his nineteenth birthday, distinguished himself for bravery while flying fifty-eight combat missions in the Pacific Theater. During a bombing raid on Chichijima, Lieutenant (j.g.) Bush had to bail out of his crippled plane and spent several hours adrift in a raft before a U.S. submarine rescued the young pilot.

After two terms in the U.S. House of Representatives (1967–1971), Bush received an appointment from President Richard Nixon as U.S. ambassador to the United Nations. Following a stint as chairman of the Republican National Committee, Bush served as chief of the U.S. Liaison Office in the People’s Republic of China, at the request of President Gerald Ford. Just over a year later, Ford named Bush director of the Central Intelligence Agency. His two terms as vice president, under President Ronald Reagan, afforded numerous opportunities to engage in statecraft at home and abroad.
If ever a man’s résumé suited his time as president, it was George H. W. Bush’s. “[I]n a man’s heart, if not in fact, the day of the dictator is over,” he declared in his inaugural address. Within the year, the Berlin Wall, the most despised symbol of the schism between Communism and the Free World, collapsed, and the Cold War entered its death throes. More emblematic of the New World Order, however, was the Bush Administration’s military foray into Panama to remove from power General Manuel Noriega, whom the United States had indicted for drug crimes. In China, the “new breeze,” as Bush described the rebirth of freedom, spurred students to mount a democracy movement, complete with a replica of the Statue of Liberty that they erected in Beijing’s Tiananmen Square. As Bush and his foreign policy team attempted to determine who was actually in charge in Beijing, the Chinese leaders brutally quashed the May 1989 uprising.

End of the Cold War

SCOWCROFT  In terms of substance of policy and the world we were facing during the transition, yes, I’d thought about it a lot—especially about this issue: Is Gorbachev for real? Does he really want to transform things? Or were the old men of the Kremlin—who certainly didn’t think they were putting somebody in who would overturn the system—were they right? Was this a man who was going to make the system run more efficiently so that they could compete in a better manner?

I had the sense at the end of the Reagan administration that they had come to the conclusion, It’s all over. I wasn’t at all sure that was the case, principally because there had been zero movement about Eastern Europe. So I came in with a fairly specific notion of what to do about U.S.-Soviet relations, which are the key to it all. That was to change our policy toward the Soviet Union—which had been one based on arms control directly—to a policy focused primarily on Eastern Europe, and changing what we sought in Eastern Europe.

Our policy toward Eastern Europe had always been to encourage those states in Eastern Europe that caused the most trouble for the Soviet Union, so Romania was at the top of the list. I said, “What we ought to do is focus and give the most help and encouragement to those who are trying most to liberalize their internal systems.” So Romania goes to the bottom of the list, Poland goes to the top of the list. Then, on top of that, to see what we could do about getting the Soviet Army out of Eastern Europe. That was the biggest barrier to the transformation of Europe, which I thought was key to the ending of the Cold War.
I even proposed to the President in late ’88 and in one of the early meetings in ’89 to the Core Group, that he make a proposal that U.S. and Soviet ground troops be withdrawn from Europe…. [P]eople said, “What a terrible idea.” And I said, “Look, a fight between the Warsaw Pact and NATO, without U.S. on one side and without Soviet troops on the other, I’m quite comfortable about the outcome. I’m not even sure the Eastern Europeans would fight at all, but if they did, that’s to our net advantage.” It also leaves our Air Forces there, which is really the core of the defense we have. It gets us off the hair-trigger worrying about how we’re going to get eight divisions back over there. It does a whole bunch of good. Well, it was way too extreme, and [Secretary of Defense Richard] Cheney about had a heart attack. But what that did when you reduced it back, it got people thinking. And what we did for the first NATO meeting is propose a bilateral reduction on both sides, which turned out to be a great idea, and it did reduce Soviet presence in Europe. So yes, I had very specific ideas. My other one was I was very worried about Gorbachev going to Beijing, which he was going to do in May, I think. I wanted to get the President in conversations with the Chinese somehow before Gorbachev got there, because I was uneasy about what Gorbachev might be able to do with the Chinese. I was not responsible for the death of the Emperor of Japan, but that turned out to be a heaven-sent opportunity to get the President to Beijing before Gorbachev got there. So that was the other thing I had in mind, and then something on the Middle East as well. Yes, I had a specific program for what I thought were the core elements. In all this, arms control—which is my first love—was to be put way in the background until we had movement that really went to the core of what the Cold War was.

### Invasion of Panama

**SCOWCROFT** Panama was a little different from Central America. In the first place, Panama was not the site of active hostilities like Nicaragua and El Salvador were. Panama first comes into my view as a concern in connection with the President’s decision to crank up the drug war. In the late Reagan administration, Noriega was indicted, which I thought was a strange way to behave. I thought that the United States indicting foreign officials, over whom we had no jurisdiction, was really an aberration. So I didn’t take that very seriously. President Bush did. He kept mentioning the indictment of Noriega, and I kept saying, “You can’t do that. You can’t do that. You have no jurisdiction. It’s a foreign official. They’re unindictable anyway. And besides, how are you going to get him?” To me, things really started to happen with the election in May.

**ZELIKOW** You’re thinking of [Guillermo] Andara?

**SCOWCROFT** Yes. The elections were going very badly for Noriega, and he stopped the vote count and seized the ballots. Fortunately we had President Carter down there poll watching. He was not down there at our request. He was down there poll watching. Well, that was what fundamentally changed our attitude toward Panama…. On Panama, my position evolved. My guess is it did not so much with
President Bush. He had had a deeper involvement. He had carried messages to Noriega on behalf of President Reagan and so on. He was sympathetic to the indictment. Panama was not on my scope in the beginning. It came there with the elections, which were hijacked in the most outrageous, confrontational way. I believe there is probably where the President decided that as soon as the opportunity arose, something was going to happen. I wasn’t there yet, but we had President Carter on board. He came back and gave us a report about how awful it was, and we used that to good effect.

SCOWCROFT We kept looking for the kinds of things that could be done. We reinforced the garrison down there, but nothing much happened until, I think it was October 3rd, when there was an attempted coup. It was a coup we had some word of. We were unable to pin down exactly what the plotters had in mind, exactly who they represented, exactly what they planned to do with Noriega, which becomes important because of the anti-assassination presidential directive.

We did take some measures, when the coup actually started, to block Noriega’s forces. But the coup was unsuccessful. We did not act very decisively. In retrospect, I don’t see how we could have done much more because it was so bizarre to make plans for military intervention on that basis. But as a result, we made some changes. One of the things we found when we had an NSC meeting on October 3rd is that the State Department had its intelligence sources, Defense did, JCS did, CIA did, but all of these intelligence reports were going straight up to their principals, and there was no cross communication. So when we got in the meeting, we found out that everybody had a very different idea about what was going on in Panama, which is not too surprising because it was extremely confused.

This was our first crisis. We didn’t do particularly well in it, and it was probably my fault. As a result, though, I took the deputies committee—which was pretty much administrative, if not moribund—and made it a sub-committee of the principals group, as the first interagency group that would focus on all kinds of crises. After the abortive coup in October—and we got a lot of unfavorable press comment on our behavior in the coup—we really sharpened what we were looking for. We had the Defense Department do some contingency planning, and we were ready for what we assumed would be another coup.

The *casus belli* turned out to be an American soldier who was shot at a checkpoint.

BRENT SCOWCROFT
wanted to do and ready to do it, but I was surprised that he would do it on those particular grounds. Anyway, at that exact time, Noriega had the Panama Parliament declare war on the United States, which helped a little.

In this run-up from May to October, or May to December, which is when we moved, the President made dozens of phone calls. My guess is he talked to every Latin American leader a minimum of half a dozen times about Panama, about Nicaragua, about Salvador, on and on and on. The result was that when he ordered an operation against Panama on December 20, there was a resolution in the OAS [Organization of American States], deploiring it and so on, but the ground work that he had done resulted in only the most pro forma kind of objections. I thought there would be an explosion in Latin America. Intervention, armed intervention by the United States was an absolute no-no. The Mexicans were the most extreme, but after they had said their piece, it quieted down amazingly well. And I think that is due solely to the President’s arduous diplomacy in courting these people, in explaining what he was doing, in explaining what his fears were, so they didn’t take this as part of a new American policy of gringoism in Latin America.
SCOWCROFT I think that by the time of the intervention everybody knew what the President’s mindset was. He had made it abundantly clear. After all, this was not a huge operation. This was what? 20,000 new troops down there, not a great operation. It’s a great opportunity for the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs to test his troops in combat.

Attitudes toward the Gulf War were different. The Gulf War was a big war. This was not that big a war. We were quite comfortable with it. After all, we knew Panama, and we had thought about it for months. So no, I don’t remember anybody saying, “Are you sure we ought to do this?” No.

ZELIKOW Any big arguments about the idea of snatching Noriega? The initial deployment in the summer included Special Forces units, Delta units, and a SEAL team. Was the President pressing for some other kind of military operation and finding his advisors unsympathetic, or was there pretty much a consensus all along as to how this thing should be done?

SCOWCROFT There was pretty much a consensus. The President would have been happy to seize Noriega. I wasn’t quite so happy about that because I thought that would really cause an outcry.
Tiananmen Square

SCOWCROFT The President, when he was thinking about China, at the time of Tiananmen Square, I’m not sure thought in terms of who needed whom most. I think underlying his attempt to reach out were two factors. The first was we had just slapped on pretty severe sanctions and done it more rapidly than anybody in Europe. And the Chinese took that very ill. Secondly, I think we all felt that there was greater internal instability in China that we had to be very careful about. The course of the month or so of the demonstrations in Tiananmen Square had seen a significant reversal in Chinese attitudes—from being open with the students and talking with them and trying to mollify them and so on, to martial law and a very severe crackdown, a crackdown that was accompanied by indications that the regime was in a panic that they may be losing control over the military.

I think he felt he had to go the extra mile and try to defuse any notion the Chinese might have that we were planning to take advantage of their situation—to do something to them, if you will—that there was no sincerity here. That we had not since 1972, in fact, established any kind of sense of mutual confidence. I think that was the motivation rather than, “How much should they do? How much should we do?”

SCOWCROFT When the demonstrations started, and the government reacted softly at first, we were slightly hopeful that something could come of it. As time went on, it seemed to us—and the intelligence sort of indicated it—that the leadership of the demonstrators was changing and that they were more calculating, more hard, less student. Then there were people taking advantage of the situation. The statue that they put up of what they called the Goddess of Freedom was nothing more than the Statue of Liberty, and I think quite obviously designed for American television, not for the spontaneous outpouring of sentiment from the demonstrators. So it gradually got ugly on both sides.

One of the turning points was when they were unable to receive Gorbachev in their standard arrival ceremony at the Great Hall of the People because the students were occupying it. They had to receive him at the airport instead. That was when it looked to me like there was no way we were going to, from our own interests, win out of this confrontation. It had turned ugly.

MAY Were you surprised by the military action in Tiananmen Square?

There is one picture that is shown over and over on television, even now, of one small person standing in front of a tank with a satchel in his hand, and the tank trying to maneuver around him and him moving back and forth.

BRENT SCOWCROFT
I was surprised two ways. First of all, I was surprised that the regime let it go on for so long. Just imagine, for example, Times Square being occupied by students for a month. Tiananmen Square is the communications, the transportation, hub of Beijing. All the streets at that time went across Tiananmen Square. So there was a kind of amazement that they didn't do anything at first. The first order to clear the square was given to local units who moved in to the square but then sort of fraternized with the demonstrators. After that, there was a short period when the students started to drift away, and I thought maybe the steam would go out of the demonstrations and they would just end. What they had been doing was bringing troops in from outside the area with no sympathetic ties to the demonstrators....

Our attitude toward the use of force was first of all, it would be difficult for us to warn the Chinese against clearing the students from the square. What really surprised us was the brutality with which it was done, unnecessary brutality, in our eyes. From the Chinese perspective, though, having gone through this session where the troops fraternized instead of cleaning out the square, I would guess that the regime was really shaken and really feared that the ultimate source of any authority—that is, the military—was not reliable. I would imagine that they gave orders, “You don't stop, you don't do anything, you just move right through. If anyone’s in front of the tank you run over them,” so that there would be no possibility of a repeat of the fraternization. So I'd have to admit that yes, we were surprised by the nature of the final assault on the square.

There is one picture that is shown over and over on television, even now, of one small person standing in front of a tank with a satchel in his hand, and the tank trying to maneuver around him and him moving back and forth. That is a very telling picture in two ways. First, the bravery of the demonstrators, but also the fact that that tank commander was not trying to run down this young person, whoever it was, but trying to avoid damage to him.

Tiananmen Square has become an image, an icon of meaning. If you actually analyze that period of a little over a month, it becomes much more complex with many more forces at work. Did we understand them all? No. Not even close. Not even close.
ZELIKOW So then there’s the crackdown. Of course, the administration feels obliged to respond. Can you say anything about how you or President Bush felt personally in the immediate aftermath of the news of the crackdown? You’ve already said that you were shocked at some of the brutality. Would you like to add anything to that, your personal reactions, emotional reactions, analytic reactions?

SCOWCROFT My personal reaction when the final crackdown came—I believe it was on a Sunday in Washington—was one of real dismay. We had worked very hard in the short period of the Bush administration—and back for me in the Ford administration, and indeed in the Nixon administration, with the opening to China—to start to build a relationship with this big, strange, new power. My first reaction, I think, was, “Maybe it’s all going down the drain.” And the result might well be that the conservatives would say, “We have fooled around with Deng’s liberalism. It hasn’t worked. We’ve got to go back to the old days.” That was my general reaction, and when I talked to the President about it—we had talked a lot about China in the first six months—he turned to his instinct, which in a time like this, is communication. That’s what started our recovery.

We cut off all military contacts, we cut off all joint R&D [Research and Development] that we were doing in the military. What he said is, “I want to punish the people who have done the harm, that is, the military. I don’t want to punish the Chinese people.”

ZELIKOW Do you think the Chinese really thought America could just go on business as usual in the midst of all this? Did they understand the Americans so poorly after all their contacts over the years?

SCOWCROFT I think their position is one that—first of all, they’re extraordinarily prickly about their internal affairs. Remember Chinese history for over 100 years was one of gross interference by the Western powers, so I think they wear their sovereignty on their sleeve. But I think it was a defensive reaction. Deng felt he was not in a position to say, “We made a terrible mistake.” So how to put the best face on it was, “It’s none of your business what we do inside our country. Our relationship is an external relationship, not an internal relationship.”

SCOWCROFT By the end of the administration, we had made considerable psychological progress, but little actual progress. As I said, the Chinese stopped the road map early on, and we did not try hard to resurrect it. The consequence was that, while the Europeans had been more emotional than President Bush in their sanctions on China, after six months or so they had all lifted them. They all had normal relations with the Chinese. The sanctions in the United States remained on (and some of them are still on) because we were unable to do anything in a concrete fashion to convince the Congress that the sanctions no longer needed to be in place. But the relationship between the two sides warmed up considerably, to the point that when we needed the Chinese in crucial votes—for example, as during the Gulf War—we didn’t get cooperation, but we didn’t get a veto either.
“From Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic an ‘iron curtain’ has descended across the Continent.” Winston Churchill’s stark metaphor captured the essence of Soviet domination over Eastern and Central Europe and encapsulated the long struggle between the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. For nearly a half century following World War II, Americans lived with the specter of a nuclear stand-off between the world’s two super powers: one the leader of the free world, the other a Communist hegemon. Life in Cold War America was punctuated by fears over periodic flashpoints in Berlin and Cuba, duck-and-cover school drills, the blare of civil defense sirens, and stockpiling of food and water in basement bomb shelters. It seemed that this bi-polar world, governed by the aptly named arms strategy, MAD (Mutually Assured Destruction), would never end—if we were lucky. Nuclear annihilation, as portrayed in Hollywood classics like *Fail Safe* and *On the Beach*, appeared to be the only alternative.

Yet as George H. W. Bush took the oath of office on January 20, 1989, a new, much better outcome loomed just beyond the horizon. The preceding Reagan administration had encouraged Soviet General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev’s agenda of economic reform (*perestroika*) and
political openness (glasnost). Divided over the Soviet leader's motivations, the Bush foreign-policy and defense team initially moved deliberately toward the U.S.S.R. The team conducted a thorough review of American Cold War strategies and tactics. In Central America, where Soviet efforts to expand Communist regimes were losing steam, President Bush ordered humanitarian aid to the Contras in Nicaragua. Within a year, a free election there defeated the Marxist regime.

No event could have so perfectly symbolized the Cold War's waning days, however, than the fall of the Berlin Wall in late 1989. President Bush led the Western allies, and his own advisors, in calling for reunification of Germany. Just after the wall’s toppling, the president and his Soviet counterpart met at the summit in Malta. As rough seas threatened the meeting’s naval logistics, Bush reassured Gorbachev with promises that the U.S. would not undermine his position in the world. President Bush also noted that he had not gloated, at the Soviets’ expense, over the historic events in Berlin.

The wall’s collapse foreshadowed the Iron Curtain’s imminent downfall. Poland, Hungary, Bulgaria, and Czechoslovakia—all forced into the Soviet orbit after World War II—experienced peaceful revolutions and ousters of their Communist authoritarian regimes. Only Romania underwent a bloody coup to remove its brutal Stalinist dictator. Meanwhile, the U.S.S.R.’s republics, starting with the Baltic states, began moving toward independence from Moscow. The Warsaw Pact (the Soviet bloc’s counter alliance to NATO) was rapidly deteriorating. Its demise provided President Bush with the rationale to sign landmark agreements with the Soviet Union (Conventional Forces in Europe Treaty and Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty I and II). Bush also persuaded Gorbachev to support the ouster of Saddam Hussein’s Iraqi forces from Kuwait in the Persian Gulf War of 1991.

Later that year, Gorbachev faced challenges from rival Boris Yeltsin, the new democratically elected president of Russia, and a coup attempt from hard-liners in the faltering Communist Party. The brash Yeltsin foiled the takeover, climbing aboard a tank in front of the Parliament to prove his steadfast defiance of the military and KGB conspirators. Gorbachev’s leadership and the U.S.S.R. itself could not survive these centrifugal forces. By New Year’s Day 1992 Gorbachev had left office, and the Soviet Union no longer existed. The once unimaginable had occurred. The Cold War was over, and the United States had emerged victorious.

GATES We did not disagree with the dominant [Bush] administration position that they had to deal with Gorbachev and that he was a productive interlocutor for the United States government. He was doing a lot of things that we wanted to see happen. But, I think Condi [Rice] and I were much more pessimistic about Gorbachev’s prospects for success, particularly when it came to economic reform and managing ethnic conflict, than others. In fact, I think we were pretty confident that he’d fail. So, we thought, the question was, how much can you get done, how much business can you get done with Gorbachev, how much can you get out of him that serves our interests before he crashes and burns? On that the administration was all agreed. But Condi and I felt very strongly that we ought to be opening up and talking to other reform-minded people, and, of course,
above all Yeltsin. And so the biggest issue on which we spent a lot of time in ’89 was in trying to figure out how to get Brent [Scowcroft] and the president to at least be willing to talk to Yeltsin and to begin a dialogue with the guy. Not to denigrate Gorbachev or anything else, but just the understanding that it was dangerous to pin everything on one guy and one guy who was walking a tightrope. So that was one of the issues where we spent a lot of time.

NAFTALI How did you open the dialogue with Yeltsin.

GATES Well, he came to the U.S. to give a speech at Johns Hopkins, and after a huge, huge fight in the White House—I mean these things were all leavened with humor and so on, that was one of the nice things about it—but after arguing a lot, we got Brent to agree to see Yeltsin. And the notion was that the president would do a drop by. But we didn't tell Yeltsin he was going to see the president. We didn't make any commitments at all that he would see Yeltsin….

And Condi, this slip of a woman, takes him by the elbow, looks him right in the eye and in Russian tells him he has an appointment with General Scowcroft, “You’re going to your appointment with General Scowcroft,” and propels him down the hall and up the back stairs to Scowcroft’s office and also, at the same time, makes him leave his entire staff behind….

And he's just sort of just droning on and on about how to help Russia and so on. That was the meeting at which I noticed he was missing two fingers, something a lot of people don’t know about Yeltsin. He lost them playing with a grenade when he was a kid and that prompted the line in my book that he was still playing with grenades but with much greater effect. Of course, his countenance changed immediately when the president showed up…. But there was a good discussion. Still, he did not do well and made a pretty negative impression, both in the White House and more broadly on that trip. But that was one of the issues where Condi and I really were of similar mind. I think that Larry Eagleburger and [Richard] Cheney basically had the same view, that we ought to be reaching out more aggressively to other reformers.

GATES President Bush, to the best of my knowledge, every day he was president, read the president’s daily briefing. And any time he was in Washington, he would read it, he would have a CIA [Central Intelligence Agency] briefer bring it to him and when he was traveling I would bring it to him or Brent would. He was very disciplined about it. He would read it, he would ask a lot of questions. As I indicated with
that example about Nicaragua, he wasn’t afraid to disagree or express a different view. One telling moment, when it was fairly important, was on the Saturday before the coup in the Soviet Union, the coup attempt in August of 1990, we were in Kennebunkport [Maine] and the president and I were sitting on the deck of his house at Walker’s Point, looking out over the Atlantic and eating pancakes and he was reading the president’s daily brief and the last item, the article in the president’s daily brief was CIA’s view that there was very likely to be a coup attempt because August 20th marked the deadline for the signing of a union treaty and so, if they didn’t act before then, it would be much harder to do so.

I’ll never forget the president turning to me and chewing on his pancakes and saying, “Should I take this seriously?” And I said, “Yes, and here’s why.” So, for all of the criticism the [Central Intelligence] Agency has taken about Soviet things, on a lot of important stuff they gave the president good warning and that’s one example, but it is also the way he would interact with the PDB.

GATES So there was still a tension in January, February, March, 1989, whether Gorbachev’s rhetoric would be matched by the actions of the Soviet military, in terms of actually beginning to do those things. And it was when we began to see them moving in that direction that it then became clear that some commensurate response was required by the United States to get out in front of this. All of the governments in the west and all of the press—a lot of the
pressure that was being put on Bush to do something bold, was in considerable response to that December [1988] speech [at the United Nations] by Gorbachev. But we were waiting to see if the rhetoric would be matched by the actions. When it began to be matched by the actions, early on, long before our Soviet national security review came out, it was clear that we needed to seize the initiative. So you had these two tracks going on of basically the principals, the gang of eight—what would become the gang of eight—beginning to address some fairly bold initiatives, even as the reviews were going on because it had become clear by that time that we weren’t going to get anything productive out of the bureaucracy on any of the security directives.

NAFTALI Did you have any intelligence that would lead you to believe in that period that the Soviet military would oppose the rhetoric of the General Secretary, or was the issue for you whether Gorbachev meant what he was saying or not?

GATES I think that it was more we had seen too many instances of Gorbachev issuing dramatic directions and nothing happening. I mean, this was part of the problem with a lot of his reforms. He would announce it, particularly on the economic side, but also some on the political side, and then nothing would happen. Through inertia, through resistance, through fear of the bureaucrats that if they did it they’d be out of a job. So there were a lot of considerations associated with that, but it had more to do, I think, with not overt opposition, political opposition from the military, but whether they would in essence just try to wait him out.

NAFTALI Did you have good coverage of civil and military relations in Russia at that point?

GATES Not particularly. But we could see what they were doing on the ground with their forces.

NAFTALI You mentioned earlier that General Scowcroft had an idea for one way of solving this policy problem which was to propose the withdrawal of American and Soviet forces from Eastern Europe. Why, did he want to do that or was that a way of prodding the system forward? Do you remember?

GATES No, I think he wanted to do that. I think he saw a real opportunity. I think he saw, by late fall, 1988, it was apparent, at least in Poland, that the regimes were going to have to change in some respect in order to get cooperation to try to deal with their economic problems and that things
If you got the Soviet troops moving out of Eastern Europe, then the East Europeans would find a way to greater independence from the Soviet Union and that would then have an influence in the Soviet Union itself.

ROBERT GATES

would begin to become unraveled at that point. And I think that Brent really and truly believed there would be an opportunity to get the Soviets out. He was willing to be far more bold than anybody else. I think his initial proposal was “Let’s both take all of our troops out.” Because that would then—it was a radical reaction and I think in both his book and some of the others, and in mine in fact, I think I said I thought Cheney was going to faint or have a stroke or something. Brent said Cheney was stunned or something when he (Brent) put this on the table, but the idea was, if you got the Soviet troops moving out of Eastern Europe, then the East Europeans would find a way to greater independence from the Soviet Union and that would then have an influence in the Soviet Union itself. So I think it was a very strategic view on Brent’s part.

GATES [G]oing back to a point we were talking about much earlier, this is also all going on at the same time that Eastern Europe is liberating itself. I mean, this is the same three months in effect, October, November, December [of 1989], and so the Deputies Committee is meeting essentially every day already on Eastern Europe. We’re already beginning to think about German reunification and the implications of that. I was with Bush in September and I still believe the first time that U.S. policy toward reunification was articulated by the president was when he was asked a question about it on a domestic trip in Helena, Montana in a press conference. He was asked about German reunification and basically said that he was for it, that he trusted the Germans. I called Brent right after that and said, “Brent, we now have a policy on German reunification.” He said, “What is it?” I said, “We’re for it.” He said, “Who says so?” I said, “The President.” He said, “Oh, shit.”

NAFTALI Before we switch to another region and you get to tell a story that you’re looking forward to telling, Soviet behavior in Latin America was still a problem in this period, wasn’t it?

GATES Yes, it was. I mean it was odd. You sort of had the feeling, in contrast to during the mid ’80s, that by 1989 the Soviets’ heart really wasn’t—that they really didn’t give a shit about Latin America and it was sort of just a bureaucratic inertia in terms of continuing to be involved in Cuba. Of course, they were still sending a ton of money to Cuba. But also in Nicaragua. [James] Baker from the very beginning in his dialogues with [Andrei] Gromyko, or with [Eduard]
Shevardnadze, and even with Gorbachev, saying, “All this rhetoric and all this stuff about a whole new world and you want to do all these wonderful things. You want to be a part of the West, you want to do this, and you're still messing around in Nicaragua. What in the hell is going on here? What's the consistency here?” Their reaction was always really lame. There was no heart to it. It was sort of, “What am I going to do? I have all these bureaucrats whose jobs depend on continuing to ship this stuff and so on.” But it is clear that there were some powerful forces at work, probably in the KGB and in the foreign ministry, and in the party structure, that still felt that it was important to continue supporting these guys. You just had the feeling the senior leadership saw it as a loser but couldn't quite, you know, in keeping with the law of the conservation of enemies at home: “Why take these guys on when I'm allowing Germany to be reunified, when I'm watching Eastern Europe collapse? Do I need this fight with my own bureaucracy as well.” Finally, after some of that passed, you had the feeling they said, “Now, we can put an end to this.”

GATES What became apparent after Yeltsin was elected president of Russia was that he understood that communism was no longer an alternative for Russia. He was willing—he was really the first major leader in the Soviet Union to come around to the view that communism would no longer work and to say so. That I thought was a very important development. It was also why Cheney and Eagleburger thought Yeltsin was worth cultivating for that reason.

MCCALL But did you have a strong notion of where he might want to take Russia beyond that, or, at that point the Soviet Union?

GATES No, again, I don't think Yeltsin had a clue where he wanted to take Russia. One of the things that as an intelligence officer I spent a lot of time telling senior officials including presidents, is that it is very hard for me to forecast to you the actions of a man who doesn't know himself yet what he is going to do.

GATES Well, political scientists and historians I think will have a hard time grasping in the future that the reason that the Soviet Union was dissolved was that it was the only way Boris Yeltsin could figure out to get Gorbachev out of his job. To abolish the job, if that required abolishing the

“Brent, we now have a policy on German reunification.”
He said, “What is it?” I said, “We’re for it.”
He said, “Who says so?” I said, “The President.”

ROBERT GATES
The hatred of Yeltsin for Gorbachev was so enormous that he was prepared to dismantle the Soviet Union in order to throw Gorbachev out of a job, as Gorbachev had earlier thrown him out of a job.

ROBERT GATES

Soviet Union, so be it. That the hatred between those two guys, or the hatred of Yeltsin for Gorbachev was so enormous that he was prepared to dismantle the Soviet Union in order to throw Gorbachev out of a job, as Gorbachev had earlier thrown him out of a job.

NAFTALI When you went back to Russia as DCI [Director of Central Intelligence], it was with a different set of opportunities. Did you notice a shift in the behavior of the Russian intelligence services in 1992?

GATES No. I was under a lot of pressure from State, Baker and company, to build a more constructive relationship with the KGB or the SVRR (Foreign Intelligence Service of the Russian Federation) and what I couldn’t get them to understand was that unlike Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, where the intelligence services had all been purged after 1989, the same guys ran the Russian intelligence service that ran the Soviet intelligence service. So the only two areas in which I was willing to contemplate, or discuss cooperation with them, was on narcotics and organized crime. I figured in those areas we probably could agree on what they were and what they were about and where there was a mutual interest in doing something about it.

GATES One of the major changes that I got underway in the [U.S.’s] clandestine service was that all through the Cold War many of the people we had wanted to recruit, we could access on the diplomatic circuit. East Germans, East Europeans, the Soviets and others. And there were many opportunities in a lot of countries, particularly Third World countries where our case officers would end up playing tennis with a Soviet officer of some kind and those presented opportunities to develop and recruit agents and so on. But, in the post Cold War period, increasingly it seemed to me that our highest priority targets were not the kind of people we were going to meet in embassy cocktail receptions. That people involved in terrorism, in narcotics, in organized crime, in proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and so on, that these were people we would have to meet in a very different kind of way. Therefore, I wanted to radically change the nature of the DO away from its dependence on cover of embassies and into nonofficial cover. Now, this has huge implications for the Agency, for the Congress, for everybody and for the individuals involved.
GATES Well, I think the biggest puzzle for all of us at the time and afterward, was just how incompetently it [the attempted Soviet coup in 1991] had been carried out. There was a general sense when it was announced what had happened, that it was a fait accompli, that nothing could be done and in fact, I think President [François] Mitterrand made a public statement, accepting the new government. Scowcroft’s first comment the morning of the coup up in Kennebunkport was very querulous, it was the kind of wishy-washy comment you’d make about a coup that you wished hadn’t taken place but a government you might have to deal with and, really this is one of those places where CIA had a huge influence during the course of the day. I was down in Washington. Scowcroft and I had just switched in Kennebunkport on that Sunday and Brent called me at 11:30 that night, Sunday night: “What’s this I’m hearing about a coup in the Soviet Union?” I said, “What are you talking about?” He said, “I’ve just been watching CNN. Call the Agency and find out if they know anything.”

Well, the Agency, I think, was watching CNN too. Anyway, the Deputies Committee met first thing the next morning. Dick Kerr was talking about what hadn’t happened in terms of the alerting of military forces or movement of military forces, in terms of the fact that telephone lines, telexes, faxes, were all still up and available and many of the dissidents and potential oppositionists to the coup had not been arrested or taken into custody. So Dick sort of went through this litany. He said, “This thing may not work.” And that was really the
first indication that we had gotten that this thing was maybe not a done deal.

So I called Brent and told him and he then went back to the plane. They were on their way down from Kennebunkport. He went to the back of the plane and made a little tougher statement about the coup. Meantime, about the same time, Yeltsin sent a letter to the president and I got it in the White House. I guess it must have come in by fax or something, I don’t remember, and it was asking for help. I read that to Brent while he was on the plane. It was clear that Yeltsin was going to stand up to these guys, so all of a sudden we had a little different situation, or a substantially different situation.

...But I think that intelligence played a big role that day in making us more cautious in buying into the notion that just because the KGB, the Army, and the party had decided to launch a coup in the Soviet Union, in this day and age, didn’t necessarily mean that it would work. Now, the interesting thing is—and it is a measure of how timing plays a role—if that coup had been launched two years earlier, it probably would have worked. Just like I believe if [Yuri] Andropov had become [General] Secretary when he was twenty years younger, there’d still be a Soviet Union. Still muddling down but still there. So I’m very much into the role of individuals in making decisive impact on history.

EDWARDS Let’s talk about another topic that we talked a little bit at various times and that’s the reunification of Germany. You just mentioned the importance of the individual in history and the reunification of Germany is often seen as one of the fundamental changes that took place during the Bush administration which we could attribute to the United States in addition to broad forces in the world such as the collapse of the Soviet Union. We talked about the president establishing a policy in Montana I think it was. Could you elaborate on the actual implementation of that policy?

GATES I mean, it is a very special achievement of George Bush in my view because every other leader, East and West, was against it. The French were against it, the British were against it, the Soviets were against it, the Poles were against it, the Czechs were against it, the Hungarians were against it, the Italians were against it. We were totally isolated. And it was by, just by sheer force of personality and determination that I think Bush finally got all these people on board. He had an ally in the Soviet Union in Shevardnadze. German reunification really ripped it for Shevardnadze. He finally ran

It was by, just by sheer force of personality and determination that I think Bush finally got all these people on board.

ROBERT GATES
out his string at home on German reunification. Then, the Gulf War, and that was kind of the end for Shevardnadze. Those two things, that amounted to three strikes for him.

But, it took a lot of effort on Bush’s part, a lot of time on the telephone, a lot of time in personal meetings, to begin bringing around, above all, our European allies who did not have the same kind of faith in Germany that Bush did. And he just flat believed that the Germans had changed. I think the title of my chapter on this subject in the book is “By Faith Alone” because it was really Bush who pushed it. And the irony is, on reunification, we can talk about the speed of events and so on, just months before it happens [Helmut] Kohl says, “Well, maybe in five years we’ll get there.” So just the pace of change, and I think Bush rode that wave and in some ways directed it.

GATES Johnny Apple wrote a piece with the liberation of, with the downing of the [Berlin] wall, one of the most moving journalistic pieces I’ve ever seen and he ends it, I can’t quote it exactly, but he quoted Churchill’s line that the lights are going out all over Europe and the last line of his piece was that the lights were coming back on. I mean, it just made the hair on the back of your neck stand up.

But, it took a lot of effort on Bush’s part… to begin bringing around, above all, our European allies who did not have the same kind of faith in Germany that Bush did. And he just flat believed that the Germans had changed.

ROBERT GATES
Foreign affairs often dominated the spotlight during George H. W. Bush’s presidency, but they should not completely overshadow the domestic agenda of his White House tenure. Vice President Bush’s “no new taxes” pledge in the 1988 presidential campaign initially limited his options for lowering the ballooning deficit. He faced a classic schism on the Hill, with Republicans calling for reductions in government spending, and Democrats, who controlled both houses of Congress, clamoring for increased taxes. Succumbing to the majority party, after fevered and futile negotiations, the president relented on tax increases. Although his approval ratings would reach a high of 89 percent in the aftermath of the Gulf War’s successful prosecution, President Bush’s popularity, especially among Republicans, never recovered from the tax hikes he finally approved in the 1990 federal budget.

President Bush was also closer to Democrats’ agenda on the environment; he supported the 1990 Clean Air Amendments that addressed the problems of acid rain by offering economic incentives to companies. In addition, the president sponsored and signed into law the landmark Americans with Disabilities Act in 1990, the broadest civil rights legislation since 1964. It mandated accessibility for the handicapped to businesses, transportation, and public
accommodations. In response to several Supreme Court rulings narrowing the reach of civil rights legislation, Congress passed the Civil Rights Act of 1991, and President Bush signed it into law, after having vetoed an earlier version for fear that it would impose minority hiring quotas on employers.

MCCLURE We didn’t do a very good job, frankly, of getting the President to say the kinds of things he needed to say to get beyond that “no new taxes” pledge. I mean in retrospect, it could have been a Clinton approach, “I’m sorry. I did it. Okay. Things have changed. I didn’t mean it. Now, let’s go on down the road.” We didn’t do that. And we did a very poor job of communicating what we did because as a practical matter, I think it was outside the realm of what was contemplated with the “no new taxes” pledge.

YOUNG Well, it guaranteed a different kind of media attention to what was going on out there: shades of the smoke-filled room, where a deal was being done. There was some of that spin put on it in the press.

MCCLURE And that was the Camp David analogy I’m trying to make in the sense that it’s away, it’s very important, it’s very special. Now, despite the fact that we took some big
hits on that politically—I don’t believe, by the way, that that’s the reason George Bush lost ultimately in 1992.

I think it probably was a factor that contributed it, but I do not think it was substantial enough to cause his loss in 1992. That said, the other thing about that 1990 budget agreement, the one that we ultimately got in round two with the floors and the ceilings in terms of defense spending and all those kinds of things in the appropriations process, was that it ultimately was a very good thing.

**YOUNG** Well, I think this is a really important perspective here because given all the things that you have discussed earlier about how you patrolled the beat, your eyes and ears, and worked this and worked that, and had a feel for the pulse and the trends in the House, it looks like this was entirely missing in the budget deal. That is, this wasn’t evolving from the people who knew the beat and were involved in the beat. Really? It was a high-level deal being put together by—

**MCCLURE** There’s another piece, too, that you have to work into the equation, which is how many times do you want the President to make a phone call when he keeps getting a no. You have to balance whether or not there truly is a chance that you can change this or that member’s mind by getting a phone call from the President, or is it just one of these things where you give the President nine names, you’re kind of down to these are your nine guys on the fence, and every single one—By the time he gets to about the sixth, he’s thinking, *Why in the hell am I doing this? These guys are going to tell me no.* And you have to remember, the President has feelings, too, and frankly he doesn’t like making phone calls and getting those kinds of responses. He got enough of that when he was Vice President, and now it’s, *Why am I having to do this now? I’m President.*

So you do have to conserve the President’s capital. A lot of times we did it in meetings. He said, “Okay, let’s just get 30 minutes of time and get these guys in a room.” And you put together a group of guys who are going to totally support the President and are just gung-ho cheerleaders and get a few guys who are in there wavering, and make them start putting pressure on each other there in front of the President. Get a couple of Cabinet members or right guys there on a particular issue and you create a dynamic, a group-think kind of a deal that herds them along. And then you have people already set up from in that group to go out and drag them before the microphone and do a statement that was very positive; plant a few questions with the media to make sure that the guys on the media side of the microphones ask the right questions and ergo, these guys get called. Not an unusual occurrence at all in that process.
Or I’d call some of my media guys on the Hill and get them to scare up these guys. “Go ask so-and-so this question.” And they would because there was always something in it for the media guys. It’s not that they did what I asked them to do, but it was, *Oh, I may be getting a lead on something here, this is pretty cool.* They’d do it and I would have already told them where we’re headed, and so it would kind of work that way. That’s all the President’s got.

Now there are those who would accuse the President of squandering his popularity—particularly at the end of the Persian Gulf War when his approval rating was 70 or 80, whatever the percentage was he ultimately got to—and that he should have been able to use that for other purposes, to ride it on to the election in November; sustain it from ’91 all the way until ’92, through ’92. And I had some votes that took place after the Persian Gulf War because I was there until February of ’92.

Maybe I’m being defensive by making this comment, but I don’t think so. I think it’s difficult to take the popularity associated with prosecuting a war, if you will, like we did and then turn around and use that and say, “Now you’ve got to vote for my nominee to be Supreme Court Justice because I’m a stud.”

**MCCLURE** The problem with the civil rights legislation—or the challenge of the civil rights legislation—is that we got somewhat boxed in because it was named civil rights legislation. It really wasn’t. What it really was, was this arcane “Who was going to have the burden of proof in cases that arose under Title VII, or IX?” And the issue became who was going to have the burden of proof and what standard of proof they had to reach—preponderance, or whatever—to get relief. And whether the bad guys had to go first versus the good guys had to go first. And it got turned into this civil rights legislation, as it was denominated. We spent a lot of time dealing with the issue from that perspective, which is what made it difficult.

I remember one day, the congressional black caucus came down and wanted to present a petition to the President, which implored him not to veto whatever version was coming through. They come, park, and get dumped off by the northwest gate of the White House. And the guys in the congressional black caucus, like, “Oh, God. They’re going to come to demand the President visit with them. Oh, this is going to be bad.” They actually called my office and said, “We want to see you, McClure.” I thought, *Awwww! From my office I could look out and see the front gate, so I walked up the driveway—and needless to say all the cameras were flashing and stuff—and I walked outside the gate. And my buddies who were in the Secret Service were looking at me like, “McClure, do you know what you’re doing? These guys are going to kill you or something.”

So I go out, greet the members of the caucus, get presented with this petition. Somebody says something to me and I say, “Thank y’all very much. I’ll make sure the President gets it.” And I go back into the White House and I’m done. That must have been on a Thursday, or—It must have been a Friday because the President went to Camp David that weekend. And I got a phone call very early that morning from him…. And the President awakens me at home…. [H]e was really concerned…. “Did you see the paper this morning?” And I said, “No, Sir, I’m not up yet. I haven’t gone
out to see it.” He said, “Well, we probably need to talk, but I’m just going to go ahead and tell you that I hope that this is not putting you in a very difficult position because of what we’re doing on the civil rights legislation.” Because he’d gotten his Washington Post already up at Camp David and saw me above the fold receiving this petition from the members of the congressional black caucus. And he cared deeply enough about me personally that he called to inquire about my emotional well-being as a result of what I was doing on his behalf.

There’s also an excerpt in his most recent book, the letters book, of a letter that he hand-wrote to me in the middle of that whole process. It relates how he hoped he was doing the right thing and how grateful he was that people like me and Lou Sullivan and Connie Newman and other high-profile, high-ranking blacks in his administration were continuing to support him. And he hoped that there was not a level of discomfort about the positions that he had taken.

MCCLURE Was the breaking of the “no new taxes” pledge, in terms of George Bush’s presidency, a defining moment? No, I don’t think so. I think it may have contributed to what ultimately happened in the election in 1992, but I don’t think it was a defining moment. I think in retrospect, the defining moment for him, at least from a policy standpoint,
was the whole Persian Gulf thing…. Now, despite the fact that I think we kept the economy from going into a much deeper recession as a result of the budget thing, on which we busted our tails and lost the impetus—It didn’t get there fast enough, but it did some things in that it helped define how government watches its spending and appropriates its dollars. Those are good things. However, it will never be considered a defining moment, I think, for the President. He will always be defined by the way he successfully prosecuted the war…. But that was a difficult time and the President was particularly pained by those decisions that he had to make in terms of the Civil Rights Act. I know that for a fact. And he didn’t think he was doing anything wrong, don’t get me wrong. It was because of how he was being portrayed because he was not affixing his signature or was vetoing something that had Civil Rights Act associated with it. And he had been, for example, active with civil rights groups going back to when he was in college.

MCCLURE I think, upon reflection, he had a successful relationship with Congress. One of the things he brought to the table was he couldn’t play like he was an outsider, like Ronald Reagan was able to—he wasn’t playing like it, but Ronald Reagan said he was. Bush was not an outsider. He’d been in town most of his life. The other thing is he was the last of the World War II generation to be President of the United States,
which I think made him especially useful given the stuff that went on during the four years that he served as President.

The whole democracy thing that was going on was a really challenging—the reunification of Germany. All this stuff was going on while we still did the war, and I can’t think of a better positioned guy who had had the experience that he had to be able to go through those things. I think he got a bum rap on his attention to domestic policy-related items. I think we had a number of successes. No, it wasn’t the thing that he got up every morning and just started thinking about. But then on the other hand, he didn’t run on those things. And the things that he did run on were things that we successfully prosecuted early on: Clean Air, the whole ADA thing—which was a huge thing in our front-end of the process—and some other domestic policy initiatives.

MCCLURE ...Depending on how you want to define “getting in the gutter with domestic politics.” He didn’t mind the give-and-take associated with that. He preferred to do the foreign stuff a little bit more, yes, that’s true. But he would go do the other things that we asked him to do in that regard. I don’t remember in any specific nature him ever being so reluctant that he failed to do what we asked him to do. But I think once he became President it was, “Okay, it’s time for me to be the steward of government. I need to govern, and I need to lead, and this ain’t personal, but this is moving us down the direction that I think we ought to go. And so here we go. And Congress, you may be a distraction, but I know I have to deal with you because I used to be one of you.”

MCCLURE  And there will probably be some next generation that we don’t even fathom, as we sit here today, that will change the way a President deals with the Congress, whether or not it’s his ability to go over their head and go to the people and get the people to go and do things for him, or whether or not it’s personal persuasion because of a long-term relationship, not unlike what LBJ [Lyndon B. Johnson] used to do. And as we go forward, I think that things will change. One thing won’t change, though, as we go forward and that’s the fact that as long as we continue to have the form of government we have, we’re going to have 535 people on one side of the equation versus one person on the other side of the equation that has to make this work. And as long as people are a part of the process, there’s a way to get through it and to be productive in a sensible way.
In these interview excerpts, Attorney General Richard Thornburgh discusses the selection of George H. W. Bush’s two U.S. Supreme Court nominees.

President Bush received two opportunities in successive years, 1990 and 1991, to nominate an associate justice to the high tribunal. On July 20, 1990, Justice William J. Brennan, Jr., unexpectedly announced his retirement from the U.S. Supreme Court. At age eighty-four Brennan had been in declining health, but he had remained a vigorous member of the Court and a formidable creator of majority coalitions through its 1989 term. Indeed, he had fashioned majorities (albeit slim ones) for the dwindling liberal bloc in recent cases involving flag-burning and affirmative action. Yet Justice Brennan, who had served as an Eisenhower appointee since 1956, suffered a slight stroke early in the summer of 1990, and his physician urged him to accept the inevitable. He reluctantly announced his retirement, citing the burdens of the Court on his fragile health.

David Souter first appeared on the White House radar screen when U.S. Senator Warren Rudman (R.-N.H.) phoned President Bush’s Chief of Staff John Sununu, the former governor of the Granite State, who had named Souter to the New Hampshire Supreme Court. Rudman, a former New Hampshire attorney general, recommended his friend and protégé, David Souter, who had served as his deputy attorney general in Concord, for a seat on the U.S. First Circuit Court of
Appeals in Boston. Thought to be a moderate conservative, with a stellar scholastic record at Harvard (for both undergraduate and law degrees) and Oxford (as a Rhodes Scholar), Souter received Bush’s nomination to the First Circuit and began serving in May 1990.

A year later, in June 1991, an aging and frail Justice Thurgood Marshall announced his retirement from the Supreme Court, where he had served as the tribunal’s first and only black member since his historic appointment by President Lyndon Johnson in 1967. Now the high court would be without its two leading liberal voices of the past several decades. In addition, African Americans saw the Marshall position on the Court as the “black seat,” in the tradition of seats reserved for Catholics, Jews, and geographic constituencies over the Court’s history.

In 1990 President Bush had appointed Clarence Thomas, a prominent conservative African-American lawyer in the Reagan administration, to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Washington, D.C. Circuit, a well-known professional stepping stone to the Supreme Court. A graduate of the College of the Holy Cross and Yale Law School, Thomas had a compelling, up-from-poverty personal story. He served during the Reagan presidency as assistant secretary for civil rights in the U.S. Department of Education and then as chairman of the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

RICHARD THORNBURGH

One of the things that the President, in our first meeting, laid down as a requirement is that we be prepared to act on any Supreme Court vacancies. We took that very seriously and began immediately the process of compiling what you might call hit lists, prospect lists of people who might be appropriate for consideration, and turning loose our intellectual fire power. A lot of it centered in OLC [Office of Legal Counsel], to compile reviews of the published writings of these individuals, opinions if they were judges, and short of the FBI background—

THORNBURGH Can you describe how that list was compiled? Did you and Boyden [Gray] sit down together, or who did it? How was it done?

THORNBURGH No, I think our staffs worked together on it. I didn’t see the list until the time came to utilize it. It wasn’t something I was personally involved in.

THORNBURGH I don’t know about putting the list together, but I know about fleshing it out in terms of substance—it was done in the department. I rather suspect there was a lot of interchange back and forth between the department’s staff and the counsel’s office and various other
outsiders. Senators had views and so did other people. But the upshot of that was that in both cases, in Justice Brennan’s retirement and Justice Marshall’s retirement, they came completely out of the blue. There was no forewarning. But one of the great sources of pride to our department was that the very next day we had the proverbial black books on the President’s desk and they were fully fleshed out in terms of substantive matters.

RILEY The black books that you presented to the President contained what?

THORNBURGH Oh, what you’d want to have. What I would have wanted to have if I were in the Governor’s office. Biographical material, samples of writings, assessments made by individuals, bar—not background investigation, this is all record stuff.

MEADOR Did they go to the White House with any recommendation from you?

THORNBURGH No. We wanted it played—unless asked, we were determined to just staff the operation. In both cases—in Justice Thomas’s recommendation, that is Thurgood Marshall’s retirement, it was a reprise and a lot simpler. But let me just continue as to how the process worked. We took these eight or ten names, gave them to—and come to think of it, I don’t think Boyden had seen those before then either, so maybe it was all done within the department. But in any event, they went to the President, went to Boyden over the weekend.…

MEADOR Were you part of that narrowing down process between Friday and Sunday?

THORNBURGH No.

RILEY Do you know who would have been?

THORNBURGH I suspect, yes, I think the President, the Vice President, chief of staff.

BAKER White House counsel?

THORNBURGH Well, I think he more or less staffed that, because it was a political decision. It really is. A political decision that, if it’s headed in the wrong direction, the lawyers had the responsibility to say, “Wait a minute, this is a bad—”

MEADOR You say it was narrowed to two. Are you at liberty to say who those two were?

THORNBURGH Yes, it was a matter of public notice. It was David Souter and Edith Jones.

MEADOR That happened in the space of two or three days?

THORNBURGH Yes.

MEADOR That has always been an assumption—and my recollection of this may be faulty—there was sort of a widespread assumption that Ken Starr was going to be it. Can you explain what happened to that?

THORNBURGH No, I can’t really explain it. He was given consideration.

BAKER He was on the short list?

RILEY We’ve actually had testimony elsewhere that he was on the short list.
THORNBURGH  Okay, all right, then. I just want to be sensitive to the person. Yes, he was, he was. And Clarence was on the short list that went over. Those are four names, I'm going to end up telling you who they all are if I can remember. Interestingly enough, as I point out in the manuscript, on Sunday we had a meeting at the White House and the Vice President, Boyden, myself and Sununu met with the President and it was clear—now with two names. And the straw poll that was taken by the President ended up in a totally unpredictable way. Boyden and I supported Souter, and Quayle and Sununu ended up supporting Edith Jones…. There wasn't any prolonged discussion about it. My sense, my own thinking was that Edith was just, had a little too much of a hard edge to her for her to be an easy confirm.… Souter was more—rode easier in the saddle.

MEADOR  Let me ask you this, at that meeting, that Sunday, was there any effort at all, any suggestion of resurrecting some other name, apart from those two?

THORNBURGH  The President, we were coming out of the Oval Office, at that time, he said, “What about you,” he said, pointing to me. It was at that time that I think I was at my nadir. I said, “Not today, Mr. President. This isn’t the time.” It was very thoughtful of him, indicative of the kind of guy he was. He just really was the most thoughtful person. But my name was not seriously—it was like the vice presidency, it wasn’t really in there.

THORNBURGH  I didn't tout anybody off Clarence. At that time, it just evolved very quickly that these were the two top choices and I think Souter was kind of fore-ordained.

MEADOR  According to accounts I remember reading, it seems to me that Warren Rudman weighed in heavily on Souter.

THORNBURGH  Absolutely, he did.

MEADOR  Didn’t Sununu also come in strong? You said he voted for Edith Jones?

THORNBURGH  Edith Jones, yes.

MEADOR  In this short space of time—you’re speaking of two or three or four days—how much opportunity was there for anybody to weigh in on this from the outside, like Rudman?

THORNBURGH  You know Warren Rudman?

MEADOR  Only by reputation.

RILEY  Enough said.

THORNBURGH  To ask that question answers it.

THORNBURGH  And the whole notion of litmus test is a total myth, and I’ll tell you why it’s a total myth. For everybody who is appointed to a federal judgeship there are four or five people who don’t get the appointment. You’re telling me that none of those people would be out shooting their mouths off to the press if they had been asked inappropriate questions and not appointed? Come on. We just, we very carefully avoided the notion of, “How are you going to rule on Roe v. Wade?” or “How do you feel about gun control?” things like this. We just kept our legal blinders on, assessing—obviously people, attitudes about the judiciary’s role, whether we weren’t going to appoint somebody who was
going to be a judicial activist, we weren’t going to recommend that kind of an appointment. But none of those, we didn’t get into the political side at all.

Now, that’s not to say the President didn’t, and certainly not to say the President shouldn’t, because it is one of his lasting legacies. But it was not part of our role in the Department of Justice.

THORNBURGH …[L]et me segue into the Marshall vacancy because I think it fleshes out the process a little bit more. We went through the same kind of procedure. As I recall, that was also a Thursday resignation. Again, caught us theoretically unprepared, but we had the books. I remember, the one thing I do remember is the President was bound for…Kennebunkport and Clarence, for obvious reasons, jumped to the front because of the racial factor. It was very difficult to avoid. Not that there’s a black seat or a whatever seat, but it was entirely appropriate. By that time he had had a degree of seasoning on the D.C. Circuit and it was a pretty short meeting. We went through the usual suspects and I think the consensus was that Clarence was the choice. Now I get to my dust up with Boyden.

I was frankly worried about Clarence’s ability to survive the ABA [American Bar Association] process, which even in its watered-down form was still in effect. Not for any deficiency on his part, but the fact that his judicial experience was so limited, and that was a big factor. So I just counseled some caution in making the selection. The President was up in Kennebunkport, we reported to him by phone and before he had left we raised the prospect of considering some Hispanic-
American appointee as a kind of Clarence Thomas-like. I don’t mean that in racial characteristics, but it would have some of the same appeal that Clarence would have, but with a little less controversy. Boyden was very close to Clarence, much closer than I, but we both thought highly of Clarence.

Boyden was very much afraid for some reason that I was out to torpedo Clarence, which was the furthest thing in the world from my mind. We had quite a short but intense confrontation over that. When we called up to the President, the President said, “Well, look at the Hispanic candidates and interview some of them,” and this was on Saturday, I recall. He was up in Kennebunkport and we were over in my office, Boyden and I and a couple of other folks…. What we did do was look at the Hispanic-American candidates who were in the array, and there weren’t many of them. We had Judge [Emilio] Garza come to the—he was on the Fifth Circuit—had him fly to Washington on Sunday and we interviewed him. He was very agreeable, very talented, but even less seasoned than Clarence in terms of being able to cope with a Supreme Court seat. So we kind of decided that Clarence was really the best choice that we had, and transmitted that to the President then on Sunday afternoon. Arrangements were made for Clarence and myself and Boyden and Virginia, Thomas’s wife, to fly up to Kennebunkport the next day where the President made the announcement.

THORNBURGH Now to back up a little bit, back to Clarence Thomas. Was the ABA evaluation of Clarence Thomas unfair in your opinion or did it reflect some of your concerns that he was seen as less seasoned?

THORNBURGH As a matter of fact, I think they gave him a qualified ranking, didn’t they? Dan, do you remember?

BAKER Yes, I think they did but it wasn’t a very qualified because of his being new.

THORNBURGH Those gradations don’t make much sense. But I think Clarence got a fair shake. Everybody knew he had limited experience on the bench. I think if he had been found unqualified there would have been a great hue and cry because just three or four years before that they had found him qualified to sit on the D.C. Circuit.

BAKER Right.

THORNBURGH Clarence’s problems didn’t come around because of the ABA. They came around because of, for better or worse—what’s her name—Anita Hill.
MEADOR  Anita Hill. There was some criticism about this point. I wondered if you have an observation on it. When President Bush announced his nomination at Kennebunkport, he used the phrase, “the best qualified person,” or words to that effect. He got criticized on that by saying that Thomas may be qualified, but he’s sure not the very best you can find. What was the origin of the President’s statement on that point and do you have anything to say about it?

THORNBURGH  I was there and I kind of did a double take. I think what he meant, sotto voce, or with a wink of the eye, was that this was the best qualified African-American candidate we could find. And I think he’s right. He really—this man, you have no idea of the decency of this guy. I mean, he really feels these issues of racial equity and disability rights and things. He desperately wanted to make an appointment of an African-American. But he wasn’t going to appoint a Democrat. I mean, that’s just crazy. So, that’s the best—he was saying it’s the best we can do. It’s too bad. I mean, I’m saying this, not him. It was not a terribly credible statement.

THORNBURGH  I mean, some of the people who went to such lengths to discredit Clarence Thomas turned out to be the same people who supported Bill Clinton over much more egregious conduct, so you tell me who is kidding whom here. This is all partisan.

RILEY  We occasionally get testimony from people about their impressions of the two justices that you were involved in putting on the Court, sort of post-facto evaluations. Do you have any comments to make about Souter? Have there been surprises?

THORNBURGH  I think Souter turned out to be much more liberal than those involved in the selection process anticipated. I remain very fond of him as an individual. He was a perfectly delightful person and very bright and able, but I am somewhat saddened by the fact that he seems to have gotten into—his votes become too predictable for his own good, I think. One of the characteristics of great justices in my mind has always been that they surprise you every once in a while. I think he’s become identified with a liberal—the four votes—

RILEY  Can I ask you the same question about Clarence Thomas that I asked about Souter? Has he been a surprise in any way?

THORNBURGH  No, I think Clarence is—he is always somewhat predictable but I think he was felt to be somewhat predictable. A solid, conservatively oriented vote.
As the Bush administration addressed the decline of the Soviet bloc, and its implications for the “New World Order,” the president faced a more immediate foreign policy crisis in the Middle East. On the first of August 1990, Saddam Hussein launched a blitzkrieg across Iraq’s southern border against Kuwait, seizing its rich oil fields. Within twenty-four hours, Iraq’s forces, with 120,000 troops and nearly one thousand tanks, overran the tiny emirate.

Saddam’s blatant aggression stunned the president and his national security team. Just three days after the Iraqi invasion, President Bush ordered a build-up of American military forces in Saudi Arabia, which appeared to be Saddam’s next target. On August 5 President Bush unequivocally declared, “This will not stand, this aggression against Kuwait.” The administration began assembling a military and financial coalition of allies around the world to oppose Iraq’s occupation of its sovereign neighbor. The U.S. strategy included pressing the United Nations Security Council to pass resolutions in support of Kuwait’s defense. At home, the Bush administration persuaded Congress to authorize the president to repel Iraqi forces from Kuwait.
On January 17, 1991, the U.S. and its allies launched Operation Desert Storm, with unrelenting air attacks on Iraqi targets. Saddam retaliated by raining down SCUD rockets, fired from mobile launchers, on Israel. Five weeks later, with Saddam refusing to concede unconditionally, President Bush ordered the ground invasion by U.S. Marines to commence in Kuwait. After only 100 hours, with the Iraqis expelled from the emirate and retreating over their border, President Bush called a halt to the allied offense. He had hoped that defeat of Iraq’s forces would topple the brutal dictator, but Saddam remained in power.

The president’s decision to stop short of invading Baghdad and deposing Saddam would engender both criticism and kudos. Yet the allies had retaken the Kuwait oil fields (though not before the Iraqis maliciously set them ablaze) and defended Saudi Arabia from almost certain Iraqi aggression, with a minimum of American casualties. When Shiites and Kurds revolted against Saddam’s regime in the wake of the Iraqi defeat, however, he massacred thousands of his opponents and precipitated a massive humanitarian crisis.

William Barr

On the Legal Issues Surrounding the Gulf War

BARR So I went over to the meeting. It was one of these out-of-body experiences, because any constitutional lawyer would love to be asked this question under these circumstances. The President said, “Bill”—and I’m sure part of this was display. I realized that, and therefore answered accordingly. There was no doubt in my mind that he could do it.

He said, “Bill, I’ve been reading these articles. This op-ed piece the other day said I don’t have the authority to launch an attack on the Iraqis. What’s your view, what’s the Justice Department’s view on whether I have the authority?” I’m sort of flattered that he asked me a cold question without having discussed it with me first, because it meant he knew what answer I was going to give him.

I said, “Mr. President, there’s no doubt that you have the authority to launch an attack.” I explained why I thought he did under the Constitution as Commander-in-Chief, and I gave him some different theories. After saying he could do it, I gave him a secondary theory—which I was sort of proud of at the time, it was a bootstrap argument. I said, “Now another reason here, Mr. President, is—even for the critics who would say that that wasn’t true—that there’s no doubt that you have the authority to put 500,000 troops in the field.”
Congress authorized—through the approval of the UN resolutions, and through their authorization and all that stuff, Congress has definitely approved you putting 500,000 troops over there face-to-face with the Iraqi Army.

“We have intelligence that they have weapons of mass destruction—chemical weapons, biological weapons—and your job as Commander-in-Chief is to make sure those troops are not preemptively attacked. If you feel as Commander-in-Chief that in order to protect your Army in the field you have to launch first, you absolutely can do that.” Which I thought was an ingenious argument, because that means if you can get your troops there, you can.

I said, “However, Mr. President, even though you have the power to do this unilaterally, without any consultation with Congress or what have you, you certainly would be in a better position, the strongest possible position, if Congress did pass a resolution. It would not be the law. It wouldn’t be a statute authorizing you to do it, but a resolution supporting what you did.”

The reason I say that is because on the Hill at that point they were actually talking about passing a resolution that said the opposite, that he could not use force unless he got their approval. There were some in the administration who were saying, “Just let them do it, screw them, ignore them, and let them pass whatever they want.”

I said, “I think it’s better to get up there and engage, to get up there and see if we can head off that kind of resolution and, in fact, get a resolution in support of it.” He said, “Well, suppose they pass a resolution saying I cannot do it. What impact does that have?” I said, “It’s irrelevant. It’s not a statute. It’s just an expression of opinion. They can’t change the Constitution by expressing their opinion on the matter. I would say you could still do it.”

“But,” I said, “I think, under Justice [Robert H.] Jackson’s opinion in Youngstown, if Congress is with you on this and does something supportive, then you’re in your strongest possible position. But even if they don’t, I think you’re okay.”

And Cheney said, “You’re giving him political advice, not legal advice.” I said, “No, I’m giving him both political and legal advice. They’re really sort of together when you get to this level.” Then there was a debate as to whether he should get up on the Hill and push. I was saying he should, and Boyden Gray was saying he should. There were others who were opposed. Eventually he made the decision after that meeting that he would. The White House went full bore on that vote and got the vote turned around, and then ultimately won the vote.

On the End of the War

BARR Well, there was discussion, but I wasn’t a party to the real discussion. I’m sure it took place in the Oval Office with Cheney, Powell, and Baker. I think the big picture actually is that he was right in that decision. If you look at it from this standpoint: I think a big part of what he was doing was establishing a doctrine and an approach to using military
You define your objectives in advance, you have the discipline to stick to them, use the force to achieve them at minimum cost to American lives. And then have the discipline to say when you’ve won, and declare victory. He never articulated the objective as overthrowing Saddam Hussein. It was always to liberate Kuwait.

Now, I do believe that part of the objective was to destroy the Iraqi war-making capability as much as we could, and we did. But I believe that a lot of the good of Desert Storm could have been undone if we had a protracted period of scurrying around fighting a guerilla war in Iraq, looking around for Saddam Hussein the way we spent two weeks looking around for Noriega in tiny Panama. I think we could have suffered more casualties. Our objective would have become more muddled.

What are we trying to do here? Replace a government? Replace it with what? Are we going to occupy this place? What’s our objective once we start running around? Now, I don’t think he was adverse to—in the context of the operation—trying to knock off Saddam Hussein. I think there were probably Cruise Missiles shot at places where they thought he was. But we weren’t able to get him. Once the military objective was achieved, I think it was probably right to stop.

**Fred McClure**

**On Getting Support from Congress**

**MCCLURE** And after the congressional meeting, while everybody was milling, the President was getting ready to go back into the Oval [Office] from the Cabinet Room, he turned to me and said, “Fred, come in. I want to talk to you for a second.”

So I followed him back into the Oval Office. Every time we had one of these meetings, particularly when it was a partisan Republican meeting as opposed to a bipartisan meeting, everybody—Just like I said, there’s a political side of doing what we were doing. So he pulls me into the Oval and he says, “Okay, tell me. Do I have enough votes? These guys are beating up on me. I don’t want war powers, but do I have enough votes to get a resolution out of the Congress to let me do what I think I’m going to have to do?” And I looked at him and I said, “No. We don’t have enough public support.” I said, “I haven’t done the numbers, haven’t checked it out, haven’t done any kind of survey, haven’t had my guys test it. But I don’t think you can do it.”

**MCCLURE** He was asking if we had enough votes and I said, “No. We don’t have enough votes. I haven’t checked it out. I can go do so, but I don’t think you can do it.” And my deal to him was the following, “At this point, Mr. President, the best you can do is we can figure out how to—this is the only thing I can come up with—word something in the negative. Veto it. I can sustain a veto, but I don’t know that
you want to send men and women off to war with 32 votes.” Period. “So we’ve got work to do if you’re ready to go to Congress to do something.” And needless to say, we went in January. But we got Congress out of town. The President had the platform all to himself. We had the Christmas holidays and—

**DICKINSON** You got the troop build-up.

**MCCLURE** …The President had been hanging out at Camp David, the troops were moving, we were getting close to January. I walk back into my office the first day back. I get there early, about an hour before the staff meeting. There was this one envelope on my desk because I’d cleaned it before I left. And it was, “To be opened by,” an eyes-only kind of a deal.

I open it up, and in it is a personally typed memo from Camp David on stationery to me and Sununu and Scowcroft that basically says, “I want a resolution. This is what I want it to be.” And he had the first draft, which he had typed on his typewriter that day. That’s when Ginny Lampley and I knew what our marching orders were for the next few days. Ultimately that piece of paper became the beginning of the United Nations thing that we did that was short of a
declaration of war, but allowed us to do the UN stuff. And that happened in January.

DICKINSON I was surprised to hear you say that in that October-November time frame you just didn’t have the votes, that public support wasn’t there, as well.

MCCLURE We didn’t. We could not have gotten support for that resolution in October-November.

KNOTT Did you, yourself, have a sense that the President wanted to go anyway?

MCCLURE At that moment? When he asked me that question? No.

. . . . .

MCCLURE I think his view was, “I’m going to do this. I would like to have Congress behind me in this process, but I don’t need them to do this because as Commander-in-Chief, I declare that this is of such a nature that I can do it whether they like it or not. We’ll deal with the consequences afterwards, but I have got to do something. This aggression will not stand,” or whatever. “This too,” whatever, “will not stand.”

I believe very strongly that he was going to do it whether he got the support of Congress or not, but that he made the rational decision that it would be better if he had the support of Congress, which is why he was asking me this question in late fall, “Can I do it?” And I said, “You ain’t got the votes.” Once we got Congress out of town and the President got the stage to himself, got the tanks rolling down, and our guys building up with [Colin] Powell and Cheney and all those guys and Baker, we could do what we did and we were able to pull it off at the end.

HENRY CATTO

On Margaret Thatcher’s Urging the U.S. to Counter Iraq’s Invasion of Kuwait

CATTO At the meeting in our living room in Woody Creek, Colorado, there was simply no doubt in my mind that he was affronted and intended to do something about this, that it just wouldn’t do. And the British, I think—pulling Uncle Sam’s beard a little bit—wanted to make it look as if it hadn’t been for Maggie [Thatcher] Bush wouldn’t have acted—and I just don’t believe that.
ROBERT GATES

On Bush’s Decision to Go to War in Iraq

GATES The reason that Bush felt as strongly as he did, in my view, was not jobs and not oil, but I think he believed very deeply that the world had a new opportunity with the collapse of the Soviet Union and to allow an unprovoked aggression to stand would have set a terrible precedent and wrecked whatever opportunity there was for structuring a new world order in the aftermath of the forty-year-long Cold War. So I think it was for mainly strategic reasons and his view of the future that Bush felt so deeply about invading, about reversing the consequences.

GATES I will tell you one story I don’t know if anybody else has told, and that is the story about the meeting where the president, the famous October 30th meeting, when the president is briefed on the offensive strategy and what it would take, because I’ll never forget it.

The president had been pushing very hard for an offensive strategy and the truth, to throw Saddam out of Kuwait. And the truth of the matter is that the military, the chiefs were very content with the deployment of 200,000 to 215,000 troops to Saudi Arabia that essentially protected Saudi Arabia, and they had no enthusiasm for an offensive effort to throw Saddam out. And the president kept pushing and pushing and pushing and finally the military agreed to put together a plan and come over and see us. This was during—and they came over with their briefing. And [Norman] Schwarzkopf’s deputy gave the briefing. Colin was there, it was the gang of eight plus the briefer who was Schwarzkopf’s deputy.

In a shortened version, what happened was—My experience with the military over the years has been that they are so accustomed, after Vietnam, to civilians wanting to use military force that any time a president demands a contingency plan to consider, the military puts together a force that is so overwhelming that the president will balk at the cost and at the disruption and everything else and not do it. This is exactly what happened when President Reagan, for example, was considering an invasion of Libya in 1985 and the military came forward with a proposal that looked like D-day, for the Libyans, for God’s sake. We’re talking about three carrier battle groups, divisions and so on and so forth, and that’s essentially what I think the military strategy was in this
meeting with Bush, to put together a package that was so daunting he would say, “Well, let’s stand pat.”

So the briefer starts out, “First we’ll need the Seventh Corps out of Germany.” Okay, you’re going to take the heart of NATO’s defense, which had been in Germany since 1945, where everything is painted dark green, and you’re going to move it from Germany to Saudi Arabia, the two heaviest divisions in the American Army. Okay. “Then we’ll need six carrier battle groups.” We had never put six carrier battle groups in the same theater of action since there were aircraft carriers, and we’re looking, that’s a hundred ships or something like that by the time you count all of the other stuff.

Remember, this is a week before the mid-year elections. And then the poison pill. If that hadn’t gotten him, this one would. “Oh, and you’ll have to activate both the National Guard and the Reserves.” In other words, you’re going to reach into every community in America and take people away from their homes and their jobs. To the day I die I’ll never forget, Bush pushed his chair back, stood up, looked at Cheney and said, “You’ve got it, let me know if you need more,” and walked out of the room.
Cheney’s jaw dropped. Powell’s jaw dropped. Cheney looks at Scowcroft and says, “Does he know what he just authorized?” And Brent smiled and he said, “He knows perfectly well what he authorized.”

**On Eliminating Saddam Hussein**

**GATES** We believed—well, first of all, we had hoped throughout the air war that we’d get lucky. We can’t assassinate somebody but we can flatten his capital city and kill God knows how many people. And the truth is, we never targeted a single thing believing, or in the belief that he was there. We didn’t have that good intelligence and we knew he was moving around and frankly, my guess was that he was staying in hospitals, schools, and mosques. He’s no dummy.

So we were kind of hoping against hope that we’d get lucky, but it was nothing more than a hope. We genuinely believed, and had some reason to believe from our intelligence, that the magnitude of the defeat was so overwhelming that the army would take out Saddam when the war was over. My recollection is that later, as we found out more, that that was not an unrealistic expectation and hope. But the unexpected uprisings by both the Kurds in the north and the Shiites in the south enabled Saddam in essence to tell his generals, “Without me you’re going to lose the country. In order to fight these internal enemies in the south and in the north, you have to have me.” By the time those rebellions had been put down he had, first of all, executed a couple of hundred generals and had re-established his terror network and re-established himself in power. I believe that had there not been those uprisings, that the army probably would have taken Saddam out at that point…. The one thing we did know for a fact, or just knew, it was an assumption, but we all, to this day believe it was a valid assumption, that if we did try to move into Iraq, in any way to bring about a change of regime, it would have shattered the coalition instantly and we would have been alone. Possibly the Brits with us, but even that’s not entirely sure.

**On Searching for SCUDs**

**GATES** Our military was very unhappy at the magnitude of the air resources that were diverted to look for SCUDs and away from the primary targets, primarily in order to keep Israel out of the war. It was essentially a political decision, driven by the need to keep the Israelis out.

**On Bush’s Involvement in Fighting the Gulf War**

**GATES** The one and only time the president looked over Cheney and Powell’s shoulders in terms of the military campaign, was particularly the bombing targets. And again, this didn’t sit terribly well over at the Pentagon, but the president sent me over to the Pentagon to review the target list to make sure that there were no churches, mosques, hospitals. Were we going to bomb something that was right next to a great historical treasure, and so on and so forth. Sort of smiling through gritted teeth, Cheney and Powell and I over lunch, or Cheney and Powell with the gritted teeth, over a sandwich, took me through the target list and I was able to go back and assure the president. It was an awkward situation for me. They didn’t like it very much, but we’d worked together closely enough and everything.
We had all just gone through the experience in Panama of not being able to find Noriega, eight or nine months before, and we had a hell of a lot more information and a hell of a lot more presence in Panama than we were going to have in Iraq.

ROBERT GATES

On the Decision Not to Remove Saddam Hussein

GATES We looked at three options: one was destroying the Republican Guard, the second was throwing Saddam out of Kuwait, and the third was bringing about a change of regime in Baghdad. Well, we agreed on the first two in about ten minutes and we spent two weeks debating the third one….. We had all just gone through the experience in Panama of not being able to find Noriega, eight or nine months before, and we had a hell of a lot more information and a hell of a lot more presence in Panama than we were going to have in Iraq. To what degree are we likely to shatter the coalition if we try to bring about a change in regime? And so on and so forth. So we ended up recommending against the inclusion of that as a war aim. And the president actually signed off on the war aims—so we knew going in what our objectives were going to be.

DAN QUAYLE

On Bush’s Reaction to the Invasion of Kuwait

QUAYLE In this particular case, George Bush was always ahead of his staff, including myself, in many respects. He’d just come back from Camp David and we all met on a Monday morning, and that’s when he gave his famous—drew the line in the sand and said, “This shall not stand,” and we all sort of said okay. That’s not really what we discussed over the weekend, but he just said it. We didn’t really know, until Saddam had invaded—there were all sorts of reports about whether he was going to withdraw. We didn’t know whether we could deploy troops to Saudi Arabia. This was before Cheney and Colin Powell went over there, and the President was out there saying, “This will not stand.”

He came into the National Security Council and—I guess he came into the Oval Office first, and I was there. Was Baker there? Scowcroft was there. He said, “How’d I do?” and we said, “Oh, good.” Brent said, “Where’d you get that ‘this will not stand?’” He said, “That’s mine.” “Well, yes, but where did you get it?” He said, “Well, that’s what I feel.” Brent said, “Okay, we’ll make sure that this happens.” It was a very definitive line. Not that he was wrong in doing it, but he just caught everybody off guard a little bit because it was so definite and so dramatic.
On the Effect of the Gulf War Vote in Congress

QUAYLE He was going to do it. It gets back, as I said, to this issue of right and wrong. Congress didn’t really bother him. He was totally focused on doing what he had to do. I remember him saying that. He said, “I don’t care what they say, you need to know”—to those of us who were advocating going to Congress—“I’m going to do it, whether Congress gives me authority or not.”

On Eliminating Saddam Hussein

QUAYLE No one in the chain of command, none of his advisors, ever recommended that he go to Baghdad. This idea that Schwarzkopf was for going to Baghdad is not true. Schwarzkopf may dicker a little bit on the timing of the end of the war, but he will not disagree that he never made a recommendation that we go to Baghdad. It was really never a serious option that was considered because nobody was recommending it—no one. So you have to take that off the table.

You can look back now and say, “Should we have gone to Baghdad?” I still say no, because to occupy that country at that particular time would have meant too much loss of life and it really was not worth it. Furthermore, we had what we thought was good credible evidence that Saddam Hussein, within six months, would be done away with by his own people. We just believed that. It was one of the reasons they didn’t want to pursue war crimes against him.

I remember Scowcroft was always arguing because I was for it and he said, “We’re going to be back in the same position. If you indict him, then you’ve got to go get him.” Sort of like with [Slobodan] Milosevic, but with Milosevic they coughed him up. And Brent had a point. But my argument was, “That’s fine, maybe we have to go get him. Maybe we will go get him, maybe he’ll be dead, maybe we won’t go get him, but at least in the international community he is going to be condemned as an international war criminal.” That’s when the CIA said, “In six months we won’t have to worry about this because he’s going to be gone.” We really thought that he was going to be gone....

We wouldn’t have had the Arabs with us, we couldn’t have repositioned our military in Saudi Arabia, perhaps a whole host of things. That was part of the coalition-building. To this day, a lot of people think that this was really discussed and that we might even have done it, but it really wasn’t discussed that much and it was never a serious option. Nobody ever recommended it.

No one in the chain of command, none of his advisors, ever recommended that he go to Baghdad.

DAN QUAYLE
President and Mrs. Bush and Queen Elizabeth II and Prince Philip cross the South Lawn for a tree planting, May 14, 1991.

James A. Baker III
Secretary of State; Chief of Staff

Date & Location: January 29, 2000, Charlottesville, VA
Interview Team: Young (chair), Masoud, Milkis, Zelikow
Special Guest: Peter Roussell

James Baker III discusses his leadership of the 1988 presidential campaign (prior to his service as Secretary of State and Chief of Staff), as well as issues in the 1992 re-election campaign.

On leaving Secretary of Treasury position to run the 1988 campaign

I remember that one of the main reasons the Vice President talked to me about coming over to the campaign and began to talk to me in the early summer of ’88 was because you can’t run a campaign with six people. I mean, you can’t have six heads. You’ve got to have someone in charge.

On relationship to Reagan’s presidency

I don’t recall a lot of discussion about how we were going to position ourselves vis-à-vis President Reagan. I remember the Noriega issue. There were obviously some other discreet and specific issues, but the truth of the matter is, we were quite content to campaign on the idea of a continuation of the policies of a successful two-term Reagan presidency…. We wanted it to be about the same issues that the Reagan-Bush administration had been pursuing. We wanted it to be about lower taxes, we wanted it to be about strong defense, we wanted it to be about the very same issues that we were pushing at the end of the second Reagan term. And we wanted to brand him [Dukakis] as a liberal, which we successfully did, and someone who had absolutely no idea about foreign and security policy, which we fairly effectively did with the tank ad.
WILLIAM P. BARR  
*Assistant Attorney General; Deputy Attorney General; Attorney General*

Date & Location: April 5, 2001, Charlottesville, VA  
Interview Team: Young (chair), Baker, Meador, Riley

*William Barr reflects on law-related issues, from the war on drugs to the Gulf War, as a major figure in the Department of Justice.*

**On Bush serving after Reagan**

Bush was coming at the end of two terms of Reagan. And if you’re going to storm the wall—which Reagan and Bush did, Reagan as President, Bush as Vice President—you storm the wall. You had certain limited objectives you were trying to break through, and you did. You accomplished a lot of what the whole effort was about. Bush comes sort of as the aftermath of that. It’s a little hard to be revolutionary if you’ve won the revolution over the past eight years, so to speak…. He was really running as a successor, sort of a consolidator, and there’s a little less pizzazz to that. It’s like being an army of occupation versus the guy who actually storms the beaches. There’s a little less pizzazz to that by nature.

**On Bush’s Character**

People I talked to—even people who were upset with George Bush at the time and didn’t vote for him—think very well of him now, because in retrospect they think he was a man of honor, and a man of character, and a man they were actually proud to have as President of the United States, as frustrated as some of them may have been with his policies at times. I think, in the wake of Clinton, Americans are reminded that that’s not a bad thing to have in a President. Already, I think even in retrospect, the American people look at him well. They think he was a man of dignity and character and brought respect to the office.

---

MICHAEL J. BOSKIN  
*Chair of the Council of Economic Advisors*

Date & Location: July 30–31, 2001, Stanford, CA  
Interview Team: Riley (chair), Weatherford

*Michael Boskin analyzes the politics of the 1990 budget agreement, the political costs of raising taxes, and the public presentation of the economic downturn.*

**On the fall of the Berlin Wall**

President Bush had a remarkable ability to understand when not doing something was a good idea. For example, when the Berlin Wall fell, he could have stood up and really rubbed it in the Soviets’ face and said, “We’ve been waiting for this.” He could have gotten in front of every interest group and made these rabble-raising speeches, but he thought that that might make life very difficult and evoke a reaction, and he was trying to avoid evoking a reaction by the Soviets. And there were many other instances of that sort where he showed his maturity by refraining from taking advantage of a situation for short-run political gain.

**On NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement)**

President Bush clearly had something even bigger in mind; he wanted better relations with Mexico. He thought this would be good for Mexico’s economy, it would be on balance good for our economy, but since their economy was 4 percent of our economy in size, it was going to be a small deal for our economy, a small positive, with some losses and larger gains. For them it would be very big and very important. Not just for their economy, very important symbolically that we were going to treat them as a partner. And I think he was quite right in that.
Nicholas Brady reflects on what he observed as President Bush’s Secretary of Treasury, especially the impact of domestic and foreign affairs on the nation’s economy.

On the Bush economic strategy
It was clear as ’88 ended, we were going to have a sinking economy, and what we were trying to do was remove the problems that could hurt the economy even more. From my business background and investment banking background, the way to rescue a sick company is to stop spending money on the things that don’t count, and put all of your assets behind that part of business, your business, that will make you profitable. So we were trying to take that principle and apply it to the American economy. Take off the roadblocks to a successful economy: Third World debt, so the banking system could come out of its doldrums; savings and loan, so the S&L industry came out of its doldrums; and getting Congress under control so they don’t spend all of the available savings money on budget deficit. That was what our theory was. I used to say President Bush asked the Treasury Department to clear up some of the underbrush for the economy. And I’d say, “Unfortunately some of that underbrush turned out to be sequoias.”

On the U.S.-Soviet relationship
The part that I remember most vividly is the meeting between Gorbachev and President Bush involving what kind of support we were going to give the Russians…. President Bush made a speech about how the world had changed, and that sort of thing. Fundamentally, Gorbachev said, “We’re going to need a lot of money, because we’ve been a completely military society.” And President Bush said, “I don’t know what you mean by a lot of money, but could you give us some guidance?” Gorbachev turned to him and said, “It depends on what kind of a Russia you want.”
President and Mrs. Bush attend the All Star Salute to Troops at Andrews Air Force Base with Treasury Secretary Nicholas Brady and their granddaughter, Ellie LeBlond, April 3, 1991.
PHILLIP D. BRADY
Assistant to Staff Secretary, Staff Secretary
Date & Location: February 22–23, 2001, Charlottesville, VA
Interview Team: Young (chair), Masoud, McCall, Riley

Phillip Brady comments on administrative decisions, such as the selections of John Sununu and James Baker as Chiefs of Staff, as well as the political impacts of the Iran-Contra indictments and the economic recession on the 1992 election.

On inaccuracy of press coverage

[O]n one trip to Florida he went to a grocery store convention on innovative products. It was not just a “this is what’s out there” type convention. This was cutting edge, state-of-the-art stuff, and President Bush did really look at a futuristic scanner, and expressed interest. And an individual, Andy Rosenthal, a New York Times reporter, who was not at the event—was not there, did not see the bemusement, or pleasure, or whatever expression was on President Bush’s face—heard about the event and wrote a story in the New York Times about how the President doesn’t get it and was out of touch with the real world. That fit a press theme that he didn’t get it.

On the 1992 Presidential debates

It was one of the debates where President Bush was accused of looking at his watch, suggesting that he just wanted to get out of there, that he didn’t really want to participate in the debate. And this was with Carole Simpson as the moderator, I believe…. Well, the truth of the matter is, at the very beginning of the debate, Carole Simpson had said to President Bush, Bill Clinton, and to Ross Perot, “Now there won’t be any filibustering here.” And she said, “That means you too, Mr. Perot,” because Ross Perot had been cited in the press many times for his tendency to go on and on; that had happened in previous debates. So President Bush, at one point during the debate when Ross Perot was going on at great, great length, looked at Carole—and if you watch the tape, you’ll see he looked at her then his watch suggesting clearly “Hey, Perot’s time is up”—meaning he’s filibustering. The media picked it up and wrote the story as another example that he didn’t get it.

HENRY E. CATTO, JR.
Ambassador to the United Kingdom; Director of United States Information Agency
Date & Location: April 12, 2000, Charlottesville, VA
Interview Team: Zelikow (chair), Masoud, Young

A long-time Texas friend of George H. W. Bush, Henry Catto describes socializing with the Bush family, his ambassadorship to the U.K., during which the Gulf War occurred, and his tenure as director of USIA.

On the Bush-Thatcher relationship

[When Maggie would slip the cassette in and talk at 300 words per minute with gusts to 500, he really didn’t like that. He wanted dialogue, not monologue. Eventually, …I sat down with [Charles] Powell at lunch one day and told him that if I were he, I would suggest that she be more receptive to letting him have a word edgewise and not be quite so forward. Ronnie was happy to have her do and say whatever she wanted, but Bush wasn’t Ronnie. It was just a different thing, and she had to readjust her thinking, which she did.

On not using Bush’s high approval ratings

The thought that came to my mind was that the administration, perhaps mostly [John] Sununu, felt that a high rating was like gold that you could put in the bank and draw on and spend it as you wish. But gold it’s not. And they chose not to spend it on anything…. [W]hat they thought was gold had disappeared when they opened the vault, and that was that.
RICHARD CHENEY
Secretary of Defense
Date & Location: March 16–17, 2000, Dallas, TX
Interview Team: Zelikow (chair), Betts, Masoud, McCall

Richard Cheney provides descriptions of his service as Secretary of Defense, particularly during the U.S. invasion of Panama and the 1991 Gulf War.

On Bush as Commander in Chief

One of the great things about being part of the Bush Administration was just the unique quality of the man who was running the show. If you were to go out and design a President to be Commander in Chief in a crisis like Desert Storm, you couldn’t do any better than what we had with George Bush. In terms of his experiences, combat pilot in World War II, UN, China, CIA, Vice President. He was a delight to work for in that regard. So a lot of what followed after that, whatever successes we enjoyed and so forth, you have to start with the man. He’s the guy who got elected; he’s the guy who hired all of us. He was the one who gets the credit and the blame if it doesn’t go right. I can’t say enough about his own capacity, the way he worked, the guidance he gave us, the support he gave us when we had to do some very difficult things, some politically difficult things. Never hesitated and signed right up to.

On the decision to end the Gulf War in 1991

We’d reached the point where 80,000 Iraqis had surrendered. You’ve seen the American troops turn from being warriors to being angels of mercy. Feeding, providing medical care and water. We had the highway of death going north out of Kuwait City where we’d really hammered them. The concern was about whether or not we got the Iraqis or got the Republican Guard cut off—because the Republican Guard was more than one unit. Some of the divisions had been hard hit, decimated. Some hadn’t. But…we’d accomplished our objective. The objective was to liberate Kuwait. Plus, we’ve reached the point where we’re asking our young kids to keep hammering away when it’s hard to justify what the purpose of doing that is, other than just continuing the slaughter. I think that was a major concern for General [Colin] Powell. He was
a big advocate of being concerned about the notion that we were somehow piling on here, because clearly the Iraqis had done everything they could to get out of Kuwait, they’re in full-fledged retreat. We had the meeting in the White House in the Oval Office where the basic question is: have we achieved our objective? The unanimous view of those of us who were there, civilian and military, was yes. Our objective was to liberate Kuwait. We’d done it.

On Dan Quayle

I think the highest compliment I can give him is this: through the most merciless pummeling that I have ever seen a national candidate take from the press, before or since, he kept his cool. He never once lost it. And this was relentless, it was merciless, and it was personal. They’re writing about his family, they’re writing about his finances, they’re writing about his courage—questions of whether you evaded the draft, whether you really fulfilled your National Guard service obligation—basic honesty. And very personal stuff. I never once saw him lose his cool. He kept it throughout. He kept a dignity throughout that. I’ll tell you, you can talk about qualities to be president or vice president, that’s sure one of them: keeping your cool under fire. And he kept his throughout. Throughout. Never once lost it. Never saw him lose it.

On the Malta summit

One night during the summit, I had paper for the President to review. The Navy took me out in a motor launch to the cruiser in the middle of the bay, and the storm was really, really coming in. The rain was coming sideways, the launch was rocking and it was awful…. Of course, you’ve got to get from the launch to the ladder running down the side of the ship. We’d be against it, but then the waves would hit and a big gap would open between the launch and the ladder. Then the waves would hit again and slam the launch hard into the ladder again. So I’m ready to step off, then all of a sudden it rocks back, and then it’s like twenty feet apart. Then the boat slams hard into the ladder and the process begins again. So you literally had to time a jump. And if you missed, the boat slams together and crushes you, and there was nothing you could do about it…. There were divers all over the place because of the security, and I looked at the divers and one sailor says to me, “Don’t worry. If you fall in, at least we’ll recover your body quickly.” …

That was the situation next day. President Bush and Gorbachev were meeting on the Gorky, which was docked. But he needed to have a secure conversation with officials back in D.C. and could only do that from the cruiser anchored out in the bay. So he took a launch over to the ship. Well, the wind was howling and the waves were really high. We watched the President’s launch go over, and you’d literally see this thing disappearing as it went down between these very high waves with the President in it; you’d lose sight of it for a second because the waves were so high. It looked like an awful trip over…. Then of course, he had to make the same jump to the ladder I’d had to make the night before. They’re envisioning what happens if the President is on it and it crashes again into the sea.

Well, the Navy somehow managed to get him on the cruiser. But while he was aboard, that launch slammed hard against the ladder down one side of the ship and it broke off and
crashed into the sea. Having watched that, the Navy was scared about the President using the one ladder remaining on the other side of the cruiser. So they wouldn’t let him leave the ship for fear that if the waves caused the launch to crash into the ladder while he’s standing on the thing—boom, everything goes into the water including the President…. So he goes over to the cruiser and he’s literally trapped there by the storm. There was no way to safely get him off the ship and get him back to the Gorky.

Meanwhile Gorbachev is back on the Gorky waiting. I was there. And Gorbachev was just anxious as a cat, pacing back and forth—This was high-stakes to him; he was very anxious about a successful outcome, and it was uncertain whether we were even going to be able to continue the summit. He’s here and the President’s out there, and you have a storm in between. For all [the] technology of these superpowers, you can’t get across that space of water because of weather.

And at one point, Gorbachev—I was standing there and he knew I was part of the President’s entourage—came over to me and very angrily said, “You better get your Navy fixed.” As if I was going to do anything about it, or as if it was the Navy’s fault. It was just a catty remark, but I guess it was an indication of how frustrated he was.

... . . .

**And Barbara was always an asset.**

**He was a good campaigner, and they were a good campaign team.**

**EDWARD J. DERWINSKI**

**Secretary of Veterans Affairs**

**WITH MRS. BONNIE DERWINSKI**

**Date & Location:** May 3–4, 2001, Charlottesville, VA

**Interview Team:** Riley (chair), Masoud, Scott, Young

Edward Derwinski recalls his education in Chicago; becoming a Republican; serving in the Army, U.S. House of Representatives, and as a delegate to the UN General Assembly; working in the State Department during the Reagan presidency; and serving in George H. W. Bush’s Cabinet as the first Secretary of Veterans Affairs.

**On Bush as a campaigner**

I remember when he started in 1979, when he challenged Reagan. I had him out in my district for two days, four or five events. He was a good campaigner, good hand-shaker. Made a good enthusiastic speech, boned up on issues. I would say he was a much better than average campaigner… And Barbara was always an asset. He was a good campaigner, and they were a good campaign team. But it was natural. He loved foreign affairs. Remember he had his stint in China, he was at the CIA, he was at the UN. He loved that world scene.

**On Bush at the United Nations**

I mentioned I was at the UN. I had to work closely with Bush…. But one thing I remember in particular, we were there, and he was leading the debate for the retention of Taiwan as China. That was 1971, when the UN voted Taiwan out and Beijing in. We were there at the U.S. desk, George Bush and I, and three of our career diplomats. The vote was announced, and we lost by a vote. I looked at George, he looked at me, and at that point the Taiwanese delegation got up and walked out. So we got up and walked out. Our three careerists just sat there. We were reflecting the political opinion, or political response, if you want to call it that.

... . . .
President Bush waves from the back of a train during his campaign whistle-stop in Bowling Green, Ohio, September 26, 1992.
BARBARA FRANKLIN
Secretary of Commerce

WILLIAM CLARK, JR.
Ambassador to India; Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs

Date & Location: April 17–18, 2001, Charlottesville, VA
Interview Team: Young (chair), Riley, Womack

Secretary of Commerce Barbara Franklin analyzes the impact of the Cold War’s end on the world economy, the Bush Administration’s handling of the U.S. recession, and President Bush’s character and how it shaped his approach to politics, especially the 1992 campaign. She and Assistant Secretary of State Clark review trade policy with China and Russia.

**On international economic policy in the post-Cold War world**

**FRANKLIN** This is the end of the Cold War. The Soviet Union had disintegrated. We had all these new countries. There was just a different tone in the world, and new markets. That’s what I was seeing, new markets. This was where, to tie back to the UN experience of 1989, I saw at that microcosm of the world in New York that all the nations of the world wanted development. The Cold War is over. Now we can get on with it. We can work for prosperity. It was that kind of feeling. It was great euphoria, and I felt that it was real, and that we as the U.S. had a great chance, because we did have a competitive edge in a lot of ways to go after these new markets. We could do well by ourselves but also for others as well.

**On character in the 1992 election**

**FRANKLIN** [President Bush] really thought character was going to count in the end, and I have a note that says that toward the end of that campaign. Character did not matter to anybody at that point. They were worried about their jobs and whatever else. That defeat was very disappointing. He felt he’d let a lot of people down. He kept saying that afterwards, “I feel as though I have let you down.”

CRAIG FULLER
Chief of Staff to Vice President Bush

Date & Location: May 13, 2004, Charlottesville, VA
Interview Team: Knott (chair), Chidester

Craig Fuller describes his move from the Reagan administration, as the Cabinet Secretary, to lead Vice President Bush’s staff in 1985. Fuller recalls some of the sixty trips abroad that he made with the Vice President, including to Poland before the end of the Cold War; the role of Lee Atwater in the 1988 campaign; the selection of Indiana Senator Dan Quayle as the Vice Presidential candidate; and the differences in leadership style between Presidents Reagan and Bush.

**On Vice President Bush’s relations with Congress**

[I]t was another area that was enormously valuable to President Reagan. Much like dealing with heads of state, members of the House and Senate knew and trusted George Bush. Without having to go through all the formality of getting through the gates of the West Wing of the White House, they could walk over to his Senate office, they could sit down and talk with him, have lunches up there sometimes. I think that was very valuable. I think his role in the Senate was important. Occasionally history records important votes cast. What was every bit as important, if not more important, was his ability to gauge the thinking of the Congress on a variety of issues and share that, again, directly with the President.

**On Vice President Bush’s learning about Iran-Contra**

[Vice President Bush] went in to do this special briefing with the President. He came back and it was as if somebody had just knocked the air out of him. He collapsed into the chair and he said, “You are not even going to believe what’s happened. You knew a little bit about it.” Because we actually never talked about it. I wasn’t supposed to talk to anybody else, it was highly compartmentalized and Ollie North and I talked briefly about it. He told me not to talk to anybody else about it. So that was my first glimpse. This then was—he just literally collapsed into the chair. It was one of those moments,
at the time I realized and came to appreciate even more, that I know he wondered, As hard as I've worked, for all I've done, this could make it impossible for me to get elected. It just was an event that was completely out of his control.

ROBERT M. GATES
Deputy Director of Central Intelligence; Deputy National Security Advisor; Director of Central Intelligence

Date & Location: August 23–24, 2000, College Station, TX
Interview Team: Naftali (chair), Brands, Edwards, Masoud

With three different positions in intelligence and national security during the George H.W. Bush presidency, Robert Gates offers unique perspectives on the Soviet Union’s demise, the Gulf War, removing Noriega from power in Panama, the impact of the Cold War’s end on Eastern Europe and Latin America, and the political crisis in the Philippines.

On Somalia
I think first of all the Bush administration’s intervention in Somalia to try to deal with the famine is probably as good a case study in foreign policy by CNN as any I can think of. The public outcry and the pressure from the Congress as a result of the televised pictures of starvation and anarchy in Somalia were, but above all the starvation, just became a huge force to deal with. And I believe, because it was in the context, in the same time frame as an election campaign—I think the decision was made they had to respond to this public pressure. I don’t think that if it had been a non-election year and if there had been no CNN pictures, that we would have ever gone into Somalia.

On Bush’s personal diplomacy
I think in all of the events of the Bush administration from the end of the Cold War, the collapse of the Soviet Union, liberation of Eastern Europe, reunification of Germany to the Gulf War, that Bush’s personal diplomacy played a huge role in all of them in many ways and with greater or lesser importance in specific circumstances. But, he had an unerring instinct for when it was time to reach out to somebody and talk to them on the phone. No president, I think, has ever engaged in the kind of telephone diplomacy that Bush did…. His attitude toward dealing with foreign leaders and his willingness to do it and to invest the time in it, just like in the Gulf War, I mean, the French are so difficult to get along with. And every time we would about reach the breaking point with the French, the president would pick up the phone and call [François] Mitterrand and it would all be better, it would all of a sudden be sweetness and light again for a while. Bush’s invitation to Mitterrand to come to Kennebunkport in May of 1989 was an inspired instinct because it changed Mitterrand’s attitude toward the United States and towards Bush for the entirety of Bush’s presidency. The two of them, the very formal Mitterrand, in the very informal setting of Kennebunkport, of Walker’s Point, developed a bond that lasted throughout the entire administration and I don’t think the United States has had a better relationship at the top with the French in living memory. The relationship between the two leaders was so smooth and without rancor. In fact, one of my favorite anecdotes about
Mitterrand is that Mitterrand did not want to begin the
ground war. He wanted to delay and he called President Bush
and the two of them were talking about it and I walked in
on Bush with a note that Saddam had set the oil wells on
fire. Bush read the note to Mitterrand and Mitterrand said,
“It’s time to go.”

CARLA A. HILLS
United States Trade Representative
Date & Location: January 6, 2004, Charlottesville, VA
Interview Team: Knott (chair), Schoppa, Fortier

Carla Hills describes joining the Nixon Justice Department in the
midst of the Watergate crisis, her impressions of President Gerald Ford
as his Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, appointment
to be President George H. W. Bush’s Trade Representative, as well as
the North American Free Trade Agreement, Uruguay Round,
Super 301 statute, World Trade Organization, and trade with
Japan and China.

On Bush’s 1992 trip to Japan
But I had said to Brent [Scowcroft], “Don’t let him take the
trip. This is a terrible, terrible mistake. The timing is bad.
It’s bad from a political point of view. It is bad considering
who is being invited on this trip, and what they will do
subsequently. Trust me.” He said, “It’s already on the wire.
We have got to do it. The invitations have already gone out.
It’ll be worse to cancel.” Of course I had no idea the President
was going to get sick on top of it all. And, just as sure as the
world, the auto manufacturers blasted him afterwards. There
was no discretion, no gratitude. They just blasted him on
the grounds of their desire to return to managed trade for the
auto sector.

On the impact of gender on Hills’s government positions
In my jobs at the Justice Department I tried to lead by
example. Nobody works harder; let me put it that way.
I never felt any slight there. I could have strong disagreements
and engage in strong efforts at persuasion. But I didn’t feel
that because I was a woman that I was at a disadvantage.
Nor did I feel I had an advantage. Many people ask that
same question with respect to negotiating in countries that
are adverse to women. But, you know, when you represent
the United States of America, leaders will talk to whoever
comes if they want to talk. And since most countries do want
to talk to the United States, the United States doesn’t have
to be shy about having a minority or a woman representing
it. I do not think you should have a minority or a woman in
office who can’t discharge their responsibility. If you have
a woman or a minority who has experience and can carry out
the responsibility, that’s good.

DAVID E. JEREMIAH
Commander of the Pacific Fleet; Vice Chairman and
Acting Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff
Date & Location: November 15, 2010, Charlottesville, VA
Interview Team: Riley (chair), Bakich, Perry

Admiral David Jeremiah recalls his career in the U.S. Navy,
especially his tours of duty in Washington, culminating in his service
on the Joint Chiefs of Staff:

On Bush’s relationship with the military
[A]s far as his relationship with the military, it was rock
solid. It’s not like he just did everything we wanted, because
he didn’t. He firmly rejected a couple of things. But his
management style was, “You come in and talk to me.” He
listens and he’ll decide what he wants to do and he’ll tell you.
Or he won’t, and he’ll tell you, “Here’s what I need to know
before I can make a judgment on that.” Very straightforward.

On Somalia
I had previously scheduled a trip to the Middle East. I was
going to Turkey and down to the northern part of Iraq to see—Operation Provide Comfort—the operation President
Bush initiated in northern Iraq to provide relief for the
Kurds and to keep them safe from Iraqi forces. Then I went down and did a swing through the Gulf countries. I wanted to see what was going on in Somalia, since I was going to Kenya. I flew into Somalia to one of the places where we were flying C-130s. We went around with the village team to see the feeding stations. We had 45 minutes or something like that on the ground. I’ve been to pretty tough places and I’d never seen anything like that. It was just unbelievable. …We went to a food distribution place. It had been a building of some form, windows and doors and all that kind of stuff, but when we got there we just drove through a hole in the wall that had formerly been the doors. There were a lot of people there waiting to get food. No roof. No windows. Everything had been stripped to be used for something else. There was very little food because the technicals, guys running around in Toyotas with guns and stuff like that, usually relatively small children, 12, 13, 14, 15-year-olds, they would steal the food. It had become their currency.

BARBARA G. KILBERG
Deputy Assistant to the President for Public Liaison; Director of the White House Office of Intergovernmental Affairs

WITH JEFFREY VOGT
Special Assistant to the President for Public Liaison

AND KATHY JEVONS
Associate Director to the President for Public Liaison

Date & Location: November 20, 2009, Herndon, VA
Interview Team: Riley (chair), Tenpas

Barbara Kilberg recalls President Bush’s interactions with external groups and institutions, including his openness to a variety of viewpoints.

On Bush and interest groups

This President came in with the very strong feeling that he wanted to listen to what everybody had to say, that if you cared enough to organize yourself as an interest group you probably had something intelligent to say about a topic. And that if he only listened to people he agreed with, he was
never going to grow. He was a voracious reader of public policy…. [A] perfect example [was] when he challenged Roger Smith from General Motors and knew more about CO₂ emissions and SOx [sulfur oxides] and NOx [nitrogen oxides] than Roger Smith did. I said, “Where the heck did that come from?” because it wasn’t in that particular briefing paper, but he just said, “I have been Vice President for eight years, thank you very much. I do read.” But he really wanted to open up the process to people he didn’t always agree with. So on Clean Air, he talked to the auto companies and the economists but he also talked to the environmentalist groups, he talked to the union groups, he talked to the consumer groups…. So when we came in [to build our staff] we were looking for people who shared that feeling and that view about being inclusive.

On Bush and the Oval Office

One time I had something I needed to know and Tim [McBride] said to me, “Well, just go down, the President’s at the tennis court.” So I went down and he said, “Oh, yes, that paper’s on my desk.” I said, “Well, okay, I’ll tell Tim and we’ll get it.” And he said, “No, no, you guys won’t know where it is, I’ll go get it. Come on, the game is over.” So we started to walk back up—the tennis courts are on the South Lawn. We started walking up I thought toward the Oval Office, in which case you’d go this way. And he said, “Where are you going?” and I said, “I’m going to your office.” “No, no,” he said, “I’m in tennis shorts.” I said, “So?” He said, “No, just wait, I’ll be back.” So he went into the residence, got dressed, put on a coat and tie, walked into the Oval Office, handed me the paper, and left. But he would not go into that office in tennis togs. He didn’t believe that was appropriate. He had such a sense of respect for the physical room as a symbol of the presidency.

TIMOTHY MCBRIDE
Personal Aide to the President; Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Trade Development; Assistant to the President for Management and Administration

Date & Location: November 5, 2010, Charlottesville, VA
Interview Team: Riley (chair), Perry

From his earliest days with Vice President Bush, to the White House, Timothy McBride provides observations on George H. W. Bush—the man and the statesman.

On the fall of the Berlin Wall

What I remember most of all was the time right around the fall of the Wall. There was a great deal of pressure on the President to get on Air Force One and fly to Europe and take credit on behalf of 40 years of U.S. policy, and on behalf of America, our role in conquering the evil East. George Bush resisted that, and was criticized greatly on the Hill, on both sides of the aisle. Where’s our President? Why isn’t he there? He understood that if he had done that, he would have provoked a different response from Gorbachev. He understood about, How do we help Gorbachev save face and unwind this thing in a way that is responsible and doesn’t require him to get his back up, doesn’t push him up against a wall and invite some response other than a peaceful unwind of this thing? It was challenging inside the White House even among his own aides, who may or may not have admitted to telling him at the time, “You need to get over there. You need to take credit for this.” But he understood differently. He understood the reaction that would cause, and didn’t do it. Consequently, most people identify the fall of the Wall with Reagan and some of his messages. I would argue that the reunification of Germany, and the peaceful unwind of the Cold War, is probably the signature, the most important contribution President Bush’s Presidency has made to history. That could have gone many different ways and I think it was his leadership that led to the unwind of that.
President Bush and Chief of Staff James Baker confer in the White House, August 27, 1992.
On the Bush family home at Kennebunkport

Kennebunkport is extremely important to him as part of who he is… Yes, they have a magnificent compound there, and the house by all accounts and observations is pretty terrific, but it is less about the compound, the surroundings, the trappings of Walker's Point, than what is the draw of Maine: the coast, the water, the ties to his mother's ancestors. That’s what drew him there, the connection to family, which is extremely important to him. But I don’t think it diminishes the degree to which Texas represented his life with Barbara, and his becoming who he ultimately was.

FREDERICK D. MCCLURE
Assistant for Legislative Affairs
Date & Location: September 20, 2001, Washington, D.C.
Interview Team: Young (chair), Dickinson, Knott, McCall, Riley

Fred McClure recalls his work with Senator John Tower (R.-TX) and as special assistant to President Reagan in Congressional relations (including the 1986 tax reform and nominations of William Rehnquist to chief justice and Antonin Scalia as associate justice of the U.S. Supreme Court). McClure reports on his tenure as assistant for legislative affairs during the George H. W. Bush presidency, which covered budget battles with Congress, the Gulf War, Supreme Court nominees David Souter and Clarence Thomas, and the Civil Rights Act of 1991.

On changes in the media

We’re now in this 24-hour news cycle and if you think back, we didn’t even have Nightline until the hostage crisis began back in the late ’70s with Carter. And now it’s a staple part, to say nothing of all of the things that have happened in terms of other networks and cable and all this kind of stuff. And now the internet, which I said we used a little bit during the Chinese students thing because we found out what tactics and arguments they were using as a result of them having discussions. And that was early on in the infant usage of the internet for grass-roots marketing and motivation of people. So when you put all those factors together, any President going forward is going to have, I think, more of a challenge because everybody got access to that kind of stuff.

On whether the President would run for reelection

And he called me into the office, a beautiful spring day. He’d made the decision already to put the library at Texas A & M University, my alma mater, and it was a great day. Something was bothering him—I can’t remember. I don’t even know whether he told me what was bothering him, but he kind of walks over to the window and he looks out the window—we’re on the South Lawn—and he says, “Fred, it’s just a beautiful day.” I say, “Yes, it is, Mr. President.” He says, “Come on, you can go with me. We ought to just pick up and go on Air Force One and just go to College Station.” I say, “Go to College Station?” And he says, “Yes. Because you know I like it down there and I know you like it down there.” And I say, “Yes, Mr. President.” And he says, “Just—Don’t have to worry about this anymore. Just kind of quit.” …He really scared me. He scared me because the nature of the conversation was one of these where I really, really felt like he was on the verge of deciding that he was not going to run for re-election. And the thrust of the conversation was, “We won’t have to worry about this anymore. We can just kind of go to College Station and kick back.” And I’m thinking, No.

I would argue that the reunification of Germany, and the peaceful unwind of the Cold War, is probably the signature, the most important contribution President Bush’s Presidency has made to history.

TIMOTHY MCBRIDE
Thomas Pickering recalls the Gulf War and the end of the Cold War from his perspective as Ambassador to the UN.

On Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait
I was at a farewell dinner for the British Ambassador who was leaving, given by Tom [Enders], who was an old friend who had been in the department for many years and now was in banking. There were just six of us at the dinner, the Enders, Sir Crispin and Penelope, and my wife and I. I got called about ten o’clock at night to talk to Bob Kimmitt, who was Under Secretary, and Bob said, “We’ve had the Iraqis invade Kuwait and we’d like to have you call a Security Council meeting right away.”

On the collapse of the Soviet Union
The other interesting thing in the Cold War was that by Christmas of 1991 it became clear that the Soviet Union was going to go through major changes. We had the August problem, Gorbachev was marginalized, Yeltsin was in power, and sooner rather than later, probably before the end of the year, communism would disappear and Yeltsin would in effect give the constituent republics his blessing for their independence. I talked to Vorontsov a couple of times and I said, “You know, Yuli, there’s no inclination on the part of the United States to see you move off the Council. You should stay as Russia and I’ll bring up a lawyer from Washington to sit with you over this period to work with you to see how and in what way we do the transformation with the Secretariat.”

James Pinkerton describes his work as a young Republican operative with Lee Atwater leading up to the 1988 presidential campaign, his role as the Bush campaign’s director of research, working with George W. Bush, and serving as director of policy during the transition. He views the George H. W. Bush presidency through the lens of his self-styled Reagan Republicanism, as he comments on the Fund for America’s Future, Willie Horton ads, “no new taxes” pledge, budget negotiations with Congress, Newt Gingrich, and Bush’s speaking style and moderate ideology.

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

On Bush and ideology
Bush would not have understood, you lose a battle now, it is an ideological point for the future. Bush would say no, you lose the battle now, you’ve lost. Didn’t have that understanding of lose now, win later. Ideologues think like that. Okay, the April revolution in Russia was a failure, we’ll do it in November, and do it right…. [I]deologues get that immediately: 1905 was a prologue to 1917. I think like that, Gingrich thinks like that. Bush says, oh well, we lost, that’s bad.
ROMAN POPADIUK
Deputy Assistant to the President; Deputy Press Secretary for Foreign Affairs; Ambassador to Ukraine

Date & Location: June 28, 2003, Washington, D.C.
Interview Team: Young (chair), Knott

Ambassador Roman Popadiuk reflects on his service in the Reagan and Bush administrations and focuses on President George H. W. Bush’s foreign policy skills as the Cold War drew to a close, especially his reaction to the collapse of the Berlin Wall and the demise of the Soviet Union.

On Bush’s skill at the end of the Cold War
So, yes, he had all these different pressures, but at the same time he had this great pressure that he couldn’t push it too far. That’s one thing I have to give the President a lot of credit for. He was the right guy at the right place at the right time. His sense of judgment, his self-effacement, his not wanting to take credit, were perfect for that time in history.

The classic example was when the Berlin Wall came down. We brought the press pool in, in November of ’89, I think it was, and they wanted his reaction to the Berlin Wall. His reaction was almost lackadaisical, like, “Yes, well, the wall came down. It’s great.” You probably remember all the stories that came out after that—“Bush Unenthused”—you know? How could he not be dancing on tabletops? … The bottom line was there was a lot more to do. You had to make sure that Germany was reunified peacefully, the whole NATO experience, the whole situation of the Soviet Union, the Baltics—how was it all going to go? He really had a big, broad, vision and he seemed to know how all these little pieces fit in together. It was amazing.

On Bush’s treatment of Gorbachev as the Soviet Union declined
He wanted to make sure that Gorbachev left with honor. Here was a guy who basically lost his country between August of 1991 and November, when it was obvious the whole thing was gone. Yet he had brought about such dramatic changes in the world—support of the Gulf War, support of German reunification, supportive of pulling things out of Cuba—cutting aid and that kind of thing. The President wanted to make sure that Gorbachev left, not on a high ground, but at least on his own terms, with honor, and I think that’s what Gorbachev basically did. He just faded away. He gave his resignation speech and went. And that’s the side of the President that people don’t realize. He accepted victory graciously, but not vindictively or with pride. He always gave the people he dealt with an opportunity to leave, to be on the stage with honor, even if they were declining. That’s the mark of the type of individual he is. He carried that out very successfully.

ROGER B. PORTER
Assistant to the President for Economic and Domestic Policy

Date & Location: December 11–12, 2001, Charlottesville, VA
Interview Team: Young (chair), Edwards, Hargrove, McCall, Milkis, Riley

Roger Porter explains the numerous issues in economic and domestic policy that he addressed as Assistant to the President.

On the Clean Air Act
On final passage, the Clean Air Act Amendments, legislation that had been gridlocked for more than a decade, passed by a vote of 89 to 11. It is extremely challenging to secure that large of a margin on major, controversial legislation. A key to this success was a process that engaged the participation of virtually all the members of the U.S. Senate. It is to President Bush’s credit that he embraced the idea of doing that.
President Bush receives a briefcase as a birthday present from his senior staff: John Sununu, Michael Boskin, Chase Untermeyer, Andy Card, Jim Cicconi, Roger Porter, Richard Darman, Boyden Gray, Ede Holiday, Sig Rogich, Brent Scowcroft, Ed Rogers, and Fred McClure, June 12, 1990.
On Bush’s meeting with the Education Policy Advisory Committee the day the Gulf War bombing campaign began

Before our meeting was set to begin in the Cabinet Room, I walked through the Oval Office and down the hall into the President’s study. When the President saw me, he said: “It looks like it’s time for education.” I responded, “Yes, this session is with your Education Policy Advisory Committee. We had a good meeting this morning. We can report quickly, in ten or fifteen minutes if you wish.” The meeting had been scheduled for 30 or 45 minutes. I indicated that I had told them he had a busy schedule that day. He looked at me and said: “Well, how much time is education worth?” His comment took me back. I responded: “As much as you can devote to it.” He replied: “Right answer.”

We walked together into the Cabinet Room and he ended up spending 45 minutes with the committee. They were all amazed, pleasantly so. He was very engaged and asked lots of questions. At a time when he was dealing with a serious set of decisions halfway around the world, he was remarkably focused in this meeting. Presidents have interesting ways of communicating signals to people. He was sending a signal, to Paul O’Neill and the other members of the advisory committee, that he cared deeply about education. He was also sending me a signal that this is an economic and domestic policy issue on which he was prepared to concentrate. He was genuinely interested in the subject we were discussing that day, the issue of standards and accountability. At the time, we were developing the idea of creating national standards in various subjects for elementary and secondary school students. It was an idea that later bore much fruit.

J. DANFORTH QUAYLE
Vice President
Date & Location: March 12, 2002, Phoenix, AZ
Interview Team: Young (chair), Jones, Knott, Riley

Vice President Quayle discusses the Bush presidency, including being selected for the Republican ticket in 1988 as a young U.S. Senator from Indiana, as well as domestic and foreign policy issues that the administration faced.

On announcing his selection as the Vice Presidential nominee

I told the Bush people, “You really need to figure out an introduction because I know how these things work. If you don’t define yourself and you let the media and your opponents define you, you’re in trouble. You’ve got to have your say for at least the first few days.” I said, “It’s very important and very critical, particularly for somebody like myself.” …Looking back on the selection, they were just totally unprepared for my introduction to the American people. They handed out as background information the Almanac of American Politics by Michael Barone, which is a very straightforward-type thing. That’s what they were handing out to the media—“Here’s our candidate.” So they really hadn’t done any work in anticipation of my candidacy.

On Saddam Hussein’s invasion of Kuwait

The principle was that this was the first major crisis in the post–Cold War. It was a sovereignty issue, where one nation invaded and gobbled up another nation. Saddam and his people said, “Kuwait was created in 1962 illegally and therefore it’s been up for grabs.” I always thought that Saddam, if he was smart, would have just retreated to that area where all the oil is and said, “This is what I’m claiming is Iraq’s”—and forget about the rest of it. That would have put us in a difficult position because it has been in some historical dispute and he would have been, at least in the international community, much stronger. But he didn’t do that.

. . . . .
SIGMUND ROGICH
Assistant to the President; Ambassador to Iceland
Date & Location: March 8–9, 2001, Charlottesville, VA
Interview Team: Riley (chair), Freedman, McCall, Masoud, Young

A former advertising director for the 1984 Reagan campaign, Sigmund Rogich describes his work with Roger Ailes in producing campaign ads for the 1988 Bush campaign, including the “Revolving Door,” which highlighted Michael Dukakis’s prison furlough program. Rogich also reflects on speechwriter Peggy Noonan’s “read my lips” line from Vice President Bush’s 1988 convention speech, Bush’s decision to raise taxes, and staff changes at the White House leading up to the 1992 campaign.

On Bush’s personality
The most significant thing I always found about him was that he had a great affinity for people’s feelings. I never, ever, saw him dress anyone down, from an advance person who might have made a flub-up and he knew it to a senior staffer who screwed up. He might roll his eyes a little bit, but he was very conscious of the fact that there is a human side to everybody and it’s fragile. I think that was the most impressive thing I always saw, his care about other people and their feelings.

On Pat Buchanan speaking at the 1992 GOP convention
[W]hat the hell were they thinking? You take a popular, outgoing President, Ronald Reagan, who is one of the more articulate men in our lifetime and relegate him to a place where no one watches him and you put Pat Buchanan, who still lives in the far right world of Genghis Khan, and you put him in prime time. It was outrageous. It was among the worst things we did and it hurt us. It made our convention look like we were unprincipled. It forced the President to run in part on a platform of extremism and we never quite shook the label and they took advantage of it.

DENNIS B. ROSS
State Department’s Director of Policy Planning
Date & Location: August 2, 2001, Washington, D.C.
Interview Team: Zelikow (chair), McCall, Quandt

Dennis Ross, the Director of Policy Planning in the State Department, discusses foreign policy issues in the Middle East during the first two years of George H. W. Bush’s presidency. Ross describes in detail behind-the-scenes diplomacy leading up to the Gulf War.

On foreign policy issues in the 1988 Bush campaign
So when we talked about SDI [Strategic Defense Initiative] we talked about why we needed to pursue it; we needed to pursue it because of these kinds of missile proliferation threats and non-missile proliferation threats, but we also needed to be willing to deploy technologies that worked. We kind of qualified it that way. But we focused on the issue of emerging threats that were different in kind, that were different in character, that were transnational, like the proliferation—I think we began to raise the issue of drugs as well—these were things we were trying to highlight to show that foreign policy matters. It is going to matter to you, there
leadership. It's a big loss for the House to lose Cheney out of the leadership, but his reputation couldn't be higher. I think you can get him through in a minute.” There were about five possibles that we talked about, the rest all in the Senate. After about an hour, the President said, “Well, I have one problem. Cheney's had a heart attack. Will you call him and find out what his medical history is?” So I did that, and I told the President “no limitation.” So he picked up the phone and called Cheney. It happened all in one day, very, very fast. It turned out to be a great choice.

On developing the label “New World Order”

It was coined in one of the few times that I've had with the President absolutely uninterrupted for about four hours. We were fishing, and the fish weren't biting. We were sitting out in a calm ocean, and it was a marvelous opportunity for a philosophical talk at length. You know, you never have time with presidents. They're always busy, and you have to focus on the issue. Here, it was open. So it started leading us into What's this new world going to be like?

. . . . .

BRENT SCOWCROFT
National Security Advisor

Date & Location: November 12, 1999, Washington, D.C.
Interview Team: Zelikow (chair), McCall, May, Young, Zakaria

General Brent Scowcroft, President Bush's national security advisor, discusses his military and academic training. He analyzes how the president assembled his foreign policy team, the astounding changes in foreign and defense policies as the Cold War came to an end, the New World Order, the invasion of Panama, and the Tiananmen Square uprising in China.

On choosing Dick Cheney as Secretary of Defense

[Scowcroft told the president,] “I think we'd better focus on a congressional member. It's the only hope we have of getting somebody through fast.” The President said, “Like who?” And I said, “Dick Cheney. He knows the White House, he's been learning Defense where he is, he's part of the House
On Newt Gingrich

Gingrich is out there. He’s the minority leader. He’s out sniping at you. He drops notes off at the White House guard shack for the President, handwritten notes. We sent them in to the President, finally. Some of them I just threw away…. He wanted to say something. He had it on his mind. He immediately would write it down, “Dear Mr. President.” He’d write all of this stuff down. “Very respectfully yours, Newt Gingrich.” Then, he’d immediately deliver it to the guard shack to be delivered to the President. You’d look at it. You’d call him back and say, “Newt, do you really want to say this?” “Well, I didn’t really mean that.” It’s one of those letters. Newt had a tendency to write letters, like we all do. You should put most of them away for a day and say, “Do I really want to send this letter today?” Well, no, today I don’t. Yesterday I did. Today I don’t.” Newt couldn’t wait the one day. He had to deliver it to the guard at the White House.

On dancing with Princess Diana

The [British] Ambassador has instructed me, as soon as the first note of music comes out, I am to get up, walk from my table over to her table and say, “Your Royal Highness, may I have this dance?” I do exactly as I’ve been told by the Ambassador. I get up, walk over, “Your Royal Highness, may I have this dance?” She looks up at me. He has forgotten to tell her that I will ask her for the dance. He rushes out of his chair at the end. “Your Royal Highness, this is Secretary Skinner. He is the Transport Minister. He would like to have the first dance.” So, we are now dancing, just she and I, dancing on the floor, and we have some nice talk about children. She’s very tall, you know. I take her back, “Thank you very much, Your Royal Highness.” Everything’s fine, other than this little faux pas, which scared her…. Next morning, I get calls in my office from the U.K., where my friends are traveling. “What have you done?” I said, “What are you talking about?” “The tabloids in U.K. have your picture…all over it, and they say ‘Government Cad Offends Princess.’” And it goes into the International Herald Tribune. I get three or four more phone calls from all over Europe. How could I have insulted Her Royal Highness and been such an oaf to invite her to dance, when she didn’t even know who I was? That’s a memory I’ll have forever.
JOHN H. SUNUNU
Chief of Staff
Date & Location: June 8–9, 2000, Charlottesville, VA
Interview Team: Young (chair), Hargrove, Karaagac McCall, Masoud, Milkis, Zelikow
Date & Location: November 9, 2000, Washington, D.C.
Interview Team: Young (chair), McCall

Chief of Staff John Sununu recalls the 1988 New Hampshire presidential primary, President Bush’s respect for Ronald Reagan, passage of the Clean Air Act amendments and the Americans with Disabilities Act, the savings and loan crisis, and the end of the Cold War.

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

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

RICHARD THORNBURGH
Attorney General
Date & Location: October 23–24, 2001, Charlottesville, VA
Interview Team: Riley (chair), Baker, Knott, Meador

Attorney General Richard Thornburgh discusses serving as a U.S. Attorney during the Nixon Presidency, as Assistant Attorney General for Gerald Ford’s Justice Department, and as Governor of Pennsylvania during the Presidency of Ronald Reagan, who appointed him Attorney General late in his term. He remained in that post for the first two years of the Bush administration, and he recalls judicial appointments, including Supreme Court nominations of David Souter and Clarence Thomas, as well as civil rights, the 1990 budget bill, the Americans With Disabilities Act, and his 1991 defeat by Democrat Harris Wofford for the U.S. Senate.

On Bush’s support
We [Thornburgh and wife Ginny] were coming back on the plane and I’d gotten a copy of a particularly nasty story. And on the plane we get a call from the White House, saying the President wants to have dinner with you tonight. So we join him at the Peking Duck.… This is the time there was speculation I was going to be fired. So he and Barbara [Bush] took Ginny and me…out for dinner. He picked up the tab. Ginny always said, “He used his own credit card!” It was a very pleasant evening, very nice, but the important thing was, the next morning in the Washington Post was a “Seen at the Peking Duck last night.” He knew this. He knew that this would be picked up and he knew that this
was the way to say to the people who were saying, “He’s going to be fired, he’s going to be fired”—nonsense. He’s there. He’s going to stay there. He has the President’s confidence.

On Bush not tolerating racism

The [Bush] administration looks like America in some ways. And let’s not kid ourselves, there’s a lot of racial animosity in both races, any races. It’s just the way the world works, I guess. But it’s particularly gratifying when leaders are role models in many respects. Anybody who expressed that kind of feeling in George Bush’s presence would have found themselves out of a job. I’m confident in saying that. If a cabinet member or a staff member had expressed any kind of invidious discrimination toward any group, they would have been gone. That’s the kind of guy he was.

CHASE UNTERMeyer
Assistant to the President and Director of Presidential Personnel; Director of the Voice of America

Date & Location: July 27–28, 2000, College Station, TX
Interview Team: Young (chair), Edwards, Karaagac, McCall, Milkis

Chase Untermeyer, who first met George H. W. Bush when the future President ran for Congress in 1966, offers a lengthy account of their association prior to the White House years. Untermeyer describes serving as Vice President Bush’s executive secretary and assisting the President-elect with the transition. He covers the appointment process in detail, particularly controversies, such as John Frohnmayer’s appointment to the National Endowment for the Arts.

On Dick Cheney

Dick Cheney, a man I intensely admire, was a very tough customer because of two things. One is that he is a man who gets his way as a rule, and he is the classic example of a Cabinet Secretary arriving from Capitol Hill who wanted to place people who had been on his House staff, and he succeeded in great measure. The other reason I think he got his way is he had been Deputy Chief of Staff and Chief of Staff in White Houses in which the White House staff did tell the Cabinet what to do, or at least sought to keep them in on a tighter leash, and he never said anything that caused me to say, “Aha, my point is proven,” but I just have to believe that Dick Cheney was intent that no White House would do unto him what he had done unto Cabinet Secretaries in his White House days. But times are different, he was of course eminently respected by President Bush and would get his way and he was a Cabinet Secretary who on a couple of occasions was willing to take a dispute over an Assistant Secretaryship into the Oval Office, not content to let the Chief of Staff try to sort it out. He had done that job himself and knew that there was somebody else who worked in the White House who had a say on appointments and that’s where on a couple of occasions Presidential appointments were sorted out. So my admiration for Dick Cheney, even before he was chosen as Vice Presidential nominee, was intense, always, but it was certainly reinforced by dealing with him as a tough customer in the Presidential personnel world. On that score I might say that because Dick Cheney is from Wyoming and my wife is from Wyoming where there are not too many people, I sort of had a degree of cushion of maybe his ire and anger because I was sort of a member of the family-in-law if you will, but I’m not sure about that.

On Bush at Untermeyer’s wedding

I shouldn’t forget one important instance of when my life was affected by the budget crisis, and that is that on approximately October 5, 1990, the House of Representatives, with Newt Gingrich in the van, rejected the first budget deal which had been hammered out over many months at Andrews Air Force Base. As a result of this, the president canceled what would have been some campaign appearances in the midterm election campaign in order to stay in Washington and work with his senior staff to put together a new deal that would hopefully pass the House. The reason this impacted
on me is that he was therefore able to attend my wedding on October 6th. And when he showed up it was—I can give details on that, it’s a little special and surprising if the President of the United States suddenly appears at your wedding. And it was sudden because we were told he wasn’t coming. The Secret Service likes surprise as a means of protection. But anyway, after the ceremony, he came around the church to wish my new bride and me well, and as I was shaking hands with him I said, ‘I’d like to thank Newt Gingrich for making it possible for you to be here today.’ [laughter] He was a little puzzled by what I said, but that’s how it happened. [laughter] 

. . . . .

CLAYTON YEUTTER
Secretary of Agriculture; Chairman of the Republican National Committee; National Policy Advisor

Date & Location: January 19, 2001, College Station, TX
Interview Team: Young (chair), Anderson, Riley

On Bush and Department of Agriculture

We did a couple of unusual things with President Bush while we were there. One was to get him on farm radio. There’s no substance involved in this in terms of farm policymaking, but I discovered that the President of the United States had never ever been to the Department of Agriculture to do a radio show of any kind. So we decided to invite him to come over and sit down and do a radio interview show. He did it, at least a couple of times while I was there, maybe as many as three times. USDA has a marvelous facility for radio programs, with its own studio and transmission of these programs to farm radio (and TV) stations all over the United States, which is a tremendous reach. The programs go not only to this huge farm audience, of course, but basically to all of rural America (with 200 or so radio stations).

The way this program worked is that you had the interviewee there, whether it be the Secretary of Agriculture or in this case the President, and these farm radio broadcasters could then call in and ask questions. We arranged to have the President come over and do this. The White House communications shop, of course, had a fit…. We went through this little debate and the President said, “No, I want to do it.” So he came over and he did it beautifully. He took all the questions, he had no problem with any of them, and he had a great time. The interviewers were thrilled to be able to speak directly to the President of the United States and ask him agriculturally related questions. That first program went out all over the country and was a huge success for President Bush.

On Barbara Bush

She was a fantastic first lady. I don’t know how anyone could have done a better job than she did. She was a wonderful wife and family supporter in every respect, and her role in influencing President Bush is, I am sure, greatly underrated. She did it all privately, never publicly, which is the way it should be done. I don’t believe she ever made a statement of any consequence on policy. She deliberately stayed away from that in her public statements, while working on her literacy programs and other activities. Behind the scenes, one just knows that she was a powerful influence on George Bush. She has that kind of personality; she is very strong willed…. A very intelligent lady, she knew a lot more of what was going on in government than she ever led anyone to believe. She is just a great mate for President Bush, very politically astute and very observant. I used to watch her at dinners, and she didn’t miss a thing. Her eyes were darting around the room, and you could tell she was sizing up this person, that person, and others too. Those Barbara Bush wheels were turning the whole time there were people in the room. She is a very observant, perceptive lady, and I’m sure all of that got fed back to the President in the bedroom that evening. She was probably his best people evaluator.
Bridging the Constitutional Divide: 
Inside the White House Office of Legislative Affairs

Edited by RUSSELL L. RILEY

The Miller Center’s White House Congressional Affairs Symposium included seven former heads of the White House Office of Legislative Affairs who compared their experiences working for every President from Richard Nixon to Bill Clinton. For two days, these Congressional Liaisons, charged with moving their respective Presidents’ legislative agendas through an independent—and sometimes hostile—Congress, shared first-hand views of the intricacies of Presidential-Congressional relations: how it works, how it doesn’t work, and the fascinating interplay of personalities, events, and politics that happens along the way.

The President’s Words: 
Speeches and Speechwriting in the Modern White House

Edited by MICHAEL NELSON and RUSSELL L. RILEY

The Miller Center’s Presidential Speechwriters Symposium assembled an outstanding team of academics and professional writers—including nine former speechwriters who worked for every President from Nixon to Clinton—to examine how the politics and crafting of Presidential rhetoric serve the various roles of the Presidency. This book enables readers to gain insider perspectives on the operating style and rhetorical manner of each of the six Presidents.

Governing at Home: 
The White House and Domestic Policymaking

Edited by MICHAEL NELSON and RUSSELL L. RILEY

This groundbreaking book resulted from the Miller Center’s Symposium on White House domestic policymaking, which brought together Presidential advisors from Richard Nixon’s to George W. Bush’s administrations. This book draws upon both the experiences of these advisors and the expertise of leading Presidency scholars to explain how policies reflect campaign promises, emerge and evolve, and are sold to the American people. It interweaves those insider and outsider perspectives to convey an eye-opening understanding of the policymaking process and the factors that influence it.
The Miller Center wishes to express its profound gratitude to the George Bush Presidential Library Foundation for its generosity in making this project possible.
The Miller Center is a nonpartisan institute that seeks to expand understanding of the presidency, policy, and political history, providing critical insights for the nation’s governance challenges. Based at the University of Virginia, with offices in Charlottesville and in Washington, D.C., the Miller Center is committed to work grounded in rigorous scholarship and advanced through civil discourse.