President George H.W. Bush
Oral History Project

Briefing Materials

Craig Fuller

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CRAIG L. FULLER TIMELINE
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1973 Fuller serves as a consultant to Governor Reagan's Local Government Reform Task Force, and as a member of the California Housing and Community Development Commission.

1974 Fuller chairs the California Advisory Commission on Youth.

Pacific Mutual Life Insurance Co. in Los Angeles hires Fuller as a public affairs officer.

1977 Fuller joins the public relations firm of Deaver & Hannaford, Inc., eventually becoming Vice President and Corporate Secretary.

1981

January Fuller joins the Reagan Administration as Deputy Assistant to the President and Director of the Office of Cabinet Administration.

February Consistent with his commitment to cabinet style government, President Reagan plans to set up a network of six Cabinet Councils centered on issue areas for debating and shaping the Administration’s major policies. This will represent the most structured system of Cabinet organization in the modern Presidency. To ensure efficiency and accountability, the system will be supervised by Craig Fuller as Deputy Assistant to the President and Director of the Office of Cabinet Administration. (The New York Times, 02/15/1981)

March Fuller reports favorably to the press on the new Cabinet Council system. He cites the Cabinet’s handling of the Three Mile Island clean-up as an example of the system working well. An unidentified aide is quoted as saying “…its [the Cabinet Council system] working better than expected.” (The New York Times, 03/22/1981)

June An unexpected procedural victory on a spending bill (Gramm-Latta II) forces Fuller to rewrite sections of Reagan’s speech at a Los Angeles dinner just minutes before he was to deliver it since the original draft reflected a defeat for the measure. (Laurence I. Barrett, Gambling with History: Ronald Reagan in the White House, Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Co., 1983, pp. 159-163)

September Fuller is promoted with a new title to Assistant to the President for Cabinet Affairs. He will continue to coordinate Cabinet activities and will report directly to Counsellor to the President Edwin Meese, III. (Appointment of Craig L. Fuller

**December**  
Reagan and his senior advisors institute a weekly “issues luncheon”. These meetings do not supplant the Cabinet Councils, but rather allow for some debate and an opportunity to obtain Reagan’s thoughts on issues likely to come up during the week in the Cabinet Council meetings. Regular attendees at the luncheon include Vice President George Bush, Chief of Staff James A. Baker, Deputy Chief of Staff Michael Deaver, Meese, Deputy to the Chief of Staff Richard Darman, Fuller, Director of Communications David Gergen, Assistant to the President for Policy Development Martin Anderson and acting Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs James Nance. (*The Washington Post*, 12/29/1981)

**1982**

**January**  
The departure of several White House staff member leads to a shake up in influence among senior advisors. It is speculated by the press that Darman and Fuller have gained influence and now represent a “back channel” for other advisors that have reportedly been left out of the loop. (*The Washington Post*, 01/06/1982)

**February**  
Concerned about polls showing declining support for the President and the GOP, Reagan’s senior advisors and political strategists gather at Camp David without the President. Fuller is one of the sixteen people attending the meeting. The group is charged with developing a political strategy for the year. (*The Washington Post*, 02/06/1982)

**March**  
Amid conflicting pressure from the Department of Health and Human Services and members of Congress from tobacco states, James Baker announces that Fuller will coordinate a review of the White House’s policy calling for stronger health warning labels on cigarette packaging. (*The Washington Post*, 03/18/1982)

**May**  
After several contentious meetings between environmental groups and the Administration, members of the President’s Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) work with Fuller in instituting an outreach program to environmental groups. (*The Washington Post*, 05/24/1982)

**September**  
Fuller and Deaver are the only staff at the Reagan ranch to watch the President sign a bill increasing taxes. No media coverage is allowed. (*The New York Times*, 09/04/1982)

**1983**

**February**  
Rita Lavelle, Assistant Administrator for Solid Waste and Emergency Response at the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), charges senior EPA officials with
favoritism, mismanagement and cover-ups. She cites Fuller as one of the White House staff with whom she has had contact. Fuller says that his meeting with Lavelle only involved her presenting her story and also asking for a job elsewhere in the Administration after her boss, EPA Administrator Anne Gorsuch, asked that Lavelle be fired. *(The New York Times, 02/13/1983)*

Testifying at a Senate Committee on Environmental and Public Works hearing, Rita Lavelle claims she was made a scapegoat and that Gorsuch and an EPA regional administrator had told her that political reasons were behind the failure to clean up the Stringfellow toxic waste site in California. Specifically, a quick clean-up would help Jerry Brown, the incumbent California Governor in his race against Republican Pete Wilson for a Senate seat. Under further questioning by Senator George Mitchell (D-ME), she acknowledges that her information was only rumor and hearsay. She further claims she had been contacted on a number of occasions by Meese and Fuller to discuss specific toxic waste issues. She says neither official tried to influence any of the EPA’s decisions. *(The New York Times, 02/24/1983)*

In response to Lavelle’s testimony, Fuller reiterates that he had never had any specific conversations about toxic waste sites with Lavelle. Fuller pulls information from his files that show he met four times with Lavelle. The first was a visit by Fuller to the EPA to set up communications procedures with the White House. Second, Lavelle and Gorsuch came to his office to argue against impending budget cuts. The third meeting included Meese and Gorsuch came to his office to argue against long-term planning in conjunction with the White House “mid term planning review”. Finally, Fuller says he had a discussion on environmental issues as head of a White House task force on the Times Beach, Missouri, toxic waste clean-up. *(The New York Times, 02/25/1983)*

*March*  
Fuller announces that two documents that make reference to the Stringfellow toxic waste site have been found and that he has voluntarily turned them over to congressional investigators. The documents show that EPA Administrator Anne Burford (formerly Anne Gorsuch) had planned to announce the clean up of the Stringfellow site, and at the last minute decided not to announce the plan due to technical difficulties in the proposals that required postponement. *(The New York Times, 03/18/1983)*

*July*  
Fuller recommends an investigation of Navy bidding procedures by the Inspector General of the Department of Defense after memos from the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) suggest that some bids may have been rigged. *(The Washington Post, 07/25/1983)*

*1984*  
*January*  
While staying with friends over the holidays, the Reagans receive a request from The Beach Boys drummer Dennis Wilson’s family requesting assistance in
obtaining a burial at sea, which is illegal, for Wilson. Reagan tasks Fuller and Fuller’s Executive Assistant Karen Hart with helping Wilson’s family. Fuller is able to secure assistance from Department of Transportation and Coast Guard officials so Wilson can be buried at sea at least three miles offshore in international waters. (The New York Times, 01/02/1984)

Ed Meese’s nomination for Attorney General fuels speculation in the press that Fuller’s importance at the White House will increase. (The Washington Post, 01/24/1984)

June

The Reagan Administration overrules an effort by Interior Secretary William P. Clark to develop a plan in the election year to share offshore oil and gas royalties with coastal states. A memo to Clark from Fuller says the proposal has “considerable merit” but that discussions with Congress and governors “would not be appropriate” now. Clark is told to form a “working group” to develop his proposal for possible inclusion in next year’s State of the Union address, if Reagan is reelected. (The Washington Post, 06/19/1984)

August

After Baker lets it be known he wants to leave the West Wing after the election, media reports suggest that Deaver will seek the Chief of Staff position and would elevate Fuller to Deputy Chief of Staff. (The Washington Post, 08/23/1984)

November

In an appeal to federal workers just before the presidential election, Meese promises that Fuller will be put in charge of running regular Cabinet-level meetings between career civil service professionals and political appointees. (The Washington Post, 11/04/1984)

The White House Budget Working Group, referred to by some in the OMB as “the Gang of Twelve” meets for the first time on the 12th. This group is “designed to get senior White House staff into the whole budget process at the beginning,” and “to develop a grand strategy” of budget cuts for President Reagan to approve, according to OMB Assistant Director for Public Affairs Edwin L. Dale, Jr. The group offers an official forum for talks that would be held anyway among the Administration’s key actors. The group includes Vice President Bush, Ed Meese James Baker, Michael Deaver, Richard Darman, Craig Fuller, David Stockman, Under Secretary of Health and Human Services and Commissioner of Social Security John A. Svahn, Deputy Assistant to the President for Legislative Affairs (House) M.B. Oglesby, Council of Economic Advisers member William A. Niskanen, Secretary of the Treasury Donald T. Regan, and Secretary of Commerce Malcolm Baldrige. (The Washington Post, 11/23/1984)

The Budget Working Group submits a plan that aims to cut the federal deficit in half, to about $100 billion, by fiscal year 1988. Most of the cuts will come from domestic programs, but Reagan’s “core group” of senior advisers proposes that the Pentagon bear part of the burden as well. (The Washington Post, 11/28/1984; U.S. News & World Report, 12/03/1984)
1985

January Fuller addresses the Leadership Forum for Young Americans during their inaugural party saying, “as long as you are with us, we are going to maintain power.” (The Washington Post, 01/20/1985)

February Vice President Bush announces that Fuller will leave his duties as Cabinet Secretary to take over as the Vice President’s Chief of Staff. Bush praises Fuller’s service to Reagan by saying, “During the past four years, Craig Fuller has served the President and the Administration with unusual ability, he has rightfully earned the respect of all of his colleagues, the President’s Cabinet and all who have worked with him.” (The Washington Post, 02/14/1985)

1986

February Bush announces the formation of a “testing the waters committee” that will begin spending money on his campaign for president. In addition to his Chief of Staff duties, Fuller will serve as a senior advisor to Bush’s 1988 campaign. (The Wall Street Journal, 01/06/1988; The Washington Post, 02/07/1988)

July Bush and Fuller meet with Counter Terrorism Advisor to the Israeli Government Amiram Nir during the Vice President’s trip to Jerusalem. During this meeting Bush is told that the Israeli-assisted contacts with Iran are with some of the more radical elements in Iran, since previous dealings with moderates had proven unsuccessful. Fuller’s notes of this meeting will later be obtained by The New York Times and published there in February, 1987. (The New York Times, 02/08/1987, 02/09/1987)

December Fuller helps craft Bush’s speech on the Iran-Contra affair. In the speech, Bush denies any knowledge of what went on, but acknowledges mistakes were made by the National Security Council (NSC). Bush supports the President’s initiative, saying that the plan exhibited leadership and was of potential long-term benefit to the U.S. (The Washington Post, 12/04/1986)

1987

February Fuller’s notes of Bush’s July 1986 meeting in Jerusalem are obtained and published by The New York Times. These notes show that Bush was informed that the Israelis were in contact with radical elements inside Iran and that contacts with moderates had been unsuccessful. (The New York Times, 02/08/1987, 02/09/1987)

March The Miami Herald obtains and publishes a letter from Vice President Bush to a Guatemalan doctor who wished to give medical supplies to the Contra rebels in Nicaragua. In the letter, Bush suggests the doctor should contact Deputy Director of Political-Military Affairs for the National Security Council Oliver North.

In
responding to the report, Fuller says that there is no indication that the Vice President was aware of anything more than the fact that Oliver North was the person at the NSC in charge of monitoring activities in Central America related to the Contras. (Associated Press, 03/16/1987)

**August**

Responding to GOP presidential candidates’ attempts to organize a debate in October, Fuller responds that the Vice President has offered to appear in two debates in November, but says that Bush, who plans to enter the race formally in mid-October, will not take part in debates before then. “We have consistently said we are concerned about beginning the process too early,” says Fuller. (The Washington Post, 08/14/1987)

**September**

Vice President Bush requests that the Polish government allow him to make a televised speech to the people of Poland during his visit there. Fuller also announces that Bush expects to meet with Solidarity leader Lech Walesa, and that Bush expects to raise human rights issues with the Jaruzelski government. (Associated Press, 09/14/1987)

Peter Teeley, who served as Press Secretary for Vice President Bush for six years, returns to the Bush camp to be Director of Communications. Teeley will serve as a spokesman for Bush in his official capacity as Vice President as well as for the campaign. Bush has been without a Press Secretary since Larry Thomas resigned in June. Teeley will also be involved in speechwriting and debate preparation. Fuller confirms that Teeley “will fill an important chair at our table” and says a formal announcement of Teeley’s appointment will be made today. (The Washington Post, 09/25/1987)

**October**

After Bush returns from a NATO ministers meeting, Fuller announces that a U.S.-Soviet summit to sign an Intermediate Nuclear Forces Treaty is likely. (Associated Press, 10/02/1987)

**1988**

**February**


In the wake of the Iowa loss, Robert Teeter reportedly takes more control over campaign strategy. He begins orchestrating a more aggressive campaign against Bush’s opponents and coordinates with speechwriter Peggy Noonan to generate a more personal image of the Vice President. (The Washington Post, 02/16/1988)

While campaigning in New Hampshire, Bush signs the no-tax pledge presented to all candidates by Grover G. Norquist, head of Americans for Tax Reform. (The Washington Post, 02/15/1988)
Bush wins the New Hampshire primary on the 16th. He defeats Dole 38-29 percent, a much larger margin than predicted on the eve of the vote. (*The Washington Post*, 02/28/1988)

**March**

Bush earns a sweeping victory in the South Carolina primary, winning all of the state’s 46 counties. (*The New York Times*, 03/06/1988)

**May**

Teeley resigns, telling the press that Fuller and Teeter have been excluding him from campaign decisions. The press speculates that a Fuller-Atwater rivalry has erupted. (*The Washington Post*, 05/26/1988)

**August**

Baker announces that he will leave his post as Secretary of the Treasury in order to head the Bush campaign, effective August 17th. (*The New York Times*, 08/06/1988)

Fuller, along with Roger Ailes, put Indiana Senator Dan Quayle at the top of his list of potential vice presidential nominees. Quayle is a lower but acceptable choice to others, except for James Baker, who opposes Quayle’s nomination. (John Robert Greene, *The Presidency of George Bush*, Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 2000, p. 34; *Newsweek*, 11/21/1988)

Bush announces Dan Quayle as his running mate, and receives the Republican nomination for President. In his acceptance speech to the Republican Convention on the 19th, Bush calls for a “kinder, gentler nation” and makes his “read my lips: no new taxes” pledge. (*The Washington Post*, 08/19/1988)

**September**


**October**


**November**

On the 8th, Bush is elected President of the United States.

Fuller and Robert Teeter are named Co-Directors of Bush’s transition team. (*The Washington Post*, 11/12/1988)


Fuller announces that he will leave the White House to return to the private sector as soon as the transition is complete. While he admits that he would have been eager to serve as White House Chief of Staff, he denies that he ever campaigned for the position. (*Los Angeles Times*, 11/17/1988)
Fuller serves as Chairman of the 1992 GOP Convention.
Early Relationship with Reagan

- Did you have occasion to interact with Reagan during your service on the California Local Government Reform Task Force? Discuss your impressions of Reagan as Governor.
- How did you come to work for Deaver and Hannaford? Discuss your observations of Reagan in his post-Gubernatorial years.
- Were you involved in the 1980 campaign? Were you involved in the transition?

Cabinet Secretary

- How did you come to be selected as Cabinet Secretary with reporting responsibility to Meese?
- Discuss your role and responsibilities as Director of the Office of Cabinet Affairs. What issues occupied most of your time? With whom did you work most closely at the White House?
- How did the Cabinet Council system function? Evaluate its effectiveness in structuring policy debate as well as managing White House relations with the Cabinet members. How effective was the Cabinet Council system in dealing with problems within the cabinet-level departments? Did the system work equally well in all areas of policy, or were there differences in economic versus domestic policy-making? What, if any, foreign policy issues came through the Cabinet Council system? How involved was Reagan in the Cabinet Council debates? How did the “issues luncheons” affect the Cabinet Councils?
- Discuss your relationships with Baker, Deaver, Meese and Darman as well as the Secretaries of the various Departments. What noteworthy issues came up with Cabinet officials (e.g. Watt, Donovan, Gorsuch, Haig). Discuss how your promotion to Assistant to the President for Cabinet Affairs affected your duties and various relationships.
- How would you characterize Reagan’s management and decision-making style? Do you think the administration effectively maintained its stated goal of cabinet-style government?

Chief of Staff to Vice President Bush

- What made you decide to take the position as Bush’s Chief of Staff? Did James Baker play a role in your selection? What reaction did you experience in your relationship with the Reagan people?
- Discuss your role and responsibilities as Chief of Staff. What issues occupied most of your time? With whom did you work most closely with in the Vice President’s office? How did the Reagan and Bush staffs interact? Comment on the relationship between Bush and Reagan.
- How did Bush begin to distinguish himself from Reagan in preparation for his 1988 campaign?
- Compare and contrast Bush’s leadership style with that of Reagan.
- Discuss the Vice President’s handling of issues related to the Iran/Contra investigation.
- What is Bush’s legacy as Vice President?
• What aspects of Bush’s service as Vice President were missed or misunderstood by the press?

The 1988 Bush Campaign
• How did Bush balance his loyalty to the President with his need to distance himself as a candidate?
• Discuss your relationship with Bob Teeter in the campaign. How did Lee Atwater’s arrival affect the campaign? Did the campaign change once James Baker left the Treasury Department and joined the campaign full-time?
• What were Bush’s strengths and weaknesses as a candidate? How did being a sitting Vice President help or hinder Bush on the campaign trail? How helpful was the Ronald Reagan in supporting Bush in his campaign?
• Discuss your role in the selection of Dan Quayle as the vice presidential nominee.

The Transition
• Discuss your role in co-directing the transition. What were the major challenges and issues you faced?
• Describe the general process for selecting nominees for the incoming Bush Administration. Were there any noteworthy debates over potential nominees?
• Discuss the selection of John Sununu as White House Chief of Staff and your decision to leave government service. How did it affect your remaining time in the transition?

1992 GOP Convention Manager
• Discuss your role as 1992 Republican National Convention Manager. Why did you decide to take the position? With whom did you work most closely? Were you planning on joining the Administration if Bush won in 1992?

The Reagan Presidency in Retrospect
• What is the legacy of the Reagan Administration?
• How effective was Reagan as a public leader, a legislative leader, a foreign policy leader and a party leader?
• How was Reagan perceived by other political leaders?
• What were the strengths and weaknesses of the Reagan presidency?
• What features of the Reagan presidency were overlooked or misunderstood by the press?
• How should the Reagan presidency be viewed in history?
TIMELINES

- Craig L. Fuller Timeline, prepared by Kelly Erickson, Miller Center of Public Affairs, University of Virginia, 12/10/2003.

SELECTED PUBLIC STATEMENTS BY CRAIG L. FULLER


CABINET SECRETARY


CHIEF OF STAFF TO VICE PRESIDENT BUSH


THE 1988 BUSH CAMPAIGN AND TRANSITION


