

White House Interview Program

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INTERVIEWEE: CHASE UNTERMEYER

INTERVIEWER: Martha Kumar

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MK: So the rules we're been working with are on the record except you can go on background whenever you feel like it.

CU: What I have to say is so historical I'm sure it can all be on the record.

MK: We're building the institutional memory giving the people who are coming in a sense of how the place worked and what's effective, what's an effective operation and how an office is started up. The second part of it, the presidential appointments process, is creating a piece of software that will in one place put all the information together, all the various White House forms plus the FBI [Federal Bureau of Investigation] and then also the Senate committee forms. [We will] hopefully have in one place the ability to answer various questions that will shoot into the forms. Then there will be a walk-through on a website of the presidential appointment process starting basically with three stages, the selection process which goes to the Intent to Nominate form; and then the clearance process which goes to the actual nomination being released with the press releases; the confirmation being the third part. And then with each one looking at what the institutions are, what they're doing during that time period and how long it takes.

CU: That's got it covered. As I think I said on the telephone, in considering this issue since 1988, the conclusion I have as to how best to shorten the process is in the first phase, in the selection and clearance phase. Giving people, especially those ambitious, eager-to-apply individuals, a place to check and begin assembling their information will cut down on a very major amount of time in the process. In fact, my view is that the next administration, whoever it is, shouldn't try lecturing to the Senate about speeding up the confirmation process until it can speedily present with confidence a nomination. That comes in large part to the business of just gathering the data to fill out the forms and fill them out correctly and get them into the process. I would welcome—I say "I"—I think the system would welcome the situation wherein the first two phases handled by the Executive Branch are done so expeditiously and so well that then the Senate is embarrassed by the stack-up of nominations. But as long as the Senate can say, "What do you mean we're holding up the process? Your nomination didn't even get over here until the twenty-seventh of April," they can be allowed that right. As I say, I think the Executive Branch should do its job first and well and then see what the Senate can do if it's then motivated to hasten its process.

MK: How long do these stages now take when you all were there? How do you think they can be reduced? To what level? What amount of time do you think?

CU: A crude rule was about two months each. Many nominations took longer than that and the length of time pretty well related to the wealth or complication of the individual, by which I mean if a person had many investments and the spouse had many investments, those all have to be gathered together and put down. Then there's the particularly pernicious aspect that the FBI in checking people out for consideration, especially for national security posts, will find out every country they have ever visited within a certain amount of time. I understand that's now been reduced to only the preceding seven years or some amount of time. Back in my day it was forever and it took forever for them to send messages out to their contacts in the U.S. embassies to contact their contacts in the law

enforcement agency with whom they had a relationship and to try to find out where a person comported themselves in that particular country.

I remember one nomination for some national security post was held up past the point of some recess of the Senate. The image I have of the confirmation process is of opening and closing windows or opening and closing doors having to do with the recesses that the Senate takes. And coming up one such recess if we could have gotten the nomination over, there was promise of a hearing and perhaps even a confirmation before the recess. But we had to wait because this individual had been a Rhodes Scholar and the FBI insisted on Scotland Yard confirming that the individual had indeed attended Oxford. And Scotland Yard, needless to say, had other things to do and it got around eventually to getting on a bus or something and going up to Oxford and, yes, confirming that the person had indeed matriculated at Oxford. For that reason, that particular gate was missed. That's one of the reasons why it can take longer than the simple two, two and two system.

MK: Can the White House put some pressure on them? Ask them why there were holdups and move it along? Cabinet secretaries have a different time frame.

CU: That's at least in their favor. But you may want to talk to Admiral Jim Watkins who was under consideration for Secretary of Energy in 1989. Here is a man who had been chief naval operations; therefore, [he was] a member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. He had been through every possible security check in his entire thirty-five year, brilliant career except he had not been through an FBI background check. So he had to submit everything over again and it had to be done by the FBI which was burdened with everybody else's background check at the time and he missed one of these gates to the point that some early recess of the Senate that year came along and he could not be confirmed until after they came back. That may well require a little risk-taking on the part of the President to sort of say, "Okay. We know there can be nasty surprises but Jim Watkins has been through every possible security check. I know him; I trust him. I think we can send this nomination up without the FBI clearance."

The question then comes, will the confirming committee expect the FBI background check to be done? And if so, then you might as well do it sooner than later and find out those things for yourself before the Senate does. It's an obvious point but I do believe that when you look at the chart of how much longer it has taken almost to the geometric increase of time that you can pretty well say that when the Senate and the White House are in opposite hands that is going to add to the process. And for whatever it's been, ten out of the last twelve years, that has been the case. The game of political gotcha which both sides have now learned to play with nominations is such that for political reasons probably no president with the Senate in the opposite party's hands can afford to let a nomination to go forward without checking every possibility—that Jim Watkins may have dealt drugs on the side and you didn't know it.

MK: How many times did you find in these various checks—you have the FBI background check; you have your White House personal data statement—that there were real differences when you had somebody profess that they had a real clean background and it could pass the front page of the *Washington Post* kind of a test?

CU: Not often is the answer but those occasions were pretty dramatic. Are you going to talk to Boyden Gray at all?

MK: Sure.

CU: Boyden has a story, which he loves to tell at dinner parties on this very subject. I will tell it if you want—

MK: I have had a few people who have been telling them.

CU: I can either tell you now or you can just make a note to ask Boyden. He is a great believer that there are surprises in the process and that presidents will, being politicians, in the end, after they may have grumbled about the amount of time it takes to go check somebody out whom they think is an honorable and eminent citizen, will want you to do it again just to make sure.

MK: In looking at transitions and successful transitions—you've had a lot of time in Washington; you've been able to see more than one administration work—what do you think are the elements that are common to successful transitions? In some ways, successful transitions are hard to bring about. What are some of the elements that you can think of that are common to them?

CU: Well, transitions are kind of an odd thing because there really haven't been that many of them and, as I like to say, you can't really practice on them. I don't think there has been anybody who has ever gone through a transition twice so whatever lessons there are can be applied from painful, personal experience.

MK: Except Grover Cleveland.

CU: That's right. But there's [a] good point. You can truly only start to talk about modern transitions since about [John F.] Kennedy. Is that seven presidents back? If so, the reason being is that much before that the federal establishment was so much smaller that certainly Grover Cleveland but even for that matter Franklin Roosevelt and Harry Truman, et cetera, could put together an administration based upon the general brainstorming and gathering of names that could be done through an informal network that was more common in those days than today just because they had that many fewer positions to fill.

When I was planning the [George H. W.] Bush transition of 1988, the only previous time in the twentieth century at least that a party had succeeded itself in power was when Herbert Hoover took over from Calvin Coolidge. In his memoirs, Herbert Hoover said that he decided to keep all of Calvin Coolidge's appointees in place, with a few exceptions at the Cabinet level, because he pretty well knew those people. He had been Secretary of Commerce after all during the preceding administrations so I think that's true. In the little bitty Washington of its day, he probably did know who the other presidential appointees were at the sub-cabinet level in the government. In any case, there weren't that many of them to have to trifle with so he paid attention to the big ones and he lived happily ever after, at least on a personnel basis.

Now when you said what are the elements of a successful transition, I'm sort of hard pressed to find one that you can hold up as an exemplar. I like to think that the [Ronald] Reagan to Bush transition was smooth but it was for the obvious reason that it was for the first time in sixty years that a party had succeeded itself in power. We decided to take advantage of that. I think we failed from a public relations angle in making this point but we decided to take advantage of it by keeping in place the Reagan appointees who were our political co-religionists and who were either retained in those jobs or recruited for other jobs and be able to do the background checks and the further recruiting knowing that there would be a seamless transition at the department and agency level as opposed to a classic transition where everyone is heaved out as of noon on January 20 and you have to rush to fill those desks.

As I said, we did a poor job of making that point. I felt, back at the time, that I could either recruit the Bush administration or take care of my own personal press, but I couldn't do both. The amount of questions that kept coming in all the time—why is there a hold up on this particular position or how are you doing on women and minorities and why is it taking so much time to fill all the positions—can truly take up a day especially in the early weeks. One of the things that I would insist on any future president, definitely any director of Presidential Personnel during a transition, insisting upon is that there be one member of the Press Office assigned to handle personnel issues full time because that is such a key story. Not that I tried but I could hear Marlin Fitzwater say something like, "I'm too strapped; I couldn't possibly spare a resource to you like that full time because we've got the President's business to take care of, all the messages to Congress and what's happening overseas, et cetera." As I said, I didn't have that conversation with the Press Secretary but, from an institutional point of view, I could see a press secretary not wanting to give up a position to another staffer, so to speak. And yet the personnel story is a very big story and past administrations have shown it can be a very bad story for the administration to the point that I think that is essential, to have somebody whose full-time job it is, at least during those opening months, to get the facts and speak them back to all the inquiring reporters and let the director of personnel do the job.

MK: Isn't it part of the press secretary's job because it's the story? It is the central story as an administration begins. You can predict what kinds of stories there are going to be. And they are the kind of stories that are good for the administration, in most cases. They are ones where the reporters want to do stories on people, the new team, and the information tends to be positive. So why isn't that a story that's dealt with on a regular basis by the Press Office?

CU: You make a very good point.

MK: It's predictable. Right up to the first hundred days you can just look at what kinds of things and then looking at minorities and the rest—particularly I guess in terms of what kind of promises people made during the campaign. [Bill] Clinton, for example, got a lot of those kinds of questions early on.

CU: You're absolutely right. And that's the reason I like to think it's a point that can be successfully made to the Press Secretary just as I feel that whatever the title will be, a congressional liaison, the assistant to the president for legislative affairs must assign one member of his or her staff to the confirmation process. This is something that did happen for me in our administration. We had one particular special assistant, maybe even a deputy assistant to the President, dealing in legislative affairs who was a confirmation person [Brian Waidman]. I think the Reagan administration had such a person in Nancy Kennedy, if you're familiar with her name. I think she has married since then and may have another name. She handled that and that is a very important job for the same reason; it is predictable in every case, even the routine ones, that there will be problems arising from the confirmation process, of meeting these opening and closing gates that come about. And if there really are problems of somebody with a committee chairman or someone else in the confirmation process then you absolutely want somebody who can be on the Hill working on those confirmation problems.

MK: What about people in the agencies? When somebody is going to be appointed to a department or agency, don't they have a sherpa that takes them through the process?

CU: They can and should, but, having been in departments and agencies myself, I know that when faced with a pile of work the legislative assistant—this is probably true of other ones but the legislative assistant in particular—is going to do what the boss needs to have done. And if the boss, the Cabinet secretary, has to go up on Capitol Hill and testify before three committees, that's going to be what the legislative assistant is going to work on. They're not going to work on getting so-and-so confirmed as assistant secretary particularly if the Cabinet secretary didn't want so-and-so to be the

assistant secretary. In that case then the legislative assistant will know that and do what needs to be done.

The same thing is true of whoever handles press in a department. They're going to work for the secretary and it will be the secretary's press that is given top priority. If there is some problem, such as a confirmation problem or maybe an on-the-job problem for a political appointment that may be troubling the White House from a political point of view, you can't necessarily count on the department helping you out.

MK: Has that led to sort a new industry of having people like Tom Korologos work nominations for Republicans and Michael Berman who does some of that for Democrats.

[Interruption]

MK: Now we seem to have with divided government—

CU: The Korologos issue.

MK: And Michael Berman for Democrats. He worked, I think, Alexis Herman's nomination. Even with the White House for a Cabinet secretary, the trouble can be substantial enough as it was in her case that you need to get outside help.

CU: The interesting question to ask is whether it's paid help or whether it's sort of pro bono on the part of this individual who gains immense gratitude on the part of the individual for helping them through the process. That's a question worth asking. I don't think Tom Korologos expected to be paid by a number of people whom he helped. Now it may have been in certain celebrated cases—Clarence Thomas or some such thing—that he might have been. For example, when I was nominated to be director of Voice of America, he contacted me. He, at the time, was the head of the Advisory Committee on Public Diplomacy which is essentially the citizen's advisory group to the old U.S. Information Agency, part of which Voice of America was. So I think he was truly interested in whoever was going to be nominated for that position. But he called and offered his services and I welcomed him in. When he came to my office, I took extensive notes on his advice on the confirmation process. Now I did this not because much of this was new information. After all, I had been Director of Presidential Personnel and we had seen many, many people with greater problems than I ever did in their confirmations. But I considered that an act of history; that is I have the complete notes of the complete Tom Korologos system for getting confirmed in the U.S. Senate which is now in the Bush Library. I'm very grateful for history, if not for myself, that was recorded.

MK: Is it open?

CU: I can make it open. The trouble is that it's my notes so it may not be very legible. I didn't have them transcribed or anything. It's there and it's many yellow pages of the complete Korologos which, as I recall, he gave almost by turning on a switch. It's clearly the standard speech he gives nominees.

MK: I have talked to people who have said they had spoken with him and he was particularly helpful.

CU: His greatest advice is the Bill of Rights does not extend to nominees before the United States Senate. You cannot be presumed innocent; you do not have the right to free speech or of any other right that you thought you had. It's whatever the Senate lets you do or be.

MK: In putting together personnel in the transition, thinking about personnel issues, in a sense you have four, even five, different groups of people to recruit: the transition people themselves and then White

House staff, cabinet people, the presidential appointees and then you have judges as well. What groups do you go to for each one? What sort of base? Do you have a base for each one of those and then do you have a schedule of how you're going to tackle each one of those, what the order is going to be and whom it's going to be done? Are those five groups the basic groups?

CU: Yes. There's one more group but it really doesn't matter during the transition, those are the people to be on boards and commissions. There are very few boards and commissions of the part-time variety for which you need to pay any attention during the transition. Now with big "C" commissions, like the Federal Trade Commission, Federal Communication Commissions then, yes, those can very much become transition items particularly between the parties because you're going to have to find a chair for that commission that is going to be sympathetic to your side and perhaps even fill some vacancies to effect a majority on that commission. That would be a special case. In my recollection, and in 1988-1989, aside from choosing who the chairs would be, there were no immediate actions on filling seats on the regulatory commissions. But those can be quite key. When you talk to Boyden Gray or any other recent counsel to the president they can describe the judicial selection process for you. I was involved in that because Boyden had a committee of people dealing with judges at the district and appellate levels. I certainly could speak to that but it would be better to have a general counsel who had the full responsibility talk to it because, in President Bush's White House, the Counsel and the Counsel alone, working with the Attorney General, dealt with Supreme Court nominees. That was not for a committee. So it is probably better to get the complete range by talking to him.

Now in our administration, perhaps even to this day, the Counsel did not care about so-called Article I judgeships. Article III judgeships are the lifetime tenured district, appellate and Supreme Court judges that we think of but there are a variety of so-called Article I judgeships created by an act of Congress who are federal judges with specific responsibility like the Tax Court and the Customs Court and the Court of Military Appeals, which I think is now called the Court of Appeals for the armed forces. These have rather long terms, like fifteen years, but they are not Article III judgeships. In this, in my experience, Boyden Gray was just as happy to let the personnel office deal with judgeships of that nature, Article I judgeships, so I could tell you a little bit about that but they tended to be fewer by far than these other categories.

You mentioned recruiting personnel staff. That clearly was an important act. That was my first act after President Bush named me and he did so the morning after the election. In fact, the morning after the election he made three announcements in his first press conference. That was Jim Baker to be Secretary of State, Boyden Gray to be Counsel and me to be Director of Presidential Personnel. Boyden and I were named because we were linked together in the entire business of putting together the administration. That's why we were among the first to be named.

So my initial need was to put a personnel staff together. I recruited not just for the transition but for the White House after that. I am grateful for the advice I received from Bob Tuttle and especially from Pen James who said—Pen James I think was the one who made this point most vividly—at the start of an administration you should get the White House [personnel] staff to commit to serving at least one year in that role before they could consider and take an appointment themselves. At the start of the Reagan administration there were a lot of people who came to work in Presidential Personnel who truly were looking out for jobs for themselves and as soon as they had secured it they were out the door. This meant you had to recruit someone else and get them up to speed, and that person may well be job hunting. So this requirement was made and kept. People were very happy to be on the White House staff instead of going off to the agencies. The job that I held did not require me to do any recruiting for the rest of the White House staff if that's what you meant by the White House—

MK: I was just saying there are different groups that have to be put together at the beginning. So the White House staff itself is put together by the Chief of Staff.

CU: That's right. I always said the job of a Director of Presidential Personnel begins or ends on the White House steps depending which way you were facing. It meant everything beyond the walls of the White House, and the chief of staff, or the deputy chief of staff more typically, did the internal recruiting.

[Interruption]

MK: I've actually been reading his manuscript. He sent me his manuscript.

CU: I'm glad to know he is finished.

MK: He's down to his last chapter, his wrap-up. So he has them for each of the presidencies he's going through; one chapter on the transition itself and one for the early part in office. Those are pretty much the time periods—our notion of transition is the period preceding the election, going up to the inauguration and then the first hundred days. We're going to see how it actually starts up. So we're taking transition in its broadest sense.

When you're looking at Cabinet people and you're putting information together, when did you start and what kinds of groups were you looking at?

CU: Because of the instruction not to do any pre-election recruiting, et cetera, I wasn't doing any particular looking myself. But it was very clear that as a result of not being able to do any pre-election recruiting or general legwork that we would be caught in the classic circumstance, which we were. That is that the President went ahead and chose his Cabinet and then at some point soon thereafter the Cabinet Secretary-designate would sit down with me or perhaps some members of my staff and begin to talk about the sub-cabinet appointments. Some of the better organized, meaning more political, people such as Elizabeth Dole, would come with their names of people they wanted to be in, what they kept saying [was] "my appointments." I resolved that in the awful circumstance that would I ever have to do this work again that I would make sure that anybody, any Cabinet secretary, who said "my appointment" would immediately have a pre-signed letter of resignation exercised because they are the president's appointments. The Cabinet secretaries do view them as "my appointments". Depending on their background—Elizabeth Dole, the background there being her husband's campaign for president; Jack Kemp's background being his campaign for president and Dick Cheney's background being Capitol Hill—you can just go through the various people who will come pre-armed with lists of those whom they want in various positions. If they are spurred along by politically savvy people, and those individuals start off being politically savvy, who tell them you have to make the first move because the White House will make you take someone you don't want then you set up the classic story from one administration to the next of the battle between a Cabinet secretary and the White House presidential personnel staff over the sub-cabinet appointments.

What I'm getting around to saying is it should be any incoming administration's greatest tool to have an inventory of names of potential resources to put together some names to have on your side of the table when that first meeting takes place. I would also hope that a future president would say what past presidents have not truly had the courage to say which is to tell the Cabinet secretary, "I'd like to introduce you to my assistant for Presidential Personnel. This individual has my complete confidence. This individual has been with me many years and knows the people who helped me get elected here. PS, while you were in your condo in Palm Beach during the New Hampshire primary, these people helped me get elected so you could become a Cabinet secretary. Therefore, I will

depend upon the assistant for Presidential Personnel to help me see that those people who helped us all get here are properly rewarded. Now, Cabinet secretary-designate, you may very well have people who are important to you and whom you want to bring into the administration. I say, by all means, we want to see those people. But in the event of a tie, my view as president is to help the people who helped me get here. I will depend upon Frank or Frances here to make sure that that happens.” That’s the speech I would like for a future president to say which would put the Cabinet secretary on notice that they may look upon them as their appointments from the point of view of their team but it will have to be truly a team effort and not a personal team.

MK: Two things. Now, didn’t Reagan pretty much do that with Pendleton James? He made a blanket statement about appointments.

CU: I wasn’t around in that time but the legend is that, yes, the White House held pretty tight control over sub-cabinet appointments. I don’t think that was true in every case. Certain strong Cabinet secretaries, particularly those who have strong relationships with the president which in those days meant Caspar Weinberger and William French Smith and one or two others perhaps; in the Bush administration, Jim Baker and Nicholas Brady, et cetera—can pretty well dictate. And the Presidential Personnel Office knows that in the case of a tie the Cabinet secretary is going to win because of that relationship. The problem with that method, and it’s not quite what I was saying in this speech that never got to be said, is that if truly the White House does dictate appointees without any cooperation, give and take, with the Cabinet secretary, then the appointee may well arrive in that department and walk into his or beautiful office but never be told about the staff meeting or never get the key piece of paper or not be invited on the retreat or all the other kinds of things the Cabinet secretary can do to freeze out somebody whom the Cabinet secretary doesn’t truly believe is one of them.

What we tried to do in the Bush administration and what I think is not in conflict with this little presidential talk that I gave you is the idea that you want to work cooperatively with the Cabinet secretary recognizing that there are some positions that the Cabinet secretary will want to fill perhaps with people who were of help to them. For example, if they came off the Hill, the person who handled press for them may well be the sort of person you accept to handle press in that department or handle legislative affairs in that department. We gave Cabinet secretaries much greater latitude in the recruitment of a deputy cabinet secretary because of the important alter ego relationship there. That had to be one in which the two felt comfortable and act comfortably. If the Cabinet secretary knew of somebody he or she wanted then we were willing to give them that benefit as long as that person was politically acceptable. It’s in the case of a tie, as I say, that the run should go to the people who helped the president get elected and those are the names which it is the job of Presidential Personnel to promote.

MK: Are there different qualities, though, that you want in people who have been involved in campaigning and those that are going to be involved in governing?

CU: Well, the primary hope, and it’s being a little too simplistic to say it’s the primary responsibility of the Personnel Office, is to get those who are loyal to the president. Now, depending on the audience, that word can cause some people to get very tense because the word “loyalty” conjures up loyalty oaths and various other tests of faith back in the [Joseph] McCarthy era or thereafter. But what you’re basically talking about is an orientation toward the president, toward seeing that the president succeeds, and you’d say everybody is for the president to succeed because we were all together and if he’s defeated for reelection I’m out of a job. That’s not necessarily true because you can have general support to the president or theoretical support but specific loyalty to the person who hired you such as a Cabinet secretary or such as an important senator who insisted on your getting a job. Those are the people, I contend, who when things get tough are the first ones to be grumbling at cocktail

parties or over breakfast with a *Washington Post* reporter about the stupid decisions being made in the Oval Office, including by the occupant of that office. Whereas the person of demonstrated loyalty is less likely to do that. I won't say they would never do it but at least they have a genuine general and proven loyalty that one expects to hold up in bad times as well as good.

MK: What if there are people that have just a particular kind of expertise, that they know how things work in a way that somebody who was involved in the campaign—they may know more even though they were outside?

CU: That would be the argument a Cabinet secretary would give in filling a particular role in which the Cabinet secretary would say, "My guy is smarter than your guy, your ex-campaigner, on this subject"—whatever the subject is, international affairs or press or legislative liaison, whatever it may be. And that will be a point which the Cabinet secretary no doubt will be willing to fight the fight all the way in to the Oval Office to prove. And it may well be in the give and take of things or the influence of the Cabinet secretary that he will concede that point.

The issue I always addressed on the question of qualifications was that qualifications are not what you are truly seeking; you are seeking the ability to handle a job. And ability is a much broader test because ability can, yes, include qualifications but ability can also exclude qualifications for a particular job if the person is generally smart, savvy in a Washington way, able to work in and succeed in a bureaucracy and dealings with the Hill, et cetera. The job, whatever kind of presidential appointment we're talking about, has many gradations and requirements that are beyond mere knowledge of the subject of that department. I'm not trivializing knowledge, but to say that a person is qualified meaning they've handled this in their life for thirty-two years is certainly a powerful argument for that person. But if the person has an absolute tin ear with regard to dealings with Congress or interest groups or the press or if they are unpleasant individuals who are going to guarantee bad working conditions in the department, if they are totally incapable of cooperative relations with Cabinet colleagues then, qualifications notwithstanding, that is a bad choice. That's why I say that ability is what you seek, which is a mixture of talents that on balance should make one person better fitted than another to handle the job.

MK: What if you have a person with limited abilities in governing but they had given a great deal during the campaign—I don't mean money but of energy and whatever—then what do you do with them?

CU: You try to accommodate that person in other ways. It might be that that person wants to be an ambassador or some other appointee, which you know they're not able to do. In that case then it's up to the director of Presidential Personnel to be the bad guy and tell this person that, "You're not going to be ambassador but the president would be most honored if you would lead the delegation of the United States to the coronation of the king of Swaziland. You'll have your own plane and you'll be first in line at the reception," et cetera. Hopefully that may reward the person. That person can also be rewarded in other ways with advisory commissions or invitations to state dinners or other things that are within a gift of the president to do short of putting that person in charge of a chunk of the federal government.

MK: Do you have to recruit a special brand of person to work in personnel? So much of your work is turning people down. The old saw that for every appointment you make one friend and nine enemies. So you have to deal with the nine enemies.

CU: Yes. That's why I paid a lot of attention to recruiting my own staff and I did come up with a wonderful group of people who had all those skills. Now, in the end, if the responsibility is to tell somebody no, particularly at a high level, then that was my job. And I learned some important life lessons which is that, first of all, don't be afraid to tell somebody no and, when you do, make sure

that they understand that it's no. There's this remarkable ability of I guess hope springing eternal in the breast of every individual that if you say something diplomatic like "Well, Fred, it doesn't look like you're going to get to be ambassador to Belgium," Fred will hear "doesn't look like" and will think: "He didn't say I wouldn't be which means that I might be which means that I will be!" Fred may leave the room convinced that he should go pack his bags. That is slightly overstating the case but it isn't exaggerating the case. There are people who unless they are clear that you are clear that the answer is no will not think the game is done.

MK: How would you do it? How would you tell them? Just say flat out you're not going to get it?

CU: Yes. I wouldn't put it quite that bluntly; I'd just say that the president has chosen somebody else for this position and you are terrific; I imagine there are other ways that you can serve and maybe even have some examples. That person could be a deputy assistant secretary instead of an assistant secretary or maybe if that won't work out we'll keep you in mind for the next round when we have to rebuild the administration. This is one of my favorite subjects so I can keep on talking but I probably owe my fiduciary responsibility to the people of Texas for the next hour.

[Interruption]

MK: Thinking about [John] Tower and the kinds of demands people make coming in, is there a difference in the administration that as the administration goes along that people are more likely to make demands as a price for coming in?

CU: Meaning I want to choose my own team?

MK: Say when somebody comes in as chief of staff, the first line, do they say, "When I come in I have to have X, Y, Z and if I don't have them I'm not coming in?" But if you look later on in an administration—like Howard Baker when he came in, he wanted to have Tom Griscom and A.B. Culvahouse. When [Leon] Panetta came, Panetta wanted to sweep out the press operation and—

CU: And Donald Regan brought in the mice. I have never been a party to that kind of discussion because I was never involved in hiring a chief of staff. I hate to think it's a non-negotiable demand but I'm sure it's couched in the terms of, "I just have a few people I want to bring over from Treasury" or "Is it all right if I get to name my own staff" or "I will get to name my own staff". I think that's how it happens rather than the presentation of a non-negotiable demand.

Now, more to the point of what I do know, in the transition planning process that went on in 1988 from everything I'd read, from conversations that I had it was clear that no president should give carte blanche to a Cabinet secretary to hire in effect their team, decide who the assistant secretaries will be. Then Vice President Bush agreed intellectually but in the event, when John Tower was designated to be the Secretary of Defense, I turned on the television on CNN to watch the press conference and one of the first questions was, "Senator Tower, who will be involved in picking the other people at the Defense Department?" He said, "The President-elect has said that I will." I don't doubt that that would have happened. As I said, he was very intent that the service secretaries were all going to go to three former senior members of his personal or Senate Armed Services Committee staff who were outstanding fellows. One of them was already appointed by Reagan as Secretary of the Navy; the other was the Acting Secretary of the Air Force. America would have been well served but these were three proteges of John Tower; they were not people who had worked in the Bush campaign.

MK: Right. Is there a lot of pressure to bring in people who have served on staffs on the Hill?

CU: Yes. That's sort of what I was trying to describing earlier. One of the funny episodes of that is at the time Tower was under consideration and had let it be known that his former staffers were going to be heading the services I got a call from Sonny Montgomery, a congressman from Mississippi who was a close personal friend of President Bush and still is, who was also very active on the House Armed Services committee. He was grumbling to me, not that I could do anything about it, about all these Senate staffers who were going to populate the Defense Department. Well, one thing or another happens and a former member of the House becomes Secretary of Defense and he insists on all kinds of former House Armed Services committee staffers to be in the Defense Department and I didn't get a call from Sonny Montgomery. That's the case.

Secretary Cheney clearly wanted the people he knew and he got his way, as I think any strong-minded Cabinet secretary will do. And there are a couple, three cases I can think of in which Secretary Cheney who is, of course, a former White House chief of staff actually went to the Oval Office on some assistant secretarial appointments in the Defense Department where John Sununu and I had another candidate. I mentioned this to my former boss, John Lehman, who had been Secretary of the Navy during the Reagan administration and he laughed. He said, "Of course, you know that if a Cabinet secretary is willing to take an issue to the Oval Office he will win. He can't go to the Oval Office every time so that means that you're likely to win the next one."

MK: What about Senate committee chairmen recommending people for commissions?

CU: This is something that I have wanted, if I were totally free, to do enough research to write the article that needs to be printed. I invite you to if not write it than to get someone else to. I think the Clinton administration in its headlong effort to deprive the presidency of various powers it has enjoyed over the years has given away one immense power that has not been given any attention. I imagine or I picture what happened at the start of the Clinton administration is that Bob Dole, the Senate Minority Leader at that time, said to the President or some representative of the President that, "On regulatory commissions for the so-called Republican seats, I want to be the one to tell you who they are." And the White House Personnel Office and maybe the President himself said okay. As a result, during this administration, the Senate Republican leader has pretty well led the selection process by which so-called Republican seats on the regulatory commissions have been filled. I've even gotten a call or two from staff of members of the Senate asking me to come up with some names for these people to feed back through the process.

Now the reason I say this is giving up the powers of the presidency is that, just on its face, having the President of the United States in effect accept the nomination of somebody from the Legislative Branch should be a clear question of separation of powers issues. But it also represents on the part of the current White House Personnel Office a total misunderstanding of what the law says with regard to regulatory commissions. It does not say that there are seats that belong to the other party on these regulatory commissions; it merely says that there shall be not more than a simple majority of any one party. The assumption is left that the minority seats, the other seats—two out of five or three out of seven, whatever it is—are "other". It doesn't say that they have to be of the other party. They can be independents; they can be people without any political affiliation whatsoever. The Reagan and Bush administrations knew this and the great game was to go find people to put in the other seats who were independent but otherwise just as much like what you wanted in somebody of your own party as you could find. The nature of naming people to regulatory commissions, the same as to federal benches, is that you can quiz them all you want and you can get all kinds of promises of love and [inaudible] but once they get there they're pretty well free to do what they want. Even the closest degree of political loyalty is no real test as to how people are going to act once they get on those commissions. But if they are in one of the other category, they are already one a big step away from what you'd like. So it's all the more reason to go try to pick those people as closely to the positions held by the President or the administration on the regulatory issues as you can.

What the Clinton administration has done is basically subcontracted this over to the Senate leadership of the opposite party. This has been a great bonanza for Republicans during the Clinton administration but I'm deeply concerned about what happens next time around especially if the roles are reversed and a Republican president faces a Democratic Senate. And the Democratic Senate says, "We let you guys select regulatory commission seats in the last administration, now this time I get to choose who's going to be on the Federal Trade Commission or Federal Communications Commission." Of course, if the underlying theme is, "And, p.s., you're not going to get a hearing on anybody else nominated to this," then we will have reached a very sad and serious situation because absent that or even in any administration powerful senators, especially committee chairmen, are going to try to do exactly that, dictate who is going to be on those regulatory commission[s].

The famous incident I can think of concerning the Federal Communications Commission, Senator [Ernest] Hollings, the Chairman of the Senate Commerce Committee at the time, pretty much made clear—he did make clear—that he had a member of his staff he wanted to have in what he called a Democratic seat on the FCC. Well, that was unacceptable. This was something that Pen James made clear to me, that a regulatory commissioner is kind of like the theoretical baby duck. The first thing it sees when it pops out of the shell is its mother regardless of whether it's its mother. In this case a regulatory commissioner is going to think of the senator who was responsible for putting him or her on that commission, not the President of the United States who just signs a piece of paper that makes it all legal. The reason that's of concern is that the Executive Branch is constrained in its ability to lobby regulatory commissioners but not the Congress. So therefore, in effect, if a member of a regulatory commission feels like he or she owes their appointment to a member of Congress, especially the Senate, then you've pretty much lost your ability to influence that individual. They're going to do what the voices they hear from the Hill are going to say.

Now this isn't necessarily true in every case but it is certainly the operating procedure that somebody trying to name people to regulatory commissions has to keep in mind. If we're in a situation in which the president of the United States has to de facto accept the dictates of the opposite party in the Senate as to who is going to go on two out of five seats on those regulatory commissions then I think there's been a significant erosion of presidential power. This is what I would want to write about if I had the time to write about it.

MK: What about the House Republicans? Haven't they been disturbed and then the Republicans outside the Senate—if the seats are going to be thought of as Republican seats—

CU: I'm not sure what role they're playing. When I said this is all upsetting and it's happened in the Clinton administration, during the Bush administration and perhaps administrations beyond that I don't know, there was a kind of, whatever you want to call it, subrogation of presidential authority to members of the House on matters of the International Trade Commission. The war over seats on the International Trade Commission were intense and there was even a law passed of dubious constitutionality which does in effect prescribe the qualifications for people to be on the International Trade Commission that really are political, by which I mean, on a so-called Democratic seat on this trade commission, it was the Chairman of the Ways and Means Committee who pretty much got to make the call. And, I think on alternate cycles, the Chairman of the Finance Committee got to make it in the Senate. In this process, to the aggravation of those of us in the personnel business, President Bush agreed to continue this practice and allow his old buddy Dan Rostenkowski pretty much dictate who was going to be in a seat on the International Trade Commission.

The Federal Election Commission, I guess since its inception, has always pretty much had its minority seats. In fact, there it's a six-member commission, so it's not a minority at all; it's half the body that's pretty well chosen by the opposite party in the Senate. You often see it referred to as so-and-so on the Federal Election Commission is a "Senate nominee" or appointee to the FEC. They

have been very bloody-minded on the point in my experience of pretty much saying that it will be this person and no other. That is, if you try to nominate anybody else even if they are a Democrat, if they're not our Democrat then they're not going to get confirmed in this process. It's probably tolerable on the FEC because it matters so much to both parties that you want as much equivalency as you can get. That's the reason why the FEC is the only regulatory commission that has an even number of seats; that's the way it works. And they alternate the chairmanship. So that has existed and on the International Trade Commission a complicated form of it has existed but never until this Administration has it broken loose on all the regulatory commissions. I've even seen in the *Wall Street Journal* where certain people have been talked of as "Republican nominees" for the SEC [Securities and Exchange Commission], for example.

MK: Do you think the warfare, the expanded battleground, over a lot of things between the White House and the Senate accounts for some of it, the willingness to place holds—there are so many holds on nominations—that the White House has decided to give in?

CU: I'm not quite sure how it's gone in this administration. It looks like it has increased over the last administration but I think that's only because people are playing the game to a greater degree now than ever before. I said at the time of the Clarence Thomas brouhaha that the Republicans were not only watching, they were learning and, if given the chance, they would apply the same action against Clinton nominees, which is what happened. I hope this is not an ever-downward spiral but it's hard to see any encouragement otherwise.

The answer to your question is that holds, it seems to me, are often used for something totally unrelated to the nominee and they often are there for pure leverage of some kind or another. It's not quite the same thing as, say, a set of committee chairmen saying "I'm not going to hold a hearing on your nominee unless it's my nominee." For one thing, holds have been used broad scale for all the people coming up for consideration in a particular category including some that are purely ministerial like military promotions that are still presidential appointments with senatorial confirmation but in effect are not subject to the regular confirmation process. They are just confirmed en masse. Often entire categories, a Marine Corps lieutenant colonel list, will be held up if somebody wants to get the attention of the Marine Corps on some unrelated matter.

MK: A long time ago Hiram Fong held up judgeships when he was on the Judiciary Committee because Hawaii didn't have a seat on the Court of Appeals.

CU: That's the sort of thing that happens.

MK: That's always a good way to make a point and get some attention.

CU: Again, not to criticize the Senate because the Constitution gave them the right and role in this to do it any way they want to do it but the fact that they are not in session all that much means that a hold has all the greater power because the windows of opportunity of getting somebody through a hearing are so limited.

MK: That's one thing I wanted to ask you about. What are the rhythms of a year? Actually not just a year but going through the administrations, the different nominations that are made at different points? For example, in your first wave you're going to the your very high-profile and positions where you are going to have policy generalists; then you end up having to go out and recruit people for specialist positions, like somebody who is going to the head of Fish and Wildlife has got to have some kind of technical background. It's a sort of different kind of recruitment perhaps. Then, as you go further in, sort of toward the end of an administration or toward the end of a first term then in recruitment I would think you'd need another set of issues: do people want to come in for—and

also can they get through. Look at what's happening to Clinton's. I'm wondering sort of both things. Can you go through sort of what are the rhythms of the way in which you're passing from one kind of appointment to another that you're recruiting for and different sets of issues that come up in each and then also, with the Senate, what the windows of opportunity are within a Senate year?

CU: I'll answer the second one first because that's pretty easy. You just get a copy of the Senate schedule and you can map it out in any given year pretty easily as to when they're going to be around and when they're not. An administration is doing well if it has in effect finished the job of nominating people for a new administration by the August recess because you hope that by the time they come back in September they'll be ready to hold hearings and at least fill out the remaining spots by autumn which is nine to ten months after the administration has taken office.

You mentioned the word recruiting. It seemed to me, from my experience and from other new administrations, that that isn't the operative word in the first year. Recruiting suggests that you have to go out and find people.

MK: You're deluged.

CU: There are certain positions for which it may be difficult to find somebody. I think year in and year out there are some of those. For us, it was FEMA, the Federal Emergency Management Agency. NASA was rather difficult. There are just some that do require some work but for the most part, you're right, there is no shortage of applicants or people pushing applicants. That's a great challenge for a new personnel team, trying to come up with and take the high ground with their own people, such as those who helped elect the president, against the onslaught of those being pushed by important senators, Cabinet members, major fund-raisers, members of the president's family and whoever else can put in a voice.

MK: But later on are there different kinds of people. You're going further down into the bureaucracy to appoint positions that require more specialists or do you do that right at the beginning as well?

CU: I think the going down through existing ranks is more typical for the end of an administration than the beginning. For one thing, by that time it's your people in those ranks unless it's a Bush after Reagan or maybe [Al] Gore after Clinton administration people in which your people are already at those ranks. In the second phase it's more like corporate recruiting in which the presidential personnel staff has more time, more leisure, more freedom to go actually ask around and try to locate people and truly to recruit them; to give them an idea they may never have had to come into the federal government. That's a happy state of affairs that you get the second year of an administration and thereafter. When I say thereafter, in a four-year administration, probably in years two and three you can do that; in the fourth year especially if, as in our administration, the polls are running against you, you probably can't recruit people into the government, especially from outside of Washington. They are more likely at that time to go to the deputy assistant secretary and other appointee ranks to find people who are already there and already known characters and probably more confirmable.

MK: Did you end up with a lot acting positions? In this administration the vacancy rate has been really high.

CU: I look forward to reading your report and other people's description of this administration because, frankly, being away from Washington I haven't been able to read the *Washington Post* on a daily basis to pick up these bits of information that would help me really know what they're doing. I would gather that a lot of the acting positions for them is a result of a difficulty of getting people confirmed which is the reason why a lot of people are declared acting. In the Bush administration that was not the case, at least during the period I was there, because we either got people confirmed or they were

continued in those roles from the Reagan administration. They may have been acting in a de facto sense—what I'm trying to say, they were the fully sworn in and continued as assistant secretary for this or that pending somebody else's being confirmed and appointed. They were acting in a practical sense because if they weren't being retained in those jobs they were just serving there until someone else came along or until they themselves left for another appointment.

MK: So they had a kind of legitimacy that somebody doesn't have in an acting sense.

CU: Exactly. And you would do well to speak, if you haven't already, with Connie Horner—

MK: I have.

CU: Did she answer that question? I wonder what the case was at the end of the Bush administration.

MK: She was one of the first people I talked to and I was talking to her for the walk-through. There are some areas I didn't get in to. She was very good. We walked through the process and what happens at what stage. In setting up your office, what were the divisions? When you first came in, how many people did you have? Actually in what sort of team did you have before you came when you first started? It was you for how long and then how did it expand?

CU: Well, it was officially zero before the election although, as I mentioned in that paper to Dr. Burke, I had pre-chosen the fellow to be my deputy, Ross Starek, who is a very good man to talk to for a number of reasons. He has an excellent memory on all these anecdotes that I may have forgotten and also he became commissioner of the Federal Trade Commission so he could give you some real life experience of the performance of presidential appointees in those jobs. But I'd known him and he was clearly the person I wanted and had no trouble in getting named my deputy.

Our first chore after the election was to go recruit other people [for the Presidential Personnel Office]. We had the benefit, as the document I gave you points out, of being briefed by the Reagan Personnel Office in the days leading up to the 1988 election. So we had a very good idea of how they did things. How they did things is I think the proven standard of how to do things. It's not just because it was the Reagan way that became the Bush way; it's because they had enough experience, eight years of running the personnel shop, to know just what portfolios there are and how to manage those portfolios. I would imagine, at least I'd be surprised, if the Clinton Administration has anything different today. But the portfolios were, as I remember them, the cluster of national security portfolios, Defense Department, State Department, AID [Agency for International Development], USIA [U.S. Information Agency], CIA [Central Intelligence Agency] recognizing that in the Bush Administration in particular, there were some major hands at work there, mainly Jim Baker and Brent Scowcroft and Dick Cheney who would make the process a whole lot easier for the presidential staff. Now, if in this interview or some other time you want to talk about ambassadorial appointments, that's a separate discussion all by itself which I think was well handled due to some unique circumstances. So that was one portfolio, the national security cluster.

Then another was the justice cluster, meaning the Justice Department and those Article I judgeships. Marshals and U.S. attorneys, are you know, are handled through the Senate process and the Justice Department monitors that and does it for the White House; at least it did in our administration. And when I say the justice cluster there probably were a few stray departments that got added on there. Then there were the natural resource departments, EPA [Environmental Protection Agency], Interior, Agriculture and kindred. There was the social service cluster of HHS [Health and Human Services], Department of Education and it seems to me one other big one that I'm forgetting [Labor] but those two in particular. Then there was whatever is left over I guess. Then there was the cluster that centered on the Commerce Department and some of the other business regulatory agencies

including regulatory commissions. And I think that covers the waterfront. I'm doing it as much by remembering the people who did that as the portfolios.

Then we had a portfolio that I thought at the beginning would be one of the lesser portfolios. In fact, I even thought that the person holding it shouldn't be made a special assistant to the president because it seemed to me to be lesser.

[That was a] great mistake because it turned out to be our biggest portfolio but the person who headed it - Jan Naylor Cope - became Ross Starek's successor as number two just because she had borne such a major burden. And that was the boards and commissions portfolio, which is extremely sensitive because that's where you take care of a lot of political IOU's. But many of those boards and commissions—I don't mean regulatory commissions but the part-time boards and commission—are very sensitive because of the subject matter; it may be transitory or ongoing. One that comes to mind is the AIDS Advisory Commission which especially in a Republican administration is subject to all kinds of review and second-guessing. Another which is one of the most important federal bodies I think in terms of its impact and influence is DACOWITS which is the Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services which is actually an appointment of the Secretary of Defense but because of its sensitivity it has always been carefully monitored and advised by the White House even in a circumstance where you have a strong Secretary of Defense like Dick Cheney who has a clear idea of who he'd like.

So there are certain boards and commissions that require a great deal of scrutiny, especially if some special purpose commission comes along where a national issue or problem jumps up and the administration's response is to appoint a commission. Well, you have to go appoint a commission. Those political sensitivities made it very big but also the sheer number of boards and commissions made it big.

That, to me, in any administration is one of the biggest portfolios that can be managed. That's why I said that I now am somewhat embarrassed to think it would be the least. It doesn't surprise me a bit that the woman who so capably handled that Jan Naylor Cope would go on to be number two in the personnel office and is now a private personnel consultant. She's expanded into the private sector in that capacity.

MK: So they really represent an opportunity though too, an important opportunity, because you can't give everybody who's been in the campaign a position, a regular kind of job. So those could be helpful at least.

In putting together the assignments for the different units, what kind of guidelines did you go on? Did you get guidelines at all from Bush as to how he wanted the process to work, what kind of information he wanted about what was going on and how he wanted information delivered to him?

CU: No guidelines from him. This is not to puff up myself but he did have confidence in my opinion, my experience. The fact that I had known for many years the kind of people he knew and knew him allowed him to feel that if somebody passed muster with me that would be the next thing to him. I remember one time I spoke to him on the telephone about some nominations to the Federal Communications Commission. The reason why that sticks out in my mind in particular is that normally for regulatory commissions I consulted with Boyden Gray, the President's Counsel, who then as now has a great interest in regulatory affairs. Because of personal investments in his family and for himself personally he recused himself from anything involving the FCC. So that being the case I pretty much was the staffer who had the call on the FCC because being a regulatory commission there is no Cabinet secretary to bargain with so it pretty much was my call as a staffer assuming that the Chief of Staff, Governor Sununu, agreed with my recommendation.

I was discussing some particular problem with President Bush on the FCC and he said, “You take care of that; it’s whomever you want.” When he said that I almost felt like a high school civics teacher: “But it’s not. You’re the President; you’re the one who makes the call.” He said, “I know that but whoever you send I’ll be happy to take a look at and probably agree with.” It wasn’t a delegation of presidential authority but that was an expression of the kind of relationship a president should have with the personnel director. It’s the reason I think the job description of the personnel director must be somebody whom the president knows personally and has that degree of confidence not just so that the personnel director can go forth knowing the president has that kind of confidence but also so that everybody else in the system, in the White House, in the departments and agencies, in the press, in the Congress, knows that the personnel director speaks with that degree of authority. It also helps prevent the I won’t say “game playing”—you can’t quite prevent that—but it is a discouragement to game playing if it is known that the personnel director has that degree of trust in relationship to the president that the tendency or the natural force of Washington politics is to get around the roadblock and get at the issue through the chief of staff or the legislative liaison or somebody else is lessened. That I think is the reason why whoever is in that job should have that degree of impact. It may not always be the case.

When Bruce Lindsey was in that job for Clinton he clearly met that goal. It’s regrettable I think from the point of view of the personnel selection process in the Clinton administration that he ceased being the Director of Presidential Personnel after a fairly short period of time, less than a year as I recall, and went into general minister without portfolio duties. But for sure if Bruce Lindsey had been in the process that anyone else had known that it was foolish to try to get around him because he was known to be so close to the president and had his ear. That, to me, should always be the case. Now, further on through the administration if the director of personnel leaves then you have to go with somebody else. Take the Reagan Administration. There were four directors of personnel in eight years there. The first was Pendleton James, who wasn’t that close to Reagan but had a direct and close relationship with the other principal people in the Reagan entourage such as Ed Meese and certainly—

MK: And he worked in the [Richard] Nixon White House.

CU: That’s right. He had that particular knowledge. Helene Van Damm was second, and no one was closer to Ronald Reagan because she had been his personnel secretary for many years.

MK: That’s right.

CU: The third person to hold the job was John Herrington, who was a very old Reaganite. He had also been in presidential personnel at an earlier stage with Helene and Pen James and went from there to the Cabinet which doesn’t often happen. The fourth and final person was Bob Tuttle who was the son of Holmes Tuttle so he basically grew up with the Reagans and had that degree of power and impact. So I would say for the entire Reagan administration presidential personnel was handled by exactly that kind of person. In our administration I think I fit that mode. Connie Horner could not claim that degree of personal relationship but she was certainly a long-time Bushie having gone from truly a clerical assistant in the campaign and in the early days of the Reagan administration a clerical person in the ACTION agency on up through to independent agency head [Office of Personnel Management] at the end of the Reagan Administration to being the deputy secretary of HHS. She, I think, fit the mode in every other capacity.

MK: If you don’t have somebody who has traveled with the president through his political life, can you bring in people who do so that you have something of a family memory, family in the sense of political family? So you have those in there too.

CU: I think that's important. There's no way around it. You said family I guess you meant in the broader sense, not just the actual relations.

MK: The political family.

CU: But I will say one of the things that I am absolutely proudest of in my tenure, because it was entirely my conception, concerned a family member of President Bush. And this concerned something that very few people ever ask about it and I didn't think about it and these are the so-called Schedule C appointments. Now you know Schedule C's are political appointees up through the GS-15 rank and they typically are but not exclusively special assistants to political appointees such as Cabinet secretaries, deputy secretaries or assistant secretaries. These are the people who did work in the campaign or at least should have worked in the campaign.

In the opening days of the Bush transition when I was focused as I had to be on trying to swim against the tsunami of job openings and various applicants for each job opening and the press clamor was already beginning to mount about why are no nominations coming through for various subsidiary posts, et cetera, I am happy to say that I was asked by Lee Atwater, then with an office in the transition headquarters, to come to his office and talk about the Schedule C's. And he described a situation at the beginning of the Reagan administration in which, as at the start of the Bush administration, all the focus in personnel was on the presidential appointees because those were the main ones. And no one was looking out for the various Schedule C positions which are not only important for the business of putting together a team in each department or agency but that is where you put the folks who slept on floors in New Hampshire and worked for practically nothing and maybe sometimes exactly nothing during the course of the campaign.

He became aware of this because the people who fit that category who worked in the Reagan campaigns were not getting called and many of them were going hungry or at least were short on funds and called him because he had been on the campaign and they felt they could reach him. He realized that they were not being taken care of and it immediately struck a chord with him because he said that in a South Carolina campaign—I think that of Jim Edwards who was elected governor of South Carolina—Lee had worked and expected to be given an appointment. In fact, he needed an appointment; he didn't have a job. And he spent some very painful, lonely days literally sitting by the phone in an apartment otherwise devoid of furniture waiting for the call to come. He resolved if ever he was in such a position that would never happen again. Well, he was in such a position at the start of 1981 and they basically made a deal. I think it was a deal Pen James basically couldn't refuse, in which Lee got Lyn Nofziger who was then head of the political office on the Reagan staff to go to Pen and maybe Helene Van Damm and say, "We will take care of the Schedule C issue for you." Pen James was probably perfectly happy to get rid of the Schedule C burden, which hadn't occurred to him as necessary, and focusing as he did so much on the presidential appointees, said yes. As I said, he probably couldn't have said no even if he had other plans for the Schedule C's. In fact he didn't, so the White House political office took care of the Schedule C effort and made sure people were taken care of in one way or another.

Well, Lee, by telling me this, made me realize there was this extra continent of appointments that needed to be made. He was absolutely right; these were the people who worked hard to elect the president; they needed to be taken care of; they needed to be remembered. And they may not be remembered in the dynamic of a Cabinet secretary such as—and I don't mean to pick on her—Elizabeth Dole who was for some other candidate for president and would have her own people that she would want to put in Schedule C appointments if given the chance. And Schedule C's, as you know, are Cabinet secretary appointees; they are not presidential appointees. The same is true of deputy assistant secretaries who are Cabinet, not appointees, not presidential but there is a whole lot

of go-round between the White House and Cabinet secretaries over those. I'm concentrating here on Schedule C's.

So it was clear to me we needed to have an effort on Schedule C's and we needed to have somebody in charge of it who would be able to basically speak with authority, who had been on the campaign who would be able to come up with a list of the deserving people and basically those would be the names that we would send over to the Cabinet departments with as much imperative in our voice as we could say that they had to be hired. The person I thought of putting in charge of that was Scott Bush. Scott Bush was President Bush's nephew, the son of William H. T. "Bucky" Bush of St. Louis.

Scott Bush had worked on the campaign and everybody knew it. He was a young guy. I think at the time he was about twenty-seven or twenty-eight. So he was basically a peer of those kind of people who had worked in the campaign. Because of his name he could speak with that authority and nobody would question his credentials either to speak or to make a fair judgment because he had been there himself. Now, because he was the President's nephew, he wasn't going to get a political appointment himself. He was forbidden to. He later to work in OPIC, Overseas Private Investment Corporation, which because it is considered a semi-government corporation is not subject to the nepotism law. In effect he had a job in the administration without it being subject to the nepotism laws. This doesn't have a sad ending for Scott but he proved to be the absolutely right person to put in charge of the Schedule C project. As a result the lists of the deserving was determined, and we were able to figure out based on what the Reagan administration and OPM [Office of Personnel Management] told us were the allocations per Cabinet department. I briefed the Cabinet in a memorable moment telling them the number of Schedule C positions they had and that we would send over names for people to fill those positions. They, of course, were welcome to use them as well but that the whole purpose of this was to award the people who had worked in the Bush campaign. Not in that Cabinet meeting but in a private session with Jack Kemp, the secretary-designate of HUD [Housing and Urban Development], I mentioned this would happen and he turned blustery as he easily does and he said, "You mean I have to hire somebody just because they worked in the campaign?" My comment back to him was, "Yes. And not only that, eight years from now if you're the president-elect you will want people who worked on your campaign in these positions too and a Cabinet secretary may ask the same question and I hope your director of personnel gives the same answer."

That's a separate story of the care and feeding of Schedule C and non-career SES, the deputy assistant secretary positions, which is an ongoing battle throughout an administration, but especially at the beginning—it never really stops—because especially after the presidential appointments are made if there are people in the campaign who have not been taken care of or other people you want to bring along that's the place you put them in the hope that they will gain and grow and get presidential appointments later. I arrived at the Navy Department in 1983 as a deputy assistant secretary of the Navy and about a year later was nominated to be an assistant secretary. I was brought along, a farm team member if you will. And that's the way it should be. You want to give people experience and credentials so that during your administration or in some future administration they will be able to compete.

MK: Do you find that it was beneficial having served in an administration in order to do recruiting, to come in and do recruiting that it's almost necessary to have come in and served in a White House post or to have served in an administration? Not only did you have a sense of Bush but also you had a sense of what you were dealing with in Washington.

CU: Absolutely. I should say that what that really helped—I'm just adding what the appointee, himself or herself, would face on the day they arrive. All the hullabaloo over presidential appointments always seems to end with confirmation but after that how the appointee then does the job is a very

important part of the formulation. We can talk about that, what our office did, to help train people, and monitor their progress and take care of problems, try to in effect make sure that our appointees were well treated once they got to their Cabinet departments knowing that sometimes games are played out in the departments and agencies and it can be pretty lonely to somebody who arrives without the right preparation.

It's for that reason that I think practically every member of my presidential personnel staff at the senior level had been in a department or agency during the Reagan administration. Some of them had actually done personnel work in those departments as White House liaisons. You're familiar with that job I think. And it was absolutely invaluable because we were able to know what kind of qualities it does take to get along, to survive. That's a little bit too dramatic but I think to succeed in a department or agency it's not just as we discussed earlier a question of pure qualifications, of knowledge of the subject matter, but the ability of that person to get along in a multi-faceted, Rubic's cube world which is the life of a high-level government appointee.

MK: If you look at the functions of your office, many of which I guess you developed over that time period like doing the orientation session—were the formal orientation sessions that you provided or just following people along?

CU: They were formal in the sense that we convened them for a day, a day and a half. I don't want to interrupt your question but I can talk about that orientation process.

MK: I wanted to look at all the different functions the office performed.

CU: I guess we've discussed the recruitment, clearance confirmation process to a large degree; if not, we can again. The orientation process is something that had begun in the Reagan Administration and, interestingly, the Reagan administration hired the Kennedy School at Harvard to do this for them. This was not a place you would expect the Reagan administration to go but they not only went to Harvard but they paid them some large amount of money because Harvard doesn't come cheap. I had gone through that myself as a nominee to be an Assistant Secretary of the Navy. I'd gone through it; it was extremely valuable. It was very clear to me that there was nothing Harvard was teaching that we, the Presidential Personnel Office, couldn't do on our own especially since by then there was enough experienced leadership on which to call. By experienced leadership I meant the kind of people whom we would call in to brief our appointees. We always got acceptances because people in these capacities were very happy to come to the White House and lecture to this group.

We wanted people who knew the Congress, who could come and talk about what it was like to deal with the Congress. These were typically assistant secretaries for legislation in the departments and agencies or even the White House staff. We wanted people from the White House itself—Andy Card, the deputy chief of staff, was very frequent I'd say and probably a perfect attendee when it came to talking to our appointees because he knew it was so important. We would bring in people who could talk about dealing with the press. And we would bring in people who could talk about dealing with interest groups or the larger world. Probably the best thing we did was two great figures of Washington, Washington monuments onto themselves, the most senior civil servants in Washington, Doc Cooke at the Department of Defense who is still there and Tom McFee at the Department of HHS who is now retired but who went through many administration and many secretaries of HEW [Health, Education and Welfare] and HHS. These were men who were very happy to come and talk from the point of view of a career civil servant of what they expected the relationship to be with the political appointee. They are wonderful people and I encourage you to talk to them. I know both are very happy to talk about what they expect from presidential appointees. So we had them come and talk.

The hardest thing, unfortunately, was to try to get the President or the Vice President to come talk to these people. Even though we were the White House and as often as not we were able to get them from the Executive Office Building over to the West Wing, we couldn't always do that. I regret that and it was a matter of scheduling. I wish I had been more persuasive with the people managing the President's schedule that this was something that he or the Vice President should always do because that's what people want. One thing that Bob Tuttle did that we never did was to make sure that there would be a picture of the appointee shaking hands with the President. That's everyone knows often an assembly line operation, but having that picture on the wall, assuming you don't already have a wall full of pictures of yourself with the President, is just absolutely invaluable. It's not by coincidence that every ambassador who goes abroad, political appointee or career foreign service officer, has a call on the President and a photograph, sometimes with spouse, so that that picture will be prominently on the ambassador's credenza at the time the foreign minister comes to call. That's the reason it should be on the desk of an assistant secretary of the Interior or a member of a regulatory commission. That kind of thing I regret wasn't done but we certainly tried. Something else we did which came from my experience in the Navy department and knowing the absolute value of paying attention to families and spouses was we had a special program for families. In fact, it was the presidential spouses group. This was something that took about a year to get around to starting. It absolutely is useful at the beginning of the administration but we had so many things to do it took about a year to get the point we could finally institute the spouse program.

MK: Does it still exist?

CU: No. Now this is something that I was perfectly willing to tell the Clinton administration. I had a very good meeting with Dick Riley who at the time—roughly the first month or so after the election—was in charge of sub-cabinet recruiting. But as soon as he was named as Secretary of Education-designate he was gone and I made myself available to anybody else who wanted to ask my opinion but the calls never came and that was that. It was something that I was prepared to tell them. I don't know that they have it. As a crass Republican, I would be just as happy if they didn't have it because I believe this is what you must do to create a sense of family in your overall administration. Now every White House including this one invites appointees' families to look at the Christmas decorations and because I was appointed by President Bush on his last day in office to the Board of Visitors of the Naval Academy, I was officially considered an appointee during the Clinton administration, not of Clinton but during the administration. So I was on some list and I would get invitations from time to time to come to the White House for the Easter egg roll or the Christmas decoration affair. I seem to remember one other thing I was invited to, something in the summer, which I'm glad they do. But I don't know that they have a spouses association.

A spouses association exists—let me back up a bit. Because I had seen this work so well in the Navy where the men (back in those days it was all men) would deploy and the wives were left at home with the kids for six months or longer back at the base they created for their own self protection associations. Every ship had an association. There were larger groups for staffs or whatever else. It was usually the commanding officer's wife who was expected to be the chairman of this particular group and to organize activities: the Christmas parties and the picnics and to take care of problems, who do you call to get your car fixed or the dishwasher fixed or various other practical matters that especially young spouses would not know. It worked so well in the Navy and I presume in the other services—I know the Marine Corps but I don't know about the Army and the Air Force—that we felt that something like that at a presidential appointee level was necessary.

So I turned to the ranking Navy spouse that I knew and that was Sheila Watkins, the wife of the Secretary of Energy, whose husband had been the chief of naval operations. She immediately jumped into that and we got a couple of other spouses of appointees who with immense enthusiasm helped organize this. And what they provided for the spouses were the following and with our

cooperation—we did everything we could in the White House to make sure it happened—one is we made sure they knew who the spouses were so they could send out mailings. I think the government paid for those.

MK: Did they include men as well as women?

CU: Yes. There were some who very happily participated in the spouse association. Now in the case of Charles Horner, Connie Horner's husband, during the Reagan Administration or maybe it was at the beginning of the Bush Administration I think they created something called the Dennis Thatcher Society, who were the spouses of very high-ranking women in the administration [and] who would get together and talk about their travails.

Anyway, in the spouse's association there were some men who participated but it was primarily women. So we made sure they, first of all, had a list of who was in the group. This list of key members of the spouse association was made available to the spouses of people being considered for presidential appointments so they would be able to find out about schools and houses and doctors and auto registration and which state has an income tax and who has to pay it, all those kind of very practical matters for any prospective appointee. It's not enough to just think about the job and can I get confirmed and what does this do for my career but what is it going to do for my family? I think that's all the more important. So that's the reason why an association like that ideally should exist at the very beginning of an administration. I don't know if I'll ever have any recommendation on this but if I did it would be to go to the spouses of ex-Reagan/Bush appointees, people who had done this kind of thing, to create a de facto wise old heads groups who could provide that kind of information to spouses. In fact, you might consider that for your website, some of the very practical family issues and the names of people.

MK: There would be information there.

CU: That people can consult.

MK: Yes. Absolutely.

CU: In any event, they were available for that. I think that's the most practical thing. But from the point of view of creating a sense of larger family in the administration we did what we could to make sure that the spouses were invited to arrival ceremonies on the South Lawn, that they were invited to come to functions at the White House where people were invited. For example, I know in the Reagan and Bush administrations if the President came back from the hospital or came back from a trip or was coming back from being defeated for President they wanted to fill the South Lawn with people. Well, here was the mechanism for doing that. In fact, that was so successful that we even had presidential appointees who wanted to get on the list to go to the arrival ceremony for Margaret Thatcher or the president of Mexico or the Queen, whoever it was. So that showed how that was extremely popular. And it takes more creative, fertile minds than mine to come up with the kinds of things you can do for families to make them feel a part of things. I know it was just a tremendous success and probably would have continued on when a group of people built up who had that experience. I think that is just so critical for any administration.

MK: Well, people burn out, particularly I guess in a White House. Is it different in positions, say a deputy secretary of a department, do they have the same burnout rate that a White House seems to experience?

CU: I think so. I speak with a particular personal passion and that is I was twice on the White House staff and twice wanted to leave it because it seemed to me that all the White House is, when you get

down to it, is highly glorified staff work. And if a person is interested in policy, if they are interested truly in governing the country, you don't do it from the White House because the White House doesn't do much governing. It basically, at best, serves to kick and prod and inspire the people in the Cabinet departments and agencies to do the governing. Therefore, I was in two instances after a spell of time in the White House very eager to go to the departments or agencies because I think that's where you get the greater degree of satisfaction.

I tell the story of when I was on the Vice President's staff, which I was for little over two years, and having an office on the main floor of the West Wing of the White House but also traveling with the Vice President of the United States to every state in the country and ten foreign trips, including meeting the Pope and having dinner at Number Ten Downing Street and meeting the emperor of Japan and meeting the Queen of Holland and all sorts of other spectacular things that anybody would be happy to claim—despite all that it was a very unsatisfying experience because it was not substantive; it was staff work. It was sitting on airplanes and traveling somewhere at which time you at best would sit in on a meeting or sit in on a dinner but wouldn't necessarily be part of the business of making foreign policy or executing some domestic policy of some sort. I very much believe that if a person is on the White House staff that at some point they should want to leave otherwise they run a couple of risks. One of which is White House burnout. The other is sort of the opposite, which you can call the White House narcotic, the sense that this is all too wonderful, I can't possibly leave it; I can't possibly leave being in a situation in which if you walk into the White House Mess you see famous people or various Cabinet secretaries; or out on the lawn: "There are all these flags today. I wonder who's coming?" Or walking through the lobby of the West Wing: "What movie star will I see?" All of that is wonderful to the degree of telling stories at the Thanksgiving dinner table but from the point of view of really doing anything with your life I think it's of limited value. In fact I contend that people who are only on the White House staff probably have a harder time finding employment when they have to go look for a job because if the outside world wonders what value it is to have served in a substantive job in government then they are even more puzzled as to what to make of somebody who is serving in a mere staff capacity, even a glorified staff capacity such as the White House.

So you can tell that I have very fixed opinions on this matter but I also believe that there should be what I call term limits for the White House staff. That is, at the mid-point of an administration before burnout occurs and before people do get hooked too much on the narcotic of the White House that there be a—and everyone knows this in advance—a grand exchange of personnel in which the White House staffers will be sent out to the departments and agencies in appropriate positions—some may get presidential appointments; some may get deputy assistant secretarial or Schedule C appointments—and people serving in those capacities in the departments and agencies will be invited to come on the White House staff. I think that is just pure gain on both sides. Now the people who are dazzled by being in the White House may disagree, but I know that they will benefit because they will get the genuine satisfaction of being in a place where they are governing, where they are making policy, executing policy, sitting at those tables looking at a congressional committee and having to sell a program or get an appropriation. They will be the ones to get on the airplane and go look at the troops and see what's actually being done to defend America. As a result, they will broaden their experience and perhaps make themselves more salable in the private sector after all this ends.

Likewise, the people who have been in the departments and agencies coming to the White House will bring tremendous depth of understanding of how you really do things in the federal government and how you get things through the Congress and how you deal with hostile groups in the larger country. So everybody should be happy. And, I might add, the people who should be the happiest, although they too may wonder about this, are Cabinet secretaries. Cabinet secretaries may bridle at losing their best people but if they thought a little extra they would realize their best people would be their

contacts on the White House staff, perfect plants, if you will, for getting things done that they may need done at the White House. And, likewise, they would be receiving people who came from the White House and know how things work over there. So I believe this a valuable thing to institute. Now, as with other grand schemes of personnel, nothing would necessarily fit this easily—

MK: Nixon did some of that, taking White House people and putting them out.

CU: I think, from what I've read, he did it because he wanted greater control of those departments. In other words, I don't think he did it for the benefit of the individuals—

MK: For his policy agenda. And he wanted to—

CU: —which is still valid.

MK: Right. I guess in the long run that's what you're there for: you're there to press that.

CU: So that is a scheme I would promote. I believe, as I said, this should be said at the outset on January 21, the first day of work, if not sooner. People are sitting there in those seats in the East Room hearing from the President or the Vice President or Chief of Staff will be told that is our plan; it will be good for you. It also lets people know that it's all going to end; that to the extent they are going to enjoy the White House—and there is a lot to enjoy—that they better do it while they may because then they're going to go be the administration's ambassadors out to the agencies.

MK: Do you think that a lot of people come into the White House thinking that they are governing, that that's what their job is?

CU: I didn't want to denigrate the matter but when I speak of governing I mean truly the ability to do something.

MK: I mean in the sense of policy in the terms of—

CU: Clearly the White House formulates policy and the White House, one hopes, manages the politics and the public relations to cause the policy to be implemented. But in the pure practical business of how you get it done, getting it through the Congress and getting the bureaucracy to accept it and making it work, that's in the departments and agencies. Clearly White House people will be there on the Hill at the key moments or even out in the Pentagon or the Department of Housing and Urban Development as required. But on a day-to-day basis it's the folks you've appointed who do that.

MK: There are numerous examples from time to time—there's a guy who comes to mind in the [Jimmy] Carter White House; Nelson Cruikshank was his name. I think he had come from a group that perhaps dealt with retired people. He was interested in Social Security. And he went up the Hill and he actually testified on the Hill and he testified against Carter's proposal. That's an example of somebody who just came in thinking that they had a policy in mind that they were going to work on, that a White House is a good place to push policy.

CU: Clearly it is the place to develop policy, to announce policy but that's all it does. You hope that the country and the Congress will follow. Assuming they do then implementing it is the real business of governing.

MK: In putting together a White House staff, what is the value to the President of a White House staff? What does it give him? What does an effective White House staff buy him?

CU: It's got to go to basics. It's the workforce. It's people without whom nothing can be done. I say that because truly 100 per cent of White House staffs turn over from administration to administration. The only folk who are left in the building who may have been there before are the messengers and the telephone operators, the guards and the maintenance personnel; very few staffers continue from one administration to another, even in a Reagan to Bush administration. So in the very beginning the President depends on those people to be able to do anything. It's quaint but still very relevant to read of early presidents who had no staff. Abraham Lincoln fought the Civil War with two staffers, John Hay and John Nicolay; that was it. And he depended, as other presidents of that period, on the clerks of the departments to walk across the lawn and come do some work. It wasn't until the modern presidency that the staff was even invented and, again, not to trivialize the answer so much but there's no way around it: they are the help. They are the ones who've got to do what the President wants or bring to him what they think he wants; they're the ones who have to go pass the word on to the departments and agencies. The President can only do so much cajoling and harassing of his own official family, Cabinet and other agency heads, on this is what I mean, goddamn it and do it. That is usually left to the staff to do. Even the chief of staff can't possibly do all that. So there's no way around it. They are the extensions of the presidential corpus.

Now you also hope to get from a staff all the other things you would expect, brain power and imagination and bright ideas and political savvy, et cetera. In the case of press secretaries you hope gifts of being able to persuade or beguile the press or other key players. But I think in the end you can't get away from the fact—and this is why I said that I don't want to denigrate being in the White House but there is no way around the fact that it is a place of staff work. And staff work is the preparation and selling of paper as much as anything.

MK: Another function in your office—and I don't know if it's performed in how many of them but I think it was when you were there—was evaluating people, evaluating performance.

CU: This was something I also decided to do and I knew I couldn't do it until after the better part of a year had gone by. The way I did it was to go to the Cabinet secretaries, get on their schedule. I would go there and sit with them and, on a very confidential basis, usually one on one, talk about the performance of these appointees. Now in most every department there was one or another appointee the Cabinet secretary was known not to like and I would often hear that ahead of time because the Office of Presidential Personnel is a very frequent drop-in point for a Cabinet secretary who is over in the West Wing. I could expect on any given day at any given moment to have my assistant announce or just have the door open and in come[s] a Cabinet secretary who wanted to try to get a particular person appointed or tell me about somebody who had been appointed. But that was a very useful arrangement it was clear to me and I did the personnel job for about two and a half years. That provided enough time that on certain problem cases by watching that individual and talking to the Cabinet secretary about them I would come around to the view that, yes, that was not the right choice, we need to make a change or that person needs to go. And then it would be up to me to let that happen. Again, I think it is one of the duties of the Director of Presidential Personnel as the voice of the President to do the hiring and the firing or at least the announcement of same rather than the Cabinet secretary or somebody else. I think that is a very valuable process. I wasn't there long enough; we weren't there long enough to see it through to full maturity.

One concept that I had that I think I tried in one case but it's worth considering again was an offer made by the—I'm trying to think of the name of the group. It was a private group made up of people who had previously been in presidential administrations.

MK: Would it be the Council for Excellence in Government?

CU: Yes. The Council for Excellence. They put together a roster of these people. I basically felt that there should be some mentoring here; that this would be an opportunity that if, let's say, an assistant secretary was having trouble with a Cabinet secretary or if the Cabinet secretary felt the person wasn't growing enough or doing things the right way that before you show them the door, especially if it's somebody you care about, somebody who worked in the administration, maybe a minority appointment of some sort who may have had to take on risk to some degree that they would be assigned a mentor on a very confidential basis to let them talk things out. I wouldn't even want to hear what they talked about when they got together so much as it might help that appointee to do things differently or approach things differently. I think that's a very valid thing to do. I would certainly propose future administration to do it that way if the Council for Excellence in Government isn't already offering its services to do this.

It seems to me that some people are better mentors than others. As I think back on what it was, I went through their directory, trying to find Republicans who had held similar positions at similar levels and then I would call and ask them if they would be willing to talk to somebody. Then I would call that assistant secretary and give them the name and number of this individual and strongly suggest that they get in touch and talk about it. And I remember doing that once or twice but I can't tell you the result.

MK: We thought on the private part of our website we'd provide information for people coming in the White House, the telephone numbers of people who had held their position previously so that when they had an issue come up that they wanted to talk to somebody about who had served there that they could do that.

CU: I think the famous Prune Book when it was published did that. In the specific jobs that they identified they gave the names of prior occupants; whether they gave telephone numbers I don't know.

MK: They do but I was thinking of the White House. They don't have very many White House positions in the Prune Book. They have the National Economic Council but there are not very many of them. Anyway, we thought we'd just provide them with a phone number in case that would help them. Can you think of any other functions?

CU: Of Presidential Personnel?

MK: One more perhaps. Say at the end of an administration, does Presidential Personnel try to ease the process for those people who are going to be leaving, particularly if it's a hostile takeover?

CU: I don't know. Connie Horner would be able to speak to that better. I think that's a very valid question. I'm not quite sure what it would take to do that. I've often thought as I was going through the process myself if that is something that should have been done earlier in an administration. My thinking didn't get much further than what I'm about to tell you. That is, when things are going great, when the administration is new and the poll numbers are up, that's when you [should] contact your friends in the private sector and ask them to allocate jobs or hold positions open or some such thing when times turn bad and you'll want people to come work in the private sector. Of course, business is in the position of wanting to fill vacancies not to allocate them or reserve them. But that's not to say that there aren't some people who would be sympathetic to trying to do that at the end of an administration. There were certain companies and business executives who would be simpatico. I would think that for the Clinton Administration, Stephen Spielberg and other people in Hollywood would be sympathetic to that. Whether they reserve jobs or hold them open is another matter. Every administration should have friends who are willing to do that. It's just the volume can't possibly be big enough for the number of people who need it.

But what I would certainly do is in those heady early days is to remind people that one day it will end. It may end with a crash in which case it's not that you need to feather your nest, it's not that you need to butter up people, especially not the people you have to deal with such as lobbyists or private interests, but it should be in your mind that one day it will all end and that you should keep that in mind. You can't burn bridges and you need to vary your experiences such as beyond the White House staff. You need to learn as much as possible, see how things work and plan accordingly. There are some people who are going to stay in Washington. I believe in my circumstance, to personalize it, leaving Washington and coming back to Houston was absolutely valuable. Now I didn't plan it that way. If somebody had offered me a job in Washington, especially in the grim months after the election, I probably would have jumped at it and considered myself very lucky. So we'd be having this conversation up there. But I'm persuaded that there's something to the notion that you should leave Washington, go back to where you came from and see how things are in perspective.

MK: Do you find that because of your experience in Washington that clearly just from your work in personnel on the State Board of Education you bring to that something that's based on something you are able to do in your personnel operation, the kinds of conflicts and everything that you had dealt with there. What other things do you bring from Washington? What are the benefits in coming back to the community, the benefits to the community of having people who served in Washington?

CU: Well, just knowing how the game is played is one thing that comes into my head. For three years immediately prior to going on the State Board of Education I was a port commissioner. In fact, by law I had to resign as a port commissioner to go on the State Board of Education. But, even before I took the oath on the commission, the chairman of the commission said that they needed to get an appropriation through the Congress to deepen and widen the Houston Ship Channel and whom did I recommend to be the lobbyist. Because I knew Washington and knew what the need was, namely a Republican (because by that time Republicans controlled Congress) who had been in the Congress and been on the appropriations committee, that all led to a particular individual, namely Tom Loeffler who was with a lobby firm in Washington. They took my advice, hired the firm—that firm had both former Democratic as well as former Republican members of Congress in it—and success. I'm not telling you it was only because of my brilliant suggestion but it did prove to be the kind of knowledge that comes from having worked in Washington, not that it was knowledge of Tom Loeffler personally as it just seemed clear to me—which isn't necessarily clear to people outside of Washington—that there are certain things you need to build upon to get something done in Washington. If you've been there then you can add those numbers together and come up with an answer.

MK: Do you find that you would be interested in going back?

CU: Yes. I've always put it that sometime between now and death I would like to return to Washington. But, having been Director of Presidential Personnel, I know better than anybody, except those people who have also been directors of presidential personnel, that wanting to go back and going back are two greatly different things. And within my experience I think of some baleful looking veterans of the Nixon and [Gerald] Ford Administrations, and even in one case the [Dwight] Eisenhower Administration, who felt that because they had been wonderful public servants and devotees of George Bush that they, of course, would be prime candidates to be in our administration. But our administration had a lot of people; our job was to find places for people who had worked in the 1988 campaign. That will be the case in every administration. There are still to this day a number of people who were in the Reagan Administration—I think more at the Schedule C ranks and at the deputy assistant secretary ranks, rather than the presidential ranks --- who feel like they were abused by the incoming Bush Administration; they were all fired. That's not true in every

instance. As I indicated, we wanted people with experience and we were on the same team so we knew we could trust those people better than total newcomers. At the same token, it is impossible to put together an administration freshly elected with people who have been in places like Austin, Texas, without having to create vacancies and the jobs were held by Reagan appointees. So that was very, very painful. I guess I expected that new Cabinet secretaries would be kinder and gentler than they were in canning some of those people. As a result I would certainly recommend greater kindness and gentleness when it came to exiting those people. It is predictable that if Al Gore is elected president that there are a lot of Clinton appointees who are going to be out not because he dislikes those people or they are bad people but just that they are occupying places that Gore campaigners have got to fill or are going to fill.

MK: Is the best move then for the sitting president to tell everybody they're fired?

CU: Well, that's the way it was worked out between Bob Tuttle and me in 1988 and, of course, checked with the outgoing and incoming President and all other players that it was felt that it would be better for President Reagan to ask as a courtesy to his successor for resignations to be brought over. Again, it matters more if it's a so-called friendly transition—we've only had that one—because everyone knows or should know in an unfriendly transition you're out anyway. I was deeply disappointed in certain appointees, mostly Schedule C's, who were desperately scrambling around in the days leading up to January 20 [1993] to find ways of hanging on even for a week or two more which I couldn't believe. It only was a matter of a couple of weeks and they should have known as of the morning after the election that they were out of a job and face up to the fact and just leave as I did and other people did. The thought that anybody would stay on is wrong; it's wrong not just from a political point of view if they're not your guys—but I never failed to give the lecture that the whole presidential personnel process isn't just about patronage; it isn't just about giving rewards to the faithful; it isn't just about trying to get loyal folk who you hope are going to do what the President wants. But it's all about translating the mandate of the people in the election into flesh and blood so that if you supported a particular president who happens to have been defeated then you shouldn't work for the next president because, by definition, you are not the kind of people who believe in what that person stands for and you are not the kind of person that the people of the country unconsciously wanted to have in that particular position. It's a live by the sword, die by the sword routine. I think people under those circumstances should leave office as proudly as they go into office, knowing that they were there to discharge the mandate of the American people at that time they had it. If somebody else has the mandate of heaven, as the Chinese say, then so much power to them.

MK: I think people develop a sense of their own indispensability. You can see it too with term limits, people who were trying to hang on in spite of—

CU: It's sort of unseemly, especially more with appointees than congressmen, especially if their day is done anyway. They might as well just go.

MK: And recognize the obvious. What was your day like? Compare it with serving in your position in the Navy, in the Defense Department, how similar or different they were.

CU: Well, there's no question there was greater pressure in personnel, pressure in the sense of the need to get things done. That's not to say it doesn't exist in the Navy Department but there—I'm speaking now of the Navy—in the course a day's work or a month's work there were only a few key things you knew you had to do, projects of importance to yourself or to the secretary. Now there are all kinds of things happening, trips and testimony and ceremonies and personnel actions of one thing or another but from the point of view of actually doing a job there were a limited number of things that had to be done whereas in presidential personnel there may be hundreds of things. At the start of

the administration we have that many slots to fill. So just the number of actions is great and the number of actors is great because involved with any particular appointment were all the people we've been talking about: Cabinet secretaries and powerful members of Congress and party leaders, presidential family members, big donors, all of whom want to reach you and many of whom you have to talk to.

I hate speaking on the telephone. This is something that has been true in my life. People have even said that I have very curt telephone manners because what I want to do with any telephone conversation is get it over with. I just simply don't like it. Yet the job of the Director of Personnel for the most part is being on the telephone and listening. I got one of those headsets that operators use which I notice a lot of people nowadays do. It's not considered demeaning to wear but for me it was physically necessary because I got tired of holding a piece of plastic to my ear for so long. Both my arm and my ear rebelled. So if I was told Senator So-and-So is on the line, the first thing I would do is to take out my headset and get ready to just listen. Also by having the headset it left my arms and hands free to do other things, even just stand up and walk around. But, for the most part, that occupies an immense amount of time that has to be done from the pure public relations side of the job.

MK: How many calls did you have a day?

CU: I couldn't estimate. At the start of the administration it truly is ridiculously high: hundreds. And I remember in the early days of the administration looking at my call sheets. It would be quarter of eight. It would be that hour of the night and I would look at my call sheets. Here would be page after page of some of the most important people in the country, people who are used to having their calls taken immediately let alone [returned] the same day, and here are people whose phone calls I simply could not and would not return. I was about ready to drop or I needed to eat and go home and get some sleep. There was no guarantee that I would be able to return their phone calls the next day.

At least I worked out a color-coding system with my assistant so that members of the Senate were on blue pieces of paper and cabinet officers were on yellow pieces of paper and I could do triage by color. In fact, the rule I followed was that I would always first the calls from members of my own staff because they had jobs to get done; they needed a decision from me and it was my work after all that they were doing so I would return their calls first. Then I would return the calls of other members of the White House staff for the same but extended reason. Then I would return the calls of my clients, the Cabinet secretaries, and then I would return the calls of senators because of the confirmation process keeping the Senate in fine favor is required; then members of the House—knowing that members of the House were in that category that would also include others, others meaning governors and party chairmen and national committee leaders and various other people or just prominent citizens of the country, major business leaders or magnates of some sort of another. That's the way it had to be. Unfortunately, sometimes the people on the white sheets, the other who included some pretty important people in America, did not have their phone calls returned.

Now that was when I was not in meeting. Of course part of the job of the head of presidential personnel is a lot of interviewing. I made sure I interviewed everyone who was a finalist, usually the only finalist but the person with whom in working out the deal with my staff and the Cabinet officer or other principle was clear was going to be the final person. I would want to bring that person into the office and have the eye-to-eye conversation. I took very careful notes. Some of my primary donations to the Bush Library are many volumes of fairly thin notebooks which were as much as my reportorial skills of shorthand allowed fairly verbatim notes as to what that individual told me. So that if, as happened on several occasions, that individual in office did something different I could at

least go back and say, "Well, the person in the interview when I asked this question answered this way and it's clear that they've changed their mind."

MK: Would they be deputy assistant up?

CU: All presidential appointments requiring Senate confirmation; so assistant secretaries up. I very, very seldom dealt with the deputy assistant secretary one unless it was so controversial or unless it's an individual of such importance that it meant that I should talk to that person.

You may have read, and it's certainly been publicized a lot lately, how George W. Bush immediately after the 1988 election was the chair of something called the Silent Committee which was put together of people who like myself had been in the Bush world for a number of years and knew the other people who have been in the Bush world. The whole idea of that exercise was to put together the list of the absolutely deserving, those who if they wanted an appointment or some other consideration, such as a part-time advisory board or member of an international delegation, would get it. They were the ones to be taken care of. That wasn't the Schedule C group and it wasn't all the other worthies, the donors and other sorts. These were kind of the ordinary folk who would be overwhelmed or run over in the stampede if there wasn't someone looking out after them. And the person looking out after them was George W. Bush who if somebody was being abused by the system would get on the phone to me. Because we came from the same background if you will, the campaigns of his father, I didn't need much persuasion but his phone call was very helpful in redirecting my effort to make sure that Sally or Sam was taken care of at that time, that that would be an important matter, not a lesser matter.

MK: Was that his [George W. Bush's] idea?

CU: It was his father's because George Bush the elder was a great believer in the people who helped him get there and he put his son in charge of it for the parallel reason why I asked Scott Bush to be in charge of Schedule C matters, because George knew those people and clearly had worked with them in the campaign, often doing the same work that they did and knew that they should be remembered.

MK: In looking at your day, when did you come in?

CU: Well, the senior staff met at 7:30. So I would arrive bright and early at 7:29 every day. I couldn't seem to get there much earlier than that because of wanting to sleep and eat, read the newspaper and do some other things. So that was about as early as I got started.

MK: What newspapers would you have read by then?

CU: It got down to pretty much only the *Washington Post*. I remember years ago, when I was in college and years thereafter, I always assumed it was the *New York Times* that people read every morning. That's what writers like Theodore H. White always said. In fact, he even once said, "It can be assumed anybody in the Boston to Washington corridor all could assume that anyone they spoke with during the course of the day had read the *New York Times*." Well, I only read the *New York Times* if I had to, if there was a story about one of our appointees or anything else involving our arrangement. It's largely because the *Washington Post* as the home town newspaper cared about those kinds of things much more deeply than any other newspaper including the *New York Times*. So it was absolutely essential reading. I wish, even in my current life, when I don't have to take calls from senators and Cabinet secretaries, that I could read more than a couple newspapers a day but I've never been able to organize my life to do that.

There are the famous White House clips which were helpful. I suspect nowadays it's all on line and a person can troll through the White House clips that way and call up the actual story in a way that you couldn't easily do with the White House clips. The White House clips were a summary. I call them the clips; the White House news summary was only that. Maybe they still do it.

MK: What they have are xeroxes of the stories so it's about [indicates] that thick.

CU: That's pretty typical. In fact, the amount of copyright violation that goes on at the hands of the federal government is pretty appalling. The Defense Department has always had something called the "yellow bird" because the first sheet is always yellow. That is a clipping service that comes out every day. The White House clips at the time were only just summaries. So if you wanted the actual article you had to call up somebody; then they had to xerox it for you and send it to you. I think that's what's probably now immediately on line. And that would make a lot of sense to begin one's White House day here instead of bent over newsprint.

MK: I think they do the clips. Joe Lockhart was saying he reads the clips when he comes in. How long did the senior staff meeting last?

CU: Only about thirty minutes because at eight o'clock or so there was some kind of meeting. I'm trying to remember. In President Bush's day I think he had his own Chief of Staff and National Security Advisor conversation at that time. So the meeting had to end as of then. But also people were pretty much used to having it only last about thirty minutes as a way of getting it done in thirty minutes. In case you were going to ask, I was going to say that I was not one of the people who were regularly asked to report as were the domestic policy advisor and the press secretary and the legislative liaison. I didn't mind because, frankly, I could probably have occupied the entire meeting if I or anybody wanted to hear about all the different appointments that were pending. I would speak only if the news of the day or some other issue focused on personnel. I was perfectly happy that I had the brief all to myself, that there weren't other personnel directors sitting around the table there as had happened in previous administrations in which the legislative liaison felt free to deal on appointments to get a senator's vote or in some other instance the chief of staff may have been cutting deals on appointments without letting the personnel director know. I'm happy to say that it was a combination of my relationship to the President and because nobody else wanted to have anything to do with personnel that I was given that entirely unto myself.

I had a very good relationship with Governor Sununu. I continue to be one of his great advocates. There are a lot of people who now, not necessarily then, say nasty things about John Sununu but I had an absolutely wonderful relationship with him. I think it's because he had been a governor; he had had to make appointments. He knew what the personnel system was. I think he hated in the way presidents often hate personnel and I know when I went to his office sometimes I referred to myself as the "dentist who made house calls." I could just tell this was not something he wanted to do was have me come in with a big stack. Yet my job was to convince him that, yes, this was the right person for the job and under the arrangement we had with President Bush almost never were there meetings in the Oval Office talking about personnel. That would only be these very rare, sensitive issues of fight with the Cabinet secretary or maybe the selection of a Cabinet secretary. It was all done by paper. President Bush would see a memo recommending somebody with initials from John Sununu and me. In 99.9 per cent of the cases he then signed it. So my job was to persuade John Sununu to co-sign a memo and he wanted to get through that as soon as possible. But, because he had been a governor, he knew what you need and want in the way of appointments. I think that was of great benefit to me in my job and one of the reasons I think our relationship was so good and maybe not so good for other people who had functions other than what a governor does.

MK: Did you meet weekly with him?

CU: No. There was nothing set. In fact, getting on his schedule was difficult, as it would be with any chief of staff. And, as I indicated, it wasn't exactly something he wanted to do so it was on an as-needed basis. I remember many a time when I would be in a meeting with somebody or even talking to a group visiting the White House that I would get the word that Governor Sununu will see you now. I would take that opportunity because it may not come for many more days. But eventually things worked and he preferred it and I preferred it to be done in person rather than just on paper.

MK: What would be the size of the stack you would take him?

CU: It would vary but a stack of twenty or so jobs. By jobs [I mean] some full-time and some part-time because we would also go over the major boards and commissions that needed to be named.

MK: How often did you meet with the President to discuss personnel issues?

CU: As indicated there are very, very few in-Oval Office meetings. Now there were telephone conversations. He would call me and on occasion I would call him to check a particular point. It was more his calling me because I described the system by which I got something to him and I didn't go around Governor Sununu. That wasn't the system. So he would call me usually to give over a name or to ask about a matter that a Cabinet secretary may have badgered him on after a Cabinet meeting or just to inquire in to the status of somebody. That would be the typical way around it, the typical call from the President.

MK: What other meetings did you regularly attend during a week?

CU: That was about it.

MK: So yours was not a meeting heavy operation?

CU: Not in the White House world. Another illustration of this is I never went on Air Force One while it was Air Force One. On January 20, 1993, when it was no longer Air Force One but it was still the same airplane, I went with the Bushes from Washington back to Houston which was a very special occasion but it wasn't Air Force One at the time. The reason was there was no need for me to be out of the White House. My job was very definitely an in-White House job and usually in my office. I would go across the way [to the Executive Office Building] to have staff meetings. I thought that was good to go visit my troops since the presidential personnel staff is one of the biggest in the White House world. That was about it. Occasionally, as I indicated, I would go Cabinet secretaries' offices and very occasionally I'd go up to the Hill to have a meeting with a senator on a confirmation matter or explain something. But most of the time my life consisted of living inside that office. At the time the office I had had kind of strange marks on it.

MK: Where was it located?

CU: This is on the Second Floor. There is a suite that at the time, and it may be still, is linked where the legislative liaison office is. If you want, I can draw you a map of where it is. Have you been up on the Second Floor of the West Wing?

MK: The Second Floor I have a couple of times. I remember where [David] Demarest's office was.

CU: Okay. The Demarest office was in a general cluster of offices. Mine was apart. The office I occupied essentially sat on top of the stairwell leading up from the main floor of the West Wing. If

you went up the stairwell you would take two sharp lefts and that's where I was. If you came up the stairwell and took a right you would go toward Demarest's office and immediately you'd be in the General Counsel's office which is generally I think used only for the counsel. So that was where it was.

Anyway, I was mentioning that for some reason the door [to my office] had all kinds of scratches on it. I joked but it seemed to be very figuratively clear that this is like the number of people wanting to get through that door to see me. I was very grateful that the Secret Service runs a screening system at the gate so that truly the only people who came to see me were the people that I wanted to see except for the walk-ins like Cabinet secretaries who could walk in. Nobody else could see me unless I wanted to see them. And that is the way it has to be. When I read that Bruce Lindsey when he was personnel director would travel on Air Force One I could not imagine why he would want to do that. Well, the answer was he was really more of a confidant to the President and had almost a buddy-buddy relationship that I didn't have with a man who was old enough to be my father. But the reason I could never imagine going on a presidential trip was why would I ever want to leave the sanctity of my office to go to Kansas City and there see the senators and congressmen and the national committee woman and the state chairmen or the prospective candidates themselves? I could have enough input from them from the telephone or occasional letters or on an invited basis that I wanted and needed. I can't imagine why a presidential personnel staffer would want to voluntarily throw himself or herself into that maelstrom.

MK: Did you have people from the White House coming in also like Cabinet secretaries or members of the Senate that would come in to talk to you about appointments?

CU: Yes. Of course, we'd never say no to them. They were most always welcome. Senators on occasion, but not that often. That would be something I would want to do not only because I think senators expect it. Some senators want to come to the White House to be in the White House. Sometimes they might drop by if they were in a meeting of some kind. Of course, I would always see them. But, for the most part, I felt it was my job to get in the car and go to the Capitol.

MK: How about Legislative Affairs? Did they come by to talk to you? Did you deal with them regularly?

CU: My counterpart, the head of Legislative Affairs, Fred McClure, and I were and remain very good friends to the point that he was very happy to let me handle personnel. He had enough on his plate not to deal in personnel. But he did let one of his staffers be the liaison to me on confirmations and I certainly welcomed that person on a regular basis. I'm talking about Brian Waidman.

MK: When you went up to the Hill, what would be an occasion you went up to see somebody?

CU: If summoned would clearly be that occasion by a senator who was upset, wanted to know why you weren't naming somebody he wanted named or more people from his state. So my job was to sit there and listen. And I remember I had several good meetings with Senator [Claiborne] Pell, who at the time was the chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, on ambassadorships since that is always very sensitive and to let him know what the administration was planning to do on ambassadorships. In fact, I love the Hill. I regret that in my life I have not really spent much time there on a full-time basis. In fact, the only significant amount of paid time I spent on the Hill was when I was an intern for Congressman George Bush back in the sixties. To this day but especially then I would very eagerly go to the Hill if given the opportunity. I think it's expected; it's courtesy to them and it's also good politics.

MK: When did your day wrap up? How late was it?

CU: It was usually about seven-thirty or eight. The White House is a place where people can truly work into the night and really need to make a break even if the telephone messages aren't all returned. It would end about that time. Now I sort of have to define my White House life before and after I got married. After I got married—and I married a fellow White House staffer—there would be all the more incentive to leave, to go home. My wife worked for the counsel, Boyden Gray. She had lots of work to do and she had possibly a longer day than I before our marriage but after our marriage our days coincided and that was healthy. We weren't married as White House staffers more than about four months before she left to take a Schedule C appointment in an agency. But we were engaged for about a year I suppose, more like ten months. So that was another reason to leave earlier.

MK: One question for you at the end here. Has Governor [George W.] Bush been thinking about the issue of governing and of how one puts together a team, moves from campaign into governing? Is that something that—?

CU: The short answer is I don't know. He certainly hasn't talked to me about it. I think this is still too early. He has a lot to do just getting the policy issues, especially foreign and defense issues, down. And this is still so frightening early a stage of a presidential campaign. It's certainly earlier than even I would recommend or even your project will recommend that they do it. Now, if he is the nominee or at the time he will wrap up the nomination, then if nobody contacts me then I plan to offer my services to give the same opinions that I've built up over the years to his operation. I was part of a small group of three veterans of the Bush Administration who planned the transition for Jeb Bush last year and he knows that. If he is thinking transition then maybe my name will pop into his head. He has a pretty good memory. If not, I at least will make the offer to do what's necessary to try to implement some of the recommendations that you will probably make.

MK: The first thing we're going to do is come out with what we're going to call "Standards of a Successful Start." Things that seem to be common among transitions that are successful. Rather than focusing on things that don't work, I think we're going to focus on things that work. I feel like the planning ahead of time and thinking through White House appointments as well as Cabinet ones, thinking them through early—for example, this administration was very late to name their White House staff to say the least. I think it was five days before they came in.

CU: And clearly nobody had filled out their security forms or had them checked.

[End of Disc 1 of 1]