GEORGE W. BUSH ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

FINAL EDITED TRANSCRIPT

INTERVIEW 1 WITH JOSHUA BOLTEN

January 15–16, 2013
Washington, D.C.

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Barbara Perry

Southern Methodist University
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UNIVERSITY of VIRGINIA

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Riley: This is the Josh Bolten interview as a part of the George W. Bush Oral History Project. We're very grateful for your agreeing to sit with us and give us your time. Just as a formality, before the tape started we discussed the ground rules about confidentiality. As an aid to the transcriber, the first thing we typically do is go around the table and have everybody say just a few words so that the transcriber can associate a voice with a name. I'm Russell Riley, the chair of the Presidential Oral History Program.

Nelson: Mike Nelson.

Riley: You've got to say more than that.

Nelson: Michael Charles Nelson. [*laughter*]

Engel: Jeffrey Engel, from Southern Methodist University.

Perry: Barbara Perry. I'm a senior fellow in the Presidential Oral History Program at the Miller Center.

Bolten: I'm Joshua Bolten and I'm in the witness chair.

Riley: I hope you don't feel about it that way, otherwise we're not going to get very far. We always like to begin by getting some biography. There's a lot of ground to cover, so we don't want to park on this for a long time, but you have an interesting past, and I wonder if you could tell us a little bit about your upbringing and your situation in Washington.

Bolten: I was born here in D.C., in fact probably just a half mile from here at GW [George Washington] Hospital. My father's career was at the CIA [Central Intelligence Agency]. We lived for pretty much the first five years of my life in Germany when he was under official cover at the Embassy in Bonn. Then back here before I was six in 1960. I grew up here. I went to D.C. public schools for elementary and middle school and private school for high school on the grounds of the Cathedral at St. Albans, so I grew up in a government environment.

Perry: What did your mother do?

Bolten: My mother was actually maybe the smartest person I ever knew, but had no college degree. So she went to GW when I was in elementary school, got her undergraduate degree, stayed through her doctorate, and taught history at GW.

Engel: What was her field?

Bolten: She taught a number of things, but her specialty and love was medieval history, which I found peculiar. [*laughter*] She wrote a Master's thesis and a dissertation on church history.

Nelson: Did you develop an interest in politics and government while you were growing up?

Bolten: I did. Especially then this was a one-company town. So the people that my—I'm sorry, my voice is even quieter than usual.

Riley: It's OK. The mics will pick it up.

Bolten: My mother was extremely knowledgeable about history and she was interested in teaching her kids about this place and history in general. My father was deeply enmeshed in international affairs and politics generally, although he didn't play in politics. He was a civil servant and was very careful about his neutrality, but he associated with people who were involved in politics. So he never talked about his own work. In fact, I grew up thinking that dads didn't talk about the office. I think I can say literally I do not recall a single incident of him saying a word about what happened at the office. But he was a very talkative person, very engaging. The people who were his friends were too, so I grew up in an environment where public affairs and politics were very much the discussion around the dinner table.

Perry: So you started into elementary school here just at the beginning of the [John F.] Kennedy administration?

Bolten: Yes I did, exactly.

Perry: Was that something that you were aware of even at that time?

Bolten: Sure.

Perry: And the crises that happened?

Bolten: Sure, and I very distinctly recall my father taking my brother and me here downtown, I don't remember exactly where, to watch the funeral procession for President Kennedy in 1963. So that was—

Perry: You were about nine.

Bolten: I was exactly nine.

Perry: What impact did that have on you?

Bolten: You know, that's an interesting question. Everyone remembers where they were when they got the news that Kennedy was shot—everybody who is—I guess Mike and I remember where we were when Kennedy was shot. I think it was especially profound here in D.C. because people didn't really associate—a relatively small crowd associated with the President, but they were our neighbors. I think it helped give me a sense of the fragility of things. I think especially

when you're a kid you think the way things are is the way they will always be. That's people's bias, anyway.

My dad was a conservative man, but he was somebody who was, from his own background, pretty keenly aware of how easily and quickly things could change with a single rifle shot. He grew up in New York City the son of Russian immigrants who didn't speak English here, and ended up a decorated World War II vet who didn't even know how to drive a car but went straight from college at NYU [New York University] to North Africa and had seen a lot in a relatively short time. I think that was an important impression on me. As I think about it, having been one of the people at the White House on 9/11, I ended up with similar—[sounds of a motorcade outside] Looks like the President might be headed somewhere. For the transcription it should be noted that we're two blocks from the White House, which is a great location.

Riley: On 17th Street.

Bolten: A great location for the center. Anyway, I don't know how the Kennedy assassination was formative, but it must have been. It must have been for a lot of my father's colleagues and friends.

Riley: You mentioned a brother?

Bolten: I didn't mention him, but I have an older brother two years older and a younger sister. A brother with whom I share most experiences and a room, a sister somewhat younger.

Nelson: Your father had friends who were politically involved Democrats? Republicans? Both?

Bolten: Interestingly, they were mixed, although he was a conservative man. They were well mixed. I would say the center was somewhere around a [Henry] "Scoop" Jackson Democrat, literally a Scoop Jackson Democrat. One of his oldest friends, maybe his oldest friend, was a guy named Max Kampelman. They met when they were both students at NYU. Max worked at the NYU bookstore. My father worked at his father's delicatessen. I think my father would trade sandwiches for books. They became friends then, and Max became part of the Minnesota crowd of Hubert Humphrey, Walter Mondale types. Minnesota Democrats who were more liberal on social policy, conservative on foreign affairs, made up a fairly large part of the group.

One of my dad's dearest friends was a guy named Dick Scammon. He was a demographer who co-authored the book *The Real Majority*. My father and Dick were in the military, in government after the war, and participated in the efforts to write a constitution and so on. I don't think my father was a big cheese in that, but somehow Dick at a pretty young age was. So they were very close friends. Dick Scammon and his wife were part of that crowd.

Ultimately—I'm having trouble with her name now—President [Ronald] Reagan's UN [United Nations] Ambassador—

Perry: Jeane Kirkpatrick .

Bolten: Jeane Kirkpatrick was also part of that crowd. I think originally through her husband who was head of the American Political Science Association, Kirk—I don't even know what Kirk's name—

Nelson: Evron.

Bolten: Evron was his real name, but they called him Kirk. The Kirkpatricks were part of that crowd. She brought in Chuck Lichtenstein. So those were some of my parents' close friends.

Perry: Did your mother have a discernible political, in addition to historical, interest?

Bolten: No. She probably had the wisdom to keep it to herself. I think she was socially more liberal than either my father or most of that crowd. She was more intellectual and less political. It was a great crowd and a great crowd to grow up around.

Riley: Where was your home?

Bolten: Within the city limits, but near the edge, near Western Avenue in Rock Creek Park. I grew up about 50 yards from the edge of Rock Creek Park in Northwest.

Riley: You spent a lot of time in the park growing up?

Bolten: I did, knew where to find tadpoles, which would really upset your mother and all that stuff, good places to go sledding.

Perry: So you went from public school to St. Albans for high school?

Bolten: I did. I was here, went to a good public elementary school, a pretty good middle school, but it was a period of disruption and racial tension in D.C. So I was in middle school when Martin Luther King was shot, which was really a seminal event for the city, and the city literally burned. You could go to various places and see the smoke rising from 13th or 14th Street. I can't remember exactly where the epicenter of the rioting was. I was in a school with a bunch of middle class white kids like me and then a fair number also of African American kids. Until the riots it had been not uncomfortable, but with the riots it became less comfortable.

More significant was the court ruling that eliminated tracking in the D.C. public schools. There was a pretty small percentage of us who were white kids in the D.C. public schools and almost all of us ended up in the faster tracks, which the court then ruled was de facto segregation and had to be unwound. So I think somewhere between my seventh and eighth grades or maybe sixth and seventh grades they eliminated tracking. My brother and I ended up in an algebra class with kids who couldn't do basic arithmetic and often teachers who couldn't do the algebra. Stuff fell apart pretty quickly.

My parents, I think reluctantly, very reluctantly for my brother and me—we were happy in the public schools—we got moved out to the private schools. We went to a great school. It turned out to be a blessing to have been able to go there for high school, but I also had the public school experience.

Nelson: I know this is a huge stretch, but I wonder—education ended up being such an important part of Governor Bush's time in Texas, and then of course in the administration. To the extent that you were involved in that, did your own experiences have any effect on the way you thought about it?

Bolten: They probably did, but I have trouble identifying it now. As big a role as education played in my life and my homelife, where—actually that is an interesting element. My family's dining table was basically a school. My dad always engaged with young people. When he was around, especially with my very liberal friends, he would talk politics and challenge them in a gentle way. My mom, you would just mention a subject and you could say, "So where were the Merovingian Kings—" [*laughter*] She would be off and running.

My friends all came to sit at the dining table and get education. Interestingly for me, the subject of education as a public policy matter was not a passion of mine. It was one of the reasons why I was a little bit surprised that George W. Bush hired me to be his policy director because there was nothing in my background or even interests that suggested I would be a good person to drive his education agenda. But he probably was well aware that he himself could do that, and he had plenty of other people around him like Margaret Spellings.

Engel: If I could just ask a question to round out the picture of that dining room table, in a sense. I'm trying to think that demographically, painting with broad strokes, a Russian Jewish immigrant—I presume a Jewish immigrant—from New York City, your father statistically should have been a liberal Democrat.

Bolten: Yes.

Engel: Did you have a sense that your background ethnically, religiously, geographically, and the ideology around the dinner table, was diverging, and at what point would you say you realized you were a Republican?

Bolten: That's a very good question. I think demographically he should have been a liberal Democrat and he grew up as a big [Franklin D.] Roosevelt supporter, an FDR supporter. But I think he also grew up with a pretty keen sense of good and evil, right and wrong, and the responsibility of the United States to confront evil and to rectify wrong in the world. So I think the foreign policy issues drove him toward—you wouldn't have called it conservative at that time.

I guess when he was growing up, real Republican conservatism was isolationist. I think his experiences as a kid and in the war informed him of the necessity for an activist United States. That, I think, ended up being the conservative side. By the '60s, that was the conservative side of the spectrum, not the liberal side. Does that make sense?

Riley: But you didn't get the sense that there was a partisan dimension to it? You said he was a conservative man but kept his politics to himself.

Bolten: It was part of being a professional and a good civil servant. He had to serve whichever party with equal zeal, as did all of his colleagues. I didn't mention his CIA colleagues, who were also regular visitors at the White House but never allowed themselves to have a conversation

about work with anybody else. They might have a hushed conversation over in the corner and then have a robust conversation about whatever.

The guy who had been the station chief in Bonn when my dad was there was a guy named Henry Pleasants who was also a great musicologist and wrote books about music. I think his wife was a harpsichordist. So the conversation when Henry and my dad were alone was spook stuff, and then it was the great classics of music when they were at the table. The original CIA crowd was a very urbane, sophisticated bunch.

Riley: I bet. Was it unusual for your dad to have been—I'm assuming he must have been posted when he came to Washington. He stayed here rather than going back out in the field?

Bolten: That was his choice, yes.

Riley: His choice.

Bolten: We spent five years in Germany, which is a long time, I think partly for family reasons. He liked it here in D.C. He liked the environment. He liked Langley.

Riley: Have you looked back since that time or talked with—is he still alive?

Bolten: He passed away at a young age, I think in '85, so quite some time ago. I still occasionally run into some of his colleagues. I still see Uncle Max [Kampelman]on the street here. I ran into him on the street just the other day.

Riley: I think he actually did an oral history for us for the Reagan project years ago if I'm not mistaken.

Bolten: I bet it must be one of the most interesting gems in the collection.

Nelson: You were born in 1954, is that right?

Bolten: Yes.

Nelson: So when I think of the things that happened when you were a teenager and still living in your parents' home but that were also happening here, in this city, where you were growing up, things like the march on the Pentagon in '67 and you mentioned the King assassination and the riots that occurred, the Robert Kennedy funeral procession here, various moratorium protests against [Richard M.] Nixon, all these happened while you were in high school. I'm guessing at St. Albans there were a lot of students who were very much engaged by criticism of the CIA?

Bolten: Criticism of the CIA, of war policy, a very interesting mix in the crowd. [Albert Jr.] Al Gore graduated a few years ahead of me. The kids of a lot of public servants, of Senators. I played lightweight football with Evan Bayh back when he was smaller. [*laughter*] So politics very much in the air. Hank Haldeman was a year ahead of me and took me to my first rock-and-roll concert.

Riley: Must have been seminal, based on your biography.

Bolten: I was already playing music by then. I had just never been to a concert.

Nelson: What I wonder is, did you find yourself defined in your own political beliefs either in consonance or in reaction to this very left of Minnesota crowd?

Bolten: I did. In answer to your question, Mike, I found myself on the right side of the spectrum, but not rigidly so. I found myself right of center. I was not with the kids who were marching and demanding an end to the war and so on. I think a lot of that was absorbed from my dad and his sense of responsibility. I wasn't one of the fire-breathing conservatives, but I was a member of a debate club called the Government Club at St. Albans. The conservative party was about a third the size of the liberal party, but I found myself as a member of the conservative party. There were plenty of people on the other side.

It was very much part of the everyday existence. One of my closest friends, and still a good friend, in high school—his high school girlfriend was [Elinor Kimberly] Kim Agnew, the Vice President's daughter. We used to go and hang out at the Agnews' apartment. There was no Vice Presidential residence at the time. They lived on the top floor of one of those big hotels at Connecticut and Woodley. I think it was the Sheraton, might still be the Sheraton.

Perry: Woodley Park?

Bolten: There were two big ones. You'd go all the way to the top. They had a nice apartment, but it was an apartment with the Secret Service in the apartment next door. It was kind of a weird life, sort of insular. We sat around the dinner table with Spiro Agnew and his wife. [redacted]

Riley: [redacted]

Bolten: [redacted]

Riley: [redacted]

Bolten: [redacted]

Riley: You mentioned music before. Music is an important part of your growing up.

Bolten: Yes.

Riley: In terms of learning an instrument and playing?

Bolten: Yes, I played the guitar starting, I don't know, sometime in elementary school. I was in bands beginning in sixth grade. So yes, music was always a big part.

Riley: You mentioned a concert. What concert was the first one you went to?

Bolten: It was Little Richard, who even then was an old guy. [*laughter*] It was Little Richard in some outdoor amphitheater on the American University campus. I don't remember where it was. There was a lot of smoke in the air. It was that era.

Nelson: When did you start thinking of yourself as a Republican?

Bolten: It's funny. I thought of myself as relatively conservative all the way through high school and college, but was rarely interested in partisan political activity. I didn't actually think of myself as a Republican—and it's possible I may not even have registered as a Republican until I was hired by Bob Packwood in 1985 to work on his staff of the Senate. He was then chairman of the Senate Finance Committee.

I was hired to work on his staff, so I figured, *OK, now I'm a Republican staffer, so now I am Republican*. I probably wouldn't have considered myself much of anything else, but I never really identified myself as a Republican until I got a job as a Republican. Then I said, *OK, that's your mantle, might as well wear it proudly.*

Riley: College?

Bolten: College—I would have described my views as relatively conservative, but I was not a member of the college Republicans. I didn't participate in campaigns.

Perry: You got there in the fall of '72, is that correct?

Bolten: Yes.

Perry: So you would have been there in the fall of the Presidential election of '72.

Bolten: Yes.

Perry: Didn't work in it, but did you vote?

Bolten: Yes. Let me see, fall of '72. I must have voted. I was at Princeton. I think I probably voted absentee. Although I don't have a specific recollection, I'm confident I voted for Nixon over [George] McGovern.

Perry: That would have been your first Presidential vote.

Bolten: Yes, in fact my friend who was dating Kim Agnew, he and I—in the summers during high school I would go with his family—they did some sort of outdoor camping trip each summer. So in the summer of '72 I drove with another friend down to the Republican convention in Miami and met up with my friend, John, who was dating Kim Agnew. He was in the Vice Presidential retinue with Kim. At the end of the convention we hitched a ride on Air Force Two—

Engel: Oh, my. What college kids do.

Bolten: —out to wherever the heck we were having a river trip. I think it was Utah. Sort of a different day where Air Force Two, because the Vice President's daughter and her pals are going on a camping trip, Air Force Two would stop somewhere and drop you off. So it did. It's funny, I hadn't thought of that in a long time. I guess that is kind of unusual to grow up in an environment where you get dropped off by Air Force Two.

Perry: It's not long after that that the Vice President has to resign.

Bolten: Yes. I remember being shocked but not that surprised; I don't know why. The whole scene just never felt right.

Nelson: The whole scene just never felt right? What do you mean?

Bolten: Just the whole Nixon-Agnew ethos to me never felt like it had the integrity that it should have. What did I know? I was a high school kid only absorbing little bits of feelings and pieces of information, but I had a feeling that something was wrong. Of course it turned out that something was very wrong inside the Nixon administration.

Riley: Did the effect of that cause you to rethink at all your own political dispositions?

Bolten: No, it didn't. I think it made me more cautious about believing in the integrity of leaders who should have impeccable integrity, but I don't think it caused me to change any of my political beliefs, and probably just strengthened my belief in the importance of integrity.

Riley: You go to Princeton. How are you defining yourself at Princeton in terms of what you major in? Are you thinking of career options? Are you involved in extracurricular things?

Bolten: The people I admired here in D.C., many of them were lawyers. They seemed to have the kind of career that I thought I wanted, which was something that would be a mixture of public service and private success. Some of my dad's friends—he always was careful to make sure that I met somebody who was a particularly good and important lawyer and got advice from. So I think I had always planned to go to law school.

Perry: What was your major?

Bolten: Princeton has the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs, which mixes history, politics, and economics into a public policy interest, which was mine. Most of the courses I took and enjoyed were in history and politics. I took a little bit of economics and barely hung on. Sociology was also part of it, but I found sociology mostly ridiculous, especially at that time.

Engel: It hasn't changed.

Bolten: I think it has, Jeff. I think it has become more scientific. At the time I remember I took a course that was labeled "Nuts and Sluts," but it was a course on the sociology of deviant behavior. The whole theme of it—here is where my inherent conservatism came out—was that deviant behavior existed primarily because we defined it as deviant. If we just weren't so strict with our definitions then we wouldn't have these outliers in society. I recall I basically rejected

the entire premise of the course. I stayed through the course, I wrote the papers and things. I didn't jump up and scream in the middle of the lecture or anything, but I remember that. Campuses were very liberal, including Princeton. I just remember thinking, *That's not where my views are.*

Perry: Any professors have a particular influence on you or that you admired in particular?

Bolten: I loved a guy named [Frank C.] Bourne, who was a professor of classics. I had no strong interest in classics, but he was such a great guy and such an interesting professor that I enjoyed him a lot. I remember his last lecture—it was his last lecture after 50 years or something at Princeton. It was on the fall of the Roman Empire. He drew the whole course together, talking about the Gracchi [Tiberius and Gaius Gracchus] giving away grain and so on, the corrosive effect on social incentives of too much government generosity and so on. I remember he then drew the parallels to the United States, the United States that he saw corroding around him.

He was a big opponent of co-education at Princeton, which I thought was preposterous. He was a real throwback. But I distinctly remember being moved when he brought it all together and drew the parallel between Rome and the United States. At the end of the lecture he just put his head down on the lectern and wept. I remember being profoundly affected, not necessarily agreeing with the very pessimistic view that he had of the trajectory in the United States, but I remember being profoundly affected by that.

I took a course from a guy named Walter Murphy on Constitutional Law.

Perry: My next question.

Bolten: He was my thesis advisor. I didn't end up being all that close to him. I admired him and liked his course.

Perry: You were in the same class as Justice [Sonia] Sotomayor, am I correct?

Bolten: Yes, here's an interesting thing. You would think that if you had been Chief of Staff to the President you would be the best-known public person in your college graduating class. I recently announced to some friends that I thought that I was at best number four in our class. A week later one of the guys who heard me say this sent around an email, the heading of which was just "number five." The implication being that I had been bumped down on the list. He attached a newsclip about a classmate of ours who briefly, and I'm sure inaccurately, claimed to be the illegitimate father of LeBron James. So I got bumped down.

Also in my class at Princeton was Sonia Sotomayor, whom I knew a little bit, Mike McCurry, whom I knew better, and was really a celebrity and a superb press secretary for President [William J.] Clinton, and then today the best known of my classmates whom I never, ever recall meeting during my entire time at Princeton was Eric Schmidt, now the chairman of Google.

I taught at Princeton for two years after leaving government, and if you had asked any of my students, if you put down a bunch of names from our class, maybe the only one that they would have surely recognized was Eric Schmidt's. I don't know anybody who recalls meeting him. He was an engineer, somewhat bright.

Perry: How did you choose Stanford for law school?

Riley: Let me intervene. Did you go straight to law school?

Bolten: No, I spent a year between working in Los Angeles as a paralegal. I had pretty much intended from the beginning to take a year off and just get some work experience. That wasn't particularly formative, I don't think.

I chose Stanford because in large part because my brother was there at the business school, and I thought, *This is a nice place,* of course with a great reputation and a small law school. I thought there would be some significant benefit for that.

Riley: We were at Stanford.

Engel: Before we get to Stanford if I could just ask one more question about your college years. You're there during Vietnam and the professor you described comparing American decline with Roman decline I presume is giving that lecture right around the time that Saigon falls based upon the chronology you explained, or at least therein.

Bolten: Saigon fell in '74?

Engel: Seventy-five.

Bolten: Yes.

Engel: What was the impact, *was* there an impact, of Vietnam? Did you think about Vietnam?

Bolten: Yes, but more so when I was in high school. By the time I was in college the trajectory of the war was pretty clear and I think my class may have been the first class not to have really been a protest class. We were veering back toward a normalcy class. My age cohort was the first not to be at significant risk of being drafted. We had draft numbers, but only if you were really unlucky with a very low draft number were you likely to end up getting pulled in.

Riley: Do you remember your number?

Bolten: I don't, but it wasn't a low number.

Perry: This was the lottery you were referring to.

Bolten: The lottery. Yes. So it wasn't nearly as deep a matter of concern. The intense period of social conflict about the war was when I was in high school. There were marches all the time. We lived here. The city would change. A lot of kids would go to the marches. I didn't. It was an environment of disruption.

I remember that period especially because it was an environment in which the adults seemed to have lost their way. I'm not sure that has ever been repeated in American culture, but I had a pretty keen sense that adults were looking to young people in a way that I don't think they ever had before or since for culture, for compass.

St. Albans is pretty conservative; it is a church school. It is a bastion of upper-class D.C., although not all of us there were from those backgrounds. They worked pretty hard to try to get a diverse background, the Gores and the Bayhs to the contrary and notwithstanding. The faculty was trying to adopt what the kids were pushing. The headmaster of the school was an Episcopal priest, Canon [Charles] Martin, a great character. We went to chapel most mornings and he would begin the service with, "Today is the first day of the rest of your life." There would be banners made of cloth in the cathedral where we would occasionally go, peace banners, with the peace symbol that was something the faculty was more proud of than the students. I remember a keen sense of adults having lost their way and trying through the youth movements to find true north. My dad and his friends were not among those. But it seemed like the culture had gone that way.

By the time I got to college it was the very front end of a shift back to normalcy, away from protest. My brother also went to Princeton. He is two years older and went two years before I did. He got the fall off because they shut the place down. It was a pretty wild place, pretty undisciplined.

Riley: You said your brother went to California before.

Bolten: He went to the business school. He's a very smart guy. He ended up going to Stanford Business School. I visited him out there several times. I thought, *Boy, this is nice. I'd love to go here.* So I got in and went. It was a really good choice for me because I was so steeped in Washington. Otherwise I was very attracted, interestingly, to UVA, which would have been a very Washington thing to do, but I thought it was probably good to expand horizons and go out to California.

I should mention my thesis that I wrote under the direction of Walter Murphy. He didn't really want to supervise it, but I insisted on it. It was on the selection of judges in the state of Virginia. It was at the time and probably remains the definitive work on the subject, there having been no others that I was aware of at the time.

Perry: He wasn't interested enough in just this one commonwealth? He was interested in selection of judges at the federal level?

Bolten: Yes, but I was doing a fairly empirical piece of work about which he was suspicious. I sent a questionnaire to every judge in Virginia, at least all the circuit judges. I remember I asked really stupid questions like, "To what do you attribute your appointment to the bench?" I got answers like, "My brilliance." [*laughter*]

Perry: You understood Professor Murphy's skepticism?

Bolten: I got it. But in the end—he thought I was going to try to draw statistical conclusions from what was not a statistically sound survey.

Perry: Just to clarify, these were state judges, not federal judges, from Virginia.

Bolten: No, no, state judges. I basically just went around and interviewed as many judges as would talk to me or that I had time for who would talk to me. I got a lot of these questionnaire

responses back with some pretty amusing answers. So it was not a brilliant piece of work, but it was entertaining and somewhat instructive empiricism about what I think at the time was one of only two states that selected the judges through election and the legislature. It gave an opportunity to talk about what is the right mechanism, what is the balance between politics and traditional credentialing that makes for appropriate judicial selection.

Nelson: So you graduate from Stanford in 1980?

Bolten: Yes.

Nelson: Had you decided somewhere along the way what you wanted to do with that law degree and where you wanted to go?

Bolten: Yes and no. Yes in the bigger sense that I knew I wanted a mixed public and private career. I was pretty sure I wanted to come back to Washington, which is where, if you're interested in public service and public policy, you probably ought to be. I was drawn to staying in California, especially. I clerked for a federal judge in San Francisco and I really liked the Bay area.

Perry: [redacted]

Bolten: [redacted]

[redacted]

Perry: How did that clerkship with him mesh with your experiences here in D.C. and the civil rights era and the burning of Washington?

Bolten: It didn't mesh. I took that job because it was a chance to work for a federal judge who seemed like a wonderful man in San Francisco, not because it was some sort of career stepping-stone or on some continuum of what I was necessarily interested in doing. I thought about being a litigator, maybe working in a U.S. attorney's office, maybe working at the Justice Department, which back then would have been a very logical thing to do.

In fact, the two finalists for jobs that I ultimately took were between the Honors Program at the Justice Department and the State Department. So I was fortunate to get offers from both. It was a difficult choice, one that I struggled with while making it, but didn't really second-guess after I made it. I felt like I picked the right thing when I went to work at the State Department.

Nelson: You were in California the year that Reagan and [George H. W.] Bush were elected.

Bolten: Yes.

Nelson: Did you have any—

Bolten: I graduated in ’80. I was there for the—

Nelson: Primaries.

Bolten: I was in law school for the primaries, and I can’t remember where I spent the summer of ’80, maybe back here. But yes, I was in California.

Nelson: Was there anything about them that was particularly appealing, repelling? Did you define yourself in any way in response to that election, those candidates?

Bolten: Carter versus Reagan?

Nelson: Yes.

Bolten: No, I was not intensely political at that time. I think I was much more focused on the beginning of my own narrow career.

Nelson: My sense is you thought of yourself as having a legal career in the Washington community public/private, but more government than politics.

Bolten: Exactly. In fact, even to this day when people say something about “your career in politics,” I sort of recoil from that. I never felt that I was in politics. I was in government. I never felt that I was—people consult me about politics or expect me to have great wisdom about politics and my reaction is always, “I don’t know. I was in government at the time.”

Perry: Is that your dad I hear—

Bolten: Could be. He loved his career, he loved public service, and had the bank account to prove it. I may have inherited a fair dose of that and respect for public servants. Coming from the conservative side, coming from the Republican side, you should come to this town with a healthy disrespect for government as such and skepticism about bureaucracy and public servants, but all of the public servants I knew growing up were the people I admired most and were the most dedicated, the most selfless, the most principled people, like my dad. So I came with a different attitude. It was one of the things I appreciated about George W. Bush. He was a person with that conservative compass who didn’t disparage public service.

Riley: So we’ve got you to the State Department.

Bolten: Not very far.

Riley: Any particular recollections or anything important that you care to share?

Bolten: Sure. I feel that in my career that I've just sort of been a bystander or in the room at extraordinary moments. I remember my mom gave me a book, I can't remember when it was, a birthday or maybe when I graduated from law school, written by, I think, a career Foreign Service officer who had been an ambassador at some important time. It's his memoir, called *Witness To History*. The inscription that my mom put on the inside was "Next witness, please."

That's the way I thought of what was happening to me and was likely to happen to me. I end up at the State Department. I remember my French was pretty good, not fluent but pretty good, so I asked for an assignment in the State Department legal office, which at the time was not large, it was maybe 50 lawyers divided up by the clients, by the organization that you served, like the environment, the oceans environment, science bureau, or the European bureau or something. I asked for one where my French would come into play, so naturally they put me in Latin America. I ended up in Latin America thinking, *God, what a crap assignment*. It turned out to be a very interesting place to be.

It was the time of revolution in Central America and the Reagan administration's efforts to control that. We had issues about El Salvador and Nicaragua. Then the Falklands blew up while I was there. What a treat for a young lawyer to be on the team with the first serious military conflict in a decade or more. It was centered around a legal dispute over who owned these islands, so the lawyers were thrilled and running up with memos to the Secretary and all that kind of stuff.

One of my roles was I was the legal advisor to the U.S. delegation to the OAS, the Organization of American States, which was a venue in which most of Latin America could vent its displeasure at the Anglos. I remember an episode in which—I was the lawyer keeping track of the resolutions and things like that. I remember [Alexander Miegs, Jr.] Al Haig was the Secretary of State at the time. Secretary Haig came to the plenary meeting of the representatives at the OAS to present the U.S. position, which was supportive of the UK [United Kingdom]. In the OAS there were a few English-speaking countries that were also supportive of the UK. Everybody else was on the side of the Argentines and trying to prevent the OAS from adopting a resolution that basically was Anglos out of Latin America.

Haig gave his speech, on which I had stayed up all night with the speechwriter, and it was greeted with dead silence around the table. I remember Haig turning around and going, "Lead balloon." Then at one point he said, "How many votes do we have for our resolution?" I said, I can't remember what it was, like eight. He said, "Let me see the list."

I showed him the list and he said, "This is nine." I took the list back and said, "No, sir, it's eight." He took it back and said, "This says nine." I took the list back and I looked at it and I said, "Mr. Secretary, St. Vincent and the Grenadines is one country." [*laughter*] There was like this little dark cloud.

Nelson: That was an issue on which your old family friend Jeane Kirkpatrick was very much on the other side, the pro-Argentine.

Bolten: I had forgotten that. You're right.

Nelson: That didn't percolate its way down to—

Bolten: You're triggering a memory, but why was she so pro-Argentine?

Nelson: I don't know. Jeff?

Engel: I was worried you were going to turn to me. I don't recall why she took that position.

Bolten: Was she UN Ambassador?

Nelson: She was UN Ambassador.

Bolten: So she must have been out of step with—

Nelson: She was out of step. It became public, but I don't know that it became public through a public announcement as opposed to leaks, and so on.

Bolten: Anyway, that was a great experience. Then continuing as the witness to history, I had already a little bit sadly decided to leave the State Department because after a certain number of years out of law school it's hard to get a job at a law firm if you haven't practiced the kind of law that people pay money for, and they don't at the State Department. It's the one place in the country where they really practice real public international law, treaty law, things like that. Part of my job was to be the resident expert on the Panama Canal treaties, which was just desperately boring. There were car accidents in the Canal Zone between a military jeep and—it was terrible, but that's real public international law. That is not a marketable skill.

So I decided I needed to leave after two or three years at the State Department if I was going to manage to get a job in a law firm that would be prepared to take me in as an associate and train me in being a real lawyer. The choice then, I'm sure it wasn't this narrow, but it seemed to me to either be a lifer at the State Department or get some private practice experience and training and look for an opportunity down the line to come back into government. So I sort of sadly decided to leave.

One of the last projects I did before I left was I wrote the Articles of Incorporation for the Bipartisan Commission on Central America, the President's Bipartisan Commission on Central America, which was chaired by Henry Kissinger and Robert Strauss. They needed a little bit of extra staff and they liked the work that I had done on setting it up and had been around to help with the setup and was planning to go. They said, "Would you be willing to stick around for an extra six months and work on the staff of the commission?" I got the approval of O'Melveny and Myers, which was the firm that hired me, and they said sure.

So again I had a great witness experience. This commission was fabulous. It wasn't just Kissinger and Strauss; it had Potter Stewart and Nicholas Brady before he was Treasury Secretary and Henry Cisneros and Lane Kirkland, then head of the AFL-CIO [American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations]. It was a great collection of very significant Americans sitting around chewing over how to manage one of the really difficult policy problems that the United States was facing at the time. It was created by the President. He was losing public consensus on the effort to prevent the advance of communism in Central America, so he was trying to generate some sort of policy consensus around that.

It's known as the Kissinger Commission, but it was really Kissinger and Strauss. Kissinger was great in it, but Strauss was fabulous; he just tormented Kissinger with such joy and spirit. [*laughter*] Kissinger was very cool, to watch how he operated. It was even more fun to watch how Strauss operated. I developed a lot of respect for both men.

Perry: What lessons did you learn?

Bolten: One was the importance of humor. Kissinger was really in charge and he was really directing the activities and the substantive direction the commission was going in, but trying to navigate a pretty broad spectrum of views. He was trying to corral people very effectively. Kissinger is a very astute politician in addition to being an intellectual. But Strauss was probably the best politician on the planet. When he saw a need to knock Kissinger down a peg, he would use humor in a way that was just devastating.

I'm not going to repeat one story, but I remember one when they were planning a trip and Kissinger had said, "I think we can—" Strauss or somebody said, "Can spouses come?" Kissinger said, "I think we'd better just go on our own." Strauss says, "Well, Henry, I can understand why your wife doesn't want to go with you, but my wife likes to travel with me." [*laughter*] It was that way all the way through, just a complete disarming by humor and candor. Strauss had his influence on the final product.

Riley: I would think that that early exposure to Texas politicians in a way formed you later on.

Bolten: I hadn't thought of that. I developed a real affection for that brand of folksy politics. I remember Strauss telling me—I was in the room when Strauss was making a phone call, I think he was calling Kissinger or something, but he really buttered up whoever answered the phone, and he knew her name. When he hung up he said, "I always learn the names of the assistants and learn something about them. That's better than knowing the people themselves."

Nelson: You liked government; you had already decided to leave State Department for a private firm before you started doing this, but was that move with the intention of being able to move in and out of government in the future?

Bolten: Probably, but not nearly as rapidly as it turned out. I had thought that I would be in a firm, that I would learn private practice of law, and earn a little money. I was even prepared to stay in the practice of law for the rest of my life if I loved it. I didn't expect to. But if this is what I want to do for the next many years, maybe become a partner at the law firm, which at the time you could typically do after seven or eight years out of law school. I think I was over three and a half years out of law school when I joined O'Melveny, maybe two and a half. I can't remember. I think they knocked me back one year in seniority, which wasn't bad. So the class I was in was OK.

It was an interesting experience. I did international trade law, which is very heavily government connected. I worked with a brilliant lawyer named Gary Horlick. I did a lot of work with the government and found it a very stimulating practice. I did work on the Hill on legislation. Then, as it turned out, an ideal job for a young trade lawyer came open in 1985, I guess it was.

A perfect job for a young trade lawyer is to be trade counsel on the Senate Finance Committee, which has the international trade jurisdiction on the Senate. So I took it. In fact, the incumbent had been one of my former colleagues at the legal advisor's office in the State Department, who had gone to Senate Finance Committee. When Bob Dole left the chair in the Senate Finance Committee and became the Republican leader, became majority leader, Bob Packwood moved up to become chair of the Finance Committee. My friend thought that was the right time to move and that Packwood would hire his own person. He recommended me and Packwood hired me, even though—I'm pretty sure nobody asked—I was not a registered Republican at the time. Then as soon as I got that job, I registered.

Nelson: I want to hear about that, but before that there are so many different ways of being a lawyer in Washington. I'm wondering, were there lawyers in town who you thought, *Now that's the kind of career I want*? I'm not talking about a mentor necessarily, but just a role model?

Bolten: Yes. I'll tell you the guy I loved—he barely knew me, the chairman of O'Melveny—was Warren Christopher. Chris was just the most gracious, thoughtful, smart, and serious person you could imagine. Whenever he was in D.C. he would stop in and see the associates, particularly stop and see me because of the work I had done at the State Department. He knew what I had done, was interested in what I was doing. I thought, *I want to be like Chris.* That's what I thought at the time.

[redacted]

Riley: [redacted]

Bolten: [redacted]

The intersections of all the interesting people and characters I encountered—I can't imagine that's typical. I think I've just been extraordinarily lucky and my mom's inscription was right.

Riley: Exactly. I owe you a break. Then what I thought I would do—think about the trajectory, just in the interest of time, from where we are now until '99. I know we have several steps in there.

Bolten: We should truncate.

Riley: What are the high points and what are you coming away with? One question in particular I'd like for you to comment on when we come back is you've talked about your respect for the civil service or for government service. Now you're spending time on Capitol Hill. Are you developing a sense of the institution of Congress while you're there that has an important effect on you later?

Bolten: Sure.

[BREAK]

Riley: Congress.

Bolten: A real eye-opening experience for me because I found working on the Hill endlessly entertaining. There was just so much interesting stuff going on. The internal politics are interesting. The dynamics among the members, especially in the Senate, are very interesting. The broader politics are very interesting. It is such a peculiar place. Again, especially the Senate, because it is so dependent on consensus and their relationships among a reasonably small group of people. So I was struck and taken with that. I was also struck at the extent to which it was sloppy and undisciplined and the relative authority held by people like me and younger and less experienced. I was shocked by the authority exercised by people who lacked—like me—experience and judgment, probably. How old was I when I got there? I was 30. I guess I got there in—

Perry: In '85.

Bolten: So I had recently turned 30 and I was a senior citizen in that crowd on the Hill. There were 25-year-olds exercising authority that they had no business doing. The members were voting on stuff that they didn't really understand and couldn't possibly because there is such a volume of stuff. But it was a very educational experience being there.

I loved being there, even when my issues were not on the front burner, because there was so much interesting stuff going on.

Riley: You've been in Washington for a long time. Was that your first foray into the Hill community?

Bolten: No, I was a summer intern in 1974, Watergate summer. I was the last summer intern for a very distinguished Congressman named Peter Frelinghuysen (Jr.) from New Jersey whose son now holds—it's not exactly the same seat because of redistricting. The district used to encompass Princeton, and he always had a Princeton student as his summer intern to organize the summer intern program, which then was much more haphazard. People now have very organized stuff. Back then it was, "OK, you're the summer intern program coordinator. Good luck. See what you can do."

I set up a variety of seminars for Princeton students. Sometimes we'd do it in coordination with some other schools. We got some great people to talk to us, like Bill Ruckelshaus, who is a Princeton alum. Partly through my dad's good offices we visited with Bill Colby, who was then CIA Director and also a Princeton alum. I can't remember all the people we did. But that was a weird experience being a summer intern on the House side in the middle of the Watergate summer. I think I had a sense that something pretty unusual was going on, but to get to my office every day I was stepping over the press cables and all that kind of stuff because my office was in the same building as the House Judiciary Committee.

Riley: Wow.

Bolten: It was in the Rayburn Building. Anyway, I'm sure it was a monumental experience, but it wasn't much of a work experience. So this was my first real chance to work on the Hill. I was fortunate to be there at a time when cooperation wasn't too bad and the issues—I was doing international trade, and the issues that I was working on were significant at the time. That was a period when everybody thought that the death of the U.S. economy was impending due to the predatory behavior of the superior economic model that the Japanese were pursuing that turned out not to be so superior in the end. But at the time, that seemed like what was going on. So it was an intense political issue fraught with more regional politics than partisan politics, which was very educational.

It was very educational to see how the members worked together, how the House and the Senate worked together. I was there and was basically floor-managing legislation that became the 1986—

Perry: The tax restructure?

Bolten: No, it must have been '85, I guess. It was the major trade legislation of the era. I can't believe I can't remember what it is called—the Omnibus Trade and Reconciliation Act.

So I had real experience in very substantial legislation. Our bill was on the floor of the Senate for like a record, about a month, with amendments and ancillary issues showing up and serious politics working out and then real conference with the House. I got a really good exposure to the whole legislative process and to its fruition. Then I was serving on the Finance Committee staff at the time of the '86 Tax Act.

Now that I think of it, the trade bill may not have gone through until '88. It's probably worth looking that up at some point.

Riley: OK.

Bolten: Anyway, so I got experience in what happens on a tax bill, but as a spectator mostly. By the way, that was the last significant tax reform that the country did, so that is now 26 years ago. I got experience on real legislation, which became this major trade bill. We got fast-track negotiating authority for the President to pursue what became the Uruguay Round, which I then worked on in the executive branch, if we can transition.

Riley: Sure. You stayed on the Hill until you went into the executive branch?

Bolten: Correct. I had been on the Hill for almost four years. I think I joined the Finance Committee in mid '85. Then the election of '88 brought George H. W. Bush to the Presidency. He was building his new team. He had selected Carla Hills as his Trade Representative. A natural place for the Trade Representative to find her general counsel was from the Republican staff of the Finance and Ways and Means Committees. So it was not at all a stretch or unusual. I think half the generals counsel had served on the staff of either Finance or Ways and Means. So it was not unusual for her to reach and take me to be the general counsel.

Perry: Do I remember reading that Rob Portman recommended you to her, or was there a connection to her at that point?

Bolten: Rob Portman was an intern; actually he was an intern when I was at the State Department. I don't remember it, but he claims I was mean to him. [*laughter*] But he also worked for us at the Trade Representative's office, I don't remember in what capacity. I sort of knew him then. I may be wrong about him working. He was in the trade world somehow, but he eventually became the Deputy Assistant to the President for Legislative Affairs. That's what you're thinking of, which is that I was the general counsel to the trade rep—

Perry: And then moved on to legislative affairs.

Bolten: To legislative affairs. I took the job he had had once removed, but there was somebody in there briefly.

Riley: When did you go to legislative affairs?

Bolten: Just the last year of 41's administration. In 41's administration my real job was general counsel to the trade rep. In the final year I got asked by Nick Calio, who was head of legislative affairs for 41, to go in and be his deputy. It might have been Rob's recommendation, but it was primarily Nick and I who had worked together. We were the leads in obtaining for the President the continuation of what was then called fast-track negotiating authority, which was very important. But he and I had really done that. I had done that from the substantive negotiating side; he had done it from the political side. So we really formed a strong partnership.

We had done that when he was the House Deputy in I guess 1990. Then when he came back to legislative affairs as the head guy in 1992 for the last year of 41's administration, he asked me to come in as his deputy.

Riley: Fred [McClure] had gone?

Bolten: Yes, he replaced Fred in the last year.

Nelson: Before you leave the Senate experience, I have a couple of questions. One is, while you were there the Republican Party went from being the majority in the Senate to minority in the Senate.

Bolten: That was a searing experience.

Nelson: Talk about that. And also, if you would—you went through a similar set of events when you were White House Chief of Staff where the Republican majority became a Republican minority. I don't know if that earlier experience prepared you for—

Bolten: Oh, yes, it informed me vividly. Actually, it happened also when I was Deputy Chief of Staff.

Nelson: Right.

Bolten: In the early months.

Riley: We'll want to park on each of those things. I'll allow the question, Mike.

Bolten: It informed me how dramatic it is. The most significant emblem of switching from majority to minority is you lose about 50 percent of your staff and you get put in the basement, which I now vividly remember.

Perry: This is the ’86 midterms. So for ’87 this is your new normal, your new life.

Bolten: We had had nice offices that always belonged to the majority staff of the Finance Committee on the second or third floor of the Dirksen Building, but the minority was literally in the basement. I remember it was right next to the interior parking lot, so that if you left a white piece of paper out on your desk over the weekend or were away for a week or something like that you could come back and you could draw a line on the paper because of the exhaust leaking in from next door. I’m sure it was like a major OSHA [Occupational Safety and Health Association] violation.

Perry: Black lung disease.

Bolten: We got a new staff director whose name was Mary McAuliffe. She was great. She was a very sweet, social person who was from Kentucky and was friendly with the Democratic head of the Rules Committee who was the Senator from Kentucky. She persuaded him to let us move to other offices in the Hart Building, which turned out to be great. That was like the best thing anybody ever did, to get us out of that basement.

The Finance Committee had an ethos of pretty good cooperation between majority and minority. So the shift there wasn’t as dramatic as it could have been. On the issues I worked on, this was an important learning experience. It was possible to see that you were almost as powerful in the minority as the majority in the Senate as long as you had at least 40.

The power to block was important in trade legislation; almost all trade legislation other than giving the President authority was bad. It was designed in some way to—the standpoint of a free trader was the side with which I clearly identified myself and with which my party was identified. My boss in particular, Bob Packwood, from a trading state, Oregon, was both intellectually and politically a strong free trader. I couldn’t have been more comfortable with the kinds of positions we were taking. From that standpoint, most legislation is bad, and you are almost as powerful and sometimes more so from the minority side of that equation than the majority. I also knew that that wasn’t universally true across the issues or across committees. But that was an important part of the education.

Nelson: Did you come away from your experience with a high regard for the legislative process, for Congress as an institution?

Bolten: No. Contempt, but also affection. I mean, it’s an odd combination of contempt for its messiness and illogic and affection and respect for its institutional integrity and the fact that somehow it works, which is against all odds. At least at the time it appeared that it works. I came away with that mix but with a very high dose of skepticism about the quality of the work that was being done there. I know my eventual boss, 43, hadn’t worked there, but he understood that implicitly, and did not approach his role with a great deal of respect for the quality of the work that was coming out of the Hill. There was a lot of respect for individuals, but not—

Engel: Where do you think he picked that up?

Bolten: I don't know. It may be that Presidents get this almost immediately. Some are better at managing it than others. Ronald Reagan was brilliant, I think, at managing it. Then 41 had had a good touch. I imagine this came out a lot in the 41 history, but 41 had a very good touch for understanding and dealing with it, in part from his own experience, but I think also in part from just the nature of his personality; 43 did not have that personality that suffered idiocy so comfortably as I think both 40 and 41 did. And 44 clearly has no patience for the idiocy and I think is suffering for it.

Riley: OK, so any major things on the agenda when you were in legislative affairs? It's a quiet time.

Bolten: Well, first the trade rep. There were a lot of major things, the launching of the Uruguay Round, of the NAFTA [North American Free Trade Agreement] negotiations. I was the negotiator on what at the time was a huge confrontation between the U.S. and EU [European Union] over beef exports, hormones in our beef, which caused it to be kept out of Europe. I was the negotiator on behalf of basically the U.S. meat industry. I had to go to all these dinners and try to get by without them noticing that I don't eat meat.

Perry: How does one do that?

Bolten: Not well. I occasionally got busted. But yes, there was a lot going on. Again, the timing in my career was such that I happened to be at a place where the issue was hot. Trade was a hot issue in the late '80s and early '90s, both when I was on the Hill and then at USTR [United States Trade Representative]. Ambassador Hills negotiated the Uruguay Round. She negotiated the North American Free Trade Agreement, the latter of which President Bush 41 signed on his way out the door and President Clinton to his credit put through the Congress. Then Clinton completed the Uruguay Round, so there is some bipartisan tradition there that I think is commendable. It appears largely to be lost.

Then when I was in legislative affairs almost nothing significant happened. I took the job knowing that for me, as a lawyer, a trained international professional policy person, taking the inside process job in legislative affairs in the last year of an unpopular Presidency, contentious on the Hill, I knew that was not a substantive step up. But I also correctly calculated that this was probably going to be the last time a Republican sees the inside of the White House for at least four and maybe eight years. I liked Nick, I liked 41, and I thought, *What a great chance.*

Riley: You'll do it.

Bolten: Carla Hills was the Trade Representative and my boss and a good mentor. I think she didn't quite understand, but she was supportive. A legislative affairs person is sort of a lower category; that's the lobbyist. And I wasn't even one of the lobbyists. The head of legislative affairs has two outside deputies, one in the House and one in the Senate. They are the lobbyists. He has one inside deputy, which was my job and it was Rob's job, who just runs the internal process, writes the memoranda to the President and that kind of thing. I had that job, which is candidly not a very important job, but I really enjoyed it. It was very educational for me just to be inside the gates of the White House every day. That's hard to replace.

Even though USTR is technically part of the Executive Office of the President, you're not really inside the gates; in fact you have to get cleared in. So to go into the West Wing every day—I had the smallest office in the West Wing, which the inside deputy probably still has, which I think was a converted coat closet right outside the office of the head of Leg. Affairs. You could have one person in the room with you, but that was it.

Riley: There was a chair there?

Bolten: There was a chair.

Riley: We had testimony from some of your predecessors in legislative affairs that the cushion was ruined on one side because it had yellow marker on it or something.

Bolten: I don't remember.

Riley: I was just getting confirmation.

Bolten: I can neither confirm nor deny, but I can confirm that it was like the smallest office anybody has ever worked in.

Riley: It was Portman's office.

Bolten: Yes, it was Portman's.

Riley: That was what I heard. It was a ruined chair in Portman's office.

Engel: Can I get you to go back and just explore a little bit? You made a very interesting comment a moment ago that you thought it was a good calculation to go over to the Congress because you perceived this might be the last time a Republican was going to be in the administration. Why? Because that calculus it seems to me was on the one hand prescient, on the other hand perhaps early, politically.

Bolten: It was pretty early. Nick asked me to do the job in, I can't remember, January or February.

Nelson: Of?

Bolten: It was '92. I don't think things had actually visibly started going wrong for Bush at that point, but I had a very bad feeling that the administration and the President had lost the bubble of what the American people cared about.

Perry: Had lost the bubble?

Bolten: Had lost a sense, had lost a connection. Bush 41 was so heavily focused on foreign affairs and managed that so carefully and expertly. I had a pretty keen sense from my relatively political seat over at USTR, knowing what the mood on the Hill was, what the members cared about, which I still did a lot of. When I was the general counsel a lot of my work was with the Hill, and the legislative people in USTR fell under my supervision.

So I stayed in pretty close touch at a minimum with the politics, stuff on trade, but was also brought into contact with how the politics felt otherwise. I just felt that the politics were bad for 41.

I don't remember when the polls actually turned south. I didn't really know campaigns, but I also had the sense that this was an administration that was not well geared up for combat.

Engel: Really? Do you recall why that was?

Bolten: I don't, but it was in a way too nice and not geared up for real political combat. I think that turned out to be true as well. I don't think I understood this when I took the White House job, but it turned out that that was an administration that was a Presidency that was not well organized for a campaign. I knew Bob Teeter a bit, just a fabulous person, one of the most attractive and decent persons you ever might encounter. I hope you were able to get him on tape before he passed away. If not, I'm sure you heard a lot of other people talk about what an extraordinary man he was.

They ended up with a campaign organization that was obviously dysfunctional. My seat inside the White House during that year very much informed the kind of structure that Andy Card and I built for 43's White House and it informed it not by "Here's what we want to emulate," but "Here's what we don't want to do."

Perry: What were those things?

Bolten: We don't want to have ambiguity about who is in charge. We don't want to have a situation where different people can get to the President and get a decision that might be inconsistent with one that was taken in a different venue. Actually, let me go back. That second lesson is one that I picked up while I was at USTR, because I found the organization of the White House to be opaque for decision making in the policy areas in which I worked. We had Cabinet Affairs, which was the office that maintained contact with members of the Cabinet, which is how Hills was treated, not really as part of the White House staff.

We had the Economic Policy Council, which was run by the Secretary of the Treasury, and then we had the Domestic Policy Council that did a lot in the economic area as well. We had the National Security Council. It was hard to find the right venue to get a decision made, and often competing venues would be going at once.

When Andy and I sat down to devise the policy structure of 43's White House, I came with the very powerfully embedded notion that every issue needs a home, but only one principal home. Then that one principal home is responsible for making sure that everyone who should have a voice gets a voice. I'm jumping ahead to my role as Deputy Chief of Staff, but when we were devising how the policy structure would work in 43's White House, I asked Andy to put me in the role of being the traffic cop. I expected to expend a substantial portion of my time sorting out turf disputes, which I didn't, but in 41's administration I participated in many turf disputes.

The structure that I encouraged Andy to allow me to leave was one in which we would designate in advance which policy council had the lead on which issue, who was in charge, and who they had to include, and if there was any dispute I would resolve that dispute, and everybody would

understand that on behalf of the Chief of Staff, if there was ever any dispute about who was going to take hold of an issue and have responsibility for getting it to the President, it was going to be me. There were not to be end runs and there were not to be parallel processes and so on. So that was one of the things I saw during 41's administration that informed how we set up 43's.

In 41's administration, being inside the White House, I saw the dysfunction of a lack of clarity, of control, between those basically running the Presidency and those running a campaign. They never meshed. John Sununu's departure—whatever might be said about John Sununu, he was gone by the time I got there. Sam Skinner had just started. Andy Card had left and it was very badly disorganized. It was hard to get decisions. I don't think Skinner felt empowered to really take control. Teeter and [Fred] Malek couldn't run the White House from outside.

So even to a neophyte like me inside the White House it was clearly not a smooth-running operation. I picked up a lot of signals in the course of that. Andy and I were setting up the structure for 43's White House. We very intentionally decided to try to make the structure so that that kind of dysfunction couldn't be repeated.

Riley: Could I ask for a refinement on this? One interpretation of what you saw in 41 was that there wasn't a good match between the person and the job with Skinner and the Chief of Staff.

Bolten: True.

Riley: Another interpretation is that the structure was bad. What I seem to be hearing from you is a sense of more the latter than the former?

Bolten: Both are true. I don't know which is the more important feature. Having respect for Sam Skinner, I actually would put more emphasis on the latter. Although I will say this, which is that I had the privilege of being there when in the last few months Jim [Addison III] Baker showed back up, and the difference was more than palpable. It was suddenly somebody is in charge. I don't think that is to Skinner's discredit. It's that only Jim Baker had that kind of stature that would overcome a structure that was inherently unsound. I think that Skinner, regardless of how well suited he was for the job, the structure made it very difficult to take control of the White House apparatus and make decisions. I saw any number of situations—I think I knew this already, but it really got embedded in my consciousness at that time.

I saw many situations in which it really didn't matter what decision leadership took, there was a close call between A and B, and it didn't matter that much whether they chose A or B. What mattered was that they made a timely decision and set a direction. That's what the Skinner-led White House was incapable of doing. I think that may have been personality driven. I think it was also structurally driven.

Engel: Can I ask a follow-up on this briefly? This is also the period when President Bush, 41 again, is suffering from some medical issues that I think have not really been covered enough and didn't leak out to the press at all. He had thyroid problems, the doctors were varying his medication, he complained about a lot of fatigue. Does that contribute in your opinion to a general sense that there is no overarching hard authority until Baker comes back in?

Bolten: It's possible. I wasn't close to 41. Even though I had a seat in the West Wing, I couldn't claim to have been close to 41, so it would be hard for me to know. I think that was also partly his personality. He was just more withdrawn or above the day-to-day running of the White House than I think either of his successors were. It could be that medical issues contributed to that, but he was thinking big thoughts and he and [Brent] Scowcroft were talking big stuff about our strategic relationship when they probably should have been saying, "Where's my convention speech?" He shouldn't have been rewriting the convention speech at the convention.

Riley: Did you get the sense from your perch in 41 that the foreign policy–making side of the White House actually was for the most part functional and smooth?

Bolten: Yes, I did have that impression, although I did have a slightly surprising impression that I thought was not quite right, which is that President Bush had a Chief of Staff for international in Scowcroft and a Chief of Staff for everything else in Sununu, and then Skinner and Baker. Even at the time I thought that didn't feel right. This is something that Andy and I agreed on and I impressed on him, which is that the Chief of Staff should really be the Chief of Staff for all purposes because you've got to have your hands on the totality of the President's agenda and make sure that he's spending his time on the right stuff and that they're not conflicting and so on.

What happened in the Bush 41 administration is that the foreign policy sort of went off over here and took priority at times when politically it should not have. There was nobody at the center for the President to say, "Wait a minute, sorry, Scowcroft can handle that. We need you over here."

Nelson: As somebody who had been involved in trade issues you probably knew that domestic and foreign policy is an artificial separation to begin with.

Bolten: I did. Trade issues were great issues, especially then, because they straddled the two; they were executed internationally, but policy was formulated domestically. That was a great straddling experience for me. Part of the confusion when I was over there was, How do we get a decision? Who do we go to?

Nelson: When you left the White House, did you have a sense that if I come back in a future administration here is the job I would want?

Bolten: I don't recall having that. I don't think I expected to be back. I remember thinking, *Gosh, I'm glad I took this job.* Because what a thrill to have been inside the White House, even for a week, much less that I was there for nine or ten months. I just remember thinking, *God, this is totally cool.* I was always a late worker. I always liked hanging around late at the office and just looking around.

Perry: What did you look at?

Bolten: Being the witness to history, just looked at the furnishings, at everything, thinking about the decisions that were made in different offices. I remember being one of the last people out of the White House on—I think it must have been January 19th of '93. I don't know why I was there, cleaning up and stuff like that. I just remember being profoundly moved by looking around the West Wing and seeing nothing on the desks, nothing on the bookshelves. It was wiped clean. I think I was still in the process of helping wipe our office clean.

Perry: Pictures removed from walls by that point?

Bolten: Yes, pictures off the walls. I think some of the formal National Gallery–type artwork was still around, but the jumbos were all gone. Just thinking—I was moved because it is a profound thing about our democracy that on January 19th I think I left at 7 P.M. because I remember hearing Democratic demonstrators out in front of the White House chanting. I can't remember what they were chanting, but it can't have been polite. But thinking, *OK, that's not graceful, but that's part of the process.* Just thinking what an incredible thing it is about our democracy that we can have this peaceful and abrupt transition of authority and power. The people who inhabited that building really ran the government, and at 7 P.M. on January 19th they couldn't have run the government if everybody had begged them to because they were out, they were gone. The next morning you could hear the hammering going on, the carpet being relaid and all that kind of thing. At 12:01 the next day Bill Clinton and his gang are going to be in charge and they'll be walking into these same rooms with nothing on the desks, nothing on the walls, nothing in the computers, and they're going to be starting from ground zero.

Speaking of starting from ground zero, sorry we haven't gotten further.

Riley: No need to apologize, not only have we indulged it, we've encouraged it and profited from it, so we'll be ready for—I'm trying to remember—

Bolten: Let me say a word about Kristen [Silverberg] and Joel [Kaplan] before either one of them is here because I don't want to say anything that embarrasses them. They are two of the most capable people with whom I have ever worked. I was the policy director of the Bush 2000 campaign and they both came to me through one of my early hires in spring of '99, a young former Supreme Court clerk named [Rafael E.] Ted Cruz, whom I put on the legal issues. To me he was golden because he was a conservative, young, Hispanic Republican who cared about public policy issues, just completed his clerkship with Chief Justice [William H.] Rehnquist. So he was on that portfolio.

Later I said, "Any more Supreme Court clerks, let me know." We were pretty well full with people we could pay and didn't want any more people we couldn't pay, but I said, "Let me know if there are some good talents." He sent me the two names, Joel Kaplan and Kristen Silverberg, who were coming off clerkships the year after his or maybe two years after his for [Antonin] Scalia and [Clarence] Thomas.

I assigned Joel to prepare for the incoming Vice Presidential nominee, we didn't know who it was, but I wanted somebody who had been part of the candidate's staff to bridge that. Kristen, I think, was put on health care and a couple of other things where we needed help. They both turned out to be fantastic.

When Andy and I were setting up the structure of the Chief of Staff's office—the Clinton folks had had a lot of people all over the place. They had several deputies and some specialist in Native American affairs had reported to one deputy and that kind of stuff. We said no, we want a very simple structure. We don't want a lot of people. We don't want the Chief of Staff's office either duplicating or displacing the policy work that should be done elsewhere. Our job is to coordinate it and make sure everybody else is doing their job properly.

So we designed for me the job of Deputy Chief of Staff for Policy and we decided that I would have just two assistants and not have anybody else technically report to me. What I knew would work for me is to have two very smart young people who would divide up the entire policy world. One would take one half and one would take the other, and I would just rely on them completely as my eyes and ears. Because they would be very young, they wouldn't be threatening to the other people, but because they would be very smart, they could help me intervene.

The two smartest young people I encountered on the campaign were Joel Kaplan and Kristen Silverberg. Then for the balance of my tenure as Deputy Chief of Staff for Policy it was kind of like having siblings. They knew each other well, they got along pretty well, but they would fight. The worst thing I could do was accidentally consult one of them about something that was in the other's territory. So that's Kristen and Joel.

Kristen went off to Iraq shortly after the invasion. She had always had an interest in international affairs, as did Joel, who was a Marine before going to Harvard Law School. So there was a little bit of conflict there—they both really liked national security affairs. I can't remember who had that portfolio. I think Kristen may have had that portfolio, or maybe they divided up the portfolio. We'll have to ask them.

Perry: How long were they with you?

Bolten: Kristen was with me until she left for the Iraq invasion. Then shortly after that I got named the Budget Director and I took Joel with me to be my Deputy Budget Director, even then at a very young age. He served brilliantly as the Deputy Director of OMB [Office of Management and Budget]. Then when I became Chief of Staff, I wanted to keep him with me, so I brought him with me back into the Chief of Staff's office and displaced Karl Rove as the Deputy Chief of Staff for Policy, a title that Andy had given to Karl, which I thought was a mistake. We'll probably have a chance to cover that in detail. So Joel was with me the whole eight years plus the campaign; Kristen was with me just until she left for Baghdad. Then when she came back we got her the job as deputy in domestic policy and then over to the State Department as Assistant Secretary for International Affairs and eventually in the last year as Ambassador to Brussels, to the EU. So she has done a lot of interesting and really important things. Both of them have.

Perry: Where are they now?

Bolten: Kristen is at home now with an infant and a two-year-old, and Joel is the head of Facebook's D.C. office.

Riley: We appreciate your bringing them to our attention and bringing them forward.

Bolten: They are both just absolutely spectacular. They have better memories than I, and I'm keen to get them on your radar screen because you will be interviewing them about the next Republican administration.

Riley: All right. Have a good lunch.

[BREAK]

Bolten: —oral history that focused not on administrations and people but on topics, so Islamic engagement, education, Iraq study group, and faith-based.

Silverberg: Maybe we can talk about that.

Bolten: I'll be looking at particular questions. Kristen has done work with the Bush Center, with the institute.

Silverberg: With the Freedom Collection, so I know firsthand how hard it is to do interviews.

Bolten: Kristen keeps claiming it was somebody else's idea, but Kristen basically put together the Freedom Initiative for the Bush Institute.

Nelson: Is there anything about the years between your two Bush positions that would help us understand—

Bolten: Not really.

Riley: You went to London.

Bolten: Yes.

Riley: When did you first start with Goldman?

Bolten: In the fall of '93, in that I moved to London in January of '94 and stayed there until January of '99, so I did five years with Goldman Sachs in London, in the legal department, but as sort of a policy person, which was a good educational experience but not particularly interesting or informative for this process. Kind of helpful when the financial crisis came around, but I guess we'll get to that. But in December of '98 I was home in D.C. for Christmas and had agreed to get together with the chairman of Goldman to talk with him about my future. He was getting the firm ready to go public; he wanted the firm to take a more public posture. He wanted to be a more public figure, so he wanted a policy person for chief of staff. He was interested in me. I was ready to leave London, and he was interested in me coming to work directly for him.

In the meantime I got a phone call from a former Congressman who heads Verizon's D.C. office, Thomas Tauke. He served in Congress for only a few years, ran for Senate against [Thomas] Harkin, and got beat, but he knew Bush because they went to candidate school together. When did Bush run, '74?

Nelson: Seventy-eight.

Bolten: In '78 for Congress. So they were candidates for the first time in the same year and he and Bush met at candidate school. He had been tapped by Bush to be the campaign manager of

the Bush campaign. I'm guessing from the looks on your faces you had not heard of this guy. A couple of people, including Bob Zoellick—more than one person, but I remember Bob was one because he keeps claiming credit for getting me into the Bush operation, which I guess he deserves. Bob Zoellick, with whom I had worked when I was in 41's administration, because he was Baker's principal acolyte, recommended me to Tauke.

They started to think about putting together a policy staff in December of '98. The Governor had not yet made a decision whether to run, but they were thinking about it, and they had designated this guy as the guy who would be the campaign manager. He was based here in D.C. I went to see him at his Verizon office. I thought, *Oh, sure, why not*, even though I was pretty far along in my negotiation with the chairman of Goldman. We hit it off and he said, "I'd like you to go visit the Governor." I thought, *Great, I'm not doing anything.*

I went down, I had a cottage in Key West, spent New Year's there and the first few days of January, and then in early January, maybe the 4th, 5th, or 6th, flew from Miami to Austin. I'd never set foot in Texas before, other than to transit DFW (Dallas-Fort Worth). They had me set up for interviews with three people before the Governor. I stayed the night and then visited in the morning with Karl Rove at breakfast and then Karen Hughes and Joe Allbaugh. Even then you could sense they were the core of the Bush operation.

Rove I had heard of as sort of the political genius. Joe Allbaugh was the chief of staff and Karen Hughes was the communication guru. So I had nice chats with each of them. They didn't press me as hard as I thought they should have about what do you know. I really didn't know much. My campaign experience consisted of—I think during 41's initial campaign they had a group of advisors on different subjects and I was in the trade group. I think I had helped Bob Zoellick do some stuff. I can't even remember. It wasn't very substantial. It was while I was working on the Hill, so you could take time off for that. It was encouraged even.

Perry: At this time did you have a sense of Bush 43? Had you ever met him?

Bolten: Never met him. I'd heard interesting things about him. I knew he was considered one of the hopes of the Republican Party. But remember, I'd been living in the UK [United Kingdom], so I was even more remote than I otherwise would have been, but I probably would have been remote anyway. I'd just heard of him; I didn't know anything about him. I did not recall ever having met him during 41's administration, although I recall him being around occasionally in 41's White House.

Then in the afternoon it was supposed to be a half-hour interview with the Governor in the library of the mansion, which I pictured in *Dallas* terms. Kristen will remember it; you guys have probably been there. It's a small house. Is it back open again?

Nelson: I think so.

Bolten: Is it functioning as the Governor's mansion again? It had a fire. It's a little house—well, it's not little, but it's not a big house. But that is the Governor's mansion. I knew I was going to meet him in the library and I imagined this huge library with books lining the walls and ladders and things like that. It's a tiny room with some books in it. But we had a great chat. What was supposed to be a half hour ended up being about two hours, just across all kinds of issues. I was

very impressed with him, very impressed at how contrary to the small impressions I had of him as not a heavyweight intellectual, how interested he was in policy.

He seemed personally undisciplined, because he was kind of sloppy and slouching down in his chair and didn't use really precise diction or anything like that, but he was clearly very precise and disciplined in an intellectual sense, in a policy sense. I remember being immediately very impressed with him and impressed with the breadth of the issues in which he was at least interested in, and in most cases knowledgeable.

Engel: Did you get the sense at this stage that he is formulating his opinions on national issues or that was he expressing—

Bolten: Yes, he's doing both. He's expressing principles, which I admired, and also he was probing me in a way that suggested he is trying to form his views on specific issues as he is going along. He was probing me about stuff I really knew nothing about. I didn't try to mislead him about what I knew, which was smart because I subsequently found out he has the best sniffer for bullshit of anybody I've ever met.

Silverberg: Do you remember what he said about why he was considering running for President or what kind of—

Bolten: I remember I asked him that question. He talked about the culture and about education, neither set of things I knew anything about. So I was thinking to myself, *Maybe they might be interested in hiring me for a job as an international economic person*, which was my specialty, my trade background, and now I'm at Goldman and that kind of thing.

Perry: What did he say about the culture?

Bolten: He was concerned about the culture, some of the lines that we heard him use on the campaign, I don't remember specifically, but probably came out of his mouth at that point. They were clearly not just lines, they were statements of conviction about people having lost a sense of responsibility in the culture and a sense of commitment to do the right thing, not just for themselves but for everybody with whom they're associated, a sense of responsibility to kids who deserved an education. I was very impressed with his passion about that. But I was kind of surprised to be sitting there because I thought, *I have nothing to offer these people.*

He seemed to enjoy the conversation. We had a good time. I specifically remember his daughter coming in and I liked that his daughter just walked in. I'd worked for and been around a number of politicians, and they're all capable people at interacting with others, but often not good at interacting with their own families. I was really impressed. He seemed to have one of the coolest father-daughter relationships I'd ever seen. You could tell instantly. It was Jenna [Bush] who walked in. She goes, "Ah, what do you know?" They chatted about whatever she wanted; can I have the car kind of thing.

Perry: How old was she?

Bolten: This was January of '99. She was still in high school, maybe a sophomore in high school.

Perry: She was literally asking for the car?

Bolten: I don't think she was literally asking for the car, but it was something along those lines, can she go out or something. It was "Ask your mother."

In a way I was impressed intellectually with the guy I was sitting with, but I was really drawn to him as a person emotionally. I went into the interview thinking a) *They probably won't want to hire me*, and b) *Why would I give up chief of staff to the chairman of Goldman Sachs?*

Riley: Sure.

Bolten: While I was there I thought, *If they want me to work for this guy, I want to work for this guy.* We'd been there like two hours and it was getting on toward dinnertime and he said, "You have dinner plans?" I knew literally no one in Austin, Texas. I said no, and he said, "Stay for dinner. Some friends are coming over." To me when a politician says friends are coming over, it's acquaintances and supporters and that kind of thing. Sure enough, friends showed up. I think Clay [Johnson] was among them and a couple of other people. They were coming over for dinner before they went to a UT [University of Texas] basketball game. So it was a really quick dinner in the dining room. Mrs. [Laura] Bush was there. I don't know if she actually cooked, but it was something like franks and beans or something pretty plain. Everybody wolfed down their food, which I learned is the Bush habit.

Perry: Including the kids? Were the girls there?

Bolten: They were not at the dinner table. It was the Governor, Mrs. Bush, and this half-dozen friends or so. So we rushed out and we piled into a couple of SUVs [sport utility vehicles] and drove the five minutes to the arena where UT plays basketball. I was very impressed with him again, because he got out of the thing, he knew the guy at the door, he's talking to everybody. He knows their names, families. He seemed especially warm with the various people of color that he was coming in contact with. With those who were Hispanic, I recognized it as terrible Spanish, but he was very brave and able to communicate. He's chatting away in Spanish with the guy who is the custodian in whatever underground passage we were using to get to the thing. He knew the referee.

We're sitting up front enjoying the basketball game and then back home. I remember thinking, *If they want me to do anything on this campaign, I'll do it.* I was worried how I might break the news to the chairman of Goldman, and that night in my hotel room in Austin I got a call from somebody, a colleague much better plugged in at Goldman than I, who said, "The chairman has been purged." I said, "That makes it easy." [*laughter*]

So I went back to New York and had a meeting with Jon Corzine, who was the chairman, and he was very apologetic and said, "I'm sure something will work out. We'll find you another good role here in the U.S." I said, "I think I have something else that I hope works out." Then we talked about whether I thought Jon Corzine ought to go into politics, which I did, because I took him to be a very talented political person who had an interest in it. So I encouraged him to seize the window and jump through it, as I was about to do.

Then I think Joe Allbaugh called me up—no, no, no, it was the Iowa guy, Tauke.

Engel: If I can just get in here for a second with this question. It's a particular moment in your life where you are capable of making a transition, but you also go to Austin and find yourself captivated by the personality that you met there.

Bolten: Right.

Engel: Would you say another personality could have gotten you to decide before the purging of the chairman to go into politics, or was there something particular about the Governor at that time that appealed to you?

Bolten: It would have been a hard call. Absent the purging of the chairman and absent Bush's personality, it would have been a hard call for me. I started to make good money at Goldman, but at that time nobody in the ambit in the chairman of Goldman would make less than a million bucks a year. Here's a good opportunity to make myself financially secure.

In joining the Bush campaign I was committing to two years of the campaign if I survived and he survived. I calculated that Bush had about, I thought optimistically, a one-in-six chance of becoming President. He was, I think, widely considered the frontrunner for the nomination, but who knows two years before the election who is going to emerge? So I gave him optimistically a one in two chance of being a nominee.

Then I thought we were at a time of peace and prosperity, and the Democratic nominee is likely to be the Vice President. The only detriment the Democrats face at this point is the personal behavior of the President, which doesn't transfer to the Vice President. You'd have to figure whoever the Republican nominee is has no better than a one-in-three chance of becoming President. I know you're not supposed to do this with odds, but I multiplied them and came up with one in six. [*laughter*] I think that was probably realistic, a one-in-six chance of being with the guy that was going to be President. So I was not doing it because I thought—

Silverberg: Tom Tauke.

Bolten: Pronounced "talky," but spelled T-a-u-k-e. That needs to be reflected in the history. He had been selected by Bush to run the campaign. He didn't say that—he left himself some wiggle room because he said, "If he chooses to run and so on, the planning is that I will be the campaign manager." Bush had chosen Tauke because he was an experienced adult from outside. He had a lot of political experience, several terms as a Congressman, and was somebody who would bring not just a parochial Texas view.

What they apparently concluded was what Tauke and Bush and Karl Rove concluded, that there couldn't really be a Tom Tauke and a Karl Rove on the campaign and that Bush was going to rely very heavily, even if he didn't ask him to be the campaign manager, which would not have been Karl's strength anyway, that he was going to rely heavily on Rove for the strategic direction and a lot of the decision making and that wasn't a good fit with somebody like Tauke, who if he was going to be campaign manager was going to expect to be fully in charge.

So sometime along the way, in between when I met Tauke and then met Rove, Allbaugh, Hughes, and the Governor, sometime in the next few days—Tauke called me, offered me the job. I said, "What is the job?" He said it was policy director of the campaign. I'm thinking, *Really?*

You guys either have very few choices or you're not into rigorous investigation about who is qualified to be a policy director. So I figured, *What the hell, I'll try it.* There probably aren't many people who would give up their careers two years before the election and go live in Austin for relatively low pay.

Riley: It was understood that this would be in Texas.

Bolten: Absolutely. Which I endorsed. I thought that was great, just from the standpoint of what the campaign would mean. I had seen Bush 41's campaign being run out of Washington. There are all these people around who are experts, senior people, and they all have to be accommodated. I saw the dysfunction that that helped create certainly in 41's second campaign, when there were just too many people around him.

Riley: Did you talk with the Governor about his father's campaign?

Bolten: I don't remember doing that. I probably would have thought that was kind of presumptuous. I was a—

Riley: I didn't know if he had raised the issue with you.

Bolten: Maybe he did, but I don't recall.

Riley: Do you recall having any observations about the presence or absence of 41 people around the Governor?

Bolten: I don't recall discussing it, but it was clear to me that he needed to establish himself as his own person, which he did in Texas by running the Texas Rangers and building a stadium. Nationally he would need to work extra hard to be something other than his father's son. So I didn't expect to see a lot of identifiable 41 people around 43, and that was really borne out. They were clearly making a conscious calculation of taking advice from 41-type people, but trying to avoid them being publicly associated with his campaign. As it ultimately worked out on the campaign staff I think I was one of only two people who had served in 41's White House.

Riley: The other one being?

Bolten: Joe Hagin.

Riley: When you made the trip to Texas did you get any exposure to the foreign policy/Vulcan side of things at that time?

Bolten: On the first trip—

Riley: On the first trip did you—

Bolten: We may have talked about how he had a lot of advisors in mind and so on who wouldn't come to Austin but would be advisors. I think we talked a little bit about that, but no, we didn't get into that at that point. That I got subsequently from Karl Rove.

Just to wrap up on Tom Tauke: He called, he offered me the job, we negotiated my salary, my start date, everything. Then a couple of weeks—I notified Goldman. I gave up the lease on my lavish flat in Hampstead Heath and I'm packing up. I think it's ten days or two weeks before I was supposed to literally move I get an email from Tauke, the headline of which is "a glitch." To me, a glitch is two conference calls scheduled at the same time. A glitch is not, by the way, "I'm out, but I'm sure they'll be in touch with you soon." He was the only person with whom I had actually talked about this job who knew that I had been hired, who knew what my title was, who knew what the terms were, everything.

So I wait a couple of days and nothing happens. I email Tauke and say, "I haven't heard anything." He says, "Oh, yes, they'll be in touch with you soon." I still didn't hear anything. I am now days away from getting on an airplane to Austin, Texas, and I have no idea who the campaign manager is or anything. So I call Allbaugh, I guess Tauke must have identified Allbaugh as the guy who was going to—I called Allbaugh and he clearly had no idea who I was when I first called. I said, "I'm the policy guy." "Oh, yes, yes." I can tell then that Bush is in the room and he says, "It's Josh." Then I hear, "Bolten. You know, the policy guy from Goldman." I hear, "Oh, yes, yes, yes."

Joe comes back on the line and says, "Are you still coming?" I said, "That's what I was calling to ask you. I'm great to come, but I just wanted to be sure you're expecting me." "Oh, yes. When are you coming?" I said, "I'm planning to fly in next Sunday." He says, "Great, great, OK, we'll see you Monday." That was it.

They gave me, literally, the supply room in Karl Rove's office on Barton Creek, was it?

Silverberg: You had a couple of other people—you called Carol [Thompson] at some point to meet you there.

Bolten: I called my former assistant from USTR, Carol Thompson. She was my first call. She agreed just to move down and be my assistant. So she drove down. She shared the supply room with me, as did Dan Bartlett. There was a little bit of natural light in there. There were these little slits. They weren't actual windows, but they were little slits. Otherwise there was no natural light in this room where Karl literally had kept the paper and the extra desks and things like that. There were some Steelcase desks. There were two telephones. I guess this was before cell phones were really widespread. There were two landlines in there and there were three desks, one for me, one for Dan, one for Carol.

We gave one phone to Dan and Carol and I shared the other, so if there was a call for me she would pick up the phone, say, "Yes, he's here. Just a moment." She'd put it on hold and she'd literally pick up the phone and walk it over and put it on my desk and I'd pick it up. So it was pretty primitive. They were clearly not prepared to receive me or anything like that.

I went to talk to Joe about it—I didn't know anything about the policy staff of a campaign, so I figured Joe would tell me. I came in with my notepad ready. "OK, so what are my marching instructions? How many people do I get?" and that kind of thing. I found myself answering those questions to Joe. He'd go, "So what do you need?" "I need at least 15 people."

I'm sort of making it up. He was very frugal with the campaign money, also very cooperative and very supportive. So I just started to build a campaign operation built around a structure that Kristen will recognize that I think was in significant part Karl Rove's genius, which is that I knew that I needed people in Austin. Having seen what I saw in 41's often dysfunctional campaign, I knew what I needed in Austin, especially for someone who had not served at the national level before, a set of pretty young but smart, budding experts in each of the major categories that were part of the national agenda and therefore part of the campaign.

I spent a fair amount of time talking to Karl about what do you think the issues are going to be, and then using my own experience to divide up the portfolios and create a structure for a policy staff. What I was looking for was people who had anywhere from two to ten years' experience in that particular area of specialty who wouldn't be our experts but would be the staff in Austin who would be able to draw on and synthesize the much more haphazard and diffuse stuff we would get from the real experts out in the Republican policy and academic communities.

I drew that conclusion in part from Karl's genius construct of creating a network of outside policy advisors for the Governor who would simultaneously be instructors for somebody who was relatively new to a lot of these issues. They would be formulators of both campaign and governing policy and, very importantly, they would be credentialers because what the Governor was fighting at that time was a perception of being a lightweight. It's hard to overcome that even as a Governor, because two-thirds of the issues a President faces aren't really on a Governor's plate.

Karl had a brilliant construct in mind, and individuals in mind, of who would be in which category of being an advisor and a credentialer for George W. Bush. He had encouraged Bush to name three lead outside people, the process for which was already underway when they hired me. I knew coming in that they were likely to want [Condoleezza] Condi Rice to lead the foreign policy undertaking, Larry Lindsey, who had been recommended by [Allan] Al Hubbard to lead the economic outside advice, and—

Silverberg: Stephen Goldsmith.

Bolten: Yes, Stephen Goldsmith to do the "all other" category, all recommended by Al Hubbard, who is from Indianapolis and was sort of a well-known policy entrepreneur on the domestic side. That turned out to be a brilliant construct. Sounds simple speaking about it now, but the way that Karl imagined it, the way he put people into positions, he knew something about everybody. He knew something about every subject. He knew which subjects he thought were going to be important to the campaign. I was enormously, and to this day, remain enormously impressed with the kind of strategic thinking that Karl put into that campaign, not just political thinking, but policy thinking as well and recognizing how important policy was going to be to the campaign.

Silverberg: Do you remember who you hired first of the policy staff?

Bolten: I came back to Washington in either late February or early March. I think I arrived in late February, so I came back to D.C. in early March because I thought the best place to recruit staff would be from the Hill. Finding people like me five or ten years earlier who would be expert in a subject matter, who would have political chops and who would be young and poorly

paid enough to be willing to pick up and go to Austin for two years or maybe less. The whole thing could have blown up in six months.

Nelson: That would be the default setting for somebody with your background, go to the Hill. Did you run into any sort of objection, "That's the kind of stale Washington thinking we don't want; we want to find people out around the country"?

Bolten: No, I didn't run into that kind of resistance from Karl. He understood what I was trying to do, which was to build a staff of people who wouldn't drive the policy, but could manage it properly. He wasn't that worried about the backgrounds of those folks and he wasn't worried about how it would look to the outside world because he was building something bigger above it that the outside world would see, and for that he was choosing people very carefully.

Nelson: What was your relationship to be with Rice, Lindsey, and Goldsmith?

Bolten: I was their handler in effect, in Austin. They were superior to me in the sense of the policy and I tried to make sure they had a direct relationship with the Governor, but as Karl and I conceived it, it was supposed to be up to me to manage their interactions with the Governor. So I would seize time on the Governor's schedule and I would say, "OK, we're going to have a national security briefing. What topic, Condi, do you want to start with? Who do you want to bring in for it?"

Karl would be heavily involved in the decisions about the who because Karl had been involved with Condi and created the national security group. He wanted to send a particular message. It was short on 41 people and long on [Gerald] Ford and Reagan people. At Karl's behest, the Governor had made a pilgrimage much earlier on out to Stanford to see George Shultz, and Shultz had introduced him to a lot of the Hoover crowd, which is largely a Reagan crowd but also included Condi Rice. The President already hit it off with Condi. I think they met at Kennebunkport because she was a favorite of 41's, even though she was not that senior a person in 41's White House. She was a favorite of his and had a lot of direct interaction with him because he focused so heavily on the transition in Europe and the collapse of the Soviet Union.

So he had already gotten comfortable with Condi and had her in mind to lead the group, but the rest of the group was Rich Armitage and Richard Perle, and Paul Wolfowitz was a very significant player in that group. You probably have in your records somewhere the full group of Vulcans, but they were managed by a staffer whom I hired and who actually I think came up with the name "the Vulcans."

Nelson: Really.

Bolten: He was a Korean-American, like Condi originally from Birmingham, and there is a statue of Vulcan.

Silverberg: Joel Shin? He works at the Scowcroft Group.

Bolten: I hired him because he was recommended by—who was the guy that ended up servicing on the NSC [National Security Council] staff who was a Harvard professor? [Philip] Zelikow?

Silverberg: No.

Bolten: He had been at Harvard and he ended up being a senior director on the NSC staff.

Silverberg: Do you remember what area?

Bolten: I think he was sort of trans areas. I'll come up with his name eventually. Anyway, he was close to Condi. He had been Condi's boss at the NSC.

Riley: [Robert] Blackwill?

Bolten: Yes, Robert Blackwill. Bob had been Condi's boss, so she relied on him very heavily. They were the closest combo originally in the Vulcan crowd. I said to them, "I'm filling out my staff. I'm going to have a staff who will be basically your staff person in Austin, your point of contact. Do you have any recommendations?" Blackwill had a student whom he thought was terrific named Joel and he said, "He's amazing." I think he made reference to "the six-million-dollar-man," which I guess is pretty antiquated at this point. He said, "He's bionic. I'm sure if you cut his arm, you will find wires."

Anyway, he did turn out to be bionic. He was very good, and like most of the people who were managing these groups he was really good at playing a subsidiary deferential role but still making sure that the ultimate controls over policy pronouncements and decisions and process were made in Austin. It turned out to work extremely well. It was important that it was physically located in Austin where not many people could get to us.

Riley: Could I ask you something that occurs to me while you're describing this? It's consistent with your own public image, which is somebody who has what the political scientists have always called the "passion for anonymity," that you've been happy being in a staff position and allowing the process to do what it needs to do for the principals. Do you recall any instances in the campaign where you had people who didn't fit that mold, who came in and wanted to create a name for themselves that you had to corral? [*laughter*] Both of you are smiling broadly.

Bolten: Just remember the ground rules and carry on while I get a—

Silverberg: You're going to make me? Really, you want me to answer?

Bolten: Yes.

Silverberg: You take it.

Bolten: First of all, I intentionally chose people who were not inclined that way.

Riley: Not inclined to be attention grabbers.

Bolten: Yes, and again, I knew from my limited experience that campaigns don't do well with people who don't know how best to fit into the organization. My final two candidates—actually this is an interesting story. My final two candidates for the senior economic staff job I had gotten—I had gone to see a wonderful guy named Bill Hoagland who had been staff director of

the Senate Budget Committee for many years. First I said, "Bill, is there any chance you would do this?" And he said no. He had a wife and kids and all that kind of stuff. I said, "I didn't think so. Who were the three best staffers on the Republican side in the economic realm, whether it be budget or anything else?" So he gave me three names.

The two best were Marc Sumerlin, who was then on the Budget Committee staff, and Keith Hennessey, who was by then on the leader's staff. He had left the Budget Committee but he was doing economic stuff for [Trent] Lott, who was leader by then.

I offered the job to Marc Sumerlin, and he turned out to serve brilliantly in a very professional and disciplined way without trying to overshadow the big cheese principals that Larry Lindsey assembled, which included Michael Boskin. I don't remember all of them, but it was a pretty heavyweight crowd of folks that occasionally included George Shultz. It had Al Hubbard in it, Glenn Hubbard, it had the Hubbard brothers. I'm sure you have the records of who were the economic advisors. They were a heavyweight group and Marc did a brilliant job of managing them.

Nelson: When Bush was Governor surely he had a network of people who thought they were his advisors now, and I'm thinking of somebody, for example, Marvin Orlansky—

Bolten: Olasky.

Nelson: —who had branded the compassionate conservative idea. I wonder, was there any tension between the folks you're bringing in, who, like you, are basically Washington people, and the crowd of advisors and associates he had already established there in Austin?

Bolten: That's one reason why I took very junior people, so there would never be a question about your judgment being displaced by this person. This person has read your books and knows enough about your subject matter to accurately transcribe what you're trying to tell the Governor, but is not going to displace your judgment. Then it was Karl's really superb input on which players to take for the balance of which issues because I didn't know anything about it. I didn't know anything about most of the issues, truth be told, at the time I entered. So I was actually a good person to be running George W. Bush University because I was taking the class along with him.

I knew that if I understood it, he understood it. Many times if I didn't understand it, he did, but I knew that if I understood it, he did.

Silverberg: I think everyone on the policy staff was in their early 30s, except I think Robert Woodson was a little bit older—

Bolten: Maybe late 30s.

Silverberg: Austin Smythe was a little bit older, mid-30s maybe, but not much. But other than that, I think the average age was probably 31, 32.

Bolten: There were a couple in their late 20s, Sarah Youssef.

Silverberg: Yes, Sarah. So in that sense they weren't at all competing with the people who had the Governor's attention. It was also an advantage that Josh had because he didn't come with a substantive expertise. You weren't perceived to be a sort of ideological person who would undermine their—

Bolten: I couldn't be. I didn't know enough. But I was learning along with him. I thought very hard about what would I want to know, what kind of presentation would I like. So for the first six months of that campaign we ran George W. Bush University. I created something called policy time. With the scheduler I said I would like—and Joe Allbaugh would moderate it—I would say I would like three hours of policy time during these four days. They might give me an hour and a half here and an hour and a half there. Then I would reserve blocks of policy time for several weeks. Then it would be up to me to fill it. I would say to Condi, "Can you come this week or that week?" She would say, "This week." I'd say, "OK, what do you want to do? What are the subject matters?" Karl would get involved in helping pick the people who would be participants.

Engel: This is fascinating. Can you walk us through a little bit more how that development of policy and education of the Governor, of yourself, and the staff broadly on policy issues subsequently translated into policy stances and politically motivated policy stances? Because one could conceive of situations where one might in the intellectual environment of George W. Bush University come up with a particular answer that might not be the best political answer. So could you walk us through how that discussion worked out?

Bolten: A couple of things. One of the first things that Bush said to me when I got there, which I didn't fully understand at the time he said it, but I remembered it the entire way through, he said, "Remember this: I want to campaign the way I'm going to govern, and then I'm going to want to govern the way I campaigned." That was the mandate to me to make sure that everything that we advocated in the campaign was something he was prepared to do in governing, and also an understanding of the guy that turned out to be very true, which is, if he said he was going to do something, that was what he was going to do. I think he brought that approach from his time as a Governor, maybe before.

But it gave me, as a campaign policy director, a powerful and I think unusual mandate because in most campaigns I've learned it's two pretty distinct things. The policy operation of the campaign is designed to say stuff that is not inconsistent with where you are in policy, but basically people will find appealing. Then you worry about the governing mandate. He was saying we're going to make the governing mandate up front and then we're going to run on it. Then we're going to execute it.

This was very much Karl's approach and where his uniqueness as a political strategist who was also a policy wonk—in that respect he may be almost unique in American politics. His ability to do that and to have conversations with me about where he thought the policy ought to focus, where it ought to go, I think was absolutely critical to the President's success, not just as a candidate, but as a President.

I'm kind of jumping to the end of the campaign, but Kristen will remember the campaign books that we did that were books of speeches and fact sheets that we had put out during the course of

the campaign. The first hundred or 200 days of governing, all you needed was that book and it would have told you what we wanted to do, and in fact we did use that book.

Silverberg: In addition to the idea about learning a governing plan was there another argument for the detail of the policy statement, namely that he was perceived to be a policy lightweight?

Bolten: Absolutely.

Silverberg: So we wanted to put out—

Bolten: Absolutely. That was part of Karl's strategy, to make sure that he had well thought through and articulated positions on all the major issues where not necessarily the public generally, but the intelligentsia would say, even if they didn't agree with it, "That's serious. He is a serious person." That was infused throughout all of the policy operation. It has got to make sense, not just to the voters we're trying to get to, but—I don't know what better word to use than "the intelligentsia."

Silverberg: That's right.

Bolten: But at least be attractive to the Republican public intellectual crowd and be impressive to the Democratic.

Engel: Help me understand and square the circle here because focusing on foreign policy as a topic, you mentioned that there was a desire to send a different message than the previous administrations, both 41 and Clinton's. There was a desire from the beginning to bring in people who would be able to make a statement about different viewpoints than what had gone on before. Yet you're also bringing in people and trying to get them to come up with the best policy going forward. Those are not necessarily inconsistent, but they're not necessarily—

Bolten: That didn't work out very well. We struggled to find—in choosing the personnel what Karl was trying to do was say not a repeat of 41's administration. So we're identifying people with whom we're associated who resound more in Ford and Reagan than they do in Bush 41. That wasn't necessarily a policy choice. That was he's not just his dad, he's a continuation.

But on the policy side I remember the foreign policy people were always struggling with—one of the best things we came up with is, "We're not nation builders." What did we turn out to be principally doing for most of the Bush administration?

You actually got in some engagement with the foreign policy people.

Silverberg: I never thought there was an attempt to distinguish himself from his father's foreign policy on the substance. I think it was what Josh just described, which was more just setting out that he is his own man and he has his own set of advisors. But I don't remember any discussion. On the economic side there may have been a little more intention to distinguish himself.

Riley: What about the—

Nelson: I just wanted to ask if you could walk us through a roughly typical hour and a half policy time. If those people stayed around for a second hour and a half, how would it unfold?
Bolten: Typically at the Governor's mansion, maybe in the dining room, which was the only room big enough to house enough people. I think you could get 16 people around the dining table and then some chairs around, that sort of thing.

I would prepare—I meaning the policy staff—a briefing book that would include memoranda, maybe some readings, often with my own notes in front. Certainly a setup note with who is going to be here, here is what the subject is, here are the questions that are likely to be worth addressing. Here is what Condi wants to accomplish, that kind of thing. Here is the order in which we've asked people to make presentations, which of course you're free to alter.

Some of the books were pretty thick, maybe unnecessarily so. I learned to make them thinner as we went along. Not because Bush wouldn't read them, but because he would. I realized we're wasting some of his precious time. I was impressed that almost every time every page had a mark on it or something He'd been through the whole thing. He would start most of the sessions by warmly welcoming everybody, maybe a couple of personal comments, some good politician things.

They were often people he knew well, like a Martin Olasky. But often people he was meeting for the first time who were academic experts or former senior government officials whom he may have shaken hands with in his dad's White House but didn't know. So it was kind of a mix. He knew he was performing for them as much as they were performing for him. He sometimes, I thought, went a little bit overboard with that, but usually was pretty graceful about it. But the really impressive thing was he would start every session with his own introduction that didn't come from the briefing book.

He would start with his own general understanding of the broad topic and the principles that were his own that he would want to apply to this particular area. He wouldn't let people get too far into their presentations. He would start out with a question. The only one I specifically remember is when we had our first discussion. It was going to be about the military budget, the size of the military and so on. We had Dov Zakheim lined up to do a very detailed presentation, pie charts on the military budget and all this kind of stuff. I think [Donald] Rumsfeld was there and Armitage was there. [Richard B.] Cheney might have been there. It's worth looking up who was at each one of the GWB University sessions.

Bush cut the conversation off. Dov was getting up to get cranked in on the long-term procurement costs and that sort of thing and Bush says, "What do we need a military for?" You could see the stunned looks on people's faces. I could tell they didn't know whether it was an unbelievably stupid question or a very sophisticated question. They treated it like the latter and they launched into an hour-long conversation of what is the point of military might in the U.S. scheme of things.

What Bush was trying to do was form his own principles, his own perspective. He wasn't just trying to come up with what am I going to say out on the campaign trail, which is where most candidates end up because they just don't have time. We had the luxury—this was mid-1999—of

being a frontrunner far in advance of the primaries and the election. He could really train himself to be both a candidate and a President as he was going along. He was clearly doing that.

I don't remember any of the substance, but I remember it was a fascinating conversation about what is a military for from some of the best minds in the country.

Silverberg: Do you remember what led up to the Duty of Hope speech? That always struck me on the campaign as one of the most important moments. It was his first major policy address.

Bolten: Was that the one in Indianapolis?

Silverberg: Indianapolis. It carved out very early on that he was going to be a different kind of Republican, that he had an agenda that wasn't to the base, it was to struggling people in urban areas.

Bolten: That's a good question. I don't remember much of what led up to it, but I know that it was part of Karl's construct for the building campaign to present not just my father's son, but a different kind of Republican and a smart policy person who believes in limited government but believes in the power of government in limited ways, which was how he had governed as a Governor and was true to his philosophy. I don't know how it was chosen to do the Duty of Hope first, but I'm confident that it was basically Karl's decision talking with the Governor. It certainly wasn't mine. I had no idea.

I had ideas about all the policy elements, but I had no idea about the bigger picture, what we were trying to present to America and to the intelligentsia. What I do remember is what I used to do with Karl is sit down once a week, once every other week, sometimes more, with a calendar. I would have a list of all of the policy elements that we had staff and outside advisors working on.

Karl had in mind what he thought was going to be important in the campaign. He had in mind a sequencing of all of these things, which we spaced out. Usually we did it by major speech accompanied by a fact sheet. We spaced them out, rarely closer than two weeks together, often like a month apart so that there was just a continuing hum of Bush coming out with another serious policy speech accompanied by a fact sheet with outside credentialers saying that they had met with the Governor and how smart he was on these issues. By the way, you follow my advice and are doing X, X, and X. But it was a very calculated sequencing of the different issues.

I remember Karl put it first on the calendar, the Duty of Hope speech in Indianapolis, I think because he wanted to implant immediately a different kind of Republican.

Silverberg: I always thought that that compassionate conservative message was a little bit misunderstood. It eventually evolved in the media into this idea, a label you gave to anything we were willing to spend money on. So basically anything that was compassionate was in that category, but when it was first delivered it was really intended as sort of the next stage and evolution of government support. The Reagan and Bush federalism initiatives had been removing resources out of the federal government to the states. This was about taking them a step further and giving it to the actual deliverers of care, including faith-based groups.

Bolten: That's where the faith-based organization—

Silverberg: But it was a very sophisticated view of limited government, which is how do you get resources as close as possible to the people who deliver services?

Nelson: You said earlier at these sessions Bush would want to impress these folks. Was the motive there that they go back to their various networks and say, "I don't know what you've been reading, but this guy isn't stupid"?

Bolten: Exactly, and they did.

Nelson: I assume you talked with these folks and said, "Here are the ground rules." Did you tell them that these are confidential sessions? What was OK for them to go out and talk about and what was not OK for them to go out and talk about after the event?

Bolten: We asked them not to discuss the specific substance of what was in the conversation. Obviously we said, "You can feel free to say what advice you gave the Governor, but please don't say how he or anybody else reacted. But feel free to say you were here and feel free to give your impressions of what you saw and heard." Because you're right, that was a significant part of the effort. We wanted those people going out, we wanted Boskin to go back to the Hoover Institution and say at the lunch, "We ought to be paying close attention to this George W. Bush guy because he is smart and he is focused and he is our kind of Republican."

Nelson: You start out occupying a space with Dan Bartlett. I assume you were no longer occupying that same space, but are you talking with him about how do we get the word out there that Bush is a serious policy guy?

Bolten: That didn't involve a lot. That was actually more of an inside game. Dan ended up working for Karen Hughes on the communications side, so they were more concerned about how to feed the media and what sort of public statements we were making. This was an inside intelligentsia.

Engel: Did you have any instances where individuals came away with the opposite reaction than you were hoping for?

Bolten: I don't recall any. The consistent reaction—partly it was the soft bigotry of low expectations. [*laughter*]

Riley: To coin a phrase.

Bolten: But very rarely did I come away from one of those sessions with the then Governor or even with any comparable session when he was President without somebody coming up to me and saying, "Wow, he's a lot smarter than I thought."

Perry: Could we talk about that just a little bit? What is that? We've talked to others about it. Why is that the image of then the Governor and even once he is President—

Silverberg: He has a Texas accent.

Engel: I take that personally.

Silverberg: I'm from Fort Davis. He had a father who was President of the United States, so he was presumed to be sort of privileged and maybe people assumed he was spoiled. He had kind of a frat boy image from when he was younger.

Bolten: You went through as many policy conversations with him as anybody, with the possible exception of me. Would you say he was anti-intellectual?

Silverberg: No, not at all. In fact, we'll get to this later, but when I think about some of the really difficult policy decisions—stem cell was a good example—he actually loved hearing from people like Leon Kass, the bioethicist, or academics, clergy, people who would—but he also asked me and the Secret Service guys, so I actually thought he was intellectually curious. In cases like that he really soaked up advice where he could get it. So I wouldn't say anti-intellectual, I would just say not snobbish.

Bolten: Not himself anti-intellectual. Do you think he never wanted to appear to be an intellectual?

Silverberg: He did not want to appear to be an intellectual. I think that is a big part of him.

Bolten: I never understood exactly why that was.

Riley: Is it Texas? I'm from Alabama.

Silverberg: That could be part of it.

Riley: There is a certain Southern quality about not putting on airs.

Silverberg: The not putting on airs is a big part of it. I think he gets that partly from his father, who is really down to earth. I think he knows that one of his skills is his ability to relate on a personal level to people, to the average American. Maybe he didn't want to degrade that by seeming to be—what do you think?

Bolten: I agree with all of that, but I think there was also some element of contempt for the eastern intellectual effete establishment that must have been formed somewhere in his younger years.

Silverberg: Maybe aggravated in his father's Presidency.

Bolten: Very much aggravated. I remember him more than once speak very poignantly and a little bit bitterly about a remark that William Sloane Coffin made to him when he was an undergraduate at Yale.

Nelson: About his father?

Bolten: About his father.

Engel: Could you say it for the record?

Bolten: I don't remember exactly what it was, but it was something like when his dad got beat William Sloane Coffin went out of his way to tell him that the better man won.

Riley: He repeats it in *Decision Points*.

Bolten: The story is in there.

Riley: Yes.

Bolten: I heard him mention that a couple of times privately. He is a fierce defender of his family and especially his father. I think he really resented the intellectual snobbism and superiority that came with being a grandee at Yale pronouncing on who was intellectually superior.

Engel: Just to push this up with your own relationships with then Governor and then the President, at the risk of being offensive, you're both well educated—

Riley: How did you clear the bar?

Engel: At one point—we're trying to get a sense of the private conversations versus the public image. So if the President is presenting an image of anti-intellectualism or not putting on airs, part of which is distancing from the east coast elite, presuming Stanford is part of the east coast elite, you both come from the east coast elite. Academically your credentials are right there.

Bolten: So are his.

Engel: Does this ever come up in conversation? Justice Thomas just made a joke about this in the Supreme Court yesterday or two days ago. Does that kind of conversation occur between the President and yourselves?

Silverberg: I can't remember an example. Again, he loved the CEA [Council of Economic Advisers] guys or when you would bring in the HHS [Health and Human Services] wonks, actually. He likes wonks, actually. I never thought it was that he was uncomfortable with intellectuals.

Bolten: But he was very uncomfortable with intellectual superiority. I think people who behaved in a superior fashion did not flourish around him.

Silverberg: That's really true.

Riley: Did that get probed when you first met with him? He sees you have a Princeton degree. Does he go into—

Bolten: He's got Harvard and Yale degrees. Why should he be impressed with Princeton? Often when FBI [Federal Bureau of Investigation] [Robert] Mueller would come in, who is also Princeton alum, he would tease us about being from Princeton, but it was more in the old boy way.

Perry: The chronology of his campaign biography comes out in ’99, I think.

Bolten: [redacted]

Perry: [redacted]

Bolten: [redacted]

Riley: [redacted]

Bolten: [redacted]

Silverberg: [redacted]

Bolten: [redacted] Karen was forever grateful to me because I had a really capable young Texas kid who had just graduated from Stanford named Steve Garrison who was on my staff. He was just sort of a utility infielder. Karen said, “No, no, I’ll write it.” She was going to go home for three weeks and just write a book, which I found stunning. Nobody else seemed to think it was quite as stunning as I did, but I thought, *This can’t be.* Everybody else treated it as yes, Karen is going to be out most of the time for three weeks and she’s going to write this book, which we kept very quiet. It’s supposed to be from the candidate himself.

So I said, “You’re probably really going to want to have an assistant while you do this.” She said, “You think so? What would an assistant do?” I said, “Trust me, you’re going to want an assistant and I’m going to give you Steven Garrison for a month.” So I did. He turned out to be, obviously, invaluable. You all have read probably at some point something substantial, and know that writing a book in three weeks is a preposterous undertaking.

Perry: Mike can do it.

Nelson: Getting to nicknames. Was that all affectionate, or was there a shadow to it? Was there a putting in place?

Bolten: It was mostly affectionate, but it was also I think a mnemonic. He would pick a characteristic of somebody that he was sort of struck by and then seize on it. I hope tomorrow you'll meet Joel Kaplan, who has a very angular face. For some reason the President just called him "angular dude." So it was an affectionate name, kind of insulting, but it showed that the President was paying attention to him, knew he was a smart guy. "Well, what does angular dude say?"

Kristen, on the other hand, was known as "sweet Kristen," clearly reflecting that he didn't know her that well. I'm paraphrasing something I said at Kristen's engagement party some years ago.

Nelson: And you were?

Bolten: I was "Yosh," kind of a corruption of Josh. I don't think I was interesting enough to produce something like "turd blossom" or something. But it's a way of connecting and feeling something personal that is really just between 43 and you. He would pick something that nobody else would.

Silverberg: I don't think it was about putting the staff in its place. In fact, staff wanted a nickname. It was a sign of affection.

Riley: In your experience with him, particularly during the campaign, did you pick up any blind spots that he had? I mean, as a staffer I'm sure one of the things that you're trying to do is help protect the candidate from his own weakness or inefficiencies. I'm wondering if in this orbit there were things that you picked up on—

Bolten: There must have been, although I probably developed a blind spot.

Riley: That's why we have her here.

Bolten: Kristen, what comes to mind? I'm sure there were. I thought the world of him when I first met him; I thought the world of him after two years on the campaign. I thought even more highly of him after eight years in the White House, so I'm obviously just an enormous fan, but he is not a perfect man.

Silverberg: No. I can't remember something that jumps out.

Bolten: In the policy scene, where I interacted with him most, I almost always liked his judgment. Occasionally I disagreed with it. But he always seemed to have a really good and thoughtful reason, and very often I thought, *I disagree with that, but he is more likely to be right than I.* That's what you want in a leader, someone whose judgment you trust. Jumping ahead to my tenure as Chief of Staff, what I consistently tried to do as Chief of Staff across the whole range of issues was to make it possible for the President to be President, which I thought coming in, and it was confirmed for me when I came in, had been partially denied him in the foreign policy area.

Silverberg: [redacted]

Bolten: [redacted]

Silverberg: [redacted]

Riley: One other generic question—

Bolten: That's not a blind spot, that's a vision spot.

Silverberg: Yes.

Riley: Something may come to you later, and if it does, feel free to interject. What about your own education process? You had said that as a Presidential candidate he had to deal with a lot of things that he didn't deal with as Governor, but he did have a record as a Governor. How did you go about educating yourself about what was already on the record as a way of accounting for—

Bolten: That was important.

Silverberg: We had three Texas people—

Bolten: Who were custodians of the Texas record?

Silverberg: Yes, Steven was the primary custodian. Deirdre [Delisi] and [Duncan] Hunter were the other Texans. Then of course Margaret was available.

Bolten: Margaret Spellings didn't actually work for the campaign, but of all the set of people in the Bush universe she was around the most, so she was a regular. I always ran stuff by her. We made a concerted effort—I made a certain person or group of people custodians of the Texas record. It was their responsibility whenever any policy issue was going on to jump up and say, "Wait a minute, here is what he said as a candidate. Here is what he did in governing."

Silverberg: We took that with us to Washington. We were still talking on Patients' Bill of Rights; we were talking Texas record.

Bolten: Yes, we have briefing books full of stuff.

Silverberg: We had a section in every fact sheet that was Texas record. It was very deliberate. Actually, we were proud of his record and very deliberate about saying here's where we're

going—there were vulnerabilities in the record, obviously. We knew we were going to get hit on capital punishment issues.

Bolten: But truth be told, and it's probably true of most Governors, it's a pretty damn thin record. I mean, not on the issues that are really presented to a Governor, but a Governor doesn't face the kinds of issues that a President does. So it might be relevant on at most a third, probably fewer, of the issues you face as President.

Silverberg: I thought it was relevant partly in the sense of tone. He had a very good relationship obviously with his Democratic Lieutenant Governor Bob Bullock. It fit his campaign message that he was going to be bipartisan in office. So I thought it was relevant in that sense. But we had to defend plenty of parts.

If you remember, one of the low points of the campaign was that NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People) ad, you remember that?

Bolten: Hated that.

Riley: What was the issue there?

Silverberg: Basically, I think it had some horrific image, maybe a lynching or something like that.

Bolten: I think it was like chains being drawn behind a pickup truck.

Silverberg: That's right.

Bolten: What was the name of the guy who was killed?

Nelson: Matthew Shepard?

Bolten: No, that was another guy. It was actually disturbingly near my old home.

Nelson: James Byrd [Jr.]

Silverberg: Yes, in Jasper, Texas. We spent plenty of time on the campaign defending.

Bolten: But a lot of that was tonal in approach and all that kind of stuff. We did spend a lot of time talking about his success as a bipartisan—and his relationship with Bullock. I think that was one of the most moving parts of the President's book, talking about Bullock. He really felt that; that was not artificial generated sentiment for purposes of the book. But two things I learned early on in the campaign about Bush were that you could really, really make him mad. I rarely saw him mad, but you could make him really mad if you put him in a position either of inconsistency with something he had said or done before, or making a factual mistake.

Kristen will remember—this was throughout his term—you fact-checked everything. You never allowed the speechwriters to overstate. If there were 480 people who successfully went through a program and the speechwriter said 500, you had to write in "nearly 500" or 480 or something

like that. He would get really mad about—a way staff could really disserve him was by giving him a fact that was wrong or not correcting him when he was wrong.

Nelson: Could you make the transition for us from Bush having all these sessions in Austin and getting immersed in all the policy issues and when that starts getting translated into his public face as a candidate? When does that start? Was your role affected at that point?

Bolten: Yes. For the first six months I'm running the university.

Nelson: The first six months are what?

Bolten: Roughly February through August, something like that. But in June is his first foray out with the Duty of Hope speech in Indianapolis. We're still running the university concurrently with that. But from that point on we're cranking out some major policy speech, at least one a month, often more. Maybe we take a break for Christmas or something. It is all on that calendar that Karl and I work on every couple of weeks. Being kind of low tech, I think we had big things that you write on with a marker that you can erase.

Silverberg: Whiteboard?

Bolten: Kind of like a whiteboard, but plastic, so it wasn't even as nice as a whiteboard, the plastic ones that you could wipe off. I had them in my office. We would sit in my office and move stuff around. Then if there was a visitor coming, my assistant, Carol, would take huge pieces of butcher paper and tape them over the calendar because that was our crown jewel. Here's what we're going to be talking about—we're going to be talking Social Security in Rancho Cucamonga this day, that kind of thing. So that is when—it's not until the summer. He announces—when does he announce? In June or something like that. It's in your excellent chronology. By the way, this is a terrific briefing book.

Silverberg: It really was.

Riley: June 12.

Bolten: I would bet that the Duty of Hope speech is just a few days after that. Anyway, for purposes of your interviews you probably ought to get hold of a copy of the policy book, which was first published in July of 2000, and then an update was published in August or September.

Silverberg: I was there.

Bolten: You have down here December 1, the $483 billion tax plan. I'm pretty sure there would have been an education speech before that because Karl would have wanted the sequence faith-based, education, and then the Republican red meat of a big tax cut. That would have been the speech in which Mike Gerson, brilliant speechwriter, coined "soft bigotry of low expectations."

Nelson: There is a luxury of doing things through most of those first six, eight, ten months, but then the Iowa caucus is on the calendar and it's the first week of—

Bolten: I'll tell you what was before that.

Nelson: The Ames straw poll.

Bolten: Yes.

Nelson: So how is it that the thorough and methodical and somewhat process policy development, giving major policy speeches, what happens to that when he's got to be out there doing six, eight appearances a day?

Bolten: It's a little harder to fight for policy time, but I still did, and we handled it the same way.

Silverberg: I think it stayed that way up until the convention. At some point in the campaign, I don't remember the exact date, it turned into giant rallies and racing across the country. The policy apparatus really was answering questions, but that was late.

Bolten: I would say postconvention is when the policy apparatus just sort of shut down and went into campaign mode. We kept it going as a parallel operation up until the convention, and we're still doing it in speeches. The last speech, I think, was an energy speech and it is in July or August.

Silverberg: Where they called for carbon regulation.

Bolten: Which nobody noticed until the Vice President noticed it. We may get to that, but going back to the "I want to campaign the way I want to govern and I want to govern the way I campaigned." The President stuck to that really firmly and I think successfully. In almost everything he campaigned on he either succeeded in doing or tried pretty hard to do. There was only one overt reversal that I know of, which is what Kristen was referring to. It's in one of those late energy speeches. With the acquiescence of, among others, the Edison Electric Institute, we had put the Governor in favor of market mechanisms to be applied to the carbon emissions in the power industry, i.e. we were basically saying we were receptive to cap and trade in the power industry.

We made the mistake, for which I took responsibility, of referring to carbon as a pollutant, which it then was not. The Supreme Court has subsequently said it is. The Vice President early on in the Bush administration seized on that. The EPA [Environmental Protection Agency] administrator, Christy Todd Whitman, was taking that and like everything else that was the policy campaigned on, we had a fact sheet from the speech. She was taking that to start to advance an agenda of looking at a real cap-and-trade mechanism in the power industry, which I believed in and thought was the right policy, although I was nowhere near expert on it, like most things.

The Vice President then seized on the mistake of having called carbon a pollutant and with the President undermined the whole policy notion and got the President to reverse on that. He actually got the President to do it in a rare policy process foul-up. He got him to reverse before the President had even heard from either the EPA administrator or the Secretary of State. Colin Powell had wanted to weigh in on it and missed his chance. That was a flub by me as the Deputy Chief of Staff for Policy in not controlling that process better, abetted by our not having in place a CEQ [Council of Environmental Quality] chairman at that point.

Silverberg: We used to talk on the campaign about having five big domestic priorities, No Child Left Behind, the taxes, Social Security, Medicare, and faith-based. We proceeded with every one of them. Social Security we didn't get, obviously, and faith-based we didn't get the full enchilada. We got a big piece of it. But he came into office with No Child Left Behind and the tax plan immediately and Medicare immediately thereafter.

Bolten: Medicare was a year or so behind. Social Security was the first thing out of the box in the second term.

Silverberg: Maybe but for the war that might have been the first term.

Riley: I was going to ask about the—

Bolten: By the way, I would be curious to know from historians if there has ever been a more policy-heavy campaign. Kristen just described it. Those are five big policy, actual things, an agenda that you would pursue, mostly legislative. There was a lot more to the campaign than that. Certainly in the two campaigns since then there has been nothing like it.

Engel: Woodrow Wilson in 1912 was very policy oriented, but that's a different beast, obviously.

Bolten: That's saying something if you have to go back that far. I assume Roosevelt.

Engel: No, actually Roosevelt was not, that's what is interesting.

Bolten: He governed but without saying what he was going to do?

Engel: He said nothing.

Riley: He just had to run *against*, which is a lot of what happens, you're just running against. If you're running against you don't have to lay out much of a policy agenda; you're just not going to do what you've been doing.

I was going to ask you about the point, or was there a point, at which the policy shop becomes during the campaign more reactive than proactive. You clearly were proactive early on, but is there some juncture at which the heating up of the competition, first for the nomination and then for the general election, overwhelms the proactive part so that you are then having to react to the charges that are being thrown at you?

Bolten: It doesn't get completely overwhelmed, like Kristen said, until after the convention. It's proactive exclusively for several months while you're sort of in the quiet period and then it's a mix all the way through.

Silverberg: There are two blips along the way. In the debate period, the entire policy apparatus turns to basically helping to support his debate prep, being prepared to respond to attacks during the debate, so for that Josh had hired—

Nelson: The Gore debate or the Republican primary debates?

Silverberg: I wasn't there for the Republican primary debates. I don't know how you staffed those.

Bolten: We staffed them in a similar way, but without the intensity of the general election debates.

Silverberg: For the general election debate Josh hired Gary Edson to come down and I was Gary's underling.

Riley: You guys keep sharing these knowing smiles that call for an explanation.

Silverberg: Gary is an extremely smart, very talented, very intense individual. I remember being at the campaign at three in the morning one night when we were putting together the books. It was Gary and I think Steven Garrison and Josh and I.

Bolten: Which books?

Silverberg: The debate prep books. Gary was explaining to me that I was using the three-hole punch incorrectly. I looked up at Josh as if to remind him that I was a volunteer.

Bolten: That's important to say. Kristen was a very worthy volunteer, although had you been paid it would not have been a whole lot more.

Silverberg: There were two of us. Joel Kaplan was the other one who showed up after our clerkships, but in any event he was very good at—because the debate prep process was about taking these complicated policy concepts and boiling them down into language that the Governor would feel comfortable using and incorporating all the advice from the political and communication shops. So it was a very difficult job. I thought he did great.

Bolten: The policy apparatus spent a lot of time on that. We were in parallel still rolling out the occasional major policy, so some portion of the apparatus would be preparing for that. Then you did have to be able to respond when Karen calls from the road and says, "They're going to ask him about what he thinks—"

Silverberg: Yucca Mountain.

Bolten: Yes, Yucca Mountain. I'm thinking, *What the hell is Yucca Mountain?* So you've got to be able to— [*snapping fingers*] I was the only one who had an office. Fairly early on we moved out of the closet of Karl's office. Once he announced we had an actual campaign—he announced an exploratory committee—we had an actual campaign office on Congress Avenue, at 30 Congress, I think.

Silverberg: Yes.

Bolten: We had most of a floor, mostly with cubicles, but I had an actual office. I'd sit there in that office and I knew if the Governor was out on the trail and exposed to the press that I would need to be near my phone. I made everybody on the staff be near their phone. Karen would get on the line and say, "Yucca Mountain." I hopefully would be astute enough to know I had to go

to our energy person, but I had it down to literally one and a half seconds and I could have that person conferenced in. I would listen to every conversation and participate. So the information would be going out, what had he said before, what is he likely to say. "Uh-oh, we don't know. I'll get hold of whoever our nuclear advisor is and get back to you as soon as he can, but play for time."

Nelson: Kristen, did you say there were two times?

Silverberg: The convention. That isn't one of the trickier parts policy-wise, but still you have to manage the platform development process. So the individual policy advisors became basically the staff of the platform.

Bolten: I had assigned one of our staffers who showed up somewhat late, was a pretty good generalist named Tim Adams, who subsequently served as Under Secretary for International—I had assigned him to be responsible for the platform. So he had to keep track of all of the issues.

Silverberg: And Steven Garrison and I did speech review.

Nelson: What about when the campaign hits New Hampshire and loses? Does that cause any difference in the way you're doing your jobs?

Bolten: It was certainly a dramatic moment. From Austin I had the impression that we're rolling, we're unstoppable here. Then it was a pretty big shock when Bush just didn't get beat in New Hampshire, he got humiliated.

Nelson: He got beat bad.

Bolten: In New Hampshire all of a sudden it felt like the wheels were coming off. That's certainly the way the press was treating it. I remember that—I was back home in Austin as I usually was. I really only could afford to go out on the trail after the convention, get out and go to rallies and that kind of thing. So I was back in Austin. I think I was probably the most senior person left back in Austin. Maybe Joe Allbaugh was there. In a way Joe was sort of above the staff, he was managing the staff, but I was the one who would have had most contact with just ordinary staffers.

I got a call from Bush and he said, "How's everybody doing there?" First I expressed condolence and hoped we hadn't let him down in any way. He said no, absolutely not. He said, "How's everybody doing there?" I said, "You know, especially the young ones, they're kind of in shock." He said, "You go around to each of them individually and you tell them I said that this was on me, nobody let me down. I've let the rest of the team down. I'm not planning to change anybody in any position," which is sort of the normal thing to do in a campaign, that is, shake stuff up, get a new campaign manager, new strategist, new communicator, something like that. He said, "I'm not planning to change anything. You've all been doing a fabulous job. I need to do a better job. You go around and tell everybody individually that I said that. You tell them I said we're going to win, I know it."

So I went around individually and delivered the message that Bush had sent. It was exactly the right reaction from a leader in a tough spot. I'm sure we made plenty of mistakes leading up to

that, but the morale rebounded pretty quickly. We were nervous going into South Carolina, very nervous. But somehow we got the mojo back and that was that.

Riley: Did opposition research report to you too?

Bolten: Yes, Tim Morrison and Bill Clark.

Riley: Tell us about the development of that. Are there tradecraft things about oppo [opposition research] that we ought to know about?

Bolten: I'm sure there are. I sort of treated them like they were the undertakers. [*laughter*] I didn't really want to know, but they had this particular craft and they loved it. I don't know, where did I find Tim Morrison? Where would he have been? I found him early. He was one of my first hires. He may have even been the first one to show up.

Silverberg: I think he had Hill experience, but I don't remember.

Bolten: I hired him early on.

Riley: Is he doing spec work on who the likely opposition is supposed to be, or is he doing general policy work at that point?

Bolten: When he first showed up he's doing general policy work because I don't have staff. He's not a specialist. As soon as I start building up a specialist staff I move him to the oppo side and he brings in a guy named Bill Clark he's buddies with. They have this space near the back of the cubes. They're just cackling away. They also were on that weird Atkins diet. Remember that? You can eat meat. You just can't eat any carbohydrates.

Perry: Lots of protein.

Bolten: But you can eat as much protein and fat as you want. So they used to have ribs and bunless cheeseburgers, trays of them delivered back there. It was just so appropriate because there was always this smell of roasting meat coming from back in the oppo corner. [*laughter*] I never quite plumbed the mysteries of what they did. It's a lot of computer work. It's a lot of bouncing around ideas. It's not just the information, it's finding that one little factoid that is just devastating to your opponent, or finding that one photo, finding John Kerry windsurfing or something like that.

Engel: I wonder if we can ask both of you about your personal, emotional experience at this time. You've spent upward of a year and a half at this point, in your case doing hard-core policy analysis and writing. Then one gets to South Carolina, and the general public's understanding of that moment in the campaign is that is one where the campaign turns on some relatively ugly issues. How does that make you feel back in Austin? None of the issues that seem to generate a lot of public angst, whether they came from the campaign or not, had anything to do with policy. There were rumors about John McCain's children, so on and so forth. Does that have a reaction for the staff of policy folks back in Austin who think that the campaign is turning on something that we didn't—

Bolten: That had nothing to do with policy?

Engel: Yes.

Bolten: For me, that wasn't much of a surprise. I remember being very angry because I was and remain convinced that we didn't have anything to do with the ugly stuff that was being said about McCain. But there are folks on the McCain side who don't believe that, will never believe that. I remember being angry about it, but I wasn't particularly surprised that nobody cared about where we stood on the inflator in Social Security benefits. A lot of that we were doing a) to prepare for governing; b) to credential; and c) to make sure that Bush appeared to be the serious heavyweight that he actually turned out to be.

Silverberg: I don't—

Bolten: You weren't there for South Carolina.

Silverberg: I wasn't there for South Carolina, but I don't remember any period where the policy people seemed particularly deflated or surprised by the politics.

Bolten: Because we were irrelevant. We were irrelevant to the politics.

Silverberg: I think for the campaign they actually felt very relevant and were.

Bolten: I never felt irrelevant. Even when it was the heat of the campaign, everybody in the policy shop had to be on their toes to answer that one zinger press question.

Riley: Sure.

Bolten: Bush was under particular scrutiny because he couldn't make a factual policy mistake.

Nelson: I was going to say there was that one incident which got a tremendous amount of attention at the time where he was asked the name of world leaders—

Bolten: Karen Hughes tried to throw me under the bus.

Riley: Did she?

Bolten: She did, which I was happy to be, if I could help.

Nelson: So what happened after that occurred?

Bolten: She just called me up and she said, "Do you know the name of the President of Pakistan?" I actually did know the name but I couldn't produce it at that moment. So I said no. She said, "OK, thanks," click. She took me as the standard smart policy guy. So she went around telling the press, "Josh Bolten didn't know who the President of Pakistan is." [*laughter*] So I'm thinking, *Thanks a lot Karen, that's really—*

Nelson: So there was no sense at all that you guys shouldn't allow the President to be asked any question you can't answer? What is all this policy time for if he can't answer—

Bolten: We knew we were in a particularly deep hole on foreign policy. So we did spend a fair amount of time in tutorials with the Vulcans, where it wasn't just policy formulation, it was here's who the players are, here's what the countries are, all that kind of stuff. Bush is not an idiot, he's pretty sophisticated, but what Governor in America can tell you where Bangladesh is in relation to Pakistan and how it got there?

Nelson: So it did affect the nature of your briefings afterward?

Bolten: Yes. I don't know if we had started it and I'm not sure if it was in response to that, but something else that we did that we didn't do in any other area was we started—because the policy sessions—we might have one or two a week, but you wouldn't be putting the Governor in the presence of his senior advisors in a particular area more than once a month at the most. We started a weekly conference call on Sunday nights that would just be Condi, and then she I think very wisely brought in Paul Wolfowitz, so it would be Condi and Paul Wolfowitz, me and the Governor and Joel Shin I would think. They would just run through what was happening that week. That would lead to a broader tutorial. It was designed to prevent that kind of thing. This guy was just being a jerk to try to produce a factoid that the President should know that Bush wouldn't know.

But more normally what would happen is that the conflict would just be heating up somewhere. It wasn't really front-page news yet, but you could predict that a reporter might say, "What do you think about the French support in Mali?" And so on Sunday nights Condi would have—and Paul would have been astute enough to say, "Here's what is going on in Mali," and then they would talk about it. If you're asked, here is the kind of thing I think you should say. Paul would try a formulation and Condi would refine it. Then the Governor would say, "Here's what I would like to say," and he would try it out. They'd say yes or—

Silverberg: We had a morning staff meeting in Josh's office where people would say, "Here's something that needs to go."

Bolten: Yes, I had a staff meeting every morning in my office. Joe Allbaugh kept walking by and seeing everybody standing in my office. How big was the staff meeting, 15 or 20?

Silverberg: Yes.

Bolten: He'd see everybody standing in my relatively small office. He kept saying, "Gosh, I can reserve the conference room for you." I'd say, "No, I have that meeting standing for a reason." We could normally get through it in 15 minutes. People were standing up and they didn't pontificate. They would say, "French intervention in Mali," Blah, blah, blah. So I'd have that in my head. I'd know whether to alert Karen, that kind of thing.

Silverberg: Can I go back to the earlier question about if you feel irrelevant? I always thought it would have been impossible to feel irrelevant as a policy person because the Governor's principal political advisor was obsessed with policy. This continued throughout the administration. It really was the focal point of a lot of what Karl was doing on top of it. That created frustrations later because Karl had this insatiable appetite for new policy.

Bolten: Oh, yes.

Silverberg: So really well into the administration we would get these requests like, "We need a new policy initiative. Needs to be big and bold. By the way, don't spend any money." [*laughter*] We would have to dig into our—

Bolten: And it did have to be something new. We'd say, "We have all of these, stuff we haven't done yet." "Yes, but we've already announced those. We need to announce something new."

Riley: My question was about something mundane. Did you find a need to prompt the Governor occasionally on something like the price of milk or the price of a gallon of gasoline? You're nodding your head yes.

Bolten: Sure. His dad famously didn't know. He'd get a briefing book for every place he was going to be. The briefing book would include his remarks; it would include who is going to be greeting him.

Silverberg: Local facts.

Bolten: Yes, there would be local facts, and there would always be at the local supermarket, here is what a gallon of milk costs and a dozen eggs and something else, a loaf of bread I think, something like that and gasoline. It was local.

Silverberg: For much of the campaign, and here's the tax family.

Bolten: Oh, yes, I forgot the tax family.

Riley: What's the tax family?

Bolten: I totally forgot about that.

Silverberg: That was a great thing we did. As part of highlighting the benefit to average families of the President's tax proposal we would take an average family of four and say, "Based on the President's proposals, here is how much they would save," and then have the family greet him at the plane. It was very effective and it took a lot of time.

Bolten: It took a huge amount of time because—that was kind of a minor plus every time we did that. If we ever got it wrong and it was somebody who was evading their taxes—there's a million ways where you could get it wrong. Or they would be a Nazi sympathizer or something. It had to be vetted 10 million different ways. Who did that? Garrison did it.

Silverberg: Marc did a lot of it, but I'm not—

Bolten: And Hunter.

Riley: I owe you guys a break since we're going to run through the whole afternoon. Why don't we take five minutes and refresh ourselves?

Bolten: I hope we finally get to the White House.

Silverberg: We haven't talked about the recount.

Bolten: I'll let Kristen talk about the recount.

Nelson: We could do the rest of the interview standing. [*laughter*]

[BREAK]

Riley: All right, we've got everybody here? You guys are good until five o'clock, right? Let me ask one more question and then we'll try to get onto the election quickly. That is, you had mentioned the convention. There are occasions where convention platforms do not mesh perfectly with the candidate's own policy preferences for one reason or another. Was that the case in 2000, or did the platform look the way you wanted it to look?

Bolten: What do you think, Kristen?

Silverberg: I remember we were pleased with the results, but I don't think there was ever an expectation that it had to completely reflect the Governor's position. I think we went in thinking we had to avoid some major departures, but it is a party document, not a candidate document.

Bolten: We didn't face the fissures that later surfaced in the party ideologically. We faced some of that, but there wasn't the sense of need for ideological purity. I sent Tim in with the major instruction do no harm, just get it done, get out of town, as limited controversy as possible. We won't consider ourselves bound by this document. Just try and make it as consistent with Bush policy as possible.

Riley: Did the Governor take the position that this is the party's platform, not mine, or was it close enough that he really didn't have an issue with claiming it?

Silverberg: I don't ever remember feeling an awkwardness in office, *Oh, this is a departure from the party platform*. I don't ever remember that.

Bolten: We tried to talk about it as little as possible. I'm sure it was not completely consistent with his views. It probably had more extreme pro-life views than he actually held, would be my guess. But I don't remember the specifics. I think we would have gone out of our way to avoid drawing any attention to it, including having him make a statement.

Riley: Very good.

Nelson: A question about the fall debates. After the first debate, did you feel like you had done your job getting him prepared and that it showed up in the way he did in that debate, or did you make some midcourse corrections?

Silverberg: I remember 2004 so much better.

Bolten: Yes, that was a searing experience. I was nervous every time. Those things are just hard. If you haven't been President for a while, it's hard to prepare yourself to deal with every single issue that might come up and talk about it coherently. I felt we had done a pretty good job of debate preparation. Bush was fairly diligent about preparation, but I thought he had not been diligent enough.

Perry: Why did you think that?

Bolten: I thought he had not spent enough time with all the issues, going over each answer and getting something that he personally was comfortable with. We had a good construct in our debate preparation and our debate book. I think our debate book still stands up pretty well.

Perry: You felt he had gone through it all?

Bolten: He definitely had gone through it.

Perry: You mean practicing oral responses?

Bolten: I felt he should have practiced more. He didn't like to practice. He didn't mind reading, but he didn't like to practice.

Perry: Did someone play Gore?

Bolten: Yes, it was Judd Gregg. One time when Judd Gregg couldn't make it, it was Rob Portman who—I think this has been reported somewhere, certainly by Rob it has been reported, but it's true. This was before the town hall debate between Bush and Gore. The standard format now is one of the debates is with the candidates not seated behind a desk but seated on stools or something like that and with questions coming from a town hall kind of format.

We were practicing in the dining room at the mansion and had two stools set up and a few staffers in the room. I don't know if you were there or not.

Silverberg: I wasn't, but it has been reported.

Bolten: All of a sudden in the middle of one of Bush's answers Rob gets up and gets into Bush's space and Bush stops and goes, "What are you doing?" He said, "I'm being Gore."

Nelson: Which he was.

Bolten: And Bush says, "He'd never do anything like that." Everybody is booing and hissing at Portman and Bush is going, "Oh, come on, he's not that big of a doofus." Portman says, "I'm just saying, I've watched him on tape and he likes to use his size. He's a big man. He likes to use his size to physically intimidate somebody he is debating with. So if he has a chance to walk over into your space, I think he will." So he said, "Oh, yes, sure, he's not that big of an idiot."

Sure enough in the debate, and I think it was a very important moment in the campaign, Gore walks over to Bush in the town hall debate. Bush is a little bit surprised but he is sort of

bemused. I think he's thinking of Portman and what a doofus Portman is because the look on Bush's face is great. It's like, *What kind of idiot are you? Why are you invading my space?*

Nelson: After the first debate, he clearly suffered for his personal manner and appearance. But the general verdict on Bush was that he didn't have a whole lot to say, or if he had it he didn't say it really well. You may disagree with that verdict, but I wonder after that first debate did he feel that he had done well? Did you feel like he had done well? Did anything happen differently in preparation for the second?

Bolten: Refresh me on where was it and what was the topic?

Nelson: That was the domestic policy debate. I don't know where it was, but they were standing behind podiums. This is where Gore maybe not realizing that his mic was on—

Bolten: Did all the sighing.

Riley: Grimacing.

Silverberg: The sighing was the first debate?

Riley: Eye rolling.

Silverberg: I remember after the sighing debate feeling pretty good actually that Gore had seemed so unlikable.

Bolten: It's hard to watch that kind of thing objectively.

Silverberg: I don't remember. We were so focused, at least the staff, on the rapid response and rebutting everything that Gore said that was incorrect, I don't really remember how I—

Bolten: It's funny, in the policy world watching a debate you're not that focused on what you should be, which is the overall impression the candidate is giving. You're focused on the technical accuracy of the answer and—*Gore said they had done 400 and they'd only done 350. He's lying*. So you get into that mode and you miss the big picture. I'm guessing that along with Kristen and the others I was probably less likely to miss the big picture, but I probably missed it too coming out of that debate. It's a tough thing, because I never thought Bush was very good in that kind of format.

Perry: Did you fear that Gore would be better just simply because he had eight years as Vice President? He obviously had personality issues, but did you just think, *We're up against a pretty good debater and this will be difficult*.

Bolten: Oh, yes.

Perry: Did you also think, though, *This is our chance to bring together everything that we've been doing* for this year and a half that you had been onboard, which was to have George W. Bush be able to deal with the material but also show his likability?

Bolten: I guess I was more scared. I just remember being very nervous before each debate. I also knew that that wasn't our guy's strength. I rarely came away, even from a practice, thinking, *Wow, he's good at that,* because the truth is he wasn't. I hope he doesn't read this part. That just wasn't his strength. If you got him in a policy conversation around the table with the advisors he was fabulous, but if you got him behind a podium, even on a good day, it was never—

Perry: That's our question that we often ask, what is that about him that made him not be at his best in that kind of setting, whether it's a debate or a news conference?

Silverberg: After the election this was the subject of long conversations because we would have some kinds of events, kind of a private policy conversation where he would be so relaxed and fluent and confident, and then the second they brought the TV cameras in at the top or the bottom of the meeting he adopted a different kind of language. So there was a lot of thinking early on about how do we take this private person and put him in public, which is why we ended up coming up with this concept of policy conversations where the President would go around the country and have kind of average Americans sitting on the stage with him. Then he'd have an informal conversation and draw out from them why they supported the administration's foreign proposal or Medicare proposal or whatever it was.

I think part of it was this idea going back to Josh's point about the President not wanting to be caught in a mistake. Part of it was him being less relaxed and overly cautious or scripted. Something makes him hesitate a little bit.

Nelson: Self-conscious?

Silverberg: Is it self-conscious or—

Bolten: I wouldn't have said self-conscious, sort of self-censoring in a way.

Silverberg: It's a completely different kind of—

Bolten: Most people's censored self is better than their real self and Bush's is not.

Silverberg: That was a communications issue. Part of the thinking well into office is how do we take this person and put that private person in front of the camera?

Perry: So what you saw was the presence of the camera did change him.

Silverberg: Yes.

Bolten: Oh, yes.

Perry: It wasn't that what was being transmitted was different. It was that he actually changed in front of the camera when it was introduced.

Bolten: Yes, and I came into the Chief of Staff job saying it was going to be one of my principal objectives never to have somebody say to me again after they had a private meeting with Bush "Wow, he's great, why don't we see that on TV?" It just got worse while I was Chief of Staff.

Partly because people had formed their opinion by 2006. We just never figured out how to address that. Maybe it was a staff failing.

Perry: Did he talk about it? Did you talk about it with him?

Bolten: Karen Hughes was probably the best one at talking to him about it, but she would usually be talking about a specific problem. I don't think I would have been super uncomfortable talking to him about it, but I never liked to talk to him about a problem without having a view of what the solution was, or at least what the options were. I never knew what to suggest. I could never quite put my finger on what the problem was. I don't know if you had any better ideas, but much better communicators than I were never quite able to do that.

The debate preps were hard. I think we prepared really good stuff. Karen Hughes came up with a great construct; I think it was Karen who came up with it, not me. She came up with a great construct for the briefing papers, or for the format of an answer. I can't remember exactly what the construct was, but the first thing you say is, whatever the subject, this is my main point about this subject. So there are two lines about that. Then there is an attack on the opponent's record in this respect. Then there is a specific answer to the question. Then step back again to the big picture. I can't remember if that was exactly it, but something like that.

Silverberg: There was a formula—

Bolten: There was a formula to it and it worked really well for Bush. I think it would work well for almost anybody who isn't Bill Clinton, who sort of naturally produces remarkable sound bites. It was just a great construct for answering questions. So in the briefing book we would have a section on Social Security, but then it would be boiled down to a page or a page and a half of here are the key points, here's the attack on your opponent on this issue. Here's the response to what they're likely to say about you, and here are some specific points. I can't remember exactly what the format was, but it was a very effective format. I thought the debate prep briefing books were among the better work that the policy staff did. We worked hard on them. Those are big books.

Silverberg: Perfectly hole-punched.

Bolten: Perfectly hole-punched and perfectly purloined in a little-noticed but very astonishing episode in the middle of the campaign. Were you in Austin for that?

Silverberg: They showed up in Al Gore's campaign. They were mailed to the Gore campaign.

Bolten: They were mailed to the guys who were doing debate prep for Gore. I'm trying to remember the names. It was a Congressman or a former Congressman.

Nelson: Tom Downey?

Bolten: Tom Downey. That's who it was.

Silverberg: But they thought it was a dirty trick, didn't they?

Bolten: Yes, they thought originally—

Silverberg: They thought maybe Karl had sent it to them to try to entrap them.

Bolten: That we were disinformationing them. I had gone to some lengths to try to keep good control of these documents. A lot of people felt like they were entitled to the briefing books, so I think we needed 15 or 20 of them. Mrs. Bush had to have one, the President had to have one, the personal aide had to have one as a backup. Karl needed one, Karen needed one, Judd Gregg needed one, that kind of thing. So when you get around to it it's about 15 or 20 books.

Mark McKinnon had one. He was our chief media guy. It showed up in Downey's office in a plain envelope without any notes or anything on it, but mailed from Austin, Texas. We had numbered the books, but had not been sophisticated enough to put some kind of hidden marker on everybody's page so we could identify whose copy it was that had gotten out. Nobody was missing their book. They were all accounted for, all that kind of stuff. So all sorts of theories were flying around.

The FBI interviewed me. Downey and this other guy, by the way, did the right thing. They contacted the FBI right away and everybody was very cooperative about it. They said that once they realized what it was, they did not read it. They returned it, the FBI took custody of it, and so on. They traced back to which post office it was mailed from and at what time. They reviewed the cameras. It showed Mark McKinnon's nanny who had been with his family for a decade mailing a package. He defended her vigorously saying she had been with him all this time. He had some pants from LL Bean, which she was returning for him, which she was. So that was the package she was mailing. But as it ultimately turned out she did mail the pants but she also mailed the book, which she had photocopied. I can't remember what the reason was, but it was one of the truly bizarre episodes.

Nelson: On her own initiative?

Bolten: Apparently. I think she actually may have done a little bit of jail time. I can't remember what happened to her.

Perry: So after the debates, what is your sense of where you are coming up to Election Day?

Bolten: I think we're winning and Karl tells us we're winning. Certainly by no means a done deal. We're all nervous. On Election Day I take my crew—I know there's really nothing to do on Election Day but sit around and listen for some of the results of the exit polls. I take my crew bowling with Bo Derek, which most of the men thought was a big treat. You remember that?

Silverberg: Very well.

Bolten: It was raining, a torrential downpour. When we got back to the office in late afternoon we're expecting everyone to be—and everyone was in shock and very glum because the exit polls were showing us losing.

Silverberg: I thought it would be wrapped up by the time we left the bowling alley. We got out—I think it was Pennsylvania—somebody said something was still outstanding. I thought, *That's strange, because Karl said on TV this morning that we were going to—*

Bolten: We all believed in Karl. I still believe in Karl. I think he's right about Ohio.

Silverberg: We all sat around the TV near Josh's space, basically sat there watching. Oh, at one point we went out to a party, remember down at the Driskill?

Bolten: Across the river.

Silverberg: Yes, across the river. Then we went back and watched the TV and watched the back-and-forth until they finally said, "OK, it's time to go to the big party by the capitol."

Bolten: I remember being in—Karl's office was just around the corner from mine. He was one of the other few people who had an actual office. He is there with a yellow pad and he's on the phone. "What about the ninth precinct?" Amazingly he knows all the counties in Florida and the precincts and he's getting reports in. When CNN [Cable News Network] first called Florida for Gore, he's absolutely apoplectic. He is outraged, beside himself. Not just because he thinks that's wrong, but because the polls haven't closed in the western panhandle, which is Bush territory. He'll now say that he is pretty sure that cost us maybe tens of thousands of votes.

So he's on the phone. He's screaming at some CNN producer or something and they pull them back. Numbers are coming in. I remember being in this very crowded office, all eyes on Karl, people talking and shouting out numbers. He's like, "We're close. He's taking a precinct. That's our precinct." All of a sudden CNN comes up, I guess it was CNN, calls Florida for Bush. Everybody erupts in applause and I just caught Karl's eyes and he's looking at his pad and he's going—I'm looking at him and he went just like that, but everybody streams out of his office.

Riley: He looks like he's not sure, just so the transcript will pick it up.

Bolten: He's not sure and he's wondering why CNN called this. But OK, and everybody is celebrating. Everybody streams out of the office to go—we're at Third and Congress and the platform is set up at the north end of Congress. What is that, about 8th or 9th maybe?

Silverberg: Yes.

Bolten: Somewhere up Congress in front of the State House. So everybody is streaming up there to go celebrate and party and greet the victorious President.

Silverberg: We start waiting.

Bolten: Yes. I hang behind because I'm thinking—I saw Karl's eyebrows. I'm wondering about that. I actually never went out there. Everybody is waiting and waiting.

Silverberg: In the rain. Finally Don Evans comes out to say that he has had this call from Gore saying that he's withdrawn his concession. So we all stumble back in the rain, back to the office.

I remember walking in and seeing the lawyers on the computer looking up Florida recount. Kevin Martin and Mike Meece, Michael Toner.

Perry: The recount law?

Silverberg: Yes, what are recount rules. So at some point they say go home and get some sleep. They say we're going to have work to do tomorrow morning. Then about three o'clock I got a call to be at the airport at five.

Bolten: At three A.M.

Silverberg: I got a call to be at the airport at five A.M.

Bolten: You had probably gotten home at about two.

Riley: Who called you?

Silverberg: It must have been Kevin Martin or one of the lawyers. I was on the first plane out, which left at 5:00, and then there was another one that left at 5:20 or something. We all had our designated assignments. I was Broward Country that day. I remember getting on the plane. It was Ken Mehlman and Brian Noyes, I think.

Engel: Whose plane was it?

Silverberg: I think it was Don Evans's. Thankfully there were a bunch of planes sitting at the Austin airport.

Bolten: Yes, everybody came to party.

Silverberg: I remember getting on the plane and saying, "OK, who knows the Florida recount rules?" I look around and everybody gives me a blank stare. We all fall asleep for two hours and then wake up and go to figure it out on the ground.

Perry: Where did the plane go?

Silverberg: I can't remember where we landed, but we all had our own—

Perry: You scattered around?

Silverberg: We scattered. Two of us went off to Broward, some went to Palm Beach. I went to Broward and they did the automatic recount and we picked up a vote, so I sort of thought of this as easy.

Riley: One vote?

Silverberg: One vote, which was fine. So I left a message saying, "OK, we're wrapping up here. Maybe we can all get together for dinner before we head back."

Riley: You're responsible.

Silverberg: I am. Six weeks later my friend Mike was still playing that voice mail message laughing. Then I went back to Palm Beach to meet that group. That's where it was clear this was going to be a much longer deal. In the automatic recount they went down several hundred votes and then that started along.

Engel: When you're on the plane and then you're on the ground and you're going into that first day, what did you think you were going to do? Were you there just to watch? Were you going to intervene in some way?

Silverberg: The first group that went out was mostly lawyers and a few political people. Our job was just to make sure that the process was fair, to get to these places and defend the campaign's interests. I thought that was what we were going to do. It evolved. I don't remember how many days later we were still in Palm Beach. I remember Jesse Jackson showed up with this huge crowd of people rallying. That was the first instance to me that this was going to be partly a legal battle and partly a communications battle and that we were ill-equipped on the communications side.

I remember coming back to Josh very upset saying we needed communicators. In fact, he put Bob Zoellick on the phone.

Bolten: I did.

Silverberg: Bob Zoellick was helping Secretary Baker, who was running the show. I remember I was so upset I yelled at Josh and Bob Zoellick that we needed a communicator.

Riley: We must have responded to make sure that we did.

Perry: Who was giving you your marching orders?

Silverberg: We didn't really have—I was calling Josh to update, but at that point we were making it up. There were separate groups and Ken Mehlman was the lead of our little group, but we didn't know we had the butterfly ballot issues. There was a law firm helping with that. But at that point we were just figuring it out as we went along. John Bolton showed up a little while later and he was my teammate for recount purposes.

Perry: And Josh, what were you doing? You were still back in Austin?

Bolten: I stayed in Austin for a couple of days and then flew out with Secretary Baker and basically became his liaison to the Bush apparatus. Baker got his gang of Zoellick and [Margaret] Tutwiler back together. I just became part of that gang.

Riley: Were you around when they were trying to scheme out who they ought to get to head up the effort, in other words when the decision was being taken that Baker was the guy that they ought to send in?

Bolten: I wasn't. That decision was taken pretty quickly, I think.

Silverberg: What about the Tallahassee strategy discussions? There were lots of questions about what position do we take on recounts at different points, what's our litigation position.

Perry: At that point was Ted Olson already on the case?

Bolten: Ted Olson was involved, but he was not in Tallahassee. I think he was on the telephone, as I recall. George Terwilliger [III] was there, John Roberts was there.

Silverberg: [redacted]

Bolten: [redacted]

Riley: Who was orchestrating all this from Texas? Who had been the principal organizer for the effort, or was there one?

Bolten: The locus shifted to Tallahassee, so Baker became the chief of staff of that operation. I became the communicator between Baker and what was our campaign apparatus. Folks like Kristen and John Bridgeland and others would report in to me and I took it upon myself to make sure that Joe Allbaugh and Andy Card, who at that point knew that if this was going to be the President, he was supposed to be the Chief of Staff.

Riley: Right.

Bolten: So I took it upon myself to make sure that they were informed and I would tell Baker and the folks in Texas when I thought it was going to be necessary to have a conversation, but Bush was fairly hands off.

Riley: That's what I thought.

Bolten: There wasn't a whole lot he could do. Certainly he wasn't going to be in a good position to evaluate what is the likelihood if we pursue a preliminary injunction in the state court of prevailing on the issue of irreparable harm.

Riley: But that gets to the core of what I'm asking about, which is you have to do something unprecedented here. You have to create a response to a situation that a mere few hours before you'd never even conceived could possibly happen. I'm trying to get a picture drawn of how you craft that response and what does the organization look like that emerges from this, whether it's formally drawn or does it just kind of congeal out of the clusters of responses that are being made?

Silverberg: There are two different things happening. There was the kind of Tallahassee legal and the larger strategy questions, and then there was all the on-the-ground stuff that was happening in each of these disputed counties.

Riley: But that ignores Austin. There's nothing going on in Austin?

Silverberg: In the disputed counties—

Bolten: The Governor isn't even in Austin at that point.

Riley: He's on the ranch?

Bolten: Yes.

Silverberg: My sense was that it was much more deliberative in Tallahassee. In the counties everybody was just making it up. So you had your canvassing board and you had these teams deciding how aggressive they were going to be on fighting different issues. So for example in Palm Beach we had had a debate about whether we are going to push for whether we are OK with the countywide recount or whether we wanted to limit it to specific precincts. As far as I remember we decided that—it was very disorganized.

Bolten: There's probably no way anybody from Tallahassee could have helped you make that decision.

Silverberg: No, no, I think that's right.

Bolten: It was pretty organic. Chaotic is not the right word for almost anything associated with Bush. For some reason there is rarely chaos anywhere around him, in part because he doesn't tolerate it.

Riley: Sure.

Bolten: But it was kind of haphazard how the decision-making structures grew up and how different people ended up in different places. They just showed up. There was nobody formally credentialing Kristen as our representative in blah-blah, we just knew she was.

Silverberg: For what it was, it was actually very organized because somehow these thousands of Republican lawyers showed up in Florida and adopted shifts to monitor the recount. We had an office and phone lines and computers somehow. We had conference calls. We had this legal structure in Tallahassee. So somehow in a matter of a week basically all this stuff popped up, but still it—

Bolten: I think Kristen is right. What is remarkable about it is how it wasn't well organized, but it's remarkable how well organized it was. The operation out of Tallahassee, which was at the RNC [Republican National Committee] headquarters there, we basically just took over their offices. I think Baker and I lived in a little garden apartment condo across the street. It was remarkable how well run that was, and typical for Bush, we had a structure in which everybody

knew who was ultimately in charge so that if you really had to get some kind of decision making, you took it to Jim Baker. Then if he thought he needed to take it to Bush—

Nelson: Whose idea was it to have Baker do what he did?

Bolten: I don't know; I think it is entirely plausible it was Bush. I know Bush had and has enormous respect for Jim Baker, who is one of the great figures of modern American politics and probably the best Chief of Staff in history. But if he had intentionally kept him at a distance during the campaign because he was his dad's guy, I think he had enormous respect for his judgment, and this was a perfect situation into which to throw him.

Engel: Looking back now, you've got 13 years of hindsight on this issue and obviously a lot of things happened in the interim, but you're on the ground in the county, you're in Tallahassee. The communications network is going back and forth, the Supreme Court is involved. Looking back now, what do you think actually mattered in this chaotic period? Was it actually individual votes on the ground? Was it the lawyering that occurred in the state capital? Was it a conjunction of the media and the communications effort? What made the decision go the way it did?

Silverberg: All of it mattered, because if we had dipped below the Gore count before going to either the Florida state courts or the Supreme Court, that would have mattered. So actually the fact that there were a bunch of people sitting there saying, "That's not a Gore vote, that's a Bush vote," or "That's a vote you have to throw out," that mattered. The fact that we had a communications strategy of making the case, and then obviously the litigation strategy was essential.

Bolten: That was a tough call to go to the Supreme Court. I was against it. I thought, *Boy, there are conservatives on the Court but—*

Silverberg: Equal protection claim.

Bolten: Why would conservatives intervene in what is clearly a political question?

Perry: In the state.

Bolten: In a state matter.

Nelson: How did you think then that Bush would win, if not through the courts?

Bolten: I thought we were going to have to need to let the recount continue and just hope for the best, but Ted Olson and I think Terwilliger and the other real experts were confident that they had a compelling argument for the Court and they were right.

Nelson: Do you remember any thought being given to, since the legislature and the Governor, never mind the fact that he was the Presidential candidate's brother, Republicans, having them in effect claim the right to cast Florida's electoral votes and throw out the vote?

Bolten: I remember that being a theory, but it didn't sound very plausible to me at the time. It didn't sound like the kind of thing that would be a comfortable place for the country to land; throw out everybody's vote and let the President's brother decide.

Nelson: [John Ellis] Jeb Bush's name hasn't been mentioned all day, but I wonder, did the fact that the Governor of Florida was George W. Bush's brother make any difference at all in the Florida recount controversy?

Bolten: I would have thought it would have made much more difference than it apparently did, but I don't recall many, if any, particulars in which it was helpful that the Governor was the candidate's brother. Do you recall anything? Katherine Harris, the Republican secretary of state, was on our side.

Riley: Right.

Silverberg: The state court was on their side. Do you think it affected the campaign's assumption about how strong our position was in Florida? I always wondered about that, whether the fact that we were overconfident that we were going to win the state because—

Bolten: You mean originally going in?

Silverberg: Yes.

Bolten: We thought we were going to win the state. That was part of Karl's calculation. So it may have contributed to that, yes. I'm not sure. I think Karl was probably right several days before the election when he said that Bush would have won, not a going-away victory but a clear victory. Karl today would attribute it in part to the revelation of the drunk-driving conviction, which he says didn't change many people's minds but caused a lot of our natural base to stay home.

Silverberg: Was there discussion about preemptively leaking that?

Bolten: I knew about it earlier and I knew that I was one of few who knew about it.

Riley: How did you come by the information?

Bolten: I don't remember. I imagine that Karl or Karen or somebody told me about it sort of prophylactically. I remember saying, "Can we pick a time to burst this blister?" Because you're certainly not going to want it to burst at an inopportune moment. I didn't participate in this discussion and probably wouldn't have participated in this kind of discussion, but that would have been a private discussion probably among 43, Laura, Karl, and Karen. I think 43 was pretty adamant that he did not want it coming out.

I never particularly liked his explanation that he didn't want his daughters to know about this, but I think he said the same thing in private that he said in public. I never thought that was a good reason not to let it out earlier. In retrospect, clearly it would have been better to have found a good time to let it out. When you're in the midst of a campaign, there aren't many good times for that kind of thing. There probably must have been a moment after the nomination was

secured when the country wasn't paying much attention, before the campaign really geared up, to let it get out and try to deal with it, but we missed that opportunity.

Perry: On the other side in the Florida dispute was a man you mentioned this morning as someone you greatly admire, Warren Christopher.

Perry: Christopher, yes.

Perry: Can you talk about that? Just having someone you so admire leading the team on the other side, but also both of you as lawyers, what mistakes do you think they made, if any? Do you think they made them in terms of litigation strategy or their communications approach or anything in the court system?

Bolten: Wow, I have no idea about the latter. My recollection of it is sort of a fog of war. The whole episode is a fog of war. As to Chris, the only thing I remember is as I said, I've always had a high regard for Christopher, but I remember one remark, I remember watching Baker prepare for one press thing. He has this habit—he takes a statement—the desk is clear. He takes the statement that has been drafted up. He will talk it back and forth with Margaret Tutwiler and then she would get it typed up. He is drawing lines and boxes and the entire statement is like a puzzle with lines and stage directions for him. But he is going through it very carefully, sort of word-by-word. He seems to be indicating where his pauses are, but very determinedly and slowly. He is very calm. Everybody else is freaking out. He's going to go on in five minutes. He is very calmly sitting there.

I remember seeing him go on and thinking, *He is so good at that. He is the best person on the planet at this kind of thing. He has got exactly the right kind of tone; he is using exactly the right words to say exactly the right thing.*

Then we saw Christopher come on and he looks terrible. I don't know if his health was poor at that point or not, but it's just not his kind of thing. It's just a different kind of skill. I remember somebody in the room where I was watching saying, "Gosh, if Warren Christopher were alive to see this." That image stuck with me the entire time that we had this, both elder statesmen. I don't think there was that much difference in age between them, Chris probably a little bit older. But these two elder statesmen and we had the really good one, the guy who looked like he was careful, prudent, cautious but alive, and this other guy who looked literally like a cadaver. I remember being so grateful for Baker at that point.

Engel: Let me ask this question and ask you to put on your most philosophical caps. Do you think, at the time, you're both working 24 hours a day on this problem, did the Bush campaign win and did Bush become President because you won the election or because you won the postelection?

Bolten: Is the question did we actually win?

Engel: Or could you have lost it—two questions, I guess. Did you actually win, and do you think poor jobs afterward would have allowed Gore to have claimed the electoral votes?

Silverberg: I think we actually won. There was this journalist recount at some point later.

Engel: If the *New York Times* confirmed Bush won.

Silverberg: I expect they were confused. The butterfly ballot was confusing. I suspect there were voters who checked the wrong box. That happened in New Mexico and all over the country. I think there probably were voters who checked the wrong box, but on the ballots cast, I think we won the election.

Bolten: I think that's probably right. Who knows? I think Bush probably did actually win that vote. But in answer to your other question, I think it could have been lost by bad decision making in Tallahassee, including if the President had listened to me and not gone to the Supreme Court. It could be that the ongoing count—

Riley: Did you tell the President that was your advice?

Bolten: I was on the conference call with Ted Olson and others. I forget who was with me, but I was among those saying this does not sound right to me to go to the Supreme Court. So the President had an actual decision to make, listen to me or listen to Ted Olson, and he chose the right one. I said at the time I wouldn't listen to me about this, I would listen to Ted Olson, who knows a lot more about this than I do, but here is what my instinct is. Bush always appreciated that kind of advice. He liked making decisions like that.

Riley: You had just come from the Court, right?

Silverberg: I had.

Riley: Did you have a sense in any way from your inside perch about how this would get perceived?

Silverberg: I was closer to Josh's position. I thought we were going to have a really hard time with those arguments in front of that Court. I mean, I thought they would be tempted by our arguments because what was happening in the state court was clearly going to be a political decision and I think they would know if they didn't intervene they were basically saying that the fact that there were more Democrats on the Florida Supreme Court was going to decide the election. They were going to feel uncomfortable with that, but they were going to have to weigh that discomfort against constitutional theory that was a little bit of a departure—

Bolten: I think we actually had to win that case. We couldn't have a draw in that case because then the Supreme Court would have turned Bush down. So he made the right call.

Perry: Where were you on that cold December night in Washington when the case came down?

Silverberg: I was here. You were still in Tallahassee.

Bolten: Actually, instead of coming back to D.C. I went to Austin, so I was in Austin monitoring the news as it came in and I think I was the person who confirmed for Bush that he won. Somebody had told me he had had won, maybe Baker or maybe Olson had said he had won. Then he called me to say, "What does that mean? They say I won, but what does that mean?" I said, "I think that means you won the election."

Engel: What was his reaction?

Bolten: It was kind of muted. "OK, just checking."

Perry: Did you call him Mr. President?

Bolten: I don't remember. Probably.

Riley: If you're focused solely on this, are you not spending any time thinking about transitions at this point?

Bolten: I had dispatched a couple of people to Washington to work with the Vice President because I knew I would be responsible for the policy transition. So I had dispatched the guy that Kristen mentioned, Gary Edson, to come here and start setting stuff up. The Vice President had set up a sort of ramp transition operation over in Virginia, McLean, somewhere near his home. He had some offices there. We couldn't get access to the GSA [General Services Administration] space.

Nelson: Can you back up a little bit? Were you involved in any way in the Vice Presidential selection process?

Bolten: No, nobody was except for Karl Rove.

Silverberg: Maybe this was something you submitted to Karl, but at one point you had a short list of candidates.

Bolten: Oh, yes. The Governor assembled his senior staff. There were about six or eight of us in the room when he was getting near a decision. He went around the room and asked everybody for their recommendation. Nobody gave Cheney. Nobody even knew Cheney was a possibility.

Engel: Was Cheney on that list that was circulated?

Bolten: No.

Perry: Who was your choice?

Engel: Who else was on the list?

Bolten: You know, I'm embarrassed to say—I shouldn't say I'm embarrassed to say. I think I was in favor of either or both Chuck Hagel or Jack Danforth, both of whom I knew something about, and I worked not directly for, but for Danforth when I served on the Hill.

Silverberg: Did you have some out-of-the-box ideas?

Bolten: I don't remember, why? Tell me.

Silverberg: Can I say?

Bolten: Yes.

Silverberg: I remember you had an out-of-the-box thought about Joe Lieberman.

Bolten: Really? Even at the time I was thinking, *Joe Lieberman?*

Silverberg: I think you were advancing him as an out-of-the-box idea. I think you were saying, "If you want to think creatively, here is a guy from the other side."

Bolten: I always had huge regard for Joe Lieberman.

Silverberg: I did too.

Bolten: Who were you pushing me to recommend? I think you knew that I was going to be in a session with the Governor talking about the Vice President.

Silverberg: I honestly can't remember. I remember the discussions, but I can't remember who my preference was. It will come to me. Joel might remember.

Bolten: Pete Domenici was on the list, there were like 10, but his health was kind of an impediment by then.

Engel: Do you remember your reaction to learning the news that it was Cheney?

Silverberg: I remember thinking, *Oh, that's a good choice. I didn't think about that.*

Bolten: I remember being surprised.

Silverberg: I thought it was good because the negatives the campaign was worried about, the son of a former President, somebody who was perceived to be a policy lightweight. Cheney gave this sense of gravitas and Washington experience. He was a credentialer. He had a national security background.

Bolten: I liked it, but I had a very parochial reaction immediately. How are we going to—who vetted this guy? I knew we were relying on Cheney and Liz Cheney to do the vetting, and thinking, *Liz Cheney vetted her dad? That just can't have gone well.* Sure enough we had this stuff, nothing here, nothing here. You find out he had some crazy votes as a Congressman. What were they?

Silverberg: I don't remember.

Bolten: I'm thinking from the policy person's point of view we're going to have to explain these votes. They said no, no, good record, conservative, nothing particularly controversial, and then there were just some completely wacky things that were hard to explain.

Nelson: Did you integrate his campaign into the policy operation?

Bolten: Yes, I took this guy Tim Adams I mentioned, whom I had tasked with the platform and had planned long in advance to basically parachute some of my own staff directly into the Cheney staff—

Nelson: Or whoever it would be?

Bolten: Yes, whoever the Vice President was going to be. I didn't know it was going to be Cheney, but we had plans in place. I told Tim, "You're going to be the policy office's liaison to the Vice President," which I thought jived well with his responsibility for the platform because doing the platform he had had to follow the whole panoply of issues. He had to know something about everything in our policy book. Then I also took Joel Kaplan, whom I hope you'll meet tomorrow, and thought he would be a good fit. He was doing other stuff in the campaign; I can't remember what. But I said, "When the Vice President comes around, you're going to be on there, particularly because Tim is going to be tied up with the platform at least through the convention. You're going to be the traveling guy."

He wasn't deeply integrated into the campaign staff; he had only been there a few months, but he knew everybody, and everybody knew him. He was liked and respected. So he knew who to call to find out—that was the most important thing to me, which is the natural instinct of a Vice President's operation is going to be, "OK, so we're being asked about Social Security. What do we think about Social Security?" You can't do that. It's got to be what has Bush said and what does he think about Social Security. So you just have to know to make that phone call, get the talking points, and so on. They were very good about it.

Silverberg: To comment about your earlier question about whether Josh was thinking about the transition, some of that work had been done even before the election. I think you and Joe had already done some work on the structure of the White House.

Riley: Is that right?

Bolten: Yes.

Riley: What were you coming up with?

Bolten: We had had conversations with Andy Card. A lot of it was because we were ironically the only three people with any White House experience involved in the entire operation. But Joe had been 41's personal aide and then scheduler. Andy had been Deputy Chief of Staff. I had been the guy in the little office upstairs outside of legislative affairs. We were pretty well agreed that we needed to avoid the dysfunctions that afflicted 41's operation, which wasn't deeply dysfunctional, but a lot of the planning we did was to decide to prevent any of those problems out of the box.

Silverberg: Which meant downgrading Cabinet Affairs.

Bolten: Oh, yes.

Silverberg: Principally, that was a big one, forming a domestic and economy policy structure that reflected the National Security Council apparatus, but this idea of using policy councils, incorporating the Cabinet that way through the policy councils rather than through Cabinet Affairs.

Bolten: All correct, all in aid of something I mentioned earlier this morning before Kristen was here, which was that we wanted to ensure that every issue had a home and only a single home. Part of the confusion that was created in 41's administration was that the Cabinet Affairs office basically ran in parallel to the other policy shops in the White House. So we had agreed early on, I don't know if it was before the Florida recount or possibly could have been after, but there wasn't a whole lot of time after. We went in very well prepared to say the Cabinet Affairs office is going to be downgraded.

[redacted]

Riley: [redacted]

Bolten: [redacted]

Silverberg: [redacted]

Bolten: [redacted]

Silverberg: At some point there you divided up the policy councils, so between DPC [Domestic Policy Council] and NEC [National Economic Council]—and I can't remember exactly when that happened, but there isn't any easy way to divide those. You remember DPC had health care issues that went through Senate Health Committee and NEC had health care issues that went through the Senate Finance Committee. NEC had transportation issues if it flew or went on rails, but DPC had transportation issues. Anyway, there were some—

Bolten: There were some weird—I think you and Joel participated in that division, so that must have been later.

Silverberg: That must have been later.

Bolten: That was part of the role that I took on as Deputy Chief of Staff, which is I'm the arbiter of turf. The important thing is not who gets it, because it can be a jump ball, but we're not going to have a dispute about it.

Riley: I'm mindful of the time, we're very short, and also that we're not going to have you back, at least for this. We hope maybe in some other iteration.

Bolten: Can I suggest something I'd like Kristen to go on to, which is to talk a little bit about the President's foreign assistance and development programs, particularly in the Millennium Challenge, how far—and the malaria initiative in which Kristen was intimately involved. You recently read an article or you got an article that covered it pretty well.

Silverberg: I did. You want me to do that?

Riley: Just take off.

Bolten: Are you all focused on that very much?

Riley: We're focused on that as a piece of the overall puzzle. I don't know whether it is going to be one of the main issues here. The fact is that we haven't talked with a lot of people thus far in the project for whom this would be a major piece of their portfolio. I'm sure Michael Gerson, when we talked with him way back it was a piece of the discussion there and bits and pieces elsewhere.

Bolten: Probably Condi as well.

Riley: But not anything on an isolated basis.

Silverberg: I guess starting with PEPFAR [President's Emergency Plan for AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome) Relief].

Bolten: Start with MCC [Millennium Challenge Corporation].

Silverberg: Start with MCC?

Bolten: Actually, even before that was the Prevention of Mother-to-Child Transmission initiative.

Silverberg: MC—the administration in connection with the G8 meeting in Monterey, Mexico, which would have been 2002, had negotiated what was really a very big success in terms of getting the G8 to adopt the Bush administration's philosophy of development aid, which among other things relied very heavily on a sense of country ownership. You needed to have the conditions in place in a country to make foreign aid effective, and that included everything from rule of law, anticorruption measures, a government that was prepared to basically adopt the difficult reforms that could help its economy grow by inviting trade and private sector funds.

Basically, as part of this package the administration—and this was Gary Edson, the author of the debate books, whom I mentioned earlier—led this effort to come up with a large initiative that would, I think, reflect this new Monterey consensus. So the MCC was designed basically to be a special pool of funds that was available only to countries that could meet our standard on all of these issues.

I guess I might think of it as a very large pilot project, a way that we could demonstrate on the ground that this way of doing development was more effective. I think that was—

Bolten: Say a word about why you think Bush was interested in that. I have my own theories of it, but you—

Silverberg: I'm not sure. I think on the one hand, there was this one theme that ran, to me, throughout my—domestic policy issues, our initiatives for children of prisoners or drug and alcohol addiction or PEPFAR or MCC was the President's commitment to human dignity, this idea that you didn't write people off, that there weren't people who were beyond hope. I felt like the development, especially PEPFAR, but the development program very much fed that partly religious conviction for him that we had a responsibility to help countries in need, that we couldn't think there were hopeless cases in the world.

PEPFAR I think particularly was a part of this kind of human dignity agenda because it was designed to treat people who are infected with HIV/AIDS [Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome]. We had lots and lots of alternatives for an AIDS initiative. We could have done a big prevention initiative based around vaccine development, but instead what we took to him was this idea of treating people who were already infected, who were literally on their deathbeds, who weren't supporting their families, who weren't going to work.

I think there was something that really appealed to him about the idea that we could offer hope to people who the rest of the world had written off.

Bolten: I agree with that completely. Let me go back for a second to the MCC, the Millennium Challenge, which came first, and add the footnote that I think Bush was grappling with the dilemma of a Republican who was not inclined to spend more money, who believed most of Republican dogma about foreign assistance being wasted and that we weren't actually helping people with this money, but who did want to help and very much took to heart what I think Colin Powell and Condi Rice were telling him about Africa generally, which is that the U.S. both morally and politically cannot and should not write the continent off.

I think that he was searching for some mechanism by which he could change traditional foreign assistance and make it effective, therefore make it worthy of taxpayer dollars. In the Millennium Challenge I think he found that.

Silverberg: And make it more effective. There is a vulnerability that the U.S. has under any administration in these international settings because many, especially the European governments, and all of the recipient countries, have promoted this UN standard that countries should spend 0.7 of their GDP [gross domestic product] on foreign aid. For the U.S. this is an awkward standard because so much of our foreign aid is private flows, not official development assistance. So for the U.S., and especially for a Republican administration, the argument is always that focusing on official development assistance misses the picture because really what we're trying to do is get private financing to these countries, which always dwarfs official development assistance.

So MCC really in assistance minds gets to the core of the problem, which is how do you create a country that would be attractive to private sources of finance? So anyway, that was the origin of that.

PEPFAR, and Mother-to-Child and MCC, I can't remember which came first.

Bolten: They were pretty close.

Silverberg: Mother-to-Child I think was June 2001. The President gave a speech at the White House announcing this Mother-to-Child initiative basically to provide antiretroviral treatment to prevent transmission and at the same time announced a founding contribution to the global fund for HIV/AIDS. After that meeting the people involved in that initiative—

Bolten: Did we create the global fund? Was that a U.S. initiative?

Silverberg: No, we made the founding contribution, but the discussions of it had preceded our administration. So we came out of that meeting and Josh had asked Gary Edson, who had helped create the Mother-to-Child, who ran that process; Tony Fauci, who is the head of the NIH [National Institutes of Health] National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases—

Bolten: Remarkably, still in the same job; great character by the way, one of the modern American heroes.

Silverberg: Absolutely. Anyway, back to his office and had said, as has been reported, "Basically this is a good start, but we need to do something more ambitious on HIV/AIDS, and let's see if we can think of something that could actually be a game changer." Then said to Dr. Fauci, "Could you go back and think very broadly about an initiative? For now don't worry about the budget, just basically think of something big and bold and come back."

At the time I thought at least that he was going to come back with a vaccine initiative because he was in charge of the vaccine program. So I was pretty confident he was going to come back with sort of a moon shot on vaccines. Instead he went back to NIH, sat down with Mark [Dybul] and came up with what was largely a treatment proposal. It was comprehensive in that it had elements on preventing the disease and elements on caring for orphans, but really the bulk of it was how do you treat people who were already infected using these new and low-cost drugs?

He came back to the White House shortly, a week or two after this initial discussion, and presented it to a larger group of us, which at that point included Jay Lefkowitz. I think Robin Cleveland was in that meeting.

Bolten: I think so, but this was all in my office as Deputy Chief of Staff.

Silverberg: Exactly. I remember at the time being a little bit skeptical, thinking, *That's a lot of*—I've learned since that they in their mind had the very ambitious plan, and then the more modest plans. I remember thinking, *That's a lot of money and that's not what I expected them to present.* Actually, the more they started talking, the more compelling the case was. There were these people that actually, for very low cost you could save these people from certain death. So

that kicked off a monthslong process, entirely in secret. In hindsight, it's remarkable. I mean, of all the things that we didn't manage to keep secret later—

Bolten: We were pretty good.

Silverberg: We were pretty good. Once I got to State—

Bolten: Well.

Silverberg: I was persuaded—

Bolten: The White House was pretty good.

Silverberg: The White House was pretty good. So it kicked off this monthslong policy process, basically drilling down on the HHS proposal, and then came out with something that the President announced at the State of the Union the next year, right?

Bolten: My recollection of it can't be better than Kristen's, but I do recall the initial meeting where I had asked Fauci to come to my office along with you and Gary Edson. Was anybody else there?

Silverberg: That first meeting, I don't think so. The next meeting was a larger group, but that one—

Bolten: But I knew I had a mandate from the President to think more broadly about the problem and that he was prepared to do something fairly aggressive. I had also been weathering lobbying from Bono and his folks and his organization at the time. It was called DATA (Debt, AIDS, Trade, Africa).

Silverberg: So you had been lobbied even before that?

Bolten: Yes, before PEPFAR was announced. They were in on MCC among other things. In fact, for the announcement of MCC we had persuaded Bono to join Bush on stage, which caused George Soros to resign from Bono's board, telling Bono—Bono does a great imitation of Soros—telling him that he had sold out for a plate of lentils. Anyway, it turned out to have been a lot of lentils. I was personally influenced by what they had to say. I knew that Bush was frustrated with pinpricks at this obviously catastrophic problem but concerned about jumping in in any big way to what appeared largely to be an unsolvable problem.

So as Kristen just said, one of the few things I do remember is saying to Fauci, "If money were no object, what would you do, knowing that I had the President's support and that I probably could beat Mitch Daniels in an arm-wrestling confrontation for a few hundred million dollars, or something like that, or maybe even billions?" Like Kristen, I expected him to come back and say, "If we spend another $2 billion over the next two years or ten years on vaccines we will have a vaccine for AIDS and this pandemic will be over forever." He didn't. He shocked me when he came back and said—I even asked when he came back, I said, "What about vaccine?"

He said, “I’d love to have more money,” because that’s him, that’s what he does. He said, “I’d love to have more money of course, but I could not tell you that an additional hundred million dollars at this point would advance by one day the day on which we have a vaccine. But we can do something about treating the people who have it. We have a shot at stemming the tide of this pandemic.”

What was going on is that because it was a death sentence in Africa, nobody was bothering to get tested and everybody was just wildly spreading the disease, not just through ignorance and misinformation, like if you sleep with a virgin you get rid of the disease, but because they just didn’t want to know. If you knew it was a clear death sentence, why would you bother to get tested? He said, “We can treat. There are examples in Uganda and Haiti of the kinds of programs we’re going to propose that are actually working at a minimum stabilizing the population.”

Gary Edson went to work with Fauci and they consulted Dr. Pop [Jean William Pape] in Haiti and Dr. [Peter] Mugyenyi. Was he Uganda?

Silverberg: Yes.

Bolten: I think one or both of them ended up in the gallery at the State of the Union. I think Dr. Pop did—

Silverberg: No, Mugyenyi.

Bolten: Mugyenyi, yes. They did an enormous amount of work on it. Part of the reason I wanted to do it in secret was—there were a lot of reasons, but one was if Bush was thinking about a big initiative, he didn’t like a lot of people talking about it and previewing it, and for sure if Democrats on the Hill had found out that he was coming out with a big AIDS initiative, they would have come out with a bigger one a week before, so he would have been trimming back on their initiative.

We also didn’t want to trigger a big turf battle between the State Department and HHS and all that kind of stuff. I even told Fauci, “You can’t tell your boss, the Secretary of HHS.” He sort of gulped and said OK. Secretary Powell was not aware of it either. They produced a great plan. Kristen from our office was the one who worked on it, which was a lot of work. My recollection is you spent a lot of time in meetings with Gary and others refining the idea, refining what was likely to work, finding out how much it was going to cost. You all kept the OMB Associate Director who had this portfolio pretty well looped in so that she was helpful in ensuring that it was being done in the most OMB-friendly possible way. Mitch Daniels ended up opposing it, in any event, for good and substantial budget-director reasoning, because we eventually came back with a five-year, $15 billion plan, which is a huge amount of money to throw in.

If you had told Bush in the beginning of this administration that in his second State of the Union he was going to be proposing the biggest expansion of foreign assistance—

Silverberg: For a single disease.

Engel: That’s what I’m still puzzling over and would like to hear a little bit more about because it’s not—don’t misinterpret me in any way, I’m not going to suggest that HIV/AIDS is not an

important issue, especially for the fate of Africa, but there are also other issues around the world that one could see the President being lobbied to put $15 billion in.

Bolten: Yes.

Engel: Help me understand, and for the record—

Bolten: Clean water. Cancer.

Engel: Malaria is one.

Bolten: Malaria.

Engel: Why this one?

Bolten: I think he was moved, as a lot of us were, by the prospect that this one now treatable disease was basically extinguishing an entire generation on a whole continent. Mike Gerson summed it up beautifully in the decisional meeting when we brought the final plan to the President, where he said, "If we can do this and don't, history will judge us poorly." I think you have to go back to the time when it looked as if AIDS was unstoppably going to basically wipe out Africa for a whole generation. There didn't seem to be any pause to it; it was growing geometrically. We were getting it under control here in the United States, but not over there. I think he felt like this is a different kind of problem.

Riley: Was the national security dimension a factor in his decision making, or was it an easy handle to grasp in the marketing of a decision he was inclined to make otherwise?

Bolten: Probably more the latter than the former in my judgment, but it wasn't irrelevant.

Silverberg: The discussion at the time was largely humanitarian. Later we talked about the destabilizing impacts of HIV/AIDS and the fact that Africa, our concern about ungoverned spaces in Africa, but at the time I think the humanitarian argument—It's true there were all these other problems, but fundamentally we were saying to him that for a few dollars a patient you can save a life, which was really what we were talking about with antiretroviral treatments. This is an initiative where we could have millions of lives saved.

I think when you put it in those terms to him, he was persuaded. The other thing is we went to him very deliberately with clear measurables. So here are clear targets on number of lives saved, number of orphans cared for, number of prevented—always on every foreign aid package he wanted to hear, "Here is how I can hold the administration accountable for these taxpayer dollars." Because we gave it to him in those terms, I think it made a persuasive argument.

Bolten: He kept up with the metrics as the program rolled out. In fact, when I was budget director I remember I upped our commitments to the PEPFAR program because on the then-current trajectory we were going to fall short of the commitment of number of people on antiretrovirals and so on. So I went back to him and I said, "You will have fulfilled your $15 billion commitment even more so. We won't have met the targets that you identified, but the

program is working really well. It is successful. I'd like to put a few hundred million in." He said absolutely.

Silverberg: The other big thing about it is he had disdain always for small ball. He didn't want to do a little trickle here and a little trickle there; he wanted to do big things with his Presidency. So I think in a sense it was easier to take one big initiative where we would do something game changing than if we had gone in with, "We want $15 billion and we're going to scatter it across all these programs and hope that they're incrementally improved."

Riley: What I was going to ask to piggyback on this question is a question about line drawing. If you agree that you can do this, what was the calculus in not using this as the basis or the example for the next big idea, or were there other big ideas considered and found either wanting, or is it the simple answer that the budget just wouldn't bear any more?

Bolten: All of the above.

Riley: All of the above.

Bolten: Solvable.

Silverberg: Solvable—just a little bit of a tangent. But the other thing is, I think one of the biggest gaps to me between public perception of the President and the private reality is his views on science. There was a public perception that he was antiscience, which I never thought. I actually thought on a lot of the big issues he had this idea that technology would be the bridge. The role of the government was to help ensure that there were technological solutions to them. That was a clear part of, for example, his climate change attitude.

Here we were talking to him about a technological—there were these new drugs that could do remarkable things for individuals. I think, I don't know, always across the board I thought that offering him those kinds of solutions spoke to something. Do you—

Bolten: Absolutely.

Silverberg: I mean, he was the President who completed the doubling of the NIH budget, which was a commitment he made during the campaign. On the stem cell issue, which was the other thing that occupied most of my time in that first year, he was a consumer of what's the science. Part of what made that such a difficult issue was his commitment to come up with something that could let the science move ahead.

Bolten: We can do stem cell or maybe Patient's Bill of Rights in a second, which consumed a lot of your—

Perry: Can I go back to something that Kristen said at the very beginning about the President's immediate interest in these proposals related to his religious beliefs, and particularly human dignity? Did he talk to you all about his religious beliefs, his religious journey?

Silverberg: I personally never heard from him about his religious journey. He talked a lot about his moral convictions and his views about individual responsibility and about our national responsibilities. A lot of the "to whom much is given much is expected."

Bolten: "Required."

Silverberg: Required. Apparently I didn't listen. [*laughter*]

Bolten: You must have missed it three hundred times.

Silverberg: Exactly, but he spoke in those kinds of terms but not specifically.

Bolten: I rarely heard from him about his religious journey, but his language in talking about how he was thinking about an issue was very often fused with moral language. It was rarely put in religious and certainly not sectarian terms, but often in moral responsibility terms. You never heard—it is sort of inconceivable to me that you would hear him say, "I think God wants me to do this," or "I had a revelation about that." That's what all my Jewish friends thought.

Riley: There is no burning bush at the White House?

Bolten: No, he is not that way about religion. Obviously a person of deep faith, but he was not magical at all about the influence of religion. It just influenced his moral code.

Perry: Did he ask you about your beliefs?

Bolten: He did periodically. Stem cell was a great example. He was always asking people. You'd be walking down the hall with him while he was struggling—whatever he was struggling with he would want to talk about it. So while he was struggling with stem cell he'd say, "What do you think?"

Silverberg: He called—

Bolten: "Is it destroying life? Do you think it is?"

Silverberg: The two of us were at some health care event with him in Virginia and he said after the event, "Get in the car. You're riding back with me." I thought immediately, *Where do I sit? What do I do?* The second we got in, he said, "What do I do on stem cell?" Thankfully it was an issue I had been working on and I didn't have to make it up. But he was doing that kind of thing the entire decision process.

Engel: When you say he had you in the limo and said, "What do I do on stem cell?" was he asking both for a policy and a personal assessment? He was asking for your advice, but which advice is he asking for? This is such a touchy, difficult, moral issue.

Silverberg: I think he was asking for policy advice. He had asked two policy staffers in the car, so I think he was asking for policy—

Bolten: Who else was there?

Silverberg: Anne Phelps.

Nelson: You say that this was not unusual, this kind of thing. But she has a position in your shop, and if she says, "Here's what I think," how does that square with the one person—

Bolten: The disciplined policy process?

Nelson: Yes.

Bolten: She would tell me. You would have been very careful to say, "The President asked me and I said—"

Nelson: Kristen, would you feel like it was your job to say what you thought or what you thought Josh's—

Silverberg: I would have said—it was interesting in that case because I had argued for funding the existing lines, which was a policy option that came out of a meeting in Josh's office with this Harvard researcher, a pro stem cell researcher who had come down to lobby the administration and had mentioned in the course of the meeting, "Oh, by the way, there are these existing lines," which is what sort of teed off discussion of that as an option.

So Josh and I had already actually talked about that. In that case I was pretty sure I wasn't—but one of Josh's philosophies as Deputy and then as Chief of Staff is you present a well-developed range of options to the President and let him decide. So I wouldn't have ever worried I was getting in trouble by floating my personal idea. The point would have been to make sure that he knows where all of his advisors are, that he knows the pros and cons of every option, that he had the best information to choose, but I don't think I ever would have gotten in trouble with Josh or Andy for saying whatever I thought.

Interestingly, actually one of the other big gaps about public perception of the President and private is this idea that he didn't like disagreement, which was completely untrue. I was 30 years old when I started at the White House and I disagreed with the President to his face many times.

Bolten: Regularly.

Silverberg: I remember the first time that happened he came into a Roosevelt Room meeting, a senior meeting. A bunch of us were back-rowing it. I had edited a set of his remarks that morning and he walked into the Roosevelt Room with Harriet Miers right behind him waving this copy of the remarks and saying, "I'm going to read this and I want all of you to tell me what you think about it." He read the original version and everybody said, "Yes, that sounds great." He looked at me and said, "She doesn't think so." He had his glasses—we were all standing up. My knees were shaking and I said, "Well, Mr. President, technically—" He said, "That's not my view." I said, "Well, sir, technically—"

We went back and forth and then he said, "OK, fine, how about if I say X?" Josh said, "Yes, sir, that sounds good." That was his way of telling me you're done. [*laughter*] But actually that was a really important event in my relationship with the President because it told him that somehow I was going to muster the will to tell him what I thought.

Bolten: That's what he liked. He liked the folks who were going to tell him what they really thought, even in an uncomfortable situation. He didn't usually go out of his way to make it more comfortable like he did with Kristen, but what he liked was somebody who stood by their position and took a reasonable, not an unreasonable, amount of time to state their view and try to persuade him.

Riley: Right.

Bolten: He liked somebody trying to persuade him out of his position.

Silverberg: He wanted to know that once he made a decision that you were going to support it and be absolutely committed to his policies, but until he made the decision—

Bolten: While he is still going back and forth he did a lot of stuff like, "Get in the car and tell me what you think about stem cell."

Nelson: Was that especially true for women? I'm thinking that here is somebody who is surrounded from birth by strong women, including daughters, who would sass him and so on.

Riley: Not that you sassed him. [*laughter*]

Nelson: And Condi Rice. Did you feel—

Silverberg: He likes strong women, that was clear. When I was leaving the White House I think three of the four policy offices were led by women, Margaret, Karen, and Condi. So yes, I don't know.

Bolten: I'd be hard-pressed to say he encouraged more from women than men, but he certainly—

Silverberg: He was very comfortable with—

Bolten: He was very comfortable with women who were not afraid of him. I think he was uncomfortable with anybody he thought was afraid of him.

Silverberg: You'd watch him with sycophants and it really was uncomfortable; you could see him kind of turn off.

Bolten: Yes, he didn't like the sort of blah, blah kissing his butt stuff. He would often make fun of it. But what he really liked was somebody telling him the truth.

I remember I had an episode early on when I was first the policy director of the campaign. I was untested, certainly unproven. I remember him asking me questions that I subsequently realized he knew the answer to and he wasn't sure that I knew the answer to them. He was probing to see whether—just sort of naturally doing it. I don't think he really went into it with a plan to do this, but he just ended up in the conversation asking me stuff that he pretty much already knew the answer to. He was probing to see a) if I knew the answers, but b) much more importantly, if I didn't know the answer, whether I would admit it.

I saw him do that with several people. He has a great sniffer for character and for BS [bullshit]. I've seen him do it many times where he would be checking somebody to see if they were likely to tell him the truth. If you said, "I don't know" too often he would assume you don't know your job, but if you said, "I don't know" when you actually didn't know instead of trying to make something up, that was the person much more likely to gain his trust.

Engel: If I could take a sort of 30,000-foot view of the decision-making process as it reached the President's desk, because I think those of us who do Presidential studies want to have a two-, three-line assessment of how each President makes a decision. Each one makes a decision obviously in a different way. Reagan liked his staff to tell him what the best idea was and he would say yes or no. Senior Bush to a large degree wanted the best options presented to him and then he would retreat with his real intimates and make the decision.

What is your view, not so much in the discussion and the give-and-take, but when you actually are presenting for a final decision to the President, how does that go? What does he want on the paper? What does he want on the memo? What does he want on the discussions? Does he want a list? Does he want options? Does he want a list of options ranked? What was your overall view of his decision making?

Silverberg: I thought he was very comfortable with options. So if there was an actual disagreement, I don't think he wanted—well, disagreement over a serious issue I guess. I never thought he was uncomfortable having people come in and argue both sides. He wouldn't have wanted that to happen on every little issue; he wanted the staff to do its job, I guess, and sorting out the things that could be sorted out.

I felt like sometimes in the meetings he didn't want to embarrass the side that was losing, particularly if there was a Cabinet Secretary coming in and arguing something he was going to reject. That frequently didn't happen in the meeting. So he would listen and then everybody would go back and then the Chief of Staff or Deputy Chief of Staff would have to deliver the bad news. So he didn't always decide at the meeting, but I think he was comfortable having options.

Bolten: Kristen described the typical mode that I saw, which is he would want the options laid out in writing. He was always a good reader. He would get a briefing book the night before. He usually would have read it, so there might be an options memo in there. He would rarely respond on paper. He would want people to be in the room and he'd want the people who were most interested to be in the room. He'd want to give them a chance to say their piece. He would probe a little bit and see what their view was.

Even if there was no embarrassment, especially if there might be some embarrassment involved, but even if there was no embarrassment involved, he would rarely make a decision on the spot unless it was obvious or he wanted to make a point. But his more typical mode of operating was to say, "OK, thanks. I'll let you know." Then the Chief of Staff, sometimes me when I was Deputy Chief of Staff, would stay behind or would come back to him within the next 24 hours and say, "What do you think about that?" Then when I was Chief of Staff he would say either, "I'm comfortable with X. Let's go with X," or he would say, "I'm leaning toward X, but is there something short of that?"

So with the Chief of Staff he would have a little bit of an exchange that might modify a little bit if he was having trouble. But he liked to have a chance to let a decision marinate so that even if he was pretty sure that he knew what he wanted to do; he would often just let it sit.

Perry: Just sit with him alone, or do you think he talked to other people then if it was a 24-hour intervening period?

Bolten: He might talk—maybe he talked to Laura. Mostly I think he was just letting things marinate in his own head, making himself comfortable, and then I think relying usually on his Chief of Staff to understand where he was coming from and be able to communicate and interpret the decision accurately.

Riley: You both have been enormously patient with us. I think Mike said earlier, this is completely fascinating and we could stay here until midnight talking. We've got more time tomorrow.

Silverberg: It was fun.

Riley: You particularly, for leaving your family under the circumstances to join us, this was above and beyond the call.

Silverberg: I enjoyed it.

Bolten: Anything that should be on the Kristen Silverberg record that we didn't touch?

Silverberg: Patient's Bill of Rights you can cover.

Bolten: I don't remember much about it. There is probably a less important episode.

Riley: There is a good possibility at some point one or the other of us will be back in touch to do more.

Silverberg: I can't think of anything, but I'll email you tonight if there is something. The 9/11 stuff, obviously.

Riley: It has been fantastic. We've learned an awful lot. We look forward to more tomorrow.

January 16, 2013

Riley: This is day two of the Josh Bolton interview and we're pleased to have Joel Kaplan here with us today. We talked briefly before the recorder began running about some of the things that we ought to talk about, given the relatively brief period of time that we have Joel here with us. Do we want to start with the creation of Homeland Security? Is that the first thing in the chronology that is important?

Bolten: Yes.

Riley: So let's go ahead and deal with that. How does the issue present itself to the administration, and how do the two of you become involved in this? Then how does it become a major part of your portfolio?

Bolten: I was Deputy Chief of Staff at the time. I think to try to give the appropriate time it would be the first half of 2002, after 9/11. In the immediate aftermath of 9/11, we briefly considered undertaking some more dramatic reorganization of the federal government to deal with the new threat to the United States, but we concluded that it was too hard to train a new horse in mid gallop. So we band-aided the situation by creating the Homeland Security Council effectively headed by Tom Ridge. That announcement was made I think just 10 days after 9/11 in the President's speech.

The Vice President was heavily involved in that decision and in the selection of Tom Ridge to be the head of the new Homeland Security unit within the White House. But it pretty rapidly proved to be very awkward. In my judgment it did not get up and running as a particularly effective internal organization. There was no history. There were very few experts. Homeland security was suddenly a major subject for policy experts. I mean, as far as I could tell there were people who had pieces of it, but there were few people who were actually experts in homeland security. There were agencies unaccustomed to cooperating in the way the National Security Council had done for at least half a century.

So it was just an awkward period. For me it reached the apex of awkwardness when we would get asked to testify. I remember a particular moment when our head of legislative affairs, Nick Calio, came to visit me and said they want somebody to come up and testify to our plans for securing the homeland. Nick had already realized, and I came to the more pungent realization, that we didn't have anybody. We weren't going to send an Assistant to the President, especially somebody who was just getting his feet wet, but no Assistant to the President is supposed to go up and testify. So we were repeatedly having to try to cobble together these collections of disparate Cabinet officers. Do you want to talk about the airports? We'll send Secretary [Norman] Mineta. Or do you want to talk about the safety of the food supply? Then we'll send Secretary [Ann] Veneman, something like that.

I thought it was an untenable situation. Having participated in something that we didn't talk about yesterday in the immediate aftermath of 9/11, the coordination of the government and something called the Domestic Consequences Principals Committee—

Riley: We'll want to come back to that.

Bolten: We actually might want to draw Kristen back in for that conversation as well. Having participated in that, I had a pretty keen sense of the high level of coordination that was necessary just because the government was so fragmented in the different elements that made up homeland security. While the administration had resisted Senator Lieberman's and others' calls for a separate department initially just because while we were in the immediate aftermath we didn't want to suddenly try to start reorganizing government, a few months later came to the realization—immediately after that meeting with Nick Calio I went to Andy Card and said, "I

don't think we can sustain going the way we're going. I think we need to get a process going whereby we reorganize ourselves for the new homeland security challenges."

I think we set Tom Ridge off on that task. It was a pretty bad failure in part because it had to be done in public. He assembled various Cabinet officers and tried to cajole them into volunteering to give up portions of their agencies that had been there historically.

After the collapse of the Ridge process and in light of the growing tension with the Hill about our inability to field a suitable Homeland Security witness, Joel Kaplan and Richard Falkenrath visited me in my office and recommended that we take a serious look, outside the HSC process, at the possibility of creating a new department. Joel and Richard were ultimately the real drivers behind the creation of the Department of Homeland Security.

Riley: How early were you—do you remember the time frame that you get into this?

Kaplan: It's interesting to listen to different perspectives, which I'm sure is the point of the whole project, even with people who worked as closely together as Josh and I did. In essence all that comports with the way I remember it in its major components. The two big things that drove toward the decision by Josh and Andy to convene this group were definitely not having a witness, and at times the witness we sent, as I recall, turned out to be Mitch Daniels as OMB Director because he was the only one as budget director who could at least arguably say that they had cognizance over the entire government effort and that, to Josh's point, proved to be not sustainable because the budget director really can't speak intelligently as your primary homeland security witness.

The one slight caveat or tweak on what Josh said about the Tom Ridge process is that that process as I remember it was a more limited version. It wasn't intended to create a homeland security department; it was an effort to take the components of the agencies of government that had border responsibilities and see whether we could basically convince them to merge.

Engel: Do you remember when that was?

Kaplan: That was in the winter, like December-January, maybe January-February time frame. Ridge tried to do it in a very collaborative fashion, bringing John Ashcroft and Norm Mineta and Paul O'Neill all together in a room to talk about how doesn't it make sense to put these things together. They all basically defended the turf of their agency. It just collapsed. So my recollection is that O'Neill was good in the latter process, I don't recall him—but he may have been.

Riley: You said he was willing to give up—

Kaplan: Take it all.

Bolten: He was a contrarian in every aspect. He did exactly what you would expect the Treasury Secretary not to do at almost every turn.

Kaplan: It became clear even internally within the government you were going to have everybody protecting their turf. I think that also led us to conclude that if anything ever got

beyond the executive branch in the form of a proposal to Congress, that sort of turf consciousness would become even more pronounced with the committees of jurisdiction. That was part of why we felt like it was really important to do this process confidentially because if it leaked, you would immediately get people from inside each of the agencies running up to their respective committees of jurisdiction and getting them to basically kill—

Bolten: My recollection is correct that the Ridge process—

Kaplan: The Ridge process just collapsed on its own weight. My recollection is that that was the late winter time frame. Then the big conflicts with some of the committees on the Hill were in the early spring, so the February-March time frame. Both of those things were happening roughly in tandem or one right after the other. That's what led to—I wouldn't say it was a decision to do something different, but it was a decision to look seriously at it. Basically, it was a decision to task this group of me; Rich Falkenrath; OMB's representative, Mark Everson, who was the Deputy Director for Management, and that was an important part of the considerations. If we were going to come up with a new structure, we wanted to make sure it was based on the most modern and best management principles, unlike some of the existing organizational structures in the government. Somebody from the counsel's office, Brad [Bradford] Berenson and—

Bolten: It was Berenson, not Kavanaugh.

Kaplan: No, it wasn't Kavanaugh, it was me, Falkenrath, Everson, Berenson, and one other guy from Homeland Security who was an Army general named Bruce Lawson. Was that his name? Lawson? He was a border expert.

Nelson: Did you take the process away from Ridge when he created his—

Kaplan: Yes. He was so—basically what we did was—

Bolten: He had a representative.

Kaplan: That group we called the G5, so it was the five of us. The G5 basically reported to a group that we called the PEOC Group, which was the principals in the White House. PEOC stands for Presidential Emergency Operations Center, which is the bunker. You probably all know the bunker that the Vice President and Josh were in on 9/11, which some of us in the White House didn't even know existed still, I think, until then. But it was a very remote, secret place inside the White House where we could go a couple of times a week and be confident that nobody would know what we were doing or see us or ask questions. So we called the group of principals the PEOC group and that was the five of us, our bosses, plus Nick Calio and [Irve Lewis] Scooter Libby. Steve Hadley was involved, but a little bit tangentially until the end. I think that's right, and Andy.

Riley: Can I intrude with one question, kind of piggyback on Mike's question? Was the failure of the Ridge process just because it collapsed of its own weight, or was there some deficiency in Ridge's style or management or capacity in not sufficiently riding herd on this? In other words, is this a failure of individual capacity or institutional capacity?

Bolten: You want to take it?

Kaplan: I think Ridge's style is collegial in nature and I think he probably didn't feel he had any kind of directive authority, which as an Assistant to the President you don't. Some people wield that convening authority that they have more forcefully than others. Ridge was very much a consensus builder and there was clearly no consensus. Could others have crystalized the issue for decision more crisply and brought it forward with Josh's help to the President for decision and overridden the Cabinet Secretaries? Maybe, but I think it was the process more than the individual. It wasn't a process that lent itself to a big, very public set of discussions, because there was so much turf involved. Cabinet members feel some obligation to defend their agency and their history and their employees more than in other discussions, I think.

Bolten: I obviously wasn't paying particularly close attention to it, as Joel has just made clear, paying that much attention to the Ridge process, but I do remember going to one meeting, sort of back-rowing it. Joel had been to all the meetings and was coming out thinking, *Nah, this isn't happening; this isn't going to work.* Ridge's style was not well suited to the process, but I agree with Joel, I don't think anybody's style could have gotten Cabinet officers to voluntarily agree to something that just institutionally they—even if they agreed with it as a matter of substance, institutionally they could never have been the guy that was the Transportation Secretary who gave up the Coast Guard. O'Neill actually gladly did it, but the Treasury Secretary who gave up the Customs Service, which was actually a founding institution of the Treasury Department, had been there for 200 years—

Engel: Could we go back a minute to the initial period thinking about Homeland Security, initial post 9/11. The natural historical parallel, of course, was the National Security Act of 1947. You mentioned very briefly that you initially discussed a massive reorganization and then put that aside. Was that because you anticipated these types of institutional problems, or because frankly after 9/11 there was just too much going on to focus on that sort of broad institutional reorganization?

Bolten: I think both. Andy Card and I both went into this White House having—Andy in particular having served, but me having been around ideas for reorganization, both when I was on the Hill in the mid-'80s and in 41's administration. There were a lot of ideas about how to reorganize the trade structure. Andy and I both came into the White House with experience and pretty strong conviction that any number of reorganizations would help, but that almost none, possibly none, were worth the effort. You would spend all of your time reorganizing and all of your energy reorganizing rather than actually doing your job.

So Andy and I came at it with a bias against, and much more importantly in the immediate aftermath of 9/11 there was too much to do to worry about how the deck chairs were aligned.

Kaplan: I'll say just from the experience of doing it, that judgment in my view was exactly 100 percent right. The experience of creating the Department of Homeland Security proved the wisdom of not trying to do that right at the outset when the country needed to focus on what are the actual steps we need to do to protect the country.

The legislative battle that took place over the creation of the Department of Homeland Security once it was announced is distracting. I think we had enough experience of the kind Josh described to conclude that it was worth it in this one instance to expend the political capital for the creation of Homeland Security. I think it was really wise to wait to do that. It distracts in getting it done and then in getting it legislatively accomplished. Then the actual logistics in operationalization of a merger is incredibly distracting, as anybody who has done it in the private sector will tell you.

People are focused on what does this mean for my job, my agency. Are there going to be cuts? Are jobs going to be eliminated, merged? Who is going to be in charge? All of those things in any merger are distracting. It is particularly worrisome when what you're talking about is as important and as new, as Josh said, as Homeland Security. So I think it was exactly right to wait. It was right to do it, but it proved really, really hard.

Riley: Can you track us through the rest of the story then?

Kaplan: Sure. You want me to do this?

Bolten: Sure. Nobody better to do this than Joel.

Kaplan: Andy and Josh tasked me, Rich and me, with this group in a really accelerated fashion—

Bolten: Let me pause there. After one conversation with Nick Calio I remember I went directly into Andy's office and I said, "We've got to do something else." Having watched a little bit of the Ridge process that Joel had been through, I said, "It's not going to work unless we do it in secret. Let's get the President's approval to give a serious look at a major reorganization."

Riley: OK.

Bolten: But we've got to do it in secret. I suggested to Andy the four or five principals that I thought ought to be involved and that each of us ought to choose a deputy. I already had Joel in mind of course.

Riley: Right.

Bolten: I can't remember exactly when we did it, but we went down to talk to the President, who was very receptive. He had been part of our line that no, we don't need a massive reorganization at this point. When we ultimately did it, it was perceived as an abrupt reversal. But in fact it had been gestating, as Joel described, for a long time. We just couldn't disclose it without compromising the operation.

Riley: Did the President set up any parameters for what he wanted to see or didn't want to see in this, or did he just sort of nod and say—

Bolten: No, we described for him what all the disparate parts were that made up Homeland Security. He knew that pretty well because he had had to deal with each of them individually. He

knew how many people showed up around the table to talk about a set of Homeland Security issues. So he didn't need much educating.

Kaplan: I can't remember whether this came from the President in the form of a specific directive through Andy and Josh or whether it was just generally understood what his priority was. Josh may remember. The one thing I remember being very conscious of was that the President was extremely concerned and protective of the capabilities of the intelligence community and making sure that we didn't do something in the context of this reorganization that would inadvertently weaken the intelligence community.

Bolten: That's true.

Kaplan: The ability of the Central Intelligence Agency and that community to do its job, he was very focused on that. He gave us free rein to go and come back with recommendations, but that was something that we knew was a guardrail, obviously.

Nelson: What were the principles that you wanted to animate this process?

Bolten: By principals I mean a-l-s.

Nelson: Right, sorry.

Kaplan: So we just went off, the five of us, and the basic task was strip away what you know about jurisdictions and where things stand today, or don't feel bound by those things. Just analyze and come back with recommendations about what is the best way to organize the government for this new mission of Homeland Security. So the five of us met, I won't say nonstop, but pretty intense discussions. We would go through different models to identify—

Bolten: By the way, did you typically meet in the PEOC?

Kaplan: No, we only met in the PEOC with the PEOC group; we met in either—my office was with Josh in the West Wing. All those other guys were in the Old Executive Office Building, so we met in their offices over there.

Bolten: You felt that you guys could assemble without raising suspicion.

Kaplan: Yes, and you can meet in the Old Executive Office Building in somebody's office and nobody sees it, but getting all the principals in the West Wing to go into the Roosevelt Room or the Situation Room or something like that, or Andy's office, would always attract attention and people would want to know what you're meeting on.

So we would do the grunt work and the analytical work and then try to prepare—we did probably three hour-and-a-half sessions a week with the principals in the PEOC. So basically we would go do our analytical work. We would come up with some visual aids that we would then present to the PEOC group to bring them along in our thinking and ask questions and get guidance back from them about various models we were thinking about. They would task us with more research to go back and do for the next meeting. It was a very iterative process I would say

that took, as I said, two or three meetings of an hour and a half or so a week of the principals from early April—

Bolten: That much? Really?

Kaplan: Yes, I'd say—

Bolten: That's traumatic.

Kaplan: It was pretty intensive. It was probably mid-April to late May. As I understood it, Andy would basically keep the President apprised as we were having the discussions and sort of get—we still had green light. It became clear by probably the third week or so of the discussions that we were heading toward a proposal to create a Department of Homeland Security. Then a lot of it was discussions about what should be in, what should be out, what would the department look like, getting a lot of input from Mitch's guy on what are the right management tools and authorities that a new department should have in order to maximize flexibility and effectiveness. So we spent a lot of time on that.

The President had some overseas trip as I recall in late May, and when he came back that's when we came forward with the final recommendation. He gave the green light. Only at that point—unusual for something that was going to have such big communications and political implications potentially—did we bring in Karen Hughes, Karl Rove, probably Dan Bartlett, I can't recall, and Mike Gerson, the speechwriter, to plan how do we actually roll this out for maximum effect and to maximize chances of legislative passage, because as Josh said, there is a little bit of a myth that has grown up that this was something Congress wanted and the President was just standing in the way, when in fact, even with a huge push and a nationally televised speech from the President, it was really hard to get done.

Joe Lieberman, a terrific Senator and great American, had a bill that he wanted to do, but he wasn't on any of the committees of jurisdiction. It didn't have any of the support from the chairman or ranking members of the committees of jurisdiction, so it was very easy for one Senator to draft a bare-bones bill that would say we're going to take something from all these other committees and put it in one department. But it had no support in Congress on really either side of the aisle because it got to jurisdictional issues.

Bolten: How much did the G5 draw on the work that had been done by Lieberman? There was somebody else too.

Kaplan: There were a couple of different bills, but the truth is they were very bare bones. There had been work—Gary Hart had done a study—Gary Hart and somebody, it might have been [Warren] Rudman—

Bolten: Yes, I remember Rudman.

Kaplan: They had done a study, actually I think before 9/11, and a report recommending a department. Lieberman had a bill. I think Mac Thornberry had a bill, Congressman from Texas. There were a couple of bills floating around. There hadn't been legislative hearings, there hadn't been any of the real—so when you say study the Lieberman proposal, there wasn't a lot behind

it, it was just like the Department of Homeland Security shall be created, it shall have these agencies. So we had that out there.

I can't remember what was in it, exactly. I don't think FEMA [Federal Emergency Management Agency] was in those bills, and that was a big part of what we thought needed to be the Department of Homeland Security to have the response and recovery and preparedness element.

Riley: Did you look abroad at all? Were there foreign models?

Nelson: I'm curious. With the G5 working in confidentiality, how did you procure the models that you wanted to assess?

Kaplan: We had people like—we relied an awful lot of Rich Falkenrath, I don't know if you've spoken to him yet. He is an absolutely brilliant guy who was an academic at the Kennedy School before he came to the National Security Council, where he did counterproliferation and counterterrorism issues before the creation of OHS [Office of Homeland Security]. Rich was a wealth of academic knowledge and also knew a lot about what the counterterrorism world looked like.

To Josh's point, not only was there not really a Homeland Security model here, there wasn't really abroad, either. There were counterintelligence and counterterrorism models abroad, but there weren't a lot of models to point to.

Bolten: At least not in the free world.

Kaplan: Not in the free world. I was going to say there are lots of Ministries of the Interior in lots of countries, so we had a good sense of what those looked like. That was part of the conversation actually, things like—Andy and Josh really did give us a blank slate to think about this on. So we did talk about would you move the FBI into something like this? Do you want to create an M16 model? Notwithstanding the President's direction on intelligence, we looked at does the counterintelligence piece or does the intelligence piece belong here. We talked about those things and ultimately decided you need a certain amount of mass to function effectively in a world that has been historically dominated by the Department of Defense.

You didn't want this to become kind of a stepchild agency in government. But there was also a sense that there were some things that were just too much—too much power, too much consolidation, and also some things that were functioning—Bob Mueller had a really good program in place to modernize the FBI and to make the FBI more effective in the post-9/11 world. Nobody wanted to interfere with that.

Bolten: That was essentially to try to shift their emphasis from postprosecution to law-enforcement-type prosecution after the fact to prevention before the fact.

Nelson: Richard Clarke got awfully famous awfully fast as a White House person. His portfolio was terrorism. Can you talk about his relation to any of this either during, before, or after? Did you make a conscious decision not to include him?

Kaplan: By this time, well before this time, Dick Clarke's portfolio had moved to being cyberterrorism. He was spending most of his time—to be honest, I'm not sure if he was still in the White House by this time. I don't know when he left. He was working on a cybersecurity program. That was sort of his area of expertise and emphasis.

Perry: Could I ask about—

Bolten: You get to edit later.

Kaplan: Clarke was viewed by that time as a little bit of a loose cannon, frankly.

Bolten: I think before that.

Kaplan: He obviously had strong ideas, but he was not an integral part of the process. I think Condi and Steve typically did consult Clarke on things because of his expertise, but he was not given a prominent role. He had his own portfolio he was working on. At some point either just before that or just after that his last thing at the White House was the publication of a big cybersecurity report. All the time I was there, that was what he was focused on.

Perry: My question is about the public relations side of this. I realize that if you're working in secret at that point there's not—so I have two questions. One is on the Homeland Security concept, and then the Ministries of Interior. I remember that there was discussion about what to call what it was that would come from this and should homeland even be used. That's my first question.

My other question goes back to the concept of the secrecy, and presumably most White Houses would like for everything to operate in secrecy more or less so that like the Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia, things can be hammered out when they need to be in secret. We know why you determined to have this in secret, but did you consciously make that decision on other issues?

Bolten: Yes. It was much more important in this case than most, but we did it on other issues. We talked yesterday about the President's PEPFAR proposal, although we didn't get that far into it. That one, a) because it also would have involved turf; b) because the President wanted to make an announcement in his State of the Union with some punch behind it; and c) because we didn't want any of our potential adversaries to get a jump on us either by proposing something bigger sooner, or by undermining it while it was in the gestation phase. We kept that totally secret.

So for example, the Secretary of Health and the Secretary of State didn't find out about the PEPFAR proposal, that it was even underway, until the night before the State of the Union in which it was announced similarly.

What was the first?

Perry: Homeland.

Bolten: I'm saying similarly with the announcement of the Homeland Security.

Perry: The secrecy component.

Bolten: I think you had Andy call in—

Kaplan: This was pretty amazing, actually. Andy called each of the Cabinet members separately and privately into his office, and he basically just told them, "The President has made a decision. This is really important to the homeland; I need you to lead on this—I need you to salute and then I need you to lead and bring your agency around on this." Every single one of them to their credit said, "Got it, I understand."

Bolten: You'll get this from Andy, but the quote from John Ashcroft was, "First, I'm glad you told me and didn't ask me because I would have had to fight it, and second, for whoever gets the immigration service I'm leaving behind a bottle of whiskey and a bullet." [*laughter*]

Kaplan: So I think it actually worked out very well. The point Ashcroft made is the realization from the Ridge process that you really couldn't ask these guys to do that, but they did understand it and they were all great. Each of them had to argue for it to their oversight committees, which was not easy.

Bolten: We had a little bit of dissent. I remember we had a little trouble with Secretary Veneman. That was one of the few modifications we made along the way, I think.

Kaplan: APHIS [Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service]?

Bolten: Yes. There were two modifications I can remember. One was APHIS, which is like the inspection service when you bring vegetables and agriculture into the airport, I think that's right, into the country. I can't remember what the modification was, but I know that was an issue. That's one that is a great example. The Agriculture Committees on Capitol Hill, which are very powerful, had strong views about APHIS.

Kaplan: I think we ended up leaving agricultural inspection at the agriculture department. That's my recollection, we can check on it.

Bolten: The original recommendation had been to move it along with the customs service—

Kaplan: Yes, but I'm not sure we made that concession. Falkenrath will remember this. I'm not sure we made that concession to Veneman, as opposed to in the negotiations to the committees. We may have just first had an indication of what was coming from Veneman. Then the other one where I feel like we did recede was in trying to move—we had proposed moving the Lawrence Livermore Laboratory from the Department of Energy to Homeland Security because they did a lot of stuff that we thought was important research. We thought that was an important center of gravity for the department to have, but we ran into some problems with that. I think the better part of valor and wisdom was to leave that at DOE [Department of Energy] also.

Bolten: Which segments didn't get moved that almost got moved?

Kaplan: You mean that we didn't include in our proposal?

Bolten: Right.

Engel: And, as a corollary, which do you wish you had?

Kaplan: Falkenrath will have much more informed and stronger views on that because he continued to live Homeland Security after that. There was definitely talk of the National Guard and of FBI, both of which I think we wisely decided not to include.

Riley: You had J. Edgar Hoover spinning in his grave.

Nelson: Wisely on policy grounds, or wisely on political grounds?

Kaplan: Both. Definitely on policy grounds, but politics would have been really difficult, I think. I'm trying to think which were moved. It was a big agency. We moved a lot, 22 separate agencies or pieces of agencies that we moved. I can't say that I've had regrets about anything that got left on the cutting room floor. There were times—look, I absolutely think it was the right thing to do, but it was operationally a very hard thing. It has not always been smooth.

Bolten: We got criticized for moving FEMA. Say a word about the rationale there?

Kaplan: Well—

Bolten: In the aftermath of Katrina I remember Hillary Clinton among others stepped out and said, "If they hadn't moved FEMA so that the director had to report through the head of Homeland Security, this never would have happened," which was preposterous.

Kaplan: Yes. I think FEMA had been—was FEMA a Cabinet position in the Clinton administration?

Bolten: Yes, I think it was, like everybody was in the Cabinet. They had to have two rings.

Kaplan: People sort of assumed if you got the Cabinet designation, you have the ear of the President, but really what that means is that you have an agency out there that people probably aren't paying that much attention to that is pretty important. We just thought, and again, to the extent there was literature on this, the notion that the things you need to do to prepare for and respond to a natural disaster are not dissimilar to the things you need to do to prepare for and respond to a mass terrorist attack.

The kind of continuum from prevention to response was all of critical importance to the overall notion of Homeland Security. That was something we experienced in the domestic consequences Principals Committee that Josh led. A lot of the toughest issues and most important from a health and safety standpoint are those decisions, those things that have to be done after an attack has taken place, and also the prevention steps you could take to minimize the impact of those things. So those struck us as pretty central components of what Homeland Security meant, and having somebody who had Cabinet-level responsibility to organize and oversee that made a lot of sense to us.

Bolten: As well as oversight over cousin organizations.

Kaplan: Yes. Organizations that are very actively involved in recovery, like the Coast Guard, have a really close relationship with FEMA, so it made a lot of sense to put those together and have them working more closely together under one leadership.

Riley: Did you generate paper when you were engaged in the secrecy?

Kaplan: Yes.

Riley: So there would be a paper trail at some remote time in history?

Kaplan: There should be a paper trail. I don't know where they keep stuff like this, but we had big whiteboards that we prepared for each of the sessions.

Bolten: I don't think we saved them. Very complicated. How many entities got moved?

Kaplan: Twenty-two.

Bolten: Out of a possible universe of moves, it was double that. The org charts were very difficult.

Riley: I'm sure.

Nelson: The issue that ended up being actually a campaign issue at the midterms was the right of civil servants working for these departments. Is that something that you anticipated when you were—

Kaplan: Two myths that exist around the creation of the Department of Homeland Security that at any opportunity I love to try to quash.

Riley: Wonderful.

Kaplan: The first was that Joe Lieberman had a bill and had a big head of steam. We talked about that. The second is the notion that the creation of the Department of Homeland Security was a diabolical plot by Karl Rove to influence the 2002 midterm elections and beat up Democrats on being weak on Homeland Security, because it turned out that the union issue did become pivotal in a few of the elections in 2002 where Republicans took back the Senate.

First thing, Karl wasn't involved in any of the discussions of the creation of the Department of Homeland Security literally until the specifics, the logistics of rolling it out. So the notion that it was part of the discussions at the outset is just historically wrong.

The second is we didn't intend for that to happen. I mentioned we had Mark Everson at the table, who was the Deputy Director for Management. So his whole focus is management of the government. In the proposal we had some pretty aggressive and modern flexibilities for the Secretary of Homeland Security on merit pay and—I can't remember what the rest of them were, but they were the kind of things that management gurus, good government types, want the Cabinet departments to have and which frankly unions don't like.

There was not anything in there, in the affirmative proposal, on the rights of workers to unionize. There is an existing law that says that the President can designate in agencies that are critical to national security, can basically ban unions. Presidents going all the way back to Kennedy have used that with the FBI. The FBI agents are unionized. I can't remember who they are now, but there are a whole bunch of agencies.

Bolten: The CIA.

Kaplan: Yes, CIA agents aren't unionized. There is a list of agencies and workforces that by Executive order are barred from unionizing.

After we put out this proposal, some of the unions and their advocates in Congress tried to insert in the legislative drafting language that would take away that authority from the President as it applied to this new agency with 22—that was being designed for Homeland Security with workforces from a bunch of agencies where the President had that authority. So in other words, if the Customs, while it was at Treasury—the President could with one stroke of the pen ban unionization, but once you moved those same people into the Department of Homeland Security, where the focus was homeland security, these legislative proposals would take that authority away from the President.

Bolten: That was authority the President had not exercised. He had it, but he had not exercised it with respect to things like Customs. I assume the unions' anxiety was that once they were in the Homeland Security Department, the President was going to exercise his blanket authority and withdraw all of those people from the—

Kaplan: Right, which he had not proposed to do. Presumably that was the fear. The idea that this was like a wedge issue that the administration came up with to beat Democrats over the heads with is exactly opposite. What happened is the Democrats, whether for good reasons or not, decided to introduce it. It did become the legislative sticking point that was preventing passage of what the President had decided was a critical piece of legislation for homeland security. At that point there was no question that all of us, I'm sure including Karl, said if you want to get homeland security passed you're going to have to make it an election issue and you're going to have to go out there and argue for it, and members of Congress who are opposing passage on behalf of the unions, we need to call out what they're doing. So we did, and it was effective.

Bolten: It's exactly the converse of what the myth is. The myth is that we used the homeland security issue as a wedge to undermine a bunch of Democratic candidates. What was actually happening was the reverse. We were using the election to try to pressure the Democrats to approve the damn bill. [Joseph Maxwell] Max Cleland got all bent out of shape—

Kaplan: So Max Cleland, who was a decorated war veteran from Vietnam and triple amputee, I think, or double or triple amputee, voted 11 times against the Department of Homeland Security in the Senate and was blocking passage. His opponent, [Clarence] Saxby Chambliss ran ads, called him on it. Whether it was too tough I'm sure is an issue you could debate.

Bolten: But it was not a White House plot to call Max Cleland.

Nelson: I wasn't assuming that; what I was asking—

Kaplan: A lot of people do. It's part of the lore. There is a great lore that says—

Nelson: I still have a question, and that is: Did you anticipate before you rolled out the proposal that this would end up becoming—

Kaplan: No idea. Now, we did anticipate that the authorities that we were seeking, the management flexibilities we were seeking, would not—people who like the status quo in existing agencies and have fought those reforms as they've been proposed with respect to existing agencies wouldn't like them. I think we did anticipate that some of that stuff would be hard to get, but we thought it would be worth getting because this was going to be a big bureaucratic monster of 22 agencies, 180,000 people all being mashed together. We thought that the Secretary of that organization really was going to need the most flexibility to integrate and operate that Cabinet department.

I think we thought those might not get through, but we thought they were important and we included them in the proposal. We did not anticipate, to my recollection, even remotely, this issue. It wasn't until—my recollection is that [Constance] Connie Morella, who was a moderate Republican from Maryland but has a big government employee union constituency—

Bolten: A district now represented by [Chris] Van Hollen.

Kaplan: Connie Morella was actually the one who introduced the amendment, so it wasn't even a Democrat who introduced the amendment. It was a Republican. But then it became in the Senate the big sticking point. To Josh's point that we were using the election and the campaign to try to get it passed, it didn't get passed before the election. The Republicans won the Senate, unusual for an off-year election, and it passed in the lame-duck. That was viewed as OK, the public has spoken on this. Objections faded away pretty quickly and we passed it and the President did not have to give up that authority. To my knowledge he has never used it.

Bolten: Certainly President [Barack] Obama hasn't used it, and I don't think we did.

Kaplan: I don't think President Bush ever used it.

Bolten: We're at 10:30 already. The thing I really want to get Joel on record about, because there is a pretty ample record about the financial crisis in which Joel played a substantial role—I don't think there is an ample record about immigration, which continues to be a festering sore on the body politic. So I'd like to get Joel on record about President Bush's truly strenuous efforts to achieve some kind of immigration reform, which is now sort of intentionally forgotten by both Republicans and Democrats for opposite reasons.

Kaplan: President Bush's interest in the issue predated his being President. It started by being Governor and having a lot of familiarity with the border issues, a lot of empathy I think for the plight of undocumented immigrants and also for the plight of businesses who often hired undocumented workers because they couldn't find legal workers in this country to actually do the jobs that needed to be done. He saw early, from the beginning of his campaign probably—I wasn't there at the beginning, but certainly by the time I got there in the early stages of his Presidency this was a big issue.

The week before 9/11 as I recall there was a state visit from Vicente Fox, who was the President of Mexico and was a leader President Bush had had a good relationship with beforehand and during the campaign. So he welcomed him to the White House on September 5th, I believe. They talked about immigration reform. The President made some mention of it I think in his welcome remarks, and six days later 9/11 happened and any talk of the border, any talk of immigration reform for the next three years, was just about securing the border and focused on keeping terrorists out, basically. The climate for anything comprehensive on immigration reform or ambition for immigration reform just didn't exist for all of his first term and then most of the first couple of years of his second term.

In the spring of 2006, right? First run up the Hill?

Bolten: I was hoping you would—I had trouble with the chronology. In fact, even in the very expert chronology that you all sent me it appears in both 2006 and 2007.

Kaplan: No, no, that's right. The President gave a televised address on comprehensive immigration reform in May, I believe May 15th, 2006. Do I have that right?

Bolten: That's not in here. I think there is a typo in here because two things appear—no, I'm sorry, I'm thinking of something else. You have the Fed helping JPMorgan purchase Bear Stearns in both 2007 and 2008 on March 16th.

Riley: Thank you for identifying that.

Bolten: It was 2008. It can't be both.

Kaplan: We did make two runs. The idea of comprehensive immigration reform was something the President wanted to pursue in his second term.

Bolten: Right.

Kaplan: He decided to do Social Security first—

Bolten: In 2005.

Kaplan: In 2005, I'm sure at some point we'll talk about the Social Security effort. In 2006 he decided to turn to immigration reform. By that time—

Bolten: This was just as I was coming in as Chief of Staff.

Kaplan: Yes.

Bolten: And dragged Joel with me as Deputy Chief of Staff. So I remember the President's Oval Office address on immigration reform as really the first thing that you and I worked intensively—the first major initiative that Joel and I worked intensively on after returning to the Chief of Staff suite.

Kaplan: In ’05 and ’06 it was a period of heightened political agitation about illegal immigration. It seems like an issue that had always been with us, and to some degree I suppose it has, but for whatever reason it really began to hit a peak in ’05 and ’06.

As we were working with President Bush and putting together the proposal in ’06, we knew that was going to be a really important piece of it. You just were going to have to address concerns about border security and our ability to prevent the flow of illegal immigration. That really is the real crux of the political dispute.

There are those who want to deal with the 11, 10, 12, whatever million undocumented workers that exist here today, and the opponents of recognizing those people and giving them some sort of legal status for a variety of reasons I’m sure, but one is basically they’ll look back to the 1986 amnesty effort by President Reagan, which was a true amnesty, basically just forgiving the illegal action and giving them a clean slate going forward. There was this sense that if you do it now again 28 years later for—at that point it was 3 million illegal immigrants and we gave them amnesty, and now we have 11 million illegal immigrants.

Well, if you do that again and we haven’t done anything to protect the border, then we’re just going to be the same place 10 years from now with 20 million illegal immigrants. You’re just creating an incentive for people to come here illegally rather than obey the laws. So we knew that was something we really were going to have to address both substantively and politically in order to get support for doing something comprehensive, which is what President Bush wanted to do.

His vision of this and view of it was always that these pieces all fit together. You’ve got to address the economic magnet that brings them here; you’ve got to address the border issues that keep people from coming illegally. You’ve got to address the fact that we have all these people here and we’re not going to deport them and they’re here because they want to work and support the families and so we need to treat them humanely. We have to have a process to meet the economic need going forward with legal immigration, both temporary legal immigration to deal with seasonal demands and things like that and also we have huge problems with our legal immigration system, huge backlogs. If people have to wait 10 years to get a green card, then they might think about not coming here legally. His view is that the country is built on immigration, it is a great source of our strength, and we need to have a system that promotes it.

So all of those things fit together, and that’s what went into the President’s proposal that he laid out—principles that he laid out I think May 15th, it might have been June in 2006, in a televised address as the start of a push for comprehensive immigration reform.

Bolten: All I remember about that address is that it was our first major address from the Oval Office. I remember there was a fly in the Oval Office during the address that I spotted after the President started speaking. It’s done live, so you don’t get a redo. I saw this thing buzzing around and I was sure it was going to land on his nose. [*laughter*]

Now, which Oval Office address was the one where they started him incorrectly?

Kaplan: I don’t have any recollection of that.

Bolten: They gave him the signal to start, but they had not fed him into the main feed. The producer from whatever network had the responsibility to handle the broadcast, which rotates among the networks, just walked in front of the President, and said, "Hold it, hold it." The President is looking at him like—

Perry: That same look he had about Al Gore and the debate?

Bolten: No, he was much calmer with Al Gore.

Kaplan: One piece I remember we had to work on before that speech—the border state Governors were really agitated about illegal immigration, not having enough help from the federal government. That was reverberating with their representatives on the Hill. In preparation for the speech and the proposal we solicited some feedback from our allies on the Hill. They said, "You have to get some help down at the border."

So we worked with the Department of Defense on a proposal to put National Guard on the border. The President, I believe, announced that as part of the speech. That was not easy to do in terms of getting the Department of Defense—

Bolten: I'll tell you, it was the first request I made of Secretary Rumsfeld. His department was naturally resisting. He himself was a staunch and principled opponent of using the military for anything other than fighting a visible enemy. I mean, to the point where he was proposing removing the Navy personnel from the White House mess. I said, "Let's not go too far here." But he had a principle on it. I expected to get huge resistance from him.

When I called him up and said, "I think the President needs you to do this. I'll give you an opportunity to appeal to the President if you want, but this is very important to the ultimate success of the President's immigration initiative that you agree to allow the National Guard to be sent down to the border."

He negotiated with us, but he was surprisingly, and I thought commendably, cooperative in allowing that to happen, and on very short notice. This all happened in a matter of—you kind of took over the speech and initiative process a day or two after you arrived in the Chief of Staff suite, and about a week later we had the President making a major announcement.

Kaplan: So we made the major announcement, made no progress in 2006. That was the first year where it became clear that Republicans were just very focused. Republicans in the House were not going to pass—and they controlled the House at that point. That was before the 2006 elections. They just were not going to pass any kind of comprehensive immigration reform. They were solely focused on enforcement. So it didn't make much progress. That was May.

We quickly get into election season at that point. It didn't advance. There was debate in the Senate. I think it was Chuck Hagel, [Melquíades] Martinez—I can't remember what happened, but whatever it was, it wasn't going to advance. Then the 2006 elections happen. The Republicans lose both the House and the Senate, which obviously is not a positive thing for the White House, but a silver lining that we saw was that this would give us a renewed shot at immigration reform because we thought with a Republican President who supported

comprehensive reform and Democrats controlling the House and Senate, this was one area where we might be able to find bipartisan agreement.

The President immediately recognized that immigration reform could now come to the top of his agenda. There was an early meeting on a separate issue in the Oval Office on education issues as I recall. Senator [Edward M.] Kennedy, who was the chairman of the Health Committee—is that what it was called in the Senate? He was there along with a couple of other bipartisan members to talk about education. This was a January-February time frame and Margaret Spellings was there and Josh and I. At the end of that meeting, the President I remember pulled Senator Kennedy aside to that little area in the Oval Office by his alcove, whatever you call it, the study area.

He pulled Senator Kennedy aside and said, "We can get immigration reform done. Let's work together on this. I want you to work on my team." Senator Kennedy had been passionate for all of his career on immigration reform. The President said, "Let's get this done and work together on this," and Kennedy agreed.

From there, Josh, that was early spring—

Bolten: Of '07.

Kaplan: Of '07. Josh asked—immigration was one that kind of cuts across all of our—it has an economic component, it has a domestic policy component, it has a homeland security component, national security because of Mexico component, so it didn't fit as easily into one of our policy councils and it was just going to be a high priority for the President. Josh asked if I would lead a White House effort. At this time I was Deputy Chief of Staff. He asked if I would lead the coordination effort, but leaning really heavily on Mike Chertoff, who was Secretary of Homeland Security, who could deal with the security issues, and then Carlos Gutierrez from the Commerce Department, who could talk about the economic issues and was very passionate as an immigrant himself about the need to deal with the undocumented workers who were here.

They were really the driving Cabinet forces. Built a team. Karl Zinsmeister, who is the Domestic Policy Director, led the policy effort. The strategy was we've got to get a core of Republicans whom we know will be there and then get them to work with us and with the Senate Democrats to get something we could pass on a bipartisan basis for the Senate and then deal with the House, which was still going to be challenging but less so because there were Democrats in control.

Engel: Could I get you to speak to that issue a little bit more, the intraparty politics of this? There is such a fierce animosity within the Republican Party in particular toward immigration reform, and much of it is tinged, it seems to me, with anti-Hispanic tone. Yet, saying this as a longtime Texas resident—this is so clearly diametric to the President's views. He just spoke on this about a month ago if I recall, reigniting his passion for this issue. What was the President's reaction, the White House's reaction, to dealing with something that your own party is opposing, something the President seems to believe not only politically but morally?

Kaplan: Josh can speak to the President's own passion on this issue probably better than I can. To me, it was just a great example of the President's courage and conviction. He believed it. He knew this issue well. He had intimate familiarity being from Texas, obviously with it for a long

time. He believed it was the right thing for the country. Tangentially, he believed it was the right thing for the Republican Party that needed to be able to speak to a growing Hispanic population for whom this was, if not necessarily their most important issue, an issue that, as we're seeing now, is a big impediment to us being able to speak to them about all the other issues that they care about and that we care about as Republicans.

That wasn't what drove him, but certainly I think President Bush had a great political instinct and understood that intuitively. Also, you can see where the demographics were going. The Republican Party couldn't afford to alienate this huge group of voters. But what motivated him on this, he just believed this was the right thing to do. He had a line he used all the time, I think going back to the campaign, that family values don't stop at the Rio Grande.

He viewed this that if you're a Republican and you believe in family values and hard work and people who believe in the American dream, then you ought to be not just humane but positively inclined to these people who literally risk their lives to come to the United States to build a better life for themselves and their family. He just believes that that is wholly consistent with Republican values. So he was willing and prepared to make the case to not just the voters but to the members of his own party.

He did it over and over again during his Presidency, but really intensely during that period in '07 when we really decided to make a run for it. He would call in groups of Republicans. There are Republicans who even then were much more sympathetic to President Bush's view, but those Republicans are not wrong—in their primary elections, it would be an issue. They would get challenges from the right. You should talk to Karl or the political people, but I've always thought that really the Tea Party's roots are traced—after the financial crisis I really think the first signs of the Tea Party sentiment and movement were during the '07 immigration reform debate.

Bolten: There was an uprising.

Kaplan: There really was an uprising in the party, that group of people who would ultimately, I think, become Tea Party advocates. It happened during that debate when we really were making a lot of progress through painstaking months and months of negotiations with Gutierrez, Chertoff, with me and some others from the White House. We were up on the Hill dealing first with a small group of Republican Senators spanning the Republican spectrum from Lindsey Graham and McCain on one end, who were very supportive of the President's approach, to guys like John Cornyn and Jon Kyl, who were leaders from border states who had historically been more skeptical of comprehensive immigration reform. We figured if we could get all the Republicans on board—meanwhile we were also having conversations with Kennedy, telling him to give us time, we've got to get the Republicans on board, keeping him up to speed on what was emerging as the possible package.

Once we got the Republicans on the same page, then we expanded and brought the Democrats in, led by Senator Kennedy but with five or six other Democratic Senators. In the same way the DHS [Department of Homeland Security] thing was the most intensive period I worked on within the executive branch, trying to do a policy process over a period of time with a lot of principal time, the Senators did that on immigration reform. They met for three afternoons a week from 2:00 to 4:00 or 4:00 to 6:00 or something in a Senate office, probably 10 of them

sitting around a table just trying to hammer out an agreement that they could all support and that they could then take to the leadership and say, "Bring this to the floor." You'll have I think 14 of them who would all agree to back it and oppose amendments. With that core and critical mass the idea was that you could actually get something through the Senate. So that's what we did.

It got pretty close. The final vote in the Senate was not close, but what happened was basically it got to about 58 and stalled. Then when it became clear you weren't going to get 60 to filibuster, a whole bunch of people came off the bill because they knew it wasn't going to pass.

Bolten: Say a word about—there was a dramatic moment when we thought we were just getting close to that 60. There was pretty intense lobbying going on and there was a recess coming up.

Kaplan: I'm not actually going to remember the leg specifics of this, and the one person who will if you talk to her is Candi Wolff.

Bolten: Is she on your list to talk to at some point?

Riley: No, only because of the length of the list. Normally every CL [Congressional liaison] would be.

Kaplan: One of us can find out exactly what was going on if you think it is important, but basically the supporters of the bill were working really hard in the Senate in the May-June time frame. As is often the case, there were disagreements about how many amendments to offer. It's very easy for the opponents of a bill to stall, to hold things up for amendments. They were having trouble getting a deal to get to cloture on the bill, and Harry Reid was ostensibly a supporter but was very lukewarm and was not really working to get the bill done. With a recess coming up, Reid couldn't get agreement from some of the opponents of the bill, probably Republicans. So he just pulled the bill down, basically. I don't know what the formal procedure is. He just threw up his hands and said, "Forget it. We're done." Then they went on a recess.

Josh was talking about the uprising. That recess period is what allowed the talk radio and the opponents of the bill to really mobilize and just beat the crap out of their Senators while they were home in their districts.

Bolten: But I remember we felt that we were literally just a couple of votes short.

Riley: Who was your target? Who were the few people—

Bolten: You might mention Senator Obama—

Kaplan: Oh, yes.

Bolten: —who had committed himself to Senator Kennedy and then deserted. Say a word about that.

Kaplan: My recollection of what he did—the group of Senators sort of agreed. There were poison pills on all sides. There were things that Republicans could propose from the right that would kill the bill if they got onto the bill; there were poison pills from the left that were

basically union-oriented provisions that would lose Republican votes if they got on. So what these 14 Senators who had negotiated it were basically agreeing to was, "We're going to oppose all amendments. Even though some are from my side, some are from your side, we're all going to agree, en masse. We're just going to oppose amendments. If we oppose amendments, then they won't be able to get passed."

Senator Obama was among that group. He was not active, but he was in the negotiations. He did a couple of drive-bys where he came in in the negotiation, made a point, some union point, but then there was a union proposal that came up and Senator Obama supported it. So he broke with the pact basically that he had made and supported it. I can't remember how it all played out, but it was very detrimental to the overall consensus process and divisive.

Bolten: I remember feeling at the time that he had intentionally undermined the process, as was Senator Reid, that while being publicly supportive they did not want this to happen. It may be unfair, but my suspicion to this day was that they just did not want President Bush to have a victory like this. On the substance, we were there. The country would be enormously better off. We may crawl our way back to that proposal, for which we had 58 votes at some point if we were lucky, but the country would be enormously better off if we had been able to put that across the finish line.

Joel is being modest about his role, but he did a brilliant job trying to pull that all together and build the concentric circles. Everybody will see now in the weeks ahead how difficult this issue is to bridge any divides. I think we came within literally two votes, and had we gotten it through the Senate with Democratic control of the House I think we could have gotten it through there.

Going back to Jeff's question, because you're asking about how was President Bush positioning himself. He would have been uncomfortable positioning himself as going against his party, but he was periodically willing to take that kind of view. He certainly wasn't wedded to a majority of the conference notion. If there was an immigration proposal that he thought could get a substantial minority of his party in the Senate, a substantial minority of his party in the House in which he believed, God bless him, full speed ahead. That's what we ought to do. It goes against the stereotype of President Bush the partisan, but in fact this was an extraordinary bipartisan effort. To have Kennedy and Kyl on the same bill orchestrated by Joel I think was quite a remarkable accomplishment. It really came close.

For me it is the biggest disappointment of the Bush years, of something that could have been done and we didn't quite get to do it. Social Security was a huge disappointment, but we were clearly just not in the game on that.

Nelson: I wonder why the 2006 effort—you knew that in 2007 that there had to be a strategy for getting this thing enacted. When you talked about the 2006 bill you didn't talk about what the strategy was. The President makes an Oval Office address and then what? What did you think was going to happen? How did you think you would get to passage in 2006?

Kaplan: That's a good question. I'm not sure—we didn't really have a strategy. On the other hand, I don't know that it was as evident at that point how difficult and how controversial it was going to be and the extent to which there was this movement growing. I think the 2006

experience demonstrated it, so we knew about it going into 2007. I think our hope in 2006 was getting it through the Senate, and that just puts pressure on the House Republicans and try to work them. I'm sort of embarrassed; I honestly don't remember whether we got it, whether the Hagel-Martinez bill got through the Senate or not. I don't think it did. But it was going nowhere in the House. That was clear. I think that's why it didn't pass in the Senate.

I would say we didn't fully appreciate yet how difficult it was going to be, although we clearly knew it was a controversial set of issues. The 2006 experience was a great learning experience for us. It set us up. It taught us how we needed to approach 2007 and it also showed us what we thought was the opportunity, which was Democratic control of the Congress would allow us to work with the Democratic leadership to put it on the floor.

I can't overstate this enough: If Ted Kennedy had been the majority leader of the Senate, that bill would have passed. He was unbelievably impassioned, totally bipartisan about it. It was a great learning experience for me. The guy just was an unbelievable legislative expert in terms of he knew exactly how to use every tool. He would go to the floor and rail against the Republicans and rail against Bush and then he'd come into the back room and say, "I had to do that. Now let's deal." He just knew exactly how to do it. He was willing to fight hard, but then make compromises, which is exactly what President Bush was all about. He could have gotten that bill across the floor. If Reid had had even half of Kennedy's commitment to it, I think we could have gotten it done.

Nelson: There was no comparable conversation with Kennedy in '06 to the one that the President had with him in '07?

Kaplan: There was an ongoing conversation with Kennedy, with whom the President had a great relationship, despite that sometimes Kennedy would bash him. But they had a good relationship going all the way back to the passage of No Child Left Behind in 2001. I recall a conversation in Josh's office once where we talked to Kennedy about it, and I think that was in '06. So there were conversations with Kennedy. The one in '07 just stands out to me because it was like when the President kind of laid hands on Kennedy—

Perry: Was that the President's idea, to pull him aside, or had you all talked about going into that meeting and pulling Senator Kennedy aside and speaking to him?

Kaplan: I suspect we talked about it, but it was not on that issue. With Kennedy that wasn't the kind of thing we would have had to suggest to him, I don't think.

Bolten: I'm not recalling us teeing that up. I think it was just as likely the President—we had talked about enlisting Senator Kennedy, but it was just something that he did spontaneously on his own.

Nelson: Just one quick question going back to the 9/11 period. We discussed what a frantic period that is. At what point did you feel like you were starting to work on things not 9/11 related again?

Engel: That's a great question.

Bolten: It dominated for the balance of the Presidency, but I would say we were looking at other stuff within a matter of months.

Nelson: Taxes?

Bolten: We were looking at taxes. We were doing Medicare in '03. This conversation reminds me, and our whole conversation brings back to mind how many things were going on at once. When you think about this timetable for the immigration issue, this was the same time that Iraq was going very sour in 2006 and the President in early 2007 was implementing a very unpopular surge. In the meantime he's pulling—and Senator Kennedy is probably on the floor calling him a war criminal.

Kaplan: Liar.

Bolten: He misled us into—so calling him a war criminal. In the meantime Bush is pulling him aside and saying, "Let's do immigration." I don't think there was ever a period in our eight-year experience in the White House when—except for very short bursts around 9/11 and during the financial crisis, when we were doing just one thing. We were doing many things simultaneously. Often making alliances with people who were our bitterest enemies on other issues.

Kaplan: All that is true, but I will say after 9/11 the war on terrorism was just omnipresent. It was the purpose of the administration, protecting the country. It infused everything we did.

Bolten: Everything.

Kaplan: In a way that whoever was elected after President Bush, I assume that would not be the case, just because that person had not been in the Oval Office on 9/11 and experienced that. But for those who were there, especially starting with President Bush and the Vice President, it was omnipresent every day.

Bolten: There was eight months of a Presidency and then there was the post-9/11 period, and it was completely different.

Riley: Thank you so much.

Kaplan: Thank you. It was fun. I probably talked too much.

Bolten: No, that's why I wanted you here.

Riley: You've been very helpful. It was fascinating for us.

Kaplan: Most people won't give you an hour and a half to talk about it.

[Kaplan exits]

Riley: We got out of Florida yesterday.

Bolten: I was keen to have Joel on record about those two things. You'll have a lot of record about Iraq, about the financial crisis and a few other things. You won't have a lot of record about the creation of the Department of Homeland Security, which is a pretty substantial event in the 43 administration, or about the effort in immigration reform, which will sort of disappear into the maw of history because it didn't happen. Therefore maybe it's not that significant, but I think for the Republican Party and for the country it is very important what happened there. I don't have a lot of hope that there will be a George W. Bush who can lead the Republican Party as close to sanity as he did at that time. But we'll see.

Riley: It was terrific to get that on the record. You had mentioned yesterday that the Vice President had come back to Washington after the election to set up an informal transition operation up here. When the formal transition business gets started up—I'm assuming you have a role in that—do you find that things are very far down the road with what the Vice President was already doing? Did you have to undo anything that was taking place that he was involved in?

Bolten: Certainly didn't have to undo anything. Nobody is sure exactly what is supposed to happen in a transition, so it's hard to say you were behind or not. But yes, it seemed relatively coherent. I had sent Gary Edson in a couple of weeks in advance to start setting up the policy transition. The effort there was to prepare briefing books for the people who were going to be taking over the agencies to identify parachutists who would go into the agencies and be representatives of the new administration. The most important thing that happens in a transition is personnel selection.

I was, I think a little bit to my surprise, although I didn't come into the transition with any great expectations about what my role would be. I knew I would be in charge of policy. Andy and I had agreed with the President—the President asked me, "What do you want to do? Do you want to be domestic policy director?" I think he had asked me on one of the last campaign flights. He said, "If we win, what do you want to do? Do you want to be the head of domestic policy?"

I said, "No, I think you have better choices for that. What I'd rather do is basically the job that I have been doing, which I think is an important role." Other White Houses have not necessarily been set up that way. The 41 White House that Andy described to 43 did not have basically the policy director role. Andy was the sole deputy during the Sununu era and he was more like the operations deputy than the policy deputy. It was a less defined portfolio and depended heavily on Andy's very close personal relationship with 41.

For the 43 White House what I outlined for Andy and then we proposed to the President was that we have two deputies, one for operations and one for policy, and that I do the policy job and basically keep the same job that I had in the campaign. Bush's attitude was kind of OK, fine. He had the right attitude for a CEO [Chief Executive Officer] in that kind of circumstance, which is, "I trust you guys. I want you there. Josh, you're doing something in the policy world. You guys figure out how you think it ought to be structured and let me know." We told him. He said, "Sounds good to me."

Then he said, “Who should do domestic policy?” I take credit for suggesting Margaret Spellings, which came as a surprise to Bush, and a little bit of a surprise to Clay Johnson, who Bush had tapped to be the transition leader, but that really meant the personnel leader.

Perry: Why was the President surprised?

Bolten: Because he and Clay viewed Margaret more narrowly as an education expert. They were assuming she would go over to the Education Department or be the education person in the White House. I said, “You’re not going to find somebody to run domestic policy who is an expert on everything and you probably ought to get somebody whom you trust, whose values you like, who understands your values, who can advance your most important domestic priority, which is education, but is a talented person and can do all the other stuff.” So they were both kind of surprised, but they said, “OK, great.” Margaret was surprised, I think, when she got designated.

[redacted]

Riley: Was Andy on board with this? I raise the question because there is in Margaret’s published accounting of this—

Bolten: Margaret published something?

Riley: A discussion that she had—I think it’s in Margaret’s account.

Bolten: Has she written a book?

Riley: I thought she had. I’m trying to be careful about my sourcing on this, but I’m confident I’ve seen it in a published source. I’m just not confident where, so it may not be Margaret’s. There was a question—there is an account of a discussion that she had with Andy about the difficulties of—maybe it’s in Karen’s account—

Bolten: That could be.

Riley: —where the President ultimately comes back and says, “Stop scaring off all the moms,” because Andy had tried to paint a very realistic picture about what life in the White House would be like.

Bolten: I see.

Riley: I didn’t know whether this was Andy’s way of trying to discourage her from taking the job or was he just being a realist in trying to prepare her for what life was going to be like.

Bolten: I don’t recall the episode, but I’m confident it was the latter, which is Andy Card’s style. He always takes pains to make sure that nobody is painted an unrealistic picture and is always

trying to tell people the truth about how hard stuff is going to be. So my guess is he was doing that. Probably just to test a little bit, are you really in.

Riley: Sure.

Bolten: So I'm not surprised at that. Andy hadn't worked on the campaign, so he didn't really know most of these folks. I didn't know Andy—I met him during 41's administration, but I didn't really know him either. I instantly liked him and thought he was a terrific choice for Chief. He had maybe met Margaret a couple of times before they had the conversation, "I'm the Chief of Staff and I want you to be the Domestic Policy Advisor."

Riley: Sure.

Bolten: Anyway, we had set it up so I would have basically the same job. I choose Gary Edson, who as Kristen described yesterday, had not worked formally full time on the campaign, but he was running his own businesses in Chicago and had a lot of flexibility. So I would bring him down to Austin about once a month for four or five days to whip the organization into shape around a particular event. It might be a speech. He organized and published the policy books that we did.

When it came time for debate preparation, I reviewed everything that went into the debate prep book, but he showed up whenever we did a reiteration of the debate prep book. He would show up and whip it into shape, which was perfect for him. He's a rough character but brilliant. It would not have worn well on him or on the rest of the staff for him to be there permanently, but for him to show up every three weeks or so was perfect.

He was well situated then, having not been the expert on any particular policy but having been through most of the policies with us. He was well situated to set up the policy transition staff. So the Vice President was well underway. He and his team, which consisted very significantly of his daughter, Liz, a very capable person on whom he relies heavily. They had done good organizational stuff. Gary shows up and starts organizing individual policy teams. Everybody beavers around and does papers and stuff like that. The really important stuff though that happens in a transition is the personnel selection. I think I was a little bit surprised, although when I finally showed up in Washington in mid-December—I showed up a day or two after the Supreme Court decision because as I said, I was in Austin the day of the decision.

I showed up here and I figured, *OK, I'm in charge of policy,* so I'm trying to figure out what I'm doing, and I wasn't really consulted on the major Cabinet positions. I didn't feel disparaged. I didn't try to fight to get in the room or something. In retrospect I'd say you probably ought to have brought your policy guy into that discussion.

Riley: Sure.

Bolten: But it was a very private discussion among basically the President-elect, the Vice President-elect, and Andy. Those were the principal players in the Cabinet discussions. I didn't even get the sense that Clay was intimately involved in a lot of the Cabinet decision making—and Karl. They had different players coming in and out, but it was—I think the Vice President is viewed often as the most powerful Vice President of all time, although maybe Joe Biden is

displacing him, but I think truly the apex of his power and influence was in the transition and the first few months of the Presidency.

Because the President naturally looked to him as an experienced partner in the creation of government. So I think Vice President Cheney's fingerprints are very heavily on that initial Cabinet, not least in Don Rumsfeld and Paul O'Neill.

Nelson: Were the Secretaries who were recruited given latitude to hire the rest of their people, or were they told, "You won't have latitude to hire the rest of your people"?

Bolten: They were warned that they would be in a position to make powerful recommendations, but the decisions were the President's and not theirs. That was part of the going in routine. It may not have been emphasized enough to some of them and it was a source of ongoing tension with, among others, Secretary Rumsfeld. That was left to the White House operation.

As I said, I don't think I was part of the conversations with any of the Cabinet officers before they were selected. I take that back. I had a chance to interview a few candidates for some jobs. While I was still in Austin, Clay had me meet with Rod [Roderick] Paige, who was on Clay's list to be the Secretary of Education. But most of the others sort of sprung from Zeus's brow. [*laughter*]

Nelson: This troika of the President-elect, the Vice President-elect, and Andy Card, how did they develop their lists from which to pick?

Bolten: Clay I think would have been involved with that. I guarantee you Paul O'Neill was not on any list Clay had. Everybody has their yellow pad and they're just sitting around and Cheney says, "I've got a great guy who was very well respected when he was an Associate Director at OMB in the Ford administration. He's a very successful CEO at Alcoa and I think he's perfect." Then they would check out his references. Everybody says, "Yes, he was fabulous when he was at OMB. George Shultz would say great things about him."

There was probably a lot of phone calling going on, but as I said, somewhat counterintuitively I wasn't involved in that. I don't know. You should explore that pretty carefully with Andy when you talk to him about where all of that came from.

Then there was the job of filling out the rest of the government. That actually did fall very much to Clay, and our different policy teams made recommendations.

Riley: You mean at the sub-Cabinet and agency level?

Bolten: Yes. Filling out the White House staff fell very much to Andy, Joe Hagin, and me. I was really pleased with the troika of Andy, Joe, and me. Putting myself aside, I thought they were very well suited to their positions. I really liked and still like them both. We had a good working relationship. No turf tensions. No status tensions. We didn't agree on every issue, but we had a really good way of working together and producing the org chart for the White House and filling in all of the spots that we needed to fill in. I probably had the most to fill in. I'm making the recommendations on who is going to fill in on the policy side.

We had Larry Lindsey—actually the first dispute was—this is interesting. This was a very vibrant dispute during the transition, which, as I think about it, you sort of think about it as a long period. It was a month.

Riley: You were awake most of that time, weren't you?

Bolten: I'm also trying to find an apartment, even though my family's home is here so I had a place to stay, but I'm trying to find an apartment and figure out how do I get my truck from Texas to D.C. and that sort of thing. But there was a vibrant disagreement over whether even to have a National Economic Council. I may have been the sole but nonetheless persuasive advocate for continuing the Clinton structure of having an NEC. I was informed by the experience I described yesterday in 41's administration of being a policy person at an agency, effectively an agency, USTR, who did not know where to go to get a decision made by the administration on issues that were not, at least in my world, of small import. So I thought, *You need a place in the White House to go*. Most of the economic team—Larry Lindsey and the folks who had served—remember, there are no 41 people involved at this point. The only 41 people are Andy, Joe, and me. Everybody else's recollections run back to Reagan and to Ford and maybe Nixon.

Nelson: The Vice President?

Bolten: He's not really playing in this at this point. Remember, his White House recollections are of Ford. He was at Defense during 41's administration. So almost everybody is on the side of no, that was a dumb Clinton idea trying to move stuff into the White House and to undermine the authority of the Secretary of the Treasury. Everybody was keen on restoring the authority of the Secretary of the Treasury. It just didn't square with me. I'm thinking [Robert] Rubin. He was a very powerful Secretary of the Treasury, but they still had a functioning NEC, which Rubin had previously headed. I think I asserted myself more than usual and said, "No, we really ought to do it this way." Andy went along with me. I don't think he had a strong view, but he went along with me and the President took our side of it.

Then Larry Lindsey, having been an opponent of the NEC, we asked him to do that job. I don't know if he had been hoping to be Treasury Secretary; I don't think he wanted to do CEA [Council of Economic Advisers]. We ultimately decided to put Larry into the NEC job, Glen Hubbard into the CEA job. Having worked with all of these people, I was involved in all of that. Condi was obvious for the national security job and her choice was Steve Hadley, with whom she had worked very closely in the Vulcans, to be her deputy.

I picked my staff from the best and brightest of the young folks on the campaign in Joel and Kristen. Margaret Spellings as the Domestic Policy Advisor and John Bridgeland as her deputy. Alberto Gonzales was a fairly obvious choice for the President as counsel. He had been close to him in Texas. The President loved Harriet Miers, and after interviewing her and trying to find a good spot for her, I think Andy astutely saw that she had the heart of a staff secretary. So we were filling in all the boxes. We had a White House surprisingly well set to go, in part because part of that ethos that Bush had said to me on the first day, which is he wants to campaign the way he is going to govern and then he wants to govern the way he campaigned. It was fairly

natural and easy for us to just transition a pretty sophisticated and high-quality campaign operation into government.

Karen Hughes had been the chief communicator and Dan Bartlett had been her deputy; they moved into those slots. Ari Fleischer had been our press secretary; he moved into that slot. Karl Rove had been our political strategist, and he moved into that slot and took supervision over some of the more political functions within the White House. Even though it was truncated, I think it was for us, for the White House, a very smooth and uncontentious transition.

Nelson: What you all did is particularly interesting because in the canons of political science one of the chronic flaws that scholars see in transitions is too readily bringing people from the campaign into the government because the campaign values skills of combat. You succeed by defeating the opponent.

Bolten: Right.

Nelson: Government needs more skills of cooperation, persuasion. You're not going to defeat Congress and make it go away the way you defeated Gore and made him go away. How did you all get the good out of the continuity and still have people who came in with a habit of success in government that requires a different skill set than success on the campaign?

Bolten: I think it's a good question and I think the answer is that we had a campaign that was designed for governing, not just for winning. I was given a lot of latitude as a policy person and I was consistently given the latitude to tell me what you think the best answer is and then I'll figure out the politics. That was George W. Bush's attitude when he was a candidate and it was very much his attitude as President. He hated getting political advice from his policy people, and on more than a few occasions somebody on the policy side would stray into politics and mention a poll or say who would be supporting it and the President would just cut him off and say, "I'm interested in your policy advice. You let me worry about the politics."

The President knew where people's functions were. As we move into those roles, Condi wasn't a political person. I'm not a political person. We had people in the campaign in the kinds of roles that would function effectively in governing.

Nelson: None of you really had much experience dealing with Congress. I shouldn't say none of you, but that wasn't a skill set that you're talking about. That put an awful lot on Nick Calio to be the one in the White House who was a—this is great policy and Karl is figuring out the politics and Dan is figuring out the communications, but there is a Hill to mention.

Bolten: I had a fair amount of experience.

Nelson: You did.

Bolten: I worked on the Hill for four years and then for three years I had basically a Hill-oriented job in trade and then actually worked in leg affairs. For a policy person I had a fairly high level of experience. So as we made our decisions early on in the White House, my Deputy Chief of Staff table was where we actually worked out a lot of the legislative strategy. That is

where I would convene the policy people and the leg people, and then we would take it into Andy's office for some kind of resolution.

Riley: Did Nick's shop formally report through you?

Bolten: No. As Chief of Staff, Andy spent easily 80 or 90 percent of his time physically with the President.

Riley: Right.

Bolten: So when Nick would wander down to the Chief of Staff's suite he would typically wander into my office. It might be something he would only be dealing with Andy on, but that would be fairly rare. It would be something going on legislatively that didn't really have a policy element to it. There would be a personality element or it would be something like, "I'm sorry, but Senator So-and-So is insisting on getting on the plane with the President, and we can't talk about it."

I worked very closely with Nick, with whom I had a great working relationship because I had worked for him in 41's administration and, true to Bush form, we'd given Nick a lot of leeway in picking real professionals to fill out his staff, which he did well. He had very effective deputies in the House and the Senate. So we had good legislative operations. But Nick was a major player in the White House. Very often your lobbyist ends up getting told what to do, to go try to sell it. Nick doesn't present himself as an intellectual, but he is policy savvy. He was at all the big policy meetings and would weigh in.

Nelson: When you're having policy conversations with the President, will he allow people to say, "Great idea, but here is a Hill consideration"?

Bolten: Yes.

Nelson: Or would he consider that to be the same kind of politics as a poll?

Bolten: It's a different kind. He would allow that conversation only after you had the first conversation. In other words, he would first insist we figure out where we think the right policy is and then we figure out if we can sell it on the Hill or how we can sell it on the Hill or what modifications we might need to do.

If it was a totally stupid conversation that you shouldn't even be bothering to have, then he'd probably want it cut off at the pass, but he'd want the political advice *after* you made the policy decision. That was true in the campaign; that was true in the White House. I can honestly say having been in most of the significant policy conversations of the entire Bush campaign and Bush administration that I do not recall a single episode where President Bush entertained polling as a factor in his decision on a policy.

Riley: We may want to delve into that, but my question was about streamlining the organizational structure in the White House. You talked yesterday about one example of this where Cabinet Affairs, which was a rather common feature of the organizational chart in earlier White Houses, you had decided you wanted to do away with that. On the national security side—

Bolten: We didn't eliminate it. We just made it a sort of service office.

Riley: So it would not have been at the Assistant to the President—

Bolten: Andy and I tried to downgrade it and Albert Hawkins got the President—

Riley: Got you.

Bolten: But we never treated it as a policy organ.

Riley: My question then goes to whether there were other—

Bolten: After Albert left, we downgraded it to a deputy, and then after that person left, we downgraded it to a special.

Riley: That is a terrific example. Are there other instances? Part of the prompt for this is that on the national security side one of the complaints that Richard Clarke always had was that he was—his status within the organizational chart gets diminished when Condi comes in because he no longer has a direct reporting line as he did before. The argument that is made is that it was a piece of the overall organizational structure trying to streamline reporting. I don't know if this was true also on the domestic side, if you're trying to—

Bolten: Absolutely. Much more advertent on the domestic side than the national security side, but for example, in hiring our heads of CEA, the CE

Q, Office of Drug Control, the science advisor—there are all these statutory appendages into the White House staff.

In hiring every one of those I made it a point with Andy's blessing to be sure to tell every one of these people that by statute you report directly to the President and we will never do anything to impede your ability to talk to the President, but by function you will do your work through the National Security Council, the Domestic Policy Council, or the Economic Council, and no substantive issue will get to the President but through one of those three councils or the budget director, which is sort of a side, parallel policy path. So be prepared that you, the head of CEQ, are part of the domestic policy organization, and if you want to present an issue to the President, it is going to be on time that I, the Deputy Chief of Staff, allocate to the head of the Domestic Policy Council. Otherwise you're not getting in to see the President.

Engel: This helps to clear up something I was confused about on the literature. Time and again discussions of this period suggest that you want an organization where people could go in to see the President but could not go in to see the President. In a sense it is very confusing to me. You always want them to have the right to see the President, but I guess what I should take from your comments is just not at their discretion for when?

Bolten: Right, or with whom. For example, the head of the CEQ or the drug czar—now the drug czar is a Cabinet officer, but we treated them the same. Yes, you're still a Cabinet officer, which, by the way, let me take a quick footnote and detour on that, which is I argued strenuously for taking the drug czar out of the Cabinet. It did not make sense to me to have any subsidiary

employee basically on the White House staff sitting at the Cabinet table. I was even skeptical about putting the Chief of Staff at the Cabinet table, but that historically had almost always been done. But I was certainly not in favor of putting the drug czar or the chairman of the CEQ or White House staffers or, for example, the UN Ambassador, who reports to the Secretary of State. Why would you have the Secretary of State and somebody who reports to her at the Cabinet table? So I was a strenuous advocate.

I remember John Bridgeland, my former deputy, made an impassioned plea to the President in the first few days of the administration when we had not yet designated the Cabinet, which I think is odd. Maybe it was in the transition.

Engel: I was going to say was that because of the transition?

Riley: It wouldn't be that odd for designation of non-Cabinet—

Bolten: To happen after the inauguration?

Riley: Yes, for there to be a decision taken later on.

Bolten: Is that right?

Riley: We'll consider this a Cabinet, which is what you're talking about.

Bolten: Yes, a designation. I'm surprised we would have allowed that to drift into the administration. That should be handled in the transition. You should decide who is in your Cabinet before you're inaugurated, I would think, but maybe we didn't, because I have a vague picture in my head of John Bridgeland in the Oval Office with me objecting strenuously and him making an impassioned plea to the President to keep the drug czar in the Cabinet because John was the one who was in contact with all of the drug abuse groups and everything.

We had made a reasonably big deal out of it in the campaign. The President cared a lot about sending the right signals about the importance of preventing drug abuse. John made an impassioned plea to the effect that it would send exactly the wrong signal if we take an official who had been in the Cabinet in the Clinton administration and remove him in the Bush administration. The President was kind of weighing—I said, "Have the simplest Cabinet you possibly can. Don't have ancillary officials in there. Your Cabinet shouldn't be constructed for signal sending."

So the President was kind of back and forth. I remember thinking that John just caught him at the right moment on the right day and he kind of went, "OK," like that. It was really a sort of haphazard decision and we ended up with a drug czar in the Cabinet. I think he saw the drug czar more often in Cabinet meetings than he did separately, especially after 9/11. That's how John P. Walters ended up in the Cabinet, but I told John Walters on the way in, "You're part of the domestic policy staff. Any time you want to see the President, absolutely you'll get to see the President, but it will have to be with the head of the domestic policy staff. She'll be there and it will be on her time that you're doing this because she is coordinating all domestic policy and it will have to come through me. I may tell you I don't think this is right for the President or I don't think it is a good time."

As I said to all the Cabinet officers, "If you insist, you will get to see the President. I will, however, tell him that you are coming to see the President against my recommendation and you will be facing a pretty tough test of using the President's time." I never had a problem with that.

If somebody said, "I want to see the President," and I said either as Chief of Staff or Deputy Chief of Staff, "I don't think so. Let's do it this way or let's delay it," and that kind of thing, I never had a problem.

Perry: What were your criteria for determining that use of the President's time?

Bolten: You kind of know it when you see it. A true Presidential issue—it's an interesting thing in the Chief of Staff suite, which both as Deputy Chief and Chief I brought to it an approach that I think Andy was very supportive of, which is that if you're dealing with nonpresidential issues, the role of the Chief of Staff's office is to force them to resolution below the President.

I always felt, and especially when I became Chief of Staff, that if you're dealing with Presidential issues, your role is actually to prevent resolution before it gets to the President because you want him to be able to make the decision. When I became Chief of Staff, that is one of the things I thought that I wanted to reorient as Chief of Staff because I had the impression—not the conviction, but the impression—that a lot of the national security decision making was done in a way to spare the President some difficult decisions and resulted in compromises that actually weren't the best policy, weren't really tenable, that we were often trying to bridge a gap between Secretary Powell and Secretary Rumsfeld and avoid the President having to make a tough call between them by some unhealthy compromise when in fact the President should have been given the option to say, "I agree with Powell," or "I agree with Rumsfeld." Instead, he didn't get a chance to say either way.

Riley: I want to ask a political science question. That is, in the literature about organizations there are two conventional modes of thinking about how you organize a White House. One is a hierarchy with a strong Chief of Staff, and the other is the so-called spokes of the wheel. I'm sure you've encountered it.

Bolten: Carter actually referred to himself as "the hub."

Riley: Yes, the hub and the spokes of the wheel. Which model were you trying to achieve in your White House?

Bolten: I always felt that a strong but modest Chief of Staff was the right way to do it and had a good role model in Andy Card. There is no one more modest. I always felt that we were keeping control of the operation in the Chief of Staff and there was nothing that the President was seeing or doing that was out of the view of the Chief of Staff. There was nothing that the staff was doing that was out of the view or control of the Chief of Staff.

Riley: How did you distinguish your deployment of this model from instances where—your model, I think, from the people who study these things, seems to work remarkably well across a wide range of issues, but there are famously dysfunctional models of very strong Chiefs of Staff. Don Regan, for example, was one. Maybe [H. R.] Haldeman was another one. I'm looking at my note about models to see what other examples there are.

Bolten: Sununu was often in that category.

Riley: Exactly. What in the way that you went about organizing your White House did you do to avoid the possible pitfalls of a strong Chief of Staff model?

Bolten: The emphasis on the word "modest." By modest I don't just mean demeanor, but modest about the role of the Chief of Staff.

Riley: Explain that please.

Bolten: Who is not a principal. Bush said something to me when he first talked to me about replacing Andy as Chief of Staff. I remember I was almost a little hurt because he didn't need to say it to me; I understood it instinctively. He said, "I don't need a Prime Minister. I need a Chief of Staff." That was the way I think Andy tried very hard to operate, almost too much in Andy's case. The way I tried to operate was you exercise sort of ruthless autocratic authority in support of the President in making decisions, not in support of the Chief of Staff making decisions. I think that's where some of these other guys went off the rails, which was that they accreted decision-making authority to the Chief of Staff rather than doing that in support of the President.

Riley: OK.

Bolten: Does that ring true to you?

Riley: Yes, it does, but again, sometimes the academic constructs are overly simplified. In your case there seems to be to some extent a greater degree of accessibility to the President than is certainly true in the Regan era, which almost suggests you're not looking at a pure model in the form of a hierarchy. A hybrid, maybe like the troika from Reagan's first administration, seemed to work really well, but on the accumulated evidence of people who talked with us, almost impossible to replicate because of the peculiarities of the people who served in that term and their relationship.

Bolten: Yes, it seems like the troika model—Andy used to talk about the troika model because he grew up in the Reagan White House. He talked about it in a disparaging way. The model itself seems impossibly dysfunctional. I think it worked because of the personalities involved. I think the model that we pursued was designed for functionality and would work with personalities who understood that they were Chief of Staff and not Prime Minister.

Riley: Did you have a model in history that you looked at and you said, that's what we're trying to approach, or are you on your own feet?

Bolten: I think we were more on our own at that point. If you had asked me at the time and subsequently what Chief of Staff would you most emulate I would have chosen Jim Baker, but he was Chief of Staff in that dysfunctional troika period.

Riley: Yes.

Engel: [redacted]

Riley: [redacted]

Engel: [redacted]

Bolten: [redacted]

Engel: [redacted]

Bolten: [redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

Perry: [redacted]

Bolten: [redacted]

[redacted]

Nelson: [redacted]

Bolten: [redacted]

Nelson: [redacted]

Bolten: [redacted]

Riley: [redacted]

Bolten: [redacted]

Nelson: Could you talk about the decisions that were made at the beginning or discussions at the beginning of the role that the Vice President would play in the White House, including what sort of staff resources he would have?

Bolten: Yes. I noticed that in the briefing materials there was a reference to a conversation I'd had with Scooter Libby during the course of the transition. I've heard it referenced before, and it's funny how one conversation of thousands that I probably had even during that month—but Scooter approached me about, "So what do you think the Vice President should do in this circumstance?" We agreed that this Vice President was going to be truly a counselor to the President and probably shouldn't be sent off with some special committee or something like that.

I said, "Look, we can figure one out. We can take competitiveness or the kind of thing [J. Danforth] Quayle had. We can find something for you. I don't recommend it. It's actually sort of a cul-de-sac for the Vice President to become less relevant in the administration." But we did end up turning over—because energy was our first mini-crisis. I don't remember how large it felt at the time; it didn't feel like a huge crisis. But it was the thing that confronted us when we walked in the door. There were energy shortages out in California and things like that.

As a matter of policy everybody knew U.S. energy policy needs a careful think and it is probably more important than the Secretary of Energy and it is broader than the Secretary of Energy on his or her own can manage. So why don't we have the Vice President lead this process? But I don't remember very clearly how we ended up there. I do remember the conversation with Scooter in which we agreed that we shouldn't send the Vice President off into a closet. Is that what you were looking for, Mike?

Nelson: I guess I'm more interested—so that's not what he was going to be. He was going to be a counselor, but that doesn't have much flesh and bones on it. Had Cheney had conversations, surely he had with Bush, at any stage along the way—

Bolten: I'm not even sure they needed to have a conversation. The relationship was such that Cheney knew that Bush would treat him with respect and deference and would seek his counsel whenever Cheney was willing to offer it. The relationship was strong and good enough, even though they didn't know each other all that well, that if they did have a conversation about, "Here's where your lines are, and here's where they aren't," they probably would not have needed to. The President made clear that the Vice President was welcome in every meeting and that the Vice President would have regular, easy access to the President. They scheduled a weekly lunch, which was their way of just catching up and making sure they had the time, but there was never any question or concern about them having access to talk to each other.

The ethos around the White House was very good. I think most White Houses have a bit of a tension between the regular White House staff and the Vice President's staff, some of it born from the usual circumstance that the Vice President is eventually going to be running for President, which was clearly not the case here. So the ethos around the White House was sort of there is a Vice President's team, but they're not like an alien entity within the White House. They're kind of like everybody's uncle.

For his part, Cheney made clear to his staff that they were not to Big Foot anything. They were intentionally very circumspect and demure. Often you'd go to policy meetings—I'm talking outside the national security area where I think Scooter in particular played a very active role. Outside those areas there were always VP [Vice President] staffers around at the policy discussions, but very rarely asserting all that much of a policy view and reporting back to the Vice President, who might then want to take a view, but I think a much more modest approach than most people imagine for the Vice President.

Engel: Were there any examples where you were surprised that was becoming not the case? I'm thinking in particular about the lead-up to the war in 2003 or the WMD [weapons of mass destruction] issue. The public perception was that this was near and dear to the Vice President's concern.

Bolten: I think it was. Again, I don't think I had enough direct visibility to offer much insight. Most of my visibility would have been one step removed, but yes, the Vice President surely was arguing strongly within the National Security Council for an aggressive posture toward Saddam Hussein for—he followed the intelligence very closely. Cheney would always get a full intelligence briefing early in the morning before he would sit down with the President, I guess it was about 8:00 A.M., the national security intelligence briefing for the President. He would have read raw intelligence, he would have gotten special briefings, answers to particular questions that he asked. He was very diligent for all of that stuff and often had a point of view, very rarely so in anything other than the national security arena.

I mentioned yesterday the one episode that I remembered of the reversal of the lean toward cap and trade in the energy sector. In fact that may be the only example I can think of where a Vice Presidential intervention had a significant effect on a policy outside the national security area, which runs counter to the—

I remember there was a guy at Princeton. I visited his class. He was teaching a seminar, apparently the entire thesis of which was Cheney ran the Bush administration. So they came in and they had me as the guest there. They said, "Tell us, how did Cheney run the Bush administration?" That was the basic tenor of the questions. I said, "He didn't." How do you know? "I was there."

Certainly the three years I was Chief of Staff there were plenty of disagreements, mostly between Cheney and Rice. I would say on balance Rice won 70 percent.

Engel: Just to go back. This is new to me, although I suspect it is in the literature, the Vice President received a copy of the PDB [President's Daily Brief] before the President every morning and then also showed up for the meeting?

Bolten: Yes.

Engel: Wow.

Bolten: He sat through the meeting with the President. I think he got some of his own materials from the CIA through his briefer that weren't in the PDB. He would request special stuff.

Engel: My understanding, I could be wrong, is that it is not unusual for the Vice President to get a copy, but to get a copy before the President and then attend the meeting, that strikes me as not the norm. Did that ever come up in any way?

Bolten: No, it didn't seem odd to me. I got a copy of the PDB. It would be on my desk at 6:00 A.M. or something like that. Usually the way the intelligence briefing ran with Bush he would actually be reading the book while the meeting was going on. He is an amazingly fast reader and absorber. So if as was usually the case—I didn't read all of the PDB articles, I would try to read them along with Bush and everybody else who had—Steve Hadley had the same experience—if I tried to read it along with Bush I found myself rarely getting more than halfway through before he was done and asking questions, really quick absorber and really absorbing what was going on.

So Cheney would sit there while Bush was flipping through the book. There would be 20 seconds of silence and then Bush would ask a question. Those times were some of the rare occasions where Cheney would actually speak up. He rarely spoke up in meetings even though you knew he had views.

Riley: I was just going to ask about priorities. You've come into an administration, and if you want to—it's fairly easy to say I want to govern as I campaigned, but in the course of the campaign you're making promises, you're dealing with policy issues across a wide range of areas. How do you go about establishing a set of priorities once you walk in the door of the White House? What are the things that are going to be the main two or three things that you're going to run with right out of the gate?

Bolten: We ended up doing a process similar to what Karl Rove and I did alone during the campaign. We broadened that process in the White House. I had built in my Deputy Chief of Staff's office—and I think it is still there, a cabinet flush against the wall, so that if you open two doors it was large enough to have four panels of large calendars inside. There is a calendar inside one so you could see four months of the President's calendar. It was kind of low tech. This was a bunch of whiteboards.

Riley: You upgraded.

Bolten: We upgraded in the White House to whiteboards. But the White House cabinetmakers—one of the great secret luxuries of the White House is that they have these carpenters who will just do whatever you want them to do. So I had them build this very lovely cabinet that opens up and it has four large whiteboard calendars that run the full length of the wall when you open it in the Deputy Chief of Staff's office. We would sit in front of that calendar with Karl usually running the show and talk about, "Here is what the President is doing, and OK, so we need to make our push on Medicare. This is going to be tax reform." The most active participants in that conversation would be Karl Rove as the strategist, the communications director, and especially, in many cases, the head of legislative affairs.

You'd be plotting out what is the battle plan. I guess in the military you're looking at maps; in the political context you're looking at calendars. So you're looking at how are we going to spend the President's time? When are we going to send the bill up? When is he going to make a speech? When are we going to invite the leadership down to the White House to talk about it? It is a scheduling exercise that is actually a strategy exercise.

I formed this group in my office and we named it "Andy's Anonymous." Andy chaired it. I never wanted to give it a name because then people would want to participate in it, so we just called it Andy's Anonymous. Naturally it grew over time, but it was basically strategy by scheduling.

Riley: How fluid is the scheduling process? I'm mindful we have just another minute or two. Josh, you've been so generous. How fluid is the scheduling process? It's on a whiteboard so I'm guessing you can—

Bolten: Well, the scheduler is there and she is taking everything down and fitting it and that kind of thing. There is then subsequently an actual scheduling meeting where the schedulers really

work out we're going to go to this city and all that kind of stuff. You don't need your whole strategy team for that. They'll come back with a plan.

Riley: My question more relates to—you've got four panels and you're meeting—Andy's Anonymous is a daily meeting? A weekly meeting?

Bolten: Weekly.

Riley: So if you've got your panels established, you come in the next week, are you presumably looking, maybe one more week down the path, but are you revisiting the logic of—

Bolten: Oh, yes, every day. Sometimes we met more often than that. Andy would make interim decisions. They were all ultimately Andy's decisions subject to being overruled by the President. So that if something came up and you say, "Look, we can't go to Chicago that day because Mayor [Richard] Daley is having a big rally against Republicans." So Andy makes a sudden decision, but yes, when we did those strategy sessions we were a very disciplined operation. Bush hated last-minute changes. If something was on the calendar in the next two weeks, you were at peril to make a change.

Riley: Of course.

Bolten: If it was only two weeks out we were prepared. Remarks were written, all that stuff. But you could make a change if you needed to.

Perry: So this was after—the President would have already made the policy decision. I'm trying to square this discussion with the previous one about the President not wanting to mix the policy and the politics. So this would have been after he had made the decision. Then you combine the politics, the strategy—?

Bolten: Right. Certainly in the first six months of the Bush administration the policy decisions had been made in the campaign; they were in that book. Interestingly, we didn't need to have that many policy conversations on some of the big initiatives because we knew what it was; it was pretty detailed. It was not that hard to take the fact sheets that we put out in the campaign and write legislation. At that point in those early months of the Bush administration we were staring at that calendar doing political strategy more than we were doing policy strategy.

Riley: I always tell my students that when these sessions are going well there is no place on earth you would rather be than sitting here doing this. You have given us a day and a half, generously, of your time, not just describing this but in such a fashion that we have been drawn in. I want to be respectful of your time and let you get out of here on time today, disrespectful in inviting you to come back to give us some more.

Bolten: Absolutely. I'd love to do it down in Charlottesville and hope to lure Kristen and Joel back.