

**CARTER PRESIDENCY PROJECT**  
**FINAL EDITED TRANSCRIPT**  
**INTERVIEW WITH JODY POWELL**  
**WITH PAT BARIO, AL FRIENDLY, REX GRANUM, RAY JENKINS,**  
**DALE LEIBACH, CLAUDIA TOWNSEND**

December 17-18, 1981

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##### **December 17 Session**

**YOUNG:** I've been over the ground rules with the participants. Since we're beginning late, I'll dispense with the usual welcome so that we can get down to business. We have been over the off the record nature of the discussion as well as the confidentiality of things that are said in the room and the usual arrangements concerning the transmission of the transcripts to the staff participants, which are reviewed for research purposes. We also touched on the general broad areas of subject matter that we'd like to probe in this session, and I'll just mention these briefly. One general area is moving from the campaign into the White House, the considerations involved in getting organized, how things were set up both in respect to the press office and in general terms of the White House advisory system. Second, discussing the range, scope, and nature of the Press Secretary's responsibilities and the operations included in that office, with particular reference today because Al Friendly will not be able to be with us tomorrow, with particular reference but not exclusively also to the National Security press operation and with respect to the office of media liaison.

We also have people here responsible for the news summaries, for press, and things of that kind, which will of course be included. The relationship of the staff activities of the Press Secretary's office to other White House activities and to their relations with and work for the President in the nature of servicing and advising the President should also be discussed. Mr. Powell's larger role as a presidential adviser in the administration is a third topic, this being a somewhat unique phenomenon in history for a Press Secretary.

With that purpose in mind, allowing us as students of the Presidency to understand how that larger role of Jody Powell should be accurately understood in this administration, we will finally move onto a whole set of larger questions about the Carter Presidency: how it should be viewed in some kind of historical or larger context, some of the major problems that this Presidency experienced, what they were and what they were not. Also, how campaigning and governing began to intersect, problems with the Democratic party, lessons learned from this Presidency, and how looking back on it from the perspective of the staff, it might look different from the way it seemed at the time.

I think we'll begin by asking Jody Powell to do two things. First, to deliver himself of some general observations, maybe things that would be important for us to hear at the

outset, and give him a chance to introduce the colleagues he has brought with him so that they can be more clearly identified in terms of their background and when they came into the administration. Please go ahead.

**POWELL:** I'll try to be as brief as I possibly can because I assume you would prefer it, and so we can spend the maximum amount of time dealing with the things that you think are important in the way and order that you think they are important. It might help to try to briefly and generally describe the press office operation as it existed during the Carter administration and let you know a little bit about how the people who are here fit into that operation. I don't want it to sound too much like the physical layout is everything, but it certainly has a rather significant influence, and I think it probably helps to have that in mind as we go through the rest of the day and a half.

The Carter press operation at the beginning was probably larger than most, not in terms of the numbers of bodies involved, but in terms of the number of functions and responsibilities assigned to the Press Secretary's office. It was, as we came to discover as we got into the administration, too large. It was either too large in a general sense, or it was too large for this particular Press Secretary to manage effectively, or perhaps both. In any case, as we went along, it began to spin off some of those functions to other semi-autonomous republics, or put them under the management of other people in the White House.

The White House press office tends to pretty well divide itself along physical lines into the West Wing operation, which occupies two offices immediately surrounding the Press Secretary's office. These are generally known as the upper press office. The one just off the press briefing room is known as the lower press office. That operation, the West Wing operation, for the most part is totally preoccupied with the day-to-day breaking news coverage and the demands of the White House press corps, if you will. Most of the people here worked at least part of the time in that operation.

Dale Leibach and Claudia Townsend came to that operation from other responsibilities that I'll get to in a moment. Dale was initially involved in press advance—which is something I hope we will explore at some point during the period because it's a very important and, I think, quite interesting bit of business. Claudia—who probably more than any other person here dealt with the day-to-day battering of the lower press office, which tends to be the first line of defense between the leader of the free world and the barbarians in the press room—came to that operation from the White House news summary, which is something we might want to spend a little bit of time on later on.

I think it has a good deal to do with the way not only a President, but a good portion of the rest of the White House operation, gets its information. It's a point of departure for just about everyone. I suspect for most people in the White House it's the first thing that they read every day, and I think ours was probably the best operation that's ever been there. Rex Granum was there in the West Wing press operation throughout the four long years of arduous service, and he also has the longest tenure with the Carter operation of anyone except me. He was there in the campaign press operation, too. He functioned as

my principal deputy. He was just by distance shielded from some of the pulling and tugging and pushing that Claudia had to deal with, but things usually came to him before they got to me. And a lot of times, even after they got to me, I would hide and send them back to Rex.

The national security press operation and relationship focused on Al [Alfred] Friendly. That also was in the West Wing, but he was in that unfortunate position of trying to serve two—I hesitate to use the word “masters”—but two distinct operations—Dr. [Zbigniew] Brzezinski’s National Security Council operation and my press office operation. He managed to come out of it with personality and everything else pretty well intact. That’s something I hope we’ll spend some time on also because it was from his office that we reached out to State, Defense, CIA [Central Intelligence Agency]—in some cases Treasury—and other agencies that were involved in on-going national security international relations stories.

Ray Jenkins came in better than halfway through the administration to that West Wing operation. His willingness to come was primarily in response to a plea for help from me. He’s probably in a better position to give you a more detached view of what he found when he got there, as compared to what he had seen as a newspaper editor and journalist from the outside, than just about anyone here.

The second half of the press office is what you could refer to as the Executive Office Building operation. The primary responsibility there, both in terms of importance and of the number of people involved, was media liaison. Pat [Patricia] Barrio ran that operation for about the second half of the Carter administration. She was the deputy in that operation for the first half. She came to us from experience on the Hill, and prior to that, in press work again, and prior to that as a practicing journalist. That is also an operation that I hope we’ll take some time to focus on specifically. I think we had a very good one over there and did it in a way that’s somewhat different from what has been done before, and, I gather, somewhat different from the way it’s being done now.

The responsibility there was primarily to reach out and deal with non-Washington-based press operations. It had to deal in a reactive sense in response to requests, inquiries, and so forth. But we also had a largely effective and very active program of getting out to them and soliciting their attention and their inquiries. In addition to media liaison, that Executive Office Building set of offices included the news summary operation, the press advance office—although as you’ll see as we go along, someone from the press advance operation was over in the West Wing most of the time because their responsibilities went well beyond the handling of presidential trips out of town. That operation also included speechwriters who were and weren’t the responsibility of the press office as we went along, depending on whom you talked to and how people felt at the moment. I think I’ve probably said more than enough here, so why don’t we get to your questions.

**YOUNG:** I have some questions about why, in moving from the campaign into office in, say, the first six months, things fell out they way did, and why the White House started off being organized as it was. One of the simple models that often are used to identify the

nature of the staff arrangements is—I'm sure you've heard of it—the “spokes of the wheel” approach. When one looks at the Carter administration, it seemed to end up with a different principle of how responsibilities ought to be organized. There was the recognition that there was an important role for a Chief of Staff, and that seems not to have been part of the preference for the way things ought to be organized at the beginning. Also, there's a question of how it looked to you moving off the campaign trail and into offices in Washington. What surprised you? I'd like to have some questions on either of those points to start the thing off. Chuck, do you want to lead off with some questions about one or the other of these points?

**JONES:** Well, let's just ask it. How did the circumstances change, how did you define the job originally, when I guess you didn't have the experience—nobody had the experience—of being there before? How did it look to you?

**YOUNG:** Also, was it foreordained that you would be the Press Secretary, or was that uncertain at some point? It was clear, I think, that you'd have some major role in the White House.

**POWELL:** I think for the most part you'd have to ask the President when you see him. Certainly very quickly after the election that was settled, so I cannot plead the excuse of having not had sufficient time during the transition to get my house in order. You certainly hit upon a key point. Very few of us had had any real experience in the whole Washington mix. Pat had, Walt [Wurfel] had to some extent, and that's pretty much it. Dale had, but to a slighter extent. From my perspective, I had so little in the way of expectations that it was difficult for anything to surprise me.

**MCCLESKEY:** Could I just interrupt to ask was the press job your preference? Did you have a choice?

**POWELL:** Yes, it certainly was my preference for no other reason than that I had no idea of anything else that I could even hope to deal with successfully. As little experience as I had there, I had more there than anywhere else. That remained so despite everything throughout the four years.

**MCCLESKEY:** Did you talk to Carter about the nature of the job?

**POWELL:** Yes, we had had discussions going way back. At the beginning of the campaign in '75, I had tried to persuade him that he needed to find someone with broader national experience to do the campaign Press Secretary's job, and I actually think I probably persuaded him. But I think he probably couldn't find anybody at that point with that sort of experience who was willing to get involved in a campaign, because the prospects looked as hopeless as they did in the spring of 1975.

But after that, it moved along pretty well. The transition period was partly in Washington, partly in Atlanta, partly in Plains, and I ended up spending most of my time in Plains. Rex, as a matter of fact, ended up spending probably more time than I did in Plains. This

was a mistake, looking back on it in the long run. I devoted not nearly as much time as I should have to thinking about how we were going to organize the press office. Frankly, I suppose Walt Wurfel more than anyone else had the responsibility for personnel and so forth in the new press office. It was that tension that continued throughout the administration, and I'm sure it was reflected in the difficulty that it created for people who worked for and with me. The tension in the press of an immediate breaking story in the Carter transition was a good example of that. It was a fairly active period both in terms of substance and in terms of press attention. I spent too much time, I think, dealing with that. If I had it to do over again, I would have given a lot to Rex, who was quite competent to handle it, and spent more of my time in Washington. Whether that would help very much I don't know, but I would have tried.

**YOUNG:** Did the President have any particular ideas he communicated to you about what the press operation ought to do, or were you given more or less a free hand?

**POWELL:** I had more or less a free hand, except the only specific instructions that he gave me was that he wanted the staff reduced by 30 percent, which I foolishly agreed to do.

**JONES:** The staff from the campaign, or the staff from what had been previously set up in the White House?

**POWELL:** The staff from what had previously been the case in the White House. I could easily have fudged that, since the array of functions was different. Being inexperienced in the ways of personnel and bureaucracy, I did it fairly honestly, much to the disservice of the President. I followed his instructions to the letter.

**TRUMAN:** You talked about the spin-offs. Was it deliberate to have included the speechwriters and so on in the early setup of the press office?

**POWELL:** Yes it was, and I think that was a reflection of that feeling that probably every Press Secretary has had, that since almost everything that everybody does ends up creating problems or opportunities, there is an unfortunate inclination to want to reach out and control what they do, in the hope that you can make them more sensitive to press concerns and considerations and coordinate those activities better. To some extent, it was based on campaign experience and the feeling that you needed to have a finger in these operations. It was not the correct decision.

**LEUCHTENBURG:** You just mentioned every Press Secretary. One of the questions that will probably recur today is how much historical awareness there was. And on this particular point, did you have a sense of particular Press Secretaries in the past as being people who had done well in the sort of thing you would like to do? Or, where things had gone badly, you didn't want to make that kind of mistake again?

**POWELL:** In a general sense.

**YOUNG:** Could I follow up just a little bit on Bill Leuchtenburg's question? This also raises the question about where one looked for sources of advice or ideas about setting up this operation, and the degree of consultation with previous reference back farther in history.

**POWELL:** I had had the opportunity to talk at some length with almost all of my living—I guess it goes without saying they were living if I talked to them—predecessors. That was very helpful in a general sense. But I'm not sure that even if I had spent more time talking to them about organization it would have helped very much. And I did. I don't want to give the impression that I spent no time doing that. Plus Walt spent a fair amount of time talking—and others did also—with our counterparts up and down the line in the [Gerald] Ford administration.

But as you know—perhaps even better than I—things change so rapidly, and there is such a tremendous difference between the nature of the President and the world and so forth—or the rest of the White House staff. But the relationship between press and White House between, say, what President [John F.] Kennedy had to deal with and what his press operation had to deal with and talking to Pierre Salinger about how he organized his press operation makes nice cocktail party gossip or history, but it doesn't apply too much to what you're trying to do. It might be worthwhile to get Rex and Claudia and some of these people into this because they saw the transition from a rather different perspective than I did.

**YOUNG:** One hears there are people who advise that there be a director of communications, that is, either a Press Secretary or somebody else who has broad responsibility for all public communications in the White House. Was that an idea you considered? Was it a way you saw the Press Secretary's role as properly being established, or was this not an idea worth considering?

**POWELL:** We thought about that. My feeling was that, for the most part, the media liaison operation operated in a relatively autonomous fashion, both because I didn't have the time to put to it, and because we had very competent people running it. You didn't need to fiddle around with it that much. My thought was that—and this goes back to something else that I said about having too much under one person's responsibility—it helped these operations to have a friend at court, in the sense that if the operation reported directly to someone who did not have as much access to the President and to the inside, they suffered from it. It helped because, even though you were a bit of an absentee landlord, at least when push came to shove they had someone they could go to to make their case on the inside and even take it to the President, if necessary. I doubt that the two things balanced one another completely, but that's something that I'd really like to hear about from Pat.

**BARIO:** We probably should find out when we talk about the Office of Communications what we really mean—the Office of Communications that Herb Klein tried to set up, and how it evolved in that administration, or the Office of Communications in the Ford administration. As I understand them—and you probably have spent more time studying

them than I have, although I've talked to people who have participated in both—both of them were basically political PR operations. Or that's what they evolved to be. The Office of Communications that the [Ronald] Reagan administration has—and I'm not sure the title still exists, but it had that title when they started out—definitely was to be a political PR operation.

When we came into our suite of offices, the Ford administration still had some of its equipment there, including a shredder, which I found an interesting thing to have in a press office. But they had been using a sophisticated word-processing system to do a marvelous book about all the accomplishments of the Ford administration, which by our standards was definitely a campaign-type operation that should not have been done inside the White House. (Maybe that's why we lost.)

**POWELL:** And of course we'd never do anything like that.

**BARIO:** So we had a different philosophy when we came in with the Office of Media Liaison. It was part of the press office, and it was operating as an integral working-type press operation in that we took press queries by phone, and we put on press conferences, special background briefings, and things like that. There certainly was a PR function to it. But I think the basic philosophy was that if we did our job very well as a press operation, if we were open and we answered the questions quickly and sincerely and honestly, that this would create such a nice impression of the President across the land that he would be reelected.

That didn't happen. But that's what we were trying to do there. And Jody's right that having his name to throw around—if we didn't have his presence to throw around—was very often the thing that we really needed to get something done. When Walt Wurfel left, I assumed the duties of liaison to the public information officers at the Cabinet level. And in that instance, particularly, being able to throw Jody's name around was important because there were enough politicians to understand that if Jody got unhappy that meant the President got unhappy—or it was the same thing—and so they were inclined to not want to make Jody unhappy. So that was useful there. But I don't think that our operation was what most people think of as an Office of Communications.

**KUMAR:** You used it for a long-range publicity operation. Was that going to be your function?

**POWELL:** That was one of those that again fell within it. As you know, we brought Gerald Rafshoon in to do that, and I think that was a positive move. But it paid some dividends in the short time that he had to work there, and which was complicated by the fact that once he became involved with the campaign, he obviously had to leave the White House, back in the days when conflict of interest seemed to be a consideration. Something like that probably would have been of benefit earlier.

**GRANUM:** I think, though, in a sense that what you're asking about is a director of communications or considering that concept. In one sense that's what we did with a



different title, the title of “Press Secretary.” The speech writers, the TV adviser, the press advance offices, the Office of Media Liaison, the regular conventional sort of West Wing press office all had to go through Jody. It was that kingdom, albeit not with the title of Director of Communications, as opposed to naming somebody as Director of Communications and having a Press Secretary working with or for that person.

I wanted to, though, back up just a bit in terms of the transition period, just in terms of emphasizing the sort of frenetic nature of all that. You know, elected November 2, very narrow margin, not clear at all that it would work out; Jack Watson for some months before the election working in a transition phase; the problems that led to that—which I’m sure you discussed at some length in previous sessions—and the conflict between [Hamilton] Jordan and Watson. In Washington, Jack Watson was over at the old HEW [Health, Education, and Welfare] building holding forth. Hamilton Jordan over at L’Enfant Plaza, in some ways two different camps. You also had the remnants of the national campaign office in Atlanta, and President-elect Carter and much of what would later be his White House press staff in Plains dealing with the national press corps, a press corps which was sort of upset about being cut off from their home base.

You know, Washington was where we were headed, but here we are for another three months in Plains working out of the Americus Best Western Motel eleven miles from Plains, and holding news conferences in the Agriculture Research Cooperative auditorium between Plains and Americus, the only place large enough to hold the press corps. Then having different Cabinet Secretaries, prospective Cabinet Secretaries, come down to Plains, going through the ritual, getting out the resumes of those selected, announcing them in the Agricultural Extension Auditorium.

“Bert Lance will be a Cabinet officer,” the *Atlanta Constitution* reported. “Will he be OMB [Office of Management and Budget] or Treasury?” And there were several days of that back and forth before any announcement. That kind of day-by-day thing was occurring within four or five days after the election. So there was that kind of activity all the way through. At the same time, as you know, very few of us were Washington-based; we didn’t have homes there. You didn’t know where you were going to live, and at the same time you try to figure out where you might live and accommodations of that nature.

Walt Wurfel, who had been in Washington—or had been a Washington reporter and had a good bit of experience there, and then had gone back down to St. Petersburg and been a political editor of that paper, *The St. Petersburg Times*—was first Press Secretary, and the administrative assistant to Dick Stone, then a Senator from Florida. So he was based in Washington. He took a leave of absence in June or July of 1976 and came to work in the headquarters in Atlanta. So he had a lot of Washington experience, and he was the real liaison with the Ford White House and in figuring out what a 30 percent cut of the staff is, and how many people we should have in these offices.

He was in competition for Powell’s time in terms of the planning, and would fly down for some meetings, as well as initiating a lot of telecopying of material or telephone conversations. But as far as Powell or anybody else trying to turn their full attention to

that sort of planning while outside, you've got 35 members of the press wanting to see you, and things are going crazy, and deadlines are coming up. It's very hard to give it the attention it deserves. We did take occasional trips to Washington. We were so spread out—Atlanta, Plains, Americus, and the agriculture extension service. So it was a very frenetic sort of period in which there wasn't that sort of contemplation. The statement is made, "Well gee, you had three months." But you didn't, really, to decide, or at least it didn't feel like it.

**POWELL:** Most of the people of the press operation would profoundly disagree with a theory that three months is too long a time for a transition, and that somehow that's a mistake that we make in this country.

**BARIO:** It should be noted, though, that the press operation in the White House was fully staffed on January 20, when we went to work, whereas the other operations were not. And it was a good thing. The Reagan folks tried to do it with about two people to answer the phones on the first day, which is crazy.

**JENKINS:** I don't want to get ahead of the chronology here, but I was a transition officer for the Reagan transition, and it worked extremely well. Larry Speakes was there, my counterpart with them, and we got along extremely well. I wrote a 20- or 30-page memorandum suggesting a lot of things that we really would like to have changed. But you don't change things lightly up there, you know.

To change a procedure about the presidential press conference, for instance. I'd rather try to rearrange the Russian and Chinese border or something. But I suggested a lot of things that they could change at the outset, which they did. Some of these things, of course, came from this group here. I did find that they were so tied up, they must have been experiencing exactly the same thing that you all were. It seemed to be almost chaotic, and I remember just almost the day before the Inauguration, I got a frantic call from Larry Speakes asking if he could keep our news summary staff on for a few weeks. I didn't know whether these people had already made their plans and what have you. We did arrange to keep them on, I think, for a couple or three weeks. But they weren't nearly as well-organized and well-staffed as the Carter press office was.

**GRANUM:** Except they had more of a publicity campaign when they came, and they won. They had a whole sense of how they were going to communicate, what message they wanted to communicate, and how they were going to communicate it.

**POWELL:** That's a very significant point, and it makes clear something I should have said at the beginning when I talked about my neglecting things and things I would have done differently. The staffing organization and that sort of thing—with the exception, perhaps, of trying to put too much under one roof—went very well in the sense of having good people there knowing pretty well what their responsibilities were and so forth. But that thing of sitting down with policy people and saying, "What are we going to do and in what order? How can we maximize the chips that we're going to have to play in these

first few months that we'll never ever see again?" That was not done as well I think as it could have been done and as well as the Reagan people did it.

At the same time, the Reagan operation has that advantage, which a more ideological approach to government always has, in that it's a little bit easier to understand it because it's a little bit simpler. Even if we had sat there for the entire three months, given the nature of the Carter Presidency and the basic sort of philosophy that he brought to office—which tended to be more eclectic and so forth—we would not have come up with that sort of approach.

There was a sub-setting of priorities. One of the first things we did was an economic package. That economic package—you can debate with the policy people about whether it should have had a little more emphasis, a little less on stimulation or whatever. But in going back and looking and refreshing our memory about the impact that that made, there was no way that that sort of approach could have been the focus that the Reagan approach was, simply because the Reagan approach was such a departure from the sort of flow of things, whereas ours tended to be within the banks of that stream.

**TOWNSEND:** And the Reagan people also had the advantage of using—in the press office and elsewhere—people who had been there before. And it's easier not to be distracted about how you go to work, and where's your office, and what does it mean, if you've seen it all before. And they have a number of people who have been working and striving for years to get in and do the kind of things that they're now trying to do, which gives you a little advantage.

**KUMAR:** But didn't they bring in that kind of person? That's what they were looking for—somebody like David Gergen, who had been there in the [Richard] Nixon administration, and who in the Ford administration had been developing a sense of how to work on long-range publicity. They brought him in for that kind of reason?

**POWELL:** I assume they did.

**TOWNSEND:** I assume that's their reason.

**YOUNG:** I think this whole area of what themes or projections and what one had in mind is a very interesting subject to explore. Also, the relationship between that and whether the President or his close advisers had had an idea about anticipating perhaps some problems, had an idea about the importance of public communication—given the circumstances under which he came in, and the circumstances which later developed on Capitol Hill. I think this is a general area of interest we need to get into. Chuck Jones, you may have had some other question.

**JONES:** I want to go back to Rex's very nice description of the frenetic situation at the time. I think more than most positions, this one will get defined for you if you don't define it yourself. Lots of the people you're dealing with are mighty anxious to tell you how to go and almost create the stories and demands—which, all of a sudden, you find

yourself responding to. So my question really goes back to that point at which you've got to begin to decide how this thing's going to be put together, and whether you have the time to say, "Here's the way we want to do it."

I think for the record we'd be interested even in who you talked to, who you first brought together to set the thing up, and what kind of instructions you had about the organization in Plains. And also when you were going to get to Washington, and some kind of nitty-gritty sort of business. I think that's very important for the record, for people looking at this later.

**POWELL:** There is no logical, orderly, decision-making process involved there. It was done for the most part on the fly. It was done in a series of conversations with Walt about organizations, and a few with the President about what I wanted to do in the office. A number—as I mentioned before—were with former Press Secretaries and, to the point you just made, with reporters who had their ideas and suggestions. I think most, if not all, were made in a constructive desire to be helpful, but certainly, as you imply, based on their expectations about the job and so forth. Although not all of them were self-serving, by any means, in the sense of urging me only to do those things which would make life easier for the fourth estate as an institution. I remember a long evening at St. Simon's with Bob Pierpoint from CBS—who, I suppose, has been around the White House longer than anybody. I think he has been there longer than any other White House correspondent.

**TOWNSEND:** [James] Deakin, I think.

**POWELL:** Well, yes, maybe so.

**LEIBACH:** Jody never had a long session with Deakin.

**YOUNG:** Excuse me just a minute. Did you want to pursue that a little bit further, Chuck or Rex?

**JONES:** I'd like to hear Rex on that.

**GRANUM:** Well, you sort of had to wait around and get asked to join the White House staff. I couldn't really discuss who was going to do what in the press office because you first had to be asked. You sort of sign on for the campaign, and there's that period in there. But there was really already a press office structure in place that had, however narrowly, succeeded in the campaign, so it continued. We flew back into Atlanta, having won the election at 3:34, or whatever, in the morning, and went back to Plains. And there were briefings. The press corps was going at Jody and others, understandably, correctly. The next day, and the day after that, the *Atlanta Constitution* story on Bert Lance broke, and "Is Cy [Cyrus] Vance going to be the Secretary of State or not?" and "Yes, he is." And Cecil Andrus comes down to Plains, and I mean, it just went on from there. So "on the fly" is the correct description.

**JONES:** When were you asked?

**GRANUM:** A day or so after the election. I think it was not specifically defined what I'd be doing, but a statement by Jody that "I very much want you to stay." I think the night of the election, you had a real brief discussion with Walt Wurfel about, "We ought to go back to Washington and get rested," but that Jody sure wished he'd help us set up the operation there, and he did that. Then the next day or the day after, we had a brief conversation.

**JONES:** You said that being in Plains, you might have moved to Washington sooner than you did. That might have been a good thing to do. Might there have been some advantage in operating in Plains just for your own purposes? Taking the Washington press corps away from Washington?

**GRANUM:** I think it was to our disadvantage. I think Jody actually talked about us moving to Washington earlier, which I think would have been a good idea.

**POWELL:** Of having spent more time in Washington. I think you also have to keep in mind the distinction between the person who was going to be the Press Secretary and the person who's going to be the President. I think it was certainly to the President's advantage to be away, and also appropriate—from just a protocol standpoint—not to just sort of set up in Washington from Thanksgiving on. But it would have been beneficial for me, and perhaps for some others, to have spent more time away from Plains than we did.

**YOUNG:** Clifton?

**MCCLESKEY:** I'd like to pursue this question of transition, particularly with Jody and with Rex. To what extent did the concerns, the problems, the needs, the issues, identified in the transition period for the press office prove to be the real needs and concerns and problems? Did you get an accurate picture of what needed to be done, what you were going to be contending with?

**POWELL:** I don't know if I ought to answer this. Rex has never deferred to me very much. He'd be less inclined to do so now. But in the larger sense, I think fairly accurately in terms of priorities, it was fairly evident that the economy was going to be number one on the list, and that would be the first major focus of the administration.

**MCCLESKEY:** I'm sorry. Perhaps I didn't make myself clear. I wasn't thinking about the substance of policy areas, but about the operation of the White House office itself and the communication problems.

**POWELL:** I think I'll make this a substantive answer. It was pretty clear that energy was going to be the next thing on the list at some point as soon as we could do it. So we knew that we were going to need to be able to deal with it in terms of communications in the public and so forth. What we did not foresee was the large number of other matters that were also sitting there waiting to spill over the dam as soon as we got to Washington. In

terms of what we needed to communicate to the public in a more general sense, I think we had a pretty good idea about that also. I spent a fair amount of time with Pat Caddell and Hamilton and others, a fair amount considering where we were coming out of the campaign, what public perceptions there were about Carter and the Carter Presidency, the things that we needed to strengthen and maintain, the places where we had work to do.

One that I suppose is routine that we certainly identified was expectations. I remember being frankly somewhat pleased as we went into January at the fact that expectations were reasonably low. On a number of the most difficult issues, people said they hoped the President would do something, but they really weren't too sure that it could, in fact, be done. There was an accurate perception coming out of the campaign that this problem of a President-elect who was this way and then that, not clearly perceived—which was identified earlier, and had been through the campaign—was a serious problem. We never adequately dealt with that. There are a number of reasons which I suspect we'd be better to get to that later. I could make the list a bit longer, but in terms of what we wanted to do in administration, what we wanted to communicate to the public, it was a pretty good general idea about that.

**YOUNG:** I'd like to press you to be a little bit more specific on that. You had identified your problem or your needs specifically as follows in terms of what this meant for what you needed to do. You had a President who was not fully defined in terms of his image; you had fairly low expectations—that was a plus, to some extent. What did this lead you to arrive at as a focus or a target for what your communications ought to communicate?

**POWELL:** Well, one of the things that the problem of poorly defined positions, at least in terms of perceptions, led to was exactly the first thing that I mentioned: an inclination to want, as Press Secretary, to get your finger into more of the overall White House operations than was probably advisable at the time. The feeling that if you could get a string on some of these various things that were going on that tended to contribute to that, that you might prevent a little bit of it.

There was, in terms of positives, President Carter as a candidate, then as President-elect, very strong appeal on the attitudinal sorts of questions—the “he cares about people like me,” “he’s close to me on the issues” sorts of things—that have always been very important, and have tended to forecast movements and approval ratings even for a sitting President very accurately. This last election was an anomaly in that regard, and a very interesting one, but it’s not what we need to deal with right now.

Out of that came that combination of attitudes that had to do with the traditional American virtues, if you will, of honesty, sincerity, frugality. And a good bit of what we did during those early months was designed to strengthen and enhance that. Some of it may have been a step too far in some cases, but overall, I don't disagree with that strategy, even in retrospect, either in terms of the general political expediency of it, or in terms of good public policy.

There was a famous Pat Caddell memo which leaked, at some point, and produced screams and howls and so forth, one point of which was that if we did what we needed to do during the Carter years, we could expect to catch as much trouble from the left wing of our own party as we did from the Republicans. That certainly proved to be true—even quicker, I think, than Pat expected.

There was another point that Pat made, and others made very well, which we eventually lost sight of—I think to our misfortune. That was—if you remember the days when people used to get criticized for style over substance—well, Pat made the point very well that the stylistic aspect of the Presidency is quite important. It's probably more important for a President who does not occupy a fairly well defined position on the ideological spectrum than it might be for, say, President Reagan. We began with that clearly in mind. And I think we became, six months or so into the administration, overly sensitive to that sort of criticism. We began to not do things that our instincts and our original judgments told us we ought to be doing. We tended to lose the benefits of that approach while retaining the negative impressions of that's what we were. Plus, the press of problems that came from perhaps an excessive substance, in the sense of trying to deal with so much at once.

**YOUNG:** What about running against Washington? Was that anticipated to generate a communications theme or a communications problem?

**POWELL:** It wasn't exactly that so much as it was an accurate perception during the campaign, and planning for the campaign, that the public was looking for a change, for a different approach to these things. I think that was accurate. I think it was a trend which continued and accelerated, and one which in the end was probably more powerful in the election of Ronald Reagan than it was in the election of Jimmy Carter. The difficulty that I had with that—and I suspect most of us did—was in maintaining that distinction while at the same time figuring out how you deal with existing institutions and people whom we were unwilling to put to one side.

I don't think the option was open to us, given what we set out to do, to do what President Reagan has done—to really make a clean sweep, and require a sort of signed-in-blood profession of loyalty to a particular point of view, or set them to one side. There was always that tension there, but I guess to answer you, yes, there was a perception that we did need to maintain that bit of difference. A separation from not being—immediately upon taking up residence in the White House—absorbed by and becoming a part of things as they were. In the end, I think one of our problems was that we frankly were not able to maintain that distinction.

**YOUNG:** I'm just trying to get at what—in thinking through what you needed to emphasize, and what you needed to do in the way of public communications—what you were assessing at that time as the main liabilities and the main strengths of this President coming into office through a new system of nominating and so forth. A President who ran against Washington and a President who was apparently out of the mainstream of traditional Democratic Party politics, and won almost as a loner and so forth. I'm just

trying to get you to bring out how that bore on your vision of what your communication problem was.

**BARIO:** Jody could recall the letter-writing campaign, and how the President was going to stay close to the people, and maybe dwell also a little bit on deciding that “Hail to the Chief” is disappearing. Perhaps that will get him on the track of what you’re trying to talk about.

**GRANUM:** While I’m thinking about it, let me mention this: We’ve come close to touching on it, but we haven’t mentioned the magic word, which is probably just as well, since so many of the discussions become so clichéd, but “Watergate.” Succeeding Gerald Ford, Richard Nixon’s Vice President, it hadn’t been that long, and there was still that real residual distrust that was obviously at one point very intensely felt throughout the country, but always—before, during, and after—much more intensely felt in Washington. I can remember very many references to Watergate or Watergate-like actions in the transition period, and that’s part of the mix that we were competing with.

Now it seems as if Watergate was so long ago, but at that time—even just these five years ago—it was much more of a reminder. That’s where the cutting of the staff by 30%, the de pomping, “Hail to the Chief”—which we ought to discuss at some point, because I think Carter never said that he didn’t want “Hail to the Chief” played, and it became a big issue some three years later when they finally started playing it again. The cutting of the limos, walking down the street at the Inauguration—I think that was all part of the “I’ll never lie to you” part of the campaign. That all fit in.

**BARIO:** And the promises book?

**GRANUM:** The promises book. A mistake.

**TRUMAN:** Just on that point, weren’t you all committed to a kind of openness in contrast to Ford and Nixon? Then, even if you had come in wanting to manage information policy, you would have had to reverse track to achieve it.

**POWELL:** Remember that during the campaign there had been a commitment to the two press conferences a month. There had been implied commitments to a lot of other things that had to do with openness and access and so forth. And Rex makes a very good point. That shadow of not just Watergate, but Watergate having been the last act of it all, of the whole Vietnam division and acrimony and so forth. It’s hard to remember how much with us that was. We may have missed it as far as the country is concerned, but I’m not sure. I think in the winter of ’76-’77 that was still very much with the country, too.

**YOUNG:** Looking backward at the damage, this experience and your need to distance from that.

**LEIBACH:** I was just going to say I think that Watergate, if anything, was really profoundly felt in the press office at the beginning. I can remember at some of the



briefings, when Jody would have an announcement, somebody would say, “When did you talk to the President?” That dissipated quickly, and I’m not sure if that was just one or two reporters, but I found a real sensitivity among the press to being manipulated. Questions were raised when we set up the radio operation and the media liaison office. They said, “This is just something out of the Nixon press office.” You know, going around the Washington press corps and manipulating the people.

**TOWNSEND:** There were a number of reporters—I mean, in spite of all that went into thinking about how the administration’s going to operate, in light of all that—there were people who said to me on more than one occasion, “You guys aren’t conscious enough. You don’t recognize the buzz words. You weren’t here. You were in Georgia when Vietnam was going on, and you were somewhere else when Watergate was going on. You don’t have the slightest idea how people feel about that. And why aren’t you more sensitive in the way you present things to the way we, the Washington press corps, are going to react to this? If you had the perspective, if you’d been in Washington, you wouldn’t get yourself in trouble on some of these things. You wouldn’t set people’s hair on edge by using the wrong word to describe what you’re doing.”

**POWELL:** Or phrase. I constantly ran into that. I would use what I thought was—and still think in retrospect—was a reasonably accurate and informative way to describe a motive or an action and so forth, and it would turn out to be sort of three out of the four words were the same words that [Ron] Ziegler had used to describe some high crime or misdemeanor.

That particular example is more illustrative than it is anything else. I came to the conclusion, which I still have, that of all the institutions in our society, the press was probably the most traumatized by Watergate, and it probably took it longer to scab over than it did anybody else. If you had to refine it more, I think the White House press corps—for all those reasons that people have written about and talked about—were even more bloody and bruised from it than the press corps at large. They were sensitive to it, and perhaps we were in the press office more than other people in the White House. But I’m not sure, because we were in such contact with them and many of the things they said. Some of it was criticism, but some of it was trying to be helpful. I mean, those comments that Claudia refers to about “You’ve got to realize what’s happened here, what we’ve been through. You’ve got to be more sensitive to that” were made in the sense of trying to help us understand why this thing was the way it was.

**JONES:** Surely also affecting your behavior, trying to affect your behavior.

**POWELL:** Yes. Certainly there was at one level the self-serving aspect of it in the sense of promoting particular interests, but it went way beyond that. It was much more psychological than it was calculating.

**YOUNG:** Were you fully prepared for this kind of sensitive, bloody, and bruised press?

**POWELL:** No. I certainly was not, although I became more prepared from the experience of the campaign. You got a taste of it. You could feel it and see it coming from your experience in the campaign.

**TOWNSEND:** What it meant in a very basic sense sometimes was that Jody was limited in the tools that he could use to do the stuff that he was trying to do. In a very basic sense, it did away with a lot of the language. You had to find new ways to describe things. You had to think very carefully about what you said, because the Press Secretary and the press corps didn't get the same resonance from the words coming out of the mouth of the Press Secretary. You were not operating any more—maybe we think there was a better basis of shared trust 20 years ago—or at least common perceptions about what everybody was trying to do—and that just wasn't there. Very innocent-seeming things could raise all of that, and you had to really pick your way through. And it's hard to know how to say what you're going to say if you're not trying to set off all sorts of alarm bells. That seems like a silly thing, but I think, in fact, it was very significant.

**KUMAR:** Did it also affect coordination? If you coordinated things—like between parts of the White House—that it would look like the Nixon operation?

**POWELL:** Well, now you go back to the comment that was made here about the “spokes of the wheel” business. Part of setting the operation the way we set it up—not so much in terms of the press office, but in terms of the White House and the government as a whole—was to some extent a reaction to that. There was the feeling that you didn't want to create one or two people who could deny everyone else access to the President. That, to some extent, had to do both with an experience in Georgia which had worked, I think, fairly well on a much smaller number of smaller executive office operations. But it also had to do with the background that we were playing against, which was the Cabinet government business, the free access of the Cabinet to the President, the disinclination to use the White House staff to discipline—or whatever a good euphemism for discipline is—the Cabinet and so forth. A lot of that had to do with that system, that situation, too.

**BARIO:** This point raises something that I found myself being questioned about very frequently all during the years: Watergate and the press. It also is the thing that I am most proud of. I think the Carter administration press office restored some belief in integrity in politicians. I went to the White House after fourteen years of working for Senator Phil Hart, Mr. Integrity, and I went into culture shock when I got the kind of questions that I got—and not just from the White House corps, but from all media I was talking to from across the nation.

In my experience with Hart, we dealt with skeptical reporters from time to time—especially in the anti-trust subcommittee where I worked most of my time. But the drill would be that you would say, “You know, this is a startling thing I'm telling you.” And they'd say, “Yes, well, what about?” And you'd give them an answer, and they'd say, “Well what about this?” and you'd give them an answer. “Well, what about this?” and you'd give them answer. And then, finally, you reached a point where they'd said, “Yes, you held up pretty well under my questioning. I think it's OK.”

We never reached that point when we went into the White House. They always went away giving you the impression of believing *I just know the S.O.B. dodged or lied to me, and later I'm going to be able to say that if they'd just answered my tough questions, I would have caught it.* There's always that sense that they're out to catch you. Very tiring by the end of the day, I'll tell you.

**TOWNSEND:** With a certain number of people whom you talked to, a question would be asked, and the answer would be, "Well no, that's not really true." And to a certain percentage of your audience, when you say, "No, that's not really true," what they hear is, "That's exactly right, but I don't dare admit it." And that's a gap that is just virtually impossible to get over.

**LEUCHTENBURG:** I'd like to return, if I could, to something you said earlier. You were saying in response to the notion that the Reagan administration seemed to have a keener sense of direction, that that was because it was so ideological, which the Carter administration was not. And you used the word "eclectic" to describe the approach of the Carter administration. One has the sense that there is a constant effort throughout the years of the Carter Presidency to find a definition. This takes various forms—like the difficulty of finding a rubric, like "new foundation," that will work, and then turning away from that. The summit conferences, that sort of thing. I wonder what you would respond to the notion that perhaps there was too much eclecticism? Maybe it's not anybody's fault, but one needed to have more definition from the outset.

**POWELL:** From a communications standpoint, in my view—and I really would be interested in hearing from particularly Ray Jenkins, who was sort of watching us from afar there. Al Friendly was too, on this, but from a communications standpoint there's no doubt about that. That made it tougher to communicate. From a public policy standpoint—this is where my own bias gets in my way—I'm not nearly so sure. I think the days are past when you could sum up a fairly eclectic and diverse and non-ideological approach to government under a saleable slogan, even though in desperation we tried it—with, I think, ample misgivings all the way around. You can't sell a car that way anymore. If the price that you have to pay in order to be able to do that is to narrow your focus and approach things on that sort of basis, I certainly don't think it's worth the price, from a public policy standpoint.

You're exactly correct in saying that it was a constant concern of ours, and we never did adequately solve that problem of summing up what we were about, by any means. It may have been—and we talked about this on several occasions—that we posed the problem incorrectly in looking for a way to sum up, and that trying to sum up was something that you just couldn't do very well. What we really needed to do was a better job of focusing, and trying to keep attention focused on the things that we were doing at the moment, and explain the reasons for doing that and not necessarily in reference to some over-arching articles of faith. That might have served as well, given the sort of impression that we were dealing with.

**YOUNG:** When you said “we,” did these discussions include the President?

**POWELL:** Oh, yes.

**YOUNG:** That also, I get the impression, suited his own approach very well. He appears not to have been very much given to sloganeering.

**POWELL:** No, that’s certainly true.

**TRUMAN:** You were talking a little while ago about the matter of running against Washington, and the need to keep some distance between Carter as a fresh personality, a fresh figure, and the old institutions and people in Washington. Very understandable—I think your explanation of it in the context of Vietnam and Watergate is highly persuasive. The thing I wonder is, did you have a sense at some point that this was one of those chips that were going to be short-lived? That is, did you have to ask yourself at what point down the line Washington became Carter’s Washington? It would seem almost inevitable that you couldn’t maintain that gap for more than a limited period of time. At some point along the line, either Washington was going to become your Washington, or you were going to become Washington’s operation.

**POWELL:** The first formulation presumably might have been acceptable if the impression was that Washington had become Carter’s Washington as opposed to Carter becoming Washington’s boy. It was the latter that we felt we had to guard against. It’s certainly true, and I don’t think we ever had any doubt about the fact, that in the end, a President is ultimately held accountable for what happens, and that with very few exceptions, if you look back on political history, is a President able to blame the other folks for things that happened during his administration. Say, “Well it wasn’t my fault, folks. It was theirs.” It’s particularly difficult if both houses of Congress are controlled by your own party, I might say.

There never really was any confusion in our minds. I suppose if I had to sum up, what I always said—and I did say it this way several times, both before the Inauguration and after it—was that what we needed to be—to use a scriptural reference—was “in the world but not of it.” We had to be a part of and needed to be a part of that system and way of doing business, but we did not need to become creatures of it insofar as the public was concerned. There’s more to this than just—you tend to talk about—well, there is communications, and there are perceptions, and there is a message that you’re trying to project over here and then over here. There is something else, which we call substance and policy, and so the real honorable business of government.

And it’s really not that way. When you talk about Watergate, or you talk about openness, and you talk about integrity, or you talk about the need to make some changes—to not be sucked into a pattern, an existing pattern of behavior—that has a substantive base to it. It was something that we felt—and I still feel, even going to the de-pomping and all of that—it will mean some things to people who may not think it means anything now. That was something that needed to be done, not just because it made points for you, but it was

something that needed to be done in terms of what was good for the government of the country, for the Democratic Party, and for the institution of the Presidency.

I've been wanting to say that. It really was. They weren't two distinct things.

**TRUMAN:** But you didn't feel that you had to make that impression within a limited period of six months?

**POWELL:** We really saw it more as something that was going to be a constant struggle to maintain, recognizing the fact that we had to operate within this system, and you had to deal with the institutions that existed there.

**YOUNG:** Follow up, and then Ken Thompson.

**JONES:** Here's what I've got written down. Did Nixon come to define the Carter Presidency, or was the Carter Presidency likely to be what it was without Watergate?

**POWELL:** I think it was largely likely to be what it was even without Watergate. And I think the best way to offer some proof of that is to go back and look at the Carter administration in Georgia in terms of these larger themes, which began in 1971, in January of 1971, and had many of those same characteristics. Because that was the way he was and is. It was a view of government and its role and its relationship with the governed that I think was shared by the people who were with him then and in Washington.

If you look back at that time in Atlanta—you can even go back to that campaign—you will see some of those same basic themes and points of what the chief executive ought to look like, how people who served him ought to behave. What degree of assembling of perks and special considerations is appropriate and so forth. All of that, the foundation of that, goes back for most of us not just to before we got to Washington, but I think for most of us that were there that long, before we got to Atlanta in terms of the state capital—certainly for the President.

**GRANUM:** If you turn it back another way, though, there would be the real question of whether Jimmy Carter would ever have been elected President had it not been for Richard Nixon and the climate that he created.

**JENKINS:** Yes, but at the same time, the press at that point— Really, it goes back to the [Joseph] McCarthy period. We talked about Watergate and going back to Vietnam, but it really goes back. That was the watershed for the press. Terribly skeptical, objective reporting underwent a significant change. Along that line, I would like to disagree just a little bit with what Pat said and what Claudia echoed. I think I'm correct on this.

Pat, you said that if we started out—or you started out, I wasn't there then—with a sort of naive belief that if we simply were honest and straightforward and open, even the cynical and suspicious press would finally come around to our point of view. I believe the

President probably shared this, too. In fact, I know that he did. I think that it did work perhaps better than you think it did, and I may have been in a better position to observe this than most of you because I did retain these very close ties that I had with the journalists who not only covered the White House but out in the country. I don't know whether any of you—and perhaps Jody in particular—appreciate how much the Carter press office did restore the credibility in the White House press office and how much they passed on to the Reagan administration. How much better they began in terms of credibility than you began with.

The one thing we could never overcome—and we don't like to quote the President, but I think it's well known that he thinks this way—is that we were never able to overcome the press's suspicion that everything the President did—and the closer it got to the election, the more pronounced this was—that every action that he took perhaps had a political taint to it and was in his own self-interest as opposed to the national interests. The cumulative effect of this thing was devastating. I think perhaps that more than anything else may have resulted in the loss of the election.

**POWELL:** I agree with that 100 percent. It's also a worse problem for a President who is not operating from some fairly easy-to-understand ideological perspective. Reagan can repeal the grain embargo and people say, "Well, he promised that in the campaign, so that's consistent with his thinking." It will get worse for him as you get on into the thing. I think, in defense of the other view, you might at some level believe what Ray says, but in the end you come down to, well, damn little good it did us.

**JENKINS:** One thing we really didn't do was to quote the President directly. But I will do this. I don't even remember what the issue was, but I remember that he was fretting over two courses of action, and he said something to the effect that, "Well, we really ought to do the statesman-like thing. It's never done us any good before, but we really ought to do it."

**TOWNSEND:** I think things did get better in terms of the credibility of the communication, in part because of the personal relationships that Jody and the rest of us were able to build up with people over time. By the time you got there, it was probably better than it was in the beginning, and maybe a measure of that is the impact that that [David] Stockman article had. I mean, that hit again the same theme of, "You're saying things you're not really believing." And had there not been some improvement, that wouldn't have been such a shock to everybody. One reason why people reacted is from that same basis of suspicion about whether you're speaking the same language they are when you talk from the White House.

**THOMPSON:** I think I've at least picked up two strains, and this is a double-barreled question. You've talked about the do's that you've thought about and pursued in the early strategy from the transition—honesty, integrity, the fresh image of a President. What about the don'ts? Just preceding this President, probably the only intercollegiate athlete we're likely to have in the Presidency for some time to come was pictured as the clumsiest oaf that had ever occupied that office. The media caught him whenever he

tripped and fell. Did you ever talk about that kind of thing with regard to jogging, with regard to the sweater, with regard to the fireside chat, with regard to that kind of thing?

The other strain is—and maybe you want to hold this—but there is an alternative to the ideology thing, and just to put it in a nutshell so you know precisely what’s in my mind and can cope with it, the alternative is some set of priorities, a hierarchical notion. One of the curious things about the current Presidency is that a highly pragmatic Presidency has apparently persuaded people that it does have priorities and that it’s following them to some extent. The Carter administration never left people with that impression, apparently. But in a nutshell, it’s the Jim Fallows argument that, in fact, you never established a public philosophy, you never defined your hierarchical structure of priorities, and whether he had influence or didn’t have influence within the administration. Did that alternative ever exist?

**POWELL:** I was trying to say a little bit of what I think you were saying there. I think that may have been an option for us. And, no, I don’t think we did do as much as we should have, particularly in terms of public priorities. You don’t have to have the same as your private ones. I mean, you can do some things without making them the focus of attention. I suspect we could have even more than doing less. We should probably have tried to do less. But even more than that, we could have tried to communicate less in terms of a smaller number of things.

But I’d just like to say also that, when you get to this business of, well, you just go in there and you decide you’re going to do two or three things, and you do those, and it looks good and so forth—that’s fine, except the world doesn’t operate that way. Just because you pretend that you only have to worry about the right front wheel on your car doesn’t mean that you don’t have three other wheels that are liable to blow out on you somewhere down the road and cause you a serious problem. Whether that will prove to be the case in what we’re dealing with at the moment I don’t know. I hope not. But there is a limit to the extent that I think a conscientious chief executive can say, “Well, we’re just going—or I as President am just going—to worry about these two or three things.” The other things bubble on. They get gangrene; they start to smell. And by and by, maybe they kill you if you don’t pay some attention to them.

**THOMPSON:** And on the don’ts to avoid the Ford phenomenon? Was there ever any talk about that in the transition?

**POWELL:** Well, that sort of followed from a lot of the do’s, I guess. From the press office, it’s hard for me to separate the do’s from the don’ts, frankly. But one of the things that Claudia mentioned, the question of access, was important to us from the press office standpoint. The feeling that you couldn’t allow, that I couldn’t allow myself as Press Secretary, and the press office in general, to be put off to one side, and only be told what people wanted us to know. We had to have as an office—and certainly through at least the Press Secretary—access to anything that you wanted to see and know about, so long as you exercise some responsibility and judgment.

In terms of the credibility thing, you had to be extremely careful about cutting corners, even when it would seem to be a relatively innocent thing to do. In terms of the personal and financial arrangements, we took the appearance of conflict to its greatest length, both in terms of what people did and didn't do, and the rules and guidelines that were laid down for that behavior. The don't part of it, if you identify those things that you think are problems or are potential problems, I suppose you try not to do things that will reconfirm those particular descriptions or impressions about the President and the administration.

**THOMPSON:** Was there ever any talk that one might go too far in democratizing the President?

**POWELL:** Not a whole lot at the beginning, probably. There was some consciousness of it, both from talking with other people and the experience that many of us had had, and the recognition that you can't run the internal part of an executive operation like a democracy. But that was when we came to the conclusion that we had gone a bit too far in some cases. It grew more out of experience than it did out of a theoretical understanding. I suppose we tended to move in the direction of our basic inclinations and beliefs and feelings about the business and the experience we had at the outset with the idea that if you need to correct back, you correct back, not forward. It's much easier to come back a step than it is to go halfway and decide you've got to push it a little bit further.

**YOUNG:** You had talked earlier about your conversations with Pat Caddell in terms of identifying the strengths, the level of expectations, the liabilities, the uncertainties about the President. Were readings from the polls constantly throughout an important part of the formulation of your strategies of communication?

**POWELL:** Well, they would have been perhaps more important if we could have afforded to do more of them. We began looking about once a quarter or so, and then, just because of lack of funds, it tailed off. Later, if you had something good and probing and in-depth once or twice a year, you considered yourself lucky. I very much envy the present situation, although I think it presents other possibilities. But I would certainly have liked to have the ability to do what the Reagan administration is doing, and do the sort of polling you do in the last week of an election all the way through the four years.

I also think it will be tremendously interesting data if somebody ever gets hold of it down the road, because I don't suppose anybody has ever tracked attitudes toward a President with that degree of precision. Everybody knows what they're doing. As I gather, they're polling almost every day five days a week or whatever, and it's cumulative. You don't take a whole national sample every day, but you get a couple or three hundred a day, and then you accumulate the things as you go along.

Once you've got a baseline, a point of departure, it gives you a very good feel for how public attitudes and opinions and so forth are moving. What we tried to do was to use polling at the beginning to identify trends in terms of movement or perceptions—not how many people are for or against the Panama Canal treaty, or labor law reform, or that sort



of thing, but the broad attitudinal questions about Carter, the man and the Presidency. Actually, if you've only got about three points on the line, it will give you a line, but it gives you a pretty gross attitude, and we really didn't have the resources to do that as much, frankly, as I would have liked to do it.

**YOUNG:** That kind of raises the question, too—I guess they're part of the same question. Did you feel out of touch with the mood of the country in connecting with it? You've already expressed some feeling of need for at least getting from reading. And the second part of the question is did you sense that there was, for all the goings-on in Washington, some kind of Carter constituency out there that you had to play to or keep in communication with?

**POWELL:** To answer the first part—other people who want to comment on that too—I think if you work in the White House, and that thing of being out of touch doesn't bother you, then you're probably crazy. You do tend to lose not just the quantity of information—that varied sort of conversations and impressions and that sort of thing—but I think there's a tendency to lose your touch, your feel for it over a course of time. I certainly felt that, and it bothered me. The President felt it, and it bothered him, too, and it's certainly not something that polling by itself can come close to correcting.

**YOUNG:** How does one overcome that? I'm remembering in this connection the “crisis of confidence” speech, in which I think President Carter said that Washington is an island. What measures do you take to keep the walls from closing in? If polling doesn't do it, what does?

**POWELL:** I'm not knocking polling. I think polling helps, unless you don't have the time to go back and read a bunch of open-ended responses and sit down and immerse yourself in that sort of thing, which you just don't if you have line responsibility.

**JONES:** It will also tell you what you want to know.

**POWELL:** There's always that tendency to look for the numbers, and as soon as you look at them, to start arranging them in conformity with whatever your fondest hopes or darkest fears look like. For President Carter, the town hall meetings were an attempt to do that. The press conferences with local and regional press that Pat's operation set up on a pretty regular basis were an attempt to do that. The news summary, in the sense that it reflected not just the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* and the *Star* and *LA Times* and the next, but editorial comment and so forth from a variety of sources around the country.

The President used people for that purpose. You know some of the people he liked to talk to—Charlie Kirbo, for example, who was out and away from it all—and others he valued because he valued their feel for what folks were thinking and what was behind it all. Rosalynn was used in that fashion because of her personality—well, not just her personality. There's a difference between being the First Lady of the President in terms of how people perceive you. So that was part of it. But people tended to say things to her

that they wouldn't say to a President, and I sometimes thought things that they wouldn't say even to a member of the senior staff. There was something about her that made people feel more at ease and more willing to speak from their more honest emotions. That was coupled with her very good political instincts.

Even though we were subject to some of the same things that isolate you that he was, nobody is subject to them to the extent that a President is, and his conversations with members of the senior staff very frequently were about "how these folks feel" and "what are they saying?" "what's their attitude these days?" Whether it was Landon [Butler] about Barkin and his boys, or Frank [Moore] and his people about the folks on the Hill, or me about the press. I think that was a strongly felt thing, and I don't have a magic answer.

**YOUNG:** I think this is rather interesting. It's something that nobody has talked very much about before. The President's own sources of knowledge or understanding of how he kept in touch with those outside Washington, who were presumably his main constituents. You mentioned Kirbo, and I'm remembering—as I'm sure others around the table are remembering—other Presidents, and seeing some patterns here, the use of the President's wife in many cases. Eleanor Roosevelt was an important eye and ear for the President—the news summaries which [Franklin D.] Roosevelt also had and so on. You mentioned Kirbo as an example of something that I understood you to say was an important source because of talking to people outside.

**POWELL:** Yes. It's very difficult to assess those things because of the nature of those conversations. You never heard much about them. You didn't even know that they had taken place, except by accident: "I was talking to Charlie the other night, and he said he thinks so and so about this."

**YOUNG:** But who else in the category? I'm not getting at so much what was said there, but did he have this sort of outside network of people he'd call on to come in for conversations?

**POWELL:** There's nobody who comes to my mind who occupied the unique position that Kirbo did. But what I was trying to get at before—it's something I don't know a lot about, but there would be enough times that he would mention, "I was talking to somebody the other night, and they think so and so." It would be people, someone whose name sort of crops up enough to say, "Okay, there's one outside source." It's something you ought to ask him about. You'd probably do better. But the impression that I have of him is that he was thinking things and dealing with things that other people had said that we didn't know about. And it would sometimes surprise you when he said it was something someone had said to him in a conversation on something else.

**BARIO:** There also was a series of private dinners in the residence, Jody, that was an attempt at that.

**YOUNG:** Private dinners, small informal dinners with people he would invite.

**GRANUM:** One thing you might pursue when you talk with President Carter—and I don't know if it's accurate. I've always had the impression, at least, that maybe Griffin Bell after he left office—to a lesser degree than Kirbo—still had some frequent conversations.

**JENKINS:** Then there were the 60-odd editors' conferences, groups about this size that would come in.

**BARIO:** Fifty-seven. We had 57 groups of editors who came in for news conferences, and President Carter held 58 structured news conferences in Washington.

**THOMPSON:** Did you ever feel you had to counter his tendencies as a loner, maybe from people less close to him? We've gotten the impression that he liked to work from paper. He often worked alone at night—that, in fact, along with this quality that you've described of talking to people, he really preferred in many instances, if that's true, to retreat to his own study and simply hammer things out himself.

**POWELL:** There is something to what you say, but I think it's not what is generally perceived to be the case. I bet you if you go back and put it on a computer, President Carter probably saw more people and exchanged more words with them other than "Hello, how are you?" per day than just about any modern President.

He did like to make people reduce arguments to paper. But, first of all, it did not preclude talk about it. It was a sort of a beginning point of discussion. My feeling was—particularly since I resisted that inclination on his part, probably more successfully than anybody else in the White House—that he did that to make you order your own thoughts and arguments, let him have your best shot to begin with, and then let's talk about it. He also liked to reach his decision in private. But I think from what little I know about Presidents, more Presidents have preferred to do that. That is to say, whatever the decision-making process was—whether it was paper, then a session around the Cabinet table, or a smaller group in the Oval Office—it was generally that and then off overnight, or whenever, to let it sort of stew and think about it. Then he'd come back with the decision, rather than announcing a decision at the conclusion of oral arguments, if you will.

What he did not enjoy doing—and which I probably would have helped him, if he had done more—was the sort of general—whatever the euphemism is for a B.S. session. He did not enjoy idle chatter—which, I think, if he had enjoyed it more and had done more of it, would have helped, not so much in the quantity and quality of the information that he had upon which to make decisions, but I think it would have helped in forming—to the extent you could—those interpersonal relationships which he lacked with many of the powerful people and institutions in Washington. I think that lack hurt him. So I won't forget it.

I'll say one more thing, and then I'll hush. I have always felt that President Carter lacked much in the way of elbow room. He came to that office with not much leeway. In fact, I think that's not an original idea. I think somebody from the *Washington Post* wrote that in a story, an old analysis piece, fairly early. I didn't understand it as well then as I do now. But he came to that office without any sort of personal relationship to speak of with permanent Washington, with the press, or with the Hill, or with the Party.

And he didn't have that sort of personal commitment from people built up over long years of association and going through the victories together that leads to an almost automatic inclination to support the President or to support the person. There were no columnists to speak of who had that sort of thing. There were few people, if any, on the Hill who had that sort of relationship with him. In terms of the people out of government but very much in it so far as figures in the Democratic Party go, he didn't have that. The fact he didn't have it when he got there was something there was nothing you could do about, frankly.

Unless you exclude everybody—you sort of say, “Okay, you can't be elected President unless you have spent a certain amount of time developing these things”—you're going to occasionally get somebody like that. You didn't have the skepticism we talked about, the inclination to assign the least admirable motives to any particular action. A lot of people knew the man as a man. They knew where he came from, what he stood for, what he was likely to do and not to do, that he might have a little tendency to cut a corner here. “But this, by God, is the sort of thing—I know Jimmy Carter—he'd never do a thing like that. Don't talk to him about that, it's just not him. I've known him too long.” There weren't those people around who would say that.

**JONES:** Thinking it more important that he develop some chatter.

**POWELL:** Exactly. That leads to the next point. It is very, very difficult, as a lot of people have said, for a President to make friends, real friends, after he becomes a President. He is no longer a person. He is, but he's something else. I don't care who you are, you can't approach a President of the United States at one o'clock on January 20 like you could approach even a President-elect at one o'clock the day before. He can't be a friend primarily to anybody anymore.

His job, his responsibilities, and so forth require that he subordinate to some extent those things. He can't say the things, except to a very small number of people, that a normal person can say in terms of talking about what he thinks, and how he feels, and when he has doubts, and what he's worried about, and that sort of thing. Particularly now, in the current climate. It was my understanding that once in this great land, there was a tradition that no one ever repeated something that a President had said to them in private conversation without the President's express permission. Now, the number one reason for most people to want to see the President is so they can get him to say something they can then go out and repeat. It would certainly be a great boon to the country if you could in some way reinstitute at least that minimal protection. It would give the President an opportunity to settle even that.

**TRUMAN:** I'm not sure that ever existed.

**POWELL:** Even if it were something where people at least recognized that they were supposed to behave that way, that would be an improvement. But having said all that, and coming back to my original point, it would have been possible to do more than we did do to overcome that lack, which I think was a very serious problem for us all the way through. If I had my job to do over again, that is one of the areas—I hesitate to say that it's number one, but if it's not, it's right up there. I would devote much more time to trying to fight for time on a President's schedule and to talk to him and to create those opportunities for at least some of that. You have to be very elitist and discriminating. People in the institution I had to deal with, the press—you know, to get to know him better and to have that sort of understanding. It would have been a marginal improvement at best, but I think even a marginal improvement would have been worth the effort.

**TRUMAN:** Would it have helped to make Washington Carter's Washington?

**JENKINS:** Yes. I think it should have applied to the whole country. He needed that communication throughout the country, particularly some sort of mechanism, you know, that would spring into action whenever he was embattled and so on.

**POWELL:** Yes, that was one of my problems, in fact. If you don't watch out, you'll say, "Well, we need four and a half million of these people. And inasmuch as we cannot in any way create four and a half million people who know and understand the President very well, then what's the use?" sort of thing. We needed four and a half million opinion leaders and molders, but we didn't have twelve. It would have been some improvement to get a nice round dozen there.

The press, for example, whose inclination would be to think up the best arguments to support what they thought the President was about to do before he even did it, much less before they heard what the arguments were pro and con. I know that Safire the other day had developed a theory about what the President's motivations might have been, and then another theory about why that theory of what the President was thinking when he did it was exactly the sort of thing that one would do if you put the interests of the public highest on your list. Well, that's the sort of thinking you need.

**TOWNSEND:** If I could add one point to that. You tossed out the remark that unless—You're going to get a President in President Carter's situation from time to time unless you just exclude people who don't have those institutional connections to Washington and the Party. In fact, for a long time those people *were* excluded, and you couldn't be President if you didn't have those kinds of connections. I think in some ways President Carter was breaking some new ground, and his experience revealed a distinction between the powers of the Presidency and the powers of the institutional background and connections of the person in the Presidency that people might not have appreciated before, because you didn't have the experience of somebody being in there who didn't have that.

**FRIENDLY:** I didn't join the administration until the last ten months, and I guess in a minor way I am of the Washington establishment.

**POWELL:** That's why we didn't let you in until the last ten months.

**FRIENDLY:** That's precisely the point I want to make. Not in quite such personal terms. It seemed to me that you all made that exclusiveness a virtue for many of the first months of the administration, because it was fresh. It was very much part of the President's style and the administration's style, but it made it impossible in those first months to make the town Carter's Washington. And it hurt from then on, because you didn't have and never could get, from the twelve opinion leaders in the White House, a ripple effect where each one has twelve people on the Hill who in turn have twelve editors in Arizona whom they call. That's how you mobilize a sympathetic network.

I think you're evading this point. Mr. Thompson mentioned the Fallows article, and you haven't really addressed it. Whether you knew what you were doing in that exclusiveness, resented the criticism, which was instant in Washington, as you remember—rednecks from Georgia who don't understand this town and its history and don't want to—or whether you simply didn't pay attention to it because it didn't appear a priority. You came in wanting to do something different, and the bad-mouthing you got from the establishment simply confirmed the views you had already formed of what the establishment was.

**POWELL:** To some extent we didn't recognize the seriousness of the problem. That was certainly there. I certainly didn't, from the press standpoint, recognize by any means how much of a priority that needed to be for me in terms of serving the President at the beginning. There was another part of it that, even if we had recognized the need for it, we really didn't, a number of us—certainly in my case, and I thought I probably knew, in terms of the press, a little bit better than some other people did in other areas. We didn't know who these players were. If somebody had asked, I might have made a list, although it's much more difficult now—that's another subject in terms of press. It's not hierarchical. It's a much more diffuse institution in terms of powers and influence than it once was.

But if somebody had asked me to make a list of the ten or twelve most important people, I probably could have done a reasonably decent job at it. If you'd asked me who the ten or twelve most important Democrats in Washington who don't occupy positions in the government or in the Congress, there's no way I could have done that. Part of it, probably—and to be very frank about it—came from a hesitation to get too close too quickly to people you didn't know very well. I'll put the best face on it, but I think there's some truth in it, too.

My experience has always been that coming new into a situation of relative power and influence, of all the people you meet in the first day or two with their hands out, there are quite a few of them who really do have their hands out. Even given that reluctance, there

were occasions when various of us got too close to people who seemed to be helpful and have the interests of the President of the country first and foremost in their mind, and it turned out later on they really, really didn't. So I guess it sort of goes back to not knowing the players.

**FRIENDLY:** Dr. Brzezinski said one other thing. He said you all worked so hard those first six months just managing that you didn't socialize at all.

**POWELL:** In terms of my priorities—and I think it was even more in terms of some other people—with a new job, and if you couple with that not recognizing the sort of importance of that—and I think it stems even to the President a little bit—I felt that if I weren't spending twelve or fourteen hours a day just on the nitty-gritty nuts and bolts of this thing, I was not responsible. I felt terribly guilty about it and concentrated on that to the detriment of these other things to a large extent. Having said that, though, I think if you go back and look, it's not true that the whole government was staffed by people who had to be born in Georgia and presumably had to have at least one pair of white socks.

You could hardly call Cy Vance, for example, or even a Brzezinski—Brzezinski was an outsider in some ways, but he was certainly not an unknown and someone without connections. You could hardly call a Joe Califano an outsider. There are those who will make the argument—and I'm sure you've heard it from some places—that we erred somewhat to that side. Coming back to what you said about providing a clear focus and definition of the administration, if the President was an eclectic President, which he was, the administration was even more eclectic.

Allowing for an example—and this is out of my league, but I'll also quote what I'm sure someone else has said or will say to you because some people disagree with it. But in an attempt not to be so restrictive, since we didn't know the players, one of the things that we did was to allow Cabinet officers to select their own people to an extent which, in the best of all worlds, I think was unwise. We ended up in some cases with people who the only thing they shared with Jimmy Carter was a common desire to be in a position of influence in the government of the United States, and whose loyalties—to the extent that they had any beyond those to themselves—were to the person who hired them, who was not Jimmy Carter, but a member of the Cabinet, or in some cases, someone further down the hierarchy.

**FRIENDLY:** You could even say that it was not just the Cabinet, but some of the White House.

**POWELL:** Yes. And how you go about doing what I agree with Al that you need to do? That is, to pull in these people with the connections and so forth, and at the same time, command the loyalty—and, failing loyalty, at least discipline, to some extent—To keep that from fragmenting and diffusing and sucking down the basic thrust of what you're trying to do is a damn tough problem, and one you can tell I don't feel that we adequately solved.

**THOMPSON:** Did you ever— Excuse me for this, but it's just linked totally with Mr. Friendly's question. Did you ever check with friends who had lived in both worlds? For instance, on the Trilateral [Commission] people you brought in, did you ever check with somebody like Dean Rusk, who had been in a certain part of the establishment but was never part of it, curiously enough?

**POWELL:** In my impression, the President did talk to Secretary Rusk on more than a few occasions. Maybe not as much as Secretary Rusk or anybody else would think that it would have been good if he had. I know that in making his decisions on Cabinet officers, for example, he made dozens of phone calls on just about every one of them. Others were made on his behalf, and not just on the routine consultation/notification sort of thing. If you didn't get into that when Hamilton was here, you probably should have. I wasn't a part of it, but I was watching it take place with a little bit of a distance. That process of trying to find out about who these people were, what they were like, where they were coming from, what a wide variety of people thought about them was very extensive. You might argue we spent more time than we should have doing it.

**YOUNG:** That point has been discussed with Hamilton. We have time for one more question, I think, before lunch.

**LEUCHTENBURG:** I would like to restate your second question, because I think everything that what you say relates to the second question that Jim asked. How did the President, and how did you, perceive the constituency in the country? The question of to whom you relate in Washington relates to which figures you think of as being pertinent to your own sense of what your coalition is. Carter comes to office having won an election, as head of the Democratic Party, which is the Party still thought to be in a modified way the Roosevelt coalition. Roosevelt knew who his constituents were in the sense of union leaders. People of this sort he could talk to, and he knew that if he held that coalition together, he would win. At the succeeding election, the legislation was geared to be responsive to people of that sort. As you looked out at the country, whom did you see were your people, and maybe were not your people, or who were the people you related to?

**POWELL:** I'll give you what I hope will be a very clear answer to that. Our perception was that the Roosevelt coalition was still basic, and you had to have that. One of the things that we hopefully could do for that coalition was to put the South back in it. But our perception also was that that is no longer a winning coalition in and of itself. The numbers won't add. If you go back and look at 1976, we won not just because we held together the coalition. In fact, if we had only done that, we would have lost.

Go down all the big states that were close—Ohio, Pennsylvania—and you'll find that we did what a Democrat is expected to do in the big cities, in the traditionally Democratic wards and precincts and areas. We did about what [Hubert] Humphrey did when he lost some of those states. We won because we were able to do better than a Democrat normally does in areas that are nominally Republican. In our case, there was a little bit of a skew to that. We were able to do better in some nominally Republican rural areas



because of the President's rural background. That helped with the margin. It was something that we hoped we could maintain, to some extent. But we saw the need to move the perception of the Party in a way that would make it appealing to more than just that coalition.

Of course, the crux of the problem was how you do that without creating such chaos in your rear that you've got to turn around and deal with that before you can do more ahead. That's one of the things that happened. The chaos in the rear did become such a problem in the person of Ted Kennedy that we had to spend a great amount of time and resources dealing with that when we should have been worrying about Reagan and the Republicans to the front. If you go back to the Caddell memo that I was talking about, we didn't need a memo to tell us that. I mean, anybody can read, and, frankly, that wasn't a particularly new idea in '75 and '76.

If you'd go back to when we were thinking about how we might be able to win the Democratic nomination in '74 and before then, that was also what we thought. If you look at the demographics, you'd look at attitudes. If you looked where the country was going, you knew the Democratic Party had to be able, first, to have at least a decent shot at the South. And second, that it also had to be able to deal with those people who used to be card-carrying members of that coalition, but now, for a variety of reasons, were not quite as dependable as they once were. There are so many clichés to describe it—you know, suburbs, and exurbanites, and all that sort of thing. You had to get out to those people, too—that array of things that I talked about earlier—of traditional values, of efficiency, of fiscal responsibility—which came to be symbolized in the campaign when you could get away with symbols to do things. The balanced budget came to symbolize that.

One of the biggest mistakes we made in the campaign in terms of issues was one that we really should have known better: the defense issue that you had had. We argued about it, but we argued about it too late in the campaign. I just use this by way of illustration. In about '73 or '74, you could see movement on defense, and I can remember arguing the point that on that traditional three-point question of whether defense spending ought to increase, stay about the same, or decrease, there was as early as '73 a substantial majority on "stay the same" or "increase"—that is to say, anti-cutters. That tended to grow, as did the increase group. We got on it. Ford really cut us up quite effectively because of some things that were said in the '75 primary. We were never able to quite get back off those statements.

[BREAK]

**YOUNG:** Why don't we turn this part of the afternoon at least to hearing about some of the specific aspects of the Press Secretary's office operations and work, particularly those that Jody has mentioned? We'd like to hear about the news summary, the press advance, the office of media liaison, and the whole national security press operation. Since Al has to leave at a certain time to get a bus, we'll want to make sure that we give ample time for coverage of that. Maybe, however, we can begin with media liaison, and then maybe

move next to you, and then some of the other things. We need to know what media liaison was as well as why it was.

**BARIO:** Well, media liaison, as I always explain it, is the half of the press office that was established primarily to be a point of contact for the non-Washington based media. As we went along the line, a number of the bureaus that did not regularly staff the White House used us as a contact point because they found that they could get through our phone lines a little easier than they could get through on what was called the 2100 number. That was the main press office in the West Wing.

And the philosophy, as I understood it, was that we existed for a couple of reasons. One is that these people really had never had any place to get service, and the fascination with covering Washington seems to have increased each year. More and more people have some reason to be interested in what's going on in Washington. The second one, obviously, was that the Carter administration did want to demonstrate its openness and that we were available. We wanted to let people question us, and we wanted to get the answers to them. So we began with a staff, as I recall, of six people, and it grew to ten before the four years were over with.

We tried to serve the press corps in a number of ways. The obvious one was that we received their queries by telephone. We encouraged the press corps across the country to call us and ask questions, not only when they knew that the White House should have the answer, but when they didn't know who in government had the answer. In a way, we were the policeman directing traffic. We tried very hard, when it was appropriate, to take the question and go do a little leg work for them and get back with an answer. The answer might be simply, "We have made six phone calls, and we found this person in the Department of Commerce who is expecting your call and should have your answer for you." Or it may be that we actually could give them the substance of their answer.

**YOUNG:** What types of questions?

**BARIO:** Everything. You had to have been there, I guess, to appreciate the kinds of questions. Some of them are what we might have put in the category of legitimate questions. "We think that we are getting a grant announced to build a new apartment building downtown or in part of our renovation. What can we find out about what the date of the announcement is, who can we talk to, who is our contact person, who should we keep nagging?" That kind of question.

Too, I remember the *Chicago Magazine* calling after the President had stayed at the Mayor's house in Chicago early in the administration, and wanting to know if he'd worn pajamas when he stayed there. I said, "I don't know, and I'm not going to go dashing over to the Oval Office and ask. But why don't you ask the Mayor's office? They probably could get the answer for you just as easily." He said, "Well, the Mayor didn't sleep with the President." I said, "And neither did I." Most of the time we weren't quite so frivolous, and there wasn't always that much fun. But the questions in general were reasonable ones, and we handled them the best we could.

Anyway, I would think one of the distinctions in our types of questions is one that Jody touched on, and that is that the West Wing was most likely dealing with a news story in general, the big story of the day, and most people were working that. And they were coming at us from all directions, from the President's pajamas or no pajamas to legitimate war and peace type questions. So it was particularly interesting fielding those questions.

Then we developed—and I do believe it was basically Wurfel's or Jody's idea—the idea of inviting in editors and news directors from out of town for frequent visits to our offices. We put on a full-day briefing calendar for them. They came in about 8:30 in the morning, and they would leave 3:30 or 4:30 in the afternoon. During that period of time, this group generally would number 25-30, would meet with 12 spokespeople, opinion leaders, etc. of the administration. This would vary from Stu Eizenstat, to perhaps some of his deputies, to the Assistant Secretary for Water Policy out of Interior. We tried to put together a program on subjects that were topical at the moment. The group that was invited in was as varied as we could possibly make it. It would include editorial writers from papers such as the *Denver Post* or the *LA Times* or the *New York Times*, and it would have radio news directors from small markets and large markets, TV people from small and large markets, and editors of little weeklies.

Each group got a half hour of time with President Carter to ask questions. It was something that the White House corps was very restive about when we began, and as we said earlier, they were convinced this was another end run. They thought they were very sophisticated and intelligent people, and if the President spent the same amount of time with them as he did with these out-of-town regional press people, the corps and the White House would really be able to trip him up and find out what was really going on, whereas the corps thought our folks were going to ask softball questions. The meetings were generally on Friday. They met with the President most of the time at about 1 o'clock, and the transcript was made available to the participants that day. It was released to the White House corps about 11 o'clock on Saturday morning, with a release time of Sunday.

I think it was interesting to the White House corps when they found they were having to write two, three, and four stories a Sunday from that transcript from these "softball questions" that the out-of-towners were asking. Ultimately, as we went down the line, the White House corps stopped honoring the embargo and started either interviewing our participants as they came out and stroking somebody's ego that his story could be on Leslie Stahl's newscast that night, or using affiliates—that the ABC person would feed to ABC or whatever—so the embargo wasn't very realistic as time went on.

Another thing that we did was send reports out to editorial writers, primarily, that we called background reports. They really were more position papers. We would take a topic that was usually legislative—the energy package going up, the budget, or whatever—and try to explain in English the best arguments we had for the position that the administration was taking. Those reports became very popular not only with people they were intended for, but Anne Wexler began to use them when she invited in constituent

groups. She got so she almost “rode the jacket,” as we used to call it, in that she would have an automatic 500 or 1,000 of them printed whenever we were doing one. They were written by a member of my staff, but they were worked out in cooperation with the experts in whatever area we were dealing with.

Only in the national security area did we have difficulty getting time for ultimate clearance. Along the line—I think at about year two—we gave in to a great deal of pressure that the radio folks had been putting on us, and put a radio operation in. The audio side of the media is very jealous of the fact that still too many of us in press relations think of print as the way to go, and they point out that having a press release doesn’t do them any good. Their business is “voice,” and they need voice. So we began a radio operation where twice a day we put on two or three feeds. It was a passive audio bite system, with 800 numbers that radio stations from across the country could call. At the beginning of this tape it would say, “We have for you three cuts,” tell how long they are, and what they’re about. The radio person could then record from that and use it or not use it, whatever they chose.

We generally tried to have the cuts in the early part of the day just under thirty seconds, because it was about what they wanted to air. In the evening feed, we tried to run them a little over a minute so that they would have the flexibility of editing out what they would like of that minute. We were trying very hard to not be Big Brother feeding out a propaganda message. The initiation of that service drove CBS up the wall. CBS, I decided in the administration, is the keeper of the First Amendment, and they were very upset about it.

**YOUNG:** Self-anointed?

**BARIO:** Yes. And they were convinced that indeed it was Big Brother, and we were trying to feed a message out. We bent over backwards not to do that, but obviously we weren’t putting things on there that were people standing up and criticizing the President in a public meeting. All the spokespeople were administration people. All had appeared at public events. We thought that was one of the ways we could safeguard—that we were not propagandizing. We didn’t go and interview Stu Eizenstat in his office and let him say nice things about his latest domestic policy plan, and then put it out on the air. But if Stu Eizenstat had done the briefing and had been asked a question and responded to it in a news fashion, we would use that on the service.

We had a TV side that was developed along the line that was something like the radio one. It was a real “talking heads” situation, but it was better than nothing. We would make appointments with up to five or six TV stations across the country to give them a five-minute segment of time to interview some prominent figure in the administration, a Cabinet officer, or a Stu Eizenstat, or a Jack Watson, on a predetermined subject. Sometimes we would anticipate. We’d know that we’re going to announce the steel package, and so three days in advance we would call a market that may be interested in steel and say, “Would you like the Secretary of Commerce on the steel package? Tomorrow you can ask him questions. It’ll be timely on the day.”

We would tape the interview, the five-minutes, and we would ship it out Postal Express so that they would have it the following day and have it available for editing to use in their news story. Some of them used them in more elaborate programming that they would be doing, not just a news clip. We didn't do nearly as many, obviously, as the daily radio thing, but there were times when it was a very busy legislative time where we were trying to do at least one segment a week, where at least five or six stations were having an opportunity to interview these people. Once again, we were using it as an educational method.

**MCCLESKEY:** Excuse me. With respect to the radio and TV shows, how were the decisions made as to who would be used for what topics?

**BARIO:** For the radio, we had one professional on my staff, generally backed up by an intern who, in effect, covered the government, as if they were news persons. They would go over with me in the morning maybe five possibilities: "There's a news conference at Justice. There's somebody testifying on the water policy on the Hill. The President's meeting with a group of people in the East Room this afternoon." We would decide which three we would cover. Then we would try and make an editor's decision as to whether anything newsy had developed. The obvious way, it seemed, to be sure and discredit that operation was to put things out that weren't news. The media would stop calling. And I should say on that that I think the capacity of the system was something the range of—I've forgotten now. I think it was up to about 1,200 calls each 24-hour period, and we ran around 800 most days in each 24-hour period.

**MCCLESKEY:** Did you have a free hand making these?

**BARIO:** Yes. I don't recall ever getting in trouble for anything we had specifically put out on that.

**POWELL:** Other than the first flap from the press, and CBS in particular. That quickly died out.

**BARIO:** Right. We made a point of having, as I said, 800 numbers coming in, but we had an in-town number so we could give it to the White House corps and anybody else who asked. So anybody who cared could monitor it. We never knew who was calling, but we had a tally as to the number of calls. Virtually every day the in-town number would register 10 or 15 calls. They could have been wrong numbers, but we suspected there was somebody dialing the phone regularly just to see what we were up to. That's one thing about behaving in a fishbowl.

The first task force I remember, when we were anticipating President Carter would veto the defense procurement bill—and if he did so, it would be a very big battle for this veto to be sustained, because I believe only once before, one other President—perhaps [Dwight D.] Eisenhower—had such a veto sustained. That's the first task force I was a member of. Dick Moe, who was the Vice President's Chief of Staff, chaired that, and

pulled together from the various departments, Cabinet-level and in the White House, those who could be useful on both knowledge and lobbying on this. I became a public relations consultant to that group, and it went on from there.

At times there could be as many ten or twelve task forces in existence. The media liaison office worked closely with those task forces, either with me or someone from my staff being a person on them, suggesting the best way to get the message out and what weapons could be used, in effect, in the arsenal of public or media relations—whatever word you want to use. Basically, that is an overview of what the office of media liaison did.

**JONES:** Who would be on the task forces?

**BARIO:** Well, they varied, and they got to be half the administration at times, or so you thought. I would think that the Energy Conservation Task Force, which was a longer duration one, probably grew to be the biggest one that I was familiar with. I think there were probably forty people on that. It would have representatives of the various sections of energy, the solar and the conservation and that kind of thing. And then we pulled in GSA [Government Services Administration] people because we wanted to talk about how the government itself could save energy and EPA [Environmental Protection Agency] and Transportation and Commerce, etc.

**JONES:** Policy people as well as White House and media?

**BARIO:** Yes.

**POWELL:** This was not just a press operation.

**BARIO:** No. This had to do with the subject. Congressional liaison members were usually a very important part of it.

**YOUNG:** These are operations that came to be organized in large part by Anne Wexler's—

**BARIO:** Wexler or Al McDonald generally chaired these task forces that I'm thinking of.

**TRUMAN:** Were they particular campaigns that were issue-oriented as far as whom you called in in '77, '78, '79? You would bring them in to talk about an issue that you wanted to get public attention on?

**BARIO:** You're talking about our conferences?

**TRUMAN:** Yes. The editors you'd bring in.

**BARIO:** No. We brought in a diverse group, and the issues that were presented to them were issues that were topical at the time. They would normally encounter eight to ten different issues during a day.

**TRUMAN:** But in 1980, didn't you reorganize the selection a little bit by primary states?

**BARIO:** In 1980, we emphasized heavily primary states. But then, so it wasn't so apparent what we were doing, we had some other people, too.

**TRUMAN:** But there really was a shift, wasn't there, in whom you invited?

**BARIO:** Yes, in that we were doing more specific targeting. We were doing some targeting on issues before that as to who we invited in. Because of such things as the Panama Canal, we were bringing in more from the South at that time to see if they got the message straight from the horse's mouth, if they would understand how reasonable we were.

**TRUMAN:** Who would make the decision on whether to set up a task force? Was that in your office or Jody's?

**BARIO:** No.

**POWELL:** That tended to be a sort of state senior staff level. It became almost a routine sort of thing. There were various—and you probably won't get the best information from this group—but, various systems were tried and modified and discarded or whatever in terms of how to organize the sort of resources available to deal with specifics, and they tended to mostly to evolve around some sort of task force concept. Then you have to decide when you will have a White House task force, at what level it will be chaired, those sorts of things. We went through any number of processes trying to more finely discriminate between the things that ought to be presidential, in terms of his involvement in the decision as opposed to the publicity and the lobbying on the Hill and so forth. There's no perfect way to do that.

**YOUNG:** We have heard about this idea and this activity from others who have been here. I just want to check out a few things with you. We've gotten the impression that it was discovered in the Panama Canal treaty—that is, the importance of the way to organize and mobilize.

**BARIO:** The State Department ran that one, right?

**POWELL:** Started out, then it moved over also. That was pointed to as the best example of something with his commitment of resources to government-wide operation. It also worked, which tends to make people think that it was a good idea.

**BARIO:** There were a lot of them that didn't.

**YOUNG:** And once it became a more normal method, then there was a problem in deciding not to have a task force.

**POWELL:** Exactly.

**YOUNG:** As long as it worked, everybody wanted a White House task force, as I understand, on something. Then the issue of the priorities arose. The second thing we've understood is that these main White House task forces came to be tied very much to the pending central legislative issue. They were tied to the legislative agenda, not just issues of topical interest.

**BARIO:** No, I think they were at least 90% legislative.

**YOUNG:** Right.

**LEUCHTENBURG:** Interesting coincidence. I just read an article a while ago that [Thomas P.] Tip O'Neill devised a task force approach to getting bills through Congress to try to broaden the base of the supporting group that would line up the votes for the necessary majority. I'm not sure there's any connection between those two, but at least in terms of trying to deal with wide diversity, and trying to marshal some sort of group that could get something done, it's similar.

**BARIO:** Unless it's that Tip O'Neill's AA [administrative assistant] is a former member of White House task forces in the Carter administration.

**POWELL:** There used to be a film that they would always show in Psychology 101. They'd put these cats in a cage, and there would be a lever, and if the cat bumped the lever, then food would drop down into this little thing, and the cat would eat the food. The purpose supposedly was to see how quickly the cat would learn to bump the lever when he wanted to eat. What it demonstrated was that cats are a lot like people, because a cat would, you know, sort of pace around a little bit, and scratch itself, and put its nose against the cage. And then on its way over to get a drink of water, it would bump the lever, and the food would come down. So what the cat learned to do was to scratch itself, put its nose against the wire, look over its shoulder, and walk over to get a drink of water close enough to bump the lever. A lot of times I think what we do in government is we're not sure which of the things work, but we go through the same ritual.

**YOUNG:** Were all of these aspects of the operation—that is, the TV part, the radio, the bringing of editors of regional press people to talk with the President, and simply the servicing of information that Wexler required—were all of these part of the liaison office operation from the beginning?

**BARIO:** Well, the radio and TV were added, and something else added that I neglected to mention before were the briefings for in-town reporters.

**YOUNG:** Could you talk a little about that? Visiting reporters, so to speak?



**BARIO:** No. We did those, too, but these would be the bureau people. We determined that, really, bureaus—there are one-man, two-man/ woman bureaus in town—don't have access in general to the policymakers in a way where they can really sit down and quiz them. So we first started doing briefings, as I recall, for black media in town, who weren't getting much attention. Then it occurred to us from time to time that there were issues that we wanted to educate people about, but they were little issues, not big enough to be announced out of the West Wing press office because the folks over there didn't care. It might be a water policy. I think that would probably be a very good example, where we would bring in the writers in town who were from the western states and would have a great interest in this and would appreciate a little news conference setting where they would have an hour or so to quiz the people from the White House and from Interior. We could bring together a mix of officials who were knowledgeable.

It got so we did probably 20 or 30 of those a year—small groups, 20 people, maybe an hour-long. Then we were also the ones responsible for visiting professional organizations who were coming to town. Maybe it would be editorial writers who wanted a half day at the White House—hoping they could get the President, but if they couldn't, at least have Jody, that kind of thing. And we probably did 20 or 30 large groups, groups meaning they were big enough to fit into the auditorium, which held 200 or so.

**BARIO:** Credentialing was in our area. Actually, my name was on all the letters, but Carolyn Wimmer, who was my administrative assistant, agonized through it all. Credentialing is something we probably should talk about. It's such a joke. If there's anything any of us could change, it's probably credentialing. It's a useless operation. You can't turn anybody down, and yet that badge that they wear around their neck is such a prestige thing that the White House corps seems to want it. In fact, one of the first people to come to see me when I came to the White House wanted to argue that we change badges so you would know it's a White House badge. He claimed it used to say "White House," and the press corps really liked that because they could use it to cash checks when they traveled around the country. I think the Secret Service was very wise to take that off. Just because they were credentialed White House correspondents certainly didn't mean that they weren't writing bum checks.

**YOUNG:** This is not a question, but I can make a question out of it. It's really an observation. The things you have listed were all done in the FDR [Franklin Delano Roosevelt] White House, working out of an office called the Office of Government Reports, which had a radio division and a film division.

**BARIO:** Where were you when we were defending a radio division? We didn't know it had been done before.

**YOUNG:** They got some flak, too. They also even produced a kind of newspaper. Then they had a division of field operations, which for 35 listening posts throughout the country, received inquiries of Mayors, Governors, and local press people. Their job was

to get those questions answered. They also served FDR as one of his many antennae. They also put on a weekly radio show.

**BARIO:** All but the fireside chat.

**YOUNG:** No, they did not. No, this is quite apart from the fireside chats. This was once a week. It was a program made for distribution over the country called "Government Reports." And what they would do would be to get an administration figure, a Cabinet officer, and put an interviewer up there and ask him to explain what his agency was doing, what his job was. I don't know whether you knew you were reinventing the wheel or not.

**BARIO:** We suspected it many times.

**YOUNG:** But to students of the Presidency, the persistence of the needs of the office for doing these things becomes quite apparent.

**LEUCHTENBURG:** One similar comment on this. There is also a problem of credentials. Until very late in the Roosevelt administration, no black journalist representative of a black public agent got credentials as a White House correspondent, ostensibly on the grounds that they didn't give credentials to weeklies, although actually that was balderdash.

**YOUNG:** But isn't the credentialing done out of the Senate?

**BARIO:** No. The Senate does its own, and the White House does its own. One of our criteria was that you had to have a credential from the Hill, but that's also senseless.

**YOUNG:** That's a precondition.

**POWELL:** I think it was originally set up because the Hill had what at least passed for some peer review system in which, theoretically at least, journalists would decide that this person did not qualify as a legitimate journalist, and so they didn't get a credential. I don't think that operates any more in the sense of being restricted in any real sense.

**TRUMAN:** I think if you went back far enough, they did accept the congressional credit, but I think that goes back at least to the [Woodrow] Wilson administration which first started admitting people.

**POWELL:** Yet if you look at White House credentialing now in effect, that is what happens. There are other criteria which don't amount to a hill of beans. The fact that the congressional pass system no longer amounts to anything in terms of exercising any judgment or discrimination means that, for all practical purposes, almost anybody in the country who wants to do it—particularly if you're willing to move to Washington for a couple of months—can get a White House press pass.

**BARIO:** And they do.

**POWELL:** It's fortunate it's not that important to most.

**JONES:** Whether it's been done before or not, I think if you reinvent the wheel in this area what you're doing threatens the people in Washington who think they're the people to receive the news. It surprises me a little bit that you seem to believe that that would be unusual on their part, that they would be suspicious.

**BARIO:** No, I don't believe it was unusual. I think it's human nature. But I pointed it out because I think there's a special sense of proprietorship that the White House corps has to the President. He is "their" President, and they're very possessive, I think.

**JONES:** My question really is, after it was set in place and you had a regular routine associated with this kind of dispersal of the news or whatever you want to call it, did that change their suspicion or their concern? Did that change at all?

**BARIO:** I don't know. They always kept referring to our operation as the one that dealt with the weeklies out in the countryside.

**POWELL:** It was not a continuing problem. They had to go on to other things. The radio, actually, is a good example. That was something specifically that some could get their teeth into. They had a little bit of a temper tantrum over it, but you can't keep that story running forever. They're going to do it, they've done it, here's what it looks like, and then that's it. There's almost no way to make a new story out of it unless they catch you doing something that's clearly misleading. I'm sure if they had their druthers at any given point, they would rather not have been there.

**JONES:** It's hard to keep shouting "First Amendment" in regard to that particular operation.

**TOWNSEND:** Well, to be fair about it, there's more than a First Amendment question there, which I think most of them would acknowledge if you hit them with it. And for the broadcast people, there's a very pragmatic point that there are not many ways to get broadcast material out of the White House except through one of the networks, unless there's an operation that you can call on the telephone. If that exists, then CBS can't sell it as well, or might not be able to sell it as well, and that was part of why they were concerned. Part of why the print people were concerned about the out-of-town editors' briefings is not because they think they should be the ones to dispense the news, but because they're going to catch hell from their editor if there's some big deal story in the *Podunk News* that they didn't know about. And you know that's not, "I'm better equipped to translate this than you are," but, "I'm going to be in trouble if you know something that I don't." And you have to weigh that, too.

**GRANUM:** The business with the network starts when one network thinks to have its affiliate briefed on the session and gets one affiliate to agree, and then the network has a

Friday evening news show feast, and the other two don't have it, and Carter said thus and such. Well, then, the other two scramble around. So once you start down that road, then everybody's trying to stay in it.

**LEIBACH:** On the whole credential issue, to back up a minute, that didn't exclude anyone, necessarily. I mean, it made it maybe easier, but it wasn't a matter of saying, "Okay, you hundred people can cover this press conference, and the rest of you can't."

**BARIO:** No, but that's why it's just a terrible waste of manpower to go through the exercises, really, because it does entail a great deal of just shuffling paper and dealing with foolishness.

**MCCLESKEY:** My question relates to the credentialing business. I can see how virtually unrestricted credentialing could be a problem in terms of the manpower required. I can see how it might be a problem just in terms of the sheer number of people involved. Were there other aspects of it that were troublesome?

**BARIO:** Well, because we had this sham of criteria that we had to supposedly enforce, you would find yourself going back and forth as to, "Well, you're not really covering the White House regularly," or something. We would try and discourage more, because it got to be so much paper. Carolyn Wimmer, who had dealt with credentials in other administrations also, and I went around and around many times as to what was the best solution to this. There is no perfect one. The only criterion that made any sense to us is that you would be willing to submit to a security investigation to make sure that you were not a threat to the life of the President. And so we thought that anybody who wanted to have access as a press person to the White House should agree to that. We'd get their name on a master computer printout. When they showed up at the gate they demonstrated they were the person they said they were, and they walked in the door. And that would have taken care of an awful lot of this work.

**TOWNSEND:** Except it didn't work that way.

**BARIO:** I know, and people can pick that apart for many reasons, false credentials showing up and all. But there were a lot of hard feelings. Early in our administration, we thought we would cut back on the number of credentials. I think they had 1,400 of them when we came in. Before we had concluded, we had well over 1,700. But one of the things that was worked out was the networks, for example, would limit how many people have credentials at any one time—trying, again, just to keep the paperwork load down. So then you got to where they would call and say, "Joe Smith is new in town and needs a credential." "Well, has Joyce Allen sent hers back?" "No." "Well, get hers back, and then you can have a new one." It was a waste of time is what it was.

**POWELL:** Yes, in terms of networks—this is probably getting much more detailed than anybody wants to get into—but what they wanted to do for a good reason was to shuffle crews in and out. It wasn't the correspondents so much, although occasionally you ran into it there, but they had their own problems in terms of overtime and work schedules

and that sort of thing. It would have made their life easier if, out of their entire pool of technical people—sound, camera, the whole bit—they could have picked any two or three at any given time and said, “All right, you go to the White House, and get over there in fifteen minutes because something is about to happen.” It would have made their life easier if they could have credentialed everybody. And Rex is one now, so he may. Is that right?

**GRANUM:** Yes, and it’s the press’s right. That’s the thing, because when the crews get to the seventh or eighth consecutive day of work, and they’re making overtime or double time, plus trying not to work people to death, and a substitute crew shows up in a station wagon loaded up with gear and under a system where they don’t have the pass, then they have to wait and submit to a search. While certainly the credentials are prestigious, part of it is just a loss of convenience because you’re often told to get over to the White House in fifteen minutes. But some days, with the backup or some glitch in the security system, you know it’ll be 30 and 40 minutes that you wait at the gate in the cold or rain or whatever to get in. So that’s the reason a lot of them try to get all crews credentialed.

**POWELL:** Where it became a prestige thing—and I ran into this on several occasions—I normally would try to stay out of these predicaments if I possibly could. And to everybody else’s credit, they manage to keep people out. But one of my bright ideas was “The least we can do is cancel these credentials of people who covered the White House in 1953 and then left and went to Butte, Montana. They haven’t been back,” and so forth. Well, when you write the letter to let that person know that they’re no longer a White House correspondent, don’t sign your name to it. Because it’s a keepsake. You know, we finally got into the thing of saying, “Well, we’ll take it. We’ll punch holes in it or something, and send it back to you.” I suppose if you agreed to frame it and mount it, then we might be able to.

**GRANUM:** You don’t win, because people who get credentialed feel, and perhaps properly, that it’s their right, and they should be in to cover. And those you don’t know, you antagonize. So many people—there’s no upside to any of it.

**KUMAR:** Were you aware that that same battle took place in the Ford administration?

**POWELL:** The time to do it—it’s one of the many things that a second term President and his Press Secretary might be able to do.

**BARIO:** On his last day.

**THOMPSON:** This is a motivational thing again, and it may sound quite different to you than it did when we heard it a year ago listening to the reporters. Their version of the open credentialing—or not quite unlimited credentialing—is that first, you had an American University graduate student, we were told, who you really wanted to credential because he had contributed to the campaign. And that got into your willingness to let this happen. Secondly, that you were quite happy with the crazies, because they made the President look good. And the third proposition—when we asked about relations with

some of the senior reporters, we got at least an intimation that maybe these dozen influential people, at least in the media, would have been easier to reach if you had been a little more restrictive—as Roosevelt and some others were—in inviting just a handful of people in. This is, as I remember it—and others may remember it differently—but, is there anything to the methodology about motivations? Or is this like [Charles Maurice de] Talleyrand’s answer when he heard that a colleague had died, and he answered, “What could have been his motive?”

**POWELL:** You’ve got to start with, well, those folks are really just a little weird. They really get themselves into some contorted psychological postures.

**LEIBACH:** Well, give the guy his five bucks back.

**POWELL:** Yes. I remember that kid from American University. I gladly would have taken him outside and beat his brains out. He was just a complete pest. All of the people who say that— and particularly including some of the ones who said, “Well, if they had just limited it to us, it would have made for a more intimate relationship.” When you limit one of them by calling somebody’s credentials, you do so not only because you just don’t think they’re important. There was one guy who, on the advice of the Secret Service, was denied a credential because the guy had been convicted of assault and carrying a concealed weapon. And all those people immediately joined ranks to sue the White House on the basis that this was denial on First Amendment rights. I think we ended up losing the suit because the assault had been long ago, and just because he carries a concealed weapon is no reason to believe he plans to use it on the President.

**BARIO:** Robert Sherrill.

**JENKINS:** The Reporters Committee for Freedom of Information actually carried the litigation.

**POWELL:** Exactly. I know some of those. I guess Jack Nelson is probably as strong a First Amendment absolutist as anybody in the world. But he also had some of the same complaints. You’ve got all these bubbleheads running around here and bouncing off the walls and hanging from the chandeliers, and no wonder you can’t get any business done. Obviously, Jack— You know, when I kick one of them out, you’re going to be standing there with him and say, “Right on”? Oh no, “We’re going to sue you.”

And that’s exactly the case. What you see there is a reflection of a projection problem that they realize is a problem. They realize that there is not much they or we can do about it. And maybe it’s that sort of natural human tendency to try to make sense out of an essentially non-sensible world. If this is happening, there must be some reason for it. It can’t be that we just have no power to prevent it. That is the argument. I know we got into this thing, well, the President likes to have people jumping up and down and screaming and crawling up on one another’s shoulders at press conferences because it makes the press look bad. He’s got bigger things to worry about.

**YOUNG:** We're about to exhaust this subject and go onto something else. Could I ask from your point of view, Jody, what in terms of your larger responsibilities was most valuable to you about the media liaison operation?

**POWELL:** The constant steady flow of information and contacts with those people I didn't see everyday, but who were writing editorials and making judgments and influencing opinion all over the country. It's not the sort of thing that on any given day will make the difference, but it's the accumulation of that sort of thing. I think it was a very valuable thing from that utilitarian point of view.

I also think it's a very important thing from a public policy point of view. The whole idea of trying to give people who don't live in Washington, who don't have much contact with the central government, who just by the nature of geography tend to feel apart from the government, to get them in there and give them at least a glimpse and a feel for what's going on. For them to feel that there's a source of reasonably reliable information available to them, and that to the extent that these people helped to shape public attitudes, not just about the specifics—whether you're for or against the Panama Canal Treaty, or assistance for people who are displaced by imports, or that sort of thing.

But the larger question of shaping people's attitudes about their own government, that's an important thing to try to do. I don't know how you measure how successful you are in doing that, but I think it's one of the things, particularly nowadays, that has to be up toward the top of the list of priorities, long term priorities, for people who are in the White House. The whole thing of the government—I don't know who's drifting away from whom, but of people ending up thinking that they don't have any stake in it, they don't have any ability to deal with it. It just operates off there somewhere, and that sort of loss of legitimacy that I think is one way to try to go at that thing. I don't know. I guess it might be worth, if you could go back and talk to these people who went through it and were there. A lot of people were there more than once, as a matter of fact.

**BARIO:** The over 100,000-circulation newspapers were represented by sometimes the same person. We went through that list several times in order to have some of them in each group. On that point, Jody this morning was talking about access to the President and people the President met with, and saying that Carter probably met with more people than anybody thinks. We had a number that's not in my head any more, that we used about halfway through 1978, of comparing the number of visitors to the White House—not White House tour people, but visitors to the White House the first year of the Carter administration *vis a vis* the 1976 visitors to the Ford administration, and reminding people that '76 was a bicentennial year, so it would have naturally been more people who would find reasons to be in the White House. I think it was double as many had been in in the Carter years. Obviously they didn't all see the President, but it demonstrates the philosophy of the Carter administration: Bring the people in, it's their house, it's their government, let them participate.

**POWELL:** There tends to be an inclination to be very cynical about that, and sort of sneer at the idea that this particularly means anything, and that "Well, if you have a lot of

people who come into the White House, they must be just a whole succession of people who came in with the broiler princess, and it didn't really mean anything." Well, there's something to be said for ceremonial activities on the part of the President, too.

But most of these people were not people who were just there for a quick picture and so forth. They were people who were coming in serious efforts and also with a short-term purpose in mind, too. We wanted to convince them that the way we saw the world was the way the world was, and also to try to provide them with information about what we were doing and why. I'll say this last thing about it. I think, in terms of the people in the opinion-makers in Washington, that we didn't do the job that we should have done in trying to reach them— There's an interesting and rather stark contrast, I think, between the fact that we fell short in that area when I think we did a very good job in reaching out to the people outside of Washington.

**YOUNG:** Tell us something about your end of the operation.

**FRIENDLY:** Well, as you know, the office I sat in was, according to some, totally responsible for the incoherence of American foreign policy during the Carter administration years. And, as you can see, its abolition has resolved that problem. I saw myself as serving not two but three masters: Jody, Dr. Brzezinski, and the press—the latter without a particular strategy, rather an atmosphere of openness that carried on from the first part of the administration. It was a function of Brzezinski's own view of what he wanted in the way of press relations, and sometimes the result of direction from Jody.

Let me see if I can divide the three things into orderly tracks. Working to and for Jody, the responsibilities were to get to him either written material that he had to have for his daily briefing, or at least enough conversation before the briefing on the questions that were going to come up that he would have to handle, so that he had the advice of the National Security Staff on them. Part of that, though, was making sure that the simultaneous major briefing on foreign policy, the one in the State Department—which was at noon every day, while Jody's fluctuated—was coordinated with what the White House was saying. That took, just as a technical matter, a telephone call almost every day that was a conference call from my office with the State Department spokesman, the Defense Department spokesman, the CIA non-spokesman, and often—but not always—the UN mission office in New York.

And that was a conversation where we traded back and forth the ideas about what was going to come up and, if we had it, some firm word on who would handle this particular hot potato. Occasionally, but not all that frequently, we really were able to give Hodding Carter's office exact words that we wanted used—or more often, make sure that we knew the exact words he was going to be using, so that Jody knew them. Back to that point of incoherence, at least as far as public presentation on day to day breaking news, the whole point of the operation was coordination.

Working for the press as a master was being a reporter for other reporters. I found that the most interesting part of the job. I did not ever do public briefings, and there were about



15 or 20 correspondents, most of them not White House press, whose telephone calls I made a point of returning. I should add I was only there for the last ten months, and you should find out what you can about how Jerry Schecter did it for the first three years, because I inherited the system. The one place I know he and I differed was that I did return all the calls, and certainly he had the reputation by the end of his time of not returning them. I don't know how he started out. My impression is that he changed his practice in the course of the years. It occurred to me several times over those months that I shouldn't be returning the calls.

And this is a point I'd like to pause on a minute. I found that operation out of the White House remarkably helpful to the press and not particularly helpful in any orderly way to the White House, to the President. The arguments for it are the obvious ones. If you don't talk to Rick Burt or Don Oberdorfer, you don't know what they're going to blindside you with the next morning. So you do answer their calls simply in order to find out what it is they're working on. It happened often that that was indeed very good, very valuable, very important.

There was a thing called Presidential Directive 59, which was a remarkable flap just before the convention in August, where Burt had the story that there had been a presidential decision in the area of nuclear targeting. And he called me, and the result was that we were able hastily to make sure he was reasonably well briefed on it at the Pentagon, and that a *Washington Post* reporter was reasonably well briefed on it at the White House. The stories that were going to come out anyway were simply that much better because the administration was moderately straightforward about what was involved.

The great problem was that nobody had spent as much time with Secretary [Edmund] Muskie as they had with the reporters from the *Post* and the *New York Times*. That became another example of the incoherence of American foreign policy. That, however, was not the fault of the press operation. The information policy on that was well considered. It was just that nobody told Ed. That goes to another set of questions.

But what really struck me on the negative side was the amount of time that I spent—and Brzezinski spent, because he liked doing it, and other people spent because they thought it was appropriate or in their interest—providing news from the White House that was news and not analysis, not commentary, and not necessarily anything that should have been sourced from the White House. I remember in September of '80, when the Iran-Iraq war started. You could have been a front-line correspondent by going to Dr. Brzezinski's office on Friday afternoons and having him haul out his relief map of the battle zone and giving you on background—with pointers and a variety of historical perspectives—a situation report from the battlefield. Well, that was not of any particular use to the President, his campaign. Probably even to Brzezinski. It wasn't a function, that is, of necessity, a White House information activity. And yet, it is something that the White House press and the Washington press has grown to expect, and pressures for, and feels terribly resentful if it doesn't get.

Mary McGrory the other day called me after martial law had been imposed in Poland and said that the White House didn't have any information, didn't want to say anything, didn't want to tell its press corps what was going on in Poland. Well, thank God they didn't. Even if they knew, it seems to me it is not the function of the White House—and may not even be of the State Department—to make up in the flow of news, as opposed to views, what journalists cannot get from the scene of an event themselves. An awful lot of time, my time, did go into being a provider of that information. I think partly because I enjoyed it. I got to be a reporter, and the one thing reporters like best is reporting. And I didn't have to write, which is the one thing that reporters like least. I could give it to somebody else to write. That was instinctive. I don't think it was directed. It certainly wasn't directed by Zbig, and it wasn't directed by Jody. It was attitude, and it could have been disciplined and maybe even cut off if anybody had ever said to me, "Stop it. It's hurtful." I don't know that it was hurtful, but it wasn't very helpful.

**POWELL:** One of the things you would have to do, though, is that you couldn't just stop that in the White House. There is a reason that the White House tries to do too much in almost any administration sooner or later, and that's because if it doesn't get done there, it's going to get done somewhere in the government. You run the risk—a greater risk under those circumstances—that the providing of that sort of information will not only not be helpful, but it will also be hurtful. Because there is not necessarily malicious intent, but because of just being that many steps further from the center of things. People don't always know what's going to produce a problem, what's going to create a ricochet or an incident or a reaction, either overseas or in this country, just because of the narrowness of focus as people become more specialized.

You also do that—and I agree with Al's general thrust of what he's saying—you also do that to protect yourself. Some of it, in fact, comes from the fact that somebody out in an agency tells a reporter a little bit of something, which spurs the interest of the reporter. And then they scratch around, and they pick up another little piece here, another little piece there, and all of a sudden, they've got a fragment of the jaw bone and the third vertebra and a big toe, and then they start constructing the animal based on that. When they come to you, they have a drawing of a monster, and you're faced with the thing. Am I going to give them information to convert this thing back into the cuddly little kitten that it started out to be? Or am I'm going to let them go off and show this monster to the whole world?

**FRIENDLY:** I had a couple of opposite examples on that. I think the work that the office did— And I should add there was—I guess from the very beginning, wasn't there? even with Gerry [Rafshoon] —always an ICA [International Cooperation Administration] guy working in the National Security Council press operation. In my time it was Len Lefkow, a very, very good one. It divided into getting the word out, on something we wanted to get out, and explaining the facts away. And almost 80%—that's probably a silly quantification, but it seems to me in memory 80%—was the effort to take that monster apart and put him back into being a kitten. Again, these were all kinds of stories that in the nature of things didn't belong in the White House. As Jody points out, if the White House didn't deal with them, nobody would.

I remember very early on that crazy story that NBC had about how we were still buying oil from Iran. Remember? That took the White House—and again, the utility of being able to throw Jody’s name around, which somebody mentioned earlier is a very great one—raising hell with the Treasury Department, statisticians all over the government, until we found out that indeed the oil had come from Iran, but it had left Iran before November 4. The story never went away.

**POWELL:** We never caught up.

**FRIENDLY:** No. NBC never corrected it. There was the permanent problem with the Immigration and Naturalization Service over the Iranian students. And again, you just wouldn’t think that the White House would have to cope with the permanent chaos of INS. But, God, we did, at least once a month, and more often than that.

**POWELL:** Based primarily on the fact that the INS is understaffed and everybody recognizes that. It was asked to do something that nobody could do, but you need to make some sort of effort at it anyway. They were using this as they had other things that were less inflammatory, primarily as a way to do nothing more than to help build a case that they needed more people and they needed to be paid better. From that very normal human emotion—“Give us some more employees and some more money”—comes this thing that preoccupies a good portion of the time of a number of people in the White House.

I think it’s something that ought to be underlined about press operations in general, not just the national security. I don’t know what—we could probably go around the table and get various percentages put on it—but a major portion of the time of, I would guess just about everybody in this room, was spent, not on putting out something that you wanted out and promoting a story or point of view, but on trying frantically to straighten something out that was already in the works before it made air or print. Because you knew once that happened, you had very little chance of ever catching up with it. That’s a major, major function.

**YOUNG:** Fire-fighting.

**POWELL:** Yes. Exactly.

**FRIENDLY:** This goes back to the point that you have to answer the calls, I think, to find out where the fire is starting. They really were the weirdest stories. The super patriotic dockworker in Charleston, South Carolina, who reported on the sale of military jeeps to Libya. That became a network story for several days that we never were able to put down, even though, in fact, they were not military jeeps, and we don’t license recreational vehicles for export. I had not thought before I got into the White House that you would have to deal with those kinds of things all over the bureaucracy. It does turn out, though, that probably the only place you can deal with them is from the White House. Whether a President sets out to be an activist in foreign policy or not, these kinds

of things, particularly in a campaign year, are going to come into the White House. You have to have, it seems to me, some mechanism to deal with them.

On getting the word out, I can think of only one area where I would claim remote success. That was a story about technology restrictions on exports of high technology to the Soviet Union. The administration came up with some new restrictions that could have been read one way or another, either as really quite tough or not tough enough. And knowing how the Washington press works, the White House was able to make sure that the stories that came out from the White House and the Commerce Department conveyed the impression that the restrictions were very tough. Looking back over ten months, I'm sorry to say that's the only example I can think of of successfully getting the word out.

The one that we worked on the hardest, and that I know the President cared the most about, was Afghanistan. It reminded me a little bit of doing advance press for Muskie in 1972 in the primaries: trying to get his name in the paper in primary states where he wasn't campaigning. It cannot be done. Well, the Afghanistan experience was similar. You could not get attention. Well, you could, but only occasionally. If Brzezinski would say on background something wild about the success of the freedom fighters, you could get a run out of that.

**POWELL:** Could be a massacre or a mass rape.

**FRIENDLY:** Exactly.

**POWELL:** For the most part.

**FRIENDLY:** And yet the President regularly directed that energetic efforts be made to get out the story based often on classified intelligence, which was very hard to deal with, to sanitize and release, about how awful, how beastly, the Soviets were in Afghanistan. It's not a Washington story, yet it was of political and foreign policy importance, and even the White House coordinating efforts by the Defense Department and the State Department and the CIA—which on this issue understood that the President wanted the word out—could not command a consistent audience for it. The only stories worth printing about Afghanistan are stories written by people who have been inside Afghanistan, and those were the only ones, I think, that really ever got much attention in the American press. So, try as we might, it wasn't doable.

The Stealth bomber, despite the Republican efforts to portray it as an example of our getting the word out, I'm convinced was not something that we put out. It was something that was put out to embarrass the administration politically. I cannot comment on the selling of SALT [Strategic Arms Limitation Talks] before I came. Pat and Jody talked about it, and it's an example of a long-term, effective campaign to build a constituency for a President's foreign policy concern. The Olympics was a mixed bag because it turned out that you had a fair amount of public support, but that wasn't relevant to the very small constituency that was going to make the decision about sending the team. Managing the news, in short, was mostly a fire-fighting, last-minute operation.

Very briefly, I will try to talk about working for Dr. Brzezinski in the sense, not of him as an individual, but of the phenomenon in the White House of assistants who become public personalities in their own right, because I think this is a change from the White House at least up until 1960. And something that is increasingly true, even in this administration where you have, now, two and a half people who are perceived as public figures, whose comments on policy are taken as the views of the White House. Obviously, human nature being what it is, those individuals come to see themselves as personalities, and come to have their own interests very much involved with their public personae. In the Carter administration, at least in the months I was there, Brzezinski was clearly the most controversial of those public and visible assistants in the White House. But he was far from the only one who was looking to make, or who was interested at least in part in making, a record for himself as much as for the administration and the President. And I can't remember—Jody, maybe you can—when it was that we decided we would try and sit on Zbig.

**BARIO:** Too late.

**FRIENDLY:** I only had ten months.

**POWELL:** Really can't remember. It was before you got there.

**FRIENDLY:** It was damn difficult to do, which had something to do with his personality. But it also has something to do with the idea that has become current. That people who serve the President can at the same time serve themselves. The confusion between interests seems to me inevitable. The alternative is probably impossible, which is to go back to the anonymity that was supposedly the most cherished attribute of the White House official in the Roosevelt and other administrations.

**YOUNG:** But at that time, high level hot-shot policy specialists were not part of the White House staff, either.

**FRIENDLY:** Yes, but surely Tom Corcoran could have boasted, had he chosen to, about his role in writing the securities laws.

**YOUNG:** Yes indeed. I'm just saying that the high-powered policy specialist was not a presence on the White House staff.

**FRIENDLY:** As long as he is—and I assume there will be more and more—he's also useful in theory. I mean, you do have to have people to put on the Sunday talk shows. And because the rule Jody stated a little while ago, that it may be more harmful to have someone distant from the White House and less well informed and controlled, you're often going to want to put White House faces on the tube. The minute you do that, though, you invite this other problem. I don't have any prescription for either of them.

**YOUNG:** Could you talk a little bit, though, in more specific terms about the disadvantages or the liabilities from the White House or presidential point of view posed by having a spokesman of an independent sort on foreign policy ground? What was the nature of the problem this created for the President?

**FRIENDLY:** Shall we leave aside personalities?

**YOUNG:** Oh, sure.

**FRIENDLY:** That you can have in the White House a fellow who has a very strong view on balancing the budget, which is not the same view as that of the Secretary of the Treasury. And if you have them both, one guy on *Meet the Press*, and another on the *Today Show*, the next morning you're going to have stories about policy incoherence. Quite the same situation applies when the views are different about—it's before my time, but—blockading Ethiopia.

**POWELL:** Never got to that.

**FRIENDLY:** When the views are different, particularly between the National Security Adviser and the State Department—let's leave aside the Secretary of State. Where it is known that, in general outlook, different parts of the security bureaucracy differ in the recommendations they're making to the President, then you get these incoherence stories. The funny thing is, they're almost all related, not to decisions that have been taken, or policy that has been enunciated, but to what is being considered.

This is another phenomenon that struck me during that period: the degree to which the Washington press has come to write stories about what's going to happen tomorrow instead of what happened today. I tend to think that's partly a function of the remarkable ability of the evening news shows to tell you what happened today and the pressure, therefore, on the print journalists in their stories that you're going to read the next morning, to move the story one news cycle further if they can. I don't think that's the only explanation. It's partly a mechanical one.

**POWELL:** There's more news to it. I mean, it goes on, the making of policy always goes on, longer than the announcing of policy. And the making of a policy sometimes seems to go on for years.

**FRIENDLY:** And in the making of policy, it's inevitable and healthy that a President receive diverse views. But the people who supply him those diverse views are more and more themselves public persons. You are led inevitably to the feeling that he is surrounded by squabblers. And that hurts.

**YOUNG:** And the divulgence of what is under consideration is, of course, easily also seen as a pressure tactic to influence the process itself, to the use of announcement of positions or options.

**FRIENDLY:** I never could see, in the field I worked in, that those disclosures of who was recommending what before the decision was taken were really made by the principals. It often seemed to me to be the staff people at lower levels, who had developed the ideas for the principals, who got terribly committed to the recommendations. And they were the sources for [Rowland] Evans and [Robert] Novak, etc.

**YOUNG:** I wasn't naming names.

**FRIENDLY:** No, but it was a distinction.

**POWELL:** Spear-carriers tend to be much more "show no quarter." Those are the folks who really do take every jot and tittle terribly seriously.

**YOUNG:** The people one or two or three steps removed from the actual decision process.

**THOMPSON:** Yes. We've had a procession of people, some related to you, who have talked about this subject. One rather interesting view one of them had was that a reason that this is inevitable—having a spokesman in the White House—is that of all the things that an electable President is capable of doing, articulation of foreign policy is lowest on the agenda.

Even Dwight Eisenhower on economics things got a quick education, I remember I used to hear, through a study group on the Marshall Plan, which considered many things about Europe, but not growth rates. And he got that in a hurry so he could talk about it. But Jimmy Carter got it through the Trilateral Commission, the argument runs. So you have to have a spokesman, and if there were no other reason for this second voice, that would be the reason. Is there any basis for that argument?

**FRIENDLY:** I don't think that's inevitable, because that really does depend on what the President decides to give priority to on his own public agenda. If a President wishes to become his own energetic spokesman, not full time, but to devote a good part of his public time to showing his involvement with foreign policy, his articulation of concepts, he can do it and still leave the day-to-day spokesmanship either to anonymous figures in the White House or to the formal declaratory podium in the Department of State and the Defense Department. It's when a President is going to be as involved as President Carter was in the day-to-day management of policy that he's going to have to have somebody on the press staff—whether it be, as I was, hired by the National Security Council, or hired in the press office—who can background, who can prepare reporters for what is coming, and can be the liaison with the press and with the rest of the government. If a President decides he's not going to be a day-to-day manager—I assume that more and more of them will be, simply because of the ability to manage out of the White House—then he's going to have to have somebody who does the press end of it.

**POWELL:** And as President, their ultimate factor is that one—foreign policy being more distinctly and solely a President’s prerogative than any other area, and also being more fatally attracted to the press than any other. Everybody thinks he can understand it, because you don’t have to worry about adding or subtracting or anything to talk about foreign policy. It probably has, in the short term at least, in terms of instant impact, developments in that area tend to grab the attention, for all these other reasons, of the public, and focus it on the White House—that real, imagined, and perceived importance of the area that a President just doesn’t have the time to do all of that, which is a point I think that Al makes.

A President can make the decisions; he can make the major announcements that he chooses. He can even do a certain amount of the explaining and justifying, which Presidents started. Still and all, that’s not enough. A President has to have an on-going, day-to-day spokesperson of some sort, and it pretty much has to be someone with perceived expertise in the area. Even if I had the time and the ability, I really could not have done that effectively, because I wasn’t seen as someone who had the background to deliver those little lectures on how we came to be where we are today, and there are four options for the future, of which two are acceptable.

**FRIENDLY:** But had Secretary Vance been disposed to do that, Brzezinski’s role in doing it might have been substantially different.

**POWELL:** Exactly. I think that’s a point that ought to be made without letting any criticism imply to either Vance or Brzezinski. Secretary Vance was not inclined to be an aggressive salesman and advocate of foreign policy decisions. This does not mean that he didn’t believe in them or didn’t feel strongly about them. It was just not his nature, not his style of behavior. The President was very interested in the area and felt very strongly about a number of issues. We had a lot of controversial foreign policy decisions over the course of the four years. He felt the need for somebody to do that. And Dr. Brzezinski did have that inclination. He was in the White House, and so it was the case of a number of things meeting at one time and place.

**JONES:** Was that distinction discussed when the appointments were made?

**POWELL:** No, not to my knowledge. I suppose somebody might have said to the President, “Well, if you want someone to be an aggressive spokesman for your foreign policy, don’t choose Cy Vance, because that’s not his nature to do.” I don’t see how anybody could have made that judgment at that point. He’d been a lot of things, but he hadn’t been a Secretary of State.

**FRIENDLY:** I went back, though, and looked at one point in the continuing controversy over Brzezinski’s high visibility to see when it began. As far as I can find out, his first television appearance was not until the fall of 1977. Now I don’t know whether that was because somebody else was doing it. I can’t even remember why it was that he made it.



**THOMPSON:** Right after the abortive Vance mission in March, 1977, to Moscow, he came on the *Today Show*. All of us had talked about the subject. He used this as a case study of glossing over this terrible proposal. He said there was no connection at all—and maybe there wasn't in that sense—between human rights and SALT. And he said it emphatically. Then Barbara Walters or somebody asked him if he had to give up the public campaign for human rights in order to get SALT, would you do that, and he said no, he would not. So I know, because we've quoted him so much. It was March.

**FRIENDLY:** Then it showed that our records weren't as good as they ought to have been, because I looked back to see what transcripts I could find. And that was putting somebody into the breach.

**POWELL:** Exactly. That's a good example where you've got a problem there that the Soviets have rejected this thing out of hand, and they didn't even ask if you've got anything else to say, right? And Secretary Vance is not in a position—even if he was so inclined under those circumstances—to try to get on top of that story. It's the sort of thing you would rather not, from a press strategy point of view, send a President out to explain. So you tend to look for somebody who has some credibility and use someone like Brzezinski, who can go out and try to get, as you said, the facts out and explain your side of the thing.

**FRIENDLY:** I now remember what it was in the fall of '77. It was right after [Andrei] Gromyko had come to the White House, and there had been the issuance of the statement on the Middle East, bringing the Soviets back into the diplomatic game. Brzezinski was on one of the Sunday talk shows on that. I don't know who, it may have been that there was a full court press by the administration.

**POWELL:** The American Jewish Committee went bonkers. We had a very serious political problem off that, and we needed to get bodies and people out getting our side of the thing on the record.

**FRIENDLY:** It's questionable whether having Dr. Brzezinski defend the administration before the American Jewish community was wise.

**POWELL:** We tried to get what's-his-name.

**YOUNG:** Here are some events that strike me as perhaps worthwhile for you to comment on in terms of problems encountered and so on. One is the hostage crisis and the management of the communications on that. Another—and I don't know if you were there at the time or not—this was [Donald F.] McHenry, Muskie, and so on about the vote, the UN vote.

**FRIENDLY:** Vance. It was my first week.

**POWELL:** So we really don't hold him responsible for it.

**YOUNG:** You want to talk about your job and your problems in the context of that situation?

**FRIENDLY:** Well, just again on the hostage thing. One of the papers we read before coming talked about the rise in interest in the crisis after a period of press disinterest in it in the summer months of 1980. The article left the implication with the reader that the White House had consciously engendered that. I think that's the inference you could draw.

**POWELL:** I think it was more than inference.

**FRIENDLY:** That just ain't the way it happened. There really was what I call the Committee to Discount the October Surprise. I don't want to defame any characters, but there were several very able Republican staff people on the Hill with access to all kinds of valid and not valid intelligence information, who constituted themselves, formally or informally, an advance hit squad to make sure that the administration didn't get away with anything on Iran—or on any other subjects in the national security field in the last two months of the campaign. They'd been working from before, and they had a lot of volunteer help in the bureaucracy, too. But these were the people who produced the steady stories about SALT violations by the Soviets and who also—I can't prove it, but strongly suspect it—fed out a whole variety of ticklers on what they believed to be going on with Iran, including the stories that Jack Anderson printed about the preparations for an invasion.

That was really, to me, a very interesting episode, because even though it was patently incredible, it got printed and discussed seriously in the press. It was, to me, an example of the inability of the Carter White House—but maybe it would have been true of any White House—to mobilize that kind of network we were talking about before, people who stand up around the country and say, “I know Jimmy Carter, and I know he wouldn't do that. That's just not his way,” and to have killed the story that way.

Right before the election, there was that radio station in Chicago that was absolutely convinced that we had ransomed the hostages. Remember? And it was on the air for 48 hours straight, with stories about how Dan Rather and Barbara Walters were flying to Iran with a planeload of spare parts and would be flying back with a planeload of hostages. You couldn't tell that Chicago station, or some other reporters who had to deal with its output, that this was just hogwash. You could tell them, and they wouldn't buy it. But the inflation of the interest—at least until the last weekend before the election, when the President flew back briefly to the White House—was not, as far as I was aware, a conscious campaign or public strategy on our part. It was a business of responding to both real events and a great many unreal ones.

**POWELL:** I'm sure Republicans knew exactly what we did with regard to Iran, which was that insofar as the campaign was concerned, it was an absolute total negative. The raising of that issue, the mentioning of the word, was the last thing we wanted. The reason it didn't operate through most of the campaign as a negative was simply because it

didn't cut, it didn't relate to voting choice. You look at people's attitudes on Iran, which was clearly a negative, but then when you do your regressions and look at them again, you find out that its weight in terms of determining voting choice was negligible.

Our hope was to keep it negligible. You weren't going to turn around people's attitudes on an issue on that. It was too negative to turn around. Our hope was to keep it low in salience and importance in people's minds. We did that, for the most part, until those last three days and the vote on confirming the statement that [Ayatollah Ruhollah] Khomeini had made earlier about their new position and so forth. Plus, the anniversary of the taking of the embassy, which came on Monday before the election, raised that issue in a very dramatic way in the minds of the public. In some ways, even with what we said about the distortions and the magnifications and so forth, the amount of press attention to that issue roughly corresponded to the amount of what was happening on that issue—not necessarily what was being said by the White House, but what was going on.

It was high from the time the embassy was taken all the way through the rescue operation, and things were going on during that period. It fell off a little bit in February—I guess February primarily, simply because we were able for once to do a good job in keeping anybody from knowing much about what was going on. Those were the negotiations through the French connection. But then it fell off during the summer because absolutely nothing was happening. Then in the early fall—really about the time of the Democratic convention, a little bit after—things began to move again. There were contacts that eventually led to the release, and as those began to get out—largely, as Al says, through people who feared, rightly, as they should have politically, at least, that indeed the hostages might be released in October—were doing the best that they could to discount that. They knew that the stuff was working, and also knew that getting it back in the news was not something we wanted. I mean, even good news was bad news.

**FRIENDLY:** The other part of the Iran story, I remember, was the weekend before the Wisconsin primary, most of which, Jody, you spent in Wisconsin. You left right after that Saturday morning briefing and didn't get back until late Sunday evening. That was the weekend when the letter, the non-letter, was released in Iran that suggested we were apologizing, a very complicated episode in which your problem, as I recall it, was to conceal what the real communications were with Iran, but not to undercut something that somebody in Iran may have done on his or her own to try and improve the atmosphere for some real progress the next week.

And that was—I don't know how many times it happened—the only time that I was there where the President did something that in other administrations seemed to me to have been routine. This was to call in—Remember that Sunday evening, the *Post*, the *Star*, the *New York Times* bureau chief, the *Chicago Tribune* bureau chief? —on a completely off-the-record basis upstairs, tell them as much as he could of what had really happened, so that they could understand that the letter that looked terribly embarrassing to our official position that had surfaced in Tehran was a phony, and get them to believe it. Again, I think that worked.

**POWELL:** It worked in the short term, but it ended up backfiring in the long term. I don't know how much time you want to spend on it, but it's sort of an interesting little case study in something or other. The initial problem, as Al says, is that there was a letter which was released in Iran, which was constructed—I'm still not sure by whom—I know there have been varying reports about it, but I suspect was constructed by people over there who were trying to do the right thing. They basically made up this letter to pass around to try to soften up some people over there, to try to get them to move in the direction that we wanted them to go.

It was then made public by someone; somebody did it because of stupidity or because they wanted to get it out to force us to deny it. I don't know. My job, as I saw it, as Al pretty closely said, was to try to convince people that neither the President nor anybody else had ever said anything like that, while at the same time protect the fact that we had, in fact, sent another letter, which was an ultimatum. The theory being that if you make a private ultimatum into a public one, then you put the guy you're trying to back off in a position where he doesn't have any choice but to defy you. The crazy thing happened after I went through all that and got my brains beat out trying to get to that idiot Bani Sadr, who released the damn ultimatum himself. God knows about those folks. But that was the original problem. And we got into flaps about the fact that I had not told them that there was another letter.

**FRIENDLY:** Remember, you chose your words very carefully.

**POWELL:** Exactly.

**FRIENDLY:** Saturday morning in his office, the most informal and effective of settings, was it not? as far as getting the journalists to accept what you had to say. You said there was "no such" letter.

**POWELL:** Yes.

**FRIENDLY:** Which was the honest and accurate thing to say beyond which you couldn't go. And it was the line we had to hold all weekend, and because it didn't work....

**POWELL:** Then it came out over the weekend that it had, in fact, been a letter.

**FRIENDLY:** And nobody remembered that you had said "no such" letter.

**POWELL:** My feeling was not to try to justify what I did, but in talking about the way you try to figure these things out and the scheming and planning that goes on. If you say, "We never sent any letter that said anything remotely like that. We did send a letter, but we never said anything like that." Well, the next question is, "What did you say in that letter?" Then you say, "Well"—which you would have to have said—"I can't tell you about that."

My feeling was that that aroused even greater suspicions. You know, “Oh well, the White House partially confirms” sort of thing. They say they sent one and that they didn’t say that, but won’t tell us what it did say. And then also—given the problems that you have in leaks—the other thing that ought to be said is that we had begun to get some positive signs back at that point, which gave us a good reason to believe that the threat was having some effect. They were sending word back, “Yes, we understand what you’re saying, and we know things got off track here about six times over the past six weeks, but we’ve got them back on track now. Just give us another couple of days or so.”

I felt if I said, “There is another letter,” at the very least what that does is launch a massive inquiry on the part of the press into every nook and cranny in government to see if they can find somebody who will tell them what was in that letter. What I thought was, if somebody says, “Well, not only was it not a kiss-your-fanny sort of letter, but it was one that said, ‘If you don’t get off the dime, we’re going to come down on you hard,’” that was likely to blow whatever chance we had—which we thought was a good one at the time—of getting this whole scenario for release back on track. But in any case, the President, as Al says, did have those people up; it did work in the short-term. I think we pretty well convinced people that at least we hadn’t sent any such thing and what we had sent was something else. Those people did not run with that stuff. They held the confidence, and so forth.

Then comes the next Wisconsin primary story, which was the morning of the primary, when finally Bani Sadr did his part, or his next step, in the scenario and said that the hostages will be transferred. The President then responded to that, and of course the transfer didn’t ever take place. The static that we got from that and the accusations of manipulation and so forth were made worse by the fact that, by then, word had gotten around that the President had had these people up to talk to them about the situation in Iran. Those off-the-record sessions became, in retrospect, not sessions which the President had called out of desperation to try to get the thing straightened out about this stupid letter, but they became part of a scheme to hike this story about an impending release, the final act of which had been planned to take place on the morning of the Wisconsin primary.

This may have been one of the worst bum raps that the President got—and he got a lot of them—not only in terms of it being unfair, but I also think it was one that had a major and continuing impact. I think that colored perceptions of the President and accentuated that tendency to view everything that he did in a calculating, manipulative, political sort of fashion. In fact, I remember sitting down with people—all reporters who cover the White House don’t know enough to cover politics, by any means, but a number of them do—and talking to them about all the elections they’d seen, and all the polling data that they had seen, and about how little you can do about a vote on the day of the vote, and how if you’re going to do something like that, you certainly don’t do it the morning of the election.

And if you figure how many people in Wisconsin had ever even heard about that by the time they went to the polls, and the fact that we had like a fifteen point lead going in—

which they knew, and we knew, and everybody else knew, too. But once the thing was off, then there was not a thing in the world to be done, and you just never could turn it around.

**FRIENDLY:** Well, I brought it up partly because they asked about the hostages, and those are the two episodes I remember. But also because it seemed I don't recall any other occasions while I was there—and I don't know how many there were before—where the President did that kind of hands-on stroking of the press establishment in Washington. That particular evening, it was a desperation matter, but it seemed to me to work.

**YOUNG:** It did. What I've always wondered is why you all didn't do it more often in less hectic circumstances.

**POWELL:** Probably should have, and we did do some more of that. The sort of dinner things that Rafshoon set up when he came in were of that nature. That's the sort of thing that, looking back on it, we should have done more of.

**TOWNSEND:** That business, though, of the President calling in the bureau chief and the head of the news organization to try to steer off the story is another one of those things that has institutional roots that aren't so hot, because people who've been around for a number of years immediately remember [Lyndon] Johnson and how he used to yank people in the White House to tell him about Vietnam. And you know what you're hearing from the field is not what's really going on. You have to weigh that in figuring how people are going to employ it.

**POWELL:** It created resentment, to some extent, among the reporters, who don't like to be the guy sitting back home, saying, "I know more than you do because I talk to the President," I can tell you. But this is not the way it happened. I think what Al's talking about is that doing it on occasions when you don't need to do it, would have helped rather than sort of calling in late at night and saying, "I've got something big for you here, and I really need you to listen up carefully." That was something that if you do it very often, you tend to wear out your welcome.

**YOUNG:** There are still two areas, at least, of Press Secretary operations we'd like to hear something about: the news summary and the press advance. And perhaps there are some general questions to wind up about the organization of the office. So we've got a fair amount of ground to cover.

**FRIENDLY:** There is a part of the press that the American students of the Presidency never look at, and that's the foreign press. And all I would say is we were a dismal failure. Nobody ever had time to do the work with the foreign correspondents that might have made a little difference in European public opinion. It was a function of time.

**POWELL:** And it had impact in the sense that the problems we had in Europe—which were not entirely the making of the press, by any means, but were accentuated by the fact

that we were not getting our story across at all there—then came back around to add to our problems at home.

**YOUNG:** I think that during the talk we had with you in connection with the press conference project, you brought up that point.

**BARIO:** Let me add something on that. It's interesting that one of the people who worked in our White House for Al McDonald is now the director of the foreign press center and has taken our briefing idea over there. And this administration's spokespeople are going over and briefing the foreign press one, two, and three times a week on various issues.

**YOUNG:** And are people attending, Pat?

**BARIO:** Yes, he's getting 40 or 50 turning out for each one of them. Bob Meyers is over there.

**FRIENDLY:** Bob saw how it didn't work.

**BARIO:** Yes, right.

**POWELL:** And they've got those Europeans marching sharp lines. We certainly got those jokers on a short leash.

**FRIENDLY:** Well, it's a long-term impact.

**POWELL:** Good public policy, right?

**THOMPSON:** Maybe you'll want to answer this tomorrow. It's partly addressed to Al, too. I think you know some of the people I'm talking about. Did you collect critics and opponents whom you might not have had to contend with if more could have been done through normal diplomatic channels? We somehow have the impression that more people than we had expected were involved in the Iran operation out of the White House. We have the impression—surely from the public picture, and, as you describe it, it doesn't seem to be accurate—that you did a lot of things to promote Brzezinski rather than to restrain him, and that—as you describe it—it seems to be a struggle to get coherence.

But the notion of a Press Secretary in the NSC [National Security Council] office, if you had mentioned that to [James] Forrestal when he talked about the creation of the office buckling things together, would have come as quite a shock. I simply wondered— Well, let me just say one quote that may give you a flavor of what I mean. One of the nation's foremost scholars of foreign policy said he never had known an administration with whose objectives he agreed more, but with whose methods and competence he had acquired more doubts and questions. I wonder if any of that kind of attitude is related to what we have been talking about.

**FRIENDLY:** First of all, foreign policy was distinguished, I think, by the same attributes that went into the public perception of domestic policy. That very eclecticism made it an open administration, but also made it possible—indeed, necessary—to a journalist to report the ongoing internal arguments. And in those arguments, inevitably—because of the personalities, and also the viewpoints involved—Brzezinski and the Secretary of State came to be perceived as opponents. Could you have eliminated that by keeping Zbig gagged? Certainly we tried occasionally.

**POWELL:** It would have been hard to focus it because the press needs a person—they need to personify, to make a story. So it would have been hard to focus on him. But for the past ten months, we’ve not even known we had a national security adviser until the recent unpleasantness. The stories about conflicts over foreign policy began shortly after the Inauguration, when [Al] Haig goes out and says, “We’re going to live within the limits of SALT II—as long as the Russians do—until we get a new agreement negotiated.” Then, out pops Captain Knife the next day and says, “No we don’t.” And you’re going to have that.

**FRIENDLY:** The business of George Bush being named the crisis manager in opposition to the Haig memo on national security organization came almost the day after the election.

**POWELL:** When [Alexander] Hamilton was writing articles under an assumed name about [Thomas] Jefferson, you didn’t have a national security staff that prompted that. At least since that time, you’re going to have it in terms of the function of the National Security Council, but whether the press becomes a part of it. He was living in a bit of a different world, and I’m sure you’re right: he wouldn’t have thought about that. But I would also say that if you think it worthwhile—and I think it is—to have a mechanism in the White House that gives a President the ability to coordinate the making of policy in that area, then you also better think about trying to establish some mechanism for coordinating the explanation and exposition of that policy, too. One’s not going to work without the other.

**FRIENDLY:** To the extent anybody ever thought about this side of the arrangement in the second term, that didn’t happen. I think we were surely moving toward the idea of my working for you, or of that function being in the press office and away from the National Security Council, at least on paper. The fact is that Brzezinski served President Carter very well for a long time, or the President wouldn’t have retained him and given him the influence he did. The other fact is that the President, as I saw it—and maybe that’s not a fact—did not wish to do what might have been effective, but probably would have come too late anyway, which was to tell Zbig to go under cover and stay there until after the election. To be effective, that decision would have had to have been taken sometime in ’79, I would think, to remove Brzezinski from the public scene.

**TRUMAN:** If not January of ’77.



**FRIENDLY:** Well, as I said, the examples we come up with from '77 are of throwing Brzezinski—because he was the most available figure—into the public breach. You informed us about the post-SALT and post-Moscow business. My memory is the post-Gromyko-Carter communiqué on the Middle East. That was always throwing him in for damage limitation. His own interests—and as I said, there were plenty of other White House assistants at various levels acting in the same syndrome with perhaps less success or damage—impelled him to go further than I think was politically a good idea. Not just politically, but for policy.

But the thing is, he was terribly good at the public articulation of policy. He got as close as the administration ever came to having on the public record the strategic framework within which it was operating. What he said didn't get a great deal of attention, except then Strobe Talbott defined it as geopolitical gobbledygook. And it was so perceived. But I think that when the revisionists get around to it, that is one area where the record will alter. It will be seen that there was a view—largely a consensus view, it wasn't just Brzezinski—about what the direction of policy was on East-West questions and North-South questions. It was generally shared. The trouble was that he was the guy who was saying it, and he carried a great deal of other baggage that made it very hard to see this particular suitcase in his hand.

**POWELL:** Some of that baggage was not anything that had to do with him, but became a position. In addition to Watergate, one of the memories that were very fresh was of a National Security Adviser destroying a Secretary of State, and then when the body is shipped away, taking the job. And that was very much in the minds of people who covered the area. If they could see a little bit of light between Brzezinski and Vance, they were inclined to think of it as, "Uh oh, here we go again."

And I think people on the inside of government were also sensitive to that, which is one of the reasons that it made people a step or two down very protective of the Secretary of State, for example, because they said, "Oh no, we're not going to have that sort of thing again." I think you're seeing some of that happening, frankly, in this administration, too. The Secretary of State, having been in the White House and having seen first-hand what can be done to a Secretary of State if he's not careful, is inclined to make sure it doesn't happen again, and maybe is a little overly sensitive to it.

**FRIENDLY:** Just again for the record. Although certainly a good deal of what I did ended up in pushing Brzezinski forward, there was a great deal of effort to keep him back. That involved, during the campaign particularly, scheduling him into places where he wouldn't get coverage, or making sure that people did know what he was going to say before he said it. I remember particularly the one thing that is presumed to be the *summum bonum* of White House service is to get your picture on the cover of *Time* magazine. I'm trying to remember when it was that *Time* was earnestly proposing to make Zbig the cover.

**POWELL:** With malice aforethought.

**FRIENDLY:** And it took you, Jody, me, and a lot of other people to talk them out of it. But we did. I think that Brzezinski's own feelings on the subject were ambivalent. It seems to be a function of the high visibility of the special assistants to the President in a modern White House that eventually those special assistants acquire little fleas on their hide as well.

**THOMPSON:** Did the President know what he was getting when he paired the two of them, Brzezinski and Vance?

**POWELL:** Not entirely, I'm sure. I'm not sure how you determine that exactly ahead of time. I doubt any President has done more to try to find out, even in terms of spending personal time with Cabinet members. And you can contrast our situation with the present Cabinet. He tried to know as best he could the choices that were available and what he was getting. He probably knew Brzezinski before he appointed him better than he did Vance.

But if you're asking did we anticipate that we're going to end up down the road with a problem, or did the President anticipate a serious problem in terms of this perception of the American foreign policy as nothing but a swallow between Vance and Brzezinski was decidedly wrong, in fact. No, I don't think he— nor am I sure how you predict that ahead of time.

**YOUNG:** Shall we go on to some of the other aspects of the operation, news summary? You identified this, I think, this morning as a very important source of information for everybody around the White House.

**TOWNSEND:** I can give you a very brief rundown, just about how we set it up. The news summary was intended not to be the President's only source of information from the press, but to supplement what he was already doing. In that sense, it's different from the way it is now, and the way it was before the Carter administration. We knew that the President would read for himself the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*, and the Washington media.

What we aimed to do with the news summary were two things. One was to give him an idea of what was going on in the rest of the country in terms of trends and news events that might not yet be covered in Washington, and in terms of editorial comment from other papers, a variety of voices. The other was to give some idea of how the things that were going on in Washington were being portrayed through the outlets that reached the largest numbers of people. To do that, we put together a little publication—that we tried to hold to about twelve pages a day—that included the main stories that were budgeted by the two wire services.

It included a breakdown of the coverage on the network news every night: a rundown of what the different stories were, what order they came in, how long they lasted, roughly what they said. And then a page or so of stories from newspapers that we picked up around the country of things that were going on that we thought were significant, that we

hadn't seen reflected in the press in Washington. And then a number of pages, depending on how interesting they were, of editorials and editorial cartoons. There were five of us who did this thing every day. It came out six days a week. We read about a hundred and twenty newspapers among us from all over the country, plus looking at the wire services.

There was a separate thing that we did once a week along all the same philosophical lines. It was a summary of articles in the magazines that carried public affairs and current events-type commentary, chosen in the same way. It was an effort to provide a little sense of what was happening somewhere other than immediately where you were.

**YOUNG:** Digest of selected commentaries.

**TOWNSEND:** Everything was summarized in a paragraph or less. We kept in the office the full clip of all the things that we drew from, so that if someone saw something that they were interested in, they could call us and we could give them the rest of it, and they could see what the exact wording was, what the context was. I only stayed with the news summary about nine months, but as time went on, I think that research function became more and more important. While I was there, it had already expanded a good bit.

We began to keep things like files on columnists—people who, for example, might be invited into one of Pat's briefings, or who might be seeing the President for some other reason. If Jody wanted to be able to look at what they had written for the last few months to get some idea of what they were interested in, where they were coming from, we would have those things on file, so that there would be a quick reference, and somebody wouldn't have to go trot downtown to the library and try to pull it all together.

People gradually learned that it was useful to have all those newspapers lying around, and folks would call from different offices and say, "You know, we're working on a project on water policy, and we want to know what you see about drought and flooding and water problems or political problems over water in the western newspapers. Can you watch it for two weeks and then tell us what you get?" And people would compile those sorts of things. Once those things were done, they were all filed and kept so that somebody could come back later and look at them again.

**YOUNG:** To whom were these circulated? They were addressed primarily for the President's daily reading?

**TOWNSEND:** It was designed entirely for the President's daily reading. It was then circulated to most folks in the White House and the heads of the Cabinet departments. There were about 120 people when I left. I think the list grew after that. It was an item of great demand.

**BARIO:** It grew to 200 before we capped it off. And it was kind of fun, because the news summary, the original one that came from the White House, had a Carter green logo. When people would want to add on to the subscription list, we would tell them, "Feel free

to copy it.” Well, that wasn’t the same thing, because then you had a black cover where it said, “The White House News Summary,” whereas insiders would have the green one.

**TOWNSEND:** We produced it during the day. It was ready in the early evening. The President, I think, often looked at it in the evening rather than in the morning. Again, that was done to his preference. The previous news summaries—and I think the current one—operate more like a morning newspaper. They’re put together during the night from the early editions of the *Times* and the *Post* and local newspapers.

**POWELL:** One of the things that necessitate that is that they summarize the *Post* and *Times*—and used to summarize the *Star*. We didn’t, because we assumed the President would read those himself, and they get those early editions when they come out.

**KUMAR:** Did Carter ever use it as an agenda for action, use the news summary, read through it and then ask that certain things be done in response to it?

**POWELL:** It was certainly a source of information for him about things that were going on and so forth. Not in any formal way. On occasion I can remember him—although he very seldom asked about a story, period—but on occasion, well—Rex and Ray usually saw him when I saw him, but occasionally would say, “I saw such-and-such. What about that?” I don’t remember specific instances, but he’d call Stu, or call somebody and ask about something that he saw in there. On occasion he would comment on the stories that said the President is considering doing such-and-such, when he didn’t even know we were considering the problem at all yet—wondering who it was that was passing himself off as being the President and considering such a thing.

**GRANUM:** I think one aspect of it, too—just to contrast it to some of the news summaries which preceded it—was its straightness. Apparently, the Nixon White House was a much more restricted good guys/bad guys, “these guys are for us, they’re not,” sort of thing. Ours was sometimes, even to a fault, a very objective wire service-like distillation: “Here is what they said that would correctly reflect the mood in the country.” When things were great, it was a delightful document to read. When they weren’t, it was not. And you very much got a sense of how things were going for you that week or over a period of time just by reading—and in your own mind determining whether this was flattering or not from those articles.

**POWELL:** One testimony to this accuracy—and reporters are much more sensitive to being misquoted than politicians ever thought about being—was that you almost never got a complaint from someone that the summary misinterpreted or didn’t give the full flavor, the accurate view, of what they had said on the news that night or whatever. Am I right in assuming that? I heard from people every now and again, but not often.

**LEUCHTENBURG:** My youngest son worked for the Carter campaign committee. I thought it was a remarkable document, and I walked off with a few copies from my files. I was looking at one yesterday on the Cabinet shakeup, and there’s a quote from Ted

Stevens saying that it appears that the President has had a nervous breakdown. That's about as blunt as you can be in a newsletter for internal circulation.

**YOUNG:** Surveying the mail was not part of your business?

**POWELL:** Different operation.

**YOUNG:** Yes, different operation. Was this summarized, too, for the President?

**POWELL:** Weekly.

**GRANUM:** I think it was summarized, and they attached ten or twelve letters a week as samples.

**JENKINS:** It was not very useful, as I recall. We'd occasionally get inquiries about how the mail was running and so on, but I don't think anybody paid much attention to it.

**POWELL:** Additional thing to ask. In fact, that would be one thing that I would suggest the White House either quit or profess to have quit doing—summarizing mail. The first question you could guarantee. The President makes a speech or anything, sort of the standard first question is, "How is the mail running?"

**JENKINS:** That question is probably asked by people who still don't believe that sample surveys of opinion can possibly mean anything.

**POWELL:** Those people said, "Nobody's ever interviewed me."

**LEUCHTENBURG:** Most of the letters run heavily in our favor. Earlier returns show in our favor.

**YOUNG:** Are there any other questions on the news summary? What about the press advance?

**LEIBACH:** I will try and explain what I did as best I can. My mother is still not sure of what I did at the White House.

**BARIO:** Probably just as well that way.

**POWELL:** Neither is the President, I might add.

**LEIBACH:** I ran the press advance office for about a year and a half or two years, and stayed pretty actively involved in it for the last two years as well. Basically, we were involved in a number of documents. One would be "around the White House" and "around Washington" speeches, photo sessions, making the arrangements for the press on those and whatever needed to be done as well as on trips. Much as the President had

somebody doing advance work for him, someone had to take care of the arrangements for the traveling press, and the local press, as well.

Just as a point of comparison, I would guess on an average domestic trip we would have 75 press traveling with us, and depending on where you were going, the media markets, anywhere from 50 to maybe several hundred local and regional press covering. On overseas trips, the numbers swelled considerably. I would guess about a 150 to 200 average size traveling press corps. And depending on what country you were in, a considerably larger number of press based there in summit meetings. I think Secret Service said at times they credentialed several thousand press people.

And press advance had the role of working on everything from the schedule and helping to put the President's schedule together, to deciding what the press coverage would be. Obviously, you couldn't always have 500 people covering a photo session, although we tried at times. To deciding how you would try and find some reasonable way of getting a representative pool in to cover whatever it might have been, from a meeting between two heads of state to a speech. It entailed everything from looking at what the camera angles might be to which door the press would use to get in. It involved press credentialing; it involved setting up press filing centers, making sure that people could file, keeping an eye on the schedule for appropriate filing time, and a lot of interacting with the President's advance staff members, Secret Service, White House communications, and the press themselves.

It's something that I think has a real impact—especially when you're traveling—on the perception of a campaign, or of a trip. If a couple of suitcases are lost, people tend to think that the whole thing is in disarray, and I guess it hit pretty close to home. By the same token, the one thing that really sticks out in my mind is the time I think former President Ford was in New York, and a bus got stuck in the tunnel, a press bus, and that was the Ford story that night on the evening news.

**BARIO:** They're not self-centered at all?

**LEIBACH:** Oh, no.

**POWELL:** I remember the time when we were in New York. Damn New York Police Department tried to move our camera truck out of the line of things so far away, and I tried to stop them and almost got arrested. That was the Carter story that night. There was a Garment District parade, the big New York event, sixty million people lining the streets, confetti, you know. The whole bit had taken a good bit of our campaign budget and thousands of man hours to put this thing on, and the New York PD decided that the camera truck was in the wrong place, and they wanted it 50 yards ahead, which meant that all that the people would see of this thing is something that looked like a car with somebody who might be sticking out of the top of it. Plus the malt didn't get there for the speech, and that was the entire story for the night.

**YOUNG:** What didn't get there?

**POWELL:** The malt, which is the box the mike plugs in on one side, and all the networks plug in on the other. It keeps you from having one microphone for every news organization.

**YOUNG:** So if you don't have it, you don't communicate?

**POWELL:** That's right—an indispensable link between the President's mouth and the ears of America.

**GRANUM:** In a New York parade once, a Secret Service agent later stationed in Butte, Montana, took a swing at Powell to dissuade him from speeding up a press truck.

**LEIBACH:** Just a couple of other things. The growing sophistication of the networks and the constant deadlines that the wire service reporters have—and radio had—is probably one of the more demanding things. Press advance tried to get what they needed, which was access. We tried to work out a schedule where you could have the President meet or sit in the holding room or on this plane while they were given 20 or 30 minutes to file, plus moving that many people around President Carter, and especially when you got into situations in countries overseas where resources were not as plentiful as, say, they are here. The demands of the press, the demands of the Secret Service, and the demands of the staff in trying to accomplish certain goals and objectives made it an interesting two years, and I thank you for it.

**YOUNG:** Did you have to learn the brands of liquor that they all like, too?

**LEIBACH:** I found that beggars were usually not choosers.

**POWELL:** The one physical thing that best demonstrates all that the press advance office has to do and has got to be—and I stayed the hell out of it as much as I could—and is one of the most demanding and frustrating and thankless jobs in the White House or the government—is the press bible, which, if you all have never seen a copy, maybe we'll send you one. But you always look at it for a trip. It is the most detailed imaginable schedule of movements and times. The President's schedule is one tenth of it.

Sometimes you can read a page and a half before you come to something that says, "President Carter does so and so." In between is nothing but schedules and information and so forth, telling the press where to go, what time they leave here, when they're going to get their press bus pool, departs at such a press booth, press pool C assembles in the lobby, press pool D leaves the American embassy to return to blank at blank. It's one of the most unbelievable documents. People were not only doing these things, but it was not something that could be done by the seat of the pants—although a lot of it had to be done, in many cases, almost by the seat of the pants, because you just didn't have time to. They not only had to decide what they were going to do, but they had to reduce it all to writing and print it up and hand it out to the reporters so the reporters would know what to do.

**GRANUM:** It showed them which reporter was in which pool.

**FRIENDLY:** Just to go back to something that you talked about: It was a two-part book. There was a second part, which, on a foreign trip, at any rate, was substantive background, unclassified background for the traveling press that was prepared by the State Department. But one of the chores, and, I think, reasonable chores, that had to be done in the White House, was to edit it to make sure that it was going to be helpful to the White House correspondents who didn't know anything about Yugoslavia. Why we were stopping there. If part of the President's travel abroad is generating support at home for policy, and you know on the road you're not going to be able to have briefings to sell your message, you've got to put some of it into a book.

And if the State Department puts it into a book without anybody at the White House supervising it, it may be a very good book, but it's not necessarily going to be the President's book. And on all of those mechanical chores—having somebody in the White House who is looking out for the President's interest in whatever travel it is, or whatever press activity it is—is essential, because otherwise you are going to have the Commerce Department determining how the President looks on a particular issue, or the State Department. You can't ask, given the nature of the bureaucracy, that the guys in the State Department be as sensitive to the President's concerns as somebody who works directly for the President, unless you make sure that everybody in the State Department press office is your political appointee, and he knows that Jody will fire him tomorrow if something goes wrong. That's a way to do it. I don't think it's ever been done, and I don't even think it's doable. There'd have to be three of you.

**POWELL:** Just to sign a pink slip. That same function is necessary when you start putting together briefings for the presidential press conferences. You can farm those questions out to the agencies, but on both the domestic and foreign policy side you had better have somebody who's plugged into that system, and who knows what they're talking about, to review those things before they go into the President. You can get yourself into difficulties if you don't.

**FRIENDLY:** I've got to go, and that just reminds me of one little note I'd made to myself about that briefing book. The President read it, in my experience, with enormous care. The first one I sent in, the foreign policy section, I didn't know what to do. He told me it was garbage—not quite in those words, but close. And I then found out what it was that he wanted. But the most interesting moment of that was a press conference, I think in October.

There was a UN resolution pending that would have condemned Israel for something, for the umpteenth time. And there was a very strong feeling in the White House that the President should say that if that resolution passes, we will leave the UN. This was a very important policy matter. There was a group of people in the White House who end-played me and got into the briefing book a question, "What will you do if the UN passes this resolution?" Answer: "We will have to consider leaving the United Nations." Well, the President read that and brought it up in a session with his advisers before the press



conference, because there had not been any very extensive discussion with his national security advisers or anybody else of policy on the matter. And, in the end, he didn't say it.

**POWELL:** He did say it later, though.

**FRIENDLY:** Yes. But the use of the briefing book by departments, White House staff, and others—to try and get a point of view to the President—was regular. That was what, it seemed to me, the staff thought the briefing book was for, in part.

**POWELL:** And it was, in fact. Some briefing books were good exercises for everybody. You identify some things that you maybe didn't realize before, and then once they're done, you use them all the time. They were done twice a month. I took them every time I left to go anywhere. If I was appearing publicly, I took the latest briefing book with me and reread the thing because it brought you up to speed on a little bit of everything.

**FRIENDLY:** It did. The weakest point of it—maybe that was the weakest point of policy operation, too—was that it was very good on specific questions, but there was never, in my experience, that one overarching answer that we wanted the President to be able to give in order to define his foreign policy with the three quick paragraphs that you could put on a bumper sticker. The briefing book mechanism didn't stimulate that kind of thinking.

**POWELL:** I'm not sure you can expect it to, because somebody prepares it at some bureau at State, and then you get it and it comes to you. That's something either a President has to do as he reads and assimilates the thing, or you can do, if you decide you want to massage it into that sort of statement.

**BARIO:** That was the position paper of the campaign.

**POWELL:** Some of it, yes.

**YOUNG:** Thank you very, very much. Sorry you have to leave, but I appreciate your coming very much. We're sort of running out of time, but I'm wondering about the briefing book for Mississippi River travel.

**BARIO:** I've been sitting here writing Mississippi. I thought that was a great example of how something evolved without notice very far in advance on what was going to happen on the Mississippi River. There wasn't going to be any media coverage, remember?

**LEIBACH:** That began by putting ten people on the boat with him, and then the networks branched off on their own, as I understand it, had Winnebagos that followed, and didn't keep the boat in sight the whole time. But wherever there were stops that the boat could potentially make, or docks where the boat could pull in, they'd be there, and the President would invariably speak, or get off and talk, or whatever. The rest of the press corps plotted out the major cities and airports along the river, and we'd get up at the

crack of dawn and fly to the nearest city to wherever the major stop was determined to be for the day, bus to that river site, cover the event, bus back to the airport. And we did that for—how long did the trip last?

**BARIO:** A week. Meanwhile, Jody's putting locals on it at all the lock stops, and they're getting one-on-one interviews, right?

**POWELL:** Which the press corps just loved.

**LEIBACH:** Always from the Iowa side, never from the Illinois side.

**POWELL:** Oh, no.

**BARIO:** As I recall, the count the President made was 48 or 57 speeches that week.

**POWELL:** What happened that was unanticipated on that trip was the fact that every time you went through a lock—and really, every time you went by a town, whether the boat was supposed to stop there or not—there would be a tremendous crowd of people who would come down. And we had thought at the beginning, all right, we'll put a pool on the boat. Just in case it sinks, they'll feel like they're covered, and we'll all pick a couple of good stops a day that we will bring people to, which is the reason for the shuttle service up and down the banks of the river. And that will do it.

But what happened was, something was happening about every hour and a half or so, as you would get to a lock or you'd go by a town. I remember at two o'clock in the morning pulling into a lock that was miles away from any sort of center of habitation, and there being twelve, fifteen hundred people out there at the lock. Of course the President is not going to sit in his cabin when there are fifteen hundred people out there waiting to see him. He's going to go out and say hello to the folks.

**JONES:** Did he have his pajamas on?

**POWELL:** We ended up throwing two press advance people in a van, which they slept in and ate in and Lord knows what else, all the way down the river. And they would get to some stop just before we got there and do the best they could to get things in reasonable order and try to figure out where the boat's going to stop and where the President's going to stand and where the local television crews that have driven 50 miles to get there can get a shot so they actually see the President, what sort of light is there going to be, and is there going to be a mike there if he wants to speak and a malt on some occasions. It was something that we literally decided to do once we got on the river and realized what we were dealing with. That was a combination, really, of press advance and just presidential advance staff.

**THOMPSON:** What did the polls show then?

**POWELL:** I never saw any. I suspect it helped in the places through which we went. Even though it got a fair amount of coverage, most of the national coverage tended to be marginal or negative on it.

**GRANUM:** But if my recollection is correct, too—I mean the aftermath of the trip, once it was over, and for five, six, seven days after that—it was highly criticized as a huge shameless media event.

**YOUNG:** Mingled with a lot of complaints, as I recall, about people who didn't get on the boat or quibbled with the driver.

**POWELL:** One time somebody did a piece about how the President had kissed a baby, and this was the lead of it, which just showed what a conniving SOB this guy was.

**JONES:** I just wanted to make sure in discussing these functions. In your opening statement, you said that the press operation was larger than most functions, more than bodies, and that you spun off some of these functions. What were some of those that you spun off?

**POWELL:** Speechwriting was one that had originally been there and then got spun off. And what else?

**LEIBACH:** Press advance.

**POWELL:** The press advance went to Jerry once he came in.

**GRANUM:** Then when he left, it came back.

**POWELL:** Yes, that's right.

**GRANUM:** A lot of these things got spun off like a yo-yo in the administration.

**POWELL:** Sort of like trying to lose a cat.

**LEIBACH:** White House photo office and the TV that does the archival. There are always the speeches and all the public appearances.

**GRANUM:** As well as the TV adviser.

**YOUNG:** The speechwriting went to Rafshoon when he came on?

**POWELL:** Yes, into the White House. Then it sort of showed up at our door one day again, back-way of Al McDonald's operation.

**THOMPSON:** Can I just ask before you drop the speechwriting, did you feel any ambivalence about bringing speechwriters to the President as they were writing a speech? Or did that not come up in your period?

**POWELL:** No, it was something we tried to do a lot more than we did. For the most part, whatever their testimony is, it's better than mine. My impression was that it never seemed to do what either I or they or the President hoped it would do when we did it. And something about the nature of speechwriters and the nature of this President made the nature of the whole thing—that getting together ahead of a speech to talk about a speech did not seem to provide the sort of guidance that the President thought he was giving, or that they thought they ought to be getting. He thought he was telling them things that they didn't feel they weren't hearing.

**THOMPSON:** They say they wrote their best speeches—

**POWELL:** —when we got a chance to talk to them ahead of time. Well, I'm glad to hear that it did more good than I thought it was doing at the time.

**YOUNG:** Also, when it was something very important to him, too, which was when they would get a chance to talk it through with him.

**POWELL:** That may have been as much the key to it as anything, because those tended to be the speeches that were much on his mind that he had given more thought to ahead of time, had more definite ideas about what he wanted and so forth.

**JONES:** Other than the briefing book and the obvious importance of what you were doing for the President, did the President feel that he needed to be prepared for the press? Is it something that you personally talked with him about?

**POWELL:** In what sense do you mean?

**JONES:** Well, what's going on in the press these days? Are there some changes in what they're looking for? Was there ever talk about reporters generally?

**POWELL:** There was some of that. Those tended to take place more in the morning sessions and be part of just general discussion about what are these guys up to and what are they thinking. But generally speaking, President Carter didn't spend a lot of time thinking about the press, compared to most Presidents, which is both good and bad. I think a President can certainly be too caught up in reading every story and watching the wires and fretting over the networks every night to the point that it's very counterproductive both in terms of his attitude and in terms of his detachment to that day-to-day stuff that a President needs.

From my own standpoint, I wished at times that he was more interested in it and delighted in the game-playing aspects of it, which you almost have to do to make it

bearable. That he took an interest in how you go about working this thing out from a press strategy more than he actually did. He did not spend a lot of time.

**JONES:** What about the media liaison operation? Was that something that he thought was a good idea? I assume it was. It sounds like his kind of thing.

**POWELL:** Yes. If he hadn't, that was an operation, the daily editors briefing. Even after we quit having the twice a month press conference, we still continued to have it fairly frequently until the campaign year, when it was much more difficult to do. In many cases, once we got well into it, they'd go roundly misinterpreting us, so we got about as much negative stuff as positive. But I think just the amount of time that he was willing to devote to doing that sort of thing is indicative that he thought it was a good idea. He didn't enjoy the press. He did enjoy very much the press conferences and those sessions with the editors.

**FRIENDLY:** He did them exceedingly well.

**POWELL:** I thought he did, too.

**KUMAR:** Why did he stop then?

**POWELL:** Because we felt, as he also felt, that they weren't doing much good, which I think was exactly right. And that he was to a great extent overexposed and, for what good you got out of them, the amount of his time that you had to invest in doing the things could be better spent on other things. Even though I think he probably spent less time in preparation for a press conference than any of our modern Presidents, you still were talking about a couple of hours on the briefing books, reading them. And then we tried to clear a couple or three hours off his schedule each day prior to the press conference, plus the 30 minutes of the press conference, and maybe another half hour until he gets back over. But that twice a month is a substantial hunk of the President's time, even a President who puts a lot of hours in the day.

**KUMAR:** What were the criteria for doing this for you? What would the press conference have done? What did you expect them to do?

**POWELL:** To win friends and influence people, I guess is the short-term advantage of the press conference. In giving the public a better understanding of what we were doing and why we're trying to do it, and that way hopefully persuading or helping to persuade significant numbers of them that what we were trying to do was the right thing to do.

**JONES:** The fact that he was good at it didn't necessarily mean, from what you're saying, that he was getting all that much out of it.

**POWELL:** Exactly.

**YOUNG:** Was that something to do with the nature of the questions asked? Those, that is, which were not necessarily uppermost in the minds of the outside public that he was trying to reach?

**POWELL:** Yes. Some of it was that a White House reporter is going to try to advance the boundary of knowledge just that little bit. Then they feel that they have done something. And that's not necessarily a bad approach to it. But there is a tendency to get down to that little bit here and little bit there, moving forward a little bit, when the people who were watching that press conference didn't basically understand the much broader considerations that were taken by the reporters as being given. So it tended to be useful and interesting. And I think the record of his thinking—as you go back and read those things over the course—will be quite interesting. In terms of informing the public, though, they were a little bit too—I don't know—little too much “inside baseball.” Not the right word for it, but something like that.

**TRUMAN:** The personality that came over in the press conferences was, I think it's fair to say, a very different personality than came across in the public speeches. Was there ever any thought given to trying to bring the personality from the former into the latter? He would have had to go through, of course, in order to do it, but he was so different in the press than he was in an address.

**POWELL:** We talked about the possibility of trying to use something like that to explain public policy. The fact was that he was best and most effective in a relaxed sort of give and take situation. The problem is finding an outlet for it. We talked about, on foreign policy, trying to set up something in which the President and the Secretary of State and the Secretary of Defense, for example, would sit down—maybe with, say, a Cronkite—and talk about this sort of issue together. That grew out of the sessions that they did with members of Congress, which I think were generally considered to be—and I'm sure Frank and those people probably told you—considered to be very effective.

**FRIENDLY:** That's where he was at his very best.

**POWELL:** There were institutional constraints. You can call a press conference, and the networks cover it. But you can't really get air time for that sort of thing. You could have done it once, and I'm sorry we didn't do it at least once. Maybe it would have caught on. The town hall meetings, and the regional press conferences, I thought were quite good in the areas where they were run live. But after the first town hall meeting, we never could get the networks to carry those things. And the value of those sorts of questions was that they did go to what people were worried about. Why is this the way it is, Mr. President? What are you doing about it?

It gave him a chance to repeat, which was something the White House press corps for good reasons doesn't ever want to give a President a chance to do, to repeat, to reinforce, to keep hammering in his point of view. I think one reason that people like the ones around this table say that the President was so good in those press conferences is maybe exactly the reason that in terms of mass communications he wasn't so good. One of the

reasons he enjoyed press conferences and liked to do them was that he has that combination of preacher and teacher. It's part of his basic makeup. And he takes very seriously and likes to do that sort of thing, explaining to someone what's going on and why and the various nuances and complications thereof, and to give a very informed and well thought-out sort of answer, not only based on pulling together briefing materials. But on occasion, sort of off the top of his head that he got from God knows where, was a question that you didn't anticipate.

In terms of winning public support, he probably would have been better off if he had cut that stuff out and spent his time instead hammering away on doing a little more sloganeering and trying to pound in the basic themes of what he wanted to say about inflation, or Afghanistan, or you name it. We even tried at one point after Jerry came in to take the briefing book answers—which were largely factual, and pretty much had to be—and supplemented those on the most frequent questions with a paragraph or two at the top to try to sum up the thrust and the theme of that answer to try to encourage the President to focus on the selling rather than the explaining, with some success, but not a great deal. One of the things I admire about his mind is it does not run readily and naturally and reflexively in overly simplified little catch phrases.

**LEUCHTENBURG:** Was the President himself conscious of the fact that he was at least thought to have a problem of communication in his speeches and was more effective in small groups?

**POWELL:** Oh, yes. Hard for him. He would have to have been deaf and blind not to be aware that he was thought to have that problem.

**LEUCHTENBURG:** Did he himself make any contributions to cope with it at a point?

**POWELL:** Yes, I think he was perfectly willing to. But to a large extent, when a person becomes President, they travel on what they bring with them to the office. And you don't take someone who's basically good at, say, answering questions and that sort of discussion and explaining and synthesizing and so forth, and turn them into a rhetorician while they're trying to run the country at the same time. Just as I think the Reagan people are finding that you don't take someone who's good at the speech thing—they're having difficulty in turning Reagan into a person who can deal effectively with the press conference situation. I think they'd probably make a mistake if they just spent too much time trying to do that.

**JENKINS:** We should have tried to watch that press conference this afternoon. Might have been worthwhile to discuss it.

**YOUNG:** It's so rare too.

December 18 Session

**YOUNG:** You or your colleagues might have some things relevant to yesterday's discussion that you might want to add in or elaborate on this morning. But we'd also like to devote the last part of the session to two of the main areas of interest that we reserve for the last day. One of those is to understand both from you and maybe from some of your colleagues how they saw your special role as a presidential adviser and as a person with a long and close association with the President. It is unusual, I think, for most Press Secretaries.

All in the interest of giving us as scholars some accurate notion of how your role really should be described in this administration, special though it was beyond the Press Secretary. Then, of course, obviously the logical questions—which I won't define—about the Carter Presidency, looking back on it and looking ahead to the study of it. Would you like to add anything to yesterday's discussion or pick something to tell us about your own self-description of your role?

**POWELL:** Yesterday after this was all over I thought about one thing, which I'm still not sure whether I really want to add. But I'll say it anyway, and then I'll probably strike it from the transcript. The memory of the flavor will be about all that will be left. I was thinking about the discussion that we had yesterday about the Carter administration and the powers that be in Washington, the people who occupy positions of influence, and the relatively "permanent press" political society structure there, which is very ill-defined. It has been hard to describe, but it's a thing which is there, whatever you call it.

I thought that I would not take anything back from what I said about the things that we might have done and probably would have been well advised to have done to reach out to those people more and to solicit their support and involvement. Having said that and left it at that, at the very least I left an incomplete impression of my own view of the situation. Without in any way diminishing our own responsibility in either the deterioration of that relationship or the failure to establish a positive relationship, by no means was it a one-way street.

It strikes me that there's something passing strange about a group of people—it's not a group in any sense of everybody knowing everybody else and sitting down together and deciding in which direction they will all flutter—nevertheless, strange, about a group of people who claim for themselves a position of leadership and honor and the responsibility with regard to a political party—with regard, to some extent, to the government of a country, and who then adopt an attitude that service to the party and to the government is not an opportunity which they are glad to have. It is instead some task which they must be cajoled and persuaded and solicited for and who—despite all that they would have people say about their pragmatic view of the world and of the political process—who have such thin skins and such a tendency toward hasty judgment that the smallest of slights, real or imagined, would cause them to stand back and take their seats on the sidelines and renounce involvement.

The next moment, they would tell you exactly the causes and the issues and the goals that are really their reason for being and living, and these are the things that they care most



about. And I don't speak, really, I think, so much about an exact pattern of behavior that characterizes each one or any particular individual, but a little bit about an attitude.

We were talking at lunch the other day about something I gather was raised at least among some in this group. It's always, I suppose, a mistake to use one illustration and then damn the whole lot based on one incident. But about an incident that took place very early in the administration—I really think within the first month or so—and that I frankly had long forgotten and thought had been adequately resolved. The whole thing was played out in the *Washington Post*, which—Lord knows, presumably everybody reads the *Washington Post* with great care.

There was a reunion of people who had served in the Roosevelt administration during the early months, even weeks, of the Carter administration. And as it turned out, neither the President nor any one else, I think, in the administration, attended. And there was a comment about this in the press. David Broder mentioned it in his column, that it was a terrible slight and perhaps characteristic of the attitude of these people who had, from the President on down, come to serve in the White House over the past few weeks. I suppose if things had been as David thought they were, then he would have been to some extent right. Except neither the President nor anybody else was invited to this occasion, which was, I suppose, one good reason for not coming.

This finally was settled after a flurry of phone calls back and forth. I don't suppose this discussion goes to any point beyond what it's reached already, but I frankly did not want to leave my comments from yesterday about what we should have done, and the roses we should have sent, and the calls we should have made, and the candy we should have been depositing on people's doorsteps, just at that. It seems to me that it was an obligation on our part to have the responsibility of running the government, so certainly the heaviest obligation was ours to have sought out all of these people who were standing so eager to help—but really standing very quietly, I might say, and sort of back in the crowd.

But there was also an obligation on their part, in that public service is not something that, even though everybody's human and likes flattery and stroking and so forth, if one's commitment to public service depends upon those sorts of things, it seems to me to be a right shallow commitment in the long run. I will stop with that.

**KUMAR:** Why didn't they come forward? And who would you have expected?

**POWELL:** I suppose a combination of what I just said and what I said yesterday. I really am not sure whether what we were talking about yesterday and what I began talking about this morning is in fact a thing that happened, or whether it's an attitude and a reaction to the attitude that only in little places is connected to the real world. Certainly, there were many people. Nothing's quite that clean. There were many people whom we did seek out, we did find, whom we did—at least in our fumbling way—induce to ask for the help and receive it.

There were others who—totally without any stimulation on our part—sat up and said, “Here I am, and what can I do?” or “I’d like to be of assistance to the President in this or that regard, and it’s something that I think I have some modest ability in doing” and so forth. I think we almost began the discussion yesterday with talk about if I had it to do over again, I would have spent more time doing this sort of thing, in my case talking particularly about journalists. I don’t particularly include journalists because, evidence to the contrary, I don’t very much admire the idea of viewing journalists, columnists, and commentators as people whom you sign on with this cause or that, or this administration or that.

I think that is something that happens perhaps less frequently than it once did. It’s something that certainly makes life more difficult in dealing with the fourth estate. But even with that, it’s probably for the good in the long run. The unfortunate aspect of it is that—and I’m having a very hard time thinking of a euphemism for a word that I can’t possibly use here—but that there are still some of those folks around who are for hire or for rent by the day or by the hour.

**YOUNG:** Mostly for rent, I think.

**POWELL:** And that’s not so bad, except that they mostly tend to be Republicans these days.

**KUMAR:** That’s one thing. What institutional factors there are, whether it’s more difficult for Democrats to get these kinds of people, is it in the nature of the Democratic coalition?

**POWELL:** I think they’re making too much money, as I think Jim Schlesinger said in the op-ed piece in the *Washington Post* not too many weeks ago, describing the difference between the young and the old Evans and Novak—you know, if you look at their lecture fees lately. Well, that may be too simple an explanation, but I’m not sure it ought to be dismissed out of hand, either.

**JENKINS:** Let me make just a few observations along that line. One of the things that I did, I had a constituency that didn’t really compete with what Pat was doing, but mine was media liaison in a different way in the sense that my constituency was the American Society of Newspaper Editors, you might say, having known a great many of them personally and what have you. And I, at the outset, identified, I’d say, a half a dozen. No, I shouldn’t name them. There’s no point in naming them—half a dozen people who were sympathetic to us, whom I knew that I could call and say, “Look, we need your help on this.” And I knew that we could get it.

Now these people were not being compromised or suborned or what have you or flattered by the White House or anything. These were people who were ideologically compatible with us to begin with. They were fairly strategically located throughout the country. Unfortunately, I didn’t have enough on the West Coast. I did have one good strong contact on the West Coast. But any time, for instance, that we had a major policy

initiative, I could call these half dozen and perhaps a few others and say, “Look, I’d like for you to really give this some thought. Don’t just write it on the basis of the news stories or what have you, but if you need Alfred Kahn to call you, or if you need Charlie Schultze or Bill Miller or whatever, let us do that.”

And I had a fair measure of success at this. I could measure the success that I had. Even papers that were not necessarily friendly toward us. The *Chicago Tribune*, for instance. Now I’m singling them out as one with an editor whom I didn’t really know, but a person I could call and say, “Look, let me fill you in on what we’re doing.” And when I’d read the *Tribune* editorial, it was different than it would have been if he had written that thing simply on the basis of the news stories.

The problem and the frustrating aspect of it—and I guess this is what everybody in the White House felt—was that there were 1,700 daily newspaper editors in the country, and if I could reach a dozen of them I was lucky. The other 1,688 continued to do as they always did. There was a definition of editorial writing that I used to use humorously, but it has a certain amount of truth to it, too. Editorial writers are the ones who come down out of the hills after the battle is over and shoot the wounded. We got a hell of a lot of scars all over us from that.

I’ll wind this up with kind of a personal observation. I guess it’s a *mea culpa* thing, but if there was anything that I learned about that experience up there, it’s that it’s a hell of a lot easier to write an editorial than it is to make a public policy judgment to make a decision. And I must have written ten thousand editorials in my career, and maybe I’ll write another ten thousand before it’s over. But when you write an editorial, you can be reasonably sure that nothing very specific is going to happen. Nobody’s going to beat their wife, or nobody’s going to go out and shoot a policeman as a result of reading an editorial.

When you make a public policy judgment, it’s different. You know that things do happen. Businesses may fail, or people may lose their jobs, or maybe even nations may go to war. So the upshot is that, however pompous and pretentious and serious the editorial writers may be, they generally know that what they’re writing is going to be used tomorrow to line the shelves or wrap the fish, and it’s not going to have any effect. Although it does have a cumulative effect, there’s no doubt about that. So it’s a very chastening experience for an editorial writer to come into that situation. I tell you, within just a very few weeks after sitting in and listening to alternatives and options, I discarded some of the most cherished beliefs that I’d written about for a good many years.

I would want to add one more thing to that. I did deal to some extent with the columnists, although less so than with editorial page editors. And I came to have a rather low regard for the columnists, frankly. Of all of the components of newspapers—you know, newspapers as opposed to television as opposed to radio and what have you as opposed to editorial pages—of all the components of the media, columnists so often wrote strictly from a perspective of ignorance. They just didn’t have all the facts.

If you ask a leading columnist what he's going to write about next week, well, I know what he's going to write about. He doesn't know what he's going to write about. He's going to write about 20 inches. Regardless of what happens next week, he's going to write about 20 inches. You've got to range over the full perspective. Now there are good columnists, and there are bad columnists, and what have you, but when you've got to range over the full perspective, you don't have 60 inches a week of profound observations to make on something. But yet you've got to fill that space. In any case I thought that perhaps tied in a little bit with Jody.

**POWELL:** Let me remind you to say something about the importance of the press advance, if you could. Just to underscore that.

**BARIO:** I'd like to comment on this as someone whom—

**POWELL:** Oh, you're the one who's going to talk about press advance?

**BARIO:** As having worked in the Senate for 14 years before these folks came to town, I was at least at some low rung of the establishment. And the thing that I think we really must raise here is that part of the problem for the whole four years was simple prejudice against the South: Folks who talk slow can't be too bright. I encountered it always. I constantly could sense it. When some of the people who were briefing were Southerners, I could sense it in the room. There's this arrogant egotism of the Northeast, and it's a very real thing. You could feel it in the White House. I don't blame the people, truthfully, because it seems to me it's an ingrained prejudice that they grew up with. I don't think it's an intellectual reaction. I think obviously anybody who's met Jody knows he's one of brighter people who has come down the pike—and I don't even work for him now. But I think it was a very real thing, and it was a very real thing for four years. It never got turned off.

**JENKINS:** I agree with that wholeheartedly. And if you need evidence of it, just go to Inauguration Day itself, where the *Washington Star* carried a full page of a political cartoon by [Pat] Oliphant which could only be characterized as pointless ridicule. It was not political commentary at all. It was pointless ridicule of Jimmy Carter because of his southern background. It showed a pickup truck on the lawn of the White House. It showed Miss Lillian in a sun bonnet smoking a corn cob pipe. It showed an outhouse on the lawn.

**POWELL:** Tire swing.

**JENKINS:** Exactly. And it even ridiculed his religion.

**POWELL:** I took mine down the next day.

**JENKINS:** But I believe that I could document that this went on throughout the four years and surfaced in such subtle ways that the people who were revealing this bias, this sectional bias, were probably unaware of it. I'll use two examples. One, I remember when

Art Pine, who was an economic columnist or writer for the *Washington Post*, now with the *Wall Street Journal*, was writing about some Carter economic policy, and in the middle of it he referred to President Carter as “the Georgian.”

Well, to me, that was being used in an opprobrious manner. You know, someone from Georgia really can’t know about economics. He would not have referred to Ronald Reagan as “the Californian,” or Gerald Ford “the Michigian,” or what have you. The Georgian. That surfaced also in a big dispute that we had—I don’t even remember what the problem was—at the convention itself, with the president of NBC—William Small, is that right?—in which someone had accused—I don’t remember the details of it, but Small’s direct quote was “That’s not NBC talk, that’s Georgia talk.” And this sort of thing. It surfaced more and more. Now I may be unduly sensitive to it myself. I suggested even before I came to the administration—I made a question to Jody once at the American Society of Newspaper Editors if he weren’t concerned about this, and he didn’t seem to be concerned about it. I was. I continued to be right up to the end.

**YOUNG:** Being from Georgia myself, I can understand some of these things. I’m glad to have your comment about this, and it raises an interesting set of questions, the most important of which is, was this really important, this Washington connection and whatever was wrong with it? To what extent was it really important in the larger scheme and pattern of the Carter Presidency in explaining it?

But it seems to me there’s possibly two aspects to it. There is the social phenomenon, which is, in a sense, a form of snobbery. Washington is our town. It’s not only that you are from the South. The Senate of the United States has an estimable tradition of recognizing southern statesmen, so it’s a little bit more complicated than that. I think it perhaps has something to do with who you were, how you got there, and the fact that this President was quite an unknown quantity. It’s not only southern. You saw some of this, I think also, with LBJ [Lyndon Baines Johnson], some of this kind of derogation of the southerner.

It may be reflective of a new sort of phenomenon in Washington, and that is that you’ve seen over the years the growth of large numbers of very broad networks of people who are part of the company town and part of the service establishment who move in and out of government, who are not elected, who never go out and face an electorate, and who are either for rent or hire, but who become the kind of arbiters of the qualifications of the crowd now in to govern. And I think that is a large part of the problem.

I think it’s something more than a social side to it. On the social side, here Reagan comes in, he is also very much an outsider, and he’s not familiar with anything that goes on there. The press was full of advertisement of the social gestures made, and then everything seemed to be hunky-dory. Well, that sort of confirms that if you make the social gestures, that’s enough. That gives them a good feeling about it. But I think that behind that there is something much more important in a political sense, and that is that there are plenty of people who have a vested interest in taming or acting as arbitrator of the political competence of the temporary government that comes in.

**JONES:** Which is becoming more temporary all the time. It has an incredibly high turnover. Presidents. Possibly in part because of what you just described. Permanent auditors and temporary visitors in the White House.

**CORNWELL:** Even an increasing turnover in Congress, which may not be related to this.

**JONES:** Very recent phenomenon of a turnover.

**POWELL:** I don't want to run this thing in the ground and make too much of it, but I think your initial question was very well put. How important it was, really, as opposed to the extent that it's become a topic that people talk about and think about—maybe because it has to do with personal relationships and emotions, since they tend to assume proportions that aren't warranted by its actual impact on the process of government. This point that you made about the increase in the turnover, the transient nature of government itself at the higher levels, both in the Executive and Legislative branch, tends to increase the influence and the weight of that thing, whatever it is we're talking about here. The people who, as you say, don't occupy that position through any decision of the electorate or through the workings of some constitutional political sort of process. They just sort of happen to be there for some reason or the other. I'm still in Washington. There's a danger that I could end up one day 20 years from now, when a new administration comes to town saying, "Well, those people."

**JENKINS:** You'll be writing your piece on the op-ed page.

**POWELL:** I remember last night we had the Carter administration reunion. None of those tacky people showed up. I can't for the life of me understand what they could have been thinking. And the hell with them, I'll just go about my business. And this is something that I've toyed with at the back of my mind, and unless I cried out in my sleep at night and then forgot, I don't think I've ever tried to articulate it. But there is something a little bit almost like a praetorian guard syndrome.

It's a thing that came into being with the idea of being of service to the government, and to the society in the political process, and has, almost without anybody thinking about it, or someone trying in anyone's small group, sitting down to plot it out— It's not some sort of— I'm more inclined with the screw-up than the conspiracy theory of history anyway—but it has become not a thing of service, but a thing which almost subconsciously presumes not to serve the emperor, but to choose the emperor. Not to protect the processes, but to arrange them according to whatever seems to be consistent with their preferences or whims at the time.

As I say, I don't want to make too much of it, because I'm not sure I really am sure about how much it matters. The point that you made earlier about President Reagan. I suspect that in the long run, despite the very deft way in which he touched the right bases and patted the right fannies, figuratively at least, when he came to town, in the long run if

things go well for President Reagan with or without regard to what he does, then these things will continue to be viewed as just the right thing. If things go wrong—which may well happen to him whatever he does, for reasons over which he has no control—these people are not going to die in the last trench with him, by any means. They will be back on the sidelines long before the battle is over.

So I'm not sure that the fleeting allegiance of those who sort of join the battle once the issue seems to be no longer in doubt, and once there's any note of hesitation step back and try to get a better picture of it before they rush in and get into it, is crucial in the whole business. But, nevertheless, it is something that does bother me. I have thought about it, tried to make some sense of it, as you can tell by what I've just said over the past few minutes. I haven't yet succeeded in making sense of it.

**YOUNG:** Dave.

**TRUMAN:** I don't want to shift this too abruptly to another sector, but we've been talking so far here about that sort of amorphous entity, the Washington establishment that is not elected, although it may once have been. But there's another piece of the thing that intrigues me in this same general context, to which in a way you've given allusion a couple of times this morning. You used the phrase "within the party" a moment ago. There are those who are in there who are on the spot who, in fact, do hold office because of the electorate, particularly on the Hill.

I guess I have two questions I want to ask, and that is, what would be your perspectives on the adequacy of the steps you took to relate to that crowd? I don't mean just congressional relations in the formal sense. And secondly, what expectations did you have when you came in about the party? What did you mean when you used the term "party" in this context? Was there, for example, any expectation that the problems that the administration would have in relation to Congress were going to be much more difficult because of changes that had occurred inside the Congress? I don't mean that there had been turnover of personnel, but the actual structure had significantly modified. Was that anticipated as adding to your problems, and in a sense recasting your needs in your relations that you would set up with these people? Do I make myself reasonably clear?

**POWELL:** Yes. We understood two things with regard to our relationship with the Democratic Party, however one defines it, and with the Congress, and particularly Democrats on the Hill. One is that the Congress had changed considerably, and—as I'm sure the congressional liaison people discussed at some length with you—it was that you get to retail everything. It's no longer possible to assemble a small group of congressional leaders in the family dining room at the White House or wherever, and have a couple of drinks with them, and reach some meeting of the minds, and then be certain that the wheels will turn and that the thing will be produced at the other end of the legislative process.

I sat in on leadership breakfasts more often than not, and it really was a depressing thing to do. That's probably why I didn't go more often than I did. Not that they weren't productive, relative to what was possible—and I'm not necessarily being critical of the individuals or the quality of the leadership there. But it was quite often a process in which the leaders of the party on the Hill were explaining to the President—although they would certainly not put it this way—or apologizing for their inability to lead. It's certainly not their fault as individuals. What has happened, and the change and the nature of that institution, is something that everybody around the table could discuss a lot better than I. We were aware of that.

The other thing was something else we touched upon rather lightly yesterday, which was that we did come into office with a pretty definite idea that the Democratic Party itself needed to be changed. If nothing else, the fact that a Jimmy Carter had been nominated by the party and elected by the country said that things were happening in society, and in the body politic, that we had best as a party take note of, and that if we wanted to continue as a majority party in this country, and to be the source of dominant ideas in government—as had been the case since the '30s, but which is probably no longer the case as of about nine or ten months ago (I happen to think very unfortunately without regard to personal considerations)—that we had to begin to reshape more.

That process goes on all the time, obviously, and it's hard to get your hands on a party and turn it like this and set it down somewhere else. But we as Democrats had really been living too much on past glories and feeding on the accomplishments of our fathers and the generation that came before. That wasn't sufficient any more. No discredit to the fathers, but it's something that just won't carry you forever. There's some obligation to earn your own way yourself.

I'm not sure that we ever were successful. In fact, I suspect that we weren't, in working out either in our own minds or for presentation to the public or to leaders within the party, exactly what it was that we saw as a somewhat different ideology and approach of the party. I've thought we might have created a post that would have been a party theoretician that we would have called something else—either White House personnel or something—given the task of sitting down and thinking out what it was that we all felt in our guts that needed to be done but never really articulated.

One of the things we did, there were discussions about it fairly early. I remember the President—who is not the sort of person who would whip polls out of his desk drawer, out of his pockets, and say, “Did you see this?”—the one time I remember him doing that was in the first few months. One morning he said, “Did you see that poll on the Democratic Party?” And I had not seen it, as a matter of fact. I did the bit right off the bat, said something like “Oh, yes.”

**JONES:** Oh, that one.

**POWELL:** Oh, that one. And he said, “Well, it's just great.” It was clear after a while that he wasn't going to tell me what was great about it, so I had to say, “Well, I must



have missed that somewhere. What is it?” And it was the fact that the Democrats were perceived as being more fiscally responsible and better able to handle the federal spending and taxpayers’ dollar than Republicans, for the first time in quite a while. And he said, “If we can maintain that, if we can establish that point”—and I think he meant by “that point” more than just fiscal responsibility, a whole range of things that fall around it—“we will assure that the Democratic Party is the only party in this country for the rest of our lives.”

Now obviously, we didn’t do that. That fact that we didn’t has to be something that is to our discredit and I very much regret. But if we didn’t, it was not because we didn’t see both the difficulties because of the changes in the institution and the need to do something with regard to the party.

**CORNWELL:** Was part of your problem—you mentioned this, I think, yesterday—the failure at the mundane level to control from the White House the appointments to the second and third level and so on, positions in the departments, and that kind of thing, to farm that out to the Cabinet people instead of centralizing it?

**POWELL:** Yes, I think it was. There’s no way that you can make those appointments, that the White House could make those appointments, from beginning to end, itself. But I think that it certainly would have been possible to exercise a tougher sort of screening on those appointments. The right of the White House or the President to, at the very least, reject recommendations from the Cabinet officers for appointment to these various positions could have been exercised more vigorously. Had it been, I think we would have been better off.

**MCCLESKEY:** I wanted to pursue this question of how you tried to go about, or how you might have tried to go about, changing the Democratic Party. Would this be done primarily on the Hill and in Washington? How might it have been done, or did you talk about that?

**POWELL:** For the most part, yes. That is, I can’t remember anybody ever saying, “This is a way to do it” as opposed to some other alternative, but we did think that we were in control of the White House, we were in control of the Congress, and that these things the party had to begin to be identified with were things that had to happen in terms of the policies and the programs that were put forth by the administration and approved by the Democratic Congress. That was a primary vehicle for it.

As we all know, the party itself, in terms of the National Committee and its structure, poses difficulties. No one should have to serve as National Committee chairman with an incumbent President. It’s a tough position to be in. It happens to both parties. We were luckier in that regard than the Republicans. We should have studied more carefully how you involve that structure, such as it is. But one of the things that is parallel to the changes in the Congress and clearly changes in the parties and the Democratic Party is certainly on that cutting edge of disintegration.

We didn't focus—whether we should or not—on changing the institutional character of the party. We talked about some of the things. But it seemed at the time—and I'm not going to be apologetic about it—it seemed at the time, and not incorrectly, that that would just cause a ruckus, and you'd pay a pretty price, even if you were successful in some small thing. The midterm conference, for example—which I know the President thought, and I certainly thought, and I think most of us who had been involved in, going all the way back to '74 and the congressional campaign, thought was a nice little bauble. But in terms of what it cost and what you could do with that money, my God, if we had this money they were going to spend on this conference to hand out to candidates who were starving for funds, God knows what we could do in terms of extra seats.

We thought about it, and there were very few people in the White House who thought that the conference was a good idea. From a practical standpoint, or a public positive standpoint, or any way you look at it.

**JONES:** It gave Jerry Brown a chance to get into things.

**POWELL:** The only good purpose it served was as soon as the one in Memphis was over, I just went right across the river to Arkansas and hunted ducks for three days. I should probably have shot more people there. That option was not available insofar as I was able to determine. But we never took that on. In fact, in 1980, the issue arose, and we once again swallowed twice and said, "Yes, we're in favor of the midterm conference." And I gather now they're thinking either of scaling that down or back if not out. We saw it primarily as a change to be accomplished by the content of policy.

**YOUNG:** I think we have some more questions here, but I'd like to think out loud for a moment about this and reflect on what you've been saying now, along with something I think you said yesterday. What is very interesting about what you're saying now, Jody, is that there was a consciousness of a need to redirect the Democratic Party or redefine it. That's a theme that I think has not really been brought out very much in other conferences here, and I think it poses a very interesting theme about the Carter Presidency.

It seems to me that you may have had a number of dilemmas here all wrapped into one. I think you said yesterday that you wanted to move the party ahead, but in the meantime, in trying to move it onto new ground, these fires developed behind you. So you, in fact, had to turn back to try to maintain the old coalition before you could do anything else. That seems to me to be rather a dilemma. If you're having to maintain the old coalition, that implies something very different here from a strategy of moving the party ahead.

I'm also getting the impression that while you were conscious of the need to redefine or redirect the party and build a new coalition, you were up the creek as far as developing a strategy by which that could be done. Maybe it was, in the nature of things, an impossible task. On the surface, at least, it looks like you were almost schizophrenic on it, I guess is what I'm saying. You had to maintain the old coalition, and that implied one set of

actions and ways of dealing with policy problems. On the other hand, you knew that old coalition wasn't enough.

**POWELL:** I would plead guilty to being a little schizophrenic about it. I think it was the nature of the times, frankly, and in retrospect, I don't see much of an alternative to facing up to exactly that tension you talked about. I don't think you take something as loose and as amorphous as the Democratic Party and just jerk the whole thing around. You can't just sort of gather it up, no matter who or what you are, and say, "Okay, you were here, but we're going over here." There's no mechanism for doing that.

You've got to sort of herd things along. Some groups and people and constituencies are already ahead, and others are lagging behind, and you've got to shove and push some people this way and pull some others behind you. I think that's inevitably the way the thing happens. Or it happens as it has historically, and unfortunately, more often it happens as it's happening now, that having been hit upside the head, you know our attention has been gained, and so now, having lost the Senate and the White House, people now are beginning to say, "Well, you know, maybe we did something wrong here, given the disaster that's befallen us." But I just don't see the solution.

**BARIO:** The programs that the Carter Presidency was putting forward were certainly a new kind of Democratic program. It was more business management techniques—taking the available funds and targeting the citizen, not taking all the dollars there are in the world and throwing them at the problem. It caused the President, of course, to be disowned by his own party. You know, "There's a Democrat sitting in the White House, but he's not putting out Democratic bills." And the coalition was falling apart. I think it demonstrated that the country certainly was in the mood to go that direction. In fact, they wanted to go farther, and I think that's why they bought Reagan in. They've given up on the traditional solutions. Now, you have [Paul] Tsongas talking the new progressive Democratic Party. Well, it's the same thing that Carter was doing.

**POWELL:** The spectacle of the past few months in which you have had people who accused the Democrats and who accused the Democratic President of treason for relatively mild attempts and moderate attempts to modify, say, the school lunch program. I remember a relatively moderate attempt to deal with milk in the school lunch program. I guarantee you that under that proposal, not one child would consume one drop less of milk. And the Democrats who were accusing the President of trying to take milk out of the mouths of hungry babies a year ago, meekly and with hardly a whimper acquiesced over the past few months in a total evisceration of any number of programs like that. And that prospect was what maybe we should have reminded them of.

I remember the President standing before the Democratic National Committee within the last two years of the administration, and maybe he should have said it earlier. Not in exactly those words, but in so many words, saying, "Look, the greatest threat to this whole social agenda is not the attempts that we're making to rationalize and to make it work better. The greatest threat is this attitude that it's treason to even touch it, because what we're going to do if we're not careful, if we're not willing to look at these things

and try to decide what works and what doesn't and so forth, is that we will undermine the consensus in this society in support of these things."

And I don't think that consensus is as far gone as the Reagan people probably think it is. I think they may in the end be the most effective tool for recreating that sort of thing. I think the President's warning in that case was very well taken, and to some extent, improvements came to pass. This sort of attitude came partly from true believers, and part of it was in the nature of political expediency. And of course politics has to do with expediency, and everybody takes their licks where they have to on some occasions. But this was a case in which the price that we paid, and the parties paid, and the country, I think, has paid for the unwillingness to adjust and deal with these things was very, very high.

**BARIO:** I think a point that might give some perspective to this is that the things that President Carter was saying during his administration as to how we had to choose our programs carefully and manage them well and target the money where it would do the most good is the same thing that Phil Hart was saying the last eighteen months of his life. Now, he was Mr. Liberal in the Senate, and had voted for every spending program that came down the pike—a bleeding heart, major liberal. But he was becoming frustrated with the fact that a lot of the programs weren't working the way they should have, and that we needed to be more careful and more a manager of our funds than the liberals traditionally had been.

**TRUMAN:** Was there a problem—and this may have been asking for something on too many removes. But in connection with that kind of effort of reorientation, which was clearly a very tricky kind of thing to do reasonably, the electorate and those active in the electorate. Would it be in the circumstances of the Democratic Party particularly difficult to make a move like that, given the kinds of Democrats who participate in primaries? Your primary electorate is not your presidential electorate, and those who vote in the presidential primaries by and large are likely to be your old-line loyalists of another era.

**POWELL:** Yes sir, except that it seems when I said the nomination of Jimmy Carter by the Democratic Party should have been a signal that things were moving and changing, that's one of the things I had reference to. Despite the fact that the primary electorate tends to be more to the left of the Democratic Party, he was nominated. Not once, but twice. If you look back on '76 and '80—and I know it's hard to make American elections that neat sort of thing—but that election, that process, did say something.

If you go back and look at what Jimmy Carter was saying and what his opponents were saying and how people moved, and if you look at the attitudes that relate to the voting choice in those elections, they meant something: that they did nominate this guy who was understood to be something different. Jimmy Carter didn't slip into Washington under cover of darkness and take over the government buildings and then the radio stations and announce that he was in control. He went through a long, long process. And what he was and what he intended to do—not in specific, but in general what he stood for—was pretty well understood. In '80, the fact that a challenge was mounted and it was able to be

mounted, not successfully but with a degree of success, is certainly partially a result of that sort of thing. But, nevertheless, the party, even in that process, did say, "Given the choices, we'll take this one."

**TRUMAN:** I don't know how far you want to push this, but it seems to me if you look back at the campaign in '76, both the primary and the general election campaign, there were frequent questions being raised—not just by partisans, either—about just exactly where Carter was going to go. There was an impression of uncertainty about it, and in '80, one gets the impression if you look at—and, of course, primaries are always special, you can't read them earlier—but if you look at states like New York or Pennsylvania, there were primary elections in which it was against a new tendency versus an old set of claims. And it was distinctly unresolved, at least at that stage, it seems to me. Is that an unfair impression?

**POWELL:** You're talking about '76?

**TRUMAN:** I mean '80. Those two primaries in '80. But the uncertainty about exactly where the President was going and wanted to take the party was present back in '76. That's not a new impression. But by '80 it should have been clear.

**POWELL:** Yes, maybe. There certainly was some of that. The New York primary was something that we did our damndest and successfully to throw away.

**TRUMAN:** Well, New York's a mess.

**POWELL:** But I still think there are always— When I say that things aren't that neat, there's always going to be some accommodations, and you push things a bit, and then you'll stop and take a half step back as you get into an election. And that consciousness of trying to pull the thing together to get through the election process and then resuming an effort to move things. I still think that, for the most part, people in '76 understood that there was a difference between Jimmy Carter and Mo [Morris] Udall that had to do with something entirely removed from personalities or any of that. There was a difference between Jimmy Carter and Ted Kennedy that went to philosophy and ideology and so forth. The specifics of the thing may not have been so clear, as they seldom are.

**GRANUM:** Oil price decontrol.

**POWELL:** Yes, that, for example.

**BARIO:** Health care.

**####POWELL:** Yes, that was made quite specific. And a debate was joined on it, and Kennedy did his damndest to persuade on one side of the issue and we did our damndest on the other, and it was not something that people didn't have an opportunity to see. There were other things in that election—obviously, there always are. But I still think both of those elections said something.

**TRUMAN:** I don't mean that there wasn't a transition element that was evident in both, but rather that it had been unresolved, in a sense, inside the Democratic electorate, even as late as 1980, given the closeness of some of those big primaries and the intensity of the feelings on both sides.

**POWELL:** Yes, I agree with you.

**TRUMAN:** The battle is very definitely going on. The new Democratic Party had not yet been established.

**POWELL:** No, sir. Absolutely. I don't disagree with that at all.

**YOUNG:** This suggests an interesting task for historians to try to take the Carter Presidency and compare it with other presidents facing similar circumstances in history who try to redirect their parties. How many of them succeeded? And the various ways in which they tried to do it while they were also trying to be President and dealing with other things.

**POWELL:** Yes, I thought after I had said that I'm not sure whether historically that it happens more often.

**YOUNG:** It rarely happens.

**POWELL:** After you get beaten, and then you crawl off and lick your wounds, and you come back. I always thought, and I still think, that we would have been a damn sight better off—and it certainly would have been easier to do it when you were in control of the White House and of both houses of the Congress, and when you had, in a sense, the initiative—than it's going to be now.

**YOUNG:** Well, Eisenhower thought that, too, at the beginning, and he didn't succeed. When FDR ran into problems with his parties, he tried purges, and then talked about forming a third party, Democratic Party. I mean it's an interesting perspective on the Carter Presidency, this whole question in relation to the party. I think we have some more questions. We can't spend unlimited time on it, unfortunately. Was your question in this line, or do you want to take a new line?

**THOMPSON:** Well, I can point it in that direction. Just in very abbreviated form. I seem to hear you saying in response to several questions most recently that the Carter Presidency was struggling with this problem of the new and the old more than we thought at that time. You were aware of the schizophrenia and of the need to pull both groups together.

Were there two impediments that you haven't mentioned in this regard, and were they real? One, the sudden rise of Carter. Somebody said Ronald Reagan's greatest boon politically was that he was defeated in '76 and that he had eight years to reorganize,

reconstitute the Republican Party. Jimmy Carter was new. Even though the campaign was long, would it have helped if he had had a longer period? Another group said on another occasion, Kennedy would have been a far greater President if he'd been elected four years later. Would Carter have been a greater President if he had been elected in '80 for the first time?

**POWELL:** Yes.

**JONES:** Knowing what we know now?

**POWELL:** Yes. It's sort of like saying, you know, one thing I've thought is that I wish I had been twenty years older when I had my chance to work in the White House. I was not going to turn it down and hope that it would come again twenty years later. I'm probably more conscious of it now than I was then, but if it had all happened, and he'd been elected in '80, you could have asked the same question then, and asked would he have been a better President if it had been '84 or '88, and I would have given you the same answer. Yes. Would he have been a better President if he had waited until he was 70?

**THOMPSON:** It's a little more serious question than that.

**POWELL:** I didn't mean to make light of it. But yes sir. It goes back to some of the things we were saying yesterday. I mean the fact that Reagan, even though he had never served in Washington either, still came to Washington with a body of loyalists and, as you say, had taken incrementally and over a number of years control of the party. And even though it was a campaign, we did it in a way that I'm sure to some people did look like sneaking in in the dark of night. All of a sudden they woke up and said, "Who are these people who have taken over our thing here?"

**THOMPSON:** The other part of the question is the word that has been mentioned in previous sessions, and I can't forbear mentioning—even though I've not heard it in the discussion up to now with you—the word "populism." Did populism or the populist image have anything to do either with the problem of the first thousand men down, the need on Elmer's question to know enough to get these people into key positions in some of the departments?

Or did it have anything to do, for instance, with your capacity to deal, not just with the Washington establishment, but there's another establishment that Reagan went to immediately, and that for the last forty years has been important, and that's the New York establishment. Did it affect your ability, in other words, to deal with all of these people, or was populism a creation of the media, do you think?

**POWELL:** To some extent both. You heard the southern populist tag line through that period coming from people who had no idea on God's earth what they were talking about. You know, if you'd sat any of these folks down and tried to explain to them what southern populism had been, you know, the history of it, its high and low points. You talk to them about old Tom Watson and what he was and what he became and all that, their

eyes would have glazed over, and they'd topple over backwards in their chair because they had no idea what they were talking about. It's the nature of the term. Probably everybody would have his own definition of it.

In some ways, we weren't much better, I guess, in that it was more of an emotion than it was a philosophy. And it probably did have something to do with our relationships. It took me a long time to figure this out, but I think what I finally figured out is accurate. It's what we were talking about yesterday, what came to be known as the de pomping of the Presidency. I think a lot of people thought that was absolutely just for show, that it had nothing to do with any sort of sincere motivation at all, and that it was sort of a garment that we put on to suit what we thought was the style of the times. But it really wasn't.

You know, you're always open to criticism for doing things to make impressions. But that whole idea that people in government ought not to be too privileged, that they ought not to enjoy too much just because of their position, to the point where they are totally separated from the experience of the people they're trying to govern, was much more than just something we thought would be attractive to the population as a whole. A lot of people, I mean decent, sincere folks, looked on it as something close to demagoguery. You know, inciting the masses through not very admirable means. They were afraid we were going to stir folks up, and then they'd come marching over a chain bridge and come down and drive them out of the temple. And that wasn't exactly what we had in mind.

**JONES:** It came to pass.

**POWELL:** It wasn't something that we'd always had in mind. It seemed to be a more attractive alternative than we had thought about, actually. And I don't know if that was what you were getting at. But we were missing each other. And it goes along with some of that "running against Washington" thing. I had a hard time talking to you about it yesterday, which illustrates how hard it was talking to people about it for that whole four-year period. But we were, in a sense, talking past one another. I think there was that component, very much, of people thinking that it was some sort of tactical device, that we really didn't mean it.

I remember getting into an argument fairly early in the administration about some of the things that had happened. And somebody said, "Well, you fool, you know this business of doing away with limousines for the White House staff, nobody gives a damn about that, that's crazy." And you know, I'd have to admit there were a lot of mornings when I thought it was a foolish thing to have done, too. I can't exactly tell you why I think this, but I really think I might do a better job for having had to sit in traffic coming into work every now and then and put up with some of that, compared to the ability to read the *New York Times* on the way in—which I can't do if I'm driving my own car—might be a decent tradeoff.

That didn't help at all. I think it made the situation worse. I think they really thought that was sort of funny. You know, at best it was either amusing or it was totally disingenuous



for me to say something like that. I still think that, given my choice, I'd probably on a lot of mornings say I'd like to have somebody drive me in. On the other hand, I'm still not sure that the tradeoff is not positive in comparing what I would have done if I'd been riding and sitting in the back seat with my little lamp sort of shining over my shoulder and drinking my cup of coffee and reading the *Times*.

**YOUNG:** There's a lot of historical precedent in it for that, too. Jefferson came in, and he instituted a new social regime into Washington of which there'd been no protocol.

**POWELL:** And he was accused of exactly the same thing. I wasn't going to be so crass as to appeal to the highest authority here.

**YOUNG:** Andrew Jackson did the same thing.

**POWELL:** And I think in our case, as in Jefferson's case, there certainly was some degree of that for public consumption. I mean, we're all like that, to some extent. But I also think that—just like many things that Jefferson did because that's just the way he was, that's the way he had always been, that's the way he believed things ought to be and were interpreted as being that sort of shallow demagoguery—the same thing was true with Jimmy Carter. It was not something that he came to when he crossed the Potomac and said, "Well, now, this is the way to handle things now." Which is the way it always was and always will be, and I think the test of it will be to watch him now that he is no longer President, with presumably no reason to give a damn what people think, and he's going to live, for the most part, the same way he lived before he came to the White House, and as he tried to live when he was there.

**YOUNG:** The cries of outrage in Jefferson's time were not from the Washingtonians, but from the diplomats.

**POWELL:** That's because Washington was such a new city, they hadn't had a chance to get used to it.

**YOUNG:** Well, the congressmen outnumbered all the rest then, it was so small.

**JENKINS:** I think it's a legitimate issue, because what we're really talking about is this issue of privilege and whether government's going to become sort of a new class as Milovan Djilas described it in his book, you know. And I remember how I reacted with a considerable amount of personal indignation when I was talking to one of the White House drivers. I think we had sixteen cars, didn't we? There were just to take us back and forth to the Capitol or whatever, or whenever we needed to run around town, not to pick us up and carry us from home and back. But he said that the Nixon White House had forty-five cars—and this was a guy who had been there for a good many years, a sergeant in the Army, the Army provided our chauffeurs—and he was describing the difference between the Nixon and Carter White House. He said during the Nixon years that routinely he would take the wives of senior staff members shopping.

**POWELL:** If my wife had ever found out about that, I'd be in more trouble than anything.

**JENKINS:** And he told of one case where he, on a twice-a-month basis, took somebody's dog to the veterinarian. That offends the hell out of me, and that really is a form of privilege that I think is fairly significant.

**THOMPSON:** Isn't part of the problem that we're ambivalent? Don Price has written what I think will be one of the most important books coming out of the Miller Center, and the thesis is that Britain had a religious establishment. It was much easier for them, therefore, to have a political establishment. We didn't have a religious establishment. We were populist, sectarian, divided religiously, and neither have we had a true political establishment.

And yet there are things in government which have to be done by people who know more, and we've been easy with this only to the extent that we've substituted, he says, people who represented science or public administration, who were supposed to be dealing with things that didn't require the kind of intangible political judgments that are required. And we struggle with it. I was thinking as you were talking, some of the early reaction against what people called the Puritanism as well as populism of Carter, is masked at the other pole by the business about the china and the Reagan household. Some people don't like either one. And you pay a certain political price with some people if you seem to touch either pole at times.

**YOUNG:** The common thing to say is that if you're there, you can't do anything right.

**POWELL:** I think that's right. But I think—I'm not sure this *is* what I think but, for the spur of the moment, off the top of my head, it will do as well as anything else. American society will allow, condone, even affirm a certain amount of this sort of foolishness that we've been talking about in their leaders off and on. But it's a very tentative permission slip that we give to our leaders, and if they do some other things pretty well, and if the things are going along all right, we're willing to say, "Well, that's all right if he wants to dandy things up a little" and so forth.

But you have to be real careful about not abusing that sort of leeway that you're given, and particularly when sooner or later you're always going to have to go back to folks and say, "Look, you've got some heavy burdens to shoulder here." And then they're going to say, "Well, you son of a—, don't tell me that when all along you've been living so well." All that back and forth thing, jerking back and forth, is pretty destructive. I guess not by any means a major cause of the problems we were talking about yesterday in terms of legitimacy and so forth, but it seems to me that it's part of it.

And yes, there is that ambivalence. But going back to something we started the meeting with, to an extent the privilege that the President and the administration is willing to take unto itself also raises the permanent operation in Washington, these folks up there. I

mean it justifies their behavior. It's a way of saying, "It's ok for you to be substantially free from the harassment that the rest of the country has to face."

**YOUNG:** Chuck Jones has just written an interesting piece called "Can our Parties Survive our Politics?" With that introduction, I think he probably had some question back on this general area, didn't you, Chuck?

**JONES:** Yes. So I now have a comment after this religious and political establishment discussion. Earl Long used to combine them, religion and politics. He said, "I'm sixty-five percent Catholic and thirty-five Protestant," which was roughly the breakdown in his district and his state. "The only thing I'm not is snake charmer," and, of course, snake charmers didn't vote.

**POWELL:** They do now.

**JONES:** I want to go back to this matter of relations with Congress. It so happens that when Jimmy Carter came to town as the new President, the Democratic Party in Congress also had new leadership. And I was interested in your comment about the leadership meetings where they talked about the problems they were having in leading. The in-town reflection of the party is up on Capitol Hill also, as well as the country, and so the problems of the Democratic Party to which you refer were also reflected on Capitol Hill. They were reporting that in these leadership meetings.

Was there concern in the first few months on the part of the President, or on your part, or the part of the people advising as political advisers to the President? Was there concern to try and make the leaders on Capitol Hill look good? They, after all, just like the President, were in the position of having to establish themselves. Although they'd been there, and some of them held minor leadership positions or lesser leadership positions, they were now in new leadership positions. Was there concern to make them look good as a way of developing political capital for the President later on?

**POWELL:** Yes, I think so. Even before he got to office, before the Inauguration, there were the sessions down in Plains inviting the congressional leadership to be there and to work out together the economic proposals that were going to be the first item on the legislative agenda. I don't know if we thought of it so much in terms of—and this is really a question that probably should be addressed to the CL [congressional liaison] people—exactly the terms of making them look good. But there was certainly an inclination to want to bring the leadership in and to want to work through them to the extent we could, although even before we got there, we certainly recognized that you could not do that to the extent that you might have been able to twenty years ago.

**JONES:** In the first six months, coming back to the water projects, the development of the energy proposal, the \$50 rebate, the gas tax as a centerpiece of the energy program, to what extent in each of those cases there was thought given to how will this make the leaders look with their own people on Capitol Hill? What I'm really searching for is whether there was ever a part of the consideration that they were new and they had to

establish themselves, as well as the President established himself in Washington and with Congress?

**POWELL:** Obviously I think you can fault us to some extent on execution on some of those things. Certainly on the water project, I think you could have consulted until your tongue fell out—and still, having done all that, if you went ahead and proposed what needed to be done, there would have been pretty near as much pain and suffering and screaming and howling as there was.

**JONES:** The timing was never thought of as a problem?

**POWELL:** Well, yes. That goes back to the question of did we fill up our tray too much. And I think we probably did. There was no lack of appreciation, on our part, that we were asking them to do some very difficult things and some very painful things. They also happened to be things that I thought then and think now were painful and difficult, but that nevertheless needed to be done. And while I agree that from a tactical standpoint it would have been better not to ask them to do so much so fast, in the long run, not only we, but they, would have been better off if they had done more of them.

**BARIO:** The water project story came out while we were in the process of at least notification—if it wasn't consulting. I remember it well because it was a Saturday, and I was press duty officer, and suddenly we got all these irate phone calls about something we had not yet announced and I had not been briefed on. It was quite an interesting day.

**KUMAR:** What about the tax rebate?

**POWELL:** The \$50 rebate? Once again, I have no doubt about that decision and that that was a right thing to do and certainly, I think, no matter what your theory of economics is, if you look back on it, we sure as hell did not need additional stimulus at that point, nor did we need a tough fight over that issue. There are matters that may well have resulted in defeat, but certainly would have resulted in expenditures of a great deal of capital and the decision had to be made.

I don't remember the reason, but something was coming up within the next day or so, so the decision had to be made on the thing. And it did leak out a day before we announced it and before we got hold of everybody who needed to know before it got out. That need to be told before it leaked to the, well the Secretary of Treasury, my foot. He was right there. He knew damn well where that thing was headed. His participation in the discussion of that issue and on many is another issue entirely.

But it was the right decision. The thing leaked out before we got to everybody, but it was a decision that we needed to make. Many of the same people who were raising hell had earlier been urging us to, you know, let this cup pass from me. So signals coming from the Hill on the \$50 rebate were very loud and clear. And I'm sure what hurt with some of these people is that they were saying that, but nevertheless not being consulted and going

out and supporting the President on it. And then to find out from somebody else that we had decided to pull back on the damn thing was irritating.

I don't know, unless you get in that whole area of leaks and how you control them. I would bet you a dollar to the doughnut that the reason that some people on the Hill found out about it from reporters calling them as opposed to the White House calling them was because their colleagues on the Hill, as soon as we called them, called the damn reporters. This was a very difficult bit of business, and some of them were raising hell about it. If we had called them first, we would have made sure that their other colleagues heard about it, so they would not have been talking to the President with one hand and dialing the other phone with another. So they could buy a few points. These are big boys, it seems to me. They're not little children who can go off and pout when they know very well how those things happen. It just seems to me to be sort of unforgivable in a way.

**MCCLESKEY:** Could I pursue this just a moment? Do I understand you to be saying that in these staff meetings, in the discussions with the President and so on, there was certainly recognition and there was awareness of the political liabilities of some of these decisions, such as cutting the water projects?

**POWELL:** I think the water projects is a little bit apart from most of the other things. I think the water projects business—and I'm not a good authority on this, but my feeling has been all along that, even despite what I said about that—if you'd asked them to do it, they would still have raised hell, no matter how you approached them with it. That was one that was not adequately assessed. That was one where the policy and political process didn't mesh correctly, and we learned some things from that. As you can tell, one of the things that I decided last night was that I was going to be much less apologetic and much more aggressive today than I was yesterday. But that's one that I have to say that I think considerable blame attaches to us in the way we handled it.

**TRUMAN:** Was that one actually discussed with the leadership of water projects? Congressional leadership?

**POWELL:** I don't know. I hesitate to say that it wasn't discussed at all with them or that they didn't know there was something in the works. I think they were honestly surprised at it. I wouldn't be inclined to hang it on the thing. It was mentioned that we were coming up with this at some point along the way, and they just didn't pay attention.

**TRUMAN:** The reason I asked is that it would have some bearing on Chuck's comment about making the leadership look good, because water projects have been part of the coin of the realm for quite a long time. And congressional leaders have never had very much leverage. They have less institutional leverage than they had, but it's always been subtle and slightly mysterious.

**JONES:** The President can potentially play a role in that subtle thing.

**TRUMAN:** Some of the mystery that surrounds what he's up to can be transferred to them, and they can share it, and that's the coin they can play with.

**YOUNG:** There is some material in our record on the session with congressional liaison staff on that.

**POWELL:** You really ought to travel on what they say on that. Because I found out about the water projects thing just about the time we were about to announce it. I didn't call Pat about it. I found out about it after the decision had been made and, "Okay, we're going to have to announce this as soon as we get through with notification on this."

**BARIO:** I think you were probably planning on doing it Monday, and it was Saturday that it broke.

**POWELL:** Exactly.

**YOUNG:** There was a meeting, I understand, in which—after the President talked about this opening response from the congressional people present—I understand Russell Long got up and said, "Mr. President, I'm Russell Long. I'm Chairman of the Finance Committee." And I think, as Frank said, everything went downhill from that point on. I'd like to shift the discussion to a question from Elmer Cornwell where we'll invite Jody to talk about his role in relation to the President, and moving from that subject onto the question of how one looks at or assesses the Carter Presidency.

**CORNWELL:** Well, I would like to ask you if you could just characterize the pattern of day-to-day interaction you had with the President by way of getting some feel for how he related to top advisers like yourself. Thinking back to the barging-in rights concept that was prevalent in the Kennedy administration. Certain people could just go in at any time—that kind of thing. If you could just indicate what the pattern was as far as you were concerned.

**YOUNG:** We are generally aware of the schedule, in other words, the regular pattern of meetings beginning 7:30 and ending up with senior staff, and then the meeting with the President. So I think that's pretty well laid out.

**POWELL:** Well, the only thing I'd say about that, which several people may or may not have mentioned because it was less of a change for them than it was for us. At the beginning of the administration, there was a CL meeting with the President early in the morning, 7:30 or so, that was later changed to a meeting at 10 or 10:30, sort of mid-morning. And what that did was really combine the CL session with the President with the press office session. We had been meeting with the President, just the press office, at 10:30, but I found myself fairly frequently sitting in on the CL meeting early anyway, since that was a convenient way to catch up what was going on on the Hill. I personally did not much care for 7:30 meetings at all. 10:30 meetings suited my body clock a lot better, but that was one of the very distinctive serious conflicts with the President, that we operated on entirely different cycles. We both grew up on a farm and got up early and

milked the cows. The only difference is that he apparently grew to like it, and I grew to hate it.

**JONES:** He knew what he was doing, and you didn't.

**POWELL:** That's right. I think I had reasonably good access to the President, and I tried not to abuse it. I can't say that I could have walked into the office any time that I wanted to, period. If I had done it, I never felt that my ability to function was impeded by a lack of access to the President. And there were frequent occasions when I did need to stick my head in, in between appointments and so forth, to check on something that was breaking and moving fairly rapidly, and I never encountered any difficulty in doing that. And he was very helpful in making sure—which is almost more important, I think, for a press operation—that I personally, and we as an office, had access to pretty much whatever we wanted elsewhere in the White House. A lot of the things that a press office has to deal with—in fact, I would say most of the things—don't really involve the President directly. A lot of the most ticklish things don't.

Going back to the sort of wisecrack I made yesterday about the President reading things in the paper about issues that he was considering and options that he was about to take, that being the first he knew that he was considering this question and these particular set of options. You know if it's on the President's desk, and a question arises, then it was for us a fairly simple thing to deal with. You go in there and say, "Mr. President, what's going on?" And he'd say, "Well, read this. Why didn't you read it before?" or whatever.

You could get right to the heart of the matter, and the tough, ticklish parts were the things that were lying out there in the bureaucracy, either within the White House or somewhere in the government. And it was his support—which very seldom did he have to demonstrate, but that I think everybody knew was there for us. And the people knew, I think, that they were expected to be responsive and candid when we called them up to try to find out what the hell is going on over here, because we've got queries to respond to. That, I think, was even more important than the personal access to the President. To some extent, those two things go hand in hand, given the nature of the beast in Washington. People tend to be more responsive to folks that they think have access to the President for no other reason than they are afraid you will walk in there and behind closed doors do them in with the boss if they don't treat you right. There was certainly some good place for a little healthy fear in these matters.

To me—and it would be very good to hear from any or all four of these other people here—the biggest danger to the credibility and the effectiveness of the press operation came when—at exactly those situations I described before—something's breaking, you've got to deal with it, you start calling around to try to collect, you're acting, as Al said, as somewhat of a reporter within the White House. Either I, or more often other people in the office, sometimes several, were calling domestic policy and CL and HEW or whatever and saying, "Where is this reported memo? What is it doing? Where has it been? Where is it going?" and so forth. "And what does it say?" and "Can you get us a copy?" and so forth.

And you have to rely to a major extent—no matter how much access you have and how many people you have—you have to rely to a major extent on what other people tell you. And then you have to go out there and, based on what they tell you privately, you have to say something publicly. That's where it hits the fan. And there are two dangers. One, that people will tell you not what actually happened or is happening, but they will tell you what they think you ought to say is happening. This becomes the second derivative of the truth, and by the time that gets filtered through two or three other people without anybody intending any mischief, you can end up going out there and saying something that just is not so, or is not close enough to being so to get by with. And it hurts the credibility of the Press Secretary and the press operation, and in the long run, it hurts the credibility of the administration.

The other danger, which is probably more obvious, is that people will tell you not exactly what has happened, but they will tell you a version which makes them look best, or more likely, that keeps them from looking as bad as they ought to. And that is where I think the healthy fear, or where fear can be healthy—where I think it's salutary for people to think that the consequences of lying to you are worse than the consequences of telling you the truth. And I apply that to myself, too. I've always found that I tend to behave better if I know the punishment is relatively certain for behaving not too well.

**JONES:** New Englanders have a word for it, the New England conscience. The Yankee conscience is deeply rooted in a fear of the police.

**YOUNG:** Before you go too much further on in this, there's obviously an image propagated repeatedly and consistently about the Georgia mafia around the President. There are analogues in other administrations, and that leads to a perception I think you ought to comment on about what the role and the function of this Georgia mafia was and wasn't, to take us out of the realm of myth. This should give us some better idea of how this President used—as all Presidents have their political advisers—his staff for that political advice as well as the press side of it. I'm inviting you to address yourself to the question of this image of this ring around the President.

**POWELL:** There is always a ring around the President to some extent, and it also generally tends to be people who have served with the President for a period of time, because confidence and the assurance of confidentiality and trust both ways—but most importantly from the President down—is absolutely essential to that relationship. If anything, looking back on it, we probably erred on the side of trying to make that group too large. The senior staff meetings had so many people in them that it became hard to get things done, and it probably should have been smaller and tighter and more protective of the President than it was.

To some extent, going back to the point that was raised yesterday, whether Richard Nixon shaped the Carter Presidency. He certainly didn't, but he certainly built the stage on which we had to play. I think that reluctance on the part of those of us who were in a position to have limited access and dealt more sternly with our colleagues to do that was



to some extent a reaction, and some said an overreaction, to the experience of previous administrations.

As to how the President used his staff, I don't suppose anybody knows that really very well except for him. I'm trying hard to give you something anecdotal about it. There was always at the same time an underlying element of competition there, in that he would fairly frequently tell more than one person to do the same thing without telling either one. He was particularly fond of doing that to me and Hamilton in the Governor's office. Yes, and sometimes you never knew about it. I suspect there were some times in those days that we never found out about it, when he never even told us after it was all over and done with. He had both of us working up the same sort of thing. Eventually he did less of that, at least for the two of us, because we finally caught on to the thing, and we would check with one another. Then he fell into the habit of saying, "I want you to do such-and-such. I don't want you to tell anybody about it." Well, that was a sure giveaway. You knew very well why he didn't want you to tell anybody about it—because he had told somebody else to do it too.

And normally we did tell somebody else. Call each other and check on it. At the same time that he did that, one of the things that I very much admired in him is that he never criticized someone in front of their peers, much less subordinates. It wasn't even a case of not criticizing you behind your back. If he had a bone to pick with you, in a serious and detailed way, I don't mean that he would never say anything critical to someone or lose his temper and display displeasure in front of others, but he never dressed down, to my memory, a member of his staff in front of their peers or their subordinates. I have always, long before I knew him, thought that to be a good quality of leadership, that he would always make sure it was just you, and then he'd tell you very plainly what he thought about your performance.

I think the President—not only us, but the President, too—and I can't speak to his motivations on this, but he had an inclination at the beginning of the administration to be more accessible to more people than he did at the end. And that's despite what I'm sure some folks would be inclined to say: that the change in his attitude was not a desire, by any means, to cut himself off from people who were bringing him bad tidings or anything like that. I think he just came to realize, as, we did, that it was a less efficient way of doing business. I think the change that took place—and I'm sure the CL people talked about in moving to that morning meeting, which is fairly nitty-gritty stuff, to a slightly more limited group than the whole senior staff—was a very positive one for everybody concerned.

**YOUNG:** Did you notice any—besides this change within the administration—any distinct or notable change in the nature of his feelings with staff when he was Governor and when he was President? Or was it, from your point of view, more or less the same type of relationship? Did he adopt what one would call a different style?

**POWELL:** It evolved to some extent, but it didn't radically change. There were more people to be dealt with in the White House than there were in the Governor's office. He

made an attempt, and made some progress in it, to hand out pats on the back a little bit more than he did in the Governor's office, which I think was good. It's just not his inclination to do it, and, though he tried—and I know he tried—he still never did it very much.

It didn't matter, and I think it was a change that he perceived was needed after he got to the White House and was dealing with a larger group. Those who had been around him for a long time knew that's the way he was, and we joked about it. And I suspect this has probably come up in some of the other conversations you've had with people. Actually, he probably took a little pride in the fact that he never said "well done" and "good job."

**BARIO:** "Adequate" was high praise.

**POWELL:** That's right. And that was rare. The [Admiral Hyman] Rickover story about how Rickover never handed out compliments, and you never heard a comment on the job you were doing unless he was chewing your fanny. But it was not a problem in the Governor's office, because of the small size of the operation. I think he came to realize in the White House that there were people who were very important to the functioning of the operation who didn't see him very often and had little opportunity for feedback, either direct or indirect, from him, and that he needed to make a special effort to try to let them know that he appreciated what they were doing and to give them a little encouragement and consolation every now and then. But it was hard for him. It just wasn't his nature, and I'm sure there are probably some folks who still feel like their efforts were largely unappreciated by the President.

**JONES:** As you reflect on the kinds of matters that you were asked to deal with, aside from the matters involving press contact and so forth, were there particular kinds of matters that he wanted advice from you on? Was it general? Can you characterize it in some way other than the press officer role?

**POWELL:** If there was a pattern, I never really detected it. I'm sure in his mind—I'm not sure whether he had some things that he would ask what I thought about and not others. That's not just my impression, but the fact of the matter is that my role as an adviser to the prince was a good bit overstated throughout the four year period, and I would occasionally say that it was being overstated. I didn't overdo it, frankly, during that period of time. I didn't try to promote it, but I didn't go out of my way to try to totally eliminate it because it seemed to me that it served some other purposes, including the one that we were talking about a little while ago, about putting the fear of the Lord in some folks who needed to be motivated that way.

But I never presumed, nor did he ever in the remotest way consider me to be competent to give any sort of specific policy advice or recommendations. I don't know to this day exactly what influence, if any, I had on the things that he did ask me about. I guess my impression is that it was more a case of him using me as someone to talk things through with for his own benefit, to help him formulate his own thoughts, to bat things around, to subject himself to some questions and some arguments and so forth. It certainly was not a

reflection of any thought in his mind that I had any particular expertise in any of these areas.

I'll amend my answer, but generally speaking, I had a personal interest in defense and national security matters, which I think he probably on occasion brought me in on as a special effort, more out of just being nice about it than anything else. He knew it was something that I was interested in, and I enjoyed talking about it and so forth. And then I think there were probably occasions when he might have, the B1 decision, which was a very instructive thing for me. He asked if I'd like to go through the decision-making process with him and read and look at everything that he was looking at. And I, of course, being no fool—at least not being a fool on that particular occasion—said yes. I still know more about the B1 and penetrability than I ever wanted to know. But it was a very instructive thing for me to do.

**JONES:** What about foreign policy?

**POWELL:** I guess you have to include that whole foreign policy, national security affairs, because they tended to roll into one. Anyway, and as I think I said yesterday, it's much easier to pretend to be an expert on foreign policy than just about thing else.

**GRANUM:** I think may be overlooked in some respects or helps flesh out talking about Jody's day and so forth. I hate to become the frenetic reporter. That's my phrase from yesterday; I'll use it again. But it was the discussions which we now in a contemplative, reflective fashion— Or well, why did you or did you not think to do this on such-and-such a day? Didn't you see that three weeks down the road? Sometimes, the big goal of the day was to be able to see three hours down the road because there were just so many things coming at you, most especially with Powell, and to a lesser degree with those people who were working for him.

You mentioned some familiarity with the schedule, but if you take the CL meeting, if you take the meeting with the President, if you factor in that Jordan—who had more of an overseer role—would want Jody's opinion. And this was an important thing, too. I mean, people wanted his opinion on everything, including the size of the mess meals. It was sometimes a bizarre phenomenon, and what they wanted Powell 's input on, which is another twenty minutes of his life, has gone away on something perhaps he didn't really need to do. People tugging at him a good bit.

The President had a line into his office and several offices that rang until it was answered. It didn't work that way the other way around. You can try and put yourself back in as a habit for almost a year now, to put yourself back into those days, but phones are going off, the wire machines are clicking, there are reporters lounging around in this upper press office as well as downstairs. Claudia Townsend, when she got in in the mornings each day, would come up with the likely questions to be asked in the briefing that day. Bring them out, we could farm them out as he says, HEW, HHS, wherever.

First Jerry Schecte and Alfred Friendly would be working with Brzezinski on foreign policy questions, having the conference call that Friendly's talking about, out there gathering things to bring back, bringing our little piece of paper, and give him one Q and A question. And sometimes we'd build up to 20 and 25 questions. At any time, a wire service story could, or even someone else in the world, and the bells would go off on the wire machine, and you're off, and the race is on an entirely different tangent.

It was a very news-oriented office we were serving, and the press, the news media, being a 24-hour proposition, whereas at least with other offices from time to time Congress would in fact go out. Speechwriters would come in and just kill themselves for a week working on a speech, but then had a week or two at least in a somewhat more leisurely pace. But that kind of quality to the Powell day and the press office day there of just being nibbled to death—sometimes you could overlook things. I mean, what came off as a nibble should have been a giant bite, and you really should have turned around and nipped it in the bud.

The big production of the day is the news briefing. Powell's briefing, which was building up throughout the day, ended up not long before that. Sometimes just three or four of us—sometimes with a larger group of people who needed to bring an expert with some particular expertise in his office building—would schedule a briefing for 2:00. Then it would slip to 2:15, and 2:30. Then you start getting people sometimes literally pounding on the door: "Why don't you get out of there? We've been waiting in this grungy, hot briefing room now for 30 minutes and 35 minutes." So there is that quality to the day which made it difficult to, in some cases, really think or to think for any length of time. I just wanted to put that back into the mix.

**YOUNG:** That's very important, and something we always need to be reminded of, because from the outside, we tend to lose sight of that. One of the reasons this is interesting is, given all of that tremendous load of activity to which you had to respond every day, it's amazing that anybody had time to think about most of the questions that we've been asking you about, larger questions. That is a very important reminder to have in the record, and in judging people's performance to the extent that others might be interested in that as a key factor to take into account. I'd like to hear you guide us on some thoughts about Carter's Presidency as the 39th President—what it stands for, what lessons it teaches, what you think it should teach, what lessons it means to you.

**POWELL:** I think a lot of what I would have said at the beginning, in response to this question, I have said in one way or another along the way, and I'll try not to repeat myself too much. One thing that I said—not around this table, but in a smaller conversation yesterday—I'll repeat. It's that I think that President Carter and the Carter administration will end up being most positively remembered for exactly those things that cost him the most politically.

I'm not trying to make an argument, you know, the sort of moral argument, but in some ways that is it, although I happen to think that generally, the things that are most worthwhile tend to be the most expensive about any aspect of life. But it seemed to me,

for a number of reasons that I won't try to get into right now, that he happened to end up being President, frankly, at the only time that he probably could have ended up being President. If he had won his Governor's race in 1966, he probably never would have been President. I mean, '72 would have been too early, and '80 probably would have been too late. But he ended up coming to that job at a time when that's just the way things were.

I think to a greater degree than is often recognized, that's always the way things are with presidents, I guess. But perhaps to a special degree. If you go back down the list of things, whether it's energy or civil service reform or nuclear proliferation or SALT or even the Mid-East, the Camp David business, the Panama Canal, all of them were political liabilities for him in more than just the sense of, well, you have a certain amount of capital expense and you ration it, you expend it. I think we understood most of them at the time.

Camp David is a little bit of an exception. It was a tremendous boost at the time when it happened, although the road to it had been somewhat painful politically. But the road beyond it was even more painful and more costly because of things that we felt we had to do to keep the thing moving along, and in fact keep it on the road and make some progress on the road. This may be part of what I'm talking about. He had—and I think will come to be credited with having—just a particular instinct toward looking to the future in both the things that he did and the things that he tried to do.

I think if you talk to the policy-making people—some of whom you have, and some of whom you will—the times that I was there when the discussion was going on and the decisions were being made, that tendency you're always conscious of: him saying, and even when he didn't say it directly, five years, ten years, where all this is taking us. And, to some extent, that was his strength and his weakness.

You should couple that with a very fierce determination and tenacious attitude about things. Going back to the discussion about the water projects. He was just, by God, bent and determined that was a bunch of crap, it was a waste of money and everything else, and in that case it led to a decision that was proper, but was untimely, shall we say. The weakness, to the extent that there was a weakness, was a question of overloading the plate. These were things that he felt very correctly needed to be done, and he had a tendency—which again cuts both ways—to feel that you always were going to fall a little bit short, and that the higher you set your sights, the better off you were in the long run.

If you don't ask a lot, if you don't demand a lot, if you don't push for a lot, then you end up with next to nothing. I think my impression was that he was very much taken with the idea that part of the problem was that we had attempted too little, and that we'd been content with looking for marginal progress—looking for, expecting, asking for marginal improvements, and ending up with insignificant progress and change. Again, that was a strength as well as a weakness. It produced our greatest triumphs and our biggest mistakes, sometimes. Sometimes, I was inclined to think at the same time on a same issue. That pretty well says it without getting into specifics that we can do if we want to.

**JENKINS:** I'd add one thing to that. You did not mention among those, political capital deregulation, which was a great irony, because, God, he accomplished more in that area—which was a traditional Republican position and one on which Reagan was running, of all things—and I guess we never did get our point across. But this gets to the problem of the special interest ganging up on you because those regulations ain't there just by accident. They are there because somebody wants it. And I remember Jody put it so well one time. He shook his head and said, "Everybody wants to get government off their backs, but they damn well don't want it off the backs of the fellow sitting next to them."

**BARIO:** It occurs to me that over these last two days there's a very important part of President Carter that none of us has mentioned, and it may have not come up because you probably don't know that one of our duties was to go to church with him on Sunday when he was in town, with the press pool. When you get to this, obviously you have to get to that part of the man. I had jotted down just two or three words that I would use to sum up President Carter and they're exactly the point that Jody's made. I've never heard him answer that question exactly.

But the first thing I think about him is courage. He really had it. I think this is why you got the impression that he was not a man of any ideological bent, because it seemed to me what he did is he looked at any problem presented to him and tried to figure out what was the right solution. Well, the right solution is not always the liberal one, and it is not always the conservative one. But the average everyday politician behaves in that way because he has a constituency that he must respond to. So Ronald Reagan could no more take Teddy Kennedy's health bill and support it if he thought it was the best idea in the world.

But Jimmy Carter might. I mean, he wouldn't take Teddy Kennedy's because he didn't think it was the best idea in the world. But that was my impression—that he was a man who truthfully tried to do what was right, and faced with what was right and had the courage to do it. I saw very few—I mean many fewer—memos that came back out of the Oval Office than Jody did, but I saw many times where the options were spelled out. And there would be one saying, "This one will cost you politically." And he would write "That's okay." And we went with it. And I think that is the thing that history ultimately will begin to determine about Carter, and I think that's why ultimately he will be judged to be a great President.

But all of that goes to obviously the manner of the man, and it goes to his relationship to God. I mean, he has set a moral tone in his own life and lived by it as President. I remember the very first time going to church with him with the pool. It's Sunday school that precedes the service, and the teacher was asking some questions about why didn't Christ heal everybody. He had this power. Now if he was a merciful God, why didn't he heal everybody? Why did he leave some of these people still lame and all?

And this fellow in the back put his hand up—the President of the United States, who thinks maybe he knows the answer to the question. Well, I like that attitude. I thought

that was rather nice. And his answer, of course, seemed to be right. It was because he thought that Christ wanted to emphasize the spiritual side of his visit to earth and not the physical side, and so therefore he didn't go around healing everybody. Obviously, you can't judge this man without looking at that part of him.

**YOUNG:** Do you think, in more conventional terms, he'll be judged as a President before his time? Is that what you were saying, Jody? The looking at the long term?

**POWELL:** I think that very much depends on what happens. Perhaps—although in a way I shy away from that because it's a little too easy a way to put it, it seems to me. Certainly, as a President who was almost preoccupied with trying to figure out and trying to make judgments on what time was going to do or how this or that option or decision was going to reverberate, not in terms of what people would think about him, but in terms of its effects over a long period of time, as a man who was absolutely determined to try to be farsighted about things. I don't know why I shy away from that term. I guess because it seems to me that so many of the things that he tried to do and did both were really things that were behind the times.

I mean they were things that should have been done twenty years ago, or ten years ago, or five years ago, and the reasons they weren't done twenty-five or ten or five years ago were exactly the reasons we had such a hard time doing then. Good reasons. It was the political difficulty.

**YOUNG:** Did this administration go out of power feeling that it had failed?

**POWELL:** I didn't. I certainly felt that we failed to win the damn election.

**BARIO:** We noticed that.

**POWELL:** Which is a hard thing to get around. Even for the best rationalizers, which any Press Secretary had to be, I guess. No, I certainly didn't feel that way. Even if we had been re-elected and eight years and all that, I would have left with a lot of regrets just in the sense that no matter what you do—I think for me at least—you always tend to forget the things you've done, since what's done is done, and always have most on your mind the things that you wished you had done or that you tried to do and you didn't succeed.

So certainly I had regrets. But I would have under any possible set of circumstances. I have never had the slightest sort of twinge of feeling in my own mind that the net assessment of the administration was even close to being negative or something that I would have on reflection felt it was all for naught or anything close to that.

**YOUNG:** I'm trying, I guess, to get at the question of besides the factor of losing the election, which is relatively important.

**POWELL:** That may be the worst thing that we did.

**YOUNG:** The worst thing you did. Some sense of what your idea, your own criteria for a success and accomplishment may be one way to get at that. One way would be for you to say what was your greatest disappointment—outside, again, of the election.

**POWELL:** That's a very tough one. To some extent—we were talking about this earlier this morning—the inability to effectively move the party, which obviously ties very closely into the election. On an issues or policy basis, I think it's that whole complex of things surrounding SALT and proliferation and so forth. Not that we didn't make some progress on it, but I think it's a combination of how important I think that is, and how tenuous I think any progress in that area is, and how apparently unstable things are wherever you happen to be at any given time.

I suppose I always felt that way to some extent, but getting closer to it was not a reassuring bit of business for me, and I certainly came away from it with an even greater concern about that whole area than I did when I came in. It's such a dangerous bit of stuff. The whole business—and I don't mean the command and control system, but the whole thing to me is jerry-rigged. The way we go is at best such a stop-and-start sort of process. I really think maybe right now if I could pick one thing it would have been to get SALT II ratified. Not that SALT II in and of itself was such great shakes, but I'm very much concerned about the fact that it's not there, and nothing's there, and the fact that we lost the election, and I keep coming back to where it's all going to lead now.

**YOUNG:** There are those who play games with rating presidents in history. And the aim behind this line of my questions is to take this cue for making those judgments the standards that a President or a presidency sets for itself, the things he considers most important by which its contribution ought to be judged. I guess one of the places one would look in print for that kind of statement about what was important to this Presidency would be the farewell address of Carter. He was reminding us of three things in which he'd invested major effort, and which he saw as continuing problems. Perhaps one should let it go at that, and take that kind of statement. But I was trying to elicit from you the idea of some better notion of what this administration would feel fair as a basis for judgment upon itself, looking back at this one and others in history.

**POWELL:** I was trying to say—and I probably didn't say this as specifically as I should have—that I think you have to look at the Carter administration or any other for that matter. We talked a good bit about the stage on which you played, the backdrop and so forth, and I don't know exactly how to sum up my own description of what that was. But in a way it seems to me that it was that the Carter administration happened to take place at a time when the society and the country were almost in mid-stride.

The things that we talked about earlier when we began the discussion on the party, of flow of opinions and attitudes, of the common ideology—if there ever was one—there wasn't one, I don't think, by the time Carter took office. And everything he did and tried to do was at a time when—this is not particularly relevant to everything—but at a time when the current was moving on. It always is. Well, take SALT, for example. Just a few years ago, that was almost like Mom and apple pie. I mean, the sort of consensus for this



sort of thing was just unquestionable. You negotiate one end, it went. And for a number of reasons that doesn't have anything, I don't think, particularly to do with the terms of that agreement. This President was dealing in an entirely different set of circumstances. I won't try to run the list and apply that all the way down. I do think that's a factor that has to be considered.

**THOMPSON:** This isn't quibbling. But on that last point and on the earlier point, one of the lasting criticisms of [Woodrow] Wilson has always been that he did see the future, he looked ahead, but that he wasn't much concerned about detail. You can't quite make that argument about Carter, given his concern for detail. And that's what's so baffling about a couple of these issues.

We've had three or four people who have talked about Camp David and little things they feel important seem to have maybe been impossible, but also gotten lost. Carter told [Anwar] Sadat he'd take care of the King, he'd call the King. Somehow, we've been told that wasn't done very effectively. Twenty-first draft had provisions about the settlement, the twentieth draft had stronger positions about the settlement than the last draft, which seemed to bring you the settlement and the agreement, but left you with problems that the traditional diplomats said have made the thing worse.

The timing of SALT. Landon Butler told the East-West Accords Committee that you wanted Panama first because this was like a track meet with a track suit on, and when you get to SALT, then, you would have been all warmed up and ready to tackle it. A lot of the professionals thought the order should have been the other way around: tackling SALT at the height of your power and popularity. Nobody can judge these things. They're all full of ifs and intangibles, but some of them at least suggest that on goals Carter was profoundly right, on means and timing and tactics and details—most of all—he may have been wrong. Is that a wholly faulty criticism, or is that the weak side of the strength that you talked about?

**POWELL:** To some extent, both. There are several things that I don't think I agree with. One, that Landon may be right, but that was never my impression of why we did the Panama Canal first. We did the Panama Canal first because, in my book, we had an agreement earlier on the Canal, and it was something that damn sure needed to be done. I think it looms even more important now than it did then in terms of looking down the road. I think people generally are a lot more aware of the difficulties that American diplomacy is going to face in that part of the world now than they were then. And if we still had that unresolved issue dangling about our necks as we try to weave our way through the next decade or so in Latin America, we'd be in even worse shape than we are now. We had a Panama Canal agreement which may or may not have been there. I suppose you could argue that we could have just said, "Okay, we'll probably agree on that, and we'll set it to one side, and we'll pretend that we're still negotiating on it until we get SALT agreed to." In fact, if we had done that, we wouldn't have done either one of them, as it turned out—unless you assume that we would have won the election if we hadn't gone after the Panama Canal treaty.

The Camp David stuff I really can't address. In a sense, it's been a long time since I've been back over all of that about Hussein [King Hussein bin Talal]. I know the President said that we probably should have made a better effort to try to deal with Hussein. I don't think under the circumstances there was much chance that Hussein was going to sign onto that thing anyway, given what we know now. But that doesn't excuse that a greater effort hadn't been made. God knows all treaties are certainly imperfect. The amazing thing to me—and even more amazing when you look at it now—is we got any agreement at all out of that session up there.

You weren't quibbling, as I've sort of started to, but I can't really argue the question that there weren't places where we could have executed better. I will say I think that sort of thing is overdone, and that the execution was a good bit better than we've been given credit for. That has become one of the myths. I think people say, "Well, his heart was in the right place, but he just couldn't ever get anything done." That's something that deserves careful analysis, and not treating it like a batting average, which I think people tend to do. If you do it on a percentage basis, somebody who only has three at-bats and gets two hits looks better than somebody with 160 at-bats, and it's not a true measure of accomplishment. I think when you go back over it and start looking at it step by step, day by day, issue by issue, that the execution is going to look a good bit better than it does now, too.

**BARIO:** May I ask a question of you folks who are probably more current on this than I am? My memory tells me that we had the SALT Treaty won until Iran happened.

**POWELL:** Pretty close. It wasn't won, but I think it was winnable.

**BARIO:** The task force, I know, was very optimistic that we could pull that off. One of the great tragedies of the hostage seizing is the SALT Treaty went down the drain. Is that the story you're getting?

**STRONG:** Most of the commentators acknowledge that you had won the hearings. The congressional hearings had gone extremely well, and most of the substantive arguments against the Treaty had been put down. But certainly the newspaper accounts of Senate votes weren't there even before Iran. And the closer you got to the election, the more Republicans you lost, and that timing element created problems.

**BARIO:** But you're going past Iran, with "closer to the election." Iran was a year before the election.

**STRONG:** But you lost Baker even before Iran.

**BARIO:** We were optimistic, I'll tell you. That's the inside poop.

**JENKINS:** Certainly Lloyd Cutler was the principle shepherd of that thing, and he was optimistic right up until Iran and Afghanistan—of course Afghanistan even more than Iran.

**MCCLESKEY:** From what Jody has just said, and I think from some of the things that were said yesterday, I get a feeling that you decided that to some extent it was predetermined that the administration would only be able to achieve certain things, that the nature of the times, the nature of the problems, set these great limits on what could be done. And yet, you didn't think that when you were campaigning in '76. You probably didn't think that when you went into office. Or did you?

**POWELL:** Well, I didn't really mean to leave that impression exactly the way that I think you've got. I really don't. I'm not that much of a Calvinist. If you ask me how we judge this administration, how we look back on it, I was trying to say that I think you have to take that into consideration, and you're certainly right. No, we didn't think that during the campaign. We didn't think it until the last day, actually. I don't think you operate that way when you're there. In fact, I think it would have been a mistake to look at it that way. There has to be some realistic appreciation of the fact that you're not operating in a never-never land.

But I really don't want to leave the impression that I'm trying to say, "Well, you know,"—with a shrug—"we did the best we could under the circumstances." I suppose in some ways that's the most that anybody can ever say for themselves. But not as an excuse or, "Gee, we had it tough," and that sort of thing. I happen to be one of those people. I know there are some of those people, primarily outside of the administration. There are some people who think the 1980 election was never winnable. I don't happen to believe that at all. I think we could have won it, and we didn't. And I really meant that when I said in terms of what we could be blamed for. I'm not sure that losing the election may not be absolutely the biggest mistake we made, and the one that we're most justifiably damned for, because it could have been done, and we did not do the right thing to win it.

**MCCLESKEY:** Well, I'm not trying to draw a guilty plea out of you.

**POWELL:** And I won't give you one, either. There are plenty of forks who will tell you all the things that we did wrong, and we're probably one of a small group that will try to give you another side of it, too.

**MCCLESKEY:** I was trying to get a better feel of what you thought the controllable things were, what might have been done differently or, in very broad terms, what factors beyond the times, the nature of the problems, and so on, posed the greater problems for you.

**POWELL:** I'm still not sure that I exactly understand what you're getting at here.

**JONES:** How might you have won the election, perhaps?

**POWELL:** I can give you my theory on it. Everybody will probably have a different thought about it. But we made, I guess, the very simple things first. Even though I

advocated it at the time, I think we never should have debated Reagan that late, and that we would have been better off taking the heat that we would invariably have gotten. There was a point at which, about a week or ten days before, where we saw several days ahead of the Reagan people that Reagan was in trouble. The voting choice was about even, but most of the attitudinal things were beginning to mass in a very unfavorable way for him.

And when we saw it, we immediately came to the conclusion that they were going to see it sooner or later, and they saw that they were going to debate because it was a serious enough situation, and that was the one way to try to deal with it. Obviously, a debate was in their interest. Clearly, it was not in ours under those circumstances. We talked about how we might go about avoiding that, and we thought we had a few days before they picked up on this thing. We even discussed the idea of issuing an ultimatum and giving them twenty-four hours and hoping that they wouldn't read their polls accurately within that twenty-four hour period.

You know, say, "We've got schedules. We've got places to go and things to do and schedules to plan, and we've asked you over and over, and we're going to ask you one more time, and we want an answer back by noon tomorrow. And after that, forget it." I'm not sure that we didn't do it because we thought that might probably be a little too cute by half. But either through that device or some other, we shouldn't have debated the guy that late.

I think we made a correct decision in deciding that we needed to try to make the election a choice between the two individuals, and that Reagan needed to make it a referendum on Carter. I think that was exactly the right way to look at it, and I think they saw it the same way. You don't have to be too smart to figure that out. But then I think we made some judgments after that, which, flowing from a correct assumption, were mistakes.

I think one of the things that we decided not to do was to devote much in the way of resources to defending the record. The logic was that if you don't want the record to be the issue, then don't raise it. Well, just like anything else, you can find an aphorism supporting any point of view you want to take. And I think that we—on things like defense and the other things that he was really beating up on us about—I think we had an opportunity, with a reasonable commitment of resources, to protect ourselves and to keep those things from cutting so badly against us.

I think that we needed, going back to that initial premise, to make Reagan the issue, but we did not need for the President to be in the position of doing that to the extent that he did. In some cases, I think he did it almost out of frustration with us, in the sense that we all knew what we needed to do, and we weren't being successful in doing it through other means. So he did it or tried to do it himself, with unfortunate consequences. From my very personal standpoint, I underestimated the difficulties that we had with the press. And again, I'm not begging off on this thing. I don't want this to be interpreted as, well, if the press had just treated us better, we would have won the election.

I just look at the press as a given. I expected all along, until it was too late, that in the end, the press coverage would balance itself out. And it clearly didn't. That's one of the reasons I stuck those **Robinson** pieces in there. It just did not. And I think it was an atypical election in that regard. Looking back on it now, there were good reasons that ought to have been detectable, to enable us to say that this is probably not going to happen. You really can't expect things will right themselves along the way. I argued that continually through strategy sessions: "Don't worry about this. These things come in cycles."

It didn't come in a cycle in that election, for the most part. Reagan had a bad time with the press right after the Democratic convention with the China business. And after that, for the most part, he got better treatment and better and better treatment relative to us along the way. Unfortunately, this was discussed, but not seriously, because people tended, unfortunately for the President, to defer to my judgment on the way the press was going. I was just wrong.

**YOUNG:** I would like to make a comment before anybody says anything else, and that is I think one of the extraordinary things about so much of the comment here is the very harsh judgments you people pronounce on yourselves. You set standards that I think are extraordinary. And when you get back home and think about it, I wouldn't want you to have that harsh judgment attributed necessarily to the objective scholar.

**JENKINS:** I was only going to ask Jody a question following up on this next one. I have always had a feeling that the Billy Carter case came at a profoundly bad time for us in the sense not so much how much damage it did. I think we finally resolved that certainly as best we could. I think it was one of the things that we handled best, or Jody handled best. But the real damage that was done there is that it diverted the press' attention and sent them off on this rabbit trail at a very critical time when they normally would have started to focus on Reagan—and perhaps start reading those three thousand columns and radio commentaries that he did over a fifteen year period that he would have had a hell of a time explaining and reconciling. He got a free ride during a very critical period.

**POWELL:** Yes, I think that was part of it, and I think it also prolonged the Kennedy challenge. We were spending time worrying about Billy, and not spending time worrying about Ronnie, who was clearly a more clear and present danger to the republic.

**TRUMAN:** Do you have any sense that the events surrounding the 1979 Camp David retreat and so on contributed also to the losing of the election?

**POWELL:** In the sense that in the end that turned out to be a net negative, yes. In my judgment, that was one of those situations in which steps or actions—which in and of themselves were the right thing to do—were done in such a way—which I suppose pleads to your execution charge there—that the sum total ended up being negative. I think the speech was right, and it was on the money, and it was something that needed to be said. The public response to the speech was one of the clearest cases of Washington being totally out of touch with what the hell is going on in the country. People, generally

speaking, rose up and said “amen.” And people around town said, “Oh my God. What is this man talking about?”

The Cabinet firings needed to be done. They probably should have been done earlier, but we didn’t need to do them right then and step right on top of the positive response we had from the speech. We never figured out, once we got off track with that, how to take that speech and follow through with it in a way that carried that message along.

**YOUNG:** Was that a hard speech for the President to decide to give?

**POWELL:** Yes. It’s a fairly major thing for a President to say those sorts of things under any circumstances. It wasn’t hard in the sense that he was browbeaten into doing it, but it’s a decision which he did not come to, nor should he have come to, lightly.

**KUMAR:** Do you think the press brings down a President? Or once he is down, do you think it grinds him down?

**POWELL:** A combination of both. My judgment of that has altered somewhat over the past few months. It is very difficult, if not impossible, for the press to initiate an assault. But once there is a little blood in the water, then there is certainly a tendency to join in the feeding frenzy that follows.

**KUMAR:** Like for example the Fallows article. Did you see the Fallows article as being important in the kind of impression that it left with lead people in the press?

**POWELL:** Yes.

**KUMAR:** People like Broder, for example, seemed to be writing differently after that time and had a different view of Carter.

**POWELL:** That’s not my perception of David. I have a great deal of respect for him. But my impression was that he had damn little in the way of a kind word to say well before the Fallows thing. I mean, any time that you get that sort of thing happening, it hurts. I have a hard time speaking in measured tones about Mr. Fallows and his piece. There’s an old story—I can’t remember who I heard it from, and I’m sure it wasn’t original with him—said in a discussion about patronage. The fellow said, “You think if you have a lot of appointments to make, jobs to hand out, that you’re fortunate. But the fact of the matter is every time you make an appointment, you create nine enemies and one ingrate.” I’ll leave it at that.

**BARIO:** I always had the feeling during the Carter years that one of the disadvantages he had was—being the type of man that he was—that he wasn’t one of the boys, and they didn’t relate to him. They could identify with Jack Kennedy and LBJ because they had chased women, and they told dirty stories, and they drank a lot in public. I mean, it was known that they did. But the media don’t relate to this born-again Christian, and so I think there is not— And I’m sure it’s all very subtle and never intentional— but they

don't have the inclination to leap to his defense. The inclination is to say, "Ha, ha, ha. He thinks he's so smart. Well look what happened," that kind of thing. That was a problem. I don't know how much of a problem it was, but it certainly was there.

**YOUNG:** It may have aggravated a problem that I think is probably much more widespread and much more deeply rooted. That goes to the crisis of confidence, really, and the essential destructiveness so often of what the public is taught about institutions of government and this one in particular. I don't think it began with Carter, and I certainly don't think it's ending with him.

**THOMPSON:** I think we will see some of the crisis of confidence in a relatively few months again.

**YOUNG:** I think we've come to the conclusion of our session. I think we owe you, Jody, and your colleagues here a very special debt of gratitude for the way you've talked to us, as well as for what you have taught us. I want to assure that we're here to learn, and we're learning some very interesting things. The experience of hearing you and the people who will follow you and who have come before you talk about the experience of being in office and the views of the world that one gets there is something that has enormous benefits for those of us, not only who have been writing things about the Presidency, but for educating our own students about this institution and at this time.

And you'll hear a lot of the same questions we get from our own students and from our own colleagues. It's been a very educational experience for us, and I want to express special appreciation for your being here and your willingness to give us this time and these perspectives. They're very useful. I hope you had some fun out of it, too.

**POWELL:** Well, I certainly enjoyed it. I did all the talking, too much of it.

**BARIO:** It's always been like that.

**POWELL:** I didn't want to turn you people loose. I did leave the room once, but if you notice not for very long. I really think that the debt is the other way, and that you people are going to be the ones who are going, I hope, to be spending a lot more time on this in a few years than we will. That's how you make your living, but it's got to be more than that. I thought of something.

Let me ask one thing, if I can: As you go along in this, you're going to run across all sorts of little incidents that you will be very tempted to latch onto because they seem to illustrate a point. And it may be a temptation not to worry about whether that particular thing actually happened because well, it's an illustration—whether it happened or not, it makes a point. Sometimes the point itself may not be valid, and sometimes the incidents and the accumulation of them are, in fact, the only thing upon which the whole argument or criticism hangs. That was something I saw a little bit of in Georgia, but frankly I didn't realize how rapidly and to the extent that that happens in Washington.

One of the problems that we ran into—and I meant to mention this earlier—is that you always wish you had done more to correct the record. You don't do it at the time as much as you probably should, for two reasons. One, you don't want to get the reputation of being a chronic whiner and complainer and so forth, and you put more stake in the long-term relationship with the press and those who are recording the events as you go along than you do the immediate things.

Two, you just don't have time. You don't even see all of them, in some cases. I know that Frank Moore was probably more a victim of these things because of having to deal with the Hill. There are more petty people up there by a long shot than there were in the press, and their egos are also larger. Call somebody, and I'll be around. I probably can't answer all of them, but I'll certainly make it my business to try to find somebody who can on some of these things. I really think that once you start, it plays into a lot of other things that we've talked about. If you start really grubbing into that sort of stuff, you'll be quite surprised at how many of those things evaporated into thin air. And you say, "Well, okay, that didn't happen, and this didn't happen, and that didn't happen. Well, what's left?" And it just ain't there. I was sort of reminded of it by my inability to deal with the two Camp David things, and then the comment about execution. That is an area where I think particularly there are all these little anecdotes floating around about how somebody forgot to do this, or this slipped through the crack, and so forth. Some of them were undoubtedly true because they're always talked about. But a lot of it is just absolutely whole cloth.

**YOUNG:** I think you're reminding us to be responsible scholars.

**POWELL:** Which is very presumptuous of me. And I realized that once I got into it.

**YOUNG:** No, we err too. We do err sometimes, too. I think what we have in mind is really trying to get away from what has been, in fact, the norm in building up pictures of the Carter Presidency. It does tend to be based on a set of incidents that are portrayed as typical or illustrative of the administration. I think we're really trying to get beyond that, and to go far beyond that. I don't think we're here to do an analytic job that merely replicates the faulty procedure of the press.

Your gracious offer—if we're going to select incidents to find out whether they happened or not, or my coming back to you or somebody else—we certainly will do that, if that's necessary. I'm just trying to reassure you that we're looking for larger game, and trying to look for a larger picture here than the illustrative incidents which are thrown out on the table for you to react to, and say, "How should one see that as a non-event? As chaff, or what?" So we often throw out incidents like that which we've heard about.

**POWELL:** Well, I assumed it was with the best of intent, or I wouldn't have made the request.



