

White House Interview Program

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INTERVIEWEE: MARK SIEGEL
INTERVIEWER: Martha Kumar

[Disc 1 of 1]

MK: —where you'd like to go on-background or off-the-record. That's fine. The use that will be made of it is, first, there will be some cuts from it used in what we call "Standards of a Successful Start," which are going to be five or six elements that are common to successful transitions. That's going to come out in the spring. Then the pieces on the offices are going to be available, probably when the transition teams begin for both sides. There will be some stuff about each office there.

MS: Even that is quite controversial, in terms of: "When do we begin?" Our campaign managers want to begin after we're elected; our policymakers want to begin with the planning as soon as we're nominated, and they want to divert funds - that the managers want to use to win - to governing. Which may or may not occur. I went through that kind of tension as well, because I was executive director of the Democratic National Committee during the campaign in 1976, and then moved over to the transition. So there was pressure on us. There was a program—I don't even know if you're aware of it. There was a program—only for women—that was called the talent inventory program.

MK: That was the thing that just filled up the basement of the Old Executive Office Building with resumes.

MS: Right. But from July to November, that was housed at the Democratic National Committee and the pressure was on me to give them staff, to give them funds and, of course, the cross pressure was to pump it into the field, pump it into media. Frankly, that was much more compelling. It's chicken-and-egg kind of thing. Although I was committed to bringing women into the government, I wanted to have a government to bring them into. I'm sure you have that tension. Less so when it's a close, competitive race, because people understand the priority is to win. But when you think it's a walk, then people want to organize very early. In one sense it's dysfunctional, because it sends out an arrogant signal: "We've won this election; we're already planning the government." Especially among our state parties that are fighting for lots of different offices, when they hear that funds are being used for putting together the transition—when they still have to win congressional, gubernatorial, city council, every kind of race—that constitutes a tension within the party. So I'm sorry to distract but—

MK: That's not a distraction at all. It was very much a part of it, of how do you start that planning and what are the problems involved in it? Perhaps because the last transition was one that was, as far as the White House was concerned, a difficult one. People weren't appointed until five days before the Inauguration. When they came in, that five days they had to use for moving. So when they got to the White House, they had nothing. They hadn't read anything. You were saying you had looked through things. They didn't have the time to look through anything. I guess once you get into the White House, Jody Powell once said, it's liking drinking out of a fire hose. Stuff is just coming at you all the time so you never have the time once you get in to the White House to prepare. How do you back things up to make certain?

White House Interview Program, Interview with Mark Siegel, Martha Joynt Kumar, Washington, D.C., January 6, 2000. Mark Siegel served under Hamilton Jordan in the administration of President Carter.

MS: I'll give you a little bit of color to that. The first day that we were in the White House this is the [Jimmy] Carter Administration—the Inauguration was at twelve o'clock noon. We had a senior staff meeting at four o'clock when everybody filtered back from parades and things. President Carter, for very interesting reasons, did not designate a chief of staff. It was his structural response to Watergate. He was convinced that Watergate was a product of concentration of power, so he was going to diffuse power. He was going to diffuse it by not having a chief of staff. So, when we all got in to the Roosevelt Room and sat down, there was literally no one to convene the meeting. You can only imagine sitting around this table. It's four o'clock; we're all really new and very excited. It's four; it's four-oh-one; it's four-oh-two. People are coughing. Literally, there is no one to convene the meeting. Finally this guy named Robert Lipshutz, who was counsel, he said in this very southern accent, "Well, I'm the oldest person in this room, so maybe I'll just get us going." It was almost like the moment in "The Candidate" where the candidate wins and the candidate looks at the campaign manager and says, "What do we do now?" Even though you put a tremendous amount of thought and work into the transition, when you're actually sitting there, and understand the power is now in your hands, it's an awesome sense of responsibility.

MK: Was that just a warning signal to everybody in the room that if they don't have anybody—?

MS: I took it that way. During the transition, I was one of [Hamilton] Jordan's deputies, working on something called the PAG - the Personnel Advisory Group. It was Cabinet selection. Nothing sub-cabinet; it was just Cabinet selection. And Jordan had designated me to meet with [Dick] Cheney and the other people in the [Gerald] Ford White House. I had told Dick Cheney the structure, which was to have eight assistants to the President with equal access to the President. He rolled his eyes into his head and he went into his closet and he pulled out this bicycle wheel. Do you know this story?

MK: I know another, yes.

MS: It's all gnarled and everything. He said, "Take this back and show it to the President-elect and tell him this is the 'spokes-of-the-wheel' theory of equal access to the President." It was really quite funny. And Jordan concurred but, again, Jimmy was convinced that Watergate was a product of the centralization and corruption of power into the hands of [John] Ehrlichman and [H. R.] Haldeman, and he was going to have equal access, and be his own chief of staff. That all disintegrated. After two years, Hamilton did become the formal chief of staff. In fact, from the very beginning he was the de facto chief of staff because, like *Animal Farm*, all animals are equal, but some animals are more equal. Well, that animal - being Hamilton Jordan - was seen as more equal because he had the relationship with the president. So, even though he didn't have the formal title, he had the power.

MK: I was reading some memos in the Carter Library and one of them from Jack Watson to Carter—it was during the transition period—and it was about White House staff. He clearly looked upon White House staff—it was from the vantage point of a symbol, the symbol of Watergate, and the rest of it.

MS: "He", Jack, or, "He", the President?

MK: Jack. And he did not look upon the White House staff as a resource. I forget how many pages it was, but in that memo you just didn't get a sense that there was an awareness that staff is important for doing things.

MS: I don't want to sound arrogant and dismissive here—Jack is a very nice guy and a friend of mine—but what Jack thought and what Jack wrote was totally irrelevant to this process, because, although he was designated the formal head of transition, he wasn't. It goes back to that *Animal Farm* thing. Everyone knew that [it was] Jordan and his cadre of four or five people, and I can tell you who they were, if you don't know—it was an interesting group. Anne Wexler and other people—they, in fact, were selecting the Cabinet and they, in fact, were selecting White House staff. So Jack had the big office. Jordan, interestingly enough, didn't have an office at transition. Jordan moved me from my big office at the Democratic National Committee into an office at transition and [he, Hamilton Jordan] took my office at the Democratic National Committee, where no one could ever find him. Because, why would he be there? And there was this relationship between Watson and Jordan that was quite interesting to watch as an academic, although it was terribly frustrating. It also, I think, sent signals to me that an organizational chart of this White House was going to be difficult to construct, because what [seemed] to be and what [was] were two different things.

MK: Yes. You certainly have to follow what actually happens, otherwise those charts aren't worth a hoot.

Who were the people that were involved in the Cabinet selections and the White House selections?

MS: Anne Wexler and Joe Duffy. Joe Duffy—you know that the Carter campaign was run out of Atlanta. But there was an “issues” office of the Carter campaign that was run out of the Democratic National Committee, and was headed by Joe Duffy. So Joe was working with me during the election campaign, but he was formally on the staff of the Carter campaign. So he and Anne were in this personnel advisory group, and Landon Butler. In the White House, Jordan had three deputies: Landon, myself and Betty Rainwater, who was also on the campaign. Landon was involved in selection.

It was funny. In terms of White House staff selection, that was almost Hamilton on his own. There was some degree of consultation. It also got a little annoying, in terms of affirmative action kinds of pressures. Worst-case scenario, but affirmative action were quotas. You fill out everything and there were a few boxes missing and you say, not: “Who's the best person to fill those boxes?”, but, “Who's the best person with: color, or gender, or this, or that, to fill these boxes?” If you're really short, it has to be a triple or quadruple. It came down to that on Cabinet, too.

The way Cabinet selection came about was that a few days after the election Jordan called me and said that Jimmy—he still called him Jimmy—wanted to begin this cabinet process and he was thinking about Pat Harris. I said, “For what?” He said, “We don't know exactly but he likes Pat Harris.” He said, “Can you work her up for Cabinet selection?” I said, “What kind of criteria, what kind of guidance can you give me?” He said, “Why don't you do this as a test case, and then we'll adjust the model from there on?” So that's what I did. I did one totally blind. That was the first time that one realizes the new power. You're an official of a party out of power and suddenly you're calling people as part of a transition [and] the response at the other end is so extraordinary. “Me, what?” All of a sudden you're a “Sir”. But we worked up the model, which in fact became the model for all the various cabinet positions. The way we worked it up, some of us were in charge of certain cabinet positions. We didn't work as a committee. Some people were in charge of various things. I remember clearly: Anne Wexler was in charge of Commerce. She found Juanita Kreps. Literally. No one knew who Juanita Kreps was, and she found Juanita Kreps.

- The form—I don't know. In the Carter Library, is there anything left of the transition process?
- MK: Well, transition papers are not government papers, because they didn't occur during the presidency itself. So, therefore, they're private papers, and getting hold of them is not so easy. But some of them just did happen to be in there.
- MS: That's interesting. Was the Pat Harris one in there? I'm just curious about that.
- MK: I didn't see it.
- MS: ... they wanted a very comprehensive biography, a very extended resume.
- MK: Now you didn't have to worry, in the same kind of way, that these searches do now about personal—.
- MS: The “vetting” crap?
- MK: Yes. The personal information.
- MS: Not really, although, sometimes, personal things would come up. I can give you some interesting examples of that, but no nanny-gate kinds of things. I came up with this model, and then it was adjusted. A very comprehensive resume. And then, if there were writings, a collection of everything that person had written. For some people, it was nothing; for some people, it was fairly extensive. And if there was testimony or public statements - that was included. But the most interesting thing that we did was, then we looked at the résumé and we would start interviewing people about that person at various stages of that person's career, if they had gone through kind of a transformation. I was an academic and I became the executive director of the DNC [Democratic National Committee]. Well, we would go back to my academic career; we would go back to my Party career. There was never really, at the end, a conclusion. These books were put together, the pros and cons, and then, as I understood it, Jordan and the President-elect would make the final determination.
- The one very interesting set of interviews for me occurred when I was interviewing the mayor of Milwaukee, about the governor of Wisconsin, for the job of Secretary of HHS [Health and Human Services] and, simultaneously, I was interviewing the Governor of Wisconsin about the mayor of Milwaukee—for the same job. What happens in these transition interviews is that, once you make your first call, three seconds after your call is over, that person hangs up with you, and calls the person, and says, “You're being considered for...”, blah, blah, blah. Usually they don't even know what the—I would never say what the office was. I would never say it was Cabinet, but they would know “White House switchboard”—which is what we were using—was doing this transition search. It was interesting to me: Henry Mayer, who was the mayor, knew he was being considered for - he assumed Secretary of either HUD [Housing and Urban Development] or HHS. “What could it be?” He was a mayor. And then I'm suddenly calling him about the governor, whom he despised, [about] the same job! Suddenly he's the competition. He used the interview to really try to destroy the governor. Who was the governor? Do you remember?
- MK: I don't remember.
- MS: He was the one who then ran with [John] Anderson in 1980. A gray-haired guy. Very distinguished guy. I'll remember it in a second. [Per Mr. Siegel: Governor Patrick Lucey.]

And then the same thing happened when I interviewed the governor—about the mayor! The governor was extremely gracious. He said, “We didn’t always agree but he’s a very, very bright, hard-working, dedicated man.” He went out of his way to be nice.

One of the things in the interview is, I would ask for negative things, not negative personal things, but: “Is there anything about this person’s character that would make it difficult for him to be a manager, for instance?” And Mayer just destroyed the governor, and the governor only praised Henry Mayer. I went into Hamilton and said, “This is a wonderful little anecdote for history, Hamilton.” He said, “Let me give you another part of the anecdote”, and he took the Henry Mayer file and ripped it in half and threw it in the garbage. Which I thought was a wonderful moment.

MK: That would certainly tell you something about his style.

MS: Exactly.

MK: —that was very important. And the fact that he wouldn’t know that that would tell you something about his style was also really—you would think that anybody would know that; they would be able to figure that one out. That they had to be gracious; that it wouldn’t do them a bit of good....

MS: It was terrible. But it’s a funny little story.

MK: When were you doing these? When did you start them?

MS: Well, the first one was, I would say, a week after the election, November 10 or 12, for Pat Harris. That’s also where I learned this phenomenon of power. I was still at the DNC and Bob Strauss was my mentor, my friend, and my boss. I told him what I was doing. He didn’t wait three seconds; he waited for the door to close to call Pat Harris and to say, “My boy, Mark, is taking care of you. I told him to take...” That sort of stuff. He told me about it and I laughed a lot.

The thing about Pat Harris was: she was a good series of interviews, and she had done a great deal, but as we progressed in cabinet selection, all the jobs I thought she was being considered for—I was pushing her for—were being given to other people. We reached the phenomenon at the end that I was telling you about, which is the affirmative action nightmare, the worst-case scenario, where we were “a woman short and a black short”. Pat got the HUD job because of that. It came down to: “Do we have a black woman?” and I said: “Ta da! Like the one I’ve been pushing for the last five weeks, you mean?” I think she actually did quite a good job.

MK: Well, in the White House, that phenomenon occurred with Midge Costanza. And Midge did not turn out to be so appropriate.

MS: Yes. I’m on the record here; it’s a little awkward.

MK: You can go off.

MS: It’s okay because I want you to get a sense of it. But I pushed very hard for Anne Wexler to get that job. Ultimately she did get that job.

MK: She did get it.

MS: It took a disaster, basically.

MK: But she was so good at it.

MS: She was so good at it, but she was too good. That's the thing. This was a group of Georgians that were still quite contemptuous of Washington, and the Washington power circle, and the Washington elite, and business as usual. They had no institutional memory and, in fact, they didn't want any institutional memory, because they're going to do it differently. They didn't want to know how it was done, because they're going to do it differently. There is no doubt in my mind, because Hamilton was a very close friend of mine, and I was working with him as his deputy on this.

He never told me why Anne Wexler didn't get that job, but I knew from talking to him that he had no intention of giving Anne Wexler that job. I think it was because she was too good and she was too connected. She had that gravitas that no one else in the circle—Frank Moore and—. Jody was different, because he was a press guy. He had it because of his relationship with the press. But certainly Hamilton didn't have it. No one knew who Jack [Watson] was. So if she had joined the senior staff as assistant to the President for public liaison, establishment Washington would have had this: "Aha! There it is! That's our way in, that's our route in!" Hamilton Jordan didn't want any part of it, and gave her a position I think she was overqualified for. She turned it into something quite successful. She became, not even undersecretary of Commerce, undersecretary regional director. She was in charge of the regional directors. It was not a high-level position.

MK: I remember it was—.

MS: Then, in 1978, when the White House was basically falling apart.... I had left in a policy dispute. Midge was very cavalier about her job; she wasn't serious. There's that word gravitas again. She wasn't really serious about it. There was that massacre of the summer of 1978, when everybody was being fired left and right—James Schlesinger and Michael Blumenthal. I was already gone. I had left after thirteen or fourteen months. Then Anne was brought in to do a job that she did splendidly.

MK: I wonder if Jordan was constrained by the statement that he had made, "Judge us by...."

MS: [Cyrus] Vance.

MK: Vance and [Zbigniew] Brzezinski, if they get elected, then they fail.

MS: And they were.

MK: So I wonder if that would have given him more trouble? That he felt he didn't like playing into that story, that he had already created.

MS: I think this was internal. This was a woman who, in the standards of 1970—not the 1990s or the twenty-first century, was just too good, too powerful, too tough.... Too, "I can play this better than you can play." Look, if he wanted a woman for that public liaison position, he could have picked any woman in the world, and he picked Midge. Now, of course, Midge was a loyalist; she was an early Carter person, but there was nothing in her background to suggest she could do this job.

MK: Once you get a person in a job in a White House, one of the tricky things about it—it's true certainly of the Cabinet, too; it's just more obvious in the Cabinet—is, it's difficult to get rid of them. You have somebody there, particularly somebody you appointed because they fill out some aspect that you have to have represented—.

MS: And in Midge's case she was a very early Carter supporter. She would go in to the office; she would sit on the President's lap and act silly, and that kind of stuff. They were close; she was there from the beginning. So it was very hard.

Another thing I want to make sure to tell you, and this isn't Cabinet selection, but it goes to how the rest of the administration was staffed. [It] was the selection of Joe Duffy for Assistant Secretary of State for Education and Cultural Affairs, over the opposition of secretary-designate Vance. Jimmy Carter, I told you what he believed, in terms of the White House structure. He believed the same thing about the Cabinet. He wanted the cabinet not to be reporting to his staff. He wanted the Cabinet secretaries to be very much on their own in terms of policy, in terms of personnel. It's a White House staff nightmare: "You're taking everything away from us!"

MK: But it became Carter's nightmare, too, ultimately, with people like [Joseph] Califano.

MS: It did. But when he would ask a Califano or a Vance to become secretary, he made it clear, and I heard it occasionally in telephone conversations: "I don't want you to suffer any interference from my staff. I trust you. I'm putting my confidence in you. You pick the best people...." Stuff like that. There were a whole series of nightmares.

I had one incident with Califano. Califano selected a guy named John Ellis to be Commissioner of Education. I was in the White House at that point, and I was in charge of political checks. And I find out he was a Republican; he had supported Ford; he was hated by the Ohio educational association. Despised! He had been sued by the NAACP [National Association for the Advancement of Colored People]. It's not nice when that happens. You think, "Good! These political checks really work; here, this is a rotten apple if I ever saw one." I went into Hamilton and he said, "We don't want this guy in this administration, but I have to go tell Jimmy." Because Hamilton couldn't call Joe Califano. He told the President and the President brought Califano in. I wasn't in that meeting. It would have been inappropriate. Hamilton was in that meeting, and he said that the President said, "Joe, you've recommended this guy and I know I told you that you could do your own staffing, but I think you should be aware of what I think belongs in this administration." He went into all these things; everything is, "No, no, no, no, no. I don't think this guy should be in this administration." And then he said, "Of course, I will rely on your judgment now that you know how strongly I feel about this." And Mr. Califano allegedly said, "Thank you, Mr. President, for sharing your views with me, but I have confidence in him and I'm going to go ahead with this appointment." And the President said, "Okay." And the word went forth from this time and place, different. When that permeated, and it did, everyone knew you could bring in the worst kind of comedian, politically, and get him on. It certainly diminishes staff.

The President only countered that position once, and that was with Vance. He told Vance, "I know what I told you, but this means a lot to me," and Vance didn't want it to take place. And he said he didn't want it to take place. He said, "These are not the terms under which I was selected. I was to pick my own assistant secretaries." The President said, "Well, I want Joe Duffy to have this position." It was extraordinary, because Vance never forgot it. When they did the State Department reorganization that year, he reorganized ECA, Education and

- Cultural Affairs, and gave it to USIA [United States Information Agency]—because he wanted the assistant secretary out. It's unusual to give away power. Education and Cultural Affairs, the Fulbright program, the exchange program. It's good sexy stuff. He just gave it all over to USIA, because of the deal that was betrayed. And he wanted his own team.
- MK: Do you think, to do the kind of vetting that you needed to do for all these positions, and for some of the White House positions, that it's difficult just during the transition, that it's something that really needs to begin earlier?
- MS: Earlier. It also goes on much later. The sub-cabinet positions I did after. We did very little sub-cabinet selection, formal selection, before. That was one of the things I did for the first three or four months. I was doing nothing but these sorts of political checks on relatively high-level people in the administration: assistant secretaries, DAS's [deputy assistant secretaries]. In this new environment, you have to do it before.
- MK: Say in [Ronald] Reagan's case, what they did was, they had an operation that was totally off on the side, that Pendleton James had, that was [inaudible].
- MS: Is that with the "kitchen cabinet" group?
- MK: Well, he had an office in Alexandria that he worked out of. Basically, he was pretty much operating on his own. Reagan had asked him, I think it was in April of 1980, to start an operation—since he had been a professional headhunter—to come up with some names. So that's what he did, just come up with names. I don't know the degree to which he could do checks, because I don't think they were calling on people. But they were developing names in his shop. Then it became public later on. But it was just off on its own, as a separate kind of operation. It at least gets the process started—identifying who the possible people are.
- MS: For cabinet or sub-cabinet?
- MK: They did cabinet. I don't know if they had sub-cabinet or not. Mostly it was cabinet positions.
- MS: Even if there isn't a formal mechanism, the process is really under way. It's under way in the minds of the presidential candidate, the vice presidential candidate, and the people on the senior staff who know that they're going to have responsibility in the transition and in the government, especially if you're not getting below the cabinet level.
- For the [Al] Gore campaign I could probably pick half the cabinet for you right now. Maybe in the [Bill] Bradley campaign I could only do a quarter. I bet there are Republicans who could come pretty close for a [George W.] Bush administration, in terms of the cabinet. Everyone is talking about [Condoleezza] "Condi" Rice, out of Stanford. If she's not at State, she's going to be NSC [National Security Council]. Paul Wolfowitz. That game is—with Paul, everyone assumes he's going to be Secretary of Defense, but if Condi Rice becomes Secretary of State, then Paul Wolfowitz becomes NSC Director. These games are being played and they're not off. These are the policy advisers. Is George Bush going to bring in some joker from Austin who does sewers in Texas? There's a national brain trust.
- MK: So do you think one of the things during the campaign is to bring in people that you think, mostly for cabinet, but also even for one particular position, chief of staff, making sure that that person has a relationship to the campaign?

MS: I think that is important, as long as it doesn't drain from the resources of the campaign. So we don't get into that tension, and that this is a private and not a public process. For two reasons. One, we don't [want] people campaigning for these positions. And I also don't want this notion of arrogance to start permeating. David Broder will write a piece about it.

MK: Couldn't it be written in a positive light?

MS: It could be.

MK: Certainly, what we're stressing in all our stuff is that planning is important. Planning not only can get you ahead of your opponents, in a way. Say in Reagan's case, they were so ahead of things when they came in that they were ahead of their allies as well. It has real benefits for you because, when you bring in people to a White House, and you've already laid out what your agenda is; when you bring in people, even if they don't agree with you in certain ways—say somebody like [David] Gergen who was left of Reagan—but when he came in he knew what the agenda was. He bought into that agenda. So it also provides you with no vacuum, so that your opponents, and also sometimes your allies, aren't going to say, "Take our ideas." Because you're shopping around; you don't have an agenda yet.

Say with Carter that first week after the election; you were deluged with people—Ralph Nader, a group of urban congressmen, a group of black congressmen—all saying, "We provided you with your victory, and you have to deliver to us."

MS: I got a call from Gloria Steinem about it.

MK: It was an amazing number. In Reagan's case, because it was so clear what he was going to focus on—the conservative religious and conservative groups could say, "Okay, we understand you've got an agenda, and we'll try holding off for a while." So, it has that benefit for you, too. I guess part of planning is figuring out—as you campaign—what your central agenda items are going to be.

MS: I see a lot of upside. I see some potential downside, which I've already mentioned. As someone who went through a transition, if I even had a spreadsheet of six transitions, and how they were structured and the processes they used, it would have been tremendously helpful. In terms of these staffing decisions.... Of course, no decision should be made before the fact; that is presumptuous. Now as a campaign strategist—let me take my hat off and put on my campaign strategist hat. Sometimes, especially in the Democratic Party traditionally, you would get the nomination from the left and jump back into the middle, and if you won the election, you start governing from the left. The Republican Party was the inverse of that. Now I think it's different because of the new Democratic Party. We'll see if the new Democratic Party is sustained. But, if during the campaign, when you're really directing all of your resources and your strategy to the persuadable 20 per cent, moderate, middle class, suburban, blah, blah blah, if the word starts to filter out that you're starting to put together an Administration which is the old left—. The word during the Tony Blair [British Parliament] thing was he's talking to new Labor but he's going to staff this with old blood Socialists. I think it could be dysfunctional.

Again, I think it's important it be done. I think it's important that the process be private. That institutional memory thing for me would have been very important. When you try to research this, there is very little there. Of course, that was before the age—now I think you

- can go to “Yahoo” [to] search transition for me. But it was before all that. I was going to every book on the [John F.] Kennedy administration, trying to see what the period was like between the day of the election and the inauguration. There’s nothing. “The President-elect went to Palm Beach.” They don’t tell you anything.
- MK: Of course, you’re dealing, I guess, with a much smaller staff in the White House to put together, and a time when you had more lead time to make decisions, and you had less information that was being made public at the same time, and fewer supplicants. The number of interest groups has increased so much. [Inaudible]
- MS: I think this goes way down below the level that you’re working at, but the level of the 2000 or so Schedule C’s that are in the administration; it’s a whole different avenue just to look at. There the pressure you are under between merit and loyalty; [it] is overwhelming. You want to bring the best people to run this government, and those are the people who really do it. “But you owe this, this and this; this one’s daughter and this one’s son; this one gave \$100,000 in soft money; how can you say no to his cousin?” As an academic maybe it’s not where you really want to be looking, but that’s the way this—.
- MK: But what ways are there? Making the transition from campaigning to governing is so difficult in terms of the people, because you owe so much from the campaign. What are the ways in which you can pay off people other than big positions? What are some of the other things you can use to satisfy people?
- MS: I don’t [know] if you can totally satisfy people. But there are avenues of deference at your disposal.
- MK: Like keep their dissatisfaction private instead of public.
- MS: I use the word “deference”. I guess I didn’t know how much “power”—I don’t know—and “glow”. Especially when you’ve been out of power for a long time. This notion of the White House switchboard. All of the little perks [perquisites] of the White House. I insisted, for instance, that at every state dinner, that two people from the party, from the DNC, be at small things like that. And I started bringing in some state chairs. Once one knew that one went to a state dinner, they all knew that, potentially, they could all go to state dinners. So they all became much more respectful and patient and didn’t want to tangle with us. But you have so many commissions at your disposal; you have so many trips where you can put people and they don’t have to—.
- MK: What kind of trips? You mean like, say, Clinton’s trip to Africa.
- MS: Yes. You have a plane? You can fill it up. They don’t have to be Africanists. Maybe some of them should be. Travel on Air Force One. Be with the President. I found it extraordinary. I didn’t know how many commissions existed. I think there probably are less; with this new “reinventing” government, they’ve cut those things down. But there were a lot of things—
- MK: They’re still large though.
- MS: I believe that involvement in the political process should be rewarded, and I think participation in the political process is a very positive value in American society. I just want, whenever possible, to be able to build merit into the criteria for these selections. I also believe in affirmative action, but I want someone to say to me who the ten best women in

America are for this position, but not say: “We’re looking for a northeast, black, woman...”, blah blah blah. It’s one person. And it’s an insult. I think the same thing comes with patronage. Patronage is the glue of politics. And people who have been out of power for a long time.... I know the Republicans; they want a [White House] winner; they want to go to state dinners; they want to do all this hoop-la thing. For us who go every year to the Christmas party, it’s not a big deal. But for these people, it’s a whole generation of Republicans who don’t know what it’s like, and they want in. But, again, I don’t know why we can’t build in the notion of merit. Give me resumes of people who are qualified. People want to work at HUD? “Let’s see, what have they done for a city? Did they work for the Conference of Mayors? Do they have degrees in urban planning?” You can have those things and also be party loyalists.

This is really an interesting point, because there has been a transformation in the kinds of people that have gone into politics. When we were drawn, people of our generation, we were drawn to politics because of issues, and we learned political skills to promote those issues. There is a whole group of young people, and they’re in the Clinton Administration, and they’re not all that attractive, actually, in terms of their characters. They didn’t have the issues of civil rights, or the war or even feminism. We fought their battles for them and we won the battles. They were in their first campaign, and they won. They never even knew what it was to lose. They weren’t ideologically or programmatically committed. They were in “politics.” I met with some afterward who said to me, “Now that we’ve won, I really should think of specializing in an issue.” I was struck by how it’s just the inverse. We were fighting for issues and then we won. We had an issue base. These people who were political and not programmatic were thrown into the departments. I don’t know if that’s a new phenomenon or an old phenomenon, where you place it in transition. But I would think it’s somewhat less in the Democratic Party now because of people who were driven into politics because there are defining issues. Of course, we don’t have defining issues, so I don’t know if I should be faulting the people. But they were very shallow in terms of the experience that we’re looking for in placing people in an administration.

MK: I wonder what the reward is for going into politics? Why go into politics, other than to be interested in the game of it? So, it’s just a game that has its own satisfaction: of trying to get somebody elected.

MS: I’m selling them short. I do think they believe in things. It’s not their fault that they didn’t have a Vietnam war, or we fought to get a civil rights law passed in 1964, and it’s thirty-six years later, and they don’t even remember it. Democratic activists and Republican activists are very, very different kinds of people and they believe in very different things.

MK: I still think there are always issues. My son and I recently had a conversation, because I was involved in civil rights activities in Mississippi in the 1960s, and we were talking about the Meredith march. He said, “You’re so lucky because there were such interesting things to do. Today there’s just not the same interesting things.” I said, “It wasn’t like everybody was doing it, either. There are always things there. There were difficulties even doing it at that time. It’s not just such a ‘natural’ in some ways. There was certainly a lot of conflict to some extent over it. Today there are issues out there as well that you could fight for, that you could get interested in.”

MS: Not only do I have this discussion with my children but I teach at George Washington University. I teach political management and I teach a course in political history. I spend two weeks on the summer of 1964. They get three points on their midterm examination if they can identify for me the names of the three men that were killed that summer in

Mississippi. And they say, “Why do we have to remember that?” And I say, ‘Because they deserve to be remembered.’ They don’t understand. They don’t understand. And I find this with blacks, too. They’ve been confronted with racism, but not overt racism, not the statutory racism that we saw in the 1960s. And they never had to be in the position of dying for their beliefs.

But what are the national overriding issues? We had the war and we had Vietnam. Those were national, international, global issues—.

MK: Yes, they were.

MS: —defining issues of character. What is it now?

MK: Well, those issues, though, went through a period of developing through consensus. So you could have issues like the disparity between rich and poor, the growing disparity between rich and poor. I just think there are things that develop. We were active at a time when those issues were coming into fruition, but there are other things that come up. Look globally. We’re looking just nationally, but look globally at, say, the issue of human rights. There are just so many issues that come off of that—that are ones that are huge.

MS: I agree. One thing I wanted to add is: that the positive thing for our generation, when we lived and what we lived through, was a great sense of political efficacy, because we knew that we could change the world, because we did change the world.

MK: Exactly.

MS: I have a daughter at Georgetown Law, and I have another daughter at Dartmouth. And the notion that a generation of college students can change national policy is very foreign to them. They read it in history books, but they can’t imagine what it must be like to be able to confront injustice and bring down a President, for instance.

MK: But you do find that people are involved in things in a community. Young people will get involved in the community, and they can see the difference that they individually can make in those kinds of circumstances.

MS: I don’t know if you’ve spent any time with “communitarians.” It’s interesting for me because Gore is very close to these values. I think in a Gore administration the communitarian notion would be expanded in the sense of giving back, which some of our kids have, but some of our kids don’t. They’re still the product of the selfishness of the 1980s; it still permeates. The materialism. Not that I’m judging. But I’m sidetracking; I’m going off.

MK: But going back to the difference of the kinds of people involved in campaigns. Let me get to one point in the Clinton people—

MS: One other thing: the professionalization of campaigns, which we didn’t have before. Now we have. I teach in the grad school of political management. We turn out campaign managers. There are consultants that specialize in very finite things. People who study campaigns and then go into campaigns, as opposed to the way.... I teach speechwriting. No one ever taught me how to do speechwriting. I was a speechwriter because it was on-the-job training. I was made a speechwriter. Now, people are being taught to do those things. They are very different kinds of people who are going into the system now.

MK: Are those people now able to go from one to the other, to go from campaigning to governing? Do they get involved in both things as professionals?

MS: I certainly saw it in the Clinton administration. They did get involved. And they were in the administrations, but they govern very politically. They govern very politically. We used to say the government was a search for consensus in society. But, when you're very political, that's not what government is. Government is imposing your values, the winner's values, on society.

But this contradicts what I just said a few minutes ago, because these people aren't particularly ideological. So it's not an ideological agenda they are necessarily imposing. But it certainly is a political agenda.

MK: It's such a tricky thing. It appears that the kind of people who are involved in a campaign are people who are geared toward one thing - which is winning. And your timetable is now; you think in terms of days and in terms of painting your candidate as all good and the opponent as all bad. When you come in to govern, consensus is what you have to build. There is not the same kind of timetable, and developing policy involves reaching out in ways that are difficult for people who were involved in a campaign.

MS: You have to build consensus if you're going to be successful. But, in the first two Clinton years, certainly the first two [Newt] Gingrich years, it wasn't a search for consensus, but a victory of values and a revolution of sorts. We always go back to the point where, if you don't try to build consensus in a society that's basically a moderate society, you're going to fail politically. As many times as we say it, I think after—. I don't know who's going to win the presidency in 2001. If it's an internal Democratic transition, it won't be so abrupt. But if George Bush or [John] McCain wins they probably, in the first year, will try to not work consensus with—probably Bush will try not to be consensus-driven—work with Democrats in the Senate, work with Democrats in the House. I wouldn't think. They'll have to sort of once again learn the lesson, the failure. And it's a very damaging lesson but we don't seem to make any progress, either side.

MK: It is particularly damaging, because that early point is a point where - particularly in such a partisan environment - that's the one window where you have less partisanship. Which is right at the beginning. There is some sense of goodwill that you can tap into.

MS: People want you to succeed. You're our president now; best shot and all of that. Maybe I'm wrong. Maybe Bush will work with the Democratic legislature. Maybe he understands.

MK: If you look at both McCain and Bradley, neither one of them were people who, when they were in the Senate, did a lot of working with people. I guess one of the things that really stands out to me on Bradley, which has nothing to do with this, is the fact that nobody from the New Jersey delegation backs him. I think that's so telling about governing and how they would govern. I think McCain as well. McCain is a guy who is a loner.

MS: And his governor hates him. He's only three points up in the Arizona primary. Why is that? It's sad when those who know you best like you least. There is a message.

MK: That's right. There sure is. In looking at the beginning of the Carter Administration and the beginning of Clinton, say that first two-year period, one of the things that happened with Carter is that Carter developed a reputation that was just etched in granite. He couldn't get

away from it. “Nice guy; can’t govern. Can’t figure out what he wants to do; he has all these things he wants to do.”

MS: If you look at his numbers, during the first year, didn’t his numbers stay pretty high if you look at his approval rating? I think you should trace it.

MK: Yes. The interesting thing is, in both Clinton’s and Carter’s cases outside, in the country at large, they had support and much more of a willingness—.

MS: They both had two extraordinary programmatic failures in their first year, the Energy Policy of the Carter Administration and the Health Policy of the Clinton Administration. More than just being programmatic failures, they were process failures. What happened to those two issues demonstrated everything wrong about the Presidents, the respective Presidents, their respective White Houses, their respective inability to try to build and seek consensus. Again, we learn from our mistakes. Why we keep repeating them is something else again.

MK: But, within the Washington community, it seemed that Carter developed a reputation that was difficult for him to overcome. In his White House, everything did get organized and it was much more smooth operating later on. In Clinton’s case, Clinton was just able to turn around his reputation. It never was something that: “The guy just didn’t know what he was doing...”; “...he’s the outsider coming in, and not being very effective.” He just was able to turn it around. I study the White House and the press and public presentation of a President, so it just seemed to me that the Carter example was one that would generally hold: that how you came in, the reputation developed early on, is something that really holds.

In Reagan’s case, his command at the beginning gave him a reputation that, when other things came in, like [Dave] Stockman’s discussion of, “They didn’t know what they were doing...”, it just bounced off. Because people already had this sense that they thought of him as a leader, which worked well for him. But Clinton was able to turn it around, his image that he wasn’t effective as a president; he was able to change.

MS: He changed his image, but he changed his presidency dramatically.

MK: He did.

MS: He became focused again.

MK: But I would say that Carter became more focused. It’s just that, somehow, he never got the credit for it.

Do you see less change in Carter first year, Carter third year and Clinton first year and [Clinton] third year?

MS: Clinton first and third was a dramatic change. They both started off as being micro-managers. Jimmy stayed a micro-manager. My letter of resignation, which was a very strong policy dissent, came back to me from the President with a typo circled. It didn’t speak to any of the issues. It was, from beginning to end, he was micro-managing. I think President Clinton had a tendency to be on top of everything, but then realized that he had a job, just like a candidate has a job, and he couldn’t be everything in this administration. I also think they were very much back on message as opposed to a multi-permeating message which made people not sure about what his presidency was all about. The Reagan presidency, which had two or three overriding values over and over. Again, we Democrats—Michael

Dukakis was a wonderful man; I supported him for president. But he would make a speech and talk about one hundred and thirty different things. When the speech was over, if you asked somebody in the audience what did he say, they wouldn't remember. Reagan said two things, but people remembered what they were.

I don't know that Jimmy Carter changed very much as president. Again, I was only there in the beginning. Have you talked to Hamilton?

MK: I haven't talked to him. Not yet. I've talked to—

MS: Did you talk to Anne?

MK: Anne I talked to in the early stages of this project. And for my book work, I've talked to her a couple of times. We've talked about some of this stuff, but I need to go back to talk to her. She's not one of the seven offices that I'm dealing with but, on the other hand, she's somebody who knows—.

MS: Which ones are they? I didn't even ask.

MK: Chief of Staff, Staff Secretary, Press, Communications, Counsel, Personnel, and, Management and Administration.

MS: Well, the Staff Secretary I think is quite interesting, because we selected a very young kid, Rick Hutchinson—have you talked to Rick?

MK: No, I haven't talked to him yet.

MS: Improbable, to say the least, for that position.

MK: How did he get selected?

MS: [Inaudible] power centers. And Hamilton is a very smart guy, and he understood and we discussed that he would control the paper and control the presidency. He would control the paper in the Oval Office, controlled everything. And why he selected this—Rick, at that point, was a baby.

MK: Were you involved in picking people for White House staff?

MS: No. I tried very hard for Anne for public liaison. I had to be very careful, because I knew how they felt about the Washington establishment, and I embodied it. Executive Director; close to labor, close to the Jewish community, academic, liberal, friend of Kennedy, a Humphrey Democrat. All—

MK: That's about five or six flags there.

MS: But I wasn't at all sure [inaudible], and Hamilton basically said that what's important is the deputies for the House and Senate should have House and Senate experience. Frank had a lot of Georgia legislative experience. I'm not sure it's necessarily applicable. You have to be careful. But I thought the Costanza selection was weak, and I thought it was an affront to talented women, talented, substantive women. I also don't understand Public Liaison. What is it about it that makes it gender specific?

MK: But she was the first woman appointed to it.

MS: But now is it even—

MK: I think once it had a woman and then had a second woman—

MS: Maybe it will be true for attorney general. That's good.

MK: —then it became difficult to have a man. I don't think there's been a man since then.

MS: I don't recall men.

MK: Well, there were some times when it got put together—I think David Demarest, during Bush, at one time was doing the liaison job as well. But once it becomes specific like that then....

MS: But there's no other position that became a "woman's position" per se in the White House.

MK: No. Well, it becomes difficult when you have a woman in a job that's high profile, and you don't have many women in your White House. Then, you just simply can't unload that woman—and not have another woman. So I think that must happen. And it's very difficult if you have a woman and you've brought her in just because you've looked at that particular problem. Say, in this administration, Dee Dee Myers is brought in as press secretary. And she really was not so suited to the job, more of a campaign person, and somebody who was familiar with what was needed in Washington, and had that kind of experience. So it became very difficult to replace her because, I'm sure, Clinton thought about it a long time before it actually happened. But in that position it didn't have anything specific with it. It had a different kind of history. But public liaison only came up in the Ford administration; the first director of public liaison was William Baroody, who was appointed in 1974.

MS: Do you use the [Carol] Gelderman text at all, that woman at the University of New Orleans?

MK: No.

MS: Do you know that book?

MK: No. Is that—?

MS: *All the President's Words*.

MK: Yes.

MS: It has a certain bias to it, but I think it's premise is interesting. It looks at the structure of a White House—I use it in my speechwriting course—communications office, the creation of the communications office. You might want to take a look at it and how she evaluates presidents from FDR on. I have it here somewhere. Here it is.

MK: I talked to somebody who was in this administration, who had spoken with her. I think communications came about when Nixon reorganized the White House. What he did was reorganize externally and figure out how to strengthen their relationships outside of Washington. Whether that was with politics, strengthening a political operation, or with the public liaison. Public liaison really was an idea he wanted to do, and Ford just did it shortly

- after he came in. So, to bring interest groups in and then bring in the outside media outside of Washington, office of communications would do that, because he had a real sense of the good press that he'd get from the regional or local press. So it was part of an overall effort to strengthen a White House relationship with outside—.
- MS: He was obsessed with image from the 1960 campaign. I think that's where—the virtual presidency is how things appear. Nixon administration on, the appearance was more important than the substance. And that's what's so interesting about the whole notion of speechwriting. Speechwriters used to be policymakers that also did speeches, and the process of drafting speeches was a way that presidents made policy. In the drafts and the redrafts and the edits, they were making policy. [Ted] Sorensen, for instance, was counselor to the President. He never had the title of speechwriter to the President, but he happened to write speeches for the President. But if you go through all the great speeches: the “Atoms for Peace” speech of [Dwight D.] Eisenhower—we just go down the list—Lyndon Johnson's Civil Rights speeches. Harry McPherson wrote those speeches. We've now created a new genre in the White House, with the office of speechwriting, where people write words, but they're not involved in generating the policy. And the speechwriters don't have access to the people they're writing for. It's a very strong wall. I've talked to people in the Clinton—and it was very true of the Bush people. Bush was almost impossible; he would never meet with speechwriters. And he would read exactly what they wrote for him. Speech drafting was never used as a form of decision-making.
- MK: You would have competing speeches. Like after the L.A. riots there were competing speeches there.
- MS: The worst case of competing speeches occurred in the Carter administration. I remember this distinctly in the American University speech: Carter asked Brzezinski [for] a draft and he asked Vance for a draft. Of course two drafts came in virtually opposite in every way. President Carter liked them both, and he basically put them together with a segue in between. It was, like, “What?”
- MK: When you came in, he was the one who would have talked to you about your job—what did Hamilton say he wanted you to come in and do?
- MS: It's interesting.
- MK: Did he give you choices?
- MS: I'll tell you exactly what happened. We were at Harvard together. We were both part of a symposium called, “Campaign Managers Speak.” I don't know if it's still done, but after every election they would bring in the top people from both campaigns and it would be a three-day symposium, going over the whole campaign. And it would be published in a book. I had been working on transition; this was probably in early December. Hamilton and I were having dinner and he said, “Have you decided what you want to be in this administration?” I said, “Thank God that you asked,” and I told him what I wanted to be. It was something that always fascinated me—I was probably unqualified for it—but I wanted to be Assistant Secretary of State for Congressional Relations. I was fascinated by foreign policy and I knew the Congress, had worked in the Senate. He said—this was probably wrong—“If you want that, you can have it.” Now I know, because of the Vance thing; Vance would never have allowed me to have it. But he said, “Jimmy and I have something else in mind for you.” First of all, when he says “Jimmy and I”—even though Jimmy Carter was an old friend of mine and we traveled together, he was now a president.

“What is that?” And he described this job as his political deputy in the White House. He said, “You’ve worked very hard for this party. This is your chance to keep the party going. You’d be in charge of the Democratic National Committee; you’d be the liaison with the state parties. You’d be in charge of all the patronage positions and political checks.” But then he said, “We also want”—this is going back to the paper thing; you’ll find this fascinating. He said, “When the paper goes in to the President, I want someone—in this case you—to have a notation laying out for the President the various political implications of his policy options.” The paper is going to go in and say, we recommend this or that, and he wanted someone political to say: if [you] do A you can expect Z will happen; if you do B the political consequence will be such. So he described that. That seemed to be very interesting, because I would have a role in the paper going in to the President. And then, he said, as issues developed—particularly the environment and ERA [Equal Rights Amendment]—he wanted me involved on that.

And only later, after there were a lot of problems in the American Jewish community, did they insist that I become liaison to the Jewish community. In the early stages they didn’t believe in liaisons; they didn’t believe in these desks. They thought they were demeaning and that foreign policy shouldn’t be made politically. That changed quickly, especially in the Middle East, Greece, Turkey. And there were some issues that are domestic political issues.

MK: That’s right.

MS: So he describes all of this. Clearly he had thought about it a lot, because he went down the list. And then he said he and the President wanted me to do it. But in a very Carter-esque way said, “If you don’t want to, you can do what you want to do.” I didn’t accept on the spot. I talked to my wife about it. We were concerned about what it would do to my concept of being a father, which is very hands-on kind of thing. Actually, I went to speak to the President-elect about that. I said, “I know I’m going to have to work day and night, but I want to be home with my kids and put them to bed. Then I’ll come back; I’ll work as long as I have to.” And he said, “You work seven in the morning until seven at night. No one can expect more of you.” Carter was wonderful that way, just the opposite of the Clinton presidency where those people stay in the White House five minutes later than the person in the next office; midnight, twelve-oh-five, one a.m. It doesn’t make any difference. And the attitude in the first two years, when I was there, I thought I was in a fraternity dormitory or something. They would live there; their clothes were there; [inaudible] was there. And I thought it was very sad. The ones who were married said they didn’t recognize their children anymore.

MK: I’ve got lots of those stories.

MS: It’s horrible.

MK: But it’s from just about every administration [that] people talk about that.

MS: Who in the Carter administration?

MK: Now, in the Carter administration, it is definitely less so. Well, I don’t know. There were a couple of people who talked about working very late, but they said that it was not different from what they did in their other jobs. One was a lawyer who talked about how his hours as a lawyer [were] very similar to a White House. Another guy, he was in a different industry, but he said it was pretty similar to what he—

MS: Well, Carter told me my most important job was being a father and husband. There was a period at the end of that sentence.

MK: So did you really get home at seven?

MS: Almost always.

MK: Did you go back?

MS: Only if there was a reason to go back. I don't think that the people who work fifteen and sixteen hours really have to; they just think it's part of the definition of the job. I think they make a terrible mistake. First of all, I don't think they're productive. Carter was right; after twelve hours there's very little left there. Also you're not a normal person; you don't understand normal values and problems. But from what I observed from many presidencies, early on, it was worst in the Clinton administration.

MK: Although some of the worst stories I have are really ones from other administrations. One person whose children were young said he always took Sundays off and always put his children to bed. One night he was putting his son to bed and he said, "Night, Dad. See you next week." He said he wasn't trying to be a smart aleck. It was reality. He only saw him on Sundays because he left before the children got up and came home afterwards.

MS: In the Clinton administration, at the beginning—I'm trying to think of who was the issues director. I keep thinking it's David Dreyer but it can't be David Dreyer. Was he there first?

MK: It was David Dreyer. David Dreyer came in at the beginning.

MS: Okay. Then I think he is the one who said he doesn't know what his children look like. And he laughed about it. I was really horrified. I tried to make them mentor. I said, "Sometimes you don't have a second chance. These years disappear and you can't make it up." But they don't listen.

MK: It's very difficult to get people to listen, because, often, they think the problems are unique, or their situation is unique.

MS: And they're very insecure. They want the word to go to the president: they work harder than anybody else.

MK: One person was saying that he thought that, while time is often discussed as a big problem, that it's not time: it's job insecurity. And it was a person from the Carter White House. He said there were only four people who were bullet-proof, or was it three. He said it was Jordan, Powell and [Stu] Eizenstat. There were, I guess, just three.

MS: Wasn't Frank bulletproof? No matter what happened—

MK: He didn't mention him, though. He only mentioned the three. Otherwise it was job insecurity, and you knew that people were after you, in one way or another. That, he said, was really wearing. That people would leak information when there was a disaster, and they would try to cover themselves. Other people have talked about that, too: that you're so vulnerable. It's just another aspect of White House work life that's tough. In fact, one person I talked to had worked in an executive branch agency and he also had worked in the Congress and he found the environment in the White House the most difficult of all of

them. One of them said that the White House was a snake pit from his view point, of people backbiting.

MS: I was only there for fourteen months. As I said, I left in a policy dispute which obviously changed my career options, because it was a very public dispute. But people ask me. They say, “You must regret ever doing that?” (Leaving the White House.) I say, “I don’t regret it.” It was the most extraordinary experience, and I learned a lot of things, good and bad. I can never forget—I know when I go back—I usually go back a few times a year—I know every inch. I was in awe of working in that place. I don’t regret it, but I also think that I learned a lot and if I ever could do it again—of course, I’m a very different person than I was when I was thirty—that I’d be much better at it. I understand the institution better, the power of the institution better, and I also think I understand myself better. I’ve matured.

There was a tendency in this [Clinton] administration to bring in very, very young people who had not had jobs, literally, outside of college. They went from college to the campaign and into this administration. This has been true of Clinton always: Clinton in some ways is very insecure. He doesn’t have people in the White House who are senior to him. I guess there are some exceptions with a chief of staff here or there but—

MK: Well, Lloyd Cutler is an exception, but he was brought in [in] “911” situations and he certainly dealt with him differently. He showed a different part of himself, for example. In an interview with Cutler, we were talking about the difficulties of working in the White House, and I asked him about the added difficulty here. Which was the President’s temper, that it must be difficult to give advice to a president in the context that the guy really gets upset. And he said he’d never seen his temper.

MS: That’s interesting because it’s abusive; it’s sort of an authoritarian personality. It’s abusive, it’s psychically violent; it’s almost physically violent. It’s obscene; it’s profane. But I can see it. You can talk to George Stephanopoulos about it. When you go through it, it’s searing because it’s so humiliating, and then, even as you’re going through it, you’re thinking: “He doesn’t mean this; in fifteen minutes he’s not even going to remember that this happened.” It’s like an alcoholic blackout or something. But I’ve heard that it doesn’t happen when he’s deferential to people, and he knows he can turn it on and turn it off.

MK: That was interesting to me, that clearly it is something he can turn on and off. I guess having those young people around is an aspect of his being able to vent in a way that he’s normally vented, and he wanted that. In looking at the Clinton administration, were you surprised that people did not quit from the Clinton White House over the—here you’re a person who worked in a White House and you quit over an issue of conscience. No one quit from this White House; no one has quit over an issue of conscience at all, actually. That I can think of. They have in the departments, like Peter Edelman.

MS: You don’t think Mike [McCurry] ultimately quit because of the—didn’t he all but quit?

MK: I think he wanted to quit earlier, and I think several of them were planning on going early, and what was odd was that they ended up having to stay later because of the situation. They just didn’t want to leave the President in a position where he was going to be without their particular skills. So [McCurry] stayed longer than he would have otherwise, I think.

MS: I’m surprised that people didn’t quit. I’m surprised, particularly, that women in the administration didn’t quit, that fathers of twenty-year-old women didn’t quit, or just people who thought that the lying was unconscionable. Forget the act.

MK: That's right. It was the lying. There were some articles about it at the time. There were some people who said, "Well, you don't quit over an issue that relates to a personal failing, and this was a personal failing." That you quit over policy differences.

MS: That's why I think I made the distinction between the act, and lying about it. Although, if I were a woman, and even as the father of women, his behavior is so unacceptable. I understand that it's personal, but it's also such a huge character flaw. This isn't a small thing. But it's different. With me, it was a policy issue, and it's very rare. You know how rare it is for people to resign in protest. After I did it, Richard Reeves sent me a copy of a book he had written called *Resignation of Protest*. It was very scary because—there were two things—if the person did it at a young point in a career, a career [was] destroyed. But most of the people who resigned in protest did it at the end of their careers, when they had nothing to give up.

MK: Can you talk about how you came to it, and what impact it had, and within the White House what discussions you had beforehand?

MS: Sure. I said that, during transition, the President and Jordan determined that there wouldn't be these constituency offices, these liaison positions. After the President's speech in Clinton, Massachusetts, in March of 1977—where the President sort of inadvertently used the term "Palestinian homeland"—previous to that I think they were talking about we would always use this entity thing. But he used the term "homeland". And the shit really hit the fan in the American Jewish community, which was always a little suspect. They had voted for him 72 per cent but were never really close to him, or whatever. And there was a great deal of distrust and vocal opposition. Then Hamilton came to me and asked if I would take on this added responsibility, not become exclusively the liaison to the Jewish community, but also serve in this capacity. We reached an agreement. I said, "this is going to be very difficult, because I feel very strongly about some of these issues. But if I can feel my job is multi-faceted, that I am not only the spokesman out, that I'm a community spokesman in, and I can be channeling information both ways"—he said, "Sure, that's the way we would want it."

That's the way I began it. People misunderstand. They thought I resigned because of the sale of F-15s to Saudi Arabia. That was the catalyst; that was the issue that triggered the resignation. But it was when I found I was being asked to sell a policy I really didn't believe in, to a community, and they wanted me out around the country selling this hard. But there was no opportunity for me to channel back their views into Hamilton, or the President. Which was, however, our deal. It finally came to a head in a speech, that I did not want to give, that was drafted by State which contained - it turned out - information that was lies. Not [information] that was subjectively body English, slightly wrong. Just flat-out lies about the offensive capabilities of these aircraft. Hamilton asked first. I said, "I can't do this anymore," and that I wanted to resign. He said, "What if you just resign as Jewish liaison and stay." I remember I didn't reject that outright. I wasn't Joan of Arc. I wasn't a fanatic, and I also had a family. I had no place to go, and there was no trust fund or anything. But I talked to my wife and I also talked to a good friend of mine, Al Hunt, at the *Wall Street Journal*, and he said once you make a decision you have to make it.

So it was determined—Jody did try to make me reconsider. Jody does like me now very much, but I wasn't particularly close to him then. But he understood there was already a very aggravated situation with the Jewish community, and this was really throwing in a match and it was going to explode. He was trying to keep it down. But I decided to go and a couple of

days later I left. There were a few days where I stayed in the White House packing up my things. I remember the day before I left I had lunch in the White House mess with a friend—that's another thing about being in the White House. You're there for four years; you think they can have lunch with you any time. So the one person that I wanted to have lunch with in the White House, and hadn't up to that point, I asked him and no one was speaking to me. It was amazing to me. These are my friends; these are my colleagues. I hadn't done anything public at this point. Very soon after that, I did speak out publicly and my letter of resignation was printed with the President's very gracious response (of the typo being circled) saying he respected my decision and he wished me well. But there was no reason—the reason was that I was being disloyal to the President. When you take a position like that, you can't have any intervening values. There is one value, and that is loyalty, and you can't let any values intervene. And, by letting a value intervene, I was demonstrating a huge character flaw. I thought of it the other way around.

MK: Does that come from having such a dominance of campaign people, people who have felt that they've laid their bodies on the fire for the presidential candidate?

MS: I think so. The person who was most hostile to me was Tim Craft, who was the appointments secretary, and was a man of no vision beyond politics. Clearly not someone who was an ideologue, or had any programmatic leanings at all. He was just a Jimmy Carter loyalist, and he despised me for what I had done. Because the word was getting out. The one relationship that I salvaged that meant a lot to me was the relationship with Hamilton. We maintained the relationship.

I remember a couple of years later when he was running for the Senate—this would probably be 1980; I'm not sure.

MK: It would be 1982, probably.

MS: Was it 1982?

MK: Yes, because they ran in 1980.

MS: And Pat Caddell—there was some fund-raiser for Hamilton in Georgetown. And I came with a check for one thousand dollars because Hamilton was my friend. It was like Joan Crawford or something. I walked into the room in silence. Everything stopped. They looked at me. Craft was there and he said, "Get the hell out of here." I was stunned. This was years after. Hamilton came over and put his arm around me and walked me into the room and broke the ice. Even that many years later—

President Carter, we see each other occasionally, and he is most gracious. But Rosalynn is....

MK: I guess one of the things that tracks, no matter if the President is Republican or Democrat, is that the First Lady is the real keeper of the flame and has such an intense loyalty that seems to be just total. You're either with them or against them.

MS: And I must say, in their defense, I gave them just cause after I left. I was very, very active in the Kennedy campaign. I'm a close friend of Ted Kennedy. I was very high profile. So it was a double betrayal.

MK: There are some other instances, too. This actually wasn't from this project but for another project—actually I'll tell you who it was, because he just died. It's was Leonard Goldenson.

- I was interviewing him on a piece I was doing on Jim Hagerty. He was talking about coming to Washington to one of those get-togethers they had at the White House with Carter. It was a dinner. And he said that Carter had to take a call, and when he took the call that they were speaking with Rosalynn—she was there—and she just berated them for their coverage. It must have been just ABC people, just a group from ABC. She just berated them for their coverage of Carter and he said he just never had heard anything like it; he was just shocked.
- MS: She was very, I thought, cold and unsmiling, but it was very disconcerting because she would enter and exit policy discussions at her will and sit down in the back of a room with her notepad and start taking notes.
- MK: I was running across that recently, she came into Cabinet meetings. I was thinking, contrasting that to when Hillary Clinton has come into - when she came into a meeting - it became a big issue in the press. So she stayed away from them. But Rosalynn went into the Cabinet meetings.
- MK: I just get a different sense about Hillary and Rosalynn. It's not that I like or dislike. But Hillary would go into these policy meetings and participate in the policy meetings. With Rosalynn, it was like a bed check; you felt like you were being watched and observed. She would never say anything. Hillary was different. Obviously, she was a participant. But you just never got a sense of—this is a funny little anecdote. The President was a micro-manager, as you know, and in the early days, if you wanted to play tennis, you had to ask the President if you could play tennis. Do you know this story?
- MK: Actually I found a whole bunch of memoranda on it.
- MS: So it was really real.
- MK: It was real.
- MS: I wasn't a tennis player, but one day I said to Hamilton, "I don't want to use the tennis court but I really would like to occasionally use the swimming pool. Can I do that?" He said, "You'll have to ask Jimmy." So I had to ask the President of the United States if I could use the swimming pool. I thought it was really weird. So I said okay. I don't know why but I actually did ask the President; I asked the President if I could use the swimming pool. And he said he would have to ask Rosalynn. A couple of days later or a week later, I don't know how long it was, the next time I saw him he came over to me and said, "I asked Rosalynn and she said 'No'." I said, "Well, it's your swimming pool, Mr. President. But I'm just curious. Why?" And he said, "Because Amy uses the swimming pool," which conjoined in my mind: what did they think I was going to do in the swimming pool? I was going to harm the child? The level of micro-managing. Can you imagine? What is this, three or four discussions about something totally inane.
- MK: There are a lot of memoranda that in a way fit into that category. There's one that's on punctuation that's wonderful. I had it and I didn't see it in this trip to the Library, but it was a memo to speechwriters in which he told them—I think it was in the first three months—in working together that there are some things that are so important to have. So he laid out the rules of when he used semi-colons. It just went through the whole thing. So that in a discussion of speechwriting, it went down to that. There was no discussion about what the role of the speech was or anything like that.
- MS: I think you should take a look at the book when you have a few minutes.

MK: Absolutely, I will. After you left, were there consequences for you as far as your work was concerned?

MS: There are consequences for me to this day. I've never wanted to be back in an administration, but I've never been asked, either. I think I've typed myself as someone who is not a team player. If Ted Kennedy had been president, I certainly would have had an important role in his administration. But, absent that kind of personal relationship, I think my action burned every bridge.

MK: When you did it, it seems like it was not one issue. Well, number one, they gave you a zillion different things to do, and you can't really do all of those.

MS: I had one assistant. And I had to choose between an assistant or a secretary; I could not have both. And I was in a situation where I was answering my own phone; there was no voice mail system; there were no machines then. There were no computers. It was a very, very—

MK: No caller ID.

MS: I remember I was sitting in my office—it was in the West Wing—and I was with Eleanor Smeal, who was a difficult woman - to say the least - and with no sense of humor. I'm talking to her about ERA and the phone kept ringing. I kept answering my phone. She said, "I've never. This is so rude. How dare you." I said, "Who's going to answer my phone? What do you want from me?" She left in a huff.

Anyway, it wasn't one issue, but if it wasn't for this issue, I certainly would have stayed. It was an extraordinary place for me to be. I wanted to be there. I enjoyed it. I was the child of immigrants. I was in awe that I was working for the President of the United States, and they were in awe that I was working for the President of the United States. Because I also had a Ph.D. in political science, and [credentialed] political science parties able to shape the national party and work with the state parties with that much power, it was extraordinary. I didn't give it up happily.

MK: When you say you had to choose between having an assistant and having a secretary, does all of that go back to the pledge of cutting the White House staff by 25 per cent?

MS: Yes.

MK: It's particularly Democrats, Democrats are the ones that say they're going to cut the White House.

MS: It's a fraud, too, because then they end up detailing [i.e., borrowing Federal workers from elsewhere] half the world.

MK: Yes. And detailing has a lot of consequences to it. It's not like it's bringing the same people on because you're bringing people that are then being paid outside.

MS: Right.

MK: An example is the NSC in the Reagan administration. They had a huge number of detailees, and nobody could get hold of them - partially because of that. It was a very difficult

organization to wrap your arms around, because they were responding to creating their own organization that didn't answer to the White House in quite the same way that one would have if they were paid for by the White House. So detailing people doesn't bring you the same kind of thing. It brings you—

MS: I also think it's extremely disingenuous. You make these public commitments. If you believe in them, do it. But you just take from the agencies and bring them there. We were told that we could have one person and we could determine—we were given the level of that person. I had brought somebody who had worked for me at the Democratic National Committee. It was an African-American woman, because I was still very sensitive about who had worked in the communications department at the DNC. But she wasn't about to answer my phones, even though I was her boss. I think it was probably the wrong decision, actually. What I needed was a good executive assistant, someone to keep me organized, manage my time with me.

MK: What makes Democrats, in particular, make that claim that they're going to cut back?

MS: I think because we—

MK: Why twenty five per cent? Kennedy used twenty five; Carter used it; Clinton did.

MS: Since we sort of established the federal bureaucracy under FDR, we've been suffering the attack of big government, big government, big government. And we use the White House as a symbol, to demonstrate that we don't believe in big government, that we believe in efficient government. A White House being the most visible point of government is the symbol. That's why I think it's—it's sad when you make these pledges and the number of people actually working in the White House, when all is said and done, could be quite a bit larger. I don't know. And the press never talks about it much. I don't think they understand this concept of detailees.

MK: One person who wrote about it was Ann Devroy [*Washington Post* White House correspondent, deceased]. She used to write about it. But a lot of it was tracking down figures that were elusive. She did seem to do it, but nobody seems to do it in the kind of the way she did. She did it annually. She would publish information about it.

What offices within the White House did you regularly deal with, in looking at your relationships inside and outside of the White House?

MS: Inside and outside?

MK: Outside, yes.

MS: Certainly I dealt with my fellow deputies, working for Hamilton. And even though he wasn't chief of staff, he was de facto chief of staff. I worked with the staff secretary closely, because of that role I had in policy, and political implications. I worked with Midge's office, especially after I became liaison to the Jewish community. Because that function should have been under public liaison. It [inaudible]. I worked a lot with Stu on policy matters. I didn't work with Jack, but I worked with Frank Harmon....

MK: In dividing up responsibilities among the three of you, was there any overlap, or was it pretty easy, knowing who did what?

MS: The three deputies?

MK: Yes, the three deputies. Butler and Rainwater.

MS: We did not work together. Hamilton didn't set up a mechanism where we functioned as an office. We had these one-on-one relationships with Hamilton and he would tell us what to do. But he didn't double-task, as I recall. Thankfully. I hate that. "Let's see who can do the better job here?"

MK: Just to add another aspect of enjoyment to working in a White House.

MS: I don't remember any particular substantive stuff that Betty did. Betty came out of the campaign; she was definitely trusted, but I don't remember any particular issues. Landon did labor liaison.

Governor Lucey. I just remembered; it was Governor Lucey because Landon's assistant—we all had an assistant—was Laurie Lucey, Governor Lucey's daughter. I guess Betty did have an assistant. Whatever. I don't recall.

You know there was a wonderful woman there who stayed on as Hamilton's secretary, who had been Cheney's secretary.

MK: Eleanor Connor.

MS: Eleanor, yes. Where is she?

MK: I don't know.

MS: And she was kept on, because we needed someone who knew where the paper clips were.

MK: And there are very few of those people that are retained. She was definitely let go. [Inaudible]

MS: When I left, she said something very interesting to me. She was very nice, very friendly, very quiet, very private. I was told this as a compliment but I don't know if it really was. She said, "You didn't belong here." But I never asked her what she meant by that. But I think she was probably right.

MK: I saw a memorandum from a meeting of people coming in to the Reagan administration. It was notes from a meeting. One of the people - I'm not going to say who it was to or from - but one of the things they said was to fire Eleanor Connor.

MS: Well, after the Linda Tripp experience there are going to be no more holdovers anywhere, any time.

MK: In the press area, Connie Gerard was critical, because she had gone back to the Johnson administration. You could say, in some ways, you can find some memory in OMB and then other kinds you can find in the executive clerk's office, too. There's an important kind of memory there.

When you came in, was there anything that you had coming in that could tell you what happened in the past? Did you talk to people? Was there anything to read?

- MS: Someone in Cheney's office had prepared a book for me. I don't know where it is. I would give it to you. But it was just: "Where things are, who to ask, how to use the office." His name—he was a very interesting person. When I came in to my office on that first day, sitting on my desk, which [had been] his desk, in the West Wing on the second floor which is now—Thurgood Marshall's son—William Marshall's office. That office, was [a book titled] *Blind Ambition*. It was that person's gift to me. He had a funny sort of waspy name like Hoddard Channing or Channing Hoddard. I don't even know. It's inscribed to me.
- MK: I was thinking there was a political scientist. Of course, Cheney was a political scientist, and Jim Connor was, too, as staff secretary—who was a staff secretary.
- MS: And I talked to Connor during the transition and to Cheney during transition. I don't remember, Channing—I don't remember. He wasn't a political scientist.
- MK: Did you learn a lot from them? Did you find that you learned more from people you talked to than anything you read?
- MS: I learned nothing from what I read. Nothing historical was helpful to me. I just really can't—what I learned most from Dick Cheney, at the very beginning, was that the spokes-of-the-wheel theory was going to cause a catastrophe and he was absolutely right. He was graphic about it. Hamilton actually laughed. He saw the wheel, all gnarled; I wonder where it is? It's been such a long time.
- MK: Did you talk to people when they came into the Clinton Administration? Did they seek you out to find information about people and about White House?
- MS: I spoke to them. More about process, not so much on—the Clinton people didn't want anyone associated with the Carter administration in their White House. They were very sensitive about it. First of all, there was very bad blood between the two men, still. There still is very bad blood. But they didn't want this failed presidency to taint their presidency. There were some exceptions. Stu [Eizenstat] did well. But Stu had to wait. Stu really twisted in the wind. He turned out to be a superstar of the administration. I talked to a few people about the process that was used during transition.
- MK: Rather than how the White House itself operated? Were they interested in that at all?
- MS: I think Al From called me in for that. I guess there were a lot of deputy directors in transition; he was one of them. I recall some discussion about that. They asked me to prepare a memo. I don't know where that is, either. They asked me to prepare a memo which From told me he gave to the President-elect. I think a lot of it dealt with the anecdotes that I told you - about the spokes-of-the-wheel and the need for organization and the reporting patterns and accountability.
- MK: So it was about White House?
- MS: It was about the White House, yes. I had totally forgotten about that.
- MK: In your memo, did you deal with the question of: what does an effective White House staff buy for a president? When a president is putting together a White House staff, how should he view it as a resource?

MS: I think maybe my focus was very message- and campaign-oriented, but it was the only way to ensure the President's message and vision permeated the administration. That there had to be accountability with, ultimately, the President at the top, but everyone in the administration could not think that they were making policy on their own. That there had to be coordination, and a good White House staff would coordinate. I did talk about what President Carter thought was the downside of that coordination, that it would be dictatorial, Ehrlichman, Haldeman. But without it, the administration was speaking with multiple voices, which I thought was a tremendous problem in the Carter administration. Califano didn't think he worked for the president. I don't think [inaudible]. Go down the list.

MK: [Inaudible].

MS: That's right. But, in their defense, the White House was so disorganized and, if they thought they worked for them, they wouldn't know what they were supposed to do.

MK: What are some things besides coordination that a White House does, can do for a president, a good White House staff does for a president, the ways in which it helps him?

MS: If you want to make sure the president doesn't micro-manage, he has to have faith in those he delegates to. To limit options; to have him involved in only what he has to be involved in. But then you have to have faith that they're doing their jobs properly in reaching out. And sometimes that doesn't take place. In the Reagan administration, he was involved in very little. Another thing—and I think they talked about it in this book—is that the virtual presidency, the public presidency, is so important in shaping policy and sending signals, that access to the presidency has to be structured. I think, in the first two years of the Clinton administration, he was overly accessible. Always on the air. And that broke the focus. I think that the staff could be very effective in that regard.

What does a White House staff do? If they all view their areas of responsibility in terms of developing constituency relations—whether your constituency is the press or your constituency is governors—and treating people as human beings, and occasionally not just telling them what to do, but asking them for advice, and making them feel like they're human beings. That dissipates this notion of arrogance which I think is so damaging to so many White Houses, especially in the beginning. Then that sets the mode, the pace, the image, and you can't break it. I guess I'm not prepared for the question. I'll think about it a lot now, what makes a good White House staff.

MK: When you think that, after an election, the president has to turn to choices of his own time, where he's going to spend time, why should he spend time on a White House staff? Why should he think about a White House staff and how it should be structured?

MS: That I can answer. Especially in the new Information Age, there is so much information that has to be pared down that if you don't have good people who can present to you salient options, you're going to be caught in a miasma. I think that happened to Carter, and it happened to Clinton at the beginning. [They were] just engulfed in too much information. I think that's the fundamental job of a White House [staff] in the new Information Age. That's why someone I think would be very helpful—if there is a Gore administration, a guy named Morley Winograd is a guy I would love for you to talk to. He is the guy who is now in charge of reinventing government for the vice president, the job that Elaine Kamarck had before she went off to Harvard. Actually he wrote a book called Politics in the New Information Age and he thinks that the management of information is the most fundamental challenge of managing government now. So at some point, if you ever have time—if there is

a Gore transition, I think this guy will be central to it because the whole [inaudible] thing is going to—.

MK: Thank you very much.

MS: I hope that was helpful.

MK: It was and is.

[End of Disc 1 of 1]