

White House Interview Program

DATE: December 16, 1999

INTERVIEWEE: ARNIE MILLER

INTERVIEWER: Martha Kumar

[Disc 1 of 1]

MK: The interviews are on-the-record, except when you want to go on-background or off-the-record.

Ultimately the interviews will be in the presidential libraries, put into the system after this Project is finished, after a new president is inaugurated. Before then the ways in which they will be used, first, in the Spring we'll do what we call "Standards of a Successful Start" which are elements that are common to successful transitions, with the hope that maybe people will focus on that. There's always hope. And then the bulk of the information goes into our descriptions of the seven White House offices that we're focusing on.

AM: I see. I don't know about the project.

MK: I'm sorry.

AM: That's all right.

MK: I thought that you had gotten stuff, because you're on our list.

AM: Maybe so long ago....

MK: It was a while back. Anyway, it's a group of presidency scholars that are working on it, and it's funded by Pew.

AM: Is Cal Mackenzie involved?

MK: Cal is on the board, yes. The idea is to provide information, so that when people come in these seven offices, which are chief of staff, staff secretary, press, communications, personnel, counsel, and management and administration, they'll have information going back to the [Richard] Nixon administration: functions, responsibilities, that sort of thing. Just an effort to try to get off to a better start.

So we're looking at both the startup in a White House itself and then how the office functioned over the course of the administration. You were involved in the Twentieth Century Fund?

AM: I was involved in that. I also wrote a chapter for Mark Green's book that you may have looked at, that talks about how to establish the Personnel operation in the transition, which I think is pretty good, actually. It was distributed kind of widely during the [Bill] Clinton transition. Clinton had it, and then had it distributed to all the people that came in to help. It does outline in pretty clear detail steps. I haven't looked at it in a while [inaudible].

MK: In looking at the ways in which the operations were set up for [Jimmy] Carter, how did it work?

White House Interview Program, Interview with Arnie Miller, Martha Joynt Kumar, Washington, D.C., December 16, 1999. Arnie Miller served as the Director of the Office of Presidential Personnel in the administration of President Carter.

AM: Well, I came into the Carter White House in 1978. So I didn't start it off. I was sort of tangentially involved, a little bit. I was involved from a political standpoint in the campaign and then kibitzed a little with Joe Duffy, who was heading up the HEW [Health, Education and Welfare] cluster. Then, when he found a job as the head of the Endowment for the Humanities, he left and it unraveled, I guess. So I didn't have an intimate view as I did during the Clinton transition. Although, I can tell you that much of the work in the Carter transition was to naught, or a lot of it, because of the failure of the transition effort to integrate with the political effort at the very beginning. Carter tilted toward Hamilton Jordan much of the work that [Jack] Watson had been developing and doing. It didn't sort of sustain itself. Some of it did. But there was this sort of wholesale shift almost from one locus to another. I think that influenced a lot of structure of the administration. A fateful mistake, I think.

MK: How do you think it can be done successfully?

AM: That issue of the transition from—?

MK: Right. Inevitably, you're going to have a separate effort if it starts early.

AM: Exactly.

MK: A planning effort is going to have to be separate from the campaign, because a campaign is a campaign, and the energy has to be there. But how does that then fold in after the election, the two forces integrate?

AM: We did it quite well, I think, in the national security cluster in the Clinton administration, I think. At least at the State Department and some of the other agencies; less so at the Pentagon. Sandy Berger was Clinton's designee as the head of the national security cluster. Sandy had been intimately involved with Clinton from the very beginning. He was heavily involved on the substantive side of the campaign, not the field organization but was clearly a member of the campaign. So, when Clinton anointed him as the head of the national security cluster, he brought with him a kind of legitimacy that other people might not have automatically had. So, to the extent that the policy portion of the campaign—which really winds down in the last few months—there's still some work in terms of debate preparation and so forth. If there are people—and there not always are—who like Berger had a foot in both camps, it's easy to make that transition. Elsewhere it's tougher. It wasn't just Berger. It was [Warren] Christopher, again from Little Rock, leading the transition effort overall and then being asked to serve as the Secretary of State. So he brought with him a kind of legitimacy as well.

So the selection of people for the transition has to include people connected in one way or another, I suspect, to the political operation. The problem is: what does the political operation mean? Is it field organization, state campaigns, all that kind of stuff? So, there I think, from the very beginning, the transition people have to understand that they are what they are designated to be here, transition people, and that there will be and they will be required to accept an influx of others after the election and before the inauguration. So there needs to be a kind of integration and an opening for new people to come in and to take the leadership. It's never going to be smooth; it can't be. I think that the mindset at the beginning has to be not: "Us against them", but, "Us until they can come." And then there needs to be a way to—every administration that I can think of—. Reagan who did a much better job, I think, in terms of the transition, still had that revolt from [Lyn] Nofziger, where

he basically cut off Pen[dleton] James' legs for a while, complaining that there weren't enough true believers, Reagan people with real commitment. So he sort of quickly forced his way in and developed a whole kind of separate operation which brought more of the pure conservatives and less what he called corporate Republicans into the fold.

So it's never going to be neat and easy. It probably doesn't have to be. But I would just say that I think it should be explicit, and understood at the beginning, that you are in a holding position and new people will come in when the campaign concludes, and room has to be made for them.

MK: What about with the White House and setting up the White House staff? Part of what happens, like, say, in the Carter transition, is the problems in the transition were partially battles over who was going to be chief.

AM: Very much so. And Carter opted for Jordan over Watson, and tried to retain some continuation—he brought both of them in but the power - to the extent there was any power - was handed to Jordan. Jordan didn't use it very well.

MK: They certainly didn't explore what a chief was. In a sense, what does a White House staff buy for a president?

AM: [Inaudible]

MK: I wonder whether the president-elect himself thinks about that? It's a lot easier to think about a Cabinet because you're thinking about particular policies that you're going to—

AM: Well, there were assumptions made about White House staff. Here you engage in a two-year, three-year effort to become president; you surround yourself with a team of people, some fall off, some survive. But you've come through this experience together. By the end it's almost expected and understood that this team in some combination is going to move into the White House and govern. The skills you need to run a campaign aren't exactly the same skills you need to govern, but go tell that to a president who has just come through a tremendous ordeal with a team that has succeeded, finally, and one whose strengths and weaknesses he knows and trusts.

Now that's sort of in a broad brush. When you narrow it somewhat, Carter and [Walter] Mondale came together in August, and by November they were much more closely connected. And Mondale succeeded in bringing into the White House staff a substantial number of people with Carter's approval, in a variety of places in addition to his own, as they were with [Al] Gore, as they were with [George H. W.] Bush. [James] Baker would be the leading example of that, I suspect.

MK: But they didn't come in immediately, and they took a while to go—say from Gore's staff, Jack Quinn went from his staff over to the White House.

AM: That's true.

MK: Roy Neel did, too, and he was able to identify good people who then got taken up within the White House. But from day one it's difficult for a vice president to be able to do that right from the start. There just seems to be this period that you go through where the campaign people dominate and then you go to a period where the seasoned Washington folks come in and then you hit deputies.

An example would be, say in the press operation in the Clinton White House, both press and communications with George Stephanopoulos and Dee Dee Myers. Without really thinking how their talents related to the situation that they would face governing rather than campaigning. Then it, of course, turned out that it didn't work so well. So they ended up then bringing in [Mike] McCurry, who was a seasoned Washington person and now you've gotten to the deputy, [Joe] Lockhart. And that's kind of a pattern that repeats itself.

AM: Well, sure, you're going to find—over eight years, when it is eight years—people are going to leave. But I thought Gore had more direct—I remember working with Leon Fuerth and Sandy very closely, from the very beginning. Leon was involved in most of our conversations about staffing. Leon was integrated into the national security operation mostly through Sandy but I think Tony [Lake] helped in that regard, too, once Tony came in. So he was welcomed and accepted quite early and effectively.

MK: National security seems to be an area that Carter people—

AM: It was left alone.

MK: Every now and then people did come in—well, Bowman Cutter came in working with [Robert] Rubin.

AM: I'm not sure I understand your question. National security—

MK: But in the national security area there were people who had come from Carter, weren't there?

AM: That was a part of the criticism I received. I was going to say that. I remember after I finished in the transition—the State Department was the only department up and ready to go at inauguration. We had all the names signed off, sent up to the Hill on the first day for all of the undersecretaries, many of the assistant secretaries. We had done a lot of good work quickly. It was a combination of relationships that had existed before; Tarnoff working for Christopher, me working for Berger and Lake, and Christopher himself engaging in all of this. The five of us really quickly got the “yes” on a lot of stuff in a way that a lot of the other departments in the White House couldn't do.

Now, we were criticized by some of the Clinton loyalists. I can remember showing up one day in the Roosevelt Room and having somebody say—I had mentioned it; it was a year or two later—“yes. But all you did was a bunch of Carter people.” They were Democrats; they weren't Carter people, in the main. And the Democratic Party had very little in terms of talent, and experienced talent, other than the people who had served Carter. So it was less a function of Carter people as it was—Berger had assembled a lot of people who had served before under [Cyrus] Vance, or whatever - [Edmund] Muskie. But it was from a bank of people we considered to be Democrats with experience in international affairs who would make sense. It wasn't exclusively that. But there was criticism from the non-national security political operation over what we were doing.

MK: National security, though, seems to be one area where you could get over that.

AM: You have to.

MK: Right, because you obviously need people with experience. Continuity is so important.

AM: There's also talent that's new. But you're absolutely right. And there's still kind of a—I was just telling somebody this morning. I was going to say: "There's a sort of hands-off approach to national security by most of the political people."

I can remember a tussle I had with Charles Duncan, who was Deputy Secretary of Defense in the Carter White House, and went on to be Secretary of Energy [inaudible]. He was Harold Brown's deputy. We were having, when I took over the personnel office in 1978, difficulty with the Pentagon. And we went into a terrific battle over two words. His definition of the role of the personnel office was to review the political reliability of candidates nominated or recommended to the president for different positions. And I said, "...and competence." I thought the Personnel Office ought to have a little bit more. That's all I wanted to change in his entire memo. And I had a process in place that would allow us to do that in an effective way, which was in fact my own theory about teambuilding. It was less a question of the Personnel Office suddenly acquiring more power—I wouldn't argue against that—but more using the hiring process to build a sense of teamwork. So it was to use people on [Zbigniew] Brzezinski's staff, use people on McIntyre's staff at OMB [Office of Management and Budget], in the interview process, because here were people with whom the appointees in the end were going to have to work. So, start at the appointments process—this was not my idea. This was an idea from the ambassador Henry Owen who was at that point, I think, the guy running the summit preparations in the White House. But it was an effort to use the hiring process and the recruiting process to start building that sense of teamwork between the White House and the other agencies. It was a tough struggle because—and Carter in the end didn't take it on. He didn't support me.

MK: Didn't he, at the beginning, sort of give that one away?

AM: He gave away hiring. I was brought in to take it back.

MK: Taking it back—

AM: Is much harder.

MK: Yes. Once people have had it—

AM: I took it back from some departments more easily than others. We had tussles, as you would imagine, with Joe Califano on this issue. And the Pentagon. Cliff Alexander was just horribly offended. So there were places where it was harder than others to do. But, at Commerce, we worked it through. I had recommended Klutznick to the President. He collaborated. I had some tussles but, in the end, Pat Harris and I worked well together on a lot of this stuff [inaudible].

MK: What ended up being the advantage of doing teamwork? How did it work? How did it make for a smoother operation between the White House and the departments?

AM: First, within the White House we used, with regularity, the substantive people as—not anchors but at least key elements—in our review process. We had arranged for—I think on the policy level it gave people less of a sense of "Us and them." I'm trying, but not very effectively, to think about specific examples where this occurred. But the effort there was to really make people understand: "We're a team; we're working together."

MK: I can see where it would really make a difference, as far as communications is concerned. In a sense, it would even help the department, because they would have roots in that they were very comfortable with, and talking about, policy.

AM: I thought you meant the public affairs communications effort. No. You meant—

MK: No. I meant communications in terms of—

AM: Absolutely. Of course it did.

MK: —internal communications.

AM: They weren't strangers. They had known each other. There was a beginning; there was some connection. It happened in some areas a little bit before I came. It happened definitely in the public affairs area where [Jody] Powell had asked for and got approval. He had right of approval of all the assistant secretaries and so forth. You'd expect that. And Carter encouraged that with his devolution of power to the Cabinet. There was so much contempt in some instances for the White House—one Cabinet member used to talk about "little boys in short pants running around"—that we had to reconstruct somehow some mutual respect, and that required changing the people in the White House [inaudible]—clean everybody out. But also re-establishing the ways—believe me, it didn't start at the beginning and it's harder to do. There were a number of us brought in, in the middle of the term, to help with that. Ann Wexler was brought over from Commerce. I was brought in. [Robert] Strauss came over. We all talked to each other and worked with each other. We had been around.

MK: How can the people with Washington experience and a knowledge of how government works, how can those people be effectively brought in at the beginning, so you have a minimum of a period where the White House is characterized by what Richard Neustadt calls: "The early people, their arrogance, ignorance and adrenaline?"

AM: Well, a new perspective if you want to be a little charitable, a fresh perspective. It's a tough question because, frankly, in this era when so much of success rides on one's ability to discredit the Washington establishment and so forth, you fly in the face of a lot of campaign rhetoric here. I don't know, except for Orrin Hatch—probably Gore—[Bill] Bradley and [John] McCain are sort of campaigning against a lot of that stuff.

MK: Is it possible to bring into the campaign, people that you think would be appropriate for governing? In policy you can see that happening. You could see it happen in the Bush campaign and certainly it happens, that's true with the Gore campaign as well. But I wonder in operations whether you can bring in some people, too. Say with chief of staff, it would be difficult to bring in a chief of staff, when you start somebody, that didn't know the people during the campaign.

AM: Well, Baker came in, not from that—

MK: He had worked in the debates, so he had done that—

AM: A little bit. Okay.

MK: —and he did some other political work, but the debates were, I guess—

AM: He didn't do much for Reagan.

MK: For Bush and [Gerald] Ford.

AM: I admired Reagan for doing that. I have a lot of problems philosophically and ideologically and so forth. They were mature about how they assembled a lot of people. I think Pen[dleton] James went a little too far in taking credit for the process. He ignores in the stuff you read from him the role that Lyn Nofziger played shortly after the election, before they took over in the transition period.

MK: They certainly were the most willing of anyone to—

AM: They were.

MK: And it was because of the President himself.

AM: I think so.

MK: Say, during the campaign itself, he was willing to have a group of people who were working on the side, and he was going to focus on the campaign, and they could start planning.

AM: The "kitchen cabinet."

MK: Yes. So that was all right.

AM: Yes. That was very good.

MK: But somebody like Clinton would not be able to do that.

AM: He couldn't let go. Clinton's mess in the early period in terms of the speed of appointments and so forth was primarily the result of his own desire and need to be heavily involved. The article I wrote, which I thought was a pretty good article, listed all of the ways to reach out for talent and so forth. Then I said, sort of half tongue-in-cheek: "...and then of course you can't ignore the President and the Vice President." Of course you can't ignore the President! But I think Clinton, when he read it, must have said, "Who the hell does Arnie think...", but Clinton went to an extreme. I can tell you, Cabinet members I talked with, in the first few months, eight months, were complaining to me about how stuff was sitting on his desk for advisory committees. Advisory committees. With Carter, we were able to take that back and took it away. I will say that the quality of people that Clinton has assembled is quite good. I think that people are quite bright and fairly effective. Look at the people over at Treasury, and many of the people in the White House. I think they did a pretty good job of bringing in some strong talent. It just took too long. They lost a lot—

MK: And in the White House, it was trial-and-error.

AM: I'm not talking about the White House. I'm thinking more about the agencies.

MK: The White House certainly did get put together well in the end. If he had not had the kind of White House staff, the high level that I think he currently has, he wouldn't have been able to get through 1998. They were really able to work a separate track.

AM: Look at Chuck Ruff, or John Podesta. There are some first-rate, highly respected, seasoned people.

MK: But it took a long time to get there. Well, it took until [Leon] Panetta came in.

AM: Sure. I was just thinking about what I'll call—corruption is too strong a word—the excessive use of the White House. It came from people who didn't have an appreciation of the institution. The Lincoln bedroom stuff, limits. There's nothing wrong with bringing political people there, using the White House for all that, but people just didn't appreciate it. And that comes from experience. Some of my own friends who were new to all that—who knows where it started? Certainly he wasn't unaware of all that. [Inaudible]. You need people around with an appreciation about what all that stuff represents.

MK: Say, Gore would come in and he would ask you why he should pay attention to a White House staff? Why should he give energy to putting together a White House staff? What would you tell him he could get out of a White House staff, why it's worth really considering? Not just that it will cause you problems, say, because the Clinton people at the beginning certainly got a lot of problems out of a White House staff, but what effective things they can do for you?

AM: First, the process by now, of campaigning, develops very personal relationships between the President and interest groups, state senators all over the country. So the expectations are no longer directed toward departments. They are; sure they are. But the connection between the President and the country, a lot through the primary process I suspect, almost requires the capacity to relate to different groups and different interests and specific people. So the presidency and the White House, I think, has changed dramatically in the last twenty years—twenty-five years, primarily because of the primary process and the process of how you get elected. It really [has]. Who would have spent a lot of time talking to some state senator in Michigan or South Carolina? If McCain gets nominated, or whatever, he's going to owe a lot to fifty people or seventy-five people in South Carolina, who never had that kind of access of power. So I think in order to manage those expectations you've got to have a real staff capacity—

MK: And those relationships.

AM: —and those relationships, One. Two, the centralization of power, which started with Nixon—well, [Lyndon] Johnson didn't do so badly at it, either. But, as government grew, the White House has become—Carter tried to decentralize and failed at it. That was part of his trouble. Reagan, certainly on personnel matters and policy matters, as well, continued the tradition started in Johnson [and] Nixon. So it isn't enough to have talent in the bureaucracy. It has to be countervailed or aided by the issue. There are just too many issues—

Let's take a look at the beginning of the Clinton White House. The first thing out of the box was gays in the military. Stupid. Absolutely stupid. It was as though it was the creation of some minds that thought he should do something courageous at the beginning. Like Carter did amnesty, Clinton should do this. It blew up in his face. If you're going to go something courageous, you have to have the resolve to drive it home. So this is not the answer to your question.

Your question is: "What, beyond having things blow up in your face, is an affirmative reason for it?"

MK: Right.

AM: I think it's the recognized sort of locus for real major decisions and that relationship is not going to go away. You can't merely rely on inter-departmental conflicts and need for resolution of those conflicts, different interests. Neustadt describes it so well, thirty years ago, whenever he wrote it, but it's still the same. The president is merely the locus for all of these various pressure points, interests. So, managing that and organizing that, is essential. Then, coming out with policy has resulted. Now you can overdo it—health insurance [inaudible]—

MK: If you look at the process that a White House sets up, too, for decision-making, and one that requires getting all of these various points of relationships that the president has involved, and making certain you go through all of them, and set up a procedure, then you don't have problems like health insurance, their health legislation. That really went out of a normal process. So one of the things that a White House staff can do for you is structure a decision-making process and make sure that that process includes all of the major decisions, and there is not a lot of side access that goes through another process. Which that did. If you had had a good staffing process in place, with a strong chief of staff, that made sure that you couldn't bypass the system, then you probably would not have had that. If they had used a normal process for looking at what they had, they would have recognized the problems they had. Wouldn't you think?

AM: It's an interesting question. I'm not sure. First, Clinton early on made a decision unlike most other presidents, to significantly involve Gore, and then he had a wife who wasn't going to sit and pour tea, or whatever. So there were, basically, three loci of power from the beginning. And a structure has to be established to conform to how a president wants to operate. It doesn't have to be something that exists, a priority or independent of—it should be very much a function of the style and interests, mostly style, of the President and how he or she wants to organize. There are certain givens, yes. A strong chief of staff and a healthier relationship with the Congress could have anticipated or avoided some of her stuff.

There it was less—I think maybe you're right. There was such a naiveté about this town, and how pressures are brought to bear, that they were just ambushed and destroyed over it. Now, I don't know whether including that in the process, having that whole stuff to come up through a more organized process, would have made a difference. I think they missed. It was partly that, but I think it was also a political naiveté where they didn't anticipate not necessarily—maybe it would have required inclusion, but they didn't anticipate and plan for the reaction that was going to occur. They were just taking on so much so quickly.

MK: So they would have realized the risk.

AM: If they were involved in a process, they would have.

MK: I can see if you have three centers of power, and you have a strong chief of staff, that's just adding one more center of power.

AM: Yes. That person becomes sort of the balancer or negotiator, at best, to that. That's the challenge really. If you're going to play like that—now I think the role of the Vice President is increasingly or at least in several recent presidencies, it has been much stronger, and who knows whether it continues? I wrote Clinton about this, actually, citing the Weld / Cellucci example in Massachusetts, which was pretty well received politically. And, in fact, Weld had given Cellucci, who was lieutenant governor at that time, a lot of responsibility. The country

wanted to see, people wanted to see, more partnership, more collaboration. I don't know. So, therefore, the structure is going to have to be thought about if that continues—again, President's choice—but the structure will have to be re-thought.

MK: I guess, with healthcare, that ended the First Lady [Hillary Rodham Clinton] as a—

AM: Public player, not private player.

MK: —but mostly a private player in terms of appointments.

AM: She stayed that. She stayed involved in policy questions, but nowhere near as directly involved. There was so much else happening.

MK: It seems that she has not taken part—if there is going to be a large meeting, then she has kind of her people there in the West Wing, like Ann Lewis and Sidney Blumenthal.

AM: In the West Wing?

MK: Yes, as well as her own people coming over.

AM: But she has capacity there, that plays a role. She's not uninvolved; she's just not, I think, as visible a player.

MK: And it became such an issue when she did come into meetings.

AM: Did it, after healthcare?

MK: Yes. But, when she would come into a meeting, it was recognized. So, I think what they did was they moved to other people coming in and talking to her. So they did it in an indirect way.

In looking at the personnel operation, when you came in, what kind of sessions had you had with Carter, about what the operation was going to be, and what he expected from you, and what you expected from him?

AM: Carter said, "I think you and Jody have the worst jobs in the White House," because Jody was always under attack and the personnel shop was always getting beaten up. I don't remember a very long, thought out—. He didn't hire me. I came in after I was hired. I had a number of conversations with Jordan and Kraft, and so forth, but not many. I had to myself think out a strategy and try to execute it. There were two things they wanted. First, I came from the liberal left wing of the party. They were going to go through a series of budget cuts. Kennedy had not yet declared, or whatever, so they wanted to shore up, through appointments, the left in the Democratic Party. Because, policy-wise, they were going to do things: the MX missile, whatever. So, they thought I would be able to help in that regard, because I was deeply committed to affirmative action and so forth.

Secondly, there was this notion that they had given away the store and they wanted to take it back. That's about it. I didn't ask for much. I said yes. I knew this was what I wanted to do. I had been advising from outside, kibitzing and wringing my hands at what was going on. So there wasn't anywhere near the kind of substantive conversation that most people would have wanted and should have had.

MK: Generally, I don't think they do have them.

AM: Probably not. You're so awed by the whole idea of it. They offered me a number of jobs at the beginning of the administration and I turned them down.

MK: Why did you turn them down?

AM: They weren't substantive enough. One job was to head up all of the public affairs efforts for the reorganization project. My response was, I didn't want to be the person carrying the message; I wanted to be the person that the message was brought to. So I wanted to have the power to do something, as opposed to being a message carrier. Then they called back a couple weeks later, or a couple of days later, and wanted to know if I wanted to head the Selective Service system, General Hershey's old job. I had been one of the early veterans against the war, and served in Korea. So there was some drama to it. I called them back again, and I said, "Only if you give me the right to declare war." Then they didn't call for a year, as you expect; for a while they stopped calling.

Then they asked me to come in, when this effort to really do something about the lack of experience [inaudible]. They brought me in to help create the political office. I was kind of giving advice about that, examining a lot of it. There was a young guy running it, a wonderful guy, but really too young and inexperienced, acting as the head of the Personnel Office. They had had Jim King in there at the beginning. He had zero pleasure and enjoyment out of it. He was getting beat up; he had no power. He ultimately moved out to head up the National Transportation Safety Board. They left the job in the hands of his deputy, Jim Gammill. This was his first job; he had just been out of Harvard. He did a brilliant job of organizing the convention, but he had no experience in government. He did a very good job in an area he carved out for himself, which was the regulatory commissions. He brought on some interesting and good people for many of the independent regulatory commissions, but he had no relationships whatsoever to the departments. So I didn't flinch when they asked me about that. I said, "Absolutely, yes!" Right on the spot.

MK: So you know pretty well what you were coming into, because you had watched it.

AM: I knew I was going to come in to rebuild it. I brought in somebody strong as a deputy and we helped a lot of people out of that office, into jobs elsewhere in the campaign, or somewhere else. We brought in some first-rate talent. We kept a couple of people who were there before, but basically built a new effort, and were preparing for the second term. Which, of course, never occurred. So there wasn't the kind of up-front discussion about how to do it. We had to make it up as we went along and we were, I think, quite well versed in it by the time the people threw us out.

MK: Did you talk to people who had held the posts before?

AM: Yes. Something that I didn't find these guys doing enough of, in the Clinton White House. But I called in the guy that did it for Ford; I spent time talking to him. I recruited John Macy, who had done it for Johnson. He had just come back from Iran. I asked him to serve as the head of FEMA [Federal Emergency Management Agency] and used him over time. Then, I went to visit a man named Frank Pace, who had served as the Director of the Bureau of the Budget under Harry Truman and then as Secretary of the Army. He was a wonderful guy, older, and he'd come down every week. He loved it, and I loved it. I tried to build some support from people and he was very helpful.

MK: Was it a group that you could go to that was outside, who would give you an honest view of what was going on, and how your ideas might work?

AM: I didn't use them as effectively—we also brought in a group of headhunting firms and built a little advisory committee, but I didn't know how to use them well enough. We used them more for systems than we did for substance. Subsequent administrations did better with that than I did, although the differences are pretty substantial. So I didn't have a kitchen cabinet that I gathered together. I had a collection of people that I separately—John Riley, who was an old Democrat, and partner at Winston and Strawn. I actually asked him—then I had someone else, what was his name? - a partner - who helped me with the IGs [inspector generals]. We recruited all of the IGs for all of the departments. When the Reagan people came in, I told them how proud we were of all of the IGs we had recruited, and they proceeded to try to fire them all.

MK: It was the first day.

AM: It was because I told them how proud we were. If I was so proud, they're going to get rid of them. And then what happened, of course, is it blew up in their face when the Congress said: "You can't do that." We had some good people. If I was trying to set a trap for them I don't know that I could have done it better, but I wasn't intending to do that at all.

MK: It's a case of, "No good deed went unpunished."

AM: Exactly. But I had someone from outside actually trying to help. I knew I didn't have the capacity, in-house, so I was looking for ways to use volunteers from outside to lead recruitment efforts, in a sense, at the beginning.

MK: That's interesting. Who would they go to? For example, Pace.

AM: I wanted Pace as a link to the business community. He had served as the CEO [chief executive officer] of General Dynamics for some time. Still he was at the point I worked with him as the head of the International Executive Service Corps. So he had a lot of retired business people who were doing stints overseas and so forth. And, occasionally, he would help come up with a candidate, or an idea, but it was less that and more looking for advice about how to—I just spilled out whatever was happening at a particular time. I used others. Strauss was very helpful and very flattering in some of his comments.

MK: How often would you talk to him?

AM: Regularly. He would call me every day, every couple days. We did a lot of work together.

MK: What kinds of things was he good on?

AM: He had people that he had recommendations for jobs and so forth. He was negotiating at one point with Fitzsimmons, the head of the Teamsters' Union, for a master agreement which was hopefully to be not too inflationary. As part of the arrangement, the Teamsters wanted a seat on an expanded ICC [Interstate Commerce Commission], and we agreed to give them one seat. But the Teamsters were opposed to our policy of deregulation. So, if we gave them a seat, we had to make sure that we had enough other seats that would still retain the balance. We were effectively packing the ICC with enough votes to support the then-Chair, and a couple of people who were already there, interested in regulating trucking. So we gave the Teamsters a seat. The person didn't work out, didn't get through FBI

[Federal Bureau of Investigation] clearance. So I had honored my commitment, and then dropped it, and was able to satisfy another set of interests. I use that in teaching about the presidency and about the personnel operation because it reflects, as you look at the moment, all of the pressures on the President from a lot of different directions. The personnel process is an important ingredient, but also a good example of how the president has to balance a variety of forces.

MK: They're all tied together. Say in that particular case, who did you deal with within the White House? You dealt with Strauss outside.

AM: I used Stu [Eizenstat]. Stu gave me somebody—I don't remember who it was anymore. I can't remember his name. Johnson, I think, was the domestic policy person who was the transportation person. We had a lot of pressure from the minority community to put a person of color on, black. Then they had a candidate who was also the candidate of a Senator who was, like [he was] the adopted father for this guy. The senator was very, very strong in his support of this guy. But this guy was not a reliable vote on deregulation. Since I had given one of those votes away to Strauss, I couldn't give away two and keep the majority we needed.

MK: He could have taken the Teamsters' seat.

AM: He did, in the end. I put two bodies on there. That's exactly what we were able to do, when the situation unfolded enough. But I found a very, very strong deregulator, a black guy out of the University of Chicago, who was spectacular—I didn't find him; my staff did—who was very good, a well regarded economist who could make a real case for the advantages to the black community or the minority community. The candidate we had who was black was a candidate of the minority truckers' association, a limited number of people who really benefited from the regulations that were in place. They were allowed in, but they didn't open it up to others. So I was able to put both of them on, in the end, plus three, maybe four. But we put on three very strong deregulators and we were able to enhance the majority we needed for the purposes. But it's just a good story about—

MK: It's certainly all the different forces that come together.

AM: That's the way the personnel process, in part, has to be viewed. It can't just be that. You can't just take, sort of, Neustadt's theory about balancing all these political interests and coming out with the best result. I think you need that, and you can't ignore that, but you have to pay a little attention to talent and make sure from a policy standpoint as well. I think this example does that. I think it really does reflect all of the political and substantive pressures.

MK: Say you're looking for somebody to fill that spot: you know you want a minority, and you're particularly interested in somebody black. How do you know where do you start?

AM: In my own business now, I do that for a living. There are an innumerable number of networks, minority caucuses, or minority sections, of the American Economic Association and all professional organizations now, subsets of those organizations. So there are lots of places to look. I remember bringing in the women's groups, Judy Lichman in particular, and then a group of people she assembled from a variety of women's groups. I opened it up and I brought in minority groups. I said, "Here are the vacancies. Go for it. I'm not hiding anything. Bring us candidates. You're not going to get all of them, but bring us people! Here's what we want in each of those places." In the first stage, it was just a list of

vacancies, and then we had to get much more precise in terms of what we were looking for. But it's important for a president to be able to reach out to those constituencies and open it up: "No secrets; here's what we need, help us." Come back with people—usually you have to be defensive, because they're banging away at you.

MK: Does that cause you trouble, though, that they give you lists and then they expect those people to be appointed?

AM: You have to make it quite clear at the front end: "No guarantees; we're not telling you, 'Here go fill this job!', we're telling you, 'We want people and we want you to understand the kinds of people...'", and so on. They'll get their share. People are sophisticated enough to know they're going to get their share, and there's always a next time. And if there's a real commitment, then your results demonstrate that.

MK: In trying to bring in more people who have not been there historically, which you all were successful in doing, is that what you need to do? You have to go entirely out of the process—

AM: You have to establish networks.

MK: Yes.

AM: Right now, it's not so bad.

MK: But, for example, in judgeships, in trying to open up that process, getting the community involved, and having those community boards?

AM: Well, Carter did that, I think, to good advantage. I think he had advisory committees in every circuit for the appeals court judges. Mostly, to the members of the Senate, he left the district court judges. But there was a pretty aggressive outreach effort done by some of the national groups here to identify and promote candidates that then made their way through the process. I think Clinton may have done away with those—

MK: I don't think those community boards have been used after that. But one thing that certainly has happened is that that interest in having the White House involved in judgeships—that has been retained. At one time it really was just the Justice department with the Senate.

AM: Is that right?

MK: The White House has become much more involved in it.

AM: Was it after Nixon? Johnson?

MK: I was thinking that Carter expanded it by having these boards and that—

AM: We were the first people really to [inaudible].

MK: —having the boards brings the White House in. Then, after that, with Reagan, they were interested right down to the philosophy of people—

AM: Exactly.

MK: —to a greater percent that had been true before, and has been retained. Nixon had battles. He generally was willing to, say for example, at the ABA [American Bar Association], call the shots when they said somebody was unqualified. But then he got angry. I forgot which—

AM: [Re: Supreme Court justices] Haynesworth and Carswell as well.

MK: I think it must have been Carswell. And so then he nominated Thomas Mescal who had been governor of Connecticut, and they rated him unqualified because he didn't have any courtroom experience. So he then went to the mat and Ford then—my recollection is that Ford picked it up and he got through.

AM: There's no requirement they have to be lawyers. I'm waiting for the first president to appoint a non-lawyer to—I think it would be a healthy thing for the country, and the system of jurisprudence, to have somebody with common sense and no legal training to say: "Why do we have to do it this way?"

MK: I think we'd hear from the American Bar Association.

AM: Sure we would.

MK: In just spades. How did you organize the office? What were the divisions?

AM: I had a deputy who was more the inside guy. Then we had clusters by department. I have five or six. We had maybe as many as forty people at one time. I gather it's grown substantially since then.

MK: It's one of the offices that really expands and contracts.

AM: It should. It should expand and contract with the workload. I can see it much larger at the front end.

My recommendations after that, to Clinton, which were in part used, were: to build little teams of people by department, to manage at the front end through the transition. If you haven't, I'd urge you to take a look at this article. I'm pretty proud of it. It was in Mark Green's book on transitions. He wrote a book proposing a variety of policy suggestions for Clinton, and then had a chapter from me at the end. If it's hard to find, I probably have some around. But what I recommended were clusters that were made up of a headhunter or someone from the personnel office, but someone who understood outreach and recruitment and then people with substantive expertise, who would be at the front-end; people who were in the transition team on the policy side, but who would potentially be—and as they were appointed to the White House staff they should be included in keeping with what I talked about earlier, in building a sense of teamwork.

So, in an incremental way, you have policy people, a recruiter, and a political person in each department, for each department, a team. Then, replace the temporary policy people with the permanent policy people, and/or once the secretary is in-place, then you bring somebody from the secretary's office. So, you have a new Secretary of the Treasury, that secretary has somebody—as we did, frankly. We did it the way I proposed it. We had myself as the recruiter, Sandy as the political/policy person; Tony once he was appointed and designated, joined us. Tarnoff, who had expected to be either deputy secretary—and he didn't; he ended up Undersecretary for Political Affairs, but Tarnoff was Christopher's guy—Chris, on occasion, himself. That was it. That was basically it. And I had a staff

person helping me. But we, as a team, five or six people, would review the names, reach out to people, develop the potential people we were going to go after, and then came to some quick concurrence about who we wanted, and rolled it through. So Chris went to Clinton and said: "Here's what I want." Clinton signed off before the Inauguration; we were ready to go.

MK: How many people? How many positions were you talking about?

AM: Well, there were potentially—we didn't finish them, but by inauguration day we had probably done fifteen to twenty, all the undersecretaries, the assistant secretaries for public affairs, legislation, refugees, human rights. I think we did PM, political military. We moved pretty quickly through the list of assistant secretaries.

MK: Was the vetting process, did you find that much different than it existed during your time—

AM: Yes. It's worse.

MK: —because of OGE [Office of Government Ethics]?

AM: I don't know if it's OGE; it could be.

MK: One aspect is that huge financial disclosure form.

AM: People spend a lot of time talking about it, and I think it's burdensome, and probably very excessive. We dealt with it during the Twentieth Century Fund. But I think it's a combination of a lot of things that have come together. The lawyers are, in the main, understaffed, and really green at how to make judgments about some of this stuff. I had a candidate for one of the major assignments at State. He came to me with a list of six or eight things he was worried about. I asked him to open up. Most of them had to do with his son, problems with his kid, other sorts of things. We were able to look at them seriously and rigorously, and dismiss them, or hang onto one or two.

I'm sure, with Chris, it wasn't that I was hiding, but somebody who's been around this stuff can say: "This matters, this doesn't." Then you have to make a call to the Senate to make sure they're on board. Particularly with the Senate in the hands of another party, it becomes very hard to develop a kind of honest working relationship where you can share stuff and not expect to be ambushed by it, or have it blow up in your face, and so forth. It's awfully hard. I think some Senate committees and some departments have worked much more closely and effectively with each other.

This new guy that Chuck brought in, Mark Childress, is apparently doing quite a good job.

MK: He does judicial nominations.

AM: He does more than judicial.

MK: Does he?

AM: He's the guy that got what's her name confirmed, Carol Mosley-Braun, confirmed for New Zealand.

MK: That was a tough one.

AM: That was a tough assignment. I won't get into the merits there. And he, across the board I think from what I can tell—

MK: One of the nominations recently—I happened to interview somebody, a Republican, who has been in Washington and the White House, for a long time. There was a nomination which he had gotten involved in, in this Administration, because it had run into real rough water, and they had come to him, and asked him to help out.

AM: Good.

MK: Three or four. I think two days later, after I talked to him, that person did get through. I thought that was very heartening, to see that in a town that seems just bitterly partisan, that there are people that do that. Did you all find—?

AM: Not as much. We had the Senate. On occasion, I would be frustrated with [George?] Mitchell's style, which was not to drive stuff home fast enough. The Republicans put a hold on our appointments earlier than ever before, March or April of 1980, and we were hamstrung. One of the appointments was Hillary Clinton, being reappointed to serve as the Chair of the Legal Services Board. She was accepted there. So I think the tenor of the town has changed, really, to the detriment of this process where you can't have—. You can, on occasion; some people have done it better than others. But there is such a sort of incentive to zap you and get you, whatever, from what I can tell—I'm not here on a regular basis. But, that's got to change.

So, in terms of where the stumbling blocks are, OGE stuff and financial disclosure are important. Then it would be very helpful to have—I've been asking for this since 1978, 1979—standardized forms that the Senate and the White House and OGE, the departments, can use. One that the FBI and the Senate—so you kind of have them do it once rather than so many times. That's a couple of days, maybe a week or two. It's a pain in the ass; I understand all that. But it's not the real problem.

The real problem is then, one, the Bureau [FBI]. The quality of the stuff the Bureau does is very, very varied. Some of it is excellent, and some of it is just dreadful; the material, the questions. The kinds of people who are used, often are not the best people in the Bureau. They're people that they'll send out to do that. There are better ways and other ways to do some of these checks. They certainly don't have to do full-field investigations on all of the presidential appointees. There should be degrees—I think they've started in that direction, but I've been advocating for that for a long time.

So there's an enormous crush on the Bureau, as you would imagine, at the beginning.

MK: Where do they get people to do those checks, since they have to do so many?

AM: Well, they use retired people some. I've been visited, actually, on occasion, by retired people who are contracted with to do some of this stuff; they've come to check on other appointees and stuff.

MK: Retired people from the Bureau, or from agencies?

AM: Mostly from the Bureau, or state-level agencies, as well. Now OPM [Office of Personnel Management] I think has contracted out a lot of this work now for Civil Service appointments.

MK: Right.

AM: So [inaudible] associates—there are other places you can go; recruiting firms themselves do references and so forth. So there could be ways, there should be ways to find really in-depth—anyone who has been interviewed by Bureau people often finds the level of penetration just terribly superficial and embarrassing. I just go through the motions with them; I'm not going to spend a lot of time. They'll ask the barest number of questions to get through the check and move on. You don't really learn anything. Occasionally, you'll surface something, and that's important, but it's more in terms of the opportunity for a scandal. You're not doing the kind of reference check that helps you—the bureau will not give you any real clue as to whether this person has the capacity to manage, what their policy positions are.

I can remember at a task force meeting at the Twentieth Century Fund, one of our members was complaining about a situation where his neighbors were asked if they knew anything about an affair he might be having with his secretary, because she had gone from one job to the next job with him. It was appalling and untrue.

MK: My father was asked about the person who lived across the street, who was up in the Reagan administration for an undersecretary position. He said he was asked whether he knew whether this guy used drugs, did he observe women coming in and out of the house?

AM: What an outrageous question.

MK: And my father was very ill and eighty-six. The only thing that he said was, "I don't know anything about him, except that he paid a million dollars for his house and he's been working on it for six years."

AM: And then he got one of the ten interviews he needed conducted. All he needed was ten, and he got one of them. So the quality of the stuff is varied and frequently not that good and certainly not helpful from a management standpoint. I couldn't get away with anything like that with my clients, in terms of checkouts, candidates I recommend. And, secondly, it takes forever. It's crap when you get it back; it's all raw and has to be evaluated. So, I think something has to be done to that. Something has to be done to the size and sophistication of the vetting people, the lawyers. We had a couple of lawyers [inaudible]. Now, of course, I wasn't there at the very beginning so it was different. But I would urge a look at—I think John's done that. John Podesta served on this task force.

MK: Yes.

AM: And I know he's attentive to this kind of stuff.

MK: But the difficulty is that you have one nomination blow up, and then you think: "We've got to make sure this doesn't happen in anything else." Stuff, say, even with Zoe Baird. Here was a whole other area—

AM: She sort of invented. She volunteered. They didn't ask her about this. She said this may be an issue and no one else even knew to ask her about this.

MK: Although it had come up with Eleanor Holmes Norton, when she was at the EEOC [U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission].

AM: What came up with her, I thought, was use of her car for family purposes. The issue of the nanny, too?

MK: Well, I thought she had an illegal.

AM: Maybe. I don't know. After she was on board?

MK: Yes.

AM: I remember, they complained that the driver was using her car for shopping, groceries.

MK: There are so many things that are looked at, that it's very difficult to roll back anything.

AM: One of the other things I recommended, and I think they've started to do better, is to have a little unit that handles the nominee once he or she has been selected or approved by the President. What typically happens is they fall to nobody. The department may, if there is enough structure there, pick up and help, but the real work ought to be done by a little unit in the White House that has a congressional person, a lawyer for the vetting, to help them fill out the forms and make sure they're reviewed quickly, and someone that helps them with press and how to manage all of that; and then finally a unit that does orientation for new people in the period before they're confirmed but after they're nominated, helping them understand how government works.

MK: Did you put together murder boards or moot boards, or whatever, to help the nominee with questions?

AM: No. I recommended that, and I think they started that, in this administration. It was something I had actually asked Jules Sugarman to look at. He was a deputy at OPM. He was going to set up an orientation program which would include helping prepare for confirmation. I think that's valuable, very valuable. It's a lot to do.

MK: In going back to your department, you had the deputy and what was the deputy's—you said he was an inside person.

AM: Harley Franklin was a guy who had been in government in the Ford administration and served at HEW. He was well regarded in those days—sort of “bureaucrat growing up.” He left and joined the campaign. He actually left government and worked in the Virginia campaign. So he had a little bit of political potential. He came to me, I don't remember how. And I saw that he had what I didn't have, which was a more detailed knowledge of the bureaucracy. He was a good insight guy. And we, together, mostly through him, assembled a lot of young, talented people to help with clusters of departments. So we had a director, a deputy director and then four or five, maybe six people each handling one or two of the major departments.

Then there was a separate unit which I always had a problem with. It was the place where people at lower levels came through, and were referred out to departments. The trouble with that unit was that, to the extent that it was successful, it was often destroying the credibility of the Oval Office to serve as a reviewer of quality.

MK: And competence.

AM: Exactly. And competence. My two words. I pondered about that for a long time. This was when we were no longer in power and I could just talk to myself about this, about how I would do it if we came back. I thought about moving it to the national committee. There could have been a way—I don't know now whether, politically, you could get away with it. But there could have been a way to literally take it out of the White House—I think the national committee would be fine—and have a referral operation where people are given an opportunity to learn about jobs and compete for jobs. But it wouldn't have the force of the White House, and it wouldn't drag down on the White House staff, but it would still give people a chance, who helped out in the campaign, and helped out politically, to come and help join the government. The Reagan people started, and I think the Clinton people continued, to sort of exert control over all Schedule Cs down to some fairly low level. I'm not sure the White House has to do that. It would be tough. You'd have to ensure that there was some power in the national committee to be able to get some results, not by any means 100 per cent results.

MK: But, then, the president wouldn't quite get the same kind of credit.

AM: Patronage jobs give you less credit and more enemies. You get some credit. I think the idea is building some sense of teamwork, and people identifying it. There are a lot of ways to do that that aren't done: the president and/or vice president visiting departments more; bringing people over in groups for policy briefings, having them feel more a part of a team, pictures.

MK: I was thinking back to Carter, in his initial round of visits to all the departments. He talked to people about how important their work was going to be, but he led them to believe that he wasn't going to make decisions without them, that they were very critical to his decisions.

AM: And, then, of course, the reality—

MK: And then the decisions started being made. What ends up happening is that yes, you create some friends, but you create a lot of enemies, in a way you didn't need to.

AM: Last night I was at the White House for a reception—I don't even know who the hell was there. There are ways to do lots of things to make people feel that they're engaged or involved. You run 150 or 200 people through a receiving line and they get a picture and they put it up on their way. Every three or six months you bring them to [Room] 450 in the EOB and they do a policy briefing, where you float a few White House people through, and there's an opportunity for some discussion, or whatever. Again, I would do it for the political people. There may be ways to do it for the career people, but I would certainly do it for the political people. Having people feel like, "I work for this president"; "There's the picture on the wall—I know it's not as important as some people might think, but it's still—I'm somehow connected to the person."

MK: One of the things Reagan did every year was he had a meeting in Constitution Hall, where he brought together all the people that he appointed—

AM: Smart.

MK: —and talked to them.

AM: I would do it in smaller groups than that, but I don't think there's anything at all wrong with something that big. I think that's enormously helpful. People have to feel they're part of a team.

MK: You listed some of the ways you could satisfy some of the people who worked on the campaign, other than giving them jobs, bringing them into 450, the various kinds of receptions.

AM: There are lots of things.

MK: What are some other things?

AM: Well, departments and agencies of government use all sorts of outside people. HUD [Housing and Urban Development] uses lawyers for foreclosures and other kinds of real estate transactions and so forth. I came in and I got calls from Democrats saying, "The Republicans are laughing at us because they're still getting all the HUD business, and we're sitting outside." So I found out the process; we did affirmative action for Democrats; we opened up the process, and allowed other people to apply and become qualified. A lot of different people got a shot at that business. VA [Veterans Affairs] does that. There are lots of things going on in communities around the country, one. Two, visits to the White House. We instituted—Jim Johnson actually proposed it to me and then I executed it before I took over the Personnel Office—receptions for fifty or seventy-five political people from each state, where they had briefings and policy stuff and so forth. Not unlike what they started to do with the fundraisers, this time around. But these were not contributors as much as they were mayors and state senators and maybe a couple of contributors. I don't know. There wasn't a price to it. They were just invited. And people were so flattered. I can remember having the White House operator call the mayor of this town and invite him to come to the White House; it was like "This is wonderful."

So there are a lot of things you can do to use the power and prestige of the office to make people feel connected, other than giving them a job. Advisory committees are important. We had that operation too obviously under us; I forgot about that. A woman there named Gloria Molina went on to become a fairly prominent member of the L.A. county council in Los Angeles; she's pretty powerful.

[Interruption]

MK: Tell me if there were any other people you had on your staff or any other divisions.

AM: We had one unit for advisory committees; one unit for Schedule Cs, and then another cluster of people—one unit for the regulatory commissions. I had a group of people doing that.

MK: Who was on it? Was that outside people that you brought in or from agencies?

AM: I tried to use some—the regulatory commissions?

MK: Yes.

AM: I used a staffer, Diana Rock, as I remember, who had been there a while. She was solid; no deep experience at all, but solid by the time I got there, really solid. And she on her own and with my encouragement but on her own reached out to the policy people in Eizenstat's shop

and elsewhere in OMB, elsewhere in the EOP [Executive Office of the President], sort of substantive advisers and stuff. She had established relationships with a lot of the interest groups in town, a lot of the professional associations in town, and so forth, who were clearly interested in different [inaudible]. It was something that Gammill, the guy whom I replaced, had been doing a lot himself. So I ended up taking on some of that. I think I may have had Oscar Garcia Rivera, a Harvard-trained lawyer, brilliant guy, also helping with some of that. So there was a unit for regulatory commissions; a number of people, each of whom had a few departments; a group doing advisory commissions, another group doing the Schedule C's. I think that's it.

MK: Judgeships just went through counsel.

AM: It was a complicated situation. They asked me to play a role in the judgeships. The woman whom I ultimately married, Margaret McKenna, was the Deputy Counsel and she was playing a role in this. I just said no. I thought it was a conflict; I opted for my relationship over my interest in more power. I said I didn't think it would work right, and they had to find another way to do it. I just said no. I did some, but very little on judgeships; it was more Counsel's Office.

MK: On White House work life, what did you think the pressures were? You've been in business and know corporate life to such a degree that you could give a good comparison of the nature of work life in the White House, its similarities and differences.

AM: Well, one of the biggest single differences is time. I worked hard. I worked long hours and people in law firms and consulting firms have that. But there was a kind of never-ending requirement; Saturdays. I take a little bit off on Sundays but it was almost a seven-day-a-week, fifteen-hour-a-day experience. But I never had working for a consulting firm, owning and managing one, I never had Robert Parr calling me at home at ten-thirty at night from the *New York Times* wanting to ask me questions about this that and the other, asking me penetrating questions. There was no relief or no boundary almost. The reporters would call; I was not a great source. I made the calculation at the very beginning that, one, I was going to take a very low profile and it would give me much more power so that other people would worry about—I just stayed out of the press. [Inaudible] but not much. I really thought this was not the way to do it. You don't leak stories about appointments and you don't—when we're ready we'll let you know. When we let you know we'll be available to let you know anything you need to know about a candidate but until that time I'm not going to play that game.

Nevertheless, there were still lots of calls about candidates whose nominations were in trouble or more often appointees or just getting a list of who was under consideration and so forth.

MK: Did you have other people calling you at home?

AM: Other reporters?

MK: Not just reporters. Say people from the Hill, political people?

AM: Not much.

MK: Interest groups?

AM: I didn't get too much of interest groups. I was pretty—no. There was some, but not that much. I may not have been listed; that was probably part of it. Margaret and I had moved in together. It was listed under her name. It may have been: people couldn't have figured out how to find me. But that wasn't by design. I don't remember—the toughest thing [was] she would come by at seven-thirty and want to leave, and I wouldn't be ready for another hour or whatever. Of course, on the other hand, our first child was born and I used to bring him to work. I had a "Porta-Crib" set up in my office and had him there. I'd sit and interview candidates for the SEC [Securities and Exchange Commission] and hold my child and change his diaper and feed him. When I had to run over to the West Wing, everybody was hovering around, waiting for me to leave so they could get the baby. I'd run meetings with him in my snugly. I loved all of that. That was terrific. That was about four or five months. He was born in June, and then we were gone.

As I remember, I loved it. I turned out the lights the last night, and sat there until the very, very end—writing acceptances of letters of resignation, and so on.

MK: What's the reward? You say you love it. What's the reward for it?

AM: It's a sense of purpose; it's the exercise of power. There's some recognition in this town. People knew who I was and what I did. People were so excited to get a call back and I was sort of just, "Why not?" So it was a combination of prestige, power, purpose—I don't know if there are any more P's for alliteration.

MK: Policy.

AM: I remember once coming over here. Brad Patterson invited me—not to Brookings—to talk to a group of business people. I was talking about the attraction of Government service. Then I tell them about the graft. I was trying to make a joke, and it didn't go over.

MK: Bring in George Washington Plunkett.

AM: Yes. I had somebody once come to me with—I threw them out. That happened more than once, actually. One guy came and said he had \$50,000 he wanted to contribute to the campaign and I said, "Sir, this is the White House. You want to do that at campaign headquarters on K street."

MK: Did he end up getting a job?

AM: Actually, I think he was wired. I think they sent over somebody to test, because he ended up two weeks later or three weeks later, named as an un-indicted co-conspirator in the Brilab investigations. He came and I said, "You can't fly into this town and expect to have a job." I sent him over to Charlie Curtis. This was a guy for the [inaudible]. I said, "I want you to talk to the chairman of the commission, and see if you agree with him on our policies." He showed up at Strauss' office, Strauss' elevator in the Watergate, the day before offering \$50,000. Strauss called up and said, "I've got this guy and he wants to help in the campaign; he's looking for a job." I said, "I'll talk to him." When he made that offer to me I said, "Sir, this is the White House!" But he just showed up in a lot of different places, and then to learn that he's an un-indicted co-conspirator, and the story was that his appointment was on the President's desk. His appointment was on my desk and I wasn't going anywhere with it. But you have to know and you have to understand where the boundaries are on stuff.

MK: Were there any rules that were set out, that came out of the counsel's office, about that kind of thing: what could go on in a White House, and what couldn't—particularly during a campaign?

AM: I don't remember them. I don't remember them. There were opportunities for tussle between me and—what's his name—Lloyd Cutler, over judgment calls over particular appointees, people whose FBI checks had come back with varying reports and so forth. A Latino guy, I remember. We ended up not appointing him; I didn't want that. But I wanted some fairness in the report of what we had learned. There were—

MK: Were there very often problems that came up, and what kind of problems did come up? People have talked about people not paying their taxes, and that kind of thing.

AM: No. It was more credit stuff. I see the importance of it clearly, but people who didn't pay credit card bills, or whatever, people like that, surfaced often. There were people who, as in the case of this Teamster appointee, were the target of an investigation. I don't know—I never learned or did I care what the substance of the investigation. It was enough for me to know he was a target. And we kept pretty careful boundaries around how much information was shared. I needed to know. I got what I needed to know about a particular appointment if it was coming apart. It didn't happen that often, but it would happen. But I deferred in the main—it was mostly Michael Cardozo who reviewed those appointments for the Counsel's Office. I deferred to them. [Inaudible] on the substantive judgments, although there were times I felt compelled to not just accept the word of the lawyers on stuff.

MK: What kind of vacancy rate did you run?

AM: I don't know the numbers, but it wasn't that bad.

MK: Now it's 30 per cent.

AM: Never. First, we didn't have the Senate holding us up. We didn't have that kind of a backlog. Our people stayed longer. I used to have this theory that Democrats liked government more than Republicans, so they would stay in office longer than Republicans. Democrats were waiting around for their chance to come into government, and Republicans did it out of a sense of obligation, or whatever. I don't know. I don't remember. [Inaudible]. Somebody's got those numbers, some scholar.

MK: Thank you.

AM: You're very welcome.

[Interruption]

AM: Most people who have read it, have appreciated it, but that chapter, if you don't have it—

Mk: I don't. I would like it.

AM: I'll send it down. I'll try to get somebody to find it. Now, are you doing this alone?

MK: A group of scholars are working on it that are going to be working on the write-ups for the seven offices. I'm doing press and communications by myself, because I've done a lot of work on White House communications. The personnel, Brad Patterson is going to work on.

AM: Is he still around?

MK: Yes. He just finished a second edition of his book on the White House staff. So he's working on that one, and so is Jim Pfiffner.

AM: Who?

MK: Jim Pfiffner. You know him: [author of] "Managerial Presidency"; "Strategic Presidency"; "Hitting the Ground Running."

AM: Where is he?

MK: George Mason [University].

AM: I don't know him. [Inaudible].

MK: So the two of them are going to be working on that. Then we have, usually, two people on each of the other offices, except there are going to be three people on Chief of Staff.

One part of the project also is creating—the Twentieth Century Fund had planned on doing it—a piece of software that, in one place, puts all of the different questions that are asked: the FBI, the OGE [Office of Government Ethics] form, and then the Senate committee forms.

AM: So, it is an effort at consolidating.

MK: It's consolidating. Try to get everybody with divided government—or even getting one form out of the Senate, because there are sixteen different nominating committees, and very different forms.

AM: Some appointees have more than one committee to go through.

MK: Did you all have a Personal Data Statement that people filled out? A White House Personal Data Statement? The one in this Administration, I think, has about forty-two questions that deal with the person's writings and then: "Is there anything in your background, or that of any of your family members, that would embarrass the President?"

AM: No.

MK: So, when you interviewed somebody, what were you working from?

AM: A resume, of course. I'm appalled, given the amount of time and attention I pay now to candidates for assignment. I interview for two hours; I do ten, twelve hours of referencing. Nothing like that kind of rigor pertains in the government. I can remember a friend of mine in the [Richard] Thornburgh Justice Department telling me—he was responsible for judges—saying in forty-five minutes, "I make a decision on somebody to serve for life on the Court of Appeals." It's crazy.

MK: A number of years ago I worked on a study—it was [Ralph] Nader's Congress Project—and I worked on the Senate Judiciary Committee. I went back to records of the nomination hearings for people for District Court judges and for Courts of Appeals. I found that the

average hearing—because they had the starting time and ending time—the average hearing for a district judge was eight minutes, and circuit court of appeals was eleven. The Senator introduced them, and that was it. Their mothers testified, or something like that. It was not a process where any information was brought out.

AM: Thanks for inviting me here.

[Interruption]

AM: But you'll see that in the article. They really have to start early. They have to not be—a lot of them are embarrassed by it. They feel it's immature. I think Bush claimed that Clinton at one point was measuring the drapes or something like that. So what? You answer very aggressively, "I'm intent to lead our country and I'm going to take the time it takes to put together a team well and responsibly and I'm starting now." Sure, the people have to speak, but I'm not—now you don't want to go too publicly about it, because you get too inundated with all sorts of job seekers and so forth. You need a public operation and you need a private operation. You need something out there that will receive—and what Clinton built was a terrific sophisticated in box, getting all these resumes and processing them. They had some sophisticated computer operation that scanned all the resumes. That's not the way you hire. You get all that stuff, you push it over to the side, and then—you go out and you pick people! You want to make sure you have a broad range of outreach and networks and all that stuff, but to respond—courtesy and everything else. But that's not the way you assemble a government.

MK: That sort of happened to Carter at the beginning: the "talent inventory program."

AM: Exactly. The TIP program. The same thing. Silly. Just silly. "Just put that over here." I had struggles with staff who were there before I came. They wanted to go through every single resume: "What are you wasting your time for? We've got to put together a government! You've got to get talent. You may miss somebody." I even had trouble with Dick Riley over this, at that point. It reminded me of pitchblende and uranium. Somehow or other he thought we were going to get to uranium by going through mountains and mountains of pitchblende. He thought that there was some kernel here that you couldn't avoid. That was his idea [inaudible].

MK: It becomes just a defensive operation: personnel becomes defensive.

AM: Of course. It has nothing to do with what you were about. That's not the way to put—. The purpose here is to put together a government, not to satisfy every single job seeker in America. Anyway, that's in my—.

[End of Disc 1 of 1 and Interview I]