

Exit Interview  
With  
FRANK R. GANNON  
On  
November 16, 1972



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Exit interview with Frank R. Gannon  
conducted by Susan Yowell  
on November 16, 1972

SY: When did you join the White House staff?

FG: I started as a White House Fellow assigned to the Counsellors [Robert H.] Finch and [Donald H.] Rumsfeld, the first of August, 1971.

SY: Are you still a White House Fellow?

FG: No, it runs for one year so that the Fellowship ended last August.

SY: What is your title now?

FG: The same, Special Assistant to the Counsellor.

SY: And, do you know how long you will be here?

FG: That's in the hands of others (laughter).

SY: We haven't really talked with anybody in the White House Fellows program and I was wondering if you could tell me a little bit about it. First of all, how were you selected? You were with J. Walter Thompson, did someone from that company nominate you?

FG: No, I nominated myself, applied myself. I think most of the nominations are self applications. It is a program devised by John Gardner, proposed by President [John F.] Kennedy and enacted by President [Lyndon B.] Johnson to take a number of people each year, mainly from business or maybe even entirely from business, and bring them to Washington for a year and expose them to the very different pressures and conflicts of government service and then send them back to spread the word that government is alive and well and responsive. The terms of the Act are that the President, on the recommendation of his commissioners, can choose between fifteen and twenty such people a year. The average number is 16--I think this year's

class is 17 and it has never been more than 17--I don't think it's ever been less than 16. One each is assigned to each member of the Cabinet and various arrangements are made--a number of years the Vice President has had one, last year I think that the Vice President did not have one and one was at the Environmental Protection Agency. In my class there were no Fellows at State or Commerce for the first time. This year there are Fellows at both. I don't quite understand that process but the average is one to the Cabinet member. I just heard yesterday that they have about 10,000 applications. The year before they had about 8,000 and my year I think there was only about 2,000. One of the things about the program is, mainly because they didn't have a budget--mainly because I don't think it really occurred to them, they didn't advertise it greatly so that it tended to be word of mouth or the kind of limited publicity it generated itself. One friend of mine in my class read about it in IBM's Think publication. I knew a Fellow, actually I'd known about it when I went to school in Georgetown from 1960-1964, I was aware of it from then. Then I had a friend at Oxford who applied and was accepted while I was there--he was finishing up there while I still had a couple of years to go. I followed the progress of his application and intended to apply myself when I came back.

SY: Was he actually in the program?

FG: Yes, he was assigned to the National Security Council and was the only one of a few people who stayed over. He had done his thesis on agriculture in Vietnam and spent a year in the Air Force and spent about eighteen months in Vietnam and went right to work on the NSC staff. He was one of the few people in the office who stayed over. This was in 1968 and bridged the gap

between [Walt Whitman] Rostow and [Henry A.] Kissinger because of course the Fellow's program was not partisan.

My class had a poll which was to be used as a weapon against those who claimed that the program or my class, either or both, was conservative or Republican or a tool of the administration. So they did a poll and of the 16 there were eight Democrats, seven Republicans, and a Whig. The Whig and I had resented the idea of the poll--he agreed that if I would put down Tory he would put down Whig--and I thought he was kidding. I agreed, and the results were eight Democrats, seven Republicans and a Whig (laughter). So it's a genuinely balanced bipartisan program.

The applications are screened initially here by the Commission staff and/or former Fellows and then, in two or three rounds of eliminations. Then there are regional panels. There are 10 or 11 of these, as many as there are Civil Service Regions in the country. Local notables sit on these panels which meet the applicants for the first time. Mine was the New York Region and [Charles] Tillinghast, the President of TWA, was the Chairman and the thing was held in his office, over, I guess one or two days in March. The applications are due in December. The initial ferreting, or vetting rather, is done by the end of January and I think there is another round and you hear the end of February and you meet the people for the first time in March. Each board recommends five or six in consecutive order of preference of the people that they talk to and thirty of those people are recommended. So presumably this three from each of the ten regions, although geography sometimes plays a part, meet in May at Airley House, out here in Warrenton for a weekend. So you go down to the country,

outside of Warrenton, for a weekend--Friday night until Monday morning with these 14 commissioners, the President's Commissioners and their wives in most cases, and meet with them over the period of three days--a weekend that only Evelyn Waugh or Agatha Christie could do justice to--30 finalists of whom 16 will be chosen. And you have roommates--you can't even go back to your room and cry. You have one of your fellow contestants as a roommate. And then the seating at luncheon and dinner is arranged so that you are always with a different judge or their spouse and you go through panels with two each going through the judges. There are seven panels of two each going through the judges. The decision is announced on Monday morning. You come back in for a reception at the White House. That's the end of May and then the Fellowship begins the first of September. Mine began a month early because I had written a book about drugs and at the time Rumsfeld was working on a thing about drugs for setting up Dr. [Jerome] Jaffe's office and he wanted me as soon as I could come down. I started a month early.

SY: Were you then assigned to Rumsfeld?

FG: To the Counsellors. As it worked out Finch was away, in California marrying off a daughter, when I came on. I met him but in effect I was hired by Rumsfeld. And with the idea that I would be time shared between the two. This is not really of interest to you, this is some of the Fellows stuff, but the Bible is right that no man can serve two masters. I don't think that a Fellow will be time shared again. But in my case it worked out very well. Because I worked for Rumsfeld for about three or four months almost exclusively and then just about the time he went over to the Cost of Living Council,

which is not really my line of country, the Fellows were getting ready to go on a trip to Asia and when we came back, right at the beginning of the year, Finch had lost his two top people, one of who had gone (who was a former Fellow from HEW [Department of Health, Education and Welfare]) out to run for Senate in Idaho and the other fellow had gone back to keep up his professional tenure at Michigan.

SY: Was that Dr. [George] Grassmuck?

FG: Yes, and Glen Wegner. So rather than going outside he offered Ray Hanzlik, who had been at the Conference on Youth, one job and, although the functions changed somewhat, essentially we were offered these two places. So as of January 1, I more or less reversed the role and went to work exclusively for Finch.

SY: Did you have any influence or any way of expressing preference as to where you would like to be assigned in the Fellows program?

FG: Yes, it varies from year to year and Fellow to Fellow. Some people like my friend Sampson [surname unknown] who was so obviously expert in a crucial area, Vietnam, was probably destined to go to NSC. Some of the better experiences are people going as far--180 degrees--in the direction opposite their professional experience. I can't do much is the problem. I can presumably write fairly fluidly. I am incapable of keeping appointments or keeping a clean desk or anything as far as getting into the bureaucracy or getting into administration or management--that was not a very viable prospect. Also, I wanted from my point of view as a historian manage to be in the White House, to be in or around the White House. That narrowed the area down. The previous year I think that [Herbert G.] Klein, Finch, Rumsfeld, and the Vice President [Spiro T. Agnew]

had been the four people who had White House Fellows. And in my year there was [H.R. "Bob"] Haldeman, the Counsellors jointly, and [George P.] Shultz when he was at OMB [Office of Management and Budget]. So generally there is a choice. I'm inclined to think that it is best to go as far away from your area as possible.

SY: I know that there are several White House staff who were formerly with J. Walter Thompson. Did you know any of them or work with any of them?

FG: No, they had all preceded me down there by about two or three years. I came back from England in June of 1969. Most of those people had been involved, if not in the planning, in the 1968 campaign itself. I have still to meet most of them, as a matter of fact. The old tie network does not run as wide, maybe they are avoiding me--maybe it does, but at any rate from my experience it doesn't run as wide or as deep or as long as the columns would have it. Also there were not as many as some of the more feverish of the columnists seem to think. Haldeman and [Ronald L.] Ziegler were from Los Angeles and Ken Cole was from New York--and Dwight Chapin as well. Although I guess he [Chapin] went out, I'm not even sure that he did go out to Los Angeles for a while. It was a big company, in New York alone 1,800 people were employed.

SY: Were you in the New York Office?

FG: Yes, in New York, I'd never been to California in my life until January of this year.

SY: Could you describe the projects you worked on when you were working for Mr. Rumsfeld?

FG: Yes and no. The only project per se that I worked on was the Property Review Board on which I represented him in a couple of

meetings and for which I read all the files and such like and briefed him for and about meetings. The main function that I've had, both for him [and Counsellor Finch]--and that's why I don't think I'm very much use to you--is the stuff I've done is mainly writing, mainly speeches or background briefs, or ideas for speeches and articles. I haven't done casework, and I haven't done--again I suppose it either sounds pretentious or presumptuous--I've mainly, since nobody has caught up with me, been an "idea man." I've done a lot of reading which I have just sort of filtered out through in the form of memoranda which usually emerges in the form of speeches, briefing papers, or articles.

One thing that I feel very strongly about and have had some success with is the use of media to convey political messages. I think media is the arbiter of American politics and has been since 1932 and, from my point of view and when my book is written about it, the sort of superficial but powerful paradox involved is this media's role in politics, as indicated by the fact that Franklin D. Roosevelt delivered his first fireside chat, I think it was in March 1933, from the White House from the only--he lost his text just before he went on the air and had to borrow a mimeographed text from one of the reporters in the room--so this epic making event in American history was delivered from what I am told is the only room in the White House without a working fireplace.

So the whole image quality of media politics was set then and reached its high point again in 1960 when someone who was an instinctive media person ran against someone who is instinctively not a media person. And that to my mind was the determining factor in that election just as both in 1968 and



this year the President, who is not a comfortable media person or personality, ran against people who were not either. So that, in a way, put them on an equal footing in a way that they wouldn't have been for example if [Edward] Ted Kennedy had run. I felt very strongly that research shows this--that the average attention span is between 10 and 12 minutes and that has valleys and peaks within it so that if you speak for more than 10 or 12 minutes without a commercial or sight gag you are taxing--just even if they are most interested-- what people can give. "I Love Lucy" would not be in its 87<sup>th</sup> year if she ran for 32 minutes in prime time without a commercial or pratfall.

There was an item in the paper the other day--an item from California--that a station in Sacramento had been besieged by hundreds of irate calls when Dr. Kissinger's peace press conference came on and pre-empted two or three serials--two or three quiz shows. They had the same problem in New York when the second man on the moon pre-empted the Giants NFL game. They got something like 800 calls at CBS protesting this pre-emption. People just can't, aren't prepared to take much more.

The Polish American author, [Jerzy] Kosinski when his last book, which is in a way about this, being published was on television on Sunday afternoon--he had been the Writer in Residence at Amherst, I think, and was then Writer in Residence at Yale, or maybe Wesleyan, but anyway he was saying that to get into his creative writing courses the cream of the English crop was chosen. There was much competition to get into his courses and that competition was only open to the best and brightest of the English students. He said that there was no question that the people who were there wanted to be there and that they were the ablest. He said that, he was giving

lectures and he discovered that after about 12 or 15 minutes he was getting glassy stares unless he broke in with a joke, or a change of pace, or an aside, when he was actually lecturing about writing for more than 12 or 15 minutes then he was actually losing them. And then he was getting the creative writing assignments and he discovered that these stories almost unconsciously fell into segments like a television play. There would be two or three chunks depending on if it was short or long, like a half hour or hour series. There would be sort of chunks of dramatic action leading to crises and resolutions-- just in about the breakdowns that a commercial program would involve and he said that he was even running into phrases like her dress was "whiter than white." He was actually running into commercialese phrases, presumably unconsciously, working into these creative writing exercises. At any rate, with the Counsellors my aim was to get them to talk shorter. Or too, Rumsfeld is a very rigorously logical man with a terrific command, which he works very hard to get, of fact. Also, he liked to speak, which I think was not productive of his time, he would speak without a text and he would usually spend an hour and a half or two hours at least preparing for each speech. And as he began to make more, or in a week when he began to make several, I didn't think that was productive of his time, although the thinking involved in preparing each one was useful to him but the thinking could be done in other circumstances. So I got him to use a text, somewhat, and his speeches were so compact, so full of facts, that they covered many too many subjects and were the material for three or four conventional speeches.

The Finch technique was very different, was much more

abstract, analytical, almost in an academic way--very long complicated sentences, not cumbersome, but just long as opposed to short, staccato sentences, brief sentences. At any rate, I think that's mainly what I've done. It may sound like a negative accomplishment, but I think I've made them, or in my opinion, more effective communicators simply by narrowing the limits of what they try to convey by seeing it from the audience's point of view.

SY: Are you saying that you tried to influence their style rather than the substance of their speeches or did you also have an input on actual policy which was being expressed?

FG: That's just very hard to say. You would probably have to go over it, if they or anyone could remember, text by text or draft by draft. I find their thinking, their approach is very congenial to my own. There is always an influence--this seemed to me to be the failure of [first name unknown] Whalen's book as a speechwriter, which I don't think is a particularly gratifying task per se, but the gratifying element is precisely what he complained about which made his book petulant, raw minded. I think the opportunity is that if the man with whom you agree, you don't even have to admire him if it can be done on a commercial basis, the person with whom you agree or at least whose policies, thoughts you understand gives you some reading and talks about it and says look at some of my older speeches, and you prepare a draft--in Whalen's case I think civil rights was one of the things he was upset about--that's the opportunity to go out and to formulate the man's thinking. So you are not affecting the content as much as you are style. If I happen to believe, maybe this is my advertising agency bias, but that the medium is the message. The medium of the

speech, the flow of the words, the phraseology, is almost as important as getting the message across as the message itself. And in a lot of occasions, the very superficial political occasions where people are there to be flattered or to be entertained or not be informed at any rate, the medium is more important than the message. How you make them feel by your words is more or equally as important as the words themselves. Both Finch and Rumsfeld are very good editors. Also, I have done some speechwriting, not down here, for people who just take your text and go with it, that is not the case. I don't think we've ever done anything less than two or three drafts. Which means a draft is submitted then edited and then it comes back and is reworked and then resubmitted and re-edited and maybe reworked or maybe it's delivered from the re-edited reworking.

Another good thing about both these people which has made mine one of the most successful Fellowships--the Fellowships are usually measured in terms of access and substantive contributions, the access you have to your principal and then the amount of substantive stuff you can do for him. Usually I am told it averages out there are four unsuccessful Fellows, six moderately successful, and six very successful of the 16. The unsuccessful ones are usually cases, my year I think at least three of the four were cases of Cabinet Members who just, either because it was their style or because they were in very large departments, assigned their Fellow in fact to one of their assistants. So that Fellow very rarely had that perspective on that department or on the federal government. Both Finch and Rumsfeld who in a couple of cases have had their aides, Glen Wegner and [Richard] Dick Cheney being examples--

and Richard Klass who had been the White House Fellow with Rumsfeld--stayed on, had gotten some of their own people from the Fellowship program. So they were very open and anxious to include the Fellow in.

By the time I got around to writing a speech on one of the two or three topics that each one would use it had been discussed, and it had been tried out in bits and pieces in press conferences or in editorial boards or in meetings. So I wasn't coming to anything cold in terms of content. As a matter of fact it worded the other way if it worked at all. I had done a graduate thesis on British newspapers in Nazi Germany and spent a lot of time reading about Nazi Germany and interviewing people who had lived in it and through it. It was very vivid in my mind. I was just reading an article last night about Poland and the Poles' continuing feelings towards the Russians knowing that of the 1.25 million people, 250,000 were massacred by the Germans at the very end while the Russians waited outside the gates letting the Germans just extinguish them. The author, it was in National Review which gives you an idea of the author's line, he says he couldn't help thinking about that, the author being a Pole, as he sat in a Paris café and listened to a bearded American graduate student go on about genocide at Kent State and in writing some speeches I was setting up as an example of real genocide, either real suppression of thought or freedom, whatever, the Nazi Reich and [Adolf] Hitler particularly. The Counsellor said it's not a good example to use because for college students today, to the person who is 18-21, Hitler is only marginally more contemporary than Barbarosa. There is name recognition but it doesn't stir the same things, the same

chords it would in an older person or someone like myself who had studied it or who is that much marginally older to even have been born during the war.

There is an interesting thing I just came across that Kissinger had written in 1968 in a thing about issues and foreign policy saying that for young Americans foreign policy and America's role in the world means Vietnam. They don't remember a time when the American structural contributions to world order were positive and peaceful and when there was a time when genocide was something other than what we did to the Indians or to the Black Panthers and when war crimes were something other than the latest press release from Saigon. That young people today, for all their information, live in a world very detached historically from everything that has gone before. So in a way if editing, if there were any contributions to style, it was from them to me in terms of making me aware of things like that or of political nuances that I was not aware of. When things would be cut out they would be explained to me--why they cut out jokes that you couldn't tell in New Jersey or that you wouldn't tell to an audience that had people over 60 or things like that.

I had one of the great lines of the campaign which was never used. So maybe I should tell it to history. It was when Senator [George] McGovern made his foreign speech in Cleveland. We were going around campaigning and I did a thing for a suburban shopping center audience saying that Senator McGovern has clearly cast himself as the Monty Hall of American foreign policy. He is saying "Let's make a deal" to anybody who comes near him and he is willing to trade what he has in his hand for what is behind the curtain. I'm sorry, I told you a lie. It

was originally written for a group of 500 Latvians for Nixon in Grand Rapids--the terrible genocide in fact that has been reaped against Latvians I very moving even to think about. In the census, I think in 1940 or 1941 there were something like 83% ethnic Latvians in Latvia and in the last census, which was about a year ago, there was something like only 46%. All of them were either killed or carted away and displaced by Russians--terrible. At any rate he was going to say he's willing to trade away what he has got in his hand for what lies behind curtain--and you know what lies behind the iron curtain. So when we got there the mean age of the 500 Latvians for Nixon was about 80 and 3/4 or 4/5 of them only spoke Latvian. So we had the feeling that this was not going to stir them. We then went on to Denver and he did talk at the world's largest indoor shopping center which was called "Cinderella City." If ever an audience was made to react to Monty Hall it was this Saturday afternoon shopping audience. And maybe they weren't because it was in fact a rally for Senator [Gordon] Allott which didn't do him enough good, I guess, but it was never used and for various reasons--some of which were good. I think it would have been worth experimenting with but there were various political and personal reasons for deciding not to use it. So that is a long way of answering your question that if there was any influence on policy or on statements, it was probably the other way.

SY: When you were asked to help draft a speech, take any example--for a dedication ceremony or a campaign rally--did Mr. Finch or Mr. Rumsfeld say "I want to talk about the environment" or "I want to talk about a particular issue," or did you decide what would appeal to that group?

FG: It depends on the group. Certain occasions impose their own-- speeches, dedications, and Legacy of Parks, or speeches to groups of doctors or lawyers or professional groups--or certain groups ask for a topic.

With Rumsfeld, he talks almost entirely about what he knows best---about what people are interested in, which is the President's economic program--and most of that stuff is done, actually all of my work is done for me either by his economic and public affairs people at the Cost of living Council or by Bonnie Bradbeer or Pam Rabbit who prepares briefing papers. Pam calls out to our contact person at the organization and finds out what the group is about and if they want to have a particular topic and if not, what they would be interested in hearing. Almost invariably they are interested in knowing, just in hearing what is called "the view from Washington." I was not able to impose my judgment but I think that most groups when they get a Cabinet Member, unless it is someone like Rumsfeld who is visibly working in something that is itself news, but most people when they get a Cabinet Member, if he doesn't have hard news to give them, would rather hear the "view from Washington" than his view on their subjects. However, when we did things like that we would use the departments, sending out for information and figures and such like, particularly from HEW or SBA [Small Business Administration].

SY: How much of this research did you do?

FG: Almost none.

SY: Bonnie said that there were some subject areas where she would go ahead and draft speeches. What were the particular areas that you were interested in and involved in?



FG: The waffling at the beginning and the end. Her hard core factual material would be the interior of the speech and I worked on beginnings and ends and sort of "tarding" up facts. I did stuff on foreign policy. Bonnie mainly worked in the areas that she had worked with him over the last six years from when he was Lt. Governor, the domestic areas of education and health particularly. I guess I did anything that was foreign or anything he was very concerned with--reform of the electoral system.

Now there I did a lot of research, but that was a lecture as opposed to a speech. That was a proper academic lecture that he gave in April at Westminster College in Fulton, Missouri, the Green Lecture Series, which is where [Winston] Churchill had delivered the iron curtain speech, which is an endowed lectureship. That we prepared for a couple of months and it was a major 55 minute scholarly academic lecture that now in fact, and this is really what I've done since then--we're working on a book. So I've done that kind of research. The research comes from my reading so that is why it's hard to tell you what I do.

For example just reading there is an article by Peter Drucker in the Atlantic about just looking at population data and the war baby boom. Every year between 1948 and 1953 there were 50% more children than there had been in any other recorded time in history as far as population explosion in history. These people are no coming into the labor market. These war babies are now maturing and, I forget his figures, but it's something like every year for the first five years of the decade of the 1970s, 40% more people will be entering the labor market or will be coming of age because of this baby

boom. Again I don't remember the figures but the mean age of Americans has shifted from being something like 35 to being something like 17.5. The terrific stresses that this wave has put onto the economy which is not only having to assimilate people coming home from the war or out of defense related jobs as the war winds down, so that not only is that influx having to be taken care of but the normal growth of society plus this wave of war babies. Two things, one it will end, the ends is in sight because the wave will break and the other that it should be seen as an unusual situation attributable to a number of factors. Now that is the kind of thing, that's the memorable thing from a speech. You can get all kinds of census figures from the census and all kinds of health figures and employment figures and such like--but unless these are in a context, a hook--and it's probably very intellectually superficial--but unless you can give people a hook to hang things on, especially in the spoken word, you've lost an opportunity. So in a speech that had to do with employment my contribution, other than editing and putting in some jokes and stuff, would be something like that--which is, in a way I guess research, but it is qualitative rather than quantitative research.

McGovern in his interview Life, said--and this is one of the most frightening things about him to me--they asked him if he was reading any good books lately and he said that on the advice of his staff he was reading Philip Slater's The Pursuit of Loneliness. This book--Tony Lewis had done an article in the Atlantic about two years ago--I had known him in London and he comes home every summer. They have a house up in Martha's Vineyard and he was writing about his community. (In fact I

almost lived in their house through mutual friends--they had a top floor in the house he bought called Cannenbery House--it's on Cannenbery Road in Islington which is coming up as a neighborhood.) And he says there everybody knows your grocer and your baker and everybody says hello and there is a sense of community. There is a great privacy but there is a sense of community. And coming to Martha's Vineyard they had some trouble and they had to sandbag something--or there was a flood--and he said it was like strangers coming out and begrudging this moment of communal labor and then rushing back immediately. He was so struck by this and he quoted a passage from this book, The Pursuit of Loneliness--it was an interesting thing that Americans have carried individualism so far that, whereas in the old days a family would live and die together from the newest baby to the oldest grandparent in one room, now in our pursuit of individualism we have separate cars and separate rooms and separate telephones and separate televisions and that instead of creating satisfaction and feeling the enjoyment of privacy it has created an alienation. It is the pursuit of loneliness as he calls his book. That is what the quote said so I got the book and it was an awful book saying that we are genocidal--we began with the Indians and we're doing the same thing to the Vietnamese and it's just a perverse book by a man who, wouldn't you know, is the head of the sociology department at Brandeis University. At any rate this is the book that McGovern said his staff had recommended to him and that he was reading and enjoying.

So I did a memorandum on that, I don't think we finally used it. We were talking to some colleges and universities so I would do various draft papers for various lines of approach

to take. The Finch approach is, incidentally--he likes questions and answers which I do too because it involves people and it's a good format if you like it and he does. So for him my writing involves maybe three or four briefs which, depending on his feeling of the audience, he will use one or more or none as his opening statement. And then my job is to keep him briefed for the kinds of questions--with sample answers or cards used in the campaign file--large 7x5 cards with figures, facts, or lines of approach.

SY: You mentioned that you were working on a book with Mr. Finch. How much have you done in the way of article drafting or writing other than speech drafts?

FG: Well, we've done maybe a half dozen op ed. type page articles for the New York Times or the Los Angeles Times. We put a lot of work into approximately a half dozen commencement speeches which he did. They were almost academic. Again for what it is worth this is the kind of thing I have done. There was a little note in the New York Times about the National Academy of Arts awards luncheon in New York that Iris Murdock had spoken to. They just quoted a little section from her address about the integrity of language. So I called them and got a text--and there is just great stuff in there--which we used in the commencement speeches about the integrity of language and its impact on the social, political, and educational processes.

SY: You are saying then that in many cases your inputs were not in direct response to a need as much as they were an open offering of ideas.

FG: Yes, although we're always proving a point and the point is that after eight years of detour, this administration, this President has brought government and the nation back to the

straight and narrow path. The common denominator of this approach to government, which is to make it efficient and accountable and decent, is the common denominator on which we have built and talked. The thing about the integrity of language was not just intellectualizing, it was in effect what he had said in the first Inaugural--"until we lower our voices and talk and listen to each other..."

SY: Although in this case that particular approach might not have been used unless you had recommended it?

FG: Yes, that is what I like to think.

SY: In this case Mr. Finch did not say he wanted to make this commencement address on this particular topic?

FG: Well, he gave several. This is another thing, he likes to give different speeches to different offices, or an individual speech to each audience. We gave some to a couple of law commencements and he more or less set the content for that--law and politics and the role of the lawyer in politics. I did the word thing. As I said they are very good editors and they are very good contributors too. Needless to say I can't think of any example offhand but I recall the writing of these things would emerge from many discussions. It was not a case of presenting an idea full blown and the man taking the text and going out with it and reading it.

SY: Did you ever recommend speaking engagements or have anything to do with scheduling?

FG: I sat in on the schedule meetings and we will discuss an invitation. I suppose yes, I have, both accepting and refusing. I can't think of anything of notable interest there--just what you would imagine. It was more logistic or political. I was a little disappointed that we couldn't speak

at more universities but that was touchy--your ability to speak was questionable so we spoke at a great many but not more. I think he [Finch] is very good with that kind of an audience. He was very good with minority audiences. Because it is sincere, he exudes a concern that is very appealing. There is great empathy that exists so he talked at a lot of minority banquets and testimonials. Of course this is partly a holdover from his HEW days. He knows a lot of people, he was responsible for their getting contracts or things like that.

SY: Did you travel with him?

FG: Almost all the time, yes.

SY: And what did you actually do while you were on the road?

FG: Again, this is part of his idea of the Fellowship. It provides for this travel with your principal--to observe. I wrote a great deal on the road, would do some casework from there too, would meet people and talk to people that Finch didn't have time to talk to. I suppose a certain amount--a lot--of bag carrying--and observing.

SY: You mentioned your casework, did you do any of that here? Bonnie mentioned the concept of Counsellor Finch being the third Senator from California - Do you...

FG: Yes, although not any more than I suppose anybody in the White House area that has any possibility or ambition of running for an office obviously takes care of his home state casework, largely because they come to him. I don't know what the figures are but I would imagine he gets 100 speaking invitations every five or six weeks just from California. He is just known there.

I did some casework for Finch on the cable television. I suppose that was the equivalent of Property Review Board for

Rumsfeld--sitting on the Cabinet Committee on Cable Television. That was the only real casework. There are three things involved there. I don't think that he felt that it was appropriate under the rubrics of the fellowship. The second was that I don't know anybody from California. There are people on the staff who know these people from HEW, the people that he was dealing with from HEW days or California who have a feel for what is needed in casework. The third is that I don't think I would be very good at it. And also, it is being taken care of so there was really no need to get involved.

SY: You have mentioned that you represented Mr. Finch on the Cable TV and Mr. Rumsfeld on the Property Review Board. Were there other occasions, either in a very specified official capacity you represented them, or did you ever do any speaking on their behalf?

FG: No, I would like to have done and just really never had the time. I made my debut in this campaign very late--about two days before the election--when I guess they figured I couldn't do any harm--going down to replace [Joseph] Blatchford in a college in Newport, California. I enjoyed that very much. Just a group of about 60 at the start and then a class came up of about 30 students who stayed on for a couple of hours. It was a good exercise because the worm turned from having sat in the back of a hundred meetings and having thought why doesn't he make this point or why doesn't he stress this or why didn't he remember this. To have to do it oneself was an interesting experience.

This sounds like I really haven't done very much except read copies of the Atlantic. One of the reasons for this is that concurrent with one's job is the Fellows' educational

program which involves luncheon or dinner, at least twice a week, with various Washington (or New York, Chicago, or Canada) leaders, politicians, journalists, and diplomats and White House people. There are also two foreign trips one of which ran for almost a month in the winter, just about this time, and then one that ran for about two and one half weeks in the summer to Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Yugoslavia. The program is always dividing one's time between the job and the Fellows.

I am a firm believer that almost equally valuable is the White House experience. In different ways but almost equally valuable was the experience of the communal group encounter of these 15, of these 15 other people, all very interesting and incredibly bright and able and all diverse. From the sort of trial by fire that begins, ordeal by fire, which begins at Airley, which is sort of like boot camp--it is just so horrible that cohesion forms and it follows the euphoria of the first days and then is... It is too bad this year I don't think they are going on the trip in November. It is being sacrificed as a matter of fact to job efficiency because the feeling is you are just about hitting your job stride in November. To then go off for three weeks with the Fellows destroys your credibility there. That trip I don't think of any of us who went on it will ever forget it or would trade it because just the rigors of being semi-official representatives, being entertained by the embassies. You are not an official representative but you are meeting government people and business people as White House Fellows and most of them don't know what that means. There is a strain there and just sixteen very diverse and very independent people traveling together under what in Asia for most of us was unusual conditions of food and houses. The



stresses and strains, breaks and alliances and misalliances that happened in 23 days are a terrific experience.

The Fellowship is not a job. If I had been hired as a communications consultant that would be one thing--or people who are labor lawyers or management consultants or nuclear engineers for that matter. I think you should go as far away from your expertise as possible if it is a very specific expertise, or you should make as much use of the educational program, the opportunity to meet people whom you wouldn't ordinarily meet. I wasn't in real life business-advertising as opposed to real life business. One of the first questions I was asked at Airley, as a matter of fact it wasn't one of the first questions, it was the first question. I had prepared plausible lies to cover almost every conceivable question for the weekend but the one I wasn't prepared for was "What do you plan to be making in five years?" I guess I said the right thing because, I think I said \$500,423.11, because I am either going to be making a lot of money or I'm going to be making pretty much what I am making now. That seemed to carry the interview along for a little longer. A lot of these people are very career minded, and rightly so. They are executive Vice Presidents of major corporations and for them their year here means a different thing in a career pattern. They come to it with a very different set and frame of mind. They are managers as opposed to observers. The only other academic in it was a nuclear scientist who was the head of the nuclear reactor at the University of Texas. That in my mind is one of the strengths of the program--it brings different people with different backgrounds.

My rule of thumb was to read as much as possible. There

is no point in meeting Arthur Goldberg or Dave Broder over lunch with 16 people if you haven't read their books. We would receive voluminous packages of stuff if you were going to meet an ambassador of a country. You would get all the State Department material and recommended books. One of our Fellows was a New York City police sergeant who was assigned to Justice and when we met with Chief [Jerry] Wilson they sent out all kinds of criminology stuff. When we met Dr. Jaffe all kinds of drug information came out. To my mind if you went to a one-and-one-half to two hour lunch with 16 other people at a U shaped table and you haven't read the material--it was pleasant and if a cop stopped you to give you a ticket you could mention that you had just come from lunch with Chief Wilson--but that really defeated the idea. This is a way of saying that in my mind the Fellowship should not bring people who by virtue of their qualifications if they applied for a job would get the job. That they should do the next year or the year before. The Fellowship is a year out. It is a year to observe, and expand, to get some new thoughts and new approaches.

SY: I heard a tape of Mr. Finch talking to White House Summer Interns, which I guess is a kind of junior Fellows program. I think he was expressing the idea that your first priority is due to the person for who you are working. The speakers are set up and other side activities but you have a job to do, do it. Is this not the general feeling of the Fellows program or is there a stated policy?

FG: Obviously I didn't write that one for him. I don't know how he would answer that one. My feeling would be that the intern program is different for several reasons: it is shorter, and it deals with younger people, and it deals with, I suspect partly

because it is shorter and partly because they are younger, at a somewhat lesser level. For people who are between years in law school or going into graduate school the idea of coming down for three months, the idea of having a job and doing it is very important for that experiences. The average age I think in my class of Fellows was 30 and this year it is 31. To my mind, the whole point of the Fellowship is to get people who had done jobs before. One of the criteria of selection was that you had shown that you could manage a department or that you could write or book or do a job and to expose you to different pressures and different ways of looking at things and doing a job in the public as opposed to the private sector.

I can think of a couple of cases in my year and I can think of a case that is developing this year where a Fellow with very particular credentials is, I am afraid, not necessarily for him but from the point of view of being a Fellow, is going to be shuffled into a very particular job that he will do very well but that will take up all of his time and that he probably would have been approached for if he were still out in business where he was. So that when it is at its best as it is with Finch and Rumsfeld, people who understand this...no as a matter of fact, now that I think of it answering the questions as I go along, they were always super-solicitous that I not miss any of the educational programs or any of the trips.

As a matter of fact, there was a point where I was going to cancel the trip because it was just after the Cost of Living Council had been set up and I had been doing a study about setting up radio communications for Rumsfeld. There was a question of whether I would stay and actually do the legwork on

it, start contacting radio programs and writing scripts and things like that. He said, "No, for God's sake, until you are an ambassador or something you are not going to get a chance to travel like this again. You would be a fool, you have done the basic work." The idea is that you can underdo your job--you have to keep up a certain amount of credibility in the department. Or, as one of the Fellows in my class did, he told them more or less at the beginning that he really didn't want to do very much there. He said he would like to go to as many meetings as he could, staff meetings, high level meetings, but he didn't really want to do much. We never realized this until the end of the year. We had a retreat at Belmont, the Smithsonian Institution's house up in Maryland at the beginning and one at the end and in very different ways they were very remarkable weekends. At the end you discussed what you had done in your department, how the department operates, your hopes and dreams, etc. None of use knew this about him until the end--that he had apparently told his department that he really wanted to spend the year visiting every art gallery in Washington--he did a lot of homework, he went to all the educational luncheons, went on both the trips, did a lot of reading, is very astute and spent his time and part of his entree (this is a military guy who was very able but who had been out of the country for quite a while--here were other factors, in a way he was getting back to America) but used both his military and his personal and his White House Fellow entree to lunch on this own with people whom he wanted to meet around Washington. It was a Fellowship here. The word Fellowship in my mind should be played up more than it is in a lot of cases. Both Finch and Rusmfeld have gone out of their way to insist on

going to this.

Then you come back--I would write reports. We went to meet Ted Kennedy and I said he would never meet with us for an hour. Sure enough 33 minutes into the hour a harried aide came in and said that there was a phone call he had to take so he excused himself just as the questioning was getting off the superficial stuff and saying things like "What do you mean by calling Ulster 'Britain's Vietnam'" and stuff like that. We have seen [Senator Hubert H.] Humphrey and [Senator William] Proxmire and a lot of people, two or three people a week. That is input of a kind. If the Fellowship works and you really have access at a high level you are dealing with people who really know what they are doing and understand political nuance and have political experience and know what they can say and what they can do. It would be very easy for a Fellow who did his job too well to be indiscreet, I would think.

SY: If I may ask you a few more specific questions. What offices outside the White House or outside Mr. Finch's office but within the White House did you work with?

FG: None, how do you mean "work with?"

SY: On projects, you might have worked with Mr. [Raymond K.] Price's office on research or speeches or...when you were doing a foreign policy speech what about working with someone on NSC for instance?

FG: No, this was an independent operation. Not in the sense of sitting down with someone and working with them. As I said we would send out for the latest figures and in some cases the departments would do speech drafts which were invariably unusable--totally, never once usable, they were always late in coming too. However it was the best of goodwill. No, it was

an independent operation here.

SY: And the same was true with the departments and agencies other than your contacts with the Fellows program?

FG: Reading through my speeches you will probably find that they are all wrong. They were all written right over there and they are probably all wrong.

SY: Where are your files, your working files, office files, official files?

FG: Right there. (In his office.)

SY: I guess you don't know whether you will continue at the White House or not.

FG: Well I want to. It is a question of whether they want me. There is a couple of things I am looking at. One of them involves working for Ray Price. That is the one I am after. What is this by way of asking?

SY: We, as the planning staff for the Nixon Library, are obviously interested in papers, technically all papers which are created while you are working in the White House belong to the President rather than to the government or the individual. And of course while people are using your files, or if one staff member leaves and is replaced by another, there are going to be certain working files which are going to be kept in the offices. This is just a matter of tracking down where files go...

FG: I don't think you are going to be very interested in mine which are not very extensive. I keep files which are mainly files of clippings or personal notes. You will also be frustrated by the fact that half of my notes or more are in very irregular Gregg shorthand. There are some files on areas like foreign policy or drugs or education or the future. We did a lot of

stuff when the Club of Rome report came out about the limits of growth. There is some personal correspondence and some sort of a minimum of office type correspondence that I can't avoid doing--people whom you meet on planes and things like that. It is almost all subject files. I keep files of memoranda I send and speech drafts. The biggest files are speech notes, just clippings or other speeches and things like that.

SY: Bonnie mentioned that you had such good rapport with Mr. Finch...

FG: Yes, I said at the outside I found them both very congenial intellectually and philosophically. They are both people who are thoughtful, again as I said, their speech styles indicate their different personalities. The one is a very direct, intellectually aggressive person who views a body of ideas or a subject as something to be assaulted and captured and assimilated. The other is someone who approaches things in a more analytical and abstract circuitous way. It was very satisfying, I've had the best of both worlds and it keeps you in tune. Of course there are people who don't have the time to read as broadly as they would like so I think it has performed a fairly useful function in keeping them aware of things that are going on. I get a number of European papers and magazines, some daily, The London Times and the Sunday English papers, the Express. I used to get Le Monde, the weekly edition, the Economist, the New Statesman, the American things like Harpers and Atlantic and things like the Public Interest, the American Journal of Psychiatry and the Harvard Business Review.

SY: You do your own kind of News Summary?

FG: Yes.

SY: Was it written?

FG: I have a file there called "Counter Culture" which, I'll give you an example. I became very interested in the case of John and Yoko Lennon who were being very visibly buffeted around by the immigration people. This was at a time during the primaries before we knew that young people were going to go for the President and it seemed to be pointless to let them go on. We were getting a lot of bad publicity from this. After each appearance in court they would come out and there would be 20,000 reporters around, and it would invariably get picture time on the news because they both looked like freaks and because they are John Lennon and Yoko Ono. They would come out and tell why the immigration people tell us we can't stay and they are going to deport us because I had a marijuana charge in London six or seven years ago--they don't do anything to people for it now. And the thing with her child. I just felt that we were getting a lot of grief on that and in fact the Fellow at Justice followed it up and I just did a memorandum. We got copies of the Texas court decision. Nothing ever came of that, it sort of disappeared which is what the report said because they couldn't appeal for the rest of their lives. The basis of my report was that it was a bad case of faulty communications. There was a very clear provision of the law. Why what was being done was very clear and very easily explained but it was--never got across. As a result each time they would come out of a hearing and say they didn't know what was happening--that seemed to be more reasonable than what was happening.

(Mr. Gannon continued to describe items in his Counter Culture file during the remaining moments of the tape.)

[END OF INTERVIEW]



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conducted by Susan Yowell  
on November 16, 1972

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