

**Timothy Naftali**

Hello, my name is Timothy Naftali, and I'm Director-Designate of the Richard Nixon Presidential Library Museum. It's April 4th, 2007, and we are in New York City. And I'm pleased to be interviewing Raymond Price for the Richard Nixon Oral History Program. Mr. Price, thank you for joining us.

**Raymond Price**

Thank you.

**Timothy Naftali**

Vice President Nixon is now President-elect Nixon. He's just been elected. It's 1968. What are you doing in the transition? What job do you have?

**Raymond Price**

I had been his principal writer in the campaign, and he had asked me to do the same or to join the staff in the White House so I was in general, just generally helping with the transition. It was understood that I would be his collaborator on his inaugural address, and that would be the first Presidential thing I would be working on. But meanwhile, I was headquartered in his -- we had our headquarters in what had been the campaign headquarters in the old Bible Society building on 57th Street in Manhattan. And generally, I think preparing to deal with whatever we were going to have to deal with, and glad that the campaign was over.

**Timothy Naftali**

I'm sure. I mean, it must have been exhausting.

**Raymond Price**

It was, mm-hmm.

**Timothy Naftali**

And so your very first Presidential task was the inaugural address?

**Raymond Price**

It was, mm-hmm.

**Timothy Naftali**

What kind of guidance did he give you?

**Raymond Price**

Well, it was -- he himself read every previous inaugural address as he tried to work out how he wanted to do his own, what he wanted it to be, and he got input from a number of people. It was understood from the beginning that I would be the principal collaborator, but a lot of people put in memos; Henry Kissinger did, Pat Moynihan did, other people did, what they thought he ought to do. And meanwhile he was thinking it through and thinking it through, which was his normal process. And I forget now when we actually started the drafting process. It would've been, reasonably -- it would've been toward the end of that transition period. And that went through, I don't remember just how many drafts there, until finally we thought we had it done. I was on that final drafting session -- the he eventually went down to Key Biscayne, and I went down with him. We did some more work on it there, got it almost done, came back to New York. And then he was going down to Washington on a Sunday for an inauguration on Monday, and Saturday night we worked in his office until midnight. There was one bottle of Heineken in the refrigerator, he brought that out and we shared that and Rose Mary Woods and I walked him around the corner to his home. And we thought it was done, and then he had a couple of other thoughts the next morning, which he called me on the phone for and we worked out the last things there and went down by helicopter to DC, and he was inaugurated the next day.

**Timothy Naftali**

Tell us a little bit about the drafting process? Did he -- he liked to dictate, didn't he? Did he dictate ideas or did he sit with you? Would he give you handwritten notes? How did he like to do it?

**Raymond Price**

It was -- some of it was just meeting with him, some of it was talking things out and then having me draft stuff up and then we would go back and forth. It was -- he always used the writing process as a thinking process. As he went back and forth through ideas, through drafts and refined ideas, and I don't recall how many drafts we went through on the inaugural itself, but it was just sort of working it out as we went.

**Timothy Naftali**

I know it's been a long time, it was a long time ago, but do remember what he picked up from other inaugural addresses? Which Presidential inaugural addresses did he like?

**Raymond Price**

I don't know if there was any one particular one, he -- he was trying to -- I think he was really trying to get the feel of the flow of them and what the structures had been, and what the themes had been, how they had been done. But again, other times were not our times. Other audiences were not ours and others were not done on television, which made a big difference. Most were not. But obviously, it was going to be his, not somebody else's. He picked up a few themes from the people who suggested, but then it was just kind of working it out.

**Timothy Naftali**

A number of people have looked at that first inaugural address and seen hints there of big policies to come, for example, the shift towards China. Since you had worked with him on the China issue, helped with the famous "Foreign Affairs" article, do you remember talking to him about hinting that something might occur in the relationship with China?

**Raymond Price**

I don't. In that "Foreign Affairs" article, that was for the October 1967, 40th anniversary issue of "Foreign Affairs." And that was Asia after Vietnam and that was his first public mention of what would become the opening of China and that was a last minute addition to that article. The article was not built around it. He, of course, he was focused on that -- he was more focused, I think, at that point, in terms of the transition period -- more focused on what he was going to do in trying to change the way we dealt with the Soviet Union and work out a new arrangement with them. China would come along in time, but the Soviet Union was a more urgent, and at that point, a larger issue.

**Timothy Naftali**

Where were you inauguration day?

**Raymond Price**

Inauguration day I was in the audience there, and it was quite a -- was a very moving moment. Of course, we had the inaugural parade and had people throwing rocks and bricks at the inaugural parade on the way down to the White House -- that was part of the culture then.

**Timothy Naftali**

When you were listening to the speech, it would be hard to understand this experience,

[unintelligible]

but to truly get a sense of how rewarding it must be, to work on an inaugural address. What were the phrases that he used that jumped out at you afterwards that made you especially proud?

**Raymond Price**

I -- in terms of phrases, I was so familiar with them, and I'm not sure that any really jumped out because none of it was a surprise. If any had been a surprise it might have jumped out, but I thought there was a wonderful unity about the whole speech. I thought it really was a good one. And it was a time when the country needed to be healed and I think it was a healing speech. It was a forward looking speech, it was a creative speech in terms of new directions, pointing us in, not a belligerent way, but a firm way toward new ways of doing things; domestically and internationally. And one line in it was chosen by his family for his tombstone and that is, "The greatest honor history can bestow is the title of peacemaker."

**Timothy Naftali**

I believe that when the President takes the Oval Office, they choose a passage from the Bible where they open the Bible. Do you know the story behind the passage that he chose?

**Raymond Price**

No, I don't, I don't.

**Timothy Naftali**

Let's talk about speech writing shop. How do you go about putting together the office of a speechwriter?

**Raymond Price**

Well, we had a -- in the campaign, we had a speechwriting unit. In the White House we didn't call it a speechwriting unit. Others do. We called it the writing and research unit. And that's an important distinction, I think, and especially something -- people are always surprised, though, when I tell them. At first, we had a non-writing managing editor for that, Jim Keogh, who had been the executive director of "Time" magazine and had joined the campaign, I think, after the convention and during the campaign. He was a very good at non-writing editor for the writing staff. He'd also had a sub unit, a research unit headed by a former Time, Inc. researcher who was meticulous, and a special unit for messages to organizations and so forth. We kept the same people that Johnson had had in those; they were very good, they were professional. But most of our writing was not speeches and most of his speeches were not written. And this is one reason we do not call it a -- made a point of not calling it a speechwriting unit. He was more comfortable without a text than with one, and he never used notes, and my educated guess from the two years that I actually ran the staff after Jim Keogh left, is that about 19 out of 20 speeches were not written, about 1 out of 20 was written.

**Timothy Naftali**

Tell us about the other members of that staff.

**Raymond Price**

Well, he brought -- the best known ones were Bill Safire and Pat Buchanan; they had both been part of our campaign organization. Bill had been a public relations guy, very clever with words, as people who have followed his work in more recent years know well, and a very good writer. Pat had actually been with him a few months longer than I had. Pat had joined the staff in while he was campaigning for congressional candidates in 1966 and he had hired him at the age of about 22. And Pat, of course, was the representative of the hard right and of the south, basically, on the staff. Then we had a couple of -- several other really bright people who were very good, meticulous. Most of our writing, though, not being speeches, the bulk of our writing was the messages to -- legislative messages to Congress, in which the President would spell out, make his case for what he wanted Congress to do, why and how, and these were long and involved and took a lot of negotiation among departments and agencies and so forth. That was the bulk of our actual writing.

**Timothy Naftali**

How did, because you represented different views, how did you mediate? I guess when we talk about various issues, of course, it would be easier to do, but Pat Buchanan and you viewed the world quite differently?

**Raymond Price**

We did.

[laughter]

**Timothy Naftali**

Did you make assignments for these messages depending on which audience you were targeting?

**Raymond Price**

Well, there was some of that, but again, bearing in mind most of the speeches were not written. And those that were written would normally go through about six or seven or eight drafts; State of the Union, I did all State of the Unions. Every State of the Union by coincidence was 14 drafts and these would be back and forth with the President, as he would work out what he wanted to say and how he wanted to say it. And again, that was part of the thinking process for him. But the writer would be chosen as one appropriate for that speech. And different ones would have different tones. Pat was never asked to write another speech after his Cambodia speech in 19 -- in April of 1970, which touched off massive riots. He did not write the kind of speeches that the President wanted to give.

**Timothy Naftali**

Let's look at -- let's talk about that speech for a minute, and we'll certainly ask him about the story. How was it that he was assigned that speech?

**Raymond Price**

I don't know how he happened to be assigned it. But that was, I guess, before I took over the staff. The -- but it had belligerent rhetoric in it, and that was Pat's style, and this was at a very tense and delicate time in the U.S. when we were dealing with massive riots with anti-war demonstrations and so forth. The massive anti-war demonstrations had been going on almost ever since we were there, there was this huge, the October and November moratorium in 19 -- 1969, huge massive demonstrations, and going on around the country. The -- and some of the rhetoric in that Cambodia speech just touched off riots, including the Kent State riots, in which four protesters were killed by other kids who happened to have guns and the National Guard which -- and all that, of course, touched off more riots, a really, very difficult time. But he recognized that he needed a different tone to what came out and that kind of tone that came out from Pat.

**Timothy Naftali**

So I noticed, though, in the collection, various collections, that you would send suggestions to the President, and so it was an important research item.

**Raymond Price**

Oh yeah, yeah, and not only researchers, important research, but we had a very good research staff and also we did a lot of our own and we drew on all of the departments and agencies, of course, for their recommendations and their ideas, and these would pour in. I remember doing the first State of the Union, a credenza behind my desk was piled high with notebooks and so forth and memoranda from departments and agencies; it was suffocating. All -- they all wanted to get their stuff into the State of the Union. But there was a lot of circulate -- we would circulate drafts among them and so forth to get their feedback, and so the writing would be a process, which would involve -- we'd try to involve all the officials who had substantial responsibilities in that area, in the process.

**Timothy Naftali**

Did you divide up or did Keogh in the beginning divide among you certain areas of expertise?

**Raymond Price**

Not, really, no, no, no. And he was his own editor -- he was his own final editor, too. He was a very good writer and a very good editor, himself.

**Timothy Naftali**

When the President would go on a trip abroad as he did very early on in the administration, did you accompany him, did you go with him to Europe, for example?

**Raymond Price**

I went with him on some trips, not on most, I did on some. I did go with him on his first trip through Asia, which was a -- was a return to the same thing that I had done with him, just the two of us in 1967, yeah, 1967, when we had gone through. And in 1967 he made a series of four foreign trips in preparation for what might become a campaign, he hadn't yet decided whether he was going to run or not. He didn't actually make that decision until New Year's weekend 1967, '68. But it was always likely that he would, but he just hadn't said it. But that -- during '67 he made a series of four foreign trips, which he took one person along on each one. And I went with him on the second one, which was through, I think, about 11 countries of Asia. And coming back by Iran and Switzerland, in which he would meet the leaders and he was always trying to bring himself up to date on what was happening out there and more importantly, how things looked from out there -- the various countries. It was one -- the first was to Europe in the Soviet Union. Bob Ellsworth went along on that. I went on the Asia trip. And Pat Buchanan went with him on one to the Middle East and Africa and then Bebe Rebozo went on one through Latin America.

**Timothy Naftali**

Well, tell us about that trip to Asia in '69.

**Raymond Price**

The one in '69? That was very interesting. We -- and he in each of these he would be meeting with the leaders and so forth but also other people just trying to soak up information. In '69 we kind of recreated that one. One of the highlights of that though was that we stopped in for fuel, I guess, in Guam, and in an aircraft hangar in Guam he held a little press briefing, standing up as usual, without notes in front of him in front of a stand-up mic and laid out what became the Nixon Doctrine. And I remember on that, watching Bob Haldeman across the -- as he was doing it, watching across the hangar, across the crowd and kind of grinning at me and watching Henry Kissinger pacing nervously around, looking obviously distraught and unhappy; obviously unhappy that Nixon was doing this rather than he, and worrying that he might do it wrong. And then after it was over, Bob came over to me and said, "Sound familiar?" It sure did -- it was the "Foreign Affairs" piece, basically.

**Timothy Naftali**

Mel Laird --

**Raymond Price**

And that was where he laid out what became known as the Nixon Doctrine.

**Timothy Naftali**

Do you remember discussions at the time about how we might have withdrawn from Vietnam? How quickly we would withdraw?

**Raymond Price**

I don't remember any particular discussions about it; I'm sure there were some, I just don't recall them. But obviously, he had thought we'd be able to do it more quickly, but he was determined that it would be done in the right way and that he wanted us to withdraw, but only in the right way. And that meant in a way that would give the South Vietnamese a chance to succeed on their own. This had not been done before and so it was early in his administration that he began the whole process of Vietnamization, that is, gradually enabling the South Vietnamese to take the war over on their own, getting their troops trained, equipped and so forth and gradually making them a bigger and a bigger part of it, so when our forces left, they would be able to continue it with our aid. And jumping ahead, I think some of the saddest moments of his life and of mine, were post- Presidency when I was down in San Clemente, and when South Vietnam was collapsing and this was when the people were being air lifted off the embassy and so forth and we could see it all happening. Knowing that it did not have to happen, that if it had not been for the spiteful actions of the U.S. Congress, it need not have happened. First, in passing the War Powers Act, which denied him the right to retaliate, denied the President the right to retaliate and then taking the supplies away from

our allies there. We condemned them to failure. And knowing that it didn't have to happen, knowing what the stakes were, he was just devastated by that and so was I.

**Timothy Naftali**

Can you recall any discussions with him from -- I'm jumping ahead from the San Clemente period; it's 1975, this is happening. You are there, can you -- you were seeing a lot of him.

**Raymond Price**

Yeah, well, this was when he was kind of getting organized for the future. It just happened that I was out there for -- post-Presidency, I went out there after his -- he made the resignation on television Thursday night -- he called me about midnight and said that he needed a few days to decompress and then he'd like me to come out and think. He had already asked me to be his collaborator on the memoirs, and I begged off that, but I said I would be glad to help in any way I could. And so a week later I went out and spent a week with him as he was just beginning to think things through, came back, spent about a month cleaning out my office and finally getting free. I had hoped to leave the White House earlier, but I got trapped into staying until the end. And then I was out there for three and a half months in the winter and spring of '75, and it was during those three and a half months that we were watching the collapse. But he was trying to think through his own future, trying to think through the memoirs, how he would approach those and so forth and transitioning, and it was a difficult transition. And, of course, that was also the period during which he had a couple of serious medical emergencies, and almost died.

**Timothy Naftali**

You were there, I suppose, was he still in the hospital when you were around?

**Raymond Price**

At least one of my visits out there, he was in the hospital. I remember seeing him there and he looked almost like a cadaver, he really did. This was after his phlebitis had acted up and a blood clot had gone to the heart and they'd done an emergency operation and complications from that, for two or three days they didn't know if they were going to save him or not.

**Timothy Naftali**

I understand in that period he actually dictated quite a bit of stuff, he didn't know if he would survive and there were some things he wanted to express.

**Raymond Price**

That I'm not familiar with.

**Timothy Naftali**

He -- since we we're talking about that period, we'll go back. Sitting here thinking about it, you didn't agree to help him with his memoir?

**Raymond Price**

I didn't -- it wasn't that it was any disagreement or anything like that; I was exhausted, I was absolutely exhausted and I wanted to do my own book about it. I just needed to get out and get fresh and get -- and during the whole time I was working with him, I was trying as well as I could to reflect his -- faithfully, in all I wrote, to reflect faithfully what his thinking was; because anything we were doing in his name, I wanted it to be what he -- a lot of other people kept trying to squeeze their own stuff into it, and I tried to prevent that. When I was writing the running -- running the writing shop I considered it one of my principal responsibilities which I defined and took on myself, to make sure that people did not get away with trying to slip this kind of stuff in, which they always were trying to do. But I needed to get my own mind working again and cleared up and be able to think for myself again, having been in the public policy arena my entire life, practically, and get thinking for myself again. And I just needed to get fresh; I was exhausted and I just had to get a fresh start, but I was glad to be of what help I could. And then I did end up, helped a good deal with the memoirs, but Frank Gannon became the principal collaborator on that. Frank was a very bright guy, an Oxford Rhodes scholar, whom I'm sure you know. He and Diane Sawyer and Ken Khachigian were the principal people on that, on the memoirs.

[Male Speaker]

Sorry, can we just stop for a second? I'm getting a lot of -- we're back on.

**Timothy Naftali**

Let's go back to 1969. You come back from -- do you recall any of the meetings with the heads of state in Asia?

**Raymond Price**

I sat in on some of them, some of them I didn't. It depended on whether the Head of State welcomed it or not. And for example, when he met with Chiang Kai-Shek I did not sit in, when he met with Yahya Khan I did not sit in. I did with several others including the President of the Philippines, and I think Thailand, and so forth and a couple of others, I don't recall just which ones. But it was -- he was always trying to explore with them how things looked from their standpoint, and things do look different from out there. And he was just trying to feed all of that into his own assessments and evaluations.

**Timothy Naftali**

And during the trip, the toasts, his speeches, primarily ad libbed?

**Raymond Price**

They were all ad-libbed, they're all ad-libbed. And this was when I had my first exposure to him as a toast master; he was a master at it. And I hadn't been aware of this sort of thing. I hadn't been exposed to this before, but it would always be a very gracious toast and taking account of the special sensibilities and sensitivities of the host government and the host himself, or herself. And a

little talk -- speech basically and thank you, but also a little bit about the future and what we could do together and all that sort of stuff. But he was really quite a master at the toast, and they're all ad-libbed. And always -- one thing that especially impressed me -- always would be something in it that would be directly responsive to something that the host had said on his own welcoming toast; he would always include that in it.

**Timothy Naftali**

I guess that would be one of the advantages of it being --

**Raymond Price**

Yeah, mm-hmm.

**Timothy Naftali**

-- ad-libbed. It also showed a certain self-confidence.

**Raymond Price**

Yeah, mm-hmm, because he was always more comfortable without a text than with one.

**Timothy Naftali**

What would happen with the text, I'm just curious?

**Raymond Price**

Well, he didn't use any for those, but in a speech or anything like that, with a text he would read it; he didn't like reading, he knew he came across better without one. And one little interesting sideline on that: In the White House, he always had papers in front of him and he read from them. And often you would look at him on the screen and you would see his eyelids instead of his eyes. I discovered how Walter Cronkite did it, which was he would have papers there so -- Nixon just refused to pretend that he was not reading a text -- but I discovered how Walter Cronkite did it, I urged him to at least use the Cronkite thing, which he had papers in front of him so he wasn't pretending not to read, but he also had the screens up in front so he could be reading from up there and you could see his eyes instead of his eyelids. But even that was too phony for Nixon, he would not even do that, he wasn't -- he didn't like reading, and he was not going to pretend that he wasn't doing it.

**Timothy Naftali**

For him, the television Presidency was a challenge then?

**Raymond Price**

Mm-hmm.

**Timothy Naftali**

I guess staging was a problem; he didn't like the stage?

**Raymond Price**

No, he didn't, no.

**Timothy Naftali**

So, it's 1969. Do you recall discussions about the draft, what to do with the draft? It's a major issue at that point.

**Raymond Price**

Yeah, he certainly -- he wanted to get rid of it. I don't recall a discussion, I really don't. You'd better talk with others about that, I think. I don't even remember when it was we finally did that.

**Timothy Naftali**

But my question for you, I think, is how much in that state, before you took over the shop, how much interaction did you have with the President? I mean, obviously, on the trip to Asia, but -- .

**Raymond Price**

Yeah, yeah, yeah -- it varied, not on a regular basis and it would often be, more often in memos back and forth. He preferred to get things on paper. He could absorb by many, many times as much from paper as he could from talking things out. And it gave him a chance to really think and to think. And so a lot of our communication was memos back and forth, or sometimes he would have Haldeman or Ehrlichman sort of pass something on, that kind of thing. So we were always in communication, but I made a point of not trying to intrude on him unless I absolutely had to. A lot of people were just cramming, but I was keenly conscious that the most precious commodity you have in a White House is the President's time. And I knew he could use time a lot better than just by sitting and yakking.

**Timothy Naftali**

Okay, thanks. Let's talk about your first, after the inauguration, what was your first major speech assignment?

**Raymond Price**

I don't remember, I don't remember. I'd have to look back at that.

**Timothy Naftali**

Well, on what role did you play -- did you play any role in shaping the "Silent Majority" speech?

**Raymond Price**

No, that was one that he did entirely by himself at Camp David. Now, whether we had some memos or anything like that, I don't know, but he went up there, he spent several days really working on hard on that, but it was entirely his own. And he came back and did it, and it was probably the most effective speech of his Presidency. I think he often thought it had been.

**Timothy Naftali**

So help us to the extent you can; help us with that process. He wrote it out and he would just give it to Rose Woods and she'd type it up and --

**Raymond Price**

Well, I wasn't sitting there watching, I don't know. But he would normally -- he would write. He'd never used a computer or a typewriter, but he dictated a lot. He always had a dictating machine beside him, and Rose would transcribe his dictations and then he would work from those.

**Timothy Naftali**

So that speech never went through the --

**Raymond Price**

Never did, nope, never did. Never went through the process. But he worked it out very carefully. But he did it by himself at Camp David with only himself and Rose up there I think, yeah.

**Timothy Naftali**

Those first two years are very full of domestic achievements. President Nixon is often described as somebody who was more interested or comfortable with foreign affairs than domestic policy. Help us think through that, and maybe think through the role that he played, for example, in the environmental policy that year. How would you view it, how would you explain it?

**Raymond Price**

Well, if I could back up a little bit and get to the environment in a moment, the central thing I think, in terms of domestically, for him, was the -- to reverse the pattern of the middle half of the 20th century. And to me, there's a wonderful division in the 20th century, and the first, second, and third thirds. The second third being keyed off by Franklin Roosevelt, the massive expansion of government. And he was determined to reverse that in the final third and go back more -- put more and more power and authority back to the states and localities. This was sort of the key to the central domestic direction for him, and this affected a lot of different fields. Revenue sharing was a key part of that, and so forth, trying to -- so we would provide the money and let them make the decisions. And he wanted to empower people in their -- individually and in their communities and through their states as opposed to having everything decided in Washington. And the middle third had begun with Franklin Roosevelt, and ended with Lyndon Johnson, and with that constant

theme there. And Johnson, of course, was the big, the massive centralizer there, too. But we were doing this a lot of different ways and the environment was separate, of course.

This was newly recognized as a major concern. It was not -- I don't think it was very high on his own personal agenda, but he recognized it was something that had to be done, and he was the one who created the Environmental Protection Agency and the Council for Environmental Quality. I did the message to Congress on those. And this was, I don't know if he realized how far reaching this was going to be at the time, but he did recognize that it was a need, and it was something that Washington was going to have to deal with.

**Timothy Naftali**

John Whittaker recalled that 1969 was this -- this was a year when environment came onto the radar screen in a dramatic way; this was the period of the first Earth Day. It suddenly takes people - it shakes people up a bit, in the sense that it's suddenly at the top of many people's --

**Raymond Price**

Yeah, it was, yeah, yeah.

**Timothy Naftali**

It came out of no where.

**Raymond Price**

Yeah, it came very, very quick. And John is the expert on this, John Whittaker, he was the one in the White House who had the oversight responsibility on this whole field and he was a very sharp guy and he's the one who really can talk more authoritatively on that. I did the messages, but John was the -- kind of the coordinator.

**Timothy Naftali**

But, as you said, when you were doing the messages, people didn't quite know --

**Raymond Price**

A lot of people thought it was out of character for him, too.

[laughter]

I guess a lot of people -- I think they didn't expect this from Nixon.

**Timothy Naftali**

Well, what did you -- how did you feel?

**Raymond Price**

I thought it was something that needed to be done. I'm an environmentalist, but not an environmental nut. We were trying to promote environmental concerns but to hold back environmental nuts, and we have some of that going on even today. I think the environmental -- a lot of the people who make the environment their primary concern really want to make that triumph over everything, and you have to strike balances. Nixon was always one to try to find a balance, and this is one of the areas in which he tried to do it.

**Timothy Naftali**

We'll be talking later about busing and desegregation, which is another area where, I think the administration tried to --

**Raymond Price**

Yeah, very much, yeah, yeah.

**Timothy Naftali**

Do you remember -- just to go back to the environment in that period when you worked on those messages -- do you recall people arguing in the shop, "Oh, my goodness, here we are trying to reduce the size of government and we've just taken on this huge new responsibility?"

**Raymond Price**

I know the worst arguments -- I don't recall them at this point, this was another that was -- doing that environmental message, it was a controversial one, I think within the administration in the White House, and also because it was plowing new ground, completely new ground. It also was a pretty complex one and we came up with a lot of different programs and so forth, too, out of that. So it was a major undertaking, but again, John is the one who can tell you more about it.

**Timothy Naftali**

You -- to do this message you would receive inputs from John and others.

**Raymond Price**

Yeah, mm-hmm.

**Timothy Naftali**

But once your message was done, you didn't send it to them. I guess you'd send it to the President for vetting.

**Raymond Price**

No, well, actually, the process in any of these things, whether that or anything else -- we'd get things, the drafts would be circulated to all those who had substantive responsibilities. Back when I

was running the staff, I had a special table in my office that I used just for this. We would circulate, maybe eight, 10 drafts to eight or 10 different people with substantive responsibilities or more departments and agencies and White House people. They would all come up with their comments and corrections and arguments and so forth, and I would sit down there and with all eight or 10 or 11 or 12 of theirs, trying to accept some proposed changes, reject others, modify others, and sort of come up with a, as near as possible, kind of a consensus draft and circulate that again. We go this several, several rounds, so that all the people with substantive responsibilities had full input and there was a chance for them to be matched off against one another and so forth, and finally, the President would be the one who would have to finally sign off on it and he might make a few changes, too. But we did try very hard to make sure they all had their say.

**Timothy Naftali**

That could be difficult, though, because they don't all agree.

**Raymond Price**

It was, yeah. And they didn't, and a lot of them vehemently disagreed with one another, but you had to make choices, Presidents have to make choices.

**Timothy Naftali**

No doubt, I was thinking in terms of -- in the case of the environmental policy, Commerce and Agriculture didn't necessarily share the same views.

**Raymond Price**

No, there were a lot of issues in which this was true. But that's part of being a President, or Presidential staff.

**Timothy Naftali**

Tell us about, you know, the first year for Ray Price in Washington. Where was your office?

**Raymond Price**

My office was in the Old Executive Office Building; I had three different offices there at three different points. I loved that building, I really did. And he -- I think he was the first President who established an office of his own in the OEOB, which he had on the -- the first floor was the good floor, and all of mine were on the first floor, also. He had one near the center, right by the center of the side that faced the White House so he would just walk across Old Executive Avenue and up the steps and there to his office there. But he used that; that was really his working office. He was much more comfortable working there than he was working at the Oval Office.

**Timothy Naftali**

So if you were going to interact with him, then often it would be right there on the first floor of that --

**Raymond Price**

Often it would be; sometimes it would be the Oval Office, but it was also very often there, on that one.

**Timothy Naftali**

Could you describe that office, his office for us?

**Raymond Price**

Yeah, it -- these wonderful -- you know the OEGB had four-foot thick outer walls, two-foot thick interior walls, high ceilings, big rooms, marbled corridors, and so forth, a grand old building. Originally it was State, War, and Navy Departments and then it was the State Department, and then it became the Old Executive Office Building. So it was a very spacious office, with an anteroom for the secretaries and so forth. And he had a desk -- he had the Eisenhower desk in that office. And wherever he worked except, of course, the Oval Office, which was probably one reason he didn't like working in the Oval Office -- wherever he worked, whether there or at his home or in the family room upstairs, family sitting room up in the family quarters, Lincoln Sitting Room -- he always had a club chair, a brown club chair, an ottoman, and a little table beside it, which he would have an ashtray for his pipe and a dictating machine and he could sit there with his yellow pads on his knee and read, write, think or whatever. And so he had one of those in the corner and a little table with, I think, four chairs around it, and we often would sit at that table while we were working things over and a couple of guest chairs and so forth, but it was a working office, as opposed to the Oval Office, which was a ceremonial office.

**Timothy Naftali**

[Unintelligible]

**Raymond Price**

He always had little plaques up there, and one of the plaques was on -- that I loved -- was something that Bebe Rebozo and Bob Abplanalp, his closest personal friends, the two of them had given him after the -- I think it was a birthday thing -- after the 1972 election. It was a map of the United States showing everything except the District of Columbia and Massachusetts, saying, "For the man who has almost everything."

[laughter]

**Timothy Naftali**

So it's '69, you're in the first office. Do you share that office?

**Raymond Price**

No, no, no, I had my own office there, it was also on the other side of that first floor, again, what a huge spacious thing, it was very nice, I really liked it.

**Timothy Naftali**

Let's talk about, well, let's go to 1970. Let's talk about -- you mentioned the Cambodia speech --

**Raymond Price**

Mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

**Timothy Naftali**

-- that Buchanan wrote. Tell us where you were when Kent State happened.

**Raymond Price**

I was in my office then, because I remember one thing about that, that I got a call from Ron Ziegler, the press secretary, saying that four kids had been killed there and they needed to do a little statement. I drafted a quick, short one, thinking that it was -- made sense, it turned out to be a mistake. I forget now exactly what it was, but it wasn't as compassionate, I guess, as I -- because I think it had something in it about -- I'd have to dig it out -- to the effect that it wasn't quite as boldly stated, but you know when you riot, you run a risk. And these were rioting kids who were actually throwing stones at National Guardsmen with guns in their hands. And the Guardsmen, a couple of the Guardsmen fired in self-defense; they shouldn't have, but they did. And so the kids were dead, but of course all of that was blamed on the President.

**Timothy Naftali**

Perhaps one of the things that people coming to this period, decades from now, will need to understand the climate. Could you give us some word pictures to help us understand the climate in Washington?

**Raymond Price**

The climate was -- I've often described the -- what we inherited when we came in 1969, was the 1960s, which I have often described, I think, is absolutely accurate, as the second most disastrous decade in American history, second only to the 1860s when the country was in an actual civil war. This was, in effect, a civil war that had begun in the mid- 1960s when rioting became the fashion. People forget, but part of the culture was burning down cities; whole sections of cities were set aflame every summer. Mobs rioted in the streets, and the counter culture was riding high and setting the cultural tone for the country. A lot of the mass media were cheering them on. It was a

disastrous decade, it really was almost a civil war. And this persisted into our early years and then it was exacerbated by Kent State and Cambodia. But a lot of it was focused on the war, on the Vietnam War, which was bitterly unpopular, which we inherited from Johnson.

When we came in, there were half a million American troops in Vietnam with no plan in place either to win the war or to end it. And we changed the way of doing things to try to end it in a way that would contribute to a larger peace rather than a larger war. But we bore the brunt of all of the dissatisfaction there but again, it was brutal and even his first year there the anti-war forces announced a moratorium for October 15th and November 15th, they announced it in advance. The November 3rd speech was done kind of in response to that but he announced before October 15th that he was going to do it on November 3rd so it would not be seen as a response to October 15th. And these were huge demonstrations -- and demonstration is a mild word, but the demonstrations in those years included mass violence, murderous violence, rock-throwing violence. And then I think it was May Day, 1969, I think it was, when they organized, when the radical left organized a march on Washington and they were determined to shut the city down, which they damn near did. Mobs were rushing through the streets, smashing windows, dragging cars into the streets, blocking traffic, even throwing bedsprings off of overpasses into the way of traffic, all to try to shut the city down. That's the kind of climate he inherited and had to deal with. It's hard for people, I think these days to understand or appreciate that, but the nation was at war with itself and a lot of the mass media were cheering, the popular mass media were cheering the violent folks on.

#### **Timothy Naftali**

The White House is always well protected but did you get a sense, walking into the executive office building or even the White House when you go over there that it was a siege?

#### **Raymond Price**

Not normally, although in one of those demonstrations we actually had to ring the whole White House complex with buses to keep the mobs from storming the White House. That's how bad it was. But just on the day to day things, no. I drove my car in there, until the last couple of years I had a White House car and driver to take me in, but I drove my own car in there and parked it on West Exec, but no problem.

#### **Timothy Naftali**

In looking at the drafts of Nixon's "Silent Majority" speech, I notice that at one point he talks about the silent center, and he changed that to majority. I thought that was interesting. Tell us a little bit about the concept of the center.

#### **Raymond Price**

I wasn't a part of that change, but knowing him, I think it makes sense. That is, in fact, the rioters who believed they were a majority, were not. They were a minority; they were a radical, violent minority. The majority really didn't like it, but they were silent. And one of the reasons that the rioting types were in the ascendant was that they got all of the attention and because they got all of the attention, people imagined that they spoke for the nation; they did not. And so he was trying to make the point clearly and directly that they were a minority and that psychologically, one of the

interesting things was, one of the things that they objected most to in that was being called a minority, not being referred to as that the majority was somebody else. But he was trying to wake up the majority to act as a majority and to become part of the solution rather than supinely letting itself become a part of the problem.

**Timothy Naftali**

You mentioned, you've used the metaphor, "seeking middle ground." Talk to us about what you recall about the busing issue in 1970. Nineteen seventy is very important, the fall of 1970, the kids are going to go to school, court orders are coming into effect. You participated in shaping the President's message?

**Raymond Price**

Eight thousand-word white paper. If I could step back for just a moment on the radicals and the '60's. In recent months, years, one thing that I've used in talking with groups to help them get a sense of this, was I would throw out a question to the audience, saying I was going to ask them a question, give them a moment to think about it and then ask for a show of hands of various numbers. The question being: What would be your guess about the combined number of actual bombings, attempted bombings and bomb threats recorded in the U.S. during our first 16 months in office, from January '69 to April '70? And then I would throw out ranges of numbers: 1 to 50, 50 to 100, 100 to 200, and so on. By the time I got up to around 300, there were very few hands. The actual number was 40,000. Forty thousand actual bombings, bomb threats and attempted bombings in the U.S. during those 14 years -- 14 months. That's one measure of what we had to deal with. But anyway, getting on to the school busing, this was probably the most contentious domestic issue there was at the time, other than violence. And it had been 15 years since *Brown v. Board of Education*, 14 years since *Brown II*, when the Supreme Court said it had to be done with all deliberate speed and it still hadn't been done; the South was still rigidly segregated. He was determined to do two things: One, to achieve the integration as ordered by the Court, but two, to try to do it while preserving the unity of the nation and to bring the South within the Union.

**Timothy Naftali**

Would you like some water?

**Raymond Price**

No, I just had something in my throat, that's all. A little phlegm got down there. The people often referred to his southern strategy, which was part of his election strategy, that was to win the South as well as the North. And they assumed that meant being soft on segregation; it was not. He really felt very strongly that the South deserved respect. Southerners deserved respect just as other people did. It was part of the culture of the North to disdain the South, and he was determined to treat them with respect and he felt he could do more with them that way than just confrontation. Confrontation had been the norm. And this is the spirit in which he was going to approach the task of trying to integrate but to do it in a peaceful way.

He formed a Cabinet committee on -- I forget now the exact term, name of it -- but a Cabinet committee for school integration is what it was. The nominal chairman of it was the Vice President

Spiro Agnew, the actual -- the vice chairman -- the actual guy who managed it was George Shultz who was then secretary of labor, and who had been one of the nation's leading labor mediators, too, when he had been a professor at the University of Chicago and one of the very best people we had, very solid guy, later secretary of state and everything else. So George was the guy who really organized it and a fellow named Bob Mardian was, I think, staff director of it, or one of the top staff. Bob was a southerner himself. And there were several meetings to talk about how to do this.

Finally decided to try to set up state committees in the southern states; black and white together, bleeding people from both black and white, to work out to the best that they could, how this would be done and be done peacefully, and knowing that it had to be done. This got off to a rocky start. The blacks didn't want to be a part of it. The whites didn't want to be part of it. The whites didn't want to be seen mixing with the blacks and all that sort of thing. But began setting them up, starting out with the toughest nut of all to crack, which is Mississippi. And I think a fellow named, if I get the names right, Hood, I think, Hood and Mason, I forget the names of each one. I think Hood was the head of the Manufacturers Association of Mississippi. Mason I think, was head of the NAACP. And they were making some progress, nurtured along from Washington, but again, making it clear that it was going to happen. The question was whether you were going to save the schools while it happens.

And finally they decided to take it a state at a time. The Mississippi folks were brought to Washington and they had a meeting in the Roosevelt Room, right across the hall from the Oval Office with Shultz and Marty and then some of the other White House folks here to meet and it was kind of -- it was making a little progress. Then finally they were taken across the hall to meet with the President in the Oval Office and this made an impression, and then they were taken to lunch at the State Department. And at each table they mixed white and black together and put the two -- those two, Hood and Mason, at the same table and George Shultz and Bob Mardian sat at that table with them. And they went on and things were going along and they were beginning to -- at first they hard to -- for Hood and Mason even to talk to one another, but they got to talking better and it was going fairly well. George Shultz got up and said, he excused himself and motioned to Bob Mardian to come along with him. Mardian wondered why, he said they were making progress and George told Mardian that "My experience has been when they get to this point they can do it better by themselves." They came back to the table, finally, sat down and the NAACP guy is saying to the white guy, you know, "If we can't do this, nobody can." They shook and from then on it worked, it worked. They got together and then the other states followed and the schools did open, segregated, peacefully in the South that fall.

**Timothy Naftali**

That's a remarkable story. Where were you then?

**Raymond Price**

I was just at -- I was at the White House, I was not actually part of it, I was watching outside and I did the 8,000-word speech. It was a white paper -- it was a white paper -- it wasn't addressed to anybody, but it was on the whole subject of black and white relations, school integration in particular. Secretly it was meant in part to try to move the Supreme Court to do it so they wouldn't overstep in the orders. So it could be done peacefully, but also to try to lay out what it was meant to be and what it wasn't. And to make the distinction between de jure and de facto segregation.

The de facto should be outlawed, that is, de facto which is the result of law, and de jure was simply the result -- de jure, the result of law, and de facto, which was simply housing patterns. Nixon was very strongly opposed to the whole thing of busing people six miles across town just to produce integration, where there had not been any enforced segregation and that sort of stuff which is beginning to happen, destroying school systems all over the country. But also to let what it was, that it was necessary and how to do it right and so forth. It had some impact, I think, but it was his sort of definition of what the problem was, why it had to be dealt with, the future of education depended on it and the future of the nation depended on it. But also, he was, throughout, when people said southern strategy, they thought he meant segregation; he didn't. He meant treating the South with respect, treat Southerners with respect.

**Timothy Naftali**

The messages include a discussion of equal opportunity and one gets the impression from the messages that the Federal Government is taking on responsibility now for making the schools better.

**Raymond Price**

Mm-hmm.

**Timothy Naftali**

Wasn't the point of the issues, what do you do if the problem is the schools are bad. I mean this is an important thing to think about.

**Raymond Price**

Yeah, of course, he was a firm believer in education. He'd gotten his own education the hard way. He knew it was important. But also, at one point, I remember one of the things I wrote was trying to define a free and open society, which I think was really what he was trying to do, meaning that both ways, that the objective being to give people, and the focus being on people, not institutions or lawyers or government, but so that people were free to do as much as they could and it was open as wide as possible, so the government would help but not interfere, kind of thing, to the extent that it could. And again trying to get the powers of decision back closer to the local level and closer to the individual. So the focus was on the individual, not on the government.

**Timothy Naftali**

Do you recall actually talking with him about that?

**Raymond Price**

I know we talked about it any number of times. I don't recall any specific conversations on it.

**Timothy Naftali**

[Unintelligible]

**Raymond Price**

But a free and open society was sort of the definition, kind of a working definition.

**Timothy Naftali**

John Whittaker told us that one reason that the administration committed itself to creating new parks was that President Nixon remembered not having a park. He would say that it's a long drive from Yorba Linda to Yosemite. You mention the fact that, you know, he had gone to public school. It's a long time ago, but can you recall any, drawing on any of these personal experiences with you?

**Raymond Price**

I don't necessarily -- I know he did from time to time, I just don't have recollection of it. I do recall the parks, though, I think the actual thing that sparked that was a little one paragraph memo - one or two paragraph memo about this long narrative recommending what I called a "Legacy of Parks," saying that we had all of the surplus Federal property we were trying to get rid of. If we could turn some of it over to local governments for park use it could be, and he ended up doing that.

**Timothy Naftali**

Was this an idea that --

**Raymond Price**

Yeah, just my own, yeah.

**Timothy Naftali**

Do you have any recollection of the Supreme Court fights, the fights over the justices?

**Raymond Price**

Yeah, yeah, I do.

**Timothy Naftali**

Can you tell us what you know?

**Raymond Price**

This was one of the bitterest fights he had. He -- the first vacancy he -- let's see, his first vacancy that he -- he was determined to, because the Supreme Court was reshaping the South, and the South was not represented on the Court. He was determined to try and get a really good southern justice for it. Now the first vacancy that he had was for, if I recall the sequence correctly, Warren Burger, the Chief Justice was leaving -- Earl Warren was leaving and he got Warren Burger for that and the nice thing there is Earl Warren is being replaced by Warren Earl Burger. But then the next was one in which he nominated a fellow named Clement Haynsworth. He was the Chief Justice of the Circuit Court of Appeals for whatever district it was in the southeast, I forget the number, from I think, South Carolina or Georgia, I think South Carolina. An eminent jurist, superbly qualified, and the -- but he was from the South, and so it turned out he was unconfirmable, because he was from the South; from anywhere else he would have been confirmed without a whisper; he was that good. This infuriated Nixon, absolutely infuriated him and he was determined to get it. He then set up -- he then angrily responded on that, and he sat down, and he called for the next -- the Department of Justice to come up with the next name. They came up with Haynsworth and, who was the guy --

**Timothy Naftali**

[Unintelligible]

**Raymond Price**

Carswell, Carswell, yeah.

[Male Speaker]

Hold that thought, I've got to change tape, sorry.

**Timothy Naftali**

We're talking about the President's second nominee for the Court.

**Raymond Price**

Mm-hmm, Harrold Carswell who looked good on paper. He had also just recently been confirmed either for the Circuit Court of Appeals, I think. He was from the South, but he sounded pretty sensible and centrist. And but it did turn out, and as the hearings went on, that he -- that the charge of not being up to the job probably fit. And he also was turned down by the Senate, but Nixon was infuriated by that, but he recognized that he really didn't belong there. So for the next one, he, but he sounded off -- he was still determined to get a southerner on the Court but for the next one, he went up north for Blackman. Then finally, one after that I think, he got Lewis Powell from Virginia who also was superbly qualified, so he finally had a southerner. But he wanted to be sure that he at

least got a southern justice onto the Court. But he also wanted to move the Court, as more conservative Presidents tend to do, to be a little less on the left, a little more centrist.

**Timothy Naftali**

Did you write any messages about that?

**Raymond Price**

I don't think I did. I don't recall for sure, but I don't think so. He did make a statement or two but I don't recall whether I had any.

**Timothy Naftali**

Did you know that Blackmun had been considered by LBJ?

**Raymond Price**

I don't recall whether -- I don't know whether he knew this or not. Hm, hm.

**Timothy Naftali**

Let's talk a bit about foreign policy.

**Raymond Price**

Mm-hmm.

**Timothy Naftali**

Some dramatic changes are going on.

**Raymond Price**

Mm-hmm.

**Timothy Naftali**

1971, there's a whole layer of secret diplomacy.

**Raymond Price**

Mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

**Timothy Naftali**

Tell us what you knew and when.

**Raymond Price**

Some -- I didn't know this, of course, I knew what Nixon wanted to do basically from the start but he didn't -- the China initiative was something he intended at some point to do as he had flagged it in that "Foreign Affairs" piece in October of '67. At some point, I forget now when, I remember he stopped by my office and just very -- with a little smile -- kind of said, "Things are moving. We're going to have something on that." I don't know, I don't recall just when that was. It was well before anything public was out. Just sort of to alert me and very happily that it was in process. But then, when it finally all came up, I thought I was going to be on the opening to China trip. I'd been planned that I would. I had done all the writing of the toasts and so forth in Washington. But then, on his 1972 opening China trip, then maybe 10 days or so before I was to go, the Chinese got very nervous and they limited to 20 the number in the American delegation. Nixon knew he was going to get a lot of flack from his right wing, so he felt it would probably be safer to have Pat Buchanan to take my seat on the plane. So Pat went over. He had nothing to do over there, but just to give him a little cover on the right when he got back, which may or may not have been a wise thing.

But, again, the reason that I didn't have to was not only had I done all the toasts and so forth for the writing, but we had also put up a satellite for communication. And so I was able to -- and this was a mind-boggling thing at the time -- I was able to pick up the signal corps phone at my desk, and say, "Peking?" and about two seconds later a male English-speaking voice would say, "Peking." It was one of our signal corpsmen in Peking, so I could converse with the folks while they were there and make any final changes and so forth, which we did. And also, a P.S. to that is that when the trip was over, we left the satellite up and it was very useful later on for intelligence purposes.

[laughter]

**Timothy Naftali**

Did you participate at all in drafting the Shanghai Declaration?

**Raymond Price**

Shanghai Communiqué? No, no, I didn't, no, I didn't, no.

**Timothy Naftali**

Because there was a struggle over that then that involved Pat Buchanan.

**Raymond Price**

Yeah, it might well have. I might have, I don't think I was. Most of that, of course, most of that was worked really out with Henry Kissinger's staff and Win Lord, I think Henry and Win. Pat, of course, would have weighed in on it because, of course, Pat hated the whole thing -- Pat Buchanan.

**Timothy Naftali**

Perhaps, well, I'll have to ask him whether it was a pleasant trip for him.

[laughter]

**Raymond Price**

No, my understanding was that on the trip he had nothing to do.

**Timothy Naftali**

Tell me about --

**Raymond Price**

And also, of course, the Communiqué had been worked out -- practically all of it had been worked out -- in fact, I had just been reading Margaret -- what is her name? -- the new -- Margaret, Margaret Macmillan -- and just reading a portion of that and so I realized that we were doing a little -- but it was the final tweaking that they were doing, whatever it was. But I doubt that Pat that would have had a hand in that.

**Timothy Naftali**

Tell me about -- Presidents have gotten in trouble with the toasts they give --

**Raymond Price**

Mm-hmm.

**Timothy Naftali**

-- to leaders of authoritarian countries.

**Raymond Price**

Mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

**Timothy Naftali**

It's a delicate matter.

**Raymond Price**

Yeah, mm-hmm.

**Timothy Naftali**

How did you think about a toast for Zhou or even for Mao?

**Raymond Price**

I don't recall. I really don't recall how we did it, but whatever it was, I would have worked with, been working with the NSA folks and so on. On anything like that, I worked with our substantive people.

**Timothy Naftali**

Do you recall perhaps the person, I mean, as we do more interviews, who might you have worked with on this?

**Raymond Price**

Would have been probably Henry and Win Lord, who was Henry's right hand and who's now at the Council on Foreign Relations. But I just don't recall anything about the process, you know, whether they -- to what extent they massaged it in Peking after the negotiations. I don't remember.

**Timothy Naftali**

You said the President preferred to ad lib but he decided to have toasts that were prepared.

**Raymond Price**

Yeah, on this one, I think he did, yeah, mm-hmm.

**Timothy Naftali**

Remember why?

**Raymond Price**

Well, this was because of the extreme delicacy of this, I think, and that you had a lot of tricky things you didn't want to ad lib on, I think.

**Timothy Naftali**

Did you work on toasts or messages for the trip to Russia?

**Raymond Price**

No, I worked on stuff there. I went on both Russia summits and I don't recall -- now that you ask me, now I suddenly don't remember.

**Timothy Naftali**

Let's talk about, perhaps you recall the Tanya speech.

**Raymond Price**

Yeah, the Tanya speech. Yeah, I worked on that. Also, I remember at one point we were working, it may have been on that, we worked -- he stayed in the Kremlin, itself. Most of the rest of us stayed over in the Rossiya Hotel across the Red Square. But I remember at one point -- I think it may have been on that -- as I was working with him and there was something that I started asking him about, if he really want to do this, and he sharply looked at me, pointed his finger up at the ceiling and from then on, I remembered never to speak aloud, even in his room there, about anything that might be sensitive.

**Timothy Naftali**

That's great. The Tanya speech drew upon a memorial that he visited.

**Raymond Price**

Mm-hmm, he visited it in St. Petersburg and this was -- it was something he found very moving. He used it there --

[unintelligible]

. Each time he went to the Soviet Union, he made a televised address to the Soviet people, to the Russian people -- from Moscow. On his first visit, he went up to St. Petersburg and he'd been very moved by the little memorial to Tanya up there who was a young girl whose family had all died. I forget now whether it was famine or what.

**Timothy Naftali**

During the Siege of Leningrad --

**Raymond Price**

During the Siege, yeah, until only Tanya was left. He just wove this in and it worked very well. I remember I was in my hotel room watching the speech on television, and I was quite moved by it, too. As I came out, the Russian woman who was the maid for our rooms there came rushing out with tears streaming down her face and hugging me.

**Timothy Naftali**

And had you known about the memorial before you got there? Was this something that had been prepared?

**Raymond Price**

I don't remember whether we did or not. I assume it was on the schedule, but I doubt that he really knew what it was.

**Timothy Naftali**

So it was after visiting it --

**Raymond Price**

It was after visiting it, after seeing the memorial that he added that in. Yeah.

**Timothy Naftali**

He went to you and asked you to edit or was it something he wrote himself?

**Raymond Price**

No, I think this was something -- because I was working him on the stuff over there. Over there I was working with him on the things we were doing and then, again, he might have used prepared toasts there. I just don't recall whether he did or not. But I was working with him on stuff there. You know, it was kind of interesting to be working in the Kremlin for an old Republican like me.

[laughter]

**Timothy Naftali**

Did you meet --

**Raymond Price**

And just walking into and out of the Kremlin, through the Kremlin gates and so on.

**Timothy Naftali**

How much -- when you were walking in and out, you must have had minders, Soviet minders.

**Raymond Price**

No, no, just us, just walked on through.

**Timothy Naftali**

Did you meet your Soviet counterpart?

**Raymond Price**

Not my Soviet counterpart but I did get friendly with the translator, because Nixon insisted on using the Russian interpreter rather than the American state department guy. And the state department guy had his nose very badly out of joint on this, but it was a very wise choice for Nixon to make. The state department guy spoke Russian and all that and spoke English, but the Russian was a very sophisticated, suave guy who had lived in England and so forth -- Victor Sukhodrev he was later at the U.N. -- and I became friendly with him. But at a dinner there -- one of the dinners - - I was seated with him and he demonstrated for me his English-English and American-English. He spoke perfect English and then he would switch to perfect American English and because he was doing it, he was doing it in perfect Russian -- idiomatic Russian whereas our translator would have been sounding like a translator. And so Nixon -- and so the voice that the Russian people heard was Victor's voice talking to them in their own idiom and it really worked.

**Timothy Naftali**

So he was given the speech in advance?

**Raymond Price**

Yeah, mm-hmm, and to satisfy the worries of the people on our side who might worry, he did a written translation, and our people pronounced it perfect.

**Timothy Naftali**

Why did they use the word, "détente?"

**Raymond Price**

I don't know why it was picked up. I guess it was probably kind of in the diplomatic vocabulary at that point but it was sort of signifying a kind of warming and a smoothing out and regularization. One of Nixon's key aims in the Presidency, of course, was to regularize the relations and one of the reasons he started what was to have been a continuing annual, back-and-forth summit, just so they'd be an ordinary thing; they wouldn't be a big deal. So they'd have a continuing dialogue between the U.S. and the Soviet Union at the top level. Somehow or other, a funny thing happened and we only had three of them. But it was to have been a continuing thing and there was a huge difference in tone between the '72 and '74. In '72, all the Russian people, they were so nervous, they could barely walk, you know. They had never -- they were scared stiff. By '74, one of the things that I think sums it up best was -- because in '73, when they came over here, Brezhnev had gone out to San Clemente and visited Nixon's house. In '74, they said we must go down and visit his dacha on the Black Sea. We didn't -- our team didn't want to do that because it was in a town called Yalta and we did not want Yalta datelines on anything that came out of there. But by then, advance men, they could work things out and so we did go down there.

We got on a plane, we got off at the airport, piled into a motorcade, the motorcade wove its way around through mile after mile, at each turn higher up, pointing out to Oreanda -- and by the time we got there, that portion of Yalta was Oreanda and so we had our sessions down there where he had -- I'd been to the Rockefellers' Pocantico Hills -- his was far more elaborate than Pocantico

Hills, down there right on the Black Sea, including a huge indoor swimming pool with 20-foot-high glass doors that opened on to it, twin 120-foot yachts that we went out on for a cruise and so forth. He lived -- the Soviet leaders lived well.

**Timothy Naftali**

That was the '74?

**Raymond Price**

That was the '74, yeah.

**Timothy Naftali**

You become the head of the speech writing shop in '71?

**Raymond Price**

I -- yeah, Jim Keogh was there the first two years and then he left and I was asked to take that over in addition to my other stuff, mm-hmm.

**Timothy Naftali**

So that meant editing everybody's

[unintelligible]

...

**Raymond Price**

Yeah, yeah, yeah, so I was in charge of it -- I was the administrative charge of it -- and I was -- mm-hmm.

**Timothy Naftali**

How was -- we're shifting towards the election. Are you given any speech assignments, you know, for the campaign?

**Raymond Price**

I assume so. I just don't recall them, particularly.

**Timothy Naftali**

The acceptance speech, for example?

**Raymond Price**

Well, no, no, no, the acceptance, again -- he had done the acceptance in '68 -- he did the acceptance himself, entirely out in Montauk. We didn't see it until he gave it, and I think he did the same thing in '72. I don't recall for sure, but I think he did.

**Timothy Naftali**

What role did your shop play in shaping the speeches of Vice President Spiro Agnew?

**Raymond Price**

Pat Buchanan was assigned to Agnew, and he did speeches for Agnew. That was it.

**Timothy Naftali**

But as the chief of the staff, did you --

**Raymond Price**

No, no, they didn't pass through me, no. Agnew had his own staff.

**Timothy Naftali**

So, no one looked to see if, be sure that they were jibing at all?

**Raymond Price**

I don't think so, but Agnew became something of a problem.

**Timothy Naftali**

The election -- what are you doing during the election campaign?

**Raymond Price**

During the election campaign in '72, I worked with him on speeches. I forget now what we did in the way of written speeches, what we were actually, during the campaign cycle. I've forgotten now whether any were written in the campaign cycle or not, probably not. But we did -- certainly, leading up toward it, we had some written -- I don't recall -- because we had about seven or eight writers or so on the writing staff, several of whom actually did, occasionally did speeches for the President. Then I would act as editor on those when they did.

**Timothy Naftali**

The day of the Watergate break-in, where were you?

**Raymond Price**

On the break-in? Of course, I don't think I was aware of it on that day. I assume I was just in my office, mm-hmm.

**Timothy Naftali**

When did you become aware of this?

**Raymond Price**

When or how did I become aware, I can't -- whenever it became public, I guess, and when that was I don't remember. I ended up doing all the Watergate -- all the President's Watergate speeches with him, the first of these, I think, being April 30th. Yeah, first one was April 30, 1973. That was the one in which he let Haldeman and Ehrlichman go and fired Dean.

**Timothy Naftali**

Why do you think it took so long for the President to give a speech on Watergate?

**Raymond Price**

I don't know, I think we all didn't -- I don't think any of us thought it was going to boil up to the proportions it had. It didn't seem that big a thing, but, again, at this point, I'll have to refresh my memory on that. We can do that on Friday, maybe.

**Timothy Naftali**

Sure, before we do that, do you remember, did you work on the second inaugural?

**Raymond Price**

Yeah, mm-hmm, I did, mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

**Timothy Naftali**

Did he -- what was the process there? Did he do much of the writing?

**Raymond Price**

Yeah, it was the usual back and forth process. I don't recall any particular details of it but with him it was usually back and forth through about six or seven drafts. But, again, as he would work it out in his own mind as he was doing this and this would be all part of the thinking process. The first inaugural was better than the second, probably, but it was a different -- but of course, in the first you had the drama of a new President and in the second, you didn't.

**Timothy Naftali**

Well, there's some debate among historians that the President, after this resounding victory, wanted to move the country in a slightly different direction.

**Raymond Price**

Mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

**Timothy Naftali**

Perhaps a more conservative direction.

**Raymond Price**

Mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

**Timothy Naftali**

From what you can recall from the period now, how much of a shift did he want to signal in that?

**Raymond Price**

I don't think it was so much a signal. Of course, when he came in the first time, he wanted to move it in a more conservative direction but he was never a right-winger. He was really a centrist. But the country had gotten kind of a leftward tilt politically and he was trying to -- basically, he was trying to right the ship, but not push it over to starboard. A few people on the staff kept trying to push it over to starboard and trying to sink it on the starboard side, but he resisted that. But he knew that he had to -- he knew the constituencies he had to -- he needed those folks to get to the center kind of thing and so it was all part of the balancing, part of the job and you would give them some things, but not everything, because you were going to ask them to give up a lot, too.

But I don't think there was any particular shift from the first term into the second. May have been a shift in what he felt he could get done. What he did -- one of the things that I think a lot of people are not aware of, he was the first -- when he took office in '69 -- he was the first President in 120 years to take office with both houses of Congress already against him, and they remained against him throughout his Presidency. This was one of the defining problems in his Presidency. And also, of course, he had been the Republican whom Democrats most loved to hate for a good deal of his professional life going back to his having had the bad grace to discover that Alger Hiss really was a spy, and they never forgave him for that. All this was part of -- among of the things he had to govern against.

**Timothy Naftali**

Let's talk a little bit about that, the sort of the problem of the haters that I think now we would talk about high negatives.

**Raymond Price**

Mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

**Timothy Naftali**

When you were writing for him --

**Raymond Price**

Mm-hmm.

**Timothy Naftali**

-- and you're a consummate speechwriter and so forth, when you're a consummate speech writer, you have to hear the voice of the person that's speaking.

**Raymond Price**

Yeah, mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

**Timothy Naftali**

How did you do that? Was it just by listening to him?

**Raymond Price**

It wasn't really conscious, I don't think. I don't think there was that much difference -- he went on different styles for different things, one for oral, one for written and so on, but he was quite at home with complexity, quite at home with sophisticated arguments. He had a very sophisticated mind and he was a voracious reader of history and everything else. I think I would try to avoid anything that would sound un-Nixonian that I might have done for something for somebody else. I'm not sure that my style was that dramatically different from his, but, again, depending on the circumstance. He would talk in a different way to one audience than he might in another, because he was pretty sensitive about connecting with an audience. So, with live audiences, you play differently to one where if you're doing a television audience, you're talking to everybody. And I was probably more attuned with talking to everybody but to some audiences he would probably sound a little more like them.

**Timothy Naftali**

Well, I'll mention this in the context of how we dealt with the fact that there was a large population out there that detested him.

**Raymond Price**

Mm-hmm.

**Timothy Naftali**

Did you talk to him about that? I mean, not certainly

[unintelligible]

did you talk to him about how rhetoric would overcome that or

[unintelligible]

.

**Raymond Price**

No, no, I think it's just part of -- what we all accepted as part of the background.

**Timothy Naftali**

Presidents are persuaders, too.

**Raymond Price**

Yeah, mm-hmm, yep.

**Timothy Naftali**

So his background -- what role did his background as a lawyer play in shaping how he tried to persuade?

**Raymond Price**

I don't know that it -- I don't know to what extent it did. Of course, lawyers are turned -- are trained to think analytically and he was a very analytical thinker. But also, as I mentioned, he had been a champion debater from high school on up and he was used to persuading. And he'd been an active politician practically all of his adult life, post-Navy. Post-Navy, he really was an active politician practically all of his adult life, and so I think he was kind of doing what came naturally in trying to be persuasive. Course, I'd been an editorial writer and in that, you're also trying to persuade people.

**Timothy Naftali**

Yep, exactly. We'll talk about that next time. So, would you prefer if we left the discussion of the Watergate speeches until the next time?

**Raymond Price**

Why don't we do that, and I'll refresh myself on that.

**Timothy Naftali**

Including the resignations?

**Raymond Price**

Yeah, okay, good, good, mm-hmm.

**Timothy Naftali**

Then let me ask you, you mentioned something about the fact that -- we'll go back to 1967 then -- the reference to, the veiled reference to China was a last minute addition.

**Raymond Price**

Yeah, mm-hmm.

**Timothy Naftali**

Tell me how much you recall of that.

**Raymond Price**

I recall, we'd worked over the piece. That's something like the origin of the piece, it's kind of interesting. After we got back from that trip I made with him through Asia, and this was getting, for me, that was part of my getting acquainted. We started off -- I joined him on the first of February '67 -- we left on the first of March for this trip. So I was just getting to know him, of course, it was just the two of us. Bob Velcher joined us for just a part of the trip. So before he recruited me -- before we first met on February 22nd of '67, I had never met him except to shake hands at a Gridiron dinner, that's all. So I didn't know him although he'd been a part of my life as a writer and so forth and certainly as a public figure.

But in the course of this, I had found him so vastly much more impressive in person than he seemed to come across to people in public that I thought it would be useful in knowing how my fellow editors tended to regard him and so forth, if I could get him some editors to sit down with him and just over dinner and get acquainted. And he liked this idea so I recruited about ten or so editors, no reporters, only editors, for dinner and he hosted this at the Links Club in New York, across from where he lived, and we had a nice evening's discussion. One of those that I invited to this was the magazine editor of "Foreign Affairs" magazine and as we were leaving, he got me aside and said, "You know, you really ought to have him write something for 'Foreign Affairs.'" Good idea. I gave some thought to it. He was going off on his next trip. I was thinking about this. You know, it occurred to me a good topic would be Asia after Vietnam, which would be a way of talking about Vietnam but jumping aside -- jumping over the current controversy over it, and the future of Asia so it would be just a part of a larger thing. But a lot was going to be happening in Asia, which was going to be very important, and he was a good analyst to this and he was up to speed on this.

He liked the idea. And so, kind of -- I drafted and we worked it out together, worked it back and forth, and that became that "Foreign Affairs" article, which appeared in the October issue. The -- but that was just -- toward the end he just came in and that was one thing he decided to add to what we had already worked out. Just the -- I forget the exact wording of it, but it was the statement that we're going to have to bring them into the world again of ours. And so we put that in sort of like a placeholder in effect. That was his first public reference to anything about --

**Timothy Naftali**

Did he, I'm sorry to interrupt.

**Raymond Price**

Yeah, go ahead.

**Timothy Naftali**

-- let you when he suggested this.

**Raymond Price**

I don't think he'd thought about how he was going to do it and all that, but this was something he was going to want to do.

**Timothy Naftali**

Now during the trip to Asia, was this a theme?

**Raymond Price**

No, no, I don't think it was, no, no, but, again, this was not his first trip. He'd been out there meeting for the third, fourth, fifth times with people he'd known for a long time -- leaders out there. He'd been keeping in touch with them through the years and he'd been following events out there for years.

**Timothy Naftali**

So this came out of the blue?

**Raymond Price**

Yeah, mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

**Timothy Naftali**

He called people with it or

[unintelligible]

**Raymond Price**

No, I think it was once, sitting in his office or something like that. I was working with him in his office. He'd given me an office at the law firm.

**Timothy Naftali**

And he just said we should have -- You said -- why did you call it a placeholder?

**Raymond Price**

Well, I don't know. It's just a term I use now. It's sort of an old newspaper term, I guess. But basically he just wanted give this mention. I don't think he really thought about how he would do it, but just to -- as a flag, that this was something that he was going to want to do in some way but without making a big deal of it.

**Timothy Naftali**

Did people see it? Did people catch it?

**Raymond Price**

I don't think there was a lot of attention to it, no. It was just a minor thing in a much longer piece about a much wider range of things.

**Timothy Naftali**

But when he came and winked at you or smiled at you in the office, you knew what he was talking about.

**Raymond Price**

Not really, but I don't recall that much. It wasn't that big a thing.

**Timothy Naftali**

No, I meant later, back in 1971.

**Raymond Price**

Oh, then, yeah, he was kind of smiling and winking then. This was -- this was obviously when -- I don't recall whether '71 or what year it was, but I know it was when I was in my head of the writing staff office that he came by, chatting a couple of things, and then he made this kind of little thing which kind of indicated something was going to be happening now. I think that was about the time they'd finally gotten word that Henry would be going over on a secret trip.

[Male Speaker]

Can we stop there -- changing tapes.

**Timothy Naftali**

I just want to just nail this down a bit. So, the idea for the article came from you.

**Raymond Price**

Mm-hmm, yeah, mm-hmm.

**Timothy Naftali**

And Vice President, former Vice President Nixon at the time, thought it was a good idea.

**Raymond Price**

Yeah, mm-hmm.

**Timothy Naftali**

And the ideas for the bulk of the article came from your trip and what you had both experienced.

**Raymond Price**

Yeah, mm-hmm.

**Timothy Naftali**

The placeholder regarding China was a last minute addition by Nixon without much explanation.

**Raymond Price**

Yeah, mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

**Timothy Naftali**

Okay, by 1971, he signaled to you that there was going to be some movement

[unintelligible]

.

**Raymond Price**

Yeah, and I think in doing that, he was referring back to -- I think he referred me back to that, you know, I think something's going to happen.

**Timothy Naftali**

Referred you back to the article.

**Raymond Price**

Yeah, yeah, yeah.

**Timothy Naftali**

But in the inaugural address, people do point to that, the '69 inaugural address, there's another hint, but --

**Raymond Price**

Mm-hmm, I'll have to look back on that address to see what that might have been, yeah.

**Timothy Naftali**

But so it -- when he comes by the office in '71, I'm not sure when, he's actually getting back to that placeholder in the '60s.

**Raymond Price**

Yes, he was. Yeah, yeah, mm-hmm, mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

**Timothy Naftali**

Actually, could you tell us that because that would be nice to put that in the museum.

**Raymond Price**

About the hinting to the '67 --

**Timothy Naftali**

The hinting to the 1967 --

**Raymond Price**

That sometime, I think, probably in '61, in '71, he did stop by my office and he seemed happy and made some reference to, I think he said, I think that China thing, but I think this is going to happen. And it was clear that something was beginning. I didn't ask for details, but he seemed quite

pleased and looked as if things were on the start. And my guess is, in retrospect, that this probably was about the time when Henry either made or was about to make his secret trip, his first secret trip to explore it.

**Timothy Naftali**

Right, thank you. My arms weren't in the way, were they?

[laughter]

[Male Speaker]

[inaudible]

**Timothy Naftali**

Thanks. Let's --

[Male Speaker]

Could we change batteries and back up? I'm sorry.

**Timothy Naftali**

No problem. Hey, it's better than just finding out later that this doesn't exist.

[laughter]

**Timothy Naftali**

That's true.

**Timothy Naftali**

I don't mind. Ready?

**Raymond Price**

Yeah.

**Timothy Naftali**

You ready?

[Male Speaker]

Yes, we're speaking.

**Timothy Naftali**

Okay, you were a journalist before you joined --

**Raymond Price**

I was.

**Timothy Naftali**

-- the President's, Vice President's staff. Tell me your perspective on the media and Richard Nixon.

**Raymond Price**

He was a favorite target then. And I was -- I'd been -- most recently I'd been the editorial page editor of "New York Herald Tribune," which was one of the great newspapers of the world and the parent of the "International Herald Tribune," the principal competitor of the "New York Times," founded in 1841 by Horace Greeley and a traditionally Republican paper. I was also a member of the National Conference of Editorial Writers, the American Society of Newspaper Editors, the Overseas Press Club, and so forth and things like that. And I had -- I was -- nine years -- the last nine years of the "Trib" until it died in 1966. And so I think I knew the media world pretty well from inside as well as from outside. I'd also been involved with political things from almost when I could walk and talk. My first Republican National Convention was in 1948, when I wangled a ticket and got myself attached to the Michigan delegation because I was a supporter of Arthur Vandenberg, the pre-war isolationist turned post-war internationalist and chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee who really helped reshape the post-war world. And I'd always been active with Republican things. I was chairman of the Conservative Party and the old Political Union and so on.

But there were very few like me in the field that I was working in. Even though we were a Republican paper, most of our staff, of course, were not. The editorial page was. But most of the others that I worked with, and I spent a -- I often visited Washington and talked with reporters and people down there, and Nixon -- it was part of the culture. The mass media are just culturally to the left of center. I've seen a lot of surveys over the years of the Washington Press Corps were showing that -- these are serious pollings -- that 90 percent, consistently 90 percent -- going back to the Eisenhower days, 90 percent were voting for the Democratic nominee for President. This is just -- this is Washington. So this is the -- this is what -- this is not -- they don't think of themselves as prejudiced but they are.

It's an unconscious prejudice and they just -- with the Republicans, especially, anyone who's been an anti-communist Republican -- in those days, that was a bad thing to be, in the culture -- is automatically suspect and the burden of proof is on the Republican, whereas with the Democratic President, the burden of proof is on the critic. And it's, most of them are unconscious of this. They really don't think they're prejudiced, but they are. And so this is, this is an obstacle that any Republican President has to confront, Nixon especially, because he had been such an object of hate and scorn, ever since his days as a Congressman when he was the guy who nailed Alger Hiss. And Hiss -- it wasn't just -- Alger Hiss wasn't just any Communist spy; he was a pillar of the Eastern establishment himself. And so the Eastern establishment all rallied to his side in this. And this also colored the media, perceptions of anybody who was in that. And also, the whole McCarthy thing, even though Nixon was the opposite of McCarthy in terms of method and everything else, that whole thing carried over into the public, kind of in the public consciousness, as if anybody who is not a Communist is a McCarthyite, or is suspected of being a McCarthyite. And this was one of the burdens that he had to bear continually and it just made it harder to govern.

**Timothy Naftali**

Can you give some examples of how it made it harder for him?

**Raymond Price**

Well, in the sense that you -- it's just kind of a lingering hostility which pervaded the press, the media, the news media, not all of them, of course. There were varying degrees and each one is an individual, and so forth. And the -- most of them, I think they really pride themselves on their professionalism. There is a lot of professional pride, but they tend -- most of us, I think, tend to be unconscious of our own prejudices. We recognize the prejudices of others but we don't recognize our own, and this is very true of the news media. They get very upset if you accuse them of prejudice. That's because they don't see it.

**Timothy Naftali**

Do you have any friends in the media that you were interacting with when you were --

**Raymond Price**

Oh yeah, I had lots of friends in the media. I did interact. We talked and so forth, including ones who disagreed with us and so forth because I always maintained a pretty civil discourse with them.

**Timothy Naftali**

Could you tell us about that?

**Raymond Price**

Well, let's see, going back there are those that I particularly did. Oh, I'm trying to remember names there. But I was always accessible to them. And they often called me and I was willing to talk to them. I would never say anything I shouldn't say. I would never reveal secrets. Some of them tried

hard. I was pretty good at keeping them. I'd had a lot of practice. But I do remember one, just on the resignation day, when I had done the resignation speech and we're waiting for it and I got a phone call, a very careful call from Clifford -- Daniel --

**Timothy Naftali**

Margaret Truman's husband?

**Raymond Price**

Margaret Truman's husband, yeah, who was then the Washington Bureau Chief of the "New York Times," saying he knew this was a sensitive thing but could I just tell him because I would understand it as a newspaperman because they had 11 pages all locked up, is the word "resignation" in the speech? And I said, yes.

[laughter]

Because I understood his problem. I said it privately, obviously, but he was very relieved they weren't going to have to throw out those 11 pages.

**Timothy Naftali**

And we'll come to that tomorrow. You spent some time with the President after the Presidency.

**Raymond Price**

Yeah, mm-hmm.

**Timothy Naftali**

Had he always planned to write a memoir?

**Raymond Price**

I don't know if he had or not. Of course, he didn't expect to leave the Presidency exactly when and the way he did. And most Presidents do, I don't think, I don't know whether any modern Presidents have not, if they've lived. I guess Ford may not have, I don't know.

**Timothy Naftali**

[inaudible]

**Raymond Price**

Yeah.

**Timothy Naftali**

Had he, during the Presidency had he talked to you before the --

**Raymond Price**

I don't think he had, but again, we thought that was a long way off.

**Timothy Naftali**

When did you hear about the taping system?

**Raymond Price**

I heard it because I was writing the Watergate speeches. I heard about it I think when other people did. I had not known about it. And I'll have to refresh my memory on that as part of the Watergate stuff.

**Timothy Naftali**

After the Presidency --

**Raymond Price**

I was not troubled by it. That's right -- I do remember now. I remember the circumstances in which I heard about it.

**Timothy Naftali**

Please.

**Raymond Price**

Len Garment, who is a close friend of mine who was on the staff and who was then counsel to the President. He took over for John Dean. He had been Nixon's law partner in New York, was a close friend of mine. And he got me aside and he said, "What would you think if you learned that the President had a taping system and all your conversations were recorded?" I said, "It wouldn't bother me. Nothing I said to him was meant to be secret from him." Well, he told me it had been, and this was about to come out, and Butterfield was about to testify to it, and so on. And that was the first I knew about it. But again, I hadn't -- I had assumed, because it was solid established law that Presidents had total control over their private papers, that there was no problem. And I didn't care about his being able to retrieve anything.

**Timothy Naftali**

Once you knew about them and after the Presidency, did he ever say that he had done the taping to make his memoirs easier to write?

**Raymond Price**

No, I don't think so. I'm not sure whether we even -- whether we ever really talked about it. But my guess is that he had multiple motives. That one, so that he we could get help with the memoirs, but also so that he would have something to rely on when other people gave contrary accounts, which he knew would happen. This is common here, so that he would be able to provide an authoritative response. And again, during the transition, the -- after our election, Johnson showed him his -- Johnson's taping system and urged Nixon to keep it. When Nixon came in -- but Johnson had his controlled. For example, I think he had in the Cabinet Room and such, he had a little button that said Pepsi Cola and Coca-Cola or something. One of those meant turn it on, the other turned it off. So he controlled when he wanted it on and when he wanted it off. And there were lots of times when he obviously wanted it off. But Nixon, when he decided a couple years later that he probably ought to have one, that he wanted to be unconscious of it and that's why he made it voice activated so he would not be conscious of it.

**Timothy Naftali**

You did help a little with the memoirs.

**Raymond Price**

Yeah, I did.

**Timothy Naftali**

Tell us about that, please.

**Raymond Price**

Having declined to be the principal one, I did go out a week after the resignation to help him begin to think things through and then I was out there for a month and then for three and a half months the following winter, and then for five months later on, just after I'd finished my own book and before I had to go to Harvard. And in this part I was helping with some of it, parts of it, but the others were doing the bulk of the work on it. And I don't recall just exactly what I was doing. We were doing some other things at the same time there, too. But it was a huge undertaking, it really was. And he had to -- a lot of it was fascinating stuff on the early days, which had to be cut by about 90 percent to fit it into the single volume that the publishers wanted to do. But he was also trying to really be meticulous about making it accurate, and so there's a lot of research and checking and so forth that went on into it, a major undertaking, but he threw himself into it very heavily. And he was a good writer and editor himself. But he had some good people helping him and a lot of it was digging through the files, the archives and so on, trying to reconstruct things that had happened.

**Timothy Naftali**

Did you help at all in preparing him for the David Frost interview?

**Raymond Price**

Yeah, there were three of us, in fact, on my study wall here in New York -- if you ever come by, I'll show you the picture of Frank Gannon, Ken Khachigian, Diane Sawyer, Nixon and me, all smiling, standing with our hands on a stack this high of three-ring binders, all smiling because we had just finished the last of 29 hours of taping for those things. I sat in on all 29 hours of tapings. And these were the briefing books. We had prepared the briefing books for those tapings, and we were smiling because it was finally over with. That's on my wall now.

**Timothy Naftali**

Tell me about that, because I guess there will be a movie about that?

**Raymond Price**

Yeah, there will.

**Timothy Naftali**

Tell me about the process of preparation, please, and what instructions the President gave you.

**Raymond Price**

I don't know that I -- I don't recall any particular instructions from him, but just we had from the Frost folks, we had subject areas that were going to be covered in each, and there was 29 hours of taping over a period of several months for what was finally aired here as four hour-and-a-half shows. And Frost had total editorial control over putting it together. So we would -- he would prepare himself on whatever areas were going to be discussed at that time. I think I'm the only one of the three of us who sat in on all the tapings, was present for all of them. And the -- it was kind of interesting, the format. Frost would question, Nixon would answer. When I actually saw the broadcast, it was usually a long accusatory Frost question and a relatively brief excerpt from Nixon's answer. Frost was determined to be the star of it, but I thought on balance it was a plus and it gave people -- I thought that the basic plus of it was that it actually gave the public a chance to see him as a real person in action and see his mind working. And it was a phenomenal mind.

**Timothy Naftali**

Sure, okay. Peter Morgan's play gives the impression that Frost felt he had done -- that Frost himself felt badly about how the first few hours had gone. Do you recall a little bit of frustration or even desperation on his part?

**Raymond Price**

I don't recall, I don't think he really showed that to us. I saw the play night before last in previews, as a matter of fact, and Peter Morgan spent some time with me, a couple hours with me, as he was writing the play. And, of course, it's now being made into a movie. And he and Peter -- he and Ron Howard, who is making the movie came in to see me recently, too. The -- I did not think the character in the play was the Nixon I knew, by a long shot. But it was being done as a theatrical event, of course. But Frost, it was obviously very important to Frost to get him to -- the play does show Frost obsessing on getting him to make a confession. And -- but I don't think Nixon thought he had that much to confess about, really, probably. And the -- so some of them were contentious, but also Nixon did get a good chance to expand on things, but again, Frost was the guy who did the cutting. And he had the right to do, to cut as he wished.

**Timothy Naftali**

Nixon didn't feel he had anything to confess to?

**Raymond Price**

Not that he had nothing to confess to -- I overextend there -- but not the kind of confession that, "I killed a thousand people," kind of thing, or that he took -- or taking full responsibility for all the actual actions, most of which I think he didn't know about. But I'll have to wait and see how it finally comes out in the -- in the play, it shows him finally saying, "I let the country down." And I think he did that and they use the, "I gave them a sword," which Frost used as the title of his book about the doing of those things. That was in the play. And I remember that was a part of it, of the final thing, the final episode. So I think he did sort of take, in effect, take responsibility for what happened, but I'm not saying he directed and I don't think he did direct it. I really don't.

**Timothy Naftali**

We talked with --

**Raymond Price**

I have my own sense, and we'll get into that later. My own sense was that -- it has always been -- one of the reasons we screwed the whole thing up so badly was that we were all, including the President, stumbling around in the dark not knowing what we were dealing with on a lot of this stuff.

**Timothy Naftali**

We talked with Herb Klein, and Herb Klein very much wanted the President to do the Frost interview. Do you remember that?

**Raymond Price**

I don't know.

**Timothy Naftali**

How did the President feel about his participation?

**Raymond Price**

I don't know. I know we were all glad when it was finally over, but I think he probably felt pretty good about the way it had come out.

**Timothy Naftali**

How is Peter Morgan's Nixon not like the Nixon you knew?

**Raymond Price**

Well, you know, I saw the play with a couple of other people, one of whom mentioned to me after, who were not Nixon fans, one of whom when I was talking about how it was not the one -- he said he actually thought the way it came across to him, it was the "Saturday Night Live" version of Nixon that was -- and that rang true to me. I think it was kind of the "Saturday Night Live" version of Nixon that came through.

**Timothy Naftali**

It's a challenge I think for historians to understand the complexity of the man. What do you think they usually miss?

**Raymond Price**

I think they usually miss the phenomenal analytical intelligence and the seriousness of purpose, the habit of looking at things from 17 different angles and trying to figure out what to do. I think they miss the vastness of the things that he had to deal with and had to try to balance among. I think they often miss the challenges of the political environment in which he had to try to get something done, and of the international environment in which he had to try to get something done. None of this -- none of this was simple. And you have to -- in that office you have to do a lot of things you otherwise wouldn't do in order to get the important things done. You have to make a lot of compromises. You have to, in some cases, sacrifice a lot of virtue. You may not have to sacrifice virgins, but you may have to sacrifice virtue sometimes. And that's the only way you get things done in the real world. It is a real world, and a lot of the critics tend to forget that the world is real.

**Timothy Naftali**

I've heard people describe Nixon as having or seeking the Quaker ideal of peace at the center. On the other hand, in the tapes one hears an occasionally angry, sometimes bitter man. Please help us reconcile these two.

**Raymond Price**

They're both parts of the real Nixon. He was a very complex guy. I think I knew him pretty well. The angry parts were things that I didn't see much of because I think he knew they wouldn't work with me.

[laughter]

And I think he used them with people who would appreciate them. But they're all part of the process, but they were never part of the conclusion. That's the key thing. And he had the process that I've always described as deciding, undecided and redeciding. This is all part of the process of analyzing. He would say, "We'll do this. No, we'll do that. No, we'll do this." So the people who were really around him understood that you didn't necessarily do it just because he said we'll do it. You gave him time to think about it. And the final conclusion was usually a pretty good one. But it was -- that was all part of the process.

With people that he felt he could let down his hair with he would -- and he would express anger in private that he would not express in public. Some of it was rational and some less so, but again, considering the pressures that a President is under, I think it's well to be able to have a forum, a private forum in which you can release the pressures. And he did that with some people, and unfortunately the tape was on. But the fact that he expressed feelings did not mean that this is what he was going to do. He was much more thoughtful about that, much more judicious about that and you have -- to understand him, you have to understand the multiple layers of him and the interaction among those multiple layers, I think. But they're all part of the same person and I think most of us have multiple layers but maybe not as complex ones or as far-reaching ones as his. But the Quaker part was a part of it. So was his whole history of life experience as a part of it. But you have to -- I have often argued -- you have to take the whole, not just the parts. And the whole, I think, was, on balance, pretty good.

**Timothy Naftali**

Could you comment a bit on his relationship with Charles Colson?

**Raymond Price**

Yeah, I don't know it that much. To me, Colson was probably, he was that -- Bob Haldeman, once, when I spent a few -- I visited with him for about six hours once when he was on a weekend leave from prison out at his home. And he was a good friend. I was a Haldeman fan. I thought he was a good chief of staff. I thought he was the right kind of chief of staff. And whereas he had the public image of keeping people out, he was really, I think, being very meticulous about making sure that all sides got in to the President. But you had to be tough to do that. But he blamed himself for creating a Colson monster, because the President liked to talk politics and Bob was a very busy guy but he could talk politics with Bob. And so Bob found that often he'd be sitting there and he had a lot of things to do and Nixon would be talking about political minutia. So he -- Colson's a very smart guy. He had come to us from Leverett Saltonstall's office, but he's not very much like Leverett Saltonstall, I think, a lawyer. Bob said he had kind of insinuated Chuck in there so the President would get comfortable with him so that he could do this talk with Chuck instead of with Bob, so Bob could get his work done and that, as he did this, Chuck got more and more power and

so on. But I've often said of Chuck, that the difference was that with other people, if the President said, "Yeah, I wish somebody would run over the guy with the truck," everybody would just ignore it but Colson would go out and hire a truck. And I think that was where a lot of our problems came from. I exaggerate when I say that, but I think he was much more likely to do things that were not really meant to be done, just because he thought he had the authorization for it.

**Timothy Naftali**

Did you know John Mitchell at all?

**Raymond Price**

Yeah, I knew him well. I was a big fan of his.

**Timothy Naftali**

Tell us a bit about him, please.

**Raymond Price**

He had been -- he's a superb lawyer -- he had been the leading lawyer for municipal finance in the United States when he merged his law firm into the Nixon firm. And Nixon, Mudge, Rose, Guthrie & Alexander became Nixon, Mudge, Rose, Guthrie, Alexander & Mitchell, and then when they both went to Washington they had to chop off the first and last names of the firm. Very solid guy, a war hero, World War II, and I think a real strong presence and a steadying force. And he, one time, or once I was sitting with John at a party in Washington during the Watergate thing and I asked John, what did he think is the source of Colson's sway? He said, "The President's worst side." Because John had been one of those, like Haldeman and all, who protected Nixon against that worst side. Colson would exploit it. The President's worst instincts, were John's words, I think. But John Mitchell was an honorable guy and a fine lawyer, and a good influence.

**Timothy Naftali**

He didn't always have the focus in the campaign that he could have, John Mitchell. To what extent -- I mean, you said he was a solid guy, most everyone I've spoken with has described him that way, but he didn't control his office, or --

**Raymond Price**

Well, of course, you know, the stuff that got us in trouble I don't think the committee really knew about. This is all I think, subterranean stuff. I don't think he knew anything about this. I'd be surprised if he did. Maybe he did, but I'd be surprised if he did. But this was not stuff -- I think Hunt was a wild card and a weird guy. I never met, I didn't even know Hunt and Liddy existed -- Liddy existed until Watergate.

**Timothy Naftali**

Please tell us something about John Ehrlichman.

**Raymond Price**

Very bright guy, and I thought he was a pretty good guy. He, of course, came in as counsel to the President, and I'm sure he'd been in -- he ended up supervising the domestic stuff after the first couple of years, when Pat Moynihan left and the Urban Affairs Council metamorphosed into Domestic Council, John headed that. And again, I think he was a sharp guy and a good guy. I didn't -- I think most of my dealings with him were on the policy side, not on the political side.

**Timothy Naftali**

Ray, you told me a story, and a truck created some outside noise, interference. You told me a story of a conversation you had with John Mitchell during Watergate period. Could you please tell us?

**Raymond Price**

Yes, this was at a party in Washington. In fact, I think it was one of those by the Dragon Lady, whatever her name was. And he and I were sitting on a couch and I asked him what the hell -- John was a friend -- what is Colson's base, anyway? And he gruffly said, "The President's worst instincts." And I think he was right. He was not a Colson fan, either. I have not spoken with Colson since then, myself.

**Timothy Naftali**

But you said his base, in other words --

**Raymond Price**

Well, I -- I figured -- "base" may or may not have been the exact word, but -- source or whatever. But anyway, the idea was, where did -- what allowed him to do what he did? But again, I think he was getting back to the same thing I was talking with before about how the President would decide, undecide and redecide, and that whereas other people, if he said, I wish somebody would run over that guy with a truck, everybody else would ignore it. Colson would go out and hire a truck. And I mean that metaphorically, not actually, but --

**Timothy Naftali**

You also mentioned that Mitchell had a sense of the President's darker side.

**Raymond Price**

Yeah, I think so. I think most people who knew him knew that he had a light side and a dark side and so forth. I've used those terms. I don't think that most people did; I often did. In other words, that he had moods, but he was under a lot of pressure and tensions and sometimes he would let off and get angry and so forth, but he wouldn't really mean it. And those that knew him knew when to just ignore it and if anybody -- if he would often say things he wished he had done but he wouldn't really want them done. He was just letting off steam. But he was the President, and some people would take it seriously and most of the others who -- most of those who had been close to him

over the years knew -- Bill Rogers, for example -- and they knew you'd just ignore that. He doesn't really mean it. He's letting off steam. But others would assume that this was the real Nixon and so forth and go out and act on it.

**Timothy Naftali**

And you would know that it wasn't the real Nixon just by experience?

**Raymond Price**

Yeah, yeah, yeah, because you knew him. You knew what kind of guy he was.

**Timothy Naftali**

Would he also say the next day, "I didn't mean it"?

**Raymond Price**

No, no, no, he knew he didn't have to, with most people. It was just -- I think all of us from time to time say, when we're under pressure, we may say things the we don't expect to have happened. And people forget, he actually was human. A lot of people may not believe this but he was.

**Timothy Naftali**

We don't expect our Presidents to be human.

[laughter]

**Raymond Price**

But almost all of them have been.

**Timothy Naftali**

I wanted to ask you about the Haldeman system. You said you were a fan.

**Raymond Price**

I was.

**Timothy Naftali**

How did the system work from your perspective?

**Raymond Price**

Well, there was -- the Haldeman system and the Haig system were very different. I think the Haldeman system was better. Haldeman kept himself strictly out of the policy process and just tried to make the whole system work and to make sure that on the policy side that all sides got heard and all sides got a fair hearing. And this took a lot of doing. And there were a lot of, you know, divided opinions and so forth in the house -- in the White House and the administration. Haig tried to make himself kind of the assistant or associate President and had policy things flow through him. I think that was the wrong way. You know, each meant well and so forth, but I think for the White House chief of staff, I prefer the Haldeman model. You've got people who are charged with policy and people who are charged with organization. Haldeman ran the organization in a way that ensured that all sides got a fair policy shot.

**Timothy Naftali**

How did the Haig system affect the way in which you did your job?

**Raymond Price**

Just that all things kind of went through Al here, whereas they're not going through Bob except as a transfer point.

[Male Speaker]

I'm sorry, could you repeat that statement? 2:01:28

**Raymond Price**

I say with Haig, all things went through Al Haig; whereas with Bob Haldeman, they might go through Haldeman, but simply as a transfer point.

**Timothy Naftali**

And so Al Haig would make substantive changes.

**Raymond Price**

Yeah.

**Timothy Naftali**

And Haldeman, did he make substantive changes?

**Raymond Price**

No, that was not his role; there were other people for that. But he ran a tight -- Haldeman ran a tight ship, and the White House needs to be a tight ship. If you can't stand that, you shouldn't be there.

**Timothy Naftali**

Labels change in American history over time. President Nixon occasionally called himself a conservative; you've described him as a centrist.

**Raymond Price**

Yeah, mm-hmm.

**Timothy Naftali**

Help us understand what he meant by conservative.

**Raymond Price**

Well, again, it's in relation to what. He was on left/right; he was, I think, sort of in the center, maybe a little to the right of center, depending on where you're looking. For one person center will be one place; for another person center will be somewhere else.

**Timothy Naftali**

So I asked you to expand on how he understood the term, "conservative."

**Raymond Price**

How he understood it and how much he used it, I don't know. I don't think he really used the terms a lot, especially now as a conservative has come to mean right wing. He was not a right-winger, but for a long time there'd been sort of a liberal ascendancy, and he was trying to break that liberal hold. And if you say you've got a liberal and a conservative, then he would be a conservative. But he was really kind of in the center there. He was just trying to restore the balance in a sense, I think, but without being a right-winger. He had a lot of trouble on his right as well as on his left. But he was also a very creative guy and he was trying to make a lot of changes. And you don't think of conservatives necessarily as making changes unless they're just trying to throw everybody in prison or something like that, which he was not trying to do. But he was --

[background noise]

He was trying to move things, but not on an ideological basis. He was very practical and he was trying to find things that worked. And things that work are often a mix of what you would call a conservative and liberal, or whatever. But he did think that the liberals were steering the -- were in the ascendancy and had been steering the country in the wrong directions, and so he was trying to change that direction, not necessarily to reverse it, but modify it.

[Male Speaker]

Can we pause for just one second?

**Timothy Naftali**

We were talking about where to put Richard Nixon on a political spectrum.

**Raymond Price**

Mm-hmm.

**Timothy Naftali**

And where would you put him?

**Raymond Price**

I would put him pretty much in the center, I think. But again, it would not be -- he was not ideological and so he would be picking some from part -- line A, row A, and some from row B, and he'd often be mixing the two.

**Timothy Naftali**

And how would you define people in the -- what were people in the right wing saying in that period?

**Raymond Price**

They would say -- I would add to that, I would say he was a pragmatist. Above all, I think he was a pragmatist. He was looking for things that would actually work, and a lot of the people who were aligned with the left or the right don't care whether it works, as long as it's ideologically pure. He didn't care about ideological purity. He cared about results.

**Timothy Naftali**

How were his relations with conservatives like William F. Buckley?

**Raymond Price**

Buckley is a long-time close friend of mine. And Buckley was often critical of him and he would have disagreed with Buckley on a number of things. Buckley was along on the China trip, and I don't think Buckley thought much of the China trip. But I don't -- personal relations, I don't think there was much one way or the other. Buckley was a close friend of mine from college days on.

**Timothy Naftali**

Do you remember some of the disagreements they had?

**Raymond Price**

Not particularly, I don't, because I don't think there were any public disagreements or anything, or particularly, I don't think they saw anything of each other.

**Timothy Naftali**

What about -- what issues would you consider Nixon left of center on, if there were any?

**Raymond Price**

Well, a lot of people considered his environmental stuff left of center. I don't think he would have considered it that way. And a lot of, some people in the South considered his integration left of center. I don't think he considered it that way. Whether you disagree with those depends on where you're coming from. And I don't -- he didn't really think that much in left/right terms, I think, in trying to figure what to do. I think it was more kind of what'll work. It was the other people who were obsessed over left and right.

**Timothy Naftali**

What role did you play in his later books

[inaudible]

**Raymond Price**

I was his principal collaborator on his next, on his first two after the memoir, "The Real War" and "Leaders." And then, I also helped him to a lesser extent on his last two and the ones in between, I think, I don't recall ever having a particular hand on.

**Timothy Naftali**

How did he feel about the reception these books got?

**Raymond Price**

I think -- well, I think pretty good. I think the first ones got a bigger reception than the later ones did, maybe because they were fresher. The memoirs got terrific circulation, and "The Real War" did very well. I think "The Real War" was the only other one that was a best seller besides the memoirs, and that was the first one after the memoirs.

**Timothy Naftali**

Did you talk to him as the Cold War ended?

**Raymond Price**

I'm sure I did. I'll have to think of what years these would've been when the Cold War --

**Timothy Naftali**

I was thinking of if you had recollections of if he made trips to Russia, he made trips to China in his latter years, whether he reminisced with you about how things had changed.

**Raymond Price**

I don't recall any particular reminisces. I stayed in touch with him right up until... And I made his final trip to Asia with him the year before he died, 1993; he died in '94. And he was still very alert and alive then. And when he died, of course, it was all very sudden.

**Timothy Naftali**

Were you there, did he meet with Lee Kuan Yew?

**Raymond Price**

On that trip -- he often did meet with Lee Kuan Yew. He probably did then, I don't recall right now at the moment. But it was through several countries out there

[unintelligible]

including of course China. And I don't recall off the top of the head, I don't recall the ones --

**Timothy Naftali**

When did you see him for the last time?

**Raymond Price**

I don't recall because I stayed in pretty close touch with him and I do recall the circumstances.

[background noise]

**Timothy Naftali**

I asked you when was the last time you saw President Nixon.

**Raymond Price**

Yeah, I don't recall when the last time I saw him was. I stayed in close touch with him. I do recall quite vividly the circumstances of his death when he had a massive stroke about 6:00 in the

afternoon, out sitting on the deck of his house in New Jersey. He had just gotten the galleys of his last book. He was happily going over those galleys when he

[clicking noise]

fell over with a stroke. He was taken to the hospital; that was on Monday. By Wednesday, his family were talking to me on the phone about funeral plans, and he died on Friday, all very quick.

**Timothy Naftali**

Did you work on any of the eulogies?

**Raymond Price**

No, I didn't, no, I didn't. But in the course of my conversations with his daughters, and David Eisenhower, and Ed Cox, their husbands, they had settled on -- I did it with them -- it was their suggestion, but I was happy about it, what they wanted on his tombstone, which was that one line from the first inaugural.

**Timothy Naftali**

You worked with him on the last book.

**Raymond Price**

Yeah, to a minor degree, not as a major one.

**Timothy Naftali**

Who were his key collaborators on those?

**Raymond Price**

At that point, I'd have to try to refresh myself on that.

**Timothy Naftali**

How did he feel about, some people would use the word, "comeback."

**Raymond Price**

Mm-hmm.

**Timothy Naftali**

Did he feel he'd had a comeback? Did he feel that he had overcome some of the taint of Watergate?

**Raymond Price**

Yeah, I think so. He was well received where he went. He was in great demand. I was President of the Economic Club when he made, I think, two appearances there at the Economic Club, one of which the members still talk about in awe of his performance there -- the Economic Club of New York with an audience of a couple thousand, of course, speaking without notes as usual. And they still talk about his performance there and these are senior businesspeople. But he lived a comfortable life and he was in great demand. A lot of people came to see him and so forth. He was settled happily in New Jersey when they came, he came back from California to New York, lived in Manhattan for a couple years and moved out to New Jersey. I think he had a pretty happy final few years. His wife's death was quite a blow, of course. She died in 1993.

**Timothy Naftali**

Did that come as a surprise to him?

**Raymond Price**

No, she'd been quite ill. She had emphysema and she'd been in bad health for some time.

**Timothy Naftali**

Did you ever write any remarks for Pat Nixon?

**Raymond Price**

I don't think I ever did, no.

**Timothy Naftali**

Can you recall any anecdotes about her?

**Raymond Price**

Not top of the head. I knew her pretty well. She was, I think she was very -- she was a really hard worker, dedicated and always very concerned about doing things right, just an overriding sense of responsibility to the office or the former office or whatever, and also very close to her family. It was a very close family and very supportive. She was a worker and just a real, real sense of responsibility, which was ingrained in her.

[Interview: PART II]

**Timothy Naftali**

Hello, I'm Timothy Naftali, the director-designate of the Richard Nixon Library and Museum. I'm here on April 6, 2007, with Raymond Price for the Richard Nixon Oral History Program. We're in

New York City, and I'm accompanied by David Greenberg and Paul Musgrave. Ray, it's a pleasure having this second interview with you.

**Raymond Price**

Well, it's a pleasure to see you again.

**Timothy Naftali**

We were going to start with how you came to work for Nixon. You were a journalist at the time. Tell us about that. It's 1967, I believe.

**Raymond Price**

1967, I had been at the "New York Herald Tribune" for its last nine years. I was the last editorial page editor for its last two years. It died in 1966, in the summer of 1966. I sat down to try to get a serious novel written. And I was happily doing that when I woke up on Washington's birthday morning, 1967. Washington was born on February 22nd. I was awakened and got a phone call from Walter Thayer, who had been the President of the "Herald Tribune," a close associate of Jock Whitney. And he and Jock were both close to Eisenhower and involved with Republican politics. The "Trib" had been considered the voice of Eastern Republicanism basically for many years, founded in 1841 by Horace Greeley. And Walter said that he'd gotten a call the day before from Richard Nixon wondering if Ray Price might be available to help with what might or might not become a campaign in '68. I told Walter I hadn't even begun to think about it -- about who my candidate would be. And I ran through a lot of things with him, whether I wanted to get involved or anything like that, but if he wanted to talk, as long as he understood I probably would end up not doing it, I'd be happy to talk with him; and hung up and kicked myself for being so honest because I would've liked to meet him.

Ten minutes later the phone rang again. A deep voice said, "Hello, this is Dick Nixon," and would I come to lunch that day. We ended up having lunch at his apartment on Fifth Avenue. We talked for three hours, had lunch on tray tables in the study, talked for three hours about just about everything; life and philosophy and the campaign, and the world, and the nation, and the other contenders and just about everything. In the course of it, more and more, I found him far more impressive than I'd expected even though I'd been writing about him for years. I found that I liked the guy. And at the end of it, as I was leaving, he asked me to give him an answer in a week because he was going to do some travel and wanted to settle this. He was then practicing law in New York. I went home. I had a very extensive library and clipping file in

[unintelligible]

of this. So I intensively researched it. The more I dug into it, the more I -- the negatives faded away and the positives were reinforced. By about the fifth day I found somewhat to my surprise that he was my candidate after all and then began to feel more and more that if he was, perhaps I should. I checked with Walter and Jock both, and they both gave their blessing. On the seventh day I called him back at his law firm and said if he'd still like me to do it, I'd like to do it. He asked me to come down to the office; I did. There were several people he already assembled for me to meet down there. And he had an empty office in the law firm and I started work that night.

**Timothy Naftali**

Did he explain how he'd gotten, how he'd found you?

**Raymond Price**

I don't know if he did, but I was fairly well known in Republican circles especially through the Eisenhower connection. I had ghosted a couple of pieces for Eisenhower during the campaign of '64, or in that period, and I'd always been involved with Republican politics. I went to my first Republican National Convention in 1948 as a Vandenberg supporter when I was 18. And I'd led the Conservative Party in the old Political Union as an undergraduate and so forth. And the "Trib," again, was a Republican paper, well known in Republican circles.

**Timothy Naftali**

What did you ghost for Eisenhower in '64?

**Raymond Price**

Two pieces, one was on the campaign -- this was when we were part of the Stop- Goldwater movement at the "Herald Tribune" -- we were back at Scranton. And this was on the campaign in which he was sort of defining what the Republican nomination should be. I've forgotten off-hand what the other one was. The other one was not political, though.

**David Greenberg**

You described yourself and the newspaper as part of Stop-Goldwater movement, the "Herald Tribune" as the voice of eastern liberal Republicanism as some people put it. '68 was clearly a time when the Republican Party is going through a lot of turmoil as to whether the Right wing is to prevail or whether this other tradition is still going to have a say in it. Did you discuss sort of the direction of the party with Nixon? Did you get a sense of, you know, how he intended to either unite the party, take it in a particular direction? What were your thoughts, his thoughts, on that subject?

**Raymond Price**

I'm not sure whether we talked about the party as such, I don't remember. We did talk about all the various candidates and he analyzed their strengths and weaknesses as well as his own, and so forth. And we also talked a lot about just the situations in the nation and the world and so forth -- a lot of it was that, and the sort of things that he might want to do, but looking ahead what the challenges are going to be in the next four years. But whether we talked about the party, I just don't recall; if so, it was not a major part of it.

**Timothy Naftali**

How long after you started working for him did you start planning the trip to Asia?

**Raymond Price**

Well, I started working on it with him on March 1st. We left for Asia on April 1st. He had been, he was making -- that year he made a series of four foreign study trips, took a different person on each one. And he had made the first one while I was away. That was why he needed an answer in a week because he was leaving on the first of those. The Asia trip was the second. The others were all two weeks. The Asia trip was three weeks. So he was away for most of that first week. And then I joined him out in California and we left for Asia and came back three weeks later.

**Timothy Naftali**

Did you -- I assume you flew commercial.

**Raymond Price**

Yes, we did.

**Timothy Naftali**

Did people come up to him in the plane?

**Raymond Price**

A lot of people did. A lot of people did come up to him. This was one of the things, initially we sorted out -- he always wanted me to take the aisle seat so I would be a buffer because a lot of people would want to come up and talk. And he always, he liked to use the plane time to work, to read, and think and so forth. He always flew with his briefcase on his lap and his yellow pad out, making notes and so forth and thinking and writing. It was kind of interesting. I quickly developed an understanding of when I should talk and when I shouldn't because he would kind of signal when he was ready to talk. But a lot of time he was thinking, and then strategizing, and then making notes and so forth. And then he would just open up and we might have a long talk. But, yes, he was readily recognized, and a lot of people wanted to come up and say hello, and he didn't want to be consumed by that.

**Timothy Naftali**

Do you recall some of the stops he made on that trip?

**Raymond Price**

On that trip, let's see, quite a few. They included, I think, Hawaii and then they included Taipei. They included Hong Kong, Tokyo, Jakarta, and Pakistan. We went up to, I guess it was Rawalpindi, and in India, Delhi, we met with Indira Gandhi an interesting story on that. And --

**Timothy Naftali**

Then stop tell us the story.

**Raymond Price**

He met -- Indira Gandhi put on a big elaborate, almost a state lunch for us with all the trimmings, even the gold- plated rice and so forth, which is a specialty of theirs, and all the formal toasts and so forth. And it was great. But then we met with her privately in her home, just the three of us, Indira, Nixon, and me. And in that, she -- of course, one of the big things wherever we went was Vietnam. And, of course, she had been on her soapbox sucking up to the Soviets and saying, "Get out of Vietnam." In that private meeting, she said to him, "One thing you must do is hang tough in Vietnam, the security of India and every other country out here in Asia depends on it." And so, after that he never trusted Indira again because of her hypocrisy on something that she, herself, considered vital to her own country's security, her public hypocrisy.

**David Greenberg**

There must have been some sense of what her reason for this double motive.

**Raymond Price**

Well she was, part of her strategy was she was sucking up to the Soviets. They were important to her. They were supporting her and so forth, and she depended on them. She, of course, was tied up with her problems with Pakistan and so forth, so she didn't want to offend them. So she was publicly supporting them, but privately she was saying no.

[laughter]

**Timothy Naftali**

Did you get that sense from other leaders that they wanted the United States to hang tough with Vietnam?

**Raymond Price**

Absolutely, every -- I think we met with just about all the dominos out there, and without exception, every one of the dominos believed fervently in the domino theory. They did not -- they were not bothered by the American presence; they were deadly afraid of an American absence. They felt their own security depended absolutely on our hanging tough in Vietnam and Vietnam was the key to it.

**Timothy Naftali**

Did you meet with Marcos?

**Raymond Price**

Yes, we did, yeah, we met with Marcos. Again he put on a nice state dinner type thing for us. And he was not terribly impressive. We also met with his Vice President, which was really peculiar, in a

kind of a, little old wooden desk and kind of a barren office, and had a couple of secretaries who were perching on the desk and carrying on conversations on the telephone themselves, personal ones, while he was talking with the visiting former Vice President. The Philippines were somewhat different.

**Timothy Naftali**

You said that Marcos wasn't very impressive?

**Raymond Price**

Not terribly, no, not terribly. He had private conversations with him, of course. I didn't take my -- I don't think I sat, I forget now whether I sat in on his private conversations with Marcos or not. Whether I sat in on the private conversations just depended on the individual host if he wanted, if he were comfortable with it or not. For example, I did not with Chiang Kai-shek and some of the others; I did with a number of them.

**Timothy Naftali**

When the tour ended, did he say he wanted to write something about Asia?

**Raymond Price**

No, he didn't. The way the piece came up for "Foreign Affairs" was that in the course of this, this was when I was really getting to know him, and as a newspaperman myself, I was pretty well connected in the journalistic field. I knew how he was regarded with by my journalistic colleagues, which was pretty low, but I had seen first hand by then how vastly more impressive he was in public than he often was -- in private rather, than he often was in public, and I wanted more of the journalists to see him firsthand. And so, I suggested to him and he said, "Fine," that I organize a group of editors, no reporters, but only editors who were friends of mine, whom I knew, for dinner; just for an informal dinner off the record, in which he could talk. And in this case he would talk about what he had learned over there and so forth and just sit around and talk.

He was a member of the Links Club in New York and he hosted the dinner at the Links. And it was a very interesting, very good evening. And then the managing editor of "Foreign Affairs" was one of the guests, and as we were leaving, he got me aside and he said, "You know, he's really interesting." So he wanted to get him to write a piece for "Foreign Affairs," and I thought it was a good idea. He was heading off on another trip. I tried to think of what would be appropriate, and obviously, the big thing in '68 was Vietnam. I came up with a thought of Asia after Vietnam as a way of talking about the future of Asia without getting bogged down in just the Vietnam War. So we called it "Asia after Vietnam." He liked the idea, "Foreign Affairs" liked the idea, and that was the origins of the piece.

**Timothy Naftali**

On the trip, do you recall any conversations with Nixon about Vietnam?

**Raymond Price**

I know we had a lot; I don't recall what they were. I don't recall what they were. It's been several years.

[laughter]

**David Greenberg**

This dinner that you described sounds very much like these dinners that were written a lot about in his post-resignation years where he would have journalists to dinner and give, he was very impressive by all accounts, the tour de horizon, the world situation. Sounds like this was something he was doing much earlier in his career before --

**Raymond Price**

It was that sort of thing, a tour de horizon, but also it was a lot of back and forth and questions, and they all had questions and he was answering whatever their questions were, too. It was just an informal give and take, just a nice informal dinner of probably about a dozen or so people, I think.

**David Greenberg**

And, of course, '68 was talk of the new Nixon where he seemed to, you know, at least for a period, get a new look from a lot of the reporters as well as editors. What do you think was responsible for that new fresh take --

**Raymond Price**

Well, I remember his commenting to me once, "All these people who talk about a new Nixon just never knew the old Nixon," and I think there was a lot of truth in that. A lot of them of course had their -- had second-hand impressions, or they'd been reading the newspapers too much, but also we all mellow as we get older. And he had been out of the fray for some time. The old Nixon had been constantly -- and he'd been carrying a lot of weight for Eisenhower, doing the things that Eisenhower didn't want to do. He had been a political campaigner and so forth. And, of course, in '66, he'd been campaigning all over the country for Republican candidates. So he was known as that, but he was also a very serious thinker and I wanted him seen as the serious thinker by these opinion leaders as the serious thinker that he was. And I think this began to come out more during this time. Again, he was not yet a candidate. He did not, in fact he did not make the decision to run until New Year's weekend '67, '68 when he sat down with his family and finally made the go, no-go choice and it was to go.

**Timothy Naftali**

Let's go back to this question of whether we're certain he's going to run. When he hired you, he asked you to come on the staff, did he say we're going to make a run?

**Raymond Price**

No, he didn't know. He really had not made the decision. He thought it was likely that he would, but he wanted to assess things thoroughly before he decided whether to do it or not. And he always had a process that I used to describe, and I still do, as deciding, un-deciding, and re-deciding, which was one of the problems with a lot of, one of the many problems with the tapes because he'll say we'll do this, but it wasn't decided until it was done; because he would always be re-examining from several different directions and changing his mind. And he wanted to get a good reading, I think, on what the prospects were. He didn't want it to be a futile run and just a full assessment.

It wasn't being coy; it was really mulling the decision, waiting until he had to make it. And he had to make it because the first primary in New Hampshire was, I think, March 12th, and so he decided over that weekend that he would do it and then we prepared for the primaries. But he also didn't want the usual, do the usual announcement thing of saying, "I am a candidate," so we worked out a nice, quiet low-key way. We mailed a letter to the Republican voters of New Hampshire, which I drafted, which we I think mailed so it would arrive on March 1st -- I may be off by a day on this -- to them, saying that he would be a candidate. And we flew up under cover of darkness to Boston. Nick Ruwe

[phonetic sp]

, who was our New Hampshire advance man, met us at the airport and in a blinding rain storm drove us across the state border to Nashua, where we registered him under an assumed name in a motel, and then the next morning went on to Manchester where he had scheduled a press conference at which he -- it started late because of a blizzard which made a lot of people coming up from New York late -- in which his first line was, "This is not my last press conference."

[laughter]

And then, from then until the primary, about six or seven weeks later, we spent a grand total of I think 11 days in New Hampshire, not all at once but back and forth.

**Timothy Naftali**

Things have changed.

**Raymond Price**

Things have changed a lot. But he had decided that because the biggest thing he had to fight was the loser image, the best way to do that was to go to -- to enter all the major contested primaries, which he did. And he won them all. And so that made it harder, since he'd defeated everybody else, that made it much harder for them to write him off as a loser.

**Timothy Naftali**

Who were his main rivals?

**Raymond Price**

At that point, Rockefeller was trying hard for it. Of course, then he took himself out to avoid the Oregon primary, then took himself back in once the Oregon primary was over. Because in Oregon the secretary of state of the state puts you on the ballot if he thinks you're a candidate. So he swore on a stack of Bibles that he would not be in order not to be. Because he knew we would beat him there. And then once that was passed he came back in and tried to storm the convention. Reagan -- if Nixon had not been nominated, Reagan would have been that year. And I forget now right off the top of my head who the other major --

**Timothy Naftali**

Romney?

**Raymond Price**

Yeah, that's right. Romney was our principal opponent in New Hampshire. He was old eastern money -- then was on Romney because they knew he was a winner and they knew Nixon was a loser. But about 10 days before the voting in New Hampshire, the Romney folks had the same poll results we had, which showed us beating him nine to one. So he dropped out, which was too bad for us because that deprived us of the actual victory over him.

**David Greenberg**

There was the famous, you know, brainwashing remark that is said to have hurt Romney. But what do you think, beyond that, was the reason for Nixon's strength compared to Romney?

**Raymond Price**

I think he just came across better to the voters of New Hampshire. It wouldn't have -- no one thing would have made it nine to one, I don't think. I think the brainwashing thing hurt him, but I don't think that was the fatal thing. I think it was just the comparison.

**Timothy Naftali**

Was the editor, Loeb, important in --

**Raymond Price**

Oh yeah, he -- the "Manchester Union Leader" was a real power in New Hampshire, and everybody courted Loeb, who was the -- he was the publisher and the owner of the paper -- editor. And I think they backed us, as I recall on that, in that year.

**Timothy Naftali**

I wonder if he would have back Reagan. I mean, he's was a very conservative --

**Raymond Price**

Well, but Reagan wasn't running then. I don't think Reagan was running at the time of New Hampshire. By the time it got to the -- I may be wrong in that, I don't recall. But by the time of the convention in Miami, it was very close. And if Nixon had not been nominated, Reagan would have been in '68.

**Timothy Naftali**

Where were you when Lyndon Johnson announced that he was withdrawing?

**Raymond Price**

When he announced -- that's right -- off the top of the head I can't recall right now. It may come to me later on.

**Timothy Naftali**

But that must have been a surprise.

**Raymond Price**

It was, very much, yeah. And I'd have to -- I just draw a -- but if you want to come back at me later on, I may remember it.

**David Greenberg**

On that same question, did it change the way you then thought about -- I mean obviously in certain ways it must have changed --

**Raymond Price**

Yeah.

**David Greenberg**

-- the way you thought about the fall campaign.

**Raymond Price**

Yeah.

**David Greenberg**

Do you recall some of the thinking, some of the strategy that changed?

**Raymond Price**

Let's see. Of course, we not only had the Johnson withdrawal, we also had the Kennedy assassination, Bobby Kennedy, which also changed a lot of things. And we had the Martin Luther King assassination, which changed a lot of things. It was a tumultuous year. But again, on the Johnson, you stumped me there. And so I really can't --

**Timothy Naftali**

Let's ask -- while you're thinking about that, let's talk about the Martin Luther King assassination. Nixon, in the 1960 -- in the 1960 campaign, John Kennedy had made a phone call to Martin Luther King. Nixon had not. In 1968, Martin Luther King was assassinated. We've heard Dwight Chapin explain a trip that Richard Nixon made to Atlanta. Tell us what you remember of the assassination and of Candidate Nixon's reaction at the time.

**Raymond Price**

I don't have a clear recollection of it. I remember better the Bobby Kennedy assassination.

[Male Speaker]

Okay.

**Raymond Price**

And they were very close together -- I forget now how many days apart but not very many, I think.

**David Greenberg**

About a month maybe?

**Raymond Price**

Yeah, something like that, yeah. But the Bobby Kennedy assassination, of course, was quite a stunning thing. And that was also the first time I encountered the Secret Service. Because immediately after that Secret Service protection was put on all the candidates. So the next morning I went over to Nixon's home on Fifth Avenue. And so the Secret Service were there and that was the first encounter. And then they were with us from then on. But again, we had to rethink things. And I don't recall what the exact rethinking was that came out of, but it was a very traumatic thing for the country, of course. And especially because of the complex relationship he had had with the Kennedy family over the years, it was especially so for him. He had to be sure to handle it diplomatically and appropriately and so forth. And that was just one of the many things that stirred up that very tumultuous year, including the massive riots and burnings of cities and so forth that year, in '64. It was an unusual year.

**Timothy Naftali**

Can you tell us what you --

**Raymond Price**

Or '68 rather, yeah.

**Timothy Naftali**

Can you tell us what you recall of the secret plan, Nixon's secret plan to get out of Vietnam? Mel Laird has told us about how his role in sort of creating that idea -- obviously, there wasn't a secret plan.

**Raymond Price**

No.

**Timothy Naftali**

Nixon actually never said that, never said that he had one.

**Raymond Price**

No.

**Timothy Naftali**

What do you recall of that? Because if that's --

**Raymond Price**

All I remember about that is just what a -- how it plagued us. Because this had gotten out somehow into the atmosphere, into the political atmosphere, and journalistic. But he kept insisting, "If I had a plan, I would tell the President," and that he did not have a secret plan and that he had never claimed to have a secret plan. At some point he may have used the word "plan," I'm not sure. But if so, it was just in a very general sense. But this plagued him from start to finish there. He did not claim to have a secret plan. He denied that he had one repeatedly.

**David Greenberg**

On some of the personnel and logistics of the campaign, who do you think of as the real heavyweights in Nixon's inner circle? And, I mean, clearly Mitchell was there, Haldeman. How did power flow within the campaign?

**Raymond Price**

How did power flow? Well, certainly there was a division of labor obviously, and division of responsibilities. Mitchell was a very important factor. He was a very solid guy, and of course, he was a law partner. He had merged his firm into the Nixon firm just shortly before. And also, he was a confidant of Nixon's and so forth, and just a very solid guy whose judgment I think Nixon respected a great deal. And he was pretty organized. Bob Ellsworth played a pretty important role, too. He was a former, I think, about three- or four- or five-term Congressman. And he became a key part of our '68 campaign. Myself and Buchanan, of course, we had our rather somewhat different -- somewhat overlapping roles. Buchanan played to his constituency; I didn't. And the --

**Timothy Naftali**

Just to probe a bit for a minute. Do you think you had a constituency? It's interesting --

**Raymond Price**

No, I didn't, Pat did. He always had his own constituency. You know, he had his solid, firm beliefs. And he was always pushing those. And I was trying to protect Nixon from the excesses of those. He kept trying to push the candidate into sort of Buchananism. But the candidate didn't want to be a Buchanan. There was one example in particular. In the '68 campaign we did a lot of our stuff with radio addresses. This really worked very well for us we found out. We kind of reinvented -- in that campaign, we reinvented radio as a Presidential medium. It had been overtaken by television, and candidates and Presidents had almost forgotten it existed. But we found it a very good way to present serious policy proposals, because of two things: one, you could buy radio time for a minute fraction of what you had to pay for television. We could buy a 15- or 25-minute nationwide radio time for, oh, two or three thousand dollars. And there was no accurate measure of the audience, but the best estimates ranged from half a million to two million, which is a good many more than you would get in the Madison Square Garden.

And also, in contrast to television, you didn't have to worry about preempting "I Love Lucy," because people would listen to it when they wanted and if they wanted and so forth. And also, radio is a more kind of intellectual medium. It's -- you're not distracted by the pictures. You can focus on the words and the meaning. And so, we did practically all of our major thought pieces on radio. We did quite a few. And the press kept saying that Nixon hadn't been saying anything. That's when, all toward the end of the campaign, we brought in Bill Casey, a friend of Nixon's, later head of the CIA and so forth, but who also had been an editor himself, and set him to task, which he did in about a week or two, of gathering together, putting together two books, each about an inch thick, one, "Nixon Speaks Out" and the other, "Nixon on the Issues." "Nixon Speaks Out" was a compilation of serious policy things that he had done. And the "Nixon on the Issues" was excerpts on every subject under earth where he had been laying out his policy prescriptions. And we forced these on the press corps to show them, to ram it down their throats, he has been saying more serious stuff about more serious things than any Presidential candidate in history. They almost had to admit that he had been saying something. But those are pretty good references even now. They were put out in a paper form. And they were distributed to the press. And some of them I think are still around. CBS, NBC, most of them, on those radio -- so it was nationwide distribution. And it was not targeted, because we wanted the broad audience. We were talking to the whole nation.

[Male Speaker]

So when --

**Raymond Price**

We were very consciously talking to the nation and not talking to particular --

**David Greenberg**

So it was the major networks?

**Raymond Price**

Yeah, it was all the major -- we wanted the maximum exposure.

**Timothy Naftali**

You said there was another advantage to radio.

**Raymond Price**

Yeah, and that is, unlike television where you have to do it in a studio and so forth, you could do it in your hotel room or where else, just tape it and give the network your tape and you're done with it, and so get on with your campaigning or whatever else you're doing.

**David Greenberg**

And, you know, the famous analysis of the 1960 debates, whether accurate or not, was that, you know, Nixon had not done so well on image --

**Raymond Price**

No.

**David Greenberg**

-- but at least there was one radio survey --

**Raymond Price**

Yeah.

**David Greenberg**

-- that said he had done very well on radio. Was that in people's minds as you --

**Raymond Price**

Yeah, I think so. Of course those 1960's debates, they were complicated by the fact that he was just out of the hospital, and he was gaunt. And Kennedy -- and because Kennedy was tanned, he refused to use makeup. And so he looked bad on television. In '68 that wouldn't have been the problem it was in '60. But he had a very good radio voice. But again, the radio is such a -- radio is a less obtrusive medium. Television is obtrusive. And so it was a little more of a compliment to the audience to do it this way. We did some television things, but most of the serious -- where you wanted people to think about it, really think, we did it on the radio. And that is just for the ear instead of for the eye. You're not distracted by what the eye brings to it. And it's just the content that gets through.

**Paul Musgrave**

And these programs were how long?

**Raymond Price**

Some were 15 minutes, some were 25. And you could say quite a lot if you're doing it in a -- and, of course, they were prewritten. Any address that he made to a live audience would be unscripted as usual. But these were all written out, these addresses were written.

**David Greenberg**

And this use of radio, was it your idea? Do you remember how it originated?

**Raymond Price**

I don't remember how it originated. But it became our principle medium for substantive issues development.

**David Greenberg**

On television there are memos you wrote that lots of historians have picked up on since about the question of image and using Marshall McLuhan's ideas --

**Raymond Price**

Yeah.

**David Greenberg**

-- and so on. How did the television strategy develop? And clearly you had to use television --

**Raymond Price**

Yeah.

**David Greenberg**

-- in addition to radio. How did it develop that you would do these forums and the other TV pieces of it?

**Raymond Price**

I don't recall the actual development of it. But of course we did bring in Frank Shakespeare from CBS. And he had been executive V.P., I think, at CBS. And he later was head of USIA and so forth, and a very able guy who really knew the medium. And he sort of helped guide us on the television front. But the actual origin -- and I think Roger Ailes had a hand in structuring those little forums with like the room full of people. And the problem with those, the press kept saying that we did those because it was a way to get easy questions. That was the exact opposite of the truth. Our frustration in those was we couldn't get -- trying to get the audience to ask the hard questions. A hard question he could knock out of the ballpark. An easy question you didn't get much out of.

**David Greenberg**

And then sort of the average questioner tends to be, I guess, deferential --

**Raymond Price**

Yeah.

**David Greenberg**

-- toward the candidate --

**Raymond Price**

Yeah, we didn't want that. We didn't want that. We wanted the hard questions.

**Timothy Naftali**

Tell us what you can remember about the campaign of Hubert Humphrey when it became clear that he was the candidate.

**Raymond Price**

I don't recall specifically. Actually, Nixon had a good deal of respect for Humphrey. I think they were personally friendly. And he was obviously a very able guy. Of course we had first in -- was Humphrey in '68? He was in '72, wasn't he?

[Male Speaker]

No, '68.

**Raymond Price**

No, he was in '68, I'd forgotten that. Oh, that's right, yeah. I remember the Chicago convention, yeah, yeah, which we watched -- I watched on television. And it was quite something. We kind of pitied Humphrey, but we were not displeased that he was having a difficult time.

**David Greenberg**

Were you with Nixon watching at least some of the convention?

**Raymond Price**

I don't recall whether I was or not, probably not. I normally didn't sit with him watching television. And how much of it he watched I don't -- in fact, I think I was back in New York at the time. I think Pat Buchanan was out there but I'm not certain. Or we may have just been out on the campaign trail, I don't recall. But that convention was really a disaster for Humphrey. But, you know, he knew Humphrey was a very able guy and a strong contender, a strong opponent. But I don't recall anything particular. But there was no personal animus like that, just trying to beat him.

**Timothy Naftali**

Did you know that Nixon had contacted LBJ when Humphrey began to pull away from President Johnson, that former Vice President Nixon had actually contacted LBJ?

**Raymond Price**

I don't think so, no. I don't recall ever having heard about this until right now; though he was in touch with LBJ from time to time, I think, on various things. I don't know just what.

**David Greenberg**

Do you recall how Humphrey's speech -- I think it was late September of '68 -- where he did finally distance himself from the Johnson position on Vietnam, do you recall how that played in the Nixon camp?

**Raymond Price**

No, I don't, I don't. I don't recall.

**David Greenberg**

With it, Humphrey did start to get some traction in the polls finally and obviously, you know, narrowed it as the fall went on.

**Timothy Naftali**

How optimistic were you as the fall went on that you were going to win?

**Raymond Price**

I don't know. It was a close election and certainly hopeful. I do remember that coming back from California, which we did election eve or on Election Day, we didn't know which way it was going to go. And on the plane Nixon was bringing two or three or four at a time up to his cabin and basically preparing us for what might be defeat, and just trying to make sure that we didn't get too badly let down in case that happened. And, of course, then election night it was touch and go up until the following morning.

**Timothy Naftali**

So he brought you to the front of the plane to talk to you?

**Raymond Price**

Yeah, about three or four at a time, yeah, just in small groups, yeah, and just talking, but it was clear -- knowing him it was at least clear to me, because I did, that what he was doing was trying to prepare us so that we could better handle a defeat if it came, yeah. He was very thoughtful that way in a lot of things.

**Timothy Naftali**

Did he talk to you at any point about the lessons he'd learned in the '60 campaign?

**Raymond Price**

He did, yeah. I don't recall what it might have been. But these occasionally came up. The '60 campaign was very much with him obviously, in his memory. And there were lessons from it. It had been a pretty difficult time. And again, that was another close one, which we think in retrospect, he might well have really -- of course, we can get into this later on if you wish, but this is one of the ironies of waiting out election night when we did in the Waldorf Astoria, as we kept waiting for Illinois, Missouri and Texas, and knowing that Illinois and Texas had both been stolen in 1960. And they still did not have much protection against vote stealing in 1968. And that didn't finally get broken up, of course, until, I think, about 8:00 in the morning, when John Mitchell got on the phone to Mike Wallace, who was on the air, anchoring CBS on the air from Chicago. And because we knew what Mayor Daley was going to be up to in holding votes back until he knew how many he had to steal, John had held back some down state votes just so that Daley wouldn't know what he had to steal. And he challenged Mike on air to -- or he challenged Mike on his phone call to challenge Daley on the air. Mike did this, and shortly after that Daley released his count. We released ours; we took it by a narrow margin. But if John hadn't done that, probably we would have lost Illinois. And the massive frauds in Texas in '60, also. And, of course, at the "Herald Tribune," our political star, Earl Mazo, in 1960, had gotten a lot of reports about fraud in Texas.

And he decided to do some sleuthing. And he started finding where the fraud was done, actually documenting it on a massive scale; whereas in Texas, for example, the entire electoral machinery was run by the Democratic Party machinery. The entire election was run by the Democratic machine. And vote stealing was just the way they did things. And he was amassing mountains of

data on this, which were to have been I think a 10 or a 12 part series in the "Trib." The first four ran, and Nixon called Earl in and said, "You know, this is interesting stuff, Earl, but, you know, you don't steal the Presidency," and asked that the series be stopped. We stopped it finally, and Kennedy carried Texas. But, you know, this was going on in '68 also.

**Timothy Naftali**

Nixon called Earl in?

**Raymond Price**

Yeah, he did, he called Earl Mazo in. Earl was in our Washington bureau.

**David Greenberg**

Had he already written a biography of Nixon, so --

**Raymond Price**

No, I don't think he had at that point, I forget now. But I don't think so. But he knew him obviously. Because Earl was probably the premiere political reporter in Washington. Everybody knew him as a political expert. He lived, breathed, and talked politics.

**David Greenberg**

I saw he just passed away not long ago.

**Raymond Price**

He might have. I lose track of who's alive and who's dead these days.

**Timothy Naftali**

Tell us what you recall of the choice of Spiro Agnew.

**Raymond Price**

On that, we were -- several of us were asked for recommendations for V.P. I put four names on my list, of which Agnew was one. He and John Volpe and George Bush and -- I forget now who the fourth one was. But he was on my list. He was then a pretty highly regarded moderate Republican governor of a border state. Border states are important. And he had a good reputation. At the convention -- and then the night before it was announced, Nixon called me in about 6:00 or 6:30 to his suite, and he told me privately it was going to be Agnew. I think he just wanted to see what my reaction would be. And I said it sounded okay, and we talked some. Then, of course, he went on and he was briefing -- talking to various groups of people. And this went on, there was a lot of animated discussion. This went on I think until 2 or 3 a.m. or something like that. He didn't announce the selection until about 11:00 the next morning. But I was not surprised by it. But I had

thought at first that Agnew would be pretty good. And I think he thought he would be pretty good, too. He turned out to be, shall we say, something of a disappointment.

**Timothy Naftali**

You describe this as an animated conversation. Who was against the selection?

**Raymond Price**

Well, it was just groups of people. I don't know there was any particular one. But he picked various categories of people that he called basically just to sound them out and ask their opinions and so forth, and getting a feel. But he didn't get a lot of word, I think, on Agnew. But he wasn't saying, "Who shall --" he wasn't saying, "These are my selections." But he was asking them for their -- and this went on through the early morning hours.

**Timothy Naftali**

Who was at the top of your list?

**Raymond Price**

I didn't really have a top. If I had had a top, it might have been George Bush, who I had known. I knew the Bush family. My first political campaign, while I was still at Yale, was with his father, Prescott Bush, the first time he ran for the Senate. And I traveled all over Connecticut with him. That's when I got my first exposure to the Bush family, really serious and close up, and my first introduction, really, to what I considered the qualities of character and integrity that were just part of their DNA. And George himself was -- George Senior himself was a senior the year I was a freshman. I didn't know him then, but we had a lot of friends in common. And he was -- everybody who knew him had just spoken so highly of him. And this -- long after he left, he still was something of a legend at Yale. And so this was kind of the background which I approached that. I knew him somewhat, but not well. And, I think in retrospect, he probably would have been better than Agnew.

**Timothy Naftali**

Were you in the same college at Yale?

**Raymond Price**

No, we were not, no, no, no.

**Timothy Naftali**

You were friendly with his brother?

**Raymond Price**

Jonathan, yeah, Jonathan. Yeah, Jonathan was two years younger than I. And he was a sophomore when I was a senior. And he remained friendly. And then just one postscript on that, when we were all saying farewell to -- waving farewell to Nixon as he got on the helicopter to head off to California on the day he left office, we gathered on the south balcony to wave goodbye. And the woman standing next to me waving who had tears just cascading down her cheeks as she waved was Barbara Bush.

**Timothy Naftali**

You just -- since you had that experience, can you tell us what Prescott Bush was like in the campaign?

**Raymond Price**

He was -- in this one, he lost this election by a very narrow margin. Then he was appointed to a vacancy and he won a term in his own right. He was a partner of Brown Brothers Harriman. Two of his partners there were Averell Harriman and Robert Lovett, an interesting trio. And -- but he wasn't -- he didn't quite have the popular touch, shall we say. He tried, but it didn't come off too well. I think he was a good senator once he got in, but the glad-handing wasn't his style. And I think that probably hurt somewhat. I didn't see him, and once he got in Washington I think he probably changed somewhat. But at that point he was an investment banker.

**Timothy Naftali**

One more sort of Connecticut- related question for you. When you were the head of the Conservative Party, what were the issues that students were talking about?

**Raymond Price**

Well, the thing is -- almost everything. The political union up there is an unusual kind of thing. It is a parliamentary debating society, kind of modeled on the Oxford Union, and organized with parties. It was, at the time, in my undergraduate days, it was the largest organization on campus and probably the most active. We had a Conservative, Bull Moose, Liberal, and Labor party. Under my chairmanship, the Conservative was the largest. Bill Buckley was an active member of the Conservative Party. And he and I were close allies. Basically what we had was parliamentary debates on set topics with distinguished outside speakers and so forth. But we didn't try to do -- it was all internal. But we didn't try to move the world. We were just having debates for the sake of having debates, that was it. But it was a serious -- these were serious discussions, serious debates. Just interestingly, one of the members of the -- the smallest party was the Labor Party. One of its active members was a fellow whose name escapes me now, but he was also the President of the John Reed Club, John Reed having been the founder of the American Communist Party. He and I became good friends. I remember a couple times he and I stayed up all night just having animated discussions of things. But it was that kind of spirit there. It was not -- things were not personal, they were -- we were honing our debating skills.

**Timothy Naftali**

You and Bill Buckley wouldn't have been -- were you and Bill Buckley that close politically at the time?

**Raymond Price**

He was a little to the right of me. Most people are not quite as far left as Bill is --

[Male Speaker]

Right, not as far right?

**Raymond Price**

-- as far right. Yeah, I'm sorry, Bill. But he was a very thoughtful guy, obviously, and brilliant, and a brilliant debater. Yeah, he and his father in law, Brent Bozell, they also were on the debate team, and they were the only American debate team to beat the touring Oxford debate team when the Oxford team made a tour of America. They were pretty good at that sort of stuff. But no, I wasn't as far right as he. But we're good friends.

**Timothy Naftali**

Do you remember your reaction to the book "God and Man at Yale"?

**Raymond Price**

I remember reading it. And, in fact, I think when he -- yeah, that's right -- when he got the galleys of that he brought me up to Sharon, the family home, to go over the galleys with him. And I don't remember the details of it that much. This was quite a few decades ago. But I think he had some really valid points there. He was going after the problems that religion had on a -- I'm not religious myself, but he is a devout Catholic. And so we came at these things from a little different perspective.

**Timothy Naftali**

Last one, last question. I know he was a senior when you arrived, but was George Bush Senior a member of the milieu?

**Raymond Price**

I don't think so, I don't think so. I don't think so, no.

**Timothy Naftali**

Are we okay?

[Male Speaker]

One more, we're almost done. I apologize.

[Male Speaker]

[inaudible]

**Timothy Naftali**

You mentioned that George Herbert Walker Bush was a legend at Yale.

**Raymond Price**

Yeah.

**Timothy Naftali**

Did that legend include participation

[inaudible]

?

**Raymond Price**

I don't think so, I'm not sure. He was captain of the baseball team. But he was just greatly admired by everybody who knew him. And, of course, he'd been a Navy pilot in World War II and shot down over the Pacific and so forth. And also, I visited with him up at Camp David once when he was President. And on the table at Laurel, a big conference table, he had a model of that plane on the center of the table.

**Timothy Naftali**

Well, actually, when you visited him, did he talk with you about President Nixon?

**Raymond Price**

I'm sure from time -- he was a friend. He and I remained friends throughout. And I'm sure we did a number of times. I don't recall any particular conversations. And, of course, he was also part of our administration in several posts. After -- we brought him in after he lost the Senate race in 1970 in Texas, and brought him in on several posts in our administration. So I used to see him in D.C., then.

**Timothy Naftali**

Okay, do you have any questions about '68?

**David Greenberg**

Well, I'm just looking here. I guess the one other thing I wanted to ask you about is, I recall from when we spoke once before a story you told me about, since you mentioned earlier, the last press conference line, that you were asked when you joined up with Nixon to go back and look at the tapes --

**Raymond Price**

Yeah, oh yeah.

**David Greenberg**

-- and it wasn't quite what it --

**Raymond Price**

Yeah.

**David Greenberg**

-- had been made out to be. Do you want to --

**Raymond Price**

Yeah.

**David Greenberg**

-- comment on that?

**Raymond Price**

Yeah, that was very interesting. The -- one of the things that we worried about was this public perception of the last press conference that you won't have Nixon to kick around anymore, which has become a part of the whole folklore of America. Would the opposition trot that out, assuming that they would, we assumed that they would, and how damaging would it be? Well, Frank Shakespeare, having been a CBS guy, got for us -- and I think -- or I guess, maybe at that time, I think he was executive V.P. at Westinghouse Television, I think. He went into the archives and got as much as he could find of clips of Nixon in action, so that we could, not just for this purpose but generally, so that we could see how he came across on television and think how we could structure things or how he might be

[unintelligible]

and so forth, simply to come across better on television. And this was one of the clips. As soon as I saw that clip, I knew that it would be no problem. I knew they would never use it, because the actual clip was so far different from the public perception. He was totally controlled, no shouting, no yelling. He did say that you won't have Nixon to kick around anymore. But it was in a very low, controlled basis. And everything was perfectly okay, perfectly calm. So they never used it. And I knew they wouldn't, because he was not what the legend had -- And of course they had kicked him around quite severely.

**David Greenberg**

Right. Move to the Presidency?

**Timothy Naftali**

Yes, let's move -- let's move to the Presidency. Let's talk about Watergate.

**Raymond Price**

I've heard of that, yeah.

[laughter]

**Timothy Naftali**

Please tell us what you remember of Camp David, April 1973.

**Raymond Price**

April '73, yeah. April 30, 1973, that was when he was going to go on the air to announce the departures of Haldeman and Ehrlichman. It was a wrenchingly emotional thing for him. We were up there that weekend. I was writing the speech. And he had gone up and down on whether he really had to let them go, whether he could work some other thing to prevent it and so forth. He finally concluded he had to. And so he had summoned both of them up there separately to come up and for him to tell them individually. In working with him that weekend, it wasn't until -- I think he was going on the -- yeah, he was going on the air Monday evening, and it wasn't until Monday afternoon I actually met with him. The President's cabin at Camp David is Laurel. It's a large cabin, it has a swimming pool down, a beautiful woodscape going off from the windows and so forth. It was very nice. But there were a number of other cabins. I was using another one nearby. And we would talk by telephone rather than in person as we worked things out. Meanwhile, he had met with them.

At one point at mine -- out of my window I saw Ehrlichman striding down the -- fierce stride -- looking straight ahead and obviously very upset as he was leaving. And eventually that Monday afternoon, he called me over to Laurel. And I went in and he was sitting in his study in the chair that he usually used there. Wherever he worked, he always had a club chair with an ottoman. And

he was in that with the back to the window as usual, and just looking absolutely distraught. And I'd never seen him quite in this bad a shape, and he was quiet for a while. And we went on, and we finally began talking about the speech and so forth. At one point he'd been working on some papers, on the draft, and the pages dropped to the floor and they just sat there. He barely noticed that they dropped. But after a silence, he turned to me and said, "Ray, you've been the voice of my conscience. Do you think I should resign, too?" And he said, "If you think so, just tell me and I'll do it." Now that is a question coming from an embattled President that one does not take lightly.

And I knew my answer would be important. I finally told him that no, that he had a duty to continue on. There was too much at stake, and I went on a little bit about the stakes in the nation and the world, that however difficult, he had a duty to continue. And it perked him up a little bit. We went on twice more that afternoon. He asked again, did I think he should resign. Twice more I went through the whole thing that he had a duty to continue. And he gradually regained his composure and so forth. And we talked more. And he got to talking about the nation and the world, the Soviet Union and China and all that sort of stuff. And his old animation was coming back. Ron Ziegler down in Washington was very worried about whether he was going to be in a condition to go on the air. And so Ron and I were talking about this from time to time during the day by phone. Finally, he seemed to be coming around pretty well. And he decided he wanted to go for a swim. He went back and changed. There's a long flight of concrete steps, broad concrete steps, running down from the cabin down to the swimming pool. And he changed and came out. And I had a lot of work to do, and we were getting close to airtime; it was that night. And Rose Mary Woods was out there.

We still had to finish things. She had to get everything typed and into his presentation thing and all that. And we had to get back to D.C. But he was still coming back to normal. And I didn't dare let him walk down the steps by himself because I was afraid he was so distracted he might slip and fall and really injure himself. So I waited and walked down with him. And as he walked down, most of the time he was talking more and more about the nation, about the world, his troubles. And the more he talked about them, especially about the Middle East, which was really a threat, really dangerous then -- how things don't change sometimes -- his animation came back. And I was pretty sure he was okay. And so I finally went up and I told his valet, Manolo Sanchez, to keep an eye on him, and called Ron and told him I thought his client was going to be okay to go on television, and went back and got the speech finished and so forth. And we got back. And by the time he went on, he was okay. But, I think, in a sense that may have been almost the nadir of his Presidency, when he really -- I think at that point he could very easily have been nudged over into resignation at that point. I think he was really very seriously considering it.

### **David Greenberg**

So as I say -- a line we often hear quoted from that speech was referring to Haldeman and Ehrlichman as two of the finest public servants it was Nixon's pleasure to know. And perhaps you could tell us about his determination to use that phrase.

### **Raymond Price**

Yeah, that was his own. It was something he put in there. He knew it was going to be a problem, but he believed it. He thought they deserved it. He was determined to say it no matter what it cost him.

**Paul Musgrave**

And the other thing I wanted to ask about this --

[Male Speaker]

I'm sorry, can you re-ask that question? There's a little bit of a motorcycle.

**David Greenberg**

Take three. Tell us about his line regarding Haldeman and Ehrlichman.

**Raymond Price**

-- that they're two of the finest public servants it's been my privilege to know, or something like that. This was one -- this was his own. It was something he knew would cause him problems, but he was determined to say it, and nobody was going to get it out. He believed it; he thought they deserved it.

**Paul Musgrave**

Okay. And I want to ask you, too -- I don't know about this particular moment, which you described as a low point for him personally, emotionally. But when one reads about these moments in Nixon's Presidency, some people's memoirs describe him drinking, sometimes a lot, sometimes a little bit. What's your recollection of his use of alcohol in this situation or others like it?

**Raymond Price**

My guess is that those who describe it that way just don't know what they're talking about. He did -- he was a moderate drinker, wine with dinner very often, and occasionally a cocktail beforehand, but nothing to excess. But he did -- you know, he was under immense pressure. And I remember when I first saw this up in the campaign trail in New Hampshire a couple times, a couple of people would gather with him in his hotel room at the end of a day. And he would take a sleeping pill and he would have half of a beer. And he would begin slurring. He'd been under such pressure all day. And he was fading down, closing out of this. It wasn't the beer, it was the sleeping pill and the exhaustion. But people would think it was drunkenness. And I think that sort of thing I think probably led to a lot of this. But again, a lot of people who write this sort of thing, it's second- or third-hand. And once things get filtered to them through the media, often truth is one of the casualties.

**Timothy Naftali**

When did you first learn that there was a taping system?

**Raymond Price**

I first learned when everybody else did, I think. I don't recall exactly -- that's right, I do remember. We had a little -- down the hall from where my office was and Len Garment's, we had a little room that had a Xerox machine and things like that. And I was in that one, then a very agitated Len Garment came in and asked how I would react if I learned that my conversations with him in the Oval Office had been taped. I said no problem. Nothing I'd said there was secret from him. And if he wanted an electronic aide-memoire, no problem, fine. He said there had been one, that -- this was a Monday -- and that Alex Butterfield had revealed it to the committee on Friday, and that Alex was going to be testifying before the committee that day on Monday. And Len, being the shrewd trial lawyer that he is, he knew that things were going to blow up when that happened. But again, that was the first time I learned about it. Again, I thought it was entirely appropriate.

We didn't -- at this point, we did not yet know the history of tapings, how far back they went, how extensive. I did not yet know, but I later found out, for example, that during the transition, President Johnson had shown his own taping system to Nixon and urged that he keep it. Nixon didn't want it; he had it taken out. And then a couple of years later he decided it would be useful for history and so forth. And my guess is perhaps, though I don't know this, that one of his considerations might have been so that he would have something to check the claims of other people against, knowing that they were often going to be wrong, but also for whatever purposes he needed, so he would have an accurate record. But when he had his put in, unlike Johnson's -- Johnson had controls. I think for Johnson, I think one for example was on the table in the cabinet room was two buttons, one something like Pepsi Cola and the other Coca Cola or something like that. And one turned the machine on and the other turned it off. So he only taped those things he wanted taped, without anybody else's knowledge, of course.

And then later, of course, after it came up, we learned that it went all the way back -- in fact, that Roosevelt had a microphone put in one of the lamps in his office and so forth, that it had been in one form or another, it had been pretty much a routine thing. But, of course, when Nixon did it, then it was a different world entirely. And it became -- but then it also, of course, had been established constitutional law that a President had total control of anything like that himself, that neither of the other branches had any right whatsoever to demand them. This was first established by Chief Justice John Marshall, a

[unintelligible]

between Chief Justice John Marshall and President Thomas Jefferson back in about 1802. When Marshall issued a subpoena, Jefferson refused to reply on the basis of separation of powers. Marshall backed down; it remained. And there was another major thing in the 1930s, Humphrey's Executor, in which the Supreme Court, again, very explicitly and clearly made clear that each of the three branches is supreme in its own sphere and is not subject to demands of the other three for anything like that. And that held entirely until the doctrine established by John Marshall and Thomas Jefferson was invoked by Richard Nixon. And then, of course, the Supreme Court reversed.

**Timothy Naftali**

But you had a complicated factor, though. You had this lengthy testimony from John Dean that was linked to a crime --

**Raymond Price**

Yeah.

**Timothy Naftali**

--

[unintelligible]

it happened. And there were these tapes that could refute or corroborate the testimony, which implicated the President.

**Raymond Price**

Yeah.

**Timothy Naftali**

That may have made it a bit more complicated.

**Raymond Price**

It made it more complicated, but it had no relation whatsoever to the fundamental constitutional separation of powers among the three branches of government; neither one -- each one being, as the Supreme Court itself had put it, "supreme in its own sphere," which was inviolable by the others. And that had been the settled constitutional law for 200 years.

**David Greenberg**

The war for the tapes, of course, leads to the next moment where Nixon's resignation is talked about, the so-called Saturday Night Massacre. I'm wondering, first, if you recall any conversations in this period between the revelation of the taping system and October '73 of what Nixon should do with the tapes regarding Watergate; and secondly, your recollections of that famous evening, where you were and what your feelings were.

**Raymond Price**

The Saturday Night Massacre? Yeah, that, I think, took place while I was out on the remote eastern end of Long Island as I recall, if I recall it correctly. And I was following it on a little transistor radio. And I was helping a friend build a place out there, 120 miles almost from New York City, a little tiny country spot. And it just felt good to be away from Washington at that point. But then I came back and was in the middle of the maelstrom. But the thing is that this was

something that -- I think Elliott Richardson had given his word -- Elliott was a very honorable person. He'd given his word to the Senate, I think, or to Archibald Cox. But anyway, when Cox was chosen as special prosecutor, he had given his word that this sort of thing would not happen. And I forget now exactly the terms of it. But when -- so he felt that he could not fire Cox.

Then Bill Ruckelshaus, who was his deputy, felt bound by the same -- that's right, it was a pledge that Cox had given to the Senate, that was what it was. And Bill Ruckelshaus, his deputy, felt himself bound by the same pledge. So it wasn't that they objected to firing Cox, it was just that they had given a solemn pledge which they could not break. But it had already been agreed between -- among them that Bork -- Bob Bork, who was the number three in the Justice Department, that if they couldn't then he would stay behind. If they had to resign, he would stay behind and he would do it. But that was all agreed in advance among them, just because they were bound but he was not. It wasn't a plight of anger by either of them. It was just that they couldn't do it. And Nixon was determined to fire Cox, and I think for very good reason. But of course when it happened, it was a firestorm and everybody, all the things -- it was just Nazism all over again and so forth. It was the President trying to protect the prerogatives of the executive branch. But it caused us a lot of problems. But then Elliott came back to the Justice Department a couple of days -- a few days later to be called there and greeted tumultuously as a hero and so forth. But he gave a very clear, studied defense of Nixon's operation, Nixon's actions in this.

[Male Speaker]

This does lead to the intensification of the calls for resignation --

### **Raymond Price**

Oh, yeah.

[Male Speaker]

-- and impeachment proceedings. What was your role in thinking about that, talking to Nixon about that? Had your thinking been changed since April 30, '73?

### **Raymond Price**

My thinking about whether impeachment was justified never changed. I did not think it was. I still don't think it was. To me it was just pure politics on the part of members -- a Congressional majority that was determined to get him. They had a chance to get him and they were going to get him by hook or by crook. And it was by crook more than by hook as it turned out. They violated all the rules to do it, all the precedents to do it, to make sure that it happened. And they eventually won. Now I fought the Watergate battle with them from start to finish. I believed that we were on the right side of it, I still think we were; we lost.

### **Timothy Naftali**

I just wanted to pick up on what David asked. What role did you play in some of the damage control? It's clear the Saturday night massacre had a much greater effect on public opinion than President Nixon expected.

**Raymond Price**

Yeah.

**Timothy Naftali**

There must have been efforts to try to, you know, restore some of his support afterwards. Do you recall any conversations?

**Raymond Price**

I don't recall, I wasn't much involved in that aspect of stuff. I did all the Watergate speeches and so forth. I worked with the lawyers, things like that. But I was also doing other stuff, too. And I think -- I'm sure I was weighing in on some of whatever conversations that were around the corridors and so forth. But in terms of actual damage control, I don't recall being involved with that beyond what the President himself was doing.

**Timothy Naftali**

Let's talk --

**Raymond Price**

That doesn't mean I wasn't. I just don't recall it.

**Timothy Naftali**

Okay. Let's talk about -- in your memoirs you mentioned chatting with Rose Mary Woods and also with Fred Buzhardt about listening to the tapes --

**Raymond Price**

Yeah.

**Timothy Naftali**

Did you listen to any of the tapes?

**Raymond Price**

I didn't -- I did not. The only time I ever in my life have heard one was once, and I think it was a Cabinet meeting -- it may have been Fred or somebody -- played a small segment of one so the people there could hear how bad they were. That's the only time I ever actually heard any.

**Timothy Naftali**

But Fred and Rose Mary Woods told you about --

**Raymond Price**

About the absolute agony of trying to transcribe it. I think one of them, I think it was Rose, mentioned that it took her an hour -- a whole day or a whole hour to transcribe five minutes or something like that. And Fred couldn't physically stand to do it for more than an hour at a time, I think he said. It was just so difficult, so difficult. They were so -- the tapes are so bad. And part of the reason was that because Nixon -- when Nixon finally decided to have it put back in, unlike Johnson, he wanted to be unconscious of it. And so he made it voice-activated. But until then nobody knew what they sounded like. Nobody had listened to them and didn't know how bad they were. But, for example, when it seemed to be a voice, it might be the rattling of a teacup. Any sound could trigger it and turn it on. And these background sounds would interfere. And how -- whether people talk with a high voice or a low voice would affect it. And it was just awfully hard -- I mean, there might be two or three people talking at once. It was just awfully hard for the people transcribing to make sense of what was on them. They were very poor quality tapes.

[Male Speaker]

Mentally, of course, there are the transcripts made as part of the --

**Raymond Price**

Yeah.

[Male Speaker]

-- negotiations with --

**Raymond Price**

Yeah.

[Male Speaker]

-- Congress. And they, too, cause a big stir of public reaction --

**Raymond Price**

Yeah.

[Male Speaker]

-- some outcry. Do you recall your reaction to reading the transcripts when they first were released or when you first were able to see them and, you know, anything that surprised you in the conversations that were recorded?

**Raymond Price**

I don't recall being surprised especially. Again, by the time -- it depends at what point, because one set of transcripts after another might be a little more complete. Whether that meant it was more accurate or not, you don't know whether it was made complete by guessing, to what extent it was made complete by guessing or just by better equipment or whatever or more time to do it or more people. The others had a lot more people to put on it than we had. I think part of the reason that they came off so badly initially was that they were so incomplete. And so they sounded kind of stumbling. And they didn't sound Presidential.

[laughter]

And they probably weren't. But most Presidents, if you were to transcribe their private conversations, would not sound very Presidential, especially in a crisis like that. Most Presidents actually -- this may surprise people -- most Presidents are people, they're human. And at least they have human characteristics like that. And I can think of a lot of conversations I've had that I wouldn't want to have made public. And Presidents, again, they feel they can talk in confidence.

And again, especially one like Nixon, who often would use conversation as a way to challenge other people to elicit their responses; for example, he would make a statement not because he meant it necessarily but because he wanted to see what the other person's reaction was so he could put that reaction into his calculations of the whole thing. And a lot of his statements were just to see how that particular person responded. And since these were not supposed to go anywhere, it was just part of his research process, really. But also he was dealing with how to handle difficult things. And you explore all avenues.

And it doesn't mean you're going to do them, but you have a -- a lot was at stake in these, the stake of the Presidency, the future of the Presidency, the future of the nation, the future of the Western world, the future of freedom in the world. And you have a responsibility to explore all options, legal and illegal, I think, considering the stakes. Because you are, unlike those on the outside, the President is responsible for the consequences of what happens. Those on -- the critics on the outside didn't have to worry about consequences. They could be as pure as they wished. But no President has ever been pure. He couldn't function successfully as President if he were pure. People don't like to face that, but it's true. And one of the reasons that he was as successful as he was with the things that worked was that he didn't feel he had to be pure. You give something, you get something, and so on. But the transcripts, I don't know how accurate some of the later, more complete ones were. My guess is they're at least as accurate as the ones we have. But they did fill in a lot of blanks that I think they may have filled in incorrectly.

[Male Speaker]

I was thinking particularly about, I believe it was April '74, when the first transcripts are made public. I don't know if you laid eyes on them before that or if that was your first exposure to seeing those transcripts.

**Raymond Price**

I don't recall the sequence there in terms of dates. I think it was fairly early on when I remember looking -- I don't remember which photo it was -- the March 23rd one -- I think it was March 23rd, the hour and half when six minutes of it was -- he kind of gave the go ahead to have the CIA intervene with the FBI. I think that was March 23rd. And I remember whenever I saw that, it took me a while -- I had to read it several times before I began to get what I thought was the real gist of it.

**Timothy Naftali**

June -- you mean June 23rd.

**Raymond Price**

June 23rd, yeah, I guess it was June 23rd.

[Male Speaker]

And the March one was Dean, right?

**Timothy Naftali**

Yeah, it was the cancer in the --

**Raymond Price**

Yeah, the cancer in the Presidency one. That was March 21st, I think, the cancer in the Presidency with Dean. But I would have been doing those in connection with one of the Watergate speeches, and I forget now which one. There were several of them along the way. But in the Dean one -- I think it was the Dean one. Yeah, this was the one where he was cleared of -- but it took me several readings to figure this out. But it seemed to me it was clear that he was trying to find as much as he could from Dean, but gradually trying to find a different way of handling it. And ending up the way to handle it was by impaneling a grand jury so he didn't have to pay red -- you know, pay them off and things like that. And -- but it just exploring it and then deciding not to -- not to do it. And then the one that finally brought him down, the June 23rd, that this was the one where he did authorize having the CIA, Dick Walters of the CIA call Pat Gray, the head of the FBI and ask the FBI to stay out of a Mexican connection for the CIA's purposes. And this was about six minutes out of an hour and 35 minute tape in which, among other things, more attention was given to the problem of whether Mrs. Nixon and the girls should stay in Key Biscayne at the convention or at a -- in downtown Miami because if they had to be in Key Biscayne and come back by helicopter, the helicopter wind would muss their hair. This got more attention than this FBI thing, which ultimately kind of brought him down. But then again, to me, one of the other ironies of that is that this was sort of the final trigger, the exposure of this, that they hung it all on. But the only practical impact of that one intervention, which was his only intervention, was a two-week

[unintelligible]

interviews of two witness because two weeks later, Pat Gray, the FBI head, called the President back and told him that the CIA had now called and told him and told him they no longer have any problem with the Mexican cities. So the President said go ahead, do a full investigation. They did. And that was the only impact of that -- of that intervention which the Democrats in Congress used to bring him down. Two-week delay on the interviews the two witnesses.

**Timothy Naftali**

On the tapes, you heard Nixon asking various lieutenants to find out what happened in Watergate, who ordered it, how --

**Raymond Price**

Mm-hmm, mm-hmm. Yeah, mm-hmm.

**Timothy Naftali**

Do you remember, in this period, ever talking to President Nixon and his explaining or expressing to you his frustration at not knowing what happened?

**Raymond Price**

I remember it happened. I just don't recall the conversations particularly. I didn't make records of them. But I know he was very frustrated --

[laughter]

-- just dealing with him on it. It was a very frustrating time. The whole thing was very frustrating. And he was -- and my impression throughout, and since, has been that he was -- all of us were stumbling around in the dark, not knowing what we were dealing with, trying -- not only trying to figure out how to get out of it, but trying to figure what it was that we had to get out of.

**Timothy Naftali**

I think later, President Nixon afterwards would express a sense that he had made a mistake in not managing the situation properly.

**Raymond Price**

Mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

**Timothy Naftali**

You were there.

**Raymond Price**

Mm-hmm.

**Timothy Naftali**

Did you have a -- leaving aside the Democratic opposition, did you have a sense the White House itself was not managing, that Haldeman -- that this problem was getting worse and worse and worse, and the White House was doing -- but never quite on top of it.

**Raymond Price**

Well, I think it's true that we were never quite on top of it. But I think a large part of the problem was that we were so -- still so much in the dark about what it was we had to get on top of. And new things kept popping out of the woodwork that we didn't know about. And so much of it was mysterious then, and a lot of it has remained mysterious since. And I did, afterwards, as I mentioned in my "Reflections" chapter in that book, the -- come up with -- so many things seemed to point -- when I was going through it, after we were safely out of the way. And I was learning more about it after we were out, that so many things floated in entirely different directions from the White House, where everything seemed to have been -- there seemed to be CIA connections in everything. The whole thing was planned in a public relations firm that was a CIA front. Hunt had his own direct line to the director of the CIA throughout the whole thing. Every target that the Plumbers hit,

[Daniel]

Ellsberg's psychiatrists and the -- the publisher of the "Las Vegas Sun" was someone that had more -- was of more interest at CIA than it was to us. It tied even back into the whole CIA conspiracy with the Mafia to assassinate Castro and Howard Hughes things and so forth. And to me, it is still a mystery who -- where this all came from, why it was all done, and that I have suspected that they were trying to -- it may have been that they were trying to get White House cover for some of the stuff they were trying to do for other clients. But again, that's just my own supposition, but based on what I have been able to put together.

[Male Speaker]

Did you ever get Nixon's sense -- because other people, Howard Baker and others --

**Raymond Price**

Yeah, yeah.

[Male Speaker]

-- would speculate about, well, what was the CIA's role? Did you ever get a sense of whether Nixon thought there might have been a --

**Raymond Price**

I didn't know, and I don't know. And I don't know what his -- what his suspicions were. These that I developed were after, long after we were out. And because a lot of this, I didn't know at the

time we were still in the White House. A lot of this came out much later. And -- but I think, to me, there are still a lot of mysteries there.

**Timothy Naftali**

Do you have any independent recollections of the choice of Gerald Ford as Vice President?

**Raymond Price**

Not independent, though I -- he -- I think he was a good choice. I think he was a solid choice. I think I had a -- and he was one that Nixon knew well, one that was well respected in Congress, well respected in the nation, not flamboyant, but solid. And -- but, of course, he had to make that choice on very short notice at a time when he was dealing with some other very serious stuff, including the outbreak of war in the Middle East, and serious -- which could have blown into World War III. But, of course, the courts were insisting on their deadline, which had to take precedence over everything, war and peace or everything else or anything else. And he had -- he had one week to try to avoid World War III and to pick a new Vice President and couple of other things like that. It was tough. But he was a solid choice. And I think in retrospect, I think he probably was the best choice.

**Timothy Naftali**

Do you have any recollections of Bryce Harlow's role in that difficult period?

**Raymond Price**

Top of the head, I can't think, well, except the one clear thing that I recall was earlier on in '73, when I was trying to leave the White House, I think it was -- you know, this was the late '73. And I had never intended to stay that long. And at the end of the first term, I was exhausted and tired, and I wanted to get back to private life. And so I worked out a deal that I would turn over the writing staff to one of my people. I chose Dave Gergen, who had been my deputy, to replace me. And I'd go around the corridor with one assistant or one secretary on a couple of projects I wanted to get done which I thought would take about seven or eight months. And then on the completion of those, that I would go back to private life.

But that, you know, while doing these other things, meanwhile, because he depended on me for a lot of speeches, and I did all the State of the Unions and things like that, that I'd be available for any speeches he especially wanted. And so I was doing that when all this blew up around the corner there. And then toward the end of '73, I guess it was, yeah, I was trying to leave. And the -- we had the '72 or '73. '73. And the State of the Union was coming up, and I had sent a letter of resignation in. I'd -- partly that I was getting, at that point, a little uncomfortable arguing our case because there was a lot of stuff I didn't know about it then. Later, I became more comfortable again. But also, I was exhausted, and I wanted to -- wanted to get back to private life, so I was resigning. And -- but Al Haig held it back. He didn't give it to the President. And then finally I was worried about the approaching deadlines on the State of the Union, which somebody else was going to have to do. And I talked to Ron Ziegler about it, with my worries. Ron obviously talked immediately to the President, and I got a call that afternoon asking me to join a little family dinner, family Christmas dinner.

And so I went over and Bryce Harlow was also a guest at that, about a dozen, 10 or 12 of us around the family table in the upstairs. And Bryce was also trying to leave at the time. And the -- some of the accounts of this dinner, including, I think Barry Goldwater's own, I'm not sure -- no, not Barry. But some of the others have portrayed Nixon as drunk and slurring and so forth and -- but he was -- actually, he was not at all so. He was -- he had things he was trying to do, and around the dinner table. And Goldwater was -- and also kind of off -- going off the reservation. And -- but he divided dinner with us, too. And over dinner, he was very carefully saying things that would have to be -- things for the State of the Union and say, "Ray, you'll do that. You'll take care of that." Well, of course, over Christmas dinner, you can't say no. And assignments for Bryce, and "Bryce, you'll take care of that." And for Barry Goldwater, "Barry, you'll take care of that," and so forth, and just weaving his net very skillfully. And then after dinner was over, Bryce and I were walking back to the -- from the residence, and I said to Bryce, "Well, I guess we've both been had, haven't we?" And Bryce said, "Yep, I guess we have." We were there for the duration.

**Timothy Naftali**

Ray, Dwight Chapin told us about an emotional moment he recalled from the 1968 campaign.

**Raymond Price**

Mm-hmm.

**Timothy Naftali**

He wasn't sure when in that year it occurred. But he was on a commercial plane with you and the candidate.

**Raymond Price**

Mm-hmm.

**Timothy Naftali**

And Nixon became very emotional, talking about his mother and his father and his background.

**Raymond Price**

Mm-hmm.

**Timothy Naftali**

And Dwight couldn't quite remember what had prompted this. But he said it was -- the President actually began to cry in talking about his mother.

**Raymond Price**

I don't remember this. I don't remember it.

**Timothy Naftali**

Okay.

[Male Speaker]

Well, and along those lines, the one that many people have talked about was the evening I alluded to where he goes to the Lincoln Memorial --

**Raymond Price**

Yeah, mm-hmm, yeah.

[Male Speaker]

-- late at night, middle of the night.

**Raymond Price**

Mm-hmm.

[Male Speaker]

And I don't think you were with him then.

**Raymond Price**

No, I wasn't, no.

[Male Speaker]

You must have had a reaction to his -- what sounds like a somewhat impulsive decision to go out and do this the next day. Do you recall your reaction, discussion in the corridors, what people were saying about this?

**Raymond Price**

I don't recall what people were saying. I do recall -- I don't recall the details of it. But the memo that Bob Haldeman sent to me of Nixon's -- Nixon's recollection of what happened was quite different from the public perception of it, yeah, that -- which was essentially that he'd been restless that evening, and this was during one of the big demonstrations down in Washington, one of the marches on Washington, which we had quite a few of. And so he called for Manolo, his valet, and asked if he had ever been to the Lincoln Memorial, and so, "Let's go." And they got in the car. And he made a point of not telling anybody that he was going. And -- because he just wanted to be private.

And he went over just so he could actually talk with some of the kids. And so he went over there. And he took Manolo up the steps of the Lincoln Memorial and showing him the stuff. And the kids who were there, a lot of them were camped out, sleeping on the grounds of the memorial. They began to see this was rather -- they were rather surprised. And a bunch of them gathered around. And the stories that came out were that he just talked about surfing and things like that. But that this was not the way it was. There was one California person there who mentioned this, and he mentioned being -- one of the best surfing beaches in California was right by his place and so on. That was the only surfing thing. But he was trying to sound them out, and basically trying to give them a little feel of the world in the future and so forth, and on a retail way, just show a human side but also to calm a little bit. And so -- and then Ron Ziegler heard from the Secret Service that this guy, the President had, zoom, gone, over there. And so he rushed over -- rushed back himself -- got a car and rushed over there. And the President finally finished up and went back.

But it was just -- he had a group of them around, but he was answering their questions and so forth. And it was all fairly civilized -- civil. And several of them were wondering what he was doing there and you know. And they just wanted to talk about their protest. And he was trying -- he was trying to get them to think more broadly about the world, and to open their -- open their horizons a little bit more to the world even though it was on a retail basis. And some of them -- I think some of them got that, and some of them didn't. And the ones who didn't were the ones who talked about it.

**[Male Speaker]**

Okay, very good. Well, let me then go to the other moment I wanted to ask about. Later in the Presidency, shortly before the resignation, there's a big dinner that Roy Ash hosts at his --

**Raymond Price**

Mm-hmm.

**[Male Speaker]**

-- Bel Air mansion. And from your account, from other accounts that I've read, it sounds like perhaps something of a valedictory, even though the decision to resign hadn't been made yet, that there was an air of looking back on the Presidency.

**Raymond Price**

Yeah, yeah.

**[Male Speaker]**

Recognition that the days might be numbered. Share with us your recollection to that evening.

**Raymond Price**

I just remember it was a -- really nice evening. Roy had a grand -- I think it had been W.C. Fields' house that he lived in, a grand place. And Roy had been part of our administration. He was OMB director and so on, a good guy. And a lot of Nixon's friends from Southern California were there and some of us and so forth. I was up -- I was at the dinner. And in the course of it, and Brent Scowcroft was running back and forth to the telephone. And there just -- it turned out that they were working out something, I forget what, one of the big foreign crises, which he -- the President was able to tell the audience about. But it was just a nice evening, and perhaps his last night evening -- last really nice evening like that as President, because I think it was just very shortly before the -- I think it was just a few days before we got into the final countdown to the resignation on that trip to California. But just a -- it was a break from a very, very tense time, yeah.

**[Male Speaker]**

Was there a particular reason, occasion for this --

**Raymond Price**

I don't think there was any special occasion. I think was it just Roy deciding to do something nice for the President. And there was certainly a lot of friends there and showing support. They were all people who were big supporters of his, and to give him a little break from the -- from the pressures that he had been under. And I think he appreciated it. He enjoyed it. He -- and he -- Nixon gave a talk, and he was talking about all the world and so forth, and as he's graded this tour de raison of the world and some of its -- and he talked about some of the stuff that Brent was working on there on these telephone calls and the things that were happening out there. And also, I think probably he had a practice when he thought something -- things might be going bad, he would, in his own subtle way, being -- tried to buck up other people, just as he did, for example, on the plane in '72, coming back -- or in '68, coming back from California to New York for election day when it looks like if we might lose. He was bringing a few people up there at a time to try to prepare them so they wouldn't be hurt too badly if we lost. And I think he may have been doing a little of this there, too, knowing -- knowing that things might or might not come out well.

**[Male Speaker]**

Did you work on writing those remarks, or were they --

**Raymond Price**

No, they were, as usual, unscripted. And my own rough guess is that -- and it's only a guess, but having run the writing staff, it's an educated guess that of his speeches, setting apart radio addresses, they were pretty scripted, and he just taped them and sent them out. About one out of 20 was written -- 19 of 20 were not, and he never used notes. He was more comfortable without a text than with one.

**Timothy Naftali**

You mentioned the importance of the messages to Congress --

**Raymond Price**

Yeah, mm-hmm.

**Timothy Naftali**

-- which were the primary responsibility of your staff.

**Raymond Price**

Yeah, and they were most of our -- most of our writing was a message to Congress because we were not writing speeches except the occasional one. And these were often very long, very detailed. They were put out to the press also. But they were addressed to the Congress. This is when -- when the President would make his legislative proposals to Congress on whatever -- whatever it was. It was in these messages that he would lay it out in detail the argument for the way he thought it ought to be done and so forth, make the case. And there were major, major undertakings, mm-hmm.

**Timothy Naftali**

Let's talk -- before David leaves, let's talk about the countdown to resignation. Talk about it from your perspective. You've done a beautiful book -- job in the book, but we'd like to talk to you on --

**Raymond Price**

Uh-huh.

**Timothy Naftali**

-- on video. When does the countdown begin?

**Raymond Price**

It depends on where -- I guess you could -- where you'd start. Probably out in San Clemente when -- I remember he was giving a speech up in Los Angeles on the economy, which I had written. And I had gone over it with him, and he'd give it back to me with some things wrong and in a little folder. And I found in the folder a couple of notes he'd made there about members of the judiciary committee, their names. It was cryptic to me. But these were key ones. And I think these were -- I think he had just learned that day that these were ones he was going to lose. And they probably meant that he would be losing the Presidency. The -- I gave them back to him with a note just saying this, and later on I found out what the significance of them was. But so we came back, so this was -- let's see, this was -- I forget the dates. But it was shortly before we came back. And then the -- you know, I was revealing these things. Let me just take a break on this. Maybe we can start over and just to -- I was reviewing the stuff this morning. And now I suddenly draw a blank on the dates and times and so forth on it, of --

**Timothy Naftali**

Well, we're talking about the first week of August, right?

**Raymond Price**

Yeah, yeah. Uh-huh, of '74. If you want me to take a couple of minutes to review -- to review my -  
- to look back at it, I can.

[Male Speaker]

Sure, let's take a break.

**Raymond Price**

Okay, yeah.

[Male Speaker]

[Inaudible]

-- write a resignation letter?

**Raymond Price**

Yeah, yeah, probably the Thursday when we had the phony meeting with all the charts and assignments of people for the -- for the battle in Congress. And then I was called back in and told that was all a show, yeah.

[Male Speaker]

Okay.

**Raymond Price**

That's August 1st, Thursday, August 1st, yeah.

[Male Speaker]

We're speeding.

**Timothy Naftali**

Okay. Ray, please start by telling us the story of Thursday, August 1st.

**Raymond Price**

Thursday, August 1st, we're back in Washington. And I was summoned to a meeting at Al Haig's office, Al being the chief of staff then. Got over there, and several department heads and so forth had been assembled. There was a chart thing with -- covered over for displays of charts, and we waited. Haig came in a little bit later, apologized for being late and told the assembly of people that we were gearing up for the final fight in the battle. He'd -- the impeachment had already been voted. And assignments preparing for the fight in the -- on the House floor and in the Senate and assigning people roles and all that sort of thing, and then we broke up. And I was lingering outside. Then I was called back in, and Haig said all that had been show, that he wants a speech for Monday morning -- for Monday evening announcing his resignation, that we had lost -- by then, we had lost the battle in the Supreme Court for the privacy of the tapes. He had lost his support in the Judiciary Committee. They had already been voting articles of impeachment. And he decided that it was not going to be a winnable fight, and he was going to -- going to resign, and -- okay. So I started -- I wasn't sure, but I started working on it.

The next day I was called back over again. And this was the first time -- what prompted this to begin with was having to turn over the June 23rd tape which was the one in which after an -- over an hour and a half or so tape, six minutes -- during a six-minute period, he had authorized asking the CIA to head off the FBI from -- from one angle. And we could have survived easily earlier on, but at this point, we couldn't, we thought. And it wasn't until that Friday meeting back in Al's office that I actually saw the transcript. I thought maybe that they'd been over worrying about it. But I saw it was -- it was going to be devastating, considering how weak we were. I think we could have handled it earlier, but then, I didn't think we could.

So I started work that night on the speech for Monday. Then Saturday we convened again. By then, he had changed his mind. He still wanted a speech for Monday, but now he wanted one saying that he was going to fight on and pledging to answer questions under oath in the Senate, which I thought, was a bad mistake. I didn't see any way we could win it. Better to end it quickly and cleanly. But we had been asked -- I had been asked to come up to Camp David on Sunday. And he was up there. And so I got to work on preparing two drafts; one, the one that he wanted to fight on, but also taking with me, preparing another resignation draft, hoping that the way I'd done the resignation draft might tip him into what I felt was a really necessary move at this point, not because it was justified, but simply because the battle was lost, and better to end it quickly. And -- but I also -- Pat Buchanan had been useful in some of this, and I had met with him. I thought he would be useful to have up there. And so when I was asked if I wanted to bring anybody up to Camp David on Sunday, I suggested that Pat also be added -- be added to the list, and he was. We went up, I was carrying both drafts. By -- but by the time we got up there, the President himself had decided he was back on the resignation track. And we -- so we worked over the -- we went -- continued working on that. A whole group of us gathered up there, trying to work out some -- trying to find answers to some of the questions and so forth. And -- but I still -- what the President finally came around to on Sunday, which I thought made sense, was that we would put the -- we would put the transcripts out. He was still expected to be resigning. But we would put the transcripts out, but with a statement explaining them from our point of view, and to see if the reaction were what we expected it to be. I thought that was a good idea because maybe we were just overreacting. And a lot was at stake in resigning the Presidency, and better to be sure we're doing the right thing. We did -- we worked on that statement up in Camp David, a whole bunch of

us up there, and with a lot of phone calls back and forth to the White House trying to clarify things. Put the statement out on Monday. The reaction was what we expected.

And so on Tuesday, I got a call from Al -- we were back on the resignation track -- for a speech on Thursday night. And from then on, I was working on that in total secrecy. This was one of the tightest kept secrets that's ever been in the White House, that he was resigning, even though people -- a lot of people assumed that he was. And we went back and forth on this. I was working with him, sending -- sending drafts back and forth. He was going on the air at 9:00 Wednesday -- 9:00 Thursday.

On Wednesday, we were meeting in his Old Executive Office Building office, going over I think probably about the third draft of the speech. And he had written in the draft something about, "I met with the leaders of the House and Senate, and they've advised me that I do not have the support to continue." He explained to me that he was going to be meeting at 5:00. He had the Republican leaders of the House and Senate and Barry Goldwater coming in. And -- to meet with him at 5:00, and that he thought it was important to meet with them so they could deliver the message to him personally, so that it would be more like an impeachment and therefore less of a damaging precedent for the future, for future Presidents. Later on, I'm -- just as a P.S., a lot of stories have -- a lot were, in recent years, going out how they had come -- they had bravely come, and they had bearded the lion in his den and talked him into resigning and so forth. This was not true. He was already on the track. He was already working on it, and he was just trying to help make a better precedent for the future. We continued on through Wednesday working, going back and forth. I was trying to refine it.

And then Wednesday night, I got a call -- we'd been sending things back and forth and talking on the phone and so forth -- and Wednesday -- about stuff. And Wednesday night were nine -- I had nine phone calls from beginning at -- the first at 8:30, the last at 5:07 a.m. This was a night when some of the accounts, I think Woodward and Bernstein's included, had him up in his Lincoln sitting room on his knees, chewing on the rug and talking to pictures and so forth. Through a lot of this he was actually talking to me as we worked out the speech. It's also when he met with Henry Kissinger, and they did kneel down and pray together and things like that. But chewing on the rug and talking to pictures, no. He was working. And it was in these -- these calls beginning at 8:30 and finally at 4:35, I think, or 4:45 -- the 5:07 was a different one. I'll come to that -- which his refining and then working out the whole final part of the speech, which I thought really elevated it substantially, about the things that were needed for the future, for the next -- so it was not just a resignation, it was also kind of a path for the future, for those who would follow. And so I think he was able to leave it on a somewhat higher note there. Then the 5:07 call. I had left the -- I'll back up here.

I had stayed at the office until about 1:00 p.m. -- about 1:00 a.m. Midnight, I got a call from Jerry Warren, who was the deputy press secretary. He was actually the one handling the press. Ron Ziegler had been doing the Haldeman Ehrlichman jobs. And Jerry very carefully told me that he was getting queries from some of the press people. They saw the lights on in my office, and they were asking whether that meant a resignation speech was being prepared. I knew Jerry well. I was very -- I replied very carefully. I said -- and he asked, "What did you tell them?" I replied, "You can tell them you don't know." Jerry knew exactly what I was doing. I was warning him not to deny it, but not giving him actual knowledge so he could actually say that he did not know. And he was grateful for that later on. But then several more calls during the -- from -- especially from the 3:15,

3:45 and so forth, that part of the early morning hours, by the time I was home, phoning me, waking me up each time, working out the -- really this forward-looking part of it, and -- which made it a much better speech. And then at 5:07, another call from him, a.m., saying, "Just have it on my desk at 8:30 the next morning. Don't run it by Haig or Henry or anybody; just you. I want this to be my speech, just you and me." And so I did that.

Then we did more editing during the day on Thursday. I was worried about his condition, but he was holding up very well. And he went on the air at 9:00 p.m. and delivered the speech, which I actually think was a very good one by the time we finished. But it was -- the better parts of it really were fleshed out during those -- during the night, Wednesday night calls from him to me.

**Timothy Naftali**

On the draft, on the early drafts, you can see where President Nixon wrote those famous lines in longhand.

**Raymond Price**

Mm-hmm.

**Timothy Naftali**

About resigning was -- contradicted the very core of his --

**Raymond Price**

Yeah, mm-hmm.

**Timothy Naftali**

Can you recall how those found their way into the address?

**Raymond Price**

Well, he -- this was kind of the way we always operated. He would mark up drafts and write things in and so forth. And this was something he felt very deeply. And this was a very personal -- this was a much more personal speech than most of his, of course. And -- but writing with him on the few that were written was always very much a back-and-forth process, as I'd edit him, he'd edit me, I'd edit him, he'd edit me and so forth. And it followed pretty much the regular routine on that as it was shaped and, as he began taking it through. And at one point, he had asked Ron to -- Ron Ziegler -- to find a special Teddy Roosevelt quote that he wanted to use about the man in the arena covered with blood and sweat and so forth, who actually gets the things done. We put that in, but I cut off the top and the bottom of it so it would seem less self-serving, or it wouldn't be kicking me and kicking the others, but just gradually working it out and massaging it.

**Timothy Naftali**

When were you quite convinced he was on the resignation track?

**Raymond Price**

This was -- let's see -- Sunday when we got up there, back here, yeah -- no, Sunday -- I think I was pretty well convinced on Sunday that we were -- no, wait a second, I'm sorry. Once we got the -- saw the response, which came -- but by Tuesday, we were clearly on the resignation track. And there was no going back then, that it was just -- that it was not whether, but just how, how you do it, and working on the mechanics of that.

**Timothy Naftali**

You mentioned that earlier when Haig asked you for a draft.

**Raymond Price**

Mm-hmm.

**Timothy Naftali**

You provided two drafts, one, the fight --

**Raymond Price**

Yeah, well, I took up -- I took up two to Camp David with me, one "fight on," one -- but that was because he had been changing his mind. And when he called me in Thursday, that was for a resignation speech. And he still was on the resignation track on Friday. But then Saturday, he had changed his -- the President had changed his mind, and he was going to fight on, which I thought was a mistake. And so when we went up to Camp David on Saturday, I took two drafts, hoping that the -- that the way the resignation one was done might tip him in that direction, not because I thought it was justified, but because I thought it was necessary. And he didn't even know that I had two drafts, because by then, we didn't need the -- didn't need the two.

**Timothy Naftali**

So you weren't one of those who was really looking at the reaction on Monday to know whether --

**Raymond Price**

I don't think I was actually looking at it, but, well, on -- we put the transcripts out with our statement on Monday. And the resignation -- and the reaction was coming in. It was solid; there was no -- it was pretty clear then that there was not much choice to make, that it was lost. We had already -- we had lost our support in the House completely. We'd lost it in the Senate and lost it in the country.

**Timothy Naftali**

Tell me about the remarks that President Nixon gave to the White House staff.

**Raymond Price**

Mm-hmm, that was Friday morning. He had scheduled a farewell to the staff on Friday morning, 9:30 in the East Room. This was a very emotional talk. It was without notes. And I think most people who recall a farewell speech recall not the Thursday night but the Friday morning because that was so emotional. And that's when he nearly broke down a couple times talking about his mother and so forth. But in this -- and I think the -- I think his family did not know that the cameras were going to be there. I didn't know the cameras were going to be there. I thought it was just going to be a private farewell to the staff. And -- but what he was doing -- I knew him well, and I could see what he was trying to do. He was -- basically, he was trying to buck up all those whom he -- who were being left behind and try to give them something positive to take out of it. He did nearly break down a couple times, but then he got through it. And he went out, and we all gathered on the South Balcony to wave goodbye. And as they boarded the helicopter, and Barbara Bush standing next to me had the tears streaming down her face and so forth. And they were gone, off to the plane and off to California. And that was it.

**Timothy Naftali**

Some people commented on the fact that at that Friday speech, the President was wearing glasses. Had you seen --

**Raymond Price**

Yeah, that's right. He never -- he never wore them. But he wore them only because there was a passage, a Teddy Roosevelt passage, that he wanted to read, and he needed the glasses to read with. So he got his glasses out, put them on. And that was the one time in his Presidency, I think, that people saw him -- saw him wearing glasses.

**Timothy Naftali**

Teddy Roosevelt was an inspiration for the resignation speech.

**Raymond Price**

Mm-hmm.

**Timothy Naftali**

And also for this speech.

**Raymond Price**

Yeah.

**Timothy Naftali**

Can you tell us why he turned to Teddy Roosevelt?

**Raymond Price**

Well, he was an admirer of Teddy Roosevelt. He was quite a -- he was quite a scholar of the Presidency himself and had favorites and so forth. But he admired Teddy Roosevelt for his spirit. And in each case, he was kind of the spirit that he was -- of Roosevelt that he was trying to evoke. The Thursday night, the man in the arena, I think he saw himself as the man in the arena. And he felt very much the critics were -- the ones who were beating him into the ground were the critics who didn't really do anything just as the critics that Teddy Roosevelt was complaining about there. And he was the guy who was actually going through the blood and sweat and tears of getting stuff done. But the essence of this Teddy Roosevelt quote was that it's really the man in the arena who counts. And I think this was sort of -- but by cutting off the complaints about the critics from the top and the bottom of that quote, I think we saved it for that. And the other -- the other that he used in the Friday morning was the one which made the point that if you -- if you give in to hate, then the one you destroy is not those who hate you but the ones -- but you destroy yourself. And I think he was just trying to leave that as a lesson for those behind. I don't think he was giving it as an apology for himself. But again, the whole thrust of that Friday morning thing was, as he did so often when he thought something might be bad, he tried to buck up the troops. And I think he was trying to do that for those who were left behind.

**Timothy Naftali**

Two leftover questions I'd like to address.

**Raymond Price**

Mm-hmm.

**Timothy Naftali**

One is the -- you told me the story, and I'd like to be sure it's on tape, that when you were working on the resignation speech, a member of the press called you.

**Raymond Price**

Mm-hmm.

**Timothy Naftali**

And it was Clifton Daniel.

**Raymond Price**

Yeah, mm-hmm, mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

**Timothy Naftali**

Can you tell us what --

**Raymond Price**

Yeah, this was -- well, it was Thursday afternoon, I think mid-afternoon, about 3:00 in the afternoon. I was in my office and the phone rang. It was Clifton Daniel, Harry Truman's son-in-law who was then head of the Washington Bureau of the "New York Times." He was -- he was a very gracious professional, and a gracious person. And he called, was rather apologetic, said that he hated to ask this, but he thought he was sure that as a fellow newspaper editor, I would understand his situation, that they had had, for some months -- they had 15 pages of material all locked up for whenever Nixon might resign. And they were ready -- planning to go with that in the thing. And could I -- he realized it was sensitive, but could I very privately, for him, just tell him whether or not in the speech there would be the word "resign" or "resignation." And I understood his problem. I told him, "Yes." And so he was very grateful, said, "Thank you. So we will not at press time have to tear apart the entire paper."

**Timothy Naftali**

Ask you about yourself. You told me that the White House gave you something to help you work longer hours.

[laughter]

**Raymond Price**

Are we on --

**Timothy Naftali**

Yes.

**Raymond Price**

Yeah, actually, the White House doctor was my source. But I -- the way I worked, I often really felt I had to work all night to get things done. I could get away from the pressures of the day, away from the telephones and so forth. And I could do things better if I could work all night. The rules were different then. And I got amphetamines from the White House doctor to keep me awake so that I could often so I could work through the night and then often into the next day. I think there was one period when I -- that's right, it was on -- the first time I did a State of the Union, I think I worked all day, all night, all the next day, all the next night. And then finally that third morning, I saw my desk on the other side of the room and decided that I'd better go home and get some sleep. But I got a lot of my best work done working all through the night with the help of those amphetamines which I was able to get from the White House doctor.

**Timothy Naftali**

Who drove you home that night?

**Raymond Price**

That morning when I was... A fellow that I had borrowed -- I forget now which one. I think it was somebody, a fellow that I borrowed from the staff to help me on that. And he drove me home, mm-hmm. That was before I had the White House car myself.

**Timothy Naftali**

Tell me about how you felt that last week of the Presidency, 1974. You must have been even more tired.

**Raymond Price**

I was very tired. Again, by the time I was -- I was awfully sorry that it all had to be done. I was very glad that if it had to be done, I was the one doing it. And I remained an admirer of the President, as I still am today. And I knew it was awfully rough for him. I knew it was a lot rougher for him than it was for me. And I just wanted to be of any help that I could in making it go as well as it could, not only for the immediate future then, but also for the longer term future.

**Timothy Naftali**

Why did you -- why were you glad that you were the one?

**Raymond Price**

Because -- well, just, it wasn't for any purpose of just being part of history or anything, it was just for whatever support I could give, really. It was important to me to be able to give whatever support I -- as much support as I could to him in what I knew was probably the most difficult part of his life -- point of his life.

[Male Speaker]

Were you working with any members of the family at that point, Tom

[unintelligible]

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**Raymond Price**

In that -- in that last week, I don't think I was working with the family in that last week. I was, often over times. They were friends. But they had their own things to tend to. And I certainly wasn't calling them with -- I wasn't going to interfere with them. And I don't think I had any direct contact with them. But I had a lot with him, but I don't think with them. And I do remember on, I guess it was the Wednesday, I think, when we were working on this thing, on the resignation speech, and he asked me to have the -- that's right. When he said he was going to be meeting at 5:00 with the congressional leaders and he said to have the speech over on his desk at 8:30 or something, he said, and -- "and then after the meeting, and then I'm going to have to talk to the

family, and that's going to be the tough part." That was what he said, because the family did not want him to resign. So he had to persuade them that it was necessary and to bring them along with it.

**Timothy Naftali**

Did Julie work with you ever on some of the President's speeches?

**Raymond Price**

No, she never did, no.

**Timothy Naftali**

She was very thoughtful about policy --

**Raymond Price**

Yeah.

**Timothy Naftali**

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And did she

[unintelligible]

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**Raymond Price**

No, she didn't. She didn't -- she didn't intrude herself into that. That was her father's business. But I certainly, in family confines

[phonetic sp]

, he listened to her. He had great respect for her, as he did for Tricia both, Tricia and all. They were a very close family. And I have seen comments people -- a lot of stuff in the press. One book I was reading recently said that it was a very troubled marriage. It was a very close marriage, very close. And the whole family were very close. And they were behind him 100 percent in all that he did.

**Timothy Naftali**

Would you describe that Christmas dinner of '73?

**Raymond Price**

Uh-huh.

**Timothy Naftali**

Was that the first time that you had dinner up at the family quarters?

**Raymond Price**

I think it was. I think it was, yeah, hmm. Mm-hmm.

**Timothy Naftali**

During 1973, you were then just working on special projects. Had you already -- in early '73, you said you had planned to move.

**Raymond Price**

Yeah, I was trying to transition out.

**Timothy Naftali**

Was it work -- I know you were trying to, but you never did transition out.

**Raymond Price**

Yeah, right.

**Timothy Naftali**

Did you actually transition to that special projects?

**Raymond Price**

Well, yeah, I did, because I had been -- I'd been an office on the corner office with the adjacent conference room and so forth when I was heading the writing staff. But then I turned the writing staff and that office over to David Gergen, who I had hired as my assistant. By then, he'd become my deputy, to him. And I took one of my writing staff, Tex Lazar, and my secretary with me. And I moved around to a smaller office on the other side, just a couple of doors from the President's office, just to do these projects, what I thought was just to do these projects that I hoped to do before leaving.

And of those, one was my -- what I called my philosophy project which was I wanted from myself, to draw together all the various strands of the President's own philosophy of government so this could better be understood within the administration and abroad and outside, as I don't think it was. But it was very coherent.

And the other was to spend part -- some time, and I figured about two-thirds on philosophy, one-third on this other. I wanted to spend some time going around the country to think tanks or universities and so forth trying to bring in some fresh ideas to leave behind, because an administration does get stale after a while. Most -- that's one of the reasons that most second terms are not very good second terms. And I thought these two together might take eight or nine months. But part of the deal was that I would be available for any speeches he especially wanted me to do. And, of course, the way things worked out, there were quite a few that he wanted me to do.

**Timothy Naftali**

Did you do the philosophy project?

**Raymond Price**

No. That was -- that was one of the -- one of the casualties of Watergate.

**Timothy Naftali**

Do you recall your reaction after the '72 campaign when the President had -- or Haldeman asked for everyone's resignation?

**Raymond Price**

I thought it was -- I was not bothered by it. I thought it was a perfectly legitimate thing because -- and I understood the reason for it. It wasn't that he wanted people to leave, just that he wanted to be able to reorganize things and to get everybody freshened up. And a lot of people were moved from one job to another and so forth. You got stale awfully quickly in -- under the pressures of that. And I thought it was a good -- I thought getting -- giving everybody a fresh start was a good thing. And asking for everybody's resignation, it wasn't, "We don't want you to be here any more." It was just to get -- to provide a perfectly free hand in reorganizing everything and everybody. Some would -- I believe some would leave anyway. Very people stayed for eight years in any administration. And -- but it was done in kind of a blundering way, and a lot of people took offense at it. I did not take offense.

**Timothy Naftali**

Who do you -- who do you blame for it being blunder --

**Raymond Price**

I don't know, I'm not a blame guy, and I don't know just how the -- who settled how and handling it. But it should have been done with a little more finesse than it was.

**Timothy Naftali**

Last question.

**Raymond Price**

Mm-hmm.

**Timothy Naftali**

You talked about some -- in 1967, you sat down, and you looked at Richard Nixon's ideas. You worked through his ideas, and you realized, this is the guy for me.

**Raymond Price**

Mm-hmm.

**Timothy Naftali**

What was it about his ideas, his statements, his thoughts, his approach to government that made him your candidate then and then continued to be?

**Raymond Price**

Well, it was just I've been involved -- been writing about Presidents and so forth, I've been following politics practically since I could walk and talk. And I'd been eight -- I'd been editorial writer for the "Herald Tribune" and so forth, and I've been in "Life" and

[unintelligible]

magazines before that, always in the public policy arena. That it wasn't so much -- it wasn't any one thing. But I had never -- unlike other New Yorkers or other journalists, I had never been anti-Nixon. A lot of Republicans had been. I had always -- basically, I'd always been favorably disposed to him. I hadn't wrote -- but the thing is I hadn't really focused on -- in '68, on who my candidate would be. I just kind of had a gut feeling that, without thinking about it, that we probably, as a party, needed somebody fresh. And he was not fresh. And I did not have a choice, didn't have any -- any one particular one in mind, much less whether I would want to get involved with it. So I -- basically, I entered it with an open mind.

But just the more I saw of him and the way his mind worked and so forth, the more I concluded that, in fact, he was my candidate. In '64, background to that, I had been one of those pushing the Republican "Herald Tribune" into endorsing Johnson over Goldwater. And I had written the endorsement myself. A very traumatic thing for the "Trib" because the only ever time -- only other time it had ever not endorsed the regular Republican nominee was in 18- -- since it was founded in 1841 by Horace Greeley, was in 1872 when it endorsed an insurgent Republican running with the Democratic nomination against Grant when Grant ran for a second term. And the insurgent Republican entered with a Democratic nomination endorsed then was Horace Greeley, the owner and editor of the paper. So it was a traumatic thing for the paper. But in '64, I wasn't even sure that I was going to favor the Republican nominee because at that stage, Johnson was still riding high. He was still manifestly confident. I supported him on most of his foreign policy things, which were the most important. And so unless we put up somebody better, I was automatically going to be for the Republican nominee. But Nixon, I thought, fit the bill once I got to know him.

**Timothy Naftali**

There is a debate among people that if the second term of Watergate had not happened, the administration might have turned, might have become much more conservative.

**Raymond Price**

Mm-hmm.

**Timothy Naftali**

In the Haldeman diaries, there's a sense that Haldeman assumed the administration would become more conservative. Recalling that era, did you think that the administration might be turning a little to the right because of the election?

**Raymond Price**

I don't know. Again I -- that was -- that sort of thing -- my guess is, I don't know that I had any special thought that way one or the other. My guess, though, is that it would probably have depended on what the makeup of Congress was and what the problems of the world were, because he was always much more focused on foreign -- foreign affairs and domestic. He cared more about those; the stakes were bigger in the foreign policy world. He had more freedom of action on that field. And the stakes were enormous. And he was always willing to make compromises on domestic policy in order to get things -- the right thing in the foreign field. And he was not an ideologue; he was a pragmatist. And he was looking -- he had been -- one of the things that he had been very anxious to do was get the whole Federal Government reorganized.

He was trying to push power away from Washington back to the states and localities. And he was trying to do this in a structured and organized way. And he'd been frustrated in this in the first term, very hard to get any of this through Congress with all their constituency problems. But he did have high hopes of being able to really make progress on this in the -- in the second term. And I think that might be defined as a conservative thing, and you're getting power away from Washington. But that was one of his stated goals from the beginning, to try to move power away from Washington.

And partly, one thing that always struck me, and we used this in some cases, was the fact that we -- we were inheriting the second third of the 20th century, beginning the third third. And the second third, the whole pattern of the second third, from Roosevelt through Johnson, had been a massive accumulation of power in Washington. He came into office determined to try to reverse that direction in this final third and move power back toward the states and localities and the people. That's what he was trying to do structurally, that you might define as a conservative thing. But it was a radical change even though it might be in a conservative direction. But that was the whole purpose of it, purpose of a lot of the reorganization.

**Timothy Naftali**

Did he differentiate with you between the New Deal and the Great Society, in terms of what he --

**Raymond Price**

No. They -- I think he saw the Great Society as an extension of the New Deal, basically, as I did, too.

**Timothy Naftali**

And -- but he accepted some of it.

**Raymond Price**

Oh, yeah, he accepted some of it. And I accepted some of the things he was trying to do. But he wanted to -- he wanted more of the decisions to be made at a lower level, fewer of them made by the bureaucrats in Washington.

**Timothy Naftali**

Is there any anecdotes you'd like to add to the record that we haven't --

**Raymond Price**

Not top of the head that I think of at the moment.

**Timothy Naftali**

Paul, would you like to -- have we left something out that you'd like to add? Ray, thank you for your patience.

**Raymond Price**

Well, thank you for your patience.

**Timothy Naftali**

And your insight. This has been very helpful.