

Nixon Legacy Forum Transcript:
The Week That Changed the World
Part I

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University of Southern California
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Panelists:

Colonel Jack Brennan, Marine Corps Aide to the President

Dwight Chapin, Deputy Special Assistant to the President and Acting Chief of Protocol during President Nixon's 1972 trip to China

Larry Higby, Assistant Chief-of-Staff to the President

Clayton Dube (Moderator), Associate Director of the USC U.S.-China Institute

Clayton Dube: Hi. My name is Clayton Dube, and it's my privilege to be from on the USC U.S.-China Institute. And it's a big week here at USC. On Friday, we are going to be inaugurating C.L. "Max" Nikias as the 11th president of the university. While he was provost, Max Nikias established the USC U.S.-China Institute, expressly to focus on the U.S.-China relationship in all its dimensions, how it was changing, why it mattered, and to look at critical trends in contemporary China. This focus on China remains a strategic priority here at USC. Unfortunately, President Nikiias has another commitment and can't be with us today, but he asked that I extend to you his warmest of welcomes. And it's of course my pleasure to do just that.

Thank you all for coming to today's symposium. We're going to be looking back at what went into making "the week that changed the world," that week in February 1972 when President Nixon traveled to China. We are extremely fortunate to have a distinguished panel to speak on that subject. After that, we're going to look at U.S.-China relations in the context of China's rising global influence.

Thirty-eight years ago, Richard Nixon stepped off a plane in Beijing. He extended his hand to Premier Zhou Enlai. And this ushered in a new age in U.S.-China relations. It signaled the beginning of big, big changes. Reconfiguring the U.S.-China relationship had been on Richard Nixon's mind for quite some time. He wrote about it in 1967, a year before he was elected President of the United States. In an article in "Foreign Affairs," he said, "We simply cannot afford to leave China forever outside the family of nations,

there to nurture its fantasies, cherish its hates, and threaten its neighbors." He was determined to change that.

Now, the behind-the-scenes diplomacy began in late 1970 with both the Chinese and Americans working through Pakistani representatives. Both sides subsequently seized on the opportunity, the opening that presented itself with the ping-pong tournament in Tokyo that led to a chance encounter between the Chinese team and one member of the American team. It was our privilege to earlier host here at USC, Zhuang Zedong, the member of the Chinese team who extended his friendship to Glenn Cowan, the southern Californian table tennis player, on that bus.

You know, of course, that the American team traveled to China in April 1971. At that time, President Nixon spoke quite clearly that he hoped, in some capacity, to get to China. Not long after that, President Nixon dispatched his Secretary of State, Henry Kissinger, to China, setting in motion the events that we are going to be talking about today.

After that July meeting between Secretary Kissinger and Prime Minister Zhou Enlai, it was agreed that President Nixon would go to China. But how? How would he go? How was this possible? That journey didn't just happen. As you know, we did not have diplomatic relations, that's why the opening was so important. And so that meant there was...we didn't have the usual infrastructure upon which to draw to prepare for such a visit.

The task of making this trip possible and making it successful fell to his staff, most importantly, the three gentlemen that we're honored to have with us today as part of this first panel. They're going to be telling you about the bureaucratic and cultural divides that had to be bridged, the work that was necessary to orchestrate this important summit. Where would they go? With whom would they speak? On what subjects? Who would travel with them? How would news be disseminated? All of these things had to be worked out in meticulous detail. And even after working all of this out in great detail, the staff had to be prepared to make last minute adjustments, because things, as they often do in China, change. You're going to be hearing about all of that.

Once again, today's symposium is divided into two parts. The first part features those who helped to make, helped to bring about the week that changed the world. And then the second part features six scholars who are going to be speaking on U.S.-China relations, on China's place in its region, as well as China's place in its world.

A lot of people have worked hard to make this event possible. I'd like to highlight the contribution made by Venus Saensradi of the U.S.-China Institute, and also the contribution made by Anthony Curtis of the Nixon Foundation. Without these two individuals, we wouldn't be here at this moment. This event, though, would not be possible were it not for the vision, the energy, the imagination of Mr. Sandy Quinn, President of the Nixon Foundation. It's a great pleasure to welcome Sandy back to USC. He's a Trojan, back to USC, and to invite him to introduce our distinguished panel. Sandy?

Sandy Quinn: Thank you, Clayton. I'm with the Richard Nixon Foundation, which is located on the magnificent 13-acre campus of the Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum in Yorba Linda. How many of you have ever gone down to Yorba Linda and visited The Nixon Library?

Only staff members. Well, that's good. Fortunately, my staff. But I know it's an hour away. It's an experience you should all put on your calendar while you're here at SC. The foundation's role is to enrich, to communicate, to spread the word about Richard Nixon's magnificent, extraordinary contributions as the 37th President of the United States. It's a lot more than resignation. It's a lot more really than the opening of China. It has immense, imaginative initiatives in the broad-spectrum of domestic affairs and foreign affairs beyond just China, including Russia and elsewhere.

But we have embarked this year and next on a very aggressive series of Nixon Legacy Forums and this symposium is one of those, where we want to bring the eye witnesses, indeed the participants, the creators, the architects, the people who were with the President at the incredible moments of his administration when great policies and great steps were taken, none more significant of course than that of the opening of China.

We have two panels today. One is from our friends at the Nixon Center, which is a Washington D.C. based think-tank, and we have three of their respected, distinguished scholars, two of whom, and perhaps all three, have served in the White House or in State Department staffs of presidents. And then the first panel, the one you're going to hear now, is made up of those who went to China on that very first historic trip with President Nixon. And these are people who were at his side, who helped make the arrangements in advance and the people who were in Beijing, Peking, making those arrangements, were there, indeed, before the president was, they communicated to the White House on a daily basis about what was going on and what steps should be taken. Getting direction from Bob Haldeman and the President himself. And they're represented here today as well.

I'd like to introduce them, the first of whom is Colonel Jack Brennan. Jack, if you would take your seat.

Jack Brennan: Thank you.

Sandy Quinn: He was a distinguished Vietnam veteran. He was a, I can't say he "was," because Marines it's "is." So, he is a Marine, he was the military aide to the President and was with him not only just during that trip, but on some of the most important car rides and meetings, where it was just the President and the colonel. He'll tell you about that in a minute. Second is Larry Higby. Larry is a member of the board of the Nixon Foundation. He had a distinguished business career following his work at the White House where he was assistant to Bob Haldeman, indeed Assistant White House Chief of Staff, who accompanied the President and was as involved as anyone in the making of that trip, and the end result of the success and the Shanghai Communiqué. Thank you for coming, Larry.

Our moderator is Dwight Chapin. Oh, I've got to say one thing though about Larry and a little bit apologetically. He is a Bruin, you should know that. However, he's a Bruin by education, but by tuition he's SC. We have him because he's sends two kids here. He writes his checks here (and that's what counts). No, but thank you, Larry.

Now, another Trojan, Dwight Chapin, who is our moderator. Dwight started with President Nixon in 1962, when he ran for Governor of California. He was a field representative. He's from the San Fernando Valley, as I am. He was involved as a personal aide, assistant to President Nixon throughout the campaigns, and went to the White House with him. Was also right outside his door, working as a senior White House aide. He was on the other end of the phone when Ron Walker and the people who were in Peking making the arrangements called in for direction. So it's an honor to have him, it's an honor to have all three of them, all old and close friends of mine. Thank you for coming.

Dwight Chapin: Thank you, Sandy. Thank you, Sandy. Well, we're here to talk about how President Nixon changed the modern world, you're going to have your panel a little later that gets into the substantive side of this historic trip and what it opened up and the consequences that are being dealt with today. But we're really here to kind of give you a little bit of an insight into the inside story as to how all of this got started.

And as Sandy clearly said, Jack Brennan who was very, very close to President Nixon and who served as the military aide on the trip. Larry, again, to remind you, he, at this point, was the assistant to Bob Haldeman.

Haldeman was Chief of Staff to President Nixon and as Haldeman was to Nixon, Larry was to Haldeman. And then my role was that I was kind of the acting chief of protocol. I was in charge of the logistics side of this trip. And it was a very historic time in our lives. Larry is going to leadoff here and give you a little background as to the state of the world and the thinking when we first learned that we were going to be going to China. Larry?

Larry Higby: Thank you, Dwight. For those of you who don't remember, we had this thing called the Vietnam War. And back during that time of the Nixon administration, it dominated any policy discussion, foreign or domestic, that took place in the United States or among world powers. So you had a situation in which we were trying to solve a war, trying to create a peace, and simultaneously trying to deal with the Cold War nation in Russia, and a nation that basically we didn't know in China, 750 million people that were largely, at that point in time, cut off from the world. In addition to that, you have to remember that Russia and China were not particularly good friends. Indeed, there had been border squabbles back and forth for them for a long time.

Finally, Nixon was worried that if in fact we were to bomb North Vietnam, both China and Russia, most certainly Russia, would very likely come down and enter the war in a more formal way. So we had a number of tensions going on in the world at that time, and a nation that was largely cutoff from any kind of modern communication or information that the rest of the world was joining. When he looked at the opportunity, he saw the opportunity to counterbalance Russia and some of its influence by becoming closer to China. But it had to be very delicately handled because China also had relations with Vietnam at that point in time, and you couldn't undo that.

So we began down this very delicate path of trying to not only end the Vietnam War, calm down Russia, but also bring China into the modern world. The thing that I remember and the first time I knew that we were doing anything like this, and I saw the CIA briefing papers every morning, so this was something that was known by only about five or six people, was Henry wandered into my office at the White House.

Dwight Chapin: Henry who?

Larry Higby: What?

Dwight Chapin: Henry who?

Larry Higby: Henry Kissinger, I'm sorry, wandered in. He was the Security Adviser to the President. On, I think, a Thursday or a Friday afternoon, going off on the next round of peace negotiations, peace talks we were supposed

to have in Vietnam. And we talked for a while because Haldeman was on the phone and then he sort of said, "I may be doing a little additional traveling." That's all he said, went in, and saw Bob. And after he was done, he came out of the Chief of Staff's office and I was called in by Haldeman, and that's when he told me for the first time, "Henry is not just going to Vietnam, he's going to China."

Jack Brennan: Clay was absolutely right when he implied that to call this "Ping-Pong Diplomacy" is a misnomer. It was at least a five year, structured reasons to get to the point where finally, there was an implied invitation for a high level representative to come to China, to make arrangements for a trip of the President. This culminated, this build-up culminated in the world's most famous upset stomach.

When Dr. Kissinger was in Pakistan, in a meeting with President Yahya Kahn, who had been one of the two contacts with the People's Republic of China. He conveniently got, first, exhausted, as what he reported to the press, he was exhausted and had to go to, their Camp David to rest, resting for a day. They had such a plan going on, they had planned a dinner and then the dinner was only planned so that they could cancel it. And then they had a big motorcade going up. In fact, Henry was just hundreds of yards away from the Presidential Palace, an old cottage, whisked away at 3:00 in the morning to a Pakistani airplane, flown into China, no one knew. There was no communication for two days. And the press thought, "Well, he's sick."

And on July 11th, he came out of, after two days of discussions with primarily Zhou Enlai, Premier Zhou Enlai. He came back into Pakistan and the "Eureka" means he sent a cable. We had no communications. He sent a cable to his assistant, which was General Haig. We're all down here in San Clemente at the time. General Haig said, "I got a message from...a cable from Dr. Kissinger." And the President said, "What did it say?" It said, "Eureka," which meant everything's set. You're welcome, come.

I should say that this is an anxious time. Why anxious? Because, in effect, we could have what could have been an incredible embarrassment. Mao Tse Tung could have said, "The American President chooses to come here, but those running dogs are not allowed." You know, it could have been just an embarrassment, a terrible embarrassment.

Larry Higby: But there was also worry that, you know, suppose they decided to hold Henry Kissinger hostage. And there were a lot of suggestions.

Dwight Chapin: That would have helped in some way.

Larry Higby: They should send more Secret Service with him. And finally somebody who's smart enough said, "Look, if the Chinese want to do anything while Henry's there, they're going to do it. We don't have enough Secret Service to worry about it." So, he went in with a very small party and just a couple of aides.

He returned, and if you'll recall, he returned to San Clemente. The President had over the weekend flown out to San Clemente to the Western White House. And Henry Kissinger returned there, immediately went in to see the President. Frankly nobody...hardly anybody on the White House staff knew anything except that Henry was getting back from Vietnam. There was some negotiation and some consultation. And then the President, without saying why, said that he requested time on NBC to address the nation on a very important matter. What that meant...

[Clip From ABC News on July 15, 1971]

Tom Gerald: Good evening. President Nixon tonight has flown from his home at San Clemente to a television studio here in Los Angeles to deliver what the White House terms a major statement. The President, this week, has been conferring extensively with Secretary of State William Rogers and Mr. Nixon's National Security Advisor, Henry Kissinger, leading to speculation that tonight's subject will be in the area of foreign policy. Here now is the President of the United States with what the White House terms a major statement.

President Nixon: Good evening. I have requested this television time tonight to announce a major development in our efforts to build a lasting peace in the world. As I have pointed out on a number of occasions over the past three years, there can be no stable and enduring peace without the participation of the People's Republic of China and its 750 million people. That is why, I have undertaken initiatives in several areas, to open the door, for more normal relations between our two countries. In pursuance of that goal, I sent Dr. Kissinger, my assistant for National Security Affairs, to Peking during his recent world tour for the purpose of having talks with Premier Zhou Enlai. The announcement I shall now read is being issued simultaneously in Peking and in the United States. "Premier Zhou Enlai and Dr. Henry Kissinger, President Nixon's assistant for National Security Affairs, held talks in Peking from July 9 to 11, 1971. Knowing of President Nixon's expressed desire to visit the People's Republic of China, Premier Zhou Enlai, on behalf of the government of the People's Republic of China, has extended

an invitation to President Nixon to visit China at an appropriate date before May 1972."

[End Clip From ABC News on July 15, 1971]

Jack Brennan: The world was surprised and the press were flabbergasted. So much so that one of the all-knowing hosts stared into the cameras like a frightened deer and had nothing to say. Just complete, complete shock. This is the next day's edition of "The New York Times," and although it tells about, look at the part that Dwight has circled. The action is not at expense of old friends. That referred, of course, to Taiwan. All of the negotiations through our secret channels, for almost always, the Chinese response was, "We may have communications to speak about Taiwan." Nothing else. And then finally when they agreed to speak with something other than Taiwan, Taiwan being primary, then things progressed.

Dwight Chapin: So what's interesting is that no one knew that this was going to happen. Larry being an exception. Two or three other people. The announcement was made in Burbank, California, and then the question became how in the world are we going to do this? What is involved? We did not know anything about going to China. We had to try to figure this out. So there were players at the White House. The President in charge of everything. It's a very important point.

The President was the architect of this trip. Kissinger, he was part of the construction group. He was the builder. But there were several people intricately involved in the trip. Henry and Haig and the NSC contributors worked on the substance. Bob Haldeman was in charge of all the arrangements, and that's who I reported to, And then we ended up with two men in the PRC, Ron Walker, and then our dear friend, Tim Elbourne, who is deceased, but was a Trojan, he was a fraternity brother of mine and Sandy's here at USC.

Dr. Kissinger went over, as we pointed out, in July of 1971. Then we put together a trip, that I'm gonna talk a little bit more about in a few minutes, that went back in October of '71. There were around nine of us on that trip. And then we went back again for the second time for me, third time for several of the people in January of 1972 with General Haig. There was a lot going on these trips, as you'll probably hear in the next panel in terms of trying to get a communiqué put together, and it was not successfully put together until the last...until the end of the actual presidential trip.

Larry Higby: Yeah, almost all the trips are really prearranged by a president, and you're going through formalities. We still had no agreement on the communiqué after the second...after Haig's visit in January of 1972. So clearly, this was an even more dicey activity that had a lot of substance still to be resolved.

Dwight Chapin: You probably have heard the lawyer story, don't ask a question you don't know the answer to. Well, in this case, it's don't go out and visit a country unless you know where you're going to end up before you complete that trip. You want to say something?

Jack Brennan: Just that my memory in Shanghai was the last moments Dr. Kissinger had a makeshift office, and everyone was scurrying around with last minute wording of the Shanghai Communiqué. This is literally minutes before it was going to be issued.

Dwight Chapin: So, when this trip started out, now, keep in mind, nobody knew that this was going to happen. So the President, originally, he said there will be no press that go on this trip.

Larry Higby: Yeah, he loved the press.

Dwight Chapin: There will be no press on this trip. Then he came to the position that he would take a military Jet Star that he had never been on.

Larry Higby: Yeah, he'd never flown in one of those.

Dwight Chapin: Which holds 13 people.

Larry Higby: He had no idea how small they were.

Dwight Chapin: But that was what he was going to do. And then events started happening. What started happening was that in the media every...this whole thing started just building. And it's a very important part of understanding this whole thing. It just got bigger and bigger. And the media contributed to this, I mean, the historians, you name it. Everybody started getting into the act. Week after week on the cover of "Time," "Newsweek," and so forth. We didn't have the 24/7 channels, or they would have been into orgasms.

In any case, we ended up with 354 roughly going on this trip, which was the official party: the press, the military, Secret Service, staff, and others. So, we had to take Air Force One, a couple of other planes, and the logistics were quite complex, particularly because we did not know the infrastructure which Clay referred to in China. We were really quite ignorant on that side.

Larry Higby: Well, just a simple question, like, how do you land at an airport in China?

Dwight Chapin: So, being Americans, being Americans, we...I should point out we had setup a room down in the bomb shelter of the White House. And I had been President Nixon's appointment secretary. I was relieved of duties and assigned full-time getting this trip put together.

So we sat down and had the Boeing people come from Seattle. And we put together a huge binder. And this binder solved all issues because we're Americans, we can solve anything. And we came up with the idea that in order to service the radio, television, and so forth community, we would get a 747 decked out with satellite dishes and everything. And we did diagrams showing how the 747 was divided into various studios for audio, for video production, and so forth. And all we would have to do is get this thing built in Seattle, fly it over, and land and we would solve all of the communications issues.

Well, we went over in October on Henry's trip, Henry Kissinger's trip, and we presented this document, and of course, everybody nodded. We didn't get any comments back about yes, no, or maybe, or whatever. And they read the plan. The interesting thing is, we got no answers, we left, we kept asking them what was going on with this particular concept, and it was when we went back with General Haig in January and we had landed and they wanted to show us something. And they took us over to a part of the airport, where they had constructed a building that was just basically in the dimensions with the same size studios and so forth, that we had had in the book for the 747, they had put it all there and built the building out of brick. And the idea, of course, being that in order to save face for their country and so forth, there was no way they were going to take our idea and use it as we had presented it. But we did end up with the facility at the airport, and it was the way that the press were serviced when they were in country.

Jack Brennan: Some of you are from China, many of you have visited China. All of you saw China being presented in the Olympics as the marvelous city that you see here. However, when we saw it, this is a 1972 version of a snow plow. The very first morning I walked out from, all of us did, walked out to see, wow, what an incredible place we're at, and it had snowed the night before. And the streets, the main streets in Peking, then, covered with snow and suddenly you see hundreds, maybe more.

Larry Higby: Ten thousand.

Jack Brennan: Of people, well, the whole street in front of us, hundreds with just makeshift brooms. That was the snow plow, cleaning the streets, and that's where they started in 1972.

Dwight Chapin: So, we got ourselves organized at the White House, as I mentioned, we had kind of a headquarters down in the bomb shelter.

Larry Higby: By the way, unless you understand the bomb shelter, this bomb shelter was really built in President Roosevelt's time.

Dwight Chapin: Yeah, it would not stop any bombs.

Larry Higby: It wouldn't stop any bombs.

Jack Brennan: It's where I slept if I had to work late at the White House.

Larry Higby: It's just the only extra room there is in the White House.

Dwight Chapin: It always impressed everybody to say we were in the bomb shelter, but there we would, we had...

Larry Higby: There's no giant secret room down there like you see in the movies. It's a basement, that's right.

Dwight Chapin: Well, maybe things have changed.

Jack Brennan: Things have changed.

Dwight Chapin: We had NSC representatives, the military aides, Secret Service, CIA would come in for briefings. Some State Department people started coming over, and that's a part you can get into with the next panel. State Department was really not into a lot of the planning on this trip, although, as we got closer, we started getting documents and so forth from them. The President, again, leading everything. Dr. Kissinger and Bob Haldeman. I've got to emphasize our good friend Bob Haldeman, because he really took...held the reins on this very closely and was incredibly demanding of all of us on the trip.

Tim Elbourne and Ron Walker, Ron Walker being a very special friend of ours who, by the way, is the Chairman of the Richard Nixon Foundation in Yorba Linda. But they, Ron and Tim were in country, and I would talk to them every day, twice a day. Morning and night, we would converse. For the first two or three weeks that they were in country, they would have to drive out to the airport. And there was this new thing called a satellite suitcase. And we would use this satellite suitcase to communicate back and forth.

And one of the key elements of the trip is that if you are making a presidential trip in the United States, all of the details are worked out.

Everything is known. In this particular situation, we would ask the Chinese, you know, what we were going to be doing let's say on day three or day two, and we would get these blank stares. In fact, the joke used to be something like they would bring the group another tangerine or something.

Jack Brennan: Have another tangerine.

Dwight Chapin: Yeah, have another tangerine but they would never get an answer as to, you know, what was happening. So that was a very frustrating part of trying to put this trip together, was trying to get the Chinese to commit. Of course, they're trying to understand the needs. They've never gone through anything like this before.

Another thing that's kind of interesting is that we would be given, or I should say I was given because it would usually come to me. I was the one making the contacts back and forth to Ron and Tim, for the most part. I mean, others came on to the conference calls. But we would be told of certain things to mention that were kind of pieces of information that Dr. Kissinger or the President was trying to get the Chinese leaders to focus on. And the importance of that is that everything we were doing was being obviously noted and listened to by the PRC, and so if we made some comment about, "It would be great if Premier Zhou would do X, Y, or Z," while I was really talking to Ron, it was a message that was being noted by the Chinese, so we used that vehicle a lot in order to try to get certain points across. The Chinese had limousines that were manufactured by the Russians and airplanes manufactured by the Russians, because they did not have the infrastructure to do it. And we used their car and we used their airplane. We used their airplane to fly from Beijing to Hangzhou.

Jack Brennan: Which was unheard of. We always, always had to fly on Air Force One. We always had to use it, I mean to this day, near or far. An awful lot of it is a requirement that the President stay in communication with the Congress. So even on this plane, we had to bring our own communications package to put it on it. But no one, especially CIA who knew how their pilots were. Their briefs said don't ever let the President on a Soviet plane. And this is a Soviet-built plane.

Dwight Chapin: Yeah, the Secret Service was beside themselves. Beside themselves. And then what happened, just to jump to another thing. In May, President Nixon went to Moscow. And when we got to Russia to plan that trip, there was no way they were going to have us bring in our own limousines and airplanes. We had to use the Russian cars and the Russian planes there, because there was no way that we were gonna do that in China and not do it Russia. So it had...this had...

Jack Brennan: Huge fight.

Dwight Chapin: ...consequences. Larry?

Larry Higby: Yeah, I think it was interesting. We took a little side thing here to try and make you understand that this trip was more than just an opening of something. Everything we did had symbolism, and everything we did was part of trying to be able to communicate the message from China to the world about what we were trying to get done. And it took several forms. First of all, we game planned television and print coverage across the boards. There were usually two news cycles back then. There was an a.m. cycle, the morning shows, and an evening cycle, which lasted half an hour, sometimes an hour, which were the evening news shows. And those were the only two times you could really communicate with the American public when they were on a news basis.

So we planned every headline out to the best we could, what the picture would say, how it would reinforce the headline, what we hoped the caption would be if we were really controlling the message, and what the quote was we wanted to have that came out of that particular event. I think...let's go to the next one. Here.

All right. These are some examples of this. First of all, the trip to the Great Wall was in the morning in China, but it was in the evening in the United States, and actually was broadcast live right from the Great Wall. So America got to experience exactly what was going on over there. The Shanghai Communiqué was the same thing. We did it in the morning, because we wanted it to be the evening news. We wanted to get the largest possible audience that we could for that event. We used Mrs. Nixon in another way. She'd go out often in the late afternoon, because that would hit the morning shows in the United States and present a different image, often a much more image about what the Chinese people were like, what the customs was like, what the culture was like, what it was like to go to a school in China back then. So, we were trying to make sure we presented the broadest possible picture of China and the American people got to come along and help and actually discover what we were discovering on a daily basis.

Jack Brennan: And the Chinese government was so impressed with the fact that we could transmit instantaneously these images throughout the world, that at the end of the trip they said, "Don't take that equipment down, we just want to buy it," and they bought it all.

Larry Higby: The other thing though, I think you have to realize beyond that, is the fact that this was equally as important for China, and why was that? Because for most of the world, this was the first insight that the world had into what China was like and what was going on there. So they wanted their coverage to be good also. They wanted to show people in the West, different parts of the world, what was going on there in their country. So it was very important to them, too.

Dwight Chapin: I would like to mention to add to what Larry has said, it was not insignificant that whenever you saw Mrs. Nixon she was in a red coat. And it was part of the strategy, it was part of the contrast. It may seem very rinky-dink, but it spoke volumes. So, we had the national media. We had the media players. As the world unfolded later on, there were the media who went to China, and those who did not go. And so it was a real distinction among the media in the United States to be part of this. Huge investments by the media companies in terms of sending their correspondents or writers on the trip.

Jack Brennan: Equipment.

Larry Higby: And camera people.

Dwight Chapin: And the cam, everything.

Larry Higby: Equipment.

Dwight Chapin: Yeah. No 24/7 news channels, as Larry has mentioned. You know, we had the three major ones. We had dedicated program. Larry mentions the news coverage on the Great Wall, which was in the morning in China. At home here, it was like an hour and a half, two-hour specials, every network, PBS, you name it. You could not get away from this trip.

Jack Brennan: The morning shows, for example, had Mrs. Nixon, as Dwight described, looking at the tiny panda bears, which was going to be their gift, their official gift to the United States, which wound up in the Washington Zoo, as a matter of fact.

Dwight Chapin: Now, we're going to see a piece of video here in a minute. Here's Helen Thomas that you people have probably heard about. She just resigned from the White House, the AP. Here's Dan Rather, Barbara Walters, Walter Cronkite. Over here is Eric Sevareid...

Jack Brennan: Tom Brokaw

Dwight Chapin: Tom Jarriell, who you saw earlier. This thing was laced with the movers and shakers of the media world.

Jack Brennan: Including the executives who wanted to go just to say they'd been there. Yeah. Not reporters at all.

Dwight Chapin: All of a sudden...

Jack Brennan: Presidents of the networks.

Larry Higby: A lot of people went down to reporter level.

Dwight Chapin: So this picture is from Hangzhou. This piece of video footage from Hangzhou where the President had his picture taken with all the media. And there's Walter Cronkite right over there. Here's Helen Thomas, Barbara Walters, and they got...Here's Teddy White, who wrote the famous book. This is Ollie Atkins, our White House photographer, getting everybody organized. And all of a sudden, lo and behold, who arrives but President Nixon, Ron Ziegler, the Press Secretary. And so they had this picture taken. And then, as the President was want to do, once he got this picture done, you're going to see him turn around and he starts talking to the assembled media.

And the thing I...in putting this clip together the other day, I thought it was very interesting, because Helen Thomas has lasted so many years. You'll see, if you look carefully, she's the only one writing. I mean, which is... She'll start writing the minute the President starts talking here. We don't hear him because we don't have audio with this.

Jack Brennan: Ron Ziegler was SC?

Dwight Chapin: Ron Ziegler was SC.

Jack Brennan: There's Helen writing.

Together: There's Dan Rather.

Larry Higby: Dan Rather looking after the...

Dwight Chapin: So that's enough of that, but since you have flavor for it. Larry? This is a key point.

Larry Higby: I think what probably most people don't understand is the tremendous amount of work that the President spent, and the preparation he did. And he did it basically in three things. First of all, it was the State Department and all the things that they were contributing. Secondly, the CIA and the things that they were contributing in terms of briefing, an awful lot of that had come from third parties because basically, we didn't have anything going on in China at that point in time. China was really a sealed off area of the world. And third, from just individual people who had lived in

China or who had traveled in China that would come in and spend time with him really trying to help him understand what was going on. He spent hours, had these giant briefing books from everybody that we went through trying to get up to speed on what China was.

And why was that important? Because every gesture and everything that the President does in China, in a country like that, has deep meaning. And he thought about what it was like when he got out of that plane, what he wanted to stand for, whether or not he wanted to shake somebody's hand, whether or not the would...how he would react the first time he met Mao. All these kinds of things he had spent hours thinking through. And if you go back and look at his notes, you can see over and over again what that was like.

Dwight Chapin: Before I go to the next one, I just want to point out that I was looking at a piece of video the other day by a British broadcaster who had the notes that he had gotten from the archives, and he was ridiculing the fact that Nixon had written down all of these things that he was going to do in complete detail. And he mentioned that as a sign of weakness or Nixon being frightened by what he was going into. He missed the thing entirely. The name...it was preparation, preparation, preparation. He would think it through. He would know what he was going to do. That was how he worked, and that was why he was so exceptional.

Larry Higby: We've got a couple of pictures now of what it was like on Air Force One. This is actually a picture of Dwight here on Air Force One. Over here you can see Ron Ziegler, the Press Secretary. John Scowen, who worked actually in the Kennedy administration, who was one of the key figures on this trip. This is a picture of Dwight, myself, and Bob Haldeman, also on the same trip.

The trip actually took several days. But we first flew to Hawaii, overnighted in Hawaii. Then we flew to Guam and overnighted in Guam. Then we flew into Shanghai, picked up pilots and translators in Shanghai, and then flew to Beijing, or as it was known then, Peking. And so it was a multi-day trip. But every single detail had to be gone over and over and over again. You can see we both have our red pencils out here. This is Haldeman changing the schedule again, and probably as he usually was sort of sitting there, like I said, trying because we can't quite keep up.

Dwight Chapin: That must mean he was mad.

Larry Higby: Yeah, we can't quite keep up with him. It was interesting. When we took off from Andrews Air Force base, we actually had the

broadcast tuned in to what the networks were covering of the takeoff, we all clapped when we took off. And then when we took off from China, we all clapped even louder because it had been a very long, very tough and exhausting trip.

Dwight Chapin: Dr. Kissinger is on the left there and then next to him by the window is Winston Lord who later became Ambassador to China. And I'll point out these briefing books. These are little books. There were big books and little books that were produced by the State Department that we could carry that had all of our schedules and itinerary.

Jack Brennan: This is in the cabin, the Presidential Cabin on Air Force One and he's with, you can't see it very well, Secretary of State Rogers is on the trip, and the assistant to the President, Dr. Henry Kissinger. I briefed him just before we got off the plane in Peking, Beijing and the significant thing was the handshake as you'll see in just a minute.

And to go back to 1954, our then Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, excuse me, yeah, Dulles, Dulles Airport in Washington D.C., refused to shake hands with Zhou Enlai. Zhou Enlai considered it an insult for all those years. President Nixon wanted to rectify this and said the importance of the handshake, keep everyone else back and make sure that he knows that I really want to shake hands with him and to rectify anything that happened in the past. We're starting again. This is the official arrival in Peking. As Larry said, we stopped first in Shanghai and had to get a navigator and two interpreters to fly in.

This is the arrival ceremony, and notice they are incredibly tall Chinese military, all exactly the same height. And of course, they had 750 million people to choose from so they could probably do that. And what else is very significant here, no civilian population. Almost anywhere we went in the world, especially those seeking out foreign aid, there were thousands and thousands of people cheering. And so when I saw this I said, "Maybe they don't like us. What is this about?" No one at the airport to greet us. No one of those people.

Larry Higby: It was a sunny day when we arrived, but when we started into Beijing, and it's about an hour trip in, it kept getting more and more gray. And we were started getting is this ominous sort of a trip and we kept waiting for crowds and there were no crowds. And all of our cars, they had curtains on the sides so we couldn't see out. Well, after a while I started getting curious. I pulled the curtain back and looked a little bit. And people were staring. They all had to stay five or six blocks back from the main room, from the main route, but they were staring out and peering out

behind their houses to see what was going on. Because you would have thought nobody lived in Peking if you looked at the route we were going into. But in fact, there were people staring everywhere, wondering what was going on. Remember, no communication.

Jack Brennan: Wondering why they weren't allowed to ride their bicycles that day.

Larry Higby: Yep. No communication, no newspapers available to them. So they had no knowledge of what was happening.

Dwight Chapin: So we arrived at the guest cottage, the official guest cottage where President Nixon was going to be staying. And in typical Chinese style, they had a kind of a welcoming period of tea. Here's Zhou Enlai, the President, Mrs. Nixon. This is Brent Scowcroft, Bob Haldeman, Henry Kissinger. We were all sitting kind of in a semicircle. Here I am, but this is a very important man.

Larry Higby: Notice there are a lot of pictures of Dwight.

Dwight Chapin: This gentleman here was Ambassador Hong Su, who became the ambassador to the United States. He happened to be my counterpart and a terrific person. Here's Rosemary Woods.

Together: President's Secretary.

Dwight Chapin: This is the meeting that President Nixon had with Chairman Mao. What happened...

Jack Brennan: Same day.

Dwight Chapin: Same day. So we had the arrival, we went to the guest cottage, we had our tea, and then everybody was given time off. The President went to his quarters to relax. A few minutes later, Ambassador Hong Su, who came to me. He said, "Premier Zhou is here." I went. Premier Zhou says, "I need to find the President, we're going to go see the Chairman."

So this was completely unexpected. It was not on an itinerary, nothing. We had to be flexible. Haldeman went in, got President Nixon, he said get Dr. Kissinger, he did not say get Secretary of State Rogers. And it was Nixon, Kissinger, and Winston Lord with the President who went to this meeting. And so this is rather...this is the first time that the President met Chairman Mao.

Larry Higby: Right, and it's sort of interesting, you notice that Nixon and Kissinger arrive together but there's a person in between Zhou and the

Chairman. This young lady was the translator, the Chairman at that time was very tough that even the best translators didn't often understand what he was saying because of the condition of his health, and it turned out Kissinger was so surprised he went like this because she'd actually taken courses from Kissinger at Harvard.

Jack Brennan: And I think she's Jien Ching's...she's Mao Chang Mao's niece.

Dwight Chapin: This is the guest palace, this entrance right here is where Zhou Enlai came to get Nixon to go see Mao. So this is the guest cottage that we were in. Now, we're still on the first day. We're going to go from here...we've got a motorcade late afternoon and went over for the first meeting with Premier Zhou Enlai. And this is the first preliminary session, some footage there. The President, Dr. Kissinger, John Holdridge, and Zhou Enlai.

Jack Brennan: John Holdridge is a China expert from the State Department.

Dwight Chapin: There's Premier Zhou. And then from here, we went to the first welcoming banquet and one of the big memories from this is they start playing all this American music like "Home on the Range." So you've got this Chinese orchestra playing "Home on the Range," but it was a wonderful banquet.

Larry Higby: They're toasting.

Jack Brennan: And they played "God Bless America," and here they're toasting with the most vile liquor you could ever have. It's called Mao Tai, not Mai Tai, Mao, and it smelled like formaldehyde and many of us became recovering alcoholics by the second day. We can't drink that.

Dwight Chapin: I took a bottle of this stuff back, brought it back home. And we would have people over for dinner or something and I would pour a little bit into a plate and it would burn for like an hour and half. Larry.

Larry Higby: This is the picture from the Great Wall. Remember the American public got to take this trip with us. And it was quite an interesting trip. If you think about it, this is one of the symbols of China, old China and China today. And to see an American President walking on that wall was really quite something. Also probably for those of us who are really inside politics, if you barely see this guy back here, this is the great conservative Pat Buchanan walking on the wall and acting like a little kid. He was so excited to be there.

Jack Brennan: He went so fast I thought it was Deng Xiaoping next to him. Anyway.

Larry Higby: Here's some pictures of President on the Wall. And before that, you saw some of the houses we went by on the way out to the Wall. A very, very special moment and a unique moment, and I think anybody who's ever had the privilege of going to China will be very impressed with what's there.

Dwight Chapin: We put this in here because this was the ever-present staged children. Wherever we went, there were these staged children dressed in colorful clothes doing all of these kinds of little games and so forth.

Jack Brennan: Remember everyone else is in a gray Mao suit.

Dwight Chapin: Yeah. And what makes this particularly significant is that Ted Koppel on ABC, he was the ABC correspondent on the trip, did a piece on the staging of these little kids at the Ming Tombs, which Nixon left after he went to the Great Wall. And so that evening, or the next time that President Nixon met with Zhou Enlai, Zhou Enlai apologized to the President for the staging of this stuff. They were horrified. So the other thing that it proves is they were really tracking what was going on with the U.S. media and how this was being covered because they knew immediately that this had happened.

Larry Higby: The next thing here, I mean, despite the fact the trip had probably been declared a success, the real purpose of going was to normalize relations. That was going to be very difficult to do if we didn't have a communiqué to clearly express how the two countries' relationship would begin to take place on a going-forward basis.

So, we finally got, literally the last day, I would say a couple of hours before we were leaving, everybody was still running around, the Shanghai Communiqué. And the essence of the whole problem was, what's going to happen with Taiwan versus mainland China. And in shorthand, what we really agreed was agreed to disagree going forward, but we would continue to improve our relationship and make this really a lasting, a lasting event. Not just an event as we moved ahead.

Jack Brennan: The Chinese were very straight forward in their negotiation, unlike most other countries that we had experienced. And Zhou Enlai said, "You list what you agree and disagree and we'll list what we agree and disagree." And we start from there, and say and we agree to disagree on the problem of Taiwan.

Larry Higby: And this is Shanghai.

Jack Brennan: This is the departure from PRC and I'm in uniform which is significant only because the last Americans to leave China in 1949 was the Marine Delegation from Peking. As a matter of fact, I was asked to not come back in uniform, I suggested that I not wear a uniform, but Marines sometimes are defiant. We left Shanghai and then no ceremony here, the ceremony is when you leave the capital city of a country. So you notice we came in to Shanghai, the arrival ceremony was in Peking, vice versa. So we left, with certainly a sense of accomplishment, very tired, and knowing that we were a little part of history.

And then here we are coming back into the United States on Air Force One. We landed at Andrews Air Force Base in primetime on television, thanks to these guys, and a great picture is, it was February in Washington, and very cold. And all of the welcoming crowds were inside this huge hangar, and we taxied Air Force One into the hangar, and one of the great pictures I've ever seen is a photographer took a picture over the pilot's shoulder through the cockpit onto the welcoming people who were met by Vice President Agnew, which was a little bit...he was very much a pro-Taiwan, anti-trip guy, which is one of the major reasons this was kept so secret, not from Vice President Agnew but from the conservatives in America who could lobby the Congress to squelch the whole thing. Bill Buckley who was a conservative columnist and leader of the conservatives. Agnew himself who was denouncing. So it had to be secret or it would never have been pulled off.

Dwight Chapin: And Jack?

Jack Brennan: This is four years later, and at this time I was Civilian Chief of Staff to the former president. He had left office two years before this, but remained a huge friend of China until he died. And the Chinese approached me through Hangzhou, who was then in Washington, and said that President Nixon is welcome to return to China, and they proudly said that we will send a Boeing 707 for him to pick you guys up.

They had started purchasing American products. They'd purchased Boeing 707s. So we went to China, this was almost four years to the day and I was privileged to be included in this small group to meet Chairman Mao, and Clay asked if I would give a little impression. As a matter of fact, as you can tell when I don't pronounce my "R"s, I am not from SC. My Alma Mater is a small college in Rhode Island called Providence College. And to Providence College, I gave all of the junk I collected around the world.

And online, you can find, I did contemporaneous notes, especially on this trip, any of you who are interested, all that stuff there, you can find it online. In my contemporaneous notes of this, I described from the time they met us, same thing. The foreign minister came to my room and said, "Chairman Mao would like to meet with President Nixon and he wants you to come because you're loyal. Chinese are very into loyalty. You were with President Nixon when he was President, as were many, many other people. Now it's just you, on and on and on."

So my impression of Chairman Mao as I wrote in my notes was I was shocked by the guttural groans that emanated from him. Just like as if someone had a stroke. And I said in my notes, and of course, I knew he had a different dialect; he was from Hunan province, and so the interpreters [inaudible 00:55:46], "If this is the Hunan dialect, then cavemen were eloquent," because it was just, you know, grunting, and then the cute little interpreter would say, "Chairman Mao says," and then she'd go on and on and on. I said, "Yeah. Sure."

Dwight Chapin: In order to underscore the significance of this trip, several years ago, an opera was created on Nixon in China. This year, that opera is opening on February the second in the New York Met. It's going to be quite a show, they're going to have something like 11 different productions of this. And on February 12th, it's going to be seen in 1,500 movie theaters in 46 countries. So, the significance of that is being underscored by this opera.

So, we believe that this was probably the most significant presidential journey in the history of American diplomacy and we do believe that this trip changed the world and your next panel will help confirm that. And that's the end of our presentation. We have a couple of minutes for questions if you would like to ask us any.

Clayton Dube: We only have a couple of minutes for your questions. So if you have a question, please raise your hand and please make it a short question. Mr. Lesser.

Audience: My question is what is the role of the Secretary of State Rogers in all of this? You mentioned him a couple of times, but did he play any role in the planning or the execution...

Larry Higby: He clearly played a role in the execution of the trip, and the State Department was very much involved. I think Kissinger and Nixon had a very close day-to-day working relationship and proximity, the fact that Mr. Kissinger was assistant to the President, was in the White House, made it

very convenient for him to confer quite often. But he clearly was part of it too.

Jack Brennan: There was a lot of discussion about he being the representative to go and make the arrangements on the secret trip, and the conclusion was that he was way too visible. Had anyone seen him, bingo, immediately. When they finally picked Kissinger, they also thought about Ellsworth Bunker, and for the same reason said, "Well, we should discount him." And when they said Kissinger, you, he didn't particularly want to go. He loved being next to the President and seeing him every morning.

Dwight Chapin: There was another major difference that I would point out and that is that Kissinger was staff, and would take orders and go do them. Bill Rogers didn't look at himself that way properly. So he was the Secretary of State and he had a whole different mentality of how he would have come at it. One more. Anybody?

Jack Brennan: If not, I have a sea story. There's a question.

Clayton Dube: Professor Holt.

Audience: You said it's a very significant presidential journey, significant in what respect? Can you actually pin down what is the complete outcome that you think is significant?

Clayton Dube: A lot of that will come up in the subsequent discussion.

Jack Brennan: Larry, here.

Larry Higby: Well, I think basically it opened the world to China and opened China to the world. I think it changed the path of China. I think it started to open up China, and I think you've seen China on a path for the last 40 years really. It's very different than the path they had pursued 40 years before that. I think people in all countries around the world react to China differently now than they did 40 years ago. So that was the fundamental change.

I think there was another change though that a lot of people forget about. It really set in the process, even though it took some time after that, the necessary elements to finally end the Vietnam War. And if you were living during that period of time and wrestling with that every day in the White House and in Washington, as we were, that probably was at least equally as significant and equally as important.

Dwight Chapin: Thank you very much folks.