

RICHARD NIXON FOUNDATION

PROJECT: ORAL HISTORY WITH STEPHEN B. BULL

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Jonathan Movroydis: This is a Richard Nixon Foundation Oral History with Stephen B. Bull. He served President Nixon on the 1968 campaign and then in the White House from 1969 to 1974 as the president's personal aide. It is November 8th, 2018. Thank you, Mr. Bull, for agreeing to this oral history.

Stephen B. Bull: You're most welcome. It's a pleasure.

Frank Gannon: First and most appropriate question of all that will give you a hint of the grilling you're about to experience, what's the B stand for?

Stephen B. Bull: Beekman, B-E-E-K-M-A-N.

Frank Gannon: A family name?

Stephen B. Bull: Mm-hmm.

Frank Gannon: Can you tell us about your path to the White House? How did you end up in the Nixon White House?

Stephen B. Bull: Pretty much, it was accidental. When I got out of the Marine Corps in 1966, I went to work for Canada Dry Corporation, a soft drink company up in Manhattan. And about the time after I had finished a training period of about a year, the company had a new CEO who came in by the name of David J. Mahoney, and I became pretty much his executive assistant. He always had a young guy around, and I was the only young guy any place in the site, in the company. So I became his executive assistant. Somewhere around early '68 or so, he received the formal letter from the Nixon campaign soliciting advance men, young people who might go out and work on the campaign to set up campaign rallies. Again, the profile that was provided, and the reason incidentally that he got the letter, I think he had been involved probably as a contributor to an earlier Nixon campaign. But, anyway, the profile called for a young guy and just, as before, I was the only young guy. So he asked me if I was interested in doing it, and it sounded like a great adventure to me. So I took a leave of absence and went off in the summer of '68 to work as an advance man.

Near the end of the campaign, showing a great degree of optimism, Bob Haldeman's assistant, Larry Higby, said, "When we win the election, would you be interested in coming down to Washington to work?" And it was rather an undefined position. And, again, I said, "You know, it sounds quite interesting, I'd be very interested in doing it." I think the main reason I was selected is that the Nixon campaign had kind of an old pal's image. As I mentioned, they wanted some young faces around there. So I and Jay Wilkinson, who was Bud Wilkinson's son, and a couple of other young guys, we were all in our 20s, 25, 26, 27, came down and worked for Bob Haldeman in very amorphous positions, as assistants to Bob Haldeman. And then after a couple of months of the new Nixon administration, we had a realignment, and I moved into the position of pretty much the personal assistant to the president.

Frank Gannon: On the 1968 campaign, what was your role as advance man? What was the typical work of an advance man?

Stephen B. Bull: An advance man would go out and be given an assigned location, usually working with, well, depending upon the size of the rally that was to be planned, would work with two or three other people, putting together the rally. And that would involve raising a crowd, staging, coming up with the money, if you could get it locally, working with the local people, setting up the hotel, just all of the logistical details involved in putting together a show for the candidate who would come and speak to, presumably, if you've done your job, a very, very large, enthusiastic crowd. And it was a lot of fun to do. We were all young guys. And on top of that, this was back in the '60s, and maybe we're 25 or 26 years old, they gave us a credit card. What a foolish thing to do? No, it was just a great deal of fun.

Frank Gannon: In that campaign, describe the best events that you had, where everything was right, and describe the worst, where everything went wrong.

Stephen B. Bull: The best event was probably down in South Carolina. It was down in Greenville and Spartanburg. It was a two-stop event, and I was by myself, trying to do both of those. But this was during a time when, of course, you always had to be concerned with demonstrators. Well, down in Spartanburg, that, back then, was really the heart of the textile company. And I'm trying to think of the name of the major textile.

Frank Gannon: Milliken?

Stephen B. Bull: Roger Milliken. Roger Milliken was a big Nixon supporter. But I remember we had the meeting with the local people, including the local sheriff. Now, I'm a boy from Long Island, up there, and I don't speak Southern. And so we got to the important part, I said, "No, no, you know, Sheriff," whatever you are, I said "now with the demonstrators," and he said, "Boy, there ain't going to be no demonstrators!" And so I said, "Sir," and we proceed with our discussion. And later on, we came back and I said, "Now about the demonstrator," and he said, "Boy, I told you, and I'm not going to tell you again, there ain't going to be no demonstrators!" And sure enough, it was one of the cleanest events we ever had. We had the cleanest crowd in this auditorium, with an overflow outside and down in the basement. There wasn't a single demonstrator. And back in 1968, it was a major concern, because the country was undergoing pretty much a revolution. And young people were leading it, and they were the bomb throwers, and it was something that you always had to be concerned about. But it ended up being, really, one of the most successful events that I was ever involved in.

Frank Gannon: They were also the raiser wielders. Can you describe some of the problems? And I'm sure there were also in '72, and they may have been different, but what was the demonstration situation that the campaign in '68 had to deal with?

Stephen B. Bull: Well, with the campaign, I mean, you always dealt with demonstrators that were attempting to disrupt. But it didn't end with the campaign. It didn't end with the election. Now, Richard Nixon came to office, and he was going to defy demonstrators. He was not going to be cowed. If you'll remember, back in '66, '67, it came to the point where President Johnson couldn't go out of the White House.

Frank Gannon: Prisoner of the White House.

Stephen B. Bull: He really was a prisoner of the White House. And Nixon came in and he was going to try to return some sanity to the American people and to this whole political cultural process. So, I mean, he would go out, but just because he was president by this time and the campaign was over, didn't stop the demonstrators. And they were a violent, violent crowd. I mean, there was an occasion in someplace in the early '70s when he was going to address a senior citizen's crowd in Atlantic City, New Jersey. Now, Atlantic City,

New Jersey now is known for gambling. It wasn't back then. All it had was people who were 90 years old or older, who would push each other around in wheelchairs on the boardwalk.

So we were going into this exhibition hall where he was going to speak to this crowd, and there were other people all along the way going in. And, you know, I would always walk right next to him. And it was a hot summer day, and I thought, "Gee," as we went inside. I'm sweating and I don't really sweat that much. And I looked down and it wasn't perspiration coming off my hand, it was blood. And someone, obviously going for him with a razor blade, fortunately for him and unfortunately for me, had slashed me. But that was the environment in which the president was dealing, always, almost throughout his entire presidency.

Back in, maybe in 1973, he went down to an event down in North Carolina. It was an event that was honoring its favorite son, Reverend Billy Graham. It was called, fundamentally, Billy Graham Day. But the demonstrators, they were among the nastiest, most violent we had ever seen. In addition to the chanting of vulgarity, they were throwing rocks, with barbed fish hooks taped to them. So if it hits you it not only would cause a concussion, it might tear your eye out. That was the environment in which Richard Nixon had to deal throughout his presidency.

Frank Gannon: Where were you on election night, November 6, 1968?

Stephen B. Bull: We had a gathering in the Waldorf Astoria in the main ballroom there, and it was a very long night, as you all record. The party was temporary. It was recessed, not adjourned. It was recessed probably about 1:00 in the morning, saying that, a fellow advance man by the name of John Neidecker, came out on the stage and just wished everyone goodnight. And I think he sang "Goodnight, Ladies," saying, "Come back in the morning when all the ballots are counted." And what they were waiting for was the returns to come in from the state of Illinois. And that was very significant because in the 1960 election, there was pretty good evidence that Kennedy's margin was the result of some shenanigans in Illinois, when the ballots were held out and, magically, Kennedy went over the top with the number of votes needed to get him there. And so they held out and they played hardball, the Nixon campaign, and it finally came in at about 7:00 or 8:00 in the morning. Illinois finally released the ballots that put RN over the top.

Frank Gannon: When was the first time you saw Richard Nixon? And when was the first time you've met him? And what were your impressions both times?

Stephen B. Bull: First time I met him, I had been an advance man and had done two or three events, but I had never met him personally. And John Ehrlichman was the tour director on the campaign, and he was our boss when the campaign got on the ground. And I appealed to John saying, "Can I at least meet the candidate, because I had been lying to all these people that I'm meeting with, and they expect me to be his close confidant of the candidate." So he arranged a couple of us at the end of whatever the campaign appearance was to go up on the steps of the plane. And that was it. It was just a quick introduction and then Ehrlichman said, you know, "These are the advance men," and the president said, or the candidate said, "Yes, hello. Hello." And then he turned. So it was not a long, extended conversation. But at least, at that point, now I can go and say, "I indeed, yes, I know him well, of course."

Frank Gannon: You talked a little about your pathway to the White House. Could you take us how you were selected for your job as a personal aide to the president? Did this happen during transition?

Stephen B. Bull: No. Dwight Chapin had been with candidate Nixon, I think, from 1966, could have even been a few months earlier in the '65, and had been his personal assistant, his aide. And Dwight, in effect, got a promotion, about three or four months into the presidency. And as I said, there were only a couple of young guys around in the White House. And I guess, kind of by default, I became, at least I had the opportunity, to kind of audition for the job of personal assistant. And so I moved into that job probably in around June or July of '69. But again, it was kind of happenstance coincidence. It was never any great accomplishment or anything of that nature. And I'm not being humble or anything, you know. It's the reality.

Frank Gannon: Did you go on the European trip in March?

Stephen B. Bull: No, I did not go in the first, right.

Frank Gannon: Where was your office then? And then did you move into Dwight's office?

Stephen B. Bull: Yes. The way the West Wing is configured, there's the Oval Office and there's an area in between, or right next to it, and the Cabinet Room. And all three of them looked onto the rose garden. I was in that middle office that's contiguous to both the Oval Office on one side and the Cabinet Room in the other side. It was pretty good take.

Frank Gannon: Yes, location, location, location.

Stephen B. Bull: Yeah.

Frank Gannon: Where is the hide-a-way office that became, or the private room that became notorious during the Clinton administration? Where is that?

Stephen B. Bull: Well, I'm not sure where it was during Clinton, because right off the Oval Office is a little hallway and there's a washroom on the right-hand side. And then there's a little galley where Manolo would make coffee. And then on the left-hand side was a small, little office. Now, at the end of that hallway is another door that led into a bigger office that was really neat, fireplace, and that's where Haldeman was at first. But I think that later on, during, maybe it was even during...no, I think maybe during Reagan that they took what had been the Haldeman office and made that part of the Oval Office suite. So I'm not sure where Clinton was, whether he was in that little office across from the galley or the more grand office with the fireplace. Given what he was doing, I don't think it made a great deal of difference.

Frank Gannon: Did Nixon, along those lines, because I think other presidents had taken naps in there, but Nixon didn't really, was there such a room where Nixon, during the course of the day, would go to and take a nap?

Stephen B. Bull: He would. He would indeed.

Frank Gannon: And was it off the Oval Office?

Stephen B. Bull: It was off the Oval Office, and it was typically in that little room to the left, across from galley. Also, he had an office in the Executive Office Building, the EOB, which was still part of the White House complex, but it's across what is known as West Executive Avenue. And he would go there almost every day after his formal public appointments were over, and he would spend time there, thinking, working, famously writing on his yellow pad, and he would often nap for a short period of time. I always gave him great credit, a person

so disciplined that he could take a catnap. I mean, most people can't, but, I mean, he would take a catnap and wake up or get up as though, you know, he had slept for 12 hours.

Frank Gannon: Winston Churchill used to take one every afternoon, he would get totally undressed, put on silk pajamas, and get under the covers. And that would be his nap for an hour.

Stephen B. Bull: Well, he'd also drink champagne and brandy in the morning. But...

Frank Gannon: So did Nixon, there was a cot?

Stephen B. Bull: No, there was a couch in both locations, and he would take off his coat, and that would be it. And I will add that this was one of the great dark secrets that I never acknowledge that he was taking a nap. He was always working under budget at something.

Frank Gannon: And would you wait for him to wake up? Did you ever have to go and wake him?

Stephen B. Bull: I never had the nerve to wake him.

Frank Gannon: I'm fascinated by it. In the new library, I had an idea that we should do a model office, because young people today, who live with cell phones and the internet, we, at that time, the Nixon White House, '69 to '74, sort of thought the IBM Selectric 3 had been embedded with the erase tape, and that was kind of the end of technology, nothing could be any better than that where you could correct your own typewriter thing. So you had an office next to the Oval Office. You had a phone console. You had a typewriter. Did you have a copy machine?

Stephen B. Bull: At that time, the copy machine was an old fax machine. Do you remember the cylindrical? And we didn't have one in our office, anywhere in that complex. I think you send it down to the messenger room or something like that. In fact, we may not even...I think Xerox had come up with a copy machine, but I don't think we had come up with anything like a fax machine yet. I don't think.

Frank Gannon: I remember we had carbons.

Stephen B. Bull: We had carbons.

Frank Gannon: We used carbon paper and produced carbon copies.

Stephen B. Bull: Actually, there may have been an old fax machine someplace rather, but we sure as heck didn't have one.

Frank Gannon: Pagers were a big thing. Describe the Nixon White House pager system.

Stephen B. Bull: The White House Signal Corps went by the acronym WHCA, White House Communications Agency, WHCA, had installed telephones that have separate switchboard, and they had a paging system. And the pagers were about the size of a small box of cereal. And I think all they could do, you would get a voice communication. And I don't think it had the capability of doing much other than that. We would only use pagers out on the road. We used them in San Clemente, as I recall.

Jonathan Movroydis: The Nixon White House is known for its structure. Henry Kissinger and Nixon were famous or noted for rejuvenating the NSC, Bib Haldeman created staff structure

that he did. In this context, how was a personal aide different in the Nixon administration than in other administrations?

Stephen B. Bull: Well, I can't speak to what occurred, what relationships were in previous administrations. I know in the current administration, they have two people. They have a director of Oval Office operations and they have what they call a body man. Dwight and I, each of us, perform that position in a consolidated manner, performing both functions. So I don't know what it was previously. When people ask what my title was or the job was, I think the short end I always use is civilian aide. I'm kind of the counterpart to a military aide. But that's not exact, but that's probably pretty close to what others had done up until that time.

Frank Gannon: We're going to do a lightning round of names that surrounded you in the West Wing. You know how lightning round works, just impressions of what they were like as opposed to what they did or whatever. Bob Haldeman.

Stephen B. Bull: Bob Haldeman was tough, no-nonsense, and excellent, excellent manager, and someone without an ego and without an agenda for himself. His only agenda, I believe, was the president's agenda and running that White House as effectively as he could so the president could be as effective a president as he could.

Frank Gannon: John Ehrlichman.

Stephen B. Bull: A really good guy. He came off as this tough, mean-looking guy in the televised Watergate hearings where they had a camera probably about three inches away from his face, and it magnified every pore on his face, but he was a good guy, a fun guy, very smart. We all knew him, or the young guys, people who had been advance men, and people on the campaign as well, knew him through the campaign. And we all got to like him right from the start.

Frank Gannon: You mentioned Larry Higby.

Stephen B. Bull: Larry Higby was a young assistant. He spoke for Haldeman. Sometimes, we would resent Higby speaking like he would for this very ancient guy he worked for. The ancient guy he worked for was something like 42 years old. But when you're 25 or 26, you know, he might as well be 80. But Larry was a bright, aggressive, very effective assistant to Bob Haldeman.

Frank Gannon: Ron Ziegler.

Stephen B. Bull: Ron Ziegler was a guy with promise. And I know, I feel uncomfortable speaking about Ron in this way, but he was a very, very insecure person. Very insecure guy, surprisingly, working as the press secretary to the president. He was a guy who fell victim, I think, to the Washington malady of confusing his institutional importance with his personal importance. As the press secretary to the president of the United States, he was a very important person. But along the way, as Ron Ziegler conducting himself in that office, he alienated a lot of people. He could be arrogant and dismissive. And I think he, this is not a new thought, was one of the real tragic figures of Watergate. Because when we were running out of town, and the mantle of institutional importance was lifted from it, he was standing there figuratively naked as a guy that most people didn't want to be around anymore. He felt very sorrowful. And I think that in later years, you could see that manifesting itself in his behavior and his attitude. I apologize for being rough, but it's an observation during a lightning round. And I feel sorry for him. I really felt sorry for him. Tried to befriend him in later years and it just didn't work.

Frank Gannon: Henry Kissinger.

Stephen B. Bull: Henry loved his celebrity. And in fact, I remember...well, remember, during the early years, he got a lot of visibility. In previous administrations, who had ever heard of a National Security Advisor? But in the Nixon administration, here was Henry Kissinger, who was out there. Of course, he was the darling in the Georgetown set. But he was dating Hollywood starlets, as I recall. And I remember one time talking to him while he was waiting to go in and see the president, and he said something along the lines of, "I'm going to make the most of this, you know." The implication being that, you know, when he was a little professor at Harvard University, Hollywood starlets were not flocking to him or taking his telephone calls. But here he was, as quite a celebrity. So he could be a very amusing guy.

Frank Gannon: Rose Mary Woods.

Stephen B. Bull: Rose was a long-time loyalist, and she was put in a very difficult position because she had been with Congressman Nixon and then Senator Nixon up on Capitol Hill. And she was the top person in the office. She was also, she might as well have been a member of the family. In fact, I remember one of the daughters referring to her or addressing her as Aunt Rose. But it was a new situation when the president got into the White House, partly a new situation and partly because of a new structure, and she was pushed aside. She still had responsibility for a lot of the personal things for the president and would look after or at least, as I recall, she worked with the bookkeeper for the Nixon family and attended to those matters, but she was not the policy person anymore. She was not involved in that way. It was taken over by Bob Haldeman, who became the top guy. And I think it was very awkward for her in many respects. And of course, later on, unfairly, she was branded as this figure of ridicule who might have erased the tapes. And if you ever want to come back to that in this discussion, I'd be happy to, because I'm just going to tell you, I'm almost positive, it was an accident and she didn't do it.

Frank Gannon: Alex Butterfield.

Stephen B. Bull: Alex was recently out of the Air Force. And Alex and I hit it off. He was a great raconteur. He was a good joke teller and a fun guy to be around. I never knew exactly where he came from. I had this vague impression that he was an old friend of Bob Haldeman's. But at the time, I liked him very much. He was a good guy.

Frank Gannon: I know that it's a theory, but it's a conspiracy theory, I guess, at best, that he was CIA?

Stephen B. Bull: I guess I've heard it. I never thought that he was. But it didn't occur to me contemporaneously with my relationship with him.

Frank Gannon: Spiro T. Agnew.

Stephen B. Bull: We hardly ever saw him. He, I'm told, was the vice president of the United States. He was over in the Executive Office Building, over in the EOB. Only rarely did the president see him. I don't think they talk to the phone very much. So he was the vice president. In later years, I got to know him a little bit, but that was long after resignation. But really didn't have much of an opportunity to see enough of him back then to answer that question with any validity.

Frank Gannon: Did the staffs and him mingle at all, like in the White House Mess?

Stephen B. Bull: Yeah.

Frank Gannon: Bob Finch.

Stephen B. Bull: Bob Finch, we met during the '68 campaign. He was the...yeah. No, not attorney general.

Frank Gannon: HEW.

Stephen B. Bull: No, no. During the campaign, he was vice governor.

Jonathan Movroydis: No, he was lieutenant governor.

Stephen B. Bull: I mean, lieutenant governor, yeah. And he was involved in the campaign there in 1968. And then he came in and he was the first secretary of Health Education and Welfare, HEW, that became HHS during the Carter years. And he was, you know, very approachable guy.

Frank Gannon: Don Rumsfeld.

Stephen B. Bull: Rumsfeld, we met first when he was a Member of Congress from Illinois. And as I recall, I think he left Congress in the fall of '69 and he took a position, I think, like, I forgot whether it was Cost of Living...no, no, no, Office of Economic Opportunity, OEO. And then, later on, he became head of the so-called Cost of Living Council during the time when there's an effort to control inflation.

Frank Gannon: Can you describe, there was Nell Yates, there was Pat McKee, the secretarial arrangements on the West Wing, and how each of them related to the president?

Stephen B. Bull: Pat McKee, first of all, was Bob Haldeman's secretary and had very limited, if any, association with the president. Nell Yates was working for Dwight, initially, Dwight Chapin, and her office was in the same office, we're the same complex between the Oval Office and the Cabinet Room. And when Dwight actually moved his office, she stayed in that location, and she, in effect, was the other secretary for the president.

Frank Gannon: Who was the other?

Stephen B. Bull: Rose Woods is the president's secretary.

Frank Gannon: And Marge Acker was in that...

Stephen B. Bull: Marge worked with and for Rose Woods.

Frank Gannon: If I had come to the West Wing to visit the president, say, in summer of 1970, what would have happened? I would have been passed through the northwest gate, walked up into the West Wing, then what would happen?

Stephen B. Bull: You would have come into the West Wing. I would have been notified that you were there. Presumably, I would have known why you were there, that you had an appointment. And at the appropriate time, I would have told the president that Frank Gannon is here for his 10:00 appointment. And then I would usher you in.

Frank Gannon: Was Shelly Buchanan sitting, then and they would, who was the first person who would have welcomed me into the West Wing after I pass the Marine guards?

Stephen B. Bull: Eventually, it would have been Sally Inch, Sally Bukavan [SP], I believe. She became Sally Inch. But initially, it was a guard. We didn't have. It was a Secret Service agent during the first, I think, probably, year. It would have been Bob Nuebrand [SP].

Jonathan Movroydis: How did the appointment process work in terms of allotted time, for people who wanted to see the president, and then sort of a corollary to that, follow up, and you had mentioned earlier the effective use of the president's time. How was that whole process managed?

Stephen B. Bull: Well, administratively, if Frank Gannon wanted to see the president, a proposal would have been sent to the White House somehow, in some manner by any number of means. And probably, initially, it would have gone to someone named Hugh Sloan, who was the receiver of all of the appointment requests. And he would process them depending upon the nature of it. If Frank wanted to discuss economic policy, the chances are that Hugh would contact someone in the White House, perhaps Herb Stein and saying, "Frank Gannon wants to come and probably make a proposal on a tax cut." And Herb would write back saying, "Fine idea," or, "Forget it, Frank Gannon is a wild-eyed liberal, and he shouldn't be allowed any place in," you know, something like that. I'd be going to extremes, but I mean there would be an opinion by the substantive person. And then it probably would have been submitted, with a positive recommendation, to Dwight, who would have consolidated a series of appointment requests, turns it over eventually to Bob Haldeman, who would present a larger package of proposals with completely scheduled and with recommendations by the appropriate substantive person to the president, who would approve or disapprove the various appointments.

Jonathan Movroydis: Were there any instances of, I guess, people taking too much of the president's time?

Stephen B. Bull: Every time, every time, particularly people outside of the White House staff and people who are close in and used to seeing the president. It was a once in a lifetime position, I mean, opportunity, and almost needed to drag them out by their feet. But that was the real challenge. And I give the president great credit. He was extremely patient with them. It was my job to come in and try to make it apparent to whoever was in there that "Time is up. Get lost. We have other people waiting."

Jonathan Movroydis: Who were some notable appointments that you've witnessed?

Stephen B. Bull: Most notable one, no surprise, Elvis Presley. Elvis Presley showed up at the southwest gate at about 6:00 in the morning, and he said he wanted to see the president. Well, the president wasn't up and about at 6:00 in the morning. Furthermore, we had no idea that Elvis Presley was coming. And he was any way around. But somehow, the word got to Bud Krogh, a staff member. And quickly, remember, this is Elvis Presley, we didn't have a whole lot of celebrities banging on our door, saying that we were fine folks. And it was quickly staffed, unlike that laborious serpentine process for...

Stephen B. Bull: So we got Elvis in there. And Elvis, I think, was wearing...it looks like he just got off the stage at Las Vegas. And they did have to secure, he did have to ask that he not bring in everything, including the fact that he was packed in heat when he came in there. He was carrying some sort of a firearm. And Secret Service surprisingly, or not surprisingly, frowns on guests to the Oval Office carrying loaded weapons. But he was in there to ask to become an honorary member of the Drug Enforcement Administration back then. And I believe that he ultimately got some sort of a badge that Bud Krogh arranged for. But it was one of the more memorable ones. Now, the thing is this is a reflection of the

naïveté of maybe other staff members, certainly mine, didn't occur to us actually until after Elvis died of an overdose that he was higher than a kite at 6:00 in the morning, as well as, when he came in to see the president. But it was a memorable occasion. And I think an entire book has been written on the Elvis appearance. And over the Nixon library, I understand, one of the hottest selling items is the picture of Elvis and the president.

Frank Gannon: And the most requested and sold photograph at the National Archives.

Stephen B. Bull: Oh, really?

Frank Gannon: You were talking earlier, in the car when we were driving home here, after about some of the Vietnam families or POWs.

Stephen B. Bull: Well, it fell to the president to preside over award ceremonies, and the toughest one for him was a posthumous ceremony. And to my recollection, he only did one posthumous Medal of Honor presentation, and it was done relatively privately. He did not exploit this publicly with grand East Room ceremonies. And he was in the Oval Office with the family there, obviously, and he presented this Medal of Honor to the family. I don't remember whether it was his mother or the wife. But it was a tough event. And after they all left, the president just said, "I just can't do this anymore. I just can't do it." He cared so much about these individuals and servicemen. Remember, he had served in World War II. He knew what it was like for servicemen to get killed. And it was just a very tough time for him. And I don't think we did any more posthumous Medal of Honor ceremonies. And it wasn't selfishness on his part. I think it was just a reflection of just couldn't do it anymore.

Frank Gannon: You mentioned the example of a campaign, the 1968 campaign where everything went right. Was there one where everything, the young advance men's nightmare in the 1968 campaign?

Stephen B. Bull: Well, fortunately, it didn't turn into a disaster, but there was an event, it was going to be a major fundraiser with candidate Nixon in New York and vice presidential candidate Spiro Agnew in Los Angeles, specifically at the Century Plaza Hotel. Well, I was by myself at that one, putting together the Century Plaza event. Well, I'm dealing with heavy hitters, guys like Holmes Tuttle, I can't think, the one who owned the drug...Justin Dart, and people of that nature. These are the people who were also part of the Reagan's so-called kitchen cabinet. So I had to tell them that Nixon wasn't coming out there. It would be Spiro Agnew. And I remembered having a conversation with Holmes Tuttle, who was a big major automobile dealer in the Los Angeles area. And he told me that if Nixon didn't come, then they would cancel the event.

Now, these are the guys who are paying for it. So I'm on the telephone with our guys back in New York, at the campaign. And specifically, Nick Ruwe, did the Agnew, and he said, "Okay, tell him we'll cancel it," and played some hardball. So I told Holmes Tuttle, I said, "I'm sorry, Nixon is not coming. We'll cancel the event," and hung up the phone and praying, "Please call back. Please call back." And ultimately, they relented and they called back. But, you know, for a young guy, and this was, I think, only my second or third advance, to have to play, you know, hardball with guys like that, was memorable. And it took about 10 pounds and 10 years off my life.

Frank Gannon: Well, heading now back again to the White House, in terms of memorable, maybe I'll do the same thing, an event that was memorable because everything worked well, and we were talking about the Ray Coniff event, so that might not be the example you would choose, but an example of something at the White House that went wrong or that went south. So to begin with, the most memorable, I mean, this is a terrible question, but

what is the most memorable event — because you went to almost everything at the White House, if not everything — what are one or two or one that stands out?

Stephen B. Bull: Well, if you want the best event, the best event, clearly, hands down, was the POW dinner, the dinner honoring the Vietnam prisoners of war, and we held it on the South Lawn, in a huge tent. And I believe it was April of 1973.

Frank Gannon: May.

Stephen B. Bull: May of 1973. And if I take a second to give you the background on it, here's partly, and I'm going to come at it on a couple of different avenues, but it will come together at the end. For some reason or another, the song "God Bless America" became kind of a Nixon song. I don't know how that came about, but it became a Nixon song and a Republican song. Well, "God Bless America" was written by a Jewish immigrant who came to the United States around 1890, from Russia. His name was Irving Berlin. And despite his Jewish heritage, if you go through his compositions, he's responsible for so many Christian related songs, "Easter Parade," "White Christmas," and of course, "God Bless America," that Kate Smith famously made popular, I think, during World War II.

But anyway, we used to have something at the White House called an evening at the White House with, and you would have some sort of a celebrity. We had an evening at the White House with Duke Ellington once. There was an evening at the White House with Red Skelton. Well, I wasn't the social secretary, but I love the story of Irving Berlin and I love the song "God Bless America." So I put together this proposal that we would have an evening at the White House with Irving Berlin. Now, mind you, an evening at the White House was kind of like a state dinner and entertainment, without the state dinner. So you would just have the gathering in the East Room, a musical presentation for 30, 35 minutes, followed by a party with champagne and dancing.

So I thought we would have...I suggested we would have an evening at the White House with Irving Berlin. He would be sitting there in a place of honor, his music would be performed, and at the conclusion of which, the president would present him with what was called the Medal of Freedom. Back then, it was rarely given out. Now, they give it out like lollipops to anyone who comes around there and does the slightest thing of note. So I wrote it up, and I remember sending it into Haldeman and Haldeman coming out of the Oval Office, and he was actually being quite cheerful to me and said, "Hey, you've got a sale, put it together."

So the first thing I had to do was, of course, you know, get the social secretary involved, get a hold of Irving Berlin, and invite him to this thing. So through the White House operators who can get anybody on the phone, dead or alive, somehow got me in touch with Irving Berlin. And I remember talking with Mrs. Berlin first and then to Mr. Berlin, and I told him about this wonderful thing that was going to happen. And I was so impressed with him, what a humble man, he said, "Oh, I don't want any evening at the White House. I don't want any Medal of Freedom. I don't want any of those honors, but that's very nice. Thank you, but I don't want anything of this stuff." So we hang up the phone and I thought, "What a fine old fellow he is?"

Well, I couldn't end it there. But he did have a local representative in Washington, and I've forgotten how I got hold of his name, let alone got him on the phone. But I talked to the guy and the guy said, "Oh, that's just wonderful. Irving will just love it. I'll just, you know, I'll talk to him." And the two of us just worked together, you know, put this together. Well, about two or three days later, I get this telephone call from this tearful man who was sobbing on the phone and saying, "Mr. Bull, I told you, I don't want any evening at the White House. I don't

want to be honored. I don't want any Medal of Freedom. Why don't you leave me alone? I told you that. Why are you doing this to me? This is just terrible." And I'm about two feet hot and I let it go, and we obviously canceled the event.

So put ahead about two years, and I think it was January of 1973 or maybe the beginning of February, the POWs from Vietnam are released. And the plane carrying them comes to Clark Air Force Base in the Philippines, and I've forgotten who the ranking POW was who got off the plane, but he came down the steps. And we had it set up as an amplified telephone call between the POWs who would be coming off the plane in the Philippines and the president who was in the White House, someplace. And anyway, the POW came off and he said, "God Bless America." And the president began the exchange, welcoming them home, and then saying, "We're going to have a great party for you at the White House, and want to welcome you all back, and we'll do it in the springtime."

So that's fine. So we move ahead a couple of months and they started putting this together. This thing catches fire. It just is shaping up to be a wonderful, wonderful occasion. It's set up to be on the White House lawn. Now, I've forgotten how many POWs there were, maybe 400 or so, something like that, and they were all invited with their spouses or girlfriends or one guest, anyway. And the whole town got involved in it. Someone came up with his tent, it was almost the size of a circus tent, out there on the South Lawn. And it was beautifully appointed out there. Someone that had chandeliers hanging down from inside and tables and stage all set up, and the entertainers were going to be Bing Crosby and John Wayne and others who had all entertained in Vietnam.

Well, come the day of the POW dinner, it started to rain. And this is mid-spring in Washington, D.C., where we have monsoon rains sometimes. And the rain started coming down, and it started flooding in the tent. But, I mean, we're going to go ahead and have this thing. And anyway, where do you put 800 people other than the tent that's all set up for it? So, in the afternoon, sometime early in the afternoon of the event, I get this call, and it was from Irving Berlin, and he said, "Mr. Bull, I want to come to the dinner tonight and sing my song to my boys." So how could I say no? And so the POWs all come, and they come through the House, and they come down into the dinner, and the mood in there was electric and wonderful music, wonderful entertainment. And even though the periphery of the tent was flooded and some of the people were ankle deep in water, it didn't rain on anybody's parade that night.

When we come to the end of the evening, and this old man totters out on the stage. I'm talking about Irving Berlin, without any musical accompaniment, sings the first verse of "God Bless America." And he sobs. And then he started singing again, and the orchestra, which is a professional orchestra, even though it was the Marine orchestra, is accompanying him. And they finished. And he starts again with the third verse, and everybody under the tent, all 800, with the rain coming down, starts singing "God Bless America," with tears coming down their faces. And he concludes and he left the stage, and I think that was his last public appearance. It was an amazing night. So that was the highlight of the entire time I was ever at the White House.

Frank Gannon: Did you get to meet him?

Stephen B. Bull: Yes, I had to.

Frank Gannon: You had to.

Stephen B. Bull: I had to, of course.

Frank Gannon: Very cool.

Stephen B. Bull: That was a good part of the job, that I got to meet a lot of people who were just coming through. But it was quite a night.

Frank Gannon: Who were some of the memorable people that you had occasion to meet?

Stephen B. Bull: Frank Sinatra, Sammy Davis, Jr.

Frank Gannon: Tell us about the...were you at the Miami Convention?

Stephen B. Bull: Yes.

Frank Gannon: The young people's concert there.

Stephen B. Bull: Yes, that's what it was called, young people's concert. And I believe it was the night before the president made his acceptance speech for his reelection in 1972, which was at the Miami Convention Center. And it was called the young people's concert at a sort of an outdoor marine theater. And I remember that it had sort of a moat separating the stage from the audience. And Sammy Davis, Jr. was there. Sammy Davis, Jr. went out on a limb, as he said, to endorse the president. And he was very pleased about what the president was trying to do to better the lot of African-Americans in the United States. And the president was speaking to the crowd, and Sammy Davis had been humped behind him. And just about the time the president finished, there was this guy behind him, this short guy behind him, hugging him. And I think the president was a bit surprised to find that Sammy Davis, Jr. was behind him, hugging him. But it was, you know, one of the amusing nights.

Frank Gannon: The picture is great.

Stephen B. Bull: Yes.

Frank Gannon: The reactions of both and the spontaneity.

Stephen B. Bull: Yes.

Frank Gannon: Who was unpleasant as a visitor? Who had the attitude?

Stephen B. Bull: The visitors didn't show attitude to the president, because they were going to be differential. It was the president. Someone who could be very difficult with us was someone who had been recently elected to the Senate and felt really responsible for delivering a number of the Midwestern states, and his name was Robert Dole. And he was known to berate White House staff members. I remember I got berated one time, and I had nothing to do with it. But the president made an appearance out at Kansas State University back in early 1969, and Congressional Relations failed to communicate first and consult with Bob Dole, a Republican senator from Kansas. And I got a call, I don't know why I got the call, or someone got a call, maybe Timmons our Congressional Relations guy, got a call from an irate Bob Dole. And they sent me up there to talk to Bob Dole. Now, I didn't have anything to do with it. But he was very jealous of his prerogatives of anything that might relate to Kansas, and he would make his feelings known. But generally, I don't recall the president getting a bad time.

Now, if you want to say, you want to put it in the context of call a member of the press, a visitor, that's an entirely different story, and we had a number of quite unpleasant members of the press during press conferences. But they don't fall under that category.

Jonathan Movroydis: Do you recall the events in the White House during the Apollo 11 lunar landing?

Stephen B. Bull: It was planned that the president would have some sort of a telephonic hook up with the astronauts, I think, when Neil Armstrong ultimately stepped on the moon. And it was done from the Oval Office. It was put together by the White House Communications Agency and, I believe, perhaps with one of the networks that would have had or did have a camera in there. I was not in the office at the time. I was in another office. I think I had to put together kind of a summary, a briefing paper for what was going to transpire. I wouldn't have written the talking points, someone else would, but I would have had it attached to my briefing paper. But I was in another office with Frank Borman, watching it on television, which was really quite a treat. It was really kind of cool.

Frank Gannon: Describe Frank Borman.

Stephen B. Bull: He liked him. The president liked Frank Borman very much.

Frank Gannon: He was an earlier astronaut.

Stephen B. Bull: I think, as I recall, Frank Borman was one of the earlier Apollo astronauts. And I think that, back in '66 or '67, during the Johnson administration, he was in a spacecraft circling the moon, around, I think it was on Christmas Eve or Christmas day. And he recited the 23rd Psalm, as I recall.

Frank Gannon: Genesis.

Stephen B. Bull: Oh, was it Genesis?

Frank Gannon: Yeah.

Stephen B. Bull: It was Genesis. But, yes, he and the president really hit it off. And I remember he came out to California as well, to San Clemente. I'm not sure if he ever got any official position.

Frank Gannon: Speaking of people the president hit it off with, back into the lightning round, Bebe Rebozo.

Stephen B. Bull: The president, to my knowledge, had only two very close friends, Bebe Rebozo and Bob Abplanalp. Bob Abplanalp was from Florida. I believe he was a Cuban-American, was a banker, had a place in San Clemente, I mean, in Key Biscayne, Florida. The president bought a couple of houses down, right next to him. And the important thing, I think, about the relationship between the president and Bebe was that the president trusted him. The two of them could sit on the porch, up at Camp David, for two hours without saying a word. But with Bebe, his friend, right next to him, I think he felt confident and comforted. His other friend, Bob Abplanalp, was a great, big, bigger than life guy who was a lot of fun. He was so different from Bebe Rebozo, who was a relatively quiet individual. Bob Abplanalp was a guy who grew up in Yonkers, New York. Even back then, it was kind of a blue-collar town in Westchester County.

Bob, quite literally, in his garage, invented the aerosol valve. That which you see on, well, so many of our products. And he made a ton of money. However, he continued, even though his wife, Josie, had to move to Scarsdale, the very affluent community next door, he insisted that he live in Yonkers, New York. Most so many people who live in Yonkers claim that they live in Scarsdale. He lived in Scarsdale but claimed that he lived in Yonkers. One time, after resignation, somehow he invited me to go up and meet him for a drink in his country club, the Westchester Country Club. And afterwards, he said, "We ought to maybe go down into Yonkers and get a bite," or something like that. I don't know how many bars we hit, but he knew every bartender by his first name. But he was such a good guy, and he was always a good guy, you would never know that he was one of the wealthier guys around. But he was a friend and a loyalist to Richard Nixon, and the two friends, I think, gave him so much support over the years, both good people, both extremely different, but both solid friends, in whom he could feel comfortable.

Frank Gannon: How about President Nixon and the Annenbergs, Walter Annenberg and Leonore Annenberg?

Stephen B. Bull: I can't comment about any personal relationship that he had with the Annenbergs. I know, afterwards, after resignation, when he was letting out in California, with the Annenbergs having a place down in Palm Springs, I think "a place" is probably an understatement, the president would see quite a lot of Walter Annenberg. I think Walter Annenberg became his first Ambassador to the Court of St. James, that is to say, to Great Britain.

Jonathan Movroydis: Were you with the president during some of the...can you described being with the president in some of the major events that happened during the first term of his presidency, things like the Vietnam War, the announcement of the trip to China and Russia? Can you describe witnessing him in the Oval Office during these monumental events?

Stephen B. Bull: I was a witness to a lot of events. I was not a participant. And if I can bore you for a second, I'll give you my job description. And it was not provided by me, it was provided by the president. And this would have been around October of 1972, the reelection year, and there was to be a fundraiser down at the Connally ranch. Now, John Connally had been the Democratic governor of Texas and became Secretary of the Treasury in the Nixon administration. And he'd left that to head up Democrats for Nixon. Now, Connally, John Connally and his wife, Nellie, had this wonderful ranch house outside of, I think, outside of Austin, and it was something right out of the TV show "Dallas," you know, one story, with all sorts of dead animals tacked to the wall. It was going to be a big deal. There was a landing strip out back, and people would be flying in for this big fundraiser event.

So the President and Mrs. Nixon got there earlier in the day, and the Governor and Mrs. Connally were briefing the Nixons about what would transpire during the course of the evening. And we were walking through the house and I'm trailing behind theirs. That was my job, to trail behind. And Mrs. Connally said, "Well, we'll do the receiving line here. I'd set up enough receiving lines to see that it would be a traffic problem." So I said, "Mrs. Connally, maybe, you know, in order to avoid the pack, maybe we could move it over here." But over here was this big old bearskin rug with teeth sticking out on the floor. And I said, "But we'll need to move this." And I got down and started folding up this bearskin rug. And Mrs. Connally said, "Oh, Steve, don't you do that. I'll have Ramos do it." President said, "No, no, Nelly, let him do it. That's what he's for."

So that is my job description. It takes a few more words than saying I was a personal aide, but, you know, that was it. So I say this, I was not a participant in presidential events. I was

an observer, had the opportunity to observe a lot of wonderful things and a lot of great memories, which we already discussed, of course, the POW dinner. But I was with him when he made the announcement of going to China. He was very, very secretive about it. He handed me...before we left to go up to Los Angeles, we were down in San Clemente and he was going to go up to the NBC studios in Los Angeles or wherever it is, Burbank, or wherever, and he had this folder. And I think, in there was the announcement. But he handed it to me and he said, "Don't open it." And I didn't know why we're going up there, but we went up there and he made this announcement. And he was feeling pretty good about this whole thing, very historic moment. It was fun to be on the sidelines observing him.

Frank Gannon: After that, did they go to Chasen's for dinner?

Stephen B. Bull: Yes, I believe they did.

Frank Gannon: And so, on something like that, you wouldn't obviously dine with them, as you say, but...

Stephen B. Bull: Typically, if we were on the road like that, those accompanying him would be a military aide, the doctor, and one or more agents, and me. We would, in a restaurant, either we'd be at the other side of the room but, you know, within view of him and us in view in case he wanted one of us. So we'd be there, never his guest, but just there, and we try to blend into the background, to be unobtrusive.

Frank Gannon: What was Manolo Sanchez' role?

Stephen B. Bull: Manolo was his valet. He was there at the White House. He would bring him coffee. He would make lunch for him. And famously, the lunch was cottage cheese and ketchup. He would just attend to some personal matters like that. And, of course, Manolo was married, and his wife, Fina Sanchez, really worked with Mrs. Nixon.

Frank Gannon: Now, if Nixon was about to go out onto a stage or something and you saw his tie was off, would you say, "Sir, your tie is..."?

Stephen B. Bull: Yes, I would. And I would try to tell. When the president was going to make a public appearance like that, without trying to distract him from what he was going to say, so I'd keep it to an absolute minimum. I mean, if you're about to make a speech, you don't want some guy talking to you about your sartorial splendor, you know. Just, you know, be quiet. But I would just try to tell him, you know, "Your tie," or, "Mr. President, there are three steps here. Here's your first step," and just leave it at that, and then maybe to tell him, "You'll be introduced by Senator so and so," and just leave it.

Jonathan Movroydis: I was reading through some of the documentation at the Nixon Library, and there was sort of the plan for the 1972 campaign that you would take on a role for the execution of events. Did you assume that role?

Stephen B. Bull: Well, the execution of the events would mean kind of guiding the president through the events. Yes, I mean, I did not plan events. If the president was going to go out and make an appearance, I'd put together a written package for him and I would, on occasion, talk to the advance man. Usually, it would be the head of the advance office who would talk to the advance man. But occasionally, you know, get an idea from the advance man himself what was going to happen and make sure I understood who was going to introduce him and what he had to do and how he would be introduced. The important thing, very often, was how do we get him off the stage. That was something that was so frequently overlooked. How do you end an event in a graceful manner? But that's the way I would kind

of be expected to execute an event, to get him through it, in its planning phase, to look after the event from what I thought would be his perspective and what he would be the most comfortable doing and to transmit that back, and then to brief him and get through the event in the way that was best for him and for the event, of course.

Frank Gannon: There were a couple of things Steve mentioned, the first one was you just talked about, events, it was the Apollo landing. Did you have something about Vietnam?

Jonathan Movroydis: I was just asking, in general, what was the president's demeanor during Vietnam. You answered China, Vietnam, the general Cold War, the televised addresses on Vietnam would be another one. Were you a witness to these sorts of?

Stephen B. Bull: Well, I was certainly a witness to the preparation for his televised speeches in the Oval Office, but I did not stay in the Oval Office, and he wanted as few people as possible when he was delivering a televised address. It would just be a cameraman, maybe one agent, and maybe there would a sound guy. And that would be it. He certainly didn't want any of us in there, especially me. But, you know, I was there before and afterwards.

Frank Gannon: Did he ever ask you how you felt something? Have you thought something had worked or gone or played, a speech or an event?

Stephen B. Bull: No, there were a couple of times when I told him, I thought he was terrific. But he had the good sense not to ask my opinion of very much anything. There was one occasion, of course, when he did ask a question, and I very foolishly answered from my heart, not from my mind. And that was on August 9, 1974. And the president, of course, that's the night that he delivered his resignation speech. And he was over in the Executive Office Building office and we're coming up to 9:00 when he was going to make, deliver his resignation speech in the Oval Office. So I went over to get him, and we were walking across West Executive Avenue. And he said, "Do you think I'm doing the right thing?" I said, "No." And he said, "What?" He said, "Don't you support me?" I said, "Mr. President, I'll support you in anything you want to do. But I just don't particularly like this one." And it was a foolish thing to say, and I should have, I mean the no part. What I should have said was, "If this is your decision, it's obviously the right decision," or something as innocuous as that. But, I mean, I know that some people, many people had worked very hard to convince him that it was the time to resign. I just didn't particularly like it. And I still don't.

Frank Gannon: After that speech, so you would not have been, as you say, not in the office. Did you then go in? I understand, Henry Kissinger and he walked from the Oval Office to the...did you observe that?

Stephen B. Bull: I'm sure, I did. I mean, I had to. I don't remember that particular event. But, yeah, I mean that was where I was, so I had to have seen it. And then, of course, my job afterwards was to put the office back together. And there was a little time later that night, we were going to leave the next morning. And I guess it was August 8 when he delivered the speech, and August 9 would have been the effective date. And for, I think, the first anniversary of his presidency, or perhaps it was a birthday present, that the girls, Julie and Tricia, gave him the silver, I guess, a cigarette box, a box, maybe eight by eight, that when you lifted the lid, it played "Hail to the Chief." And it was always on his desk. So after the resignation speech that night, the president is back in the residence of the White House, and I had to put the office back together again, but also, we were going to leave the next morning. I packed up his things. It was dark by then, and I don't think even the lights were on in the Oval Office, but the doors were open, the door to the main lobbies. So the light was coming in and the light from the moonlight coming in. And I picked up the music box, because I was going to take that out to San Clemente and inadvertently, opened the top.

And in the silence of that night, following the resignation speech, it's playing "Hail to the Chief." Very poignant.

Frank Gannon: Indeed.

Stephen B. Bull: Almost ironic.

Frank Gannon: Yeah.

Stephen B. Bull: Moment.

Frank Gannon: The next morning, the morning of August 9, was the morning of the departure and the farewell speech. The staff in the East Room, what was your role that day? Did you get any sleep?

Stephen B. Bull: Yes, I believe, but not a heck of a lot. By the time we got home and packed and turned around and came back, it was probably just a few hours. It didn't matter. We were all so wired, I think, that actually it would have been difficult. But that morning, my role really was to go up into the residence and say, "All right, Mr. President, you know, it's time." Went down in the elevator and I started briefing. And Mrs. Nixon was very upset to learn that there would be press at this.

Frank Gannon: So let, if I may take you back, you go up to the family quarters and you see him first.

Stephen B. Bull: Probably not. He may have still been in his bedroom, and I would have knocked on the door and said, "Mr. President, it's whatever time it is. They're waiting for us downstairs."

Frank Gannon: So at what point are you all assembled? How does that happen? You are assembled in front of the elevator to get on the elevator.

Stephen B. Bull: Right. I mean, when the whole family was together, then they got on the elevator. And I think, probably, because, I don't remember whether I rode on the elevator with them or not, but there was a stairway right next to them. So I usually go down the stairway and he was on the elevator. It's his elevator, not mine. But when I gave them the briefing, the family, the briefing about what the setup was and what it would be, until there we mentioned the press. And it wasn't a surprise to anyone. I just said, "The press will be such and such." And Mrs. Nixon was very upset to hear that the press would be present. And the president, nevertheless, said, "No, they have to be there," or words to that effect. And then he went in, and then as has been recorded and is available on tape to this day, he gave a very personal emotional speech. And he put on glasses, which was interesting. To my knowledge, it was the first time he had ever worn glasses delivering an address in a public setting.

Frank Gannon: Where were you in the East...were you in the East Room during that speech?

Stephen B. Bull: I would have been in the back of the room. And the marine aide, Jack Brennan, made the introduction when they entered the room.

Frank Gannon: Where was he? Because that, in the library, the new Nixon Library, we have a selection from that, and some of the docents will talk about the quality of Jack Brennan's voice when he gives a very...

Stephen B. Bull: It was very, very loud, defiant. And it was, "Ladies and gentlemen, the President of the United States of America and Mrs. Nixon," and then I don't remember whether he went on with the remainder of the family.

Frank Gannon: Now, was he standing next to you?

Stephen B. Bull: Yes, the two of us were...well, I would have backed off. I went into my shadow. Jack would have done it right by the entrance to the East Room from the grand hall. And they would have been right behind, and then they would have gone up through the central aisle that was set there up onto the stage. And, of course, the president gave that very memorable personal and, I think, a very graceful speech.

Frank Gannon: I know Marines don't cry. Did you cry?

Stephen B. Bull: Later on that day, I just, when we were out in California, we'd all arrived out there, and we were just...no, I'll tell you when it was. We landed at El Toro, in the Marine Air Base, and the plane that started out as Air Force One, someplace over Kansas or Oklahoma, after his resignation, effective at 12 noon on August 9, it became Special Air Mission 27000. That referred to the tail number. And so we landed, and the president got on this little helicopter, and he was sort of knees up to his chest to get on it, a far cry from the Marine One helicopter he was used to traveling. And there was a steward, the stewards were such good guys. On those trips, over the years, I'd go in the back with a couple of other guys, and in the coffee cups, instead of coffee, they would slip me Bourbon. And anyway, we're off, the president had left, and Mrs. Nixon, they're all there. And the steward came up to say goodbye, and that was the emotional time for me, the guy who kept me in Bourbon for four and a half years. And you couldn't drink Bourbon in front of Haldeman and Ehrlichman. Those guys were two Christian Scientist, and they prefer the staff members not be, you know, gassed anyway, when dealing with the president...

Frank Gannon: So my understanding is that the president did not know, now former president, did not know that he was expected to make a speech there, that he was surprised to see the small platform and a microphone. Were you privy to that?

Stephen B. Bull: No, did not know it was set up, and I don't know who set it up, because it was sure as heck didn't have an advance man. In fact, we were surprised to find that there was such a large crowd there at El Toro air base to welcome the former president back.

Frank Gannon: So to go back, you're in East Room. You then are on Army One, as it was, for the flight to Andrews. When did you board? Because the famous picture, of course, is of Nixon standing at the top of the steps and giving the, as he says, a way of a salute.

Stephen B. Bull: There were two doors to the helicopter. There was the front door, if you were sitting in the pilot seat on the left side of the helicopter, then there was a rear door around the other side, close to the tail. And so that's how we would always board. Now, more important people would board from the front with him. But I would have run around to the rear and was probably already on. So I would see him giving the famous "V" for victory through the window.

Frank Gannon: And who else was aboard?

Stephen B. Bull: President and Mrs. Nixon. I should remember. I think it was Tricia and Ed, Ziegler, Jack Brennan, I think Ollie Atkins, doctor, and I think that's it, and an agent, of course.

Frank Gannon: And then you arrived at Andrews. How do you board Air Force One?

Stephen B. Bull: Again, two entrances to the airplane. President would enter from the front, and we would all enter from the rear.

Frank Gannon: And what are your memories of that five-hour flight?

Stephen B. Bull: There was a very small group of us. We were sitting at the staff table, and we had two documents with us. The Former Presidents Act and the Transition Act. That has to do with the transition from one presidency to another, of course, the transition to the Ford presidency now. And we were trying to figure out, "Okay, now, what do we do? What's an office of a former president? How do we set that up? I mean, and what is the former president supposed to do?" So we spent much of the time on the plane trip trying to figure out, "Really, now, what the heck do we do? Now, what are we supposed to do?" President was out forward in his cabin. And I think Ron Ziegler, the press secretary, was spending a great deal of time with him. And I think that Ron was with him when the hour of the effective time of resignation took effect, which was 12 noon on August 9.

Frank Gannon: And then the president did come back into the cabin to...

Stephen B. Bull: He came back in the cabin at the...well, he came back when we first boarded and noted that there was no press on the plane. This was unusual. During his presidency and during the campaign, there was always a press pool. But no press on this plane. And I think he made a comment that it was a much more favorable environment. And then the pilot, Air Force Colonel Ralph Albertazzie, was walking back with the president. President said, "Well, Ralph, I'm sorry I never made you a General." And in all seriousness, Ralph said, "Well, there's still time." It was a somber flight, though.

Frank Gannon: And then the plane lands. You disembarked. And...

Stephen B. Bull: Well, we disembarked. I didn't even remember what you just said, that there was a platform and a microphone. I had forgotten all about it, or maybe we were just kind of dead to reality.

Frank Gannon: And then did you go down to La Casa Pacifica?

Stephen B. Bull: Went to a hotel. Interesting thing that night, there was, I don't know, four, five, six of us, and we were all going to meet for dinner someplace, doesn't matter where. And the next morning, we all met at the offices down there in San Clemente. And the first order of business for every one of us was to go around and apologize to the other for not showing up. And no one showed up, no one consulted with anyone else. Everyone was just emotionally drained and then just stayed in their respective hotel rooms.

Frank Gannon: What were your observations of him, that's the big question, in San Clemente? Because you were there for several, couple of months, almost several months, during which, the pardon occurred, his two hospitalizations.

Stephen B. Bull: The hospitalization was, like, really concern, major concern. We almost lost him. I mean, quite simply, we almost lost him. Remember, he was dealing with a condition called phlebitis that, as I understand it, is a blood clot of some sort. And the concern was that I think the blood clot was in the leg and that it would break free and go to the heart and stop the heart. And so he had some surgery, and I think it, in effect, installed some sort of a

screen that would prevent it from traveling anywhere. And I think his heart stopped. And he was in the Oceanside Hospital. Not Oceanside.

Frank Gannon: Long Beach.

Stephen B. Bull: Long Beach Hospital, there. And in a new wing of it, an intensive care room there, and the bells went off as his heart had stopped. And it was a very tensed moment, almost lost him.

Frank Gannon: You had been so close to him, observing him. I mean, you were the body man, so-called. So what was it like to observe? Because, obviously, he was not his best and he was not in a great mood. Did you see how, if you think about that, how do you...was he despairing? And then how do you describe what must have been a decision, conscious or not, to survive, and then not only to survive but then to build a new post-presidential life?

Stephen B. Bull: I wasn't out there for the building of the post-presidential life. I was there for kind of the winding down. But I shouldn't have been surprised. He was quite in control. As I said, I got in trouble saying this, because I wasn't supposed to talk to the press, only Ziegler could talk to the press, but some guy I knew, I've forgotten who it was but a friend of mine, the press had called, so he said, "Well, he's not down in the mouth, really, but he's not sitting around and singing 'Hail to the Chief.'" But he was accepting of it. I guess that's the way to say it. He was accepting. I'm not sure what he was doing a whole lot. There was not a great deal for him to do back then. But he would come to the office, and he was there every day, wouldn't stay there all day, but he'd be there maybe till around noon. And I remember then, he was starting to venture out.

There was one time, he was going to go out with, I think, well, one of the sons-in-law, whether it was David or Ed. And they were going to go to McDonald's. And he said, well, he'd be going out and, did I have any cash? Well, I had just gotten a cash advance of \$100, and I said, "Well, I just got a cash advance of \$100." So I gave him my \$100, took it. And remember, he's a president. He'd been a president. He hadn't done any of the stuff for money for years. So I handed it to him, and he looked at it, and he went... And I think he tried every pocket that he had. So I think I started to laugh, or so I left and just went outside. Then I, you know, shortly thereafter, I heard the door closed and he went out. And I went back in to see if there was anything in the outbox that I should have attended to. And there was \$100. He didn't know what to do with it, so he left it. But it's totally understandable. But the point, I mean, there is a significance to this point because he had not been in a position where he was a private citizen, and this was going to be his first foray out as a private citizen, doing something as commonplace as going to McDonald's with his son-in-law. Now, what do you when you go to McDonald's? How do you do it? He wouldn't know it. But it was just kind of fun.

Frank Gannon: Along those lines, one of the things in the film "Frost/Nixon," and I guess I'll ask you if you saw it, what you thought of it, one of the key points, he makes a phone call late at night, alone, in his office, to David Frost at the Beverly Hills Hotel.

Stephen B. Bull: I was not here for that, or I was not there for that.

Frank Gannon: Would he have known how to make a phone call, which would have involved, one, an area code, a number?

Stephen B. Bull: Probably, someone helped him do it. I think, at that time, he still had...no, he didn't. He didn't have White House Communications Agency. I haven't the slightest idea if he knew how to do it.

Frank Gannon: In the film, it's late at night. It presents him as a little bit under the weather a little bit.

Stephen B. Bull: He might have had Manolo do it for him.

Frank Gannon: No, he does it himself in the film. I'm just...

Stephen B. Bull: No, I know. Well, Jack Brennan says that, to clean it up, a lot of it is fictional, a lot of what is in that film, including the question of whether David had had activities with his girlfriend that weekend. Jack said that just didn't happen, but it makes for a good line in a movie.

Frank Gannon: There's a lot talked about Nixon's clumsiness or lack of manual dexterity or facility. I know you observed some of that. What of that did you observe, if you did?

Stephen B. Bull: He lacked manual dexterity. The famous one is, of course, when he asked me to go to the bathroom off of his bedroom and get a little bottle of medication that was in the medicine chest. So I brought it back to him and gave it to him. Well, the thing had a childproof lock on it. Now, I mean, people who had the best manual dexterity have a tough time with it. But after 5 or 10 or 15 minutes, I hear the buzzer, and it's a rather insistent buzzer. And I go in and, without looking up, he hands me a jar with teeth marks on it. And he was incapable of getting the childproof lock off. I mean, we joked about it, but he was not very dexterous, if that's the right term.

Jonathan Movroydis: There's a couple of incidents in which, I've mentioned the phone call in the movie "Frost/Nixon," but there's also the instance during the Middle East War in which some authors talk about the idea that the president was frequently under the influence of alcohol, whether during his presidency or during his post-presidency. Have you seen any instance of that?

Stephen B. Bull: If there's one image I'd like to correct, and I can't say it vigorously enough, this image of him being an abuser of alcohol is just outright wrong. It's just BS. He had a very low tolerance for alcohol, and therefore, he very seldom had more than a drink or two, and he did that only on very rare occasions. I never saw him impaired in any way in the office, never saw him impaired the morning or evening afterwards. It's one of the many myths associated with the person of Richard Nixon, that he was a drinker. And it's just absolutely wrong.

Frank Gannon: One reporter has combined that with the allegation that he was addicted to or used a drug called Dilantin. You were the body man, so you were there to observe.

Stephen B. Bull: I never saw him or, at least, I was never...I never saw him, nor was I ever aware that he took any medication other than whatever was in that bottle. And I think I don't know whether it was Dilantin. I doubt it that it was. There was a book that came out, I don't know, 20 years ago or so. I've forgotten who the author was. And he had an allegation that president took, used mood-altering drugs, and I guess I learned that it was something called Dilantin, whatever that's for, and that he abused Mrs. Nixon physically. And I am not aware of either of those incidents ever happening. I can't believe that he would ever abuse Mrs. Nixon, nor could I ever believe that she would ever tolerate such abuse. In fact, I think he would be well-advised never even consider doing that. And as far as the Dilantin, I understand that that was a product that was being marketed by an old friend of his, and perhaps he was given a, I don't know, a supply of them and asked his opinion, and out of

courtesy, perhaps he said, you know, it's okay. But I never knew of him taking anything like Dilantin, whatever that was.

Frank Gannon: Did you observe him, he had dealings with President Truman, with President Johnson, and briefly, unfortunately, probably for a couple of months, with President Eisenhower, did you observe him in these interactions with former presidents?

Stephen B. Bull: No, I did not. Of course, he famously had been feuding with Truman for ages. Truman didn't like Nixon, and I don't think...I don't know how the president felt about Truman but probably shouldn't have liked him very much. But the president was very gracious with Truman. He invited him to the White House very early on. And I think he may even, somehow, had given him the piano, in which Truman had played when he was in presidency. Again, you know, with Eisenhower, Eisenhower died in February, March of '69, shortly after he took the presidency. And LBJ, I know he talked to him on the telephone from time to time, but I was never there. The closest I ever came to seeing them together was when the president went down for the dedication of the LBJ library down at the University of Texas in Austin, correct? And then, just, it seemed to be cordial. I really wasn't an observer, anything beyond that.

Frank Gannon: Much is made of the relationship between Nixon and the Kennedys. Did you have an opportunity to observe, I guess, it would have been Kennedy family members, the senator or the widow and the children?

Stephen B. Bull: Closest I came to that was in the fall of 1969. You'll recall, that was the Chappaquiddick incident, when Ted Kennedy had driven off a bridge and the girl with him had drowned. Excuse me. And there was, I think it was a bipartisan congressional leadership meeting at the White House, and afterwards, the president called Ted Kennedy into his office. I don't know what he said, but I'm relieved he called him in to give him some moral support. I have to excuse myself for a second. Just dry now.

Frank Gannon: Want to stretch or anything?

Stephen B. Bull: No, this is fine. And I believe that very early on, also, and this was an initiative of Mrs. Nixon...

Frank Gannon: I'll just start that again. Did you observe, talking about feeling with former presidents or presidential families, did you observe any contacts of President Nixon with the Kennedys?

Stephen B. Bull: I think only two occasions. One was shortly after the Chappaquiddick incident, where Ted Kennedy drove off a bridge with his girlfriend in the car, and she drowned. And there was, obviously, and predictably, a great deal of controversy over that and the question of whether Ted Kennedy should resign, and he did not. Later on, that was in the summer of 1969, and later on, after, perhaps in the fall, there was a bipartisan congressional leadership meeting at the White House, in the Cabinet Room. It was attended by, among others, Ted Kennedy. At the conclusion of the meeting, the president very quietly asked Senator Ted Kennedy to accompany him to the Oval Office. And just the two of them went in there. I don't know what was said in there, there was no taping system in there at the time, so I don't think there was ever any record of it, and I don't believe, I don't know if the president ever wrote of it. I don't think Ted Kennedy ever wrote. But my belief is that the president wanted to give him some reinforcement, some moral reinforcement.

Early on, I believe that Mrs. Nixon invited Jackie Kennedy to the White House. And I think it was the first time that she had been back to the White House since her husband, President

Kennedy, had been assassinated. But I think it was a very private off-the-record meeting. I did not see that, I was just aware of it. Very gracious moment.

Frank Gannon: You mentioned there was no taping system. When did you learn about the taping system?

Stephen B. Bull: I learned of the taping system in 1973. Up until that, I was not aware of the existence of the taping system. Alex Butterfield, who was an assistant to the president, deputy assistant to the president, was the liaison with Secret Service. That was among his many jobs in the White House. And as a result of that, he became aware of the installation and of the operation of a taping system in the Oval Office, the Cabinet Room, on a couple of the telephones, and later, at Camp David, and in the Executive Office Building office. When Alex left, we head up either the CAB or the FAA. He had been a pilot himself. He was not replaced. His job was divided into three parts. I inherited one-third of his job, that included liaison with Secret Service. Therefore, I inherited the knowledge of the taping system. So I learned of it in about March of 1973, when Alex Butterfield left the White House.

Frank Gannon: What was your reaction?

Stephen B. Bull: First of all, the reaction was, "Gee, I should have known about it." Just because of certain things that were said that Alex Butterfield said, it was a pretty rudimentary system. It was not, at all. It was a very unsophisticated system. I mean, for the Cabinet Room, I won't go into all the details, but for the Cabinet Room tape recorder to be activated, Alex Butterfield had to push a button on his telephone to activate it. So he was always insistent, since I was on the other...his office was on one side of the Oval Office, I was on the other side, and I would obviously see when the president was going into the Cabinet Room. So I was supposed to call Alex immediately and say, "The president's in the Cabinet Room." I never knew why he was so insistent on knowing that. But that should have been a tip-off that there was something up.

Frank Gannon: Did you feel betrayed?

Stephen B. Bull: No, I felt kind of stupid that I should have figured it out.

Frank Gannon: No, no, about the idea that your and other people's, without your knowledge, conversation had been recorded.

Stephen B. Bull: I never felt betrayed, because...

Frank Gannon: Did you think it was an invasion of privacy?

Stephen B. Bull: I think I thought...you know, I may be reconstructing history, but that would not be unusual thinking that...I always thought that, perhaps, our own telephone conversations were being recorded for security purposes. So I guess I thought that, "Well, maybe this is what all presidents do."

Jonathan Movroydis: When Alexander Butterfield disclosed the tapes, what kind of position did that put you in?

Stephen B. Bull: First of all, I was so grateful that Alex Butterfield was the guy to disclose. He did it on a Monday, before the televised Senate Watergate Committee hearings. I got a call at home on Sunday from some guy who identified himself as Scott Armstrong, with the Senate Watergate Committee. And he said, they'd like to talk to me, maybe the next morning. Well, there was only one thing they could possibly want to talk to me about, which

would be a taping system, which was a deep dark secret. So after we hung up the phone, and it's unusual to get a telephone call from some guy at a Sunday afternoon when I was at home. I called, I think, Fred Buzhardt, who was in the White House Counsel's office, said, "Fred, I got this call. They can only want to talk to me about one thing." And he said, "Oh, no. They wouldn't know that."

Well, Fred calls back a little bit later and said, "They know all about it. Alex Butterfield testified into the staff last week and he disclosed the existence of the system. And they want you to go on television in the morning and testify to this." They were going to let Alex off the hook because he had a meeting of the International Aviation in Moscow, I believe, and he was supposed to leave that morning. So they wanted me. So I come to the office the next morning, and I get another call, say, "No, they want Alex." Alex was a much more important person than I was. So they got Alex directed that he cancel his trip to Moscow and that he make the appearance and disclose the existence. But, you know, by the grace of God, it could have been me. I don't believe Alex Butterfield deliberately revealed the existence of this taping system. It was a dark secret.

Earlier during the Senate Watergate Committee hearings, John Dean testified that when he was in the meeting with the president, he got the impression that maybe his conversation was being recorded. So that's what he testified, and he said, "You know, I think that my conversation might have been recorded." Now, John Dean didn't know anything about a taping system. So here's Alex, a couple of months later or a couple of weeks later, whatever it was, and the staff reminded them of John Dean's testimony. And so he was asked an innocent question, or at least so I'm told, is it possible that John Dean's meeting with the president was being recorded? And Alex supposedly said, and kind of shuffling his feet, "Well, yeah, it could be." And he said, "Well, any possibility that any other meetings were recorded?"

Alex had a dilemma. He didn't know how much they knew or didn't know. And he told me later that he thought they knew and that he was being set up. And so he said, "I guess you know that there was a taping system." And so he told them about it and he said that those staff members, just stayed very calm and said, "Yeah, you know, just fill us in on the details about how that worked." So that's how it came about. And, at least, that's what Alex Butterfield said was the history of it, and I got confirmation from someone else. And I don't know what I would have done if I had been asked. And, you know, my life might have gotten an entirely different direction, because I might have lied. I don't know. I mean, I really don't know. You'd never know how you're going to react, whether it's in wartime, whether it's in a situation like that, you don't know how you're going to react in a crisis.

Frank Gannon: To go back to the mechanics of the tape system, then it's revealed, and then you were charged, you and Rose Woods, I guess, were sort of dynamic duo charged with identified subpoenaed or relevant parts of the tapes that the president wanted to hear and you defined them, identified and find them, locate them, and then Rose to transcribe them. What was that process like?

Stephen B. Bull: Well, actually, there's two parts to that. The president, when we received the first list of subpoenaed tapes, and I have to emphasize, not the whole tape, a certain conversation that might be on a tape and there might be two weeks of conversations on a single reel of tape, he wanted to hear what was being turned over. Then, later on, it was in the fall of '73, they were going to turn the tapes over to, I think there were nine tapes that were going to be turned over, I believe, to the Senate Watergate Committee, not to the special prosecutor. And so we wanted to have a record of what was on those tapes. We didn't have copies of them. So if you turn the tape over, you didn't know what they had. So Rose was to make a transcript of the conversations. We went up to Camp David, and that's

where it was going to be...where she was going to do the work, and it was going to be my job to find on a reel of tape a specific conversation, which was always tough to do, because there were so many and you had to do it using logs and voice identification. Well, then I would set it up for her, and she had, basically, an old-fashioned, you know, reel-to-reel tape player, with three or four buttons, stop, go, fast-forward, fast-reverse, something like that, record.

Frank Gannon: Record.

Stephen B. Bull: Yeah. Well, she would push play and she'd hear, I don't know, a sentence worth and she'd be typing like mad and then she'd stop. And, you know, in some cases, she'd have to go back and find her place. Well, I thought we weren't getting anywhere. It was taking her the longest time, and we had to do nine tapes, and she had hardly made a dent in tape number one. So we get back to the White House and I talked to the White House Communications Agency. By that time, there was no secret that we had a taping system. I said, "Isn't there some sort of a tape recorder that we have or a tape player that we utilize? It'd be like a stenographer's playback that would have a foot pedal so she wouldn't have to...so you could stop, you know, she could type, and the like." And they came up with something, a machine by the manufacturer Uher, U-H-E-R. And it had been modified that it had a foot pedal on it. So that's what she was using.

And it turns out that there was an erasure that took place on one of the tapes she was transcribing. Well, obviously, this began the great controversy of the so-called 18.5-minute erasure. And they sent the tape out to experts, and the experts found that there were five to nine deliberate, I don't know how you say anything is deliberate, but they said deliberate erasures. And that, of course, became the coin of the realm, the intention, and that it must have been done. Well, Rose didn't know how she might have done or might not have done it, and there was a great picture taken where she said, it could have been when she was working on the machine and she reached over to answer the phone. It became known as the "Rose Mary Stretch" and became, I think, the front page, the cover of *Time* magazine.

Later on, post-presidency, out in San Clemente, California, there was a Southern California newspaper report who ran into a woman who ran a medical transcription service. And I guess the way it worked is a doctor would call in and dictate his diagnosis, and she would type it up and send it back to him. She had a Uher machine that was modified with a foot pedal, and she had a Uher machine with a foot pedal that erased. The reporter heard about this and went over and actually observed exactly what she had reported and exactly what Rose had experienced. And it turns out that the machine had kind of an inherent malfunction when modified in a certain way, that when you put it in reverse, it inadvertently would activate, at least temporarily, the erase head. And going backwards, it would erase. There was no voice coming into it so it just erased it. And if you're trying to find your way, you're going backwards and forwards, backwards and forwards, maybe five to nine times. So that was probably the explanation.

I can't believe that there was ever a deliberate erasure of the tape that might be, with the remaining portion, might be incriminating. I sure as heck didn't erase it. If I'd been asked to, maybe I would have. I don't know, I never was, though. But I would have done a heck of a better job. I wouldn't have left any portion of it on there, and I don't believe that the president would have done it because he was digitally incompetent. He could not have done it and he wouldn't have done it. I can't believe he ever would have done it, nor would he have known how to do it. And Rose would not have done it on her own. But it was so much fun for the press. And, of course, when people like, Al Haig, said it was a sinister force, that was his term, but when I talk to the special prosecutor about it, it was just dismissed when I gave

that explanation. This whole thing, it was dismissed after the president resigned, because it was no longer a matter of any interest.

Frank Gannon: What do you think Al Haig might admit? Because he said sinister forces might have been at work in the erasure of the tapes.

Stephen B. Bull: I think when Al said that, he was just being facetious. He had no idea what happened to the tape or what caused the erasure. And it was kind of the equivalent of saying, "The devil made me do it. I don't know." I mean, I think he's saying, "I don't know what it was."

Frank Gannon: How big were they? Were these like 12-inch reels? And how many? It must have been enormous. If they were taping every day or every day and night for three...

Stephen B. Bull: No, it didn't. The machine would roll only when the president was in the location. It was a sound actuated machine. Some say voice actuated, but sound as well. If he had a coffee cup and put it down, it would record it. But the machine was not set up to begin recording, in the Oval Office, for example, until he went in there. And it was called the White House Police back then, now, they call it Secret Service Uniformed Division. When he would go into the Oval Office, the White House policemen out front would pick up the telephone and call the squad room and say, "The president is in the Oval Office." And someone down in the squad room in there, pushed a button, because they have a locator board, and it was for the security people to show where the president was at any one time. And the options on that board were Oval Office, EOB, Cabinet Room, South Lawn, residence, out, six of them. So when they push the button Oval Office, they hadn't realized that someone had enabled that system. So there was a wire that went from the light or the light that said Oval Office, that actually turned the tape recorder on. But the tape recorder wouldn't run until the tape recorder microphones heard some sound in there.

So that was the Oval Office. It worked a lot easier with his telephones. There were tape recorders on the Oval Office telephone, EOB telephone, Lincoln Sitting Room telephone. And that was just...he'd pick up the phone and that'd cause the telephone recorders to work. The Executive Office Building now was terrible. They had two tape recorders over there, because Secret Service didn't want to spend all its time going back and forth, maintaining the system. And it was on a timer, a 24-hour timer. So tape recorder number one would be activated on Monday, Wednesday, Friday, and Sunday. Tape recorder two would be Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday, Monday. And the timer in between them would change it when midnight came along. On Monday, at midnight, it goes over to Tuesday's recorder. Well, the president didn't spend that much time in the EOB office. Further, when he was over there, normally, he was pretty quiet, he was by himself. So the machines weren't running and it wasn't recording anything. So you might have a month's worth of conversations. On one reel of tape, what is that, a six-inch tape? The old-fashioned tape.

But what complicated things if you were trying to find a specific conversation and you heard that it was November 8th. You didn't go to the library and pull out November 8th. You'd go to the library there or, actually, it was a safe there, and you'd find a couple reels of tape that would say September 15th through December 1st. And there would be another one with the same date. Well, what made it even difficult is a Monday-Wednesday-Friday-Sunday tape, the next week became a Tuesday-Thursday-Saturday tape. So you'd go back and forth on two different tape recorders to try to find the conversation in question. And on top of everything, the total quality, with the exception of the telephones, was terrible.

Jonathan Movroydis: During the post-presidency, you talked about going to back to San Clemente. But after that, you created something called the February Group. What was that? And was Richard Nixon involved in that at all?

Stephen B. Bull: No. In about February of 1975, a guy who had been an advance man, by the name of Dewey Clower, put together a luncheon of maybe a dozen, a dozen and a half guys, who had all worked together. It was over at the Mayflower Hotel. And he did it just because we'd all become very good friends. We would all worked together and traveled together for, what, five and a half years. And his idea was just, you know, "Let's all stick together and we'll do this, you know. We're all good friends. Let's maintain our friendship." Well, it was a very successful luncheon. And, you know, later, someone said, "Oh, yeah, that group that met in February, let's do it again." Hence, the name February Group. And it grew into a Nixon alumni group. Then it grew much too large and started including a lot of outsiders. But, you know, during the first couple of years, it was a Nixon Alumni Association, and the president wasn't part of it, but he did come down to a gathering at one point, a number of years later.

Frank Gannon: Going back in time just a little bit, one thing that we didn't cover was interaction with the First Lady and her staff and the First Family. Do you have any anecdotes that illustrate that relationship?

Stephen B. Bull: I don't, but I had a very, very privileged position. And the thing I'm proudest of, and I hope I'm correct in this, is that I believe they trusted me, all of them. And I had the opportunity, therefore, to be observers of the family and to be fairly up close, not a participant, not a part of the family, but to be kind of around the family. When the president would go out at night, to give a speech, believe me, I'm not saying went out at night, I would, and with everyone's permission, I went up into the private quarters and knock in the president's door and said, "Okay, it's time to go." This was the private quarters. I walked into their house unannounced and with their permission. And I have the highest regard and affection, certainly, for Mrs. Nixon, I speak in the past tense, of course, and for the daughters, Julie and Tricia. And I appreciated, and still do, that they seem to have accepted me and, as I said, trusted me. I don't have anything to reveal that would betray the trust even if I wanted to. I found them all to be very gracious and really a credit. And if you want to have a measurement of someone, look at their family. And so if you want to know how decent a man Richard Nixon was, look at his wife and two daughters, just wonderful people.

Frank Gannon: We've talked about one of the things on the tapes that they were famous for, where the expletive is deleted. And as a result, the Nixon conversation, a lot of people think of it as just riddled with expletives. What was your observation of the way he talked?

Stephen B. Bull: He was very uncomfortable with profanity. It was almost as though he had to steel himself to say something like that and would do it really for emphasis. I very seldom heard him use profanity, very seldom. And when we did, it was not the F-bomb. He'd call someone a little shit. Well, probably, they deserve to be called that. But it was in the privacy of his office. My gosh, the things we say to people, say about people, I think, in the privacy. But it was very seldom and it was not extreme. Unfortunately, I think it was Fred Buzhardt, a Southern Baptist, who prepared the transcripts. And where there was, in references where he'd taken the Lord's name in vain, he deleted them and said, "Expletive deleted." Well, you know, it's unacceptable in many ways to say "goddamn," for example. But, I mean, that was the type of language that you might hear, occasionally, and only occasionally. But, also, you know, what people are hearing are selected portions of tapes where conversations were in the privacy of his office. And I wonder, you know. The Kennedy tapes are sitting there in a vault, up there in Massachusetts, stuffed there until, I think, 2030. You listen to the Johnson tapes. We don't have the insight into the private conversations of those guys.

Frank Gannon: Did he have a sense of humor?

Stephen B. Bull: Yes, but you would see it most when he was with Bebe Rebozo and Bob Abplanalp. Other than that, he was a fairly serious guy. He took his job very seriously. He, himself, was not a great raconteur. I think he appreciated humor. I'm just going to go on to say, the type of humor was not offensive humor either, by any means. It was not anything racial or ethnic or any of that nature. Sometimes, the jokes he would find funny were almost corny. But I think he appreciated humor, but he, himself, was not a humorist.

Frank Gannon: I think, at one point, you said that he was insecure. Is that correct? Did you say that?

Stephen B. Bull: I think he was.

Frank Gannon: And what did you mean by that?

Stephen B. Bull: Well, he was a guy who grew up a poor kid in a dysfunctional family out in California, where the family struggled. He had a brother who died of tuberculosis. But up until the time that the brother died, I think his name was Harold, whatever spare money that the family had was expended on treatment for Harold. He had to work his way through high school and in college. He went to Duke. It's famously reported that he had to live out of a shed. He was a good student. Oh, I'm sorry, that was in graduate school, in law school. When he went to undergraduate, he was not a great athlete, but he tried. He sat on the bench on the football team. I'm not sure if he ever played in a game, but he tried to be there. In law school, he was a good student, but when it came time to get the offers of employment to join law firms and the prestigious law firms, such as up in New York, he didn't have the right credentials, he didn't have the right pedigree. And even though he was probably a heck of a lot smarter and a heck of a lot better student than so many of his classmates, who were invited up to join those law firms, he was ignored.

I think, understandably, he was kind of socially uncomfortable, and every reason to be so. He was, I think, fundamentally, a shy person, which is kind of contradictory to think of a guy who spent so much time in the public arena. But he was not a guy to make small talk. I don't think he would have been very comfortable in a cocktail party, with strangers. He was probably most comfortable either in the silence of his two friends, Bebe Rebozo and Bob Abplanalp, or in the company of his family in the family quarters, or maybe making a policy speech someplace to a prestigious audience. But socially, probably quite uncomfortable.

Frank Gannon: Earlier this afternoon, you told me a story about going to see the musical, the Tony award-winning musical, "Two Gentlemen of Verona." And I think, I don't think that was an example of the sense of humor, but can you tell that story?

Stephen B. Bull: Well, "Two Gentlemen of Verona," a modern musical version of the Shakespearean play, had a pretty pointed anti-war message. And there was a song, something along the lines of, "Re-elect me and I'll end the war." It was pointed right at President Nixon. It was always his tradition to be very polite to performers and, perhaps, to go backstage afterwards to thank them for their performances and commend it. He was going to have no part of that. I was sitting behind him in the theater, and I saw this hand come back there, and it had a note on it, rather pointed, "We will not go backstage after their performance. We will leave immediately," expressing his displeasure through absence backstage.

Frank Gannon: And my one is, did you ever see him get angry?

Stephen B. Bull: Yeah, I've seen him angry, but he didn't stay angry. I mean, he would express frustration. But then, you know, personally, I had been around him and he might have barked at me a little bit, but then, in his own way, he would apologize. Although, I don't remember him ever saying, "Sorry, I barked at you." Rather, he would be extremely solicitous, which was worse. "If it would be okay, would you please, you know, stop standing on my foot?" No, it wouldn't be like that. But, I mean, it would be, "Steve, could you please, you know, such and such," which was his way of saying, "Sorry about that." But he didn't stay angry.

Jonathan Movroydis: When was the last time you saw President Nixon?

Stephen B. Bull: He came down to Washington probably in about 1992, something. No, that was not it. I last saw him at Mrs. Nixon's funeral. That would have been it.

Jonathan Movroydis: Do you know what you talked about?

Stephen B. Bull: Well, I didn't talk.

Jonathan Movroydis: Didn't talk.

Stephen B. Bull: Didn't talk. I think we just, there was a receiving line, and whatever you awkwardly say in the receiving line at a funeral. And that was a very moving occasion when he came out and he looked at this crowd there gathered in the garden of the library. And he put his hands into his face and just sobbed. And I think we all wanted to sob with him.

Frank Gannon: Did he say goodbye to you when you left San Clemente?

Stephen B. Bull: No, that was shameful on my part. He was in the hospital. It was time for me to go. We were getting criticism for having staff people out there. You know, even though I was still on the government payroll, it was time to pare it down. And I just left and disappeared. And I don't know what I would have done if I had stayed longer, but he was in the hospital at the time, and he had gotten through the crisis of the temporary, you know, the heart stoppage following that surgery. And I just thought it was time to go.

Frank Gannon: You told me earlier that, at one point, if I understood you right, that at one point, you told him you thought the staff had dis-served him.

Stephen B. Bull: Yes.

Frank Gannon: When did you do that and why did you say it?

Stephen B. Bull: I normally didn't have substance of conversations with the president because of the nature of my relationship with him. I was a functionary. I'll answer the question in a second. But I was shortly out of the Marine Corps and only been out a couple of years. He was a commanding officer. You don't ask questions or, when you get an order, you don't say, "You know, I think what you ought to consider," you say, "Aye, aye, sir," and you go on. So I was there for the president, as I've said before, when the two of us were in the Oval Office together. As far as he was concerned, he was all by himself, he was alone. And that was fine, that was my job. I should blend into the woodwork but to be available to him. However, after resignation, we were out there in San Clemente, I'm not sure how the conversation started, but I said to him, "I think we, on the staff, ill-served you, because we never presented to you as being a full-dimensional human being." Regardless of the situation, we would always say the president was just calm and temperate and unflappable and just accepted it.

I said, "If just one day..." Ziegler, in response to a question how did the president react to the unanimous override of his veto, he had said, "The president was so angry he threw an ashtray at me." People would have understood that you were a real man, a real human being like the rest of us, with emotions of anger, humor, happiness, sorrow, sadness. But we never did that for you, and I think we really ill-served you. And I believe that to this day, because we always wanted him to be The President, capital T, capital P. And it was partly in reaction, initially anyway, to be more presidential following the presidency of President Johnson, who pulled his shirt up to show us the scar from his recent surgery or became much too much the common man and revealing personal matters to the public. We wanted to return a degree of formality and decency to the presidency.

Jonathan Movroydis: What are your overall impressions, the man? You've witnessed the peaks and valleys of the administration. What was your overall impression of the man, both the triumphs and the tragedies?

Stephen B. Bull: That man was so darn smart and so dedicated, so disciplined, and so defensive. And he had every reason to be defensive. But, you know, to have to go through life, to have all of the great characteristics and attributes he had and, yet, still trying to explain and defend himself against some pretty scurrilous attacks, I have to say I kind of feel sorry for him. That's quite a difficult thing to say about a guy who has achieved so much personally and as the president of the United States. He doesn't get credit for some really remarkable accomplishments. China is just one of them, the opening of China. But he is a man for whom I had the greatest respect. He wasn't a personal friend. It was a master-slave relationship. And there was no question who was the master and who was the slave. And that was the nature of my job. So I don't blame him for that. A very good man and a very smart man and a decent man. And I'd go back to say, if you want the real measure of a man, of a person, look at his family. And I think that that metric tells you a great deal about what a good man, Richard Nixon, the person was.

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