

Gerald R. Ford Oral History Project
David Frey
Interviewed by
Richard Norton Smith
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Smith: Thank you for doing this.

Frey: Glad to do it.

Smith: One of the things we've been delving into is the whole question of the political environment that produced Ford that shaped and reflected him. Clearly West Michigan changed an awful lot over the last fifty years. How defining was the influence of the Dutch in this city, in this region?

Frey: I think you see that in some of his vetoes as sitting president. You see his frugality, his thriftiness.

Smith: A lot have said he was tight.

Frey: Frugal, I'd say. And there is a difference. But he was very mindful of some of the real basic Dutch, Midwestern values of thriftiness and balancing the books, so to speak. Living within your budget, and not living beyond your means. And you could see it through the whole pattern of his life. Frankly, in today's world, that's a less cherished value than it was then. Sometimes then is better. I think we're going to go back to then. I think we're in the process of learning the lesson all over again, both nationally and individually - because part of our economic and fiscal challenges are the result of the excesses of financial institutions - but also the excesses of individuals, whether it's credit cards or mortgages or whatever - excess spending. Excessive spending.

Smith: In a curious way Ronald Reagan decoupled conservatism from fiscal responsibility.

Frey: Budget balancing.

Smith: He opened the door to credit card conservatism.

Frey: Right.

Smith: And we're paying the price.

Frey: People are coming back to the fiscal fundamentals of the party, the Republican Party, which was sort of pirated by President Clinton there for a while. I think we are coming back to some of the basic fiscal tenets of the party and rightfully so.

Smith: Now, your family clearly goes back a long way in this town. What are your origins?

Frey: My grandfather, John E. Frey, was born here on the west side of Grand Rapids, at the corner of Straight and Douglas in 1880. He started Union Bank and Trust Company in 1918. The bank was subsequently chaired by my father and then myself. The Frey family has been here well before 1880. My two biological sons are fifth generation, so we have been here a long time. This is our family home and the city of my birth and several generations of Freys.

On my mother's side, I should just add parenthetically, my mother's family moved here in 1911 or 12, the Taliaferros, and were originally from Virginia. But this branch came from Missouri and my grandfather Taliaferro was chairman and chief executive officer of the American Seating Company during the great years of American Seating Company when it was, in fact, the premier manufacturer of school seating in the country. And then in World War II it converted to war time production. It was the major employer in Grand Rapids for thirty or forty years.

Smith: During which the town was transformed.

Frey: It transformed a lot, although there were years when I didn't live here. I left to go to private school and returned about twenty years later and it had changed a lot, and it continues to change. I've tried to play a role in helping it change for the better and making it a more economically vibrant and more diverse city in terms of its culture and institutions. And so it's changed a lot. There is more change on the horizon. If you don't like change, this is probably not where you want to be. But I think we've retained some of our core values. Most of the changes have been physical changes, economic changes, cultural changes, but not value changes.

Smith: Well, that brings up a point. If you were describing Grand Rapids to someone who had never been here, what is it that sets it apart, not so much physically or geographically, but in terms of the culture, the values?

Frey: I think it is very Midwestern. We're not blessed with an abundance of truly great architecture, but we're Midwestern people and our core values have stayed steady through all the economic turmoil that we've currently experienced in the state. But I think it's basically Midwestern, a very friendly city, for the most part. Private people, perhaps, but very frugal, dependable, hardworking, diligent, certainly a very prayerful culture. Churchy, as described by others. But it is what it is and it's not atypical of other upper Midwestern cities. We're equal distance between Chicago and Detroit. We're never going to be a megatropolis, but we can be a terrific, fabulous, mid-size city and retain the virtues, if you will, and the culture that was embodied in President Ford, which he carried through all his life. He never strayed from his principles, and I think that is one of his greatest attributes.

Smith: I said in his eulogy that emotionally, he never left Grand Rapids.

Frey: Right.

Smith: I think that's true.

Frey: Whenever I saw him in a crowd, he just had this glow in his eyes, a smile that wouldn't quit and a genuine affection for his constituents and for his mission. And he was true to his mission, he was true to himself, comfortable in his own skin, and understated, and yet a tower of strength and highly principled. And if you talk to those who served with him from his early years in Congress all the way through to his presidency and afterwards, he was the same Gerald Ford that you knew, whenever you knew him. And the level of his seniority did not affect the man.

Smith: We were talking to Greg Ford and he said something I thought was remarkable. I asked him the last time he saw his uncle. He said it was in March of 2006. He got out there and he said they had forty-five minutes together. At one point Greg said something, not that he intended to do this, but he was kind of curious if he were ever to go into politics. He said, "You

know, Uncle Jerry, I'd really like to know what is the most important thing for someone to know who is going into politics. What in your life sort of defined your success?" And President Ford said something very interesting. He said, "I always made other people's problems my own." Which is a very interesting way to sum up looking back how he saw his career.

Frey: Very astute observation. Very reflective of the man. Interesting observation.

Smith: When did you first meet him?

Frey: As a very young man, he was a congressman. We lived in the southeast part of town, East Grand Rapids, where Congressman Ford lived. I may have met him before, this must have been early '50s, and he came to our house on a Saturday morning to discuss some pending legislation with my father. I was home and I met him at the door and introduced myself and somehow that sticks in my memory. There may have been an earlier meeting, but on this occasion I would have been maybe nine or ten – something like that. And it's one of those special moments and I'll just never forget it. It was a sort of interesting moment, my father and Jerry Ford spent probably an hour, an hour and a half together on some legislation that was pending in Congress and he left to go on to another commitment.

Smith: On a Saturday morning.

Frey: The first of many meetings, and they were always interesting, they were always fun, and enormously important.

Smith: What made him such a successful congressman?

Frey: Well, he paid a lot of attention to his constituents; he was always available. While in the Navy on in my second tour of duty I was stationed in Japan, and spent a lot time in Vietnam; I was in the war zone – frequently, not in combat, per se, but in the war zone. I got out of the Navy and I was doing some job interviewing and stopped in Washington and had a good talk with Congressman Ford and he was a great listener, a great listener. Because of our mutual Navy experience, (my father who served in the Navy on Guam had the same experience in World War II) there was a special sort of affinity there

and we could relate to each other. He asked all the right questions, and I'm not sure I gave all the right answers, but I gave him the best answers I had. We had a great conversation. After I was out of the service and we had more meetings subsequently all the way through his passing. Special guy.

The Vietnam war was winding down and the fleet was being downsized and some naval base was being considered for closure or reduced capacity.

Smith: It's interesting because someone who, by modern standards, had essentially a safe district and didn't have to come home as often as he did - by all accounts he did come home.

Frey: He came home often, and as I said earlier, he was faithful to his constituents, made every effort to really pay attention to what was going on in his district, he listened to constituents. He absorbed it, he retained it. This was not a cameo appearance, we were not doing a walk on - he was genuinely interested in people's lives their concerns and what their views on various issues, and I think that's made him a great congressman. He became the influence that he was in the House of Representative - he knew what was going on in the streets and on the farms and in the cities and suburbs of Western Michigan, of his district. And he never forgot from whence he came. He just had such great bearings and great orientation, and he was so well grounded, if you will, in Western Michigan.

Smith: People over and over again say, "What you saw is what you got." That almost begs a question of whether there was, maybe not as visible, and in the best sense of the word, ambition, calculation - guile is a pejorative. But here's a guy who was going places, who obviously wanted to be Speaker of the House and all of that. I wonder if, at some times in his life, he didn't use that reputation - nice, good old Jerry. In a sense, putting to use for him?

Frey: The President was a very moxie, individual and that could have been. He was in some respects self-effacing, but ambitious - I would say appropriately aggressive in the right circumstances. He was a highly competitive individual. All of his athletic and academic activities reflect that, suggest that, and confirm that. He could have used that personality trait to advance his career,

but it was not in any way but in a truthful, forthcoming, forthright manner, which was the essence of the man.

Smith: Were people here surprised to see this projectory when he became Republican leader of the House, and then the leap to the vice presidency?

Frey: I don't think you could be surprised. He was so respected and revered by his fellow Republicans in the House; and even the Democrats – of course that was a different era, a different process, if you will, of how legislation got passed that we don't have today to the extent we had it then. But I don't think we should be surprised. I think he was so well respected, even if you disagreed with the man, that to see him continually move up in the leadership chain was not surprising. In fact, it's a confirmation of all that is great about this country and about the person as well as the process and what you can do with the great set of characteristics, attributes, faculties and energy that he brought to the task. I don't think we should be surprised; we should be proud that we sent him there.

Smith: There must have been local critics. We were talking to Werner Veit earlier today, and he made it clear that he and the paper were somewhat to the left of Ford, although having the same veneration, almost. But they were very critical of the pardon at the time. But I was wondering even before that, when he became sort of a local institution, whether there were people taking pot shots?

Frey: I'm sure there were. There's always somebody saying how could he? But there's always this part of the human condition, there's always the naysayers, the ankle biters, those who would hound you – whether it's jealousy or whatever – people who would second-guess the success of an individual, for whatever reasons they may have. But they are, in this case, so far in the minority. You have to listen to all who have contrary views, but I would say those who disagreed with his progression up the political ladder all the way to the White House would be small in number.

Smith: Do you ever find it ironic that he was largely responsible for the Calder?

- Frey: Most people would not attribute the acquisition and placement of the Calder – that was perhaps not one of President’s personal areas of interest and perceived *skill set* - but it was the National Endowment of the Arts who helped do it. It was something the city wanted, and if it was not high on his priority list, he recognized that it was high on the community’s priority list and would work tirelessly to make it happen, which he did.
- Smith: How controversial was it locally?
- Frey: Well, actually, I was not here at the time. This was late mid-Sixties and I had finished graduate school and then off to the Navy for three plus years, I’d been deferred through graduate school. I was commissioned in Newport, Rhode Island, and then off to my first tour of duty I went. Although I did get some clippings from the then *Grand Rapids Herald* and the Press. I knew it was controversial in many quarters, but as we look back, it was really a national first for the NEA and the city and it has become sort of our hallmark. Our logo, if you will.
- Smith: It’s also intriguing that as president he gave the Presidential Medal of Freedom to Sandy Calder, just before Calder died. So there was some connection for him there.
- Frey: I guess I had forgotten that fact. He understood the need for public art in the cultural mix, even if maybe it was not his own personal first priority in terms of his passions. But he certainly respected the place that it had in our culture, both nationally and around the world.
- Smith: We had been told that he did not want a statue of himself here at the museum. So they did the spaceman and he was happy with that. We’ve also been told that he gave genial, but firm advice to people that, “whatever you do make it representational art.”
- Frey: You may end up with a statue – I don’t know if the final decision has been made for all time – but for those of us who are trustees of the Ford Foundation we try to live by his direction.
- Smith: Now, by the time he was president, were you back?

Frey: I was living in New York City at the time. I got out of the Navy in December, 1970, about one or two months early. They were issuing early outs for some of the officers – I was a Lt. JG, stationed in Sasebo, Japan, but was on Yankee Station frequently and it was a great experience. I was all over Asia, primarily in Vietnam and so forth. And then I moved to New York because I was a bachelor and wanted to work for a bank in Manhattan. I can remember the headline in the *New York Times*, “Gerry Ford becomes vice president,” Jerry with a “G.” And he was so unknown to most of the country. I think you’ll find there is an above the fold article in the *New York Times* library that was a little bit embarrassing, perhaps, at the *Times*, having misspelled his name. I had moved back to Grand Rapids when he became president in August 1974.

Smith: What did you think about the pardon?

Frey: I think, as most people did, that it was sort of a bolt out of the blue on that Sunday morning. Not expected or anticipated by some, although there was always that sort of occasional undercurrent as if it was something the President was thinking about. I think that the trauma of the Watergate process was so gut wrenching, that when Vice President Ford became the president in August, it soon became apparent that he was spending an inordinate amount of his time related to “Watergate” and Nixon-related issues; a huge distraction for him personally and the Cabinet; and just the uncertainty of it all and where it was going to lead, and for how long it was going to take to get there. The process itself could have taken not just months, but years, and that would have incessantly invaded the time, energy and focus of the President who had so many critical issues that demanded his attention.

So I think in hindsight, and hindsight comes in different time frames.

Sometimes it’s weeks, sometimes it’s twenty years and thirty, but I think almost to a person today, the wisdom of it, and I would say the courage of it at the time he did it, was pretty amazing. And it really speaks to the individual and to the level of comfort that he has in his own skin and his own judgment. It would have been very easy, in some respects, to pay less attention to it, let the process go where it was it was going to go, and be in the headlines, either above the fold or below the fold, day after day, month after month, year after

year. Today I think President Ford's decision is pretty clear to almost everyone that he really just cut it short. I think those that think there was some sort of deal struck, I think they are misguided and unfounded in their belief.

Smith: Thankfully Ford lived long enough to know that most people had come around to his way of thinking. He said, "For twenty years everywhere I go people asked the same questions." When the Kennedy Library gave him the Profiles in Courage Award, they stopped asking the questions.

Frey: It really sort of put it to conclusion and it could have been some other circumstance, but that sort of stopped it for all time.

Smith: It's unstoppable.

Frey: It sort of said, "That's it. Move on." I always, in my heart of hearts, wish the President could have had one full term of his own to let the public get a full measure of the man. With all respect to President Carter and the election, the challenges of the two and a half year presidency, there would have been a much more substantial evaluation then and now, because we would have had a chance to really see some legislation passed, do some really great things instead of being on defensive for a good part of his presidency.

Smith: Now, presumably, you got to know him much better after he left office. Was there resentment locally when he decided to locate in California?

Frey: I think there was some head scratching, but I have to go back for just a moment. A wonderful memory of mine is that I had just moved back to Grand Rapids in 1973-74, and I think it was 1975 or 6. The President came on one of his visits to Grand Rapids and stayed with my parents. The Secret Service came in and had the house wired with all these special phones and the President spent the night. I came over to my parents' home and had a wonderful visit with the President, mixed him a drink. He'd had a very long day. He stayed with some other friends from time to time, Bob Brown, I think, and perhaps some others. But it was a really special moment because he was sort of off duty. I remember because my parents lived next door to Bob and Mary(?) Pew, and the Pews came over and had drinks as well with the President and he had his valet with him. It was a wonderful couple of hours

with a sitting president who could talk about anything, it was off the record and all amongst friends. There was nothing particularly sensitive discussed, it was a fun moment.

But people appreciated Betty Ford's health issues, her back and related issues – I think it was asthmatic issues, perhaps. I've sort of forgotten all the medical issues, but they had looked at a number of different climates that would give them the privacy that they earned and deserved, as well as be more helpful to her medical conditions. I think people were hoping that he would come here, or hoping that maybe he would retain a residence and spend a portion of the year here or maybe in northern Michigan, that way they could have some privacy. But I don't think that anybody, for more than a short period of time, took exception to their decision to select Palm Springs because he was so loyal to the city, and came back frequently.

Smith: Has Marty told you this wonderful story about Mary Pew, who apparently, umpteen years ago, was a potential suitor?

Frey: They actually dated.

Smith: They did? Okay. Has Marty told you this story? One evening he was going on about Grand Rapids and the name came up and so on. Once prompted he started going on about "Gee, just think, I might have married Mary." And Mrs. Ford said, "Now, just think, if you had married Mary Pew, instead of being President of the United States, you could have been president of Steelcase."

Frey: There you go.

Smith: Perfect shaft. But he took it. One saw that they had that very kind of comfortable relationship. She had a sharp wit and he almost enjoyed the darts.

Frey: Well, they did date. Mary reminded us about that during that evening over at my parents' house. It must have been in the '40s, I guess; obviously before he married Betty.

Smith: Now, there was obviously some controversy about where the Ford Library-Museum was going to go. And isn't it the act of a congressman to split it

down the middle? When this came up with Werner, I said, “Were you upset about that?” He said, “Well, actually by that time people in Grand Rapids just wanted to make sure we didn’t lose the whole thing, so we were delighted to get the museum.”

Frey: I was living in New York City. Well, I can’t recall all the facets – there was really a question of where to locate the museum in the city. There were some that were wishing that it would be on the east side of the Grand River, and it turned out it’s on the west. It’s been a great location, a great site. I think, my own personal view is, that the President’s loyalty to the University of Michigan was extraordinary and special and deservedly so. I think most people think at the time the decision was made to split the library and museum that it was the right decision then, but with the renaming of the school of public policy, the Ford School of Public Policy - that hindsight always being perfect, and 20-20, that the Ford School undoubtedly is and will continue to be the focus of the President’s legacy in Ann Arbor. And at some point, maybe consideration should be given to uniting the library and museum to Grand Rapids. I do not think the GSA would permit another bifurcated presidential museum and library in the presidential system.

Smith: No, that’s safe to say. And I think the trick is in convincing the University that they are not actually losing a library, but they are gaining a foothold in West Michigan.

Frey: And it could easily be identified as such. That’s a whole different issue for another day. But I think it would increase attendance, I think it would be more operationally effective from the budget standpoint. There are lots of issues to talk about. But it is what it is. It was the right decision for the President when he made it, but I don’t think you’ll see another split facility in the presidential museum system going forward.

Smith: I know he wanted very much to put it downtown. I understand that Fred Meijer had some land and it was very generously offered. There is a sense that a lot of people looked at this and thought that it was a curious place to put it. But in many ways, hasn’t it been a catalyst for what followed?

Frey: It really has. It really accelerated the growth and development of the near west side of the city, which for the most part has been industrial and residential. As you look around the museum has a fabulous view to the east and the north and to the south. It's been a huge success. And so I think it's been a catalyst for growth and investment, mostly private investment in the west side of the city. And it's going to continue to move in that direction. So I think it's been a great pick, it's a great pick for the President's burial site.

Smith: And that was always part of the package.

Frey: Always part of the package; I understand that. It's a very special place, and reflects his loyalty to the city of his birth.

Smith: Now you must have seen a great deal of him in his later years when he came here.

Frey: Right.

Smith: Did you go to a football game with him or watch football with him?

Frey: I did not have that opportunity, but on several occasions when he was here or we were in Palm Springs or Ann Arbor in his later years, we always had a few quiet moments to talk. He knew my grandfather who was born in 1880, died in 1962, and he was chairman of the bank, Union Bank and Trust Company. I can remember the President saying, "Gosh, Dave, I remember your grandfather so well and your dad." The President and my father went to the University of Michigan together. They were fraternity brothers. The President always kidded me, "Your dad was pretty tough on me down at the Deke house." They were both members of Delta Kappa Epsilon. My father was in the class of '32 and the President was class of '35. So really, the family relationship goes back to the late nineteen twenties, if not the early 1930s and so it's been a great friendship and a very respectful relationship and a very special one that has spanned a lot of decades and it's going to keep going.

Smith: How did he change over time? Let me put that in a more specific context. I've often wondered whether he didn't change and the Republican Party moved ever further to the right - or a different set of issues came up and illustrated

that difference. There were a number of issues on which, as I said in the eulogy, most of us tend to get more conservative as we get older, and he certainly never stopped being a fiscal conservative. But he seemed to become more tolerant. And I often wondered how much of that was her influence on him and how much was just the experience he had in life.

Frey: I think that clearly his wife, Betty, has been a huge influence on some issues. And he has such love and affection and respect for her, and was an advocate for her views on a lot of issues, which I think he shared genuinely. And he was a fabulous listener, he could digest things. I think he aged very gracefully, for the most part. His basic personality didn't change much. You may not have the same energy level as you get a little bit older, but I found him a remarkably consistent person both in style and thought and action. I think the party has moved in a different direction. But certainly the process has moved in a different direction. And the style that made him so successful in the '50s and '60s and '70s is a different style today, much more confrontational, much more along party lines. Still, negotiation is important, but it's a different era. But I think he was true to himself, true to his views, willing to change when circumstances changed and world events caused change. But I found him remarkably stable in those things where he could be true to himself and true to his views, and true to his convictions.

Smith: At least one opinion that changed, from the time he left office until later in life, was his opinion of Jimmy Carter. It took a while, but they became very good friends.

Frey: I think in the heat of the battle, when you are fighting for your political life, particularly for the presidency, some things get said; some things get done, not necessarily by the principles, but by secondary, tertiary staff people, well intentioned as they are, to sort of create issues that would not otherwise be created. I think that it really turned out to be a remarkable relationship and friendship. It took a while after President Carter had served in office. I think it was on the flight to Sadat's funeral that they sort of bonded, and subsequent to that had some great time together and very respectful and I think some genuinely warm feelings towards each other. As different as they might be on

a number of issues, they got over it finally and were able to put all this stuff aside and had a pretty good one on one relationship.

Smith: That's a great example for their successors, in both parties.

Frey: Absolutely. The Carters were here when we rededicated the museum. It was a fabulous dinner. The senior Bushes Mrs. Johnson, Caroline Kennedy Schlossberg and, oh gosh, it was a great event.

Smith: You must have seen him in the crux of the Foundation, and his fiscal conservatism. Tell us about it.

Frey: We had a meeting of the Ford Foundation in the Amway Grand Plaza Hotel several years ago now, when the Foundation was much more modest in size. We were talking – a number of the trustees, maybe fifteen of us in the room with the President – and we were talking about the investment portfolio. Well, the President being a child of the Depression, his parents having lived through the Depression, as did my grandparents and parents, and that was a huge influence on any young person...it was a huge influence. And the President was concerned with this. He said, "We should be 98% in bonds." And Fred Meijer was in the room and myself and Pete Secchia and a few others and in the conversation. "Mr. President, that may be a little too conservative. If we want to grow the principle of the Foundation we should be more diversified."

So after a long discussion we moved from a predominately, almost exclusively, bond portfolio to a much better mix of assets. I had explained to the President that's what we had done in the Frey Foundation in terms of diversity of our assets. And how we needed to grow the Foundation in order to sustain our grant making. I think he thought about it, it took him a while to get there, but at the end of the day – several weeks later, he signed off on a different mix of assets that would help us grow this Foundation over a period of time.

Smith: And, obviously, it grew far beyond what its originators envisioned.

- Frey: Both by the investment portfolio and by gifts. We've had extremely generous donors to the Foundation. We still need to grow it some more, but between our investment performance and our gifts we really are doing quite well.
- Smith: And you've weathered the storm over the last couple of years?
- Frey: We have. There's been some uneasy moments for all of us, both individually and for the Ford Foundation, and even if you think you've got a well-balanced portfolio, when you get some of these dramatic and traumatic shifts in the market, you're going to take some temporary – hopefully temporary – some asset diminution. But the markets recover. And it's still true today that equities over the long haul will serve you well, but you do have to have a balance.
- Smith: Did he have a sense of humor?
- Frey: He had a great sense of humor. And I can remember he had a great laugh. It was more of a chortle, maybe, than a laugh, and it was genuine. It was deep, it came from well within him; he had a great sense of humor. It had to be the right moment and the right person. He had this great chemistry and it had to be the right person, right time, and when it came out it was wonderful to hear, wonderful to see. It was fun to be with him. I think he was a good storyteller.
- Smith: Actually, it's funny. Penny and I were co-conspirators, because I was writing a lot of his stuff in the later years, and she would make him practice and practice and practice. He wasn't a natural joke teller. He said one time, "If I had to do things over, I would have spent much more time mastering communications skills." So he knew he wasn't a natural spellbinder. But the sincerity showed through.
- Frey: The sincerity, the genuineness, his truthfulness came through. I think in hindsight, that's probably one of the things he could have spent a little more time on, as it became more of a communications age. Knowing the President went to Washington in the late '40s, television wasn't then the nation's primary communication vehicle. Whatever you do, you need to be a great communicator, an effective communicator. Some are better than others, but

it's not personal politics but because television is so persuasive and it's increasingly important.

Smith: He spent a lifetime, very successfully for the most part, controlling his temper. Did you ever see his temper?

Frey: Not frequently. I think most of what you saw with his temper was a clenching down on his pipe, or something that sort of conveyed a concern. But I never heard him say an unkind word toward anyone, which speaks volumes for the man, no matter what his thoughts, or whatever concerns he had about individuals or circumstances. I never heard him issue an unkind word towards anybody. So it takes me back to what my mother, [when I was] a young boy would say to me when I was a young boy, "If you can't say anything nice about someone, don't say it." He was very civil. And he was the right person in the right place at the right time, all through his career. And he had a wonderfully diverse and enriching career – from his naval experiences, or even as a young boy here, all the way through the presidency.

Smith: Do you remember the last time you saw him?

Frey: I do remember the last time I saw him. I saw him in Ann Arbor at the groundbreaking of the Ford School of Public Policy in November 2004. I have a picture in my office of the President and Sandy Weill and myself. That was about two years before he passed away. He did not make it back for the dedication. This was an indoor, ceremonial groundbreaking, and he was sort of frail at that point. Then I was with him at – the last Gerald R. Ford Foundation trustee meeting he attended in Palm Springs in June 2005, about 18 months before he passed away.

Smith: And he announced that he was Deep Throat.

Frey: Oh, that's right.

Smith: And there's one time he practiced and practiced, and by all accounts, he pulled it off. Had the place just stunned.

Frey: It was like, oh my gosh. And after a second you could hear the laughter fill the room, and that was a great moment. I'm so glad Judy and I went out to

Palm Springs for that meeting. It was very difficult for him to travel at that point. And I'm not so sure he left Palm Springs after that.

Smith: Up until he was around ninety he was still getting around, and then the doctors really prohibited it and I thought that was a kind of death. Because he just loved traveling. He liked rubber chicken, he just loved it all.

Frey: He'd been doing it for so many years, and when you stop doing something that you love, and you're used to it, it's like the wheels start falling off the wagon.

Smith: Were you surprised by the reaction at the time of his death?

Frey: I can't say that I was – I think he was respected and revered, and I think the outpouring for him, particularly here – was pretty remarkable. And by his own design was a modest funeral for a very modest person. He could have had a much more elaborate service, but it reflected the man and what was important to him, and it was comfortable for the family. He was very sensitive, as you and others know, of his relatively short presidency, and that he was an unelected president. He wanted to make sure the service was respectful of the scale and style of other elected presidents. It was a very moving moment for me and for everybody who knew the President.

You never know what you have until you don't have it, or maybe appreciate what you have until you don't have it. And I had so many moments when I think how much I miss this good man – for who he was and what he did. For how special he was and yet he had such an understated style, but so dependable and so remarkable in so many ways. So I am not amazed. If I am halfway typical of the country, what the country values in its leadership. The outpouring of goodwill for this man was genuine, it was nothing other than a heartfelt goodbye. He was terrific then and now...he had this great respect.

Smith: Would he have been surprised to see the lines?

Frey: He would have been, but he probably shouldn't have been. But that was also his style. Even after he left the presidency, he had this modesty about the fact that he had served as president. You don't see many people who were

respected, revered and adored like this individual. It is very rare to be respected and liked – he was both.

Smith: Last question: how do you think he should be remembered?

Frey: I think he should be remembered as he is remembered. I think it is really important that those of us who are involved in the President's Foundation continue to educate, to promote in the best sense of the word, his legacy, his contributions to the country, and the world. I'm very much in favor, and we're working very diligently, to have a definitive biography written and published about this President. I am an advocate for that as part of his legacy, because he really does need that to cement his place in history. The School of Public Policy in Ann Arbor and this museum, as well as the library in Ann Arbor will collectively promote and secure his place in history. I think his legacy will continue to grow, even given his short presidency. So I am optimistic. So we are committed to making sure that his place in history is secure for all time. He's the real deal.

Smith: That's perfect.

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