

**Gerald R. Ford Oral History Project**  
**Bobbie Kilberg**  
**Interviewed by**  
**Richard Norton Smith**  
**May 5, 2010**

Smith: First of all, thank you very much for doing this.

Kilberg: You're welcome.

Smith: Tell us how your path crossed with that of the Ford White House.

Kilberg: Well, I joined the Ford White House in July, or the end of June 1975, and it was interesting why I wanted to come in there. I'd been a White House Fellow for President Nixon in the '69-'70 class and assigned in the White House to John Ehrlichman. I left in June of 1971. However, even though I left, I had this psychological need as a young person to have my colleagues and friends know that I could go back, that I had not been part of Watergate, even though I left before Watergate ever started.

Smith: Based on what you had seen and experienced in the Nixon White House, were you surprised when the troubles began?

Kilberg: Well, because I was a real fan and mentee of John Ehrlichman, I was very surprised. I was not surprised that that kind of thing can happen given the general feel in the White House of a 'we' versus 'they' nature. But as to the individual person of John Ehrlichman, I was just floored. I still don't think he got a fair deal. I don't think he was a willing participant in creating a conspiracy, certainly not in having anything to do with the initial act.

Smith: What did you admire about Ehrlichman?

Kilberg: I admired his integrity. I admired his intellectual curiosity. I admired his organizational skills. I admired the fact that he really cared about young people such as me and would work very closely with us and wanted to have us grow on the job. And I admired him because he really had a very progressive domestic agenda. If you take a look at the domestic policies of President Nixon, he was probably one of the most progressive Republicans

you've ever seen. And whether it was the creation of OSHA, the laying of all the groundwork for ERISA and pensions; whether it was the creation of the EPA; whether it was the first Affirmative Action Plan in the construction industry in Philadelphia; whether it was the AT&T settlement, which my husband actually did as solicitor of labor which involved associates for Civil Rights at the time, but which involved a massive settlement with AT&T with women - back in those days, women were not having the opportunities they have today - whether it was something I was deeply involved with, which was changing the whole definition of Native AmSmithan policy in the country, any of those by themselves would've been very progressive. Put together, they really set the Republican Party on a new course and set the administration in the White House on a new course. And I think they were all very progressive.

I think, though we will never know, that that was as much John as it was the President. I think the President set guidelines. The President said what he wanted to accomplish in general terms; I think John was not the one and only that made it happen, but framed it. And without the framing of it and without putting the meat on the bones - as you know, the devil is in the details - it would've been, I think, a very different domestic policy.

Smith: That's fascinating on a number of levels. Of course, Richard Nixon has this reputation as somebody who didn't particularly care about domestic policy.

Kilberg: You know, I think he did care. I don't think he cared to get into the weeds, whereas on foreign policy, my impression was - and again, I was right out of school, I was a very, very young White House Fellow and they don't take them that young anymore for a lot of good reasons - he wanted to be in every detail of foreign policy. I think that's accurate. He didn't want to do that for domestic policy, but he certainly wanted to put his imprimatur on it and tell people what direction he wanted it to go.

Even just taking two of the examples I can give is, one, Native AmSmithan policy where he was very actively involved in it in setting the parameters.

And, number two, was health care reform. Now, because of Richard Nixon, you had the creation of HMOs. Now, we all may think HMOs are a terrible thing these days, but back then, that was a major reform of provision of health care services. It was extraordinary. And he very clearly, well, Ehrlichman did - but he sent the instruction to move a number of us over to HEW and not come back until we had the outlines of a deal that everybody could live with. So I do think he cared. And I think his daughters think he cared. I know I've had a number of conversations with Ed Cox, his son-in-law, and Ed thinks he cared. I know Julie does, too, though I didn't have a conversation with Trish about it.

Smith: Let me ask you - you get this sense of Haldeman-Ehrlichman - that it was like Lewis and Clark, almost one person. Were they different people?

Kilberg: I see Haldeman and Ehrlichman like this rather than going in one way. John spent a lot of time, just as one little example, protecting me from Haldeman. I mean, Haldeman had a very different viewpoint of how the White House staff would operate, what collegiality meant, what diverse viewpoints meant, and I think they were very, very different people. As you remember, the Roy Ash Commission created the OMB and the Domestic Policy Council. I think that the President wanted the Domestic Policy Council among other reasons, to insulate in some ways domestic policy from the most raw nature of the political process. And by creating a council and the process of putting John in charge of it, I think he accomplished that. I think if Bob Haldeman, on his own, had continued to go down the path, it would've been very different. So, I don't know - they seemed to be, from a young person's perspective, they seemed to be perfectly friendly, et cetera, et cetera, but I don't think they were great buddies or very close. We convinced John to move out to Santa Fe where we have a home after he got out of jail. As a matter of fact I did convince the Council of the Taos Pueblo people to ask the judge to give John community service rather than prison, working with the Pueblos. And the judge said, "No." But in that process, he started coming out to New Mexico before he went to prison, not afterwards, and settled there. So every summer,

his youngest child, Michael - who was the same age as my kids - we spent summers together for seven or eight years until he moved to Atlanta. And even after he moved to Atlanta, I'd go and see him frequently and was with him.

Smith: Was he bitter?

Kilberg: Yes, he was bitter. He thought his dignity had been taken away. He thought everything he'd worked for had been taken away and that he was viewed by people as some sort of pariah and all the good things he did were ignored. He had diabetes and his kidneys failed. He was 73 or so, I can't remember exactly, and he was up here.

Smith: He was a Christian Scientist, wasn't he?

Kilberg: He was a Christian Scientist, but he did take medicine for his diabetes and he was not opposed to having treatments. If somebody had told him you have to have a kidney transplant, maybe he wouldn't have done it, but he was taking dialysis. At any rate, every year for at least the last thirty years, we've had a reunion of our Domestic Policy Council. It's always in November, the week after the election every year, even odd year elections because Virginia has odd year elections. And John would come to those. And it was probably a year before he died, he was pretty ill and his second wife or maybe third wife had already left him, but he had a gal. Do you remember Senator Talmidge?

Smith: Yes.

Kilberg: It was Senator Talmidge's daughter who then began a relationship with him and was sort of helping take care of him. She brought him up to Washington and she and I stayed with him during our dinner that night and then in the day and then I took him back to the airport. And he said to me, "I won't see you again." I said, "Yes, you will because I'm going to come down." And I came down to Atlanta and it was, I don't know, maybe eight or ten days before he died and we watched the Superbowl together. You'll have to tell me what game that was or what year, but it was a team he liked. And he looked to me

after the Superbowl was over and he said, "Okay, may I go now?" And I just burst into tears and I said, "Do you want me to leave?" And he said, "No, I want to leave." He said, "It's time." He said, "I want you to know, I'm not going to take any dialysis anymore." And, by golly, he didn't. But with his strength, it took him eleven or twelve days to die. That's a long time for someone in their 70s to live without any dialysis. But he just said, 'There's nothing left for me here.' I said, "What about Michael?" And he said, "Michael will do just fine, but I can't do it anymore."

Smith: I assume there was no relationship with Nixon?

Kilberg: I don't know.

Smith: Yeah.

Kilberg: I don't know. I'd hate to tell you. I have no idea.

Smith: Let me go back to when you were there. There've been stories over the years in terms of what the White House's attitude and, in particular, Ehrlichman and Haldeman's attitudes were towards Republicans on the Hill. I assume from what we've been told, they liked Ford compared to Hugh Scott, for obvious reasons. What was your sense?

Kilberg: I don't know. Again, I was a White House fellow first in the office of the Staff Secretary which was before the days that Dick Darman under Reagan turned that into a massive public policy bottleneck or hold. But I was there first and then when Ehrlichman became head of Domestic Policy Council, I went over and worked directly for him on that. I had very little relations with the Hill. The only time I had any relations was with the President's Indian message, which you may or may not know about, but it basically redefined Native AmSmithan policy from one of assimilation to one of self-determination. And part of that also included two major land mass returns. One was Lu Lake, which belonged actually to Taos Pueblo people, which had been taken inappropriately by the Bureau of Land Management or whatever and the surveying era 64 years before that. And then Alaska native land

claims, which were both very important and of great economic importance, including the ability to drill oil. You couldn't do that until you got this resolved.

This was ahead of energy significance especially in a time of tight energy. As you remember, we went into the Ford energy problem. At any rate, those were the times that I went up to the Hill when I was in the Nixon White House. And in those times, I didn't sense it...I didn't see in those two instances any catty comments or anything about actually Democrats or Republicans. I'm sure it existed in spades. I just had no reason to see it.

Smith: So, what did you do in between White House stints?

Kilberg: Well, I left in June. I'd gone to Yale Law School and never had any interest in practicing law, but everyone kept on telling me, including my then new husband, who went to Harvard, "You really need to give this a try." So I went to Arnold Porter in June of 1971. I was there a little short of two years and I hated corporate law. I loved the people at Arnold Porter. They were great people. And eventually in an attempt to keep me, they put me totally on pro bono stuff. They were one of the first firms in the nation that would sign people on full time to do pro bono work, and I went on to work with a guy you may or may not know, Jerry Strauss, who later became General Counsel to Occidental. But at this point was a partner at Arnold Porter and we took on Buffalo Creek, to put you back many years.

The Piston Coal Company in West Virginia in Logan County would do strip-mining in Buffalo Creek. And they would just pile up the coal, kind of like when you're in the sandbox when you're a kid and dig it out. They'd just pile up the coal and did some reinforcement, but nothing that anybody today or even then would consider acceptable. Then there came a major rain similar to what you had in Nashville just this past week. And it just broke the dam and it killed 120 or something people. I mean, it came down that hallow and there was no place to go. We did that case pro bono and I worked on that for probably four or five months, almost camping out in Logan, West Virginia

when it was not an easy place to get to in 1973. And then I just said, “No, I can’t do this anymore.” I left.

So I then went and I became Academic Vice President at Mount Vernon College, which was a women’s college at that time. It was trying to decide whether they would remain a women’s institution. They’d been a boarding school and a day school and a two-year junior college. And the decision was whether to take them into a four-year institution and remain women or not, single sex or not. And they wanted a business-type oriented person to do that. So I came in and did that. We decided to become a four-year institution. They decided to go into just four academic areas rather than the whole panoply of majors. And I was actually very happy there. I went there in June of ’73, but then came August of ’74 and I got a phone call from Don Rumsfeld, probably in September.

Smith: Did he know you from the Nixon White House?

Kilberg: Yes, he was Counsel to the President under President Nixon and he was head of OEO and he had an office in the second floor of the West Wing up next to what is actually now the counsel’s office. And I had a little office in the basement of the West Wing, where if you smiled, your cheeks touched walls.

Smith: Still location, location, location.

Kilberg: That’s right. Location, location, location. Next to Pat Moynihan who also – never mind.

Smith: Was he fun?

Kilberg: He was a great, just hystSmithal. At any rate, I didn’t know Don Rumsfeld. I went to the senior staff meetings in the Nixon White House as a White House Fellow, not because I had any right to be there by seniority, but because as a fellow, and this is also interesting - Nixon felt that the White House Fellows was a program he had a lot of respect for Johnson talked to him before he left the White House about it and he wanted the White House Fellows to have the

broadest White House exposure. So, I became friends with Rumsfeld through that and also very close friends with Dick and Lynn Cheney who, at that point had two little girls. We used to be there late at night and Don would order us pizza and all that.

OEO eventually gave money for the Indian that occupied the BIA to leave town as head of OEO. And he kids me about that to this day, because when all these Indians left, we discovered three days later that they cleaned out all the art and some national treasures. So, Don had the State Troopers chase after them, et cetera, et cetera, so it's always been a fun story. But, yes, I did know him and he called me and asked me if I wanted to come back to the White House. And that's when I said to myself, "You know, I really need to be able to show in addition to the fact that it would be interesting, I need to show people that I can come back, that I had not been tainted by Watergate and that's very important to me."

In my career, I didn't know Jerry Ford, but I instinctively liked him; but at the same time, I couldn't leave. We'd started the academic year and I just didn't think I could do that. So I said, "I have to wait until the academic year ends in May and then I'll come in June." I may have come in July 1, I don't remember. But I had this conversation with Don, it was fine and checked off. And I saw Rod Hill who was Deputy Counsel and who was going to be my boss maybe a month or two before I was going to come and he had said to me, "Oh, everything's fine. Great. Looking forward to having you." When I appeared the first day in the White House, there was not a piece of paper because Don had gone over to Defense by then, hadn't he, in May or July of '75?

Smith: He went late, later than that. It was towards the end of '75.

Kilberg: That's right. He was still there, but Dick was his Deputy and was handling all that kind of stuff. And they let me in the gate even though now these days they wouldn't, but they let me in the gate and I remembered most of the guards. And I'm waiting in what was the West Lobby in the White House

and Dick came out and said, "I didn't know you were coming. Nobody told me that you were going to be part of the staff." I said, "Well, I'm here. I quit my job at Mount Vernon." And he said, "Well, we'll make it work." But Rod was not a lot with follow-up often and Don had turned it over to Rod and Rod had decided this was great and fine. So, I came without an office, without a title, without a salary, but Dick worked his magic and I wound up in an office far, far away from the counsel's office in old EOB for about three months until something opened up. But they did manage to pay me and give me a title. I had to wait three or four months to get in the White House mess because they had to go through with the titles, to be the Associate Counsel to the President. The commissioned officers stuff takes time. But I was there. I just had a little bit of a slow start.

Smith: What were Rumsfeld's strengths?

Kilberg: I think Rumsfeld's strengths were management, clearly defined objectives, and holding people accountable for results. I would say mostly that. I don't think he thought nor would he conceive of himself as a strategic or philosophical thinker. He's very, very results-oriented and liked to see how you'd go about it.

Smith: Obviously there's a lot of ways to see the Ford presidency, One is the trajectory of someone coming in who had spent 25 years on the Hill, and who, in effect, has to learn to be an executive and a President. And there are those who believe that Rumsfeld was particularly good at coaching him.

Kilberg: Coaching the President?

Smith: Yes, along those lines.

Kilberg: Well, Rumsfeld had been in Congress.

Smith: He had. Yeah, but he had some executive experience.

Kilberg: In the private sector.

Smith: It's interesting that he called you when he did because a number of people confirmed that he advised the President early on to clean house. It raises a couple of questions which I realize are speculative, Ford felt strongly he didn't want to tar all the Nixon people with the Watergate brush. He believed in continuity, that there were a lot of very talented people. But it does raise the question of whether you can be too nice or not sufficiently ruthless in situations where perhaps ruthlessness is called for.

Kilberg: No, I think you have to look at how President Ford defined his presidency. And I'm convinced, though again, I stress I was a young staffer, I was not particularly close to him.

Smith: Right.

Kilberg: He knew who I was. He was very kind to me. He read my memos, but I don't think I was a friend of his as I was with Bush 41. It was just a totally different relationship. But having said that, from what I observed, I think he defined his presidency in large measure as restoring civility to both the White House and to politics, and to give the American people a feeling that it was okay, that we were a nation united, and that he was a good guy. And indeed he was a wonderfully good guy. But I really think he viewed that as his role, and I don't think it was in his bones or his DNA to turn around and punish people by association. I know he came eventually to believe obviously that the President should resign, but I think it took him, from talking to Phil Buchen, who is no longer with us unfortunately, I think it took Gerald Ford a long time to get there. He always liked to believe in the best of people. And he did change. I mean, he immediately changed the White House counsel, obviously.

It's interesting, also, too, I'm not sure I remember this correctly, but I think the White House counsel under Nixon's office grew exponentially as he had more and more trouble. I may be wrong with that, but I think so. Our White House counsel's office was six of us. There was Buchen as Counsel, Ed Schmaltz who was new, he had come from the private sector. But Ed was

Deputy. Rod came in when Ed left, so it was Phil Buchen, Ed, then Rod replacing him, then a guy named Ken Lazarus, Dudley Moore and myself. And then one young fellow named Barry Roth and then we had two 'legal interns' who were in school. One was H.P. Goldsmith who is now a lobbyist and one was Mark Decker, whose professional history \_\_\_\_\_ been a lot of real estate \_\_\_\_\_ and investments. So, that was it until the guy from Idaho who - what was his name? A Senator who caused the whole CIA to be—

Smith: Frank Church. The Church Commission.

Kilberg: Frank Church. The Church Commission. Then there was a whole other group of people that were brought in as detailees in the counsel's office headed by Jim Wilderotter, who at least I rarely saw. They were there, but there was kind of a Chinese wall. So it was almost as though 'I don't need a lot of lawyers and a lot of defensive stuff. I am who I am and this counsel's office can deal very nicely being small and efficient.' And we relied on the Justice Department an awful lot and Bob Bork and Nino Scalia, who was head of Office of Legal Counsel then. Nino's oldest son, Gene, is a young partner of my husbands and he was going through his dad's papers for some reason and he found a memo exchange - there were no emails back then - on a logistic(?) veto that I had with Nino and Bob Bork. And that's the kind of stuff we did. I mean, we weren't there in this defensive posture.

Smith: That raises a couple of things. First of all, I'd be interested just to hear you talk about Phil Buchen. There is this school of thought that says that the "Grand Rapids crowd", by and large, fell by the wayside, or over time were ground up.

Kilberg: Hartman and Buchen and \_\_\_\_\_

Smith: Tell me about Phil Buchen.

Kilberg: I think Phil Buchen was a person who was extraordinarily secure in his own skin as to who he was. And I think his battle with polio really made him put the world in perspective. I was not there when they pardoned Nixon, by the

way, I think that was his real trial by fire. By the time I got there, I was dealing with busing, the Arab boycott of Israel, the Secret Service and a bunch of issues, et cetera, et cetera, the arts. He was obviously dealing with other things that we dealt with such as economic deregulation. We dealt with deregulation of the airline industry and all that. Plus he was dealing with the Supreme Court, the appointment of Justice Stevens, and I'm sure lots of other things I had nothing to do with. But I never sensed that he often lost his cool.

Sometimes, from sitting in on – I did not sit in on the White House senior staff at that point even though I was higher rank now than I was as a White House Fellow - but in our staff meetings, I never saw him lose his temper. He would tell us sometimes, “You know, I’m out of the loop on this one,” or “Why don’t you all at that level try to find out what’s going on and come back to me.” But he was never kind of “How dare they do that to me?” or this or that. I think he was just delighted and thrilled to be there. Kind of a little bit in awe of “Am I really here?” But he knew that his friendship with Gerald Ford was as solid as it can be and that he would always be his advisor. And he would sometimes go in there, not for hours on end, but for a long time in the Oval Office, and my understanding is that they just kind of shot the breeze and they’d talk about issues and then just talk about their lives and their kids and Grand Rapids and all that. I think he was a very secure person internally.

Smith: People all talk about the normality of the people around Ford, beginning with the President.

Kilberg: Correct. Let me give you some examples. I was thinking the other day, our first child was born in March of '75 and I came to the White House either at the end of June or beginning of July '75. And I tried very hard not to go in on Saturdays and indeed in this White House that was not unusual. You didn't have to. It was, again, a very-low key White House. But when I did come in, I would bring Jonathan with me because I only had a five day a week nanny. And I will always remember, one time the President called a meeting in the Roosevelt Room, I think it may have been on busing, I don't really remember,

but I think it was on busing, and I didn't have a secretary. She wasn't there. We didn't have secretaries there anymore. And there was nobody there, so I kind of said, "What should I do?" And was it Nell Yates who was Ford's Secretary?

Smith: Dorothy Downton?

Kilberg: Dorothy Downton?

Smith: Mildred Leonard, early.

Kilberg: I think it was Mildred Leonard who said, "Well, just bring him" because she didn't want to watch him. So I had a little blanket and his teething toys and I plopped him down next to me in the Roosevelt Room. The President came in, looked at him, got on the floor and played with him, sat down in his chair and we proceeded with the meeting. Now, of course, once kids start toddling, it's a little more difficult, but Jonathan wasn't going anywhere, but it was just that kind of normality. "Oh, a baby. Good!" I mean, can you imagine any of these other guys? They'd just freak out. And it was just the most normal thing. And when we lost, this I remember because it's on the back of the picture, January 9<sup>th</sup>, I had Jonathan with me again for some reason and the President saw him and he said, "I think he should sit in my chair." I said, "What?" He said, "Come on!" So he came in, opened the Oval Office door, and he plopped Jonathan in his chair in the Oval Office and I had photos of that.

When we left the Bush White House, Bush 41, I said to him, "Mr. President, Jonathan has a picture in the chair." He was now 15 or 16 years old. I said, "He wants another one." And he said, "Sure!" and he stood behind him, but, again, that was different. I mean, there was a relationship that went back to when I was in college. I mean, I was part of that family. I was very close. I wasn't that way with Ford, but he just thought, "There's a kid. There's my Oval Office chair. Let's plop him down." And the day we left office, he invited all the commissioned officers because I would've been the equivalent

of the associate counsel to the president, I would've been the equivalent of a special assistant to the president. So it's down to all your commissioned officers. How many that would've been, I don't know how many that was. Invited us all to the state floor to have breakfast, you know, a stand-up buffet breakfast and sit there and talk with them. And he came around, and I'm going to start crying when I think of it, because he came around and talked to everybody.

He thanked everybody for what they did and went upstairs and changed his clothes, I'm sure. And we just were, you know, just dumbfounded because it was just a lovely thing to do. And then a lot of us left and stood on the two sides of the portico, the north portico rather than south, and watched the limousine come up with Jimmy Carter and watched Ford greet him. We were not invited, obviously, at that part when they came up and had their own coffee. I thought, "This guy, 20 minutes ago, was just sitting there talking to the staff." And when he lost that night - if you remember, they didn't call it until the next morning - some of us didn't get any sleep at all and got there really early the next morning and we were just hanging around the press room. The staff was in the press room and he came down and from the Oval Office and said, "I'm going to concede now", went out to the press podium and conceded, and then came back and just kind of talked to us. And we're in tears and he's just telling people it's going to be fine, it's going to be alright.

An extraordinary guy. And, I'm sorry, after he left, and this was after Reagan's first year in office and now I had four kids but only took the older two. John was only six or so and Sarah was four and took the kids to Disneyworld and we were going down. My husband's a partner at Gibson-McCrutchen, so we were going down to La Quinta and we stopped at Rancho Mirage, the Ford's family home, and with very little notice I just called whoever it was who was the secretary then out there and I said, "We'd like to drop by." And she said, "Well, he's on the golf course, but I'm sure when he comes back, I'll call and let you know." Called me up - again, we didn't have cell phones - but, however, we got in touch, and she said, "Come on by."

And he spent two hours with us, with the kids, showed them everything. I mean, I'm sure he had a lot of other things to do with his day. And, again, it was not as though he was doing this with someone who was a member of his senior staff who he was very close with. I was a junior commissioned officer, but it didn't matter because I belonged to him because I worked for him.

Smith: He was very proud of the team that he put together. And it's interesting. Even people who tend to dismiss the Ford presidency, if you scratch the surface, they'll acknowledge, "Well, yeah, they put together an amazingly talented cabinet and White House staff," which also tells you something about the level of comfort, the fact that he was comfortable with people who had huge egos and huge IQs and agendas of their own and never felt threatened.

Kilberg: And that he brought in, he just died recently, Bob Goodwin, right? The guy he brought in to be kind of the scholar in residence who then went to Brookings who kind of wandered around and never had any role? It would've driven me nuts. But he would just kind of come around and sit in on meetings and pontificate and then leave. But Ford liked that. He wanted somebody around. That was Ford, wasn't it? I know it wasn't Bush and I'm sure it wasn't Nixon.

Smith: Well, I heard President Ford say one of the appointments he was proudest of was Dan Boorstin as Librarian of Congress and that's pretty distinguished.

Kilberg: Yes. And you also think – you were talking about the kind of person he was – one of the last things I did was the clemency. In the end we had to make an announcement, which I was in charge of, to create the Clemency Board or did it basically say, "We're giving amnesty to everybody or everybody coming home." But remember, he made it possible for all the kids in Canada to come home.

Smith: Which was not a popular thing to do.

Kilberg: No, and actually it was so unpopular that when it came time to announce the policy, everybody turned red and I was the one who went after the White

House press corps. And I guess the theory was that these were the young people who were my age because I was – I'm now 63, so back it up.

Smith: Late 20s?

Kilberg: Well, at the end, almost 30. But these were my friends, I mean, not necessarily my friends, I happened to be in favor of the war, but these were my colleagues, you know, people my age and my peers. And he just felt very strongly that it was a part of the healing and he said, "We need to heal the White House and we need to heal this country." Part of the healing was people needed to be able to come home and rejoin their families.

Smith: People tend to overlook the fact, but it was only three weeks apart - the announcement at the VFW convention of this program and the Nixon pardon. Party of the same effort, along the lines what you said.

Kilberg: What we did in the end of 1976 was we brought it to closure and we declared that everybody could come home. I'd have to go back and look at my notes and you could do that easily, too, in the library. I have it somewhere. I can get it for you. But that reminds me also, not to beat a point, but would somebody please come get my papers? I have tons of papers of President(?). This was when you still could take things legally. I have tons of stuff, most of them are not originals. I think I left the originals, but tons of copies of all sorts of things.

Smith: I'll pass that on.

Let me ask you. Did you feel uncomfortable at all as the only woman in the room? One senses that you were on the cusp.

Kilberg: I was on the cusp. There was an article that I have at home that's framed by Isabelle Shelton from *The Washington Star*. She did this big, huge article on me which says, "What's a nice girl like you doing in a place like that?" or something because I was the only woman. I suppose I was one of the few women in a professional role in the White House. I certainly was the woman

lawyer floating around. I mean, Carla Hills was Assistant Attorney General for Anti-trust, I believe. There was a Women's Office, but that was very different. I never, certainly not from Gerald Ford nor from anyone in the counsel's office nor from anyone of the Justice Department that I dealt with, felt that anything was strange.

Smith: Nor Rumsfeld.

Kilberg: Nor Rumsfeld. Nor Cheney. Absolutely not. Lynn would've killed him. He was very fair. I always found that I was very lucky to have opportunities that other women hadn't had before me and I was very sensitive to that. But I never felt, certainly not in the Ford White House, any sense of discrimination or that the quality of my work was being scrutinized in a different way or anything like that. But, if you go back to the Nixon White House, and that's almost another generation in many ways, and, there - again, there wasn't such a thing as email at that point in time - in the Domestic Policy Council, they divided it up so everybody had certain cabinet members and agencies you dealt with.

Plus, before that, as the Assistant Staff Secretary, I had to be able to deal with all cabinet members, because all their papers came through me and through my boss. Ehrlichman had to call every cabinet member and follow it up with a letter saying that "Bobbie Kilberg is a member of my staff. She's authorized and required to talk to you all and you need to take her calls when she calls," because I couldn't get anybody to call me back. But it was not the cabinet members. What it was was the gatekeeper secretary, who invariably was female. It was not that she didn't like the fact that I was female and was trying to have access, it was that she couldn't conceive that I really could be senior enough to be talking to her boss because I was female. Because it was totally out of their experience. That hadn't happened before. And their answer was, "Well, if you're calling me and you're a female voice, you must be a secretary just as I am, and so if I'm going to put you into my boss, you tell me what you want." So I had a heck of a time for the first month or two

in the Nixon White House - not getting anybody in the Nixon White House to call me back- that was not the problem – but getting any cabinet members in departments or agencies. That was the real issue.

Smith: Did you have any contact with Mrs. Ford?

Kilberg: Very little. I had a lot of contact with Susan Porter-Rose, who was a very close friend of mine. I had very little contact with Mrs. Ford. I was invited once to a tea up in the family quarters, which I think included women from other departments and agencies, but I had very little contact. I'm sorry, I take that back. I did have one experience with her and that is, at some point in 1976, after the people splattered blood when they came through on the tour – it was calf's blood or something – the Secret Service said, "Enough of this." They wanted to create a different receiving area which was more removed. You used to come right into, literally, the East Wing without having any sort of additional checks before that. And so, I did wind up having some interchange with her because the design didn't have to be approved by the Secret Service, it had to be approved by the Capitol Planning Commission and everybody else and she had an interest in what it was going to look like. And I was the legal person who was walking around with all these darn diagrams and schematics and all that. So I wound up having some interaction with her, but it was just maybe once or twice.

Smith: I'm wondering whether there was background noise in the fall of '75, late '75 when she does the now famous *60 Minutes* interview. And one senses the good grey political types in the White House are aghast initially. And it takes awhile for people to realize, some poll numbers come in - the country's changing, particularly post-Watergate. People look at her as refreshing.

Kilberg: And not standoffish like Mrs. Nixon.

Smith: And the Ford presidency's all about restoring not only confidence and dignity and trust, but also openness.

Kilberg: Yes.

Smith: She becomes a symbol of that.

Kilberg: As you know, there's the staff mess, the Navy mess in the White House. There's a regular staff mess and a senior staff mess. I don't know if there was a senior staff mess initially, but by Bush 41 we had one. At any rate, there was this staff mess and I remember sitting around - if you didn't have a guest - you would sit around this circular table and I do remember sitting around the circular table and having the guys kind of questioning things. I can think of two guys, but I can't tell you their names, but two guys in particular who are actually people who dealt with the Hill, saying, "Oh my gosh, how am I going to deal with this?" and "Why would you say that?" And I also remember then the head of the CIA.

Smith: Bill Colby.

Kilberg: No, under Bush. My Bush.

Smith: Oh, I'm sorry.

Kilberg: But I'm trying to think, because he would come over sometimes and just sit at the round table. And we had a discussion about how refreshing it was because she was kind of like Barb, Mrs. Bush is like that. He felt totally at home with her because that's just what he got every day at home and if any of this had happened to Barb, she would've gotten right up and told everybody right away. So, I remember talking to him about it. I'm not sure if it was at the time of the *60 Minutes* interview or not, but yeah. And that's the other thing the President would do - and Bush 41 used to do this as well - would come say to me sometimes, "I'm just continuing Jerry's tradition" - he'd just come down often and just kind of plop down and sit in the mess. President Bush 41 would do that, too, but he'd come more often into the senior staff mess.

I remember one time when we were all just very upset about the budget agreement that Sununu and Darman and Gingrich had forged. And Nick Callio, who at that point was head of House Relations, was sitting in the staff

mess at the round table, sitting here and facing there and the door was there. And he was just furious about the President. “How can he do that without including us” et cetera, et cetera. The President walks in and I’m going like this and Nick just keeps on talking and talking. And the President comes up and he puts his arms on Nick and starts massaging his shoulders and said, “I know you used to love to work here.” And of course, he didn’t do anything about it. He said, “I understand your frustration and I’m going to try to work through it.” And we just plopped down and tried to figure out a strategy to deal with all this, but Ford was very much like that. I mean, I can’t think of a funny story like that, but I remember his just coming in and plopping him down and sitting with the staff and eating.

Smith: School desegregation. I’m from the Boston area originally and knew Kevin White quite well and did some work for him. And know now that he had national aspirations at one point and they went up in flames at that time.

Kilberg: And that was really one of the remaining major - you had Detroit and the Supreme Court ruled that you couldn’t force the busing of white suburban kids into Detroit. You had to be within the parameters of the city, which didn’t do Detroit much good, if you believed in busing. And then what you had was Boston and with Boston tentacles, if I remember, were a lot longer in the sense.

Smith: Geographically a much larger area.

Kilberg: Geographically, yeah.

Smith: What was the administration’s position?

Kilberg: Well, the administration’s position was interesting. I dragged out Jim Reichling because I was trying to remember all the parameters on that. Ed Levi, the Attorney General, was a major influence on that and he took a very long time to decide where we were at in that and I remember numerous members going back and forth and it just confused the heck out of me because I wasn’t sure where we were. Eventually we had two separate meetings in the

Cabinet Room that included Levy, Buchen, myself, David Matthews, and other people. Cheney. I'm going to say Rumsfeld was in that picture, because that wasn't right because he was at Defense already. And our position - and a lot of people accused us of not being very clear, even at the end - what we eventually got to was that, in order to force busing, you had to have shown that there was an actual practice of past discrimination that led to segregation and that often related to housing, back to housing, that would require you to remedy that versus saying simply, "Detroit is (or Boston), there aren't any white kids here, therefore, it's somebody's fault and we need to bring the white kids in by force." Is that de facto versus de jure? It's kind of complicated. I'm not sure it's easy to say either way, but I know we used those terms in the legislation, and I don't know whether our legislation passed. We asked for legislation, but we eventually left it to the courts and it kind of subsided. And if you ask people today about busing, they look at you like, "What are you talking about?"

Smith: Looking back 30 years, was busing kind of an aberration, a noble experiment doomed to fail? What was it? A phase?

Kilberg: I don't think it was a phase. I think there clearly had been many wrongs. You clearly had segregated communities and in some cases, not only in the South, but in the North, people intentionally creating situations or systems so that these kids were separated out or segregated out, even if they lived fairly close to each other. And I think people had all the good intentions and motives. I think it didn't work because, in fact, when you take kids out of neighborhood schools and bus them across town or wherever else, you're leaving a very important component of the educational experience, which is being in a community. You're losing that and I'm not sure that - because you had tracking systems in these integrated schools - you had that much integration. You had some, yes, but you wound up having, if I remember back to those days, in some of the studies we saw, the white kids on one track and the black kids on another track. Now, was that something that argued against busing?

No. But did it argue against the school systems actually dealing with the systemic problems? Yes.

It was fascinating to me to watch, in college and after that, in the school systems that - and I don't know why - the kids often segregated themselves back out socially. You had some kids who were really brave and crossed those lines and forged friendships, but a lot of it was their own social segregation back. Now, was that to say that the parents ought to say, "Okay, you all just want to not integrate yourselves with each other, so we're going to drop it"? No. But I just don't think it worked. It didn't improve educational performance, it didn't improve relationships between the communities, and it took kids out of their communities. Was maybe economic integration the better way, i.e. as people integrated themselves by their income levels, you had true friendships and educational experiences? I don't know.

But I remember there was one time that the President called over Attorney General Levi, I think it was on a Saturday, and Phil Buchen went and told me to wait in my office and I waited for hours. And they just spent hours, just the three of them, in the Oval office, just talking about it. And I remember then, we wrote up the President's statement. We didn't write up the legislation, the Justice Department wrote up the legislation, we reviewed it. But then I think it just kind of died. It went up to the Hill and I don't remember it ever coming back the other way. Did it?

Smith: I'm wondering about the tension between, in effect, a President putting himself implicitly or explicitly in opposition to Court orders.

Kilberg: Well, that depends how you define the Court orders. What was your experience with White?

Smith: Well I wrote speeches for him and I watched. He was scarred for life by the experience. He started out as this kind of John Lindsay, street corner liberal who, I think, in many ways was redefined by the practical realities of going through this experience. He was a very different mayor at the end of 16 years

from what he had been at the beginning. And right in the middle, came this civil war on the streets of Boston.

Kilberg: Yes, correct, but, if I remember right, what the Court said was that you cannot force suburban school districts who are not part of the city - the entity - to bus their children into Detroit even though the result of you not doing that would mean a predominantly, overwhelmingly, 98%, or whatever, black district. What we were saying was a logical extension of that, which was that, unless you could show that there was clear evidence of distinct practices that lead to that segregation, you couldn't do that.

Smith: Was it a particularly sensitive issue? I mean, in terms of not wanting to appear that you were lending aid and comfort to the Louise Day Hicks' of the world.

Kilberg: Yes, to those terrible people. And they were terrible people.

Smith: You knew who they were.

Kilberg: Yeah, and Louise Day Hicks was a very bad person. I think the President thought he was doing what was right. I mean, he was a Yale Law graduate, thank you very much. I don't think he was a constitutional scholar, but he clearly understood the law. And I think he was comfortable with doing what he did. However, I do think also that obviously he spent a lot of time with the Attorney General and Phil walking and talking it through, because I think he wanted to get it right. Would he have spent that amount if he had been Nixon or Carter or Bush or Reagan? Probably not. But he was a lawyer and he was interested in the intricacies.

Smith: Also, tell us about Ed Levi.

Kilberg: About Ed Levi? I don't have much I can tell you. I was just kind of in awe of him.

Smith: What made you in awe of him?

- Kilberg: Because he was a professor and he just sounded brighter and smarter than anybody else and he wore bowties. He'd walk into a room and he could be very condescending.
- Smith: Really?
- Kilberg: Yeah. And he could be very certain of himself and very dismissive if you had other opinions. So, if you're a young lawyer, you can be pretty scared of him. Now, I'm sure Nino Scalia wasn't scared of him and other people weren't scared of him, but I was scared of him. I kind of stood behind Rod or behind Ed Schmaltz during that time.
- Smith: Talk about an overlooked contribution - in terms of taking a tarnished Justice Department and restoring standards.
- Kilberg: Yes, absolutely, and that's all part of it in that he was very certain of himself and he had very ethical standards and he was going to pose those and that was absolutely fine. You just asked me why I felt I was scared of this person.
- Smith: You were just intimidated.
- Kilberg: He was intimidating, which was funny because he was small and wasn't very big and kind of wiry. But he was. But I also do remember having very frustrating conversations with the Justice Department - about that I spent a lot of my time, while Phil and Ed or Phil and Rod didn't. But the other four of us did, in doing a review of the FBI clearances for positions. Because you're bringing in new people and you want to be sure of a very strict ethical standard. You're going to look very carefully at their backgrounds. And I got so darned tired of reading. The FBI would go and ask their set of questions. "Do you beat your mother?" "Do you hate your wife?" "Are you sleeping with so and so and so and so?" And reading this day in and day out, what neighbors would say about people, no basis in fact, just, "I think" or "I don't like the color of their hair." And the FBI would just write all this down and give it to you.

Smith: A raw file.

Kilberg: Yeah. And you'd sit there and read it and say, "Where's the analysis?" "Where's the backup to this?" "Where's the substantiation of any of these charges?" And Ed Schmaltz looked at me one day after we had some nominee who turns out to have had major fraudulent finances in some major deal that went south - there was no Google then or anything else - it was just shoe leather. Ed said to me something about, "This guy doesn't smell right." I said, "I think you're right." So he called up his friends on Wall Street and we began to piece together a story. We discover that indeed this person was being looked at by Morgenthau in New York, which we hadn't known or had any access to. And we thought, "Here's the FBI worrying about who's sleeping with whom or who's not taking out their garbage and they were paying no attention to all to possible economic malfeasances or whatever." I mean, yes, they asked what your income was and they checked and made sure you paid your taxes, but there was no analysis on this stuff. And we really worried about that stuff related to ethics and government. It was one of the things that we really pushed the Justice Department to do something about - the FBI was independent - nonetheless to get the FBI to start focusing on it.

Smith: Who was the FBI Director at that point?

Kilberg: It certainly wasn't Bill Webster. I don't remember. I have no idea.

Smith: A couple other things and then we'll let you go. Did you have any contact at all with the Vice President?

Kilberg: Rockefeller?

Smith: Yeah.

Kilberg: Only because I came to New York as a Nelson Rockefeller Republican. My godfather was Ken Keating.

Smith: I've been working for ten years on a biography on Rockefeller and so I have a particular interest in the subject.

Kilberg: Ken Keating was my godfather and had convinced me to work for Rockefeller when I was in law school - for his presidential race during the summer instead of going to a law firm.

Smith: '68?

Kilberg: '68. So, I worked for Dick Nathan on the domestic policy side. I'll get to the point of if I had contact with Rockefeller. I did not have relations with Rockefeller.

Smith: Get that on the record.

Kilberg: Get that out now. But at any rate, I worked at 30 Rockefeller Center. It was really interesting. Rockefeller set up his policy team for his presidency at 30 Rockefeller Center. It was Dick Nathan, a bunch of people, and then two of us who were junior interns. Then Kissinger was on that same floor with Nancy McGuinness, who was then not his wife. Nancy Hanks was there and Jonathan Moore and just a great group of people and I was literally the youngest person there. We would go to the kitchen, which was on the floor also, during the day and open it up and it was stocked full of Pepperidge Farm cookies and shrimp et cetera, et cetera. Every once in awhile, they would send us over to deliver something or to talk to the delegate counters or the political people who were in some damned warehouse someplace, blocks and blocks away in New York City, where you have to kind of walk over the rats and everything else. And he just had this food there because you had to keep these kinds of people, who were his type of people, happy - and those other people, who did that stuff, you'd keep them over there.

His office was just a series of old metal desks and tables and all the delegate books around; of course everything was on paper in those days. But at any rate, we had this wonderful, elite, expensive suite and then it came time to go to the convention - and you'll like this also - and they forgot about me. And

eventually the Governor said, “Why isn’t she going?” And they basically said, “Well, we’re out of money. We didn’t think of it. I mean, she really doesn’t have any relevance. You’re not going to sit at the convention and worry about domestic policy.” And he said, “No. She goes. And Mark,” who was a Harvard undergraduate, “goes too.”

And so they put us up, a boy and a girl, in the suite that he had in the \_\_\_\_\_ where he was going to make the deals. And so we were in charge, our only job was to be sure the suite was secured so Mark and I, there was three bedrooms in here and he had one and I had one and we would rotate and we would be sure that the suite was secure. And all sorts of people came wandering through there. I’m sorry I can’t tell you at this point, I can’t remember who they were, but all sorts of state delegation heads, et cetera, et cetera, would come in and meet with the Governor. And it was clear that it wasn’t going well, because I could see the Governor’s face when they left. We used that suite and I was there that night when the count came and he did not get the nomination. And then I didn’t see him or anybody else for that matter, many of those people, until he became Vice President. And Peter Wallison is a very close friend. Wallison was a partner of my husband’s, so we were very close. And Dick Parsons and I forged a real friendship during that period of time and Dick went off and would come down to my office and plop himself down and talk about how it was very frustrating that the Rockefeller people really couldn’t get through the system and couldn’t really be part. And I was not senior enough to really see that, but Dick really felt that the Vice President was supposed to be - “the concept of being in charge of or having a lot of say in domestic policy” - but, in fact, nobody was really listening. That’s the sense that I got.

Smith: Yeah.

Kilberg: And then Susan Herter, who you know lives in Perocking(?) now about twenty minutes from us in Santa Fe, she for a time was there, too. Remember Susan?

Smith: She replaced Ann Whitman.

Kilberg: Yes, that's right. At any rate, no, I didn't have much contact at all, but I did have the sense that they really did not feel that they were really part of it.

Smith: He went to his grave believing that Rumsfeld did him in.

Kilberg: Right.

Smith: Of course, no one ever wants to blame the President and I think a lot of it was it was naïve of him to believe that realistically he was going to be given domestic policy. And to some degree, he wasn't completely honest with himself. He said, "I've known every Vice President since Henry Wallace and they were all unhappy." On one level, he went with a realistic set of expectations, but someone—

Kilberg: But he'd been the Governor of New York State.

Smith: He did and more.

Kilberg: And more.

Smith: And he was a Rockefeller.

Kilberg: And he was a Rockefeller. And he built single-handedly all of these stone by stone by himself.

Smith: Exactly. But someone close to him tried to talk him out of it during this brief period when he was considering it. And after about fifteen minutes, Rockefeller says, "Look, everything you said makes sense, but you don't realize, this is my last chance." And when you really stripped it all away, at the bottom, there it was and it never went away. And that almost guaranteed that he would be frustrated, perhaps more than frustrated.

Kilberg: I do remember Dick Parsons being with us in most of our meetings on busing. I do remember that and I think I'll go back and try to find that picture for you.

I think he was around the Cabinet Room table as well. I seem to remember that. Again, I apologize. This is all so long ago.

Smith: You're doing great.

Kilberg: Okay. I'm just sitting here looking at notes about things we haven't covered and one of the things that occurred to me was the whole concept of deregulation. The one I worked on was deregulation of the airline industry. And who was the guy from Cornell who was head of CMV?

Smith: Alfred.

Kilberg: Alfred, he was CMV.

Smith: There were several. It will come to me, but I can see him.

Kilberg: Yeah, me too. Kind of looked like a younger Alan Greenspan.

Smith: Exactly.

Kilberg: Yes, okay. This is terrible. At any rate, Jim, who then tried to run for the Senate in Virginia. He tried to challenge Warner in the primary. He was on the staff of the CEA, the Council of Economic Advisors. And Jim then became the star at Heritage. Jim was very strongly in favor of deregulation and the CMV chairman, "Alan," I think was probably somewhere in the middle. But what struck me was when not just the airline industry CEOs came in, but other business CEOs came in, and didn't like this at all. I mean, it was the concept of businesspeople actually liking the free marketplace - which I thought made a lot of sense - was for them horrifying. And they predicted that there'd be turmoil and lots of airlines would go out of business and the President's attitude was, "Well, that's the free marketplace and maybe these airlines don't --"

Smith: Alfred Kahn and Jim Miller.

Smith: Alfred Kahn and Jim Miller.

Kilberg: And Jim Miller! Thank you. But the President's attitude was that is the marketplace and if we're talking about Republican principles and we're talking about the economy working, it ought to be what succeeds, succeeds and what doesn't, doesn't. What happened, of course, was small cities lost their routes. But I think if I went away with one thing, it was just - which was perhaps naïveté - how the business community did not like this concept of making them stand on their own two feet without the defense being a monopoly and how businesses from other sectors of the economy were very concerned about it as well. And from that perspective, the other part of the business community, they just wanted certainty. They felt that you wouldn't have certainty if you had just total deregulation of the airline industry. But we worked on that, too, and Ed Schmaltz worked on that a lot and Rod did - or was it Rod and Ed?

The other thing I remember was the bailout of New York City. And I was telling this to one of Rod Hill's daughters the other day. We were at a funeral together. And I told her that one of my jobs was to keep track of Rod. Everybody had their jobs, one of my jobs was to keep track of Rod Hills because he was just full of a million ideas and would just go off and try to implement them on behalf of the President whether they'd been approved or not. And he evidently went to New York one day to find the guy who was in charge of Lazard Freres, Felix Rohatyn, with his own deal to bail the city out without anybody's approval.

And I guess the President or Phil or somebody got wind of this and I got called into the Oval Office which I rarely, rarely did. And they said, "Get on a plane and go find Rod Hills." And I said, "Any particular place I ought to start?" They said, "Try Wall Street." And somebody met me with a car and driver and we went around until I found Rod Hills. And I told him that he had to come back and he was not right(?), he could not speak, because he was not returning phone calls. Again, there wasn't any email. They didn't have cell phones then. There was no way to communicate with him, so I went and found him and told him to come home. But I look back at it and think,

“That’s pretty cool.” You know, the President calls you into the Oval Office to tell you to go find your boss in New York City.

Smith: Did you sense an internal debate in the administration? I have talked to most of the surviving principles, for example, Bill Seidman, who was quite vocal. He was in the Rockefeller camp versus the Greenspan-Simon sort of purist, if you will. And the speech that the President gave at the Press Club which gave rise to the famous “Drop Dead” headline, was battleground between the two camps. Were you aware of this philosophical turmoil?

Kilberg: I was sort of aware of the fact that some people were more moderate and some people were more conservative. Especially as it came out in the campaign for the presidency or the nomination, that there were certainly people viewed as moderates - which I was viewed as - and people who were viewed as conservatives in the White House. I was never quite sure where Don viewed himself. Or where Dick viewed himself at that point in time. And when I thought, you know, I always put Dick on the moderate camp and then when he went to Congress, we’re very good friends, remain very good friends to this day, but I went, “Wait a minute. Your positions are not what I remembered. You’ve evolved.” And he said he evolved to reflect his constituency. I do remember that. But my only role in the Drop Dead New York was finding Rod Hills. And Rod would’ve been in the Seidman camp.

Smith: I assume that your office was pretty well insulated from politics, but I can’t imagine that anyone in the White House is totally insulated.

Kilberg: No, but we were given very clear instructions that the counsel’s office was the lawyers. We were non-political. We would act in a non-political way. And that we would not talk to any outside parties on any topics. That nobody was to come lobby us outside the White House. Obviously our colleagues in the White House could talk to us, but nobody was to lobby us. That we were not to ever, ever send anybody who came to us to ask for us to send them to a department or agency because they had a problem. That was an absolutel no-no. We cut those people off at the knees. We would do none of that, and Phil

was very clear about that and we all adhered to it. And I don't think you saw one ounce of any sort of scandal coming in with the Ford counsel's office.

Smith: Last major question, here. There's this school of thought that says they waited far too long in terms of acknowledging, first of all, the real possibility that Reagan might run and, secondly, that Reagan might turn out to be as formidable an opponent as he was. , I don't think you were involved in that. I mean, Washington is a town where there's a lot of conventional thinking...but the sense of a White House that in some ways—

Kilberg: Was asleep?

Smith: Well, asleep, but also coming out of the experience of '74, not a-political, because there's no such thing as an a-political White House, but a White House wanting to restore public confidence in the a-political nature of its leadership.

Kilberg: My guess is, though it's just my instinct, that the people that worried about politics in the White House - which the counsel's office did not - that they were probably surprised that the President wasn't viewed as acceptable to what was then viewed as the conservative wing of the party. And I think they probably couldn't quite figure it out because in fact Gerald Ford was quite conservative.

Smith: Fiscally.

Kilberg: Yes, fiscally very conservative with a wonderful demeanor about him and the inclusiveness was very fiscally conservative, so my guess would be that they were somewhat surprised about the intensity of it. But again, we were totally isolated from that. I think my one experience was that at the convention, Dick did give people permission to go out to the convention on their own dime if they wanted to though they had to show that they were taking vacation time, et cetera, et cetera. And if you wanted (though we were not allowed to, the counsels), but if any White House staff wished to volunteer on the campaigns, they had to show me – I was the gatekeeper on that as was two or three other

people on the White House counsel's staff – they needed to submit to me that they had performed every week a full eight hours of government work before they took off to do anything else. We kept scrupulous records to show that nobody was doing politics on government time.

But I was going to go up to the convention and I was part of the group that was still pushing for the Equal Rights Amendment, which, by the way, Gerald Ford endorsed initially and Betty Ford was very strongly in favor of. In fact, I went to speak on the floor of the North Dakota legislature, which is the single unicameral legislature, on the Equal Rights Amendment. But at any rate, I was going to go to the convention with a group of Republican women, Jill Ruckelshaus, Peggy Heckler, Mary Louise Smith, who became chairman of the RNC actually, yeah, at the end of the Ford presidency. A whole group of very respectable women lobbying for that and Dick called me to his office and said, "You're not going anywhere." And I said, "Yes, I am." And he said, "No, you're not, because Clarke Reed will close the Mississippi delegation from supporting the President if you show up there." I said, "Don't be ridiculous." He said, "Clarke Reed doesn't like you and you're not going anywhere." Clarke Reed was very much opposed to the Equal Rights Amendment.

But Bush, when he was chairman of the RNC, created the Rule 29 Commission, which was designed to look at a variety of party rules to modernize them. And one of the rules that the party looked at was rule 32. And Peggy Heckler, who was the congresswoman then from Massachusetts, from Boston, was on the commission but she could never be there and so Bush said that Peggy said, "Can I have a proxy and could that proxy sit at the table and I want that proxy to be Bobbie?" And he said, "Sure." So, that drove Clarke nuts, number one, because he thought that was a violation of the RNC rules, but, number two, that rule 32 language that was proposed was to have the national party encourage state delegations to have increased representation of women and minorities as delegates. The Democrats at that time were putting in a quota. We thought our thing was personally very

rational. I mean, there were very few women. We wanted to get more. At any rate, I wound up in fisticuffs with Clark Reed on that and he remembered and remembered all the way through '76 and evidently told Cheney that he did not want me there. I went anyway. I said, "Dick, I'm going just as we say everybody can campaign on my own time. I'm going to put in my timesheet. Take vacation time. I'm going."

I got there. Everybody else who had come by themselves but were still part of the White House staff got all these fancy credentials and I had this one little credential which I think probably said "Do Not Allow In The Building". But I get this one little credential and at that stage in time, this was the week before when they were having the platform hearings at the hotel or something and there wasn't much security in those days. Anybody could go in places. I just remember that I went over to where the White House staff was during the convention and I couldn't get in. It was just fascinating. I mean, Dick made it very clear I needed to go home. It's funny. We were having dinner the other night and I was relating this to him and he said, "Come on. I never did that." I said, "Oh, yes you did."

The only point of that story that's silly, my only point was that people were so sensitive and walking on such eggshells that Clarke Reed could make such an unrealistic statement that he didn't believe, nobody was going to take any chances. And clearly I was going to go and I was going to piss him off. And that meant that one delegate or any delegates from Mississippi were going to move. Everybody was hyper-, hyper-, hypersensitive.

Smith: And the great irony is, in the end, it's Reagan's designation of Dick Schweiker as Vice President that P.O.'d Clarke Reed more than you could have.

Kilberg: Oh, of course. Absolutely. And evidently he's still alive and says very nice things about me these days. I ran into his daughter in New Orleans about a year ago and she remembered those stories.

Smith: Really?

Kilberg: Yeah, he told her about these stories. She and I were about the same age. "There's this young lady up there that's causing all these problems." But at any rate, that just shows you how ridiculously sensitive they were to little things.

Smith: Were you and/or other members of the White House staff sensitive to, resentful of, the media portrayal - in its most extreme form, Chevy Chase - of the President's intelligence?

Kilberg: Yes. I thought it was totally unfair. I thought the incident with knocking the head and the golf. The golf thing was while we weren't in the White House, it was afterwards.

Smith: That is right.

Kilberg: Yeah, it was afterwards. But, I mean, obviously knocking the head on the airplane and the Poland thing, I thought was absurd and ridiculous. I didn't expect that of the press. I really thought that, after they let out their vitriol on Richard Nixon, even though some of it was not deserved, that they too would have an interest in restoring civility and decency. And, instead, they gave us a break for a little bit, but then it was just back to not only business as usual, but ramping up what had become.(?) Sometimes the standard of their profession was: how nasty can you get. But, yes, I really thought that was terrible. Really terrible.

And I also remember sitting there in the fall. Again, by the fall, there weren't any great policy initiatives coming out that we were working on. We weren't clearing more people for appointments, so counsel's office sat around with not a lot to do. I mean we couldn't do election law. That was being done at the campaign. So I kept everybody's timesheets while they'd go out and work and help the President. And I remember just sitting there and being very frustrated. You know, feeling that this person that I had no respect for, Jimmy Carter, was just climbing in the polls and I could not understand how anybody

could prefer the governor of a small, little state with, to me, no redeeming qualities could possibly be elected over this man that I thought had taken an impossible job and then done it with dignity and grace and an extraordinary amount of respect. I was very, very proud to work in that White House.

And I think back to when Rumsfeld called me and I said, yes, I'll do it, but I can't do it until the spring. The thoughts that went through my mind then, which were that I need to go back to show that I can go back, that I'm not tarred by Watergate, even though I left the White House before Watergate, had changed by the time I was in that White House to just saying how fortunate I am to be here because of the person who is here. Not because I needed to prove something to myself or to my friends. Rather, I want to help him do the things he's set out to do because he's just such a gracious person.

And he reminds me, by the way, one, he had the same qualities as Bush 41 has and they come out of that same generation. Gerald Ford did not get a nice middle class, upbringing, he was not part of the upper class New England class of President Bush, but they still had that same quality of character and sense of obligation and duty to serve. And the same kind of parents, even though they were from somewhat different economic strata. And they both had an Ivy League upbringing, at least Ford in law school and Bush all through. This is going to sound terribly elitist, but I really believe this - that taught a value system and a sense of responsibility. I mean, our youngest son is graduating from Princeton in two weeks. Princeton teaches that. I went to Vassar when it was single sex and then to Yale law school. I think they taught it and I think it's something very important and I think they both had that.

Smith: Time was actually pretty good to Gerald Ford, wasn't it? He lived long enough to know that most people had come around to his way of thinking on the pardon. He was thrilled when the Kennedy Library gave him the Profiles in Courage award. He said afterwards, "For twenty years, everywhere I go, people ask the same question. Now they've stopped asking the question." The imprimatur of the Kennedys was enough to in effect cut off the

discussion. And I just wonder if you were surprised at all when he died at how much reaction there was. Because I was with ABC the first half of the week and then with the family the second half and I can tell you, journalists, particularly younger journalists, were frankly surprised at the amount of reaction. And my theory was it was a whole generation that was discovering him for the first time. They were seeing these clips and he looked awfully good, especially compared to the ugliness of our politics today.

Kilberg: Well, I'm not sure whether I was surprised or not. Because frankly I was so busy just trying to be sure that the service got completed, actually. I didn't have anything to do with anything that was going to go on in the service, just the logistics of it. But I think that my children, the oldest of whom is now 35 and the youngest of whom is 22 – so how many years ago did the President die?

Smith: Three years ago.

Kilberg: Okay, 32 to 18 or 19. I think they discovered him for the first time and they paid a lot of attention and asked a lot of questions and it was all positive and they sensed, I mean, I think they all felt the sense of his sunny disposition. Not a Ronald Reagan type of sunny disposition, but a different kind of low-key sunny disposition of someone who – I mean, the picture with the pipe. I think they just felt good about him and they thought he led a good life. And I think he did. And you say how proud he was and how good he felt about getting the award from the Kennedy Library. President Bush 41 gave the Bush Presidential Library award to Teddy Kennedy before he was sick. And a lot of people in the senior staff of the White House were furious, absolutely furious. And I said, “No. This is so typical George Bush. It is reaching across the aisle and recognizing and celebrating a life of service, even if he didn't agree with him on the issues, but the concept of serving your country.” And everybody said, “Oh, but what about Chappaquiddick, et cetera, et cetera?” I said, “That's just part of it. That's just part of President Bush's

feeling that somebody can redeem themselves and that you ought to recognize that.”

Well, Gerald Ford did nothing to redeem himself from, but it’s still this concept that recognizing that life is a life well worth living and having lived. And I think what the Kennedys did for Ford was the same thing. And President Bush was very proud of his decision to honor Ted Kennedy and I think sent, not a blistering but a very pointed email to the entire senior staff pointing that out. We all didn’t work for him anymore.

Smith: Frankly, time has been pretty good to George H. W. Bush. I think there’s a growing sense that he’s not just an interregnum between Ronald Reagan and Bill Clinton. That he had a very significant and difficult historical assignment, which was carried out very well. And then when you factor in the gentlemanly qualities, you know, the graciousness and the consideration and the decency and the fact that he could form his own friendship with Bill Clinton in a way that Ford and Carter did.

Kilberg: Well, that was a little strange.

Smith: Well, yeah, it is

Kilberg: But it’s typical Bush 41. And it took George W., who’s a friend of mine, sometime to get used to that. You know, he said, “What is this? I’m his son!” I mean, he generally said that to me, “It’s really strange, Bobbie.” And I said, “Yes, Mr. President, I know.” But it’s typical. And I would expect, you know, Bush 41 I met when I was at law school and George W. was at Yale, an undergraduate, and I was very young. I was just barely 20 when I got there to the law school and George, we’re the same age, and so it wasn’t that he was behind or that I was ahead, but we wound up being together for two years. He graduated in ’68 and I graduated in ’69 from law school and we ended up spending a lot of time together.

I met his father through that because at one point in time, George Herbert Walker Bush came up to visit and also to straighten things out and explain to

George W. how you need to behave at Yale, et cetera, et cetera. But, once he found me, and I never dated George W., we were just friends, he went out of his way when I came down as a White House Fellow to literally adopt me and my husband and he loved doing that. He loved mentoring young people. He loved to see people grow and to grow into their capabilities and I never heard – well, that’s untrue – there are only two people I ever heard of in his life him say a nasty thing about. I won’t tell you who those two people are. And he found the best in everybody.

Smith: President Ford, I later heard him speak disparagingly of two people. I’ll tell you who they are because it probably won’t come as a great surprise. One was John Dean and the other was Gordon Liddy. And the worst he could say was, “He’s a bad man.” I mean, that’s as close to outrage as he came.

Kilberg: Well, I won’t tell you the two.

Smith: Finally, how do you think Gerald Ford should be remembered?

Kilberg: I think Gerald Ford should be remembered for saving the soul of this nation. I think he came in at a very perilous time when distrust, not only of government, but distrust throughout the country was at an all time high. And I think he restored dignity and civility and respect for the office of the presidency. And I think that’s in the end what he would be remembered for. I think the other issues, whether it was the economy or busing or deregulation or foreign affairs, were important, but I think people will remember him for how he restored our sense of self. And I just think that was extraordinarily important and God bless him. Where he really stood up was the Arab boycott of Israel. And, if you remember, that was all in fashion. If any company did business with Israel, they were boycotted from doing business throughout the Arab world. And, as you know also, Jews couldn’t travel to any Arab countries, et cetera, et cetera. And he really stood up against that and made it very clear that it was anti-public policy and that if any corporation was caught not doing business with Israel because of that, that there would be severe consequences. And he also fought the United Nations with it. He took on an

issue that he didn't have to and he took on an issue very strongly and I think gained a great deal of respect in the AmSmithan community because of that.

I was with a friend the other day who worked actually for – would it have been Kissinger then? Where was Kissinger in '75, '76? Still there.

Smith: Secretary of State.

Kilberg: Yeah, Secretary of State. She said, interestingly enough because he was Jewish, that Kissinger was the bane of his existence. She said that she remembers getting memos from me and Kissinger just exploding saying, “God damn it, I'm trying to solve the ancient problems with the Middle East and the President's worried about the Arab boycott of Israel!” But he was, because it was the right thing to do. That's all I wanted to add.

Smith: I'm glad you did.

Thank you.

## B

Buchen, Phil, 11–12

## E

Ehrlichman, John, 1–6

## F

Ford, Gerald R.

1976 Republican Convention, 32–34

amnesty, 15–16

deregulation, 29–30

first acquaintance with, 1

personal stories about, 12–15, 19–20

remembrance, 39–40

school busing, 20–23

## L

Levi, Ed, 23–24

## N

Nixon, Richard

domestic policy, 2–4

## R

Rockefeller, Nelson

personal stories about, 26–28

Rumsfeld, Donald, 8–9