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

Hills: Thank you for taking your time.

Smith: It’s hard to know where to begin. Tell us the road that led you to the Ford White House. What were you doing before your path crossed that of Gerald Ford’s?

Hills: I was at the Justice Department. I was Assistant Attorney General in charge of the Civil Division.

Smith: During Watergate?

Hills: Well, yes, in that time. I came to Washington at the invitation of the then Attorney General Elliot Richardson. I came to Washington – actually, he came out to see me in California in 1973. I was teaching at UCLA and running a law practice, so I was very, very busy. I kept asking him for more time to come back. He called me in September and said, “I’m under a lot of pressure, could you come back and make a decision?”

I flew back in October with my husband and met with his deputy, Bill Ruckelshaus, and talked about the position. We had lunch with his wife Ann, and talked about schools for our children in the region, and said finally, “Okay, I’ll do it.” We flew home for a friend’s fiftieth birthday – Saturday night – and turned on the radio when I got there. That was the weekend of the Saturday Night Massacre. I called the White House on Monday and said, “I’m sorry, I was recruited by Elliot Richardson, and I don’t know what your plans are, but I am off the list.” And they kept after me to come, and, indeed, although Bill Ruckelshaus had left, others in the Justice Department pressed me to, as they say, fulfill your commitment. And they felt…

Smith: Did that include Judge Bork?
Hills: Yes. And Judge Bork said, “It’s not a pleasant time for me. I’m under a lot of pressure. I really, really would like to have you come.” So I came back another time and met with then Attorney General Saxbe

Smith: That’s right - from Ohio.

Hills: He was from Ohio, Mechanicsburg, Ohio. I interviewed with him and he was very different from Elliot Richardson. I asked him whether I would have leeway to hire the kinds of people that I had hired for our law firm, and that I was particularly keen about having deep talent and broad capacity. After about ten minutes he said, “Mrs. Hills, are you only going to hire women?” And I thought, never was there a clearer indication that I’m not getting through. I said, “Who’s going to be your deputy?” And he said, “Larry Silverman, who’s over at Steptoe and Johnson.” I said, “Would you mind if I talked to him?” He agreed, and I went over to talk to Larry – never met him before – and was absolutely captivated by him. So I said, “Okay, I’ll come.” And I came in February and then that was the beginning of my being in Washington when President Ford called me.

Smith: Let me back up. For people for whom Elliot Richardson is just a name in a textbook, what was Elliot Richardson like? And what was his role in all of this?

Hills: Elliot was an enormous talent. He graduated at the top of his class at Harvard. He was a man of great integrity He had served as secretary of the Defense Department, served on Health, Education and Welfare, attorney general, and secretary of commerce. He’d been everywhere. He just made an enormous contribution to government as a very strong man of integrity and independent views.

Smith: Did you, in later years, ever discuss with him those events surrounding the Saturday Night Massacre?

Hills: Absolutely. We became very close friends, he and Ann and Rod. He came back into the Ford administration. He was especially close friends with Rod, who did a lot of different things with him when Rod was at the White House.
Rod has pictures of the four of us doing things together. We had an enormous admiration for the Richardsons as a family.

Smith: Did he ever contemplate carrying out the president’s order? How much of an internal struggle was that that he confronted in terms of firing Cox?

Hills: When he called me and said he was under pressure, I had no idea just how much - being out in the hinterlands – I had no idea the pressure he was under. And I think that he struggled with it in the sense that he wanted to be a loyal lieutenant, but he wanted more to be a man of integrity. And he thought that having made the commitments to Archibald Cox that he had made, he had no choice.

I think his deputy, Bill Ruckelshaus, felt similarly and I think Bob Bork felt that if everyone left the Justice Department at this time of great turmoil – and this was a terrible time of high inflation, high unemployment, disappointment and anger over the Vietnam War – that if there ever was a time we needed a strong rule of law and a strong Justice Department, we needed it then. I understood both sides, and admired both. I thought that Bob Bork staying and holding the fort, so to speak, was admirable and courageous.

Smith: Interesting you say that. It did not imply, necessarily, a personal endorsement on his part of the decision to first Cox.

Hills: Absolutely not. And from where Bob Bork came – he’s hugely criticized. He came from Yale; the Yale faculty was very, very critical, and I think it cost him a lot in terms of his prestige. History will, I think, smile upon him because I think he did what he thought was right for the country.

It’s sort of interesting when I think about the people who worked in the Ford administration – a disproportionate number of them relative to what we see in later years – did what was right for the country, as did President Ford.

Smith: Did you harbor – particularly after the Massacre – did you harbor doubts about “What am I getting into? Do I really want to join an administration whose future may be so uncertain?”
Hills: Yes. I was a bit iffy. I didn’t seek the job, the job sought me. I had four children. My husband was going to have to commute from California, and although it was an exciting prospect, the turmoil did bother me. I was, as I say, I was more recruited by the deputy attorney general than by the attorney general. I was very impressed with Elliot Richardson, and to join a team that he was putting together – of the caliber that he had put together – was an honor. The next step was more of a gamble.

Smith: During that period after you arrived, and before the so-called final days, I assume this was a topic that consumed Washington. And I imagine it must have been, if nothing else, gossiped about continually within the halls of the Justice Department.

Hills: Not really. You’re talking about the final days of President Nixon and…

Smith: The unfolding Watergate scandal and the prospects for Nixon’s…

Hills: I do recall that I was playing tennis with Larry Silverman in September, and word came of the pardon and I was absolutely stunned. Judge Silverman who was deputy said, “Well, there’s goes President Ford’s election,” and that was the kind of talk. It was very closely held. I did not have rumor of it ahead of time, other than as reported in the press. There was a “Would he do it? – No, he wouldn’t.” That kind of thing.

Smith: That’s fascinating. Can you think of a time – was there such a thing as ‘that moment” when you internally decided that the Nixon presidency was not going to survive? Was it when the Supreme Court ruled on the tapes, or the specific, so-called “smoking gun” tape, or was it earlier than that?

Hills: Well, this was a time of great anxiety and, of course, the president was claiming that he knew nothing of the Watergate. The tapes were not widely talked about because, until publicity about the 18 minute gap. People weren’t aware generally speaking that their conversations were being taped. So, the view was generally a man is innocent until proven guilty, and I think in the Justice Department that was really the mindset, although there was a lot of criticism of the style and tone of the then presidency.
Smith: It is interesting – just to back up. We had an interesting interview, fascinating actually, with Jerry Jones, who, at the time, was running the White House personnel office for Haldeman. And he got a call from Haldeman, who was still at the White House so this had to be before the middle of April, ’73. He got a call wanting to know how many people reported directly to the vice president.

Hills: The vice president?

Smith: The vice president. And Jones does some figuring in his head and he says probably about fifty. He said, “Good. I want undated letters of resignation from every one of them.” Which led Jones to believe that Haldeman, Erlichman, and presumably the president, knew as early as spring of ’73 that Agnew, in fact, might have severe problems - which presumably would have come from the Justice Department. I don’t know when that investigation began, but that’s striking.

Hills: I did not arrive until Feb, 1974. But no one ever asked for my resignation. And I was too busy to look up. It was a 24/7 kind of a job.

Smith: Describe the job – why you were at the Justice Department at that point. I think probably, to most people, there’s a perception that government had ground to a halt.

Hills: Right.

Smith: But, presumably, that’s not the case. Presumably below the surface, the government continues to function no matter what crisis is enveloping the White House.

Hills: The Justice Department was very, very busy. The Civil Division represents all the departments and agencies of government - any suit brought by or against them. They are often quite complex. So we had a lot of litigation, and when a country is in turmoil, you tend to get more litigation. So there were all kinds of cases being brought across the land that we were involved in that ranged
from class actions involving the swine flu vaccination to re-lining at HUD. It wasn’t a time of vacation.

Smith: Can you describe – everyone has got their own word portrait of that transition. Does anything really stands out in those last days of the Nixon presidency and the transition to Gerald Ford?

Hills: We were all glued with our ears to the radio in those very last days. First Gerald Ford was appointed vice president and there was a lot of discussion about his qualities as an appointed vice president. And there was discussion in the last days of how he would govern were he a president. But, as I say, we were engaged in tough lawsuits – the May Day Riot suits, the Nixon tapes cases, a lot of Constitutional statutory interpretations that were quite crucial to the country, and so our forces at the Civil Division were scampering to keep up.

Smith: Al Haig, among others, has said that he realized the presidency was gone the day that the court came out with its ruling on the tapes, which I think was unanimous.

Hills: Right, yes. The court issued its opinion in the summer of 1974.

Smith: In fact, someone with whom we’ve talked raised the question, “Could we get away with defying the court?”

Hills: Defying the court?

Smith: From San Clemente, clearly Nixon’s first instinct was, is there any wiggle room in this? Can we – politically, would it fly if we were to defy the court? And the word was passed along, no way. Were you surprised that – really Richard Nixon was surprised – were you surprised that it was a unanimous ruling that went the way it did on the tapes?

Hills: I don’t think I was surprised, but I don’t have any clear recollection. The case was handled in the SG’s office – the Solicitor General’s office – and Al Haig was in the inner sanctum with Nixon – talked to him quite a lot. He was a courier between the presidency and the vice presidency at that time, and so
the comments that you mention – letters of resignation and whether they could defy the court – I’d be very surprised with their legal training that either President Nixon or President Ford would think that was a possibility in this country. Particularly with the turmoil in the country. That would have been a match next to a gasoline can in my view, with the unhappiness over Vietnam and Watergate, and then you add the defiance of the Supreme Court. I think they must have dismissed the idea in thirty seconds.

Smith: When did you first meet Gerald Ford?

Hills: On one Saturday I got a phone call. I tried very hard to be home on weekends and not do anything social so that I could spend time with my children.

Smith: How old were your children at that point?

Hills: The youngest was four and the eldest was thirteen. One Saturday in February 1974 I got a phone call saying the White House wants to see you. And I naturally thought it was about one of my cases, and I said, “Who in the White House?” The White House is calling, and I said, who? Well, it was Don Rumsfeld. Don got on the phone and said he wanted to see me but the president also wanted to see me. So I drove down and Don said, “We’d like you to go over to HUD.” And I said, “I’m not an urbanologist. Is this a good idea?” He said, “Well, the president thinks you’re a good manager.” He took me in to see the president. I said the same thing to President Ford. I said, “You know, I’m not an urbanologist. You’ll probably get some push back on this, and actually I think you need me at the Justice Department because that’s all I’ve been doing all my life, being a lawyer.” And he said, “I’m told you are a good manager. HUD needs a good manager. I’d like you to go.” And so, I figured when the president asked you do something, you do it. So I acquiesced and it wasn’t very long before I was over at HUD.

Smith: Now was there any discussion, not necessarily at that meeting, but from Rumsfeld or others regarding the HUD agenda? In addition to managerial skills, there clearly had to be a sense of what they wanted the department to do.
Hills: Less of that, but you must understand that the Civil Division was the trial counsel for HUD. And so I knew very well who the people were at HUD, particularly those who handled their litigation. The first piece of legislation that President Ford signed was the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974.

Smith: And what was that?

Hills: That changed our whole housing picture. I think John Sparkman, who was then chairman – Senator Sparkman was chairman of the Banking Committee – said it was the most revolutionary change in housing since 1949. What the act did was to let communities, states and localities, decide what to do with the federal monies that they received. On the housing side, instead of having Congress tell them that they would build housing projects, they had a choice of using new, rehabilitated, or used housing – which made a whole lot of sense economically, because a community like Phoenix had nothing but new, and a community like Newark had nothing but old. And so for Newark to be limited to building new housing when it had empty houses that needed rehabilitation and occupancy didn’t make any sense.

And the other side of the act was community development. Up to that time Congress had a long list of specific programs that it mandated for communities - they must have a rat-extinction program, or they must have a parks program, or they must have a lighting program. Congress had seven big, specific programs. The new bill changed that and distributed federal monies based on a formula that weighed poverty and population. I think the age of infrastructure was also a component of the formula. The law required the recipient locality to hold a hearing. A mayor would have a hearing, then the locality may spend it for its critical need – new curbing and lighting, because that’s its need. If the need was to have a new park, then that’s its need – green space, open space – that’s fine. But it had to be on the basis of a public hearing covered by the press. The monies were distributed on formula of poverty, population and age of infrastructure…no earmarks, no special interests.
I often think of that today as we’re stimulating the economy. President Ford felt that the concept of Washington knows best, when San Jose is so different from Little Rock was wrong. A mandatory program misses the mark. And I certainly saw that. On day one when I went to HUD, I could tell that mayors could not leave money on the table. And even though the specific program was hitting maybe their eleventh priority, if there was money on the table, “Okay, we’ll take it.” Whereas, if they could use that money for what they really needed, you would have diminished the cynicism about government.

Can you imagine in a community like Newark, building a new dwelling when there’s a block of boarded up buildings that you’re not using – the citizenry must think, “What are they doing? Don’t they have the sense to know that they could use these buildings and make the neighborhood cleaner and safer?” And so this was a big, big change.

Smith: That’s fascinating because it really does fit in with this whole sense – first of all, I’ve always thought that it’s a mistake for people to look upon the Ford presidency as simply a coda to the Nixon presidency.

Hills: Right.

Smith: That’s a tendency. And it’s more than an interregnum between Nixon and Carter. That in many ways, Richard Nixon can be seen as the last New Deal president. Someone whose political reading was, “I have to accommodate the New Deal majority in the country.” And Ford really represents in many ways, a break with that. The Ford presidency is more about foreshadowing changes that would become consensus. Economic deregulation is a classic example.

Hills: Absolutely.

Smith: But this whole idea of loosening the strings that Washington had used traditionally to mandate one size fits all kind of policy. That kind of pragmatic conservatism seems to be the hallmark of the Ford presidency.

Hills: And he was driven by what he thought was right. Not by politics. You talk about earmarks. He wasn’t for earmarks. He was for doing what was right for
the people. And it was courageous. It’s hard to find a president so courageous. When you stop to think that he, with a Democratic House, and a Democratic Senate, but that his twenty-six years on Appropriation made him know what government did and what government should do. He was quite amazing.

He is the only president, in my recollection, who briefed the press on the budget. That’s every department and agency of government. And when I was told that he was going to brief the press on the HUD budget, my heart was in my mouth because I don’t think anybody would have described President Ford as being very articulate, very smooth in talking. Smooth in thinking and he did the right thing, but eloquence wasn’t the first thing that comes to mind. I was so afraid that he would have a problem. He didn’t have any problem. He knew where every dime was going. It was quite amazing. I don’t think any president – not only if they wanted to – could do that. Any president since, none have done it, in any event. He understood government.

Smith: The other side of that – there is this notion out there that it took him a while, in fact, maybe it took him two years to, in some ways, outgrow the Congressional mindset. To evolve from being a man of the Hill to a president. They are different functions in a lot of ways.

Hills: Right.

Smith: He brought those skills with him to office, but then in some ways, it took him a while to realize that they alone weren’t enough. What’s your take on that?

Hills: I don’t agree at all. I found him to be quite a leader. When you think of the decisions that he made that were unpopular – enormously unpopular; granting amnesty to those who refused to serve in Vietnam; applying sanctions to South Africa at a time when big corporations were opposed; the Helsinki Accords – so many things that he took because he felt that they were the right thing to do. Indeed, the pardon of President Nixon – he knew, he certainly knew politics – he knew that that was going to have a horrific cost.

He was a man of the House of Representatives, he knew he had to run in two years. And yet, he felt when the country was in turmoil – and he said that
subsequently to me – the country was in turmoil, it was time to draw a line and move forward. And if we had litigated over the impeachment or gone through all the litigating steps, we would have been involved in that for four years, and the country had double digit inflation, it had high unemployment, it had a misery index that was enormous. He wanted to get on about the job of bringing those things down and in twenty-nine months he did that. And so, inflation was brought down to five percent, which is really remarkable, and unemployment was brought down, investment was brought up. He created jobs. I think his economic record was quite, quite good.

Smith: Apparently the folks in the White House, and obviously including the president, were hearing from Leon Jaworski at the outset that it could take up to two years to bring Nixon into a court room. And the thought of having the country and the press obsessed with Nixon and Nixon’s tapes and Nixon’s legal prospects and everything else, weighed heavily upon him.

Hills: I believe that. I believe that when he said this is a time for healing, he really believed that the country would continue to disintegrate if we didn’t draw a line and put the problems of the past behind us and move forward in a more positive sense. If you look at his record, everything that was going down that should not be going down, he brought up. And everything that was going up that shouldn’t be going up, he brought down. And so when he left, people who have commented on his presidency have said his successor didn’t have to initiate new programs, he simply had to continue the path of President Ford. And sadly, that wasn’t done. The economy – again, we got back into turmoil, and I think because of lack of knowledge with respect to the government.

Smith: You don’t think of Gerald Ford as being particularly drawn to urban affairs, urban policy. Was that a misnomer? Did he, because of his work on the Hill, know more about these programs, or have more of an interest than perhaps people might imply? I’m thinking of Grand Rapids, West Michigan, conservative Republican, did he, in fact, have an interest in and knowledge of urban policy?
Hills: He had a great knowledge of how money was spent. He had a strong view that all wisdom did not emanate from the Potomac. And he believed that there was an inefficiency when Washington was specifying how money should be spent. And he must have seen that in Grand Rapids. But, again, having served on Appropriations, where you follow the money, you know what’s happening to the money. He was aware of it. I took any number of appeals up to him while I was at HUD.

Smith: On what, for instance?

Hills: All kinds of issues. My predecessor, Jim Lynn…

Smith: Who went on to become budget director?

Hills: Went on to be head of OMB. As is normal, most predecessors don’t think their successor is doing it just the way they would have done it. So, Jim would call me and say, “I’m not going to let this counseling program go through.” And I said, “Jim, we’ve got a hundred million dollars sunk into a program, and people are coming into housing that have never had housing. And when they get frustrated they pull the plumbing off the wall because they just simply don’t know what to do. They don’t fix things. They need some help. We’re going to invest ten million dollars across the country to work with NGOs and mayors so that they are trained. So people who go in, take care of the places that they are living in.” No, he didn’t want to do that. I said, “Well, take it up.” He said, “You can’t take a ten million dollar program to the president.” I said, “Just watch me.” And what was just remarkable – I mean, this is just one small incident – the president would have us into the Cabinet Room, Jim on one side, me on the other, and the president across the way. Just the three of us. I made my pitch, Jim made his pitch, the president would rule from the bench. In all my time as a prosecutor, I had never seen a judge be so prompt, so thorough, and I appreciated the fact that he ruled for me.

In our dinner, Vice President Rockefeller got up and said, “The person who has brought more of these cases to the president and won them is the one who
put this dinner together.” But it was true. He was just terrific about taking on and listening to the issues.

Smith: That’s fascinating because we keep hearing this sense that Ford welcomed a vigorous exchange between opposing points of view. He was totally comfortable with people who might have a little more eloquence; a little more polish; a little more – whatever.

Hills: Absolutely.

Smith: And in the end, no one doubted who was going to make the decisions, or that it would be made.

Hills: Right. He engaged. The Cabinet meeting was interesting.

Smith: Describe how the Cabinet worked under the president.

Hills: He would raise issues so that we were aware, and he would engage, both qualitatively and quantitatively, to the discussion. There were, as you know, very strong, differing views over deregulation, over various programs, over foreign policy. And he was very skilled at participating in the discussion. I would say that most of the discussions that were focused, were more of one on one or one on two, or a group. I can recall several group discussions, so that domestic policy and economic policy were separate from the foreign policy. But he was extraordinarily engaged in the issues. I think of his Cabinet – he really had strong-willed, talented people. He brought in – I don’t know whether you’ve talked to Secretary Bill Coleman – a Frankfurter law clerk, first in his class at Harvard, civil rights lawyer – I mean, a really splendid mind.

Smith: And, it’s extraordinary when, just in the course of one conversation, when you stop to realize, the fifty-five mile per hour speed limit, airbags, the beginnings of deregulation. And also, the Metro in D.C., I-66, finishing the Interstate Highway system, it is extraordinary how much happened in that slice of time.

Hills: Twenty-nine months, and on deregulation, his successor gets a lot of the credit. But airline deregulations, trucking deregulations, you’ll be talking to
Rod about that, but he was in the White House as counsel to the president and he’ll talk to you about those issues. But he gives tremendous credit to President Ford. And President Ford also listened – he brought in such a diverse people – a present from the north, Ed Levi, spectacular attorney general. Present from the south, David Matthews. He brought in John Dunlop who was the dean up at Harvard on labor. He was a very different kind of thinker in terms of what you’d call traditional Republicanism. He absorbed these views we’ve talked about. Elliot, who has been in every post that you can imagine.

Smith: Tell us about Ed Levi, I remember working with the president on the eulogy that he gave at the attorney general’s funeral in Chicago - which was a real education. He was a remarkable man. And I do think, in some ways, he’s an attorney general who set a standard.

Hills: Yes.

Smith: Tell us about Ed Levi, and that relationship and how, in effect, the department regained its credibility.

Hills: Well, Ed Levi was an independent lawyer. He was a strong, thoughtful, lawyer. He called it as he saw it. I’m sure that there are some political advisors in the White House who wished he had made decisions differently than those that he did make from time to time, but there is no doubt that he was going to call it as he saw it. He brought great prestige. I was always sorry that I hadn’t had the opportunity to serve with him at Justice. I left before he came, but we were Cabinet colleagues. We had a lot of discussions. We became very good friends and had lots of dinners together, Kate and Ed and Rod and I. Kate was wonderful in terms of insisting on a one table conversation. When there are so many interesting things to talk about, it’s lovely to get differing points of view, and that was her trademark on dinners, and it was lots of fun.

Smith: That’s great. And I take it that he, over time, became devoted to the president.

Hills: Yes, absolutely.
Smith: On the surface, they are almost from different planets. Just culturally, sort of the obvious. But you could say that about a number of the people in that Cabinet.

Hills: You just said what I would say. You look around the table from Bill Scranton – governor, erudite, articulate…

Smith: And pretty liberal by Republican standards.

Hills: And certainly a centrist – and Vice President Rockefeller – certainly a centrist and more liberal than I would – I’m not fond of labels, quite frankly. I think you have to look at the issue, but Henry Kissinger – very strong-willed and certainly a talented individual. So his Cabinet was made up of people who were independent minded and willing to express their points of view – with courtesy, but they did express their views.

Smith: I remember talking to Bill Simon before he died. As you know I’ve been working on this biography of Nelson Rockefeller for years – people who thought that he sort of veered to the right in his later years, overlook the Energy Independence Corporation. It was just classic Rockefeller.

Hills: Rod will talk to you about that, too.

Smith: Well, good. Needless to say, Simon didn’t agree with this. And at some point, and I don’t know if it was in a Cabinet meeting or in a smaller conversation, but there was a very heated exchange about this. And Simon at some point claims to have said, “Don’t let him do to the country what he did to New York.” And the president indicated in front of the group that he was going to support Nelson on this.

Hills: Right.

Smith: And Simon continued the argument privately. And it shows you who was the real politician. The president said, “Bill, you and I both know there’s not a chance in hell that Congress will ever adopt this, but I’m not going to embarrass Nelson.” Which is so revealing.
Hills: I wasn’t in that discussion, but that sounds so like how he might have just ended the discussion. And, of course, there was great pressure for that on the Hill, from certain segments. So, by moving in that direction, he not only let them do their dance on the Hill, but he didn’t embarrass the vice president.

Smith: How difficult was it for Rockefeller to subordinate himself into this job? He said he’d known every vice president since Henry Wallace and they were all miserable. And yet, I talked to someone who tried to talk him out of taking the job when the president asked him to do it. This guy went through all of these reasons why he would be the latest miserable vice president, and Rockefeller, who I don’t think was totally honest with himself about his motives, finally was backed into a corner. He said, “Bill, everything you say is right, but you forget one thing. This is my last chance.”

Hills: Well, I thought that he was a wonderful man. He brought levity and charm – he had served six presidents I think, in one capacity or another. Certainly in knowledge, big city, big state, populous state, politics. And yes, they did disagree on issues from time to time, but they disagreed agreeably and he wasn’t the only one. There were very strong discussions on labor policy, very strong discussions on deregulation - timing and the extent of. There were others in the Cabinet, too, that would war. It’s not unusual, either, turf being what it is in the federal government; there is a certain gnashing at the edges. He was very compliant when he was not selected to run a second time. He could have fussed about it and created problems, but he did not.


Hills: Absolutely. So I give him very high marks for loyalty and his contributions.

Smith: I think the one substantive issue where there really was disagreement, and it obviously didn’t just involve the president and vice president, was the whole issue of aid to New York City.

Hills: Yes.
Smith: I would be fascinated to know your take on all of that, because my sense is that there were two camps. I talked at length with Bill Seidman about this. Seidman sort of aligned himself with the vice president, and then there was Bill Simon and Alan Greenspan and those folks, who are perhaps more classically free market types. Again, the danger of labels. But, there was this famous speech at the National Press Club, and as Seidman reconstructs it, the two camps were at a tug of war, and he thought the president was going to go and deliver this fairly moderate address. And at the last minute - in part because at that point, the Reagan challenge was looming and it was deemed good politics to take a tough stance against what was seen by many people to be an irresponsible city government in New York. [the speech was changed] That’s the background that I have from those folks. It would really be fascinating to know your recollection of how that evolved.

Hills: I think it was the Post that had the “Drop Dead” headline. That’s inaccurate. The president came down more of wanting New York to take on greater responsibility. Whenever you have to work out a situation, you want the folks that have created the problem to take on some responsibility and how are they going to behave. So I think he was negotiating and a harsher headline was put on it than he meant to communicate. So, I would have put him as a centrist on that issue. He did have advice. As I say, on most issues he had vigorous debate. He had a diverse Cabinet and he had a discussion that was pretty robust, and then he came down on one side or another, but often in the middle.

Smith: Were you part of that group that was discussing New York?

Hills: No, other than as how we would provide the funding. In other words, the philosophic issue of helping New York. We were helping New York. HUD was helping New York big time.

Smith: Something like 25% of New York’s municipal budget was already coming from Washington.
Hills: Absolutely. And we were committed to doing that. I thought the president should get credit for that. So, it wasn’t that we were cutting off New York. So this is again what I would put in the era. And if you look at it, New York made it, and I think the problem was in eloquence. How do you express yourself, and maybe by trying to weave between these two groups in the White House, both in the White House. The president didn’t get enough credit for what he was doing, what he was willing to continue to do – which he committed to me he was committed to do – and to try to get them to do more. You don’t just want to throw new money down a hole. You want to know what are they going to do with it. And he was tracking it – he wanted to track it.

Smith: Clearly, when Mayor Beame showed up for the first time, he was not willing to make serious cuts in what had come to be seen as the fabric of New York. Hugh Carey told me years later, he said, “You know, Jerry Ford’s never gotten the credit he deserved for his role in saving New York.”

Hills: Absolutely. That’s what I think. I think that we were working very closely with the people up in New York. We committed to them. We’ll stand by you. What the president was doing was saying, “If we give you any additional monies, we want to know where they are going to go. We don’t want them to just be spread around politically.” And he couldn’t get that commitment and then he got the headline, but his tough stance was really kind of tough love, I would say.

Smith: Did you sense there was a disagreement there between the president and the vice president? Rockefeller must have been in a somewhat awkward position at that point.

Hills: That’s what I meant when I said I was not part of it. I meant I did not hear a disagreement between Nelson Rockefeller and President Ford.

Smith: How aware were you, and presumably other members of the Cabinet, during ’75 - this prospect of the Reagan challenge? It has been claimed over the
years that it tended to be underestimated for a long time. That people in the White House were slow to realize just how serious this might be.

Hills: Right.

Smith: Was that your sense of the time? Were you surprised when Governor Reagan got into the race, were you surprised at what he was able to mobilize?

Hills: Well, you remember the economy was coming up, but it was coming up very gradually. I think that if we’d had one more month, if the projections were constant, President Ford would have won. Very close. President Reagan was a competent campaigner. He and his forces offended me hugely in Kansas City as they danced in front of the president’s box and were rude to a point of an embarrassment, I thought. And that always bothered me a lot. I thought anyone could see what President Ford had contributed to his country in so many ways. You can run a campaign, but you can run a courteous campaign, and they were not courteous in Kansas City. It bothered me considerably.

Smith: That suggests that the split in the party was profound.

Hills: Yes, the split was very strong. Particularly strong in California. California had lost Republicans from the time that Bobby Kennedy was shot in the 60s. In fact, Rod was co-chairman with Leon Panetta of the campaign of a Republican who was criticized for not coming home often enough. And somebody in the John Birch Society, Max Rafferty…

Smith: Oh, sure. Tom Kuchel.

Hills: Ran against Tom and beat him. And then Al Cranston, who was controller, Rod also ran a Claremont professor against Alan ___________. And ___________ beat Al Cranston, who didn’t have a job, so he filed for the Senate seat and he beat Max Rafferty in a walk away. So Alan was always very fond of us. He said, “You paved my way to getting into Senate.”

After that time, centrists and even? re-registered and were either independents or Democrats. First of all, they had registered to vote for Kennedy, who was popular. So you lost a slew of them then. And then when
the Max Rafferty’s took over the party – you saw a big slide and big re-registration. So the Republican Party had become quite conservative and quite ideological, and it’s had a hard time recovering. If you think about it, Arnold Schwarzenegger would never have won, but for having run through a general election because the party is very polarized there. That’s unfortunate.

Smith: He [Ford] is an atypical president, isn’t he, in a lot of ways? David Broder famously said he was the least neurotic president David Broder had ever known. And maybe in part because he hadn’t spent his life calculating what it would become to president.

Hills: Not at all, he wanted to be Speaker, Leader. He loved the House. So, when he was picked, it was because people loved him.

Smith: The great irony is then, of course, he becomes president and he really spends the next two and a half years trying to fend off the Watergate babies and others who are pushing back against the executive branch of government. And all of those vetoes…did you have vetoes?

Hills: You bet we did. And I have nothing but admiration for him. When you think of the presidents that have come since and you think, how in the world could they have signed that bill? This man vetoed, I think, sixty-six bills, he sustained fifty-four, if my numbers are right, and he had a Democratic House and Democratic Senate. That he was able to sustain fifty-four vetoes because he was right, was because they respected him. We had the middle class housing emergency bill in ’75, we got the bill up and it was, in the president’s view, and with my recommendation, too broad. Remember, we had…

Smith: It was more than a question of money, it was…

Hills: No, no. It was a question of money, but in other words, it took the middle class and it was paying benefits – we were paying the interest rates on mortgages. Very similar – here in 1975 we had the oil shock, we had distaste over Vietnam, we had Watergate, so there was cynicism about government. You know, you think about our government today and the analogy there. I won’t go into that. But I said to him, “Mr. President, this is going to cost us a
bundle because it covers all the middle class, whether they need it or not. Whether the house is in foreclosure or not.” And so he wanted it trimmed back to those who had lost their jobs and could not pay their mortgage. So he vetoed it.

Now, this was a housing bill where it was something the Hill wanted very, very much. Bill Proxmire was absolutely convinced that this would help cure inflation. Spend more and you’ll get jobs. He was wrong economically, but he was my chairman. The president vetoed it. We took it back to the Hill and we worked with the Hill, and with a lot of Democratic help like ______ Ashley, we got that bill back to the president. We killed the override the next day. And we had the bill back within a week, and he signed it at a Rose Garden ceremony. I have a picture of that with the Democrats there who were supportive, helping us get this done. And so, yes, we gave assistance. But he was a president who really worried that the money be properly spent.

Smith: And I assume, probably keenly aware, that not only is there the old cliché there’s nothing more permanent than a temporary program, and by the same token, something starts small and with the best of intentions and balloons over time into something perhaps much, much larger and more costly.

Hills: Well, he had the notion, if you want something – more here – you’ve got to bring it back there. And so he was very disciplined on trying to control inflation and his program worked. He sold it as: one, we’ve got to bring down inflation, and he did bring it down from double digits down to five percent in twenty-nine months. That’s really quite amazing.

Smith: And yet, the irony is, people think about Whip Inflation Now. And that was just a false start.

Hills: Yes. Well, you know, you get these slogans, and if you don’t get the press behind it, they amplify. And we didn’t have Saturday Night Live, as I recall then, but that’s the thing that amplifies the problem. He wanted to whip inflation and the little button campaign was a joke, it was turned into a joke.
But it was a serious issue. If we’d let inflation go way up, we would have had a big problem.

Smith: Can you think of an instance where you really went toe to toe on something and he overrode you?

Hills: No, I cannot. I really cannot. He was extremely supportive. Of course we only had twenty-nine months. He loved the new bill, he thought it was moving in the right direction – away from categoricals – into giving communities the leeway both on housing and community development, to do what they would do. He was proud of what they did with the money. We didn’t have a lot of allegation of fraud because the press was in on it. It was required by the bill that there be a hearing so that the community knew you had the money; what were you going to do with it. And of course, we had seventy-eight head offices spread out throughout the nation who participated, and it was a program he could be proud of.

Smith: Now, you joined the Cabinet when in ’75?

Hills: In March of ’75.

Smith: So you were there in time for the fall of Saigon.

Hills: Yes.

Smith: What are your memories about that period?

Hills: I think that hit him very, very hard. And, again, his efforts with Vietnam and how he treated those who were opposed to the Vietnam War were magnanimous. I just don’t think anyone could disagree with that. But that was wrenching for the country and to see the photographs of people climbing on the roof of the embassy trying to get out in helicopters and leaving behind friends whom we knew would be persecuted. It was wrenching.

Smith: And then, remember the sequel. Congress, understandably, wants to pull the plug, and sort of pretend that this horrible thing never happened. And specifically, not fund, cancel funding to bring refugees into this country.
Hills: Right.

Smith: And the president singlehandedly challenged them on that and put together this crazy quilt coalition. I know George Meany was part of it, and governors like Reuben Askew and others. And he, in effect, went to the country and shamed Congress into putting back sufficient funds to bring out about 120,000 in the first wave.

Hills: You see, there’s another example of doing what is right, not what is politically expedient. And for a president to lie down and fall asleep and just leave it up to the legislative branch is something that he did not do. He really participated with Congress. I can’t imagine that president, President Ford, saying to Congress, “I need some legislation, you draft it.” We drafted the legislation. We went up on the Hill and sold it. Yes, sometimes Congress inflated this or that, and then he decided whether to veto it or to back it. But he was an active president who led the Congress. He didn’t just say, “I’d like to have a bill that looks something like…” and then say, “Well, I’m sorry it didn’t turn out just to please everyone.”

Smith: And then at the same time, in part because of ’74 and this whole new generation – things were changing so rapidly on the Hill – he had a very ambitious energy package. And part of it was the decontrol of natural gas prices, and there was a heated debate about that, not surprisingly. As I understand it, eventually they came to an agreement, a gentlemen’s agreement, a handshake agreement, on a period of time over which this would happen. And Mansfield and Albert came back a week later, embarrassed, and said, “We can’t sell it.”

Hills: That happens. That happens, but then they went to work again. They tried hard. He tried to shape the legislation and give an outline, rather than just, “We need an energy bill, give me something.” He didn’t do that. And also he had people up to the White House that were on the other side of the aisle and worked with them very often. Here was a man who played golf, I would say, every third week or so, with Tip O’Neill. And he’d say, “You know, I don’t
agree with Tip on a lot of things, but he’s a decent guy. I like him.” Can you imagine in succeeding presidents…

Smith: There is a wonderful story. Don Penny, who worked on the president’s speeches and humor and all that told the story; the president and Tip had just met in the Oval Office and had a great meeting, and then Tip went out on the driveway and unloaded, mercilessly, on his friend, Jerry Ford. And Don, who wasn’t accustomed to the ways of Washington, saw this. Took it very literally and went back in and told the president, “You won’t believe what Tip O’Neill is saying,” and on and on and on. The president’s at his desk with his pipe sort of nodding, and he said, “That’s just politics, Don.”

Hills: Really, he was very tolerant of that kind of thing, and yet he didn’t engage in it. It’s amazing. He did not – I don’t remember him – I remember him being a little hot under the collar and I can’t remember the congressman, and he said, “You know, I have to be careful because Betty carpools with them…” So, always, he was restrained in a gentlemanly way. I couldn’t imagine him doing the reverse thing with Tip O’Neill. Not at all.

Smith: I only heard him speak disparagingly of two people. One was John Dean, and one was Gordon Liddy.

Hills: Oh, how interesting.

Smith: But I never heard him disparage anyone else. And then he and Hale Boggs would have debates at the Press Club.

Hills: Yes.

Smith: And they would drive down together to the Press Club and they would decide on the way, what are we going to debate today? They would have their debate, and then they would go have a drink and lunch and go back to the Hill.

Hills: It’s just amazing, isn’t it? Very different atmosphere and much missed, I think. I wish we could bring it back. I used to say last year; I just can’t imagine our current president playing golf with Harry Reid.
Smith: Did you have much contact with Mrs. Ford or the family?

Hills: I did, only socially. I mean, she was very gracious. And then after his presidency they went to Beaver Creek. When he was in charge of a World Forum, I never missed one, except when I was in government and was travelling.

Smith: Describe the World Forum.

Hills: The World Forum was put together by The American Enterprise Institute. But Gerald Ford was the chair of it. Rod and I stayed at the home of President Ford and Betty. I often spoke. It was a roundtable – about two hundred people and so they would have people lead in, and they had groups that met – breakout groups.

Smith: And former world leaders.

Hills: Yes. And in the four corners of the room he had Willy [Helmut] Schmidt, and Jim Callaghan, and Giscard d'Estaing, and Gerald Ford. But the one thing I do take away, aside from the fact that he, again, engaged qualitatively in the discussion, in a very nice way, was that people would come back after lunch and these fifty year olds would be sitting there sort of falling asleep. Gerald Ford would be there right to the end, chairing that meeting like a good CEO would. This is when he was thirty years older than fifty years of age. So, he was just remarkable to the end. And he kept his mind and his wit about him. Just magnificent.

Smith: Again, one of the remarkable things - he and Jim Callaghan were politically as different as two people could be.

Hills: Absolutely.

Smith: Classic old British Socialist Labor, old labor, and yet, by all accounts, they were great mutual admirers and genuine friends.

Hills: They were genuine friends. In fact, with all of them, he was a genuine friend and that’s why they made the trek, which is not easy from Europe, to get to
Beaver Creek. It’s a long way. It’s by saying “thank you” for the association we’ve had with you. And they came year after year after year. They stopped before he did.

Smith: Apparently they were beloved in Vail, the Fords.

Hills: Absolutely. And they did a lot for Vail. They contributed mightily to the community. And Betty did, too. They would have all kinds of charitable endeavors where they would lasso the Fords and get them to lead the effort. But, yes, they were really beloved. And I think that – I know I’ve talked to the family – and in his later years the doctor said, “Now, don’t go up there because the altitude is too much,” and he said, “I guess I have to go because the quality of life means more to me than longevity.” And so, until the very end, he did go, and it wasn’t great for him but he loved being there.

Smith: The ’76 campaign, you talked a little bit about the convention. They obviously started out way behind, and basically closed the gap.

Hills: Yes. I think if the economy had picked up thirty days earlier it would have been a different outcome. And I often think about that because our history would have been different. Everything was going in the right direction with President Ford. He’d only had twenty-nine months. He had to take away several of those months to campaign, and still they were going right. His successor, a nice man, was inexperienced, and things were undone that ought not to have been undone. It’s so traditional that successors want to wipe the slate clean, clean out the people that were there before, and every new administration is anything but my predecessor. You see it in every single presidency, and it slows things down because you lose a lot of talent. It’s very rare to keep someone over, or in administrations, you have the secretaries there home alone, and no assistant secretaries, no ambassadors, no nobody confirmed.

Smith: That raises an interesting question. As Secretary of HUD, did you have latitude to choose your own people?
Hills: I did, and partly because some of those were leaving. Some of them were involved with the prior administration, and had differing difficulties. I brought in as my undersecretary the general counsel of HEW, John Rhinelander. As I had been the general counsel for all these, I knew all the general counsels and he had been in government a long time, and knew the programs at HUD.

One little vignette. I got to HUD in March. Then we were on a June to June fiscal year. The legislation had been signed. It was President Ford’s first piece of legislation – August 9, 1974. I get there March of ’75. I called together my assistant secretaries and I said, “We’ve got a new bill. How many units of housing are we going to get out for our low income population?” And they all look at one another. I said, “Come on, give me the number.” Well, it turned out the regulations had not yet been drafted. And under the law, you put out your regulations for comment for sixty days, assimilate the comments.

Now, I’m testifying in mid-March before the Senate committee on my budget which ends in June. And I’m going to be asked how many units did you get out in the last budget? And the answer was zero. And that was going to make me really popular. Right? So I had to bring together all of our regional people and I said, “Look, I want a commitment.” And we got those regulations out and the next year we blew them away with how much we got done. But that was, as I look back on it, the reason why President Ford wanted someone to manage the place. It is extraordinary to get a bill out in August and not have regulations drafted, not even started, until March. That is lax behavior beyond a minus grade.

Smith: That raises this larger question, and it’s something we’ve asked several people. It’s at the Cabinet level, and obviously sub-Cabinet level, and White House staff: the metaphor is, we talked to Leon Parma who was sort of shoehorned into the East Room for the inauguration on the 9th of August, with several members of Congress. Following the ceremony there was a receiving line and then everyone was invited to the State Dining Room for a reception. And he said something other people have confirmed to varying degrees, “You could see at that point, the Nixon people just kind of peel away and go to their
offices.” Under the circumstances, you could understand, what they’ve all been through. In the broader sense, the president took some heat for not “cleaning out” the White House, and even the Cabinet overnight.

Hills: Right.

Smith: And yet, in retrospect, you see the quality of the Cabinet that he assembled.

Hills: Right – without a transition period. Most presidents have from November to the end of January. He had nothing. Not one day. I think he did remarkably well. I look at that Cabinet and, present company excepted, I would say that it’s very hard to find a Cabinet that matches the quality and the diversity that he put together.

Smith: But it’s also interesting because I had recently occasion to check into this, there were six or seven people who had Harvard degrees. Which, just on the face of it, you can imagine Richard Nixon would not have been inclined to – or Lyndon Johnson – “the Harvards.” Again, this notion that Ford was totally comfortable with himself and comfortable with high powered, big ego’d colleagues.

Hills: Well, and people who had been successful in their own right, and he liked talking with them. They were very different personalities. They had achieved. It’s remarkable.

Smith: You were the only woman in the Cabinet.

Hills: I was the only woman.

Smith: Now, I assume, at that point, you were probably not unaccustomed to being the only women in a lot of meetings.

Hills: That was life then.

Smith: Did you feel comfortable?

Hills: Absolutely. I was the only trial lawyer in the court sometimes. There weren’t many women coming out. I graduated from law school in 1958, and was an
assistant U.S. attorney and there were very few women in my class at Yale. And now, fifty percent or more are female. So, there has been quite a change over a generation, or maybe you could say two generations.

Smith: But as a woman, you felt perfectly comfortable in the Ford administration?

Hills: I certainly did.

Smith: And of course, you have Mrs. Ford, who was pushing women’s issues, as we know.

Hills: Absolutely. She was very outspoken and warm and lovely. Mary Scranton was a wonderful woman. These spouses, Lavita Coleman, wonderful lady. Bill Coleman was really quite a remarkable man. When we got together as a Cabinet in a social circumstance, I think it was just—the spouses were just lovely human beings that were working hard for the country in various ways, too.

Smith: Was your name one of those considered for the Supreme Court nomination when Bill Douglas retired?

Hills: Some books have said so. I was not party to those discussions.

Smith: You never heard anything officially?

Hills: Well, subsequently, yes. People said that she was on the list.

Smith: People in a position to know?

Hills: Yes.

Smith: Do you think Mrs. Ford might have had anything to do with that?

Hills: Maybe. You never know.

Smith: He’s probably the last president, if you look at Justice Stevens, who was chosen in the most nearly apolitical manner. We’ve talked to Justice Stevens and he said at his confirmation hearings no one asked him about abortion.
Hills: Well, that was a different time.

Smith: If you look at how that process has degenerated in a lot of ways…

Hills: There are all these black and white questions that are asked, and they go back over writings that I think is most unfortunate, because law school professors should be thinking about all kinds of ideas and champion all kinds of concepts. It’s too bad.

Smith: It’s become another political campaign.

Hills: Yes. The ideological approach, particularly for the court, is most unfortunate.

Smith: Where were you on election night ’76?

Hills: Where was I on election night ’76? I think I was at – I know the next morning I was at the White House – I think I was probably at the campaign headquarters.

Smith: At that point did you think you had a real shot?

Hills: We knew it was really frighteningly close, and the polls were showing that there was a trend line that was uncomfortable.

Smith: You mentioned this earlier; I’ve often thought everyone focused on the pardon, but in fact, the weekend before – I think it was on the Friday before – there was some economic numbers released that suggested – it became famous as “The Pause” in the economic recovery – and I’ve often wondered how much impact that had at the very end of the campaign.

Hills: It didn’t help. People were voting their pocketbooks. And we, I think, framed that phrase “the misery index.” I guess it was Carter who did that.

Smith: And, of course, it came back to bite him.

Hills: It came back to bite him, yes. Because I thought, my goodness, how could anyone have done any better and in such a short period of time than President Ford.
Smith: You say you were at the White House the next morning. Did you see him?

Hills: Yes.

Smith: And what was that like?

Hills: Well, I was just so sad. I was so very sad. When he finally left, it was, I thought, the country has made such a bad choice.

Smith: He’d lost his voice at the end of the campaign. Did you speak with him that morning?

Hills: I think we had a – if it wasn’t the next morning, it was shortly thereafter – the group got together and it was nostalgic.

Smith: And apparently he gave very explicit orders that this was going to be the best transition.

Hills: Absolutely. We’re going to leave shiny, clean desks for our successors. Make it easy for them. And we did. I really worked over at HUD all the way down to the local offices. Let’s be very careful that we have everything in order. We tried to work hard with them.

Smith: Rex Scouten told us a wonderful story. On election night he was up with the president and the family and it was late at night and it wasn’t definite, but it was clear that it was almost – it was gone.

Hills: This is before?

Smith: Yeah. This is election night, and he was with them all. And it was like three in the morning and the president said, “I think I’m just going to get some sleep.” So he walked across the hall and Rex followed him. And he went over to try to say something consoling, and he said, “You know, Mr. President, you’ve spent your entire life in service to this country, whether in military uniform, or in Capitol Hill, and now as president. And it’s a damn shame and you really deserved to win. But, maybe it’s just time for you to get a well-earned rest.” And the president looked at him and said, “I don’t think so.”
Hills: Well, I don’t think so, and none of us thought so. That was the sad thing about it.

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

Hills: Yes. It was down at Rancho Mirage at a meeting that was prior to the annual dinner. The University of Michigan president came down and made an award to him. I think that may have been the last time I saw him. That has to be – he was weakened, but still showed up. He is so polite, every time that the president, who is a woman, would come to talk to him, he’d stand up. And I could tell that it was making him dizzy. I went over to Susan and I said, “Would you please tell your dad that he doesn’t have to stand up every time.” And I said, “I think it’s having an adverse affect.” I was sitting close by. So she went up and spoke to him. And I went and spoke to the president [of Univ. of Michigan], and I said, “Keep your visits down a bit. I think it’s having its effect upon him.” But he was still clear. We were having a board meeting. I think it was the year that we awarded the medal to Betty. Was that out in Rancho Mirage?

Smith: Yes, I think so.

Hills: Did he come to the one – the next one was Armed Forces – is that right?

Smith: No, he wasn’t at that one.

Hills: I know, he wasn’t there. It was the one before that. I believe, my recollection may be faulty and I may have seen him in another circumstance, but I believe that is the last time I saw him.

Smith: How do you think he should be remembered?

Hills: With great affection, great appreciation, and enormous gratitude. I just wish so much that the current crop of political leaders, I don’t even say politicians, but political leaders, would read about him, and think long and hard about how can you rule, not in a bipartisan, but in a holistic sense. How do you take into consideration others’ needs? How do you work with the opposition? How do you make people collaborate rather than have conflict? He was a master at
that and I think one of his great virtues was, when people push back and say, well, we can’t do that, he knew government. And if you want an engineer to build a bridge, you want a good engineer. You want a good doctor to fix your knee, you want a good doctor.

Well, we really had a very good president who knew governance, he knew where the money was spent, and if you know the price tag for these programs, you’re apt to rule more intelligently. And then he had such a gracious manner about him. I never heard him say one arrogant thing – not one. He was self-deprecating. Here’s a man who worked his way through Yale, graduated in the top third of his class, was a top athlete, and the press made such fun when he fell down. I mean, have they ever seen a president ski down a mountain that is straight down? Have they ever seen a president play tennis or golf like he did. He was intellectually sound and an athlete to boot, and a gracious – he made fun of himself. You just don’t do any better than that.

Smith: There’s the classic – Kennerly is the source – because Kennerly took the photo in Vienna on the rain-slicked runway and the president was holding an umbrella over Mrs. Ford and then lost his footing.

Hills: And then fell.

Smith: Exactly. And all the people on the White House staff were berating the photographers for doing this and the president said, “Well, of course, they took the picture. If they hadn’t they would have lost their jobs.”

Hills: Oh, yeah. That’s just typical. He’s trying to see it from the other side. Once he tipped over a coffee cup. Well, how many of us have not tipped over a coffee cup? It was so amazing but you get words that kind of stick.

Smith: But, you know, in many ways time was good to him because he lived long enough to know that, for example, on the pardon, the vast majority of people had come around to his way of thinking. At the very least, even if they had disagreed with it, they didn’t question his motives.

Hills: Not at all.
Smith: And the Profile in Courage Award at the Kennedy Library was the icing on the cake.

Hills: And then when he spoke to the Senate here, and they gave him their award, and it was packed. It was really a wonderful occasion. But he had earned all of those accolades and more. And I do think that as history goes on, you’re the historian, how people forget some things, but whether the vote is – you know, I think about prior presidents. We weren’t there when our alleged greats served. So we don’t know whether we’re forgetting some great problem that they had and exaggerating some virtue that they had. But I know that as a man of integrity, decision and capacity to govern, I give him an A+ on each one of those departments.

Smith: That’s perfect. Thank you.
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