

Gerald R. Ford Oral History Project
Doug Bailey
Interviewed by
Richard Norton Smith
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Smith: First of all, tell us about the road that led to your involvement with the Ford campaign in '76.

Bailey: Well, John Deardorff and I had started a political consulting firm, Bailey-Deardorff, in the late '60s after we had both worked for Nelson Rockefeller in 1963 and '64. John stayed on as executive director of the party in New York and I went to Washington as staff director for the Wednesday Group of House Republican liberals. But we'd planned to create what Deardorff first called Campaign Consultants, Inc. It was the first national Republican political consulting there was; which became the first national political advertising firm, and we had some remarkable early successes. Whether we lucked into it - I tend to think we lucked into it - but in fact, we got pretty good at it. But because we were the first and because we had won a number of early races like Ed Brooke and Dick Schweiker and people like that, a lot of people came knocking on our door. We had sort of a pick and choice of candidates to work for and in that case, if that's true, then your record ought to be a winning record.

Smith: Have you ever worked for a candidate you didn't much like?

Bailey: In 1970 we got so big for our britches that we staffed up before we signed on the candidates. A big mistake because that gives you a burden of overhead costs that you have to meet, and therefore you have to have races, and therefore you have to work for certain candidates, whoever those candidates are. And we ended up working that year for two or three candidates in races that they didn't win and probably shouldn't have won. They weren't bad people but we weren't excited about it and we never made that mistake again. By and large our rule became, if you can't vote for them, if in fact, you were registered to vote in that state and if you couldn't vote for him, why on earth would you work for him?

In 1968 we had the opportunity to work for Nixon's presidential campaign and turned it down because we didn't like him. It doesn't mean that he wasn't a good president, in many respects, because I think he was. But he obviously had a paranoia that was dominant.

Smith: That's interesting because, fairly or not, I assume by that point, you were tagged as at least moderate to liberal Republicans.

Bailey: We were tagged fairly as liberal Republicans. In fact, I still call myself a liberal Republican and I'm probably the only one around.

Smith: But see, that's fascinating, and it gets back to your comment about the Wednesday Group. For today's political junkie, describe a time there were enough liberal Republicans to form a Wednesday club.

Bailey: We had a Wednesday Group in the House which consisted of – at its high point – about two dozen members who some would call themselves liberal. Most would call themselves moderate or middle of the road. But the fact of the matter is, by today's standards within the Republican Party, they were certainly liberal. This was John Lindsay, before he was mayor of New York was a Republican congressman from Manhattan who was among this group. Mac Mathias from Maryland, Brad Morse from Massachusetts.

Smith: Was Charley Goodell in that group?

Bailey: Charley Goodell was not in that group, although I think he was invited to be in that group. But he chose not to go quite that far to the left.

Smith: Until he became a senator.

Bailey: And this was a group that worked on a whole bunch of issues. They were very much against the Vietnam War, they were very much against the draft. The staff wrote a book with them, for them, on how to end the draft; which became the formula by which the draft was ended in this country.

Smith: Is it safe to say these people were, whether they wanted to be or not, labeled as Rockefeller Republicans?

Bailey: Well, they certainly were labeled as Rockefeller Republicans. For some that was not a fair description. Bob Ellsworth from Kansas was in the Wednesday Group and very active in it, but he was a very active Nixon man, for example. He was one of those that met with us to invite us to join the Nixon campaign, in fact. But this was a pretty liberal group of people. Browning Reed from New York – by today’s standards totally unacceptable within the Republican Party. They wouldn’t even be talked to.

Smith: That raises a huge question. And that is, how did this group get along with, and more importantly, how did Ford, as House Republican Leader, get along with this group?

Bailey: Well, Ford’s leadership in the House was the result of his easy going, welcoming personality. He was not an ideologue in any sense of the term. He was a pretty conservative guy, but ideology did not dominate his world. And therefore he got along with moderates in the House. He was able to talk with them; they were able to talk with him. And this was a group that was instrumental in getting – I’ve forgotten even what the leadership fight was - but Charlie Halleck became the Republican leader largely because this group encouraged and pushed him along.

Smith: Okay, first Halleck had beaten Joe Martin back in the late ‘50s. Then after the Goldwater disaster Ford knocks off Halleck.

Bailey: I think some of this group helped Halleck in the first place, and then helped Ford against Halleck.

Smith: Right. That makes perfect sense.

Bailey: You’re bringing it back to me. I mean, the fact is that both Halleck and Ford were pretty open people and they were open in the middle. Open to the right and open to the left. And were not ideologues in any sense of the term.

Smith: There is such a focus – understandably – by the media and others on ideology as the defining component in these contests. I guess the older I get, the more I wonder if generational factors aren’t at least as important, particularly in an institution like the House.

Bailey: I'll tell you one thing, Richard, that I think is enormously important that has been lost here, and it doesn't have much to do with generation, and it doesn't have much to do with ideology. New members of the House now, and this has been true now for close to twenty years, fifteen years, anyway – new members of the House tend to leave their families back in the district. They don't come to Washington with their families, with their wives. And the reason they don't is that they are told that it is so busy that they won't have time to do that.

But one of the factors is, and I don't mean as a conscious decision by Gingrich or others, but one of the things that was changed when he caused that to happen was, when the wives stay home back in the districts, they are not here to be sort of the social glue that brings a whole bunch of people together. I mean, there were dinner parties where Democrats actually went and had dinner with Republicans – can you imagine such a thing? And they liked each other. They got to know each other. There was a social life that enabled people then to talk to each other when they saw each other on the floor. I don't believe that Republicans talk to Democrats. They don't.

Smith: But another factor – when you stop to think - forty years ago, if you were a newcomer, whether it was the House or the Senate, particularly the Senate, but the House as well – the fact of the matter is, each party had wings. I was talking to Vice President Mondale about this – Bob Dole talks about when he arrived here, he was told to be sure and spend time with Senator Stennis. He'll show you the ropes. But even within your own caucus, if you were a Mondale arriving in Washington in the mid '60s, there was still a substantial Southern conservative – hostile to civil rights – wing of the party. And by the same token, there was a liberal wing of the Republican Party, so that inside the party you had to learn to work with people who were your ideological opponents.

Bailey: Probably the biggest difference in politics between the years when Bailey-Deardorff was active and today, is that in both houses of the Congress there were a whole variety of people, in both parties, who were more interested in getting things done on their particular areas of interest, than they were in perfection of some ideology. It just is true. And Bailey-Deardorff became, and

this is bringing it back to your first question, Bailey-Deardorff became particularly effective for some reason that I'm not sure I quite understand, in working in gubernatorial campaigns and candidates for governor. Governors actually govern. They have to do something. They can't sort of just pontificate all day long.

Smith: Or play to the base.

Bailey: They have to get things done and the way they get things done, particularly in states where the members of the two parties are competitive, is to work with people on both sides of the aisle to form their majorities to get their legislation through. To me it was very instructive the other day when the (Sotomayor) nomination in the Senate was approved. There were nine Republican votes for her. Those nine included four of the six former governors; former Republican governors who are in the Senate and those four were all from states like Ohio and New Hampshire and Tennessee and Missouri that are competitive with both parties. Governors understand that in order to get anything done, you've got to work with the other side.

The two governors, by the way, former governors in the Senate who didn't support her were from South Dakota and Idaho, where governing tends to be a one party function. So there is a different mentality entirely to those who are effective in that office. Same thing is true of mayors and same thing is true of presidents. Somehow we've allowed legislatures to sort of pontificate and think that ideology is everything; and in fact, my judgment seriously gets in the way of good government much of the time.

Smith: Gerald Ford, when he was in office, was widely seen as the most conservative president since Calvin Coolidge. In very short order, however, he was virtually marooned in his own party – I mean once out of office. But even in '76, he was targeted by an almost successful insurrection on the right. One senses that if it was purely an emotional decision – if you consulted people's hearts rather than their heads or their pocketbooks – that he might not have prevailed at the convention. Did Watergate create the vacuum in which, for lack of a better word, the hard right was able to seize the initiative and define the party?

Bailey: Well, Watergate certainly helped. It is very interesting. Nixon will be forever remembered by Watergate and justifiably so. There's not any doubt about that, but what is truly interesting is that his domestic policy legislation accomplishments and proposals were radical by comparison to his party and by comparison to what the Republican Party stands for today.

Smith: I've often called him the last New Deal president. He's the ultimate pragmatist, some would say cynic – and he was the last president, arguably, to be guided by the long shadow of FDR and what was perceived to be the New Deal political consensus about the role of government. So COLAs and OSHA and EPA – all of that expansion of government wasn't necessarily because Richard Nixon in his heart particularly wanted it, but because his political calculating machine told him that that's what the consensus required if he were to be re-elected.

Bailey: And so when Nixon was rejected by the country and by his party, it was convenient also to reject most everything he had worked for. But I think the Goldwater movement before Nixon's presidency had laid the basis and there was this charismatic fellow, who was elected in '66 in California as governor, Reagan, who was remarkably effective.

Smith: And there are many who believe to this day, that he actually came a lot closer even in '68 at that convention in Miami; that if it had not been for Strom Thurman holding the South, and for whatever happened in New Jersey - people forget how close a run thing it was.

Bailey: And so comes 1976. Here you have this natural heir of the Goldwater, of the Republican Party, particularly the Republican Party that had been freed of Nixon. I mean, remove Nixon from the Republican Party and then what's left – the natural heir to that is Ronald Reagan. There isn't any question about that. But he's not the president. The sitting president, the incumbent President of the United States is Gerald Ford. Who is not, by the way, an ideologue. He is not.

Smith: And is it fair to say that Reagan, which is part of the dynamic why these two men really never much cared for each other, went to each one's definition of

legitimacy. That is to say, Reagan really did believe that the Republican Party is a hierarchal place and it was his turn. That he was the natural choice and Watergate only enhanced that. That philosophically he was where the Republican Party was and was going; and therefore, to break the Eleventh Commandment didn't really count because there was a greater good. Whereas, obviously, the Ford partisans said you don't challenge an incumbent president, particularly one who is trying as hard under such difficult circumstances. Plus, he's the only Republican that has a chance of winning in November.

Bailey: I've never thought that the challenge by Reagan against Ford in the primaries was inappropriate. It would mean that if Ford wasn't the better person in my judgment to be the candidate(?) but nonetheless, I didn't think that was wrong. What may have been wrong was how little support Reagan gave to Ford after he was chosen, because that was something that was unfortunate.

Smith: Did Reagan make Ford a better candidate? Because the argument has gone on for years that Ford, by being pushed the way he was, became a better speaker, became – fill in the blank.

Bailey: It is certainly true that he became a better speaker. It is certainly true that the Reagan candidacy helped him focus. It was also a significant distraction in the sense that all the political thought process – I don't mean the President's himself – but everybody else's thought process – was about how to get the nomination, not how to win the election. There were a lot of things that if the Ford White House had gotten an earlier start on, I don't think Ford would have faced the difficulties that he faced against Carter. I think also, that the Reagan challenge created such a divide within the Republican Party, that was one of the reasons why Ford was so far behind, so late in the game. But I do think you can argue that Ford became a better candidate because of some of the things that Reagan did. But his candidacy was all the more difficult because of what Reagan did.

Smith: There is a school of thought that says that the Ford White House waited too long; that they were somewhat naïve; that they tended to underestimate either the probability of Reagan actually challenging him; and/or Reagan's strength

once he did. That it was a White House that perhaps was asleep at the switch, to some degree.

Bailey: Well, clearly, they underestimated. And I think, clearly, they severely misjudged whether the primary battle was over once they had won the very early battles. I'm not a good one in all of this Richard, because you know we didn't join the campaign until the convention or immediately thereafter. And one of the reasons that we didn't join the campaign, I suspect, I don't know, nobody has ever said this to me, but it's bound to be true, that Bailey-Deardorff was so moderate and so liberal that we would become an issue in the primaries.

Smith: What do you remember of the convention? Because we've heard from a number of people who have bittersweet memories; who recall a convention of a party that was clearly very, very divided. And that did not necessarily leave Kansas City healed.

Bailey: Oh, they were divided. There wasn't any question about that. I don't really remember those parts of the convention. We were there to do a bunch of filming and taping and we were there to get as much as we could get for potential use in the general.

Smith: Let me go back. How were you hired for the fall campaign? How did that happen?

Bailey: As a practical matter, the Ford campaign had no money. They could not hire an agency for the fall campaign until they were the nominee of the party under the very new campaign finance laws. So, once the California primary was done, they had been through two or three agencies, and we don't need to discuss them. Some of them were bizarre. Teeter and a couple of others told us clearly that we were going to be hired immediately after the convention. And to come to the convention and get this done and start working on the plan now because you're it.

Smith: Who was running the campaign at that point?

Bailey: Our sense was that at that point, the people that we had contact with, that in effect running it, were Teeter, Cheney, Spencer.

Smith: Tell us about Bob Teeter.

Bailey: The class act of politics. I mean there were pollsters and then there were pollsters. This is a fellow who understood the statistical theory, understood the shortcomings of polls, but also understood what polls could do. And he was remarkably accurate, remarkably even tempered, an absolute joy to work with, and he would never, ever disagree with you directly. In fact, I thought about this many, many times; if you watched Teeter in a meeting, and somebody said something that you knew that Teeter disagreed with, Teeter would say, "That's right, and?" and then he would launch off in the exact opposite position. His capacity to communicate effectively was brilliant. And he had the very deep trust and affection of almost anybody who he ever worked with and for.

Smith: And that transcended ideology?

Bailey: Yeah. If you asked me today, what was Teeter's ideology? I have no idea; I have none.

Smith: Now, Stu is a powerful figure. We spent about six hours with Stu.

Bailey: Six enjoyable hours?

Smith: Just a delight. Lots of laughter, a few gasps along the way, but the semi-famous story about what he went in and told the President – do you know what I'm talking about?

Bailey: I'm not sure. I don't think I ought to admit that I know until I know what it is.

Smith: Okay. He was not terribly happy, I think he was going through a divorce, and he sort of took this job in part just to get out of Dodge. And he arrived and he found chaos. But, it's the end of a week and it's not been a great week and it's a lousy, dreary, rainy Friday and he has this unenviable task of basically dissuading the President from going out and campaigning, pressing the flesh as much as he likes to. He's tried all sorts of euphemisms, and he was in the

Oval Office and the only two people there besides him and the President was Dick Cheney. Finally, Stu being Stu, he just sort of snaps because the President is not getting it. Stu says, “Mr. President, you’re a great president, but you are a fucking lousy campaigner.” And, one, the fact that he could say it to Ford tells you volumes; but it’s the sequel that makes the story - because in the Germond-Witcover book that appeared, that story was there. And Stu was embarrassed, angry, humiliated. He called Cheney to chew him out for telling him this story. Dick lets him go on and on and on and he finally says, “You know, Stu, there was a third person in that room.” And the fact that Ford told the story on himself multiplies the impact. I mean, it tells you a lot about Stu, but it tells you even more about Gerald Ford.

Bailey: Exactly. It’s one of the dominant facts of the Ford campaign that, until the very end, until the last few weeks, wherever he would go, his poll numbers went down. It’s just astonishing.

Smith: What were the factors that you attribute that to?

Bailey: I have no idea. Well, I shouldn’t say that.

Smith: Well, the factors that led – what we’ve heard is one of the themes of the Ford presidency is the learning curve involved in having spent a quarter of a century in the minority, in the House, and in effect, outgrowing that and learning to be an executive, learning to be a president. At the same time that all this learning is going on, in the furnace of a white-hot campaign, the part of Gerald Ford that *loved*, as long as he was able to do it, getting in a plane and going to some obscure place on the map, and talking to an obscure audience and eating undistinguished food, and delivering undistinguished oratory - that was just mother’s milk to Gerald Ford. And that presumably carried over. Plus there are those that believe that the White House speech operation was subpar in some ways. Anyway, the combination of all those things...

Bailey: Here’s my view of the reason his polls suffered whenever he went anywhere. It wasn’t a negative reaction to him as much as it was a reminder that he was the president and he succeeded Richard Nixon, and that if you focus on Ford,

you like Carter. If you focused on Carter, Ford had a chance. That was certainly true throughout the general election. One of the theories of the campaign as far as we were concerned, was keep the focus on Jimmy Carter. If the question in voters' minds was do I know enough about Jimmy Carter? And then Gerald Ford would be elected president. If the question was do I think that Gerald Ford ought to be re-elected, then Jimmy Carter would win.

Smith: Let me understand though; was that primarily because people saw Ford as Richard Nixon's heir, as Richard Nixon's pardoner, or because of some set of qualities that Ford...?

Bailey: I think it's a combination of things. Part of it is this is Richard Nixon's choice and Richard Nixon is a traitor to this country. That's the worst possible, right? Part of it was, to independents anyway, and to those in the middle, Nixon led us down the wrong road. It would be wise to put all of this behind us, let's move on to something else. And part of it was that Gerald Ford – they really didn't know [him] and some of the things that they got to know about him such as the pardon and such as *Saturday Night Live* and so forth, were not particularly attractive. So you put all those things together, and you don't want the public focusing on Ford, you want the public focusing on Carter. Now, does this mean that everybody voted that way? No. But that group of people undecided, in the middle who were going to swing, could conceivably swing one way or the other, all fell into this description, whereby if the election was going to be determined by those people, you wanted those people thinking about Jimmy Carter and who is this guy?

Smith: That raises a couple of things because what may be the single most effective jingle in modern American politics. Maybe it was all about redefining Ford, or reminding people why they ought to like Ford, but "I'm feeling good about America," brilliantly both in a head-on way and a soft-sell fashion, reminded people by the summer of '76 that the mood of the country very different from what it had been two years earlier. And some responsibility, some credit for that had to go to the man in the White House.

Bailey: Well, there isn't any question that that was part of what was true and people, I think, saw this. They didn't equate it necessarily with Gerald Ford, but it's

very difficult when you are speaking to young people, and I'm sure you've had the same experience, you're speaking to young people and they can't imagine what the hell you are talking about when you talk about the state of the country in 1974 and 1975 and what it had been through for the last twelve years. Just an incredible period of time where the emotions of the country had been rubbed raw. After the Kennedy assassination and the civil rights riots and Bobby's assassination and Martin Luther King and the civil rights laws and Vietnam and Watergate, suddenly there was this calm. And there was this calm guy who was President of the United States.

Smith: And the press thought it was dull.

Bailey: Correct. And by comparison, it certainly was. But to most people, you could make that argument. You didn't want to overdo it, but you could make that argument and the music was not about Gerald Ford, the music was about the country.

Smith: Where did it come from – the idea and the execution?

Bailey: I wish that Bailey-Deardorff could claim all the credit in the world; we can't claim any of it. It was a guy by the name of Bob Gardner in San Francisco, an advertising guy who had been there during the primaries, who wrote it and we loved it. Everybody loved it. We had also had some experience in working with music in campaigns, and we thought it was the right thing to do and used it as the backdrop for both five minute stuff and for thirty second and one minute ads and used it throughout the campaign, I suspect in your lifetime and mine, it probably is the most familiar piece of political music that either one of us can think of.

Smith: Let me go back. This notion of fashioning a campaign strategy to re-elect a candidate who had this impact on the voters, for whatever reason; and in a sense, making it about his opponent and not him. At some point, presumably, you must have been in the business that Stu had been in. I mean, finding the language to explain this to the principle. How did the strategy get set, what was his reaction, and was this something that happened after the convention?

Bailey: Immediately after the convention, we had been working on it immediately before the convention and during the convention, but immediately after the convention, we gave to the President and to Jim Baker, who then came on to take charge, basically, and to Cheney and to Teeter and to Spencer and the whole crew, gave to them an advertising plan and we said, "Look, we haven't got enough time to debate every day what we ought to do. We need to have a plan that says here we are on the 20th of August, or whenever it was, and here's the election and here's what we're going to do and here's what we're going to do and here's what we're going to do. And we're going to go do it, but we want you to see this plan and to sign off and say go do it. And as long as we do that, when we're done with something, before it goes on the air, we'll bring it back and let you see it."

By the way, President Carter never looked at any of his advertising before it went on the air. Amazing. We'll show you what we've done, but we want you to see it in advance. We don't want to have this debate every morning at seven o'clock. And when we come up with an idea that is contrary to this, then we'll debate it and discuss it. We just simply said that's the way we operate, and in this particular campaign we haven't got enough time to approach it any other way. So we gave them this advertising plan, which is exactly the plan that was followed with one exception on one ad. We can talk about that. But part of the theory was, you know, America has a president it doesn't even know. This is the only guy - and we weren't telling anybody any secrets - the only guy ever been in the White House that has never run nationally and therefore the public really doesn't know him. They don't know him, they don't know his family. They don't know all the things that they normally know about a president or a candidate for president. They don't know as much about him as they know about Carter in many respects.

Smith: Is part of that because - I always describe Ford as the least self-dramatizing president in memory?

Bailey: A large part of it. I mean, this was an ordinary guy. This is a wonderfully simple, straightforward, ordinary guy.

Smith: David Broder said he was the least neurotic president in my lifetime.

Bailey: Correct.

Smith: And did he pay a price for that?

Bailey: Well, I don't know.

Smith: In the short term?

Bailey: Yes and no. The reason I say I don't know is that if you make Gerald Ford neurotic, then what have you got?

Smith: But how do you dramatize vanilla? Or decency? An Eagle Scout – how do you sell...?

Bailey: One of the things you did, and this is part of what we did, was to tell the story of Gerald Ford and his family. Back in those days there were such things as five minute spots and we did them and we had the music and we had great footage and we had great people. The whole family was like him. They were ordinary, honest-to-God people.

Smith: Let me ask you because I remember, twenty-five years later, the reaction from people who did not know the story about his mother and his birth father. In some ways he was an astonishingly contemporary figure in that he was the product of a broken home with a gutsy mother who was ahead of her time in a great many ways, and all of that. But that part of the family story, I don't think, really ever got through to the public. Was it because you didn't talk about those things in those days? Was he reticent about it? Or because no one thought it was politically advantageous?

Bailey: I don't think it was because it was a conscious decision not to talk about that because it was dangerous. What is true, one of the prices that we pay for the kind of advertising world that we're in is that you have to make choices as to what you say and what you don't say. I don't mean choices about keep telling the truth and ignoring falsehoods or whatever. It is more when you've only got thirty seconds, or only got sixty seconds, or you've only got five minutes. What is it that isn't known about this guy that you want to be known. And if you had to make choices, the clear first choice was get the family out there, because that's an all-American family.

Smith: Including Mrs. Ford?

Bailey: Absolutely. Absolutely, because her story resonated with people.

Smith: Was there a divide in the White House? One senses that when the famous *Sixty Minutes* interview was done there was a disconnect between the immediate reaction – because everyone fights the last war – the immediate reaction of people in the White House who thought, “Oh my God,” and the startling, to them, reality that America had changed and was changing. That particularly post-Watergate, her candor, her outspokenness, epitomized almost more than anything Gerald Ford himself could do, the desire to restore honesty, authenticity, whatever you want to call it, to the White House. They didn’t realize what a political asset she was.

Bailey: Correct. And frankly, I’m not sure that anybody in the campaign appreciated it. But there was an instinctive judgment that made the Nixon paranoia - cover it up, hide it, don’t let anybody see the truth - was exactly the wrong thing to do with the anti-Nixon candidate. And therefore, the notion of openness and candor and let it all hang out was essential – politically essential. If you could not trust this guy, how in heaven’s name are you ever going to vote for him? You have to have that measure of trust, and trust only comes from candor.

Smith: Did she help with woman voters?

Bailey: A lot.

Smith: There were those famous buttons, “Vote for Betty’s Husband.”

Bailey: Sure. I don’t think it was as prominent as in later years. We’ve come to think about the gender split and so forth. I don’t think that was as prominent in those days, but I don’t think there is any question that she was talking about things and experiencing things that women across the country knew about.

Smith: Yeah. I want to ask you – I’m jumping around here – but, you mentioned in your book about a five minute ad that, I guess, never ran. Tell us about that and what it was supposed to do and why it didn’t run.

Bailey: Five minute ads were four and a half minutes in length – the first thing you learn about them, and they were common on network TV. Remember than in 1976 most TV was network TV, not cable. They ran in the last five minutes, last four and a half minutes of an hour segment. And so they tended not to interrupt prime time, but they tended to be five minutes of eight, or eleven twenty-five, or something like that – some time period like that. The interesting thing about a five minute spot - I'm spending some time on it because I think it's important for you to distinguish. Two interesting things about a five minutes spot: one is, with thirty second advertising, in order to make your point, the campaign has to run the ad often enough so that you can see it probably three, four, five times, because you are not tuned into it. It comes and goes, and more often than not, you don't even get the point. But if you see it five or six times, it can start to sink in on you. Five minutes, by and large, you only really need to see once, because if it's well produced it gets your attention, "Ah, this is interesting," and you settle in and you start to understand what is being said.

The certain thing about a five minute spot, the difference between it and thirty seconds – I can make a thirty second spot, Richard, to get you to vote against my opponent – in thirty seconds. Because all you really need to know is one thing to vote against him. But if you're going to vote for somebody, you need to know more than one thing, you need to know their personality, you need to know their stands on issues, you need to know quite a bit about them. You need to know a kind of full story. So thirty seconds is great to get that one thing across that causes you to vote against somebody.

Five minutes is a lot of time to get a story across with a beginning and an end that reinforces. In that context, there were three or four five minute ads that were planned for Ford. And then one, and this is the only diversion that there was from the initial advertising plan that we did for the campaign, it struck me that there was an opportunity to do a five minute ad that would run in the last week of the campaign that was so powerful that it could reach out and grab hold of you and shake you and turn people's votes around. Now, that's a very risky thing to do if you are ahead in the polls. You don't want to turn people's votes around, but if you think you're going to lose, then if there is a way to

reach out, responsibly reach out and grab you and shake you and make you not so certain of how you were going to vote; whether you were going to vote for Ford or Carter or are undecided. If you could turn the whole electorate into undecided, if otherwise you were going to lose, that would be pretty good because you had another chance at it.

There was one opportunity that we had, and that was to create a five minute spot that emotionally rang all of those bells of the last twelve years. Of the assassinations, of the wars, of Watergate, and to reinforce emotionally with people what they had been through. To take them through that again, and shake them in a way that caused them to rethink how they were going to vote. Now, if you could do that, it would be pretty interesting.

There was an opportunity in September - we were filming where the President was speaking before a crowd at the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor, and he was giving a sort of standard stump speech to a crowd of mostly students, but a lot of others. Very enthusiastic and so forth, and Betty Ford was there and it was very exciting and just as he was saying the words about trust – and you have to trust your president, it's not good enough to say trust me, trust must be earned, it was the words he was using – and that really was a comment about Jimmy Carter's being an unknown person. Just as he was saying this, as we were filming it, a shot ran out and the President looks up and looks down and he keeps speaking, but he kept looking around and there was a bunch of scurrying and the audience was looking and everybody was scared to death.

This is a president who had already gone through two assassination attempts, and it was an instant reminder to everybody in the room of the assassinations that we had been through and yet he keeps making this point about trust, trust must be earned. He gets to the conclusion a few seconds later, and people stand and applaud and he wipes the sweat off his brow and looking up in the gallery and everybody then realizes that, in fact, it was a cherry bomb - that some prankster had set off a cherry bomb in the audience. There was a sort of sense of relief, but what an interesting opportunity because we captured every bit of it on film.

So I went back to New York and with some very competent editors put together some man in the street stuff about how Ford had really done remarkable things and the economy was looking up, we were at peace and all that kind of stuff. And then some introduction of Ford and how he is seen by a variety of people and then it brings to this audience in Ann Arbor and he is speaking, and there is no introduction of this. There is no warning on the film of this, and suddenly there is this shot and it just horrifies you. And then things calm down a little bit and the announcer says, voice over says, "There is a new calm in America these days," I can't remember the exact words, "After Vietnam, after Watergate, after all we have been through, when a president can parade openly through the streets of Dallas," the picture shifts to a president in an open limousine waving with a very thick bullet-proof vest, I might add, waving to the crowds in Dallas as his car goes through the city, "There has been a change that's come over America. The people and their president are back together again." And then he gets out of the car, and now we have morphed into another scene, I think it's in New Orleans or maybe Mississippi, I don't remember which, but he's getting out of the car and diving into the crowds and you pick up a sentence of his from the convention speech and so forth and wrap it up.

But basically what this was an effort to do was to say to that voter, "Do you understand what this election is all about? Do you remember what we have been through? How are you going to vote? How are you going vote? After all you have been through and now you have a president that has calmed the waters of this country, how are you going to vote?" And so I finish it and we put this together, of course, at a time when we were way behind in the polls, but throughout the production time and by the time we take it to the campaign, and to Jim Baker and Spencer and Cheney and the rest, there are now maybe three weeks left. We had started closing the gap significantly and were making some steady progress. I showed it for people in the campaign and they just went crazy. First of all, the Secret Service just has a nightmare and I'm respectful of this, I mean, in their mind, it is inviting the nut cases to come forward. But in the campaign, Jim Baker in particular just thinks this is nutty, absolutely screwy, I have a screw loose someplace.

- Smith: He understood what you were trying to do?
- Bailey: Yup. But he said, you're going to lose the state of Texas. And I said, "Well, forgive me but aren't we going to lose the state of Texas anyway? He said, "John Connally tells me that we will carry the state of Texas. But you can't make a reference to Dallas that way without losing the state of Texas." We did lose the state of Texas by 500,000 votes.
- Smith: Was that an unfortunately Texas-centric viewpoint for the campaign manager to have?
- Bailey: Well, it's not unusual. Jim Baker is great, but he's like all the rest of us. You start talking about my state, then I'm going to have better views about my state than you do. I know more about my state than you do. That's the view of everybody.
- Smith: Did the President see it?
- Bailey: I don't know, not from me.
- Smith: Which raises a larger question, how did that work? He presumably passed judgment on his own...
- Bailey: We provided to the White House, to Dick Cheney, and to the campaign all the ads before anything ran, and I'm absolutely certain that he looked at all of them. I don't know to this day whether he ever saw this ad. Among other things, it never ran, so nobody would ever feel that it was necessary. There was another very big doubter for very interesting reasons. Bob Teeter did not like the ad; he was really worried about the ad for two reasons. One is he wanted to see, and perfectly appropriately, he wanted to see if he could, how a focus group would react to the ad. Because here's this theory that everybody is going to change their minds. Okay, fair enough. His second theory – and I'll tell you how the focus group turned out in a minute – or I'll tell you how they told me the focus groups turned out in a minute. The second reason was be wary about Texans talking about Texas and be even more wary of Michiganders talking about Ohio and Ohioans talking about Michiganders. Now, you know as well as anybody, that there is no bigger sports rivalry than

there is between Ohio and Michigan. Now, I'm an Ohioan, Teeter isn't – he's a Wolverine – he's not only from Michigan, he's from Ann Arbor. So his view was that this would cost us the state of Ohio. If you show all those University of Michigan students and Ford speaking at the University of Michigan in an ad, you'll lose Ohio.

Smith: Fascinating.

Bailey: Now, I think – I can't prove it – I think that's an exaggeration.

Smith: That does raise a large question. Are campaigns, like government, better at preventing things from happening than making them happen? When creativity rears its ugly head?

Bailey: It is true in government that almost anybody can shoot it down. If it's up there, it's going to be shot down. And in this case, there were a number of people who had some serious doubts. And in the end, by the way, I was among those who agreed that it should not run, but not for the reasons that they gave. Remember that this was designed for a campaign we felt pretty sure we were going to lose. But in the last week we were gaining so much momentum that it was perfectly believable that we were going to win the election, and you know as well as I do that on Saturday before the election, the Gallup polls put Ford ahead. So the conclusion was that we shouldn't run it and this was intended for the last week, and I agreed with it, that we shouldn't run it. Maybe I was also bowing to the inevitable because they did hold a focus group and the focus group just hated the ad. My reaction to that was, "Yes, so they hated the ad. So what's the next conclusion?" Because if you show an ad to a focus group and then ask their opinion of the ad – what are they going to say?

Smith: This is my problem with focus groups: it's like keeping a diary. Keeping a diary is a distortion. You may set out to be as truthful and honest a reporter as possible, but the very fact that you are keeping a diary is...And a focus group, by the same token...

Bailey: If you are going to take a test after you've seen something, you'd probably watch it a little differently, but it doesn't really matter. The whole theory of

this ad was, of course they are not going to like it. That's why it was designed to shake them up. If it was designed to shake them up, of course they are not going to like it. That's what they are going to tell you. That doesn't mean that it doesn't necessarily work to our benefit in the long run. And let me add one more thing; when I said this, of course, they would just go bonkers. I said, "You understand, I'm not saying that as a result of this, that Ford might not lose much bigger than he would otherwise. What I'm saying is, force voters to rethink when you know collectively what they think now is going to hurt you, and when they rethink that, it might hurt you more.

Smith: You can imagine, or at least I can imagine sitting here listening to you, I can imagine an ad that would eliminate the Ohio-Michigan rivalry, almost in the style of the famous daisy ad. A series of sledge hammers, black and white images that would absolutely hit you over the head with a two by four about the turmoil of the last decade. I mean, just as simple as that; that in fact brings you to this oasis.

Bailey: It was an extraordinarily emotional moment for this country. And that if you could cause people to remember what they had been through and then cause them to realize that after all they had through, my God, there's this nice guy who is President of the United States and I feel good.

Smith: You said - by the way, I think you're right - the last minute Gallup poll that showed Ford ahead may very well have contributed paradoxically to his defeat. Why do you believe that?

Bailey: It goes back to something I said earlier. I think the basic thesis of the campaign, from my standpoint, was that it was going to be decided by people in the middle who, if when they went to vote, the dominant thought they had was, "I don't know enough about Jimmy Carter," then Ford is going to win. Those same people, if the dominant thought or the first thought they had is, "That guy Ford really shouldn't be president," or "Ford was chosen by Nixon," or "Ford was..." whatever. Then Carter was going to win. If they're thinking about Carter, Ford's going to win. If they're thinking about Ford, Carter's going to win. And as long as the polls - we didn't have twenty polls a day, which we do now - but as long as the polls seem to say Carter's going to

win, Carter's going to win, Carter's going to win, then my thought as one of those voters in the middle is, "God, who is this guy? I really don't know enough about him." And so that's the thought that's going to be on my mind when I go vote, so I'm going to vote for Ford.

Smith: Wasn't it also true that literally days before the election there were some economic numbers that came out. Alan Greenspan dubbed it The Pause, which may be fine in theoretical circles, but given the heightened emotions of that period, it just reinforced people's doubts about the recovery, and the President. You had come so far, but when it became clear that you had come that far, people just kind of sat back and said, "Well, do I really want four more years of this?"

Bailey: One of the undeniable things about a close election, Richard, is that you can find a hundred, if not a thousand, reasons to explain what happened. I think there were some economic numbers that might have contributed. I think the poll might have contributed in a negative way for us. I think and I have said this publicly, so I might as well say it again, I think that the performance of Bob Dole in that campaign, particularly in the debate with Walter Mondale, probably cost some voters. I don't know how many who were planning to vote on Ford, they were thinking about Ford, they were thinking about Ford, they get in the voting booth and they realize that they can't vote for Ford without voting for Dole and they go the other way. I think that's possible. There are so many explanations for any election that is that close.

Smith: You had an alternate vice presidential candidate in mind, didn't you? Or at least if you could have made the selection?

Bailey: It wasn't _____, it wasn't John, but it is our understanding that the group that met with the President on the night before he made his selection public, left that meeting believing that Bill Ruckelshaus would be the vice presidential choice. Now, others that you've talked to probably have already told you what happened. I don't know exactly what happened, but obviously the next morning the choice was Bob Dole. Although Ruckelshaus was called, it's my understanding he was called and told to get himself to Kansas City.

- Smith: Really?
- Bailey: Bill Ruckelshaus would be a very interesting interview for you.
- Smith: Absolutely. And he presumably would have been the surest defense against the Nixon hangover?
- Bailey: I think so. Let's put it this way, what does Bob Dole do for you in terms of the Nixon hangover? I think the answer is nothing. Bill Ruckelshaus is clear evidence of a sort of anti-Nixon behavior.
- Smith: Do you think they were worried about a floor fight? And if they'd gone with Ruckelshaus there might have been?
- Bailey: Quite possibly. And when I say I don't know what happened, I suspect there probably was some communication with Reagan or Reagan's people that caused Ford to pull back. That's my guess.
- Smith: Yeah. I have to ask you about the *New York Post* headline, "*Ford Ad Man Linked to Porn.*" Far be it from the *New York Post* to try to...
- Bailey: This was before Rupert Murdoch bought the *Post*, that's how bad this story is. We did a bunch of man in the street commercials.
- Smith: Where did that come from? Was a technique that you had used in other campaigns?
- Bailey: Yes, we had done that in some other campaigns, and we liked to think that we sort of invented it for the political genre, anyway.
- Smith: Why don't we see that more today?
- Bailey: Lazy. Or maybe they don't understand that real people, not reality TV, but real people are probably the last believable people there are in terms of politics, anyway. We can talk a little more about that, but we did them sort of coast to coast with a film crew that had worked with Bailey-Deardorff for years; cameraman, soundman, and assistant. The soundman was a fellow by the name of Michael Scott Goldbaum, and he worked out of New York and he was spectacularly good. I had suggested to him that he take all of the sound

tapes of those interviews and, if he wanted to, do some work and put together some radio commercials of man in the street, and get them to me and I would be happy to take a look at them and see if we could play some.

And so he was doing that in his studio in New York under a gigantic poster that said, "Ford is Making Us Proud Again." But that wasn't all he was doing. He was also interviewing for lead roles in some porn film that he was doing. And so he would have women come in and be interviewed and auditioned for the job. Obviously, we didn't know anything about this, but somebody at the *New York Post* discovered it and a woman reporter by the name of Lindsey Van Gelder, went and applied for the job. Now, I don't know how deep into the interview she went...

Smith: It sounds more like a porn name than a reporter's name.

Bailey: In any event, I got this call, this is now the Thursday before the election, I get the call. I'm in New York at a production studio and I get a call from the *New York Post* saying, "Did you know that your soundman is doing this, and what in heaven's name are you up to? Do you know about this?" And I said I don't know anything about it and so I put the phone down, picked the phone up and called Michael and asked him. He told me everything about it and I said, "You do understand that you are fired, absolutely fired now? Done. Don't ever talk to me again. I don't want to see your face, I don't want to hear your name. I don't want to have anything to do with you ever again." I called the woman back at the *Post* and told her that and so I didn't get very much sleep that night. I know that the story is coming out, I'm flying back into Washington the next day, but on my way out of the hotel I grab the paper and there is a banner headline, "*Ford Ad Man Linked to Porn,*" and "*He's Fired On the Spot.*" That's what it said. And I'm thinking, oh my God, this is the Friday before election in an election where we are so close.

Smith: Of course, it might help you in New York.

Bailey: And so I fly back to Washington and I come into the Ford offices and by that time they all had knowledge of this story, but they also had knowledge of the Gallup poll coming out the next day and they were all giddy. Everybody was

terribly amused that I was really upset about this story and what it might cost. Everybody was trying to calm me down. But I went into my office and sort of had my head in my hands and there comes a knock on the door, and there's a friend named Jed Summer who worked for the campaign. And he said, "Doug, listen, it looks like we might win on Monday, or it looks like we might lose. And if we lose, I just wonder whether you've got a position for me in any of your work."

Smith: Have you ever considered the possibility that it might have been that story that undid your lead in the Gallup poll?

Bailey: Yes, it has occurred to me. The fact of the matter is that you can't imagine that happening today without it being picked up by everybody and being made front and center cable news and bloggers and millions strong. Nobody, nobody to my knowledge, other than the *New York Post*, carried that story. Nobody picked up on it. Nothing. Zap. Nada.

Smith: That is amazing. The debate - there were three of them. We forget there were three of them and two of them went fine. And one of them went fine for the most part. But, anyway, the famous Polish gaffe. You had been involved - I assume you were part of a team. How did the preparations for the debate go?

Bailey: There was the sort of standard preparation for the debate that you can imagine somebody standing in for Carter and so forth. And I didn't have anything to do with any of that. I didn't attend those sessions, but Teeter and Cheney and I, a couple of days before each of the debates, would meet with the President and say, "Look, here's what we think you might try to focus on more than anything else. If there are a couple of points that you can make, these would be the points to stress." This was not an effort to - we didn't want to over-prepare him, and he knew all these subjects, obviously, inside and out, and it wasn't necessary to do all of that. But it was worthwhile, we thought, to stress a couple of things and to stress a couple of things to stay away from, and a couple of things to try to hit.

On the foreign policy debate, we were very excited because in the first debate Ford was expected to lose badly, and he at least held his own and most people

thought that he had won, maybe because they expected him to lose and you get into that. But that was on domestic policy and the only thing that people really remember about that was a twenty-eight minute pause because the sound went out and there is the President of the United States standing there for twenty-eight minutes not doing anything and the guy who wanted to be president standing there for twenty-eight minutes. When you think back about it, you think how odd is all that?

In any event, we were very excited about the foreign policy debate because this was one where Carter had no experience – zero. And that Ford had an advantage could seize, and our conclusion was that the way to seize it was to put Carter on the defensive. While Carter would try to put Ford on the defensive because Kissinger was a controversial figure, Ford should put Carter on the defensive because of lack of foreign policy experience and the whole point was that Kissinger is my secretary of state and will be my secretary of state. I know that will upset some folks, but that's going to be the way it is and I think America needs to know that from me just as they need to know from you Governor Carter, who your secretary of state will be. That's particularly true because you have no experience whatsoever in foreign policy. And I don't mean that you ought to tell anybody tonight in this debate, but before the election, they have a right to know who your secretary of state will be.

Smith: The paradox of this was, you've won the convention by defeating the concept that you had to name your vice president. So much for consistency in politics.

Bailey: Yes, consistency – what has that got to do with anything? Teeter thought it was exactly right, Cheney thought it was exactly right, I thought it was exactly right. The President agreed - it's exactly right. That really makes good sense. And he made a few mental notes to himself, and he was ready for it. So comes the debate, - the debate hall was in San Francisco, wasn't it? I'm not there, I'm in St. Louis doing some still editing, not only a preoccupation, but an occupation. But I watched the debate, of course, and in the very first question, Carter's answer included the comment that Henry Kissinger is the President of the United States, and he sort of takes off on Kissinger a little bit.

Comes to Ford and Ford doesn't say anything, it was an opportunity, but he didn't seize that opportunity.

Then in one of the next questions, the next question to Carter, I believe, was a question from Richard Valeriani of *NBC News*, who said, "You really don't have a whole lot of experience." This was not a planted question. He said, "You really don't have a whole lot of experience, Governor, in foreign policy, and therefore, wouldn't it be appropriate to tell the American people who your secretary of state would be, your secretary of defense, and your national security advisor?" And Carter said just what you would expect him to say, "Oh those are decisions that ought to be made after the campaign, not in the middle of a political campaign and we'll get to that after November." Sort of the standard expected. But it was a massive opening for the President who chose to use his rebuttal time to talk about Israel and something that Carter hadn't said about the Middle East.

And I'm just going crazy, so much so that when in the debate Ford later said something about Poland, or implied that Poland was no longer under Communist control, I didn't pay really that much attention to it. I was really so upset about his not taking the opportunity that I didn't see the size of the mistake. And then when the *New York Times* reporter, I think, gave him an opportunity to clarify and he didn't do it then, it was clear that he had misspoken. Why he had, I have no idea. But then I do know why he didn't – there is some Dutch in him and he just got stubborn. He was not going to admit that he had misspoken; he had said what he intended to say; it didn't come out quite right; but he wasn't going to admit it. Whereas, anybody who has anything to do with politics knows that the public does not expect their officials, whether they be president or congressman or anything else, to be perfect. And if they admit to an error and a gaffe, it doesn't amount to a hill of beans. He could have put that behind him in short order. And, in fact, it took him a week, I think, to explain that he really had misstated and that he was sorry.

- Smith: And repeated, heroic-foolhardy attempts by both Cheney and Spencer to impress upon him the need to walk this thing back. And literally, they were thrown out of the cabin on Air Force One more than once.
- Bailey: When he finally did it, then we started – it wasn't that Carter was gaining any during that period of time – it was just an absolute dead heat. There was no movement in the polls.
- Smith: The momentum had stopped.
- Bailey: Momentum absolutely stopped dead and the moment he retracted the statement, or corrected it about a week later, the momentum started again.
- Smith: What was contributing to that momentum? Doubts about Carter?
- Bailey: Almost all of it was doubts about Carter.
- Smith: Is some of that in a way an extension – people forget – of the race for the Democratic nomination? Carter lost most of the later primaries as people began to entertain some doubts.
- Bailey: There was never great excitement in the Democratic Party about Jimmy Carter. There was not. I don't mean that negatively toward the guy, there just wasn't terribly great excitement about it. And one of the things that happens in an election, is when you're not excited about the guy, even though you might vote for him, if you feel that he doesn't need your vote, you might vote for somebody else. And that's what happened in those later primaries. It wasn't as if Carter didn't have the nomination; I knew he had the nomination, but, "I'm not excited about him, so I'm going to vote for Jerry Brown or somebody." But that was a real signal that Carter did not have a sort of uniform support within the Democratic Party.
- Smith: We learned subsequently, of course, that George McGovern voted for Ford, Bess Truman voted for Ford, and when the President went to visit Hubert Humphrey in the hospital, he said, "You're getting some votes out of the Humphrey household." It was kind of fudging, but it's almost as if the people who knew him the best...

Bailey: Most of those people who knew Gerald Ford well, or even slightly well, also knew Richard Nixon well, or slightly well. And to them, the comparison was just overwhelming. This guy is sick and this guy is just the most natural human being alive. And that comparison was so compelling that anybody who knew both of them...

Smith: There is an argument, and it goes back to Broder's remark about the least neurotic president, Bert Russell said that in many ways Ford was the president that Americans said in the abstract they wanted, but either didn't fully appreciate, or understand or whatever at the time. And that it was really only after the fact, in some ways, when he died, that you saw a lot of this surface. And I mean by that, by that time the contrast with the ugliness of our current politics, the contrast with – a whole generation was being introduced to him for the first time and they saw these clips and they were comparing that against what they had experienced in recent years in the White House and it looked pretty good.

Bailey: Right.

Smith: And it contributed, I think, to some of the crowds that were...because this guy was out of the public eye for thirty years.

Bailey: I think there came to be an appreciation of – there is another way of looking at this. That Ford was the first sensible, sane human being to be president in quite a while, or at least in a calm America. But looking back, he was also maybe the last, because whether you start it with Reagan or you start with Bush or somewhere, there had been just a sort of long run of very tumultuous times – different kinds of tumult that they had known earlier. But compared to what went before him and what has come since, Jerry Ford, my God, he's my president.

Smith: He's been called Eisenhower without the medals. This is a kind of centrist, undramatic.

Bailey: Steady.

Smith: No flash.

Bailey: One of my favorite Ford stories, it just sticks in my mind so completely and has no historical value whatsoever, but I'll tell it. I was with him once in the White House with a group of half a dozen women and I can't remember why they were there, but there was some political award they were giving him, or he had agreed to meet with them to service some political contact purpose. It was in some kind of small room; we were all sitting there and the President comes in and he shakes hands all around and he sits down for a few minutes; and then he gets up and he obviously wants to leave. And the women, of course, want him to stay just as long as they can keep him there. And so they keep talking and he starts backing out of the room, just getting closer and closer and closer to the door. And as he's doing that, he goes right up against the door jam and bumps his head against the door jam, sort of like a *Saturday Night Live* Chevy Chase thing, and I thought to myself, "Isn't that Jerry Ford?"

This is the anti-Nixon. Nixon never took a step that he hadn't plotted out absolutely in advance. Here's Jerry Ford, walking backwards and not caring where that door jam is. It was just a perfect little vignette of Jerry Ford as an average guy. He is an average, nice guy, without any of the Nixon paranoia, without the self-importance that dominates this city.

Smith: A couple quick things and we'll let you go. 1980 – there was speculation about a Ford race.

Bailey: There was a point when John and I thought, we had done some work with Howard Baker who was sort of in and out and proved not to be going anywhere. And there was some talk occasionally about Ford, and John and I thought that if he was going to do it, now was the time, he's got to do it within the next two weeks was our conclusion. I don't remember ever being asked to do this by anybody, but we called him up and said, "Can we come and see you?" And so we went to Rancho Mirage and Alan Greenspan was there that weekend. And so he sat in on the meeting and basically we said, "Okay, here are the pluses and here are the minuses. Here are some reasons to do it and some reasons not to do it. Is it some kind of a lead pipe cinch that you could be the nominee? Absolutely not. But if you are thinking about it, you've got

to do it now.” I don’t remember exactly when this is, but sort of like the middle of March, maybe the 20th of March.

Smith: Of ’80?

Bailey: Of ’80. Very late in the game, but, you know, a former president getting into the race, he would clearly have some focus. We were not encouraging him to do it. Part of me, of course, wished that that would be the case, but a part of me recognized that one) that it was very unlikely; and two) that unless he was really.... As I remember it, the President said that he had thought about it a little bit. What he said was that he had, at some times, been inclined to do it, but that on balance, he thought that it was not the right thing to do because it was really important to change presidents. And that his challenge to Reagan would be a distraction from the job at hand. A little of irony and whether he was aware of the irony of what he was saying in terms of Reagan’s challenge to him, I don’t know.

Smith: It has also been reported that Mrs. Ford only half jokingly threatened to divorce him.

Bailey: Oh, I absolutely don’t doubt that. And frankly, she was not in that meeting. Always very cordial to us and very cordial that weekend to us, but she was not in that meeting. And I have no doubt that she had no interest whatsoever, and frankly, I think the President was probably just being pleasant to us.

Smith: Well, the bell rings and the old warhorse heads for the track.

Bailey: And, of course, he’d like somebody to come around and say, “Maybe you ought to think about running.”

Smith: Or save us. Did you see him in later years?

Bailey: I saw him a couple of times. What a levelheaded, even-going guy he was. He did decide in that meeting – by the way Greenspan was flat out against it, totally against it for whatever reason.

Smith: Do you remember why?

Bailey: No, not particularly. And as a sitting president, he could barely hold onto the nomination running against Reagan, after Reagan had basically thought that he had sewed up the nomination that would have been a very difficult chore. And would have made Ford – I don't mean that this was part of his decision at all – but if you look back now on history and think of Jerry Ford, that is likely to be a dominant fact if he chose to challenge Reagan and not win, that would have been a dominant fact in how he was remembered. So it was a very unlikely thing to have happen.

Smith: They had a good life, too, by then. They'd had the intervention, she'd licked her problem, they were happy.

Bailey: Yup, absolutely.

Smith: Were you surprised at all by the reaction when he died because of the extent of it? Again, given the fact that he had been out of the public eye for quite a while, that there were the kinds of crowds that turned out. I know the media – people were surprised to see.

Bailey: I can't say that I was surprised. The fact is that, and maybe it's just that, I ascribe to other people the feelings that I've had. But he is so anti-the stereotypical figures that you think of in politics and in Washington, that it is, I think, not surprising that there are an awful lot of people who warm to him. I was thinking of that the other night when Ted Kennedy's funeral procession went right by there and across the bridge. A big crowd. Ted Kennedy drew a kind of affection from a certain kind of people for quite different reasons, but Ford drew the same kind of affection for his own reasons. In many respects it is interesting; he and Carter were very much alike as human beings. As human beings, very, very, much alike. And, in fact, you can take the whole sweep of fifty years from Jack Kennedy on and the only two normal people – I think you could conclude that the two only normal people who were in that job were Ford and Carter.

Smith: What do you remember of election night '76?

Bailey: I remember being more disappointed by that election than any I had ever been in because the stakes were so high for the country, and everybody who had

worked in it, including me, was just totally and completely exhausted. We had done everything and the campaign had gone remarkably well.

Smith: And the final broadcast, it is very unusual, on Air Force One, with Pearl Bailey and Joe Garagiola.

Bailey: It was John. The whole Garagiola fandango over the last week, ten days, was due to our production.

Smith: Was that because Garagiola, for whatever reason, just sort of relaxed the President?

Bailey: Absolutely. It was like he didn't have to be in charge. Garagiola was in charge of the program and all he had to do was be there and show up and do his thing. He didn't have to worry about it because he liked Joe and Joe liked Jerry.

Smith: And Pearl Bailey?

Bailey: I don't know that relationship at all.

Smith: How do you think he should be remembered?

Bailey: Well I hope he is remembered, and I think he should be remembered as a person who brought the country back from the brink. It's very difficult, I think, to appreciate how close to the edge the country was – sort of psychologically and in a whole variety of other ways. Even that five minute spot that we talked about earlier - I show it to people now and they don't get it. And they don't get it because they don't understand what it means to have a president assassinated and have race riots in the cities, and for the country to lose not three thousand or four thousand people in the war, but fifty-nine thousand dead, and not a sexual game in the White House, but a serious legal infraction by the president in an effort to cover it up and lie to the American people.

All of those things, when that all happens within ten-twelve years, it kind of brings the country to a point where if it doesn't have the right kind of president, lord only knows what will happen. And Jerry Ford was the right

kind of president. I don't know what went through Richard Nixon's head when he picked him, but he was a kind of savior for this country. I'd like to think he would be remembered that way.

Smith: That's perfect.

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