

Gerald R. Ford Oral History Project
Marty Allen
Interviewed by
Richard Norton Smith
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Smith: It's hard to know where to begin. Before we get into the chronology, tell us something about Gerald Ford that might surprise people.

Allen: Well, I think it's probably not necessarily so surprising, but if you had the *experience* with him, things like humility and all those type of things based on encounters that I had with him on things really comes to be true. I've always said, and I don't how many times he said it to me, he used this phrase, "What's the fuss all about?" I think one time I kidded him - I said, "Would you like that on your epitaph?" because he cherished the office of the presidency. But because of the way it came to him, he never quite put himself of as elected president. And for that reason he was surprised, And I'll give you a couple of examples.

When we had the first or second annual dinner, he was surprised that all the administration came back, and other people he'd asked. He said it to me. He got up and he got a little teary-eyed as we went up the elevator and saw everybody in the room. He said, "My gosh, I can't believe it." That was the first time I said to him out of many times, "Well, you have to remember you're the 38th President of the United States and these are your best friends and they're extremely loyal to you."

To the point where we had the funeral here and it was an extension of it. He would have said, "What's the fuss all about?" But this time the whole community came out and did the same thing as friends, for the same reason. He was the 38th President of the United States, and they had a sense of feelings about him, but he never showed it. He never was comfortable using the presidential seal or *Hail to the Chief*, or anything like that in his post presidency.

We were sitting here in his office and there are two presidential seals in here. One of them is on the door behind me, which I thought he was almost going to have us remove, which were part of the original museum. But the chair behind the desk is a great story of the man. He had this chair in his office out in California that you'd swear when he sat down, he was going to go right to the floor. The springs had to be broken, probably came out of Washington, one of those chairs – I don't know. Jim Hackett, who was the head of Steelcase, saw it and said, "We've got to get him a chair." So Jim called me and he said, "I just did a chair for the governor of Michigan with the State of Michigan seal on it, I'll put the presidential seal on it." I said, "Naw, you've got to let me call him, I'd hate to have you go through all that."

So I called him. I said, "They're going to build a beautiful chair," and he said, "I really appreciate that." I said, "Now, there's one little thing. Discretely, there is going to be the presidential seal." He hesitated and he said, "Oh, I don't think I can do that." I said, "Well, let's do it this way. Let's have them make it. If it doesn't work out for you, it would be something nice that could be utilized in the museum one way or the other." He said, "Fine, okay go ahead."

After the chair arrived a few weeks later, he calls and he says, "You know, I kind of like that chair with the seal on it, do you think they could do one for Colorado and Michigan?" But he was so hesitant and that sort of typifies what I found out about the man that was a confirmation, really. But not all people probably hear how humble he was and probably never had the opportunity to see that. That stands out to me.

The other thing is, as a part of the character, all the people that he's met in his lifetime, and I was kind of with him twenty-one years. And out of the twenty-one years, how he just didn't hold things against people. He would show his temper once in a while, but he had a couple of things he would say. He would say, "Now, Marty, that's a *bad* guy." That's as far as he'd go, and it started with G. Gordon Liddy out in the museum. Every time he passed that picture he'd point at it, "Now, Marty, that's a *bad* guy." But he said that about some other people, some here in Grand Rapids. That's as far as he'd go with that. He wouldn't go any further.

Smith: You mentioned his temper because he famously, like Dwight Eisenhower, had a temper, particularly as a young man. One gets the impression he spent a lifetime pretty successfully controlling it.

Allen: But he still had it.

Smith: Yeah.

Allen: Probably never to the degree, but he did have a temper. You know the great story about how his mother controlled that by having him memorize the poem *If*. But I would encounter that in a couple different ways. I would encounter it in frustration, for example, not being able to use a telephone and that made him just go ballistic. He didn't know how to place a telephone call. And if he had to, he couldn't do it right, and he wouldn't realize that he really had made a call and I was on the other end. So it was the little things. On the golf course, his competitive nature took over a little on occasions and he would get extremely angry. He was known on a few occasions to throw a golf club. I played golf with him – the last time I played golf with him, which was with Justice Stevens, and we played nine holes. He got in a sand trap once and all of a sudden the ball didn't come out, but the club came out. So he controlled it to the extent that I'm sure a lot of things really irritated him more publicly, but he wouldn't show it. But behind the scene, you could just see the sense of that...

Smith: That's interesting, because two things I want to explore: one of the Stevens' visit, and the other about the phone. There is this famous story about Ike the day he left office. In those days there was no Secret Service protection, so as a special courtesy, Kennedy had let these Secret Service agents drive them back to Gettysburg. He gets out of the car, he's excited to be home, and runs into to the barn to see his cattle and then goes into the house and picks up the phone. Now he hasn't made a phone call in twenty years. He waits for the operator and he hears this buzzing sound and says, "What in the hell is wrong with this?" Someone has to explain to him, "Mr. President, that's..." So I'm wonder if part of it was: you get in this cocoon, almost unknowingly and - you're right about the modesty - but you're still in this cocoon. I wonder

whether part of it was technology had moved on and he just wasn't part of that.

Allen: Oh, it was. There's two great stories about technology, beyond the telephone, but not in our lives, it's just a normal part of our lives. One of them was, the night before they were retiring his jersey at University of Michigan – his football jersey – the president of the university had a small dinner at his house, including Bo Schembechler and a few athletic people and the president of the university, who was an engineer, and got into his wine a little bit too much and at the end he stood up and gave a little dissertation about the technology in his office and how he could communicate with various parts of the campus offices. Whatever he wanted, he could do through technology – videos and a variety of things. He got up and I was looking down the table and I saw Schembechler was practically asleep and President Ford was looking at his watch.

The next thing I knew the president of the university said, "Now, Mr. President, tell me about the technology in your office." He said, "Well, I use a legal pad and a pen. And I think Betty and I have to go home now." The rest of them were just totally trying to control themselves. It sobered up the university's president quite quickly.

The other classic was with his great assistant, Penny Circle. He did an interview with students via internet. They would ask the questions and he started answering them like they were there. He was animated; he was faster than poor Penny could type the answers back to them. He didn't quite get it that they weren't getting it directly. The technology had completely passed him by.

Smith: Is it true, I think Penny told me, I guess he taught himself, or she taught him, to play solitaire on the computer.

Allen: Yes. I think that's true. I heard the same story. That was about all he could do on it was play solitaire on it. So he did have technology pass him by. I'm sure some people would say it shows a lack of intelligence, but it wasn't. He did live in a cocoon – in the biggest cocoon in the world. It has to be hard, at

times, to operate in a vacuum, and therefore he had great reliance on people. More than most would.

Kissinger told me once, he said, he didn't worry about how bright his Cabinet was or his vice president because he wanted to learn and listen to them very carefully. Not all people are that way. So he at least broke through to the point where at that level he had some people that he really did trust. The last time I was with Paul O'Neill, Paul was telling me that last time they did the budget – and Paul knew it inside and out – but he knew the president knew it inside and out, they had a public press conference on it. He said President Ford asked him a question and Paul said he [Ford] knew the answer to the question he asked, but as a courtesy to one of the senior staff people, he wanted them to feel he was a part of it. An amazing story.

Smith: The courtesy aspect – when Rockefeller had come up with this Energy Independence Corporation and Bill Simon, very literal, incredibly bright, but without all the people skills or the diplomacy that you'd associate with a real pol. There was a very heated debate in the Cabinet. It got fairly nasty and Simon could be cutting. He said something to the effect that, Mr. President, don't let him do to the country what he did to New York. Before the meeting ended – it was very clear, there was virtual unanimity opposing this idea – but the president made it clear that he was going to support it. Simon, of course, wouldn't let it drop, so he got the president, waylaid him, because Simon goes back over all the intellectual arguments. And Ford said, "Bill, I know, I know, but look, you and I both know Congress is never going to enact this, and I'm not going to embarrass Nelson."

Allen: Not going to offend him, no. You know what's funny about that story, and this is on such a much smaller scale. The first time I chaired the Foundation, I think the Foundation became for him just a little bit of the presidency on a far lesser scale, but it had the same sense, because a lot of the same people were involved, a lot of the Cabinet. One of the first meetings I was conducting, Bill Simon – we were on investments – made some very profound statements on how terrible our investments were and if he were on it we'd get sixteen percent. Well, then Bill Seidman got into it, and Paul O'Neill and Frank Zarb, and they were having a debate at the board meeting. I leaned over to the

president and I asked, "Should I break this up." He said, "No, don't break it up. This is just like the Cabinet. We would have these intellectual arguments, but by the time they were finished, they realized they'd used up their ego, and they were all in agreement with each other, and it was a done thing. I'd listened and accepted it and that's the way they operate."

Smith: In many ways, shrewd, generous, and easily overlooked by the public. It's not the stuff of swashbuckling, presidential leadership. It is a very congressional kind of insight.

Allen: Yeah, it was really his congressional experience that came out so much in that. I agree.

Smith: You mentioned Justice Stevens, and I'd love to talk about that because I know, obviously that was part of that twenty-fifth anniversary lecture series that we did, and it was remarkable that the president would come all the way from California, basically to introduce Justice Stevens. I remember asking him, you may very well have been present, when the last time was that he saw the justice or talked to him or had any contact with him. He said, "When I appointed him."

Justice Stevens is considerably to the left in terms of his jurisprudence, and yet there was a real, not only bond, but one sensed a real pride on the part of the president. It may have been the last time a Supreme Court nominee was chosen with almost no regard for ideology, for simple intellectual brilliance. I assume that was similar to the Levy nomination - trying to restore faith in the judicial system. And you wonder if it had been a different political culture whether Ford would have had more latitude to go in pursuit of a more conservative - who knows?

Allen: The only comment that he ever made to me on that subject, and we didn't talk a lot of politics, he did because we were going to play golf and he did it with a smile on his face, which was a little unusual. He smiles, "Well, you know, he didn't come out quite the way I expected him to, but I really liked my choice." Some people would be angered by it, or defensive about it. But he wasn't, he just said, "He's a great justice." That's all, that's the way he operated. So we

went out and played golf and they were like old friends for nine holes. They just had a marvelous time together, the two of them did.

Smith: What did they talk about?

Allen: They were in one golf cart, I was with Dick Ford in the other, so I didn't hear a lot, but I could tell they were very animated, very talkative and enjoying themselves. It was kind of quick and over with, so I didn't have a chance to really...

Smith: Remember, I think the purpose of that was Justice Stevens had always wanted to play?

Allen: He did, you are absolutely right. He always wanted to play golf with him. He had the opportunity and the president, obviously, was just delighted to do it. He used sports an awful lot to his good. He liked to do that. He got people very comfortable with him that way. But that was a nice session with Justice Stevens. I didn't hear that much of the conversation, but he did say to me, made that statement that didn't quite, maybe come out the way exactly he thought, but he was a great justice.

Smith: He made a lot appointments that people have forgotten today, but that were prestigious choices. I remember him saying once about Dan Borstein, Daniel Borstein, very distinguished historian, named him librarian of Congress... "That was one of the best appointments I ever made." You look at some of the people that Ford appointed, and he obviously was very proud of the quality.

Allen: He was. He was really proud of his appointments. I go back to Kissinger again. Kissinger told me, he said, he just surrounded himself with such good people and it didn't make any difference to him whether they might upstage him with their egos and everything – he just picked the right people. He did enjoy it. I think Roger Porter wrote one of the best articles about that Cabinet and some of the senior people. You see where those people have gone and where they are and how history has looked at them – they were all really great choices. There was a couple of them he had to remove, but other than that he

stayed with those people and it would have been amazing to see how that Cabinet would have operated for another four years.

Smith: Did you ever hear him talk about Jim Schlesinger?

Allen: Never did. Never did hear him talk Schlesinger, and I knew the circumstances, but he never said anything about it.

Smith: Let's go back to the beginning. Fill us in on how you became acquainted, what you were doing at the time?

Allen: It's a question that's asked of me all the time because I sort of, particularly with the funeral, got an awful lot of visibility. And people just are curious. I have to say, I was a typical Grand Rapids person as it relates to Gerald R. Ford. He was the ultimate congressman, knew his district well, was in his district a lot, did more things than more congressman do, including the annual Red Cedar Flannel Parade which he was in, or the Hollyhock July 4th little parade in an alley over in the south side of town. So everybody got to know him and so people weren't name dropping later on when he became president. They'd say, "Did you know him?" and everybody said, "Yeah, I knew him," and they did know.

They knew him because he was around, and that's how I knew him. I knew him because of the activities that were going around the community. I was with a bank that was very active in the community, I got to know him that way. I got to know him a little bit more for a short period of time because he asked to become a director of Old Kent Bank. Now the reasoning behind that in his mind was that was the largest bank in town. Most of the directors of that bank were leaders in the community. He felt once a month it would be a good thing for him to be on it. Well, he lasted about a month. A congressman from Texas – Gonzalez would it be?

Smith: Henry Gonzalez.

Allen: He must have been turned down for a loan at a bank some time in his life. Because he was literally almost waiting for Ford to get back to Washington when he had been elected as a director of Old Kent Bank, and told him, "If you don't get off that board, you're going to have real difficulty getting

passage of some things you like.” Jerry Ford said, “Gee, that’s why I did it.” That didn’t do any good, he said he just weighed the two and said I’ve got to get off the board.

Smith: This is speculative. Do you think in the back of his mind, presumably even then, he assumed that when his career in Congress was over, he was going to come back here and practice law? And presumably, it would be a very useful thing to have been on the board.

Allen: It would be. I think, though, his motive primarily was to learn about his district from a business standpoint. But there’s no question that these are people who really did know him at the time. Knew him better, probably, than I did. What happened after that is, I would run into him, we were on a first-name basis. That was it. But that was true of almost anybody in the community that was active.

But when I got appointed, I should get the letter out and the date – I got appointed to something called the National Alliance of Businesses. I think it was created by Nixon and it was in August and it had to be awfully close to the time that he resigned that I got this appointment, or whatever you call it, a commission or whatever. And then all of a sudden within days he was no longer the president and this National Alliance of Businesses continued and the next time I was there was in the White House when Ford was president and we were in the state dining room, just for a reception. I looked around and there were heads of industry and everything I could recognize from the automotive – I was sort of standing off, I didn’t really know anybody, so I was standing off to the side.

All of a sudden he walked in the room and he didn’t go to a mic or anything, he just was kind of talking and looking around, all of a sudden his voice booms out and he says, “Where’s Marty Allen?” Everybody was like, who’s Marty Allen? He said, “He’s one of my constituents in Grand Rapids. I want him to come up here and have a martini with me.” You know, that was just typical of him. From that point, then nothing happened until he lost the election. I was with him election day when the mural at the airport was dedicated, when he broke down a little bit about his parents and I remember

leaning over to a friend of mine and said, "It's just too bad that that didn't happen sooner."

I was later to find out, because his staff would not allow them to put anything about his mother and father in because they knew he would get emotional. I walked out, I was responsible as the greeting party and the exit party, so I walked out to Air Force One with him and the best picture I've got, the one I treasure the most, is standing with him, shaking his hands as he going to get on Air Force One and head back to Washington. He looked at me, and he was quite hoarse at that time, he said, "Marty, I've done everything I can. I did it the best I could." I almost felt he was giving me a message that down deep he might have known how close it might have been. But then, to kind of catch it up...

Smith: By the way, wasn't there an event out in front of the Pantland as well?

Allen: There was. There was a big rally, a big outdoor rally. I was in the distance, but I was there. It was a big outdoor, typical old-fashioned rally that took place that night. It was really, again, Grand Rapids responding to their favorite son and their favorite son at the airport, kind of the way they knew him. They knew he had a sensitivity about his mother and father and how important that was to him. Unfortunately, it was all just within twenty-four hours of the loss of the election.

Smith: Let me diverge. Did you know his parents?

Allen: I did not. Never met his parents at all. I got to start knowing his brothers because I played golf with Dick and Jim, and I knew Tom because he was in the Michigan legislature – so I knew them pretty well. Never met the parents.

Smith: Tom was in the legislature?

Allen: Yes, he was.

Smith: So there was more than one politician in the family?

Allen: There was more than one politician. Tom was a politician. He passed away. He was very active in the legislature here in Michigan.

Smith: How would you characterize the brothers?

Allen: A great deal of similarity to President Ford. Not overbearing, not outlandish, not standoutish in a crowd type people. When he became president, that's the way they preferred it. They stayed in the background as opposed to some other presidents who had problems – they were always in the background. So they had a lot of the same tendencies. You could tell they were brought up pretty much the same by their parents. But I never had the pleasure to meet the parents. I certainly heard many stories from him and from the brothers about their parents and how much they treasured them.

Smith: I feel like I know more about his mother than I do about his father in some ways, and yet he's been quoted as saying - the president said - that he thought the person who was the biggest influence in his life was his stepfather.

Allen: Yeah, I think he was. I think when you go back in history and the Depression and even before that, I think he was highly influenced and respected him so much. I've sat in this office so many times with him and watched him look over at the picture of his parents and he never talked about referred to him as his stepfather, he always talked about him as his father. That was his father, that's the way felt about it and that's the way it was. You could tell he had tremendous respect for him. He must have been quite a man, the way he handled the Depression – putting personal things aside to keep his business going. It's kind of like President Ford, take care of the country before I take care of myself. The type of thing that he must have learned at an early age.

Let me just go back to when I did meet him. When they started the museum plan, I was not part of the planning committee.

Smith: So, he comes out of office – were there people here in town miffed or surprised, or whatever, that they decided to go to Rancho Mirage?

Allen: Yeah, there was a lot of that. There was a lot of misunderstanding and I think there is still some of it – not nearly – I think the funeral probably took care of it. But over a period of time, there's just no question about it. There were letters to the editor and various things, that he gave up his hometown, which

he didn't, but they thought he had. There were good reasons he went out there, and a lot of it had to do with Mrs. Ford's health.

Smith: And one senses that decision was not made on the spur of the moment.

Allen: No, because they had planned to come back to Grand Rapids, that was their original plan, and it got changed during the course of events. A lot of people just didn't accept whatever the reason was – they just didn't want to listen to it. They just said, "Hey, he abandoned us to be with other kinds of people, other than Grand Rapids." Well, he didn't ever fuss about that. I don't know that he was ever offended by that, but he just kept coming home. And he kept calling it home. That's all he could do.

Smith: There's a story, it's in this issue of *Grand Rapids Press*, where I think Maury DeJonge is the source. He was out there visiting him. It was almost sunset; the sun was setting over the mountains, and they came off the golf course or something and the president just said, "Now do you see why we decided to live out here?" If anyone had that experience, then they would understand.

Allen: Really it was the right environment for him at that time. But you are absolutely right, there was a lot of discontent about the fact that he had gone from here.

Smith: Did that affect the decision about putting a museum here? Was there ever any debate about a single facility? Was it a fete accompli that the library was going to be in Ann Arbor because he'd been sending papers there? And the whole decision of where to put the museum in the context of revitalization and so on.

Allen: As to the split, the museum and library being split geographically, there was a meeting in Ann Arbor at the president of the university's house and he and a couple of the senior vice presidents from the university were to meet with Bob Barrett, who was his military aide that had come in and was his chief of staff here. Bill Seidman was supposed to be there to represent the Grand Rapids side. I got a call from Bill Seidman in desperation. He missed a flight or couldn't get out, asked me if I'd get in the car and drive to Ann Arbor and just represent. I'd no background on what had transpired, so I went into this

meeting and it was very clear to me, despite some things that have been written since by the university, it was very clear to me that it was the wish, which is almost understandable, that the University of Michigan have both the library and museum as one unit.

I spoke, I don't think eloquently, but I just spoke to the fact that I knew that there was a great deal of interest in Grand Rapids, his home, to have his museum here, if not his library, but at least the museum. President Ford seemed, as I was watching him, he seemed to be nodding his approval and the meeting was over. And the next thing I knew that decision had been made to split them. Now, I'm not saying that because I presented something. I just think that he was torn. He had two great loves here. He had hometown and he had his university, and he saw it as the absolute best solution.

Years went by and we would bring the same subject up again over time, and he'd look at me and said, "Marty, at the time, we made the right decision." I said, "I'm not questioning that, but times have changed, and I don't know that you'd make that same decision now." He never responded. So it happened and it happened, probably, so easily, I can just visualize him after that meeting saying, "Hey, here's the solution. We're going to have the museum in Grand Rapids, we'll have the library...."

Smith: Isn't that exactly what a congressman would do?

Allen: Absolutely.

Smith: Solomon, you split the baby and come up with a perfect straddle. You resolve the problem without contemplating what the needs might be twenty years from now.

Allen: He was a decisive man. He was a great listener on a variety of subjects and he would, at the conclusion, have a very comfortable time making a decision.

Smith: He's been quoted as say, "Raising the money was the toughest thing." In fact, I think it is one of the things that brought he and Jimmy Carter together, because they were both presidents who were not re-elected, who suddenly found themselves saddled with an obligation to raise millions of dollars to build a library. People talk about all the perks of the ex-presidency, and no

one focuses on the fact that the first thing they have to do, whether they want to or not, is to raise all this money. And I think then, even more than now, it was not something you thought about. First of all, you didn't think you were going to lose. No one wanted to contemplate that, and I'm sure, given his frugality, and given what he was accustomed to spending in campaigns, when someone came to him and said we need nine million dollars or twelve million dollars to build this facility, it must have been an absolute shock.

Allen: To him, it was. He wasn't quite used to have that kind of money spent on him per se. Dick Ford can really fill you in on an awful lot of the story. But there was a very wealthy man from the east that was sort of head of the fundraising, who apparently did nothing. It was the local people here and the people at the university that, together, really did put that together. Some of it was foreign money, too. There was some money from Taiwan and other places that were fairly significant - that were, in a sense, probably as far as he would ever go to use his self.

You think back, he had time after he lost the election. It wasn't the best of times, but he still had time to utilize the resources he had, but he'd never do that. LBJ, on the other hand, although he'd resigned, or said he wasn't going to run again, they told me the next day, he was raising money from the White House. Well, Ford would have never done that. But he was always surprised at the magnitude of money. He never personally had money, he knew how to appropriate money if he had it, he did that in Congress, he did that well. But he never really had to raise money. His campaigns here for Congress were minimal.

He always told me about how little they'd raise and how little staff he had and all that. It was a shock to him, but went really well. I think Dick Ford can fill you in. He was really close to the local head, which was Carl Morgenstern, who has passed away, who really did raise the money. He coordinated with the University of Michigan. Michigan was the accounting side of all the funds, but it was smoother than he even thought. His thoughts were, "My gosh, this is a lot of money

When I did get involved with them it was just on the dedication event. Not the planning of the building, but the dedication. We were in this office, he had an alphabetic list that he brought with him of who he wanted to invite. The first name, I still remember, is Carl Albert, alphabetically, the first person on the list. We sat here, this committee, and he said, "Now I want to explain to you, there are people on there that will not come, but I owe them an invitation," and Carl Albert was the first on the list.

When the invitations were out, he said Carl's not well. When invitations went out, the first call (they just had to send a card back), but a telephone call came from Carl Albert. He said, "I have already had a plane provided to me, I will be there." And that whole thing mushroomed from that. This small list that he had just kept growing and growing. But again, he never saw the magnitude of his impact. He never understood the magnitude of dollars, but because of his appropriations, [committee experience] when I was running the foundation, John Baab and I would, as soon as he would get the statement, he could go through that thing like – he could understand the utilization. So, big money, lots of people, it's back to that phrase, "What's the fuss all about?" He never comprehended what the fuss was really about.

Smith: Tell me about his frugality.

Allen: Well, he was pretty tight. I experienced it directly. He and I had an annual bet on the Notre Dame–Michigan football game, and he would initiate the call to me. I just knew it was going to come the week before the game and he would say, "We've got to make a bet on game." I said, "Yeah, we do." It used to be rather simple, we'd just bet the game. But then it got more complicated because he wasn't, at that time, winning very many bets. So he upped the ante a little bit. For a gambler, absolutely the wrong thing to do is double your bet. But he thought maybe he could make up what he'd lost and then he decided that we had to look at the odds and we would discuss that. And it wasn't just one conversation, this would take two or three conversations. We'd finally make the bet. If he lost, I didn't see my money very fast, so I would write him a letter and said, "I think it probably slipped your mind, but you owe me ten dollars." And then it would finally come.

There were a couple of other bets he'd make – one was with Max Fisher for the Ohio State game and one was with Pete Secchia for the Michigan State game. Those were the three games he'd bet on, and they all experienced quite the same thing. So we had to remind him of it. It got to the point where when he would win, and I wouldn't send the money, he'd call me and say, "You know, I haven't gotten the money." And I'd say, "I'll tell you what, I decided to take the ten dollars and put it in the church basket in your name." He said, "Send me the money." And then one time I had to tell him, "Listen, you know, we're doing this betting over – you've probably got a government phone – I've got a government phone here – and we're betting over the public lines, I don't know that I'd want to pay you off." And he said, "Send me the money."

When he would play golf, and Dick probably could share golf stories, but he was known not to be able to pay his bets off quite as quickly as he should, and he never carried any money with him. That was another part of his cocoon. What would he ever carry money for? He just wouldn't do it. So he was just very frugal. I played golf with him, he and two of his really good friends out in Palm Springs once, and they were awfully nice guys. Obviously, very wealthy, just delightful people, and I asked President Ford a question, we were waiting to tee off on a hole, and I said, I'd heard about a club in Palm Springs which they said was the most expensive club in the country or something. I mentioned it to him and I said, "How much would it cost to become a member of that club?" He looked at me quite quizzically and the other two started laughing. They said, why would you ask him that question? I said, I just figured – they said, he has no comprehension of the cost of being a member of any club, any place in the United States, because as far as he's concerned, he's a member of them all. It's free. So there's a lot of stories. He was pretty frugal.

Smith: Do you think that was the product of his upbringing and what he went through to go to college, which people don't realize?

Allen: Oh, yeah, I don't think there is any question. Plus the Depression, the combination. But what he had to do at the University of Michigan to get

through college, to do dishes in sororities or fraternities, wherever he did it, but he just...

Smith: Sell blood.

Allen: Yeah, and I bet he hitchhiked back and forth a little bit from Grand Rapids here. There was a train that went by because he told me he'd take the train once in a while. But he didn't have any money at that time at all. If you really think about his life, and the time he was living, the things he appreciated most was his family and sports. It was almost like his reward because he didn't have any money. The day his father, his real father, arrived in Grand Rapids, he was working in a restaurant. Here was a high school kid working in a restaurant. So he goes through that stage of his life. He didn't make a lot of money in those days as a congressman, and he was going to come out of that with a nice pension, but he had to go back to work. We used to kid him a little bit that he then ended up with a congressional pension of the vice president, president, and military, which added up. But he'd just smile at that.

Smith: That raises a delicate subject, but it's an important subject. He took some heat, particularly in those early days after leaving the White House, for "commercializing" the office. Now, it was going to happen. The reason Nixon didn't take speaking fees was because Nixon was in the business of rehabilitating himself and he wasn't giving many speeches. I always say, we have this civic religion in this country, we like to think that the office makes the man and people go into the presidency a mere human being and they inevitably grow and they become this kind of icon. The fact of the matter is, they come out pretty much what they were when they went in. You can predict what kind of ex-president they are going to be.

You knew that Richard Nixon, as long as he drew breath, was going to be rehabilitating himself – whatever that took. You could have predicted Jimmy Carter would spend the rest of his life pursuing humanitarian and other causes that were important to him. And you knew that Gerald Ford would go to chicken dinners and speak for Republican candidates, the things he loved to do, and play golf when he could, and so on. But he did take some heat for it.

Did he ever talk about it? Do you think there was ever any - I don't want to say guilt - because he could be stubborn?

Allen: He could be very stubborn. I remember having a couple of discussions with him about it when a lot of that was going on and he seemed to be very comfortable with the decision. He used to say that he never had the opportunity to do for his family what he might have done, and a lot of that was family-oriented. He said he wanted to put himself in a position to help other people and he was very generous with charities and various things.

So I think he looked at it as an opportunity, not to take care of himself so much, as the family and other things that he might be able to do and he did them well.

Smith: Plus, isn't it also true that he was one of, if not the biggest single donor to the Foundation?

Allen: He was. After he passed away there was a large amount that came our way that way, and there is still probably more to come later on. So he was very generous with his money, very generous with his time. He was funny about it. He kept raising money, also, for the Foundation. When he would do these things, sometimes he would speak, he would send part of his money. But he always used to tell me that we couldn't cross the Mississippi, that Mrs. Ford – that was her side of the Mississippi to raise money for the Betty Ford Center, which he was so proud of. The other side was ours, so we had to be real careful about where we raised money. I can see why people are that way, I guess, but knowing him, I don't think he was looking for a lot of personal things for himself.

He lived a very good life. He had beautiful homes with help from Leonard Firestone. He lived a very nice life, which he enjoyed. But I still think his motivation was primarily to take good care of his family – that he didn't think he could do based on what he had.

Smith: Now I think there would be much less criticism. He took the brunt because, in some ways, he was the first.

Allen: He was.

Smith: That said, I don't think even then people would have criticized speaking fees, per se. I think there were a couple of things, and again my sense is, and we can always edit this out if you want, but that Bob Barrett, as his first chief of staff, was on the lookout for commercial ventures. And it was some of those. I think there was a hook up with the Franklin Mint, or something – there were a couple of those things that were very easy to go after and that was...

Allen: Yeah, and I'm sure there were certain things that he did like the Franklin Mint and a few others that, in retrospect, he might have not done, that he didn't, at the time, see that as a wrong thing. He was being given advice, which he accepted, and did it. But I'm sure there are a few of those things that he wouldn't have done over again.

Smith: I also wonder how much of that - at that point, because that's '77, '78, '79, against the background of, "Gee, I've got to raise ten millions dollars to build this museum." How much of that is factored into it?

Allen: I think that was part of it, but I don't really know because I didn't have an awful lot of conversations. I really just had the feeling that it wasn't so much he knew that he was a different person than he was before in terms of where he was as a former president, versus a former congressman. He just saw it as an opportunity without offending anybody – he didn't think he was going to offend anybody – that he had some goals in mind that he wanted to take of. Whether it was money for the museum, his family, or some other things he wanted to do. He was very generous. He did it in other ways – he did it with his golf tournament in Vail, and all the money that was raised out of that went to the Vail Valley Foundation. So he did a lot of those kind of things.

Smith: One thing that people don't realize is the extent to which he spoke on college campuses. Usually for free. He would go into classrooms, talking to and listening to kids.

Allen: If you look historically, he had really a great interest in the youth. When he built this museum, when he said he didn't want it to be a memorial. When he talked about a growing history – he was really talking about the young people. I'm always impressed by the fact that Father Hesburgh, who was then president of Notre Dame - there had not been a sitting president that went to a

college campus since the Vietnam war. They didn't want to go on campuses. Father Hesburgh called President Ford to come on campus, And it still was an issue. He didn't hesitate. He said, "When do you want me there? I'll be there." Father Hesburgh was surprised and knew that at Notre Dame or any other place, the students were going to probably take exception.

But he came and he did his thing and he enjoyed that – he enjoyed talking to students. He was always disturbed, I think, about things like Oliver Stone providing education his way and not the right way. I went back and read as many of his speeches to colleges, whether it be commencement addresses or other. And they are fascinating to read. You could really sense that he really had his heart into talking to those students, and he just enjoyed it.

Smith: Let me go back to the Hesburgh relationship. Was this after Hesburgh had agreed to be on the – the clemency board? Because that was pretty early in the administration.

Allen: Yes. I think that it was. In fact, Father Hesburgh is somebody you should talk to. He talks a lot about the amnesty, the pardon, about the courage of Ford. He always was very impressed, but he was most impressed with the fact that he came back, he was the first president to come back to a college campus, after Vietnam regardless of where it was.

Smith: Had they had any relationship before he went on the clemency board?

Allen: I don't know whether he had any in the civil rights issues or not when Nixon appointed him to the civil rights [commission], and eventually fired him from that commission. I don't know. I don't think so. That was probably the first time they had any kind of – he certainly didn't as a congressman, I know that. But they did afterwards and it was an interesting experience to be with the two of them, which I had the privilege to do that one time here at a small dinner. Father Hesburgh would get up and give this five minute dissertation on President Ford in such a way that I looked over to President Ford and he was a bit teary eyed at that, too.

If you remember when Billy Graham came here, we had Father Hesburgh on video here because of his feelings. He just had a liking for students. I would

often call him after different groups had been into the museum and he was always fascinated, but he was always most interested in school children and up through college. That age group. If you look at the amnesty, his comment after the amnesty was that these were young people and they had to pay a little bit, but they needed to be brought back, because they had value. That's the way he saw it. That was a terrible political decision, but it was absolutely a great decision and he based it on the fact that they were young people that had made a mistake, that they had a right to come back .

Smith: You almost wonder, how much of that was grounded in his own upbringing – going back to the Ford household and the rules and the values.

Allen: Forgiveness, a lot of things, I'm sure.

Smith: But you pay a price, you're forgiven, you move on.

Allen: You pay a price. I agree. There is so much that goes back to his childhood. It's just amazing. This little prayer that we have from the Proverbs out on the burial site, he learned that on his mother's knee. He used that the night that he met his real father and he cried himself to sleep with that. When he was going over the side of the *Monterey*, in a typhoon he said that prayer, the night before he became president. That all goes back to this mother and father who must have been absolutely marvelous with those kids.

When the real relationship started I was named the trustee of the Foundation, but five years later, I get a telephone call from President Ford. Bob Griffin, Senator Griffin, was the chairman and President Ford called me and asked me if I'd be chairman and I hesitated for a minute and I said, "Now, I have to remind you of something." He said, "Yes, what's that?" I said, "Well, I did my undergraduate work at Notre Dame, did my graduate work at Michigan State, and I'm replacing a University of Michigan man and I don't know how that's going be perceived." And just like that, he said to me, "I knew all that. But I also knew you got wiser in life and married Sue, who was a University of Michigan graduate." And that, I think, was the beginning of a long, personal relationship that I had with him.

Smith: That's a great place to break because there are a couple of big things I want to get into.

Smith: Let me ask you a large question about Ford and religion. Some people have asked me, was the president religious? My sense is that it was something very important to both of them, but there was a kind of Midwest reticence that characterizes them in a lot of ways. They weren't about to parade it, much less risk even appearing to exploit it.

Allen: I have to tell you, as well as I knew him, I was surprised. I really didn't become aware of how really deep their religion was until they got into the tail end of the funeral planning, not even the front end. The front end was a lot of military, and, as you and I know, we went and talked more about the "coming home" aspect of it. I was really surprised how deep their religion was. He certainly didn't wear it on his sleeve. In private conversations with him he said all the right things that might have been relative to religion, but he never talked about his religion.

Then come to find out how deep it really was, even now more associated with some of the children, one gets the sense that there was so much of it there. Just like the proverbs that I mentioned in some of the parts of the funeral that were used. But, boy, you go back and read and study and there was one commencement that he did, I think, for Mike when he was practicing to become a minister. There was some really strong religious tones in that, that I just couldn't find in any personal things that I had with him, or things he wrote or he said. But later it became very obvious he was very deeply religious. I didn't realize it. It was a surprise to me.

Smith: What are your memories about the Billy Graham visit?

Allen: I was trying to remember a couple of years ago when I was thinking of Father Hesburgh, and I always sort of had this feeling. I really, really respect Billy Graham, but I really had this feeling with presidents, he sort of became the presidential chaplain, if you will. So I didn't see, in my mind, anything distinguishing again about Billy Graham being here for that. I really didn't. I thought he had this relationship with him. But I just never saw evidence of it. He lived a life that was exemplary, but not necessarily showed the religious

side of him. I don't remember, it might very well be that he didn't like to be away on weekends, but I don't remember being in Grand Rapids on a Sunday and going to church – I don't know how much he went to church at Grace Episcopal when he was growing up – I just don't know.

Smith: It's interesting because I sense on the one hand a kind of live and let live attitude. When you get him talking about Congress in the old days, it was very clear there was a certain amount of misbehavior going on. There was a lot of drinking going on. There was more than a little womanizing going on. And you have this sense that Ford had kind of chuckled at the frailties of his fellow men. But at the same time, he'd never preach. It goes back again to this Midwestern, and that generation, too. It found expression in his politics – the fact that he was conservative. He was an economic conservative, he was in the traditional sense, a social conservative in that there were things that were personal, that were intimate, that were left to the individual, that were not part of the political process and certainly not something for government to intervene on. And his career straddles this period when all that changed.

Allen: I think you're right. He just lived this exemplary life that, however he was brought up, he would look at those misdoings of different people and didn't accept them - to the point that he wouldn't feel that he had to call them the bad guys and him the good guy - but that he would continue to live his life. But he liked to observe all that, and he didn't like what he saw, but he liked to observe. It's not that he was the gossipy type, but that he kind of liked to know what was going on. And yet, he just wouldn't become part of it. Those guys would go out to have a drink practically every day after they were in Congress – Democrats and Republicans together – and he would be a party to that, he went out with them. But I doubt that he ever came home late, or...

Smith: A lot of this, in my observation, was evident in his attitude about Clinton.

Allen: Yeah.

Smith: Which was a complicated...

Allen: Yeah, that's the first time he really kind of openly came out, and I guess he didn't directly say anything about the kinds of things he was doing, but he just

felt that in that office he had to pay the price and he felt obligated to do that. In conversations I had with him, the only thing he would say to me about Clinton was, “You know, since Truman, when I became active in Washington, I’ve never seen anybody that can communicate like Bill Clinton. And he can do it regardless of who the audience is. But his management style in his management of his life was very, very poor.”

The other thing he told me was that when he had dinner with Hillary and Bill Clinton out in Colorado, he said, “I couldn’t believe how smart she was. She is one smart person.” So I don’t know whether he was meaning like Bill might not have been as smart, but he had all that street knowledge that he needed. But he was intrigued with them. When they went out and played golf with Jack Nicklaus in Colorado, in a sense Bill Clinton cheated at golf. He [Ford] was just beyond himself, as was Jack Nicklaus, to the point that they didn’t want to play with him anymore. The guy was cheating, and cheating to him was not a good thing.

Smith: Did he talk about Nixon?

Allen: Never heard him talk about Nixon at all – other than the only thing I ever did was, he and Betty both talked about their close, personal relationship with him and what a disaster it was that happened. That’s the only thing he ever talked to me about as far as Nixon.

Smith: We were talking about his judgment about people. Obviously anyone in that position is going to have a lot of friends and a lot of would-be friends, and some people with mixed motives. Let’s face it, it just goes with the territory. Celebrity-hood. How did he cope with that?

Allen: I know that he knew the kind of degrees you just went through. People were just good friends, people that were friends, but also had favors, and those that just wanted favors. He had a difficult time saying no to anybody, regardless how they fit into those categories, other than when they got in that bottom tier and they irritated him. Then he didn’t want anything to do with them. I can’t imagine there were a lot of people like that. He just hid his feelings about people trying to use him. It is interesting, later in life, as he learned how autograph seekers were liable to put something on to make some money off of

– but it was interesting, you’d walk with him and somebody would want an autograph. He’d see a little kid and autograph and he’d see somebody and he’d would just avoid them. I’d say later, “I noticed you avoided him,” and he’d say, “I just knew what he was up to. I knew what he was going do and I don’t want to favor them with any of that.” So, probably throughout his lifetime he probably had some of those kind of people.

Smith: One thing that no one knows is how much time he and the other former presidents spend signing their name.

Allen: Oh, Lord, yes. They got pretty wise as a group when they would sign something when they were together. They would make an agreement that they would only do fifty, and then they would use those for personal friends. But a tremendous amount of that came across their desks at times. We had enough of it here where we’d make some judgments and send them out to him. He’d always say yes, but they were coming from all over and how much time they’d do that.

This is a little bit different subject, but it’s similar. What really concerned me in his latter years – he needed a literary doorkeeper. He was saying yes to things, he was not taking his usual care that he had used all through his life – how careful he was – just almost by his own nature he was that way. He had lost that near the end, and it was hard to see some of the things that came out - the guy who wrote the foreword to the Warren Commission. That whole incident never should have happened. There were just a lot of things going on that I was just amazed. He went outside of his own boundaries, he didn’t even put any restrictions on it. He didn’t say, “Hey, talk about this five years after I’m gone” or anything and right afterwards stuff just started spilling out that I felt was really unfortunate.

I never could figure out how big the impact was, comments that came out from Mike Lloyd or DeFrank, or Woodward. I never bump into those people on the street that say, jeez, how could he ever do that kind of thing?

Smith: But I wonder if some of that is, and it’s the other side of this Boy Scout quality, there was a kind of almost naiveté about him. On the one hand, you’re right, he could sense when people were obviously using him. On the other

hand, part of it you also wonder – here you are, you’re out of Washington, you’re out of the picture. Bob Woodward wants to come spend time with you, which is flattering. He wants to talk to you about all these things, and he just didn’t put any restrictions on it.

Allen: You’re right. Particularly in those later years when he wasn’t traveling anymore. He was very alert at that time, but he just wasn’t traveling, wasn’t giving speeches. But he missed that life. So anybody, I didn’t talk to media people, but it is amazing to me that people, be it Don Rumsfeld or Bo Schembechler would say to me, how’s he doing? I miss him, I would really like to talk – I’d say, “Call him.” He loved that. But people would feel they were imposing, so I can see him doing that and I can see him just having a enjoyable conversation. But he didn’t put any restrictions on it. Writers are writers.

Smith: Now, that raises an interesting thing, because one senses that Mrs. Ford, in particular, was upset, not that some of these things appeared, but they appeared as soon as they did. Would she have known that this was an ongoing thing – or would she have anticipated– or would anyone have anticipated? Frankly someone should have.

Allen: That’s my point. There was no doorkeeper there. I respected Penny, his chief of staff, an awful lot, but she wasn’t the right person to do that. If you’re going to have a Woodward, DeFrank and a Mike Lloyd there, you’d think somebody would be sitting there with him...

Smith: Almost protecting him from himself.

Allen: Yeah, right. We see that in other people all the time, but he didn’t. He had nobody to protect him, so I don’t think the family, until it came in print, knew what he had said. I mean, my understanding with the Mike Lloyd and the, I think, Maury DeJonge preceded Mike in those meetings out there, maybe I was naive, too, but it was about the obituary. The official obituary, which I was pleased was coming out of the Grand Rapids paper. What I didn’t know, and maybe it started out to be that, and maybe President Ford started getting it – it went way beyond an obituary. It became what he thought about former

presidents and everything – had nothing to do with his obituary. And I can see him sitting there talking about it.

Smith: Everyone brings their own outlook. I remember reading the series in the *Grand Rapids Press* and I thought, “Is this what you came up with after twenty years of visits.”

Allen: It was terrible. It was awful.

Smith: It was really very thin.

Allen: Especially the first Mike Lloyd article, which was the main article. I think it was just a reaction to Woodward. It was poorly written and Mike’s not that bad a writer, but it was done in a hurry and it just didn’t flow very well, it just wasn’t good writing. It was almost like, “I’ve got to get something in the paper right away.” It was very poorly done. I’ve often wondered when he had those kind of meetings, whether it was his naïve sense of value, that he trusted people, that they would use good judgment. I wonder if he sat there said, “I’ll say anything I want, but these people, I’m giving the privilege to these people to sit with me...” I wonder if he sat there and said, “Well, they’ll never put this in,” and therefore never said don’t write anything about it for five years or something. I just never could figure that out, other than his age. He had that loneliness that he was missing a part of life that had been – his whole life he was sitting out there and he just loved to talk to people.

Smith: This is purely speculative, but you wonder how he would have reacted to the DeFrank book.

Allen: Oh, I think he’d have been upset. I really do. Tom was a friend he respected...there again, I don’t know whether because of that and because that’s what he would think of him, that he would just write a different kind of book. That part did hurt Mrs. Ford, and I can see, because she became a little bit of a doorkeeper there in the house at the very end. Although she wasn’t in the room all the time with Tom and I would guess she’d said, “Boy, I wish I’d never” – you know – it was too personal.

Smith: I have to believe she played some role – remember when the Profiles in Courage Award was announced and I know because I got a call from Ken

Duberstein saying, “Can you help?” I said, “What do you mean?” Because President Ford wasn’t going to go. And what makes me think about this is, I remember the *Newsweek* story, and I saw Jon Meacham not long ago, and I said, “I thought that was a really good story, but there was one thing in it that really kind of jumped off the page at me, and I thought was kind of inaccurate. It was more than a hint that Ford had consciously, deliberately, met with these historians and reporters in an effort to shape his historical legacy.”

I said, “I can’t think of anyone who spent less time plotting and scheming about how history would see him than Gerald Ford.” The classic evidence of that is if you were making a movie about Gerald Ford’s life, you’d end it with the Profiles in Courage Award, because that really was – it had come full circle and it was just – you couldn’t have scripted it. But he had so little sense of self-dramatization. That’s what was totally missing. To some people it was naiveté, some people thought it was innocence. He simply wasn’t the sort of person - it goes back to what you said, “What’s the fuss all about?” He wasn’t going to go to Boston.

Allen: I didn’t know that, but that doesn’t surprise me.

Smith: He wasn’t going to go! Initially, and I have to believe that Mrs. Ford was part of the process that brought him around. Clearly she understood, instinctively, the meaning of this event. This wasn’t just another award.

Allen: I don’t think he did. I really don’t think he did. You may be right, somebody influenced him. Whether you did or somebody else, but after the fact he would talk to me a lot about that. He’d say, “You know, that was the best thing I ever did. I never worked so hard at practicing,” I know you had written it – “I’d never worked so hard practicing my delivery for that. I am just stunned at the impact...that the question is over with about the pardon. It’s done!” I don’t think he saw that from the front end.

Smith: He didn’t see it in advance. Which raises this larger issue...

Allen: I saw some things, some awards, there were some really neat athletic awards – big time that they wanted to give him, and they wanted him to be there. One

of them was in LA or something, and he just wouldn't go. I'd try and convince him and say, "It really is worth it to you." But he never perceived that. The NCAA made a wonderful award in his name, but by that time it may have been questionable about whether he could have gone. He had one of his sons go, but even then he struggled with, why are they doing this, what's the fuss? I'm just the guy that was put into a position. I wasn't elected, I was put in a position, I loved what I was doing, I wish I could have continued, but I didn't and that's the way it is. I think that's classic and I didn't know that, but it doesn't surprise me.

Smith: It was an amazing day. Part of it was, Ted Kennedy got up and said - he can be the most charming, almost deferential, and it was a remarkable day. One sensed that it was left to his friends to think about things like vindication. I don't think he thought in those terms.

Allen: No, absolutely not. He'd just get angry about it. He'd get angry - he'd say, "I've told them that so many times." But the questions never stopped. He couldn't stop it, they were going to ask those same questions every time, until something like this happened to stop the questions. It's over. And it was amazing to him. It was really a highlight of his life. I've got to tell you, that was one of the major highlights of his life - he talked about it so often. That and the Congressional Medal of Freedom were two awards that - he joked about the Medal of Freedom - that meant a lot to him - but he always joked because Betty got it before him.

Smith: You wonder why he didn't get it at the same time. And it was a Republican president. The story about the Clinton thing...I was working with Skip Rutherford, behind the scenes. It was ten months after the op-ed piece which the White House seized upon at the time, understandably. There was no quid pro quo, but I think Skip was the guy who went and said, "You know, you really ought to do this." It was the twenty-fifth anniversary. Then, I'll never forget, the day before was another op-ed piece in the *Times* about affirmative action. And the Willis Ward story. I was a little bit miffed, Clinton should have done just Ford. But you know how that White House works, they get eight or nine people and something for every political group. Ford became the center of attention, not so much because he was getting the award, but

because all these people wanted to thank him for the piece on affirmative action.

Allen: Isn't that interesting – I didn't know that... But even that, he used to joke about the fact, and he wasn't offended at all, he'd joke about the fact that his wife got a Medal of Freedom and he didn't. But he never saw himself getting the Medal of Freedom, even. He just didn't. And the Congressional Gold Medal became such a delight to him because they did it jointly – it was the first time it was ever done for a husband and wife and I think he was prouder of the fact that she was getting it than he was getting it himself. But it was home to him again – Congress. But did he ever have any expectations for that? No way.

The conversation that I had with Congressman Vern Ehlers about was it a possibility and then the discussion got around, well, you know, they both have achieved so much. But do you think he'd ever even, ever, ever, on any kind of award, named after him or whatever, say, "Wonder why they haven't done that for me?" He wouldn't think about that. He just wouldn't think that about that. When it was done, then he really appreciated it. Something as small as that presidential seal – when it was done – he thought, well that is pretty nice.

Smith: Tell me about 'them.' I know that's a huge subject, but he clearly was so proud of her.

Allen: Oh, yeah.

Smith: And what she had done. And what she was accomplishing. The stories about him at their annual event or whatever, cooking hot dogs. Taking this sort of back of the house role.

Allen: It was a great love story to start out with, but it was a love story that was based on what she had achieved versus what he did. It meant so much to him, whatever she was into. Small things like, we were at the hotel and they dedicated that room, the Ford Room downstairs, which is an elegant room. And right at the dedication he said it would do him a big favor if it was the Jerry and Betty Ford Room.

When I'd travel with him or when he was here, he was just on the telephone to her all the time. This whole thing with what she achieved with her overcoming her problems was – it was so big to him. I can tell you in a very private discussion with him, when I had a problem in my family, I was in a hotel room with him in Ann Arbor having breakfast and he said to me, “You're not yourself, Marty. Something's bothering you.” And I kind of let it out. I'd never seen it before, but Secret Service came to tell me it was time to go and he said, “No, I'm not going any place. I've got to take care of this.” But then it was immediately transferred to Betty. Betty called me and he was so proud of those kind of things, so proud of the Center, he would do anything for that Center. He would do anything for her.

I tell you, it was just one of the marvelous love stories. And it was a two way story. I will, for this purpose, tell one story that I haven't made public. I went to see her about three or four months ago and we had a great afternoon. The two of us sat and talked about a variety of things and she said how hard it is, and I said that I had not lost a spouse, so I don't know, but I assume it's very hard. I said, “It's harder, I think, for you because you both lived a long time together and spent good years together for longer than most people, so then when the parting comes it's got to be even tougher.” She said, “You're absolutely right.” And that's when she smiled at me and then got a stern look without saying, and said, “You know, if I'd known I was going to live this long, I would behaved myself a little better in my earlier life.” But she said, “Marty,” and she had this great grin, and she said, “but I had so much fun.”

When we left she was going to get up and I said, “No, I know where the door is, you sit and relax and I'll go on.” She said, “No, I want to go to the door with you.” So we went to the door and there was an olive tree outside their door. It's a pretty good sized tree, and she said, “You know, I never took the Christmas lights off that tree, they're white lights, not colored. All white, beautiful tree. And I turn it on every night so he knows I'm okay.” This was after he passed away. Well you just know, she's always worrying about him. She knows how he just took care of her and he was with her all the time. It was so sincere, it was just amazing.

Smith: It's been tough for her, hasn't it?

Allen: Very tough. I think that, as I said to her that day, I said, “One of the hard things is...” she said, “I don’t get out.” I said, “Well you should get out.” She said, “Well, I’ll get out with my friends.” I said, “I know the difficulty because you are outliving your friends like the President did. You don’t have the people to go with that you had in the past.” She said, “That’s part of it,” but she’s never really wanted to go back out, I don’t think. She used some excuses, I think, and people accept them. Why not? I tell you, it’s a love story that I really observed, it was just a classical love story. The decisions he would make, he said, “I like to stay in the hotel, rather than a private home because I can order butter pecan ice cream from the kitchen and she doesn’t know it.” But that kind of stuff – like early romantic stuff that was going on when he was ninety.

Smith: One thing I sensed about them, and I think maybe a lot of older people do it, one sensed that they particularly liked to be around younger people. That they made an effort to sort of cultivate younger people. Maybe it was just lucky timing or something, I was just one example of that. But I think it was almost a kind of renewal that went on.

Allen: I think they did and she was, you take a look at her kind of culture and her spirit, it’s really quite different than his. He was, as we’ve described him, quite quiet, and just very unassuming. But she was just kind of the opposite. She was a dancer. She liked excitement and I think as they grew older, I think they just would go back mentally to all the things they did as young people and enjoyed it so much. It’s just like you’re saying that to me. And I know what she was saying, but she said, “I really had fun.” She had the whimsical part of her that I loved.

Smith: Do you think he felt any degree of guilt about those early years when his political career really took off in the House and as Minority Leader, and he was on the road all the time, and really left her to raise the kids? Some of her problems, which may not have been directly related to that...if I were going to write a book about Ford, I’d write a book about the Fords, because I think the two of them, the two stories cover so much more territory. She really is representative of a whole generation of women who struggled to find their identity and their role, who certainly didn’t reject their traditional role, but

who in many ways were prevented by cultural norms from doing more. Whatever price, psychological or other that she paid for that – did he understand that?

Allen: I think he did. I don't know that for sure. I really think he understood that he had – he thought he was doing the right thing, and he was doing the right thing, politically and in his job, if you will. But I think he probably didn't realize that he was really putting her under the almost total role of raising a family. She had other talents, but she could never use them, and I don't think he realized that until later in life and realized what had happened to her. I'm sure he had to look back and say, gee - because he always would talk about taking care of the children, afterwards.

I didn't see the relationship with the children in my position with him at all until late in life. They would tell me stories about how he began to realize that he had not been there for her. I think he did, he never said that to me, but I just think he did. He realized that in doing the things that he was – and that happens to people – happens to business leaders, they get so obsessed with running a company they forget about their families and it causes problems.

Smith: I think maybe more of that generation than later generations.

Allen: Oh, absolutely. But at the same time, you saw the spirit of her. The *Sixty Minutes* interview, can you imagine being in the White House after that, people turned upside down, "What do we do?" and everything. He's sitting there saying, "That's Betty. May have lost a few votes, but that's the way it is."

Smith: One senses that she blossomed in the White House.

Allen: I think she did.

Smith: It's as if she had this stage and she could explore a lot of her interests. I was telling someone for this PBS special the other day, her interest in culture and clothes matched Jackie Kennedy's.

Allen: Yeah, very much so. I never thought of it in that comparison, but she did. And that was her life; that was how she grew up. She was a dancer and I guess you

know the great photograph Kennerly took of her on the last day in the White House is on top of the Cabinet table, just to me told the whole story. It took her right back in her dancing pose – this beautiful lady. And she did in the White House - she had an opportunity. But you think about it in terms of Congress, yes, she was in some of the aid-type things with the wives, but that wasn't her. She watched him closely, by the way. Not the Nancy Reagan type with the President, but she watched him closely.

Smith: Remember the famous Vikki Carr story?

Allen: Well, I don't know the story. You probably know the story well, but I mean, referring to her as a Hot Tamale, he got lectured about that.

Smith: What was your favorite Mexican dish? He said, "You."

Allen: Yeah. I'll tell you a great story about that. I think Dick Ford was there. We were at, we being my wife and I and the Ford brothers and their wives, and I think there was one other couple there, at dinner out in Colorado around the golf tournament. We were talking and somehow the subject of Steelcase came up. Well, he jumped on it and said, "Well, you know, I dated Mary Idema," who was in the Steelcase family. And he kept going on quite extensively about it. All of a sudden she interrupted, she said, "Well, Jerry, did you ever think that if you'd married her you would have been president of Steelcase?" And that was the end of the conversation. She had her way of kind of stopping...it was so funny to watch her do that.

Smith: I think you told me the story at the rededication of Pantland.

Allen: Oh, yeah. That's on tape - that reference to the 1913 Room that they had to redo.

Smith: The renovation.

Allen: Renovation and she said something to the effect that, "You could go through a bit of a renovation yourself." I forget the lines, but I was there, and we have it on tape someplace, I think. She had a tremendous wit about her. She was a strong person, a very strong person. In some ways, probably, stronger than him in certain characteristics. If she had been a gatekeeper, I think he might

not have done some things, and some of them might not have even been outlandish. But she watched him very carefully. He didn't resent it, he appreciated it.

Smith: I know, at the time, she told him that dropping Rockefeller was a dumb thing to do.

Allen: Oh, I didn't know that.

Smith: That's not after the fact, that's at the time, she told him.

Allen: See that's the point I make, in a way, in saying that she brought him back to his own strength, because he didn't do those kind of things, he didn't do things for the best interest of politics. He would have never, probably, done that, and from that day forward he knew he'd made the worst mistake that he ever made and he was very open about that.

Smith: I wonder - the old line about men marrying their mothers - but the fact is, he clearly was accustomed to strong women. One gathers that Dorothy Ford, just by what she went through and what she did in life, had to have been a pretty impressive figure in her own right.

Allen: And in particular as it got later in life, he never openly talked about the abuse of his mother, but it was almost like saying, Betty stepped forward after her abuse of herself, and I've been through it this way - there's some parallels in that life, that he saw his mother and his wife go through some real severe problems. It had to affect him. I bet he did compare himself a lot to her.

Smith: Tell me the story about the merry-go-round on one of his visits back home.

Allen: Well, at the public museum when they dedicated that, again, he was very good when he was healthy, to come back for events like he used to come back as a congressman. And that was one of them, the dedication. It was a black tie affair and it was very late and they had rebuilt this merry-go-round. It was a very ornate type of room overlooking the river that the merry-go-round was in, and so they took the major guests in the room to ride the horses on the merry-go-round. They put him on a horse and I've never seen such a disgusted look on his face. And he'd look at the Secret Service men and say,

“Tell them to stop this thing. I want to get off this horse.” The great photograph is, again, it shows her whimsical and his kind of ‘keep things straight.’

She had a picture taken for their Christmas card on a Harley Davidson motorcycle. A big red motorcycle. She sitting on the motorcycle, he’s there in a black leather jacket and you could almost tell he’s like “What am I doing?” and “Betty asked me to do it, so I’d better do it.” So they get the picture and it’s the only time I heard him refer to himself in a presidential manner. He said, “This isn’t very presidential, me standing in a black leather jacket next to a Harley Davidson with my wife on it. With ho-ho-ho written on the bottom of it.” She negotiated with him. She said, “Can I have sixty of them to send to my sixty best friends?” So they did and it’s my favorite picture of the two of them. It is just a marvelous picture because it tells so much about both of them.

Smith: It’s a perfect microcosm of what was attractive about each of them, and what attracted each of them to each other. The classic opposites attracting, in many ways, and it was greater than the sum of its parts. It’s almost like – you think of Burns and Allen – two people with very fixed personae and part of the charm was that kind of creative friction between this free spirit and this traditionalist. Some of that came out in the White House, but it was so politicized. Is the First Lady overstepping her bounds and all of this. You almost wish, if there had been some skilled presentational people, you could have taken that relationship and...

Allen: ...that relationship and the relationship with his mother and stepfather. Not a sob story, but a sincere story of a man who was so influenced by his mother and stepfather. And so influenced by his wife.

Smith: The more people knew about Ford, the more impressed they were. But, for lots of reasons, they didn’t get to know them. In a curious sort of way, it’s almost as though they got to know him more when he died than when he was in the White House.

Allen: Oh, I think they did. I don’t think there is any question about that. I do think that the funeral was thought out the way you wished that people on the staff

would have thought about when he was living in the presidency. Because there was so many aspects of that funeral that stood out in people's minds. The stop at the World War II thing was just so meaningful to veterans, and the use of the Capitol Building.

Smith: And validate, so I'm not a liar here, when we went out there and talked about, the one thing he was adamant about, remember?

Allen: "I'm not going to have that damn riderless horse going down Constitution Avenue." He just didn't want to do it. I went back, as you remember - well that's his choice. But at the same time, I think there was some history behind us, so I went to the Military District of Washington and they wrote a letter about the history of the horse and everything. That didn't make any difference to him at all. "I don't want the horse." He wanted it simple, he wanted it focused on his second home, which was the Capitol Building and his home in Grand Rapids when he came back. We had to bring that out of him.

The military had set the plan for burying a Commander in Chief, which is rightfully so, but it was lacking in some of the real personal things to him, because he had a hard time addressing it himself. He just didn't want to address it. So we had that day with him and I think that turned his thought process around and he seemed to – and I'm sure she probably had some very good conversations with him afterwards. They were a little upset because – the family was – he kind of let the military go with it. He probably thought that's the way they do it, and the family hardly had any input whatsoever, until quite a bit later, then they had input into it. It became more him than it did the military.

Smith: Let me ask you something – in our next conversation I want to get into detail about all that, but let me ask you, because that raises something. And it is difficult to phrase. I always sensed, maybe passivity is the wrong word, but it's almost an offshoot of modesty. He could be very stubborn, he could be assertive, but he could also yield, defer is maybe a better word. I wonder if part of the problem in the early phase in the presidency especially was, coming out of the congressional experience. Learning to be president, is, in fact, a very different thing. That quality of inviting input from a lot of people,

and then making a decision...I'll give you an example. Letting the re-election campaign go as long as it did. It slid for a long time.

Allen: The campaign?

Smith: Yeah. Assuming that Reagan wouldn't run, assuming that Reagan could be bought off, in effect. Lyndon Johnson is the other extreme, but somewhere there is a happy medium of having all these fine qualities, but at the same time looking out for his own interests and being a little more anticipatory and assertive.

Allen: You've used the phrase quite often about it, how he acted in Congress and he really didn't have to do all that when he was in Congress. But when he became president, he was a chief executive officer versus a congressman and a chief executive officer has a balance of being a good manager and being a micro manager. And the idea is to fall someplace in the middle, but he tended, as I watched him, he became a sort of after the fact. He would listen a lot and then take a position. But if he took positions himself early and then listened - he probably did - but it wasn't noticeable. He tended more, as he had said to me that day, when I was running that meeting. He said when I was there I would listen to him and know that they would come to a conclusion that was acceptable to me or I would do something about it. It wasn't that he was leading that and I think when they opened the papers on Vietnam, at the conclusion of that, you saw some of his assertiveness. He made some very firm decisions, but it was made, and never noticeable publicly that he ever did that. LBJ wouldn't have let that get away.

Smith: It put a greater burden on key staff around him to compensate for that. I don't mean to pick on Barrett or anyone in particular, but when some of these offers came along, that you just kind of uncritically accepted. Where, if there had been in place a process that asked really tough questions, I wonder whether he would have been better served - because he was such a trusting guy himself - he was someone who needed a Haldeman. That's the irony. The irony is that Nixon needed the opposite.

Allen: Yeah, if you had a leader that was that trustworthy, almost with a Boy Scout attitude, that he just trusted everybody, that's almost when you've got to kind

of guard him and protect him because he has so much faith that it works most of the time. But when it doesn't work, it doesn't work well. That's why I always wondered whether when he talked openly to people, he just had faith in them. They were people that he trusted; that's why he had them in front of him. And I never could quite get a handle myself on how that staff operated within the White House, other than I was disappointed at the end when I found out that they kept personal things out of his speeches and things like that, that were not good decisions. I don't know who made that decision, I have no idea, but you wonder whether that kind of thing was happening in the White House. And he, rather than be assertive, he would listen and trust them and then do something. It's a tough one.

Smith: That's a great one on which to end. We've had two solid hours, and we'll have no trouble filling the next two.

August 6

Allen: Let me go back to the question you posed to me about some of the unique things about the man that may not be known to the public. One of the things that is really amazing is the loyalty both ways about the man: his loyalty to other people, and the loyalty of other people. I often am again reminded, Kissinger told me two things. He told me that what distinguished him was his Cabinet, for one thing, because he selected people that he wasn't afraid of their egos. He said, "Look at me, I'm the perfect example, but there were many others." But he enjoyed that part of it and he enjoyed it a great deal to have those intellectual people talk to him and he listened carefully, but made his own decisions, and he earned that respect. But he said the other thing that is unique to Ford was his long standing relationship after he got out of office with heads of states. Particularly three: d'Estaing, Schmidt, and Lord Callaghan. I thought about that after we'd started the interview, and all three of those came to Grand Rapids.

Smith: And all three are at the other end of the spectrum, either politically or temperamentally. Giscard is not exactly a homegrown Midwestern type, and both Callaghan and Schmidt, Callaghan an Old Labor socialist in the British tradition, and Schmidt is a socialist from Germany.

Allen: That added to it. But they came here, of course they met every year in Colorado at the AEI World Affairs meeting, but when Lord Callaghan came here, Lord Callaghan came by himself for one occasion. And he said to me, "The reason I really wanted to come so badly was that I wanted to find out why we trusted him so much. The only way I was ever going to find out, and I needed to find out, was, I had to talk to the people he talked to. I had to go and walk the ways he walked." In fact, in his suit, he asked to be driven out to Lake Michigan because he'd heard the president talk about it. Took his shoes and socks off, rolled his pants up and waded into Lake Michigan. But he gave a talk that, unfortunately, it was never transcribed here that night. A small dinner group. He said, "Now I know why I've trusted him. I know more about his background. I know that he was a Boy Scout, but more importantly, I just talked to the people that he did and I have a sense about the man."

I think that's really quite a unique trait of his, and he, President Ford, was just the same way to other people. He, for example, would not let Kissinger come to Grand Rapids unless he was here. And there were others, too. There were people like that, he said, "Marty, if those kind of people come to my hometown, I've got to be there." The last time Kissinger came was the fall before the president passed away, and he didn't come, and he wrote a letter for me to read, and I had a terrible time reading it. It was a very personal letter about the fact that he wanted to be there. Kissinger gave his talk and we went out to the airport and he started getting on the private plane, started going up the steps and turned around and came back down. He was crying, he said, "I know I'm not going to see him in Grand Rapids again under the circumstances." And he turned around and went back up to the plane.

I had a lot of unusual experiences for somebody who never, ever expected to with a lot of people of the caliber of Bill Simon, Paul O'Neill - all those people had the same feeling about him. Carla Hill, you heard Carla's comments when she got the Ford medal, you could just tell it was coming from her heart. This cross loyalty among them is just amazing and he always, as I think I mentioned, he was always amazed that people came back for that annual dinner. He always was surprised. He didn't understand why they would all come back and that's when we'd always have to tell him why. But

it's just a side of him that I remember Kissinger and others bringing up that I thought was worth talking about. He has this amazing personality.

I'll tell you the other thing. He made people so comfortable. People ask me how in the world did he get up and talk at the White House, at a dinner, or how do you get up and do these things. I said, "You know, it's not normal for me to do that. I can't talk about my own family without getting moved someplace about them, but because he made you so comfortable, you kind of did things you wouldn't have even expected that you could do."

Smith: Tell us about the ninetieth birthday, both at the White House and here in Grand Rapids.

Allen: Well, it was very thoughtful of the incumbent President Bush to offer the White House and it was fun planning it because they both had a lot of similarities. They didn't like formality and it was going to be in the State Dining Room. First of all, they didn't want tux, they wanted business suits. Bush was known for not liking any kind of parties in the White House of any kind, it was a struggle for him. But that night turned out to be a fun night. It was a fun night for a lot of reasons. As you know, the remark was made by the president that we had one thing in common, and that was our lack of vocabulary. I happened to be sitting at the table with President Bush's mother. I thought his mother was going to just roll off the chair laughing about it.

So it took on that tenor, and the other rule they set ahead of time – let's not make this a late evening, which of course, both of them loved that. It was a wonderful night, it was a night where the two of them, an incumbent president, whoever it would be, but in this case was President Bush was very down to earth and President Ford said it was a fun night – the entertainment was fun.

Smith: Was there interaction between, for example, Betty Ford and Laura Bush?

Allen: No, because they were at separate tables. I'm not sure, I could be wrong about that, they may have been at the table with President Ford. You know how they split everybody up. I happened to be at the table with President Bush and his mother. The exchange between them was absolutely – she was on him

something terrible – this was shortly after he was playing his western role in going over to get them dead or alive and she was saying, don't ever say that again. She was punching him and he'd kind of wink at you. It was an interesting table because Happy Rockefeller was at that table, Jim Cannon was at that table. It was a very interesting table. I think all the tables were. My wife ended up sitting next to Tobin Armstrong and that was interesting. Anne Armstrong was there, too.

Smith: I saw where she just died.

Allen: Yeah. He really had serious feelings about her playing a very active role either as Cabinet or vice president. She was always a very generous lady to us. So it was just a wonderful evening and at the stroke of about nine-thirty, it was funny to watch because you could tell that the staff was working against time to get the food – it was moving in and out – if you didn't eat your main course pretty quick it was gone. The birthday cake was wheeled out as a whole cake, wheeled back in, but then another cake, all cut, came out. And the two of them disappeared, but they left the bar open in one of the rooms and we had a very nice night.

The party in Grand Rapids was incredible. The estimates were that ten or fifteen thousand people were here with a lot of children. He was very moved by it. Here again, it took a light note because Governor Granholm was active in his campaign in '76 as one of the young Republican "Scatter Blitzers." So she was relating that and Vern Ehlers, who has a sense of humor but he doesn't know how to express it - had a clever way of trying to invite her back into the party at that particular time. The music was great. He was terribly moved by it and they did a great thing. I don't remember whose idea, I think it was Ambassador Secchia's, but they got all the children together with just him. They're on that hill out there and there is just a sea of children's faces. And he was just absolutely delighted. He many times expressed that. That was the last time he came to Grand Rapids, of course.

Smith: Do you think he knew it was going to be the last time?

Allen: I think so. Let me tell you why I think so. He had a way about him to anticipate what might be coming. Let me give you a couple of examples. His

golf tournament. He loved that golf tournament in Vail. It went on for twenty years or so, but three years before the last year it was going to be, he announced the last time would be three years. And he said privately to some of us, "I just don't want to be wheeled out in a cart like Bob Hope does his tournament. I want to be playing golf, I want to be with the people."

I heard him say that to me in the back of the car after a National Press Club speech he had just given. The content was great, but he was having a little trouble delivering it. He knew it though. He got in the car and not necessarily in his temper-type thing, he said to me, "That's the last time I'll speak at the Press Club. I've got to begin to look at not speaking anymore." And the last time, I think – I could be wrong on this, you may know – but the last time I think he might have really given a public speech was when he gave the Ford Medal to Rumsfeld and Cheney. It was memorable because he had a difficult time physically – we had the podium really bolted down so that just in case he leaned against it or something, it didn't end up in Cheney's lap. But he struggled in his delivery and you could tell he was really struggling. But at the end, he stood between Rumsfeld and Cheney, and like a referee at a boxing match was holding their hands, because they were helping him. But he raised their hands and he said, "These are my boys." He was great until he got off stage – he went into a room in the Capitol and he did lose his temper. He said, "Don't ever allow me, ever, ever to do that again. Ever. I don't want to ever put myself in the position to make a fool out of myself." He sort of had that sense about him.

Smith: The only time I ever saw him display temper, it was really directed at himself.

Allen: Yes, and this was.

Smith: It was probably a couple years – well, I was still here, and I don't remember what the event was. I'd written some remarks and he spoke in the auditorium, and it wasn't bad. But part of the thing was, the lighting, or the angle of the podium – and, of course, he never put on glasses.

Allen: No.

- Smith: So, the result was – he probably hadn't practiced as he did for really major events - Penny was a co-conspirator in making sure...obviously the Kennedy – but a number of these things. The one where he really practiced the most was the White House dinner.
- Allen: Oh really? I thought you were going to say the Kennedy Profile in Courage.
- Smith: The Kennedy was a big deal, but in some ways that was easier because it came after the White House dinner. You remember in November of 2000, it was three days after the disputed election, no one knew who was going to be president. They had all the former presidents and first ladies back to the White House for the 200th anniversary of the White House. He had, if I do say so myself, really good remarks, and Penny made sure he really practiced. When I say this, you know what I'm saying, he benefited from low expectations.
- Allen: Yes.
- Smith: Because he wasn't an orator. And a lot of these folks, they were just glad to see him. They hadn't seen him in twenty or twenty-five years. Well, anyway, he got up there and he really delivered it well, and the jokes and everything. There's this appeal to unity which didn't specifically refer, but was in the back of everyone's mind. The history recurred. This is the man who, in times of national crisis, brings us together. That was the subtext for the event. Hugh Sidey wrote afterwards that he hit it out of the park, so on and so on. That was a great evening.
- Allen: This isn't a praise Richard type thing, but let me tell you something about what a lot of people have said over time. I remember you telling me years ago, because I was just curious and it really had to do with the Dole speech at the Nixon funeral – how you don't try and write for yourself, you try and understand the person and write for them.
- What you really did for President Ford in so many occasions was not create a different Gerald Ford, you just created a way for him to express himself that nobody had ever helped him do before. It was so noticeable to many of us, not that he was a different man, but he was saying things – and we all said to ourselves – he needed somebody like that during the campaign and he would

have probably won. But he had this anticipation that, just something about that he knew. The last conversation that I had with him was about the ship, the *USS Gerald R. Ford* (CUN-76). I had just been at some kind of meeting about it. Maybe it was the ship naming, I don't know, but it was getting close to the end. I called him and I said, "Lt. Commander Ford, this is Lt. Commander Allen calling." And he kind of stopped for a second, and I said, "Well, I just wanted you to know they named a ship after a Lt. Commander, I was a Lt. Commander, too." And he hesitated, and then he said, "Commander, let me ask you a question." I said, "Yes, sir." He said, "Tell me about your wartime duty." And of course, I didn't even have one battle ribbon, I was a peace time Lt. commander. But he had that wit about him. But then he said something, he said "Would you like to come aboard my ship, Commander?" I said, "Yes, sir." He said, "Will you be there for my ship?" I said, "Yes, sir." "Then you have my permission to go on board." That was the last conversation I had and I cried.

Smith: He was very proud of his naval service, wasn't he?

Allen: Oh, was he! Yes, he really was. He was proud, very proud of his naval service, talked a lot about it, we'd walk by the model of the *Monterey* out there and he'd stop me every time. It wasn't that he'd forgot that he told me, he just wanted to talk about it again. He'd show me on the ship where, when the typhoon hit, he slid across the deck, where he grabbed the guy line. He did, he had a tremendous pride in his military and I think he used that a lot to his advantage when he was in office. I really do, both as a congressman and as a president. He used his pride in the military extensively. But he was that way about football. He just had a tremendous pride in having been on that Michigan football team, and he talked about it so many times.

Smith: That brings up, and here's a classic instance where there was no speechwriter involved - tell us about the pep talks.

Allen: I went to one of the pep talks. I think I was there most often when he was there, but I didn't go into the pep talks. You've never seen somebody so completely relaxed and articulate talking to a football team. He just had a sense about him, and the interesting thing - he would always call me, he knew

about my football relationship at Notre Dame, we had a mutual relationship with Lou Holtz, so we just had this football thing.

He'd always call me and he would say, "I need your advice." I'd say, "What would you like my advice about?" He said, "Do you think I'll impose, when I go to Ann Arbor, if I would impose by asking Coach Schembechler or Coach Carr if I could talk to the team?" I said, "Mr. President, you've got to be kidding me." "No, I'm not kidding you. I could impose on people, I don't want to disrupt..." and of course they loved him. He would always go and do it. He loved it. He would almost schedule events in the fall in Ann Arbor so he could get there to be at football.

Smith: And it was often before the Ohio game?

Allen: Not necessarily. But I will tell you about a very unusual pep talk he gave. The University of Notre Dame decided to give him an honorary varsity letter. He had done so much for intercollegiate football and supported it and been a spokesman about it, just as he was about the Navy. That's the way he was. So they wanted to give him a letter. He was honored, delighted, and he went to Notre Dame on a weekend, it was a Boston College game and he talked to the Notre Dame team the night before the game. Now the ones at Michigan were practice sessions, this was the night before the game. This was Friday night. The full football team is assembled there, all in coat and ties, he walks into the locker room, he kind of looks around, and he says, "I've got to tell you guys something. This is the first time I've been back in a locker room the night before a college game. I almost have the same feeling I used to have and I want to talk to you about it."

Notre Dame had only won one game up to that time. They were like one and five, a terrible start. He said, "You know something? I want to tell you guys something. When I was a junior we won the national championship, when I was a senior, we won one game. That's it." He said, "I could hear the boos, I couldn't make out the remarks, but I said to myself at that time, 'How do those people know anything about it? How do those eighty thousand – hundred thousand people know what it's like to play a football game and to be tackled or to break up a pass or be in a critical situation – every play of the

game.” And he said, “That lasted my lifetime. Politically, as I went through politics and I knew I was going to be criticized, I always went back mentally to that – they don’t know what they’re talking about – I do. And I’ve got to live with it.”

So he made this speech to the team, which I thought was great, and at the end he said, “I’ll bet you guys would like to have a picture taken with me.” And individually he went through every one of them and had a picture taken with them. The next day is the game, he walks out with me to present the flag to the Irish Guard, and as we were walking around the band was playing America the Beautiful, and he sees these six guys, who were over six feet tall coming in kilts, he says to me, “This has got to be one of the neatest things I’ve ever done in my life!”

And he did it. Notre Dame won. Notre Dame won the rest of the games that year. Notre Dame went to a bowl game. Notre Dame opens with Michigan the next year. He calls me, he said, “You don’t think that will come up, do you? That I gave them this pep talk and now they’ve got this string of victories and they’re playing my alma mater.” I said, “No, I don’t think that will come up.” But he just loved the things he did.

Smith: He could have been a motivational speaker. I had no idea: Peter Pocklington told us that every year he’d give a pep talk to the Edmonton Oilers. Peter would bring the team down to Rancho Mirage. And every year he’d spend time with them, and he’d give them a pep talk.

Allen: As I’ve said, I saw it twice and he was as good as anybody I ever heard do that. In fact, when he’d go out to practice in Michigan, he’d go out there and he’d stand next to Bo while they were practicing and he would say, “Hey, Coach, would you mind getting your center?” The center was like six-five, 300 pounds, and he’d get up next to him and he’d talk to this guy and he’d say, now, I don’t know how to ever handle him, and yet he played in all star games.

Smith: It’s implicit in what you’ve said, but the relationship with Schemblecher was pretty special.

Allen: Very special. Extremely special. They just had a good sense, feeling about him. Bo was a tough guy. President Ford just kind of respected his toughness and his discipline. He just liked it. And of course, the results always were good, but again, late again in life, I sat with Bo – we were on the advisory board of the Ford School of Public Policy, and he said to me, “I miss talking to him.” I said, “Why don’t you talk to him?” and he said, “I’d be imposing on him.” I said, “No, you won’t.” I knew the number by heart. I said, “I’m going to write it on a piece of paper – call him.” I later found out that he called and Penny said they must have talked for an hour. I said, you can call him every day and he’ll be happy. This was when he wasn’t traveling and he just loved it. And Bo just loved that relationship with him.

Now Woody Hayes is probably even the greater story. Here is the greatest nemesis of the University of Michigan. Woody Hayes was the icon of that hatred, and he expressed it, he never referred to the state of Michigan. But President Ford, particularly when he was campaigning, he just liked football, it didn’t make any difference. It’s just like politics, it didn’t make any difference who he was talking with – Democrat or whoever it was, if it was Lord Callaghan who was a Labor person, that didn’t make any difference. He just respected – he respected Woody because of his knowledge of history – he was a great historian.

So when the dedication of the Ford Museum came in 1981, he was on the invitation list. I can remember it like it happened yesterday. As people were sort of – not parading, but there was only one route because of security – when Woody came, people saw him and there was some booing and some of that, and Woody was just smiling and everything – he was used to that, too. But afterwards, after the dedication, there was a small reception, mostly for out of town people, mostly for Cabinet level people, and I walked in and President Ford looked at me and he said, “Where’s Woody?” I said, “I don’t know, I don’t think he was invited.” He said, “See if he’s still in the hotel.” I went and got a phone, he was in the hotel. I said to Woody, “I’m calling for President Ford, he’d like you to come down.” Woody said, “You’ve got to be kidding me.” I said, “No, he wants you to come down.” He came down. Ford

gave him a big bear hug, and Woody was crying. It's that unusual relationship that he had that was so special.

Smith: And which the public never saw.

Allen: Never saw, never saw that. The public never saw very much, the relationship with three heads of state.

Smith: Right. It's just unfortunate that in the White House, he never became a vivid personality.

Allen: No, he didn't.

Smith: In some ways, she became more so.

Allen: She sure did, yeah.

Smith: Talk about Mrs. Ford a little bit, how she adapted to life after the White House. Obviously there's a before and after intervention.

Allen: The before is, obviously, she came out and she had the chemical dependency, and they had an intervention session and that's well-known. It was a typical intervention where she was very bitter and angry about it, but the family...

Smith: Was that something – I've heard over the years – was that something anyone in particular spearheaded? I've heard Susan's name mentioned.

Allen: If I had to guess, I would guess Susan. I could almost see a conversation going on where Susan...and they were all very active in the intervention, but I think Susan more than any of them. So they got through that ordeal and it was very difficult and she went and she's very proud to tell me, every time she talks to me she remembers exactly how many years she's been sober – that's what she'll say. "You know, Marty, I've been sober now for thirty-some years." She knows when it is and she goes to the AA meetings, and she was up until maybe just recently, her health maybe not allowed it, and the loss of her husband. But she went to it.

Smith: Tell us about Leonard Firestone and his role in the whole story.

Allen: Leonard had a worse problem almost, than she did, in terms of dependency. As I understand it, it was really close to reaching the point where he was going to lose his life. She interceded on his behalf and he became a recovering alcoholic and then they became extremely close friends, not only because he was generous with the Betty Ford Center, but he resided next to them both in Ranch Mirage and in Vail.

Smith: And didn't he have something to do with their being there?

Allen: Yes, I think there was some land that he had and he was in that compound in Rancho Mirage before they ever got there, and the same way in Vail. He was so close to them that he helped arrange for that. He was a perfect neighbor for them. They loved him.

Smith: Did they build that house?

Allen: They built both houses. They were not in existence – the house in Rancho Mirage, the compound was made up of three houses. Leonard Firestones', the house that the Fords built, and the Ginger Rogers' house that really had been donated, I believe, to the University of Southern California, in some kind of a leasing arrangement. That became the office and the Secret Service headquarters. At Vail, Leonard had the house and they built their house next to Leonard's out there. And, again, I think it was on land that Leonard had secured. In fact, Leonard was such a great guy, I said to him once, I was walking in the compound and there were all kinds of cars there all the time, and I said, "Leonard, does this drive you kind of crazy – all this traffic and all this security?" He said, "No, this is the greatest thing in the world. I've got Secret Service guarding me, I can't have it any better than this. They're at the gate, and I come into my gate and there they are to let me in." They were very close.

But she went through that part of her life where – and I had one experience with her – it was the Easter Sunday after the loss of the election. I think it was that first Easter Sunday after that. They came to Grand Rapids and stayed in a private home, Bob Browne's home. They came for the purpose – there was some preliminary discussion about the museum, some kind of slides they wanted to show them, and she showed the effects of the problem that she had.

In fact, when they turned the lights down to show the slides, when the lights were up, she was asleep. As gently as he could – with twenty or thirty people there, he got up and very gently woke her up and escorted her out of the room and never said another word about it. So I think that was the peak time, maybe, right around there. Then after that it took place.

So my next exposure to her, really was as we got into the dedication of the museum and then, quite frequently after that. She wasn't kept abreast of all the things like the burial site and the funeral plans that came to light – it kind of came to me because I think they thought I had created the plan. Up to that point, as you know, they had been created by the military and then we interceded a little bit at that time. But I do remember walking across this bridge out here, the Gillett Bridge, walking with Mrs. Ford across to the hotel and she stopped me in the middle of the bridge, she looked back at the museum, she said, "Now, tell me, where am I going to be buried? Because I know there'll be dancing on my grave," with this big smile. I said, "Nobody's told you yet?" "Nope, nobody's told me yet." So I said, "When we go back I'll show you." At that time, the wonderful fence that you were responsible for that just made the site – it wasn't there yet, so it was kind of out there, and now it's well-defined by this beautiful fencing and the children's tree that's out there. But we took her and showed her where she's going to be buried. She's a grand lady. She's looks so fragile – and maybe she is on the outside – but she isn't on the inside. She's a strong, strong lady.

Smith: Was she ill the week of the funeral?

Allen: Well, I found out during that time that she had a bad cold, which eventually was diagnosed when she got back as pneumonia, but she didn't want to take any antibiotics because she felt that she would miss the sense of what she was to be there for. So she struggled through that week. And a lot of people commented very politely about it, that this poor lady was grieving – which she was, but she also was not healthy. I'll tell you something, she wouldn't get in that wheelchair. We had it at all the places for her and the last place was when they were going to do the procession down the walk to the internment site, and she just waved it off. I heard her say one time, "I just want to be as close to the casket as I can be." The next morning the family came over to pay

their last respects before they got on the plane to fly back to California, and then she got in the wheelchair. She got to the gate of the fence – got out of the wheelchair and walked into that site and the family sat together out there.

When she came out she said to me, “I forgot how beautiful this site is.” And that was the last thing she said before she went back. From that time on we’ve had a number of reasons to talk, and we’ve talked a lot.

Smith: Tell me about the bet.

Allen: Oh, the bet? Well, I think I mentioned to you that President Ford and I always had this bet and it was just not one telephone call. It was a highly negotiable thing – to the point where she had come to the conclusion, despite his being quite frugal, that we were betting for quite a bit of money. That we wouldn’t go through this process that we were going through and she said something to him about it. She said how much money, and she eventually told me. She said, “I always believed it wasn’t over five dollars.” And I said, “You know your husband well enough, you should have known we were going to negotiate over five dollars as well as five thousand. It didn’t make any difference – he wouldn’t have bet five thousand.”

When he passed away, that Michigan-Notre Dame game, afterwards, I called her and I told her I missed him – that I’d always planned to get that call and it didn’t come. But she and I then started laughing. She said, “Marty, I thought about this. Can you imagine that he’s up in heaven with Bo Schembechler, and they’re watching the Michigan-Appalachian State game, and do you think there’s any language that’s ever been used in heaven like that?” We just started laughing.

The great end to the story was, the next morning I get a call from Jan Hart, her chief of staff. “Mrs. Ford would like to bet you five dollars on the Notre Dame game,” which meant a lot to me. It meant almost more to me that Notre Dame lost so that I could send her the five dollars. But I hope sometime it gets reversed so she’s got to send me the five, ‘cause I can really use that on her. “Now, come on. Your husband was that way, I never knew you were that way.” That kind of stuff makes it all worth while.

Smith: She, obviously, didn’t come back as often as he did.

Allen: No. She really didn't. The type of events that he would do, quite often he would be going to New York for a board meeting and pick up an event. So it was a lot of traffic and it wasn't any dislike. In fact, when she really wanted to start coming, her health wouldn't permit it. Quite often then, Susan would participate for her – like the ninetieth birthday – she was very, very disappointed in that. She was all set to come, but her health – she had this bronchial problem that would just pop up, and so when she really wanted to travel – it was like this ninety-fifth birthday this year, she really wanted to be here. I think she will come back. I think when she does, I don't think it will be for any event, though. I think she needs to make her first visit back pretty much on the QT, understandably. It's been difficult for the children when they've come back for the first time, and more than the first time. But it's tough enough that he's gone, this soon, and the difference in the geography also creates a problem for them.

Smith: You saw him around his grandkids, and then eventually great-grandchildren. Talk about that.

Allen: He was more fatherly than I would have thought he would be. I didn't see him as much I did see him in that situation. I talked to him, I talked to the kids about him. It was very, very clear that he really did treasure his children and grandchildren. And I say children because, I never could quite figure out how close the relationship...I knew they were...but because he was traveling and because he wasn't at home much and they were in the growing up age, just how much contact he really had with them. And even afterwards, and this is not being critical of the children, but they weren't active in the Foundation. They would sometimes come to meetings, sometimes not. It was really when they knew that their father was not as visible that they began to play a more active role. But he did talk to his children a lot. I think he treasured those moments. I think he treasured the moments even more so with his children at the end.

I think of Steve. Steve's the bachelor. Steve really gave up pretty much the last six months of the president's time. He gave up his life to be with him. Steve got so bonded to him, the last time President Ford ever played golf was with Steve. Steve had to really convince him to do it again because he didn't

want to go out and embarrass himself. Steve said, "Let's just go out and get out on the course, play three holes and come home." And that's what they did. He came home and he looked at Steve and - I think Steve struggled more during the funeral - they all struggled - but not as much as Steve did. If you look at any of the photographs, I think that last six months, the closeness that he was with his father really had a big impact. But I think the children, the grandchildren, the great grandchildren were just that - those of us who have got grandchildren - they give you a great fix when you need it. You can have the worst problems in the world and you just sit around with your grandchildren and just chat with them. You don't visualize him doing it, but he did it, he did it a lot. He wanted to be near them.

Smith: One of the banes that we talked about a little bit the other day, even here you'd see it - is autograph seekers. Everyone wants something. I don't mean to be cynical, but let's face it. There's a lot of people who are drawn toward celebrity, and there are lots of people who want things. I assume that if word got out that he was in town, or was going to be in town, there must have been a deluge of - some with the best of intentions, and others with their own agenda. How did you deal with that, how did you filter it?

Allen: He was very accommodating when a request would come into the office and some judgment was made - he was very accommodating. He loved to write personal notes to friends, but I think he had a reluctance to do it just in general - because he sensed that there were people out there that were not doing it in their own personal best interest. He got to the point where he could see somebody he knew, didn't have to be in a Boy Scout uniform, but it could be a young person that he just knew, but he'd look at another person, and he'd say something like, "I think I saw that same person." He was pretty astute at that. I didn't notice it, but he'd just say, "No, I don't do that." He'd be very abrupt about it. He did like writing the notes.

The most personal he got was when he had a death in the family. To my knowledge, he only attended two funerals where he actually participated, as you know. One was Secretary Levi and the other was Bill Simon. Again, those eulogies that he was assisted with by you, but still was him talking. Those two families have told me many times that it was the most special - not

because, necessarily who he was, but what he said about their father or husband. Because he told me, he said, “You know, I hope people aren’t offended because I don’t go to funerals, but there’s a reason for that. I don’t want to take anything away from the family.” Now that’s the way he thought.

Now, there are other people who would probably like to be seen – but he just didn’t do it. But he would personally, he would call people. He would, right away when I would let him know about deaths, or Penny would, his mind would start working – who can I talk to? And he did it. He did it frequently. Mike Lloyd, who is head editor of the *Grand Rapids Press*, his wife was killed tragically in an automobile accident, and when I went to the wake and I got up to Mike and I was standing in line, and I expressed my sympathy and he looked at me and he had tears in his eyes, and he said, “I don’t know what you had to do with it, but I got a call that I’ll never forget from the President.” I said, “If I had anything to do with it, simply was to inform him that you’d lost Judy.” That’s about as far as I’d ever... I would never suggest anything to him. He just did it. He had these different sides to him. Autographing was not one of his favorite things to do. He would get a little grumpy about it.

Smith: You wish someone would put together a manual for ex-presidents, because they have no idea of what actually goes with the territory. From having to raise all this money to build these buildings, to putting up with the autograph seekers.

Allen: The only thing the former presidents did with any kind of discipline was when they were photographed together, they would agree to sign a certain number of them and that’s all, they wouldn’t do any more. He didn’t know how to use a computer, but somehow he found out that one of the ones he gave, and I think he knew who it was, had put it on eBay. That just killed him to think he had done that – it would kill me, too, to think of somebody doing that. They had that agreement. But like I told you about a literary gatekeeper, they needed an autograph gatekeeper.

Smith: Penny tells this story, and I’m sure they probably told it among themselves. That fraternity didn’t meet very often. It tended to be at funerals and library dedications, or somber events of state – which didn’t prevent people, who

weren't very bright, from trying to go to one office and claim that, "Well, President Carter's going to do this," not even realizing that there were people in President Ford's office that talked to people in President Carter's office and checked it out.

Allen: I think Penny was pretty good at that kind of gate keeping, she was pretty good. I'll tell you my classic story on myself. I have a picture from the Ronald Reagan Museum dedication that he did send me. I was very fortunate – he sent a very nice letter. He [Ford] one time said, we've got to start paying you, and I said, "Listen, I get too many rewards, I don't need to be paid. This is beyond my scope of things." Even these photographs of me are more valuable than money, but I get this one and it's signed by all the presidents, and I have it properly framed and the right kind of glass put in it, and I put it, not in a very public room in the house, but a nice hallway where it's a little dark, and it's up there for a year or two, and one of the kids walked by and said, "Why didn't President Nixon sign this?" I said, "What do you mean? He signed it." I looked and it was gone – I mean, there wasn't a trace of it.

I took it to the Secret Service here in town. I said, "Can you look at this and see if there is a residue of any ink on here?" And they took all their gear and they said it looks like something was there. So I called Penny. I said, "I'm just sick, the signature is gone. I'd even be willing to go to the Nixon people and use the machine to put it back on there – at least to have it on there and have four written on it." Well, the machine gets destroyed the day he died. The Secret Service told me, and they were smiling when they said it, I think he knew exactly what he was doing. I think he knew – those particular pictures - he said he didn't want to join the group in signing, and he did it reluctantly. He said, I think he knew what he was doing. He probably absolutely just delighted...

Smith: Used disappearing ink. What a metaphor for Nixon's controlling personality.

Allen: And mine wasn't the only one. Some of them that have been kept really in isolation still have it, but that's always tickled me.

- Smith: We talked the other day a little bit about Nixon, but one thing that would surprise people was to know about the relationship that he had with the Johnson family.
- Allen: Yeah, he had a great relationship with them. I don't know – I'm sure it started in Congress, because I'm sure they had a lot... But there was just no question that when he was out of office, even early on when we had conferences here, if Lady Bird herself wasn't here with Harry Middleton, the children were here for something. And that turned around out at the LBJ, too. They had President Ford out there, and there was a tremendously strong, very fond relationship beyond the normal first family. It was very close, you could tell that. I can remember Mrs. Johnson being here with Harry when they came back from the re-dedication of the permanent exhibits. She, along with the others created quite a stir because they were so impressed with the new exhibits. I can remember Mrs. Johnson, "Get Harry in here. Get Harry in here. Come look at this. It's so different than what we have." But they really were close.
- Smith: Talk about a trouper. Remember her sitting out there in her fur coat, with Barbara Bush mothering her. She wasn't going to miss it.
- Allen: No, and the funny thing was, Caroline Kennedy stayed in. She stayed right in this office and she looked and she said, "I feel terrible. They're out there but I'm going to freeze out there." Oh, yeah. She was a trouper.
- Smith: It surprised people that Caroline Kennedy would come to the Ford Library.
- Allen: I will tell you that there was a close relationship between Caroline and President Ford. She knew about the relationship they had as congressmen, and having offices across, so she knew he knew her father. They had a lot in common. They were both naval officers and they had a lot in common and they had a lot not in common - but they had a tremendous and close relationship. So I had encouraged President Ford, she had talked to me, she was on the advisory committee for the presidential libraries, and I had a chance to meet her. She was very quiet and very guarded which is understandable, and she would talk about President Ford, how much she would like to talk to him. So I think they did have a conversation, at least one, if not more.

- Smith: And her brother interviewed him for *George* magazine.
- Allen: That's right. He just felt very strongly about Kennedy, he didn't want to accept LBJ's request that he be on the Warren Commission because of his friendship with him. It was just more than he thought he could handle. Of course then you get right back to the Profile in Courage Award and how much it meant to her, and she was there. But I've kept in contact with her and when the President passed away. I wrote her when her brother was killed in the plane accident. She wrote a very nice note. There was just something about those two, and so she came back here on occasions and I think they saw each other. I would have loved to have heard those conversations.
- Smith: The dinner the night before the re-dedication. Were you at the table with the presidents and first ladies?
- Allen: I don't think I was.
- Smith: Because we had the Fords, the Carters, the Bushes, and Caroline. And Lady Bird. So that would fill up the table.
- Allen: They were in kind of a center, more rectangular shape so that they all could be together. That had to be a great thing. Whenever they get together that way, I gather there is something about the comfort level, because they took a group picture of them, and there's Bush '41 behind Barbara with his fingers like rabbit ears behind her. I saw so much of that. Now, I wasn't with them that much, but when I was it just seemed to be a lightness about them, and maybe it's the reunion of them. I don't know what it is.
- Smith: I think, just the chemistry of those people. And I think here they were made to feel completely at home.
- Allen: Yeah, they were very comfortable. It was a very elegant night. It was beautiful. It was as close to a White House dinner as you could make it. The furniture, the music and everything, was just marvelous.
- Smith: And Alvie Powell.
- Allen: Alvie Powell has become a member of the family. Alvie Powell, Master Sergeant, I believe, who has been with the Army Chorus, left the Army

Chorus for a while, and went on his own singing and came back. The Army Chorus itself is like President and Mrs. Ford's chorus. For so many events, on every event in Washington, out at Vail for every golf tournament they were there. We've had them here at least a half a dozen times, and they have this tremendous respect for him. They feel part of the family and he makes them feel that way. There was always a couple of requests that he made. One was *What I Did for Love* from *Chorus Line*. Until he got tired of it, that became their song. Then after a while they suggested to me and others that maybe there was some other music they could play. But he always liked *Old Man River* from *Showboat*. It got to a point where we wondered whether, in this day and age, there might be some sensitivity about it, but he wanted *Old Man River* and he'd get the biggest smile. He [Alvie] loved to sing it for him.

Smith: As long as their health permitted, they would go to New York and do a lot of shows. They loved the theater, would she shop?

Allen: I don't know that part.

Smith: Stay at the Waldorf.

Allen: I think they probably, they weren't long trips, I would expect they just got together with some of their friends and go to the show.

Smith: I remember they loved the *Lion King*.

Allen: Oh, yeah, loved that.

Smith: And *Chorus Line*.

Allen: Loved *Chorus Line*. That's where that song, just kind of...and if you listen to the words of it, it fits the tune – *What I Did for Love*.

Smith: And it's also such a product of the Seventies.

Allen: He enjoyed going to shows. I think that was something, even back in California with the McCarter Theatre and everything. I think he really did enjoy going out and seeing that type of entertainment. He enjoyed entertainment very much, he really did. And Alvie sang at the funeral. I adlibbed when I did my arrival remarks, with the Army Chorus behind me

and I was looking down at the family and I said, “You know, I can almost feel Alvie Powell behind me because he’s part of the family.” It just came out because that’s the way he always was. He’s now invited to all the Foundation annual dinners, he’s a guest at the dinners, his wife is a delightful person. It’s again one of those things that happens.

Smith: What about their lives in Vail? Because that last summer, when everyone told them they shouldn’t go, they were adamant.

Allen: They enjoyed the life in Vail. I think they enjoyed it in a different social context. It was more relaxed, it was more outdoorish. They obviously escaped the desert heat and they enjoyed that. It was dry heat, so that was very helpful to her, and yet they were very informal and very casual out there. He loved to go to the post office himself. And I’d sometimes get these things that would come back to me and the envelope would be torn and the pages inside would be scotch taped together. I’d say, what kind of a post office do they have out there? She’d say, “That’s him opening up the mail, he doesn’t do that very often.” But he liked that out there. He just loved to walk to the post office – can you imagine that? You go to the post office to mail a letter and you look and there’s the president standing in line to get his mail. But that was the kind of thing he liked out there. He liked the golf, he liked the golf tournament, he liked the annual conference out there, the AEI conferences, he just loved that kind of stuff.

Smith: And there was an amphitheater named for him?

Allen: There was a great amphitheater, the garden was named for her, they unveiled a beautiful statue in there – I can’t remember of what in that place, but it was basically their place. And when he had the golf tournament, the big night was, all the entertainers, and a lot of entertainers played in the golf tournament, would entertain that night. People like – I have to think of the western singers – Vince Gill – is that right? He would get up there and get Mrs. Ford up there to dance on stage because he was a recovering through her. So there is just this great atmosphere. Bob Hope would come out and entertain. The last year was just such a sad thing, but they’d come out – he got out there and somebody was trying to lead him. And he’s cussing, “What the hell, I can find

a place to sit.” And he’s on the stage – you know, that’s the part that was sad. But President Ford told me he would go to dinner with he and Dolores as many times as he could, even though it was a terribly uncomfortable thing to do because he wasn’t well. But he just felt that he needed to be with Bob Hope.

Smith: I remember the story – talk about putting yourself out – toward the end when, where Bob wants to play golf, he was almost blind, and could hardly move, but they’d play two holes. And then Bob would want to take a nap, so the President would come back to the office, and then, “His nap’s over, he wants you to come back and play some more golf.”

Allen: I’d forgotten that story. That’s true.

Smith: Then he’d go back – talk about friendship.

Allen: He just felt so badly...

Smith: But it must also have been, as you’ve suggested, a cautionary lesson seeing what happens when...

Allen: And he related to Bob Hope. He thought it was just too bad that they did that. Literally, when he’d go out and play his golf tournament, even before he reached the two-hole stage, the guy would go out and put the tee in the ground, put the ball on it – and he’d take a swat at it and the tournament would start. But I saw him at those tournaments when he was healthy, and he was a lot of fun. When Bob Hope came here for the dedication and did one of his NBC shows, we had a parade and he was the grand marshal of the parade. He liked it so much, when the lead car finished he got in the car and went to ride the back end of the parade – typical of Bob Hope for a repeat performance. And he was that way through most of the tournaments that I saw up there. There was a lot of great entertainment and the Army Chorus was always there for it.

Smith: What was the charity that was benefitted?

Allen: It was the Vail Valley Charities. It was a group of charities that they did out there and he was responsible for a lot of it, because when you think about

when he started going to Vail as a young congressman in his condo out there, there was hardly anything there. So he was involved very much in the development and was very supportive of the development. There was the chapel there, which he was very much involved in. A variety of things. So it was really a second home to him, but a more casual home. At the times I was out there, it was just entirely different than Rancho Mirage.

Smith: Penny would say the office facilities were not the best.

Allen: The office facilities were not good. They were in the house, sort of a triple-decker, and they were down at the bottom, which wasn't a full floor, it was very close.

Smith: I think it was likened to the Black Hole of Calcutta.

Allen: It was. There was not privacy among the people that were there, and it was tough. I think she enjoyed the activity outside, but she was anxious to get back to her office in California.

Smith: People think of this notion of the imperial ex-presidency – they make all this money and they have all these staff. In fact, it was a very small staff.

Allen: It was. He had a small staff.

Smith: He supplemented their salaries.

Allen: He supplemented their salaries. The Foundation helped with one salary because we got a lot of help out of Penny and so we supplemented that. He had a very small staff. I don't think he was demanding, in the sense that he wanted things done when he wanted them done. But I don't think there was a lot that he wanted done. I think he was that kind of a person. He wasn't out selling things, he wasn't out like Carter or somebody is constantly on the move or Clinton now. He was pretty well in there and he did not do a lot of outside speaking – so he didn't have as great a need for the staff. He liked the quarters, they were kind of close out there. They were nice quarters. I know you've told the story, and I have a very similar story, when we were out there one time planning the funeral and we used the conference room next to his office and one of the staff had stuck their head in the door and said, "The

President wants to see you.” I went in, and I don’t know how long we met, and said to me, “Well, tell me, have you buried me yet?” And I said, “Yeah, we’re even thinking about talking about burying your wife.” And he laughed. Boy, he had taken a bad fall that day before. A really bad fall. He showed me the stitches and that was some of the first signs that his age was really affecting him.

Smith: Was it a circulatory problem in part?

Allen: Whatever you get with old age. I think it was partly that, certainly part of it. Eventually it was required by his doctors, when he got on his feet to count to ten before he’d walk. Well, you can imagine telling him to count to ten. He’d go: one, five, ten, and start moving. He wasn’t going to do that. But I think they were doing it so he’d get his bearings before he moved. He’d taken a couple of falls.

Smith: And I know Mrs. Ford was resistant to the idea of bringing in outside help.

Allen: Yeah, she really was. She just didn’t want to do it. She wanted to be the caretaker and it’s part of the love story. That’s part of the deal.

Smith: Also, I think part of it was a reluctance to acknowledge that it was necessary.

Allen: Yeah, I’m sure it was that, too. I’m sure that’s part of it, but she did have a great deal of reluctance. Finally, she gave in. As I was telling you about the last visit I had out there, I always, as I was walking through the living room there was a very attractive card table – it was really more of a game table that was in that window overlooking the golf course, where I think they played a little cards or whatever they did there. And I looked over at it because I knew they liked it, and there on the table was the casket flag, folded, in a case, sitting in the middle of the table. She wasn’t going to let that be far away from her.

Smith: Did they watch much television?

Allen: I think they watched quite a bit of television. I really do. I think they liked game shows and things like that – I think they really did. And of course, he loved sports, so he had sports on all the time. Of course, he watched the soap

operas when Steve was in the soap operas. I understand he would close the door, almost so nobody would see him, and turn the TV on so he could watch Steve in the soap operas.

Smith: I think he watched C-Span a fair amount, too.

Allen: I think he did, too. He liked that type of show, so I expect they would watch it quite a bit. Contrary to the current president, who apparently doesn't read papers or like television.

Smith: Did you know that President Bush was going to stop for a visit there that last year – remember, when he was out in California?

Allen: I did not know. I had heard that maybe he was, and that somebody said it was a wise thing. And it was, it was a good thing. I think the president appreciated it. He was going through some really difficult times, but it meant a lot to him. He was lonely, in a sense, because he had had such an active life and traveled so much. And then people always had the feeling they would be imposing on him. Either telephone calls or visits were very important. I think when Secretary Rumsfeld went out there on Thanksgiving Day and presented him his Navy hat for his carrier, it was just huge to him. He just missed that – so visitors were really important to him. Very important to him.

Smith: In terms of the development of this place, this first draft – back in '81, how was that put together – the content? Did he have any input on that?

Allen: As I said, I was not a member of the planning committee, I became involved in the dedication. It was my understanding that he had a lot of involvement originally and I don't think they saw what this was going to come to be. It really was a museum, quiet, sedate, and there was an attitude of the committee that if we build it, they will come. Three million dollars is an awful lot of money to have in the kitty to do what you've got to do. And, for doing nothing, that was a lot of money. But he was proud of it and it was attractive, it served its purpose very well for a good time, but it changed dramatically after that. I think he had a lot of input, he certainly had a lot of input into the selection of the location. He was always so pleased...it was Dick Gillett who was so close to him. Dick was the chairman of Old Kent and he was

recognized as sort a visionary in the community and a lot of what happened in Grand Rapids over time. Dick told me there was only one place for the museum, it's right downtown.

Smith: What had been on this site?

Allen: Old factories and parking lots. There was an old schoolhouse. It created probably one of the worst relationships he ever had with one of the property owners here. Bob Sullivan owned a good chunk of the property – he had a furniture store and a bar and he held them up pretty good financially. He never forgot that. He'd bring that up to me. There were certain things he'd bring up quite frequently to me and that was one of them.

Smith: Such as?

Allen: Well, there were people, as I mentioned that he thought were too aggressive or who were bad guys and he would not let me forget who they were, just in case I had forgotten. He would let me know that. There weren't a lot of them and he was so guarded in doing it, he didn't want to call them really nasty names, but he just...

Smith: I remember when we took him the first time through the revamped museum. I think he was a little uncomfortable with the disco. It was Mrs. Ford who came to our rescue, and she said, "It's so fresh and original." Which may have been a euphemism, but she 'got it.' And because she got it, eventually he probably got it.

Allen: He was on the verge of that – Is this presidential or not? – in his own mind, and she took him back. Although, if you remember, there was one thing that she said we could not have. We discussed a hologram of the president in his office – and he didn't know what a hologram was when we were sitting at this table, and they were going over some of the changes that you had made, and she was there, too. There was the beginning of something really different for him. So we talked to him about that, and I could tell he didn't know. I knew he'd been to Disneyworld several times – he liked it. I said, "Did you ever go to the Haunted House?" That was the worst mistake I ever made. I said, "Oh,

yeah. Remember those ghosts that were floating around?” “That’s a hologram.” “Oh, that’s kind of neat.”

All of a sudden I looked over at Mrs. Ford, she said, “No ghosts of President Ford in the museum.” I said, “Okay.” But that was the only thing she didn’t authorize. But I think she knew she was going to be responsible to get him comfortable.

Smith: Put it this way – she would be the interpreter of popular culture.

Allen: She’d know about a discotheque. He may not quite know what a discotheque was.

Smith: She has a marvelous sense of humor. Sometimes salty.

The following section in italics is closed until the death of Mrs. Ford:

Allen: Sometimes salty – she does. I heard some of that, I might have already mentioned – on the last visit when we were talking about being that old and she said, “If I’d known I was going to be this old, I’d have behaved better.” She said it quite seriously, and then she broke into that big smile and said, “But boy, I had fun.” The dancing on the table in the Cabinet Room, and the motorcycle thing, and the conversation at that – “If you’d married her you might have been the president of Steelcase.” She just had that way about her. She had a way about kind of poking it to him at dinner settings and everything – “Oh, Jerry, come on.” You could see him respond to her right away.

Smith: The famous line was - remember at the dedication at Pantland?

Allen: The renovation of the 1913 Room, she said, “You could use a little renovation yourself.” And he used that line a lot after that. It was a great line. You wonder how many lines she might have had over the course of time that the kids probably know, too, that have just got to be classics. She does have a tremendous spark to her.

Smith: That’s well put.

Allen: She’s never lost that. Even at this stage in her life – even in her mourning, she’ll pop up with some pretty Betty Ford-type statements.

Smith: It must have been terribly frustrating to outlive their friends.

Allen: Well, that was a discussion that I had with her. I know, personally, that quite often there would be events that President Ford would ask me to put together an invitation list. I'd put together this list and he would look at it and say, "Gosh, Marty, there's got to be a lot of names missing." I said, "Well, I feel badly if there was." And he'd start – then all of a sudden he look and he'd say, "They're all gone." I said, "Yes, sir, you've outlived them." And I think the difficulty that Betty's having is the same thing. She's ninety years old and she's in the desert and some of the people who are her friends in the desert don't stay in the desert. But even the ones that do, it was very difficult – difficult enough for her to break out and to be with friends. But there aren't that many. Mrs. Annenberg's not well – and I think it's very difficult.

I think that's why they were so close at the end. This romance kind of got relit, if you will. I just read something in, I don't know if it was *Time* or, I don't know, but it's a great article by Kirk Douglas growing old. He said, "I really got romantic when I got ninety." In a way, their closeness, they just have each other so much and they are so close together, then to lose one is terribly difficult. He always told me he was going to go first. She would survive him. He talked that way in different conversations we had, planning things. He'd always say, "Make sure the Foundation takes care of her, she'll be the person there and she won't be that active, but just make sure she's taken care of." I said, "Don't worry, she'll be well taken care of."

Smith: Do you think part of that was because he couldn't contemplate the reverse? He could not have imagined having her gone?

Allen: Yeah, it would have been even harder for him. As so often happens in relationships like that, when somebody passes, the other passes away. I always thought to myself, I wonder if he really would have been able to survive. He got so close and so dependent on her and that happens in marriages. It is quite often the wife who becomes the strength of it. It's not unique. When you're watching a football game and they put a camera on a guy, he always says, "Hi, Mom." He never says, "Hi, Dad." He always says, "Hi, Mom." It's that motherhood strength that's there.

Smith: Were there things about the funeral that surprised you?

Allen: The biggest surprise to me and the most emotional part for me...not giving arrival remarks. It was what I call 'going home.' When we got on Air Force One at Andrews and the music struck up *Going Home*, my first reaction - my God, I've got to give a little talk here pretty quick. But it disappeared kind of quick. And then we had that kind of University of Michigan drop, and we came down to the ground and saw the Michigan band.

But I rode with Dick Ford in the car, and I was absolutely amazed at the turnout. And I've lived here all my life. It moved Dick who had lived here all his life and myself, it really just moved us how many - we knew there'd be crowds - we'd planned on crowds - we planned right down to how many people we could get in the front door of this place per hour, because we knew how many hours it was going to be, and we exceeded it by twenty thousand people. And I know there would have been even more, but the word kind of got out that this is the end. So that, more than anything, was probably the most moving part of it.

The other parts were, again, the reaction of those people in his Cabinet. People at that level, how they suffered the loss, visibly. Kissinger had a little reception for them in Washington, and they all came. It was kind of their wake, if you will. I went to that and I just really kind of stood off to the side and watched them. You could feel the closeness of them, and that was a very strong part in my estimation.

Smith: Were you in Blair House at all during those days when she...tell us about it.

Allen: Well, she was in Blair House. The family was there and she had different groups that would come in - the diplomatic corps, of course - and then President Bush came in, I think - Clinton maybe came in. Then some of the close friends who were really the honorary pallbearers and a few of the people giving tribute. She was certainly alert, but she was certainly struggling. There just was no question about it. Susan was close by. The other kids were. It was a very tough time.

Smith: The Nixon family came, the Johnson girls came.

Allen: All the presidents' families came, yeah. So that was quite an occasion to see that. To be in the heart of an event like that. I always remember Rich DeVos. Here's Rich DeVos, one of the richest people in the country. He's an honorary pallbearer, we're standing outside the Capitol steps, waiting for the remains to come and then march up the steps. Rich leaned to me and he said, "I never thought, ever in my lifetime, I would be standing doing what I am today." Now here's a man who is everything. But he was just extremely moved by it, and he was a little bit physically shaken, but the military is amazing. Somebody spotted that and all of a sudden there was a full uniformed Army guy saying, "Mr. DeVos, we'll take you in another way." "No, I want you to take me up the steps, I want to go up the steps." So a lot of those things that just stick with you. Then of course, the crowds that night.

I went out and walked the crowds for a long time. The police chief came to me afterwards, the chief of police asked to see me. He came to thank me, and thank the Ford family for his officers participating. I said, "Wait a minute. We've got to turn that around, you did a magnificent..." They didn't have anything to do. He said, "I got very concerned with this huge line curling around down here. It's night and it's cold. These people don't know each other. I called the squad." I said, "You'd better go out and check the line." They went and they got to the end of the line and called him back. "They're singing Christmas carols, they're singing patriotic songs. They're just greeting each other." So the chief said, "Do one other thing, stay at the end of the line, just so people that are coming know that they've got five hours wait, but you'll be there to protect them." Those kind of things are just...you could tell a hundred stories, I guess. We probably should have written a book about it, it's such an amazing story.

Smith: A couple of things. Subsequent to that, you greeted a couple of presidents.

Allen: Yes. President Bush came here. There's an acronym, OTR, Off The Record visit. He came, I met him at the back, we came around the front. He had a military person with a bouquet of flowers. He was quite conversant. Went into the site, spent some time there, came out and he was very quiet. I think it had moved him that he was standing at the site of the president. He came out and he said to me, "I just marvel at this site and this location – here in the middle

of a city, on a river, what a marvelous place. It is just so much Jerry Ford.” Then he said his goodbye’s and walked to the car.

Clinton came. Clinton didn’t come quite as prepared. He was giving a speech across the river, but then his staff said, “Can you get him something?” I said, “What?” “A nice bouquet of flowers.” And he started talking to me out of the car. It’s kind of the same mood as Bush was. He spent a long time at the site, a long time. Came out, made the same, similar remark, “This is Jerry Ford.” It’s just peaceful in a busy setting, it’s just peaceful. He started asking me, “Did you have to get state and city approval to bury him?” I said, “No, it’s a federal site.” It’s not a city or state site, so they didn’t have to get approval. He was talking about the river again, he said, “You know, we’re on the river...”

The end of that story is kind of interesting. He didn’t go back and get in his car. I was reminded of President Ford saying to me, “This guy is an amazing communicator, a terrible manager of his life and other things, but he’s just an amazing communicator.” He looked at me and he said, “Why don’t you and I take a walk?” I’ve never met the guy in my life. He kind of looked at his staff guy and he said, “How much time do we have?” He said, “You’ve got time.” So, instead of getting in his car, we walked in the front. He asked me a lot of questions about the museum, which I answered, and then we started walking across the bridge and there were people on the bridge that didn’t realize that they were going to see Bill Clinton here in a second.

His Secret Service were leading him and there was an elderly African-American man coming across and they kind of politely asked, and he spotted him and he told the Secret Service, “Radio that guy and tell him to leave that man alone. I want to talk to him.” So he goes over and talks – typical of Clinton. Gets up to the top of the bridge and there’s a family sitting there, just looking at the river, and he goes over to them. They don’t even see him coming and all of a sudden he’s there and he’s talking to them.

In the meantime, across the windows over at the building where he was supposed to speak, there’s a reception he’s supposed to be at and all these people have got their noses against the window and he’s talking to these

people as he's going across. He gets on the other side and he thanks me and he starts walking to the building. Then he turns around and comes back. "Oh, there's something I want to tell you. I want to tell you without even knowing how valuable you are to President Ford and have been to President Ford through his lifetime. I need that now, I need to have somebody that I can trust."

My wheels are turning, I think, "I can hear President Ford say, 'He's conning you Marty, he's saying all the right things to you.'" And I think he was half sincere, but it was vintage Clinton. He took advantage of every situation he could to make himself – and he gave a marvelous speech. Here's he in one of the most conservative cities in Grand Rapids, got a packed house and he spoke to them like he was a conservative.

Smith: You saw a pro at work.

Allen: Yeah, he's a pro. He's absolutely a pro. And they wrote a little article in the paper about him, because they were so amazed he came over and talked to me. I didn't tell them everything I told here, but he is a pro.

Smith: I also think, as much as he can be, I think Clinton was grateful for the lifeline that Ford threw him at a time when there were no other Republicans who were willing to...

Allen: That had to mean a lot to him. This cool character, he had to be desperate at that time and to have somebody give him that lifeline had to be extremely valuable. But he spoke very highly of him, as you'd expect, but it was a very interesting experience. It was interesting how long he stayed there. I guess he is a religious man, and you could tell he was pretty serious in there.

We've had other guests, the one that was most awkward was the Attorney General [Gonzalez], just before he was fired. He was here and we treated him the same way. He went in and paid his respects. But he had a little extra time so he wanted to go into the exhibit and so we skipped the discotheque and went right to Watergate. Of course, the part came on about the attorney general, and I thought, my God this guy is about ready to be canned and he's

sitting here looking...thinking what kind of a guy is this that's showing me this exhibit.

Yeah, we've had a lot of interesting guests here and the public, I guess it's more surprising to me than to you because you've studied burial sites and tombs and graves of presidents, but I'm just really amazed at the number of people that go there, in a very dignified way. I've gone out there on a number of occasions just to talk to them. It is very moving for people to go to a site like this.

Smith: It transforms the site.

Allen: Oh, yeah, it does. And I have to tell you, I've not been to all the sites. You have, but there is something about that site – the wrought iron fence around it and the children's tree that they gave their parents on their 45th wedding anniversary, and how we now decorate that, and always had planned to because they loved Christmas and I told Mrs. Ford we would do that. We would decorate that tree, which meant a lot to her. And she added a dimension to the site – she called me the first time she'd gone there - she told me it needed more flowers, and we took care of that. But after she'd gotten back after the funeral, she said, "We need a couple of benches out there where people can sit down for meditation."

That was a great move, not only for the public, but for the kids when they go in there. They sit there a long time. And I'm always glad that I suggested to her, for her consideration to put their favorite prayer, Proverbs, in between those two benches, which a lot of people ask about, because it's a great thing to tell them the meaning of those proverbs to the president and Mrs. Ford.

Smith: That's a good note on which to end.

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