

*A Memoir
of My Years
in Washington*

No Higher Honor

CONDOLEEZZA

RICE

Extraordinary, Ordinary People: A Memoir of Family

Uncertain Allegiance: The Soviet Union and the Czechoslovak Army

The Gorbachev Era (with Alexander Dallin)

Germany Unified and Europe Transformed: A Study in Statecraft (with Philip Zelikow)

NO HIGHER HONOR

A Memoir of My Years in Washington



Condoleezza Rice



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To my parents



*To the men and women in uniform
who volunteer to defend us on the front lines of liberty*

and

*To the diplomats and other civilians
who serve in hard places to promote a balance of power that favors freedom*

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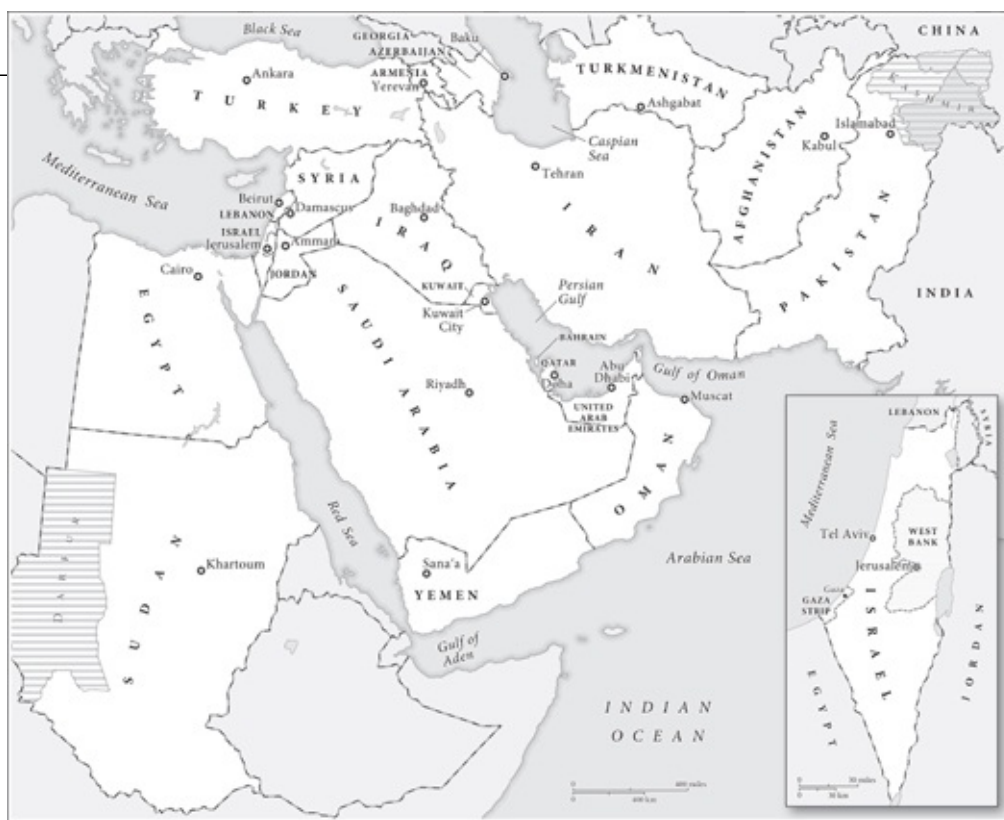
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Acknowledgments







THE RIDE TO FOGGY BOTTOM from my Watergate apartment was short. I had the good fortune to live four minutes from the office, and I'd been grateful many times after late nights and tense days that I didn't have to commute.

On this, my last morning, I would have enjoyed a little more time to reflect. But I was quickly in the garage and then up the secretary's private elevator to the seventh floor, entering the ornate paneled hallway lined with portraits of my predecessors.

I met my staff for one final time to thank them. They had a gift for me: they'd purchased my White House Cabinet Room chair. Each member of the President's Cabinet sits in a large brown leather chair with a plaque on the back. I remember seeing "Secretary of State" for the first time and blushing at the thought that there had been a few others who had chairs like this before me. *Did Thomas Jefferson have his own chair?*

The ceremonial part of the meeting was short, though, because we had work to do. Tzipi Livni, Israel's foreign minister, was coming to negotiate a memorandum of understanding on terms for the withdrawal of Israeli troops from Gaza. Turmoil in the Middle East had been there when I arrived, and it was going to be there when I left. But it was a fundamentally different place than when we had entered office in 2001. So much had happened to shape the contours of a new Middle East.

Toward the end of my day, I stopped to look at the four portraits of former secretaries that I'd kept near me. There was Thomas Jefferson—everyone kept Thomas Jefferson—and George Marshall, arguably the greatest secretary of state and, well, everybody kept George Marshall too.

But I'd asked to have Dean Acheson and William Seward moved up the queue. Acheson graced my outer office. When he left as secretary in 1953, he was hounded by the question "Who lost China?" with many blaming him for America's inability to prevent Mao Zedong's victory. Now he was remembered as one of the founding fathers of NATO.

And I kept William Seward. Why would anyone keep Seward's portrait in a place of honor? Well, he bought Alaska. When the purchase was submitted for ratification in the Senate in 1867, Seward was excoriated: "Why would you pay the tsar of Russia seven million dollars for that icebox?" The decision quickly became known as "Seward's folly." One day I was talking with the then defense minister of Russia, Sergei Ivanov. He'd recently visited Alaska. "It's so beautiful," he said. "It reminds me of Russia." "Sergei, it used to be Russia," I quipped. We're all glad that Seward bought Alaska.

The portraits were not just decoration; they were a reminder of something that I often told the press and others: Today's headlines and history's judgment are rarely the same. If you are too attentive to the former, you will most certainly not do the hard work of securing the latter.

In that vein, Dean Acheson and I shared more than having had the honor of serving in turbulent times; we shared a favorite quote from the English historian C. V. Wedgwood: "History is lived forwards but it is written in retrospect. We know the end before we consider the beginning and we can never wholly recapture what it was to know the beginning only."

My, you've lived a lot of history, I thought. Then I headed down the hall to meet the Israeli foreign minister one last time.

INTRODUCTION

IT HAD BEEN a long two days. On Thursday morning, September 13, 2001, I stood looking myself in the bathroom mirror. *How could this have happened? Did we miss something? Keep your focus. Just get to the end of today, then tomorrow, then the next day. There will be a time to go back. Not now. You have work to do.*

The time of reckoning—of facing the nation and myself about what had happened that day—would come in April 2004, when I testified before the 9/11 Commission. From the day the commission was announced, I knew that the administration would be asked the questions I asked myself. “How could you let it happen on your watch?” “Why didn’t you see that the system was blinking red?”

I was familiar with past commissions of this type and had even taught about the investigations into the Roosevelt administration’s failure to spot telltale signs of an impending attack on Pearl Harbor. But it’s one thing to read about it and quite another to be a central, maybe the central, character in the drama.

“Isn’t it a fact, Dr. Rice, that the August 6 PDB warned against possible attacks in this country?” Some forty-five minutes into my testimony, Richard Ben-Veniste, a seasoned prosecutor, abruptly pounced. He was referring to an intelligence report prepared for the President’s Daily Briefing (PDB) on August 6, 2001. The report had been developed only after the President himself had asked whether there was any information on a possible al Qaeda attack on the U.S. homeland. The very fact that he’d had to ask suggested that the intelligence community thought it an unlikely event.

The report summarized historical information that had been contained in old intelligence documents and quoted a media interview that had already been public. It also said that the intelligence community could not corroborate a 1998 report about Osama bin Laden’s desire to hijack a U.S. aircraft. None of us even remembered the PDB until May 2002, when *CBS Evening News* referred to its contents. I had talked to Bob Woodward and his colleague David Eggen of the *Washington Post* about it and had given a long White House press room briefing. The story had largely gone away.

The report, though, carried the eye-popping headline “Bin Ladin Determined To Strike U.S.” Since it had been issued only a month shy of 9/11, it commanded the spotlight during the hearings. In my opening statement before the commission, I said that the briefing item had not been prompted by any specific threat information. It noted some suspicious activities that we went to great lengths to investigate. But the report was not a warning, which I made clear at other points during the hearing. That did not prevent the commissioners from asking probing—and at times hostile—questions about its contents. I had to be careful with what I said because the report itself was still classified at the time. In fact, there are no more closely held documents than PDBs, which are seen only by the President, the Vice President, and a handful of other officials. Because PDBs usually deal with the most sensitive and current intelligence reporting, they are rarely declassified. But that fact did not prevent Commissioner Ben-Veniste from asking me to reveal the title of the August 6 memorandum. I knew I had to answer the question.

“I believe the title was ‘Bin Laden Determined to Attack Inside the United States,’ ” I said. There were audible gasps in the chamber, particularly from victims’ families who were in attendance. The report’s title was suddenly the news of the hearings.

As the President’s national security advisor, I had the responsibility of managing the various agencies involved in national security affairs at the time of the attacks. It helped me remember that I’d done everything that I thought necessary at the time. From the very beginning, I pressed for a strategy to disable al Qaeda and directed Richard Clarke, the White House’s counterterrorism expert, to develop one. When threat levels began to spike in the summer of 2001, we moved the U.S. government at all levels to a high state of alert. Secretary of State Colin Powell and Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld had secured our embassies and military bases abroad. After all, the intelligence assessment was that an attack would most likely come in Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Israel, or in Europe. The three of us talked almost every morning and assessed the situation and the need for further action. I asked Director of Central Intelligence George Tenet if there was more we could do, and we tried to find the key al Qaeda facilitator, Abu Zubaydah, with Vice President Dick Cheney asking the Saudis and Jordanians for help in doing so. With White House Chief of Staff Andrew Card present, I insisted that Dick Clarke inform domestic agencies of the heightened threat just in case an attack might come against the United States, despite the lack of intelligence pointing to the homeland. I did everything I could.

I was convinced of that intellectually. But, given the severity of what occurred, I clearly hadn’t done enough. The hardest moment that morning was walking into the room and seeing the families of the 9/11 victims. Some were accusatory and others were supportive, but they were all hurting. And I hurt for them because the United States of America had failed to protect nearly three thousand of its innocent citizens.

The room was filled to capacity, and there were cameras and television lights everywhere. I felt surprisingly calm and said a little prayer before we started. I made my opening statement, acknowledging that the country had been poorly prepared—but because of *systemic* failures, not the negligence of any one administration or any one person. There was no silver bullet that could have prevented the 9/11 attacks. I concluded my prepared testimony by making the point that terrorists have to be successful just once, while the defender must be vigilant 100 percent of the time.

I had to make the policy case for what we’d done in response, place the blame squarely on al Qaeda, recommend changes to prevent another attack, and restore the American people’s confidence in the Bush administration. A part of me wanted to apologize, but the collective view of my advisors was that to do so would overwhelm anything else that I said. So instead I expressed regret.

“I’ve asked myself a thousand times what more we could have done,” I told the commission. “I know that had we thought there was an attack coming in Washington or New York, we would have moved heaven and earth to try and stop it.”

...

YEARS LATER, in 2008, toward the end of our time in office, a terrorist attack took place in Mumbai, India. I traveled to New Delhi to lend support to the Indian government and to defuse tensions between India and Pakistan. I walked into Prime Minister Manmohan Singh’s

living room and came face to face with the Indian national security advisor. He was a slight man who wore huge dark-rimmed glasses that made him look like an owl. I had heard that he had offered to resign shortly after the attack and that the prime minister had refused to accept his resignation. He, M. K. Narayanan, had the same shell-shocked look that I remembered seeing in the mirror after the attacks on the Twin Towers and the Pentagon.

I took his hands. "It's not your fault," I said. "I know how you feel. It's like being in a dark room with doors all around and knowing anything might pop out and attack again. But now you have to concentrate on preventing the next attack."

I don't actually remember what he said in response because, in reality, I was very much inside myself. I was replaying those awful days in the wake of 9/11, days that had from that time forward been September 12 over and over again. Nothing was ever the same. It was as if there had been a crack in time.

Protest as you might to yourself, to the nation, and to the world, you never get over the feeling that you could have done better. And you resolve never to let it happen again.

BEFORE THE CRACK IN TIME

IN AUGUST 1998, President George H. W. Bush called and invited me to spend time with him and Mrs. Barbara Bush in Maine. I had become close to President Bush in the years after I served as his Soviet specialist in the National Security Council, and they had hosted me a few times before at their wonderful family home in Kennebunkport. The weathered, shingle-style house, decorated in calming pastel chintz, has an elegant yet understated decor and a spectacular view of the ocean. I'm not all that fond of being in the water. But I love to look at it, and there isn't a prettier place to view the Atlantic than Walker's Point. I promptly accepted the invitation.

Driving along the rocky New England coast to the entrance of the property, I was struck by two flags flying over the compound: the Texas state flag for the governor and the Stars and Stripes for the former President. (The Florida state flag would later join them when Jeb Bush was elected governor.) It was a subtle reminder that this was no ordinary family and it would be no ordinary weekend.

The elder Bush didn't hide his desire to get me together with his son George just so we could get to know each other better and talk a little about foreign policy. Before a casual lobster dinner that night, I joined Governor Bush on the back porch, where he told me that he was confident of reelection in November and that if he won impressively (which he fully expected), he'd likely run for the presidency.

A run for the White House by the Texas governor struck me as having long odds for success. President Clinton's years had been morally tarnished but peaceful and relatively prosperous. The governor was untested and would likely face a real pro in Vice President Al Gore. I was too polite to say those things that night, but I sure thought them.

Throughout the weekend, while fishing (he fished, I sat in the boat and watched) or exercising side by side in the small family gym on the compound, we talked about Russia, China, and Latin America. He wanted to start thinking about what to do in foreign policy if he got elected. I soon realized that he knew our southern neighbors, particularly Mexico, far better than I did. I made a mental note to read a few articles about Mexico when I got back to my home in California.

But we also talked about other things. He was interested in my upbringing in segregated Birmingham. I was attracted to his passion for improving education for disadvantaged youth. We compared notes on the problems of college admission and affirmative action. I was more traditional in my support of race-based admission; he'd tried to increase diversity at the University of Texas by other means. He proudly said that he would likely receive half of the Hispanic vote and more than a quarter of the African American vote.

I liked him. He was funny and irreverent but serious about policy. We e-mailed back and forth several times during the fall, mostly friendly chitchat about whatever was in the news—the growing conflict in the Balkans or the Clinton administration's efforts to expand NATO. Then, a couple of days after the November election and the landslide victory Governor Bush had hoped for, I received a note from him. He wanted to follow international events more

closely.

Early in March 1999, Karl Rove, the governor's political advisor, called to ask if I'd come down to Austin and speak with the governor about the upcoming campaign. "Will you book a hotel room for me?" I asked.

"You won't need a hotel," he replied. "The governor wants you to stay at the residence." This was a signal that he expected me to support his campaign, which was quickly becoming a serious endeavor. A few weeks later, when my picture appeared on the front page of the *New York Times* as a member of the "exploratory committee" dedicated to electing George W. Bush President of the United States, I was momentarily stunned by the sudden exposure I had committed to the cause.

My father was the first person I called after the governor asked me to join his campaign. John Wesley Rice, Jr., loved politics. He watched news shows, particularly C-SPAN, for hours at a time, and had been a loyal Republican ever since a clerk affiliated with the Grand Old Party had helped him register to vote in segregated Alabama. My father could barely contain his excitement.

The campaign itself proved professionally fulfilling, but early on I realized that it would require my full-time focus. For six years I had been the provost—the chief operating officer—of Stanford University. I was ready to step down independent of the chance to join the Bush campaign. Foreign policy would be the governor's Achilles' heel against more seasoned candidates in the primaries and eventually in the general election. I knew that George W. Bush would look to me to help answer the inevitable questions about his readiness to assume the mantle of commander in chief.

Throughout 1999 I worked to assemble a small group of foreign policy specialists to develop policy for the governor. My first call was to Paul Wolfowitz, who had been ambassador to Indonesia under President Ronald Reagan and under secretary for policy in the Pentagon during George H. W. Bush's administration. Paul was a cerebral, almost otherworldly intellectual. He'd done his undergraduate work at Cornell and gone on to complete a PhD in the intense academic environment of the University of Chicago. Though Paul had already had a distinguished public policy career, he was really most comfortable debating ideas. We'd been friends since the 1980s, and when I asked him to join me as cochair of the foreign policy group, he readily did so.

Richard Armitage and Stephen Hadley had also been in the first Bush administration. Richard was a muscular, stout former naval officer who had served in Vietnam and specialized in Asian affairs. Many people believed that the Rambo character had been based on Rich. Yet there was another side to him: he and his wife had adopted numerous special-needs kids. He was Colin Powell's best friend, a fact that would later lead to considerable conflict within the administration.

Steve was a quiet, Yale-trained lawyer from Cleveland, Ohio, who at the time wore horn-rimmed glasses. He was smart and methodical, and when there was real work to be produced for the campaign (rather than just things to be said and debated), we all looked to Steve to write the first draft of the paper. He did so selflessly and effectively.

Robert Zoellick, Robert Blackwill, and I had worked closely together during the extraordinary days of 1989–1991 at the end of the Cold War. They were among the best policy engineers I had ever known, capable of conceiving of a solution and then actualizing it.

implementing it. Zoellick had been Secretary of State James Baker's closest aide at the State Department and the architect of many important initiatives concerning Central America and Europe. He had led the three-member U.S. delegation to the talks on German unification of which I had been the White House representative.

Bob Blackwill had been my boss for a while at the NSC the first time around as special assistant for European and Soviet affairs. He'd held numerous high-level positions. He was from Kansas, with very traditional values and a wicked sense of humor. But he could be abrasive and impatient, and he made enemies. Some thought that Bob would be high maintenance, but he would be valuable to the governor, and we were good enough friends to speak honestly about any problems that might arise.

I asked Richard Perle to join the group to represent the right wing of the Republican foreign policy establishment. Perle had been the bane of the party's foreign policy traditionalists such as Brent Scowcroft and Henry Kissinger. He had a well-deserved reputation for ruthlessness too. But Governor Bush needed all elements of the party united behind him, and the group that I assembled was broadly representative enough to demonstrate his commitment to a foreign policy big tent. Dov Zakheim, who did most of the work supporting our Pentagon reform plans, rounded out the group. And we were able, to draw on the regional expertise of others such as Jendayi Frazer, who developed our African policy.

In general, we got along well. My job was to organize the group and to deal with the personalities and egos—to keep everyone on board so that we could concentrate on the governor's campaign, not ourselves. If there was any resentment of my role (I had been the most junior of those who had served together in George H. W. Bush's administration), I couldn't tell. In any case, they all knew that I was the one who was closest to the governor. I was the point of access. We worked smoothly and with little drama, just getting the job done in standing Sunday-night phone calls to coordinate requests, policy positions, and responses for Governor Bush.

Just for fun we decided to adopt a nickname and called ourselves the Vulcans, after the Roman God and symbol of my home city of Birmingham, Alabama. The name meant nothing more than that, but many a conspiracy theorist tried to divine some deeper significance.

The work in the campaign was proceeding well. I made frequent visits to Austin to brief the candidate, developed policy papers on a half-dozen major initiatives, and helped write a couple of major speeches. I also began doing press appearances on behalf of candidate Bush. The question was always the same: "What makes you think that the one-term governor of Texas is ready to be President of the United States?"

My first televised interview was on Chris Matthews's *Hardball* in June. Chris was a relentlessly challenging interviewer who rarely gave a guest time to really answer a question. Asked at one point whether George W. Bush's being in the Oval Office would be "on-the-job training," I pointed out that my candidate was already dealing with considerable complexity as governor of Texas. Texas is a big, complicated state, and the person running it has to be able to ask the right questions, digest information, stick to principles, and make decisions. The Texas governor has to be tough.

Chris, sensing that I was contrasting George W. Bush's readiness with that of Bill Clinton when he had first run for President, said, "Right. You sound like the wife of the governor."

Primary Colors where she said, ‘And he’s governor of a real state, not Arkansas.’ ” I don’t know where it came from, but I shot back, “I come from Alabama, so I’m not going to talk about what *real* states are.” Chris broke up laughing, and I thought that I’d passed my first media test on the campaign trail.

Anyone who is interested in politics should work on the ground floor of a campaign at least once. Early on we got stuck in traffic jams and carried our own bags. The crowds were enthusiastic but, in some places, quite small. The music track that introduced the governor’s campaign rallies included Stevie Wonder’s “Signed, Sealed, Delivered (I’m Yours).” I never understood why that song was chosen, but to this day I can’t listen to it without vivid memories of stadiums, auditoriums, and cowboy bars full of early believers in George W. Bush.

I loved the pace and the sense of being a part of an adventure. Life had settled into a nice post-provost pattern, and I was quite content. When I arranged to have George W. Bush meet my father during a trip to Palo Alto in July of 1999, Daddy was hooked. He peppered me every night with questions about campaign strategy that I couldn’t answer: “How in the world did we screw up in New Hampshire? George Bush isn’t getting through to people there. He is going to be a different kind of Republican. That’s what people need to know!” He admired Governor Bush and was very proud of my association with the campaign.

In February 2000 I was back home, helping to rally the troops for the California primary in the wake of the disasters in New Hampshire and Michigan. I was getting ready to do a radio interview with a reporter named Ann Dowd for a profile of me. Ann had gone to interview my father that morning and was in the house when suddenly my father suffered cardiac arrest. She called 911 and then my longtime assistant, Marilyn Stanley. I was in a meeting but Marilyn burst in and said that something had happened to my father and he was not breathing. I asked my assistant Ruth Elliott to come with me, rushed out, and sped to the house. It looked like a scene from *ER*. Daddy was on the floor, and they were shocking his heart. I heard the medic say, “I have a weak pulse.” We all rushed to the hospital and waited. It hadn’t been a heart attack, but his heart had stopped long enough to cause what his physician called an “anoxic brain event.” Essentially, he’d been deprived of oxygen to his brain and was now in a coma. No one could say what the prognosis was.

Daddy continued in a coma for about a week and then began to stir. But he’d sustained significant brain damage. He never fully recovered, but he fought to live. Several times he was near death and refused to go. As I watched this giant of a man who’d loved me more than anyone in the world approach the end, it was hard to find much good in life. It seemed so unfair that I could no longer share stories of the campaign with my father. Here I was at the height of my professional career, and my father couldn’t enjoy it with me. Not surprisingly, my absences from home became a source of guilt, and the campaign, which had been such a wonderful magical mystery tour, became something of a slog.

I kept going and told myself that Daddy undoubtedly approved of my decision to keep my commitment to the campaign. Slowly the governor was climbing in the polls, and he clearly had a real chance to be President. But we had not erased the questions about his foreign policy competence. In fact, early in the campaign, one particular misstep created a deep hole, and it took a while to climb out of it.

I arrived at the Austin airport one November evening in 1999, and my cell phone was going

crazy. It was Joel Shin, an incredibly dedicated young man who actually slept in the campaign office. (Joshua Bolten, the policy director for the campaign and later deputy chief of staff, director of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), and chief of staff, finally made him get an apartment.) Joel asked if I'd seen the governor's interview with Andy Hille. I said that I'd been on the plane and hadn't. He read the transcript. My heart sank. "Can you name the president of Taiwan?" Answer: "Lee." "Can you name the general who is in charge of Pakistan?" Answer: "General." "And the prime minister of India?" No answer.

"Well, that reads pretty badly," I commented.

"It's worse," Joel said. "It's on videotape and being played over and over."

I went to the hotel but decided not to call the governor, thinking it might be better to wait until I saw him the next morning to address what we might do. That evening, he called me. "Who is the prime minister of Italy?" he asked. I laughed and thought to myself that he'd be just fine. In truth, the failure to know the names of leaders said little about the governor's competence to lead the country. Indeed, even President Clinton said that if Governor Bush were to make it into the White House, he would "soon enough learn their names." It was not as debilitating an issue as the press was making it out to be. Still, when we had breakfast the next morning on the patio of the Governor's Mansion, I said exactly what I was thinking. "We've got to step it up."

"I know," he replied.

And step it up he did. We needed to fight to a draw in foreign policy so that the American people could concentrate on the governor's qualities and domestic achievements, not on whose names of leaders he knew. We picked a few key issues on which to focus—missile defense, reduction of offensive nuclear arms, and relations with emerging democracies such as India—as well as trading on his extensive knowledge of Mexico and Latin America.

Some of the senior statesmen of the Republican Party backed the governor early, particularly Dick Cheney, Don Rumsfeld, and George Shultz, who held policy seminars in his home on the Stanford campus. After the primaries, other heavyweights joined forces with us, among them Colin Powell and Henry Kissinger. The work paid its greatest dividend in the second debate against Al Gore.

In the first debate, George Bush had been a bit shaky on foreign policy, but fortunately, Al Gore's sighing and orange makeup had obscured this fact. Moreover, there had been fewer foreign policy questions than expected. We all knew that international affairs would therefore dominate the next encounter. The afternoon of the second debate, Karen Hughes, the governor's close confidante and communications director for the campaign, and I sat in his suite in North Carolina, going over major foreign policy questions. After a while, the tired George Bush said, "That's enough."

By then, though, we'd armed him with a particularly good answer on issues of global development and poverty. When the question came up, he replied that the United States is a generous country and ought to participate in significant debt relief for the poorest countries. A few days later a *New York Times* article noted the backing of debt relief by an assortment of leaders, including Governor Bush and the Pope. With his crisp answers on other questions—and Al Gore's inexplicable near-catatonic state (lampooned on *Saturday Night Live*)—George Bush delivered the foreign policy performance he desperately needed. Foreign policy was no longer a liability.

He knew the significance of that too. After the debate I found him outside his room at the hotel. He hugged me and said, "Oh, baby!" I translated that as "Job well done."

Florida

THE TIME after the debates passed in an instant. I flew down to Austin the afternoon of the election. By the time I arrived at the Four Seasons Hotel, the news stations were chalking up state after state in the Gore column. When I made it downstairs to watch with a few Bush friends and family, everything was going against us: Michigan, Illinois, Pennsylvania, and Florida were all gone. I sat there with Doro Bush Koch, the governor's sister, and watched in dismay. "Let's change places," I said to Doro, employing a superstition from my days as an athlete and a sports fan: if your team is not winning while you're sitting on the right side of the sofa, move to the left. Yes, I know it doesn't matter, but it can't hurt.

We did change places. Almost magically, NBC News reported that we'd won Georgia. The Jean Becker, the elder George Bush's assistant, got a call. Jean had been a reporter, and a friend from *USA Today* called to tell her that they were about to reverse the call on Florida. Within what seemed like minutes but was much longer, the TV screen suddenly began showing "George W. Bush, 43rd President of the United States." It was quite a moment, and my immediate impulse was to call my father. I decided not to, fearing that he would be too disoriented to share the moment with me.

I jumped into a minivan with other Bush supporters for the trip to the capitol for the victory speech. It was freezing cold in Austin, and we stood on the square, rocking to "Y'all Ready for This" from the Jock Jams album and hugging each other. But something was wrong. Al Gore hadn't conceded. I could also see the big screen displaying CNN's election coverage. The margin of victory in Florida was shrinking very fast.

Then Karen Hughes called her husband, Jerry, and reported that although Gore had called the governor to concede, he had subsequently withdrawn his concession. After another hour or so, we all shuffled back to the minivan and went back to the hotel. There was confusion but not really despair. I went to bed and awoke to the news that Florida would be contested.

When I spotted Fox News reporter Carl Cameron in the lobby, I asked him, "What's going on?"

"I thought *you* might know," he said and then went on to tell me that there would likely be a recount.

I also ran into Bob Blackwill. "You know what this is like?" he asked. "It's like eating a really spicy meal before bed and having a really bad dream. You think to yourself, 'Must have been what I ate last night. Boy, I'm glad to wake up from that one!'"

But of course it wasn't a dream. I stayed in Austin a few days. I hung out near Karl Rove, trying to understand what was really happening via his sophisticated county-by-county analysis of our chances in Florida.

Governor Bush called the morning after the election to say that he wanted me to be a national security advisor but we'd obviously have to wait a bit on any announcement. It was surreal, but we went through the motions of planning a foreign policy transition that might never happen. One particularly bad idea was to have a photo op of the governor and me sitting in front of the fireplace discussing foreign policy. It looked like a faux Oval Office scene.

and was properly ridiculed. I decided to go home to California.

The return to California gave me a chance to spend quality time with my father. Meanwhile, I watched the ups and downs in Florida, my mood swinging with every court decision. I asked Steve Hadley to be the deputy national security advisor if I needed one. The two of us met with the Vulcans in Washington and talked about how to organize Bush's foreign policy, if we were given the opportunity. After the session, Steve and I were sitting in the conference room of his law office when we got word that the Florida Supreme Court had ordered a manual recount. The Bush lawyers had fought to prevent that, and though no one could know the outcome it seemed to portend a probable defeat.

We walked outside toward the restaurant for dinner. "Steve," I said, "I would have loved to serve with you. You would have been a great deputy national security advisor." I flew home to California the next day, believing that it was over. When I got off the plane and into the car, my driver, Mary Reynolds, gave me an update. The Supreme Court had, by a 5-4 decision, issued a stay, halting the manual recounts and setting a hearing for the matter on Monday, December 11. That meant that the judges in the majority were likely to rule in favor of Bush, certifying him as the winner of Florida's electoral votes. George W. Bush would indeed become the forty-third President of the United States.

That night I went to a birthday party for George Shultz at the Bohemian Club in San Francisco. The mood was very festive, and everyone congratulated me on my appointment. It hadn't been announced, but it had been assumed for a long time that I would accompany the governor to Washington as national security advisor. I accepted the thanks, but the next morning I called the governor and told him that I didn't think I could go to Washington. I explained that I could not leave my father in his current state. In fact, I'd already told a couple of close friends. I remember a conversation with Janne Nolan, with whom I'd been a research fellow at Stanford in 1981. "People would understand if I said I can't do it because of the children," I said. "They won't understand my obligations to my father."

"Rent a baby," Janne advised. We laughed, but she was one of the few who seemed to understand.

The governor called back and said that he understood but it was important I go. "I'm not asking you to leave your dad alone. He's always been there for you, and you want to be there for him. We'll make it work." We agreed that I would go to Washington but travel back to California every two weeks. In my heart I knew that it wasn't a practical solution, but I wasn't prepared to leave my father alone.

Three days before Christmas I went to have dinner at the home of my good friend and sports buddy Lori White. I stopped by to see Daddy on the way, and he seemed in pretty good spirits. I called a few hours later as I was leaving Lori's house, and Daddy got on the phone.

"I'm going home," he said.

"Daddy, you are at home," I answered.

"No, it's time for me to go home."

I knew in my heart what he meant, and it terrified me. My father, a Presbyterian minister and a man of great faith, believed that at the end of our earthly existence God calls us home to eternal life.

I rushed to his house. He seemed fine, and I left. I drove the ten minutes to my house. As

walked in the door, my stepmother, Clara, was calling. Daddy had stopped breathing. We rushed to the hospital. This time the physical and mental damage was irreparable. On Christmas Eve, after slipping into a coma, my father died.

I'd told Daddy just after the election that George W. Bush wanted me to go to Washington and become national security advisor. Daddy was able to communicate his understanding, but he also cried, and I couldn't tell whether they were tears of joy for my achievement or tears of despair because he knew that we would be separated. With his death he resolved my dilemma. Was it coincidence? I've always prayed that it was because I can't bear to think that John Wesley Rice, Jr., deliberately did that one last thing to make sure I fulfilled my dream. Honestly, it would have been just like him.

Inauguration Day

I SAT ON the dais a few rows back of the President-elect, my feet freezing and covered in a plastic poncho to protect me from the sleet of that January day. I reflected on my journey to that point and ached to have my parents sitting on the Mall to see George W. Bush take the oath of office, ushering me into the White House with him. Still, it was a joyous day as I took in the sights and sounds of this most remarkable demonstration of the United States' democratic stability, despite the controversy surrounding the election. At the lunch in the National Statuary Hall, the new President entered for the first time to the strains of "Hail to the Chief." I felt chills of pride and excitement. And then the celebration was over. We returned directly to the White House and got down to work.

From that day on, my "routine" reminded me that nothing would, in fact, be routine. Entering through the guarded gate each morning, passing stiffly standing marine guards, walking through the corridors that Lincoln and Roosevelt, Truman and Kennedy and Reagan had frequented, gave me an extraordinary sense of a place—a small place—in history. But those who became too focused on the atmosphere didn't last very long. There was work to do, under enormous pressure, and missteps could have dire consequences. The White House was a hothouse, and everyone who worked in those highly coveted jobs knew the stakes.

HONEST BROKER

I'D GIVEN A LOT of thought to the type of organization that I wanted to form. The National Security Council was established by the National Security Act of 1947 when, after World War II, it became clear that the United States would be permanently and dominantly involved in world politics. There are four original statutory members of the National Security Council: the President, the Vice President, the secretary of state, and the secretary of defense. The only other statutory position created through the act is the executive secretary of the NSC, a largely administrative but very vital function. That person manages the paper flow, oversees the Situation Room, handles interagency communication, and often staffs the President during travel. The role requires a very good administrator who can “keep the trains running on time” internally and work seamlessly with the other agencies. But it also helps to have a seasoned foreign policy hand who can understand the context and meaning of the paper he is seeing. Our executive secretaries, Bob Bradtke, Steve Biegun, and then Greg Schult, all possessed both sets of qualifications.

Because of a very capable career administrative staff that works for the executive secretary, there is a kind of bureaucratic continuity. This allows for smoother functioning on the national security side of the White House than on the domestic side, which has essentially no standing career apparatus. When I returned to Washington, I was struck by the degree to which the paperwork looked exactly as it had when I had left as special assistant for Soviet affairs on the NSC staff of George H. W. Bush in 1991.

Given the prominence today of the national security advisor, it is surprising that the role is not officially known as the assistant to the President for national security affairs, is not even mentioned in the 1947 legislation. McGeorge Bundy, who served President John F. Kennedy, is widely regarded as the first person to hold the position. Since then, there have been many variations in how the role is played. Some, such as Henry Kissinger, have sought—and successfully—to become independent power centers. Others, such as Brent Scowcroft, have been honest brokers in representing the views of the secretaries to the President but giving him advice privately, never publicly.

The national security advisor is staff—rarified staff, to be sure, but staff nonetheless. There's no doubt that sitting a few feet from the Oval Office confers influence, but it is the reflected influence of the President and must be used sparingly. The national security advisor must find a way to get the secretaries to do what the President wants them to do. I once told the President that this was a bit like trying to execute policy with a remote control. You don't have your own troops, diplomats, or a budget. You have only your relationship with the President. I felt confident in mine and was sure that I knew what kind of NSC I would run.

We are all captives of our earlier experiences, and mine had been a very good and successful one when I had worked for Brent Scowcroft. I patterned my role after Brent, as an honest broker, not a separate power center. There would be a small staff, dedicated to doing the work that the Cabinet departments could not but avoiding the tendency of the NSC staff to duplicate their efforts. And never would the NSC become involved in operational matters.

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