

Messenger Markin Fitzwater

- ✓ AP - Nancy Benace
- ✓ WP - Howie Kurtz
- ~~NYT~~ - Betsy Kolbert
- ✓ LAT - Tom Rosenstiel
- ✓ Chicago Trib - Steve Daly
- ✓ Boston Globe - Michael Karnish
- (Renée Loth)

- Newsweek excerpted quotes quotable
- New Republic Fred Barnes
- ~~→ New Republic Michael Kinsley~~
- Charles Krauthammer, Syndicated Columnist
^{Roland} Evans + ^{Bob} Novak
- ~~→ Time~~ Michael Kramer
- US News Ted Stofsky 955-2457
- NY Post - Gerbra Omin.
- ✓ USA Today - Bob Minze

disk file names

"Merlin" - transcript
"Merlin.1" - press release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Contact: Rayne Pollack
(202) 626-4863
Monique Llanos
(202) 626-7975
Virginia Diez
(202) 626-4602**

**"ROAD TO THE WHITE HOUSE"
GOES ONE-ON-ONE WITH MARLIN FITZWATER**

Washington, D.C., December 24, 1992--On a "Road to the White House" one-on-one interview with C-SPAN that airs on **Friday, January 1 at 5:00 PM and Sunday, January 3 at 9:30 PM (ET)**, Marlin Fitzwater reminisces about his days at the White House during the Reagan and Bush administrations.

The White House press secretary talks, among other things, about his relationship with the press, the role of print and broadcast media, the different styles of presidents Reagan and Bush, his plans for the future.

Mr. Fitzwater compares the pain of losing a presidential campaign with that of running at full speed into a wall, and with the same feelings of rejection one might experience through a divorce. He sees print media as the leader "in framing the debate and ... what you see on broadcast journalism."

His future plans? Maybe starting a firm in Washington, writing a book, and sailing the Chesapeake Bay. "The ocean is my prairie," he says as he recalls growing up in Kansas.

"Road to the White House" is C-SPAN's weekly program focusing on the presidential transition process. This year, C-SPAN won the 8th Annual Golden Cable ACE Award, the industry's highest annual honor, for its comprehensive coverage of the presidential election. "Road to the White House" was an integral part of such coverage, and continues to bring viewers nationwide a close look at the post-election process.

C-SPAN is available in 58.3 million households nationwide and around the world via satellite. C-SPAN is privately funded to serve the public by America's cable television companies.

--30--

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Contact: Rayne Pollack
(202) 626-4863
Monique Llanos
(202) 626-7975
Virginia Diez
(202) 626-4602**

**"ROAD TO THE WHITE HOUSE"
GOES ONE-ON-ONE WITH MARLIN FITZWATER**

Washington, D.C., December 24, 1992--On a "Road to the White House" one-on-one interview with C-SPAN that airs on Friday, January 1 at 5:00 PM and Sunday, January 3 at 9:30 PM (ET), Marlin Fitzwater reminisces about his days at the White House during the Reagan and Bush administrations.

The White House press secretary talks, among other things, about his relationship with the press, the role of print and broadcast media, the different styles of presidents Reagan and Bush, his plans for the future.

Mr. Fitzwater compares the pain of losing a presidential campaign with that of running at full speed into a wall, and with the same feelings of rejection one might experience through a divorce. He sees print media as the leader "in framing the debate and ... what you see on broadcast journalism."

His future plans? Maybe starting a firm in Washington, writing a book, and sailing the Chesapeake Bay. "The ocean is my prairie," he says as he recalls growing up in Kansas.

"Road to the White House" is C-SPAN's weekly program focusing on the presidential transition process. This year, C-SPAN won the 8th Annual Golden Cable ACE Award, the industry's highest annual honor, for its comprehensive coverage of the presidential election. "Road to the White House" was an integral part of such coverage, and continues to bring viewers nationwide a close look at the post-election process.

C-SPAN is available in 58.3 million households nationwide and around the world via satellite. C-SPAN is privately funded to serve the public by America's cable television companies.

--30--

PRIVATELY FUNDED
TO SERVE THE PUBLIC
BY AMERICA'S CABLE
TELEVISION COMPANIES

-TRANSCRIPT-

C-SPAN C-SPAN'S ONE-ON-ONE INTERVIEW
WITH
WHITE HOUSE PRESS SECRETARY
**MARLIN
FITZWATER**

Copyright 1992 C-SPAN

Airing Friday, January 1, at 5:30 PM and
Sunday, January 3, at 9:30 PM and 12:30 AM (ET)
on *"Road To The White House"*

C-SPAN

400 North Capitol Street, NW, Suite #650
Washington, D.C. 20001

Contacts: Rayne Pollack (202) 626-4863
Virginia Diez (202) 626-4602

-TRANSCRIPT-

**C-SPAN'S ONE-ON-ONE INTERVIEW
WITH
WHITE HOUSE PRESS SECRETARY
MARLIN
FITZWATER**

Copyright 1992 C-SPAN

**Airing Friday, January 1, at 5:30 PM and
Sunday, January 3, at 9:30 PM and 12:30 AM (ET)
on "Road To The White House"**

C-SPAN

400 North Capitol Street, NW, Suite #650
Washington, D.C. 20001

Contacts: Rayne Pollack (202) 626-4863
Virginia Diez (202) 626-4602

INDEX

	page
The role of print press vs. television	1
Impact of satellites on communications and television	3
Comments for and against a president's participation on call-ins, other TV shows	5
Reaction to Ed Rollins joining the Perot campaign	7
Future plans	9
Remarks on the importance of personal relationships in President Bush's international relations	15
Different personal styles and relations with the press of presidents Reagan and Bush	16
Remarks about losing the election	21
Reasons for not allowing greater TV coverage of his White House daily briefings	26
Transition work	28
Regret for allowing full coverage of Pres. Bush's leisure activities during Gulf War	29
Remarks on giving Newsweek and Richard Ben Cramer equal access to President Bush	33

C-SPAN: Marlin Fitzwater, when you look back on your experience in this White House, what's the best thing you can say about the American press?

MR. FITZWATER: Well, they're alive and well, and they've done a great job. I have the highest respect for the press corps, and it's a tough job. For me, it's a war every day. I mean, we battle back and forth, they know my every whim and mood and I know theirs. And we fight back and forth, but overall I respect them and I think they respect me or we couldn't get along this long.

C-SPAN: What don't you like about what they do from time to time?

MR. FITZWATER: Well, I think there is a tendency to be a little too cynical about government, and maybe that's an historical problem in the sense that I think Watergate and Iran-Contra and other kinds of scandals, whatever they may be, take the toll on the way people view government and I think, generally, we're more honest and government in general is more forthright than we get credit for.

C-SPAN: You know, television's gotten an awful lot of ink in the print press over the last couple of years for its impact. What role does print still play?

MR. FITZWATER: Well, I think print is still the leader in terms of -- interestingly enough -- of framing the debate and framing many times what you see on broadcast journalism. The fact is that here I deal with the White House press corps on a

daily basis and every day the newspapers lead the news agenda for the day and you see broadcast news playing off of it. And then they expand it by their interviews and so forth during the day. But the leading edge of journalism is still the print reporter, I believe.

You know, in Desert Storm -- it's interesting -- in Desert Storm I thought that the print journalism was terrific. The reporting was really astounding in terms of the comprehensive coverage of the war, of the men, the machines, the strategy, and of the countries involved. The print papers had good background on Kuwait and Iraq and its leaders, and they told people what Saddam Hussein was all about and what he was up to and so forth, and television journalism, I thought, did a very poor job in that area. Partially because I think they were late to the story, they thought the war was going to go badly, they didn't anticipate the background of it, and I think broadcast journalism took a black eye overall for their coverage of the war.

C-SPAN: When was the first time you came to the White House?

MR. FITZWATER: I came here in September of 1983, as deputy press secretary to Larry Speakes.

C-SPAN: Have you ever left this place?

MR. FITZWATER: Only to go across the alley for two years as press

secretary to Vice President Bush in '85 and '87. Then I came back as press secretary to President Reagan in '87 and I've been in this office ever since.

C-SPAN: What's -- back to the press again, the print and the television, what's changed?

MR. FITZWATER: The biggest change, I think, is satellites and what it's done to television. And that is reflected in many ways. One, the instantaneous nature of television now, the live coverage from around the world and the role that that has played in decision-making within the government as well as just how you relate to the news media.

And secondly, in the growth of regional, local independent television that individual stations now, in places like Cleveland and Toledo and Keokuck (phonetic) and cities all over the country, one, they can afford to have their own crews come to Washington, two, they can afford satellite time, they can do stories wherever they want to around the world, and third is the growth of things like regional talk shows and regional television like we saw in the presidential campaign. And basically that's all -- that all comes from the satellite, which is a phenomenon of the last decade.

C-SPAN: Does it make your job or the president's job harder or easier?

MR. FITZWATER: Easier, because there's so many more outlets and so many

more ways to communicate with the American people, and this campaign was a graphic description of that. But even without that, it's made communication more exciting, more interesting, and you can target your audiences more, you can reach more people quicker, so in an overall sense it's much easier.

C-SPAN: When you go back to the campaign, early on the president made some comments about not wanting to appear on an MTV show.

MR. FITZWATER: Uh-huh.

C-SPAN: Not wanting to do the call-ins and all --

MR. FITZWATER: Right.

C-SPAN: -- that. Why did you change your mind?

MR. FITZWATER: Well, I think initially, partially because President Bush was the incumbent president and you're always concerned about presidential stature as the president because the way you're viewed by the people, and in a way that is a different standard than the incumbent or the -- I mean, I'm sorry, a different standard than the challenger faces, who does not have that -- one, that advantage. It is an advantage and you don't want to lose it. The people think of you as president, see you as president, so you want

to be careful not to put yourself in positions where that changes and people suddenly don't see you as president any more and then, all of a sudden, you lose that presidential advantage. So that was the major concern on the talk shows.

The thing that got us to doing it was simply the realization that that was the way to reach the mass audience and to do for -- do it more efficiently. The most effective single instrument, I think, was the talk show from a local station in a state where the president, or Bill Clinton, or any of the other candidates would go to a station and they would do an audience participation show that would be beamed around the state or two or three states via satellite with participants in other stations around the region. The questions were tough, they were interesting, they came from a variety of people, plus you had a lot of professional newsmen involved, it was a very good combination of information and worked very well.

C-SPAN: Do you think it would have made any difference had you decided to do those talk shows earlier?

MR. FITZWATER: I think we should have done them earlier. I still don't think we should have done, as we didn't do, some of the total entertainment shows, but some of the news talk shows I think we should have done more and we should have done them earlier, yes.

C-SPAN: Were you arguing to do them earlier?

MR. FITZWATER: No, not really. I think I was slow in that. I think the Clinton people were much faster. But we recognized it was a good forum but we didn't really push for it -- I didn't push for it the way I should have.

C-SPAN: And when the president eventually did them, did you think he looked less than presidential?

MR. FITZWATER: No, I thought it looked -- it looked great. We didn't do the ones that we still thought would have destroyed a presidential stature, we didn't do many of those. But on the shows I'm describing, where we did in Florida, in Texas, or interviews with Larry King or others who are -- who have shows that are informational, if you will, I don't think there was a stature loss.

I think, for example, that President-elect Clinton's appearance on the show where he did -- I'm reluctant to name that show because the host calls me every name in the book every time he hears it -- but the playing the saxophone, I bet you that's not one he would repeat when he runs as an incumbent.

C-SPAN: Why not?

MR. FITZWATER: Well, because I think that does have a tendency to diminish presidential stature and in this case it worked for him and it worked well, because it got him to reach an audience that he needed and it gave him very expanded coverage at a time in his campaign where he was trying to broaden his appeal. This was when he was just coming out of the primaries. But as an incumbent, I think there's a different set of circumstances that'll come into play there.

C-SPAN: When Ross Perot stuck his toe in the water, what was your first reaction?

MR. FITZWATER: I thought it was serious and I predicted he'd be there all the way to the end. I thought he was a guy who wanted -- liked the challenge, had the money, saw politics as kind of a giant video game for billionaires, and I thought he'd play all the way to the end. President Bush said no, he said, "He'll drop out, that that's been his history," and indeed that's what happened. Then, of course, he ended up getting back in, but that was another whole set of circumstances, but -- we were divided on that part.

C-SPAN: There were some people that you know that were involved in that campaign. Was that hard to take? Ed Rollins and . . .

MR. FITZWATER: It was . . . rejection is always hard to take and it doesn't matter whether it's your wife, your girl friend, a hundred million people, or your political

consultants. So it was difficult to see Republican leaders and workers go to work for Mr. Perot, yes.

C-SPAN: Would you, if you had it to do over again, send that group down there to meet with the Perot people in Texas --

MR. FITZWATER: Yeah.

C-SPAN: -- on that magic day?

MR. FITZWATER: Yeah, I think we would.

C-SPAN: Why?

MR. FITZWATER: Well, because the reason we went there was to send a message to his supporters that we wanted them. Quite apart from Ross Perot. And while that gave Ross Perot a day in the sun from a media standpoint, our real effort was to send a message back through all those support groups that we wanted their vote and I don't think we could have -- we would have -- could have dared not go, actually. But I still think it was worthwhile, in retrospect.

C-SPAN: If the outcome -- if he had not joined in this campaign would the

outcome have been different?

MR. FITZWATER: I don't know. I think it's hard to say. He got 20 percent of the vote. Where those would have gone -- if we'd have gotten all 20 percent it would have been, but that seems unlikely.

C-SPAN: What is Marlin Fitzwater going to do next?

MR. FITZWATER: Well, I don't know for sure. I'm looking at a number of possibilities. I might start my own firm here in Washington. I might take some time just to lecture and maybe write a book. And, for sure, I'm going to spend a lot of time on the Chesapeake Bay.

C-SPAN: Start with the firm. What kind of firm would it be?

MR. FITZWATER: Well, I would be interested in a firm that specialized in communications strategies and some general government relations. I've been in government 26 years now, and I've worked in five cabinet departments, respect government, like government, and I think I could represent corporate interests who are -- who have problems or need to know how to deal with government, one way or another. And I've dealt with every major crisis from Love Canal to Desert Storm, so if this is an ad let me just tell you how great I am at crisis management. (Laughter.)

C-SPAN: Is that what you go through right now, letting the world know that you're interested and see if anybody salutes?

MR. FITZWATER: That's about right. I mean, you kind of -- people ask what you're doing and I think they're genuinely interested, but it's always good to tell people what you're thinking about and just to see if -- if five fellows come in tomorrow morning and said, "You're the guy we need and we're going to pay you a lot of money," then I might be in business by Thursday.

C-SPAN: If you wrote a book, what would it be about?

MR. FITZWATER: I'd like to write a book about -- I think I'd like to write one on press relations, just because I've been through it from so many different angles and -- and kind of interesting and funny events. I have no bitterness towards the press and I think I could write a good book that's funny and tells about all the wars we've gone through and Helen Thomas sitting outside my door every morning, and we've had a lot of fun together.

I'd also like to write a second book or maybe a first book that talks more about the end of the Cold War and about the Soviet-U.S. relations. Just by circumstance, really, I've been in more summit meetings with Gorbachev and Yeltsin than any other American, just by virtue of being in all the meetings with President Reagan and now with President Bush, and everybody else -- I'm the only guy who's served two administrations, so --

:

And I wouldn't mind seeing if some of my Soviet counterparts -- I've been through five Soviet press secretaries since the first one, Kanadeg Gerasimov, that I dealt with in the late '80s -- and they might want to contribute. I wouldn't mind getting together with them and sharing a perspective on the walk in Red Square in '88, for example, the Washington Summit before that in '87, the Malta experience, which was really the big opening by President Bush that said America is willing to help in -- this Cold War transition. And so I think there might be some interesting observations along those lines.

C-SPAN: How would you describe Mr. Gorbachev up close?

:

MR. FITZWATER: Well, up close he's probably the most fascinating politician I've ever met and I think his story -- history will say he's the most influential in the last forty years, in the post-war world. I think what he did was truly incredible and in all the summits I went through with him, which was seven or eight, he was a different man in every one. And he had an emotional range that was incredible and was suited to fit the objectives of that summit. And I don't think any world leader that I'm aware of has ever really planned his presentation, his emotions, his personal image, and the relationship with his interlocutor more than Gorbachev did. And whether it was by intent or just by instinct, I'm not certain.

:

C-SPAN: Did he know you? Did he act like he knew you?

MR. FITZWATER: Oh, yes. We had a lot of interesting exchanges. In 1987, the first one in Washington, I told -- the press were on me about this relationship between the Soviet Union and Moscow at Gorbachev's first visit -- and I said, "It's good to keep in mind here that we're old enemies, not old friends." And when Gorbachev came he was introduced to me and his interpreter said, "This is the man who said you're old enemies," and Gorbachev shook his fist at me and says, "If you were in my country and said that I would scold you." I wanted to say, "Well, that'd be better than Siberia," but nevertheless ...

And we had a lot of -- we were in Malta on the ship together and his spokesman, Gerasimov and I were standing there and Gorbachev says, "You know, I'd like to put the two of you in a bag and drop you over the edge." So he didn't have too much patience with spokesmen, but -- in any case, we had a recognizing relationship all those years.

C-SPAN: Did he either speak or understand English?

MR. FITZWATER: Gorbachev? No.

C-SPAN: Not at all.

MR. FITZWATER: He used an interpreter all the time. And I don't believe he did. I mean, I think it was real. Sometimes foreign leaders like to use their own language or they don't feel they know English well enough, but in Gorbachev's case, he may have

understood a few words but not enough to carry on discourse. And I've been in enough meetings that they always slip if they know.

C-SPAN: First summit you went to?

MR. FITZWATER: First summit was Washington, 1987. Which was really the -- that's when we had to sign the first INF, the arms control agreement. And we had 7,000 press from around the world here, had the big press center over in the Marriott Hotel, and Gerasimov and I briefed together at my invitation, which was a big risk in terms of being a spokesman to have a joint briefing with the Soviet spokesman. And it sent a strong signal around the world about what we were up to at that point in time, but it was very risky. And Gerasimov was sensitive to that and it went pretty well.

I only had one trouble, one problem really, and that was in Moscow in the next year, in '88. We were negotiating the follow-on to the INF Treaty, in long-range missiles. And late one evening, Gerasimov chose a strategy that would say that we were making more progress than we had actually been making in the meetings. And I think what their -- they thought the talks were going to fall apart and they were going to say -- try to take credit for progress in the first day or two so that it'd look like we were responsible for failures in the end.

In fact, we had not made progress. We had achieved real stumbling blocks on

bomber counting rules and on the number of missiles -- and number of warheads on missiles. And Gorbachev -- I mean, Gerasimov, with me standing beside him, characterized this totally differently. And I had to make a choice of do I challenge him here in front of the world's press corps, or do I try to think of another way to deal with this, and I chose not to challenge him because I thought it would really blow up the summit for the president. And among the many responsibilities of a spokesman is not to do any harm to the substance of what your president is trying to do, and I didn't feel like that was an appropriate place to get in a fight. So I let it go. This was the sixth evening.

I then went back to the press at 10:30 that night, held a background briefing, not for the cameras, and told them, "Look, what happened is not what was described to you this afternoon," and got it straightened out. So I managed to finesse that. But that was the only time where a Soviet spokesman and I had a potential conflict.

C-SPAN: What about Mr. Yeltsin?

MR. FITZWATER: Well, Yeltsin is a very interesting fellow, a man of some courage and very direct manner. In the meetings that he's had with President Bush, he says exactly what he thinks, he is in private meetings just as he appears in his public persona, which is that he says exactly what he means and in that sense has been very good to deal with. And President Bush has been very direct with him.

They have a good relationship, and I think one of the interesting histories of this administration that only President Bush can write and maybe General Scowcroft, maybe I can add a little bit to it, will be the way that President Bush's personal relationships have guided the post-Cold War era, and there's been a lot of private things that he has talked to Yeltsin about in terms of how he manages the transition, how he relates to Gorbachev and the people that were left behind, how he deals with his parliament and Mr. Yeltsin's going through a difficult process right now with that.

Similarly, some of the president's guidance toward reunification of Germany I think has significant historical consequences, and none of that has been reported because it's all been private conversations, but it will be as the history of this administration is written.

C-SPAN: You said that Mr. Yeltsin is the same in private as he is in public. How about Mr. Gorbachev?

MR. FITZWATER: No, he is not. Gorbachev in private has a range of emotions, again, and he -- he carries on or conducts himself in private in a way to advance his objectives. In public he's always polished, he's always smooth, he's always calm and so forth. In private he's very emotional, can be soft or loud as the opportunity fits.

I recall at the end of the summit meeting in Moscow in 1988 that he was

standing at the end of a table toe-to-toe with Ronald Reagan, and President Reagan towered over him by four or five inches. But he was -- he wanted a phrase in the final communique very badly and he was fighting and shouting and screaming for it, and he was gesturing wildly and so forth. And President Reagan says, "No, this is the way it's going to be. That's it." Gorbachev says, "Okay, the meeting's over." And they turned, arm-in-arm, walked out, and he was calm and placid. Very fascinating character.

C-SPAN: What's the difference between working for Ronald Reagan and George Bush?

MR. FITZWATER: Well, mainly just the difference in their personalities, in the way they operated. Both are wonderful men that I love very much and would do anything for. President Reagan -- for example, President Reagan liked to make decisions on the basis of memos and reading summaries of issues, and he read much more than people knew or than he was given credit for. And he would devour a lot of memos on things and he would make a decision and that would be it. And you'd have discussions with President Reagan and you could come away from a meeting with him knowing exactly what he wanted to do even though he never actually said it. It was very interesting, the quality about the man and the way he made decisions.

President Bush likes oral discussion. He likes to hear the arguments, he likes to talk to people, he likes to use the telephone and in person to know what people think and

how they view an issue. And when he makes a decision, he says it. He just says, "This is what I want to do, this is the decision."

So there's a -- there's that kind of technical difference in the way they operate.

As a spokesman, President Reagan and both President Bush were both very forgiving fellows in terms of things I would say that might have not been as astute as they should have been. And were both very kind to me and paid attention to what I said and were great to work for.

C-SPAN: What was difficult about either one of them?

MR. FITZWATER: I think the difficulty -- I used to say that -- well, first of all, the biggest difficulty in this job is also the biggest difficulty with both of them, and that is just there's so much information, there's so much to know. And a president does so many things and a press secretary is expected to be a part of all of it. So keeping on top of the information. And I used to say President Reagan, because of the way he operated, that he liked information on paper, he liked briefing documents, option papers, you could read the paper flow and maybe see him 20 percent of the time during the day and you would know basically everything that he was dealing with and the issues that he was considering and what his attitude was.

With President Bush, because of the way he operates, making a hundred phone calls and lunches with everybody and so forth, you could be with him 90 percent of the day and only know 20 percent of all the things he's talked about. So -- but fortunately we've had a very close relationship. He calls me a lot, says, "This is what I want to do," he's very sensitive to the press and the public needs, so it's worked out. But the biggest problem is always just staying on top of the issues.

C-SPAN: The two men operated rather differently when it came to how they dealt with the press.

MR. FITZWATER: Yes.

C-SPAN: Ronald Reagan met, what, 50-some times --

MR. FITZWATER: He had 48 press conferences in eight years.

C-SPAN: How many has George Bush had in --

MR. FITZWATER: President Bush has had 270-some, over 270 in four years. And that is a major difference. And you'd say, "Now, how does that come from the same press secretary," and the answer is, first of all, that I try to design a press strategy that fits the president, the principals. They both had different ways that they wanted to do -- to relate to

the press when they wanted to disseminate information, that they felt was best for them. And I think, by and large, we were successful.

President Reagan liked the formal press conference, not held too often, ones in which his qualities of showmanship came into play, his incredible ability to communicate on television with the camera, which really was so powerful that it overcame many of the other aspects of the briefing, the qualities of the information and so forth. So 48 press conferences, all televised, all formal and so forth, were really incredibly successful with President Bush -- I mean, President Reagan.

President Bush was more immediate and has direct contact with the press. He's at his most compelling in one-on-ones or in a close setting where he's talking directly to reporters or to whoever it is he's talking to. And we stumble on a -- I was -- I'd had long talks with him before the administration started, about how he wanted to conduct press relations, and he said, "I'd like to meet with the press more often, I'd like to do it more informally," and then he said beyond that, you know, what design a location and so forth for me, he said, "But I'd like to do it where I can, just with ten minutes' notice, go talk to the press."

So in trying to come up with a way to do that and still be fair to everybody, and, i.e., make it open to all the press corps as opposed to just two or ten or one or two, we decided the best way was just to come in the press briefing room and see how it goes. And it

:

turns out that it was very successful because the press briefing room is small, the camera tends to magnify it but it's really a very small room, and the press were right on top of him. And so it enabled -- it brought out his strength of being -- of having a close association or rapport with the people he was talking to. And we have a lot of press conferences that were wonderful cases of banter back and forth and it also demonstrated that this man had a total command of the issues before him.

And I think worked well in the sense that there were -- there's very seldom, in the course of these four years, did the press and the American people not know what George Bush's attitude was on a given issue. Because he was willing to do those and talk so much to the press.

C-SPAN: Let me, though, for purpose of discussion, suggest that eight years and 48 press conferences --

MR. FITZWATER: Yeah.

C-SPAN: -- President Reagan won the second time around.

:

MR. FITZWATER: Right. Right.

C-SPAN: George Bush's 200-and-some, he lost.

MR. FITZWATER: Right.

C-SPAN: Would you then conclude from that, or --

MR. FITZWATER: Yeah.

C-SPAN: -- that it doesn't do --

MR. FITZWATER: Yeah.

C-SPAN: -- any good to talk to the press.

MR. FITZWATER: No, I wouldn't. Because, first of all, I don't think he lost because of press relations. I don't think you lose because of explaining to the American people what you're doing. I think we lost the election principally because of the economy and maybe we could have run a better campaign, but I don't think less exposure to the press would have been more substantial. I mean, would have been better for the president.

C-SPAN: What did it feel like the day after the election was over?

MR. FITZWATER: It was very disappointing. And again, it feels like rejection. It doesn't matter what course it comes from. There's just a deep -- there's a deep

hurt in your stomach that says, "I don't understand why these -- why people did this." And it's like -- I think it's like any rejection. I'm divorced so I know what that's like, and it's just -- you just can't understand it. There's a kind of a loss feeling. And it goes away after a few days, but it takes a while because --

And the other side of that is people always say, "Well, when did you know you were going to lose?" Well, I first knew when Mr. Clinton had about 265 delegates and he needed five more. Because if you're on the inside of that cluster of people who are with the president or if you're the president, you're campaigning like crazy in the final days, 30 days or so, four or five cities a day, big crowds, good audiences, people are all cheering you on, you're getting a good response. The polls show you're ten points behind but you say, "Hey, how can this be? All these people are coming out every day and telling me, I'm going all over America." And so the psychology is that you're winning, you feel like you're winning, you feel like something will happen.

I remember watching TV and the delegates are starting and -- in the Electoral College, they're starting to go against us, the popular vote's back and forth, doesn't tell you too much, and this is on Election Day, and you keep thinking, "Well, now, there's going to be a snowstorm in Colorado and that'll hold down the vote there where we're a little behind and it'll come in big in New York and," and in your mind there's always a strategy to win. Right up to the end.

And that's what keeps you going and why I, you know, the press often said to me in these last days, "Gee, you guys don't look like you know you're going to lose," and I kept saying, "We're not going to lose, what are you talking about?" And so then, when you do lose, however, it makes the impact a lot harder. Because you just -- you run right into a wall. And when you hit that wall, it takes a couple days to pick yourself up.

President Bush did it well and set the tone for all of us with his graciousness and dignity in defeat, but it's not easy.

C-SPAN: What about all the stories about him being depressed?

MR. FITZWATER: I don't think he was depressed but he was hurt and disappointed just like we all were. It took a few days to turn around. But he's -- he did, and I think he conducted himself with great elegance and now he's looking to his future, just like the rest of us are. We have a serious situation in terms of the Somalian humanitarian effort, and that is going to be underway for a while, but in terms of looking at his future in Houston and planning his library and thinking about what he's going to do, well he, like all the rest of us, are looking ahead now.

C-SPAN: When you look back at some of the stories that were published about the presidents you worked for, was there a time when they were -- the press was just dead wrong?

MR. FITZWATER: Well, I think there have been a lot of those. But they're mainly daily stories. In other words, the press is wrong often on a daily basis, and my attitude has always been that the only answer to a bad story is a good story and you just set out to turn it around the next day, you can't get angry about it.

In terms of has the press ever been wrong in terms of a total concept of a president --

C-SPAN: Like -- how about the health story?

MR. FITZWATER: The health story in Japan? No, they were right on that. I mean, --

C-SPAN: No, but the health story that came out that said that this president is sick and that was published in the middle of the campaign.

MR. FITZWATER: Oh. Yeah.

C-SPAN: "He's sicker than we know and --"

MR. FITZWATER: Yeah. No, that was wrong, yeah.

C-SPAN: But did that hurt --

MR. FITZWATER: No, I never thought that caught on too much, and I don't think it hurt us. I don't -- maybe I'm wrong, maybe I missed it, something, I don't think that was believed. Because he's such a vigorous man and I saw him on TV every night being vigorous. So I think that story had -- it was tough to sustain that.

C-SPAN: In the end, you said, it was the economy that made the difference.

MR. FITZWATER: I think so.

C-SPAN: Let me ask you, then, in the end is there nothing you can do if the economy's bad, you just have to sit back and take it?

MR. FITZWATER: Well, it's tough -- well, no, the best thing you can do is deal with the economy and I think the real debate will be, "Should we have dealt differently with it in the year before the election than we did?" I don't know. We tried a strategy of working with the Congress, we submitted three packages, we didn't get any of them, it didn't work. Should we have done something more dramatic earlier? I think with hindsight you can probably say we should have. But who knows. I don't spend a lot of time looking back, but I think -- you can only change things by actually changing things. I don't believe PR is going to create or break anybody in a -- as a presidential candidate.

C-SPAN: One of the things that we would have liked to have done during the time that you were in this job is to cover you more at the podium --

MR. FITZWATER: Yeah.

C-SPAN: -- briefing the press.

MR. FITZWATER: Yeah.

C-SPAN: How come you wouldn't let us do that?

MR. FITZWATER: Yeah. That's an interesting thing. I was just talking to the Clinton transition team about that.

I maintained briefing rules the whole time that allowed some film of me at the top of the briefing and it was all on the record so anything I said could be quoted, but no sound. And the reason was that I wanted the option of in that briefing, which usually always lasted an hour, to have some real interaction with the press, to try to explain what the president's doing, to try to argue, if you will, our case. Because so much of what the press secretary does is educational. And I felt that if I made it a televised show, that I would be intimidated into kind of standard speeches or sound bites and I would be so concerned with how I looked on the evening news that I'd be afraid to really pile in there and take on the

issues.

So it was protection for me, really. So I didn't have to worry about that 30 seconds that showed me looking foolish and have it repeated 1800 times on all the networks. And I don't regret that. What I -- all I -- I mean, I may have given up a little visibility for the president by doing that, but for me, anyway, I think it was the right thing to do.

:

C-SPAN: Is the Clinton transition group asking your advice?

MR. FITZWATER: Well, they're asking me how I did things and why. And then they can use it to make their own decisions. And that's the way I approached the transition. I don't try to tell them how to do it or really advise them one way or another. I just say, "Here's how I did it and why."

C-SPAN: Are there things you're telling them that they shouldn't do?

MR. FITZWATER: No, no. I don't know of anything I would tell them not to do.

C-SPAN: Or things that didn't work for you.

MR. FITZWATER: No, I don't -- there aren't very many things in those

:

categories. For one thing, they're professional people who have got just as much political press savvy as I do. I mean, George Stephanopolous and Dee Dee Myers are both very good and very accomplished, and they can figure this out and what's best for them. I try to give them some ramifications that they might not understand because of my knowledge of the government and the bureaucracy and how it relates.

This question on on-camera interviews is a good one, because what it does is it tends to elevate the role of the Defense Department and the State Department in a media sense and a national sense because they brief on camera. So their spokesmen are going to have the face and the presence on camera every night. So that has ramifications for the president, in the sense that he has to think, "Do I, as president, want to have the lead, publicly-recognized responsibility on every issue, particularly foreign policy, or not?" And if it's -- if the answer is not, then the way I did it is probably the right one. If the answer is yes, then the press secretary here probably has to brief on camera so -- and then the pecking order of the power shifts entirely because the press secretary in the White House will always be the face the networks put on camera because he's closest to the president. So there are power shifts like that that I can help them with, and then they can decide for themselves.

C-SPAN: Is there a way to reduce the force of the bubble that everybody talks about around the president?

MR. FITZWATER: It's -- there are, and you -- but you have to bite some

tough bullets to do it. And mainly with the press. I mean, you can limit the press and, in doing so, give the president more privacy, and he just has to make that trade-off. I mean, what he's -- how much heat he's willing to take from the press corps and ultimately how much political ramifications there are for the American people. In other words, if people say, "Well, he doesn't really -- he isn't really trying to level with us because he wants all this privacy," then, you know, that's a demarcation line he -- a president probably doesn't want to cross.

On the other hand, I suspect that a president can demand more privacy than we demanded and get away with it in terms of public reaction.

C-SPAN: Remember during the Gulf War, people said that the president made a mistake by running around the Liberty boat --

MR. FITZWATER: Yeah.

C-SPAN: -- the cigarette boat and playing golf --

MR. FITZWATER: Yeah.

C-SPAN: -- and being seen.

MR. FITZWATER: Yeah.

C-SPAN: In retrospect, did that hurt him?

MR. FITZWATER: I think in the final analysis it may have. It may have.

And that may have been a case in which we simply should not have allowed the press to film that. Because that was a matter of privacy that was important to the president, important to his mental well-being, his ability to rest, relax, to be prepared to make decisions, and I don't think you should tell a president that he can't go boating because the public image is bad. And what we did was live with it. We said, "The president wants to do this, he needs to do this for his welfare, the press thinks they have a right to know that, in a way the American people do have a right to know what the president is doing, and therefore we allow maximum access," and we did.

If I had it to do over again, I'm not sure I would do that. I would just say, "Private is private." And that's an issue that the Clinton people will have to wrestle with, too.

C-SPAN: You may not want to do this. Who, in your opinion, does the best job? If you were talking to a bunch of college kids about journalism, who would you give credit for being the best?

MR. FITZWATER: Well, you're right, I won't do that. Picking best and worst is --

C-SPAN: I won't ask you who the worst --

MR. FITZWATER: -- an ultimate sin --

C-SPAN: I'm just going to ask you who's best. What do you admire the most?

MR. FITZWATER: I admire hard work and people who are trying hard and going after the story. And the reason I admire that more than, say, accuracy or something is because everybody makes mistakes. Nobody is ever accurate. No story -- there's no story ever been written or ever been broadcast that is as accurate as the bureaucrats on the inside think should be. And that's not a reasonable standard.

The other thing is, I respect people who try not to -- it's not a matter of -- try not to have a political agenda of their own. And I think that's more difficult in an age of advocacy journalism than it used to be. Because it used to be that a principle of journalism was objectivity and I think now that's a much lesser important factor, even in journalism schools. And as advocacy journalism has grown, it's become more appropriate in the academic world of journalism as well as the practical world to adopt a point of view and

present it. And it's been successful. Part of that's an outgrowth, again, of Watergate and Iran-Contra and other things, but part of it is I think will require a pre- . . . an evaluation of journalism at some point down the road.

C-SPAN: As you know, the Washington Post and other publications have suggested that you punished certain journalists for being negative against George Bush --

MR. FITZWATER: Yeah.

C-SPAN: -- by not letting them come to the Christmas party.

MR. FITZWATER: . . . Not true. Not -- I don't have anything to do with the social list, thank God.

C-SPAN: Why would they blame you?

MR. FITZWATER: Just 'cause I'm the press secretary and it's the press they're talking about, and they don't know all -- anybody else to blame.

C-SPAN: Have you ever been punitive during your reign?

MR. FITZWATER: No, and I -- fortunately, I think that's one of the things

that the press recognize about me, that I've been in the White House twelve years and they know that I've had trouble with reporters and we have arguments and we have fights, but I've never been punitive. There've been -- there've been a couple times when I've gone to reporters and said, "Look, I think what you did was wrong, I think it was unethical, that it was wrong journalistically, and that it was wrong on the merits, and I promise you that I will never treat you different than any other reporter but I want to up-front tell you that on a personal basis I think you're way out of line." And that's the way I dealt with it and they respect that.

And so that I have always tried to make fairness and honesty and directness as a hallmark of my time here, and I think that they know that. So I'd never use a Christmas party. They can -- I don't care who comes to the Christmas party.

C-SPAN: There are a couple people I want to ask you about. Tom DeFrank, who did the George Bush --

MR. FITZWATER: Yeah.

C-SPAN: -- side of the Newsweek piece, was not given access.

MR. FITZWATER: Right.

C-SPAN: Whereas, his counterpart, Mark Miller, was with --

MR. FITZWATER: Yeah.

C-SPAN: -- Bill Clinton.

MR. FITZWATER: Yeah.

C-SPAN: And Richard Ben Cramer, who wrote the book --

MR. FITZWATER: Yeah.

C-SPAN: --"What It Takes," --

MR. FITZWATER: Right.

C-SPAN: -- seems to have had a lot of access. Why did you decide in these cases that one got access and one didn't?

MR. FITZWATER: Actually, they got about the same. With Tom, what we said was, "I will deal with you just as I would as if you were a Newsweek reporter, which you are. I will -- and give you all the information that I give all the other press corps. But

we are not going to choose any news organization and give them exclusive behind-the-scene rights to a book or whatever." I think that's unfair to everybody else. For example, why should we guarantee the success of a book for any one organization when there are a lot of others who would like to write that, too, and in fact anybody you gave that to would have a commercial success on their hands. So that's a case of the government or, in this case, the presidency endorsing a commercial venture and giving them a windfall by virtue of just being president and I don't think that's right.

C-SPAN: So Bill Clinton was wrong by giving access like that?

MR. FITZWATER: I think it was not good press relations, yeah, I would not have done that. And whether he would want to do that again or not, I don't know, because he -- there again, he's a candidate, he's running for office. If he choose -- if he decides that that's going to help him get elected, get a book out someday, well, then, all bets are off. But in my position, with an incumbent presidency, we have always tried to be careful not to do that.

Similarly with giving interviews. In my six years as press secretary, whenever we give an interview to one network we try to work out something for the other ones, so there's some kind of reciprocity between everybody. Because I think fairness is important.

Richard Ben Cramer, for example, worked on his book for four years. He

interviewed a lot of people. But in terms of the president, he didn't get the access that Tom did, really. He had one brief discussion with the president and Tommy's had two or three.

C-SPAN: Last couple questions. I read in USA Today that you're thinking also about being the president of a college or hope to be the president of a college?

MR. FITZWATER: No, that's not really true. I think the reporter thought that would be an interesting avenue and certainly if some college was interested in me, I wouldn't turn down the offer, but that's not really where my interest lies. I'm not really an academic kind of person.

C-SPAN: And you said earlier in our interview that you wanted to spend a lot of time on the Chesapeake. Doing what?

MR. FITZWATER: Yes, I come from Kansas where there isn't much water, but since I've been here I've learned to love the ocean and I always say the ocean is my prairie, which means it gives me the same kind of solace that I had growing up in Kansas, where you can look out over those waving wheat fields and dream about the far horizon. And I've learned to sail and boat, and I would like to buy a boat of some kind and explore the east coast and take a couple of days at each one of those little cities on the Chesapeake Bay, do that kind of thing.

C-SPAN: Would you ever come back into a job like this?

MR. FITZWATER: I don't -- I don't know. In government, there really isn't a job like this. One of the grandest things about my leaving now is that -- is this has always been the pinnacle of a career for me, and I'm able to say that career is behind me, my government service is behind me. There may be other good jobs in government at some future year. I'm only 50 and you never know what might happen, but I don't think I'll be back in the White House.

C-SPAN: What will you miss the most?

MR. FITZWATER: I miss the information and the access to information. Because every morning I have at my disposal all the news of the world, television sets behind me, all the newspapers. I have the people within arm's length here who can give me an answer to anything that's happening. If I see on television that the foreign minister of France made a phone call to the president of Germany about some problem, I can walk 40 yards and ask Brent Scowcroft if he knows anything about it and what they're talking about and what's our role and is the president going to call somebody. And that kind of information flow cannot be duplicated any place but the White House. And access to the people who are making the judgments.

C-SPAN: Time's up, thanks.

MR. FITZWATER: Thank you very much, enjoyed it.

:

:

: