

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION
WITH PRESIDENT
SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 22, 1974, from 12:30 to 2:00 p.m.
OVAL OFFICE

Just the two of us met. Topics: we talked about my father, talked about the President's health.

We talked about the Chief of Staff approach that had been used in the past, and his difficulty with some aspects of it. He talked about his key people: Phil Buchen, Hartmann, Marsh, Ron Nessen, and if I took the job - me. That is his White House Cabinet. Buchen handling legal and personal friend; Bob Hartmann as a speech coordinator, certain political PR matters, as an advisor, that it has been a tough transition down for Bob; Marsh who started with Defense and Congress, kind of a trouble shooter in an unassigned responsibility, but the Chief of Staff was not really Jack's cup of tea, the feeling was that he would replace Timmons if Timmons left. We talked about the terHorst problem and the fact that terHorst is now using some stuff that he learned when he was in the White House in his columns; Jerry's feeling that Nesson will be good; Rush is leaving after the Summit; Seidman will be coordinator of economic matters in the White House but at a lower level; Rog taking over energy; Simon on economic policy; Ann Armstrong staying; Birch handling politics until January; Allen Greenspan; mentioned Jerry Jones saying that he was very impressed, purely a mechanical coordinator, he wants to stay, but if Rumsfeld wants him to leave or wanted someone different, the President would try and work out something for Jerry. We talked a bit about Kissinger and the importance of his staying on, his value. I agreed and said that that was very important and that I thought that the President ought to get himself into a position where he had some options and wasn't totally dependent on anybody.

We talked about how long I'd stay in this job, and he said it would be until an opening that Rumsfeld feels is appealing and stimulating comes up. The President said he didn't see it as an immediate development, but if it came up in three months or six months -- fine.

I told the President that that meant that I would have to begin looking for a successor and that that would be one of my responsibilities, and he agreed that we should be thinking about that. We reviewed the fact that I had been thinking of leaving government, that his moving into the Presidency had changed that, and



that I did want to help, but that on the longer term basis, I really did have to think about what I ought to do and that I did appreciate his comment that a position of substance and importance in the Cabinet would be available in the coming months, and he agreed. He said, "Don you have a commitment on that."

We then talked about the concept of how the White House should be operated. I said that there were several ways for a person to run it, that there had been talk about a straight line Chief of Staff operation, and ⁴⁹indicated to me that he didn't like that. I said that some other people have proposed free play and frankly I couldn't abide that, that that is your quickest way to lose your credibility because even though you are honest the fact that you don't know what you are doing misleads people and once you lose your credibility, you can't govern, so there has to be order, and that I would consider it my job to see that there was order. I then said that here is how I envisaged doing it, and that I wanted his OK. I said essentially that it was important that there be multiple centers of information up to him, and that I agreed with him on that. I said, however, as far as directions down, it was important that there not be multiple directions down from him. I said, "Let me give you an example, Phil Buchen is handling the legal, Ron Nessen is handling the press, and I am in the spot as Assistant to the President for White House Operations. Now, obviously ^{Nessen} is going to come to you and tell you things that you need to know about the press and that is fine so that you have that source of information about the press. As far as I am concerned I think Nessen ought to also be able to come to you and say, look I hear something in the legal area that I think is fouled up. But what can't be if for you to then say to Nessen, well Ron, I want you to do this in the legal area. Rather, you have to see that I know, and probably Phil knows about the legal area so that there is somebody, at least one guy in the place, who knows what is going on, and that people's legs aren't cut out from under them by having everyone messing in everyone's else's business without their knowledge". He said that he agreed completely with that idea. Second, we talked about personnel, and I told him that I wanted him to really understand that I felt strongly that there should be changes, and he talked about it a little bit, and my impression was that he doesn't feel as strongly as I do. He said he wanted me to be a member of the Cabinet. I told him that I thought that was a bad idea, that he had too many people in the Cabinet and that it cheapened the currency, and that it was perfectly all right with me not to be in the Cabinet. He said, "Well, he agreed with me that the currency has been cheapened, but we have all these other guys in there now, Marsh, Buchen and everybody and Ann Armstrong, and it will look funny if I am not, and I might have trouble dealing with them."



We then talked about a successor for me, and I said it was very important that it be done rapidly. He said he was thinking of David Bruce and had offered it to him. I said, "Well number one, I am delighted you are moving fast on it." He said, "What do you think of Bruce?" I said, "He is a fantastic man, although I am not sure he has the energy for it, but he certainly has the stature." He said, "Who were you thinking of?" I said, "I was thinking of Richardson or Frelinghuysen." He then told me [REDACTED] he thought Richardson was not a bad idea and said he would try him if Bruce wouldn't accept it. He told me that he had asked Elliot to do the Amnesty Boards before Goodell, but Elliot hadn't wanted to.

The long and the short of it was that we agreed that he couldn't have floaters in the White House. If there was any floating around, it had to be for advice up, but not for assignments down, and only if I know. We then talked of the range of my responsibilities in the National Security area, and he said I could sit in on meetings, I certainly would attend the Cabinet and obviously as a member, and sit in on the National Security Council. He did, however, feel that I would want to get a good relationship going with Kissinger, and he said that it shouldn't be too hard since Kissinger speaks incredibly highly of me. I said that I thought we ought to try to wire Timmons in a little bit more. We talked about when Timmons might leave. I ended up saying that when one person is doing other people's business, that they are going to have trouble and the President's going to have trouble, and that isn't good.

He talked about his schedule, where he comes in between 7:30 and 7:45 a.m., CIA briefings from 7:45 to 8:00 a.m. with Brent Scowcroft there; 8:30 a.m. Al Haig came in and laid out the day, schedule matters, signing; 9:15 a.m. Kissinger came in and stayed until about 10:15 a.m.; 10:15 a.m. Ron Nessen would come in for 15 to 20 minutes on press matters and then he would be free for the rest of the day for his normal work. He said that during this initial phase of his Presidency, he feels that he needs that full hour on foreign policy and national security matters with Kissinger.

He then said that he badly needed me now, and he wanted me to know that I had a firm commitment to an appropriate Cabinet post. He then smiled and said, "Come on, Rummy, I have a golf game scheduled. Say 'yes'". I then said, "OK, I'll do it on that basis," and I told him my plan was to go to Brussels immediately after the meeting, come back on Wednesday or Thursday, take over on Friday. That I wanted him to know that I would have to go back to Brussels for two or three days at some point in the coming month. And the second thing I told him was that I wanted to be able to invite the NATO Council to come and



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meet with him at some point, and that I would talk to Kissinger about it. I told him that I was going to meet with Haig after I met with him, and I would work out the details on the schedule and the title and that type of thing with him, and the meeting ended at 2:00 p.m.

