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THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

FOR THE RECORD:

Shortly after the President's announcement on January 8, 1985, that Donald Regan, Secretary of the Treasury, would be Chief of Staff to the President, his Assistant, Christopher Hicks, called and asked that we put together a list of the Chiefs of Staff of the White House beginning with the Roosevelt Administration. We immediately informed him that there was no Chief of Staff at the White House during several Administrations because the concept or position simply did not exist. We did, however, agree to put together a list of persons who would closely fit the description of Chief of Staff. This was a simple task: Simply contact William J. Hopkins, former Executive Clerk of the White House and Executive Assistant to Presidents Johnson and Nixon (1931-1971) and Thomas M. Jones, former Chief of White House Records and Executive Clerk of the White House (1952-1982). They both agreed that the persons appearing on the attached list could have been classified as Chief of Staff during their service on the White House staff but strongly stressed that at no time could anyone have been called Chief of Staff during the Administrations of Presidents Roosevelt, Truman, Kennedy, and Johnson. It was only at our insistance that they named the perons shown on the list for these four Administrations.

Additionally, they both made the following general observations on these four Administrations:

HOPKINS - (Roosevelt) President Roosevelt certainly would have opposed the Chief of Staff concept. He served as his own Chief of Staff. Some writers have placed Harry Hopkins in this position, but this simply is not true. He was a very close adviser to the President and served him in many different assignments. He had a very small apartment in the residence, even when serving as Secretary of Commerce.

HOPKINS & JONES - (Truman) President Truman was his own Chief of Staff. The last President to have daily morning meetings with his senior staff. Mr. Hopkins attended these meetings. Both Clark M. Clifford and John R. Steelman were powerful and influential men on the staff but Matthew J. Connelly would best fit the description of Chief of Staff.

HOPKINS & JONES - (Kennedy) President Kennedy had no Chief of Staff. Theodore C. Sorenson was a close adviser (speechwritin and domestic policy), but both agreed that P. Kenneth O'Donnell would best fit the description of Chief of Staff.

HOPKINS & JONES (Johnson) - President Johnson had no Chief of Staff. He was his own. Both agreed that Jenkins, Moyers, and Watson would best fit the description of Chief of Staff. Because of the President's strong dominance in the day-to-day affairs of his administration, this administration was the most difficult to pick. Having been here, I agree. This President seemed to enjoy reading and signing off on the enourmous amount of staff papers, including his night reading file. Additionally, he delighted in walking into staff offices, especially in the evening hours, and engaging the startled staffer in a conversation about the functions of the office, what they were doing, why, etc.

NOTE: After Marvin Watson was appointed Postmaster General on 4/26/68, the President appointed James Jones to replace him as Special Assistant to the President. At the time of his appointment, Jones was the "Appointments Secretary" and deputy to Watson. Although he replaced Watson, he did not have the same influence or duties during the 7 montl he held this position that Watson had during his tenure. Again, in the broadest of terms, he could have been considered the Chief of Staff during the 7 months he held this position. The Johnson librar concurs with this assessment, but would not list hi along with Jenkins, Moyers, or Watson.

To the best of my knowledge, this is the first list of this nature prepared from sources who were serving on the White House staff during these administrations.

Ronald Geisler
Executive Clerk

NOTE: In early 1986, public broadcasting produced a program that was a round-table discussion between former Chiefs of Staff. The person who represented the Johnson administration was Harry C. McPherson, Jr., who served as Special Counsel to the President from March 2, 1966, until January 20, 1969. It should be noted that he did not claim to be the Chief of Staff, but was there as a representative of that administration.

PERSONS WHO HAVE HELD THE POSITION OF CHIEF OF STAFF OF THE WHITE HOUSE OR A COMPARABLE POSITION BUT WITHOUT THAT TITLE, LISTED IN REVERSE CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER:

NAME	TITLE
PRESIDENT REAGAN	
James A. Baker III	Chief of Staff and Assistant to the President of the United States of America
PRESIDENT CARTER	
Jack H. Watson, Jr.	Assistant to the President of the United States of America and Chief of Staff
Hamilton Jordan	Assistant to the President of the United States of America and Chief of Staff
PRESIDENT FORD	
Richard B. Cheney	Assistant to the President of the United States of America
Donald Rumsfeld	Assistant to the President of the United States of America
Alexander M. Haig, Jr.	Assistant to the President of the United States of America
PRESIDENT NIXON	
Alexander M. Haig, Jr.	Assistant to the President of the United States of America
H. R. Haldeman	Assistant to the President of the United States of America
PRESIDENT JOHNSON	
W. Marvin Watson	Special Assistant to the President of the United States of America
Bill D. Moyers	Special Assistant to the President of the United States of America
Walter W. Jenkins	Special Assistant to the President of the United States of America
PRESIDENT KENNEDY	
P. Kenneth O'Donnell	Special Assistant to the President of the United States of America
PRESIDENT EISENHOWER	
Wilton B. Persons	The Assistant to the President of the United States of America
Sherman Adams	The Assistant to the President of the United States of America

PRESIDENT TRUMAN

Matthew J. Connelly	Secretary to the President

PRESIDENT FRANKLIN ROOSEVELT

Stephen Early	Secretary to the President
Marvin McIntyre	Secretary to the President
Louis McHenry Howe	Secretary to the President

Prepared by: Ronald Geisler
Executive Clerk
The White House

staff if they wish. Similarly, the functions assigned to a given office may vary from one administration to another, and sometimes even within an administration. Presidents are free to change the job description of any office at any time, whether it is an office passed down from a previous administration or one of their own invention. Titles do not always accurately indicate who does what in the White House, nor do they always reveal whom the president consults on important matters. Presidents tend to seek advice from those assistants with whom they feel most comfortable, regardless of the staffer's position or the subject matter.

CHIEF OF STAFF

The most important position in the present-day White House is chief of staff. This senior aide is responsible for the smooth operation of the White House, which is no small task. Materials must be made available to the president in a timely manner, and the president's requests and directives must be acted upon and implemented quickly. The swift and accurate flow of business is a primary goal. The chief also acts as head gatekeeper to the president, and by reviewing all papers and visitors, he or she channels as many as possible around the president. Sherman Adams in the Eisenhower administration and H. R. Haldeman in the Nixon administration were very effective in this role. The gatekeeping function provides the chiefs of staff with a great deal of influence, since anyone wishing to bring an issue before the president must obtain their approval.

Although most chiefs of staff have denied playing a role in policy making, the position has acquired a policy function as well. Because most chiefs have a close working relationship with presidents, it is only natural for presidents to seek and heed their opinions. Hamilton Jordan, who served as Carter's chief of staff, was an important voice in the administration, and James A. Baker III was an adviser as well as a political operative under Reagan and Bush. Bush acknowledged even before taking office that his first chief of staff, John H. Sununu, would be an administrator and a policy adviser, and indeed Sununu was, notably in domestic affairs. *(See Table 27-3.)*

Another important function of the chief is presidential hatchet wielder. All presidents have had jobs that they wanted to avoid, confrontations that they wished to dodge. Haldeman once noted that "every president needs his son-of-a-bitch" to do the dirty work.[22] The chief of staff is that person. Adams reprimanded or dismissed people to save Eisenhower the unpleasantness of doing it himself. Haldeman did the same for Nixon. After the 1972 election, Nixon called a staff meeting and thanked everyone for their efforts in his behalf. Then, just before leaving, he turned the meeting over to Haldeman, who without preface immediately demanded everyone's resignation. The demand was really Nixon's and everyone knew it, but Haldeman had the task of carrying it out. Failure to be tough enough can lead to a staff that is ineffective and in disarray. Clinton's first chief, Thomas F. "Mack" McLarty III, was seen as too easygoing (he was nicknamed "Mack the Nice") and was blamed for much of the perceived confusion in the staff. He eventually was replaced with budget director Leon Panetta.

TABLE 27-3 Chiefs of Staff, 1932–1996

President	*Chief of Staff*	*Years*
Roosevelt	—	—
Truman	John R. Steelman[a]	1946–1952
Eisenhower	Sherman Adams[a]	1953–1958
	Wilton Persons[a]	1958–1961
Kennedy	—	—
Johnson	—	—
Nixon	H. R. Haldeman	1969–1973
	Alexander M. Haig Jr.	1973–1974
Ford	Donald Rumsfeld	1974–1975
	Richard B. Cheney	1975–1977
Carter	Hamilton Jordan	1979–1980
	Jack H. Watson Jr.	1980–1981
Reagan	James A. Baker III	1981–1985
	Donald T. Regan	1985–1987
	Howard H. Baker Jr.	1987–1988
	Kenneth Duberstein	1988–1989
Bush	John H. Sununu	1989–1991
	Samuel Skinner	1991–1992
	James A. Baker III	1992–1993
Clinton	Thomas F. "Mack" McLarty III	1993–1994
	Leon Panetta	1994–

SOURCES: Presidential libraries and the White House.

NOTES: The Roosevelt, Kennedy, and Johnson presidential libraries each reported that there was no chief of staff or even a presidential assistant who served in that role. a. These aides carried the title of "assistant" rather than "chief of staff."

Finally, the chief often shoulders the blame for the president. Performing unpleasant jobs such as dismissals, which may have political significance, and taking responsibility for misstatements or other errors in fact made by the president are two ways in which the chief may act as presidential shield. Or the chief may act as a lightning rod to draw criticism away from the president. This function will not be found in any job description, but the possibility of being a scapegoat for the president is part of the job, and most chiefs know it. Sununu's failure to play this role adequately for Bush was one of the major factors in his ouster as chief of staff.

SPECIAL COUNSEL

The position of special counsel has varied in importance over the years. In creating the position, Franklin Roosevelt argued that the White House needed its own lawyer because the attorney general, the nation's chief law officer and the government's first lawyer, was too busy to give the White House the necessary time. In reality, Roosevelt envisioned a larger role for his counsel.

The special counsel is the president's private lawyer. (He is not, however, the president's personal lawyer; the counsel was not responsible for President Clinton's defense in the Whitewater affair.) The special counsel provides legal advice on an assortment of topics, reviews legislation before it is sent to Con-

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Guide to the Presidency

SECOND EDITION • VOLUME II

MICHAEL NELSON, Editor

CQ CONGRESSIONAL QUARTERLY INC.
WASHINGTON, D.C.

Sorensen

There was a short way and a long way of handling ideas that I thought were mistaken. The long way has already been described here. I would say, "Well, let's staff that out, let's get a meeting on it," and I would make sure the people at the meeting were all against the idea. (*Laughter*)

The short way was to say "That sounds like something Dick Nixon would have suggested." (*Laughter*)

Chancellor: General Haig, how about you? You've got broad experience as a big forceful military man. Could you just march in? How do you feel when you go in to the president, and you know you are right, you know he's wrong. What goes through your mind? "Am I going to get fired?" What happens?

General Alexander Haig: What I usually did was to say, "Right, boss. I wish I had thought of that," and then go back and be sure he had time to think about it. I think that's the most important thing you can do, to protect him from some of these bumptious ideas that presidents get because they do have to, as Bob has said, have people around them who give them an opportunity to let off tensions and steam and protect them from themselves, so to speak.

But you must know your customer. Having been exposed to several chief executives under differing circumstances, I think sometimes it's best to say, "No, you are wrong." Other times, it's far better to say, "Well, let's think about it" or "Let's get some staff opinion on it." That's what is at the heart of the success of each and every one of the people who has had these responsibilities: to know their boss and to adjust to his idiosyncrasies.

Haldeman: And Haig and I didn't have the opportunity that Ted had to say, "That sounds like a Nixon idea." (*Laughter*)

Rumsfeld: The other side of the coin is that the president might be right and he's the president, and so the beauty is in the eye of the beholder. The chief of staff may think that it's a damn fool idea but, in fact, it may not be. In the last analysis, you have only one president, and I wouldn't want this little discussion to end by leaving the impression that a chief of staff actively subverted what the president wanted to do on his own hook because I didn't, and I'm sure no one in this room did.

In the last analysis, the president is the president and he is perfectly capable of taking your advice when you think he's wrong and staffing it with other people and even disagreeing with all of them, and going ahead and having it be right. It's not an accident that he's president and you are chief of staff. (*Laughter*)

Goodpaster: We had something that crystallized that pretty well. We called it Jack Martin's Empirical Rule Number One, and Jack took a while to reach this view.[6]

He had served on the staff of Senator Taft, and when Eisenhower became president, he asked Taft if he would send one of his staff people to work with Eisenhower so that he would be sure to understand

6. Jack Martin served as an administrative assistant to President Eisenhower from 1954 to 1958.

To give an example. The Press Secretary in the White House is asked a question by a member of the White House press corps about agriculture. He's got a choice: either he answers it or he says that's a question that should be directed to the Department of Agriculture. Now, the person asking the question doesn't want to go to the department because his paper already has someone covering the Agriculture Department. He wants the story, and so he presses and presses. Finally the press secretary caves in, and pretty soon every question in the world is being answered by the White House press secretary, which is goofy, and then you need a giant White House press staff. Whereas basically, a lot of that should be shoved out. That's true of issue after issue. It's true of substantive jurisdiction.

Haig: The simple facts are that this horrendous growth in the White House staff has been paralleled by an even more horrendous growth in the congressional staffs, where today I think you are looking at a figure of about twenty thousand.[4] A White House has to respond to that behemoth, and therefore it's a natural contributor to this growth.

The other gimmick, which Bob Haldeman will remember, is that administrations that want to show they are lean and mean merely keep the fellows they have but charge them to the departments. It's nicer anyway, because the department has to pay and those fellows are counted on the department's books and not counted by the White House press who are looking for this growth.

4. Between the mid-1950s and the early 1980s, the growth of staff in Congress and its committees more than matched that of the White House. The staff of the members' offices increased from 3,556 in 1957 to 11,432 in 1981; the number of committee staffers rose from 715 in 1955 to 2,865 in 1981. Norman J. Ornstein and others, *Vital Statistics on Congress, 1984–1985 Edition* (Washington, D.C.: American Enterprise Institute, 1984), pp. 121 and 124.

I share Don Rumsfeld's view very, very vigorously. Cutting down the staff—and I know Bob tried to cut it down, I know Don did, I know I did—is the best way. The leaner and meaner you are, the more effective your White House will be.

Watson: Another point, as a matter of clarification. There are about fifteen hundred people in the Office of Management and Budget, which is part of the Executive Office of the President. The White House staff is about 350 or less, generally speaking, and is just one of the components of the executive office.

What runs the numbers of presidential staffers up higher are the Council of Economic Advisors, the Council on Environmental Quality, and other such groups that are in the executive office.

Haig: What's material is who gets in the White House Mess, who gets a parking place. (*Laughter*) If you have been involved in the bureaucratic in-fighting, try to decide that.

Watson: I'll make a suggestion, as a general proposition—and we were victims of this, so I'm speaking out of bitter experience here. There began a tendency, I suspect under President Johnson, but we took it to

ident. There was a certain momentum left over from his legislative days, and he fancied that the "spokes of the wheel" was the right way to do it. Al Haig argued against it, Don Rumsfeld argued against it, Dick Cheney argued against it, but the president had to go through his period where he got that out of his system.

In that system, with the spokes coming in, the president is in the center, and the chief of staff is the grease. All the grease does is get overheated and have to be replaced. (*Laughter and applause*)

I'll give you an example of what Jack's talking about. Good motivations, honorable, decent, fine people. Secretary of Labor John Dunlop comes in to see the president; wants to see him alone. Sees him alone. President when he was minority leader always met with legislators alone. What's the problem? Fine. Met with him alone, and they came to some understanding as to what John Dunlop would negotiate with respect to situs picketing, as I recall.[28] And Dunlop went out of the office and proceeded, as an intelligent, honorable, talented man, to do exactly what

28. Organized labor had sought passage of federal legislation that would allow a union with a grievance against one contractor to picket all the contractors at the same construction site. (Such picketing, referred to as "common situs picketing," had been ruled illegal by the Supreme Court, citing the ban on secondary boycotts under the Taft-Hartley Act.) Secure with the impression that he had the president's backing, Dunlop testified in behalf of the proposal at congressional hearings. When this position came under attack from Republican constituencies, President Ford reversed course and vetoed the measure. Thomas E. Cronin, *The State of the Presidency*, 2d ed. (Boston: Little, Brown, 1980), p. 259.

he believed the president wanted. The president didn't tell me, didn't tell Dick, didn't tell anybody else what was going on.

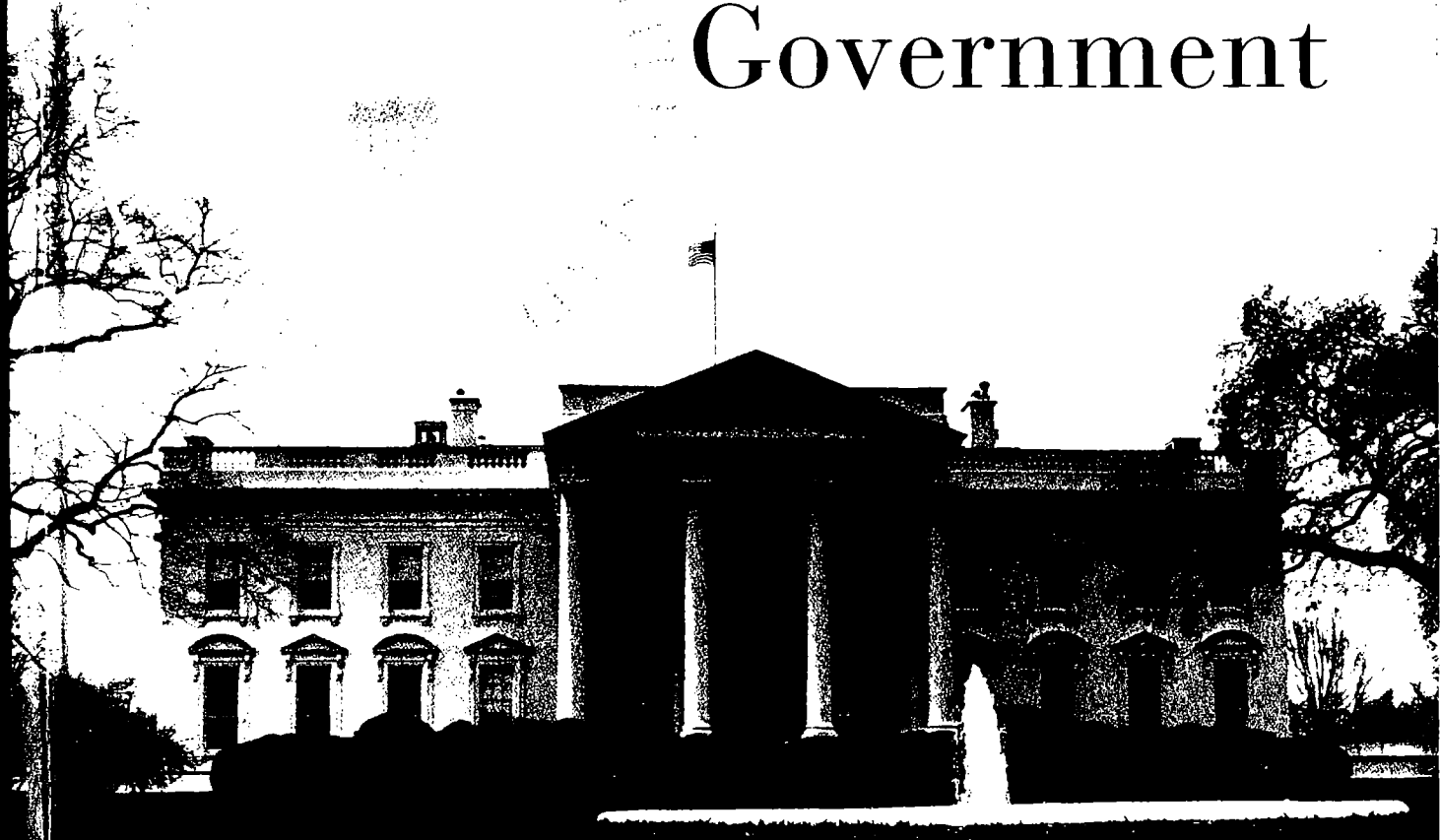
Chancellor: Not even "Oh, by the way"?

Rumsfeld: No. And pretty soon, John Dunlop comes back in and reports, "I've done it." And the president looks at it, says, "My gosh, I can't do that, John, and I'm very sorry." Obviously it wasn't what he had intended. Events had intervened and there was no way he could agree to what John had done, and John said, "Well, I can appreciate that, but if you don't do it, I can't stay. My credibility is gone." So you lose a secretary of labor unnecessarily. Two people who were good people, intelligent people, liked each other. Ford didn't want Dunlop to leave. Dunlop didn't want to leave, but there was no way he could stay because of this spokes-of-the-wheel nonsense. There was no question.

Conceivably in Eisenhower's era, conceivably in Kennedy's era, the nature of the world and the size of the White House staff and the nature of the problems, you could have a different arrangement. Today, I do think you need a chief of staff at the White House who has a set of responsibilities that are understood. He has to bring integrity to that staff system. He has to assure that people do get the opportunity to have their voices heard, but he has to be the one who helps the president maintain a certain discipline and order in the process or else the process loses its integrity.

Chancellor: Let me ask Ted Sorensen this because as I recall your stewardship at the White House, your ser-

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—KAY OLIVER

Chief Executive.

See Executive Power *and* President as Chief Executive.

Chief of Staff to the President

The office of chief of staff to the president was established as the post–World War II White House became more institutionalized. Up to the 1970s presidents could choose to organize the White House on a collegial basis or in a more hierarchical manner by using a chief of staff. Since the 1970s, however, each president has sooner or later designated a chief of staff, and some scholars argue that it is now a virtual necessity for managing the White House.

Dwight Eisenhower was the first president to use a chief of staff to manage the White House; he chose Sherman Adams, who acted in the president's stead much of the time. Adams had full range of the domestic side of the government and coordinated White House operations authoritatively. Adams's official title was "assistant to the president" because Eisenhower did not want to create an appearance of military organization in the presidency. Nevertheless, his function was to be similar to the military chiefs of staff with whom Eisenhower had worked during his years in the Army. When Adams was forced to resign because of appearing to help a business friend with government regulations, Wilton Persons became Eisenhower's chief of staff.

John Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson, both with legislative rather than executive careers, chose to organize their presidencies along collegial rather than hierarchical lines. Each had several aides reporting directly to him in what has been called a "spokes-of-the-wheel" model of White House organization. During the 1960s the White House staff was small enough to allow this type of traditional approach to White House management to work effectively.

When Richard Nixon was elected, he returned to the more hierarchical approach of his White House years as vice president and designated H. R. ("Bob") Haldeman to be his chief of staff. During the Nixon presidency the White House staff grew considerably in size, and Haldeman ruled it with an iron hand. He advised Nixon on the full range of presidential issues and ensured that all presentations to the president were fully "staffed out" and ready for presidential consideration. When Haldeman was forced to resign during the

Watergate scandal, Alexander Haig took over as Nixon's chief of staff.

When Gerald Ford assumed the presidency he decided not to have a chief of staff because he felt that the tightly closed Nixon hierarchy contributed to the Watergate problems. He thus began his presidency with nine people reporting directly to him, but soon became overwhelmed with coordinating the large White House staff that had grown under the Nixon administration. He then asked Donald Rumsfeld to be his "staff coordinator"—in reality, his chief of staff. When Rumsfeld was appointed secretary of defense, his deputy, Richard Cheney, became Ford's chief of staff.

Jimmy Carter also began his presidency without a chief of staff for the same reason that Ford did: he wanted to distinguish his administration sharply from that of Nixon and to steer clear of any suggestion of Watergate. But Carter also had nine people reporting directly to him and in 1979 finally admitted that he could not run the White House without a chief of staff. Hamilton Jordan first held the position; upon taking over the Carter reelection campaign, he was replaced by Jack Watson.

The lessons of the Ford and Carter experiences were not lost on Ronald Reagan, and when he was elected in 1980 he designated James Baker as his chief of staff. Baker did not have as complete control of the White House as had his predecessors Sherman Adams and H. R. Haldeman, but he held the official title, occupied the traditional corner office, controlled White House personnel and office space, and coordinated the administration's policy agenda. Access to President Reagan, however, was shared with Edwin Meese and Michael Deaver, who played important roles during Reagan's first term in office. After the 1984 election Baker traded positions with Secretary of the Treasury Donald Regan, who, in contrast to Baker, took a very controlling approach to his job, jealously guarding access to Reagan and dominating the White House staff. Regan was forced out after the Iran-*contra* scandal, and former Senator Howard Baker (and later Kenneth Duberstein) took over Reagan's White House.

Governor John Sununu of New Hampshire had played a crucial role in George Bush's victory in the 1988 state Republican primary, and upon gaining the presidency, Bush asked Sununu to be his chief of staff. Sununu was very intelligent but a domineering personality, and unlike previous chiefs of staff had strong policy preferences. Thus, in addition to his chief of staff duties, Sununu served as liaison to the right wing of the Republican party and the protector of conservative values in the Bush White House. Sununu took a particularly controlling approach to the White House staff and antagonized many colleagues as well as members of Congress. He was forced to resign after it was disclosed that he had abused his perks as chief of staff and taken a number of trips, many of which did not seem to be related to his official duties. He was succeeded by Samuel Skinner; less than a year later Skinner was replaced by James A. Baker who resigned as secretary of state to become Bush's chief of staff in the summer of 1992.

Bill Clinton was the first Democratic president to begin his term with a chief of staff, naming Thomas ("Mack") McLarty, a childhood friend, to the post. Unlike other chiefs of staff, McLarty spent a good portion of his time as a high-level emissary from Clinton to Capitol Hill and the business community and only about one-third of his time managing the White House as a traditional chief of staff. After Clinton's tumultuous first year of mixed policy success, McLarty was replaced in mid-1994 by Leon Panetta, who had previously been chair of the House Appropriations Committee and director of the Office of Management and Budget in the Clinton White House.

Several lessons can be drawn from the experience of these presidents. The first is that in the contemporary White House, a chief of staff is a virtual necessity. No president since Lyndon Johnson has run the White House successfully without one, and no one since Jimmy Carter has tried. On the other hand, a too domineering approach to the job can easily result in trouble. There have been four domineering chiefs of staff (Adams for Eisenhower, Haldeman for Nixon, Regan For Reagan, and Sununu for Bush). Each of these men alienated members of Congress, alienated members of his own administration, had reputations for a lack of common civility, and had hostile relations with the press. And each of them was forced to resign in disgrace after various degrees of scandal.

The job can be done well, however, and in that case the chief of staff performs a number of essential services for the president. The chief of staff must enforce staff discipline by organizing information flow to the president and ensuring that all issue analyses are ripe for presidential involvement. The chief must orchestrate administration policy development by coordinating policy input from cabinet departments and agencies and ensuring that all appropriate officials have had a chance to comment on administration initiatives. Access to the president must be regulated so as to ensure that differing perspectives are brought to bear on administration policies and that limited presidential time is protected. All of this must be done with the chief of staff acting as a neutral broker. That is, his actions must be, and be perceived to be, neutral among different perspectives and members of the administration. Each significant presidential adviser and member of the administration must have confidence that his or her advice is getting through to the president without distortion. If this is not done, back channels of communication to the president will be created, and organizational discipline will be undermined.

Chiefs of staff also serve their presidents by acting as high-level negotiators in crisis situations or by negotiating among members of the cabinet who are in disagreement. No one else besides the president has the clout to assuage the large egos in the cabinet or enforce the president's wishes on reluctant members of the administration. The chief enforces presidential directives and often delivers the bad news if a White House staffer must be fired. He or she also protects the president by taking the blame for incidents that might be embarrassing to the president. The chief of staff is the person who has a close-enough relationship with the president and a broad-enough perspective to make sure that the politics of the president and the policies of the administration mesh as smoothly as possible.

The bottom line is that somebody short of the president must be in charge of the White House. The president's job is too overwhelming to include managerial duties and overseeing the White House staff. The chief of staff should be as informed as the president on all of the dimensions of presidential policy making. But delegated power must be monitored; the president must make sure that the White House is being managed to his specifications and that the chief of staff does not abuse the great amount of authority that is delegated to him.

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—JAMES P. PFIFFNER

Children and Families, Administration for.

See Health and Human Services, Department of.

CIA.

See Central Intelligence Agency.

Cities, Localities, and the Federal Government

Relationships between the federal government and the many local governments in the United States have taken a variety of forms over the years. Over the long term, and with many deviations, the relationships have become more numerous and more com-

Encyclopedia of the American Presidency

14. White House "Czars." If a momentous problem slams itself onto the presidential agenda, making the nation apprehensive, provoking calls for swift response, and cutting widely across departmental jurisdictions, a President will be tempted to take quick, and at least symbolic, action—often appointing a "czar" right in the White House. Eisenhower used this technique often, and his successors have done likewise. Some positions, such as the "Drug Czar," have been authorized by Congress.

15. The First Lady. Students of the American presidency should never underestimate the policy role of the President's spouse. ELEANOR ROOSEVELT traveled widely and wrote a newspaper column; ROSALYNN CARTER attended Cabinet meetings; NANCY REAGAN hosted a world summit conference of first ladies; and BARBARA BUSH had an active schedule of public appearances. FIRST LADIES have some thirty-five assistants to help them.

16. The Vice President. After Harry S. Truman's experience of becoming President without any executive branch experience in 1945, Vice Presidents have increasingly become advisers to the President and participants in the work of the administration. Under John F. Kennedy, Lyndon Baines Johnson became the first Vice President to move his office and staff into the White House environs. Under Jimmy Carter, Vice President WALTER MONDALE was the first whose advice was truly welcomed; the Ronald Reagan and George Bush presidencies followed the Carter-Mondale model. In the early 1990s the Vice President's staff numbered about one hundred, and even the Vice President's spouse had a staff. Most of the President's information is shared with the Vice President, who has been made a statutory member of the National Security Council and participates in important White House meetings.

17. The Staff Secretary. First created under Eisenhower in 1953, the Staff Secretary regulates the flow of papers into the OVAL OFFICE, enforcing the internal system of circulating draft speeches and papers for staff comment.

18. The Office of Cabinet Affairs. This office handles external coordination with the departments and agencies, sending option memoranda and speech drafts out for comment and issuing the periodic "Cabinet Report" to which agency heads contribute. The full Cabinet meets rarely, but CABINET COUNCILS and subgroups convene constantly, and the Cabinet Secretary and assistants provide the executive secretariat services to these groups. This office also began under Eisenhower in 1953.

19. The Personal Office Assistants. One or two secretaries and a personal assistant sit outside the President's door, the former performing standard secretarial duties, the latter handling the myriad daily personal details for the boss: making sure that the schedule is being followed, that people whose presence the President is going to acknowledge will in fact be on hand, and that a presidential request, made while walking to or from the office, is put into the action system.

20. The Chief of Staff. Most centripetal of all, the CHIEF OF STAFF is the system manager, "boss of none but the quarterback of everything." The Chief of Staff does not command any other senior White House staff officer, but his personal antennae reach into every corner of the place. He enforces the indispensable coordination across all of the sixteen principal offices described above. Since it is the Chief of Staff who so often has to say "no"—to inadequate papers, beseeching visitors, or proposed appointees—he swiftly makes many more enemies than friends.

Support Staff. Undergirding these twenty offices are the professional support units of the contemporary White House, including the Secret Service details (involving eight hundred personnel, with others borrowed as needed), the thirteen-hundred-person Military Office (with ten specialized subunits, e.g., Air Force One, the doctor, the mess, CAMP DAVID, and the eight-hundred-person White House Communications Agency), the Chief Usher (who manages the mansion), the Executive Clerk, and the Correspondence, Gifts, Telephone, and Visitors offices. The number of people in the entire White House Staff community totals some thirty-four hundred. Many are assigned or detailed from other agencies. In addition, five hundred volunteers help out part time.

Every White House staff will inevitably reflect the style and working habits of the President. The offices are often renamed and the lines of supervision rejiggered. But these twenty principal functions are such basic responsibilities of the White House that future Presidents are not likely to abolish any of them outright.

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BRADLEY H. PATTERSON, JR.

WHITE HOUSE CHIEF OF STAFF. Up until the advent of WORLD WAR II the White House still served

primarily as the President's residence. White House staff maintained informal relations with President Franklin D. Roosevelt: formal staff meetings did not occur, but rather key advisers often met with Franklin Roosevelt at breakfast to discuss the agenda for the day. Advisers who needed to see him during the day could readily gain access to Roosevelt in his office by going through the President's appointment secretary or his personal secretary. Roosevelt was also typically available during the afternoon cocktail hour, and he frequently spent evenings with his speechwriters.

The war increased demands on the presidency, as did the expanded role of the federal government, both internationally and domestically, after the war. By the time the war ended, the staff within the White House reporting personally to the President had grown considerably, and the White House had become a locus for policy development and decision making as well as a residence. These intensifying pressures contributed to the creation of the post of White House Chief of Staff during the Dwight D. Eisenhower administration.

Eisenhower's predecessor, Harry S. Truman, had initially intended to cut the White House staff back to its prewar size. The COLD WAR, however, expanded the role of the United States in global military and diplomatic affairs. The expanding role of the federal government in the domestic sphere can be traced back to the Great Depression of the 1930s, which had launched the country into an era of Keynesian fiscal policy, with greater government intervention in the economy. From the 1930s on, government regulation had expanded incrementally (but seemingly inevitably) to encompass regulation of business practices, management-labor relations, and consumer protection. Government's greater role, in turn, had generated greater demands by various constituencies to pursue their cases before the President. Truman therefore reversed himself and expanded the White House staff, without, however, creating a chief of staff. (One assistant did serve as a route to the President for minor agencies without other direct presidential access.)

Drawing on his military experience of managing complex and sometimes competing units in unfamiliar circumstances, Eisenhower replicated the military role of chief of staff in the White House. Although SHERMAN ADAMS retained the previously used title of Assistant to the President, his role was vastly expanded. Adams functioned in a way similar to how General Walter Bedell Smith had functioned as Eisenhower's chief of staff during the war. Eisenhower saw his Chief of Staff as his personal "son of a bitch": Adams served as a gatekeeper for all activities, issues, and constituencies

White House Chiefs of Staff

President	White House Chief of Staff
33 Truman	John R. Stedman, 1946–1952
34 Eisenhower	Sherman Adams, 1953–1958 Wilton Persons, 1958–1961
35 Kennedy	None
36 L. B. Johnson	None
37 Nixon	H. R. Haldeman, 1969–1973 Alexander M. Haig, 1973–1974
38 Ford	Donald Rumsfeld, 1974–1975 Richard B. Cheney, 1975–1977
39 Carter	Hamilton Jordan, 1979–1980 Jack Watson, 1980–1981
40 Reagan	James A. Baker III, 1981–1985 Donald T. Regan, 1985–1987 Howard H. Baker, Jr., 1987–1988 Kenneth Duberstein, 1988–1989
41 Bush	John H. Sununu, 1989–1991 Samuel K. Skinner, 1991–1992 James A. Baker III, 1992–1993
42 Clinton	Thomas F. ("Mack") McLarty, 1993– 1994 Leon Panetta 1994 – Erskine Bowles John Podesta

(except for those involving foreign policy) wanting to reach the President. He oversaw PATRONAGE and personnel decisions, appointments and scheduling, PRESIDENTIAL SPEECHWRITERS, and PRESS RELATIONS. He also served as the liaison to the CABINET, headed up special projects, and managed PRESIDENTIAL-CONGRESSIONAL RELATIONS. Adams held staff meetings as frequently as three times a week to coordinate White House work. Under his management the White House staff gained a valued reputation for efficiency and a less-valued reputation for rigidity. Adams wielded immense power as Chief of Staff until he was forced out in 1958 after having been accused of accepting favors from a Boston industrialist.

There was no formally appointed White House Chief of Staff under Presidents John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson. Kennedy was more attracted to the informal managerial techniques of Roosevelt than to Eisenhower's formal organizational structure, which had been designed to meld relative strangers into an efficient working team. In contrast, most of the staff Kennedy appointed had worked with him previously and were personally loyal to him. Johnson, too, preferred personal control and informal organization. Richard M. Nixon, however, reinstituted the Chief of Staff position, appointing H. R. Haldeman to fill it. Haldeman's mismanagement of the considerable powers he was given as Chief of Staff played a major role to the disastrous WATERGATE AFFAIR. In response to this, Gerald Ford did not appoint a formal Chief of Staff,

although Donald Rumsfeld, who had headed up the Ford transition team, served as a de facto Chief of Staff. At the end of the Ford Administration, DICK CHENEY was the Chief of Staff.

Jimmy Carter also initially eschewed the formal appointment of a Chief of Staff, preferring to serve as his own. This overburdened the President with minor details, however, and, by 1979, Hamilton Jordan was appointed to the position. Ronald Reagan, likewise, chose not to appoint a single Chief of Staff during his first term, instead splitting the Chief of Staff's functions among three advisers. At the beginning of his second term, he appointed a single Chief of Staff, DONALD REGAN. In contrast to his two immediate predecessors, George Bush embraced the Chief of Staff concept and appointed the bright but contentious John Sununu, former governor of New Hampshire, to the post. Both Regan and Sununu were unpopular with the public, and both were replaced before the ends of their respective Presidents' terms. Bill Clinton followed in the tradition of Eisenhower, Nixon, and Bush and appointed a chief of staff (Thomas F. McLarty) on first assuming office.

The Chief of Staff requires no Senate approval and serves at the pleasure of the President with few formal constraints. The Chief of Staff wields considerable power from serving daily at the President's elbow and may be the second most important person in an administration.

The Chief of Staff performs several functions. One primary duty is to organize the information flowing to the President. The Chief of Staff must make sure that important issues receive adequate attention and enough staff to handle their workload. Further, the Chief of Staff coordinates policy development and work across various issues. Another important function of the Chief of Staff is to take the heat for the President, serving as a buffer between the President and angry constituencies. For example, appointments are often announced by the President personally, but personnel who are dismissed will likely receive the news from the White House Chief of Staff.

The Chief of Staff manages WHITE HOUSE–DEPARTMENT RELATIONS, negotiating with members of the Cabinet over budget and personnel matters. As the President's surrogate, the Chief of Staff may be called on to massage egos and soothe hurt feelings. Besides these functions, a Chief of Staff may be asked to orchestrate policy issues, cutting across several Cabinet departments to develop policies on issues of particular interest to the President, to uncover information (sometimes embarrassing) that Cabinet officers may be reluctant to report, and to intervene in and monitor foreign and domestic crises in which the White House has a role.

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MARCIA LYNN WHICKER

WHITE HOUSE COUNSEL. The key legal adviser to the President is known as the White House Counsel. The Counsel works in the White House Office and provides legal advice to the President on a wide array of issues; legal services performed by the Counsel and staff include legal clearance of documents for the President's signature, assistance on legal problems not provided by the Justice Department, and liaison between the President and the Justice Department. The position of White House Counsel is located in the personal office of the President. White House Counsel staff and facilities allow the President to communicate with Congress, the press, the public, and appointed department and agency heads.

Even during the Franklin D. Roosevelt and Harry S. Truman administrations, when members of the White House office were mostly generalists, the position of legal counsel was somewhat functionally specialized, although the counsel did not yet have a large staff at his disposal. Despite this relative specialization, the legal counsel continued to perform many nonlegal duties as late as the Truman administration.

Functional specialization within the White House became more pronounced during the Dwight D. Eisenhower administration. Specialized staff units were formed to handle functions (including Cabinet affairs, legislative liaison with Congress, and liaison with the President's party) previously handled by the legal counsel as well as other staff members. Under Richard M. Nixon, Gerald Ford, and Jimmy Carter, additional specialized units were created to deal with communications and to provide liaison with state and local governments and interest groups.

Some administrations have taken on additional legal advisers within the White House. By the Lyndon B. Johnson administration, the President's legal staff had grown to include not only a counsel and four special counsels but also a deputy special counsel, assistant special counsel, associate counsel, and associate special counsel. Besides serving the legal unit, these special counsels provided advice to White House speechwriting, appointments, and legislative program development units. Counsel staff were also active in executive guidance and control. More recent administrations

CHIEF OF STAFF

TWENTY-FIVE YEARS OF MANAGING THE PRESIDENCY

EDITED BY SAMUEL KERNELL & SAMUEL L. POPKIN
WITH A FOREWORD BY RICHARD E. NEUSTADT



gence network throughout the country. He doesn't have, whatever you might think, the FBI doing that.

How does he find out what's going on in the country? How does he get a sense of what's important and how does he get a sense of whom to listen to, where the weight is in the cities and in the agricultural areas?

Chancellor: But he used you as an agent.

McPherson: That's why he has a staff around him of people who have big ears and listen and meet with people all the time and will send him memoranda and will talk to him on the phone and tell him what they think is going on.

Johnson, in the evening, the end of his second day in one, would have a navy guy come in and give him a rubdown and then he'd start reading about 150 memoranda. At the bottom, he would write either yes, no, "see me," or something or other.

Well, every now and then, this would get to be too much for him. So he decided to have a chief of staff, and he picked Bob Kintner, who had been the NBC chairman and had lost his job. He was an old friend of Johnson's, and Johnson thought the world of him. Bob didn't really have a function around the White House for a while. It just coincided that Johnson got tired of reading all these memoranda, and Kintner said, "Why don't I be chief of staff?" So Johnson said fine. He was formerly a network chief of staff. "We will make you the boss."

Well, none of us believed it. We just sent stuff to Johnson as always. Kintner got mad and asked that they all be sent to him. Johnson said, "Well, okay. Send them through Kintner first." We did that.

Lasted about two days. Kintner stopped something. I don't know what it was, some minor piece of business. Johnson got furious and that was the end of Kintner. (*Laughter*)

Ted Sorensen is quite right, and Don is quite right talking about the nature of the fellow, the kind of man he is. It would have been inconceivable to imagine Lyndon Johnson as a Harvard Business School CEO [chief executive officer] coming in—Imagine Lyndon Johnson with a computer, with his PC? (*Laughter*) Inconceivable. On the other hand, he had something that many presidents, many CEOs don't have. Outside of being the smartest man I've ever known, he had twenty-five or thirty years of profound and far-reaching political connections in Washington, which even the smartest president, maybe in just sheer IQ points, Jimmy Carter, did not have.

In 1977 Carter developed that great energy program and tried to put it into effect. When Carter explained it, a Republican congressman whom I respected a lot came back from a meeting up there and said, "That fellow really knows everything about this energy program. Taxes, all of it. He didn't have to call on the secretary of the treasury or energy or any of them. He could do it all." I was bowled over and I said, "Is he going to get it through?" And he said, "I don't know. You know, he's got no agents up here." Having agents throughout the system who want to help you out becomes a very essential part and a nonorganizational part of a successful presidency.

Chancellor: We have talked about the impact of technology, of how fast-flowing information enters into the president's decision-making. It seems to me there's

request for a budget for next year has been sitting on your desk for a very long time. What's happened? I've got to make some plans." I said, "Gee, Joe, I've got a stack of them on my desk. Yours unfortunately is at the bottom of the pile. I've got so many other things I'm trying to work out. For example, that problem between you and Udall. I don't know what to do about that, but I sure wish you'd talk to him about it. If I get that off my desk, I might have time to get back to the pile." (*Laughter*)

He said, "Well, no, no, that's a question of the rights of an independent agency."

"Okay. Well, I'm sure it is."

He called me back ten days later and said, "What about that budget request?" And I said, "Gee, Joe, yours is still at the bottom of the pile." Next day, he saw Udall, and the matter was resolved.

Watson: Let me add just one quick one. People have different images. We have got the Rumsfeld image of the White House chief of staff as the grease, or the sand, on occasion. A friend of mine asked me if the White House chief of staff was more like, in sports terms, a quarterback, which is sort of the glorified image, or a goalie or a utility infielder.

Kernell: Or a cheerleader.

Watson: Or a cheerleader. I said the image that comes to my mind, borne out by some of the stories being told this morning, is that of javelin catcher. (*Laughter*)

Haldeman: Excellent.

Rumsfeld: One thing we haven't even talked about is turbulence in government, the fact that so many of these

people hold these jobs for such short terms. If I ran G. D. Searle the way the government of the United States is run, it would go broke in five minutes. You have had four national security advisors in the Reagan administration in five years. That is not healthy for this country.

It is damaging, and it is something that we ought to think about. You don't get good at those jobs in five minutes, and if there's anything we know, it's people get out on that track and fall into the same damn potholes that their predecessors fell in. With a job as important as that, it seems to me that it's important that there be some stability; the same is true for some of the other key jobs. There are other jobs, though, that you can change every five minutes, and the world would go on just fine.

Transition periods

Kernell: That raises another issue that we haven't talked about yet. A president comes in and typically has to make something like three thousand appointments. How do you make those appointments? Where do the names come from? Coming out of the campaign, how do you set up an organization to govern?

Bob, could you begin with a discussion of that?

Haldeman: Yes. I wish Harry McPherson were here because we had, I think, an ideal transition, as ideal as a transition can be from one party to the other, from

THE RING OF POWER



sonalities. Pressures to bypass the coordination controls are so intense that the staff, Cabinet, and personal secretaries need reenforcement. A senior guardian there must be, standing watch for the president over the integrity of the entire decision process. This is the White House chief of staff.

THE CHIEF OF STAFF

The title may sound grandiose, even militaristic; the two presidents following Nixon avoided it. Donald Rumsfeld and Richard Cheney were designated "staff coordinators" in the Ford years. President Carter began his presidency by banishing not only the title but the function as well. He was wedded to a "spokes of the wheel" arrangement where he was the hub and each senior staff office connected to him directly. It didn't work, and his own staff told him so.

"I continue to believe that our most serious structural problem is the lack of internal White House coordination," wrote Domestic Policy advisor Stuart Eizenstat to President Carter only eleven months after they entered the White House. While the staff feels comfortable with one another, he observed, "there is no mechanism by which, on a regular basis, we can find out what the other is doing that may have impact on an area in which we are working. . . . no one has been given the directive to sort out the various priorities of our work, to coordinate our work and make sure it is all going in the same direction, before it all pours in to you." Acknowledging Carter's aversion to the chief-of-staff title, Eizenstat diplomatically proposed the same responsibility with a different label:

> . . . this White House coordination function, which is critical . . . can be done by a key "coordinator" to whom we would all look as a point of coordination between us. This would be particularly useful also in making sure that there was domestic input into foreign policy decisions and likewise that there was foreign policy input into domestic decisions [11]

Nearly a decade later, distinguished presidential scholar Richard Neustadt agrees: "Even at [the] . . . minimum you do need some administrative coordinator . . . a modicum of administrative tidiness."[12]

"Administrative," however, is too prosaic an adjective. The chief of staff is *system manager*—the boss of none but the quarterback of everything. He commands no senior person in the White House, but the decision-making

procedures he enforces leave not one of the sixteen staff centers exempt. His task is not to redo the internal work of any of them but to guarantee that when their product touches the concern of others on the staff (as it always does), the linkages are made. The chief of staff will not second-guess the national security assistant on strategy in the Persian Gulf, but if the president's legal powers are questioned, or if a congressional consultation impends, he will see to it that the counsel or the Legislative Affairs Office is in the picture. As former Ford Chief of Staff Donald Rumsfeld recalled, "You are the person who sets up the staff system so that there is an orderly flow of work, meetings, paper, appointments, thought, and action, and that it satisfies the president, and serves the president. You bring those disparate threads up through a needle eye."[13] As for the first lady's and the vice president's territories, here the president's personal word may be needed so that the chief of staff can also glue them de facto into the whole White House framework.

While the chief of staff's authority comes from only one place, his intelligence sources must be ubiquitous, his antennae tuned to every corner of the White House establishment. "It's 'walking-around management,'" Rumsfeld remembers. "You have lunch in the Mess; you talk to congressmen and senators and press people, you hear things and learn things, *and end up asking questions.*"[14]

There can be no significant enterprise afoot of which the chief of staff is unaware—be it a planned speech by the first lady or a covert action hatching in the National Security Council. Thus alerted, it is he who must be able to say, to the national security assistant or to any other senior White House staff member, "Hold everything, let's have the boss look at this once more."

While past chiefs of staff (Adams and Haldeman for instance) have hung back from positioning themselves directly in the national security affairs decision process, President Reagan—in the Iran-contra aftermath—affirmed the chief of staff role here in perhaps the most explicit fashion in all the history of that office. At the president's invitation, the chief of staff "shall attend NSC meetings," the president wrote, and he was made a formal member of the National Security Planning Group and the Senior Review Group. National security decision documents, including "all proposed Findings and MONs [memoranda of notification detailing changes in findings]" for intended covert actions were to be transmitted "to the President through the Chief of Staff." "The National Security Assistant," Reagan instructed, was to keep the chief of staff "fully informed on all matters of substance."[15]

The chief of staff must close the Oval Office door to some, open it to

others—but only because he knows the president's own priorities. To one Cabinet officer "who carried a huge briefcase and had an unending flow of items to talk to Nixon about," H. R. Haldeman must have seemed a barrier. To a legislative leader whose arm Richard Cheney had to twist to bring him back *into* the Ford Oval Office to avert a misunderstanding, Cheney must have seemed a nag. The chief of staff is both, and will absorb the heat for being so. He must be as wary of the staff or Cabinet member who wants to tell the president only the "good news" as he is alert to those who avoid the Oval Office, claiming that "we mustn't bother the president." The chief of staff assumes all those unpopular postures—he's a "javelin-catcher," observed Carter Chief Jack Watson.[16]

Surprising as it sounds, a chief of staff must at times tell even the president to "go slow." A president can be tired, mad, punch-drunk, preoccupied; he needs a buffer person at whom to vent an angry command, who will perhaps say "Yes, sir" but then do nothing. Scholar Fred Greenstein quotes Eisenhower:

> I told my staff . . . once in a while you people have just got to be my safety-valve. So I'll get you in here and I will let go, but this is for you and your knowledge, and your knowledge only. Now I've seen these people going out, and I've gotten a little extreme, a little white, but pretty soon one of them comes in and laughs and says, "Well, you were in good form this morning, Mr. President. . . ."[17]

Both former presidential assistants Haldeman and Califano describe their similar experiences. When Nixon issued an intemperate instruction on one occasion, Haldeman remembered, "I said nothing more, then stepped out of the office and placed the order immediately on my mental 'no-action-ever' shelf."[18] President Johnson had the same habit and Califano used the same response. Califano comments: "After three years of serving on his White House staff, he would have expected me to have some sense of how to measure his true meaning when he spoke in anger."[19]

Illustrating the importance of enforcing escape-proof coordination systems are three notable failures, from the Truman, Nixon, and Reagan presidencies.

On September 10, 1946, Secretary of Commerce Henry Wallace came into the White House to clear with Truman in person a speech about foreign policy that he intended to give two days later in New York. Reportedly, Wallace realized that the Department of State would not approve of what he was going to say, since it undercut the position being taken by Secretary of State James Byrnes, who was in Paris. Wallace, however, read his speech aloud to the president. As historian Robert Donovan's account

states, "The President, either through preoccupation with other matters or simply through lack of insight as to how others might read the speech, allowed Wallace to consider it cleared."[20]

When queried by the press, Truman had to admit that he had approved the speech, and as the embarrassment grew worse, Byrnes threatened to resign. Angry at himself as well as at Wallace, Truman fired his secretary of commerce.

In letting himself be importuned to clear a speech, Truman put an unfair burden on himself. What he needed then but didn't have was an airtight staffing system, which would extract from even a Cabinet member's hands a policy statement requiring interdepartmental review, and which would insist on completing that review before the secretary even got into the Oval Office.

The second example of failure, the Watergate wiretap, occurred when a supposedly strict staffing system was in effect, in the Nixon White House. It was apparently not strict enough. If Chief of Staff Haldeman's account is to be believed, the president, through private conversations with White House assistant Charles Colson, "caused those burglars to break into O'Brien's office." Of Colson, Haldeman writes: "Even though I knew he was a potentially troublesome person and represented a real possibility for damage, I let him go ahead rather than doing something about it. . . . I dealt with what came before me, leaving the rest to others." He commented as well: "Had Watergate been handled through the usual White House staff system . . . it never would have happened in the first place."[21] Watergate, of course, was a disaster involving many other actions and people, but this one stupid move, Haldeman implies, might have been stopped cold.

The third example, the Iran-contra debacle, is another instance of a supposedly tough chief of staff who in the end was not tough enough. Under questioning by the House-Senate Investigating Committee in July 1987, former Chief of Staff Donald Regan admitted that he allowed National Security Assistant John Poindexter to "pass papers to the President . . . getting his signature on them and having them returned . . . outside the normal way." When pressed, he acknowledged, "I sort of lost track of what was going on."[22] The Tower Commission itself was unforgiving. "He [Regan], as much as anyone, should have insisted that an orderly process be observed. . . . He must bear primary responsibility for the chaos that descended upon the White House when . . . disclosure did occur."[23]

Haldeman and Regan may be underestimating what their respective presidents personally knew and personally commanded, thus putting too much here a burden on their own shoulders. The lesson, however, seems clear.

A chief of staff cannot afford to let *any* people or information go past him without review. The hotter the enthusiast who marches toward the Oval Office, the colder must be the scrutiny.

How cold? Does this mean that a chief of staff will inevitably be tagged as an abrupt and arrogant martinet? Sherman Adams was called "the great stone face"; Haldeman "the Iron Chancellor," "with a gaze that would freeze Medusa"; Rumsfeld the "Praetorian" and "the Haldeman who smiles." A joke told about Regan was: "He's leaving to be a cardinal. For most of us it is a relief to know that we will now only have to kiss his ring."[24]

Most chiefs of staff will not escape those labels. Asked if he would have changed his style, Adams declared, "No, I could not have gotten the job done"; Haldeman acknowledged, "I should have used a velvet glove," but then reflected that courtesy could be misunderstood, that when he spoke he was not merely making a polite suggestion, he was conveying a presidential order.

Former President Ford summed up his experience:

> The Chiefs of Staff we had were on the ball, paying attention to their responsibility—which was the administrative side. They weren't worried about getting their face in a picture with the President; they weren't worrying about getting recognition themselves; *they ran the shop.*[25]

The chief of staff is system manager, but around the Cabinet and in the White House, the system he is trying to manage throbs with centrifugal thrust. While the White House is a unifying counterforce to the pluralist Cabinet, within the White House staff itself sixteen miniworlds spin in separate orbits. The central staff offices, and the chief of staff, are the centripetal forces for the lot of them.

Mara A. Silver
05/04/2000 05:14:16 PM

Record Type: Record

To: Lowell A. Weiss/WHO/EOP@EOP

cc: Monica K. Shelton/WHO/EOP@EOP, Christopher M. Wanken/WHO/EOP@EOP
Subject: re COSs

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G. Timothy Saunders
05/04/2000 05:08:31 PM

Record Type: Record

To: Mara A. Silver/WHO/EOP@EOP

cc: Michele Ballantyne/WHO/EOP@EOP
Subject: re COSs

A couple of my personal favorites:

Jack Watson, Chief of Staff for President Jimmy Carter, on the role of the White House Chief of Staff:

> People have different images [of the White House Chief of Staff]. We have the Donald Rumsfeld (chief of staff to President Ford) image of the White House Chief of Staff as the grease, or the sand, on occasion. A friend of mine asked me if the White House Chief of Staff was more like, in sports terms, a quarterback, which is sort of the glorified image, or a goalie or a utility infielder . . . or a cheerleader. I said the image that comes to my mind is that of javelin catcher.

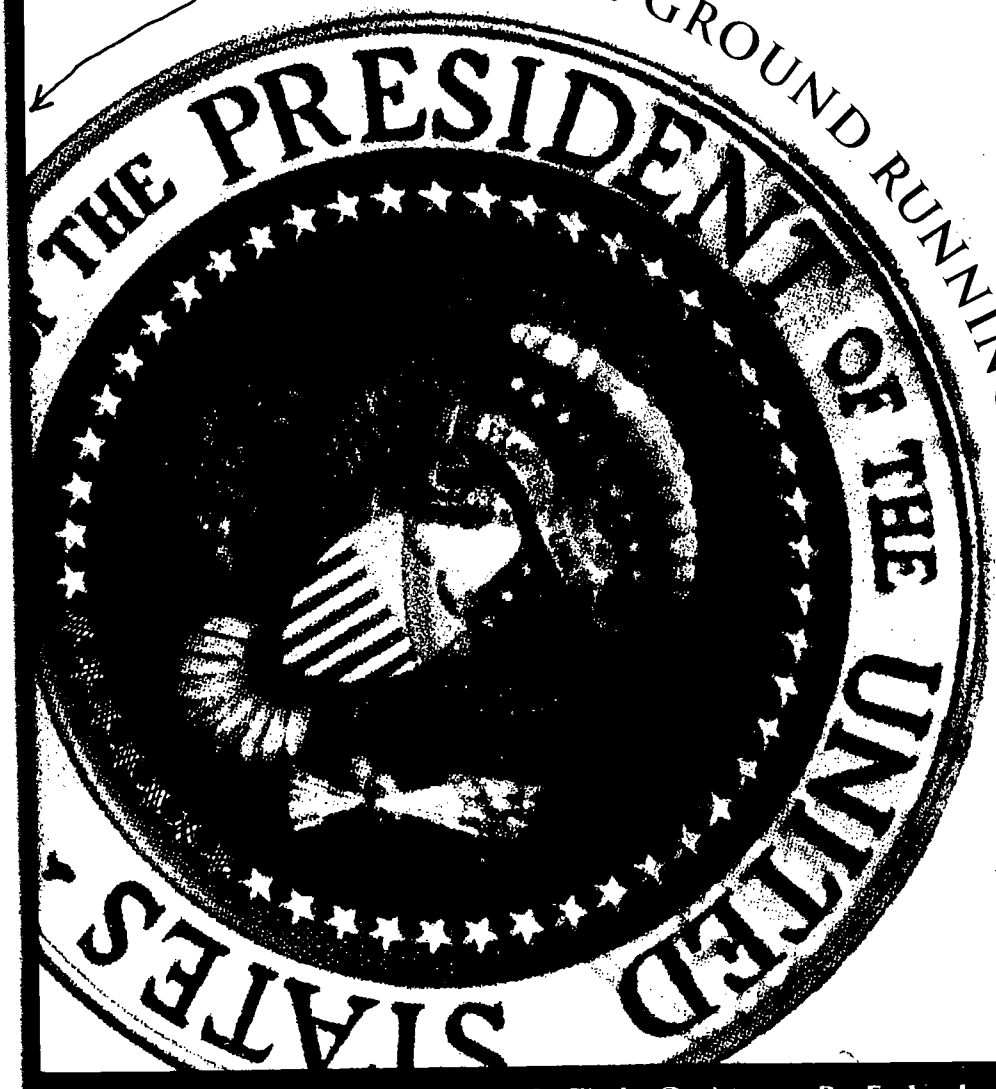
John Sununu, Chief of Staff for President Bush:

> I don't care if people hate me, as long as they hate me for the right reasons.

James P. Pfiffner

THE STRATEGIC PRESIDENCY

HITTING THE GROUND RUNNING



SECOND EDITION, REVISED

1
Organizing the White House

"The most important decision the president has to make in the transition period, more important than deciding what his policy or his state of the union message will be or even his Secretary of State, is his choice of his principal White House staff."[1] If the president does not designate early who will be first among his White House staff, the hesitation becomes an invitation to struggle. Much is at stake because the president's program must necessarily wait while the battle for who is in charge is settled.

The Carter administration lost a lot of time while the relative positions of White House aides Hamilton Jordan (Carter's campaign director) and Jack Watson (Carter's transition planner) were established. This struggle negated some of the other elaborate preparations the administration had undertaken to prepare for office. In rejecting the strong chief of staff model of White House organization, Presidents Ford and Carter lost valuable time and energy while they experimented with a "spokes-of-the wheel" model of White House organization and refused to designate their chiefs of staff.

The urgency of this first order of business is matched by the complexity of making delicate judgments about human competence and chemistry. The president must blend factors of personal confidence, intelligence, experience, knowledge of the government, and compatibility with other members of the White House team. He must also balance the need for personal loyalty and familiarity with his need for people experienced with Congress and the Washington establishment as the winning team shifts from running the campaign to governing the country.

Recent presidents have solved the puzzle of White House organization in different ways, from the highly structured White House of Richard Nixon to the more fluid approach of John Kennedy. This chapter will examine the White House organizations of recent presidents. The emphasis will be on the

role and functions of the White House staff and the importance of designating a chief of staff.

CHOOSING THE WHITE HOUSE STAFF

Presidents choose their White House staffs primarily from among those individuals who have worked with them on their campaigns and who understand best their personality and values. "You use your own campaign organization because people know each other" and are used to working together.[2] More importantly, the president has confidence in the judgment of the people who have weathered the storms of the campaign. According to John Ehrlichman, "The president's confidence is the only qualification for working in the White House."[3]

The Brownlow Committee, whose report led to the creation of the Executive Office of the President in 1939, envisioned a White House staff of individuals "possessed of high competence, great vigor, and a passion for anonymity," who would have "no power to make decisions or issue instructions in their own right."[4] But there is often a disjunction between the time-honored prescriptions for White House staff members and their actual behavior on the job.[5] In the contemporary presidency, White House staffers often seem to be "young, highly intelligent, and unashamedly on the make. They take chances, they cut corners, and unlike most politicians they sometimes have a little spontaneity and irreverence left in them. This accounts for much of their charm and most of their problems."[6]

The natural choice of campaign aides, however, may lead to problems because the nature of governing is different in important ways from the nature of political campaigns. Bradley Patterson, with fourteen years' working experience in the White House, argues that "the virtues needed in the crucible of a campaign—are almost the opposite of the preparation needed for life within the White House."[7]

In a political campaign issues are simplified and differences accentuated. In the White House, however, issues take on "infinite shades of gray."[8] Simplification does not help the president deal with the tough issues. In a campaign people are either for you or against you, and the latter are seen as the enemy. But in the White House coalitions must be built to gain support for the president's programs, and the country must be united behind the administration. In a campaign you can make points "if you make a strong speech or raise the right question or sound the alarm. None of that does you any good at all when you are in the White House and you are responsible for running the show. You have to come up with the answers."[9] The shift from campaigning to governing entails important changes in style, perspective, and attitude. Patterson asks: "Can a hard-driving, fast-moving bunch of egotists be so metamorphosed between November 5 and January 20?" His answer is only "perhaps."[10]

Richard Neustadt argues that one critical component in the qualifications of White House staffers is governmental experience, which engenders a respect for the traditions of the constitutional system and a sense that power in the U.S. government is shared among several institutions. He argues that in the Nixon administration the "new set" of advertising men and lawyers from the West Coast and their "beaver patrol" pushed out the "older set" of Washingtonians who were experienced in governing, such as Bryce Harlow, Arthur Burns, and Herbert Klein. The new staffers had no previous experience in government and were "loyal, empathetic, and ignorant. Ignorance and arrogance combined in Watergate."[11]

The combination of high-strung personality types in the presence of great power and the pressure to achieve short-term political goals combine to make the White House a peculiar cauldron fraught with danger as well as potential for good. Opportunities for greatness and abuse of power abound. "Policy differences, piled on top of personality clashes, multiplied by the time pressures, and heated by sometimes vindictive news leaks, can add up to an incandescent plasma of high-voltage conflict."[12] "I would provide a staff psychiatrist," one Carter staffer observed, "because it is a world of highfliers . . . there is a lot of competition between people. For instance, I have never worked before this in an atmosphere where information is hoarded. Part of your strength and position comes from hoarding and being very careful about whom you say things to."[13] With the particular personality types likely to be in the White House and the pressure-filled atmosphere, organizational issues take on extraordinary importance, with access to the president the prize.

EISENHOWER AND KENNEDY MODELS CONTRASTED

The two general models of White House organization in the contemporary presidency are the Eisenhower and the Roosevelt-Kennedy models. Eisenhower's participation in staff advisory systems in the military led him to conclude that the White House must be organized much more formally than Truman's and Roosevelt's. While good organization would not guarantee sound advice, Eisenhower felt it would enhance the likelihood of efficiency. "Organization cannot make a genius out of an incompetent. On the other hand, disorganization can scarcely fail to result in inefficiency."[14] Eisenhower insisted that as many issues as possible be settled below the presidential level and that issues be presented for his consideration on one-page memoranda.

The driving force behind the Eisenhower White House staff system was former New Hampshire Governor Sherman Adams, who came to dominate the White House with an iron hand. Adams said that his job was "to manage a staff that would boil down, simplify and expedite the urgent business that had to be brought to [Eisenhower's] personal attention and to keep as much work of sec-

ondary importance as possible off his desk."[15] He controlled who saw the president, and most cabinet officers reported to the president through him. He seemed to dominate White House policy so thoroughly that one newspaper ran a story headline declaring: "Adams Insists Ike Is Really President."[16]

When Theodore Sorensen, representing president-elect Kennedy, was briefed by General Persons, who had succeeded Sherman Adams, Persons told him: "With the exception of Press Secretary Hagerty, no member of the White House staff went in to see President Eisenhower except in General Persons' company or with General Persons' blessing, and no piece of paper went in to President Eisenhower without General Persons' okaying it in advance."[17] On the other hand, Eisenhower felt strongly that certain matters were cabinet rather than staff issues. According to Andrew Goodpaster, "I remember that when important issues came up in staff meetings, Eisenhower would interrupt and say, 'Excuse me, but this is not a staff matter. I will take that up with the secretary of defense, or interior."[18]

One of the useful functions Adams performed was to act as a lightning rod when the president made an unpopular decision on a minor matter. Adams could be seen as the "abominable no man" or the one who denied access to the president. This helped maintain Eisenhower's image as a benevolent leader not concerned with petty politics.[19] On the other hand, a chief of staff with tight control of access to the president can isolate him from diverse points of view and keep him from seeing people whom he ought to see. Greenstein argues that this was not the case with Adams and Eisenhower, though the issue was raised later with regard to the Nixon presidency.

After his election John Kennedy was strongly urged by his advisers to reject the Eisenhower model of White House organization and to adopt a system closer to that of Franklin Roosevelt. In his memorandum "Staffing the President-Elect," Richard Neustadt described the type of organization he thought Kennedy ought to adopt: "You would be your own 'chief of staff.' Your chief assistants would have to work collegially, in constant touch with one another and with you. There is room here for a *primus inter pares* to emerge, but no room for a staff *director* or arbiter, short of you. . . . *[Y]ou* would oversee, coordinate, and interfere with virtually everything your staff was doing. A collegial staff has to be managed; competition has to be audited."[20] Clark Clifford also urged Kennedy to reject the Eisenhower model with its dominant chief of staff.[21] In a memorandum to Kennedy he argued: "A vigorous President in the Democratic tradition of the Presidency will probably find it best to act as his own chief of staff, and to have no highly visible majordomo standing between him and his staff."[22]

These proposals of Neustadt and Clifford have been called the "spokes-of-the-wheel" model of White House organization. The president himself is the hub and his chief advisers the spokes, each of them having direct access to the president without their advice being "filtered" or "coordinated" by any single chief of staff. Kennedy followed this advice and ran a relatively loosely structured White

House with several senior aides having access to him. Although Theodore Sorensen became his principal adviser, he never became the keeper of the gate that Adams was for Eisenhower or H. R. Haldeman was for Nixon. But the lack of a chief of staff imposes a heavy burden on the president himself. After a long day and night of work during the transition, Kennedy remarked: "Now I know why Ike had Sherman Adams."[23]

Lyndon Johnson continued the Kennedy model of a fluid, unstructured White House staff. While Kennedy, like Roosevelt, dominated the White House staff with his intelligence and choice of which assignments to dole out to whom, Johnson carried his personal domination of White House staff members to extremes. Jack Valenti recalls how Johnson treated his staff.

> He brutalized them, always tried to shove spoonfuls of humility through their clenched teeth. He never named any of his aides to be chief of staff. He kept some aides unenlightened as to his thinking even as he instructed others in several directions at the same time. . . . He once said: "If anyone is going to make a big-ass blunder around here, I want it to be me and not some assistant to me who thinks he is running the country." He made sure everyone knew the source of their power: "Now you very important guys ought to keep one thing in mind. The folks tonight who tell you how smart you are and how charming you are don't give a pig's ass about you personally. They think you can get to me. They also know you won't be around this Oval Office one second longer than me."[24]

The lack of structure in Johnson's White House and Johnson's style of dominating his staff led Patrick Anderson to entitle a section of his chapter on the Johnson White House staff "Caligula's Court."[25] The White House under Johnson was so unstructured that when a new aide reported for duty and asked for an organization chart he was told by an amused career official who had been in the White House for thirty years: "We don't have any organization chart at the White House because we don't have any organization."[26]

NIXON'S WHITE HOUSE

Richard Nixon rejected the loosely structured styles of Presidents Kennedy and Johnson, and began his administration with a clear-cut White House organization. While staff members would change, the linchpin of the organization, H. R. Haldeman, maintained tight control over the White House. According to Haldeman, "You've got to establish a clear cut organizational structure" in order to keep staff rivalries and competition for the president's ear from dominating the policy process. "We all knew where we fit. There were five of us that were equal, but as [Bryce] Harlow said: there was a first among equals,

and it was clearly me. Nobody questioned it. I never asserted it; I never argued it. I never had to."[27]

While others saw Haldeman as a barrier between them and the president and suspected that the White House staff was arrogating much power to itself, Haldeman saw his role as merely acting at the direction of the president. "If I told someone to do something, he knew it wasn't me—he knew exactly what it was; it was an order from the President. They knew an appeal wouldn't get anywhere."[28] According to this view every president needs someone who will make the tough decisions about protecting the president's time and who will shield the president from having to make unpleasant face-to-face decisions about personnel. Haldeman characterized himself: "Every President needs a son of bitch, and I'm Nixon's. I'm his buffer and I'm his bastard, I get done what he wants done and I take the heat instead of him."[29]

One of the assets of a close staff aide who is almost an alter ego to the president is that he can weigh what the president says and discount it if in his judgment the president made a poor or hasty decision out of pique. Haldeman often stalled and held petty or vindictive orders until Nixon had cooled down.[30] In one instance Haldeman refused to implement an order to plug up leaks in the State Department by subjecting each employee to lie detector tests. Haldeman argued that in such situations "It's the obligation of the staff . . . not to carry out the order until it has been at least reviewed once and then reordered by the president."[31]

Nixon also counted on Haldeman to protect his time and shield him from unnecessary demands. This was a valuable service in that it diverted hostility from disappointed seekers of appointments from the president to Haldeman. It also led to the dissatisfaction of some cabinet members, such as John Volpe and Walter Hickel, who complained that the White House staff was preventing them from seeing the president.

While others saw Haldeman's role as heavily influencing the president's decisions, Haldeman perceived his role to be free of politics and values. His function as he saw it was to "staff out" every issue that got to the president and scrupulously ascertain that all sides of the issues were presented fairly. While he consciously modeled himself after Sherman Adams, he saw himself as less involved in policy. "Adams spent little time with the President but a lot of time acting for him. I spend a lot of time with the President. I act at the President's direction. . . . I don't directly act in policy matters."[32] One of Haldeman's aides estimated that Nixon spent more than 70 percent of his staff time alone with Haldeman.[33]

The reaction in the country to the Watergate scandal was so strong that the next two presidents felt a need to distance themselves and their administrations from the Nixon legacy. This led Presidents Ford and Carter to begin their terms with promises of open access to the president and a spokes-of-the-wheel structure of White House organization. Each was forced to admit failure after a period of attempting to run the White House without a chief of staff.

THE FORD AND CARTER REACTIONS

Upon succeeding to the presidency, President Ford took pains to distinguish his administration from Nixon's.[34] He spoke of a return to "cabinet government" and an open presidency without a powerful White House staff standing between the president and his advisers or cabinet members. "A Watergate was made possible by a strong chief of staff and ambitious White House aides who were more powerful than members of the Cabinet but who had little or no practical experience in judgment. I wanted to reverse the trend."[35]

A survey of department and agency heads during the transition from Nixon to Ford found that virtually all felt that they were dominated by the Executive Office of the President and that their ideas did not receive a fair hearing. Nor did they have confidence that their proposals reached the president intact. The transition team thus recommended that Ford avoid "isolation of the President by providing a flow of information, access to the President, and a span of control that can be handled while still allowing time for reflection, and an orderly but inclusive decision making process."[36]

President Ford began his administration with nine people reporting to him and with the intention of running his White House without a chief of staff who might evoke the specter of H. R. Haldeman. As Robert Hartman described Ford's intentions: "The President doesn't want any Colonel House or Rasputin around here. He prefers something analogous to the Knights of the Round Table, where all are equal."[37] But in order to lend some sort of coherence to a White House staff of over 500 people, Ford designated Donald Rumsfeld to be "Staff Coordinator." After several months in office even Ford had to admit that something akin to a chief of staff was necessary in order to run the White House. Ford explained: "Someone, I decided, had to be responsible for scheduling appointments, coordinating the paper flow, following up on decisions I had made and giving me status reports on projects and policy development. I didn't like the idea of calling this person chief of staff, but that was the role he would fill."[38]

When Rumsfeld was appointed to be secretary of defense in the winter of 1975, his deputy Richard Cheney took over as Ford's chief of staff. Cheney perceived his role as chief of staff to be one of imposing order on presidential advice, but in a low-key manner that kept him out of the spotlight. Cheney viewed himself as an honest broker who saw to it that all views were presented to the president. This had to be apparent to cabinet members and the rest of the White House staff in order to prevent them from trying to establish back channels to the president in order to get their own views heard. "It is important that the rest of the troops feel that we will honestly present their position to the president."[39]

Cheney felt that establishing a chief of staff in the White House entailed some risks, but that they were worth it.

> It's really a matter of trade-offs. There is no question that to the extent that you involve a number of people in the consultative process before you make a decision, you raise the level of noise in the system. You enhance the possibility of premature disclosures and leaks. You also take more time, cut down in efficiency. On the other side, by encouraging different viewpoints you make sure that the President's got a wide variety of options so he won't be blindsided. But it's a very risky business to classify an open system with a lot of consultation as all good, and a very tightly run system with little consultation as all bad.[40]

Cheney concluded from his experience in the White House that the Roosevelt and Kennedy system would no longer work: "Somebody has to be in charge."[41]

At a White House staff party Cheney was presented with a bicycle wheel mounted on a large board with all of the spokes of the wheel mangled and tangled except for one that was all that held the structure together. A plaque mounted on the board read: "The spokes of the wheel: a rare form of management artistry as conceived by Don Rumsfeld and modified by Dick Cheney." When the Ford administration left office on January 20, 1977, Cheney left the present on his desk and appended a note reading "Dear Ham, beware the spokes of the wheel."[42]

Jimmy Carter did not heed Cheney's warning. Carter, like Ford, was reacting to Watergate and the Nixon presidency and promised "no all-powerful palace guard in my White House, no anonymous aides, unelected, unknown to the public, and unconfirmed by the Senate, wielding vast power from the White House basement."[43] Carter also started out with nine advisers reporting to him, and he intended to be his own chief of staff. This came naturally for Carter, who prided himself on being a good manager and who enjoyed (or was obsessed with) the details of policy and management. As a result, it was difficult sometimes to determine who was in charge short of the president. And minor issues tended to be elevated to the presidential level.

The situation was aggravated by the transition conflict between the Watson and Jordan staffs. Valuable time was lost waiting for the dispute to be resolved; and while Jordan was unquestionably the winner, Carter refused to give him unambiguous authority over the White House staff. This was in part because the White House was dominated by a small band of Georgians, and Carter was unwilling to choose one to put first. But also Jordan did not want the title of chief of staff, because he did not enjoy the routine duties of administration as much as the formulation of political strategies.

In retrospect, Jack Watson concluded that the spokes-of-the wheel organization model is "a fatal mistake" in the White House. The Carter attempt resulted in "lack of cohesion" and coordination of decision making. Watson felt that appointing a chief of staff earlier in the administration might have ameliorated

the administration's problems with Congress and lack of clarity about who was speaking for the president.[44]

Carter tolerated the lack of any formal chief of staff until July 1979, when he went up to Camp David to consult with various prominent people from throughout the country and made his speech about the crisis of confidence he felt in the country. He then demanded the resignations of his White House staff and cabinet and accepted those of five cabinet members: Michael Blumenthal, Joseph Califano, James Schlesinger, and Brock Adams, as well as Griffin Bell. At this time Carter finally admitted the obvious need for a chief of staff to run the White House and officially appointed Jordan to the post. Later, when Jordan moved to work on the 1980 campaign, Jack Watson took over the title. After his four years as domestic policy adviser to President Carter, Stuart Eizenstat concluded: "It is critical to have one person in charge."[45]

THE REAGAN WHITE HOUSE

The Reagan administration came to office with the conscious intention of avoiding the mistakes they thought that President Carter had made. Edwin Meese, who had overseen the transition, was put in charge of policy, the cabinet, and national security. But Meese was not the president's only top staff aide. He shared his primacy with Michael Deaver and James Baker. Thus Reagan's White House was organized in a modified spokes-of-the-wheel and chief of staff system.[46]

Meese and Deaver had been with Reagan when he was governor of California and were longtime, trusted associates. Baker was brought in after the election; his choice, since he had worked for George Bush, showed that President Reagan was not threatened by advisers who were not old-time Reagan loyalists. It can be argued that the early Reagan successes were due to his willingness to bring in old Washington hands, like Baker, Richard Darman, Max Friedersdorf, Kenneth Duberstein, and David Stockman; and not limit his immediate advisers to those who had been personally loyal to him over the decades of his political career.

Initially Baker was given the functions of "administration" and implementation with the title of chief of staff. Meese took control of "policy," the cabinet, and national security. Michael Deaver, who was closest to the president, handled scheduling, travel, support services, and the First Lady's office. Deaver was not particularly interested in issues or policy, but saw himself as steward of the presidential image and protector of the president's time.[47]

On November 17, 1980, Meese and Baker came to an agreement on the division of duties between them and, as befits two lawyers, wrote it down in a memorandum that was initialed by each. Meese would have cabinet rank while

Baker would not. Meese would coordinate the work of the Domestic Policy staff and the National Security Council staff. Baker got the traditional office of the chief of staff and control of the paper flow to the president and hiring and firing authority in the White House staff.[48]

This division of labor, though it was not immediately obvious, was loaded in favor of Baker. Meese would have responsibility for the long-term Reagan agenda, and Baker would dominate day-to-day operations. It is a predictable rule that in the White House day-to-day firefighting drives out longer-range (six months or longer) planning. Baker's control of operations, paper flow, and personnel would give him the upper hand.

Baker brought in Richard Darman as his aide. On February 17 Darman was named as the "contact person" to coordinate and plan activities related to the economic recovery program and was named secretary to the Budget Review Group. Darman wrote a memo on February 21 arguing for the need to coordinate legislative strategy in order to achieve a "planned string of successes" to develop momentum in Congress. From this memo grew the Legislative Strategy Group that met in Baker's office and included only the highest-level officials in the White House. It played the crucial role in directing the administration's relations with Congress during the budget victories in its first year in office. Darman was secretary to the Legislative Strategy Group.[49]

During the first year of the administration, Meese, Baker, and Deaver ran the White House by "troika" and met each morning for breakfast. But control of policy gradually flowed to Baker through his domination of the budget and legislative strategy of the administration and his control of day-to-day operations.[50]

Ideologically Baker was seen as a "moderate" or "pragmatist" and was viewed as anathema by the right wing of the Republican party. But his pragmatic abilities to get things done in Washington may have been an important reason that he came to be such a strong chief of staff. Despite his longtime loyalty to Reagan, Deaver was also seen as a pragmatist, and he was instrumental in getting Reagan to bring Baker on board. Ideological conservatives on the right saw only Meese among the three as the protector of the "real Reagan" of ideological purity. They were also displeased when William Clark, who had come to the White House as national security adviser and was seen as a true Reaganite, left to be secretary of the interior when James Watt was fired.

The White House organization dominated by the troika (or quadrumvirate when Clark was there) seemed to work quite well for the first part of the administration. The first year's victories seemed to be engineered quite well by the functional separation of duties among the three top advisers. They all had direct access to the president, and they coordinated their work with daily meetings and a minimum of friction. In late 1983, however, reports began to surface that some of the traditional problems of lack of monocratic hierarchy (each person having only one boss) were being felt.

The problems stemmed from the fact that no one staff member was clearly in charge, and the president was not closely enough engaged in policy making and administration to settle disputes quickly. One White House official who had served other presidents said: "I've never worked in an organization like this. There is no one person to give orders, except the President. This lends itself to jockeying for position and not letting anyone else get too far ahead."[1] Another administration official said that the early collective management team approach no longer was operating and that top aides acted as "individual lords, each possessing his own fiefdom, with middle-level people often brandishing the swords."[2] A former White House official put it this way: "It's hell to work in that kind of situation. It's not natural. I think it's because the President doesn't lay down the law. He wants to stay out of the whole thing. It kind of goes against his nature, so he lets a few people he trusts just fight it out."[3]

The beginning of President Reagan's second term was marked by major personnel and organizational changes. At the invitation of Donald Regan, James Baker agreed to swap positions with him in the administration. The change put Baker in charge of the Treasury Department and Regan in charge of the White House staff. At the same time Edwin Meese left the White House to become attorney general and Michael Deaver left to establish a public relations firm. Thus the triumvirate was no longer in charge at the White House, and Donald Regan moved to establish his dominance.

The chief of staff's power might have been undercut by the dual roles played by Meese and Baker. Each was to head a White House policy council as well as his cabinet department. Meese would be in charge of a council on domestic policy, and Baker would head one on economic policy, which were to replace the seven cabinet councils of the first term. The two hats worn by Baker and Meese had the potential to give them powerful policy-making roles, but Regan fought that, and Regan prevailed. Baker and Meese continued to be able to pursue successfully their personal policy initiatives. But this was due to their personal stature and access to the president and not to their roles as heads of cabinet councils.

Regan began to establish his preeminence with important changes in White House personnel. David Stockman, who resigned as OMB director in the summer of 1985, was replaced by James Miller, who was agreeable to Regan. Robert McFarlane, the national security adviser, left the administration in December, in part because of conflicts with Regan. In addition, other members of Reagan's first-term team were leaving the White House, including Max Friedersdorf, Edward Rollins, and Kenneth Duberstein. These White House aides were replaced with people who were acceptable to Regan.

A former marine major and chairman of Merrill Lynch, Regan moved to establish control through a tight hierarchy in the White House. "He considers the Executive Branch to be like a corporation," said one of his aides. "Cabinet members are vice presidents, the President is the chairman of the board, the chief of

staff is the chief operating officer."[54] He personally approved virtually everything concerning the president: speeches, schedule, paper flow, appointments, and phone calls.[55] Some thought that his control of the Reagan White House was even more complete than Sherman Adams's was over the Eisenhower White House, in part because Adams did not have jurisdiction over foreign policy; Regan did. "Regan often sits alone with the President and talks quite a bit. No one knows what he says," said one Reagan White House official.[56]

Regan's approach to control contrasted sharply with the politically smooth style of James Baker, though Regan gradually became more accustomed to the fragmented power of American government. "When I was chief executive [at Merrill Lynch] and I said, 'Jump,' people asked, 'How high?' As Secretary of the Treasury, when I said, 'Jump,' people said, "What do you mean by jump? What do you mean by high?' But having entered this milieu, I think I have learned to live in it."[57] Regan considered the crowning achievement of his first few months in office to be the elimination of the collective management system of president Reagan's first term.[58]

Regan saw his duty as chief of staff to take some of the heat for controversial decisions for the president. "One of the reasons I've gained so much prominence is because of the blame coming my way. It's kind of nice for the President to be able to lay the blame off and say: 'I didn't do it, it was somebody down the line.'"[59] At times, however, he chafed at the role of lightning rod for the president. "If someone gets a cold in this town, I get blamed."[60] In 1986 Regan characterized his role as leader of the "shovel brigade" that follows the circus through town. He saw himself as director of political damage control after others had made blunders.

Regan's tight control of access to the president solved the first-term problem characterized by one aide as "nobody knows who's in charge of what, and people . . . slip in the back door and get policy changed at odd hours without anybody realizing what's happened."[61] But the other side of the better coordination coin is the perception of less access to the president for other White House staff members. This was the reason for the departure of some White House aides after Regan took over.[62]

David Stockman criticized Regan for operating on the "echo principle" by reinforcing President Reagan's optimism about the economy and firm opposition against any tax increase to narrow the deficit gap. To Stockman this was preventing White House aides from presenting the full fiscal policy picture to the president. To Regan this was merely carrying out the policy preference of the president and "letting Reagan be Reagan."[63] "I'm not interested in how I can influence policy. I'm interested in how Reagan's plans and policies get developed and actually become part of American life."[64]

In 1986 Regan's performance as chief of staff came under attack when it was disclosed that White House staffers had arranged for shipments of arms to be made to Iran for the purpose of freeing U.S. hostages and attempting to infl

ence "moderates" in the Iran government. Many critics of the administration argued that the policy amounted to appeasing terrorists and that it would encourage the taking of future hostages. They also claimed that our credibility with our allies may have been seriously undermined by the U.S. government's sending arms to the radical Iran government while at the same time strongly urging our allies not to sell arms to Iran.

Even more damaging to the administration was the revelation that proceeds from the sale of the arms to Iran were diverted into Swiss bank accounts and destined to aid the Contra rebels in Nicaragua. This happened at a time that the "Boland Amendment" was in effect which prohibited any direct or indirect U.S. aid to the Contras. Thus it seemed that the administration was trying to achieve its policy goals of aiding the Contras by secret means in spite of laws to the contrary. This raised questions of circumventing the constitutional prerogatives of Congress as well as possible violations of laws by the administration.

Major issues were thus raised about the procedures set up to advise the president on foreign policy. With regard to sales of arms to Iran, the president did consult with Secretary of State George Shultz and Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger, both of whom advised against the sales. The attempted rapprochement with Iran, regardless of its wisdom, was probably within the president's prerogatives as head of state and commander in chief. The delivery of arms to Iran, a terrorist state, without notifying Congress may have been a violation of the Arms Export Control Act. But the president said that he had no knowledge of the diversion of funds to the Contras. An NSC staffer, Lieutenant Colonel Oliver North, was said to have carried out the operations without knowledge of Don Regan or the president.

The question was raised: Could a lieutenant colonel on the National Security Council staff have carried out such a complex operation without the knowledge of the White House chief of staff? The irony is that Donald Regan had prided himself on being in charge of every aspect of the White House. His style was one of tight control, and he told his subordinates that he did not like surprises. His purview included foreign policy and national security issues to a broader extent than other presidential chiefs of staff.

So Regan was caught in a dilemma: either he knew about the diversion of funds and was thus potentially guilty of serious breaches of the law, or he did not know about it and therefore was not in control of important actions of the White House staff that affected U.S. foreign policy and national security.

Several issues were raised by these matters regarding the strong chief of staff system of the second Reagan term. What is the proper role of the NSC staff? At its creation in 1947, its role was not intended to be operational. It was created as a staff agency to coordinate national security policy. Operations are normally carried out by the State Department in diplomatic matters, by the Defense Department in military matters, and by the CIA in clandestine matters. These agencies have strong institutional capabilities and professional personnel to carry

out their missions. In the important matters of the arms to Iran and aid to the Contras, these professional agencies were bypassed (except in minor matters) by the NSC apparatus.

The other issue is whether the exceptionally strong management control over the White House exercised by Don Regan and the exceptionally detached style of President Reagan contributed to the developments. It is doubtful that the diversion of funds of the Contras would have happened if the policy had been vetted with the members of the White House triumvirate of the first Reagan term (Baker, Meese, and Deaver) or if the secretaries of state and defense had been consulted. So, insofar as Regan's operating style and procedures encouraged excluding the president's normal advisers, the system may have allowed the scandal to occur when it should have been nipped in the bud.[65]

It was the Iran-Contra scandal that proved to be Regan's downfall. According to the report of the commission headed by former senator John Tower: "More than almost any chief of staff of recent memory, [Donald T. Regan] asserted personal control over the White House staff and sought to extend this control to the national security adviser. . . . He must bear primary responsibility for the chaos that descended upon the White House." The day after the report was released in February of 1987, President Reagan decided to replace Regan as chief of staff with former senator Howard Baker. Baker's experience in politics and in Congress provided a sharp contrast with the background and style of Donald Regan. According to one former Reagan White House official,

> Don never realized that while Wall Street runs one way; Pennsylvania Avenue is a two-way street. He never realized there is a difference between being an elected and appointed official. He never realized the distinction between being a staff person and the chief executive officer. He never realized that the White House demands talent throughout, rather than talent derived. He never realized his job was to compensate for the perceived strengths and weaknesses of others, rather than to dominate those weaknesses.[66]

In this case the detached and passive leadership style of the president combined with the rigid and controlling approach of his chief of staff resulted in disaster.

This scandal, however, ought not to lead future presidents or the Congress to overreact. The president needs to have a chief of staff to organize the White House to suit the president's management style. Congressional meddling with the president's personal staff will not solve the problem. Future presidents should be aware of the potential for problems of operational units in the White House and the potential dangers of a chief of staff who tries to shut out all others. But they should also remember the Ford and Carter administrations if they are tempted to try a spokes-of-the-wheel advistory system.

WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED?

No one questions that the modern presidency needs an active White House staff. Cabinet members may complain, and staffers may abuse their power, but the president cannot operate without a staff to protect his political interests and keep the administration focused on the central agenda. Departments and agencies, as Stuart Eizenstat argues, are inherently incapable of coordinating themselves. "Agencies simply do not trust each other. . . . This lack of trust means that, when we have to deal with cross-cutting, conflicting, complex issues of the day that involve more than one agency, it is very difficult, if not impossible, to entrust to one agency the responsibility to coordinate the development of policy that affects several agencies. . . . Without a centralized, strong, and effective White House staff, it is simply impossible to assure the neutrality of the policymaking process."[67]

There is also a developing consensus that in the White House staff someone must unequivocally be in charge. In the words of one Kennedy aide: "Everybody believes in democracy until he gets to the White House and then you begin to believe in dictatorship, because it's so hard to get things done."[68] On this issue we have the informed opinions of presidential chiefs of staff H. R. Haldeman, Donald Rumsfeld, Richard Cheney, and Jack Watson. Each of them has concluded that if the president does not designate someone to control White House rivalries and competition, chaos will result.

Even Richard Neustadt, who had urged Presidents Kennedy and Carter to be their own chiefs of staff, concluded that "letting the president be his own administrative coordinator was probably unrealistic in 1976."[69] Reagan's first term, with its troika of differentiated jurisdictions, has brought into question whether access to the president must be controlled by only one person. Three staffers had regular access to Reagan, but James Baker was clearly chief of staff with control of White House personnel and paper flow to the president. The second-term Reagan White House, however, reverted to a domineering chief of staff. The special personal chemistry of the first-term Reagan White House troika was an unusual occurrence.

It is still possible that a president may be elected with the skills and intelligence of a Franklin Roosevelt or a John Kennedy, who can act as the hub of the wheel and be his own chief of staff. But the increased size of the White House staff, the enhanced technological capabilities of the White House, its increased centralization, and the experience of recent presidencies has brought into question whether we can return to the less formal days of the 1930s or even the 1960s. The consequences of attempting a spokes-of-the-wheel model of White House organization and failing, as Presidents Ford and Carter discovered, are apparent and present a serious risk for any president who tries it.

Several major functions must be performed by the White House chief of staff:

1. The chief of staff must organize the information flow to the president to ensure that issues are "staffed out" and coordinated. All important options and every relevant side of an issue must be presented to the president for his consideration. For instance, if the president gives a speech, all of the substantive issues touched upon must be cleared through the cabinet secretaries affected by them. Secretaries should not, of course, have any final power over content, but the president must have confidence that each relevant person has considered the issue and has raised any reservations to the president.

The chief of staff must be, and be perceived to be, an "honest broker" in ensuring that the views of all concerned administration officials are presented to the president. If this is not done, cabinet members will do their utmost to establish "back channels" to the president. The chief of staff must assure that the president's time is not dominated by one person or point of view and that dissenting opinions have a chance to be presented.

One of the most important coordinative functions of the chief of staff, and the one that causes much trouble with members of the cabinet, is the necessity to prevent "Oh, by the way" decisions. That is, if a member of the cabinet catches the president after a meeting or in a social situation and tries to get a decision on a policy issue, there is the danger of a hasty or poorly planned decision. The president may not be immediately aware of the full ramifications of the decision. It is the chief of staff's duty to delay the decision until it can be "roundtabled" and input can be gained from all the relevant administration officials.

2. Another indispensable function of the White House chief of staff is to take heat for the president. Presidents must inevitably make unpopular decisions and difficult personnel choices. If these unpopular actions can be perceived to be the doing of the chief of staff, the president can be spared some of the negative fallout, though not the responsibility, for them. When a high-level administration official must be fired, it is the president's decision, but "somebody has to do it . . . if there's a dirty deed to be done, it's the chief of staff who's got to do it. The president gets credit for what works, and you get the blame for what doesn't work."[70]

3. The chief of staff must be the person who negotiates with cabinet members over budgets and personnel for their departments. There is no one else short of the president, who has the clout to arbitrate among members of the cabinet. The president does not have time to do it, and so the chief of staff must manage the "giant egos" and decide when a little "presidential stroking" is needed. "I can't count the number of times I would get a phone call, probably once a month, and it would be a situation in which Pat Moynihan [ambassador to the United Nations] was calling threatening to resign or Henry Kissinger [secretary of state] was threatening to resign because they didn't like each other," recalls Richard Cheney.[71]

Other functions that must be performed by the White House staff, according to Bradley Patterson, who spent fourteen years on the White House staff, inclu

(1) the interrogation/orchestration/moderator function on crosscutting policy issues; (2) the personal policy development function on issues especially sensitive to the president; (3) the ferret task: of receiving and judging informal, anticipatory information on problems about which cabinet officers are embarrassed or reluctant; and (4) selective intervention where policy changes or crises make necessary a White House monitorship even of operational details. Patterson argues that these are functions unique to a White House staff and that no cabinet officer would be able to perform these functions along with those of heading a cabinet agency.[72]

The presence of a strong White House staff is not without its dangers. There will inevitably by complaints from the cabinet and others that the White House staff is isolating the president and limiting their access to him. These perceptions will persist even though it will often be the president's personal decision not to see a cabinet member. Criticisms of the White House staff will often be intended for the president. The danger is that these complaints will be well founded and that the president may come to depend too heavily on his staff and limit his sources of information.

Presidents must depend heavily on their immediate staffs, but they must maintain a delicate balance between unconditionally supporting them and undermining their decisions. The danger of giving too much rein to White House staffers is that they may claim to be speaking for the president when they are merely pushing their own agendas. This, of course, is what cabinet members often suspect of the White House staff, but it is often too risky for a cabinet secretary to have a showdown to settle the issue. But the danger of a president regularly undercutting the decisions of senior staff is that pretty soon the staff person is seen as a cipher, and all decisions are appealed to the president.

Presidents are also faced with the danger that the chief of staff may take a domineering approach to the job, as did Sherman Adams, H. R. Haldeman, Donald Regan, and John Sununu. Each of these chiefs of staff abused his power while alienating members of Congress, the press, and his own colleagues, and each ended up harming his president. Each of them also resigned in disgrace.[73] Thus every president must appoint a chief of staff who can firmly control the White House staff and operations, but if that person takes a domineering approach to the job, the president will be ill served. Don Rumsfeld, Dick Cheney, Jack Watson, and James Baker have demonstrated that the job can be done with restrained firmness. The conduct of the chief of staff office in the Bush and Clinton administrations will be taken up in Chapters 7 and 8.

Despite the purge, Federalist officers continued to outnumber Republicans by a majority of 140 to 38.[8] The only senior officer thought to be sympathetic to the Republicans was Wilkinson—and he was notorious for swimming with the tide. Jefferson had not gone as far as his more extreme supporters wished. Secretary of War Henry Dearborn complained, "We have been much more liberal towards them [the Federalists] than they would be towards us, and in future I think we ought to give them measure for measure."[9] Jefferson put it well when he commented, "The army is undergoing a chaste reformation."[10] Lewis had been invaluable in bringing it about on a fair rather then an excessively partisan basis.

Beyond his active role in the reduction of the army, Lewis's duties were varied and not particularly exciting. He spent long hours at the writing desk, performing menial tasks, such as drawing up a list of all U.S. postmasters, with their locations and compensation, a total of twenty pages. He copied many other routine documents, including a list of prisoners in the Washington jail as of March 29, 1802; an extract of a letter of March 6, 1802; four pages of a report on the cost of a naval arsenal on December 4, 1802; and so on. He delivered messages from Jefferson to Congress.[11] It was tedious work, but instructive.

Abigail Adams, the first resident of the President's House, called it the "great castle" and hated the place. It was too large—twenty-three rooms—and basically unfurnished and unfinished. Mrs. Adams complained that it took thirty servants to run the place. The roof leaked. The walls were unplastered. In the nearest stable, at Fourteenth and G Streets, John Adams told his successor, were seven horses and two carriages in the stables that were the property of the United States and available for the president's use.

Jefferson ran the place with only eleven servants, brought up from Monticello. There were no more powdered wigs, much less ceremony. Washington and Adams, according to Republican critics, had kept up almost a royal court. Jefferson substituted Republican simplicity—to a point. He had a French chef, and French wines he personally selected. His salary was $25,000 per year—a princely sum, but the expenses were also great. In 1801 Jefferson spent $6,500 for provisions and groceries, $2,700 for servants (some of whom were liveried), $500 for Lewis's salary, $3,000 for wine. And it turned out he had to buy his own horses; Congress, thinking it an outrage that the government should pay for the president's horses, ordered that the ones Adams had turned over to Jefferson be sold. Adams was so mortified over this action that he left town before the inauguration.[12]

Jefferson was a widower. His two daughters were married and had their husbands, children, and own affairs to look after. Secretary of State James Madison and his wife, Dolley, stayed with Jefferson in the President's House for several weeks in May 1801, and Dolley Madison often acted as hostess for

dinner parties, but essentially the President's House was a bachelor house in the years Lewis lived there.[13] Other than the servants, Jefferson and Lewis were the only residents. On May 28, 1801, shortly after the Madisons took their own residence, Jefferson wrote his daughter Martha, "Capt. Lewis and myself are like two mice in a church."[14]

They ate together, spent the evenings together—usually with guests—and worked closely together, especially on matters concerning the army. Jefferson came to know Lewis as well as he knew any man. He later praised Lewis for, among other attributes, "sound understanding and a fidelity to truth." But he also noted, "While he lived with me in Washington, I observed at times sensible depressions of mind." He had seen the same melancholy in Lewis's father, and felt it was a malady that ran in the family: "Knowing their constitutional source, I estimated their course by what I had seen in the family." Lewis's depressions, in other words, did not unduly alarm the president, or last long—but Jefferson could not help noticing them.[15]

Lewis's quarters were in what became the East Room. It contained almost no furniture and was damp, cold, drafty, and depressing. Abigail Adams had hung her wash in it. Life in the President's House, however, was as exciting and rewarding to Lewis as life in the White House has been to most of the young people lucky enough to live or work there in the following two centuries.

First of all, there was that daily association with Jefferson. No American has ever surpassed Jefferson, and fewer than a handful have ever equaled him, as friend, teacher, guide, model, leader, companion. Dumas Malone, author of the definitive multivolume biography, called Jefferson "this extraordinarily versatile and seemingly inexhaustible man."[16] For Lewis, left fatherless as a child, thirty-one years younger than Jefferson, the president was all that and a father figure as well.

Lewis took his meals with the president, and was almost always present when he entertained, which was four or five nights a week. The dinner parties were small affairs, usually two or three guests, sometimes six to eight, never more than a dozen.

One of the guests, Mahlon Dickerson, four years older than Lewis, was a lawyer from Philadelphia and a politician who later became governor of New Jersey and then a Cabinet officer. He noted in a letter that Jefferson "is accused of being very slovenly in his dress, & to be sure he is not very particular in that respect, but however he may neglect his person he takes good care of his table. No man in America keeps a better." "You drink as you please, and converse at your ease," another guest reported.[17]

The table was an oval one, encouraging a general conversation. The talk flowed freely, on any subject that interested Jefferson, which meant practically all subjects. But the concentration was on natural science, geography, natural philosophy, Indian affairs, and of course politics.

Jefferson had promised Lewis that if he accepted the appointment he would "know & be known to characters of influence in the affairs of our country,

and give you the advantage of their wisdom," and that was exactly what happened. Lewis sat with the Republican high command, including such regulars as Madison, Dearborn, Secretary of the Treasury Albert Gallatin, and Attorney General Levi Lincoln. Nonpolitical guests included the poet and journalist Joel Barlow, the artist Charles Willson Peale, the author Thomas Paine, the poet Philip Freneau, and other writers, scientists, and travelers.

Lewis and Dickerson, who met at Jefferson's table, became good friends. Lewis visited him in Philadelphia, where young bachelor Dickerson moved in the highest social circles. Dickerson kept a diary, with such entries as "Frid. 14 [May 1802], A fine day—Capt. Lewis & others dined with me—went to see Rannie's deceptions—much pleased." Rannie was a magician and ventriloquist. "Wed. 19 [May], Cloudy & rainy part of the day—cold at evg.—spent the evg. at Madmoiselle Fries with Capt. L." "Frid. 21. Clear in Morng. rained very hard PM.—rode out with Capt. L. to Dr. Logans—diner there—retd. at eveng." George Logan was a physician and U.S. senator and a founder of the American Philosophical Society, in which Dickerson was active and Jefferson was a member.[18]

It was a feature of Jefferson's personality that he reached out to men older and younger than he, men with different life experiences who could bring to his table perspectives and information foreign to him. Henry Adams wrote, "Three more agreeable men than Jefferson, James Madison, and Albert Gallatin were never collected round the dinner-table of the White House; and their difference in age was enough to add zest to their friendship."[19] Jefferson was fifty-eight years of age in 1801, Madison fifty, Gallatin forty, and Lewis twenty-seven.

Lewis's activities with Dickerson added to the list of famous men with whom he visited. "Mon. 24. A charming day—rode with Capt. L. to Wilmington—on a visit to Jno Dickinson—he was from home—we put up at Craigs." John Dickinson was the revolutionary pamphleteer who wrote the *Letters from a Farmer in Pennsylvania* in 1768. That same week, Lewis and Dickerson dined with Pennsylvania Governor Thomas McKean, former member of the Continental Congress and signer of the Declaration of Independence. On a visit to Philadelphia a year later, Lewis joined Dickerson for dinner with Henry Sheaff, a merchant who had been the provider of wine and sundries for President Washington when the capital was in Philadelphia.[20] Clearly Captain Lewis was moving in elite circles.

In August 1802, Jefferson retired to Monticello for a two-month vacation. Lewis accompanied him and stayed at the clapboard house three miles east of Monticello on the estate called Franklin, home of Ben Franklin's grandson William Bache. Being there allowed Lewis to visit his mother, brothers, and sister at Locust Hill, and to attend dinners at Monticello. One Albemarle planter, Lewis's schoolboy friend Peachy Gilmer, called the company that gathered at Jefferson's table "the most accomplished and elegant society that has been anywhere, at any time, within my knowledge in Virginia. Meriwether Lewis was, too, sometimes with us, sometimes absent."[21]

In Washington, Lewis was on the move much of every day, carrying messages and invitations, gathering information for his boss. He had the honor of copying and then delivering Jefferson's first State of the Union Address to Congress. This broke the precedent set by Washington and Adams, who had delivered their speeches in person. Jefferson thought that practice a bit monarchical; besides, he disliked making public speeches.*

The summer of 1802 was marked by a juicy scandal full of invective and slander, leaks from men in high places, hush money, blackmail, and charges of immoral sexual conduct and miscegenation by Jefferson. Meriwether Lewis was involved, in his capacity as aide and messenger for the president.

The scandal had its origins in 1798, when Jefferson leaked some information on foreign affairs to a Richmond journalist named James Thomson Callender. It was not new or secret information, but it had received little publicity and Jefferson wanted it known, although he did not want his having supplied it to Callender to be known. He asked Callender to attribute what he had supplied to an unnamed source, which was done. Jefferson then read some of the page proof of a book Callender was writing, *The Prospect Before Us*, for the 1800 presidential campaign, and approved of what he saw. He wrote Callender, "Such papers cannot fail to produce the best effect. They inform the thinking part of the nation."

But the work as a whole turned out to be full of such spleen and scurrility that Jefferson disapproved of it and feared its extreme language would help the Federalists and hurt the Republicans. For example, Callender called Washington "the grand lama of Federal adoration, the immaculate divinity of Mt. Vernon," and described Adams as a "hideous hermaphroditical character which has neither the force and firmness of a man, nor the gentleness and sensibility of a woman."[22]

Callender was arrested for his words, tried before Supreme Court Justice and arch-Federalist Samuel Chase on charges of violating the Sedition Act of 1798, found guilty, fined two hundred dollars, and thrown into prison. By the time Jefferson became president, Callender had paid his fine and served his nine-month sentence. Jefferson gave him a pardon. He could do no other, not so much because Callender had been his supporter in the election as because he and his party had denounced the Sedition Act—along with the Alien Act—as unconstitutional in the Virginia and Kentucky Resolutions.

When he granted the pardon, Jefferson also ordered the fine returned to Callender, who was pleading poverty and simultaneously demanding the postmaster position in Richmond. But a series of red-tape delays held up the repayment.

Callender came to Washington in May 1801 to demand his money. He

*Jefferson's precedent lasted until it was broken by another Virginian, Woodrow Wilson. Wilson, a professor, could not resist a captive audience.