

President Ronald Reagan Oral History Project

Briefing Materials

Peter Hannaford

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PETER HANNAFORD TIMELINE

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- 1964-1968** Hannaford is named a member of the City of Piedmont Park Commission.
- 1965** Hannaford supports former San Francisco Mayor George Christopher in the 1966 Republican gubernatorial primary. After meeting Reagan during the primary season, Hannaford concludes that Reagan is “such a likeable man, but he can’t possibly win.” Following Christopher’s defeat, Hannaford supports Reagan in the general election. (Peter D. Hannaford, “Expanding Political Horizons,” in *The Governor’s Office and Public Information, Education and Planning, 1967-1974*, an oral history conducted 1981-1982, Regional Oral History Office, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, 1984, p. 23)
- 1966-1974** Hannaford becomes a member of the Alameda County Republican Central Committee.
- 1967-1969** Hannaford is President of Pettler & Hannaford, an advertising and public relations firm based in Oakland and Orinda, California. (Hannaford, *Expanding Political Horizons*, p. 8)
- 1968-1969** Hannaford is selected President of the East Bay Division of the Republican Alliance.
- 1968-1974** Hannaford serves on the Republican State Central Committee of California.
- 1969-1972** Hannaford becomes Vice President of Wilton, Coombs & Colnett, a San Francisco advertising agency. As Vice-President, Hannaford works on a number of local political campaigns including those of Milton Marks and San Francisco Supervisor John Molinari. (Hannaford, *Expanding Political Horizons*, p. 21)
- 1972** Hannaford is elected the Republican nominee for the U.S. House of Representatives in California’s 7th Congressional District. He is defeated by incumbent Ron Dellums in the general election.

Hannaford is selected to serve as Vice Chairman of the Governor’s Consumer Fraud Task Force. Hannaford finds his service on the Board to be “a wonderful experience.” “I had the feeling that everybody was pulling for the same objective,” Hannaford would later comment. “It was a small group, but we represented a lot of very different interests. Yet somehow the

spirit of cooperation was very strong.” (Hannaford, *Expanding Political Horizons*, p. 22)

1973 Hannaford becomes president of Hannaford & Associates, a public relations firm based in Oakland.

Reagan appoints Hannaford to the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency. According to Hannaford, the Governor was looking for someone “who was a strong Reagan supporter and a member of the Sierra Club.” Hannaford finds the experience “both rewarding and frustrating.” (Hannaford, *Expanding Political Horizons*, p. 26)

Hannaford serves as northern field coordinator for the special election campaign for Proposition 1, Reagan’s tax limit initiative. Michael Deaver heads the campaign. The measure is defeated on the November special election.

1974 During the final year of the Reagan gubernatorial administration, Hannaford becomes a part of the “Nofziger Group.” Named after Lyn Nofziger, it is an informal group of Reagan advisors. According to Hannaford, “the basic mission of the Nofziger Group was to monitor the national political picture” with an eye toward a possible Reagan presidential bid. (Hannaford, *The Reagans: A Political Portrait*, p. 32)

January Hannaford is asked to join the Reagan administration in its final year as Assistant to the Governor and Director of Public Affairs. Hannaford accepts the position, which supervises the Governor’s press office, speech research office, community relations unit and the office of information services (a clearing house for the 45 departments of California’s state government). Edwin Meese tells Hannaford, “If we had a motto for this year it would be Finish Strong.” (*Official Peter D. Hannaford Biography*; Hannaford, *The Reagans: A Political Portrait*, p. 28)

October Deaver and Hannaford present Reagan with a comprehensive plan for his activities after leaving office. The plan includes a daily radio show, a newspaper column and several speeches a month. Reagan agrees to the plan under the management of a new firm run by Deaver and Hannaford. (Kiron K. Skinner, Annelise Anderson, and Martin Anderson (eds.), *Reagan, In His Own Hand: The Writings of Ronald Reagan that Reveal His Revolutionary Vision for America*, New York: The Free Press, 2001, p. xiv)

1975

January Reagan’s gubernatorial term expires.

Hannaford and Deaver create the public relations firm of Deaver & Hannaford, Inc. From 1975 until the time Reagan becomes an official candidate for the GOP presidential nomination in November 1979, the firm serves as Reagan's business coordinator and public relations counsel. Reagan keeps an office in the Los Angeles home base of the firm. Among those joining the firm are Reagan's secretary, Helene von Damm, and gubernatorial aide and driver, Barney Barnett. (*The Washington Post*, 6/6/1980)

Hannaford, Michael Deaver, Edwin Meese, John Sears, Senator Paul Laxalt (R-NV) and Lyn Nofziger begin to hold regular meetings. The group meets at a Marriott Hotel at the Los Angeles airport and calls itself the "M Group." Its purpose is to explore the possibility of a Reagan presidential candidacy in 1976. John Sears emerges as the leader of the group. (Hannaford, *The Reagans: A Political Portrait*, p. 65)

Reagan begins his daily radio broadcasts and newspaper columns. (Skinner, et. al., *Reagan, In His Own Hand*, p. xv)

May In a memo written five months after the radio broadcasts begin, Hannaford tells Reagan that his radio show is being broadcast on 286 stations and his columns are being printed in 226 newspapers. (Skinner, et. al., *Reagan, In His Own Hand*, p. xv)

July The Citizens for Reagan Committee officially opens its doors in Washington, D.C. Senator Laxalt serves as its national chairman. John Sears is executive vice-chairman, assuming the position of campaign director. The Committee begins fundraising and direct mail efforts. Reagan still has not formally announced his candidacy. (Hannaford, *The Reagans: A Political Portrait*, p. 68)

October Reagan gives his permission for a late-November announcement of his candidacy for president. On the 17th, Hannaford and the remainder of the M Group meet in Washington to review campaign plans and assignments. Hannaford will be director of issues and research for Reagan's 1976 presidential campaign. (Hannaford, *The Reagans: A Political Portrait*, p. 75)

November On the 20th, Reagan formally announces his candidacy for the presidency. The speech is crafted largely by Hannaford. (Hannaford, *The Reagans: A Political Portrait*, p. 78)

1976

January Hannaford accompanies Reagan on his trips campaigning for the Republican nomination.

- February* President Ford wins the New Hampshire primary.
- March* Reagan wins the North Carolina primary.
- May* Reagan wins an overwhelming majority of delegates from primaries in Indiana, Georgia and Alabama, putting him in the lead in the race for national convention delegates for the first time. (Hannaford, *The Reagans: A Political Portrait*, p. 115)
- July* In an effort to halt President Ford's momentum, Reagan announces his selection of Senator Richard S. Schweiker (R-PA) as a running mate.
- August* President Ford wins the Republican nomination for president.
- 1977**
- February* Reagan's political action committee, Citizens for the Republic, officially opens its doors in Santa Monica, California. The Organization is headed by Nofziger. Hannaford is named a member of the steering committee. (Hannaford, *The Reagans: A Political Portrait*, p. 142)
- 1979** Following discussions about their roles in a future Reagan campaign, Deaver and Hannaford agree that Deaver would move into the campaign while Hannaford would stay with the firm. (Hannaford, *The Reagans: A Political Portrait*, p. 195)
- August* Lyn Nofziger resigns from the campaign following disputes with campaign chief John Sears. (*The New York Times*, 8/29/1979)
- November* On the 13th, Reagan formally announces himself as an official candidate for the GOP presidential nomination. The announcement is written largely by Hannaford
- On the 25th, Deaver calls Hannaford to tell him he has left the campaign. (Hannaford, *The Reagans: A Political Portrait*, p. 221)
- 1980**
- January* George Bush wins the Iowa caucuses.
- February* Hannaford joins the campaign in New Hampshire just before the Bush-Reagan debate. (Hannaford, *The Reagans: A Political Portrait*, p. 238)
- On the day of the New Hampshire primary, Reagan makes a number of senior staff changes in the campaign, including the replacement of campaign manager John Sears with William Casey. Following the

campaign shake-up and the departure of press secretary Jim Lake, Hannaford agrees to serve as interim press secretary. Commenting on the staff changes in the Reagan campaign, Hannaford says, “disagreements are possible among honest men.” Hannaford would go on to become a senior communications advisor. (*The New York Times*, 2/27/1980)

June The press reports that the government of the Republic of China on Taiwan was a client of Hannaford’s firm during the same period Reagan was a client. Hannaford, who signed the contract as board chairman of the public relations firm, says in an interview that Reagan had been asked in advance about the relationship with Taiwan and said that “it was fine with him.” Reagan, whose campaign statements have indicated support for increased ties with Taiwan, says he knew of the contract with Taiwan and had “no objection.” (*The Washington Post*, 6/6/1980)

Hannaford puts together a writing team and begins work on Reagan’s convention acceptance speech. (Hannaford, *The Reagans: A Political Portrait*, p. 264)

July Deaver returns to the campaign as deputy director and chief of staff.

Reagan accepts the nomination at the Republican National Convention in Detroit. The acceptance speech is crafted largely by Hannaford.

Given Deaver’s return to the campaign, Hannaford returns to Deaver & Hannaford, Inc. following the convention. Hannaford advises the Reagan campaign in a voluntary capacity through the election. (Hannaford, *The Reagans: A Political Portrait*, p. 286)

November Hannaford joins the Reagans at a Los Angeles hotel to watch the election returns. Ronald Reagan is elected President of the United States. (Hannaford, *The Reagans: A Political Portrait*, p. 9)

1981 Hannaford returns to his public relations and public affairs firm, now called The Hannaford Company.

Hannaford is named a member of the Board of Trustees of the White House Preservation Fund.

Reagan names Hannaford a member of Public Relations Advisory Commission of U.S. Information Agency.

1987-1988 Hannaford serves a consultant to the President’s commission on privatization.

PETER HANNAFORD SUGGESTED TOPICS

Prepared by Darby A. Morrisroe

Miller Center of Public Affairs, University of Virginia, 12/20/2002

Early Years with Reagan

- Describe the circumstances surrounding your entry into California politics.
- How did you come to serve in Governor Reagan's administration?
- Comment on your service with Governor Reagan's advisory groups: the Governor's Consumer Fraud Task Force and the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency.

Advising Governor Reagan

- What were your responsibilities as Assistant to the Governor and Director of Public Relations? With whom did you work most closely? What activities most occupied your time? What type of advice did Reagan seek from you and his staff?
- Comment on Reagan's management and leadership style as governor.
- Discuss your relationship with Michael Deaver and your decision to advise Governor Reagan after his term expired. Describe the functions served by Deaver & Hannaford for Reagan during the period between 1976 and 1980.
- Discuss the importance of Reagan's radio show and newspaper column to his future political efforts.

1976 Campaign

- How did Reagan come to the decision to run for president in 1976?
- Discuss the role of the Nofziger Group and the "M" Group in planning a Reagan presidential bid. Describe the formation of the 1976 campaign organization.
- Discuss your role and responsibilities as the Director of Research and Issues for the 1976 presidential campaign.
- How was the speechwriting process handled during the campaign? On what issues were you consulted most regularly?
- What were the major challenges you faced as a senior advisor during the 1976 campaign?

1980 Campaign and Transition

- Discuss your role and responsibilities in the 1980 presidential campaign. How did your role change from the 1976 campaign? How did the campaigns differ? Describe the speechwriting process during the campaign.
- What changes did you observe in candidate Reagan from the 1976 campaign to the 1980 presidential bid?
- What were the major challenges you faced as a senior advisor during the campaign?
- Discuss the campaign's personnel changes following the 1980 New Hampshire primary, including Deaver's departure from and return to the campaign. How did the changes affect the campaign's tone and strategy?
- Comment on the vice presidential selection process and the consideration of a possible "Reagan-Ford" ticket.
- Were you involved in the transition? Describe the process of recruitment and selection of the Cabinet and White House staff. What attributes did Reagan consider most important for his staff and Cabinet officers to possess? Did you consider joining the administration?

The Reagan Presidency in Retrospect.

- What were the strengths and weaknesses of the Reagan administration?
- Discuss your observations of Reagan's decision-making style and grasp of policy. How effective was Reagan as a public leader, a legislative leader, and a party leader?
- What features of Ronald Reagan and his presidency were missed or misunderstood by the press?
- How should the Reagan presidency be viewed by history?

TIMELINES

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