

President Ronald Reagan Oral History Project

Briefing Materials

Frederick J. Ryan, Jr.

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Prepared by Jeff Chidester, Research Assistant
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FREDERICK J. RYAN, JR. TIMELINE

Prepared by Jeffrey L. Chidester

Miller Center of Public Affairs, University of Virginia, 01/20/2004

1980

Frederick J. Ryan, Jr. earns his J.D. from the University of Southern California Law Center. (*Public Papers of the President: Ronald Reagan, 1981-1989*, 02/06/1985)

Ryan joins the Los Angeles law firm of Hill, Farrer and Burrill. (*Public Papers of the President*, 11/04/1987)

Ryan joins the Reagan-Bush Committee and volunteers to help with advance work for Reagan-Bush campaign events. (Peter Hannaford, ed., *Recollections of Reagan: A Portrait of Ronald Reagan*, New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1997, p. 152; *Public Papers of the President*, 02/06/1985)

1982

February

Ryan joins the Office of Presidential Appointments and Scheduling as a Deputy Director. He reports to Director William K. Sadleir. (Charles B. Brownson, ed, *1982-83 Federal Staff Directory*, Mount Vernon, VA: Congressional Staff Directory, Ltd., 1984, p. 11; *Public Papers of the President*, 02/06/1985)

1983

February

Ryan is appointed as Special Assistant to the President and Director of Presidential Appointments and Scheduling on the 25th. (*Public Papers of the President*, 02/25/1983)

1985

January

The White House announces that Chief of Staff James A. Baker, III and Treasury Secretary Donald T. Regan will swap positions in the Administration. (*Financial Times*, 01/09/1985)

February

Ryan is named Deputy Assistant to the President on the 6th. He will continue in his current position as Director of Presidential Appointments and Scheduling. In addition, he will also head the White House Office of Private Sector Initiatives, the office created to execute the recommendations of the President's Task Force on Private Sector Initiatives. The 44-member Task Force, aimed at encouraging private sector solutions to many of America's social and economic problems, was

created by President Reagan in December 1981. It released its final report in December 1982. (*Public Papers of the President*, 02/06/1985; *The New York Times*, 12/03/1981)

May Michael K. Deaver resigns as Deputy Chief of Staff. (*The Washington Post*, 05/20/1985)

1986

January Ryan is named one of twenty-six members of the President's Child Safety Partnership on the 15th. (*Public Papers of the President*, 01/15/1986)

September Eureka College holds a Salute to the President dinner in honor of Ronald Reagan, raising \$320,000 for a Eureka scholarship program in Reagan's name. Ryan, along with numerous other friends and former associates of the Reagans, attends the ceremony. (*The Washington Post*, 09/24/1986)

December Local groups in Palo Alto, California, and student and faculty members at Stanford University protest the proposed construction of the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library on Stanford's campus. The Ronald Reagan Presidential Foundation begins to search for alternate sites for the library. (*The New York Times*, 12/24/1986)

1987

February Chief of Staff Donald Regan resigns on the 27th. He is replaced by former Senate Majority Leader Howard Baker. (*The Washington Post*, 02/28/1987)

April The trustees of the Ronald Reagan Presidential Foundation decide against building the presidential library on the campus of Stanford University after months of pressure from local and university groups. (*The New York Times*, 04/24/1987)

November Ryan is named Assistant to the President on the 4th. He continues serving as Director of Presidential Scheduling and Appointments and as Director of the White House Office of Private Sector Initiatives. (*Public Papers of the President*, 11/04/1987)

It is reported that the Reagans have already put together a team to oversee their move back to California after the end of the second term. Ryan is selected to organize this operation. (*The Advertiser*, 11/14/1987)

1988

- February* Citizens of Simi Valley, Moorpark and Thousand Oaks, California protest the proposed construction of the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library in their area, arguing that the project will force the development of protected greenbelt lands. (*The New York Times*, 02/17/1988)
- November* President Reagan dedicates his presidential library in Simi Valley, California. (*The Washington Post*, 11/22/1988)

1989

- January* Ryan is appointed Chief of Staff of the Office of Ronald Reagan. (Hannaford, p. 152)
- Ryan is selected by Reagan to serve on the President's Board of Advisors on Private Sector Initiatives on the 19th. (*Public Papers of the President*, 01/19/1989)
- President and Mrs. Reagan leave the White House for the final time and board a plane to California. Ryan, along with several other Reagan aides, is on the plane. (Ronald Reagan, *An American Life*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 1990, p. 725)
- June* On the 14th, Britain's Queen Elizabeth II makes President Reagan an Honorary Knight Grand Cross of the Most Honorable Order of the Bath, one of the highest orders of chivalry. The President and Nancy Reagan also attend a private lunch with the Queen at Buckingham Palace. (*Financial Times*, 06/15/1989)
- July* President Reagan is thrown from a horse in Northern Mexico and suffers minor cuts and bruises on the 5th. (*Reuters News*, 07/05/1989)
- September* President Reagan is awarded the Business Council of the United Nations' Gold Medal at the 23rd Annual United Nations Ambassadors' Dinner for his outstanding contributions to the cause of world peace. Reagan, who could not attend the ceremony, thanks the Council by phone as his wife, Nancy, accepts the award on his behalf. (*PR Newswire*, 09/21/1989)
- October* Ryan and his wife are part of a group of about twenty associates joining Ronald and Nancy Reagan on their October 20-28 trip to Japan. During the trip, President Reagan gives two twenty-minute speeches for the Fujisankei Communications Group, who are funding the trip, and conducts

a two-day visit with the Japanese government in Tokyo. (*The Washington Post*, 10/07/1989)

1990

March

President Reagan testifies on videotape in the Iran-Contra trial of former Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs John Poindexter. Reagan says he authorized the arms sale to Iran and the organization of outside support to the Nicaraguan Contras, but he denies knowledge of diverting the funds from the arms sales to support the Contras. The President also has trouble remembering key people and events from his presidency. (*Reuters News*, 03/21/1990)

June

In a televised address one week before Bulgaria's first free elections in nearly fifty years, Reagan wishes the people of Bulgaria luck in moving toward a democratic government. (*Reuters News*, 06/03/1990)

Reagan writes a retrospective article on US-Soviet relations during his tenure in office and the changes that have come to the Soviet empire in the last two years. He urges the US to continue to work for democracy in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, but cautions against humiliating the Soviet government at this time. (*The Guardian*, 06/25/1990)

September

On the 10th, Ronald and Nancy Reagan arrive in Berlin to begin a ten-day trip through Europe. They spend the first few days in Germany, as Reagan meets with East German officials, West German Chancellor Helmut Kohl, and President Richard von Weizsaecker. They move on to Poland on the 14th, where Reagan addresses shipyard workers in Gdansk and meets with Solidarity leader Lech Walesa. The Reagans then travel to the Soviet Union for four days, where Reagan meets with Mikhail Gorbachev, and addresses the Supreme Soviet and students at Moscow State University. They end their trip in Italy where the President meets with Italian leaders and Pope John Paul II. (*Associated Press*, 08/30/1990)

1991

February

In a speech at Brigham Young University, Reagan says his Administration made a mistake in giving Iraq military support during the Iran-Iraq war. He says the US "had no way of knowing" how Iraq would turn out. (*The Salt Lake Tribune*, 02/16/1991)

April

Reagan releases a statement saying Kitty Kelley's new biography of his wife, *Nancy Reagan: The Unauthorized Biography*, contains "flagrant and absurd falsehoods" that "clearly exceed the bounds of decency." (*San Francisco Chronicle*, 04/19/1991)

July Edwin Meese, III, William P. Clark, and Martin Anderson, three longtime associates of President Reagan, are asked to leave the Board of Directors of the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library after their terms expire on November 4. Although the move is approved by Reagan, many Republicans privately say it is part of a “purge” by his wife, Nancy Reagan. This comes shortly after the resignation of Reagan’s former secretary, Kathy Osborne, and his public information officer, Bill Garber. This leaves only two former Reagan Administration officials on the twelve-member board: Ryan and former Energy Secretary John Herrington. (*The Washington Post*, 08/01/1991)

November The Ronald Reagan Presidential Library opens on the 4th. The opening ceremony is attended by former Presidents Nixon, Ford, Carter, Reagan, and President Bush, along with numerous celebrities and former Reagan Administration officials. (*The Washington Post*, 11/05/1991)

1992

August Reagan endorses President Bush during a speech at the 1992 Republican National Convention in Houston. (*The Guardian*, 08/18/1992)

November Reagan, German Chancellor Helmut Kohl, and former Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev are declared honorary residents of Berlin on the third anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall. Gorbachev and Kohl are present to accept their award, while Reagan is represented by Ryan. (*Houston Chronicle*, 11/10/1992)

President-elect Bill Clinton meets with Reagan in California. Ryan, along with senior Clinton adviser Bruce Lindsey, also attend the meeting. (*The Washington Post*, 11/28/1992)

1993

January President George Bush presents President Reagan with the Presidential Medal of Freedom, America’s highest civilian award. During the presentation, Bush calls Reagan “my mentor” and “a true American hero.” (*Reuters News*, 01/13/1993)

February President Reagan writes a public letter criticizing the Clinton Administration’s proposal to raise taxes. Reagan points to the economic expansion that occurred as a result of the tax cuts passed in 1981 and warns that tax increases could bring back the economic problems of the 1970s. (*The Guardian*, 02/20/1993)

1994

October Ryan is named Senior Vice President and Vice Chairman of Allbritton Communications Company, a Washington-based firm which operates broadcast and cable news properties. He begins his tenure in January, 1995. (*The Washington Times*, 10/25/1994)

November President Reagan writes his farewell letter to the public. Ryan sits in a nearby room with Mrs. Reagan as the letter is written. (Peggy Noonan, *When Character Was King: A Story of Ronald Reagan*, New York: Viking Penguin, 2001, p. 322)

1995

January Ryan resigns as Chief of Staff in the Office of Ronald Reagan and begins work at Allbritton Communications Company. (Hannaford, p. 152; *The Washington Times*, 10/25/1994)

May After visiting with President Reagan in Los Angeles, Ryan says that Reagan “had no problem at all recalling his presidency.” Ryan’s report runs contrary to the majority of reports currently in the press regarding Reagan’s health. (*The Washington Post*, 06/08/1995)

Ryan serves as editor of *Ronald Reagan: The Wisdom and Humor of the Great Communicator*, which is released by Harper Collins Publishers on the 30th. (*International Herald Tribune*, 05/20/1995)

1996

December President Reagan’s brother, Neil “Moon” Reagan, dies on the 12th at the age of 88. (*Associated Press*, 12/12/1996)

1998

February The US Senate votes, 76 to 22, to change the name of Washington National Airport to Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport. (*The Wall Street Journal*, 02/05/1998)

May On the 6th, President Clinton and Nancy Reagan dedicate a federal building in Ronald Reagan’s name. It is the nation’s most expensive federal building and second-largest behind the Pentagon. (*USA Today*, 05/06/1998)

1999

April

Ryan is elected Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Ronald Reagan Presidential Foundation. He is nominated by former First Lady Nancy Reagan, who says, "Fred has been a great friend in many ways over the years. Ronnie and I are delighted that he will be Chairman of this effort that is so important to us." (*PR Newswire*, 04/14/1999)

2000

August

Mrs. Reagan is honored at the 2000 Republican National Convention in Philadelphia. Ryan is one of many distinguished former Administration officials who take part in the ceremony. (*The Washington Times*, 08/02/2000)

2001

January

President Reagan falls at his home in Bel Air and breaks his hip. (*Associated Press*, 01/12/2001)

February

President Reagan celebrates his 90th birthday. In honor of the celebration, Harper Collins releases a new version of Ryan's edited book of Reagan quotes, *Ronald Reagan: The Great Communicator*. (*The Washington Times*, 02/05/2001)

August

Maureen Reagan, President Reagan's daughter from his first marriage with Jane Wyman, dies on the 12th after a five-year battle with skin cancer. (*The Grand Rapids Press*, 08/12/2001)

September

Following satirist Bill Maher's description of U.S. military actions against terrorists as "cowardly" in his television program "Politically Incorrect," WJLA-TV decides to pull the program off the air. As President and Chief Operating Officer of Allbritton Communications Company, the company which operates WJLA, Fred Ryan publicly supports his company's decision. In an editorial to *The Washington Post*, Ryan says Maher's comments are "beyond the bounds of taste and decency." (*The Washington Post*, 09/29/2001)

2002

February

Ryan meets with former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher about the Reagan Library. Dismissing rumors that Thatcher's health is in serious decline following a mild stroke, Ryan says she was "fighting fit" and as articulate and strong as she ever was. (*The Washington Times*, 02/05/2002)

July

President George W. Bush awards Nancy Reagan with the Presidential Medal of Freedom for her anti-drug campaign as First Lady. Ryan hosts a congratulatory dinner for Mrs. Reagan following the ceremony. (*The New York Times*, 09/29/2002)

2003

July

On the 12th, Nancy Reagan dedicates the *USS Ronald Reagan*. A large number of President Reagan's former associates, including Ryan, take part in the commissioning ceremony. (*The Washington Post*, 07/12/2003)

FREDERICK J. RYAN, JR. SUGGESTED TOPICS

Prepared by Jeffrey L. Chidester

Miller Center of Public Affairs, University of Virginia, 01/20/2004

Origins of Relationship with Reagan

- What were your impressions of Reagan as Governor of California?
- How did you first come to know Ronald Reagan?
- What was your first involvement in Reagan's political career?
- Discuss your involvement in the 1980 presidential campaign.

The Reagan Administration

- How did you come to join the Reagan Administration?
- What were your responsibilities as Director of Presidential Appointments and Scheduling?
- Evaluate the roles of Michael Deaver, James Baker, Donald Regan, and Howard Baker in setting the President's schedule. Comment on their differing styles. With whom did you work most closely? What role did Mrs. Reagan play in scheduling? What other Administration figures played a major role in scheduling? What were the priorities in managing President Reagan's time?
- How did you balance the Reagan's political and presidential schedule during the 1984 reelection campaign?
- Describe your responsibilities as Director of the White House Office of Private Sector Initiatives.
- What role, if any, did you play in the site selection for the Reagan Presidential Library? Comment on the controversy surrounding the proposed sites in Palo Alto and Simi Valley, California.

The Reagan Post-Presidency

- Describe your role in the Reagans' transition to the post-presidency.
- How did you come to be named Chief of Staff for the Office of Ronald Reagan? What were your responsibilities in this position?
- What most occupied Reagan's time once he left the White House?
- What role did Mrs. Reagan play in the post-presidency?
- Discuss some of Reagan's key meetings and events in the years following his presidency—i.e. trip to Japan, testimony in Poindexter trial, trip to Europe, Gorbachev's visit to the Reagan ranch, speech to the 1992 GOP convention, meeting with President-elect Clinton.
- How did Reagan react to major world developments in the years following his presidency—i.e. the fall of communism in Eastern Europe, free elections in Nicaragua, the Gulf War, the collapse of the Soviet Union, etc? How did he view his role in these events?
- How involved in national politics did Reagan remain once he left office? How did he feel about the Bush presidency? The Clinton presidency?
- When did you first begin to notice the effects of Alzheimer's Disease on Reagan? How did Mrs. Reagan respond when she realized he was suffering from the disease? When was the last time you saw President Reagan?

- Describe the Reagans' reaction to the release of Edmund Morris' *Dutch*. Are there accounts of their lives and his presidency that they felt were especially authentic?
- Discuss your appointment as Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Ronald Reagan Presidential Foundation in April 1999. What were the major responsibilities of this position?

Reagan Presidency in Retrospective

- Evaluate Reagan's managerial style.
- What were the strengths and weaknesses of the Reagan presidency?
- What features of the Reagan presidency were missed or misunderstood by the press? How should the Reagan presidency be viewed by history?
- How did Reagan want others to view his presidency?
- What was Reagan's own assessment of his legacy?

TIMELINES

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Chief of Staff, Office of Ronald Reagan

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