

# **President Ronald Reagan Oral History Project**

## **Briefing Materials**

**Howard H. Baker, Jr.**

**August 24, 2004**

**Prepared by Kurt A. Hohenstein, Research Assistant**

June 2004

**Biographical Information**

**Participants and  
Preliminary Schedule**

**Miller Center Oral History  
Policies and Procedures**

**Timelines**

**Selected Writings and Public Statements  
by Howard H. Baker, Jr.**

**Senate Majority Leader**

**Chief of Staff**

**Major Issues**

**Suggested Topics**

## ***Howard H. Baker, Jr. U.S. Ambassador to Japan***

Howard H. Baker, Jr. was sworn in as the 26<sup>th</sup> (13<sup>th</sup> post-WWII) U.S. Ambassador to Japan on June 26, 2001. He presented his credentials to Emperor Akihito on July 5, 2001.

Ambassador Baker served in the United States Senate from 1967 until January of 1985, and as President Reagan's Chief of Staff from February 1987 until July of 1988. He was born in Huntsville, Tennessee on November 15, 1925.

Following undergraduate studies at the University of the South and Tulane University, Ambassador Baker received his law degree from the University of Tennessee. He served three years in the U.S. Navy during WWII and subsequently worked in the law firm founded by his grandfather, now the largest in Tennessee.

In 1966, Ambassador Baker became the first Republican ever popularly elected to the U.S. Senate from Tennessee, and he won re-election by wide margins in 1972 and 1978. (Ambassador Baker's father and mother both served in the U.S. House of Representatives. His father-in-law, the late Everett Dirksen, was Republican Leader of the U.S. Senate from 1959-1969).

Ambassador Baker first won national recognition in 1973 as the Vice Chairman of the Senate Watergate Committee. He was the keynote speaker at the Republican National Convention in 1976, and was a candidate for the Republican presidential nomination in 1980. He concluded his Senate career by serving two terms as Minority Leader (1977-1981) and two terms as Majority Leader (1981-1985).

Ambassador Baker was a delegate to the United Nations in 1976, and served on the President's Foreign Intelligence Board from 1985 to 1987 and from 1988 to 1990. He is a member of the Council on Foreign Relations and the Washington Institute of Foreign Affairs. He serves on the boards of the Forum of International Policy and is an International Councillor for The Center for Strategic and International Studies.

He has received many awards including the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the nation's highest civilian award, in 1984 and the 1982 Jefferson Award for Greatest Public Service Performed by an Elected or Appointed Official. A noted photographer, Ambassador Baker received The American Society of Photographer's International Award in 1993, and was elected into the Photo Marketing Association's Hall of Fame in 1994. He has received numerous honorary degrees from educational institutions including Yale, Dartmouth, Georgetown, Bradley, Pepperdine, and Centre College.

Ambassador Baker has published four books, *No Margin for Error* in 1980, *Howard Baker's Washington* in 1982, *Big South Fork Country* in 1993 and *Scott's Gulf* in 2000.

Ambassador Baker, a widower, married Nancy Landon Kassebaum, former United States Senator (R) from Kansas, on December 7, 1996. He and his late wife, Joy Dirksen Baker, have two children, Cynthia Baker and Darek Dirksen Baker, and four grandchildren.

PRESIDENTIAL ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

RONALD REAGAN ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

**HOWARD H. BAKER, JR. INTERVIEW**

August 24, 2004

Washington, D.C.

List of Participants

*University of Virginia*

**Stephen F. Knott**, Associate Professor and Research Fellow at the Miller Center of Public Affairs. Professor Knott oversees the Ronald Reagan Oral History Project. He has taught at the United States Air Force Academy. Professor Knott has written numerous articles and is the author of *Secret and Sanctioned: Covert Operations and the American Presidency* and *Alexander Hamilton and the Persistence of Myth*.

**Jeff Chidester**, Project Assistant for the Miller Center's Presidential Oral History Program. Mr. Chidester received his B.A. in Political Science from Grove City College (PA) and his M.A. in International History from the London School of Economics. He has published several articles and is currently writing on Reagan and the Soviet Media.

*Notetaker*

**Kurt A. Hohenstein** is a Graduate Research Assistant and a Ph.D. student in the University of Virginia's Corcoran Department of History.

PRESIDENTIAL ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM  
RONALD REAGAN ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

**HOWARD H. BAKER, JR. INTERVIEW**

Washington, D.C.

August 24, 2004

*Interview Schedule*

**Location of interview:**      **Howard Baker's Office**  
                                 **Baker, Donelson, Bearman & Caldwell**  
                                 **801 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W. Suite 800**  
                                 **Washington, D.C. 20004**

**Tuesday, August 24, 2004**

1:30 PM – 3:30 PM      Interview Session

## HOWARD H. BAKER, JR. TIMELINE

*Prepared by Kurt A. Hohenstein*

*Miller Center of Public Affairs, University of Virginia, 8/18/2003*

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**1966** Howard H. Baker, Jr., is elected the first Republican United States Senator from Tennessee since the Civil War.

**1977** Baker is elected Republican Minority Leader of the U.S. Senate.

**1980** Ronald Wilson Reagan is elected President.

**1981**

*January* Baker is elected Majority Leader as Republicans win a 53-47 advantage in the Senate. (*The Washington Post*, 1/6/1981)

Reagan is inaugurated as the fortieth President of the United States. Iran releases the 52 American hostages held since November 1979. (*The Washington Post*, 1/21/1981)

*February* In a speech to Congress, Reagan proposes the biggest tax cuts in history, along with domestic spending cuts and a buildup of military spending. Baker contends with skeptical Republican and Democratic senators as he begins to push the economic package forward. (*The Washington Post*, 2/18/1981)

In a nationally televised address on the 5<sup>th</sup>, Reagan outlines his proposed economic plan. The plan calls for tax cuts and reductions in spending. Specifically, Reagan asks for a ten percent reduction across the board in personal income taxes for each of the next three years. The President also announces sweeping budget cuts and a hiring freeze for federal employees. (*Public Papers of the President: Ronald Reagan, 1981-1988*)

*March* Reagan sends his fiscal year 1982 budget proposal to Congress. It calls for \$695.3 billion in spending and projects a \$45 billion deficit for fiscal year 1982. (*The Washington Post*, 3/9/1981)

John W. Hinkley, Jr., attempts to assassinate Reagan outside the Washington Hilton. Reagan is gravely injured, but returns to the White House less than two weeks later. (*The Washington Post*, 3/31/1981)

Still recovering in the hospital from the assassination attempt, Reagan signs his first bill into law on the 31<sup>st</sup>. The measure eliminates an increase in dairy price supports.

*April* Administration officials cut off aid to Nicaragua due to that government's support of leftist rebels in El Salvador. Reagan proposes aiding pro-democracy forces in El Salvador through political means. (*The Washington Post*, 4/2/1981)

Congress considers the President's economic plan. On the 2<sup>nd</sup>, the Senate approves a \$36.4 billion budget reconciliation package, 88-10. The House Budget Committee rejects the President's budget plan, instead approving a measure that includes more defense cuts and less tax cuts than the President proposed. Reagan reportedly rules out compromise on his legislative economic package during a meeting with senior advisors on the 13<sup>th</sup>. (*Reagan's First Year*, Congressional Quarterly Inc.: Washington, D.C., 1982, pp. 99-100)

On the 21<sup>st</sup>, the White House announces its decision to sell Saudi Arabia an arms package worth several billion dollars. The deal would include the sale of five Airborne Warning and Control System (AWACS) aircraft.

In a nationally televised address to a joint session of Congress on the 28<sup>th</sup>, Reagan pushes his economic program. Reagan criticizes the defense cuts and higher taxes in the alternative House Budget Committee budget proposal. (*Reagan's First Year*, p. 101)

*May* On the 7<sup>th</sup>, the House approves, 270-154, the Administration-supported Gramm-Latta version of the first concurrent resolution of the fiscal 1982 budget. The House votes to substitute the Gramm-Latta amendment for the House Budget Committee bill. On the 12<sup>th</sup>, the Senate approves the Administration-supported first concurrent resolution of the fiscal 1982 budget by a vote of 78-20. (*Reagan's First Year*, 101)

*June* Reagan offers Congress an alternative tax plan. The revised plan proposes \$37.4 billion in tax cuts for 1982, a lessening of the first rate reduction and the addition of savings incentives and "marriage penalty" relief. (*1981 Congressional Quarterly Almanac*, p. 91)

In a meeting with conservative Democrats, Reagan says he would not campaign against Democrats who support his economic program. "I could not oppose someone who supported my principles. I could not look myself in the mirror if I campaigned against you," says Reagan. (*Reagan's First Year*, p. 102)

In a letter to Reagan on the 18<sup>th</sup>, Supreme Court Justice Potter Stewart announces his decision to resign from the Court effective July 3<sup>rd</sup>.

In a letter to Reagan expressing concern about the announced sale of AWACS to Saudi Arabia, 54 senators and 224 representatives urge the President to delay and reconsider the sale. (*Reagan's First Year*, p. 103)

- July* On the 7<sup>th</sup>, Reagan nominates Arizona State Appeals Court Judge Sandra Day O'Connor to fill the Supreme Court seat vacated by Justice Potter Stewart.
- Republican leaders announce plans for a \$500,000 national radio campaign calling for passage of Reagan's tax cut proposals. (*Reagan's First Year*, p. 103)
- Modified tax cuts pass the House (323-107) and the Senate (89-11). Baker succeeds in keeping conservatives who want larger tax cuts and moderates who want smaller spending cuts together in a coalition to support the President's proposals. (*The Washington Post*, 7/30/1981)
- August* In a letter dated August 5, Reagan states his intention to go ahead with the sale of military equipment to Saudi Arabia, including the AWACS aircraft. (*Reagan's First Year*, p. 104)
- Reagan signs the tax cut bill on the 13<sup>th</sup>.
- September* The Senate confirms the nomination of Sandra Day O'Connor to become the first female Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court. (*The Washington Post*, 9/2/1981)
- In a nationally televised address on economic recovery, Reagan calls for an across-the-board twelve percent reduction in federal spending for fiscal 1982 and a \$13 billion cut in defense spending over the next three years. (*Reagan's First Year*, pp. 105-106)
- October* Baker announces that he favors keeping the lid on proposed tax increases in 1982. The ballooning federal deficit of between \$80-100 billion puts pressure on the Administration to find ways to cut spending in order to reduce interest rates. Baker warns that further "draconian measures" of spending cuts and tax increases may be necessary to address the budget deficit. (*The Washington Post*, 10/26/1981)
- November* Reagan vetoes the continuing budget resolution passed by Congress to keep the government operating. The government shuts down when Congress proposes an additional \$2 billion cut in spending instead of the \$8 billion cut Reagan is seeking. Baker supports the veto, and Congress passes a short extension the next day, giving Reagan a symbolic victory. (*The Washington Post*, 11/24/1981)
- December* The 97<sup>th</sup> Congress adjourns and Baker says that "Congress has made more fundamental changes in the public policy of this nation than any Congress in decades." He cites the \$750 billion tax cuts over five years, and significant increases in military spending along with huge decreases in domestic social spending as evidence of the historic shift. (*The Washington Post*, 12/17/1981)



**1982**

- January* Reagan proposes his “New Federalism” agenda in the State of the Union speech, calling for a reduction in the federal role in domestic programs and increasing the role of the states. (*The Washington Post*, 1/27/1982)
- February* Reagan supports legislation intended to reform the Clean Air Act of 1970, relaxing rules for industry. The measure, which has bipartisan support from representatives from automobile manufacturing state in the House, faces a tough fight in the Senate. (*The New York Times*, 2/11/1982)
- March* Baker and House Speaker Thomas P. “Tip” O’Neill (D-MA) attempt to work out a budget compromise between Reagan and Congress that reduces the growing deficits. Baker wants a deal, but refuses to work a compromise with Democrats without Reagan’s agreement. (*The Washington Post*, 3/21/1982)
- Congressional Republicans squabble over the budget, abortion, and busing as Baker works to promote Reagan’s agenda. Reagan credits Baker for the successful 1981 legislative agenda, but maintains that the Senate will independently push for a budget he can support although it may conflict with Reagan’s plan. (*The New York Times*, 3/28/1982)
- April* Reagan’s budget faces problems in Congress as unemployment figures show that the recession is worsening. White House aides meet with top Republicans and Democrats in both houses to work out a compromise. (*The Washington Post*, 4/2/1982)
- May* Unemployment figures increase to 9.4 percent as face-to-face budget bargaining sessions between O’Neill, Reagan and Baker break down. Spending cuts and delaying of the 1982 tax cuts appear as viable options to reduce the growing deficit. (*The Washington Post*, 5/5/1982)
- August* The Senate passes, 69-31, a constitutional amendment requiring a balanced budget, but Baker worries that restrictive language making it more difficult to borrow money or raise the debt ceiling will likely doom the proposal in the House. (*The New York Times*, 8/5/1982)
- Congress passes budget reconciliation and tax bills that address the growing deficit and economic downturn. The bills are largely the work of Senate Finance Committee Chairman Robert Dole (R-KS), Budget Committee Chairman Pete Domenici (R-NM), and Baker, who bypassed Administration proposals and worked out their own plan. (*The Washington Post*, 8/22/1982)

- September* Despite defeat of a legislative proposal to severely restrict the ability of women to obtain abortions, anti-abortion groups give the Administration high marks. (*The New York Times*, 9/17/1982)
- October* Reagan signs legislation into law that will provide job training for up to one million unemployed workers annually. The stop-gap spending resolution calls for \$2.4 billion in Comprehensive Education and Training Act (CETA) funding for fiscal year 1983. (*The Washington Post*, 11/27/1982)
- November* Congressional opposition to deployment of MX missiles leads the Administration to reverse its decision to deploy Minuteman III missiles as originally planned. Senator Jesse Helms (R-NC) calls on the Administration to postpone the ABM treaty review, but the Administration refuses to delay the arms talks scheduled to occur in Geneva. (*The Washington Post*, 11/27/1982)
- As Congress returns to session, Democrats propose a jobs bill that Baker agrees will gain bipartisan support. Republicans, smarting from a loss of 26 House seats, agree to consider a highway jobs bill that will cost nearly \$5 billion. (*The New York Times*, 11/30/1982)
- December* Despite Reagan's assertion that the MX missile program is essential to the nation's defense, the House votes 245-176 against funding MX production. Senate supporters agree that reversing the House vote will be very difficult as Baker announces a compromise with Reagan that permits an MX study and a vote on funding by April 1983. (*The Washington Post*, 12/15/1982)
- Internal division over the decision to sign the stop-gap spending measure involves disagreement over the congressional deletion of funds the Administration requested for Pershing II missile testing and MX missile development. Reagan decides not to shutdown the government with a veto. (*The Washington Post*, 12/21/1982)

## 1983

- January* Administration officials and leaders of the President's Social Security Advisory Commission announce they have reached agreement on proposals designed to stabilize the system. The compromise, which must pass both houses, includes adding federal workers to the social security system, increasing tax rates, and taxing social security benefits for people with incomes of \$20,000 or more. (*The Washington Post*, 1/12/1983)
- Reagan calls for a freeze in domestic spending and continued increases in military spending in the State of the Union address. Inflation is down to 3.9 percent from 8.9 percent a year earlier, and unemployment has decreased slightly to 10.4 percent, signaling an end to the recession. (*The Washington Post*, 1/27/1983)

Budget committees in Congress question military spending on the MX missile, the M-1 tank, and a new attack helicopter proposed in Reagan's fiscal 1984 budget. Budget Chairman Pete Domenici (R-NM) challenges the Administration to justify its request of \$35 billion more than fiscal 1983 spending, given the growing budget deficit. (*The New York Times*, 1/30/1983)

*March* Reagan, in a nationally televised address, calls for the development of the Strategic Defense Initiative, a space-based antiballistic missile system. (*The Washington Post*, 3/24/1983)

*April* The Senate Budget Committee rejects the ten percent increase in defense spending the Administration had requested. Administration aides disagree over how to respond, as national security advisor William P. Clark and Defense Secretary Casper W. Weinberger insist that no compromise be made. Other aides insist that flexibility is warranted. (*The New York Times*, 4/10/1983)

The House Foreign Affairs Committee rejected the Administration's request for an additional appropriation of \$50 million for El Salvador. House Democrats voted against the request, calling on Reagan to support a political, not a military, solution. (*The New York Times*, 4/20/1983)

Reagan signs the social security reforms into law. The reforms, which increase the tax rates and income levels on which the tax is imposed, are credited as a bipartisan effort that garners Reagan renewed support in Congress. (*The Washington Post*, 4/21/1983)

*May* U.S. and Soviet officials begin negotiations on a new long-term grain sales agreement. Reagan calls for the reopening of talks, and Baker applauds the effort, calling it "the appropriate time to renew efforts to renew dependable trade relations with the Soviet Union." (*The Washington Post*, 5/18/1983)

*July* In his weekly radio address, Reagan announces the Administration will soon propose fair housing legislation with "real teeth." Civil rights groups, who have accused the Administration of lax civil rights enforcement, react with skepticism. (*The New York Times*, 7/20/1983)

*August* Congress rejects Reagan's proposal to provide covert aid to anti-government rebels in Nicaragua. (*The New York Times*, 8/1/1983)

*September* Soviet military aircraft shoots down civilian Korean Airlines flight 007 killing all passengers on board. Reagan cites the act as evidence of the evil nature of the Soviet empire. (*The New York Times*, 9/4/1983)

The GNP grows at a rate of 9.7 percent in the second quarter, providing more evidence of a recovering economy. The growth boosts Reagan's chances of

getting congressional support for his tax and budget proposals. (*The Washington Post*, 9/27/1983)

Reagan authorizes marines deployed in Beirut, Lebanon to call in air strikes against enemy forces. Administration officials meet with congressional leaders over the invocation of the War Powers resolution. (*The Washington Post*, 9/13/1983)

*October* A truck bomb explodes at U.S. Marine headquarters in Beirut, Lebanon, killing 241 Americans. The incident increases calls by Congress for a new look at Reagan's foreign policy in the Middle East. (*The New York Times*, 10/23/1983)

U.S. military forces invade Grenada to rescue and protect American medical students living on the Caribbean island. Administration officials cite the recent coup by Marxist military officials against the civilian government as cause for the invasion. (*The New York Times*, 10/25/1983)

*December* U.S.-Soviet arms control talks end in Geneva without any new date set for further talks. (*The Washington Post*, 12/9/1983)

## **1984**

*January* In his State of the Union speech, Reagan proposes a bipartisan approach to close certain tax loopholes and cut domestic spending in order to reduce the federal deficit. He also advocates keeping troops deployed in Lebanon as an essential component of U.S. Middle-East policy. (*The New York Times*, 1/26/1984)

*February* U.S. troops withdraw from Lebanon. Reagan calls the withdrawal "not an end to U.S. involvement" but says that the peacekeeping forces are no longer essential to the mission. (*The Washington Post*, 3/31/1984)

*March* Baker complains that the Export Administration Act has become "absolutely bejeweled with amendments" unrelated to the Act, and worries that Senate action prohibiting the power of the President to impose embargos on exports of farm products will doom the bill. (*The Washington Post*, 3/1/1984)

Reagan agrees with Senate Republicans to reduce the Administration request for increased military spending by \$57 billion over three years as part of a fiscal package to reduce the federal deficit by \$150 million by 1987. The agreement signals renewed efforts by Senate Republicans to propose and pass a budget that cuts the budget deficit, despite opposition from Reagan over the amount of military spending. (*The New York Times*, 3/16/1984)

*May* Saudi Arabia receives the first shipment of 400 Stinger missiles from the U.S. The Senate had earlier approved the sale, after a tough fight over expanding military sales to the Middle East ally. (*The Washington Post*, 5/29/1984)

*June* Administration officials announce they will find other ways to aid the “Contras” fighting the Marxist government of Nicaragua after Congress refuses to fund any further CIA aid for them. Baker says that despite the 81-1 Senate vote to delete the funding, he is confident other ways will be found to fund the effort. (*The Washington Post*, 6/27/1984)

Baker calls on Reagan to renew arms talks with the Soviet Union. Baker told reporters that U.S.-Soviet relations had become so tense, that a change in strategy was needed. “When you have changed circumstances,” Baker says, “you ought to change your strategy.” (*The New York Times*, 6/13/1984)

*September* Reagan calls the compromise on MX funding a victory that keeps the program alive. Congress agrees to increase defense spending nearly five percent, below the President’s request of a 7.8 percent increase, but above the three percent that Speaker Tip O’Neill had wanted. Baker calls the MX deal a win for supporters, although no missiles will be built without further congressional authorization. (*The Washington Post*, 9/21/1984)

*November* Reagan and Vice President Bush are re-elected in a landslide. Baker, who did not seek re-election to the Senate, serves his last days as Majority Leader as Senator Dole (R-KS) is chosen as his successor. (*The Washington Post*, 11/6/1984, 11/20/1984)

Administration officials announce that the U.S. and Soviets will engage in trade talks early in 1985. Reagan calls talks scheduled for January part of “a more constructive relationship with the Soviet Union.” (*The New York Times*, 11/7/1984)

The Treasury Department offers a sweeping revision of the U.S. tax code. Reagan, who has called for tax simplification, offers a tentative response to the plan and congressional leaders express doubt that the sweeping plan could be enacted without major changes. (*The New York Times*, 11/28/1984)

## **1985**

*January* Baker leaves the Senate after serving sixteen years. He will return to practice law for Vinson and Elkins, a Texas law firm with offices in Washington, D.C. He will also practice law for a firm in Tennessee and serve on a number of corporate boards. (*The New York Times*, 12/11/1984)

**1987**

*February* The Tower Commission, headed by former Senator John Tower (R-TX), releases a report on the Iran-Contra affair that is critical of the Administration, but finds no criminal wrongdoing by Administration officials. (*The Washington Post*, 2/27/1987)

Howard Baker, Jr. replaces Donald Regan as Chief of Staff. Baker's appointment is broadly welcomed by members of Congress. Baker, who was in the middle of deciding to run for the Republican nomination for President, says "when the President asks you to do something, it's hard to say no." (*The New York Times*, 2/28/1987)

*March* Baker begins to assert control over the handling of the Iran-Contra scandal. Former members of his Senate staff Thomas C. Griscom and James M. Cannon, along with Kenneth M. Duberstein, work with Baker to address the continuing controversy by responding quickly and openly to press questions, and they put the Administration back on track by proposing a renewed Administration legislative agenda. (*The New York Times*, 3/2/1987)

House Democratic leaders concede that they do not have the votes to cut off \$40 million of funding for the Nicaraguan Contras. Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan (D-NY) says that the appointment of Baker "changed the equation" insuring that the Senate would not block the final installment of aid for this year. (*The Washington Post*, 3/4/1987)

In a nationally televised address to the nation, Reagan accepts responsibility for the Iran-Contra actions, but admits no criminal wrongdoing. Even critics of the President admit that the appointment of Baker and of William Webster as the Director of Central Intelligence have done much to restore confidence in the Administration. (*States News Service*, 3/4/1987)

Baker adopts a conciliatory approach with the Democratic-controlled Congress, restoring arms control and deficit reduction as Reagan's principal agenda items for his final two years in office. (*The Washington Post*, 3/15/1987)

*April* Reagan vetoes the \$87.5 billion highway and mass transit bill, calling it "budget-busting pork-barrel politics," but both houses override the veto despite personal appeals from Reagan. (*The Washington Post*, 4/2/1987, 4/10/1987)

*May* Congressional hearings over the Iran-Contra matter commence. (*The Washington Post*, 5/5/1987)

The U.S. warship *Stark* is hit by an Iraqi missile while on patrol in the Persian Gulf, killing 37 sailors. Administration officials oppose invoking the War Powers

Resolution, arguing that hostilities are not “imminent or likely.” (*The Washington Post*, 5/21/1987)

*June* Baker warns Iran that the U.S. would view the deployment of land-based missiles in the Persian Gulf region that threaten shipping as a “hostile act” that could bring retaliation. Baker adds that the U.S. will “do whatever we need to do” to protect transit in the Gulf. (*The New York Times*, 6/8/1987)

*July* Reagan nominates Judge Robert Bork to replace retiring Supreme Court Justice Lewis F. Powell, Jr. Observers claim that an Administration battle between conservatives and moderates over the choice will likely result in a contentious hearing process. (*The New York Times*, 7/3/1987)

Baker asserts that U.S. warships could be withdrawn from the Persian Gulf in response to a Soviet pullout from the region, but White House and State Department officials contend that there would be no complete withdrawal, only a reduction in forces. Baker’s statement comes at the same time U.S. and Soviet diplomats meet in Geneva on the Iran-Iraq war, now in its seventh year. (*The New York Times*, 7/7/1987)

Testifying before the congressional committee examining the Iran-Contra affair, Rear Admiral John M. Poindexter says that he never told Reagan of the plan to divert the profits from the Iran arms sales to the Nicaraguan Contras. Baker says that Reagan will instruct senior aides to begin close consultations with congressional intelligence committee leaders to insure that Congress is kept informed of covert operations. (*The New York Times*, 7/16/1987)

Reagan appoints members to the newly created federal AIDS commission. The commission is the first official government act addressing the growing concern with the AIDS crisis in the U.S. (*The Washington Post*, 7/25/1987)

*August* Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua sign a tentative peace accord as Administration officials signal a shift to diplomatic measures instead of direct military confrontation to address the Soviet threat in Central America. Some conservatives blame Baker for the pragmatic policy, arguing that it concedes too much to Democrats. (*The Washington Post*, 8/7/1987)

*September* Reagan denounces, but signs, a \$23 billion deficit-reduction bill. The measure slows the rate of growth in defense spending, and is seen as a victory for Baker who argues for a more conciliatory approach with Congress. (*The Washington Post*, 9/30/1987)

*October* The stock market crashes, losing 508 points in the Dow Jones average, the worst single-day decline in the exchange’s history. (*The Washington Post*, 10/20/1987)

The Senate rejects Robert Bork's Supreme Court nomination. The Administration nominates Judge Douglas H. Ginsburg to fill Justice Powell's vacant seat. Baker warns that Ginsburg, seen as the choice of conservatives in the Administration led by Attorney General Edwin Meese, faces a tough confirmation fight. (*The New York Times*, 10/23/1987, 10/31/1987)

Ginsburg asks the White House to withdraw his nomination after news accounts disclose that he smoked marijuana while in college.

*November* Judge Anthony M. Kennedy is nominated to fill the vacant seat on the Supreme Court. The announcement is seen by critics as an attempt to gain bipartisan support for the nominee after the failures of the Bork and Ginsburg nominations. (*The Washington Post*, 11/11/1987)

The special congressional investigating committee issues its Iran-Contra report, declaring that Reagan must assume "ultimate responsibility" for the affair. (*The Washington Post*, 11/18/1987)

*December* Reagan and Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev sign the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Force (INF) treaty reducing the number of missiles each nation may possess. At a ceremony in Washington, D.C., Reagan jokes that his motto has become "trust, but verify." (*The Washington Post*, 12/9/1987)

## 1988

*January* Reagan welcomes Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak to Washington, D.C. for talks about resolving Mideast problems over the Israeli-Palestinian land conflict and the continuing Iran-Iraq war. Baker refuses to characterize the Administration's response to Mubarak's nine-point peace plan. (*The Washington Post*, 1/19/1988)

*February* The House rejects, 219-211, an aid package to the Contras that includes \$3.6 million of lethal aid. Reagan decries the vote and argues that the humanitarian aid substitute is insufficient to resist Soviet aggression in the region. (*The Washington Post*, 2/3/1988)

*April* Reagan balks at signing a bipartisan trade bill that relaxes export regulations and controls. The bill contains a provision requiring major employers to notify employees 60 days before plants are closed that Reagan has promised to veto. Baker meets with key lawmakers to work out a compromise. (*The Washington Post*, 4/13/1988)

Reagan vetoes the trade bill, citing the plant closing provision as the main obstacle to presenting a bill he would sign. Baker works with Congress as Democrats work to override the veto. In July, Republicans facing election year pressure switch their votes and favor plant closing notification legislation,



handing Reagan a legislative defeat less than a month after the Senate refused to override the trade bill veto. (*The Washington Post*, 5/3/1988, 7/7/1988)

*May*

Administration officials continue to discuss a U.S. policy toward Panama designed to encourage Panamanian military strongman Manuel Noriega to surrender power. Baker resists internal Administration pressure to use military force, advocating the use of force only in the event of a threat to the Panama Canal. (*The Washington Post*, 5/22/1988)

The U.S. Senate ratifies the INF treaty 93-5. (*The Washington Post*, 5/28/1988)

Reagan and Gorbachev meet in a final summit in Moscow. Baker attends the summit and lauds the new atmosphere of cooperation and dialogue between the former Cold War foes. (*The Washington Post*, 5/31/1988)

*June*

Baker announces his resignation as Chief of Staff, citing the illness of his wife Joy, and his stepmother, Irene. Baker, who will leave the staff on July 1 receives warm praise from former Senate colleagues. Senator Dole says Baker has done “a superb job” and Senate Majority Leader Robert C. Byrd (D-WV) credits Baker with doing much to “calm and quiet and make things more serene” on the rough seas of the White House during the height of the Iran-Contra scandal. (*The Washington Post*, 6/15/1988)

## TIMELINES

- Howard H. Baker, Jr. Timeline, prepared by Kurt A. Hohenstein, Miller Center of Public Affairs, University of Virginia, 8/18/2003.
- The Chronology of the Reagan Presidency, *Ronald Reagan Presidential Library*, <<http://www.reagan.utexas.edu/resources/handout/Sigdates.htm>> (6/25/2002).

**SELECTED WRITINGS AND PUBLIC STATEMENTS BY HOWARD H. BAKER, JR.**

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- Howard H. Baker, Jr., “Outlook Interview; It Would Take a Lot of Effort to Really Be a Bad President,” *The Washington Post*, 1/27/1985.
- “Candidate & the Press: Iran-Contra Scandal; Howard Baker,” *National Public Radio*, 5/4/1987.
- James Reston, “Washington Talk: Q & A: Howard H. Baker, Jr.; ‘We’re Becoming a Bland Society’,” *The New York Times*, 5/12/1987.
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- Howard Baker, “The Reagan White House,” in *Leadership in the Reagan Presidency, Part II*, Kenneth W. Thompson, ed. (New York: The University Press of America, 1993) pp. 3-20.
- Senate Leader’s Lecture Series, 7/14/1998, <[http://www.senate.gov/artandhistory/history/common/Generic/Leaders\\_Lecture\\_Series\\_Baker.htm](http://www.senate.gov/artandhistory/history/common/Generic/Leaders_Lecture_Series_Baker.htm)> (8/4/2003).
- Howard H. Baker, Jr., 113<sup>th</sup> Landon Lecture, Kansas State University, 3/9/1999, <<http://www.mediarelations.ksu.edu/WEB/News/NewsReleases/bakertext/html>> (8/18/2003).

## SENATE MAJORITY LEADER

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## **HOWARD H. BAKER, JR. SUGGESTED TOPICS**

*Prepared by Kurt A. Hohenstein*

*Miller Center of Public Affairs, University of Virginia, 9/6/2003*

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### ***Majority Leader and the Reagan Agenda***

- Describe your relationship with Reagan before 1981. Did you play a role in the election or the transition?
- Discuss your working relationship with the Administration. Discuss specific instances of legislative collaboration with the Office of Legislative Affairs. With whom did you work most closely? Discuss the relationship between White House staff and your leadership staff.
- Describe the role and engagement of President Reagan in shaping and lobbying for his legislative agenda in 1981.
- What were the major legislative successes during the first year of the Reagan Administration? What strategy or tactics did you use to achieve the legislative successes?
- Discuss Reagan's relationship with members of Congress. Describe any political divisions that played a role in legislative matters.
- Discuss the nature of legislative policymaking with a divided Congress. Did that affect legislative and political strategy or tactics during those years?
- Compare Reagan's leadership and legislative style to other presidents you encountered during your long service in the Senate.
- Discuss your decision to leave the Senate in 1985.

### ***Chief of Staff: February 1987-June 1988***

- Why did you decide to return to public service as Reagan's Chief of Staff?
- Can you cast any light on the reasons Reagan selected you as Chief of Staff? What were the circumstances you found on beginning your service as Chief of Staff? What was your job, as you saw it, upon becoming Chief of Staff? What steps did you take to accomplish those duties?
- Talk about what steps you took to address any problems resulting from the Iran-Contra scandal.
- What was the morale and attitude of the White House staff when you became Chief of Staff? Discuss what you did to overcome the problems associated with the Iran-Contra crisis.
- What were your duties as Chief of Staff? With whom in the Administration did you work most closely? What activities most occupied your time?
- How was the Chief of Staff office organized? Discuss your relationships with your deputies and staff. Describe their duties and responsibilities.
- Discuss your relationship as Chief of Staff with Congress. Compare the Administration's approach to legislative matters from 1981-1984 to 1987-1988.
- How would you characterize your working relationship with other cabinet members? On what issues and with which cabinets members did you work?
- What were the major domestic legislative and foreign policy issues you faced while serving as Chief of Staff?

- Talk about the confirmation battles over Supreme Court nominees Bork and Ginsburg. Describe the judicial selection process employed by the Administration. Discuss the nomination and confirmation process.
- Discuss your decision to leave the Administration in June, 1988.

***The Reagan Presidency in Retrospect***

- What were the strengths and weaknesses of the Reagan Administration?
- Discuss Reagan's decision-making and management style. How did his style affect his legislative agenda?
- Did the Reagan legislative agenda change from 1981-1988? What continuities or changes occurred during those years? How did the domestic and foreign policy agendas relate to each other?
- How effective was Reagan as a public leader, a legislative leader, a military leader, and a party leader?
- What features of Reagan and his presidency were overlooked or misunderstood by the press?
- How should the Reagan presidency be viewed in history?