

Transcript: Tom Reed interviewed by Lou Cannon, May 23, 2019

Lou Cannon: This is another in a series of interviews by Open California of people who played significant roles in the political career of Ronald Reagan. Open California is funded by the California State Library. And today we're sitting down with Thomas C. Reed, whose own career is varied and interesting. He graduated first in his mechanical engineering class from Cornell University. He earned a Master's in Electrical Engineering from USC. Served in the Air Force, worked on nuclear projects at the Livermore Laboratory and was Secretary of the Air Force under President Ford. But today, we're focusing on Tom Reed's relationships with Ronald Reagan.

Tom, what did you find attractive about Reagan and how is it you came to work for him?

Thomas C. Reed: Well, Lou, I appreciate your having me here and I appreciate the chance to contribute to history. I found him the key to my political objectives, which was to close down the Soviet empire. I got involved in politics starting in the senior year of my high school and first year in college because of two events. The war in Korea had taken a bad turn in the spring of 1951. The tide had turned; Korea was an American problem. MacArthur... General MacArthur had been fired, he came to address Congress and in that address to Congress he talked about the problems, and he delivered the punch line to me: "There is no substitute for victory." And that speech was played into our high school lunchroom.

Cannon: Where was your high school, Texas?

Reed: In Massachusetts.

Cannon: Massachusetts.

Reed: The second event during that time period, as a result of the MacArthur speech and listening in my senior year, all of us listening said, "We are prime material for the draft. We damn well better pay attention." The other motivator was then reading Whittaker Chambers' book "Witness," which was published in the spring of 1952. And "Witness" was written by an awfully good author, Whittaker Chambers, who had been a communist, basically emerged from that and wrote what it was like to be a communist. He wrote in his book, some of the best literature I've ever read, which was a letter to his children.

And in that letter he talks about converting from communism and he was asked... He wrote about why did his friends stop being communists. And he put it in one sentence, "Because in Moscow they heard the screams." In this essay Chambers talks about the screams that come from the children and the families locked into freight cars and left to freeze on the railroad sidings in the Soviet Union. He then closed by saying, "Our challenge is: by the end of this century the world will either be all communist or all free." And I took that as a challenge. I therefore became a Cold Warrior. I joined the Air Force after that. I worked on nuclear weapons at Livermore until a window opened into my political opportunities via Reagan.

Cannon:-Tell us about the first time you met Ronald Reagan.

Reed: I had written Reagan a letter saying, "I hope you run for higher office." I had then done some

busywork assignments in Northern California I first met Ronald Reagan at his house in Labor Day of 1965. It was the first gathering together of the pieces of the campaign. Spencer Roberts, Stu Spencer, Bill Roberts were there, from the South there was Denny Carpenter, who was the Orange County Chairman. From the North, there was me, Ron, Nancy. And it was the first time that we just sat around the fireplace and Reagan talked about why he was doing this and he was pretty clear he was going to run, and he then asked us for our views and I, right out of the jar, I thought, amazing mind, amazing mind. It was at his house, it was an unpretentious house, it was not Hollywood, it was a...

Cannon: Do you remember what you said?

Reed: I think I expressed banalities about getting organized. No grand theory.

Cannon: Where did you hear Ronald Reagan's speech for Goldwater?

Reed: I was in a hotel in Pittsburgh, I believe. I listened to the speech and when I went home I thought, "Here's somebody who could make the case about how terrible communism is." I wrote him a letter, like thousands of other people, saying, "I hope you seek elective office." He put that letter in apparently the "interesting" file. I was contacted during '65. I went to chat. I was given some assignments and test assignments by the manager, (political consulting firm) Spencer Roberts. And in time, Reagan called to ask if I would be his Northern California campaign chairman.

Cannon: You didn't have any real interest in California politics at all. Your interest was entirely the national, on the national stage here.

Reed: My focus was on winding down the Soviet Union. California politics made very little difference to me. I was a Californian and I wanted it well run. But I wrote to Reagan saying, "You need to seek elective office." And I then focused on how do we get Ronald Reagan on the ticket in 1968 because we can't let Lyndon Johnson get re-elected and everybody knows that Richard Nixon can't win anything. And so I wanted to enlist in a Reagan campaign to get Reagan nominated and elected in 1968.

Cannon: So when you came in after you served as his Northern California Chairman, Ronald Reagan, as I think anybody watching this will know, won the governorship of California in 1966 and you don't get to be his chief of staff, but you make an offer to serve as his appointments secretary. Tell us about that.

Reed: Well, the election is in early November. Ten days after the election I go to his house with a few of the Spencer-Roberts people to say, "Now, I want to get busy collecting delegates." I don't say, you ought to run, but collecting delegates for the '68 convention for you to deploy as you see fit. So I'm focused on -- I want nothing to do with Sacramento. After Thanksgiving I watched what was going on in Sacramento or in Reagan's mind, and he's a product of the Depression and therefore he is very sympathetic to people who need jobs. And therefore, as soon as the election was over all the losers are on his doorstep asking for jobs. And being the Depression-raised kid that he was, he said, "Gee, they're out of work, they need jobs," and he starts promising jobs to misfits. They had been defeated because the people of California said, "This guy is not competent." And so I saw this going on and I thought, "I'd better take a hand because this governorship will never get off the ground." And so, on December 5th, after the election, I marched up to Sacramento and said, "You

need a good appointments secretary and I'd like to do it." And he said, "Fine by me," and he announced it a few hours later.

Cannon: You told me that you only agreed to serve as appointments secretary for 100 days, which gave you, what, a certain freedom that you wouldn't have had if you were planning on being part of the Sacramento bureaucracy for a while.

Reed: The decision to serve for 100 days really was a well-thought-through stratagem. It wasn't just, "I don't want to do this full-time, I want to focus on the presidential politics," but it was also, we settled on a plan of, "I'm going to be there for 100 days and I will take the blame for all the offending decisions." We're not going to appoint senator so-and-so's law partner to be a judge; he's not qualified. And I'm going to be the guy that says "no" all the time, and I'm going to try to reach out to recruit good people, and then when I leave after 100 days, the Governor and my successor can talk to the legislators who didn't get their will worked and say, "Well, you know, that was Tom Reed. And it's all his fault. Now, let's get on with business."

Cannon: You got some outstanding people in that way. You got Norman "Ike" Livermore, who saved some things from being destroyed that are environmental treasures that are still there today. You got Bill Mott as the parks director who put away more parkland than anybody in the history of California in that job. And these people were not ideologues. They were not, I think you could fairly say, conservative ideologues. They were Republicans. So how did you handle that part of the job? Because there were a lot of people who felt Pat Brown had been in for two years, two terms, and we've got to replace them with people who are staunch Republicans and for many people, that meant very conservative Republicans.

Reed: Well, I think, in retrospect, in viewing Reagan's career, it really was an important contribution to have a good appointments secretary. And I think I did the job well, because what we did, first of all, was not picking people. The first thing we did was devise a system. Bill Clark and I, on the day after the inauguration, went to Reagan's house and started to make decisions. And Clark, who became the cabinet secretary and then went on to other things, and I devised a system for making decisions, which was going to be a one-page memo, and here is the options. We have a vacancy, the first thing that I worked on was the director of Emergency Services, and here is four or five candidates. Senator so-and-so likes this fellow and the folks in Los Angeles like that fellow and our outreach programs like these people. And here are a half a dozen names. My advice as the appointments secretary was probably, "You ought to go with John Doe, but, Governor, it's your choice." So we did that and he looked at the list and said, "Yeah, that's a good guy. OK, do it."

And the key thing was, same as with Clark with policy issues, he said, "No, you can't just say, 'OK,' pick the choice and put your initials next to it." That means the decision is made. That was terribly important, because that closed the door to reclaims after the fact. Reagan had made a decision. Now, the process then continued. Our sources of names were Reagan's friends and supporters and financiers in Los Angeles. They were legislators; they were vested interests, whether it was unions or logging companies.

It was our own outreach system to go try to recruit people, but the criteria for recruiting, which gets to your question, was, number one: Competence. We've got to have people who know what they're doing. Secondly, integrity, we want to have absolutely solid people. Thirdly, they need to share philosophic beliefs with Reagan. That doesn't mean staunch, conservative Republicans; it means

they've got to share Reagan's views. Ronald Reagan was a pretty strong environmentalist and so we focused on people who really had an appreciation for the environment. And I think that produced some good people that there were... The first appointments campaign was the five cabinet, the senior people, the cabinet members, the director of Finance is the most important appointee the Governor makes. Money is politics, but they percolated up from his friends in Los Angeles, and that did not work well. For Resources, we recruited Ike Livermore, who had worked for a timber company, was a staunch member of the Sierra Club and had a little sweat equity in the campaign in that he had been the Finance Chairman for the Congressman that represented the North Coast. Ike did not apply, I went and sought him out and said, "You've got to come to Sacramento." And after considering his views about the environment, he said he would do that.

Likewise, another was Earl Coke. Earl was a vice president of the Bank of America, which at the time was the banker for the agricultural community. He knew every farmer in California and besides that, he had been in Eisenhower's Agriculture Department and therefore we asked him and he said he would...

Cannon: You asked him to become the Secretary of Agriculture?

Reed: I'm sorry, the Secretary of Agriculture, he was a cabinet member. And he accepted doing that. Those two had an additional advantage as it worked out. They were Reagan's contemporaries. And he was more comfortable with people kind of his own age. He was a little nervous with all these 30-year-olds running around.

Cannon: Like you and his chief of staff, Phil Battaglia.

Reed: Like me.

Cannon: Phil Battaglia. But you guys did a good job, I thought. I said... Wrote that in my books, but you struck out on the important job of the Department of Finance. And the people who were resisting that, we call them the Kitchen Cabinet. I think you call them the Elders, but they were the wealthy backers of Reagan, and you wanted Caspar Weinberger, who was eventually brought in to rescue that situation. They didn't want Weinberger. Why... What's that all about?

Reed: Well, I didn't really have a candidate that I started. My list was here, the five big cabinet members and the first is director of Finance, but early on I learned that the Elders, the Kitchen Cabinet, were meeting in Los Angeles and there were a self-appointed task force, and they were meeting to consider recommendations. And they decided that director of Finance was the equivalent to the CFO, so they hired a headhunting firm to go find somebody. When I saw that going on, I really didn't weigh in, I concluded, I've got other things to do, that these guys are going to do it and they're not going to do it well, but time is of the essence. So both Clark and I thought that Cap Weinberger would be a director, better director of Finance, but neither of us really pushed it, I didn't... My view was the Elders are going to make their recommendations. They did, they recruited... They hired through a headhunting firm Mr. Smith, Gordon Paul Smith. It was a disaster, because he was a bean counter. He was a financial officer, and that's not what the chief of Finance does in California; he makes policy. And so that did not work out. When he finally wore out his welcome with the Legislature and the Governor, then Governor listened to others and Bill and I proposed Weinberger again and it happened.

Cannon: Weinberger and the person who succeeded him, Verne Orr, did a good job, I thought, but that... It was a disaster under Mr. Smith. He simply didn't have a concept of what the job was about.

Reed: He did not. He did not understand that in politics, the director of Finance is not the same as the chief financial officer in some company. But the names of Weinberger and Orr are interesting in another context in that they typify the solid people that we recruited and that continued with Reagan all the way to his presidency. Weinberger was director of Finance, a decade later he shows up as secretary of Defense. Verne Orr became the next director of Finance and he shows up as Reagan's secretary of the Air Force.

Cannon: You left after those 100 days. And as you explained, I think very well, on this video, your interest was always been with trying to get Ronald Reagan into national office. You wanted him to be president.

Reed: Yes.

Cannon: Now, that view... My feeling was, having covered the administration at that time, that there were... There was a sort of a kind of an agreed sort of attitude that Ronald Reagan was going to be running for president someday. But there was a real difference of opinion in 1967 and early '68 about whether he should run for president then. I mean, there were a number of people who felt he should complete his first, at least one term and then there were people like you who were prompting him to run. So tell me... Discuss that a little bit if you can.

Reed: Well, my view was that he was the right person to wind down the Soviet empire, and to do that you've got to be president. I didn't think that the day after the election he's running for president. My pitch to him was, "We need to start collecting delegates. You need to become a fixture on the national scene. But to do that, first of all, you've got to be a good governor. And so we need to focus on the track record. Secondly, you need to connect with people who decide who the delegates are going to be. You need to connect with the Everett Dirksens and the Strom Thurmonds and those players." But let's file for presidency? No, that... Once he established a track record, and it was good because his first half-year of the legislative succession was quite successful, then we began to really start building relationships with the kingmakers within the Republican Party. That was not popular with the Elders in Los Angeles. They didn't disagree; they were just not happy that they hadn't been included.

Cannon: Well, I think, I mean, Ed Meese, and even your friend Bill Clark, were not gaga about him running in 1968.

Reed: No, those gentlemen were not in favor of a 1968 campaign, because they wanted to run the State of California well, which seems eminently reasonable. They just had different objectives.

Cannon: Now, as we all know, Ronald Reagan did not get the nomination in 1968, Richard Nixon did, and Ronald Reagan ran. He ran; he was a very persistent person. He ran for the nomination again in '76. He actually ran three times. And there aren't many people, there are a few, but there aren't many in the nation's history who have done that.

I take the view that he learned things. We've discussed this before, I take the view that even though

the '68 campaign was on paper a bust, Reagan learned things from it that became very important to him when he ran for office eight years later and 12 years later. And tell me what you think about that. And if you agree with that, what did he learn?

Reed: Well, yes, I do agree with you. But let's back off. '68 wasn't a bust, he came very close. That if we had gone... Nixon won because he had gotten such solid commitments.

Cannon: From the South, particularly.

Reed: In the South, particularly. That Strom Thurmond was the angel of the South. And because Reagan ran a changing campaign. He never said, "I'm a candidate," that really made the kingmakers nervous 'cause they don't want to get on a train that isn't moving. So he didn't commit himself and therefore, the Southern kingmakers said, "OK." Those delegates made it very clear personally that they were with Nixon on the first ballot. After that, if we had gone to a second ballot Reagan would have got it. But he did not because... It was pretty close, but it was not a bust. It was a very close call.

What did he learn? Well, I think he learned first of all, if you're going to seek the nomination you've got to focus on it. Don't give me this stuff about the office seeks the man, no. If you want to get nominated you've got to focus on it and do it. I think that he learned that a national network, both fundraisers and advisers, the network, the political network, like the Thurmonds and the Dirksens and so forth, are absolutely necessary. And you've got to pay attention to those people early on. That he learned that the people that go to conventions, political conventions, are human beings, they're not saints.

Some are filled with deceit and don't tell you the truth. They pledge things they're not going to do. And he learned that the nature of convention delegates are not the same as just looking for votes on the open market. He learned that. And I think he ended up by understanding that the White House really was a possible achievement.

Cannon: I remember going with him and you on that Southern swing was which people in the South he could trust and in which he couldn't. You once said to me, speaking of the Mississippi chairman at the time, that he learned that when he said... That when this guy says yes he means no. But there were others who kept their word and I think, to me, the most important thing that happened out of that, he had some idea of the national... About who he could trust in the national Republican Party, and who was out to feather his own nest and...

Reed: I think Reagan learned who he could trust in categories rather than just names. The other lesson he learned from the '68 campaign, which played well in the future, is if you're going to do this campaigns it needs to be based on substance. You cannot... You need to tell the delegates and the people what it is you propose to do when you achieve office. And you need to think through those statements. You cannot just have some inspiration as you walk to the podium and throw something out. That is death to many politicians. You need to think through what it is you want to do, what you want to say and then you get serious research focused on does it make sense and what is the consequences. If you say, "I'm going to cut taxes here," who is going to be happy, who's going to be unhappy. And one of the achievements of '68 was we recruited a really good speech writer in that... It was Charlie Murphy who had written for Fortune. And he was another Irishman. And he really helped Reagan with the keynote, first speeches of the summer of '68... Summer of '67,

sorry. Talking about Vietnam, Bobby Kennedy, and thought through the consequences. Reagan learned you cannot just start talking when you're on the podium running for president. You need to think it through. And that really... That's how he turned the campaign around in 1980.

Cannon: In 1980, David Broder, my esteemed mentor at the Washington Post, wrote that this was the most issue-oriented presidential campaign that we'd ever had, at least since the Civil War.

Reed: Absolutely. That's a lesson to learn.

Cannon: And... Now, moving back to Sacramento: you were an ally and a friend and he was a friend of mine, too, I'm happy to say, of William P. Clark, Bill Clark subsequently known as Judge Clark, after he was in the judiciary on the California Supreme Court. But Clark, I think, was extremely important to Ronald Reagan. Tell us a little bit about him.

Reed: Absolutely, Bill Clark was really important to the whole Reagan career. Bill Clark lived down in Ventura County, his father had been a sheriff, he became Reagan's campaign chairman in Ventura County.

Cannon: He was a Democrat, too.

Reed: I did not know that. Is that right? But he and Reagan connected because Bill Clark was understated, just like Reagan was. He was not a 30-year-old out to save the world. He was a horseman, and, therefore, he and Ronald Reagan could ride horses and spend hours chatting about stuff. He was Reagan's county chairman in Ventura. When the campaign was over he, Reagan, recruited him by some means to become the cabinet secretary. The cabinet is where you make the policies and operate. And he did an excellent job because he was thorough, he had a good legal mind, he was careful, attentive to the details and he did not, great -- he did not offend other people, like I do. So he really helped shape the early Reagan years and when the crisis had resulted and a change of executive secretary took place in the summer of '67, that Ron turned to Bill Clark to become the Executive Secretary. And Bill essentially ran things in the first term. He then, come '69, he decided he wanted out of Sacramento. Got himself appointed to the Superior Court, and then eventually moved up through the judicial system.

During all that time he really stayed in connection with Reagan and the Reagan family and was viewed as a trusted adviser. He was very close to Reagan because he was perhaps one of the few true friends that Reagan had in the political world.

Cannon: Reagan turned to him; he was having trouble with Secretary of State Al Haig. He turned to Clark then and when the Secretary of Interior, (James) Watt, who was no Ike Livermore, collapsed really, and once again Reagan turned to Bill Clark and made him the Secretary of Interior. So he was kind of a troubleshooter for him...

Reed: Oh, he was.

Cannon: In 1970 Ronald Reagan runs for re-election as governor, and I can remember that a lot of your former colleagues and friends and people in the administration were absolutely sure Reagan was going to win in a breeze because the Democrats were going to nominate Jess Unruh, sometimes called Big Daddy, the Speaker of the Assembly. You didn't share the view that this was a walk in

the park. So talk a little bit about that and in the '70 campaign generally.

Reed: It was not going to be a walk in the park, but to back off, I did not want to be involved in that campaign. I didn't run it, I was turning my attention to other things, but I had a conversation with Lyn Nofziger in the summer of '69 in Washington. And Lyn made the point, "He's not a shoo-in, he could lose. And it doesn't matter whether we like his staff or anything else. We have a... We are the trustees, we have a responsibility to get him re-elected because that's important." Now, as things began to unfold, it became clear that Nixon was running, had articulated views of campaigning for everybody else on the law and order basis. And then when Reagan, when '70 started, the polls showed that Reagan's antipathy to the rioters on the Berkeley campus resonated with the voters and so he was running on a "kick these people out of there," disturbing things. But things changed through 1970 with Kent State, and it became clear...

Cannon: Kent State was where National Guardsmen shot and killed I've forgotten how many people.

Reed: Yes, Kent State, there were riots on the Kent State and the National Guard killed some students. And that really... You could feel it. It changed the parents' view in California from, from the, say, "Throw those rioters out," to, "Holy mackerel, those may be my kids who get shot." And the genius of all this was Stu Spencer, who was the chief thinker about the campaign, and the surveys, because we were, we were chugging along. But to get back to your question, first of all, it's not going to be easy because it's a presidential off-year and the president's coattails don't sweep in a lot of people and in general that... This is just two years after Nixon's elections and presidents like to get rid of all the bad news before they have to run for re-election. And so a lot of bad stuff was going on.

That Stu Spencer looked at the polls, which showed that all of a sudden the support for "get tough on the kids of Berkeley" disappeared. And Stu had the sense, and I guess I joined in at looking at surveys, and we agreed, we've got to change this campaign, and so we changed the campaign. We're not going to talk about law and order and the kids on Berkeley; we're going to talk about what Reagan has achieved in terms of cutting taxes and property taxes. We're going to talk about welfare reform. We're going to talk about the environment and all the wonderful things that Ike Livermore oversaw and we're not going to talk about law and order. And that helped us to make... The polls of about October 15th through 20th showed us really headed down badly, and that if we didn't do something, we could have lost that one, and we had sense enough to see we've got to change, and we did.

Cannon: Even... You could win a lot of bar bets with the question of who in a general election gave Reagan his closest race. It wasn't Pat Brown, or Jimmy Carter, or Walter Mondale; it was Jesse Unruh.

Reed: It was Jesse Unruh.

Cannon: And the...

Reed: Well, excuse me, it was a bad year for Republican gubernatorial candidates across the country, and almost all...

Cannon: Two notable were re-elected, Rockefeller and Reagan.

Reed: Two guys who had really good organizations and an ample supply of money prevailed. Perhaps a dozen others, Republican governors and Republican candidates, went down.

Cannon: Yeah, it was a... What we now think as a fairly typical off-year election, where there's no... And it's usually bad for the party in power, as this last mid-term was for the Republican Party.

Reed: We lost control of the Legislature. In '68, we won control of Legislature; 1970 we lost control.

Cannon: The truth is that Ronald Reagan was more successful in the six years he had a Democratic-controlled Assembly than he was in those two years when he had a Republican-controlled one.

Reed: That is true, because one of his geniuses, he was not attacking everybody, he was a big tent person and therefore he was able to get along with the Legislature. Now, the climate was different. So many of the legislators were there 'cause they were trying to make California a better place. Many of them could talk to Reagan, and Reagan was a big tent person and he did marvelously well.

Cannon: You wrote a book. It's called "The Reagan Enigma," it's here, and what I want to know is why you think he was an enigma?

Reed: Well, Clark Clifford put it best in one sentence when Reagan arrived in Washington as the President of the United States. He commented Reagan is an amiable dunce and if you start there, you lost, because Reagan's mind was the most amazing. Not only smart, retentive, but he was a genius in so many ways. His mind could store and recall facts, he could put pieces together, and if you start out thinking he's an amiable dunce, you were going to lose big time. And that's why I called the enigma, because so many people thought he was a dunce, and he was not. And he would not often tell you what he was thinking, but I spent enough time with him, I knew how to read him, and I thought I ought to write down the things that he had done.

Cannon: Did you always figure him out or were there times he baffled you?

Reed: Yes, I think I figured him out early on and I didn't necessarily like what I read.

Cannon: What I mean, was there a time where he did some... Made some decision or picked somebody that surprised you?

Reed: No, I think once we started, there was the opening turmoil of all his friends getting jobs, but once we were connected, I understood how to read him very well.

Cannon In this book, you talk some about Nancy Reagan. Your views on Nancy Reagan are a little different than some of the people I've talked to -- Stu Spencer, for example. Tell us what you think about Nancy, and how important she was or wasn't to Ronald Reagan's career.

Reed: Nancy Reagan was absolutely indispensable to Reagan's success. She provided the bubble, she provided the protection, in that she provided the incentive and the enthusiasm of go for higher

office that... In all of that, she was very important. My problems were many, but I think the core in the '80s, was she really didn't care about winning and ending the Cold War. Nancy's focus was on headlines tomorrow in the press, and Ronald Reagan was focused on prevailing and toppling the Soviet Union. A wonderful story from Stu Spencer: He was having dinner upstairs at the White House and Reagan had just made the "evil empire" speech, and Nancy started getting, turning to Stu as an advisor about, "What did you think about the 'evil empire' speech?" And we can't... Gee, that was terrible, Nancy, that was terrible. You can't say those things. Stu said, "Well, you scare a lot of people; it's true, but you better be careful." And Reagan said quote, "We're going to push him over backwards. Mommy, what's for dessert?"

They were very different, and that's why my focus on Reagan, Ronald Reagan was -- he's going to prevail in toppling the Soviet Union, and Nancy was not aboard and was...

Cannon: But she was aboard on so many things with Reagan when he was President, including that. I mean, she... Remember the colloquy with Andrei Gromyko, where Gromyko is saying, "Why don't you whisper something into her ear?" And he says, "Well, I'm going to whisper something into your ear." And she did really help him, I think, on that...

Reed: She didn't say, "We're going to beat you." She said, "You should want peace." Well, of course, everybody wants peace. She was a peacenik, which is...

Cannon: Well, but that was part of the... It was a multi-pronged offensive, wasn't it?

Reed: It's not evil; it's not bad. I just didn't happen to agree.

Cannon: What we haven't talked about at all is 1976. And you were Secretary of the Air Force at that time. And as my recollection is that you supported President Ford, as did most of his cabinet.

Reed: Yup.

Cannon: What's your thinking about that?

Reed: Well, I and many people including the Elders, Ronald Reagan's financial friends in Los Angeles, all were of the view as I was, as a good Republican, we have a Republican President. And you cannot topple your incumbent and hold the office. That has never worked, and it is foolishness. So we have a Republican President, and there may be ideological problems, but the fact is you have a Republican President and that's important. And therefore, not only 'cause I was in the cabinet, but because I liked Jerry Ford, I said, I was of the view, we have a Republican President. Do not try to make waves. That view was shared, interestingly enough, by my 1970 political partner Holmes Tuttle who went to Reagan in the summer of 1975, and said, "You shouldn't..."

Cannon: Holmes Tuttle, for those who are watching this who don't know him, he was a Los Angeles auto dealer and he was the chief of the fundraisers for Reagan. And I remember... I'm going to quote you, I think I'm remembering this right. You said, and we're talking about a time when \$1,000 was a lot of money, that you asked for \$1,000, all these people will give it. Holmes will go out and raise \$10,000, or \$100,000, or whatever the numbers were. And he was... I think any... I can't think of anyone who would disagree on this proposition that he was the most important of Reagan's fundraisers when he was running for governor and governor.

Reed: Absolutely, let's talk about Holmes. Holmes Tuttle was really key to Reagan's success of the Elders in Los Angeles, the people that Nancy socialized with. He lived in the real world. He sold cars to real people.

Cannon: Yeah.

Reed: To say he was a car dealer is like saying Mr. Brady plays football. Well, he was the biggest Ford dealer in Los Angeles. He opened more... He sold Ronald Reagan a coupe when Ronald Regan came to Hollywood. They had known each other for a long time. He was hard-driving beyond belief. He did not brook arguments well. It took us a while to get... to be compatible, because I'm this 30-year-old kid, and he's this number one guy in Los Angeles. But we came to work very well because in 1970, we were co-chairmen. And he worked the finance in the older side of the street. I worked the machinery in the younger side of the street. And it was a great team and he was a terrific guy. He was key to Reagan's success.

Cannon: In 1970 campaign, I believe also he was an important figure.

Reed: He was co-chairman. We ended up... When Reagan and I talked about my coming to run the campaign, we worked out that we need to bridge this problem with the Elders in Los Angeles. And I liked Holmes because unlike all these other guys who made policy and lived in Los Angeles and had dinner with Nancy, Holmes Tuttle lived in the real world. And a lesson I learned from politics, when you're going to some county, Butte County, and you don't know anybody, go find the auto dealer, because those people deal with reality. And he did.

Cannon: Oh, I think that was even more true then probably than it is now.

Reed: Of course.

Cannon: What do you think Reagan accomplished as President now? The Soviet Union ceased to exist, but some... I think everybody watching this will know what your position is on that. But is there a broader accomplishment that just can't be put into a laundry list? I mean, Lincoln freed the slaves. The Soviet Union disappeared on Ronald Reagan's watch, at least.

Reed: I'm sorry to roll back on what you just implied, but closing down the Soviet empire was not simple.

Cannon: No, of course not.

Reed: And therefore when you ask me that question, that's the only answer you're going to get, because that was my focus. And Ronald Reagan was focused on closing down the Soviet empire, and it was not a simple decision. It was a lot of... The National Security Council, cabinet members were all hemming and hawing about, "Well, you can't push them over backwards and so forth."

Cannon: Why? I hate to keep quoting you to yourself, but you once...

Reed: It worked.

Cannon: You once told me that... This is when you were in the appointments secretary, that one of the problems you... I think you had Lyndon Johnson in mind at the time. One of the problems was, with American politics, was you used to be able to say, "Eat your spinach, son, and you'll grow up to be President." We don't have any leaders now who... You don't want to eat spinach, or grow up like Richard Nixon. That's not something that people... So, there are a number of people, but I won't put it on anybody else. I feel very strongly that Ronald Reagan provided a sense... Gave the country a sense of well-being.

Reed: Yes.

Cannon: That was lacking, a sense that there was a reassurance. It's certainly lacking now. And I just was wanting... So, I didn't want you to repudiate the Soviet Union part of the argument. I just wondered if you could go back to the "eat your spinach" part of that.

Reed: You know what? I think you're right here. I interpret the question too as a scientist. What are the six things on the list that he did? I can't list the other accomplishments about taxes and welfare. I really don't know what, I wasn't paying attention, but you're absolutely right that he restored a respect for the presidency. He became somebody that Americans looked up to. The theme of the re-election campaign in 1984 hit it right on the head, "It's morning in America again." And he really brought a respect for the office into this.

Cannon: That campaign has been both praised and mocked, but it's not a campaign you could run unless a majority of Americans had a good feeling about your country.

Reed: Well, you could mock it because you didn't like the way it run or you can...

Cannon: Well, you could mock it because it didn't... What does it mean, it's not substantive.

Reed: The fact is it was a huge landslide.

Cannon: Yeah.

Reed: It was mocked because people didn't like it, you know, because they were the losers.

Cannon: Yeah. Is there something that you'd like to say about your service with Ronald Reagan, or about Ronald Reagan the man, and the Ronald Reagan you knew that my questions have not touched on?

Reed: That's a broad question in itself. I think I am really pleased. I did work at the White House; I was not involved in the 1980 campaign. Once I withdrew in 1970, I really withdrew from politics, ran my business, got my own life organized, had children, and I was not involved in 1980 at all, I was not involved in the transition. I had been a Ford person, so I was persona non grata but I liked Jerry Ford as a person, as well as don't throw out your incumbent. So we weren't particularly close. But in Reagan's first year, 1981, he focused on the economy and fixing the economy.

At the end of 1981, he sat down by himself and said, "Now, I'm going to think about national security." And so, we flip the switch and say, "OK," because in this first year, he really didn't have a National Security Advisor. He viewed that as a job that had just had not, that led to detente. In

January of '82, he said, "OK, national security, I need a National Security Advisor." He turned to Bill Clark, who he, Reagan, had recruited Bill to become Deputy Secretary of State, he then recruited Clark to become the National Security Advisor. And that was really an important key to winding down to the Soviet Union.

And so, Clark, for better or for worse, recruited me to come join him at the NSC where I became a special assistant for policy. And Reagan was decisive and supportive, and he was focused on ending the Cold War, and winning it, not just getting along stuff. And that was a difficult process. I recall I went to work in January of '82, I go to the White House. I've been to the Oval Office before. I walked in there with Bill Clark at 9 o'clock in the morning, which we did most every morning, and after we finished talking about problems in Tanzania or something, he peers over his glasses and he says, "Tom, you know, we have a problem." I thought he was talking about the air conditioner or something. "Tom, we have a problem." "Yes, Mr. President, what is that?" "The Soviet Union."

Yes, that's a problem. Right then and there: "I want you to get the smart guys together, from State and Defense and Treasury and figure out how we're going to defeat them." And so, we collect the bright guys from those places, and my role was to force them to do things the Reagan way. "Let's have options, don't have a pre-digested solution." And so we put together a plan that was called the National Security Decisions Directive that laid out, "Here's what we're going to do. Here's how we're going to win." Economic, military, and so forth.

Cannon: The consensus of historians, I think, was that expressed most succinctly by Reagan's first Chief of Staff as President, James Baker, you have to solve the economy first, 'cause if you can't solve it, you're not going to be able to do anything. And if you solve it then you're going to be able to do what you want.

Reed: That is exactly right, and he knew it.

Cannon: Tell me your own most lasting impression of Ronald Reagan from your connections with him. Is there... If there's a story that stands out, you can tell that, if not, you can tell me the generality.

Reed: I think there's no one story, although there is one story I want to get to, but my lasting impression is extremely bright, smart. I'm not sure of the right words, but a mind you just can't fully comprehend. Huge, retentive, quick, very quick, and focused, and decisive. So my impressions were not of some particular day but it was how he was decisive. To end with a particular day that we talked about the national security policy of how we were going to prevail in the Cold War, and this was the study we did and we prepared a directive. And so I came to brief the National Security Council, "Here's the options, but here... the Soviets, the CIA thinks the Soviets are only spending 16 percent of their GDP on defense. But we think you can win." And in the middle of all this he looks over his glasses at me, and says, "Tom, why can't we just push them over backwards?" meaning, we're going to win.

And the seniors around the table, "Well, umm, mmm, haw-hem, gee, though, that will make Maggie Thatcher mad and they're only spending 16 percent of GDP on defense." The, my views, my economic assistant, but the hero of ending the Cold War, was Harry Rowen, who had come from Hoover but was currently the chairman of the Intelligence Council, said, "No, Mr. President, you can push them over backwards. They're spending half of their GDP on defense, we can push them

over backwards." And Reagan looked over his glasses at me and he said, "That's what we are going to do."

Cannon: Where are we now in time?

Reed: April of 1982.

Cannon: And where is this discussion being held?

Reed: In the Cabinet Room.

Cannon: There are different moments where one marks the end of the Soviet Union. Many people mark it from the collapse of the Berlin Wall, although it hadn't formally collapsed then. And then there's when Yeltsin actually dissolves the... becomes a federation. Even before that, I think, when you had Reagan and Gorbachev walking around in Moscow. I remember being very close to them and I thought the world has really changed. But, whatever's your particular marker, I know the Berlin Wall is for lots and lots of people. Where were you, or did you have a feeling about it?

Reed: There are several markers. An interesting photo from the presidential archives tells it all. This is the first Reagan-Gorbachev meeting in Geneva. And Gorbachev is sitting there with notebooks and papers and pencils and so forth, and Reagan is sitting there, hands in his lap, with a crossed leg. Because he knew where he was going. He was not going to fool around with pencils and pieces of paper. And so if you look at that photo in retrospect, you say, "Click. Reagan is going to win." Then the other pieces were... Things started working, that the attempted coup in the summer of... Let me go back to the Berlin Wall. The falling of the Berlin Wall was important, but it wasn't the end. It was, in many ways, the beginning of a really historic interlude which was the George H.W. Bush presidency, which was essential for ending the Cold War, because George H. Bush drew Gorbachev across the line without ever talking about surrender.

If you talk to Bush, he will tell you that the Congress people wanted him to go over and stand on the wall and make a speech. And Bush's view was, "We're never going to do that, we're not going to talk about surrender, we're just going to..." And Bush had sense enough to say, "We're going to stop, we're going to take our nukes off boats. What do you think of that?" And he extracted concessions from Gorbachev, not by negotiation.

I was consulting, after I left the White House to what was known as the Strategic Advisory Committee, which is the people that advise the tri-service military operation that targets nuclear weapons. I stayed connected. I was out of the White House, I was glad to leave, but I stayed connected with the military establishment and consulting. So I was involved in that. I recall a memory or a trigger, along the way, where right after the coup Bush says, "I'm just going to start taking nukes off boats and I'm going to do other stuff..."

Cannon: This is the unsuccessful coup to oust Boris Yeltsin?

Reed: This was the unsuccessful coup where Gorbachev was down in the Crimea, and this was in the summer of '91, and that George Bush, basically, he said, "This is what I'm going to do unilaterally." And I thought, that's how this is going to end. And then there was the coup, but then I was connected with the Strategic Advisory Council and I do remember... Watching television, and

the news that Gorbachev has called Bush and said, "Have a good Christmas, I'm leaving and I'm turning the nuclear codes over to Boris Yeltsin." And then there's a picture of the hammer and sickle coming down and the Russian flag going up. I remember that exceedingly well with pride.