

Naftali Reconsidered

By Max Holland

Since late April, Reuters, the *Orange County Register*, *The Nation*, *Los Angeles Times*, and *The New Yorker* have published articles lamenting the lack of a director at the Richard M. Nixon Library ([RMNL](#)) in Yorba Linda, California.^[1]

All the articles (excepting Jeffrey Frank's slightly more nuanced *New Yorker* piece) have the same narrative, almost as if they were part of an orchestrated campaign. The uncommon delay in finding a new permanent director (going on three years) is the fault of Nixon partisans, so the story goes, who are holding out for a congenial person to rehabilitate the only president to resign in disgrace. And the National Archives and Records Administration ([NARA](#)) is being stymied in its admirable effort to present Nixon in an objective, unvarnished light.

As proof, the articles reprise the conventional, heroic narrative about the tenure of Tim Naftali, who headed the library from 2007 to 2011. Naftali "presided over the installation of a new, historically accurate Watergate exhibit," *The Nation* article said, which Nixon loyalists "vehemently objected to," according to [Reuters](#). That left Naftali "fiercely at odds with the . . . [Nixon] family and close supporters of the 37th president," the *Orange County Register* reported. The *Register* also quoted Naftali to level the allegation that Nixon loyalists are consciously stalling so they can allegedly "write the text" for a pending \$15 million renovation of the museum, which is the public face of the library, since most visitors to Yorba Linda do not use the archives. The *Los Angeles Times* article dispensed with a reporter and made these points in an article written by Naftali himself.

As the late Alexander Cockburn liked to observe, "The First Law of Journalism is to confirm existing prejudice, rather than contradict it."^[2]

There are serious issues up for debate here, not the least of which is whether presidential libraries should be shrines, places that debunk their namesakes, or something in-between. There is also the question of whether Nixon deserves special handling. Before considering such issues though, it might be well to reconsider Naftali's tenure. As the cliché goes, there are two sides to every story—even one involving Richard Milhous Nixon.^[3]

In a widely-noted remark at Richard Nixon's funeral service in April 1994, then-President Bill Clinton said, "may the day of judging President Nixon on anything less than his entire life and career come to a close." Naftali was supposed to hasten and facilitate that day as the first NARA-appointed director. Yet the portrait of Naftali that emerges after taking a closer look at his directorship is not as flattering as the above clippings. The former RMNL director is skilled at public relations, knows how to use the press to advance a case, and has a talent for self-promotion. But through acts of commission and omission, he failed to enrich and preserve the historical record. In one particularly egregious instance, he even helped falsify that record.

• • • • •

Press coverage of Naftali's tenure has been consistently reductionist, boiling it down to the controversy over the [Watergate exhibit](#). The exhibit, however, was not the only task he oversaw at the RMNL. In every sense—resources, time, thought, and effort—the oral history program he directed easily rivaled the Watergate exhibit. One might even argue that it is the more important legacy. An exhibit, after all, can be revised in time, is primarily viewed by the sandal-wearing general public, and cannot purport to break new historical ground. In contrast, an oral history program is a permanent contribution, of vital interest to scholars, and at its best, provides contextual information and details not to be found in the paper trail.[\[4\]](#)

The late [James Sterling Young](#), director for many years of the well-regarded oral history program at the [University of Virginia's Miller Center](#), provided one of the best descriptions.

Presidential oral history transcripts are historical documents that will be read, first by respondents, then by all those who in the future seek to understand the presidency of our time as it was experienced by those who knew it first hand. They are unique primary source materials that will be permanently archived in the relevant presidential library [\[5\]](#)

Reviving the defunct Nixon oral history project was rightly one of Naftali's top priorities. Nowadays, oral history programs are undertaken soon after a president leaves office, when memories are relatively fresh and everyone is still around. The Nixon oral history project, however, was one of the primary casualties of the delay in integrating the RMNL into the NARA system. Resurrecting the program was therefore urgent; given the "aging cadre of Nixon administration officials," as Naftali put it, there was a very limited window of opportunity if the oral history program was going to fill in the unspoken premises seldom found on the written page, the "why" and "how" of what happened.[\[6\]](#)

The self-described "ambitious and sweeping oral history program" operated with a budget in excess of \$500,000, which did not include Naftali's six-figure salary or the salary of Paul Musgrave, his principal investigator and research/logistics coordinator beginning in October 2006. Funding came from three sources: NARA itself; approximately \$130,000 from Nixon alumni who were interested specifically in

underwriting oral histories about the administration's domestic policies; and \$180,000 from the Nixon Foundation, which supports programming and special exhibits at the library and museum complex.^[7]

As envisioned by Naftali, the revived project was going to be a state-of-the-art program involving “multi-city shoots using professional camera crews.” This ambition was understandable in the C-SPAN and internet age, when oral histories can easily be made available to a wide audience. Arguably, the oral histories were likely to become the RMNL's principal portal to the outside world, with far more persons viewing, reading, or hearing them than might ever visit the library/museum in a given year. Naftali considered C-SPAN the ideal venue to “showcase” the oral histories he conceived of and created, and place to “project our brand.”^[8]

From 2006 to 2011, a total of 142 [oral histories](#) were conducted (involving 139 people, three of whom were interviewed twice). Of these, around 60—about 40 percent—had substantially to do with Watergate writ large, although the word doubtlessly came up in almost every interview. The extraordinary focus on one event from the Nixon presidency was certainly justified. Watergate is still the scandal by which all others are measured. More than 40 years later, the press still attaches the suffix “-gate” to presidential-level disgraces, viz., most recently, “Bridgegate.”

The other justification is the ossified nature of the historiography. Major events usually undergo re-interpretation as time passes, passions cool, and the evidentiary record emerges, or is simply considered anew. Yet the history of Watergate has proven remarkably impervious to revision, largely unchanged from the first draft of history as presented in *All the President's Men* (the book and eponymous film). Yale Professor Beverly Gage [recently noted](#) that “Watergate has languished in recent years as a subject for serious research.”^[9]

Or as the critic Wilfrid Sheed once summed up this state of affairs: “Folks may be getting fuzzy about the Watergate details, but at least they remember the movie: a couple of nosy journalists and an informer, wasn't it?”^[10]

A Full-Time Job Done Part-Time

The bulk of the Watergate-related interviews were conducted during the years 2007 to 2009 (46 in total). There was an uptick in 2011 (13), after almost no Watergate-related oral histories were recorded in 2010 (2).

One aspect of the program that immediately jumps out is that Naftali himself conducted the “[vast majority](#)” of the interviews (Watergate and otherwise). Having the director of a presidential library simultaneously conduct its oral history program is unheard of; it has not occurred at any other presidential libraries, and for a good reason: running an oral history program well is a full-time job.^[11]

A common misperception is that oral histories are glorified interviews. They may have started out that way, but the methodology has evolved to a point where there are recognized standards and obligations for conducting them, particularly for presidential libraries. A case can be made that they have assumed ever-greater importance as the practice of keeping meticulous notes and/or diaries has waned, primarily because written White House records have become a target for hostile investigators.^[12]

The Oral History Association ([OHA](#)) has attempted to codify the technique since 1968, and there is an extensive bibliography on the methodology. The primary factors that distinguish them from interviews, according to the OHA, are content and extent. They are supposed to supply an “in-depth account of personal experience and reflections, with sufficient time allowed for the narrators (the person being interviewed) to give their story the fullness they desire.” The aggressive techniques journalists often use to elicit information—refusing to accept that any topics are out-of-bounds; producing a surprise document; challenging an answer—are frowned upon. The “narrator” (aka the person being interviewed) is often given the questions in advance, or at least an outline of topics to be addressed and questions to be raised. The narrator is also given the right to edit the transcript as he or she sees fit, and accorded control over access to the final transcript. The idea is to produce a document that accurately represents the perspective and recollection of the former official, almost as if he or she had sat down to write a memoir.

The above controls do not mean the interviewer is completely neutered, or prohibited from asking tough questions. “Interviewers are obliged to ask historically significant questions,” according to OHA guidelines, “reflecting careful preparation for the interview and understanding of the issues to be addressed.” While the narrator’s right to refuse to discuss certain subjects is respected, there is a bit of a confidence game going on. The idea is to put narrators at such ease that they want to be candid and frank, even if it means making an admission against presidential interest. Robert Dallek, after all, first learned of John F. Kennedy’s sexual liaison with an intern (later identified as [Mimi Alford](#)) from Barbara Gamarekian’s oral history at the John F. Kennedy Library ([JFKL](#)).^[13]

Achieving such lofty goals requires extensive research on the person, topic(s), and the larger context in both primary and secondary sources. It might not be too much of an exaggeration to assert that the oral historian going in has to be as well-versed in the subject as the narrator is, or was. According to Russell L. Riley, director of the Miller Center’s state-of-the-art [presidential oral history program](#), a seasoned research assistant takes roughly 100 hours to prepare a briefing book, usually three to four inches thick, for every single oral history the Miller Center conducts. If the narrator has written a memoir, that has to be read in addition. The briefing book is then provided to the narrator and the prospective interviewers, who may spend anywhere between 18 to 50 hours preparing for the oral history.^[14]

The father of oral history programs at presidential libraries was Philip C. Brooks, once director of the Truman Library. In the early 1960s he conceived of interviewing White House staffers who had worked with Truman on a daily basis, and “add[ing] the

transcripts of their spoken recollections to the documentation they created at the time.” Brooks hired a full-time, newly-minted historian, Charles T. Morrissey, to run the oral history program. This was because Brooks recognized the “value of research and the value of doing oral history well and not casually.”^[15]

Morrissey quickly became a disciple of the gospel that the “only way to do oral history” was via “thorough preparation and mastery of the paper trail.” Any worthwhile oral history program was inextricably linked to the acquisition/preservation of and research into the paper trail (or, in the case of Watergate, a vast primary and secondary literature also). Indeed, when Morrissey, because of his pioneering work, was drafted by Robert F. Kennedy in 1964 to run the oral history program for the new John F. Kennedy Library, he eventually quit because of the lack of professionalism evident in the Kennedy oral history program. Not only were some questions deemed beyond the pale (e.g., such as “compare and contrast JFK with LBJ”) but Morrissey and the two other historians hired for the project were expressly denied permission to research the administration’s paper archives. Despite ample financial resources, including a \$200,000-plus grant from the Carnegie Foundation, the earliest oral histories compiled at the JFKL are an embarrassment for the most part.^[16]

The Nixon oral history program had none of the above problems, only the daunting task of racing to catch up after decades of neglect. But when Naftali took it upon himself to wear both hats—director of the library and interviewer-in-chief—something had to give.

The Limited Scope of the Watergate Oral Histories

The first noticeable deficit is scope: the list of those who were interviewed is grossly skewed. Important aspects of the two-year scandal are hardly or not covered at all, while others are over-represented, however justified each individual interview may have been.

The Watergate cast of characters is well known, as many of them became household names from 1973 to 1974. Despite the deaths of such key actors as H. R. “Bob” Haldeman, John Ehrlichman, John Mitchell, Sam Ervin, and Barbara Jordan, there are still scores of participants to choose from. Accordingly, Naftali arranged interviews with such prominent figures as the late Charles Colson, John Dean, G. Gordon Liddy, the late Jeb Magruder, [William Ruckelshaus](#), Earl Silbert, and Bob Woodward.

Still, one is struck by what’s missing, or more precisely, who. There are no oral histories with such key individuals as [Alfred Baldwin](#), the former FBI agent who was the government’s leading witness during the January 1973 trial, or [Donald Segretti](#), who achieved notoriety as the lawyer hired by Dwight Chapin, his former USC fraternity brother, to carry out “dirty tricks” against the Democrats. There is no evidence that Naftali was diligent about seeking to interview the elusive [David Young](#) either. Young is

perhaps the most important participant in Watergate who has never written or talked publicly about his ordeal. Originally one of national security adviser Henry Kissinger's closest aides, Young was seconded to Ehrlichman's domestic policy council in July 1971 to help conduct a study of document classification procedures—and investigate Daniel Ellsberg's leak of the Pentagon Papers. He co-directed (along with Egil Krogh) the White House “plumbers.”

The lack of interviews with Hugh Sloan, Jr., the treasurer at the Committee for the Re-Election of the President (CRP); [Judith Hoback](#), the CRP bookkeeper, and Millicent “Penny” Gleason, who worked on security under James McCord, one of the Watergate burglars, is also striking. Hoback is eminently worthy of an oral history, since she never testified before Congress (unlike Sloan), and was of the few CRP employees who leveled with the FBI from the outset (as did Gleason). Agents interrogated Hoback on six separate occasions, more so than any other CRP employee, and her statements were instrumental in the prosecution of the five burglars plus Hunt and Liddy in January 1973. The program only includes oral histories with CRP employees whose reputations were besmirched during Watergate, namely Magruder, Fred Malek, and Robert Odle, Jr.

In a similar vein, there are no oral histories with either [John Sears](#), a White House aide, or [Donald Santarelli](#), a Justice Department official. These men are so knowledgeable that during the long search for Deep Throat's identity, both were regarded as possible suspects (since both were highly prized confidential sources for Woodstein). They are capable of proving a road-map to the dominant personalities and rivalries within the Nixon administration and campaign apparatus, which, in turn, are vital to any understanding of how Watergate happened.[\[17\]](#)

Equally noticeable is the disparity between the number of oral histories conducted with members or staffers on the House Judiciary Committee, which voted on the articles of impeachment, versus the Senate Watergate Committee, which broke open the scandal in concert with the legal process. Both panels were equally important. With respect to the House, four members—former Reps. William Cohen (R-Maine), Elizabeth Holtzman (D-New York), Trent Lott (R-Mississippi), and Charles Rangel (D-New York), three of whom voted for at least one article of impeachment—and ten staff members were interviewed, making for a total of 14 oral histories. By contrast, only two persons associated with the Watergate Committee—Lowell Weicker (R-Connecticut) and Democratic assistant counsel Terry Lenzner, both of whom were anti-Nixon—were interviewed.[\[18\]](#)

The failure to record oral histories with either the late Daniel Inouye (D-Hawaii), who died in 2012, or Howard Baker, Jr. (R-Tennessee), the president's foremost defender, are glaring omissions, as are the lack of interviews with such Watergate Committee staffers as Fred Thompson, [Rufus Edmisten](#), David Dorsen, James Hamilton, Ronald Rotunda, Marc Lackritz, Robert Muse, and Scott Armstrong. Hamilton wrote a [book](#) on congressional investigations, and Edmisten is on record elsewhere as saying, “[L]ord of mercy, for some Democrats [Watergate] was their chance to get Nixon, just to be honest about it.” Nor did Naftali fill a gap in the historical record by recording an oral

Washington Decoded

history with [James Flug](#), then chief counsel to Senator Edward Kennedy (D-Massachusetts). Behind the scenes, Flug carried out what amounted to a one-man investigation in the months right after the break-in—a probe that was instrumental to the formation of the Watergate (or Ervin) Committee.[\[19\]](#)

A similar lack of balance is characteristic of the Justice Department and FBI interviews, especially when contrasted to the media oral histories. The latter includes three journalists from *The Washington Post*. Yet only one agent and *no* executives from the FBI sat down for oral histories, even though the [Bureau's probe](#) was the equal of its investigation into the JFK assassination in terms of man-hours and resources expended. Neither the late Charles Nuzum, the FBI's supervisory agent who died in 2008, nor John McDermott, the Washington Field Office agent-in-charge during most of Watergate, were asked for their recollections, although their perspectives are critical for a balanced view of the investigation and the scandal itself. Nor was the late [Edward Miller](#), who died in 2013 and was one of [Mark Felt's](#) closest allies in the FBI, approached for an oral history to shed light on [why Deep Throat took it upon himself to leak](#).

The legal process that broke the scandal wide open is also given short shrift. Of the three US attorneys—Earl Silbert, Seymour Glanzer, and Donald Campbell—who initially prosecuted the Watergate burglars and two higher-ups (Liddy and Hunt), only Silbert was asked for an oral history. Nor were any members of the fabled grand jury asked to sit down and lay out their recollections. The foreman of the grand jury, [Vladimir Pregelj](#), a long-time employee of the Library of Congress, still lives in the same home on Capitol Hill.

Even allowing for the *Post's* foremost role in covering Watergate, one can take issue with a project that conducted interviews with Bob Woodward, Carl Bernstein, and Ben Bradlee to the exclusion of other print journalists who covered Watergate. Significant articles appeared in *Time* magazine, the *Los Angeles Times*, and *The New York Times* during the period, June 1972 to February 1973, when the cover-up orchestrated by the White House gave every appearance of succeeding. This *Washington Post*-centric view of Watergate is a pinched interpretation of who or what was truly important, and decidedly at odds with building a baseline of information useful to future historians. As Clark Mollenhoff, an esteemed investigative journalist in his own right, observed in 1988,

If you believe the downfall of President Nixon was dependent upon what . . . “Deep Throat” . . . whispered to a young reporter in a Washington parking garage, you are half-informed or the victim of one of the superficial myths flowing from the Watergate experience.[\[20\]](#)

Indeed, by ignoring *Post* editors [Harry Rosenfeld](#) and [Barry Sussman](#), the oral history project doesn't even fairly depict what truly went on inside the newspaper during those fateful months. This is particularly true in Sussman's case. The author of a well-regarded history of Watergate, [The Great Cover-up](#), Sussman provides a sorely needed corrective to the fabulistic account of the *Post's* coverage that was presented in *All the*

President's Men (both the book and the film), and reprised in Robert Redford's recent documentary, [All the President's Men Revisited](#).

Sussman was a city editor at the *Post* at the time of the break-in. He became the special Watergate editor in mid-July 1972, when managing editor Howard Simons decided to go after the story. Sussman put Bernstein and Woodward on the story full-time, and in reality, a troika—not a duo—was responsible for the summer/fall 1972 coverage that won the newspaper (*not* Woodstein) a Pulitzer Prize. According to interview notes by Alan Pakula, taken as he was preparing to direct *All the President's Men*, managing editor Simons and metro editor Rosenfeld thought if any single person at the *Post* was deserving of a Pulitzer it was Sussman.[\[21\]](#)

According to Pakula's notes, "Barry made [editorially] acceptable the work of two junior reporters . . . They didn't understand what they had often and couldn't write it." Sussman's role was to "interpret the significance [of what the duo gathered] and to structure it in terms of news articles [which necessitated] quite a bit of rewriting." Sussman also played a larger role in guiding the reporters during the critical first months than was commonly understood.

Sussman told Pakula that he regarded *All the President's Men* as a "modified, limited hangout" of what had occurred at the *Post*—intentionally parroting Watergate co-conspirator John Ehrlichman's infamous phrase. The book Woodstein wrote represented a "copout" at key moments, and was "trivial in terms of what they said happened at the *Post* . . . and "sentimentalize[d]" the story. Sussman also warned Pakula that several substantive issues were treated inaccurately, i.e., "they're wrong often on detail" and "some of their writing is not true"—as proved to be the case with respect to the grand juror interview.[\[22\]](#)

Sussman had flatly claimed for years that the *Post* successfully interviewed a grand juror in December 1972, a time when the newspaper was concerned that the legal process itself had been corrupted. Bernstein and Woodward, just as flatly, always denied they ever gained any information from a grand juror. Sussman turned out to be right, as Bradlee biographer [Jeff Himmelman discovered](#) when reading through Bradlee's papers, in which he found Bernstein's notes on his conversation with the grand juror.[\[23\]](#)

If the *Post's* coverage was going to be featured, different perspectives of what happened at the newspaper during Watergate ought to have been gathered. Instead, Ben Bradlee, Carl Bernstein, and Woodward were interviewed and repeated the hoariest clichés.

Overall, there was a marked tendency to obtain oral histories from what might be called the usual suspects at the expense of recording the recollections of persons who are not celebrities. This was particularly unfortunate given that so many of the former have written entire books about their Watergate experience (Dean, Colson, Magruder, Liddy, Woodstein); for that matter, Colson had already provided two oral histories to the RMNL during a short-lived effort to gather such materials in the late 1980s. If any kind of triage

had to be performed, the non-book writers and unheard voices should have been given priority.

According to John Taylor, executive director of the Nixon Foundation from 2007 to 2009, the oral history program was entirely “Tim’s project . . . he chose the interviewees and determined the content.” Neither Naftali nor his special assistant, Paul Musgrave, responded to any questions regarding the scope and selection of oral history narrators.[\[24\]](#)

The Substance of the Oral Histories

Marked imbalances and gaping holes; several critical interviews that should have been conducted but weren’t—these are earmarks of a program not dictated by scholarly considerations, or even budgetary restraints, but other factors, most likely a presidential library director who was unwilling to delegate responsibility and share the presumed limelight.

That these criticisms are accurate is underscored by the substance of the histories that were conducted. They are not useless; it would be difficult to interview Earl Silbert or William Ruckelshaus about Watergate and come away with a worthless transcript. Rather, the oral histories fall short because in too many instances they fail to ask difficult questions, or do not appreciate what narrators have just said by asking appropriate follow-up questions. The tone and content of the interviews is too often superficial rather than scholarly; frequently the questions seemed designed to flatter rather than probe, and when at a loss, the focus often is “how did it feel.”

These deficits are traceable to a lack of familiarity with the subject matter, or a casual attitude about being prepared for the interview, and probably both. Most people, aside from top officials, have little or no experience being interviewed in depth and tend naturally to be wary. One of the few ways an interviewer may be able to elicit frank recollections during what is, more often than not, a one-time opportunity, is to demonstrate an excellent grasp of the history, including, but not limited to, the narrator’s perspective on important issues.

Angelo Lano’s 2009 oral history is good example of where a superficial understanding/lack of preparation produced an underwhelming result.

On the face of it, the oral history should have been superb. Lano was the FBI’s lead or “case” agent for the duration of the Watergate investigation. He has rarely agreed to be interviewed because, from his perspective, the FBI probe has been consistently misrepresented and unfairly portrayed. He was highly motivated, in other words, to get his side of the story out in 2009, and had reason to believe the RMNL oral history program would be the appropriate venue. Naftali noted in his letter to Lano that the

Bureau’s “vital role . . . is often overlooked,” and the RMNL was interested in presenting a “360-degree view of the case.”[\[25\]](#)

Upon viewing the oral history—the RMNL has not yet released a transcript—it quickly becomes apparent that Naftali was ill-prepared. The questions proceed in a random, non-sequential manner. Naftali doesn’t listen to Lano’s answers, i.e., ask follow-up questions that flow naturally from what Lano has just explained. The result is a disjointed interview that leaves much unsaid. This critique was confirmed by Lano when he was asked what he thought of the interview. Naftali “had a lined sheet of paper with some questions written upon it,” Lano recalled. “It was a rush job as far as I was concerned.”[\[26\]](#)

One prominent Nixon scholar viewed many of the oral histories while the program was ongoing. He has requested anonymity, but recalls suggesting to Naftali that the oral histories could be “much more” if Naftali used documents and tapes to prepare the narrators and inform his own questions more fully. “They could have been used to break new ground, but instead they seem to present the status quo,” the scholar said at the time. “The purpose was to record the status quo,” Naftali responded, “to simply get them down while they were still alive.”[\[27\]](#)

This frank admission was at odds with how the oral history program was originally touted and sold when it started out. In 2007, a reporter for the *Chronicle of Higher Education* was told the oral history program will consult with “outside independent scholars to create a new record of Nixon and his era.”[\[28\]](#)

Not Asking the Right Questions

A different facet of the problem with the oral histories is evident in the ones conducted with Carl Bernstein and Bob Woodward. Here the issue was not interviewing someone who had lot to say but whose views had never been recorded. Rather, Naftali faced the opposite problem: how to get Woodstein past their familiar narrative and anecdotes that have been repeated *ad nauseum*.

One of the critical questions that should have been put to them, as any Watergate scholar would know, has to do with the *Post*’s centerpiece story of 10 October 1972. Occupying the prestigious upper-right quadrant of the front page, it was boldly headlined “[FBI Finds Nixon Aides Sabotaged Democrats](#).” The story was and still is regarded as the “centerpiece” of the newspaper’s pre-election coverage. It seemingly tied together the scandal’s disparate strands and tried to put the break-in into a context, as one element in far-flung program to subvert the Democrats if not the democratic process—which included greasing the way so that Nixon faced the one candidate he wanted to run against the most, George McGovern.[\[29\]](#)

The only problem is that the article's most damning allegation proved to be untrue. The article alleged that White House aide Ken Clawson wrote the "Canuck" letter that helped destroy Maine Senator Ed Muskie's candidacy. But the Watergate Special Prosecution Force (WSPF) later found that neither Clawson, nor anyone else at the White House, had anything to do with this letter to the editor of the *Manchester* (New Hampshire) *Union Leader*. What also makes this episode especially significant is that according to *All the President's Men*, Deep Throat (aka Mark Felt, the FBI's no. 2 man) supposedly told Woodstein that the Canuck letter was a "White House operation—done inside the gates surrounding the White House and the Executive Office Building." Yet at the time, the FBI knew nothing about the Canuck letter; it was nowhere on the Bureau's radar. Since the allegation proved completely false, the episode raises profound questions, not limited to the nature of Felt's relationship with Woodstein. To this day, Bernstein and Woodward cite their October 10 article as proof that President Nixon was bent on nothing less than subversion of the electoral system in 1972, despite the central untruth in that "seminal" article.[\[30\]](#)

Here is the excerpt from Bernstein's 2007 oral history in which he discusses the Canuck letter, Muskie's political implosion, and *Post's* seminal article, along with Naftali's verbatim questions:

Naftali: How did you get to [Donald] Segretti?

Bernstein: Segretti . . . I got a call one night—anonously, from a guy named Alex Shipley from Nashville, who had been in the army. I think he was going to be a local prosecutor or something. He had been approached by someone, he said, who he had been with in the army, to go to work in the Nixon campaign and go around the country and try to disrupt the [Democrats'] campaign at rallies, and things like that.

And this guy's name was Donald Segretti, and he [Shipley] thought this might be interesting to me. And, of course, it was very interesting to me. And I remember I went the next day to the office of Al Gore's father, to see [then-Senator] Al Gore senior, to try and find out a little more about this guy, Alex Shipley, and whether he was on the level, and whether, by any [chance], you know, were there any contacts back—I wanted to make sure that this guy was bona fide, and if anybody had ever heard of him.

And somehow somebody had, and from there on in, Bob [Woodward] and I started trying to work off Shipley's information and look for Segretti. And the first thing we did was to get hold of Segretti's phone and American Express travel receipts. They showed these cross-country trips, and then we started making calendars of where the campaigns were, on a given day, and they fit together. And it became apparent that what Shipley was telling us—and then we would read, you know, what had happened . . . and there would be this disruption, or there'd be demonstrators that had

showed up, or that . . . the equipment, the sound truck had been—wouldn't get there, and there'd be no microphone available for the Democratic candidate.

And Muskie had had particular trouble. And there were also some intimations that the so-called “Canuck letter” might have been part of this [sabotage effort]—this being a letter that was embarrassing to Muskie because he had . . . in this ostensible letter he had written [sic]—which was a forgery, he had not written it. He referred to French-Canadian Americans as “Canucks,” which was, even though it was the name of the hockey team, it was not considered a very nice appellation.[\[31\]](#)

Naftali: Why did you go to Al Gore senior?

Bernstein: I can't remember it all. But as I remember, Shipley had said to me that he knew somebody in Gore's office, and I wanted to make sure this guy was on the level.

Naftali: So what was it like when you met Segretti?

Bernstein: It took me a long time to meet him, and we had already run the story by then. And the most important story that we did was in October of 1972, based on what these records we had gotten . . . and the fact that by then, we knew that Segretti had been directed by a guy named Dwight Chapin, who was Haldeman's deputy, and in charge of the White House campaign scheduling and all kinds of things.

The story said . . . you know, Watergate didn't make sense. The break-in didn't make any sense. Why break-in? But this story said that the Watergate break-in was part of a vast campaign of political espionage and sabotage directed by the Nixon campaign against the president's political opponents. So suddenly it all made sense . . . it pulled everything together. And that the idea that—oh, it wasn't just a break-in, it was—the idea was, to try and actually undermine the Democratic Party and their selection of a nominee. And every evidence is that Nixon and [G. Gordon] Liddy and [E. Howard] Hunt and [Bob] Haldeman wanted George McGovern to be the nominee. And they wanted to knock out Muskie, and they wanted first to knock out Kennedy—which explained Hunt's fascination with Kennedy, and the research he was doing on Teddy Kennedy.

Naftali: This story, um—

Bernstein: So it was a fundamental perversion of the electoral process, I mean, and now you started to understand that there was a constitutional aspect to this, and an undermining of the very system, whoever it [the nomination] went to.

And I should—should mention a moment that we did not talk about in *All the President's Men*, and we probably have put it in there. And we didn't write about it until after, actually, Deep Throat came forward. And in Bob's book, *A Secret Man*, about Felt, I wrote an afterward to the book about Felt and about the journalism we had done

Between the simple matter of failing to correct Bernstein when he mistakenly described the Canuck letter, and not asking critical questions about the October 10 story at the right time, Naftali performed dismally—as if he were flying by the seat of his pants, insufficiently versed in the history and unprepared for the interview.

This problem crops up again and again in the oral histories. In the William Ruckelshaus oral history, conducted in 2007, the interim FBI director spends several minutes describing his relationship with Deep Throat, and culminates his recollection with an astonishing revelation: in May 1973, William Sullivan may have leaked FBI information to John Crewdson of *The New York Times* and successfully framed [Mark Felt for this leak](#). Naftali does not react to the revelation or its implications (the transcript renders Crewdson as “Kruzen,”) except to chime in with a reference on the Nixon tapes to “Hoover people . . . protecting their behinds”—which reveals that Naftali had no real understanding of what Ruckelshaus was talking about. Rather than seek clarification, Naftali changed the subject: “Do you recall [Alexander] Haig putting pressure on you to release information on national security wiretaps by John F. Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson?”[\[32\]](#)

It's worth interjecting here why the Miller Center uses the group method to conduct oral histories, i.e., having as many as four interviewers pose questions to one narrator. According to director Russell Riley, a small group is more likely to ask questions that future users of the interview would want to know; the group compensates for “individual blind spots and biases.” There is also a pragmatic reason, in that it is difficult for a single interviewer to keep an oral history session moving productively for hours at a time. Even on the core issue of establishing a rapport between the interviewer and narrator, a team approach has proven superior, since if rapport with one member sours, others can step in and rescue the session.[\[33\]](#)

Not surprisingly all these problems crop up in the Naftali-conducted interviews, along with another one that is especially evident when looking at the videos: “how much Naftali talks” when the conversation lags, and sometimes even when it doesn't. According to a C-SPAN producer who vetted the Nixon oral histories for broadcast on [American History TV](#),

It's almost like he [was] the show. At times his interview subjects fight to get a word in. A good facilitator of an oral history asks short questions, gets the interview subject to talk as much as possible, and generally tries to remove themselves from the interview. After all, it's not their interview! But that is not how these went.[\[34\]](#)

Helping to Falsify History

Failing to ask the right questions is one thing. Injecting materially wrong information into an oral history, however, is even more egregious. Yet that is precisely what Naftali did while conducting the oral history with Bob Woodward.

In *The Secret Man*, Woodward wrote that after he began working at the *Post* in September 1971,

That spring [Felt] told me in utter confidence that the FBI had information that Vice President Spiro T. Agnew had received a bribe of \$2,500 in cash that he had put in his desk drawer.

I passed this on to Richard Cohen, then the top Maryland reporter for the *Post* . . . Two years later, the Agnew investigation revealed that the vice president had indeed received such a bribe in his office.[\[35\]](#)

Anyone familiar with the rudimentary history of this period would immediately recognize a problem with Woodward's chronology. "That spring" would mean the spring of 1972. "Two years later" would be 1974. Spiro Agnew, however, resigned in October 1973.

According to Richard Cohen's 1974 co-authored book on Agnew, the Felt leak that Woodward passed on was given to Cohen in the spring of 1973. Nor could it have been any earlier than that, because the FBI had no knowledge of the bribery before then. When this discrepancy was pointed out to Woodward, he forthrightly admitted to this author that the chronology presented in *The Secret Man* "looks like it's not right." And given the speed with which *The Secret Man* was published, the error is understandable.[\[36\]](#)

In the Woodward oral history, Naftali made a point of raising the leak about Agnew. But rather than realize it could not possibly be true, and giving Woodward an opportunity to correct the record, Naftali claimed it proved that Felt was leaking stories adverse to the Nixon administration *before* J. Edgar Hoover's death on 2 May 1972—which is certainly [not accurate](#). Moreover, Naftali concluded triumphantly, the timing proved that Felt did not just leak out of pique, after he was passed over for the FBI directorship, but out of principle.

Here is a transcript of the relevant section from the 2010 Woodward oral history; Woodward's puzzlement cannot adequately be conveyed on the written page; it is more apparent when viewing the oral history because Woodward realized something was amiss.

Naftali: So, how long was this . . . were you in the farm leagues [reporting for the *Montgomery County* (Maryland) *Sentinel*]?

Woodward: One year.

Naftali: And then . . . they called you, or you went back—

Woodward: Oh no, I called them. I was pestering [them]. I wanted to work at the *Post*, and . . . so I was persistent.

Naftali: And so you go back to the *Post*—you go to the *Post* I mean—and you have a job, and you start calling Mr. Felt again.

Woodward: Yes. Well, I was—I was keeping in touch with him, but the real break-through in dealing with him, was the [15 May 1972] assassination attempt on George Wallace. It—[\[37\]](#)

Naftali: Can I ask you about something before we get to that?

Woodward: Oh sure, of course.

Naftali: Because it—

Woodward: Oh yeah.

Naftali: His first leak to you—

Woodward: [chuckles]

Naftali: —is about Spiro Agnew.

Woodward: That's right. But I didn't see it as a leak, or a . . . and I don't think it was a leak that he said that the vice president's taking money. And I passed it onto the reporters who had covered Agnew in Maryland, and they couldn't believe it. And, you know . . . but he was right![\[38\]](#)

Naftali: Yeah . . . I'm stepping—

Woodward: [chuckles]. Yeah.

Naftali: —I want to step back for a moment because some people in—who have looked motives see that [Felt] was angry because he didn't replace [J. Edgar] Hoover. But Hoover was alive [sic] when he [Felt] gave you this information [about Agnew].

Woodward: [mutters]

Naftali: So you must have developed some kind of rapport with him.

Woodward: Well, I mean it was very clear I wasn't to use it or quote him, ah, but again, you've—you know, this the craft of the reporter. You . . . talk to people and you listen, and, ah, you have to really just let the silence suck out the truth. And, you know, I was calling him and talking to him, and I was working on this, ah . . . I was working—well, I guess, no. This was before the Wallace assassination wasn't it?

Naftali: Yeah.

Woodward: Yeah. And he had it right. And the FBI somehow knew—whether officially, whether in the investigations—that early, the vice president was taking money.

Naftali: Umm, please—and you then passed the story along, I guess to Richard Cohen.

Woodward: Who just didn't believe it . . . thought it was im—incredible, and I said, “Well, that's what I've heard.” [chuckles]

Naftali: Now let's talk about Wallace

The Non-Watergate Oral Histories

The preceding three examples suffice to give a flavor of the problems associated with the Watergate-related oral histories that Naftali conducted. The domestic-policy oral histories, unrelated to Watergate, exhibit the same problems only magnified.

This subset of the overall oral history program was conceived amid great optimism and enthusiasm in 2006. Ninety-one Nixon alumni, who had long been denied the opportunity to record their accomplishments, were keen to foster an oral history program on par with that of the other presidential libraries—so much so they raised \$130,000 amongst themselves, with the stipulation that the money would be used only for oral histories on domestic policy. The enthusiasm at the outset of the program was such that Paul Musgrave, Naftali's special assistant, effusively asserted to the group that “Very soon the Nixon Library will have produced one of the most outstanding oral history archives in—and about—American history.”^[39]

Whether one agrees with Nixon's domestic policies or not, there is no denying his was a consequential presidency. And many people who would figure in public service, the media, or politics for the next three decades got their start during the Nixon years, including Richard Cheney, Donald Rumsfeld, Paul O'Neill, Colin Powell, Henry Paulson, David Gergen, Diane Sawyer, Pat Buchanan, James Lynn, Frank Carlucci,

George Shultz, Roger Ailes, and Brian Lamb. Several Nixon-era initiatives had lasting impact, including:

- Consolidation of domestic policy-making
- Transformation of the BoB into the OMB
- Creation of the EPA
- Home rule for Washington, DC
- Integration of trade unions
- Establishment of revenue-sharing and block grants
- Creation of the all-volunteer armed forces

The program was originally represented to the group as an effort that would use a “wide array of academic partners” knowledgeable about the subject matter; if they didn’t actually conduct the interview, they would be very active participants. “[W]e will need to involve scholar experts in the various fields to ensure that the questions are informed,” Naftali told Shepard in 2006. On several occasions scholars did participate, but soon Naftali claimed it was just too difficult to line them up. He unilaterally decided to do the “important” interviews—meaning of persons who had come to prominence after the Nixon years—by himself, leading to the quip that the most dangerous place in Yorba Linda was between Naftali and a camera. Since he didn’t know the subject matter, and prepared haphazardly for the interviews if at all, the oral histories ended up lacking real substance and will be of dubious value to future researchers. “Naftali was thrilled to conduct the interview but the oral histories themselves represent tragically lost opportunities,” said Geoff Shepard, a former Nixon aide who was the prime mover behind the fund-raising effort.[\[40\]](#)

[William E. Timmons](#), who was interviewed by Naftali in March 2009, was the first alum to raise an alarm. Timmons had been the legislative affairs assistant from 1969 to 1974, and as such, the person responsible for Nixon’s success in dealing with a Democrat-controlled Congress. Like many other alumni, he was genuinely looking forward to the opportunity to recall a history he had thought about long and hard. Yet when it was over, Timmons felt he had done Nixon a disservice; he had not made the points he most wanted to make. He was also disturbed in that once the cameras were rolling, Naftali had asked him unexpected and specific questions about Watergate—had even thrust a memo toward him, on camera, and asked his reaction.[\[41\]](#)

Unschooling in the ethics of oral history, Timmons initially blamed himself for not doing a good job. But the more he thought about it, the more he concluded that the way Naftali had conducted the interview was the reason why it failed. When Timmons shared his concerns with Shepard, he was sufficiently concerned to undertake an informal survey of his former colleagues. The more Shepard learned, the more disturbed he became. Naftali’s conduct with Timmons was not isolated. Former speechwriter William Safire was unperturbed: “I’m pretty experienced at not answering questions that I don’t want to answer. But perhaps other of our colleagues are not.” Fred Malek reported that Naftali had tried a similar document stunt with him, but Malek had simply refused to be drawn in. Several participants said they would never have agreed to an oral history in the first

place if they had known they were going to be asked their personal views about Watergate.[\[42\]](#)

Ambush interviews, of course, violate the professional standards painstakingly established by oral historians. Assistant archivist Sharon Fawcett reportedly told archivist David S. Ferriero that if word of Naftali's conduct ever became widespread it would threaten all future presidential oral histories; at the request of the Nixon Foundation, NARA contacted every Nixon alum who had been interviewed to say that unless they specifically gave their consent in writing, no part of their oral history could be incorporated into the long-delayed Watergate exhibit.[\[43\]](#)

Eventually the domestic-policy project went kaput after 32 of the approximately 91 oral histories originally contemplated had been conducted. Concern over Naftali's approach, coupled with a controversial invitation to have John Dean speak at the RMNL in 2009, deflated alumni's enthusiasm for the project. Shepard—who, like many Nixon alumni, was greatly impressed with Naftali initially and supported him enthusiastically for more than two years—said that former aides ultimately decided they could do more with group interviews on given topics, which they termed “Legacy Forums.” Naftali committed to doing “prep work,” i.e., compiling a briefing book that would outline the topics and document specific pieces of legislation so that the participants did not have to undertake extensive archival research on their own. “Of course, never once did he provide a single bit of helpful information,” Shepard said.[\[44\]](#)

The first substantive forum was on the environment—William Ruckelshaus, the EPA's first administrator, along with two former members of the Domestic Council participated, and an environmental scholar, John Brooks Flippen, was the moderator. “All Tim provided—at the very last minute—was NARA's response to a FOIA request Flippen had submitted some months before,” Shepard said. But the request had been so poorly drafted that it yielded nothing of substance. “After this fiasco—from a research point of view—we stopped including Tim and the program has worked quite nicely ever since,” Shepard noted.[\[45\]](#)

Dwight Chapin, the president's appointments secretary, typifies the sense of betrayal that lingers among Nixon alumni long after their dismal experience with Naftali. Naftali's 2007 letter requesting an interview had asserted that Chapin's oral history would be “important to informing historians' and future generations' understanding of President Nixon and his times.” And Chapin certainly had a lot to share.[\[46\]](#)

At 20 years old, I went to work as a field man in California when RN ran for governor. In 1964, I went to the [GOP] convention in San Francisco as RN's aide. In 1965, I moved from California to New York . . . In the evenings, twice a week, I would leave J. Walter Thompson and go to Wall Street, where along with Mrs. Nixon, I answered mail coming in to RN. In 1966, I was an advance man for the off-year campaigning RN did for congressional candidates. In 1967, I joined the political staff at the [Mudge, Rose] law firm as RN's personal aide. It was Rose [Mary

Woods], [Pat] Buchanan, Shelley (Pat's future wife), Ray Price, and me. I had a little office in the Nixon's private apartment on 5th Avenue. Up through the election and our move to the White House, I never missed a trip with RN. My room always connected to his or was a part of the suite. I got him to bed and woke him up. I was very privileged and witnessed the fascinating, inside story of a presidential campaign.

I should add, my closest friend was Bob Haldeman and he told me everything. *Everything*.

The above is stated only to underscore the point [John Mitchell's biographer James] Rosen made to me: Tim's interview with me did not focus on Nixon the man I knew. He primarily interviewed me with a slant toward Watergate or with leading questions that set up (lent credence to) Tim's views on Watergate and the evils of Nixon.

I had worked directly with the man, knew things no one else knew regarding [his] temperament, relationships, the trials and tribulations of the campaign, and early White House years. Yet Tim did not explore them. He could not have cared less. There are probably many interesting insights he could have gotten out of me—that I would have been willing to discuss—but that was not his purpose in interviewing me.[\[47\]](#)

An oral historian true to his or her craft would be deeply mortified to have elicited a reaction such as Timmons's or Chapin's, but Naftali sloughed off all criticism. In a 2009 response to Robert Odle, one of several signatories to a letter criticizing the RMNL director's unprofessional conduct, Naftali chided him: The signed letter "contains a paragraph that I assume you did not read because it alleges that I pretty much only ask questions about Watergate and very few about appointments, presidential travel, etc."

Didn't we talk about Tricia Nixon Cox's wedding in our interview? And Dwight Chapin and Ron Walker must have told you that we talked a lot about advance work in their very long oral histories This allegation will be dismissed by those we have interviewed, but my colleagues and I worry about a possible chilling effect on future [oral histories].

I understand that as a public intellectual my views are fair game

[But] I wish you had insisted on fact-checking the letter before putting you [sic] name to it And finally I regret that you put your name to something that could limit the scope of our successful oral history program going forward. Already the interviews have captured the spirit, creativity, and public service of the Domestic Council, OMB and the rest of the administration. The domestic side of the Nixon administration was new to me . . . and I have come to appreciate the vibrancy and deep significance of that [sic] was accomplished domestically between 1969

and 1974. It would be a shame if the project were to wither before we had a chance to reach out to preserve the recollections of the rest of Geoff Shepard's reunion group.[\[48\]](#)

Feeling partly responsible for the debacle, Shepard eventually offered a public apology to the entire group of alumni at one of their periodic reunions. But the real losers are historians, biographers, and anyone else who wants to write about Richard Nixon in the future, or for that matter, just Watergate. The oral histories about the scandal are "Woodwardian," as an archivist at the Nixon Library, put it. "There's nothing new. A lot more real research would have had to occur. But it was easier to stay with what's popular with the parlor set, the accepted version" of Watergate.[\[49\]](#)

Naftali left behind the largest oral history program on video ever created solely by a presidential library. Size doesn't equate to quality. The oral histories represent a "lost opportunity," the archivist noted. "And now that [Naftali's] done it, no one else will."[\[50\]](#)

The Next Director

Managing a presidential library under the best of circumstances is a demanding task, for it requires a director to balance the desires of a president's family, supporters, and alumni for hagiography against the interests of scholars and the general public for history with the bark off.

The first director of the Nixon Library under the NARA aegis admittedly faced a difficult, certainly unprecedented, and possibly thankless job. Integrating the library into the NARA system, given a president as controversial as Nixon, and with pent-up tasks that had languished for decades, required, among other things, someone with the skills of an experienced diplomat and inordinate patience with Nixon loyalists wary of the slightest evidence of a double standard.

Given the operating arrangements—NARA has the final say for the most part, but the presidential libraries/museums are run (and funded) jointly by NARA and foundations with a "hagiographic impulse"—any visitor to a presidential museum who expects something other than rose-colored history (at least for a few decades after it opens) probably deserves to be deceived. The primary difference between the RMNL and other "presidential temples," to borrow the title from Benjamin Hufbauer's outstanding book on these libraries, is that the drama over the Nixon exhibits, papers, and tape recordings has played out belatedly and very publicly rather than behind the scenes. When it comes to fiercely protecting an image to the point of projecting false history, however, Nixon loyalists (as in 1960) are mere also-rans to Kennedy loyalists, or for that matter, Reagan loyalists. Both the Kennedy and Reagan foundations have been able to secure their interests with virtually no adverse publicity. That leaves the slightly separate but related question of whether Nixon should to be singled out for special treatment because he resigned from office rather than face a Senate trial. He should not be.[\[51\]](#)

When a director retains the confidence of a library's most interested constituents, he can work wonders. Harry Middleton, the long-time director of the Johnson Library was easily as devoted to LBJ as much as Dwight Chapin, say, is to Nixon. President Johnson had ordered that the tape recordings made during his term in office be closed for 50 years after his 1973 death; the directive was as specific as could be. But because Middleton was trusted by Lady Bird Johnson, he was able to turn a partial release, mandated under the extraordinary Assassination Materials Act of 1992, into the wholesale opening of the tapes—facilitating an entirely new and penetrating round of Johnson scholarship that has not yet run its course.

Naftali, in hindsight, was uniquely unqualified by temperament to lead the Nixon Library. (In one article about his controversial tenure, he came close to admitting as much: “If the foundation had done their due diligence, they might not have been so enthusiastic about me.”) His grandstanding instantly alienated the core group of loyalists who had created the library as an outlier; his self-aggrandizing behavior then antagonized the wider constituencies vital to running the RMNL successfully inside the NARA system. Eventually his counterparts at the other presidential libraries took a dim view of his histrionic gestures because they threatened to poison their own respective, sensitive relationships. And in time, Naftali wore out his welcome at the NARA office that oversees the presidential libraries and lost the trust of the assistant archivist, Sharon Fawcett, who ran it.[\[52\]](#)

NARA has an obligation to conduct a national search and nominate candidates (not just one) who understand the needs of scholarship and public history, are good managers, and above all, not bent on enhancing their reputations at the expense of Richard Nixon's.

No wonder that the library's core constituents are holding out.

Max Holland worked on the Lyndon Johnson presidential tape recordings at the University of Virginia's Miller Center of Public Affairs from 1999 to 2003; during that time, Tim Naftali was director of the Miller Center's Presidential Recordings Project. Holland is also the author of *Leak: Why Mark Felt Became Deep Throat* (2012).

[1] Tim Reid, “[At Nixon library, Tension Over How to Portray a Disgraced President](#),” Reuters, 29 April 2014; Daniel Langhorne, “[Nixon Library Left Leaderless as Foundation, Federal Official Seek Common Ground](#),” *Orange County Register*, 11 May 2014; Jon Wiener, “[The Nixon Library Needs a New Director, Now](#),” *The Nation*, 13 May 2014; Tim Naftali, “[There's New Trouble in Nixonville](#),” *Los Angeles Times*, 14 May 2014; Jeffrey Frank, “[Who Owns Richard Nixon?](#)” *The New Yorker*, 20 May 2014.

[2] One of the better, but nonetheless slanted accounts, of Naftali's tenure is Andrew Gumbel, "[Nixon's Presidential Library: The Last Battle of Watergate](#)," *Miller-McCune*, 8 December 2011.

[3] Anthony Clark criticizes the trend toward monumentalism in "Presidential Libraries Are Huge Failures," *Salon*, 25 April 2013.

[4] In a July 2007 letter to executives with the Nixon Foundation, for example, Naftali put the new Watergate exhibit and oral history program on an equal footing. Email, Naftali to Allen Weinstein, 3 July 2007, released under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) 11 May 2011.

[5] James Sterling Young, [Oral History Transcript Editing Guidelines](#), Miller Center of Public Affairs, University of Virginia.

[6] Email, Naftali to Weinstein, 3 July 2007, FOIA.

[7] Email, Naftali to Weinstein, 8 February 2007, FOIA. The foundation allocated a fixed amount annually to the oral history program, but required that it be notified in advance in case it chose not to underwrite that particular interview. Email, John Taylor to Naftali, 5 January 2008, FOIA.

[8] Email, Naftali to Sharon Fawcett, 23 February 2010, FOIA. Despite the use of professional camera crews, several of the oral histories are "unairable," according to a C-SPAN producer. The video quality is below average or the sound quality is less than professional. Interview subjects were "not being miked or too far off-mike, [though] Naftali always ensured he was miked." Email, C-SPAN producer to Max Holland, 8 June 2014.

Naftali made a pitch to C-SPAN to use his oral histories "to tell the story of the Nixon administration" as early as January 2008, after the oral history program had been operating for little more than one year. In July 2009 at the request of C-SPAN, which was starting a *American History TV* on its third cable channel, Naftali instructed Musgrove to send over several oral histories although they had not been reviewed for classified information. The oral histories were those of Richard Cheney, Brent Scowcroft, George Shultz, Frank Carlucci, Egil Krogh, Charles Colson, and William Cohen. NARA had to mount a frantic effort to retrieve them as this represented a major security violation. Email, Naftali to Susan Cooper, 4 February 2008, FOIA; Email, Naftali to Nancy Smith, 21 October 2009, FOIA; Email, Naftali to Terry Murphy, 21 October 2009, FOIA.

[9] Beverly Gage, "[Unanswered Questions About Watergate: There Are So Many—Why Is No One Asking Them?](#)" *Slate*, 22 April 2013.

[10] Wilfrid Sheed, *Essays in Disguise* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1990), 148.

[11] Holland interview of Sheldon Stern, 17 May 2013. Stern was the historian at the JFKL from 1977 to 2000, and conducted its oral history program.

Naftali's decision to direct the program was also odd in that he had worked at the University of Virginia's Miller Center of Public Affairs, which has made conducting presidential oral histories a specialty. Its Presidential Oral History Program, initiated in 1981, now constitutes the single largest repository of such oral histories, encompassing the Carter, Bush, Reagan, and Clinton presidencies. According to program director Russell Riley, a collaboration with the Nixon Library was never broached, although given the Miller Center's commitments, it may have been difficult to get involved. Email, Russell Riley to Holland, 21 May 2013.

[12] Russell L. Riley, "For History's Sake, Nothing Like a Paper Trail," *Washington Post*, 6 November 2005; Russell L. Riley, "The White House as a Black Box: Oral History and the Problem of Evidence in Presidential Studies," *Political Studies*, Vol. 57, 2009, 187-206; Russell L. Riley, "Presidential Oral History: The Clinton Presidential History Project," *Oral History Review*, Vol. 34, No. 2, 2007, 81-106.

[13] Robert Dallek, *An Unfinished Life: John F. Kennedy, 1917-1963* (Boston: Little, Brown, 2003), 476.

[14] Email, Riley to Holland, 20 May 2013.

[15] Tracy E. K'Meyer, "An Interview with Charles T. Morrissey: Part I—"Getting Started: Beginning an Oral History Career," *Oral History Review* Vol. 24, No. 2, Winter 1997, 79.

[16] *Ibid.*, 81-82; Stern interview, 17 May 2013.

[17] Max Holland, [*Leak: Why Mark Felt Became Deep Throat*](#) (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2012), 60-61, 143-144. In Carl Bernstein's oral history, Naftali asks Bernstein about a "former White House official" who was a prized source; from the way Naftali asks the question he does not appear to know that this person was John Sears, who was outed in 2000 as a Woodstein source by Leonard Garment. Carl Bernstein Oral History, 22 October 2007, RMNL, 29:25; Leonard Garment, [*In Search of Deep Throat: The Greatest Political Mystery of Our Time*](#) (New York: Basic Books, 2000), 219.

[18] Naftali also wanted to interview Hilary Rodham Clinton, who was on the House staff, but apparently she declined. Holland interview of NARA archivist, 2 May 2013.

[19] [*Rufus Edmisten Oral History*](#), 8 September 2011, Senate Historical Office, Washington, DC, 62.

Naftali wrote Thompson in February 2009 and asked him to participate in the oral history program, but there is no evidence of any follow-up. The documents also indicate Naftali's interest in interviewing Inouye, but again, it did not actually occur. Letter,

Naftali to Fred Thompson, 24 February 2009; Memo, Naftali to Taylor, 2 August 2007, FOIA. Former Senator Baker never responded to overtures, apparently because he heard about Naftali's increasingly controversial directorship. Interview of NARA archivist by Holland, 9 June 2014.

[20] Clark Mollenhoff, "Journalists Suffer Their Own Deadly AIDs," *IRE Journal*, Fall 1988, 3.

In October 1972, the *Los Angeles Times* published, in effect, what would be the testimony of Alfred Baldwin, the leading witness for federal prosecutors. Baldwin had monitored the wiretaps at the Watergate and was serving as a lookout on the night of the second break-in. In January 1973, the *New York Times's* Seymour Hersh wrote the first story exposing the cover-up, e.g., that at least four of the burglars were being paid "hush money." Meanwhile, *Time* magazine's Sandy Smith was the first reporter to link the Watergate break-in with the mysterious White House "plumbers" unit, and to disclose that several reporters and staffers on the National Security Council had been wiretapped from 1969 to 1971. Jack Nelson and Ronald J. Ostrow, "Bugging Witness Tells Inside Story on Incident at Watergate," *Los Angeles Times*, 5 October 1972; Seymour Hersh, "4 Watergate Defendants Reported Still Being Paid," *New York Times*, 14 January 1973; (Sandy Smith), "Watergate Contd.," *Time*, 14 August 1972; (Sandy Smith), "The Watergate Issue," *Time*, 28 August 1972.

[21] Max Holland, "[What Director Alan Pakula's Papers Reveal About Watergate](#)," *Daily Beast*, 12 June 2012.

[22] *Ibid.*

[23] Carl Bernstein and Bob Woodward, [All the President's Men](#) (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1974) 210; Jeff Himmelman, [Yours in Truth: A Personal Portrait of Ben Bradlee](#) (New York: Random House, 2012), 205-206.

[24] Email, Taylor to Holland, 1 May 2013.

[25] Letter, Naftali to Angelo Lano, 24 February 2009, FOIA.

[26] Email, Lano to Holland, 15 January 2011.

[27] Email, Nixon scholar to Holland, 6 May 2013 and 8 June 2014.

[28] Email, Fawcett to Jennifer Howard, 25 February 2007, FOIA.

[29] Carl Bernstein and Bob Woodward, "[FBI Finds Nixon Aides Sabotage Democrats](#)," *Washington Post*, 10 October 1972.

[30] Watergate Special Prosecution Force, *Report* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1975), 56-57; Bernstein and Woodward, *All the President's Men*, 134; Bernstein and Woodward, "[40](#)

[Years After Watergate, Nixon Was Far Worse Than We Thought](#),” *Washington Post*, 10 June 2012.

[31] The Canuck letter was not written by Muskie, but was a February 1972 letter to the editor published in the *Manchester Union Leader*. Signed by a “Paul Morrison” from Deerfield Beach, Florida, the letter appeared on February 24, shortly before the all-important New Hampshire primary; the letter alleged that Muskie, while in Florida, had referred to some of his Maine constituents as “Canoocks” [sic].

[32] William Ruckelshaus Oral History, 12 April 2007, 8.

[33] Email, Riley to Holland, 20 May 2013.

[34] Email, C-SPAN producer to Holland, 8 June 2014.

[35] Bob Woodward, *The Secret Man: The Story of Watergate’s Deep Throat* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2005), 40.

[36] Richard Cohen and Jules Witcover, [A Heartbeat Away: The Investigation and Resignation of Vice President Spiro T. Agnew](#) (New York: Viking Press, 1974), 78; Email, Richard Cohen to Holland, 30 April 2011; Holland interview of Woodward, 12 October 2011.

[37] Woodward is correctly recalling here (before Naftali confuses him) that the first significant leak he ever received as a Post reporter from Felt concerned the Wallace assassination attempt on 15 May 1972, thirteen days after Hoover’s death. The Wallace disclosure (unlike the Watergate leaks to come) was an institutional leak, in that the FBI wanted it known that Arthur Bremer, Wallace’s assailant, was not part of a larger conspiracy. Holland, *Leak*, 27-30.

[38] If not a “leak,” then Felt was certainly making an unauthorized disclosure about Agnew to Woodward—for that is how Woodward described the episode in *The Secret Man*.

[39] Email, Geoff Shepard to Holland, 2 June 2013; Email, Paul Musgrave to Shepard, 30 January 2007, FOIA.

[40] Email, Naftali to Shepard, 20 & 21 April 2006; Email, Shepard to Holland, 2 June 2013; Email, Shepard to Holland, 26, 27 & 28 May 2014. In early 2007, for example, Kent Germany participated in an interview of Linwood Holton, and John Brooks Flippen assisted in the oral history of John C. Whitaker. RMNL archivists also participated occasionally in conducting oral histories.

[41] Email, Shepard to Holland, 1 May 2013.

[42] Email, Shepard to Holland, 1 May 2013.

[43] Email, Shepard to Holland, 26 May 2014.

[44] Briefing Note, Naftali to Fawcett, 27 November 2009; Memo, Shepard to Naftali, 15 February 2008, FOIA; Email, Shepard to Holland, 1 May 2013.

The Legacy Forums have been criticized as being too favorable to the administration. But as one Nixon scholar pointed out, “The truth is they probably would never have been created had Tim done the job he promised to do.” Email, Nixon scholar to Holland, 8 June 2014.

[45] Email, Shepard to Holland, 2 June 2013. “All in all,” Shepard concluded, “the oral history project with Tim was a terrible experience for those who participated: a scholarly opportunity completely wasted; a betrayal by a federal employee of astounding dimensions; and a total misuse of donated funds—all solely due to Tim’s false representations, lack of scholarly preparation, and ineffectual involvement.” Ibid.

[46] Letter, Naftali to Dwight Chapin, 2 March 2007, FOIA.

[47] Email, Chapin to Holland, 1 May 2013.

[48] Email, Naftali to Robert Odle, 14 June 2009, FOIA.

[49] Holland interview of NARA archivist, 2 May 2013.

[50] Ibid.

[51] Jennifer Howard, “[A Scholarly Salesman Takes Over the Nixon Library](#),” *Chronicle of Higher Education*, 9 March 2007; Benjamin Hufbauer, *Presidential Temples: How Memorials and Libraries Shape Public Memory* (Lawrence, KN: University Press of Kansas, 2005). Hufbauer makes the point that presidential libraries undergo a dynamic life cycle: the first stage is hagiographic, the second is scholarly, and the third is a search for relevance. Ibid., 197.

[52] Gumbel, “[Nixon’s Presidential Library](#).”