



Former U.S. Secretary of State James A. Baker, III, whose 30-year legacy of public service includes senior positions under three U.S. presidents, was interviewed at the 2020 Starr Federalist Lecture at Baylor Law on Monday, October 13 at noon CDT. Secretary Baker was interviewed by accomplished author and distinguished trial lawyer Talmage Boston, as they discussed Secretary Baker’s remarkable career, the leadership lessons learned from his years of experience in public service, and the skills and capabilities of lawyers that contribute to success as effective leaders and problem-solvers.

Baker and Boston also discussed Baker’s newly released biography, *The Man Who Ran Washington: The Life and Times of James A. Baker III*, by Peter Baker and Susan Glasser. The *Wall Street Journal* calls *The Man Who Ran Washington* “an illuminating biographical portrait of Mr. Baker, one that describes the arc of his career and, along the way, tells us something about how executive power is wielded in the nation’s capital.” In Talmage Boston’s review of *The Man Who Ran Washington*, published in the *Washington Independent Review of Books*, Boston states, “[This] book provides a complete, persuasive explanation of how this 45-year-old prominent but politically inexperienced Houston transactional lawyer arrived in the nation’s capital as undersecretary of commerce in July 1975, and within six months, began his meteoric rise to the peak of the DC power pyramid...” The *New York Times* calls it “enthraling,” and states that, “The former Secretary of State’s experiences as a public servant offer timeless lessons in how to use personal relationships, broad-based coalitions and tireless negotiating to advance United States interests.”

The Federalist Papers are a collection of 85 essays written by Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, and John Jay between 1787 and 1788. The authors wrote under the name “Publius,”

making the case for the ratification of the U.S. Constitution, outlining how the new government would operate and why it was the best choice for the United States of America.

***This course has been approved for Minimum Continuing Legal Education credit by the State Bar of Texas Committee on MCLE in the amount of 1 credit hour.***

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Brad Toben:

Good afternoon, I'm the Dean of Baylor Law School. My name is Brad Toben, and it's my delight to welcome to you today to a virtual front row seat as our good friend Talmage Boston interviews former Secretary of State James Baker III. Mr. Baker, of course, was a powerhouse of presidential leadership and politics over the course of several decades. He served under the administrations of four United States presidents. Secretary Baker was going to be the capstone speaker for our Baylor Law 2020 Vision for Leadership Conference which unfolded last month, September 14th through the 17th. The Secretary was scheduled to speak, in fact, on September 17th, Constitution Day, which would have marked the 233rd anniversary of the signing of the Constitution.

Unfortunately, COVID-19 intervened. Secretary Baker and Mrs. Baker both became ill with the coronavirus. I'm happy though to report that the illness is now in their rear-view mirror and we have the pleasure today of having Talmage Boston sit down with Secretary Baker to review a remarkable career in the public square. Talmage Boston himself, a go-to lawyer, perennially referred to as a super lawyer. Talmage is a history buff, and a prolific author. He has authored a book in which he sat down with presidential historians and looked at the qualities of leadership as demonstrated by various United States presidents. I'm also delighted today to note that this capstone appearance by Secretary Baker marks our sixth Starr Federalist Papers Lecture Series, an endowed lecture series endowed by John and Marie Chiles, in honor of Judge Starr.

The purpose of the Chiles in honoring Judge Starr with the establishment of this endowed series was to draw attention and to showcase the importance of the Federalist Papers authored by Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, and John Jay, following the signing of the Constitution. The Federalist Papers were widely discussed and published as a means of Hamilton, Madison and Jay showing those within this young burgeoning republic how the government would work under the new Constitution. Hamilton and Jay, of course, were lawyers. Hamilton, the first secretary of the treasury, John Jay the first chief justice of the United States Supreme Court, and Madison, although not a lawyer, was learned in the law and of course served as the fourth president of the United States.

The Papers were written from 1787 to 1789 when, of course, the Constitution was ratified. The work of Hamilton, Madison, and Jay in authoring the Federalist Papers and then, of course, so to say, going on the road to convince those living within what was the Confederacy, that the Constitution would form a strong and lasting government with a remarkable example of leadership. And today we will be exploring with Secretary Baker this concept of lawyers as leaders, just as we

did last month during the Baylor Law 2020 Vision for Leadership Conference. With that, Talmage, I will turn it over to you and to Secretary Baker. Thank you.

Talmage Boston:

Great, thank you Dean Toben. Two years ago, I wrote a book published by the State Bar of Texas titled *Raising The Bar: The Crucial Role of the Lawyer in Society*. In one of the chapters, I identified as the two most important lawyers of the last 50 years. I picked Leon Jaworski on the litigation side, and right now I happen to be sitting in the exact replica of Leon Jaworski's law office here at the Baylor Law Library. The other most important lawyer of the last 50 years is our special guest, Secretary James Baker. Secretary Baker, we're delighted you're here. Nobody epitomizes the concept of the lawyer leader more than you. To refresh peoples' memories, Secretary Baker was the leader of his law firm for almost 20 years, in Houston, the Andrews & Kurth firm. Then he went to Washington, became Undersecretary at the Department of Commerce, and ultimately and essentially led the Department of Commerce.

He was the leader of five different presidential campaigns. During Reagan's first term, he was the White House Chief of Staff. During his second term, he was the leader of the Treasury Department as the Secretary of the Treasury, and during George H.W. Bush's presidency, he was the leader of the State Department as Secretary of State. In the year 2000, he became the leader of George W. Bush's legal team that prevailed in the landmark case of *Bush vs. Gore*. So we simply could not have a better lawyer leader to be part of this program than our special guest. Secretary Baker, thank you for being with us today as the final this very important conference.

Secretary James Baker:

Thank you Talmage, I'm delighted to be with you.

Talmage Boston:

Since you've been a leader in so many different arenas, and we're going to be talking about "the lawyer as leader," I think a logical place to start the conversation is, how do you define the word "leadership,"?

Secretary James Baker:

I think it was the great historian James MacGregor Burns who said that leadership is "a commitment to values and the perseverance to fight for those values." I think that's a pretty good description of leadership. The toughest part of that formula is the commitment to fight for those values and getting it done.

In Washington D.C., even back in the days when I was there, it's easy to kill deals, it's hard to get deals done and make deals. The really difficult part of leadership, in my view, is the *doing*. The knowing is really important but it's not as tough as the doing.

Talmage Boston:

In order to do, a lawyer leader has got to persuade, and the art of communication, both oral and written, is an essential trait for the lawyer leader. When you think about different lawyer leaders you've known, as well as in your own life, what's been the key to best practices in communication?

Secretary James Baker:

If you want to lead others, you have to start out by making sure that those others have faith in your word. So truthfulness is extraordinarily important. I also think it's important to be consistent. It's pretty hard to be a leader when your view has changed from time-to-time during the very time you're trying to lead others. One of the things that I used to argue for and still think is critical, in terms of a White House or a presidential campaign, is message discipline. You have to be consistent; you have to be truthful. If you're not either one of those, people are not going to follow you.

Talmage Boston:

Besides being an effective communicator, another essential trait for the lawyer leader is to be able to resolve disagreements and conflicts. People typically do that through effective negotiation. Secretary Baker, in your legal, political, and public service careers, you've always been recognized as one of the world's great negotiators. If you were going to write a book on the art of negotiation, what would be the theme in its first chapter?

Secretary James Baker:

If you expect to be successful as a negotiator, first of all you need to understand that no negotiation can be a zero-sum game. To be a successful negotiator, you're going to have to be able to make sure that you conduct a negotiation in a way where the other guy leaves the table thinking he's at least achieved something. So the number one thing, I think, for a successful negotiation is to begin by putting yourself in your interlocutor's shoes, so you understand what his or her red lines are, and what she or he can reasonably be expected to agree to.

Once you do that, you increase the chances of a successful negotiation. Again, I go back to trustworthiness. If you're going to be a successful negotiator, you need to make sure that the person across the table has faith in your word and doesn't think you're lying to them or fudging around the margins. It's very important that your word be seen as good if you're going to successfully negotiate with someone.

Talmage Boston:

When we think about walking in somebody else's shoes, the word that comes to mind, to me at least, is the word "empathy" in terms of kind of understanding where the other person is who comes to the table, and who you're trying to make a deal with.

Secretary James Baker:

Right.

Talmage Boston:

Can you think of a specific instance where having a high level of empathy for a counterpart made a big difference in American foreign policy?

Secretary James Baker:

Probably the most prominent one that comes to my mind is that after the Berlin Wall fell, President George H.W. Bush and I, as his Secretary of State, knew we had a lot of business still to do with

Mikhail Gorbachev, who was president of the Soviet Union at the time, and with his foreign minister Eduard Shevardnadze. So we didn't rub their noses in it. We were very restrained to the point that President Bush was criticized roundly for not showing more emotion at the fall of the Wall. After all, we had been in the Cold War with the Soviets for over 40 years, the war had ended, and we had won. Why weren't we celebrating? Well, we weren't celebrating because we didn't want to stick it in their eye since we had a lot more things we needed to get done. I think that would be a good example.

Talmage Boston:

So after you've walked in your counterpart's shoes, and empathized before you get to the table, then you get to the table, and it's time to start the actual horse trading as we say in Texas. So in order to strike a deal, you talked a minute ago about not viewing it as a zero-sum game, and you've often spoken about the importance of pragmatism.

Secretary James Baker:

Right.

Talmage Boston:

Expand upon how you always kept pragmatism in the front of your mind in your negotiations.

Secretary James Baker:

At times when I was up there, and even today, it's easy to politically demonize pragmatism, because pragmatism, of necessity, means compromise. Compromise is not, and should never have been, a dirty word. Unfortunately, it has been a dirty word sometimes in the past and in Washington today, it may be perceived to be a dirty word. But that's how you get things done. Pragmatism is the art of the possible. You're never going to get everything. If you go into a negotiation thinking you've got to have everything, you're not going to be successful.

Pragmatism is the art of the possible. It's really important when you start negotiating to realize that negotiation is a give and take. You need to understand, particularly when you're negotiating in Washington D.C. for instance, or internationally, that in a democracy no one side gets to make all the rules, and therefore you've got to be willing to give up a little to get a lot. A lot of people enter in negotiation without having that view and they're, for the most part, never successful.

Talmage Boston:

Secretary Baker, in negotiation, you've talked about the importance of trustworthiness between people across the table. When you're in that situation, what are the things that you do to try to build trust and the rapport with the person across the table?

Secretary James Baker:

The one thing you have to be very careful about, particularly in international negotiations, is to make sure that you're words are good and that your interlocutor never has an occasion or reason to doubt what you tell them. That means you don't say anything that's not backed up by the facts. The worst thing you can do, in my opinion, in a negotiation is to get caught in a lie. Then it's

almost all over because the other guy thinks to himself, “Boy I can’t trust anything this fellow says.” So you’ve really got to be careful that what you say is accurate and that you can prove it.

You need to also test the other guy across the table, with respect to the trustworthiness of his or her statements to you. Those statements have got to be true. The surest way to kill a negotiation is for one or the other negotiators to catch the other in a lie.

Talmage Boston:

I’ve read much of your work, and of course your books. You had a tactic that you used to build this trustworthiness called “parallel reciprocal confidence building.” Tell our audience what that was.

Secretary James Baker:

Normally a negotiation is a series of discreet, small-step negotiations. And if you can find a way to approach your interlocutor so that you build on the idea that, “Look, if you’re willing to do X, I’m willing to do Y.” Those are not the end-game objectives. But they’re steps along the way that can be taken that will build trust, and build confidence, and will lead you toward the desired result.

You have to always remain flexible. Flexibility’s important, as you know, in the practice of law, it’s important in politics, and it’s certainly important in negotiation.

Talmage Boston:

As you know, at this conference that Baylor Law School put together this year, many people in our audience are legal educators who aspire to plant seeds of leadership in their students. You’ve mentored many young people throughout your life, many of whom have become leaders in their own right. What’s been the key for you in planting and cultivating seeds of leadership in the young people with whom you’ve worked?

Secretary James Baker:

First of all, you’ve got to set a good example for them. Secondly, I think it’s important to teach them leadership skills, teach them what your experience has taught you that’s required to become a leader. Leadership skills are skills that can be taught. We just talked about a lot of them. Students can learn those, but they’re not going to learn them if they’re not presented to them. So I think teaching leadership skills is really important.

Talmage Boston:

Secretary Baker, there’s a new book that just came out a couple of weeks ago. There you are on the cover. It’s your biography, and it’s appropriately titled *The Man Who Ran Washington: The Life and Times of James A. Baker, III*. It’s written by *New York Times* White House correspondent Peter Baker and his wife, Susan Glasser, who’s the staff writer for *The New Yorker*. I know you fully cooperated with Peter and Susan in the research and setting up the interviews, but you did not have any editorial control over the final product. I’m sure you’ve read it. What’s it like to read the biography of yourself? Published by Doubleday with huge reviews in *The Wall Street Journal* and *The New York Times*. What do you think of the book and its presentation of your life?



Secretary James Baker:

Of course, I was a little apprehensive because I am a conservative Republican, and *The New Yorker* and *The New York Times* are not necessarily conservative publications. But I determined that there really wasn't anything out there for me to hide, so I gave them everything. I gave them boxes, files of correspondence from years ago with my parents and with my sister, and others. I just said, "Have at it," because I was not really particularly worried. Was I a little bit apprehensive about what conclusions they might come to? You bet I was. Are there some conclusions in the book that I would tend to disagree with? You bet there are.

Do I think, on balance, that this is a really fair and complete full-throated biography of my life? I do. I think it's fair. It certainly covers everything. There were some things in there that I didn't necessarily agree with as to some of Peter and Susan's conclusions, but on balance, I think it was good to just turn everything over to them and let them write a full-throated biography that has the good and the bad. I tell people it's a fair biography with warts and all. There's some of the warts I disagree with, not too many. It's really a pretty darn good book and they're excellent writers.

Talmage Boston:

I did a program, earlier this morning with David Rubenstein, who I know you worked with for many years. He did a program with Peter and Susan recently, and he's read their book and he says this book is worthy of a Pulitzer. So I hope good things come from the book because obviously I think it'll help to build your legacy for generations to come.

Secretary James Baker:

Let me just say, in my opinion, they did a really good job and that the warts that are in there, they've dealt with them in a fair way. So I was pleased with it, Talmage.

Talmage Boston:

As developed in the book, in fact it's in the Introduction, your perspective has always been the point of holding power is getting things done. During your years in Washington, obviously you did a great job of that.

Peter and Susan say in the book that one of the reasons that you were able to achieve so many goals is because you were not a crusader. They say you had no ideological fervor, which certainly goes along with your focus on pragmatism that we discussed earlier. Do you agree that in your political and international negotiations, you had essentially no ideological fervor?

Secretary James Baker:

I don't know what you mean by ideological fervor. I was White House Chief of Staff for President Ronald Reagan. Ronald Reagan was pretty ideological. I was his Treasury Secretary. So it's a question of balance. The commitment to values that I mentioned earlier and James MacGregor Burns' definition of leadership is a commitment to values, and those values are ideological for the most part. So you have to have some ideological component in your policy, in your world view, but it's a question of balance. If you're overly ideological, you're going to be too strict and too wedded to the ultimate, and governing and international negotiations even for that matter, are a matter of balance.

There's a conflict in American foreign policy, for instance, between realists and idealists. You've got to have some realism in your foreign policy but you've also got to have some idealism. As for ideological fervor, you better have some idealism, and American's foreign policy is built on idealistic principle.

Talmage Boston:

I heard you last November when you spoke to the National Convention of the World Affairs Council, and of course I've also read David Rubenstein's book where he interviewed you. In both instances, you said the biggest problem in Washington these days is political dysfunction. Given that reality, do you think you would be able to achieve in today's politics the kinds of things that you did during your heyday in Washington from 1980 through 1992? Is there a place for somebody with your skill set and principled pragmatism in today's Washington D.C.?

Secretary James Baker:

I would hope that there would be, but I don't know. Nothing I accomplished could ever have been accomplished without the presidents with whom I served. Today, as always, leadership has to come from the top. We need presidents today who want to see that old paradigm re-established, where people go to Washington to do the nation's business, not to fight and squabble and argue all the time.

And by the way, we also need a press that views that as the objective. When I was in Washington, the press had their biases, but to some degree they were objective reporters of the facts. Today, that's no longer the case, and this is a serious problem for our democracy. Our press today are players in the political debate, on one side or the other. That's not good. It's not good for getting the peoples' business done, which today is happening less and less.

Talmage Boston:

Another key that Peter and Susan bring out in terms of your capacity to get things done, particularly during your Washington years, was that you believed enemies don't have to be permanent.

Secretary James Baker:

No, they don't.

Talmage Boston:

So what was your strategy for mending fences and transforming difficult relationships?

Secretary James Baker:

It was a couple of things. Number one, you've got to keep your eye on the ball. What's the objective? Okay? So when you're on your way to trying to achieve that objective, you're going to receive slights from people. People are going to trash you. They're going to do that, and you can't let that stand in the way of the objective, which is to make the agreement, do the thing that is the people's business, and get it accomplished. Furthermore, I think to some extent, my faith comes into play here. I've had a strong faith ever since I was a young man and I developed it at prep school. I think Jesus teaches us that if you want to be forgiven, you better be ready to forgive.



I think particularly if you're up there in that environment in Washington, D.C., where you're trying to get things done and you're negotiating with the other side, you better be like a duck. You better let all those slights roll off your back like water.

Talmage Boston:

During your years as Secretary of State for President Bush, America's foreign policy and the execution of it was probably the greatest it's been in history. During those four years, of course the Cold War ended, and you led the reunification of Germany, and the Gulf War success in driving the Iraqi army out of Kuwait. When you left office, having won the Cold War, having won the Gulf War, having brought Germany together, what was your expectation for the world order going forward?

Secretary James Baker:

I really thought we were on the cusp of a new paradigm. I thought that because we had not only ended the Cold War, we'd ended it peacefully. It showed that antagonists for 40 years could get along and resolve their differences in a way that would promote freedom, prosperity, and liberty for many people around the world. So we were very hopeful. One of the big disappointments of my life, is to see the return by Russia to the same types of things that were going on when Russia was the Soviet Union. We made efforts to bring Russia into the West, into the organizations of the West and so forth, and they evidently didn't work.

So here we are now, and not just with Russia, but here we are now in pretty much of a Cold War environment with China. Of course, I fought like hell to get China into the World Trade Organization because we thought that they would become a more responsible international player once they were admitted to these important international organizations. To get into the WTO, they made a lot of promises, but they didn't keep them, and that's not good. So, I think there's room today for doing the kinds of things that we did during the Reagan and George H.W. Bush administrations, because we're right back in the same environment.

Talmage Boston:

With this audience and the theme of this conference, and with your spectacular career as a lawyer before you became such a success in Washington D.C., when I interviewed Peter Baker and Susan Glasser about their biography of you, I asked them about what was it about your training as a lawyer and your years of practicing law that translated readily into your service in Washington while you were leading different parts of the government. They said your being a lawyer was absolutely key to the way you went about your business.

Secretary James Baker:

Yes, it absolutely was. By the way, I wrote a book about my four years as Secretary of State called *The Politics of Diplomacy*. In it, I spend some time talking about how much I thought my experience as a lawyer helped me in politics when I got to Washington. Most of all, my legal training really helped me when I was Secretary of State because in that position, there's a lot of negotiating. Lawyering is where I learned whatever skills I have in negotiation. The Secretary of State's job is to negotiate on behalf of this country. It's not business negotiation; it's international negotiation. So being a lawyer and learning to cross the Ts and dot the Is and be careful, and think

through things. Those are all traits I learned because of my legal training, and they helped me immeasurably in D.C.

Talmage Boston:

Peter Baker and Susan Glasser talk about your success in working with Congress in their book, and they talk about the ricochets in politics and that you were the master, like a pinball player, being able to play the ricochets. As I thought about that, I thought about your famous Five Ps, “Prior preparation prevents poor performance.” How did the Five Ps translate into your being able to deal with the political ricochets that you had to confront constantly?

Secretary James Baker:

The 5 Ps are even more important when you’re dealing with the politics of Washington, particularly in some of the jobs I had... I get asked frequently, Talmage, “What do you consider as your most significant accomplishment in the 12 years you were in Washington?” I say, “The most significant accomplishment was running five campaigns for president, being White House Chief of Staff to two different presidents, being Secretary of Treasury and Secretary of State, and leaving Washington un-indicted.” And I say my experience and my training as a lawyer really helped me in that. Peter and Susan write in the book about how I kept a memo and a file of every inappropriate request I was asked for when I was Chief of Staff, or when I was Secretary of State, or anything else.

I think I learned that because I was a lawyer. Remember, I came to Washington in the immediate aftermath of Watergate, so I saw what could happen to careless people when they go up there. That’s a tough environment. And Chief of Staff of the White House, I was the longest-serving Chief of Staff of the White House in history, up until my successors came along. And I tell people it’s the worst job in government, because you walk around with a target on your front and on your back. When people can’t get to the President, they want to get to the Chief of Staff, and the press particularly want to. So my training as a lawyer was invaluable to me in my second career in politics and public service.

Talmage Boston:

Now in this day and time, with social media everywhere as well as television, multiple cable channels, newspapers, and everything else there is, the media seems to be a bigger part of our attention span than they have ever been before. Susan and Peter, in the book, talk about how during your time in Washington you, “courted the media assiduously, always for the most part with great results.” So for all these law school professors who are training future leaders, what tips can you give on how to deal with the media in order to get them on your side as opposed to against you?

Secretary James Baker:

The number one thing is to realize that the most important thing when you’re in a high-level job in Washington D.C., and you’re dealing with the media, is to let them know you’re willing to engage with them – you’re willing to talk to them. I would maybe argue with courting the media “assiduously,” I’m not sure about that phrase, but I made it a point never to go home at night without returning every call I got that day as Chief of Staff from a Congressperson or press person. That was in the days before texting, so I could return a call after hours and know that they wouldn’t be there to answer it, but I’d get credit for returning the call. But what the press want is for you to

be willing to talk to them with transparency, and they want to have access when you're in those powerful jobs up there.

So I paid attention to it and it was the right thing to do. In terms of backgrounding the press, some people call that leaking. It's not leaking. Leaking is when you talk to the press to push your own interest as opposed to the interest of the administration. Your job as White House Chief of Staff is to make sure that you spin the press with the administration's position to as many press people as you can. That's not leaking, that's backgrounding the press, which is very important.

Talmage Boston:

Again, focusing on our audience here, law school professors and law school deans who are in front of law students all the time. Secretary Baker, pretend like you're in front of a big class of law students. Tell today's law students, is there anything besides what you've already said that you think really needs to be driven home that from your experience, and you realize now how incredibly important it is to get it while you're young, before you get out into the professional world.

Secretary James Baker:

I can't think of anything other than what we've talked about here today. I'm a big believer in prior preparation prevents poor performance. That was my grandfather's mantra and my father's, and it sure served me well. I never winged it, Talmage. There's a passage in Peter and Susan's book that talks about when I was going to be on the Sunday shows when I was chief of staff for Reagan, and I would require the staff to come in and brief me, sometimes for two hours. Larry Speakes, the White House Press Secretary, is recorded in there saying these words, "I would rather be out playing little league ball with my son than trying to brief Baker for two hours for a 'Meet the Press' appearance." But prior preparation is really, really important, and it's particularly important, in practicing law. I know it's important in trying to serve in Washington, in either politics or public service.

And another thing I would say is, I was fortunate enough to be Secretary of State of the United States at a time when we were on Neptune almost. It was a unipolar world. Everybody wanted to get close to Uncle Whiskers, and I went all over the world, to 91 countries during that four years and everybody admired the United States, everybody wanted to come to the United States, and nobody wanted to leave the United States. Guess what? Despite all our troubles today, everybody still admires the United States. Some people resent us, but regardless of whether they admire or resent us, they all want to come here. Everybody wants to come here and nobody wants to leave.

So I get very tired of listening to people run down this country, and talk about all of our problems. Yes, we've got some problems but we've had big problems in the past and I'm old enough to have lived through some of them and see them get fixed. And we can fix any problem because we are the finest, best country in the world. Pardon the patriotic speech.

Talmage Boston:

We love the patriotic speech. That's just such a magical opportunity to hear you say that. Getting back to your emphasis on the 5 Ps – prior preparation prevents poor performance – an important part of your rise in Washington D.C. was when Ronald Reagan asked you to prepare him for the presidential debates in 1980, and it was your extraordinary preparation that caught Nancy Reagan's attention. And so here we are in this election year, we've had a presidential debate and vice

presidential debate. Is there anything that stands out in your memory about that preparation for debating that maybe tied into preparation for a big legal meeting or case? Of course, Reagan was such an iconic figure and there you were getting him to where he could surge past the incumbent, President Carter.

Secretary James Baker:

There were a lot of long-time Reagan people who worked for him who were a little reluctant for him to debate, but I was sort of the deputy chairman of the Reagan campaign in charge of debates because they asked me to come over after George Bush left the race. I'd never seen Reagan lose a debate, so I argued strongly for him to debate John Anderson. Anderson was another Republican running for president though that year he ran as an independent, and Carter didn't want to debate two Republicans. So I said we ought to go debate Anderson because I felt sure that Reagan would wipe up the floor with him, which he did. But I wanted to put an empty chair out there and put a sign on it, "Jimmy Carter's chair." But they wouldn't let us do that, it would have been very effective. But Reagan was a wonderful debater and whenever the red light went on the camera, boy, he was good.

There was only one debate in that 1980 campaign, and Reagan just destroyed Jimmy Carter in it. Then, after he won the election, he did something that I don't think will ever be done in American politics again. He asked somebody, me, who had run two campaigns against him, to be his White House Chief of Staff. Everybody was shocked, but nobody was more shocked than I was. But what a beautiful human being I was privileged to serve for four years.

Talmage Boston:

If you sat down with your grandchildren today, would you recommend to them a career in public service and/or politics?

Secretary James Baker:

Absolutely. Without any question. Remember this, and for you students out there, politics can be a grubby business. Politics ain't beanbag and I've got the scars to show for it. But politics is the way, under our democratic system, that you get the right to practice policy. As Lyndon Johnson once said, "You can't be a statesman until you've been elected." And it's true, politics is the way we get to practice policy. Even if your politics are not successful, you are giving back to your country when you participate in politics. It's our system, it's very imperfect but it's better than all other systems.

So I would encourage all you students to find a way to participate in politics. If you want to just go straight to public service, you can do that. Go take the foreign service exam and go into one of the nation's international policy agencies. George H.W. Bush used to say, "The way to get into politics is to go out and do something else first successfully." Which is what he did, which is what I did. Mine was being a lawyer. But whatever you do, remember this is the finest country in the world and it's incumbent upon each of us to give something back. The way you give back is to participate in politics and/or public service.

Talmage Boston:

Secretary Baker, we can't thank you enough. This is all something we're going to remember for a long time. And thank you for your incredible years of service, thank you for running Washington

at a time when things ran and the trains stayed on the track and things actually got done. So I hope the rest of your day goes well, and you've been an important and key part of this conference on the lawyer as leader. Thank you so much.

Secretary James Baker:

Thank you, Talmage.