

Jimmy Carter Library Oral History
DAYLE POWELL SPENCER INTERVIEW

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SPEAKERS: Interviewee Dayle Spencer
Interviewer Kay Hamner

Kay Hamner: Kay Hamner conducting an Oral History Interview with Dayle Powell Spencer in the Sheraton Hotel, Maui, Hawaii. Now, we'll try it again.

Dayle Spencer: Okay. Aloha, Kay. Welcome.

Kay Hamner: Thank you. Well, I know that I've read some of the more -- kind of other interviews that you've given, like some information that was in the [Douglas] Brinkley book about how you first came to be at the Carter Center, but could you just briefly talk that first experience with President Carter?

Dayle Spencer: Oh, wow, that does take me back. I remember it vividly, though.

It was Law Day, May 1, 1984, and I was practicing law in Birmingham, Alabama. I was chair of our bar association's Law Day committee, and it was my job to get this speaker, the keynote speaker, to come and address the bar association for law day. I had this really huge responsibility and zero budget. So I knew at the time that former President Carter was trying to raise money to build the Carter Center. I thought that if I made him an offer to come to Birmingham to give the keynote address at our bar association's Law Day meeting in exchange for which I would host a fundraiser for him for the benefit of the Carter Center, maybe he would accept, and he did. And he was wonderful. We had a town hall meeting. We had 1,000 people in attendance.

Kay Hamner: Wow.

Dayle Spencer: It was just amazing. Choirs were singing, and it got lots of news media attention, and that night over dinner, we raised \$100,000. And so it was just a great day. We were together all day long, really hit it off. I mean I just immediately liked him, and there was just a real comfort level of talking with him and feeling good about him as a president and his future as a former president, a relatively young former president.

And, actually, in the Secret Service car on the way to the airport, taking him back to his plane, he asked me if I'd be interested in coming to work for him, and I said, "No." I said, "I appreciate it, but, you know, I'm on track here to be a federal judge. If I just stay in Birmingham, I think I'll get the next judicial

appointment." And so I put him on the plane. He headed back on to Plains or wherever, and the next morning I was at my office early, and my private line rang on my desk, and I picked it up and I answered, and it was him.

And he said, "Dayle, this is Jimmy Carter. I think you should reconsider." And so he made me promise to come to Plains and to meet with he and Rosalynn and to talk about his vision for the Carter Center, and I did. And that was in May, and in September, I left Birmingham -- decided to forego any judicial aspirations and move to Atlanta and never looked back.

Kay Hamner: Well, for goodness sakes! Well, okay, this was now what month? You moved in what --?

Dayle Spencer: September of '84.

Kay Hamner: September of '84. So they were operating still out of the Woodruff Library?

Dayle Spencer: Absolutely, the top floor of the Woodruff Library, where the Woodruff collection was, where you couldn't have any food because it would cause "vermin."

Kay Hamner: That's right!

Dayle Spencer: We used to get all these vermin notices all the time about the top floor of the Woodruff Library. And then we had an office in a very old building on North Decatur Road, just across the street from Emory. It had been a privately owned house that the school eventually took over. And so when we had too many staff to be able to all fit together in the top of the Woodruff Library building, we moved into that old house building on North Decatur Road for a while.

Kay Hamner: But now who was -- was there a director of the Center in 1984 at the time?

Dayle Spencer: Ken Stein was -- I think his title was Executive Director at that time, and I was hired as the Associate Director at the time. And we had just a handful of staff -- Betsy Morgan, Linda Helms. President Carter and Mrs. Carter, of course, had their presidential staff, Nancy [Konigsmark] and Faye [Dill] and folks like that, but they were housed downtown in an office building separate from the Carter Center staff. So Steve Hochman was there at that time, and you could count on slightly more than one hand all the staff.

Kay Hamner: But when you came, what was the discussion about how people, when they became associated with the Carter Center, what was going to be their role with Emory University?

Dayle Spencer: It was not clear; it was evolving. President Carter had had discussions, of course, with Emory prior to my coming on board. He was already teaching, and he was already doing his town hall sorts of appearances on Emory's campus. It was clear that he was going to have a long-term relationship with Emory, but it was pretty testy, actually, the actual details of the arrangement because there were misunderstandings between he and Jim Laney, the President of Emory University, about the responsibilities that each would share in terms of fundraising and development and building the buildings and who would own the buildings, and all of those details had to get worked out over time.

Kay Hamner: Dayle, I've had an interview with Dr. Laney and [inaudible], and I did learn some things that I think that weren't generally known at that time.

Dayle Spencer: Yes.

Kay Hamner: Dr. Laney said that actually many of the Board of Trustees at Emory University were less than delighted --

Dayle Spencer: Absolutely.

Kay Hamner: -- with President Carter's association.

Dayle Spencer: But, you know, I think President Carter would be the first to say this. When he and Rosalynn left Washington, it was in bitter defeat. President Reagan had soundly defeated him, and, in fact, I think the only state they carried in the election was Georgia. So they were -- I mean I think they've actually used the term humiliated. They were both depressed, despondent. It was a pretty gloomy picture at the time. And we had just had the hostage crisis with the Americans who were captured and held [in Tehran]. That was sort of the defining moment of his presidency. And I think there were a lot of people who saw him as a political liability at that point in time rather than an asset.

Kay Hamner: Well, I know that one of the things that I keep trying to get people to think back on was how he really envisioned the Carter Center when he undertook it. All through the years, as you know, there've been all these discussions about whether it should be an institution that was going to be something to survive him or whether it was primarily his vehicle for remaining active in public life. What did you see when you first came there?

Dayle Spencer: Well, what I saw was a frustrated leader who was cut short in his leadership. But here was a young man in his 50s who had been president early in life and then was denied a second term, who had a lot to offer, a brilliant man whose mind could fathom the complexities of any problem, political or otherwise, and he was frustrated because he had so much to give and didn't have really a forum in which to give those gifts. I think what he was trying to do

with the Carter Center, at least initially, was basically continue the agenda he had started while in the White House that he would have continued had he still been in the White House but was thwarted from continuing. And so, certainly, the Conflict Resolution Program grew out of that. I mean certainly his experience at Camp David was the thing that imprinted him to have an interest in that field and to want to go on and do more in the field even after leaving Washington.

Kay Hamner: But how did he think that he could accomplish what you've just laid out, fulfilling the agenda that he first began as President, as more or less -- what would you call it -- a government in opposition? I mean there were some accusations about what Mr. Carter was attempting to do and why it was inappropriate for a former president to be doing, that it should be more appropriately done by the sitting government.

Dayle Spencer: But, you know, to be candid, Jimmy Carter was blazing new trail here. I mean there was an expectation that as a former president, he would just go on the boards of huge corporations or give expensive speeches and rake in the bucks and retire very wealthy and play golf for the rest of his life, and that just wasn't in either of their characters to do that.

I don't think he really knew at that point, in the early '80s, how it would all unfold. I think he was just frustrated. I think he was always a hard, hard-working, driven person, and I think that drive was ultimately going to take him somewhere, but he wasn't sure at that time which path it would be down or how exactly it would unfold. You know, at the time, I mean when I first joined the Carter Center, the constant struggle was on raising money, just having enough money to even build the presidential library. He had to raise \$26m, I believe the budget was, and that was an astronomical amount of money. And, you know, he was literally spending so much of his time just basically begging, but there wasn't an awful lot of time for visioning and for strategic planning and putting into place a structure that would take him where he ultimately wanted to go. That came later.

Kay Hamner: But he did, from the very start, see conflict resolution as being more or less the core --

Dayle Spencer: Absolutely.

Kay Hamner: -- of what he was going to be doing, even though how that was specifically going to work itself out, he didn't. But I know when I interviewed the architects for the building --

Dayle Spencer: Yes?

Kay Hamner: -- he was very clear with them in discussions about the design of the building as he wanted a building that would be a setting for those kinds of

activities to belong, so he saw bringing people to the Carter Center rather than himself going out somewhere.

Dayle Spencer: Absolutely. He really had in mind that he could create kind of a Camp David environment, a kind of a peaceful, tranquil place, and we did exactly that later with the Ethiopian Eritrean parties, who came physically to the Carter Center, and we had negotiations on the property and he achieved that. But the very first conflict resolution initiative that we did, we actually did at Callaway Gardens.

Kay Hamner: I didn't know that.

Dayle Spencer: Yes, we did. In September of '85, we did that one. We created a Camp David sort of a retreat environment in the woods in a quiet, peaceful, contemplative environment, to work with parties who were in conflict.

Kay Hamner: Now, did he always feel like that? I mean he didn't see any of these activities as being something that would put him on a collision course with the sitting government?

Dayle Spencer: No, I think he was very careful to avoid that. I mean for one thing, Ronald Reagan was a master of the media, and Carter didn't want to bring any more criticism on himself or any more negative press on himself than he and she had already endured, so I think he was very careful not to run afoul of any of the presidents that succeeded him in office, and he always consulted with the sitting president before we undertook any kind of international intervention in any conflict situation. And, in fact, on occasion, when the sitting president asked us not to, we didn't go into certain situations at the request of the sitting president.

Kay Hamner: Well, you were mentioning the role that -- President Carter and then Dr. Laney having to work out who was going to be in charge of what, and I have talked to Jim Waits and some of the role that he played there with also, I thought, the difficulty in raising money there.

But how did you see that role change? Or how did you see that partnership or how everyone would term the relationship with Emory change during the years, too, with the Carter Center? What was the year that you left? You were there part of '91 or '92?

Dayle Spencer: I can't remember exactly, but [inaudible] --

Kay Hamner: [Inaudible] but you were there a good eight years or so.

Dayle Spencer: Yes. Well, you know, I don't know if Jim talked about this or not, but, you know, there was actually a time when Will Spencer mediated between Jimmy Carter and Jim Laney. Did he tell you that?

Kay Hamner: No, no, he did not.

Dayle Spencer: Oh, yes, it got that difficult.

Kay Hamner: For the record, just tell who Will Spencer is.

Dayle Spencer: Well, Will Spencer's my spouse, but he worked with the Carter Center as a consultant for many years, and his background was in conflict resolution, and he was a facilitator and a mediator, and he worked with us during that very first initiative that I mentioned to you about Callaway Gardens.

Kay Hamner: Right.

Dayle Spencer: He was one of the team of people that we took to Callaway Gardens to work on that conflict. Well, President Carter asked him to become involved because the situation between he and Jim Laney had become strained, at best. And what had happened was they made this agreement that Carter was going to raise money to build the Carter Center, and Emory's development office was going to help him do that. And Carter felt like Emory hadn't followed through on their part of the commitment, and Emory felt like Carter had cherry-picked all the potential best donors for his own fundraising initiative, not leaving Emory any really great sources to go to for funds for their part of the contribution. And they really got to a point where they could barely speak to each other. I mean it was that difficult between them.

Kay Hamner: That's amazing.

Dayle Spencer: And so Will, at Carter's request, began to go back and forth between he and Jim Laney to try to bridge the differences, and he actually facilitated a couple of sessions with Carter and Laney together, with him serving as the neutral third party, to get them to directly confront each other about the distrusts and the misunderstandings and to move beyond it. And so ultimately they did, and ultimately they were able to work together to raise the rest of the money. The negotiations took place at Houston Mill House.

Kay Hamner: This is best -- amazing story because I know -- I had quite a lengthy interview with Jim Laney, and nothing came out except the nature of their relationship and their mutual respect. Some discussion about their -- and I did lead the discussion that way about their mutual religious [inaudible], some of the basis for their relationship.

Dayle Spencer: There's tremendous goodwill and tremendous respect, but the relationship had gotten quite contentious, very strained, and neither of them wanted it to be that way, and I think that it was necessary to bring in a third party in order to clear the air and to have a kind of a way to move beyond this.

And to Carter's credit, I mean what he was really doing was walking the talk, you know. If you believe in conflict resolution, then you do try to deal with these things directly, and you don't ignore them and sweep them under the rug or anything and hope they go away.

Kay Hamner: Now, what year would that be?

Dayle Spencer: Mid-'80s.

Kay Hamner: Mid-'80s?

Dayle Spencer: Yeah. I don't know exactly what year, but it was a month or so before the Center opened.

Kay Hamner: It was about the time the facility opened? That's what I'm trying to get to. Was it '86?

Dayle Spencer: I would say it was earlier than that. I would say it was like '85, maybe even '84 possibly, but I think more likely '85.

Kay Hamner: Well, at the time that Carter first began the Carter Center, did you sense that he saw it as something that would survive him more than he saw it as a vehicle for remaining active?

Dayle Spencer: I don't -- I think he saw the library as something that would survive him. I think initially the Carter Center was more an immediate sort of agenda thing rather than a long-term legacy, "What do I leave behind when I go?" I think those thoughts came later as his age advanced. But, you know, in the fifties, you're not so much thinking about your legacy really; you're thinking about your life.

Kay Hamner: I bring this up because continually since I came to the Center in 1986, there has been discussion around, and occasional criticism by some, of President Carter for not having groomed a successor and not having more forthrightly addressed the whole issue of succession. And my sense had always been that that had not been a real important issue with him about the whole thing until, as you say, much later, what was going to happen with that institution. So he didn't see it as perhaps an obligation to do something to see that there was a successor, but he saw his role as doing the best he could with what he could do, but it was there. Do you think that that -- I'm pretty well describing that?

Dayle Spencer: Well, I think that's an accurate description. I think, to be fair, he was starting out in a real deficit position, and they were both starting out really emotionally down and depressed. I mean I would say depressed; in fact, they've

said depressed in their books. And I think it took them some years, maybe three years, to get beyond that.

Kay Hamner: I think so.

Dayle Spencer: And so I think in those early years, the identity was really unclear, and I don't think it was until several years later that they began to have the luxury of not worrying so much about the money, have the luxury of having a broader support group. People that began to value even his presidential administration, in hindsight, once they'd had four years or eight years of President Reagan, began to think of Jimmy Carter differently. And so they began to come out of this slump that they were in. But I think those initial years were extremely hard for them.

Kay Hamner: Can you pinpoint a time at which you think the public perception of President Carter began to change?

Dayle Spencer: The longer President Reagan stayed in office, the higher public respect rose for Jimmy Carter. And so certainly by the time eight years had gone by, by the time Reagan left, he was almost a saint, you know.

Kay Hamner: How much was that change in perception due to what President Carter was doing? In other words, that might've happened, as you've just described in, as the comparison between the two presidents and their administration.

Dayle Spencer: Right.

Kay Hamner: So how much was that change in perception due to the activities President Carter was pursuing in his post-presidency?

Dayle Spencer: Well, see, I think the thing about Jimmy Carter that I've come to see in hindsight is that President Carter was the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow. I mean I think he's been on this path probably his whole life, Kay. Very driven, very intense, very dedicated, very doggedly pursuing what he thought was the right thing to do. And I think that what shifted was the rest of the country, not Jimmy Carter. I mean I think President Carter would've done this had he been in the White House. He would do it in the private sector, only it would be much harder because then he had to. It was like – who was it?—the Little Red Hen trying to bake a loaf of bread and nobody would help her, you know. She'd ask everybody to help her, and nobody would help her grow the wheat, harvest the wheat, grind the wheat. Well, he had to do all of that himself and bake the bread. And so I mean I think what happened was people began to value that over time, and so he didn't change so much as we changed, the country changed.

Kay Hamner: I know that [indiscernible] -- of course, there was a big dramatic occurrence of the elections in Panama when there was such wide -- when he did such a dramatic thing of standing up in the Marriott Hotel --

Dayle Spencer: Yes, yes.

Kay Hamner: -- and renouncing. So that was the -- I know he got a lot of positive press out of that, and I do remember that up until -- along about that time, whether that was the specific incident, getting good press for him -- I know, nowadays, you know, it's holding the press off. I mean they're lined up to talk to him, but I can remember when Carrie Harmon first came there, it wasn't exactly -- they weren't exactly lined up.

Dayle Spencer: That's right. She would work really hard to drum up any press for some of the early things that we did, and it got easier over time.

Kay Hamner: It got easier over time. I'm coming back to the relationship with Emory, and then we'll talk about that and move on to some other things there.

I had been told by several people -- and I was surprised by this, too, Dayle, because it came from more than one person -- that perhaps Emory did not have the depth of scholarship in certain areas to really support President Carter that he had expected, which also contributed to some of the tension between him and the university.

Dayle Spencer: Yeah, I think that's true. I know that's true for a fact because he would often call on certain professors at Emory to do a briefing for him on whatever issue he happened to be interested in, and he would be disappointed in the quality of the work that he got. But, you see, he was coming at that from the perspective of someone who had the entire State Department behind him in the White House doing the research, doing the briefings, and he was asking a professor who had a full-time job with lots of demands from his students and the classes to do this as a side thing for no compensation and very little glory involved in it, and so he probably wasn't even getting the best effort from the faculty member involved because of their circumstances. So then it was easy enough for him to pick up the phone and ask for a State Department briefing to supplement whatever he got from the faculty member or call Harvard or anywhere else he wanted to call because anybody would try to help, you know, because of the prestige. But, yeah, I think that is accurate to say that he was often disappointed in the caliber of the scholarship that he saw from the private sector.

Kay Hamner: Which then began to alter where he began to look for support in terms of improvement for the Carter Center --

Dayle Spencer: Yes, yes.

Kay Hamner: -- again, going beyond the university academy.

Dayle Spencer: Yes, and which [indiscernible] some, you know; it raised some comments.

Kay Hamner: It did. And it might interest you to know now I don't think -- I think Jennifer McCoy, who is still there and has -- [inaudible] with Emory.

Dayle Spencer: Right.

Kay Hamner: She [inaudible]. She's at Georgia State University as a professor and what have you, and her Associate Director, Shelley McConnell, does do some teaching at Emory but none of the program directors are from Emory. Emory people are fellows. They come from USAID. They come from the State Department, none from the academy --

Dayle Spencer: Wow.

Kay Hamner: -- which has been an interesting change to watch that.

Dayle Spencer: So they're called program directors now, not fellows?

Kay Hamner: That's correct, I mean because they're not fellows in terms of they have no academic [inaudible]. And interestingly, though, the internship program has grown by leaps and bounds, and they have a full-time director, who has more resources than poor Linda had available to her, and they recruit interns from all over the world now and it's just very -- that's probably one of the strongest ties to the academic world.

Dayle Spencer: God, I remember when Linda Helms used to have to beg for change to buy pizza for the interns who had just worked 40-hour shifts, you know, around the clock to get briefing materials ready for a consultation we were going to have.

Kay Hamner: I know.

Dayle Spencer: Oh, my. To hear that is amazing. Don't tell Linda!

Kay Hamner: Well, I said I can remember when in '86 even that -- just the -- when I came, the facility hadn't been paid for, so one of the things that was facing me right away was that we hadn't even collected all of the pledges --

Dayle Spencer: Right.

Kay Hamner: -- to finish paying for that facility. And then I was sitting in these meetings trying to wrap up the contracts with --

Dayle Spencer: The vendors.

Kay Hamner: -- the vendors and so forth and no money for a lot of that.

Dayle Spencer: And George Schira was still there.

Kay Hamner: George Schira was still there. He shortly left. You traveled with President Carter out of the country?

Dayle Spencer: Yes.

Kay Hamner: So beginning even as early as 1984, the reception of President Carter in other countries was always quite different from the reception of him in this country, this, our country?

Dayle Spencer: Oh, yes! I mean, we would go to Africa, and he would be revered as a king, you know, and it would just be amazing to see the outpouring of love and support that he got from every place he went. And the contrast, especially in the early years, between the reception he received throughout Africa and the reception he received in America was dramatic. And I think it just took the country, the United States, a while to catch up to the international opinion of President Carter because he was very highly regarded internationally, and again, it was because of Camp David, largely, that he had such fame.

And I think in fairness, a lot of people felt even early on that an injustice was done to him when he was not given the Nobel Peace Prize when Sadat and Begin were awarded it. And in some ways, the international community was sort of sending him a signal that they revered him as if he had been the Nobel Laureate all along, as he should've been.

Kay Hamner: As he should've been, yes. That was a really high point at the Carter Center.

Dayle Spencer: Yes, I wish I'd been there for that. That was great.

Kay Hamner: That was pretty neat.

Dayle Spencer: Yes.

Kay Hamner: Do you have any particular incidents from the early years? I'm talking -- now, you came in '84, so let's say '84 through '86, '87, was the first two of three years that you were there -- that stand out in your memory that sort of

would illuminate something about President Carter's character and the way he worked with you and others there at the Center?

Dayle Spencer: Well, of course, to me, you know, I'm a lawyer, and I come from the practice of law. And one of the first things he asked me to do was to work on the architect's contract to build the place because they didn't even have one at that point.

Kay Hamner: They didn't even have an architect's contract?

Dayle Spencer: No—the Center was built on the strength of a handshake agreement between President Carter and the contractor – Lawrence Gelder? It was very worrisome to me, as a lawyer, to have him commit to a \$26 million dollar project without binding legal agreements, well crafted, executed, notarized, etc. But President Carter felt the strength of his relationship with the contractor would serve them better than any written legal agreement. And it did, even when a couple of million dollars had to be cut from the budget due to cost overruns. The two of them would put on their hard hats, walk the property with Dan Lee, who was managing it for President Carter, and with myself (occasionally), and mutually agree on what to do. It was President Carter's unique style of negotiating, and it worked.

Kay Hamner: How did health issues become added to the political aspects of the Center?

Dayle Spencer: Health was just sort of like it was listed, but it was not like a focus or anything. I think what happened is when Bill Foege came aboard -- and Bill was such an incredible gift. I mean he was so bright and so talented and such a visionary and so capable -- that what Bill was able to do was sort of swing the focus of the center much more toward health than anything else. I mean, sure, other things were going on -- Middle East, Africa, Latin America, conflict resolution and human rights, you know, Soviet Union and all of that -- but if you were drawing the staff tree diagram in later years, I think you'd have to put health in the center of the diagram and these other things sort of on the periphery to be fair. But it didn't start that way, no.

Kay Hamner: And the conflict resolution story you were telling about, with your husband-- did you say it's Will and not Bill?

Dayle Spencer: Yes, yes. He always wanted to be called Will, always. He hated the name Bill. Thought it was just hard sounding. And so when we moved to Maui 10 years ago, he just said, "You know what? I'm going to claim the name that I want," and everybody here knows him as Will.

Kay Hamner: That's wonderful.

Dayle Spencer: So I call him Willie. And we can always tell when you knew him in his life by what you call him.

Kay Hamner: I think the role that he played as an arbitrator or a facilitator in negotiations between President Carter and President Laney and that things had become that tense of their relationship is an unknown. You were the first person --

Dayle Spencer: Really?

Kay Hamner: -- that has brought this up.

Dayle Spencer: I'm surprised Laney didn't mention it. I know Carter remembers it. At the time, the discussions were quite sensitive. Maybe they were both embarrassed by it.

Kay Hamner: But Laney --he did not bring it up. And this is very -- as I said, Steve Hochman has talked very forthrightly about some of the Emory/Carter Center tension and so forth --

Dayle Spencer: Right, right.

Kay Hamner: -- but others have been, probably because of the relationship with it now is --

Dayle Spencer: Yeah.

Kay Hamner: -- that's a little bit reluctant. To me, you have to talk about the way things were in order to fully appreciate the way things are.

Dayle Spencer: Oh, sure. I think to me that just is a testament to both of them that here are two men of noble character who refused to let individual differences get in the way of a big vision that would make the world better for everybody. So I mean to their credit, yes, they have their differences, yes, things were tense, yes, they reached an impasse at one point, and they knew what to do to get beyond it.

Kay Hamner: Do you think that the tension was solely due to the issues of them raising money and that you'd mentioned earlier about each of the Carter contingent, the Emory contention, having taken on certain obligations for fundraising and all that came out of that? Also, just the role that Emory would play in the activities of the Carter Center? President Laney had mentioned -- I will tell you this -- his disappointment in that he saw conflict resolution in the Center as being a place where people could be trained --

Dayle Spencer: Yes.

Kay Hamner: -- to be, that they could bring people from all over the world there -
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Dayle Spencer: Yes.

Kay Hamner: -- train a core group of people that would go out into the world into their countries, and from there it would spread.

Dayle Spencer: Right.

Kay Hamner: And that that turned out to be something totally different than President Carter had in mind.

Dayle Spencer: Yeah, I mean I have to say, like Jim Laney, I'm disappointed in what happened with the conflict resolution program at the Carter Center. I mean, obviously, that's the reason I left. My vision of it was really focused on the legacy, that what President Carter could do that would be most important is obviously to model this kind of behavior, this new behavior. Conflict resolution was a new field. It was just evolving. We were just trailblazing all the way, you know. Law schools didn't offer courses in mediation and negotiation at that point in time. They were just beginning to put a toe in the water because it was not profitable for lawyers to practice mediation as an alternative to litigation.

So, to me, what President Carter could have done that nobody else in the world was in a position to do was to enable other world leaders to do what he had done, and that would require a far more collaborative effort. It would require sharing the limelight, handing off assignments to Archbishop Desmond Tutu or Sonny Ramphal -- we had a core group of eminent people throughout the world who were dedicated and committed to this, who were prepared to join him shoulder to shoulder, and, you know, when a conflict arose anywhere, yes, Jimmy Carter could go, but so could 10 other people. And not only that, so would other people be trained to support those 10 other people. And that was where President Carter and I had a different vision. I mean my vision would have been that we would have leveraged what we knew globally, rather than focus it so internally.

Kay Hamner: Well, I know that there's certain techniques that can be learned --

Dayle Spencer: Yes.

Kay Hamner: -- and so forth, but do you think there is a quality that President Carter personally brings to this because of his personal prestige and what have you that's not transferable?

Dayle Spencer: No, I think he has many noble qualities that serve him well as a neutral third party and as a mediator, but I think hundreds of other people have those throughout the world. I think it's very American-centric for us to believe otherwise, and I mean I have seen the prestige, for example, that Archbishop Tutu has that Carter doesn't have, you know, and there are certain situations where a white man is the wrong person to send in to a certain conflict situation. It's the wrong message. An American in some situations is the wrong person to send in because we are often the problem. We often instigated the problem in our previous dealings with a given country. And what Carter couldn't do was see that.

Kay Hamner: Okay, so Carter doesn't see what he could do for the world in terms of what he could develop other people to do. He sees it in terms of what he can directly do himself?

Dayle Spencer: This is what I think was Carter's principal flaw, and I'm saying this, Kay, with tremendous respect for him and tremendous appreciation of what he did do. But I think his principal flaw was he was, remember, so beaten down by the political landscape in the United States, and he also felt so neglected by the international community when he did not get the Nobel Peace Prize, when Begin and Sadat got it. I think he was driven, almost obsessively driven, to prove himself worthy of the Nobel Peace Prize. And that precluded sharing the limelight, giving away the power, bringing other international leaders to the same level of responsibility and credit, if you will, for a job well done, as he got for himself.

And so it's sad to me because as much as I thought he deserved the Nobel Peace Prize and I'm delighted that he got it, I wish he would've gotten it 20 years before so we could've moved beyond it into a bigger realm. But in a way to me, it limited his larger role because there was too much of keeping credit for himself rather than sharing the credit with others, and I think he was driven by that.

Kay Hamner: I think that's a very interesting analysis, but don't you think, also, that there are just characters, just people whose characters are such that doing it themselves and rather than through others, regardless of what might've been the motivation -- in this case, you were talking about President Carter's feeling of having -- in my own view, justifiably feeling of having not been properly recognized by -- in the world community for what he had done, spurring him on, and to do things in a particular way, I've always felt even without that that his particular character was one of hands-on, "I'll do it myself," more than -- I'd never seen him as a teacher.

Dayle Spencer: Yes.

Kay Hamner: As a teacher in that --

Dayle Spencer: Yeah, I think you're right. He's not what I would call a facilitative leader. A facilitative leader has as his principle objective helping others understand how to do the job, you know. He's more of a field marshal.

Kay Hamner: This is interesting because in my talking with Ellen Mickiewicz, she talks about that, the side of that, that's a plus and that it was often, in her view, that President Carter's sheer determination and doggedness that would just force something to happen. She talked about the first conference that she did with him there --

Dayle Spencer: The Middle East -- or, excuse me, the arms control consultation--

Kay Hamner: [Inaudible], yeah. And watching him work with just this field marshal kind of approach is what made it -- he was brilliant.

Dayle Spencer: I agree. I agree.

Kay Hamner: In that particular kind of a role.

Dayle Spencer: Yes.

Kay Hamner: She also mentioned that she thought it was about that time that President Carter began to realize how he could benefit from the media if he properly used the media for reaching his objectives there. Do you agree with that?

Dayle Spencer: Yeah, I think it was about that time. The media had never been kind to Jimmy Carter even in the White House. They had been -- you know, the thing about him carrying his luggage on board Air Force One. They really sort of portrayed him as this boob from South Georgia and never gave him credit that he deserved. I mean I think he is, by far, the smartest -- well, I can't say by far. I could say this until President Clinton left office. I was going to say by far the smartest ex-president we had, but, I don't know, I think Bill Clinton is probably extremely smart, just lacks judgment. Carter has judgment, and he's very smart.

Kay Hamner: Yes, yes, that, too. Well, so you found working with him, except for perhaps what you were saying this area where he -- the flaw that you've talked about, a gratifying experience?

Dayle Spencer: Oh, you know, I would have made a huge mistake had I not gone to Plains and had I not moved to join him because what President Carter did for me personally was open the world. I mean I'm a little girl from Alabama, for God's sakes, you know?

Kay Hamner: I know it.

Dayle Spencer: And Jimmy Carter literally opened the world to me. I had opportunities that would never in a million years have come my way but for him. He was patient with me. He was paternal, you know, in a kind way, not condescending at all, but in an encouraging sort of a way. Rosalynn, too, for that matter. And I think that -- no, I think it was a great, great period of growth for me and enrichment, and I'm forever in their debt, forever in their debt.

My only regret, again, is the legacy thing. I really wish that he could have seen it, that the more you give away power, the more power you get. I really only wish that could've been possible for him to see.

Kay Hamner: At the time that you left the Carter Center, I believe at that time, both [Watson] and Bill Foege were still -- were they still there?

Dayle Spencer: Oh, yeah, um-hmm.

Kay Hamner: So you must've left '91 or '92 'cause they left '92, I think.

Dayle Spencer: Did they?

Kay Hamner: Somewhere along --

Dayle Spencer: Yes, well, they were still there.

Kay Hamner: -- along in there. So that was the era that you were there. You were there at the time that Bob Pastor was one of the -- Ken Stein was doing both the Middle East [inaudible]. What would you say about the relationship among the people who carried the title of fellows? How would you describe that?

Dayle Spencer: Well, we were an odd bunch. It was difficult. It was contentious. It was, at times, a rivalry, you know. It was never an easy camaraderie, which is what I hoped it would be, but it was never that good. There was a certain respect, I think, not universally, but a certain respect. We were all competing for scarce resources. We were all competing for Jimmy Carter's time and attention for our project. We were all competing for the Development Office's time and attention for our fundraiser needs. And we were often competing for space. I mean just to book an event, you know, we were all competing to have the auditorium, to have whatever, the cafeteria or the catering service or whatever. So, you know, there were some very strong personalities, nine of us at one point, and the pie was being divided in continually smaller slices. And so I think that fueled a lot of the tension that did exist.

Kay Hamner: Do you think that at that point in time President Carter needed to narrow it down, just the scope of the activities that were being undertaken by the Center? That is something that I remember being discussed at the time.

Dayle Spencer: Yeah, it was pretty wide. I mean it was like we were trying to be all things to all people. Ultimately, he did decide to narrow the scope, and I thought that was the right move as the political horizon shifted. Moving away from the Soviet Union media stuff was a good idea, and certain personalities caused other shifts to take place.

Kay Hamner: In your observing of the relationship, the partnership between President and Mrs. Carter, could you comment a little bit on that because you had quite an unusual opportunity.

Dayle Spencer: You know, I always thought people underestimated Rosalynn.

Kay Hamner: Absolutely, I agree with you.

Dayle Spencer: I always felt like she was a real strength in that relationship, and she often didn't get the credit she deserved. He always got credit; she sometimes did-- but not enough. And I think she was a rock and an anchor without which he would've been adrift. I think he would have -- I think he needed her and he depended on her for grounding, for judgment, for that quiet voice that gave him guidance, and I think he was wise to listen to her.

Kay Hamner: And at the same time, unconditional support.

Dayle Spencer: Oh, yes. I mean, she really truly was on the team. She was not ever, in my estimation, this fragile flower of the South. A lot of people saw her that way, but, boy, I saw strength in her, and I saw confidence in her, and she was soft-spoken, you know, but she carried a big stick.

Kay Hamner: She does. She's very strong-minded.

Dayle Spencer: Very, yes, she is.