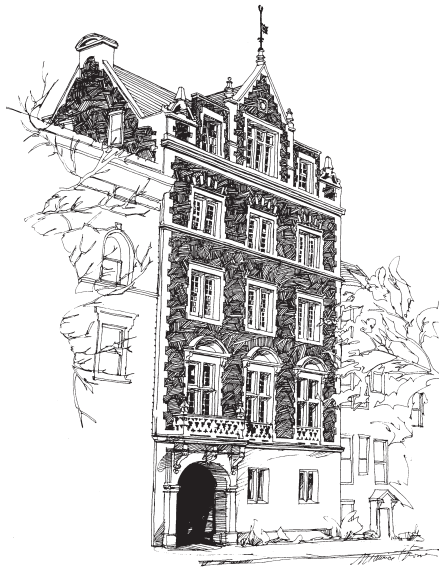


*Commemorating the 25th Anniversary  
The Nelson A. Rockefeller  
Institute of Government  
1981-2006*



*Conversation on the Public Service  
December 7, 2006*

*The essential political truth is that —  
today more than ever — the preservation  
of states' rights depends upon the exercise  
of states' responsibilities.*

**Nelson A. Rockefeller**  
*The Future of Federalism*  
**The Godkin Lectures**  
**Harvard University, 1962**

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*25th Anniversary  
The Nelson A. Rockefeller  
Institute of Government  
1981-2006*

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**D**ecember 6, 2006 — The Nelson A. Rockefeller Institute of Government, the public policy research arm of the State University of New York, held its 25th anniversary dinner at the Convention Center at the Nelson A. Rockefeller Empire State Plaza. David Rockefeller was the honorary dinner chair, Richard D. Parsons and Chancellor John R. Ryan were the co-chairpersons; the dinner was attended by 300 people.

The following day, guests at the dinner, many of whom had worked for Governor Rockefeller, gathered at the Institute for a conversation on the public service. Joseph Persico, who worked for Nelson Rockefeller for 11 years, chaired the discussion. This publication includes excerpts from this transcript. It reflects the informality and nostalgia of the conversation, which many felt was a fitting tribute to Nelson Rockefeller as well as a reminder about the importance of public service in the lives of people who worked with him. This text is not meant to tell a story in a chronological way, so much as to capture the spirit of the man and the moment. Before the transcript, we present a brief description of the role and work of the Institute.

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*Back cover photos (from top): Eliot Spitzer speaking at the Rockefeller Institute, November 5, 2005; participants at the Institute's 25th anniversary dinner: Richard D. Parsons, Richard P. Nathan, Governor George E. Pataki, and SUNY Chancellor John R. Ryan; Dinner Co-Chairs Clifton R. Wharton, Jr. and Donald M. Blinken; Paul Francis delivers remarks from Governor-Elect Eliot Spitzer..*

## *Introduction*

### *The Nelson A. Rockefeller Institute of Government*

**T**he Nelson A. Rockefeller Institute of Government was established in 1981 as the public policy research arm of the State University of New York.

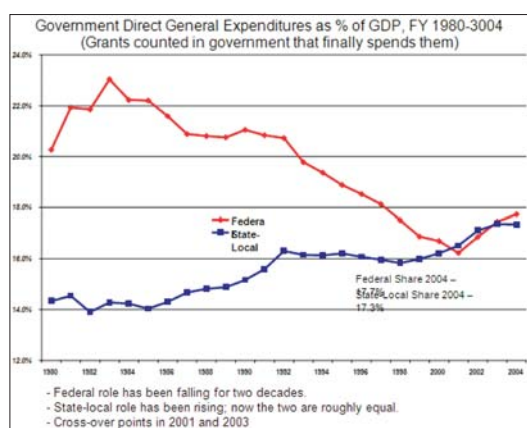
American government has undergone enormous changes in this 25-year period. Despite the growing size and scope of many federal domestic policies, state and local governments shoulder more and more of the responsibilities of domestic policy making and putting programs into effect. In addition, public agencies at all levels of government increasingly rely on nonprofit and for-profit organizations and community-based and religious institutions to implement programs.

The mission of the Rockefeller Institute of Government is to provide independent, in-depth knowledge on the finances, programs, and operations of state and local governments, with a special focus on state and local governments in New York.

The Rockefeller Institute often applies a field network research methodology in analyzing whether and how national and state policies are put into effect, what government capacities ought to be upgraded and reformed to perform their responsibilities, how state and local governments manage their fiscal burdens, and the ways governments have used private nonprofit, for-profit, and religious organizations to carry out their responsibilities.

## *Shifting Financial Roles*

The Institute has an active finance program. As shown in the chart below, fiscal year 2001 was the first year in recent decades when state and local expenditures surpassed federal spending on nondefense programs when we assign expenditures to the government that actually spends the money.



A larger percentage of all civilian public employees in the United States — about 85 percent in 2003 — work for state and local governments than at anytime since 1933.

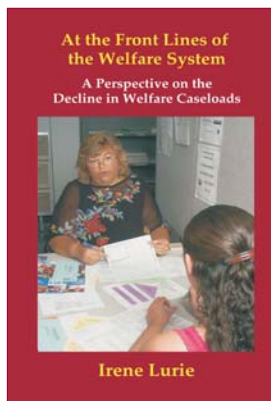
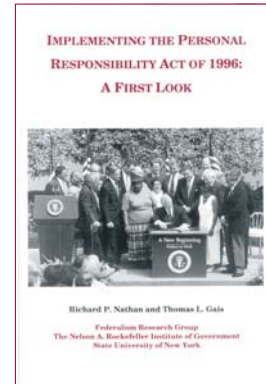
## *Implementation Studies*

The Institute often conducts studies of the implementation of new national programs. These studies include state and local government and nonprofit organizations and “street level bureaucrats.”

In 1997, the Institute launched its study of state and local implementation of the national welfare reform law signed in 1996 by President Bill Clinton. This study used the field research network approach to collect data on policy choices and administrative

changes; it covered nineteen states as they implemented new welfare systems under the federal reform. The first report, “Implementing the Personal Responsibility Act of 1996: A First Look,” was issued in 1999 and was the basis of congressional testimony.

This study led to a successor, the front-line management and practices



study, to examine program signals, service access, and on-the-ground aspects of welfare implementation by directly observing a random sample of approximately 1,000 interactions between welfare workers and clients. Irene Lurie’s book on this research, published by Rockefeller Institute Press, sets a high standard for methodological rigor and insight into the relationships and interactions between street level bureaucrats and program clients.

A similar implementation study was conducted on the implementation of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 for the U.S. Department of Labor.

Other studies of the implementation of national policy initiatives include a study of state efforts to reach out to persons eligible but not actually enrolled in the Medicaid or Health Insurance for Children programs and studies of the implementation of Americorps for the Corporation for National and Community Service. Such studies provide practical, on-the-ground information

## ***Comments on “Implementing the Personal Responsibility Act of 1996: A First Look”***

“Good legislation is much less than half the battle in program reform. The real action takes place in the states, counties, and cities. What Nathan and Gais do in this book is show that welfare reform legislation has led to profound changes in the way welfare programs are run throughout the country. I can’t decide whether the change itself is more amazing than the timeliness, depth, and insight of this report.”

*Ronald T. Haskins, Staff Director, Subcommittee on Human Resources, Committee on Ways and Means with the U.S. House of Representatives.*

“This report is a must-read for policymakers, and anyone who needs to track the complex series of changes the 1996 Act is bringing about. Dick Nathan, Tom Gais, and their associates have done a great service with their quick field work and timely reporting.”

*Donna E. Shalala, Secretary of Health and Human Services*

“This report is great. It really describes the complex mix of changes happening in states. More persuasively than anything else I’ve seen, it documents the real “revolution” that’s occurring. If I were teaching a Poverty and Public Policy course this year, this report would definitely be on the reading list.”

*Rebecca M. Blank, Council of Economic Advisors*

“The Rockefeller Institute is out front in studying the complex process through which laws passed in Washington affect real-world policies across the country. For people interested in how the revolutionary 1996 welfare reform legislation is changing the way the system functions, this report should be required reading.”

*Judith M. Gueron, President, Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation*

about how state and local governments carry out their purposes. An ongoing project looks at the organization and implementation of the No Child Left Behind law of 2002.

## **Build State Capacity and Political Responsiveness**

**T**he Rockefeller Institute also conducts projects aimed at improving government capacity. In the 1990s the Institute sponsored the Commission for the State and Local Public Service, known as the Winter Commission, chaired by former Governor William Winter of Mississippi.

The Winter Commission report was presented to President Clinton at the White House and at an event at the



National Press Club. The Commission

worked closely with *Governing* magazine in disseminating its findings and recommendations.

The Institute has provided empirically grounded, accessible information on other subjects relating to state capacity and reform. In 1998, it published a book on the implementation of campaign finance reforms in the states.

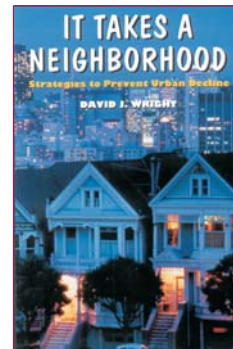
## State Fiscal Studies

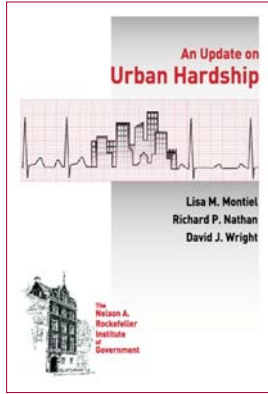
The longest-standing activity of the Institute is the collection and analysis of fiscal data from the states. Soon after Steven Gold — formerly director of fiscal studies at the National Conference of State Legislatures — joined the Institute in 1990, the Institute began publication of its unbroken series of *State Revenue Reports*, a quarterly analysis of tax revenue collections in the 50 states, based on Institute surveys. The reports found a wide audience, including the *Wall Street Journal* and articles in the *Economist*, *The New York Times*, *BusinessWeek*, and other publications. The Institute’s timely analyses of state revenues help the financial industry track the financial status of state governments and the health of state economies and the national economy.



## Urban Studies

Since 1995, the Institute has conducted urban and community studies. One such study used the field network research evaluation methodology to assess the Neighborhood Preservation Initiatives, a program of the Pew Charitable Trust and the national evaluation of the Empowerment Zone/Enterprise Communities initiative. The Institute’s research was credited by the Department of Housing and Urban Development for focusing attention on program implementation and



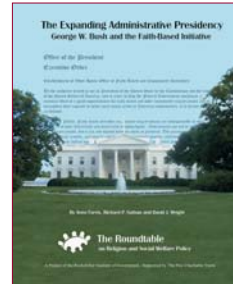


accountability. The Institute’s *Study of Urban Neighborhood and Community Capacity Building*, identified nonpoor majority minority neighborhoods and defined the forces that influenced the character and shape of these neighborhoods over time.

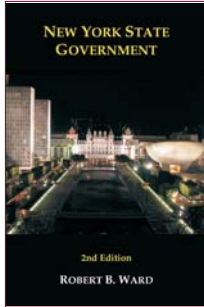
*Urban Hardship* — The Institute tracks social and economic conditions among the largest cities in the nation’s most-populated metropolitan areas over the past 30 years. This research — generated news stories in major newspapers across the country.

## *Religion and Social Welfare Policy*

The Institute’s Roundtable on Religion and Social Welfare Policy is a source of expert, unbiased information on faith-based social services in America. Roundtable research, reporting, and dissemination events have defined and measured the character of faith-based social services; examined policy and legal developments concerning government partnerships with religious organizations; gauged private and public sector funding for their work; and assessed their comparative effectiveness.



## *New York State Government: Second Edition*



In November 2006, the Rockefeller Institute Press released an expanded and updated edition of its book on New York State government, which has become required reading for policymakers, students, and active citizens.

*New York State Government* explains the institutions of government and the essentials of state policies, while examining recent trends. The book contains updates on major issues and is written in a manner that is accessible for voters, and at the same time provides new insights even for those who pay close attention to Albany. Original material in this second edition includes a timely analysis of government reform issues in New York and a new chapter on state-local relations. The author, Robert B. Ward, is director of research for The Public Policy Institute of New York State.



*Governor Eliot Spitzer comments on the Institute's book, New York State Government, at the Institute on January 26, 2007.*

## *Conversation on the Public Service*

*December 7, 2006*

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### **Richard Nathan**



Welcome to this conversation on the public service. This is not just about Nelson Rockefeller, as important as he is to our mission and what we stand for, but it's also for people who want to introduce ideas about public service at a time when the public service needs friends.

And now, this is what I've been waiting for. I am here to serve as Joe Persico's biographer. Joe is a special friend. He was born and grew up learning things from Jim Cannon, down the Thruway in Gloversville, New York. He went to SUNY Albany when it was a Teacher's College.

After graduation, Joe went into the Navy and served on a minesweeper. He went to Columbia University for graduate studies. He went on to work as a writer first for Governor Averill Harriman for three years, and then into the Foreign Service. He worked around the world, particularly in Argentina and Brazil. When he came back, he went to work in the Health Department for Commissioner Hollis Ingram for two years. He was discovered there for his gifts as a writer. He worked for Nelson Rockefeller 11 years, during Rockefeller's time as governor and vice president.

Joe really found himself as a published and accomplished author. Altogether, Joe has written 10 books. His second book was about secret agents. He wrote a novel and then a biography of Nelson Rockefeller. He wrote about Edward R. Murrow and about William Casey, head of the Office

of Strategic Services (OSS). His book on the Nuremberg trials became a television program. With Colin Powell he co-authored *My American Journey*. He wrote *Roosevelt's Secret War*, about espionage in World War II. His most recent book is *11th Month, 11th Day, 11th Hour: Armistice Day, 1918, World War I and Its Violent Climax*.

### **Joseph Persico**



Thank you very much, Dick, for that generous and perhaps all too revealing introduction. The first thing that I want to say is that last night was just a magnificent evening. It was warm, it was nostalgic, it was a family reunion, and the perfect tribute to this organization that has now existed for a quarter of a century, which perpetuates the public service ideals of Nelson Rockefeller. I want to say how much I admire Richard Nathan for the very imaginative, innovative, and energetic leadership for all these many years that Dick has carried out, as director of the Rockefeller Institute, along with his team.

I must confess though, that last night when I arrived at the Convention Center, I was looking for all those bright, shining faces with whom I had worked many years ago. I suddenly thought, “I have stumbled into a chapter meeting of AARP.”

As Dick has already said, we’re here for a marvelous opportunity to trade experiences, judgments, conclusions, and observations about the leadership of Nelson Rockefeller and government in general, and particularly state government.

When the Empire State Plaza was still called the “South Mall” and it was about half completed, there was the main tower half way up. The workmen had painted in 10-foot-high letters, “Rocky’s Pyramid.” I remember coming into the governor’s office to go over a speech with him and he was standing at a window that overlooked this sign.” He was nodding and smiling. And I thought, “That’s Nelson Rockefeller.” Think big and don’t be shy about it.

Let’s talk about the three Rockefellers: Rockefeller the politician; Rockefeller the innovator; and Rockefeller the executive. And finally I would just throw out one that’s always intrigued me: Why did this remarkable leader never become president?

#### **Alton Marshall**



I’m not too sure just how good a politician Nelson Rockefeller was as I look back. I think a lot of his political success arose from his own personality, his being, and his sincerity. Nobody ever questioned him, although they may have differed from him sincerely, and I got the brunt of a lot of that. But I think that his sincerity was this: When he said something he believed in it.

As an innovator, I’ve never been associated with anyone who had what Dick Parsons called last night this “innate capacity to not just take a problem.” The worse thing a staff person could do was to go to Nelson Rockefeller with a problem and not, at least, have suggested solutions.

I recall one instance when I was secretary to the governor where he’d been in office about 11 years and I said, “We need to get

the staff away and get a new thrust, a new idea.” He said, “Good, we’ll go down to my brother’s place in Puerto Rico.” Well, I had an idea we were going down to work. And Mary Kresky can testify we worked for a week on the program manual for the following year. And then we would sit by this nice pool and the golf course running right in front of the patio and there we were looking over these policies, “Should we have an endowment for the cultural arts?” and other things of that sort.

But I think that, frankly, one category you didn’t include was Nelson Rockefeller as a person, and as a person I admired that man. He had sincerity and a dedication to what he was doing. He wasn’t a phony in my judgment.

One time he called me into his office and said, “I want you to buy the Queen Mary.” He said he’d been to dinner with somebody that he met before and that he thought it was a good idea to put all the junkies on the Queen Mary. I said, “My God, you don’t put junkies on the Queen Mary.” But he sent me off to do it when it was announced on the first page at *The New York Times* that New York City was going to buy the Queen Mary and make it a high school.

Rockefeller and I had the worst fight we had on that, which resulted in me going up and dictating my resignation. He said I’d been disloyal. I hadn’t been disloyal, I just didn’t know how to buy the Queen Mary.

His one weakness was what the propagandists called “transfer.” If Edward Teller was having dinner with him and decided that we ought to make changes in the Bureau of Motor Vehicles, he’d come and tell me about it. Well, Teller knew all about the atomic bomb, but he didn’t know a damned thing about

the Motor Vehicle Bureau. Yet Rockefeller, every time he would meet with somebody, he would assume because they had been successful in one field, they would know everything. So you had an awful time in fighting back.

But he was a successful politician. I admit, I spent a lot of his money, and he was an innovator. He liked new ideas, he liked new things. He couldn't sit still and that's a plus when you are leading a government.

Probably like all of us, he had personal weaknesses. If you ever got on his list, you were on there, and you stayed there. And you had a hell of a time ever getting off. One person on the list, of course, was John Lindsay.

I, personally, look to those years with satisfaction. I virtually lived with him, as we went through garbage strikes and all kinds of things. It is interesting that I could come out of all of that and still admire the guy. I consider it one of the most wonderful periods of my life to have had the chance to work with him.

### **Joseph Persico**

Thank you. I'm sure that Al's apt remarks provoked some thoughts. Let's hear from you, Henry, about Nelson Rockefeller, the politician, environmental innovator, executive, and the human being.

### **Henry Diamond**



Nelson Rockefeller — and other Rockefellers — had a tactic of never locking into one source of information. Now, the second source may be nuts, but he would, indeed, do it.

For each of his major associates, he had someone who checked on their information. There was a wonderful woman in Washington; some of you may remember her, Donna Mitchell. She knew more about the details of federal programs than I'd ever thought of. And she would inform Nelson that my figures or details were off on some program. You'd get a telephone call from Nelson saying, "Well, Donna says." And unfortunately, Donna would usually be right.

I think Nelson learned that method from Franklin Roosevelt; he worked for Roosevelt early on. Roosevelt not only never had himself locked into one source of information, he would set people to competing over the same assignment.

Another story involves some people in this room. When I was new to the organization, one night we were at the State Fair in Syracuse. We were all waiting in his suite arranged in order of rank around his chair. On Nelson's left was Al Marshall, then Bobby Douglass, Hugh Morrow, Joe Persico, Joe Boyd, and Jim Cannon. The governor's remarks for the next morning dealt with my field, the environment, so I was there, seated at the far end of the couch.

The governor read the draft and reacted, "This is awful." So, he turned to Al, and Al said, "Yeah, you're right, governor." He turned his head to the left to Bobby, who did the same, and then Morrow, who said, "Governor, it's really awful." Persico said, "I don't know who did this," and snapped his head to the left, and so on with Boyd and Cannon. There I was on the end of the couch facing six hostile stares and a grumpy governor. The rule is: Never sit at the end of the line.

One of the attractive facets of Nelson's management style was that he would generally put someone in charge of an agency or a project and leave them alone to run the show unless or until it flopped.

### **Joseph Persico**

Jim Cannon, you must have some observations. I have to tell you that when I wrote *The Imperial Rockefeller*, the two big founts of knowledge, wisdom, and some things that couldn't be printed were Marshall and Jim.

### **James Cannon**



Al's story about the Queen Mary reminds me that once when Rockefeller was vice president and I had an office across the street, he summoned me over and I sat down. He said, "Greenland." I said, "Governor, what about Greenland?" He said, "I'm going to get Ford to buy it. We need more room; we need expansion."

But Joe, I'd like to just say, for my part, I was always grateful to the governor. I'd been a newsman. One day I thought, "Well, I wonder if I can go down from the grandstand and out on the playing field." And he gave me that opportunity.

The first thing I learned, and it took me about a week to figure this out, was that I hadn't known a damn thing about what was going on really in politics in the government, that I'd seen only the tip of the iceberg. He gave me that opportunity to learn, to find out how governing worked.

Thinking back, there were good times. I was out in our little farm in Warwick when he called me and said he had been asked to be the vice president. He said, "I don't really want to do it, I never wanted to be vice president of anything. But I don't know how I can turn it down, so I think I have to take it for Jerry Ford and the country." Which, of course, he did. I don't think I ever saw him as totally miserable as he was in the vice presidency, just not the job for him. He didn't know how to be second to anybody; he was either trying to do too much or being obsequious. Neither one of them worked for him. But he did it manfully.

After he was dumped from the ticket in 1975, I thought that one of the most extraordinary feats of loyalty that I've ever seen was when Ford got behind in the delegate count after he lost a couple of primaries. Rog Morton came to me and said, "Can't we get Nelson to give us some of those New York delegates?" I said, "Rog, the only thing to do is for the president to ask him." And so, the president asked him.

Rockefeller delivered delegates from New York and, with Governor Scranton's help, from Pennsylvania and part of Connecticut, as I recall. From that point, Ford was always ahead in the number of delegates he had. That was a singular act of loyalty. You won't see that often in politics where a man has been cast aside, will then give the nomination to the man who cast him aside.

### **Alton Marshall**

You asked, "Why was he never president?" And my own personal belief is because he made a personal sacrifice that Jim Cannon just described. I was heading up the Rockefeller group. I

went in to meet with him and he was alone. He said, “I just got a call from Gerald Ford asking me to accept the appointment of vice president.” In my typical style I said, “Not by any means will you go for it. That’s terrible, don’t even think about it.” He stared at me for a while, and finally said, “Al, do you mean to say that if you were called upon by the president of the United States because he thought you could add a leavening factor in our government, you wouldn’t respond?” A lot of us forget how close we were to anarchy when Nixon was about to resign. And I got red as a beet, and I realized that there weren’t a lot of times that I’d given him bad advice, but that was one. But I think that’s the answer to your question. He went to Washington because he felt he was making a contribution. That man sat there and thought his name and background could help our nation. He went there and served, and they cut his heart out. And the very group in the Republican Party that did that has earned my eternal enmity for what they did to him.

### **Joseph Persico**

Somebody here who was as close to the governor as is anyone present is Mary Kresky.

### **Mary Kresky**



Everyone is correct about when Rockefeller was offered and accepted the vice presidency. But, oh my Lord, what was involved with those hearings after accepting that nomination and what he went through. It was really a remarkable event because it also, obviously, involved his family, which at that point in time had never said anything, really, about their personal

holdings and so forth. And the questions that he had to answer and had to delve into.

But at one point, do you remember there was all this questioning about money he had given to individuals and so forth? Suddenly one night at 12:00 o'clock, up came this name, "Joe Smith," or whatever his name was. We had no idea who Joe Smith is. And we worked and worked, and couldn't find out. Next day, they asked and he said, "I don't know who Joe Smith is." Some of the members of the Committee kind of raised their eyebrows thinking, you know, 'He's going to hide this fact.' Anyways, you remember those little metal things with the symbol of Albany that he handed out to everybody? Joe Smith was the guy who made those symbols.

The other thing that always struck me was that I think he had an absolute belief and, therefore, commitment, that when he was campaigning, no matter what the issue was, if he felt that it was the right thing to do, he believed that the people would come around to it if he told them the facts and the circumstances. I really think it drove a lot of his audiences crazy. But he really believed if you gave the public what the facts were, they would come around.

### **Joseph Persico**

While we're waiting for the rest of you to form a question, let me say in connection with the ordeal that the governor went through as vice president. I have this recollection: He had helped some of his very top people, people he really valued, and this became an issue. And as I heard the Senate's Committee hammering away at him on these matters, I kept thinking, "Throughout American history, there are politicians who got in trouble for being on the

take. This is the first one who got in trouble for being on the give.”  
Yes, sir?

### **Jacob B. Underhill**



As an assistant press secretary, I used to have to go to parades, mostly in Manhattan. Here we were at a Puerto Rican Day parade, I believe it was, during the 1966 campaign. The State Democratic Convention had not happened yet, but it was clear that Frank O’Connor, a self-effacing, pleasant man, was the Democratic candidate. We passed by where he and his aides were getting ready to join the line of march, and there was nobody there. Rockefeller said, “There’s O’Connor, we’ve got to go say hello.” So, immediately, he diverts into 73rd Street. The people were cheering, “El Rocky, Viva El Rocky.” “No,” he says in Spanish, “This is your ‘candidato.’ You’ve got to meet him. Frank O’Connor!” He gave all those votes away. What a guy.

### **Joseph Persico**

Bill, you must have a story for us.

### **William McDevitt**



I came late to this thing. I joined the campaign in 1970, and then stayed on his staff for a couple of years. He reached out for everything and anybody, and nobody was beyond being asked to contribute or be part of something. There’s a great truism about Nelson.

One of the things that I really loved was the day Joe Persico called me and said, “We have to go down and see the governor.” On the way down Joe told me, “It’s about the abortion issue and you have some theological background; we want to tap it.” So, we got into the governor’s office and he handed me an editorial from the *Niagara Falls Gazette* that talked about the stance of a leading Catholic theologian by the name of Thomas Aquinas that in the first three months of pregnancy anything that happens to the fetus in that time period is not blameworthy. And he said to me, “Do you know this guy Aquinas?” I said that I did. And he said, “Well, I want to talk to him.” It was a great example of his “I’m going to reach out and find somebody,” which I just enjoyed being a part of.

### **Jack McGrath**



I was the advance man, and I’d sit in the car all day long with him, particularly around New York, but sometimes in other parts of the country. At the end of the day, there were always a couple of beers hidden; he had a fake bottom in that cooler in the back of the car. He never drank beer in public, but going home he’d always have a beer, and if I was the only one in the car, we’d have a beer together.

And he always asked me what I thought about people who liked him and didn’t like him. But during the day if anything happened between stops on a campaign and he couldn’t get hold of Kresky, or Ronan, or Persico, he’d sit in the car and ask everyone what he should say about a subject if it came up at the next stop. I think because he was brought up in wealth, with a favored group of

people, he'd ask whoever was there what they thought, and I think it gave him balance.

### **Joseph Persico**

I'll just add one thing to what Bill McDevitt said. You raised the issue of abortion, obviously very testy. I think this was a real testament to the courage of this man. If you'll recall, the State Legislature in one session passed a sweeping legitimization of abortion, and then the next year repealed it. And so, the governor had to decide whether to veto this repeal of the abortion law, and he did it. It took a great deal of courage, and I must say this, for the next eight or nine years, whether it was in Albany or whether it was in Washington, or wherever he went to speak, he was dogged by the pro-lifers. He was picketed, he was placarded, but he never budged from that position. I wonder if any of you here had a personal involvement with that?

### **Scott Vanderhoef**



I was a program associate assigned to run with the governor to the town meetings, which he seemed to love. He went down to Olean, and had a state police escort. Antiabortion folks had placards describing him as a murderer. People were honking and yelling at him.

We got to the town meeting and several people got up and were very angry, but one man got up and was particularly hateful. The governor said absolutely nothing until the man said, "And, I've been writing letters to you at the Capitol for months, and they are being diverted." Well, with that, the governor finally responded.

“Wait a minute,” he said, “I want you to come right up here and talk to Howard Shapiro, my counsel, because we don’t interfere with the mail.”

I mean, of all the things that were important. All the screaming and hatred, but it was the question of whether the mail got to the governor. I thought it was wonderful.

### **Eliot Lumbard**



I was part of the John Lindsay staff group in the 1950s. Then I came to work for Nelson. Later John Lindsay ran a campaign for mayor of New York. Lindsay asked me to work on the crime issue for him, as I’d done with Nelson several times. Well, that raised hell in Albany. I remember talking to Al Marshall about that and he was not happy with me going down there to do it. Then when I came back there were cross feelings all around. But it was successful; the crime issue and our “white paper” were the main lead of the Lindsay campaign.

Shortly after that there came the moment when I was taken into a small room in the secretary’s area. Things were around the walls for charts and briefings. The governor started asking me questions like, “How much does it cost the public to prosecute somebody for robbery?” I said, “Governor, nobody knows.” On and on he went asking for the cost of this and that. Finally, he said, “We know the size of everything. We can even get the average window size in a high school from the educators, and we can’t get anything out of you.” So we started a criminal justice cost study.

### **Joseph Persico**

I have asked Jack Vandervort to share his long association with the governor.

### **Jack Vandervort**



I was the governor's only advance man in 1958 when he ran for governor. One Saturday, a very rainy day out in Long Island, we were in a shopping center with Carl Spad. Carl said, "Vandervort, go find me a martini." So I went to a little bar and I walked in, and I said, "I'd like a martini." She said, "I don't know how to make one." I said, "Well, I do." So, I made him a triple. Came out with it in a big water glass, got in the car, and started driving back to New York. It was raining like hell, and Nelson looks at Carl and he said, "You know, my mother said on a rainy day, you have to drink water." Carl got out of car, stumbled, and I said, "Why didn't you tell him what it was?"

Another story that really a lot of people don't know. One day Lieutenant Governor Malcolm Wilson was in the Executive Mansion and they were all sitting around talking and they were talking about the South Mall, and Nelson said, "You know, right next door is this beautiful, old church, the Church of the Immaculate Conception. Would you go over and talk to the Bishop of Albany? We will move that wonderful edifice to wherever he would like." Well, Malcolm being the good Catholic that he was, went over and said to His Eminence after kissing the ring, "My boss has just asked me to come over and talk to you about something." Malcolm had all the drawings and everything else. I don't know the whole story, but

I think there were a few words that were muttered that most people, you know, wouldn't think that a Bishop would say.

### **Joseph Persico**

We have somebody here, one of the leading scholars of jurisprudence, who worked closely with the governor on these matters, Dick Bartlett.

### **Richard Bartlett**



Al Marshall, I remember you calling a meeting in the governor's office and the governor joined us after a while. It was when the students occupied the president's office at the University of Buffalo. Buzz O'Hara wanted to move the troops in, and you were expressing some skepticism about that. And the governor joined us and you were describing what had happened at Buffalo. I mention this because Al, as you know, can occasionally be profane, never heard otherwise in conversations with the governor. The governor leaned forward and said, "Well, what happened then, Al?" He said, "Governor, that's when the \_\_\_\_ hit the fan." Nelson grinned. Never would have said it himself, but it lightened the moment.

I must say that I shared the expressions that were already made about what an incredible man he was, obviously with his faults as we all have. But he did love the competition of ideas. If you gave him an idea about something, he would test it with someone else. I'll tell one more story.

When I decided I had to get back and practice a little law, because the kids were running out of milk, I went to see him and told him I'd like to resign as chair of Crime Control Planning. I had

a very nice meeting with him and he said, “Well, don’t tell me this is the end of your interest in politics and government. What would you really like to be?” And I said, “Truth be told, I’d like to be the last elected attorney general in New York.” “What do you mean by that?” “Governor, I don’t think the attorney general should be elected, they should be appointed. They are the government lawyer, they should be appointed by the head of government.” He said, “That’s a very interesting idea. So, if you were elected attorney general, you would work those four years to abolish your office?” I said, “More or less.”

I got on a plane and flew back to Albany, got in my car, drove to Glens Falls, came in the house, and Claire said, “Louie Lefkowitz has called three times.” So, I called Louie back and the first words out of his mouth were, “Dick, are you out of your damned mind?” It was obvious that the governor had wasted no time in sharing my idea with Louie.

### **Joseph Persico**

I want to raise a point about Nelson Rockefeller’s leadership style that has stuck with me. Some of the stories we’ve heard of initiatives that he proposed and supported were a little nutty, but what I think is that this showed the openness of his mind. He was susceptible or interested in any idea.

Anyway, what I wanted to get to was perhaps a story from Henry Diamond about how the environmental movement in New York State was launched with Henry leading the way. What was the seed of that, Henry?

## **Henry Diamond**

I think the governor was underappreciated as an environmental governor. His brother Laurence had an extraordinary influence on him in the matter of state parks and conservation generally. Nelson, while he was a great builder, had a background of going to the western national parks with his father and he had a love of the Adirondacks and the Hudson. The Adirondacks is an underappreciated achievement where he used political muscle to impose the best land use planning scheme in the country. The Hudson River Commission, while less successful, was also an important step.

So I think conservation was deep in his background and underappreciated. It conflicted with his builder impulse and the builder often prevailed. But all in all, he was underappreciated, predating the federal government and the rise of environmentalism in the 1970s. In the 1960s, before the federal Clean Air and Clean Water laws, he was out front pushing clean up in New York.

## **Joseph Persico**

Henry has referred to one of the governor's greatest environmental conquests, which was creating the Adirondacks Park Agency. I'm very proud to say that another Persico was the first head, my brother Richard.

I've always been fascinated by the Rockefeller leadership style, how he was able to seduce people on the other side of the aisle. And we have in Dick Nathan somebody who is a leading authority in this country on public administration leadership. Do you have any thoughts, Dick, about how Nelson Rockefeller proceeded as a successful executive?

## **Richard Nathan**

I spoke at the 10th anniversary of the Dartmouth Center named after Nelson Rockefeller. The historian in me got me thinking about the Hamiltonian executive. The idea that there should be an active executive was resisted at the founding of the country. Because everybody thought the king was such a terrible idea, we shouldn't have a strong president. It was New York State, particularly Al Smith, who set executive reform in motion.

For a legislature with 200-plus people, it is very hard to focus. We need executive leadership. We need executives who can express important ideas and fight for them. That's the style of great governors of this State — Franklin Roosevelt, Theodore Roosevelt, and Al Smith. It's a proud tradition. I think Rockefeller was 50 years old when he first ran for office. He took to it like a kid to candy.

Last night, talking to Dick Parsons, I said politicians aren't loved nor is public service, which we are here to talk about. In college, I wanted to be in government and do things in the public service. Now, we really need energy, and dedication, and willingness to fight for changes in the public service, and Nelson Rockefeller was all of that.

It is important that we need leadership, and we need talent in the public service, people who care about government. We couldn't live five minutes without the services governments provide for us. And yet people are always saying bad things and criticizing bureaucracies and government. That's the challenge. Nelson Rockefeller reminds us about how exciting leadership can make things happen.

### **Jacob B. Underhill**

Just following up on what Dick was saying. A lot of that leadership is on the street; for example, the Pure Waters bond issue. He appointed my good friend Joe Boyd as the point person on that bond issue. People don't vote for bond issues in the State of New York. Yet, it had to be campaigned for, and a whole campaign was set up to get the message to the public. And Nelson Rockefeller campaigned for that and other things on the street. People knew what he wanted and they went along with it. And that's the kind of initiative and energy — energy always — that he showed.

### **Eugene Zeltmann**



I think that as I listen today to a lot of the comments about public service and opportunity, it was clear to me that I was one of the true beneficiaries of the governor's plans and programs.

In 1970, I was working for General Electric and the governor instituted something called the Alfred Smith Fellowship Program. That was an opportunity for some of us to work for different agency heads, and in my case I was working for Joseph Swidler. Most fascinating about that whole process was the point made earlier about him reaching out for the best talent. Mr. Swidler was, by far, one of the more prominent liberal Democrats in the area of public regulation and power regulation. And that made absolutely no difference; the governor reached out and brought in a man of first-class temperament and also regulatory abilities.

What the governor provided for the likes of us was the unique opportunity to work with the various agencies within the

government, work with the governor's staff, meet with the governor periodically, and to be cognitive in our own lives to the importance of public service.

### **Alton Marshall**

I want to pick up on something Jake Underhill said. We were embarked on the largest bond issue ever issued by the State of New York, \$1 billion for what we called, "The Clean Water Act." It was one of my experiences, which soured me on the public being an important source of support. We were losing the bond issue and suddenly we came up with a television ad that showed talking dead fish in the drinking water. And the people in the State of New York, who hadn't paid the least attention to the important facts we'd given them, took off and we won that bond.

Nelson Rockefeller was not afraid to give to get, and that's something I think modern politicians have forgotten. Sometimes the public stalls them if they, in fact, catch them giving something to get something, but that's one of the attributes of leadership that this man had down so pat that it was almost frightening.

### **Joseph Persico**

Al made his point by citing the Pure Waters bond issue, which I must admit was the first time that I had ever seen the figure "a billion dollars" in any state government program. I went to see the governor with a speech promoting the Pure Waters bond issue, and I had written into the text, "\$1 billion." And he looked at that, and he shook his head, "That looks like one dollar. I want all the zeros!"

### **Mary Ann Fish**



There are many in this audience today who were brought into the Republican Party through Nelson Rockefeller and youth groups. Nelson Rockefeller's effect on all of us is still part of us here, and it was learning politics at the feet of all of you who were working with him at the time. We like to think that we learned well, that we are still trying to produce, and that's why we are all here today.

### **Joseph Persico**

Well, I think this Institute is the best monument to perpetuate that vision of public service that Nelson Rockefeller possessed.

New York State has had some extraordinary giants on the second floor of the capitol: Franklin Roosevelt, Teddy Roosevelt, and Tom Dewey. Among 20th century governors, who was the greatest governor of New York State?

### **Mary Kresky**

I won't answer the question directly, I'll just quote from *The New York Times* editorial when they endorsed Governor Spitzer; they "...hoped the next governor would be act like the great previous governors, Alfred Smith, Franklin Roosevelt, and Nelson Rockefeller."

### **Tanya Melich**



In 1958, I came from the West from a Republican family to New York City to attend graduate school. I didn't know anything about New York politics, except that my dad had been a delegate

for Taft at the 1952 Republican convention and Taft had been defeated by Eisenhower. I was at that convention and I hated Tom Dewey because he was the campaign brains behind Eisenhower's nomination. I linked up with the Rockefeller people through Jack Vandervort, who was working for the state committee and whom I knew through the National Young Republicans. Several years later, Jack Wells called me. I had a young child and needed some paying work. He said, "Would you be interested in being Thomas Dewey's research assistant?" I said, "Yes, if he's into flex-time."

I went to work for Dewey. I think the greatest governor of the State of New York was Nelson Rockefeller, but I also think that for the governors that *The New York Times* editorial mentioned, one has to also add Dewey. Those of you who worked in Governor Rockefeller's administration must have learned a great deal from studying Dewey's record. Dewey paved the way for the accomplishments of the Rockefeller era.

### **Catherine Bertini**



I am a Young Republican from that time. A couple of comments from a "youth" perspective. In 1968, when the governor announced he was running for president, Billy Bridges and I were both students at SUNY Albany. We organized a Rockefeller for President campaign on campus. Bill asked his dad if he would ask the governor to come to campus. A couple of weeks later the governor came. The campus was about to explode in antiwar demonstrations, but there was so much positive energy for Governor Rockefeller. The biggest room we could find at the new campus at the time held 1,000 people, and was jammed. Those

people had to wait an extra half hour because there were 2,000 people outside waiting to see the governor. It was extremely enthusiastic.

In 1972, when I was the youth director at the state committee, the Nixon people called and asked if we could send kids up to New Hampshire to work in the primary. I wondered if that was a good idea. But Chuck Lanigan, then state party chairman, said, “No, you have to do it, because the governor is looking for ways to convince the Nixon people that he really is for Nixon. Maybe if his young people are going up to New Hampshire to help out, that will help him make that point.”

I think we learned from Governor Rockefeller how to think big, how to look at problems and solutions on a much broader scale. We learned to stand on principle, and that no matter what the consequences, to do the right thing.

### **James Cannon**

We shouldn't overlook the governor's initiative and capacity to solve problems. He was good at it. I think it was his last effort, the Commission on Critical Choices, which was needed at the time, except it was cut short by his nomination to be vice president.

In the very first weeks of this operation, the governor decided to really make this thing valid. He felt with the Critical Choices Commission he would bring in the majority and minority leaders of the U.S. House and Senate *ex officio*. To keep them interested he would ask each one of them to appoint a person to be our liaison and put him on a modest fee.

Tip O'Neill, who was then the majority leader, called me and said he was sending up a young man named Edward Flynn to be his representative at the meeting. I mentioned this to the governor and he kind of shook his head and said, "Well, he's from Boston, he's probably one of these guys up at the Kennedy School and they are going to come in with all these liberal ideas, and so on. And that's just what we don't need, so let's be wary of this."

Then we had the meeting and Mr. Flynn came into my office and I was trying to feel him out. Is this a brainy guy or is this the guy who kind of comes in with a lot of ideas? We talked a few minutes and he said, "How long is this meeting going to last today?" And I said, "Well, probably until early afternoon." I said, "Why?" And he said, "I have a tip on the fourth race at Belmont. I wonder if I could get you to make that?" I said, "Eddy, we'll take you to Belmont in the state car."

### **Thomas Constantine**



I really came here for an education, so I have really enjoyed the morning. My relationship started as a state trooper in 1961. Governor Rockefeller was really responsible for dramatically changing, through Arthur Cornelius as superintendent.

My first interaction, now in retrospect humorous, wasn't so at the time. It was early August 1964, and a number of us had worked about a 12-hour shift in the barracks called "Wrights Corners" in Eastern Niagara County. We had slept for an hour when the phone rang, "There's a big riot going on in

Rochester, New York. The mayor has declared a state of emergency; the governor has ordered the troopers to go in.”

We got there; we had 100 troopers. City police had withdrawn, the sheriff had withdrawn, and I was trying to understand how we were going to do anything about this. It was a day of battling in heat from 7:00 in the morning until about 7:00 at night. Somebody had a bullhorn and said, “The first group can go back and sleep.” All of sudden I heard all the bricks hitting the top of the bus again and the windows were breaking. A riot had broken out on the other side of town. They deployed us there until about 8:00 the next morning.

So, after about 48 hours they let us go back and sleep on the floor of the Culver Avenue Armory. It was a Sunday and none of us had fresh clothes, no showers; we were kind of gamey and a lot of us were beaten up. Somebody said, “The governor’s here and he wants to shake everybody’s hand.” We had slept about two hours and I said, “Can’t he just send us a letter?”

I think we all have a tendency not to discuss difficult things. My life took me as a sergeant to the Attica prison during the riot and I was assigned to a number of tasks. I watched a lot of what was going on from September 9th to September 13th. There are these myths that the governor should have done or didn’t do certain things. I really had a firsthand observation of what was occurring.

In the first days of the riot, a guard named Bill Quinn was killed. Three other murders took place within the prison while we were observing it.

I always thought Russ Oswald was very courageous. The negotiation team that was given to him had given every possible

compromise that you could give the inmates at that point in time. And so they went in on a Sunday night. The man charged with the state police detail sent me and another person up on the roof to get to a place where we could watch and listen to the delivery of the compromises that the state had offered.

Part of the negotiation team just totally collapsed in the face of the inmates. The inmates had taken control and had them intimidated. The inmates wanted one thing — they wanted the governor to come there to give them amnesty for the death of William Quinn. There was no way that you could give amnesty to a group of people who had killed a correctional officer. So the governor could do nothing else other than that, and the murders inside the prison were starting to occur. A decision had to be made.

I was on one of the assault teams, and I'm not going to tell you that everything went right. But I can tell you was just outside of Santa Fe, New Mexico, about six years later the government decided not to go in and there were about 40 inmates who were killed in the riots.

I think the governor was unfairly castigated for that. I think that goes with what I've heard other people talk about the strength of his decision-making.

### **Alton Marshall**

I would very much urge Dick Nathan to concentrate on this attitude that Rockefeller had, that not all problems belong to the state or to the private sector. That's a division that I think goes to the new political scene. They don't know the difference. They've thrown themselves far to the left where the government solves all

problems, or way to the right to let business alone and everything will be all right. That's not true. The truth lies in deciding how much of each problem belongs to government and how much to the private sector. Here I think Rockefeller would stand up among all people, even Franklin D. Roosevelt, who was a government-solution guy.

### **Edward Cox**



You may wonder why Richard Nixon's son-in-law has a microphone. As a teenager growing up in New York in a Republican family, Rockefeller was a part of my political upbringing and dominated the political landscape. When Tricia and I began dating as high school seniors in 1963, her father was a Wall Street lawyer, but politics was always in the air and Rocky was always there — even in a literal sense, since the Rockefellers and the Nixons lived in the same building, 810 Fifth Avenue, and the presence of the governor was in evidence.

And, whether it was when I was serving the Reagan administration as the general counsel at the Synthetic Fuels Corporation, which was a Rockefeller conception when he was vice president and an idea that is now being looked at again; or whether it's my service in the State Parks as chairman of the Council for 11 years and what Governor Rockefeller did for the environment that President Nixon later put into effect nationally with the EPA and the Clean Air/Clean Water Acts; or whether it is my service as a SUNY Trustee: I have had the privilege of being an actual participant in the Rockefeller legacy. It is a tremendous legacy.

But what I'd like to reminisce on more is August 9, 1974, when we got on Marine One, President and Mrs. Nixon and Tricia and I, and then transferred at Andrews to Air Force One, which at noon was no longer Air Force One because it no longer carried the president of the United States. In those dreary days after that in San Clemente, I sat there with the former president in his office and he would say, "Ed, President Ford's got to do it, he's got to do it." You might think he was thinking of the pardon, but he wasn't. He was saying, "Ford's got to make Rockefeller the Vice President."

And why was he thinking that? Well, you know, it goes back to what Dick Nathan said about Rockefeller being a Hamiltonian believing in "energy in the executive." Well, both Nixon and Rockefeller believed in "energy in the executive," and Ford's career had been as the minority leader in the House; that's a different thing, that culture doesn't lend itself to putting "energy in the executive."

What he was thinking about was all of you who are here in this room, the talent and the energy of the big people that Rockefeller brought into government and some of whom President Nixon brought into his government, whether it was Dick Nathan or Henry Kissinger. He knew that that talent was there, that in the next two years, President Ford would need that talent, and this is what he was saying to me: "Ford's got to bring that talent into his government."

And only Governor Rockefeller then could bring that kind of talent into the government and that kind of energy into the Presidency so that the Ford Administration could lead the Free World in a dangerous time and have some major domestic

accomplishments in the short time remaining before the next election.

So, that's the legacy of Governor Rockefeller and the talent that he attracted, and all of you in the room here, and many who are not with us this morning, and the service that you and they did for New York State and for the Nation under Rockefeller's leadership — I think the people of New York State and of the Nation should be very grateful for your service.

### **Joseph Persico**

I'm going to make just one last observation and then we'll close the meeting with Dick's final remarks. Something I remember very vividly. It was the morning in which Nelson Rockefeller was resigning as governor of New York State. I had an idea. I put my researcher and my secretary to work and that very morning we banged out a single-spaced document running about 10 pages describing everything Nelson Rockefeller had done — the firsts that he had scored in the nation, the breadth of areas where he had gone in and succeeded.

I have to say by that measure in my judgment, there is no doubt that, not denying the greatness of all these other people in terms of the scope of achievement and changing the skyline of the capital and the opportunities of this state, Nelson Rockefeller ranks number one.

### **Richard Nathan**

I'll close with a couple of comments. Thank you, Joe. It's always good to be in your company.

Dick Parsons asked me when we were talking about the dinner, “What should I talk about?” And he said, “Write me one page,” which I did and he didn’t use it. So I’m going to use it, although his remarks were wonderful for Rockefeller Republicans. And I thought, “One page? How am I going to put all of the stuff on that page that captures the energy of the years when Rockefeller was governor and of the people in this room?”

People don’t like government. Mary Nathan and I go on trips every once in awhile, and I remember more than once I’d be sitting at a table with a bunch of people and somebody asks, “What do you do?” I say, “Well, I’m a teacher and I do research on government.” I remember a woman from Long Island, who immediately turned away. “I want to talk with somebody interesting. I don’t want to talk about that. That’s bad stuff,” she said in effect.

Allison Armour-Garb, one of our researchers, and I were talking about this one day. She said, “It is hard at parties to talk about really caring about government.” And that’s not good. And it’s not right either, because Al, you said it right, we live in a mixed society. Everything involves government and other interests, for-profit and nonprofit. We couldn’t live five minutes without government, which provides water, schools, traffic lights, and all of the judicial and environmental things that make life livable.

Our mission in this Institute, in this building, and the Malcolm Wilson building next door, for Tom Gais and me, and all of us here, is to try to help explain things. Our job is to educate and not advocate, but I’m doing a little advocacy today. I’m advocating today for caring about what government does, and how it does it, and how it can do it better, and how we can elevate the ethics and

capability of government, but care about it and appreciate it at the same time.

**Mary Kresky**

Dick, I just have one item. Bill Ronan wrote to Dick Nathan apologizing and regretting the fact that he couldn't be here. It is the last paragraph of Bill's letter to Dick that I want to read today:

*Congratulations and appreciation to you, your associates, and the State University of New York for the excellent program and accomplishments of the Institute. It is a continuing tribute to Nelson's great service to the people of New York.*

**Richard Nathan**

I'm sorry Bill Ronan couldn't be with us. He also said in his letter, "I accompanied Nelson on his first Albany visit. This was for the Temporary Commission on the Constitution, where Harriman had told him, 'This will get you into government.' Little did he know."





***25th Anniversary Dinner Program***

***December 6, 2006***

*Presiding*

Chancellor John R. Ryan

*Greetings/Remarks*

Governor George E. Pataki

Paul Francis on behalf of Governor-Elect Eliot Spitzer

*Remarks*

Dinner Co-Chairs Donald M. Blinken and Clifton R. Wharton, Jr.

*Greetings*

From David Rockefeller read by Clifton R. Wharton, Jr.

*"Leadership in the Public Service"*

Richard D. Parsons

*Closing Remarks*

Chancellor John R. Ryan

Thomas F. Egan, *Chairman, SUNY Board of Trustees*

Richard P. Nathan, *Co-Director, Rockefeller Institute of Government*

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December 6, 2006*

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