Getting to the other side of the iron fence

Walk to West Wing, vice president’s office reveal formality, humanity of how executive branch conducts business.

By Thomas Dewell

WASHINGTON – Office of the Vice President Deputy Press Secretary Megan McGinn steps toward the black iron fence at the North West Gate to the White House. From behind a pair of buffalo-skinned glasses, her eyes scan the crowd.

A group of what look like Africans card signs, making a chant for an autonomous Somalia. An older couple sings for peace and men and women in neatly pressed suits, clutching umbrellas on this cool, gray Friday in Washington, D.C., wait for their escort into the center of the nation’s executive branch.

McGinn makes eye contact with me and I step toward the gate. We know each other only through email exchanged in the weeks leading up to my meeting with Vice President Dick Cheney.

“Nice to finally meet you in person,” she says. McGinn carries a clipboard and wears a black skirt and jacket – professional yet stylish attire. For my trip to the White House I had only one outfit choice: The blue suit I wore to my wedding rehearsal dinner and returning to open air.

The guard behind a glass window in the low, white security station spots my passport and confirms that I may enter the grounds. Another officer hands me a metal pass that dangles like large dog tags from a metal chain. The weapon detection system resembles one I used in an airport, and I pass through quickly, leaving the confines and returning to open air.

The White House stands to my left – bright in the dull light having been recently painted and primped ahead of an important day. His Replies consume my allot 11. During this interview I notice what Simms, Cloudveil fishing gear. The vice president’s great-grandfather, Captain Samuel Fletcher Cheney of the Ohio volunteer infantry, traveled from 1861 to 1865 during the Civil War (later, Cheney rises from his desk, strides toward me and extends his hand. I introduce myself, and he directs me toward the sitting area and a high-backed chair. He takes its twin to my right and asks for a diet Sprite. A digital recorder seems to appear on the table between us, and I take this as an invitation and place my recorder on the table.

Vice President Cheney does not have to wear an identifying lanyard around his neck. On his lapel one finds only a small American flag pin. He is dressed in a pin-striped suit, wears a gold Rolex watch and has a Band-Aid around his neck. On his lapel one finds have to wear an identifying lanyard – and the vice president’s office, she says, You know the Scarletts. The vice president speaks very highly of them.

“They are fierce friends,” I reply. And McGinn looks at me and smiles, I think knowingly.

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The vice president sits at his desk and reviews a document with what I assume is aide. A map depicting the U.S. early in its history colors the wall behind his desk. (Later, I learn his daughters commissioned the piece that shows the route the vice president’s great-grandfather, Captain Samuel Fletcher Cheney of the Ohio volunteer infantry, traveled from 1861 to 1865 during the Civil War.) Cheney rises from his desk, strides toward me and extends his hand. I introduce myself, and he directs me toward the sitting area and a high-backed chair. He takes its twin to my right and asks for a diet Sprite. A digital recorder seems to appear on the table between us, and I take this as an invitation and place my recorder on the table.

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