

White House Interview Program

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INTERVIEWEE: BARRY JAGODA
INTERVIEWER: Martha Kumar

[Disc 1 of 1]

MK: If you'd like to go on background or off the record, that's fine; whatever you'd like.

So we're trying to build an institutional memory for these seven offices so that when the new people come in, in 2001, they'll have information on how the place works, what the gears and levers are, and how they've been used in the past. There will be a general essay on White House staff, what it buys for a President, and its importance. The offices are: Chief of Staff, Staff Secretary, Press, Communications, Personnel, Counsel, and Management and Administration. They are all, in one way or another, important to a startup - either for the things they can buy you, if you organize them well, like Press and Communications, or ones like Counsel and Management and Administration. If you don't do them right, they can turn and bite you, like what happened with the Travel Office at the beginning of the [Bill] Clinton Administration. The interviews will be used in several different ways. In March we'll release what we call "Standards Of a Successful Start" that deal with the elements that are common to successful White House transitions, and things like: the importance of planning ahead, making some kind of effort here to legitimate the whole notion that you've got to plan early. Often candidates are afraid to do so because it looks presumptuous. But it's so important really in getting a good start, because the beginning of an Administration is a time when you have an opportunity that you don't have at another time in the presidency. There's a kind of goodwill there that you want to take advantage of, since Washington seems these days to be a little short on goodwill. So some of the material from interviews will be used as background for the standards.

Then we'll put together the information modules on the seven offices. They are designed for the incoming staff and will be password-protected. There will be a public website that will also have information for reporters and for scholars and students working on transition issues. There will be clips from interviews there as well. But the interviews themselves, the first use of them, will be just for the staff coming in. Then, after January, after the new Administration comes in, then the materials will be made public—except for whatever restrictions there are. They will go into the National Archives, into the Presidential Library system. We've been dealing with Sharon Fawcett at the Presidential Libraries, and also with the Archivist, John Carlin. So, in your case, the interview will go into the [Jimmy] Carter Library. Those are the various uses that we're going to make of the material.

What we're trying to get a sense of is: how people have come into the White House, what they knew coming in that was helpful to them, what they didn't know that they wish they had known, and then how their offices worked, and the nature of White House work life. Those are some of the topics there. Can you discuss, first off, how you came into the campaign, because you were involved in the campaign?

BJ: Right. Actually, I had some experience with these issues you've raised, as a television producer: first at NBC News, and then CBS News, where I was involved in covering some aspects of the [Richard] Nixon Administration and the [Gerald] Ford Administration. So I did have some experience particularly with the Communications Office and the Press Office,

those two organizations. I actually think the idea of having a Communications Office started with Nixon.

MK: It did.

BJ: It didn't exist before then, historically. I remember thinking, when I first heard of it: "That's a propaganda office." I sort of had a very cynical view of it. But as I got closer to it I realized I could get a lot more information from the Communications Office than the Press Office. First of all, the Press Office was very busy; secondly, particularly in the Nixon case, by the time I got involved in covering it, it was Watergate stuff. Everyone was out to get the office, so to speak, and get the President. But the Communications Office had a more longer-term view. So as a journalist the Communications Office was somewhat helpful.

MK: What kinds of things was it helpful for?

BJ: Well, logistics. I was producer of a unit that was covering Watergate and Presidential travel, making certain arrangements out in Laguna Beach, California, and that sort of thing. The Press Office didn't want much press coverage. On the other hand—I can't remember the players now. It seems like Herb Klein was involved.

MK: And Jerry Warren.

BJ: And, especially, Jerry Warren, who was an extremely nice fellow, a very obliging guy. So that was a backdoor, and it was helpful just from that standpoint. I came back from it being somewhat skeptical, and came to use it for logistics and for information and for background. I think as much as anything else the Press Office was just too busy with day-to-day stuff. It may have been that, as much as the concern that they didn't need to help the press anymore, because it would only result in something negative at that point.

But to answer your question, having worked as a television journalist for a long time, early in the 1976 election campaign, actually in 1975, the Carter people—when I say the Carter people, primarily Governor Carter and Jody Powell—they realized they didn't know that much about television, although they were doing just fine going around and being straightforward. They asked one of the correspondents who was covering Carter's efforts in Iowa from CBS, who was a friend of mine, if [he] knew anyone who might be interested in helping them. I was just in the process of thinking about making a change, leaving CBS; I was bored in my work. My name came up. So I had a call from Jody Powell and he asked if I would come to New Hampshire and meet him and meet Governor Carter. It just seemed something of a lark, actually, at the time. But I was taken by Carter. This was a few weeks before the New Hampshire primary and I was kind of at loose ends and said, "Okay." So I quit my job and went to work as television adviser to the Carter campaign.

MK: Did they talk about the kinds of things you'd be doing?

BJ: Yes. Carter said, "What is it that you can do for me?" He's, of course, very straightforward, probing, and right to the point. I said, well, I probably wouldn't do anything specific for him; he was fairly well spoken and I didn't think he needed any image help, but I understood the requirements of the media, and I'd try to help on that side. He sort of absorbed that for a minute and said that sounds right. In other words, he was a bit arrogant about his own abilities: "I don't need any help; I'm fine; there is a lot of press hanging around me and maybe you can help with that."

I had been a producer in the unit that covered Presidential primaries in 1972. A lot of what was involved, as you know, in getting elected, in winning the primaries, is creating a sense of momentum and moving the candidate around, so the candidate is available for interviews by the anchor people and what have you. I knew a lot about that; that's what I was really valuable at. Unlike what has come to be thought of as a media adviser or a television adviser: someone who stages the candidate, fixes their diction, finds the backdrop.

I was more interested in understanding how the broadcast organizations were working and trying to accommodate their needs to our needs and vice versa. I always thought the idea of image-making was ridiculous. You don't take a mature adult and turn him around. Even though there's a lot emphasis on that in the commentary about the presidency and what have you, I never thought it was successful. I thought that, any time you did try to get into manipulating the personality, you ended up causing trouble. So I tried to stay away from that.

MK: Did you talk to Carter, and to Jody, about assessing what kind of forums Carter was good in and how to make use of the advantages he had?

BJ: That was a very common topic of discussion: that he was good in free-for-alls with reporters, extremely good in news conferences; he was good in debates because he had a psychological sense of self. That was a topic. This became a very contentious matter years later, in the third year of the Carter presidency, when it was thought by some, including by Rosalynn Carter, that the President was overexposed and that he would answer a question at the drop of a hat. I thought that was the key to his success, which was that he was a genuine, natural person who would respond to anyone on any subject. But there were those who felt that he needed to have a few issues and focus on a few issues.

Actually Jim Fallows, who was a Carter speechwriter years later, after he left talking about [Ronald] Reagan and Carter, actually during the time of the Reagan Administration, said—it was a wonderful line; you might remember it. It was something like, “Carter had a position on all issues; had fifty issues and no one issue. Reagan had one issue and no answer to specific questions.” But I thought that was a strength and what should be played to, and that was successful. Occasionally, there would be some misstatement. I remember in Philadelphia he talked about ethnic purity in the *Playboy* interview, and “lust in his heart” things that became famous later. But there were thousands and thousands of interviews and very few gaffes. And personally, just as a matter of philosophical principle, I thought that that's what the American people needed: someone who would be responsive and open and all that sort of thing, particularly if you were running against Nixon. Although Ford was the candidate, we were really running against Nixon. So that was a big part of what I was trying to do, was to make him available to everyone.

Anyway, so I did hook up and it worked out. It was fine, and I went through all those primaries.

MK: What kind of preparation did you do with him, for the various kinds of events that he was going to do, that involved television?

BJ: In the primaries, everything was so fast there wasn't much preparation.

MK: I want to get a sense of the differences between what you do in a campaign and then what you do when governing comes.

BJ: There was an issues staff in Atlanta that churned out answers to a lot of questions, a lot of matters. This was run by Stuart Eizenstat. He understood what Carter's position was on everything. Sometimes Carter would have a change. That was simply a matter of the fax. We weren't using e-mail or anything like that. So there were many position papers and statements. There was New Hampshire, Florida and Wisconsin. In that period of three or four months—again, there was an issues team working on developing issues—it was basically Carter and Jody sorting through things as they went along. There would be some discussions about: “What if you got asked this?” sort of a check. It was never like a formal preparation.

Before a couple of the candidate forums, I remember there were some serious kinds of briefings—Hamilton Jordan and a few other people, Mr. Charles Kirbo would come to the primary location. There would be a sit-down discussion in a hotel suite about issues. It never lasted very long and everyone sort of depended on Carter to take care of himself. Of course, that's always all he's done - is take care of himself. He's had these helpers. In some ways—this is just an aside—his downfall came later when he could no longer take care of himself, because he had the government on his back. The Department of Agriculture was making a position, and he couldn't get away from the Agriculture Department's position. It's very difficult for any President to do all these things. You have to delegate. I think that's how he eventually got in trouble. As a candidate, and later, what he has done on his own in the last decades, he's done pretty well; but, somehow, the genius of Carter was being such a quick thinker and a smart guy and being on his own and being able to be—. His political instincts were good; he was good by himself. It was only when he got burdened with the albatross of the government that he got into deep trouble. Anyway, so there was some preparation, but not that much. Really, we were more concerned about logistics than we were about content: moving him around; being sure that if the next primary was in a certain state that he was ready to start the next morning, and that sort of thing.

It was during this period that, actually in my own case, I had access to Carter pretty much at will, because I was the staff person on so many of the television events, the primary night coverage sort of thing, and got to know him pretty well. We developed a fairly decent relationship. I tried, however, to never really do anything important with him, with Carter, without checking with Powell, since he was in some sense my boss, but also was a strong independent force, more than any press secretary had ever been, I think, on the policy side. We developed that relationship. Sometimes, as a matter of fact, Powell might ask Carter to do something, and Carter would decline. Powell would then say, “Why don't you try it with a little different approach?” In other words, it was a side door. That model later evolved into the way we operated in the White House. Essentially, Powell had two chances on some issues. That was very helpful.

MK: Can you think of some instances?

BJ: Let's see. A lot of it would be, like an interview. Some television program or newspaper correspondent or magazine might come along and ask for an interview, and Powell would throw that in the hopper. And Carter would say, “Can't we get out of that?”, or, “Do we have to do that?” Rather than press it there, it would become something I would ask for later. That would be one example.

But it was really just an escape valve, for getting a second chance at getting a decision turned around, nothing really major that I can recall. Anyway, so that was—.

MK: In a sense, Jody's initial request sometimes would be getting him used to the idea of being interviewed by a particular person or network, and then you could come in—.

BJ: Well, introducing the idea which might be rejected.

MK: That's right.

BJ: It might be from another perspective: "We really need these people...", and there's nothing wrong with it. In other words, "I know you're busy, but it ought to be done." I've noticed just generally, in situations where one [is] asking for [the] time of a principal in private life or in corporate life, or in government, sometimes a busy person might be inclined to say, "No, I can't do this; I'm tied up; I've done so many." Rather than making an issue of it at that moment, you can come back to it at another time or in another way. But I think that this was actually more important for the staff approach to the principal than for the content of the particular decision-making.

Occasionally Carter—of course, he knew he was being played with here—would say, "I've already said 'No' to that, but since you are making such a big issue of it..." He saw through that. Anyway, so this process went on. We had the issues operation in Atlanta; we had the road group and we had the political group. Also at work was a transition team, a rather extensive transition team which I barely knew anything about, and paid no attention to. That started before Carter had the nomination.

Then, as he became the nominee-apparent, at what point I cannot now remember, things suddenly changed from kind of a free-floating group, where there were ten or twelve people around, and another thirty or forty in Atlanta, and some political people in some of the states, it suddenly became quite organized. Suddenly, overnight, there were hundreds of people involved, traditional Democratic politicians—it was most interesting to see. This reminded me of this process of people getting involved with the candidate. Actually there was a moment—this moment was dramatized in an early Theodore White book about the Secret Service arriving at the break of dawn to provide protection for candidate or President-elect [John F.] Kennedy or something like that. It was that sort of descending on the candidate that it suddenly became real. That was a very dramatic process. I'm not sure that—.

MK: Was that before the convention or—?

BJ: It was just before the convention. As I say, I'm not sure how much that changed. The most dramatic thing that happened to the Carter campaign was the sudden availability of Democratic Party professionals of all stripes, people who might have worked for [Henry] "Scoop" Jackson; [Morris] "Mo" Udall's people—were suddenly all there and available. That was interesting. As I say, I don't know how it changed, particularly.

In any event, the core around the candidate continued pretty much right on through the election.

MK: Did the Communications core stay pretty much the same?

BJ: Yes, it did. Pretty much. There were more people and particularly there were more people in what was evolving as kind of a Communications office in Atlanta, the people you know—Walt Wurfel and Rex Granum, and people like that. Granum had been around from the

beginning. But there were just more people and more interviews, just more. But, again, I don't think much changed with the candidate.

MK: And then, moving into the transition, what kinds of things did you do? Sort of taking the Communications work you did, how it shifts from the campaign to the transition to governing, both in substance and in organization?

BJ: In the case of Carter, he had appointed a highly skillful Atlanta lawyer, Jack Watson, to be the head of his transition team. Within twenty-four hours or forty-eight hours after Carter was elected, the federal government, of course, had a transition logistics operation in place. One of the federal buildings had opened—the HEW [Health, Education and Welfare] building had just moved down the street. The offices that had been occupied by the Secretary of HEW and the various HEW assistant secretaries were turned over to the Carter transition team. I was actually named Press Director for the transition and was the only person from like the core of the campaign who was involved in the transition. Everybody else was from the transition, who hadn't been involved in the campaign directly. I didn't realize it immediately, but that was not necessarily a great compliment. I thought transition, we're going to plan for the government. But, just before we opened the Transition Office, I remember having a conversation with Jody Powell, the President-elect's Press Secretary. He said, "You know you're not expected to make any news. If there's news to be made, we'll make it here in Plains." I said I had no interest in making news but.... He said, "If things develop, they develop."

So the Transition Office opened and we had a formal opening. Two hundred reporters showed up and we had the presentation by the transition director. He said, "We're here to make great government." I said, "I'm happy to help you with questions you might have and what-have-you." Dozens of articles were written about this: "Jimmy Carter's government has come to town; Jack Watson has announced elaborate plans." I didn't get into trouble over this but this was the beginning of a fierce feud, later became a famous feud, between the guy who had run the campaign, Hamilton Jordan, and this fellow Watson who had come to Washington to take over. That went on for three months. I was kind of in the middle of it, trying to say nothing. And basically it was just housekeeping. It's true that, after a few weeks, people realized that announcements of appointments and what have you were coming out of where the President was. The only time we ever made any news was when Carter came to town. But it was a great feud.

Of course, it was a terrific idea to put a smart lawyer and several hundred people involved in[to] the transition planning but in the process no one got the Campaign Manager to agree to it. Not that he would have necessarily agreed to it or disagreed with it or whatever. He [Hamilton] didn't like it because he was going to run the White House. He didn't want to be White House Chief of Staff, but he was going to be in charge of appointments and that sort of thing. So that was three months of—.

MK: Did Watson think that he was going to have a senior organizational role in the White House, such as Chief of Staff?

BJ: Yes. Well, a senior organizational role. The line was there would be no Chief of Staff. We would have no [H. R.] Haldeman. We would have no Chief of Staff. But certainly he would play a large role in the government, in the White House operation. He was very bright and very capable. So when he would be asked a question, he would provide a decisive and intelligent answer; the result of which was he sounded like he was trying to take over. He really wasn't, particularly, although he did want to show that the group was capable of

governing. Really it was just a staff conflict of almost no importance, except that it became symbolic of disarray. I think the lesson here is: that if you are, for political purposes, doing something which is different from what your predecessor in office did—"We won't have a chief of staff, because we don't run a tight ship like that; we have a variety of voices..."—it's important to make sure that it's thought out carefully, and that you don't make great substantive errors in the interest of political benefit. That's what happened, really; there'd be no chief of staff. So early parts of the Carter White House seemed to be in disarray. I mean a new White House does seem and is—people just starting out, it's very difficult to not have a sense of getting your bearings in that office or any office. It takes a while to get started.

So you might ask: "What could you do differently?" Well, expect a period of transition. The transition doesn't end with the taking of office. Actually things were probably better in the Carter White House than they seemed to be but, because there was no clearly defined hierarchy, there was an appearance of disarray. In my little area, the idea was: there would be a Communications Office and a Press Office and there would be an Office of Media and Public Affairs. That would be mine. Again, I'd report to the President and have a dotted-line relationship to the head of the Press Office for reasons discussed earlier - about having a separate avenue to the President. That worked out fine. We had a five-person staff and got responsibility for Communications policy. A very capable lawyer took that responsibility.

MK: Who were the people and what did they do?

BJ: Well, I was called Special Assistant to the President for Media and Public Affairs. There was a Deputy special assistant to the President for media and public affairs, whose name was Rick Neustadt. Years later, he died an untimely death at an early age in a white-water rafting accident. We had a television coordinator, a woman named Ann Edwards. That job was, basically, to work closely with the television networks.

MK: She's still working in the White House.

BJ: And she still is, isn't she?

MK: Yes.

BJ: That's quite amazing. One of the very few people who—.

MK: That's right. There are very few, and she's one.

BJ: Let's see. There were two other people. There was an administrator and there was a researcher who was doing research on communications policy, and that sort of thing.

For two years, we did this television liaison, the telecommunications policy and policy toward the National Endowment for the Arts, the National Endowment for the Humanities and USIA [United States Information Agency], all out of this little office. Normally, the domestic policy staff would handle that.

MK: How did those areas come under your umbrella?

BJ: Well, I was very interested in them. Rick Neustadt had worked in the campaign, and he was very interested in them. Stuart Eizenstat wasn't all that interested in them. We just discussed it, and he said that would be fine with him. I wanted to do something more than the public relations liaison. It worked out fine for two years.

Then, actually, we were testifying on public broadcasting legislation—again, one of the things we were interested in [was] a strong public broadcasting system. Not because this had been attacked by the Nixon group, but just because that was something we thought was a good idea. Out of nowhere, we got called up to the Hill by Senator [Ernest] Hollings and Senator [Barry] Goldwater and they wanted to know why the White House public relations staff was involved in the funding for Public Broadcasting, were we interested in influencing public broadcast content? Some small newsletter had written stories, saying that. (Actually the newsletter was written and edited by Brian Lamb, who later founded C-SPAN.) So it seemed quite apparent that we should drop that. Actually the only difference was that Neustadt went over to work on the domestic policy staff and took this complex of issues with him.

MK: What year was that, when those issues went?

BJ: 1979. For the first two years of the Carter Administration, I was involved in a lot of event planning, special-event planning, coordination of international travel. You may recall things like the radio call-in show—remember that?

MK: Yes.

BJ: That was sort of a strange and huge event. Eleven million people called the White House on a Saturday morning. Walter Cronkite was the—

MK: Yes.

BJ: We put a lot of emphasis on that, because Carter had talked a lot about, you might remember the rhetoric, staying close to the American people and “as President [Franklin D.] Roosevelt had fireside chats, so will I. We’ll use the new media.” I was constantly trying to come up with young people contacting him on television and town meetings and that sort of thing. He was also quite good at that.

MK: Had you all talked beforehand, that you were going to be doing this, and what kinds of ways you could do it, the different medium?

BJ: Yes. We did. We talked about it—

MK: Who talked about it?

BJ: The first I remember discussing it in some depth was during some preparation for the presidential debates. Of course, there had been presidential debates with Nixon and Kennedy and then there had been none. Carter was interested in debating; Ford, the underdog, also agreed to go ahead and debate. I was involved in negotiating that. While we were planning that and discussing that, I remember Carter actually saying we must be sure not to lose the opportunity to use the media to stay in touch with the public. I remember him adding, “I hope you’ll be creative about that.” So that was really the first time. It was before the first debate.

MK: Did he give you any hint as to what he meant when he said “be creative”?

BJ: No. But it was quite obvious that he meant: “Get on the air.” In other words, we had often discussed that there was a tradeoff between making news and being responsible, that you could get coverage, but sometimes you had to go to extremes, and that you didn’t want to do

so. Here the idea was: to do some interesting things that would generate enthusiasm on the part of the television organizations. That's really what he meant by that. And we did. As I say, we had these town meetings and a group of young people in the White House. But the high point of all this was this radio call-in program which was also—all the television cameras were watching. Only eleven people—I think it was eleven; I've forgotten the number; maybe it was nineteen—it probably wasn't eleven. There were eleven million people who called, but some relatively small number of people got through. But the—I hesitate to use the word—symbolic effect, but the meaning of it was that the President wanted to be open to the public. Actually this got carried to such extremes that it became a subject of the cartoons. Gary Trudeau created a character called “Secretary of Symbolism”. He actually gave me one of his cartoons, dedicated it. But we were making a lot of effort to be creative and in being open.

Some of this stuff backfired in the oddest way. The most famous example of it was during the—Carter came into the White House in January. In March there was the energy crisis. He was to give a fireside chat. Carter and Rosalynn and several other people, Jody, Hamilton, maybe Jerry Rafshoon, went on a tour to see where we could have this “Fireside Chat.” We were inspecting the various [White House] fireplaces to see which one would be the most appropriate. So we found one room; this would be fine.

MK: What was appropriate, large or small?

BJ: Just a place where a couple of cameras would be able to fit in, and where the backdrop was good. I wanted to do it in the Map Room, which is where President Roosevelt—I thought that was best. For some reason that didn't work out; I can't remember why now. We chose another room, a library of some sort on the first floor of the White House. So, as we're walking through there, Carter just mused out loud, “I wonder what I should wear?” And before I had a chance to say—whatever I would have said would have been wrong, probably, but I was going to say something like: “Whatever you wear at home if you were sitting by the fireplace.” That's what I was going to say. I almost said that. And before I could say it—he sort of addressed the question to me—Rosalynn said, “What about that new sweater that so-and-so gave Chip?” He said okay; that's fine. Suddenly he was wearing a sweater. Again, the criticism was: it was “BS”: “You wouldn't wear a sweater!” Why wasn't he addressing the American people in a coat-and-tie? Again, I probably would not have recommended that, because the guy is sitting at home by the fireplace. But, of course, that probably would have made the most sense; the President is speaking to the public, “At least put on a tie.” But the issue became, “Gee, there's a new sweater in the house,” as opposed to symbolism and conservation, all these other issues. I think that's so important to realize, that what becomes the sort of truth of the moment is not necessarily—.

MK: The message you're selling.

BJ: What really happened was: none of us thought about: “We're talking about conservation; maybe it would make sense to wear a sweater.” Or, “Out of respect for your audience, maybe you should wear a tie.” The sort of thoughtful decision: no one did that. We were sort of walking around and someone said, “Why not wear that new sweater?” Not because it would save energy, but because it was a new sweater. And a lot of paragraphs have been written about this, none of which particularly had it right. I never thought there was a problem with the sweater actually; I thought it was just fine.

Anyway, what were we talking about?

MK: We were talking about his use of different kinds of media. So he was interested in your being creative.

BJ: That's right. I remember, one time he had been asked several times, numerous times, by his mentor, Admiral [Hyman G.] Rickover, to help dedicate the last of a series of nuclear submarines. Of course, he couldn't refuse the Admiral, but he didn't really want to travel to this location, New London, Connecticut, or wherever it was. So there was some electronic hookup: "You push this button and the ship will be dedicated." Actually, I thought that was pretty good, because it would be right in the White House. There would be a button. There would be pictures, and graphs, and Admiral Rickover; that would work out just fine. He would be dedicating a ship, he wouldn't have to go anywhere, and it would be easier for coverage.

So that took place, and it was a pretty good story. It worked out fine: in the Oval Office, push the button, dedication, applause. Suddenly, everyone was gone. There was no one there. Carter went off in his one direction and the other staff members; the press, were ushered out. There was no one left except Admiral Rickover and me. The Admiral looked at me and said, "Oh my goodness, I forgot to give the President these briefing papers. Here, will you please take care of this? He must see these. It's very important."

I was thinking: "This is like a joke; this can't be happening." It was just sort of strange. Included in the briefing materials there was a large folded-over diagram of some sort. I said, "Certainly, Admiral. I know he'll want to see those. I'll be sure that he gets them very soon." "Mind you, it's very important." These strange circumstances took place. But, anyway, we had a successful—I gave them to the Staff Secretary. I'm not sure if Carter ever saw them or not.

MK: I imagine, when they came from Rickover, he saw them.

BJ: Again, the thing that's important there, it seems to me, is the sort of melding of mythic circumstances and reality. This actually happened. It was just sort of out of some storybook, Rickover sort of almost demanding that he was going to go find Carter and give this to him.

MK: You had the radio actualities, as I remember. Yours was the first Administration to do that.

BJ: That's right.

MK: Where did that come from, and how did you see it playing out? Was it effective? Was it used a lot?

BJ: First of all, it was a tremendous burden for the speechwriters. They had to constantly be coming up with new stuff. I was trying to remember if Carter was the first to do that. It got used quite a bit. It's gotten advanced in science, however, since then. I don't believe that Carter did it every Saturday morning, and that sort of thing.

MK: There were telephone lines for radio, from around the country, where you could call in and get clips from the speech, that particular—

BJ: Yes.

MK: I think it was changed maybe every two or three days.

- BJ: It was done in the Office of Communications, and I can't remember the details.
- MK: It was the first administration to do it. The Saturday radio address was Reagan.
- BJ: That hadn't been done before?
- MK: No.
- BJ: I see. I don't remember the details of that. I think part of the problem was that the Herb Klein operation was so good in the Communications Office, it was hard to beat it. One thing they did was the out-of-town press thing. But, as I say, I can't remember....
- MK: Did you work on the every-other-week meeting, I guess it was once a month, with out-of-town editors coming to Washington?
- BJ: Yes, I did. That was primarily done by Pat Barrio and her group, and Walt Wurfel. But I was involved in it, mainly by what kind of questions would he be asked. The Communications Office was very interested in coming up with questions and preparing Carter for questions of various sorts. They didn't want to leave things on an impromptu basis at all. But everyone was asked to submit questions and that sort of thing. There was an invitation list that was generated; I'm not sure how that was done, exactly. These people were working just down the hall from me, but we did work somewhat separately. It was a very methodical, planned office. It was done in a rather thorough way. Ours was more spur-of-the-moment, sort of going-with-the-flow. I don't have too much of a recollection now, of the details of that.
- MK: Do you remember, in terms of the questions that were prepared for, for a press conference, were they different than the questions the President would be prepared for, for the out-of-town editors, in terms of the people and subjects and what-not?
- BJ: You mean, who would work on it?
- MK: The people who would work on it, and the subject they would come up with.
- BJ: Yes. The domestic policy staff was very much involved in preparing questions for the news conferences. There was always a large briefing book.
- MK: It was just updated?
- BJ: Yes. I guess updating it would be correct to say. At first, there was a new briefing book every time, but then it just got updated. I'm sure that Carter would look at it and see the answers; no question he would do that. But this was coordinated by Powell himself and he would take these questions from everywhere. It was a major thing that he did.
- MK: Did reporters ever tell you, either the out-of-town people when those were coming up for the out-of-town editors, or with press conferences with the Washington press corps, the White House press corps, did any reporters ever give you questions?
- BJ: Only in this sense: "You can be damned sure he's going to be asked about such and such," not, "Let me whisper in your ear, I'm going to ask this question." It was like he better be prepared for such-and-such. It was less a "let me help you out" and more of a "I hope you people realize that." So there was never any....

MK: Would somebody say, for example, “If the President, when he finishes with all these current, hot-button topics, is interested in talking about Czechoslovakia I’ve got something?”

BJ: Powell would hear the things like that, definitely. I remember on a few occasions just sitting in his office and that kind of thing—of course, Jody would take note of it and say, “I wouldn’t be surprised if you didn’t get called on...,” kind of thing. It was sort of a loose conspiracy, not a formal one. This is a great convention, the spontaneous, unrehearsed news conference; it’s more important to reporters than anyone else. You want to be able to ask a question, without have tipped off the principal of the question. So there’s no time for the principal to make up something to defeat your effort to put him on the spot. The motivation, and I think it’s a justifiable motivation, in the press corps is to shine the searchlight of truth on government. That’s the questioning process, to get the truth, whatever that means. So there’s some distance.

MK: What about, from the White House point of view, what was the view of a press conference?

BJ: Well, depending on the situation, the timing, what was going on—I remember there were times when it was just mere survival - getting out without getting clobbered. But I would say there were two more positive perspectives on this. One, of course, you tended to dominate the news that evening, and then the next day, and you had a chance to make a statement. So if you had something to say, that would be a good time to say it. Because you could get the lead. Jody was constantly concerned about this. He always was very much interested in coming up with a little statement where he could get the lead or where he could get a favorable ride for this particular initiative. So it wouldn’t just be some answer to a random question. So that was the first goal.

The second goal, and it’s a little corny, actually—I really cared about this in a very big way—this was a chance for public concerns to be aired, to prove that we have an open society. The idea is that dispassionate, detached representatives of the public, the press, would ask the President questions, which the President had to answer and help insure that it was a democratic society, open and free. It was on my mind. I thought about it a lot; I cared about it a lot. I think if I had said that or when I did say it from time to time, I would get at best a smile.

MK: Did they not view the press in the same way, as surrogates for the public? How did they view the press?

BJ: In an adversarial way, an adversarial manner; as people out trying to cause trouble and get them. I will give Carter credit for realizing that this function had to go on and that there was a certain gamesmanship involved. He didn’t mind the questions, because he needed to have the answers to those questions. They were legitimate questions he needed to have the answers to. But, generally, the staff members didn’t see it that way.

MK: Within the government, does the press conference serve as something of an action-forcing mechanism in terms of getting accurate information of what’s happening in the departments? One of the problems, often, is that around the departments and agencies they don’t want to deliver bad news to a President, but when you’re preparing for a press conference the President has to be given a heads-up, if there’s real trouble brewing.

BJ: Right. A big part of the preparation for the presidential news conferences was receiving information from the press offices around the government which would be cleared by the key executives in those departments. I hadn’t actually thought about that, the way you put

- the question. I don't know for sure. I definitely recall on a number of occasions information coming up like: "We're not going to meet that goal." I'm trying to think specifically: "We're behind on such-and-such..."; "The Space agency says so-and-so...." But, normally, that information would be known to the Domestic Policy Council, the staff person, already, so it wouldn't kind of slip into the briefing books for the first time. That's an interesting thought. I guess that would be—in other words, under the guise of helping prepare the President, you slip in some bad news.
- MK: Because you recognize that he's got to be prepared for it, because it may come up. You wouldn't ordinarily tell him, but you would wait until a time to your advantage but this requires it.
- BJ: There was a lot of information that I heard of for the first time. I recall, now that you ask the question, "That's all that we know about..."; "...don't worry about that..."; "...everybody knows about that." And I would be sort of surprised. I don't remember too many times, at least in the Carter period, when news like that would develop: "The Government's Asleep: Lax Security Matter in the Energy Sector." I don't remember very many of those things. Has that been an issue?
- MK: I'm just thinking in the Nixon Administration, Sarah McClendon once asked a question about trouble in the Veteran's Administration which he had been unfamiliar with, and changes really occurred as a result.
- BJ: I vaguely remember that, too.
- MK: You've seen it from time to time. I'm just thinking of positive kinds of things that come out of regularly having press conferences, because they're so torturous from a President's point of view.
- BJ: Again, another initiative of the Nixon group, as it turns out, this Domestic Policy Council, where there was some person who was in close touch with each government agency, each sector. The Carter Administration followed that to the letter with Eizenstat and his people. That was the principal communication. In other words it would be—.
- MK: What about the communications with the people in the press operations in the departments? Did you deal with them at all?
- BJ: That was almost exclusively handled by Walt Wurfel. Have you talked with him at all?
- MK: For the book I did, but I haven't talked to him recently.
- BJ: He had it in his job description. I would occasionally get phone calls.
- MK: Through Walt, in putting on events, did you deal with the cabinet secretaries, to see how they could be folded into events?
- BJ: Yes. Directly. If there was some—any time Carter was going to be somewhere and there would be a cabinet officer there, there would be some discussion with their office or with the cabinet secretary. I had very good access to the cabinet secretaries.
- MK: Did they come over frequently for events in the White House?

BJ: Yes.

MK: Compared with today what you see in the Clinton White House, with cabinet secretaries coming over?

BJ: Yes. First of all, there was actually a Cabinet that met. There was a Cabinet secretary and there was a Cabinet that met. The one problem was, about halfway through the Carter Administration, there was this bloodletting where Carter fired [Joseph] Califano and three or four members of the Cabinet.

MK: Brock Adams was one.

BJ: Brock Adams.

MK: [Michael?] Blumenthal.

BJ: I guess. I'm not sure what happened with Blumenthal, whether Blumenthal resigned.... But, at first, it was: we're one happy family, we're doing great, and we're moving forward. Later on, I think everyone was so busy, the bureaucracy took charge. That was a theme of the whole Carter period, which was: "The government took over." Instead of the elected officials running the government, the government was running the elected officials. I don't quite know how that happened; it seems incomprehensible to me that it would have happened. It may have been just that, through Carter's spartan approach to things, he just assumed that things would just roll on—we'd get very irritated with him when there were troubles like this. There was a competent fellow named Rick Hutcheson who was the Cabinet Secretary—he was Staff Secretary—who would be responsible for getting these papers. Sometimes they wouldn't come in. There would be a lot of irritation there.

Anyway, I'm trying to think of these major themes. What can a President and the staff do different or better than was done then? The initial Carter problems were, I think, responded to by creating a hierarchical White House staff. That was very important. That has tended to work pretty well. It worked very well in the Reagan period, and seems to work fairly well with Clinton. Actually, part of the reason that this situation changed with Carter was that things were somewhat in disarray, and there was concern about getting re-elected. Concern about being re-elected, I think, is what brought Hamilton Jordan back in, to try and run the place: "We got elected once; I ran that; I may as well come back and be the Chief of Staff and run the reelection."

MK: When did re-election come on as an issue?

BJ: The third year.

MK: How did it affect all of the Communications and television operation?

BJ: The main way that—Carter's numbers were very good. His popularity was very good for the first two years. People forget that. Actually, for eighteen or nineteen months, his popularity was extremely high. When those numbers started going down, there was less concern about the numbers going down and, "Well, I'm doing the right thing; I can't worry about that." But in the third year, as the numbers continued to go down, and the election seemed to be looming, people around him—Jordan, particularly Jerry Rafshoon and Rosalynn—began to talk about: "There's something wrong here! How can this be?" So, it was in the third year that one began to see some questions going out to the bureaucracy about: "What can be

done differently, what initiatives are you taking that we need to bring to the public's attention?" It was also in this period that Jody started to change his attitude toward the press: "I'm going to be nasty; I'm going to be mad; I'm going to be angry; that's how you get respect in this town." It was sort of: "We've been too easy and too friendly...."

So it was, on the one hand: "What can we show that we're doing right?", and, on the other hand, "Let's be nice to our friends, and ignore our enemies, penalize our enemies." It got a little hardball, I guess you would say. I wasn't much help in this. I thought that, basically inflation was up, and there were a lot of problems, there were subsequent problems; he was a good victim and there wasn't much that could be done. That is not a very helpful attitude to have in a situation where people were an extremely competitive group of people who wanted to win. I personally wasn't very helpful, but I could see all around me there were people putting on shoulder pads and getting ready to get rough. I've forgotten. The political party was re-engaged and re-energized at that point. Bob Strauss, those people started getting more visibility; they were around more. This is a period during which Bob Lipshutz, who had been Counsel, was sort of eased off to the side and [Lloyd] Cutler was sort of brought in. This is when the Cabinet officers were moved aside. So I'd say in the middle of the third year.

It was about this time I moved over to the National Security Council staff. I wasn't able to be helpful in this new hardball approach. So I was watching it for nearly a year from the NSC staff. And things started improving. The numbers went up somewhat; there seemed to be more organization. And then I could see that things were really moving toward the re-election campaign. All of the scheduling was based on certain states and that sort of thing. But there was a certain, I don't want to say desperation, but there was a certain search for "What-are-we-doing-wrong?" I don't think anyone ever found the answer to that. The historical consensus seems to be that there were too many problems.

MK: Remember the misery index which he invented in 1976 was much higher—I think it was 20 at the end and had been 12 under Ford.

BJ: Right. That's absolutely true. And even if you don't—

MK: And, of course, the hostages—

BJ: The hostages, the energy crisis, and inflation. So I guess that's right. I read somewhere—it may be Powell—someone said that Carter seemed to be too little a man for such big problems. I thought that was a good way to put it. It's all in the realm of impressions. I personally think that it was circumstances, plus he was never able to make the government work for him. In part he was never able to make the government work for him, because he was too busy doing what he thought was right instead of running the bureaucracy, and he didn't have people around him who were running the bureaucracy. You didn't have cabinet loyalists who were in tune with what he was trying to do. Maybe this is the way it should have worked out. It was a transition figure and.... Maybe it's a great country which does take care of itself pretty much as long as there is no crisis, that it doesn't need huge amounts of governance. I never thought that; I never had that philosophical view but that certainly has been the trend in the government since the end of the Carter period.

Carter, of course, started this, by moving to the center as a Democrat. The country seems to want moderation in the White House, unless there's some kind of crisis, unless there is another Depression, or whatever. It's moving to the center and, for the Democrats at least, Carter invented this notion of less government as an officeholder, as a presidential

officeholder. This whole idea has been carried forward to this moment. I don't know. Of course, the question for Carter is: "If I had it to do all over again, what would I do differently?" I suppose it would be better management of the government bureaucracy; the result would probably be the same.

MK: For yourself, in coming in, what did you know and what do you wish you had known?

BJ: Well, the thing I knew the most was: how decisions are made in journalism and, specifically, in broadcast journalism. That was enormously helpful; I really knew something. And I knew how to write. [Those were] two things that were very helpful. I knew a lot of reporters and other people in Washington. I was thirty-two when Carter took office. That was older than most of the people around. I was one of the older people, and had actually been in the workplace ten years. You remember, the head of Presidential Personnel had just been a year out of Harvard, Jim Gammill, a wonderful guy who now has a Ph.D. and is making a lot of money as a financial wizard. But, at the time Carter [was] running for President [he] stopped off in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and actually ended up spending a night at one of the Harvard houses, in one of the suites there, and met this kid. A year later the guy was Director of Presidential Personnel. He was very competent; I don't mean to suggest he wasn't. So I had some hands-on experience in the field in which I was working which was one thing, and I was a trained writer.

MK: In putting events together, did you write for those events?

BJ: Certainly. I did background materials. And, during the election era, I always helped with drafting up the beginnings of statements and that sort of thing. I would see all the speeches, and was involved in editing the speeches. When I say write, writers it seems to me—writing is about: one, having ideas, and, two, knowing what is good grammar, good writing, good English language writing.

But, more interesting, and tougher, is what I did not know. I suppose that I would have liked to have had a better tempering of my idealism with some longer view. I got involved in this thing in the first place because I didn't like Nixon; I thought Carter was a good antidote. That's part of the reason a lot of people voted for Carter. But I guess if I had—what I would have liked to have known, I would have from a personal standpoint liked to have had some deeper, broader sense of what I wanted to do with my life, so that this experience could have been useful for the long term. I don't mean that I could have made a bunch of contacts and gone out and made a lot of money. I don't mean that so much. I was merely a journalist, which meant that I was interested in a lot of things, but did not know much about anything in depth. So it would have been helpful to have a Ph.D. in something, or to know something in some depth, or to have worked somewhere besides in journalism. I think I would have been a more valuable person around there and it would have been a more useful experience.

This reminds me, I guess all the candidates or the elected officials, eight years ago, were asked what books were most important to them. I thought [Al] Gore's answer was the best of the lot. He said the most valuable book he ever read was *The Structure of Scientific Thinking*. He said it wasn't so much valuable for itself, but it was valuable for when he read it, because it was a book about how change is made in science, how new paradigms are created. He said, "As I recall, I read it when I was a sophomore in college, and I was just getting new ideas of my own. It was so helpful in realizing that you could make new ideas." It was a great comment.

I think I would have liked to—I was filled with the open, creative possibilities, radio call-in shows and town meetings, all these things in my technical areas, but I guess I wish I had known more about some substantive areas in-depth. As it turned out, for the first couple years there, I got to do some good things about communications policy. The policy-making in telecommunications in the federal government had been in something called the Office of Telecommunications Policy, which was in the White House Office.

MK: It was headed, at one point, by Brian Lamb.

BJ: That's right. That's exactly right. Clay Whitehead. Brian Lamb may have been on his staff.

MK: Yes. Whitehead was first.

BJ: I think Brian Lamb was an assistant director or something. But, anyway, we moved that out of the White House Office, to the Commerce Department, on the theory that it was too close to the White House; that Communications policy shouldn't be made where it can be reached and touched and shaped by—I thought that was really a good thing. We did a few things like that.

One issue I was involved in—this was an astonishing thing; it just fell in my lap and I worked on it for a year and a half. There was a part of the United States Department of State called—the abbreviation was CU and it was the Secretary of State for Cultural Affairs. It was the person who was responsible for the Fulbright programs and the international, the “let's communicate to the world what's so great about America by showing off our books and our writers” and that sort of thing. An issue bubbled up from the bureaucracy that this should not be in the Department of State; it should be in the United States Information Agency because, in the State Department, it was too subject to State Department policy and it should be freer. Or something like that. I was on a government-wide committee and we moved this CU into USIA; it became a fourth part of USIA. It seemed to do okay. The people who were running that got guidance from the State Department about what U.S. policy goals were, but tended to be freer in this separate bureaucracy. And there were some other matters like that, very in-depth matters concerning the Voice of America and should it be free or should it be part of this bureaucracy? Just now, though, in late 1999 or earlier 2000, the cultural affairs unit has gone back to the State Department. So there's a book or two on just that subject. Have you heard about this?

MK: Yes.

BJ: Up and down and all around. But people cared about those things, passionately.

MK: Who did you talk to in the broadcasting industry about these issues?

BJ: Well, that was interesting. Frank Stanton, who had been a top boss in the company I worked for. Stanton headed up a broadcasters' committee. There was a fellow, a guy named James Keogh, who was involved in these things. I can't remember now. The guy who was heading USIA was named John Rheinhardt. He was very much involved in it. One of the repercussions—you know how these things have strange repercussions.

MK: Yes.

BJ: The guy who had been appointed by President Carter to be Assistant Secretary of State for Cultural Affairs was a fellow who had been a loyal political ally of Carter's, Joe Duffy.

Joseph Duffy. He was sent over to State; that was his job. Suddenly he was without a job because the bureaucracy was moving over; so he had no job. Hamilton said, “We’ve got to find a job for Duffy.” Now, I had been made the chairman of the committee to find a chairman for the National Endowment for the Humanities. Duffy had a Ph.D.; so he got that job. This is sort of serious stuff. Many millions of dollars were involved and people’s lives. I guess I wish I had had a little more seasoning; I would have been better at doing these things, to answer your question.

MK: In dealing with issues related to NEH, were you dealing with the broadcast industry for that?

BJ: No.

MK: Because it would seem like it would have an entirely different constituency.

BJ: Not at all. The head of the University of Kentucky, a woman named Eleanor Sifton, who was the daughter of Reinhold Niebuhr, American theologian, social critic, and winner of the Presidential Medal of Freedom and a publisher, the head of American Studies at the University of Texas and a Pulitzer-prize winning historian. Entirely different group of people.

MK: In looking back on life in the White House—compare it with the period you had before in working in the industry itself, and then later—what kinds of pressures are there in the White House, of time and everything else? What was your day like?

BJ: First of all, [they were] very long days. You had to come in early and stay late just to catch up with all your work. Second, and the thing that struck me the most, was that every phone conversation I had was terribly important to the person on the other end of the line. They were calling the White House; they were getting some White House official; they really cared. It was just another phone call as far as I was concerned. I have somewhere—the administrator in our office kept very, very good logs. I remember being amazed, looking later, at the people who had called, senators and college presidents and heads of companies. They either got referred to or they were interested in some issue or wanted the President to come here or they’d seen my name in the newspaper. So I had to keep reminding myself that I had a lot of responsibility because after a while you’re just going into work. You have to keep reminding yourself that it was a serious and responsible position; that you needed to be respectful of circumstances.

By far the biggest pressure was concern about trying to be responsive to the President. The thing gets quickly elevated. First of all, Carter by nature—having been a military guy and having been a governor—is used to people jumping. He seems like a nice guy but: “Goddamn it, I asked you about this yesterday! Where’s the answer?” He was a very strict disciplinarian and was a very, very tough boss. The biggest pressure was being sure that you were on your toes in dealing with the President. That was very serious, because he had a very biting wit and was extremely demanding. But that’s the way it is in any job. You want to be responsive to your boss, whoever the boss may be.

MK: What kinds of things would he be particularly interested in, and get irritated over?

BJ: Well, let’s see....

MK: What kind of demands would he make?

BJ: A lot of times, “I’ve already told you people, I don’t want to do it that way!” In other words there would be something he’d said, and word didn’t get around. Scheduling and time were the biggest areas of irritation for Carter. He, of course, was very concerned about being over-scheduled because he didn’t want to be late. In my case, there was just a little bit of concern about—I did get quoted a lot. I was available and particularly on small things like staffing or offices or what people were doing, the style questions, I didn’t have any fear about saying what I thought. From time to time Carter might say something about, “I see you’re being a good source again,” or something like that.

MK: Too much ink.

BJ: Too much ink. “I’m the President. Why are you mouthing off?” That kind of thing. There would be some of that; not a lot, but some of that. I tried to be careful about it, but I did feel a certain responsibility—being kind of related to the press operation—to be responsive. That wasn’t really ever—I think to the extent [that] it was a problem, it was a problem for some of my colleagues—who thought I got too much ink.

MK: Did you have a regular group of reporters that you dealt with?

BJ: No. I knew the whole press corps. That came from the campaign; I’d been involved in the campaign. No. A lot of times people would call me when they weren’t getting an answer in the Press Office, and I might try to provide some background. I knew what was going on, and I knew what the line was; I would never ever deviate from it. Sometimes, I could say something on background which would be helpful to both sides. It’s hard to give an example of that. You know reporters on a story need a perspective on something. “Is Carter concerned about such and such?” Of course, he’s always concerned about background but it’s not a big problem now. Actually that was not ever a problem. I had a consistent attitude toward one thing from the first day that I met Carter and that was that I was working for Powell as much as for Carter. Those two guys pretty much—as long as you were square with them you didn’t have any problems, at least in my situation.

MK: Who were the people that you dealt with on a regular basis in the White House? You dealt with Powell.

BJ: Yes.

MK: How often would you see Hamilton Jordan, and over what kinds of things?

BJ: Personnel issues like: on the Endowment for the Humanities, and National Public Radio. Things like that, that I had gotten delegated to. He was very much interested in those. He would call—

MK: Did he call looking for names or clearing people with you?

BJ: Mainly, he would call when he “wanted the following...” done.

MK: I see.

BJ: He wanted to be sure that so-and-so was interviewed and seen. He would call giving direction. Occasionally, he’d call and say, “How is such-and-such coming?” He was a major boss in that operation. Contrary to the superficial image, he was very efficient and didn’t waste a lot of time. So that would be what he—occasionally he’d call about some story on

- television or some trip, something like that. But I dealt a lot with David Rubenstein. He knew everything about policy issues.
- MK: And he was there forever.
- BJ: And he was there forever. He was very responsive and very helpful.
- MK: From sunup to way after sundown.
- BJ: Yes. He was very helpful. And with Wurfel and Rex Granum and Powell in the Press Office. The speechwriters, a lot. I talked to [writers] Hertzberg [and Fallows] all the time, constantly. Occasionally with some of the other—so Watson ended up being in charge of inter-governmental relations. That was a cabinet secretary, and that woman [named] Jean Harmon, who was a Congresswoman from California, worked for him. There were three of them.
- MK: Gene Eidenberg was—
- BJ: Yes, Eidenberg. There was somebody before Eidenberg; I can't remember the name. They knew a lot about what cabinet officers were doing and thinking. I talked to [Counsel Robert] Lipshutz some; he was helpful.
- MK: What about outside the White House? What were the regular people or institutions that you'd deal with there?
- BJ: Besides the press?
- MK: Yes. And the press you were dealing with one-on-one, right?
- BJ: My main responsibility in the press area was to deal with the network pool chairperson. I did that every day for two years, nearly three years. The then three—I guess now it would be five—network news organizations—each month they rotated. They—ABC, CBS, NBC—had a bureau chief who would be in the pool. And we had a telephone; it would be a ring-down telephone, among the four of us. It was a very crucial coordination tool; I assume it goes on today.
- MK: Didn't that pool operation break down?
- BJ: Well, I thought it expanded. CNN was put in it.
- MK: Yes. Well, they have it for the pool on a daily basis.
- BJ: But this was really a big deal: foreign trips, what's going on in news conferences. It was treated in a strange way by the news organizations. They knew they weren't supposed to be getting involved in coordinating government activity, and they were supposed to keep a distance. But if we were going to have a news conference, I'd pick up the phone and say, "He's going to have a news conference in forty-eight hours. Who's covering it? It's going to be in such-and-such-a-location." And it was almost as though the bureau chiefs—Sandy [Inaudible] at CBS and George Watson at ABC and I guess Frank Jordan at NBC—they would almost put on different hats. They were no longer journalists; they were sort of—I don't know what to call it, exactly—part of the Fourth branch of government. Presidential travel and news conferences. They weren't in the government, and they were taking this

information on a background basis, just so they could get their logistics together. It was relatively harmless. But if it got looked at under a microscope, it was something that press critics would complain about, or be worried about, even though I think it was pretty harmless. And, because of my background, I tend to be very concerned about intermingling of press and government.

So anyway, that was a big thing. That was part of my job, to deal with these people. I'm trying to be more responsive to your question—.

MK: So that was mostly logistics?

BJ: Mostly logistics. Yes. Almost all logistics.

MK: Now would you have times where you would have to try to convince them to cover a press conference?

BJ: Yes. In the third year of the Carter Administration, they were: 'Well, what's he going to say? Is there any news in this thing, or is it more propaganda?' That would be less the case with the news conference, because—after all—they're asking the questions. The more difficult thing would be something like: "We've got twelve teenagers who are coming to the White House next week, to talk about problems of youth. We're thinking about doing it on a Saturday morning at eleven. Would you be interested in covering it?" That kind of extra programming was much more of a challenge. I would say, in the first year, anything we wanted to do, we could do. In the second year, it had to be fairly good. In the third year, even if it was good, there wasn't much.

MK: What about the fourth year?

BJ: Well, the fourth year was an election year. I don't know. I was on the sidelines. I was working at the National Security Council. I would say that the incumbent gets no breaks from the media.

Anyway, on the thing you were asking about—let me tell you some of the organizations and people who would be interested in talking to me and who I would occasionally—. The American Association of University Publishers, very concerned about the National Endowment for the Humanities, and grants for books. I would get phone calls from people like the NEA [National Education Association], the teachers; "We're having a teacher of the year, can you help us? We're trying to get the President or the Vice President." But, in terms of this question—of what kind of entities do you turn to for collegiality and that sort of thing—as you asked the question, I think there weren't enough. On the policy side, there was a lot of talk about this previously-mentioned Voice of America and the cultural affairs in the State Department, a lot of interested parties. On the Communications stuff we had a lot of conversations with the people at Public Broadcasting. I guess I could answer the questions better if I had these logs of phone calls. I can't be too responsive to that.

MK: On the pressures of White House life and, first off, the time that you spent, what was an average day and an average week, both in terms of when you came in, the number of phone calls you dealt with, the variety of decisions?

BJ: Very long days. I would set my alarm at six and I'd be in the office six-forty. I tried to be in by seven. I used to watch the evening news in my office. So that would be from seven to

seven-thirty. I was a bachelor for that whole period of time. I didn't have a family. I was pretty much on my own. I ate out a lot. So I was working there, not as long as David Rubenstein, but not too far away. Everyone worked long hours. Everyone. It would be strange if you called somebody's office at seven or seven-thirty and they weren't there. It would be very strange.

I definitely remember thinking, "I may as well do this now, and put in these long hours and give it my all; when else would I do it, if I'm not going to do it now?" There's that sense of: "This is really important." That's good, I think, because it is important. The other side of it is you don't want to be too self-important. That's really a delicate balance.

MK: What are the benefits of working in the White House? You work long hours.

BJ: Well, I guess you get to think that you're seeing history go by in front of you. When I first got involved in it, I thought there was an opportunity to actually make some difference, to actually make some change for the better, in public policy. I don't think that's the case, in retrospect. I think it's very hard to move the government. Government, particularly in a big, fat, conservative country like ours: things don't change very much. The thing I mentioned about the cultural affairs part of the State Department moving over and moving back. I think there may be an emotional value in that, when you're a little kid, and you live in a country, and you're supposed to make a contribution or be a good citizen. At least in my household, that was the case. This is a manifestation of that. It's just terrific.

The day that Carter was inaugurated, I remember walking in to the White House. I walked into one of the offices of a friend of mine, whose office window was out on the front lawn. I walked over to the window; he was sitting at his desk. It was actually Rex Granum. I looked at him and said, "My God, your office overlooks the front lawn of the White House!" There's a certain emotional—it's the one-of-a-kind thing that's real. There's nothing else like this. I think that's a positive human value, to be able to do things that are unique. There is a certain authenticity and uniqueness. I actually liked the people that were working there. I thought they were a lot of fun to work with. Powell was a hilariously funny guy. These are all very good people, very good people. They are, by and large, sort of clean-cut, responsible people, not a crook or a few crooks I can think of in the group. People with good values. That's a tremendous thing, to work around people with good values. We did a lot of travel, very interesting travel.

Of course, the other thing in the Carter case that was most amazing was, for me, a little bit like going to the racetrack and putting a two-dollar bet on the longest-odds horse, and the horse wins! That was an amazing thing. I, from time to time, had to pinch myself: did this actually happen? I remember the night that Carter won the New Hampshire primary, we were going to make the rounds of the TV networks that were all in New Hampshire. I was in the limo there, since I was the staff person on this, going around to the networks. It appeared that he was going to win the New Hampshire primary; we were about to go and claim victory. And as we were getting ready to pull out of his hotel, this guy came up and started knocking on the window, with the Secret Service there. It was Jim Wooten, then *The New York Times* correspondent. Carter rolled down the window and Wooten said, "Governor, I think you're going to be elected President." It was funny, just the idea; it resonates this many years later. A lot of that interesting, "Eye-witness-to-history" sort of thing means a lot to me personally.

MK: You said in coming in, you think you're going to make a difference, and at some point you realized that that was not so.

BJ: Right.

MK: Did you realize that while you were there? Or is it post-administration?

BJ: For a while, I thought I was making a difference on some of these policy issues, and also, I thought that Carter was moving things ahead. And, of course, history records the great accomplishments, such as the Camp David Accords and the Panama Canal, and so forth. In a few areas where, as a staff aide, I had some responsibility, particularly in certain personnel appointments and relatively minor policy matters, we did edge things forward a bit. Insofar as things like de-regulation of telecommunications, and providing permanent funding for public broadcasting, in things like that—which were relatively small but important in those areas—we made some difference in my office. But, as a staff aide, what I could mainly hope for was that my candidate, my leader, the President, was a success. So I'm not sure how much difference we made. Certainly Carter's lasting contribution will be the personal example of the individual.

MK: Which was really so much of what his election was about.

BJ: That's right. Character. But I don't know. The economy seems to turn on what the Federal Reserve does. A liberal Democrat to a conservative Republican appoints the same people to head the Federal Reserve. The use of military power, to what extent is that a function of political perspective? You get a right-wing Republican doing the same things that a moderate-to-liberal Democrat does. So the country is in many ways bigger than these individuals. When there is a crisis of some sort, then the individuals can make a difference. It's the oldest line in political science: In this period of peace and prosperity, whoever is in office is doing just fine. That's what happened to Carter; we had a period that was lacking prosperity and lacking peace, if you can call the hostages that. That old saw comes back to be true.

[Interruption]

BJ: My organization is creating a literary award in Germany; we're thinking about doing it in Leipzig. We went over there for some meetings. As a result of that trip I have been pre-occupied with the amazing changes in Germany, I picked up a book at a corner bookstore the other day by the former Carter Secretary of the Treasury, W. Michael Blumenthal, who was born in Germany and who with his family left Germany, escaped the Nazis in 1938 or 1939, and went to Shanghai. Blumenthal came to the United States, to San Francisco, in 1946, with \$65.00 in his pocket. He later became CEO [chief executive officer] of Bendix, and what-have-you. So Blumenthal has taken a great interest in the history of Germany and he's written a book about the history of Germany, particularly emphasizing Germany's Jews and their history and what-have-you. He's turned himself into a bit of a historian. It's actually not a bad book. This is a book which covers about 1,000 years. So we don't have that much history to deal with here. You and I have been talking about a mere twenty-year period, maybe twenty-five years if you throw in Nixon. Of course, we're putting it under a microscope. I guess....

MK: How has your White House life been valuable in the period afterwards?

BJ: Well, first of all, I met a lot of people who I run into all the time. I'm not sure that in itself is valuable, but I made a lot of friends and I see a lot of people. There's very little—I had one big advantage over a lot of my colleagues in the Carter White House in that, as I said before, I had had a ten-year career in journalism and had been around a long time,

particularly in major events and what-have-you. So the White House operation and all that was exciting and interesting, but it was not the first I had been involved in what you might call big-league surroundings. But I don't go anywhere—I was in Taiwan the other month and met another President. I take a lot of that for granted. In some ways it's not such an advantage. It's almost like I've lost my capacity to be impressed. You see a lot in that—people I've met and the surroundings I guess are the big advantage.

The disadvantage is that, even though I consider my own personal experience there less than satisfying, and I consider the Carter Administration less than satisfying—even though that's the case, it was by far the most interesting work I've ever had and I'm sure it will be the most interesting work I ever do have. That's a positive and a negative. I have a very good job now; I go places and do interesting things, but I don't know. I used to think—there was a great line. Kennedy was asked why he wanted to be President. He said, "The White House is an office of action. It is where the power lies." It is the office of action; it's not necessarily where the power lies. A lot of that drama is gone, but it's still hard to duplicate the time in terms of the excitement and the sense of seeing history go by. That's the advantage of getting older: you do get to see a lot of history. So I guess the biggest advantage of the White House period is that it provided a kind of baseline for experience.

MK: What were the ways in which it's not satisfying?

BJ: Well, we lost the re-election; we weren't re-elected. There was that, sort of the mandate from the public. That's one thing. Second, I think there was an amazing amount of daily activity and a long list of things that had to be done that day. You could never sit back and think things through. I so wish that I'd had a chance to think things through in a more in-depth way. That's the way it is in life.

MK: Were there efforts to do that, like taking retreats at Camp David, or when the President was on vacation, getting people together to step back and say: "Where are we going?"

BJ: Yes. There were some things. People would talk about it. One famous one in the Carter Administration resulted in disaster. It was a little retreat, and it turned out the American people were depressed or something.

MK: All the malaise wasn't used in the speech itself, but I think [Walter] Mondale used it as a description.

BJ: This is a really interesting problem, because it is true: that people helping to run the government should have a chance to think things through, and step back, and reflect. But I believe it's impossible. I think there's just no time for that. The idea of stepping back, you just can't do that. Maybe there should be some institutional process built-in. I don't know. There's something wrong with all this. First of all, there's the partisanship, and then there's the immediate need for action. In the White House staff you've got—the President is going; he's moving; you have to keep going; you can't stop. There have been some efforts. The White House Fellows Program is something of an effort to do that, to bring people in who can step back and offer some guidance. For the most part, I had a technical role, and it was okay that I was busy all the time, because it didn't require coming up with a new philosophy. To the extent that I was involved in some policy matters, it would have been helpful to have some detachment. I did have a deputy who was very smart and somewhat detached and thoughtful and philosophical. That was very helpful. But I'm glad to have done it; it was a wonderful experience. I don't know that I'd want to do it again. It's a lot of hard work, terribly long hours, and there's really not that much in it for the individual. You really are a

public servant. Honest to god, in some ways the only way in which it is a good career move, excuse the impression, is that it's on your resume so people are always asking me [inaudible] as though that meant something. It does add something to the resume.

I did have one benefit of the job that was a strange one. When I grew up in Texas, I knew no one who had the same last name that I had—Jagoda. I didn't know what my name meant, particularly, what the word was and where it came from. I went in blissful ignorance. It was only in college that some visiting professor of film studies was flipping through the IBM cards and said, "Jagoda; where is this Jagoda? You're not related to the notorious Russian secret police chief Henrik Jagoda are you?" I said, "No, my name is Jagoda." So, I went through college and once or twice I ran into some other people with that name. But I was working for Carter in the White House; my name was in the paper a lot. I began to receive letters from people. I must have received three hundred letters from people wanting to know if we were cousins who had the same last name. It turned out it's a common Slavic word. It means strawberry in Serbo-Croatian and blueberry in Polish. The word "jagoda" means "berry" in Russian. So there are hundreds of [Jagoda] people in the United States, most of whom contacted me. I met some fellow "blueberries."

MK: Did you find any that were relatives, actually, that you hadn't known of?

BJ: I think water is thicker than blood in this case. I'm not sure we ever did establish any close—my great-grandfather who came to Ohio and then to Texas, from Poland, had some family members, and I think one or two of those people did show up. It is interesting. You get to see the great [American] country, and I went everywhere, most of the states; places I hadn't been. I have a sense—I might meet somebody from Iowa and ask where [where they are from], and I know the county [they come from]. So, you learn a lot about the country. It was four years, really, altogether. Nearly five, but four with the campaign. It was like going to graduate school, or having some kind of seminal, lasting experience. In that sense, I benefited from it personally. I'm proud to have been part of the Carter team.

MK: Do you hear from him?

BJ: I see him when we have these reunions, the Carter-Mondale Reunion Group. We had a reunion ten months ago. My wife is on the local Habitat for Humanity Committee and, occasionally, there's a connection there. But I didn't get an invitation to the seventy-fifth birthday, which was last week or last month. I think he was serenaded by a bunch of singers and stuff in Georgia. I haven't talked to him in ten months. I could certainly call him if I had to. One is always careful—I am Chairman of the Board of something called "The Friends of Raoul Wallenberg"; it's an organization that's interested in—we're currently getting young people involved in human-rights activities. He's helped us with that a little bit, with some names and stuff. Carter is really smart about these things. He's focused on his center, "The Carter Center." People are always coming to him for things. So if I'm interested in helping him with the Carter Center, I can call him up. I would want to be careful about using the connection and the contact. I do get asked about it.

I hope this [project] turns out okay for you.

MK: Thank you very much.

BJ: It was a great pleasure to chat and catch up.

[End of Disc 1 of 1 and Interview I]