

ANNE EDWARDS EXIT INTERVIEW

This is an exit interview with Anne Edwards in Room 171 in the Old Executive Office Building, September 5, 1980, [at] approximately 11:40 a.m. The interviewer is David Alsobrook of the Presidential Papers Staff.

ALSOBROOK: First, Anne, what is your title?

EDWARDS: Do you want a history of my titles? I've kept the same office. I've simply changed bosses and titles for four years. Right now, it is Special Assistant for Press Advance. For the first two-and-a-half years I was in the White House, it was television coordinator. But we were structured differently then.

ALSOBROOK: Could you tell me a little about how—

EDWARDS: Well then, I had started getting into everything. But when we first got here in January of '77, when they were structuring the Press Office, Barry Jagoda was here as a Special Assistant for Media and Public Affairs, and there was a need within the Press Office for someone who knew how to deal with television--radio or broadcast media, film, and I did. That was my background for eight years before I joined the campaign. The need was there for that kind of person. There was a job in the Ford administration, I believe, titled Television Coordinator, but they kept that, and they sort of let the job dictate itself.

We had no idea what the needs of demand would be. We knew they would be fairly heavy. And they really were. But within our office, whenever a television, radio, film interview, live program, special request, anything that came up like that connected with broadcasting or media in any form, it would be directed to us. Working for Barry, that all fell on my desk. And it eventually proved far too much for one person. I did it. And there are a lot of times I'd be here until three o'clock in the morning or have to turn around--but I have a good martyr complex, no problem--but come back in at four in the morning and start the day because we'd be filming the President at 5:00 a.m. for some special interest.

But eventually when Jerry Rafshoon came here, they took the Office of Press Advance and my position and blended us, and there were a lot of times that we had done that automatically anyway. They worked right next door. Press Advance would handle things on the road as broadcasts began to happen on the road, the town meetings; things that we were innovating, which were innovative for broadcasters as well. I traveled to do that. Press Advance would say, "Well, can you pick up the Press Advance end of it as well." I'd say, "Sure." And then sometimes when there wouldn't be any television activity here, I'd simply go out and do a press advance for them. So we restructured under Jerry Rafshoon to combine the office and finally bring other people in

who had some exposure to media, where I would tell them how to do this thing. In the event I got hit by a bus, somebody else could handle it. And as Hamilton always says, "It's not you that's important; it's the job. The work goes on." But that was when the title changed to Special Assistant for Press Advance and there are four of us now carrying that title.

ALSOBROOK: Would you list who those people are?

EDWARDS: Right now Michael Pohl is Director of the Office of Media Advance, I believe. Forgive me, I'm not sure what today is, Friday is my title. But the other people right now are Larry Walsh, Sharon Metcalf, Gael Doar, and the Administrative Assistant is Janet Smith--tight little family.

ALSOBROOK: Also Anne, when Jerry Rafshoon came on, didn't he also absorb the duties of being responsible for speechwriters, too?

EDWARDS: You'd do much better checking with Jerry on that. But what happened was that Jody had too much to do, and it was July of 1978 when we went through that major reorganization internally. The July of 1978 reorganization, which was the idea, was to streamline things. It was the internal streamlining, which was the way it was more fondly known around here, where they tried to cover the most efficient way just to handle things managerially. And that did seem to make more sense. Speechwriters bounced around for a while. But yes, the idea was that Jerry's office would handle any public manifestation of the President, which would include speechwriters, our office, ideas that come in, ideas that are policies we've got going on. Well, how do we explain that to the public? And so anything that fell under that purview would come to Rafshoon's office. And then when Jerry left to go to the campaign, it broke up again and most of us felt it fell back into Jody's hands with a slightly different organization within the Press Office to make sure that things got done. But our Press Office is fairly unique for working with each other. Where lines are hazy we can pick up each others' responsibilities and take care of things, so with different personalities, we did.

ALSOBROOK: So how would you describe your job since the summer of '78? I mean, if it's logical to break it down that way.

EDWARDS: Well, it would be easier to go back and explain it from the beginning, because when we got here Barry's background, like mine, was in television, actively in commercial television in news and television production. Mine was on a lower level than his, but I, in a way, had more hands-on experience with production itself. When we got here-- and again we weren't quite sure what would happen--and as we did predict, as soon as we got here we were flooded with requests, ideas. "I want to do this with the new President--film him, show him here. Why can't he do this?" A lot of the initial work was sorting that out, figuring out, well, is this worth his while, worth his time, worth our time, worth their time, a lot of that. Barry eventually gravitated more toward a policy

overview type of job, which was necessary. A lot of things which had not been designed were structured for them--had not been designed when we first got here, policy type of things.

There was another fellow working in our office then named Rick Neustadt. Rick has since--because what was coming into this office was domestic policy--that was shifted out to Stu Eizenstat's staff, which is where it fits more comfortably now. But all of the production would fall into my hands. And it was everything from the conception and innovation of the radio call-in programs, the NBC monstrous project "The Day in the Life of the President." The press conferences, which we had to figure out systems for doing every two weeks as a live broadcast out of this place which is not designed for television broadcasting, and Thomas Jefferson did not have that in mind. Dealing with people who thought we had some kind of production facility here, and I cringe and say, "We don't." Figuring out how to do things, how to get things done, when the President wanted them done, or when a broadcaster didn't know how to do them was more of a conduit job. Almost an interpreter's job, some points between a broadcaster and the staff, or going back the other way--why we don't want to do something. That was consuming at first. It then slowed down. It then petered out. The early ideas were taken care of. We did develop systems. We did develop formats. More and more people got familiar with them. I know my last couple of months here I've noticed people being so familiar with people's timing down the President to give him a cue for a live broadcast or being very familiar with microwave or cable runs. Where before nobody was--that a film crew would need a little extra electricity, something as simple as that. Or the fact that they don't have to bring their camera cases up to the second floor of the West Wing. And a lot of people are familiar with that now. Before they weren't. And so, for the first couple of years there, I'd sort of babysit all of that business. And no, it didn't mean that I was so wonderful. It's just that that was what I was here for.

Part of it was making sure that other people learned. And I was not the master at teaching other people. I'd be so busy with the details of doing it myself that I wouldn't be taking the time. When Mike finally came in, he read me the riot act to make sure you tell us how to do it. And so we did. And I'd make out all these forms of how to do a speech from the oval office, how to do a press conference in the East Room, how to do a press conference in the EOB [Executive Office Building] 450, and that kind of thing. And it came to the point where other people could handle that. And a lot of it was taken out of this job. We got to the summer of '78 where I was free to do more press advances where other people could go on a trip. Say there was a town meeting scheduled for a city; we were, at that point, where I would not have to go. You would not have to have Anne there to be the producer from the White House side to deal with the networks. And that's good. That's the way it should be for a President. And we had to learn that. There was no precedent, though. There really wasn't. For all the television that Presidents have done, and I became real familiar with that, there was no way we could have predicted when we were designing our press office that would occur. No way at all. We were doing more television than had ever been done before.

Because television is in such a state of flux and ideas right now, special programming, and cable, microwave, people like to try new things at the White House. Because at the White House, it has to work the first time. Right. There is no going back, and it's got to be the best when you've got the President of the United States, because the broadcaster wants to look good, and we do. And there's no second chance with the President. He's usually live. There was a lot of innovation going on around here. But people became more and more familiar with that. And then as our staff became more and more familiar with that, and everybody got comfortable with each other, like I said, there was no precedent for it, and there's no precedent for the television that's been done for this administration. When I was looking through my files, just going through them one by one to find stuff I meant to take with me and that kind of thing, I'd forgotten so many of these projects--so many things that were innovative while we were here that are now standard in the broadcast industry, just ideas that we used to make things more convenient, to make it flow more efficiently, to make a better broadcast, that are now [in] standard use that I see around the country being done.

ALSOBROOK: Could you give me maybe one or two specific examples of that sort of thing?

EDWARDS: The one that stands out in my mind is the application of minicams. When I left television in '76 for the campaign, minicams were commonly on the market, but there weren't that many of them available. People weren't completely familiar with them yet. Some of them were breaking; you'd buy a cheaper brand; you'd find out what worked and what didn't. But everybody was fascinated by them. They knew they had to get used to them quickly. But we really put them to work here. Minicams were covering the White House already. That's no problem for the hard news coverage where the crews chase the President around. But being able to go live instantly is necessary around here. Using minicams where normally you would have used a large studio camera for an oval office speech. That was coming. I'm sure we weren't the only place that was beginning to be a natural gravitation to develop that. But it was here that it became necessary to do it. The President was going to give an Oval Office address; we only had four or five hours notice; let's use minicams--we didn't have the time to use studio cameras. It became something which is now standard.

And cameras now have the lenses to handle that kind of thing. Tripods that can handle that kind of a steady shot. And it's much cleaner; much more efficient. The use of a minicam on what I called "cable drop," which is the industry term for it, where you would love to have--say we had a South Lawn event, which we would in a number of cases, or even in the press conferences--where you'd love to have six or seven or eight, nine cameras around the place. Well, a lot of times the broadcaster's budget won't allow that. Or just the clumsiness of the equipment would screw up the event. So, on a cooperative suggestion base--my ideas, their ideas--we'd put the wire in, disconnect the camera, run around to another position and reconnect the camera, which means you could get by with four cameras to do the work of eight, because you have this one little

camera that can run around, or two little cameras that could run around, in some cases three little cameras. And when the camera can move large distances, or unscrew one end and run one hundred yards and plug in again, you've given yourself more camera positions. That is one. The use of the minicam as a standard part of the broadcast like we do. EOB 450 is a tiny room--that is where we were doing Jimmy Carter's main appearances, which were his press conferences in 1977. We'd put four cameras in there to do the basic coverage of the reporters, the President, the cover shot of the room. On the first press conference was the CBS--laid on this minicamera, which could run up and down the aisle, get a tight shot report of the notebook, and it worked like a charm. And that kind of thing you see developing and people adapting to it.

And it was fun to do with the radio call-in program. Even AT&T discovered they needed a new rate structure to handle it. That was great. That was after CBS got away with doing it for a song. And when poor little National Public Radio came back with the same idea and AT&T said, "Well boys, in the meantime, we structured our rates and here's what it's going to cost you," and NPR nearly went into cardiac arrest. And then they couldn't do a call-in; they had to do people sending in cards, and it was actually a call-out. And that kind of thing has happened because it's the White House. It happens in other places, too, where there is that kind of pressure to do it quickly, and do it right. But [there were] a lot of innovations like that, and it's fun to look back through the files and find all of these things.

ALSOBROOK: You know it really sounds--

EDWARDS: We're talking about how the job changed. Anyway, just to finish it--that then as more people learned the pressure came off that this one television coordinator had to do all that stuff. And I got to do more and more press advances, which were creative applications of technology, too. When the President went down the middle fork of the Salmon River, I went out in the press advance, figured you can't take any press. Well, [I] figured it out and yes we could. And came back and laid out this bizarre plan with helicopters and backwoods radio bands, and we did it. We did it. Everybody fought it. But everybody here does things like that. That's the fun of press advance, doing it right. So the press gets their story. The President isn't too interfered with. If the President wants to say something, there's a way for him to do it. If the President doesn't want to say something, there's a way for him not to do it. It sounds like a manipulative job, but it's not. You simply create the conduit so everybody can do what they need to do, and want to do, and figure everyone's certainly got enough intelligence to take it from there, but if you lay out the basic groundwork--so that's press advance. You travel ahead of time and get everything ready so people can just step off the plane, step into what they're supposed to be doing, having never seen the place before, and not having time to look for the telephones, the men's room, the ladies' room, the whatever, it's there. It's obvious. So that trying to get your job done doesn't have so many obstacles [that] you can't. It's preventive medicine. Any advance is preventive medicine. You go out and spend a week or ten days thinking of every possible disaster

or obstacle and trying to eliminate them. And then just hold your breath and see what you forgot.

ALSOBROOK: You know, I understand that some of the most difficult press advance work would be done in, say, one of the Middle Eastern countries or a place where the communications network is not as--

EDWARDS: No, I'd say, facetiously, the most difficult press advance work might come in the city with a Republican mayor. It has nothing to do with the Middle East. Facetious, I stress, for the archives. Yeah, it depends. Because communications is what you're doing. If the technology does not exist, then you can have the same problem again on the middle fork of the Salmon River in Idaho as you would have in Cairo, where you can't call the hotel lobby from your room. That is every foreign country. Sure, because again, not that they're so backward, but we're simply not used to their systems, and it's a very elitist Western attitude to go into a place and say, "Well, they don't have this, or they don't have that." Well, they're perfectly happy. And they might groan about their phone system, but it's theirs. And you just adapt. You just have to figure out what you got, where you have to go, and how you're going to get there, and do it. That's all.

ALSOBROOK: I assume WHCA [White House Communications Agency] really plays a role in that, too.

EDWARDS: Sure. WHCA's wonderful. Primarily, I think because we get to the point where I say, "Okay, I need this. I need this here," and WHCA having their exposure and expertise in telephone communications and the AT&T reps [representatives] who travel with us can work with, like Cairo, Egyptian "Ma Bell" and figure out what they can do and what they can't. There have been times, you know, we have had to lean on WHCA real heavily, and other times WHCA just sits back, too, and says, "Well, let them do it." But every country's got a different song. I think people say the Middle East more, but I think if you'd talk to people who went to Africa, they'd give you a different story. And then again, you go into a country which does not have the same political views as we do, and plugs can be pulled no matter what the technology is. So, you know Eastern bloc type places, which has not happened, but there are other administrations with real good stories when it has.

And the war stories of advance, of course, are the--it's like an underground. It is. There is a code of honor among advance people; where so many things that happened on an advance out of context sound incredible; like a lot of stories about President this or that. You'll hear [that] they said something or did something. An advance person can hear that story and know it's out of context and what probably preceded and followed. Those are the stories everybody loves to hear. That's why advance people sort of tell the stories to other advance people. And because you don't break the honor code. It's a real privilege to be as exposed as you are. I guess privilege is the word in the other

sense, too, that you know that you're exposed to a lot of privacy and private moments, and you've got to respect that. You've got to put it absolutely in its perspective and respect that.

ALSOBROOK: Have you ever been involved in any press advance work where you actually felt like, at the time, something historically important was going on around you?

EDWARDS: Oh, yes. Sure.

ALSOBROOK: Could you give me one or two instances--?

EDWARDS: [The] Camp David Summit. I spent two weeks up there. I wasn't staying on Camp David. I was down with the press. I was doing the babysitting operation in Thurmont. But every day I would be up at Camp David with--the only press we were doing out of the Summit was the photograph releases—

ALSOBROOK: At first Jody came down to Thurmont for a little briefing every day--

EDWARDS: Yeah. That would be another thing I'd have to do. I know it sounds very easy. Jody comes down to Thurmont, but I'd have to go up there and find Jody, put a net over his head and put him in the car, sneak him around to the back door of the American Legion Hall. Sometimes we'd send out a diversion car so all the press would go clamoring for that car and let Jody get into the building and talk to everybody else on staff before he went up to talk to the press. That was really something. The press didn't have a whole lot to do, so we were creating our own amusements up there. But then getting those photographs, on some days just getting them taken; getting them down to Anacostia; having them developed; getting them back to Camp David; getting hold of Dr. el-Baz for the Egyptians, Dan Pattin from the Israelis and Jody; locking them in one room; having them agree, and getting the release done every day. And that took shading as the days went on. Eventually Dr. el-Baz appointed a surrogate to do it for him. And in other cases we had other people involved. That was, of course, something historical going on. You knew it. But you got very used to that. And I think that I was very comfortable, because I had been covering news for eight years; you can't get distracted by the celebrity or the event of the moment. You've just got to put it in its place and keep going. And it doesn't mean that you're oblivious to it, or that you have to always keep all your systems functioning while you're doing it. And Camp David stands out, of course, because it was so terribly intense. But there were so many other moments, just all the way down the line.

And I think right from the beginning when we did the first rehearsal for the--not the rehearsal but the "look at," when the President did his first fireside chat in February of '77, right at the beginning of the administration the President--I think there was just me and--I guess Jim Fallows was in the room when the President came in and was just talking for a while about what his first weekend was like here. What he'd done,

reactions of people to him, and him to them. And even though there were only three of us there, you know, that was historic, too.

And then there would be some things as big and wild as the Pope coming to the White House, which was a carousel with no brakes. You know, it was all kinds of stuff like that.

The moment in Cairo when the President came back and the President was on a telephone with Anwar Sadat in a room at the airport. I went running in with the [press] pool because I thought we were supposed to be in there. Hamilton [Jordan] came chasing me out, and I didn't realize why. And he [the President] was standing there talking to Begin. It wasn't until I walked out the door, because we shouldn't have been in there at that point, but then we went back in there to get a picture. It was kind of chaotic. And, you know, not from disorganization, but just not everyone knew what was going on. And it wasn't until I walked back out the steps down on to the ramp at the airport there from the VIP lounge that I realized, "Wait a minute, if they were talking to Begin, we got it. They did it." And it hit me then. You know, things like that.

Sure it was all historic, every minute of it. Every minute was important in some context--every minute of it, just moods sometimes. Like what it was like around here the morning that the--God save them--the hostage raid failed.

ALSOBROOK: What was it like? What are your memories of that?

EDWARDS: Very sad. I think everyone of us here, you know, felt the--wishing we could do something all the way through after the hostages were taken, but knowing you can't. Saying about the job, that changed it again, too. Because all of a sudden you've got all these people here dispatched like cabs, city-to-city, and weren't traveling. We weren't sure when we would start again, if we could get involved in something else in the meantime. And for a while there we just sat, the traveling people just sat. At first, it was kind of nice, but we just sat. We got very close to it for that reason. And you'd see people that you care about very much in other offices so deeply involved in it, and so unable. [You'd] hear everybody's frustrations in the street, but understand the frustrations in here. And knowing that the President, from the way he works, even though we didn't know it was called whatever it was, Operation whatever, you knew he had something up his sleeve. And then when you heard about it, and it didn't work--I still have to sort out my feelings about that morning. You know, I spoke to Hamilton that morning. I had seen the President just the day before at a moment, I put together later, [that] made sense to me. And it all fit. And not having known about it at all, of course, when I went home and coming in the next morning. Because I called up that night when I saw it on television. They said, "No. We've got a couple of people here. We need fresh blood in the morning. Stay home. Sleep. Come here early in the morning," and I did. It was one of the quietest, heaviest days I have ever felt around here. I know what people said. I'm not putting that on tape yet; I'll scribble it some place. I just think

because we all--because of the President's emphasis constantly, whether it was private or public, on the hostages to have this magnificent effort go poof. Not despair. I don't want to make it sound like that. Just severe sorrow. And not lightening up any. Just severe sorrow at that moment. And then the next was, of course, a week later when we went to Arlington for the memorial service, which was one of the most moving things I've ever been through because you just felt the whole frustration. It wasn't just the empathy everyone was feeling for the families, but just the entire frustration the country was feeling. How do you hold your horses? How do you keep saying "restraint" when we are an impatient country? I mean, this country wouldn't be here if we were patient people. We are not. And all of a sudden a year seems too long. And it is. It is, but it is in the sense that no one should have to go through what the hostages are going through. But again, knowing what people have been trying to do around here and that the effort hasn't lessened any. And then the fury you feel when people start saying, "Well, it's because in an election year this or that." I'm not patient. I tend to want to slug people. This is why I'm not a diplomat. I take a look at people's front teeth and figure how easily I could take them out. I didn't do it, but I thought about it.

ALSOBROOK: Really you were leading into an area that was one of my other questions, that is: You know very few people see Jimmy Carter, the person. Based on what you've seen of this President, you know, what kind of man is he? And what kind of President is he?

EDWARDS: I'd have to preface and explain that because a lot of people that I've worked with--I'm one of the only people--I am the only person in press advance who's been around for four years. On the advance side, I think, down the hall, Dan Lee has been around as long as I have, and neither one of us thought that we'd still be doing this at this point. But because of the way my job shifted from all television to advance in the earlier couple of years, I saw the President constantly. You know, I would have to preface it that way. In situations which are like, "Mr. President, listen, we've got to do it this way," whatever his mood is. A lot of private moments. I was luckier than most at being able--you have to understand the man. The job of doing all that producing--I avoid the word images because they sound like something that is artificially created. I would say the word image in the sense of what needs to be conveyed of what exists.

[Break to turn tape.]

ALSOBROOK: All right, you were telling me a little bit about images.

EDWARDS: Yeah, images in a sense. I mean that. As soon as Jerry Rafshoon came to work everybody was up in arms about images. And I felt my defenses rising in that--because Jerry's only instruction ever to the staff was just to let the President follow his instincts, and we'll follow that. We never sat around and said, "Well, let's get the President to do this or get the President to do that." Nothing like that. And anybody who understands that kind of media image work, it's just--I will digress for a minute. A

presidency covers everything. You name it, it's sent to the White House. And what we do with it after it gets here is another thing. But you name it, and it comes to the White House, and we have to do something with it. The White House covers every single topic that involves the United States of America. A President has to focus other people. You need to target what is important, which they did. With energy, inflation, the Canal, reorganization, whatever it was at the moment until we got it done. SALT II, energy, energy, energy, energy, and the image is simply to convey what we're focusing. I'm sorry, it's just that was on my brain because people always run on that one.

ALSOBROOK: I really was asking you about—

EDWARDS: I was explaining that I have had more of a--because of that job--this job--having to convey all that, making sure that the situation says what really is there and what is important to him. You know, no apologies for that, explaining what is important to him, what he's trying to say. You get to read him. You have to read him. If you know that he's coming off a weekend at Camp David, he's going to be in a terrific mood. You know if he's coming out of a five hour meeting with the Joint Chiefs, and he's got to go in and do a "give blood to the Red Cross" message, you've got a little work to do. I was very lucky to have all that exposure to the President and all kinds of moods and situations. And [I] got to know him pretty well. I think he's magnificent. He is one of the most honest men I've ever met in my life. One of the most disciplined--disciplined not in the sense of being a Spartan liver. Just simply he has made it a point, he knows he has a tremendous intellect, a tremendous capability, and even going back through his life, he has been determined. Sometimes hard on other people, I know, but determined that he's going to figure out what his capabilities are and apply himself. Develop what he's got and shore up what he doesn't have. Whether it be he didn't have a knowledge of economics. Well, everybody knows the story of how he'd read and read and read to give it to himself or find somebody who did. He is--he cannot--can I say the word bullshit on an Archives tape? He won't stand for yes men. He can spot it in a second. He does not want someone to waffle. He doesn't like uncertainty. He doesn't want someone to stand there in front of him and pretend you know what's going on or give him an answer just to give him an answer. He has no patience with that. He doesn't react angrily, but he simply reacts with an efficiency of, "Why are you talking to me right now and you don't know what you're supposed to be saying to me. Find out and let me know." And people would get used to that around him. He grasps everything real fast. I know I'm fond of saying to the television people that he's the easiest talent I've ever worked with. The talent, in TV jargon, being the person that's on the air. Because he simply accepted the fact that the TV people around him would say, "Okay, you're standing up to do this, read this, do that." And he'd simply say, "Fine. Your judgment. You know this job." If he had anything to contribute, he sure would. But if he had a question about it he would [ask it]. But you could usually just give him the reason, and he'd be fine. He didn't question things that often. But on occasions he would be curious more than questioning, "Why are we doing it this way?" And I'd give him background, and I'd explain it. And he'd say, "Well, oh

great, fine." Or on the days he wasn't in the mood to say, "Oh great, fine," he'd say, "Okay. Give it to me." His intelligence to me is paramount and very comfortable. It's not the least bit threatening. I don't mean personally to me. I mean to people around him. Comforting, because you know he always understands, because you know that he's got this tremendous capability for retention and a terribly analytical mind, terribly rational mind, and he's also a very emotional man, an extremely emotional and sensitive man. I know I went through one bad time in my life while I was here. I had one personal crisis that he was told about. And we were in the middle of Mr. Lance's problems, Panama Canal Treaty signings, and he made a rather large chunk of time in his day to sit down and talk to me about it until I was straightened out again. And I give him full credit for that. I won't go into what the incident was, but it was a serious incident. And I give that man full credit for taking my head off me backwards and turning me around and saying, "Okay." And he was magnificent.

He also has a tremendous sense of humor. It's extremely dry. It is not a backslapping sense of humor. But he's more of a wisecracker, you know, than anything else, and very sharp, very quick, and very funny because he's primarily a quiet man, though. His demeanor is quiet. He's a gentleman. That, I think, was a surprise to the American people who saw this happy, waving candidate seizing the moment in 1976. He was happy and waving at the time, but not realizing they were not getting someone who had this charm and drive of John Kennedy or this power obsession that Lyndon Johnson had. They knew they weren't getting the--Nixon you think of as being more of a quiet, devious type. The President is, I would say, primarily he's a quiet gentleman. That's his strong suit is intelligence and that's a very hard thing to convey to two hundred million people who need to be reassured. That's why I can see people wanting to run on the record, his record. Because that says it, that the man's intelligence is his strong suit and that is what we need now, etcetera. But that's a very, almost intangible thing to try and convey. There are no noises, sounds, or pictures that go with intelligence except for the end product, the bottom line. And that's what he has delivered. But that's a hard thing to get people to focus on when they feel like they are drowning and they want a bright orange dayglow life preserver. And you say, "Just stop kicking your feet, stop thrashing the water. Listen, here's how we're going to do it. You know a life preserver will pull someone out of the water, but it's not going to stop the storm." You know, I understand that having been that close to him. I hope it's not seeing trees and not seeing the forest. I'll know that after I've left. But I like the guy. I really do. I even like him when he'd get mad. He'd get mad a lot, not angry, but like I've said, what would get him--whenever I'd see him upset--I don't want to convey some kind of, you know, some kind of raving person. He does get tight. He gets quiet, and he is in no mood for small talk. It would be because someone hadn't delivered something he needed they should have done, for which there are no excuses. The President, I'd say, can handle a rational reason for something not happening, but it better be a real good reason, a real good reason. And he's great when he's mad, as long as he's not mad at me.

ALSOBROOK: I've read a lot about that so-called icy blue stare. Is that--

EDWARDS: Oh yeah. Cold blue glare, yes, it's there. It's real good. [It] sets your knees knocking, hands sweating. Sure, it works.

ALSOBROOK: I want to ask you a philosophical question, too--

EDWARDS: I've tried it on people. By the way, it's only his eyes. I can't quite get the same effect.

ALSOBROOK: This is really an opinion question. You've been around television quite a while, I think you told me eight years or so--

EDWARDS: Since 1968.

ALSOBROOK: How do you feel that television has changed the American presidency? That's a heck of a big question.

EDWARDS: Twenty-five words or less? It's something I'm still giving thought to. Having been involved in a presidency where--you react to it. Television is the medium of the day, and I'm not slighting radio, which reaches millions of people. I'm not slighting the newspapers or the others, but television is the powerhouse educator, which is the way I like to look at it. Sometimes it seems like a gangly kid to me that's twelve years old, and his hands and feet are too big, and it doesn't quite know what to do with them yet. You'll find television people saying that faster, because in a lot of cases their technology grows faster than the rank-and-file people who are doing it. It's changed the presidency in that it has become a part of the way a President communicates, of course, to the American people. It has to, being that big. It's something a President and an administration have to be terribly conscious of because there can often be--remember when you were a kid and you played telephone around the table; when you'd whisper a word and by the time it got back it'd be something different? There is a lot of difference between what happens in a policy and the way it does change just being transmitted around, because television is one of the main transmitters. People have become terribly sensitive to "How is this one going to be transmitted? Okay, how do we say it so it gets out there in some semblance of what we want to say ourselves?"

Then you get into the shadings of how much is changed to convey something that isn't there? How much of it is manipulation on a government, you know not just the presidency, I'm thinking like the Department of Education's Public Affairs Office or whatever? How much of it is changed to manipulate say--not only can we convey what we want to say, but we can create a change by doing it this way, or let's do something with these television people have to cover because we have to get this on the news. You get into those shadings which are books and books worth. And they do exist.

There are people who are incredibly innocent about television in government, incredibly innocent, who think that they can just have a media event and that makes it news, underestimating number one and always the intelligence of the television audience; Americans are real smart people, whatever their education level. They are savvy as hell. You can't fool them. You shouldn't try. And that's been the one reason it's been so comfortable to work in this press office with Jody Powell, whom I respect with the exact degree of respect I've got for Jimmy Carter. Jody doesn't try and fool them. There are a couple of cases he's toyed with it. But Jody knows, and Jody is an American person and he's never forgotten that, and so is the President and the same thing. I think the Ford people were as aware that the message gets there through television.

Then you get into this business of how tight you are with the networks or a commentator, or what you try and put over on them. Or what you say by not saying something, and this and that. Sometimes like when the President wanted to get the word to the Ayatollah, it had to be through television. You know it's Brezhnev and his people sitting around the Kremlin dissecting his [President Carter's] press conferences word for word. It's the messenger of this century. I don't know what life forms it's going to go into, but basically it's the messenger. And that's where you get into the big distinctions of how much of it is the message. What picture do we use to show this or that? Which is the message, and which is the messenger? But the awareness, having to have so many people aware of how television works; what it's there for; how much is the television broadcasters, the journalists' job and how much has to be done before the message is even mentioned, like when people are briefed or they get talking points, or "Don't you do the talking. So and so's going to do the talking because they know how we want to say it." That kind of thing. That's part of it. That's all part of it.

People who won't talk to reporters are part of it because they're afraid they can't do it right, even though they understand a policy inside and out. I've seen some people that I respect tremendously turn into knee-knocking five-year-olds at the thought of having to go on television because they are afraid they won't do it right, or that they'll get burned, or that the words will get twisted because they don't know how to speak in televisionese. [They are afraid] that they'll get edited down and that the important part will get edited out. And that again is always case by case. You know people--like our press corps we know well. You know who's going to do what by the way they work. You know them well. They know you well. And that makes a very comfortable working relationship. It does not eliminate the adversary relationship. It makes a comfortable enough working relationship that you can say, "Oh God, I've got to go edit this or that out," and that kind of thing.

But I think something else that this administration did which is terrific is become aware of other television. It's very easy in Washington to just think of the networks and the big, big newspapers and the big Time and Newsweek, but when you're sitting in Jackson, Mississippi, for two weeks, you realize that John Chancellor is only on for thirty minutes

a night. But for an hour, a half-an-hour at six and a half-an-hour at eleven, I'm watching the local newscaster in Jackson, Mississippi, who is also writing and interpreting it. And so we had a whole wing of the press office here deliberately designed--the big wing of our press office--to make sure that people everywhere outside of Washington got what they needed, too.

ALSOBROOK: And that's media liaison—

EDWARDS: That's right. That's media liaison, but it didn't have to go to them secondhand through the networks, the wires, Time, and Newsweek. It was a direct access for them here to the White House, which is critical and wonderful and should be applauded highly. I can't tell you how many broadcasters I know that I've met who love that office. And there are individual arguments with it of course, but they've got a direct--they couldn't believe it at first. They don't have to go through--like a CBS affiliate in Portland, Oregon, doesn't have to go through CBS in Washington to talk to the White House. They can call the White House. They can fly to Washington. They can be in an editor's briefing with the President of the United States. That counts, and that's good. That's real good.

ALSOBROOK: What's the most difficult thing about working in the White House? If there's one thing?

EDWARDS: My first reaction is to say nothing, really, nothing. I know all these people. It's a second family. It's a terribly pressured job in the sense that a lot of times you don't get a whole lot of sleep. Our job in traveling so much, and the physical demands of my job in particular, were very severe--just like a Secret Service agent doesn't--you know honestly I spent four years not knowing where I was going to sleep at night. You know, I couldn't guarantee that I'd always be home, ever. I can't remember the last time I bought theater tickets. That sounds crazy, but it's true. When you do this job, you eventually get to the point where you stop [social activities] because you know darn well the odds are an easy 50/50 [that] you're not going to be in town; it's a waste. So you don't gamble on it. You gamble away from it. That sounds funny, but you are definitely adjusting your life.

It's a physically demanding, time consuming job. Friends understand it. Relatives understand it. You don't see them much; you really don't. I tended to find the time I'd be in town [that] I'd be at home doing my laundry, hiding out, reading, sleeping, not telling anybody I was here. But that's an adjustment that you have to make. But then again it's like any other job that demands your time like that.

I don't think there's anything terribly difficult about the White House itself, because you know while you're here. I always had, I suppose, less pressure because there was nothing I was ever trying to capitalize this into. I never thought of a future in politics or, to be honest, any other job in the White House itself I wanted to do, ever. You know, I

was perfectly happy doing this little number for four years. I didn't want to be promoted to anything else. There was nothing else that I wanted to do around here except the television and the press advances, eventually.

ALSOBROOK: That's the same thing you did during the campaign?

EDWARDS: Press advance? Yes. Oh boy, I walked into that like a baby.

ALSOBROOK: Well, tell me how you got into that.

EDWARDS: I was sitting on my assignment desk in Washington at Channel 7. Having done that for two years, I figured I wasn't changing the world much. Here's this presidential election coming up, and I wanted to work for this Jimmy Carter character. I wanted to see a good President in the White House. I liked Jody Powell and all these other people I had been talking to on the phone during the spring, during the primaries for coverage purposes. I just decided to up and do it. And when I talked to them in my interview, and to Jody then, I said, "Look. They explained the job to me about setting up coverage." And I said, "All I know from politics is covering it. I know how to watch it. I know how to observe it. I know what should happen A-B-C-D, but all I can do with this press advance business is walk into an event and set it up the way I would need to cover it." And Jody said, "Fine, that's exactly what I want you to do." And you can't ask for much more than that. You really can't. No way he's telling me to manipulate, manage, nothing. And I figured, boy, if this crowd is this honest, we're going to be in good shape. So that's how I started doing it, just bumbled around until I figured out how to do it.

ALSOBROOK: So when did you first meet then Governor Carter after you took this job?

EDWARDS: Either late August, early September of '76.

ALSOBROOK: Do you remember anything about that first meeting and what it was like?

EDWARDS: [The] first time I had a conversation with him? Sure. I had to go up to his room, [it] was like 8:00 in the morning, to get him for some editorial board meeting we were doing. [I] knocked on the door--it was a hotel room--knocked on the door. And, you know, I heard, "Come in." [I] walked in and the President's sitting there, the Governor's sitting there. I said, "Governor we have to go now." And he said, "Yeah, just a second." He was reading the newspaper. [He] gets up, puts it down [and says], "It's exactly what I'm talking about." [I said], "What?" And there was a story about some welfare mother who through a wonderful bureaucratic mess up has these children who weren't going to eat a lot for the next couple of days. She should have gotten her money because people being down on welfare, she's aced out of it. "That's exactly

what I'm talking about." And he was steaming. That's the first I'd seen the quiet steam. Quiet steam that rises from his collar [and] heats up the room with a whole group there. But, you know, I'm being silly now, but that was the first time. That was the first time. And he talked about it on the way down in the elevator. And, you know, he was for real.

ALSOBROOK: And so you got involved in the campaign?

EDWARDS: You know that was after I was working for the campaign. I was on an advance [and I] went up to get him. No, I didn't meet him before that. I just liked him. And that was a nice little introduction that even in front of some little minion he may never see again, he was just sticking to it at 8:00 on a Saturday morning, I think it was.

ALSOBROOK: And what were you doing during the transition, the same thing?

EDWARDS: No, the transition I stayed in Atlanta for three weeks. That was a good one, too. The morning after the election I stumbled into the press office. I'd come directly from the election returns place over at the Omni, and came into the press office and the phone was ringing. I said, "Who the heck doesn't know us well enough to think we're going to be here at this hour." I picked it up, and it was the President, and he was looking for Hamilton. I said, "What are you doing awake?"

ALSOBROOK: He said that?

EDWARDS: I did. "By the way, congratulations." I stayed there for three weeks to give everybody else a break. Now, since they'd been working since January and March and May and all this, I'd come on in late summer, and so I figured I was a little less tired than they were. And they took a week vacation or so, and I just kind of covered around in Atlanta for three weeks. [I] came up to Washington. I would have loved to have stayed if they had asked me, but I had no idea that they would. I went out looking for work and worked in the transition press office. And that's where this television job began. Barry [Jagoda] was in charge of the transition press office--that part of it--and started giving me all these television assignments that were coming up. So, I started that then, press advancing the President-elect's trips to Washington, the special television interviews he would do during the transition. And I did find a job. And I was all set to go. And nobody told me I was coming here. I found out by mistake, and they worked it out. And here I am. I took the job. I was all set to go to Raleigh, North Carolina, to work for a friend of mine who was running a television station down there. And [I] got this note on my telephone that I was supposed to be over here on January 21. I got it on January 21. [I] never left.

ALSOBROOK: So now you're going back to work for CBS?

EDWARDS: Yes. I'm going home now. Going back to television.

ALSOBROOK: What kind of job will that be?

EDWARDS: It will be what I was doing before. I'll be an assignment editor again. I was trained on ABC's desk as a desk assistant and made a conscious decision to leave networks and go to local television when I graduated. I'd worked about four or five--all kinds of part-time jobs. I was working sixty hours a week by my senior year in college, different jobs in broadcasting. So I graduated. [I] had run the campus radio station and--

ALSOBROOK: Where?

EDWARDS: University of Maryland. And as somebody said the other day, "You were the only woman to have done that." I said, "You're either saying that with admiration or else I gave women a bad name." But, I got out of school with a lot of experience and made a decision to leave networks and go to local because you can learn more. You can do more of what we called "hands-on" in a local station, and in Washington, particularly, you can do what you want. So, I had learned assignment desks. I was an assignment editor. And the interesting twist is that when I had decided to leave Channel 7 and was kind of talking to the Carter people, but that was a huge switch in my life to do that, I was also talking to CBS about being an assignment editor. It is a pay cut. It is going back to what I was doing four years ago in essence even though it's network now. They were people who knew me from before. They've known me throughout, of course, but also knew me from before. And, to me, that's kind of a graceful way to leave. It was very, very, very important to me that I never translate or exploit this place and what I've done here into anything. For myself that won't make much difference in the world turning, but it will to me. To finish that thought the--it's a good way to leave. It's a good way to leave. I'm glad to be doing that. When I left journalism going into politics, I was not sure, not sure at all, that I'd be able to go back. And I still did it consciously. I figured I would figure that part out later. And so to have CBS say, "Yes, right out of the White House we consider you honest enough to be an editor, knowing the way you feel about the President." I consider it a compliment to this operation, to be honest--not to me alone.

ALSOBROOK: Anne, I've taken more of your time than I'd planned on. I have one last question. That is, I need a permanent address and a telephone number that might still be good five to ten years from now.

EDWARDS: Probably my parents. It would be Mr. and Mrs. John R. Edwards, at 6 Bancroft Place, in Radburn, New Jersey, 07410.

ALSOBROOK: Telephone number?

EDWARDS: 201-797-1228.

ALSOBROOK: Well, we barely scratched the surface in a lot of these questions--

EDWARDS: It's a fascinating subject. You know, I didn't realize how much of that I'd been around for until I started looking around and started saying good-bye.

ALSOBROOK: One of these days we'll probably come back and talk to you at great length about some of these various topics after you've had a chance to think about them all.

EDWARDS: Oh! I'll forget them after a while.

ALSOBROOK: Thank you very much.

EDWARDS: Sure.