

JANE LAKES FRANK
EXIT INTERVIEW

This is an interview with Jane Lakes Frank, Deputy Secretary to the Cabinet, on June 28, 1978, at 10:00 a.m. in Mrs. Frank's office on the second floor of the West Wing. The interviewer is Marie Allen.

ALLEN: First of all, have you held a position other than the Deputy Secretary for the Cabinet or has this been your position since you've been here?

FRANK: This has been my position.

ALLEN: What date did you enter on, do you know?

FRANK: February 7, 1977.

ALLEN: Did you have any previous job experience that was influential in helping you prepare? I notice you were Chief Counsel for several sub-committees.

FRANK: Right. I worked in the United States Senate for over five years, first as Legislative Assistant and then Chief Legislative Assistant to former Senator John Tunney and then as Chief Counsel and Staff Director of two different judiciary sub-committees that he chaired.

ALLEN: What about this experience has been helpful to you?

FRANK: This experience in the White House?

ALLEN: What has been helpful in the White House job?

FRANK: Well, it's been a chance to see the workings of government from a very different perspective than on the Hill. On the Hill the jobs that I had had to do with concocting legislation, drafting it, working through committees and so on to get it passed. Here, my policy role has to do with a different place in the legislative process. Some of the things we look at have already passed Congress and the question is whether the President should sign them. In other cases, the administration is suggesting some kind of legislation, but we don't draft it here, and we don't work in a technical way in the committee process as I did on the Hill.

ALLEN: What were your duties with regard to the Cabinet in the White House?

FRANK: Well, they fell in three areas. The first was ministerial in terms of drafting an agenda for the Cabinet meeting for the President, attending the Cabinet meetings, drafting the minutes for Jack Watson's signature, and various technical tasks associated with that. The second basic category was more substantive: convening groups of Cabinet members to work on issues affecting their departments; participating in those discussions; and, in some cases, running those discussions. The third was what Jack Watson and I have called protecting the integrity of Cabinet government, which had to do with ensuring direct access between Cabinet members and the President. Not that there were any particular people in this White House blocking access, but there are some insidious forces that operate in any White House that tend to isolate a President. We have tried and Jack Watson is trying as hard as he can to fight those forces and to assure that Cabinet members see

the President as much as possible.

ALLEN: You've listed three duties. Which of them was the hardest? Was the third one the hardest? The one of assuring direct access?

FRANK: The second and third were the hardest, as far as I was concerned. I enjoyed the second the best because I've always been very substantive by temperament, and I loved the chances to be involved in policy making around here.

ALLEN: What particular issues were involved in policy making?

FRANK: Oh, a range of them. The ones I knew most about related to the justice system because that was my background on the Hill. As many people have said about this White House, things are so hectic that you have to use your existing inventory of intellectual resources. There's no time to do any fresh work on problems and so, therefore, since I already knew about LEAA [Law Enforcement Assistance Administration] or undocumented workers or the establishment of a National Institute of Justice or a lot of things to do with judgeships, those were the issues that I naturally gravitated toward.

ALLEN: And Jack Watson split this duty with you and took over several of the policy areas that you didn't have particular background on?

FRANK: Well, that's been true. But in addition to that, Jack Watson has two titles. He's also the Assistant to the President for Intergovernmental Relations, and that second duty occupied a lot of his time so, by necessity, I took on a major part of the Cabinet Secretary responsibilities.

ALLEN: Could you describe a typical day?

FRANK: There was no typical day. Every day is different. Today I came in breathless at ten o'clock and much embarrassed at my delay. But some days I come in breathless at seven thirty. I suppose the typical element is that I'm breathless most of the time. But it varies enormously. On the Mondays when Cabinet meetings are held, my morning was tied up in the meeting and my afternoon dictating the minutes of the meeting. Other days involved reading a lot of paper, numerous telephone calls and meetings.

ALLEN: How is your office organized?

FRANK: Well, the whole Watson operation is quite small. There are ten permanent staff people. Those assigned full-time to the Cabinet function are solely myself and my secretary. Watson, as I said, splits his own responsibilities and those of his secretary. The other permanent people on the staff and some detailees work on Intergovernmental Relations.

ALLEN: And so you report directly to Mr. Watson?

FRANK: Yes.

ALLEN: Okay. Do you have situations in which you report directly to the President?

FRANK: We have done that. I have represented Jack Watson a number of times and dealt directly with the President. I've also been with Jack Watson with the President on some things. In one case I was the

coordinator of the White House Conference on Balanced National Growth and Development. I did the work myself, really not supervised by Jack Watson, and worked directly with the President to the extent he was involved.

ALLEN: If you had to pick your most significant assignment or project, which one would you pick? The one that had the most importance, perhaps, to the future or to the administration.

FRANK: Well, I think the thing that will make the most difference is what I did to ensure access to the President by the Cabinet, as I think about it. Some of the substantive issues were also important, such as tax reform and others. But I think it is so crucially important to the spirit and to the productiveness of what we call Cabinet government to have that contact be free and open and positive that I think that's my most important contribution.

ALLEN: You just talked about what you thought was the most significant assignment you worked on. Would you also say that was the most difficult one, or would you pick out a different one to be the most difficult?

FRANK: Well, it depends what difficult is. In terms of intellectual challenge, it was not that difficult. In terms of a challenge to my patience, it was incredibly difficult. Just getting meetings scheduled and things of that nature is a time-consuming occupation. One worth doing, clearly worth doing. On the other hand, I found the work on policy issues more intellectually satisfying.

ALLEN: Were there other White House units that worked closely with you

in carrying out your responsibilities?

FRANK: Well, again, it depends on what. The ministerial work connected with the Cabinet meetings we did alone. The policy work we shared really at all times with Stu Eizenstat and the Domestic Policy Staff. They do most of the policy work. In fact, the line between their operation and the Watson operation is that they work on legislation, we work on implementation. But often those circles seem to be identical or overlapping, so we work very closely with them on policy. On the third part of my responsibilities, ensuring Cabinet access, I worked very closely with Tim Kraft over the first year plus, until he took on a different job, and now Phil Wise is the person I'm in contact with quite a bit.

ALLEN: On developing legislation, would you get involved coordinating with the Cabinet members on the developmental stage of legislation or only in the implementing, the actual coordination, getting it through Congress?

FRANK: No, it's even a later stage than that. In theory, where we should be involved is in implementing something that's already passed or that is essentially to be carried out through administrative rather than legislative action. For example, we are not working on the urban policy legislation now pending on Capitol Hill. The Eizenstat operation drafted it; Frank Moore is trying to get the bills passed; and Anne Wexler, the new Assistant to the President, is trying to mobilize constituent groups to help get them passed. But there are other pieces of the President's urban policy proposal that require administrative action of various kinds or other non-legislative action,

and Jack Watson is in charge of an interagency committee to implement those. That's, in theory, what the distinction is. In fact, because I had a record of experience on Capitol Hill and knew a lot of legislators, knew a lot about legislative drafting, and had a long-standing friendship of fourteen years with Stu Eizenstat, I was called on a lot to work on the beginning phases of legislation.

ALLEN: You said that you'd been involved in developing legislation as well as in the implementing end of it. Were you involved in developing legislation just because of your personal experience or were you involved in relation to the Cabinet and getting their input into developing legislation?

FRANK: Well, to the extent I was involved, I was involved with the Cabinet, but the specific reason why I was sometimes used to do it had to do with my own prior experience. The people who normally work on that for Stu Eizenstat are on his Domestic Policy Staff.

ALLEN: You said that you have a long friendship with Stu Eizenstat?

FRANK: Yes, we were summer interns in Washington together in 1964, sat at desks next to each other at the Young Democrats national headquarters and became great friends. We both went to Harvard Law School—he was two years ahead of me—and then we kept in touch over the years. In fact, as I was cleaning out my files I noticed that he had asked me to come down to Atlanta to work with him during the campaign, but I turned him down because I didn't want to be away from my children for that long.

ALLEN: Did you have a similar long friendship with Jack Watson?

FRANK: No, I didn't know Watson at all. I met him for the first time just before the inauguration, when he was interested in me for this job and offered it to me.

ALLEN: Did you have any other friendships, long-standing friendships, with folks who are here?

FRANK: Yes, well, Eizenstat is my oldest friend here, but there are some others at high levels. Harrison Wellford and I both worked in the Senate together, and, in fact, he was my student at one point when I taught a course at Georgetown Law School. And there are numerous others. Many of the people in this administration from Washington are people I have known over the years I've lived here.

ALLEN: Primarily in Congress or law school?

FRANK: Most of the lawyers I know because I was in law practice here before I worked in the Congress, so I just have a large acquaintance among Washington lawyers.

ALLEN: That's very helpful. You've been in Washington for a long time. You had a good deal of experience before you came here. Despite that, as a result of your White House experience, did you have any particular new insights into the governmental process or into the executive process?

FRANK: Oh, definitely. I've never worked in the executive branch at all except as a summer intern at a very low level, and now I must say in this job I feel on top of the bureaucracy, on a perch somewhere up on a mountain, looking down on the executive branch. It has been a

marvelous opportunity to see how government works, and how it doesn't work. And, I have a new appreciation for the federal bureaucracy and its slow ways. There is a lot of talent in the bureaucracy, but I am struck again and again and again by how most of the energy is sapped out of people in the incredibly tedious effort to move ahead with a project.

ALLEN: When did you first meet Jimmy Carter?

FRANK: My first day on the job. I'd never met him before. I'd worked some on his campaign. I'd worked on some papers for the campaign and transition. I was on a task force during the campaign chaired by former Senator Joe Tydings on which were a number of people who are now in this administration, like Griffin Bell, the Attorney General, Warren Christopher, the Deputy Secretary of State, and several others. We worked on civil justice and federal judicial reform, which are two areas that I know a good deal about.

ALLEN: So you weren't involved in active campaigning other than working on those issues?

FRANK: No, I've been active in Democratic Party affairs, though, since high school. I was president of my high school Democratic club in Los Angeles, and President of the Smith College Young Democrats and Secretary of the Massachusetts Young Democrats and generally active for close to twenty years.

ALLEN: As you leave, what are your plans for the future?

FRANK: Well, after a great deal of thought, I submitted my resignation

about three weeks ago and told Jack Watson, to whom I wrote my letter, that the primary reason I had decided to leave was to spend full-time with my young children for some period into the future. I haven't decided how long that will be, but my children are almost three and almost five, and I've worked full-time since before they were born and feel, frankly, that I've shortchanged them a bit and that I've shortchanged myself. It is due time for me to stop and to hear other sounds and to enjoy the summer with my young kids.

ALLEN: And let me ask you two final housekeeping type questions. Your official files, have you arranged for disposition of those? Are those being sent to Central Files, do you know?

FRANK: A lot of them have been as they've accumulated over time. The ones that relate to current issues I've just put in some order for the next person who arrives here, whoever he or she may be. My personal files I'll be taking with me.

ALLEN: Okay. At some point we may want to come see you and talk with you, years from now, to see if you'd like to give your personal papers, at the end of your career, your several careers, to the Jimmy Carter Presidential Library. We may come to talk to you again about that.

FRANK: Well, my goodness, I'm very flattered.

ALLEN: You know, the Presidential Libraries are collections, not only of the papers of the President, but also of his associates and his contemporaries.

FRANK: I didn't know that.

ALLEN: So it makes a nice resource for historians.

FRANK: You make me chuckle because some of the stuff which I was re-reading as I was throwing some of it out, my files from my Senate career, too, seem to me to be so juvenile. I mean so un-Presidential. Really, not that it's terrible stuff, but when I think about the files in any kind of archives, I think about very lofty, important memoranda about when to start war with what country, and so forth.

ALLEN: Yes, but that loses the personal flavor altogether. Is there a permanent address for you or is there an association you'll always be a member of like the Smith College Alumni or someplace that ten years from now we could be pretty sure of getting your address?

FRANK: Oh, goodness. I don't know. There's not a good permanent address, and I'm not much of a joiner of such associations. I suppose I belong to the Smith and Harvard alumni, but they scarcely keep up with me. I suppose the one that's more diligent is the Harvard Law School Association because I'm on the visiting committee to the Law School.

ALLEN: Are your parents at a permanent location in California?

FRANK: They are, but they move around, too, so I would think that Harvard Law School would probably be the best bet.

ALLEN: Okay, thank you very much.