

Exit Interview with Mary Ann Haas, First Lady's Correspondence Section of the Presidential Correspondence Unit

Interviewer: Marie Allen, Presidential Papers Staff

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Allen: Ann, first I would like to ask you some questions about your experience prior to working in the White House. Where did you grow up and what were your jobs before you came here?

Haas: I grew up in Washington and immediately before coming here I worked on the Hill for two years where I was a secretary. Before that I taught school briefly and I worked as the secretary for a publishing company, and I had some graduate education. I've been here for five years.

Allen: Where did you have your graduate education?

Haas: At American University in Washington.

Allen: How did you come to work in the White House and when?

Haas: I came April of 1974, and gosh, I heard about the position through a woman who worked with me on the Hill. She had a friend who was someone who was interning at the White House, so that came about.

Allen: Who was it that actually hired you?

Haas: Gwen Keating

Allen: And what was her position?

Haas: She was Mrs. Nixon's director of correspondence.

Allen: Do you remember your first day on the job?

Haas: Yes [laughs], I had to get a message for...I can't remember what it was...for Mrs. Nixon to sign though. It took me almost the whole day to do it. [Laughs]

Allen: Just because you had never done that kind of thing before?

Haas: Really, I wanted to get it just right and Mrs. Nixon had her writing style and she had particular words that she didn't like, particular sentence structures that she didn't care for, so it was my job to put it so it would be acceptable as far as she was concerned.

Allen: What was her preferred writing style?

Haas: She was pretty formal. [Pauses] She had words that she didn't care for...like thank you. She didn't like to begin a letter with thank you. She didn't like the word nice or lovely. She didn't mind long sentences.

Allen: Now, you worked on the Nixon staff then until August of 1974 when the President resigned. What was that six month period like? Were you working in the East Wing first?

Haas: Yes, uh huh. Oh, yes, uh huh.

Allen: This was a period at the very end of that presidency when there was a great deal of public controversy going on about the Nixon presidency. What do you remember about the atmosphere in the East Wing during those months?

Haas: Well, we were all working pretty hard. The mail that came in was what I would call hard core support letters, people who had confidence that President Nixon would be vindicated as soon as new information came out and they wrote to Mrs. Nixon in very personal terms urging her to keep confident. And we wrote back in detail and took up letters every night to Mrs. Nixon that she signed or revised to suit her own taste. She was interested in her mail right up until the last day.

Allen: What were your duties during those months?

Haas: Well, pretty much the same. I drafted letters for Gwen Keating or for Mrs. Nixon and we had some constituent type inquiries, even then, that were assigned to each person to handle. It's been pretty much the same type of assignments through the years.

Allen: Since you have been here through 3 administrations, I would like to ask you to compare the correspondence handling of the first ladies at different points in this tape, but let me ask you before I leave the Nixon administration to describe what the correspondence handling for the first lady was like then...Mrs. Nixon's? How would you characterize it?

Haas: We had several drafters...two typists. The director of correspondence and the mail analyst and a person who did a little bit of everything—distributed the mail and did other duties. I guess the main difference between then and now is that there were at least three people who were drafting mail and sometimes I think we even had more than that and she had an assistant, Mrs. Keating had an assistant who assisted the director in doing things.

Allen: Was the mail totally handled in the East Wing for the First Lady?

Haas: Yes, uh huh. Our office was a part of the First Lady's offices and I think always has been and with the Ford's also we stayed there.

Allen: Did you have more access therefore to the First Lady and her staff?

Haas: It was very convenient. No matter what you had a question on the offices were right there so you would just run next door or two doors down. There was a person to person type feeling, face to face rather than by telephone and you kept up also with the entertainment plans that were going on. It was kind of a total atmosphere of the First Lady's activities.

Allen: How did things change during the Nixon administration---I mean during the Ford Administration?

Haas: Well, I guess the biggest change was probably personnel wise. Marva Perrot came in to take Gwen Keating place.

Allen: Can you spell that last name?

Haas: P E R R O T T – M A R V A.

Allen: Marva.

Haas: She was an old friend of the President's from Michigan. She had known him from their college days, I think. And, while we were given more responsibility in those days---in fact, this was something that was very positive about Marva, in my opinion, was that she encouraged each of us to do the research associated with letters to the fullest extent. She encouraged us to call up the agencies, find out what programs applied, to get names and addresses to send back to people, so it was really a learning opportunity for me about the federal government and really I was exposed to a lot of programs and situations that otherwise I would never have known about.

Allen: Did you continue to draft letters most of the time?

Haas: Oh yes, always.

Allen: You mentioned messages. Did you also draft messages for the First Lady?

Allen: Yes, and in fact, when Mrs. Ford had her surgery the mail that came to President Ford from heads of state, members of congress, chairmen of corporations, whatever, came over to Marva because of her friendship with the President and so we got to draft letters back for the President to sign to all these different types and that was a nice experience.

Allen: Why was that a nice experience, particularly?

Haas: Well, it was interesting to see who wrote. People from all over were concerned about the President's wife. It gave me an opportunity to learn how to address heads of state. I kind of felt like I was part of that moment in history. You know, it tested our resourcefulness, I think.

Allen: What do you remember about the response to that situation of the First Lady?

Haas: Just a spontaneous outpouring of concern and good wishes. I can remember one letter from a woman who said she thought it took great courage to make this kind of thing public and

she hoped Mrs. Ford would have a complete recovery right away. She said I don't want you to misunderstand.... "I am a long term democrat and would never vote for a republican." [Laughs]

Allen: Do you remember seeing Mrs. Ford after the surgery and what her attitude was during that period?

Haas: Well, she didn't really discuss it with the staff, but she came down to the East Wing in the press office and everyone was so excited to see her I think she was kind of overwhelmed by the enthusiasm that was thrust upon her.

Allen: Was she popular with the staff?

Haas: Yes, oh, she had a wonderful sense of humor. Really, she was very quick.

Allen: Did you have periodic staff meetings?

Haas: Not in so far as I was concerned. No, no.

Allen: Were there other occasions that you remember that you did, as an entire staff, get together?

Haas: Oh, sure...birthdays and celebrations on the hall.

Allen: Were you involved in any social events during those years?

Haas: Yes. The Fords, I think, wanted their staff people to come to the after-dinner entertainment if they weren't invited to the state dinners themselves.

Allen: How exciting.

Haas: Yes. I went to after dinner entertainment for Thomas Suditko who was just recently executed...but that was a festive event. We had another little aspect to our job. We were the flower person at the arrival ceremonies. We handed flowers to Mrs. Ford to give to the wives of the visiting dignitaries. That was kind of a kick too. I remember standing on the south lawn and thinking "my left knee is going to give way" and wanting to sit down in a chair.

Allen: Do you remember anything special about the bicentennial?

Haas: Oh, yes, my goodness! The Queen Elizabeth entertainment. I also drafted letters for the social secretary's signature.

Allen: Now what kind of letters would that be?

Haas: Oh, anything regarding entertainment...the people who wanted to come, people who wanted to recommend someone, people who felt this kind of activity should be considered,

people who felt this was inappropriate, people who.....oh, you name it and somebody thought of it with regard to entertaining.

Haas: We had a great volume of letters following the Queen Elizabeth visit.

Allen: What was the entertainment for Queen Elizabeth?

Haas: It was the Captain and Tennille...and apparently some people thought it was not appropriate for the Queen. Actually, it was our understanding that contemporary music was her favorite. I'm not sure whether Bob Hope was there also, but I think he might have been, because I know he was a favorite of the Queen---is a favorite of the Queen.

Allen: Huh! Did you meet her at that time?

Haas: No, no.

Allen: Do you remember the fireworks display?

Haas: Oh, yeh, gee, that was terrific.

Allen: Were you on the south lawn?

Haas: Yes.

Allen: I was too.

Haas: Oh, were you?

Allen: By the Rockefellers...under the ... Oh, gosh.

Allen: Do you remember anything special that day---as far as working in the East Wing.... any preparation thing...was there a special festive air?

Haas: I can't even remember what day of the week it was, Marie. Was it during the week or on the week-end?

Allen: I don't remember either.

Haas: But there must have been a good deal of planning going on leading up to the grand July 4th. I just remember watching TV and the patriotic spirit that seemed to be expressed everywhere....in all of the different events.

Allen: Were there clear policy guidelines in writing letters that came from Marva Perrott through the Ford administration or were there other people who gave some policy?

Haas: Well, fortunately, there were a few people who had been at the White House for some time and could pass on information about policies that had worked in the past and really the

whole change in administration was so sudden that it was absolutely necessary to have some people who could keep things steady during that time.

Allen: Uh huh. It must have been very difficult to one day be signing Mrs. Nixon's name and the next day

Haas: Oh, no, we didn't sign them. Oh no, she signed everything.

Allen: There were no auto pens for Mrs. Nixon?

Haas: There may have been on pictures, I meant photographs, but I never saw them. But we sent everything that had her name on it, including the correspondence, was signed by her. And, this is another thing I didn't include, she didn't care to have the phrase, Mrs. Nixon has asked me to. If she hadn't seen something she wanted it not to be misleading in terms of the person for whom the letter was intended. We would put it in the future tense; Mrs. Nixon will appreciate seeing your letter.

Allen: She wanted to be absolutely honest about it?

Haas: Oh, yes.

Allen: Did Mrs. Ford use auto pens or did she take a similar interest in her correspondence?

Haas: You know, I didn't realize it at the time, but I think Mrs. Ford had a series of physical problems but even those of us who were on her staff weren't completely aware of. I know she had a pinched nerve and she has arthritis and unexpectedly we find out her drug dependence and her alcohol dependence.

Allen...and she admitted to trouble...

Haas: She just wasn't able. I kept thinking, gee, I wish she could come down more often. I just did not realize it at the time and I am just so glad that we had people who were close to her and were concerned about how things were done so that...she only saw a percentage of the mail and it was all she could do, really.

Allen: Uh huh. So she didn't really have as much of an impact on her mail as Mrs. Nixon, for instance, had had on hers?

Haas: No, but it was a different situation entirely, completely different. Looking back, I just feel she was thrust into that roll and it wasn't her first choice at all.

Allen: Uh hum, uh hum. Do you remember the transition time? You've alluded to it and how sudden it was. Do you remember the first time you saw Mrs. Ford and the first instructions you got.

Haas: Oh, yes. In fact, members of Mrs. Nixon's staff had gone over to hear his resignation speech in the East Room. Gosh, that was emotionally draining, really. I was in tears. I was just bawling. Really, that was just a traumatic experience. I can't remember what time it was but on the very same day President Ford was sworn in and when I had worked on the hill; our office had had contact with congressman's Ford's office in the past. My boss had known him for some time, so I was enthusiastic about his selection as Vice President.

Allen: Who had been your boss by the way on the hill?

Haas: Jack Cochran at the Republican Congressional Committee which is a campaign group to elect republicans to the house, so he had worked closely with the minority leader's office. When he was selected for Vice President I guess a lot of people felt some vicarious achievement as though one of their own had been picked. When he became President I was enthusiastic about his being there. We went over to the White House after he had been sworn in. We shook hands with him in the receiving line, and I remember thinking Mrs. Ford was so little and her hand was so little.

Allen: Did she start handling mail that first day after she had been sworn in?

Haas: I can't remember, I can't remember. But I remember thinking, gosh, how lucky I was to be there. This was a chance to show what I could do and I was just very positive about the whole thing. I can remember some other people were saying, gee, we've going to be losing our jobs, they're going to be bringing in new people, but I guess it was just fortunate for me that I hadn't been there so long, really, to have such a hard and fast loyalty to one...to the previous president. Even within parties I think there can't help but be that feeling. At least to whomever comes in.

Allen: Uh huh, yeh, yeh.

Haas: From the point of view of the incoming person, not from the stance of those who were there.

Allen: Yeh, I think it is true. I frequently have the sense of being in an important place, even if I'm just an on-looker.

Haas: Yeh, really, on the day of the resignation and the swearing in, somebody from the hill said he felt as if he had been to a funeral and a wedding in the same day...and I thought, well, that really does express it.

Allen: Uh huh, uh huh. And to have been in the White House itself and to have been on the scene and sense the atmosphere is something you'll remember your life long and feel a little small part of what happened. We've talked about the Nixon and Ford administrations; let's move on into Carter's. How have correspondence handling procedures changed within this administration under the First Lady?

Haas: This administration felt that it would be advantageous to combine Mrs. Carter's mail with the President's mail and handle it in the same way, as far as possible, so our office was moved to the old EOB.

Allen: When was that? Was it right at the beginning of the administration?

Haas: Yes, uh huh. In fact, our office had become quite considerable, in terms of numbers. We had, gosh, I'd say, nine people, maybe, working on the mail, and so we all moved over.

Allen: Do you remember who the other names were at that point? Can you recall just last names?

Haas: Let's see. Tom McCoy, of course. He'd been here a long time. Suzy Amchan.

Allen: Suzy what?

Haas: Amchan. A-M-C-H-A-N, Gregg Smith, Theo Hahn. By that time I think Kathy Golter had gone to the Ford transition office with Ruth O'Neal who had been the director of correspondence for Mrs. Ford through the campaign.

Allen: I'm glad you volunteered that because I had forgotten to ask about that. What was her name?

Haas: O'Neal. Let's see, who else? Oh, Fred Jefferson. He had come to the White House as Ike's personal assistant at some point. He had been Ike's valet in Europe. I don't know if you have learned about him or not, but he was a fine, fine person. He died in January of '77 or '78. Oh, I can't remember. I think that was it.

Allen: What were the changes that were inaugurated in that office?

Haas: Well, through relocation and attrition, the number of drafters was reduced. Our typing operation was absorbed by the President's mail operation so that really left a mail analyst, a director, and a drafter.

Allen: Who was the director at that point?

Haas: Helen Dougherty....came in with the Carters.

Allen: How do you spell that?

Haas: D-O-U-G-H-E-R-T-Y--a sweet, sweet person. Really nice.

Allen: She had been with the Carters for a while?

Haas: Through the campaign and I think she had known him since he was governor and I'm not sure whether even before that, but for some time. She'd known the family for some time. And

she left in May of '77 at which point Rhonda Bush was selected to be Mrs. Carter's director of correspondence.

Allen: Where did Helen go when she left?

Haas: Back to Atlanta. Her husband and the little boy were there so she went home to be with them.

Allen: And at that point you had Helen Dougherty and Peggy McGuire as the analyst, or was there another analyst at that time?

Haas: I think Peggy was it. At some point Tom McCoy had been selected to be a director of mails, but I am not exactly sure when that was effective...so Peggy was. Oh, and we did have Vi Harkins review Mrs. Carter's mail for a while....before she left.

Allen: And then you were the single drafter?

Haas: Yes, almost from the beginning of this administration. Well, now, there was a period of months where people's assignments overlapped, so I think Suzy may have been doing some drafting and Theo may have also. And Greg Smith was there for a while. He was a drafter.

Allen: Can you describe what after Rhonda came were there changes after that time in procedures or in policy in handling correspondence?

Haas: No, not really. Well, if there were changes it was increased closeness with the Carter family. Rhonda is very close friends with Jeff and Annette and so our office had contact with them and with Chip also. Rhonda has been invited to the East Wing staff meetings and there is a rapport that exists between our office and the East Wing, so if anything, that has been the change. It has been enhanced communications; I guess you would call it. The policies have basically...well, no, actually with the gift policy that was a new decision,...with the Carter's not accepting personal gifts, although I wasn't involved in doing a lot of gift work before.

Allen: Was there a single gift unit that handled both the President's and the First Lady's gifts before the Carter Administration?

Haas: Oh, sure, oh sure, with Marge McGoin.

Allen: So to what extent was the First Lady involved in the decision about that?

Haas: I can't really say. I did that only on a very seldom, necessary basis. Really, the kinds of things we thanked people for were books, and handkerchiefs, and neckties and the substantive items were done by someone else.

Allen: And now, in this administration, you will return those things.... neckties or...?

Haas: No, no, they are allowed to keep those because they are not of great monetary value. In fact, I think most of them are recycled and given to charitable organizations.

Allen: Uh huh.

Allen: What has happened in our office in terms of policy as I referred to earlier is that Rhonda has become involved in the gift unit's work, so in that way our office has changed focus or increased the focus.

Allen: To what extent is she involved in the gift unit policy?

Haas: She reviews the reports daily and advises the East Wing in what is going on in terms of gifts. She's the liaison person there.

Allen: Does she get involved in the correspondence acknowledging gifts?

Haas: Oh yes, uh huh. But I don't do those. Jan Donic does those.

Allen: And then Rhonda has a supervisory role over that kind of correspondence too?

Haas: Uh huh.

Allen: Have you continued to draft a variety of types of things in this administration...messages, as well?

Haas: No, no, our office hasn't been doing messages. Those are done out of the East Wing so really my focus has been ...well, I've done a lot of case work types of things for personal problems. I haven't done a whole lot for Mrs. Carter to sign. Just very occasionally something has come to our office that Rhonda says "here, do something for Mrs. Carter's signature."

Allen: Do you have guidelines on what types of things Mrs. Carter signs?

Haas: Yes, Rita Merthan is her personal secretary so she does letters that would be signed by Mrs. Carter except Kathy Cade does the messages, so that's a little different. Our office during the Nixon and Ford administrations used to do both of those things so we had more of a variety. And her secretary, Mrs. Carter's secretary, would even draft the letters as well as getting them signed.

Allen: So you work in this administration is more limited in scope?

Haas: Except now we do letters for Jeff, Annette, Chip, and Amy. Rhonda is also the sort of family liaison, whereas in the Ford administration there was a person who did the children's mail and in the Nixon administration there also was, so that is one little aspect that has changed.

Allen: Uh huh, uh huh, you have that addition. Would you say the quantity of mail for this First Lady is equal to, more than?

Haas: I don't have a clue about that. I really don't. Maybe Tom McCoy could give you some input that way. The Carter Administration has kept weekly records of incoming letters so there is something preserved forever. To my knowledge that is the first time that that has been done.

Allen: Incoming letters. You mean just from the general public?

Haas: Yes, uh huh, well, it would include personal friends also—just incoming mail.

Allen: This has been the first time that a First Lady's correspondence has been integrated with the President's correspondence organizationally. Could you summarize what are the pluses and minuses of that and what impact does that have on the correspondence that comes up?

Haas: Well, I guess the nice thing is that we are very close to the kinds of issue mail that the President receives. His staff has specialists or a specialist who deals with issue mail so if we have a letter on insulation or whatever, we can check with the President's correspondence and often they will have something so that we don't have to start from scratch to do the research. Also, the typing operation has been taken off our hands so that helps. That reduced the numbers.

Allen: It eliminates duplication.

Haas: Uh huh, and we've gotten to work a little more closely with the President's staff—our counterparts.

Allen: Do you lose anything in your sense of oneness with the East Wing staff?

Haas: Well, for my particular job, yeh. It used to be very handy to be so close to everyone else who was involved in similar work, whereas now we are physically separated and so the majority of our work is by telephone rather than person to person contact, so I kind of miss that.

Allen: You are no longer involved, I would assume then, in the carryover that you might have from other East Wing persons such as the social secretary.

Haas: Very little contact---just as it relates to our individual letters.

Allen: So your role for the First Lady is limited in that extent that you're not involved with other East Wing staffers.

Haas: Well, Rhonda is. She goes over to the meetings...so she keeps up.

Allen: Do you have any other observations you would like to make about, uh. ... to a person who is studying the First Lady's correspondence one of these days in libraries and wonders about whether there were major changes in policy from one administration to the other and the things the First Lady says?

Haas: Oh gosh. Each administration has had its own identity so it is hard to really make a generalization that would be sound. No, I can't think of an overall summary observation.

Allen: Would you say that Mrs. Carter is more issues oriented in her mail?

Haas: Yes, I would say. She has her own areas of special interest that are different from what has customarily been the jurisdiction, so to speak, of the President's wife. She has her own areas that she has pursued deeply and actively.

Allen: For instance, in the area of mental health.

Haas: Uh huh, uh huh.

Allen: You have form letters, I was told, in the area of mental health.

Haas: Yeh, those are done by her projects person, Kathy Cade.

Allen: And these letters are developed by a subject's area person in the East Wing?

Haas: Right, right.

Allen: Who are the other people on the East Wing staff that are also involved in correspondence? You mentioned Kathy Cabe.

Haas: Uh huh.

Allen: Now, she's a special projects person?

Haas: Yes, she was very active in the President's commission on mental health. She is the specialist there. Now Paula Watson does messages and I think she helps Mary Hoyt also with her mail. Faith Collins may also become involved in the mail now and be a part of that.

Allen: What is her position?

Haas: She is Mary Hoyt's assistant.

Allen: Would you title Mary Hoyt as the director of First Lady's correspondence in policy?

Haas: Well, she is certainly the person to whom our office turns for a final decision on anything of controversy when we feel we want to have definite input. She is Mrs. Carter's staff coordinator.

Allen: And she is the final decision maker?

Haas: Uh huh. And Rita Merthan does the letters for Mrs. Carter's signature to personal friends. Madeline McBean has her own correspondence that she drafts. So letters could come out of a number of places over there. Gretchen Poston even has her own letters.

Allen: When I was talking to you earlier in your office you were describing to me a series of copies that you got of all outgoing mail that your office, Rhonda Bush's office, produced.

Haas: Right.

Allen: That would then only be those letters that you especially drafted?

Haas: Yes. As well as Rhonda.

Allen: That wouldn't include Gretchen Poston's letters or Mary's Hoyts's....any other East Wing staff's letters?

Haas: No.

Allen: It would not include form letter mail either?

Haas: I think that Peggy McQuire, Mrs. Carter's mail analyst, keeps a current record of all form letters.

Allen: For Rhonda's signature.

Haas: Kathy Cade has her own series. I'm not sure. I guess Peggy keeps those also.

Allen: You've spent most of your time drafting letters. What are the subjects on which you draft letters? And when is the decision made frequently in most cases that you will not use a form letter but that you will specially draft a reply? What are the criteria?

Haas: Well, some letters are fairly broad in nature and a letter would have to be looked at or would require some sort of special treatment in order to be responsive. I guess responsiveness is the basis for that decision.

Allen: Would you handle....is it because of the writer of the letter that it would come to you?

Haas: Sometimes it is a hard ship case. Uh huh.

Allen: What about personal friends? Would those be more likely to go to the East Wing?

Haas: Yes, uh huh.

Allen: So you would handle the hardship cases---now, you mentioned some of our case work earlier. What type of case work has this been?

Haas: Oh, gosh. People who need educational loans. I think I probably told you when we talked earlier about the woman in New York who wanted a myna bird and couldn't get one.

Allen: What is a myna bird?

Haas: She lived in Brooklyn and she had had a myna bird as a pet and it died and she hadn't been able to find a myna bird in a pet shop anywhere. This was back in the Ford administration and couldn't Mrs. Ford please help her? So we called the Agriculture Department and found out

the name of the quarantine facility in the state of New York where the birds were being kept and gave her the name of a person to contact. We had a letter a couple of weeks ago from a young man who was concerned about the Canadian harp seal hunt. I think he had gotten a card response and he was dissatisfied with that, so we checked with the Commerce Department and they gave us some information about why this was beyond the U.S. jurisdiction, but the kind of impact that our government could possibly have on these cases. We get a lot of social security mail, people who are subsisting on the income that they get from social security checks or who have children who are developmentally disabled. Gosh, just things.... all kinds of mail. One woman whose farm in Germany had been taken over by the Nazis and was trying to get payment for it. One woman whose husband had worked at the State Department and was trying to get a government pension on the basis of his annual appointments. Really, just a great variety of situations.

Allen: In these cases you mentioned, there is no particular reason why the First Lady would have the answer to them.

Haas: No, a lot of them are desperation measures, I think. They don't know who else to write to and they figure that she has visibility and may be inclined to be sympathetic.

Allen: Um hum. Uh, hum.

Haas: Gosh, I had a telephone call from woman who didn't even know she had a congressman....she had a representative in the Congress...so she was dealing with Mrs. Carter. Really...

Allen: Have these been rewarding to you?

Haas: Oh yes, oh gosh. You get some satisfaction. We had one man who---gosh, each of us in the office had spoken to on occasion and he said he was hearing impaired and you could tell he was because his hearing aid was twittering in the receiver. He was trying to get money from the Veteran's Administration. He was claiming for a service connected disability. Finally we got him something through the Labor Department. A small payment, but something nevertheless. We had a letter from a woman who was concerned about the widow of a black opera tenor in Massachusetts. At that point she was living on social security and her house was about to be taken from her. The National Endowment for the Arts has just managed to get her some assistance through a performer's association so that her house isn't going to be taken away. I guess the really positive aspect of this position is learning how many aspects of daily life the federal government is able to help with. You have the resources of the federal government at your command if you can just plug into the right circuit. So, I think that is a part of it that I have really enjoyed. It brings satisfaction to me in that way.

Allen: Able to make a difference in somebody's life.

Haas: Yeh, in some way.

Allen: On other than the hardship cases, on the subject matter, did you mostly write draft letters on subjects that were close to the First lady's heart, like mental health?

Haas: No, Kathy Cade did those and the elderly. That's also her special area. The subjects that I myself have gotten involved in have just been as they relate to writers all over the country and there is no consistent pattern say except for maybe social security.

Allen: Uh huh, just making a more responsive letter. Does Peggy McQuire note these letters that she thinks need your special draft? Is she the one that identifies those?

Haas: Or if she has any that she thinks are special. She'll discuss them with Rhonda and they will go from there.

Allen: One final thing, let me ask you about the integration of the files between the First Lady's correspondence and the President's correspondence. How was that decision made, and what was the reasons for it? Tell me something about it.

Haas: I really wasn't involved in that so I can't give you the ground work, the background on that. I think it is something that Frank Mathews has wanted to do for some time. The East Wing has had up to this time held out just to keep its own autonomy, I think.

Allen: So, files were kept beforehand in the East Wing?

Haas: No, no, no, no, just the First Lady's files were kept separate from the President's.

Allen: In the central files area still? They use the same subject filing and the same filing scheme the President's use?

Haas: I really don't know exactly how they filed. I know they have a name file and an organization file and a trip file, but outside of that I really couldn't tell you.

Allen: Thank you. Do you have anything else you would like to contribute?

Haas: No.

Allen: Can I ask you for a permanent address? Do you have an alumni association you will always be a member of or a parents' home, something that would be a more permanent address for you?

Haas: Well, I gave the personnel office my home address.

Allen: Yeh, is that a permanent address? Are you settled in the area?

Haas: Uh huh.

Allen: Could you give it to us?

Haas: Sure. It is 1200 N. Nash St., # 558, Arlington, Virginia 22209.

Allen: OK. In case a researcher at the Carter Library one of these days wants to ask you a few more questions to follow up, you said you are going to the Fish and Wildlife Service?

Haas: Yes.

Allen: What division are you going to be working there? Do you know?

Haas: No...the Law Enforcement Division which is concerned with the importation of the pelts of endangered species or the killing of animals that are on the list of native species. The bald eagle is the most obvious one. I understand also that our little office is going to be involved in the killing of the lynx by the doctor on the golf course. [Laughs]

Allen: [laughs] Oh, no, that was so funny. My husband is very interested in knowing what the true story is.

Allen: Well, thank you very much. I wish you the best of luck.