

Jimmy Carter Library
Tapes - Exit Interview of Rick Hertzberg

Interview by: Marie Allen; Presidential Papers;
Interview of: Rick (Hendrik) Hertzberg; Carter
Administration; Chief Speechwriter

Hendrik Hertzberg - "Rick" Hertzberg - in his office in the
Old Executive Office Building. The interviewer is Marie
Allen. This is December 10, 1980.

Marie Allen: The first question I'd like to ask you is
about your educational and your professional background
before the White House. Could you summarize?

Rick Hertzberg: Sure. I think maybe I'll start by spelling
my name.

Marie Allen: Good.

Rick Hertzberg: So that the transcript person can get it
right. It's H-E-N-D-R-I-K H-E-R-T-Z-B-E-R-G. And as Marie
noted, my nickname is Rick, and Rick is R-I-C-K. Okay.

Marie Allen: Do you have a middle name?

Rick Hertzberg: No middle name.

Marie Allen: Have you had a lot of trouble with people
misspelling your name?

Rick Hertzberg: Yes, indeed. Indeed. Both of them.

Marie Allen: Well, I'm glad you've set it straight for the
researchers.

Rick Hertzberg: I'm 37 years old. I was born July 23, 1943
in New York and grew up in New York City and New York City
suburbs. I went to Harvard College, graduated in 1965,
studied government and political science [inaudible] at
Harvard, although I was not a very diligent student. In
fact, I spent most of my time working on the newspaper--the
school newspaper, the Harvard Crimson, on which I was the
Managing Editor. The year after I graduated from college,
I came to Washington.

Marie Allen: Can I ask one question there?

Rick Hertzberg: Sure.

Marie Allen: Was--Jim Fallows was involved in the Crimson, too. Did you know him there?

Rick Hertzberg: No, he was considerably later. He was--he was not yet--he was still in high school when I graduated from college, although that--I'll get to that connection later. It was via the Harvard Crimson. The year after I graduated from college, I came to Washington and worked as Editorial Director of the United States National Student Association. I helped put out a magazine for that and did public relations and all their sort of editorial work, their annual book, that kind of thing. This is an organization that later it was revealed--about six months after I left it was revealed to be funded and, to a large extent, manipulated by the Central Intelligence Agency.

I was one of--there were two kinds of people at NSA, the National Student Association - witty and unwitty, meaning knowing about the CIA connection and not knowing. I was one of the unwitty ones and--but made a lot of friends through that organization, some of whom I've become reacquainted with through the Carter Administration. Roxanne Brown, the head of [Action] and Jim Johnson, who worked for the Vice President. A lot of the people reappeared.

I then went and worked for about six months in the San Francisco bureau of Newsweek Magazine, where I wrote about--I wrote the first national story about hippies, and also a few stories about San Francisco--the so-called San Francisco sound - the Jefferson Airplane, the Grateful Dead - that kind of music.

The draft caught up with me and I joined the Navy. I spent two years in the Navy. By--because of the Catch-22 in the military, I asked to be sent to Vietnam, but instead was posted--was stationed in New York City. When I got out of the Navy, I worked for--I went to work as a staff writer at The New Yorker Magazine and that was in 19--that was September of 1979--I'm sorry--of 1969. And I'm still theoretically on leave from The New Yorker, in their minds anyway. And for The New Yorker, I wrote a lot of--hundreds of "talk of the town" stories, as well as a number of long

articles, reporting pieces.

I--speechwriting is something I've been in and out of mostly by accident over the years. When I was in the Navy, I did a bit of it. When--then I did nothing more until 1976, when for about four months--three or four months I wrote speeches for Governor {Hugh L.]Carey of New York. And I had left--I did that as sort of just a lark, but it got me this job in a sense because when Jim Fallows was looking for a staff during the transition of '76 and he was calling around to various friends of his and asking if they knew anybody who would make sense as a speechwriter for Carter, a couple of them mentioned me.

I think Frank Rich, who was a classmate of Jim's and is now [inaudible] with the New York Times mentioned me. I think he was one of the persons that mentioned me. And [Suzanna Lesar], who is now a New Yorker writer and had been a colleague of Jim's on The Washington Monthly, also mentioned me.

Jim and I had met in--I'm not sure what the year was, but it was the--it was his senior year of college. It was the 100th anniversary dinner of the Harvard Crimson, and I was one of maybe 100 alumni that Jim met that day. But we certainly didn't know each other, but got to know each other, became good friends, and still are good friends.

He called me up at The New Yorker and I think it was in December of 1976, and I was--I didn't think--I didn't have to think for a long time about whether to do it. I immediately wanted to do it. I came down here and saw him for a few hours, and then he--and we--and he said, fine. I just have to kind of clear you with Hamilton and make sure that you haven't done anything to offend him. And then, shortly after Christmas, I guess, Jim called and said that it was all set. And it took me a while to close--to get here, and I started February 14, 1977.

Marie Allen: Why was it that you had--didn't have to take any time to decide to come? Had you always wanted to do this?

Rick Hertzberg: Yes. I'd always had sort of a fantasy of doing it--of being--of working in the White House. Of course, I'm a Democrat. It's something that you should only--can and only--you should only do it when you're

relatively young. And certainly this was my last chance [inaudible]. And it was just too interesting. It was too interesting an idea--too interesting of a proposition to pass up.

Marie Allen: Even though your roots were very strong--strongly put down in New York City still?

Rick Hertzberg: Yes. But I'd lived in Washington and it's just an hour away.

Marie Allen: So you came here, and your first day was in February of '77.

Rick Hertzberg: My first day was Valentine's Day 1977. And so, that was about three weeks after the inauguration. And Carter had already given his first Fireside Chat. And there was--and the--he was beginning to gear up for the big energy Fireside Chat I would say in April.

Marie Allen: Who was the personnel in the Speechwriting Office and in the organizational lines when you came?

Rick Hertzberg: Well, Jim Fallows was the Head Speechwriter--Chief Speechwriter. Then there were--under him were speechwriters and roughly in the order of their--I guess their salaries, which is as close as it got to seniority. There was Griffin Smith, Jerry Doolittle, Achsah Nesmith, me, and Susan Battles, who was sort of a speechwriter/researcher. And Achsah and I were the only ones left from the original crew.

Marie Allen: You got quite a perspective then on the whole four years.

Rick Hertzberg: Now, Jim was then--he was then working--our department I think was under Jody's jurisdiction--under Jody Powell's jurisdiction and remained so until Jerry Rafshoon came to the White House.

Marie Allen: How were things assigned by Jim Fallows?

Rick Hertzberg: Oh, we'd just get together and very informally--I mean, we'd get together and people could volunteer for things. And if nobody was volunteering for something, then Jim would assign it.

Marie Allen: There were no specialties particularly among the speechwriters?

Rick Hertzberg: They--specialties developed. There were interests--people had interests. And as we went along specialties have developed. And I got--I specialized more in foreign policy things. But still, it's never been--there's never been very much specialization. In a way--there's this. Now, Achsah--for example, Achsah has often done what you might call soft speeches.

She's done--almost every time the President has spoken to a black audience or to a black church, Achsah has done it. And also, if he's gone to--if he's gone back to the hospital or he's gone to speak on hunger - all of the sort of soft-hearted things, Achsah has generally done those. In the current speech writing, [inaudible] we're getting ahead of the story, if we talk about that.

Marie Allen: Well, but can we follow along chronologically?

Rick Hertzberg: Yes.

Marie Allen: With the--after the office was under Jody Powell. And then, the next organizational shift was under Mr. Rafshoon.

Rick Hertzberg: Yes.

Marie Allen: What are the circumstances of that?

Rick Hertzberg: Well, they brought Jerry in because things--there seemed to be trouble getting the President's message out. There was inconsistency. It was felt that there was inconsistency, that cabinet officers were sort of publicly disagreeing with each other and squabbling that there wasn't enough--that the President wasn't getting out a consistent, simple message and was therefore not being heard at all.

So Jerry came and just sort of coordinated all of the kind of public relations of the Administration and the White House. One of the things that he was put in charge of was speeches. And that was sort of--that was during Jim's last months here--Jim Fallows' last months here. And Jerry looked for--Jerry and Greg Schneiders, his deputy, looked around for somebody to succeed Jim. And they--finally they

picked Bernie Aronson. They didn't want to make him Chief Speechwriter for some reason, so they dreamed up a new title for him - Executive Speechwriter. Bernie [inaudible] speechwriter.

They didn't pick me partly because I undersold myself. I didn't really want it--didn't really want the job. And I wasn't sure I could do it. So, Bernie came in. And there was immediate--there were immediate problems because the first big project that Bernie did was the President's speech to the midterm Democratic Convention in 1978 - I guess it was '78 - in Memphis. And Bernie wrote a speech [inaudible].

But in any case, Jody--or Jerry and Greg wanted a different sort of speech. And they kept kind of demanding that Bernie rewrite it or change it. And they kept being not satisfied with how he was changing it. And then, I was basically on Bernie's side in that battle. Then came the big--the sort of climactic event there was the State of the Union in 1978. And again, Bernie did the first draft. And it seemed we were still having trouble getting to--getting a handle on this speech and making it a message that we wanted to somehow encapsulate what Carter's philosophy and approach was.

And so, long about the second or third or fourth draft of the State of the Union, I suggested an idea that I'd had, or that had come up, I should say, in a discussion shortly before Jim left--a discussion among me, Jim, Walter Shapiro, and a couple of other people and Paul Jensen from the Department of Labor. And that's--that was this idea of the New Foundation as a slogan, and is something that would describe what Carter was trying to do in his presidency.

So I made--wrote that and thought maybe this would be the place for that. And Jerry and Greg got enthusiastic about that. And so, the speech became an exposition on this idea, which the idea was that we were--the slogan suggests that we were going back to basics and building new foundations for a better future and energy policy and build a better economic future, and with the SALT negotiations for a better future in foreign policy. And with civil service reform and reorganization for a better government, we'd have to rebuild the foundations of the government.

So that was the idea. It was a very--it was a bad scene

from a human point of view because--and I fault Jerry and Greg for not [straightening]--although they were in a very difficult position because they had made Bernie the top speechwriter, but they wanted me to write the speech. And they sort of--at one point they had the two of us writing the speech separately across the hall from each other. And it was--it was a very--it was an unpleasant period.

Marie Allen: And both of you knew this was happening?

Rick Hertzberg: Yes. We both knew it was--we knew it was happening, and we were both in--just in impossible positions. And we finally--we have finally--the miracle is that we don't hate each other and that we get along after all of that because eventually Bernie sort of got forced out of the Speechwriting Office and I got made Head Speechwriter.

Marie Allen: About when was that?

Rick Hertzberg: I'm not even--I'd have to look it up. It was--well, it was sort of mid-'78, I guess.

Marie Allen: Okay.

Rick Hertzberg: Sort of mid-'78.

Marie Allen: And since--.

Rick Hertzberg: --It was in the wake of the State of the Union thing. Now, the State--I still think the New Foundation was a good idea. President--the President wasn't committed to it as a rubric for what he was doing. And that's why it didn't go anywhere. I could talk for hours about that--what happened to that.

Marie Allen: Well, this may be a good point. We've gotten down to the last reorganization, now that you're head of the Speechwriting Office. The President wasn't committed, you don't think, to the--.

Rick Hertzberg: --Maybe we could go back to it. I'll just zip through the other organizational--.

Marie Allen: --Okay--.

Rick Hertzberg: --Things. Well, I got to be Head

Speechwriter, then I was very shorthanded at that point. I hired [Bob Radcliffe], who had been a detail--had been detailed here. Because when I came in as Head Speechwriter, long about that time, Walter Shapiro left. He had come in and then--and he left to go to the Washington Post. So I run into Bob Radcliffe during this sort of interregnum while Bernie was here. And kind of while I was in the process of becoming Chief Speechwriter, Gordon Stewart joined us.

And then, Chris Matthews--then I hired Chris Matthews. And that's the kind of lineup. There was also someone else I had - Anna Simons, who was a kind of paid intern that really pulls her weight. I mean, does as much as anybody else in the department.

Marie Allen: How do you run the Speechwriting Office in a way that's different from Fallows or from Aronson?

Rick Hertzberg: Well, when--I don't really--I'm not sure how I run it that's different from the way they run it--from the way they ran it. It's so small that it's just my personality is different from theirs. So I guess it's--however I run it is a function of my personality. But since it's so--since it's so small, there isn't anything very complicated to be done organizationally. The main thing that's different is that when Al McDonald came in, he by--through a series of flukes got in to be put in charge of the Speechwriting Department.

What happened, in fact, was that they--that Jerry Rafshoon left--was leaving, and nobody knew what to do with the speechwriting. I don't think it was really ever considered to make it autonomous and make the speechwriters part of the--make me part of the senior staff reporting directly to the President because--well, I'm not really sure why. But I don't think that I was ever seriously considered. And Hamilton--this was at the time when Hamilton became Chief of Staff. So this is the whole post- [indiscernible] reorganization with Hamilton becoming Chief of Staff and Al McDonald coming in to worry about the things that Hamilton--that bored Hamilton.

We wanted to--our goal was to get closer to the President because he never--he was simply--he was never--he never dealt closely enough with these people who were writing the words that he spoke. So it--so we were just kind of

looking around for ways to make that possible.

The choices seemed to be that we could go back under Jody, which since we had already tried it and it was simply kind of chaotic--Jody just never really had the time to do it. Jody's not all that well organized. And he's got--had enough to do already. And he--Carter relies on him for so much that this would have been just one more thing that he would have had to worry about. So, there was that possibility.

There was the possibility--it seemed to be a possibility at the time--of having Ann Wexler be our godmother. Then there was--but the best possibility seemed to be to attach ourselves to Hamilton. And we did--that's what we finally did. And that meant that in the event--being attached to Al McDonald, whom we'd never met and had no idea what sort of person he was or any of that.

The way it's worked out has been all right. And we did--we organized--we got this place organized so that we have these sort of schedules now and we keep track of everything now. We added an extra staff person, [Tom Teal], who's very good. His--but his whole job is just to keep track of stuff basically.

Marie Allen: He keeps track of the President's upcoming speech needs?

Rick Hertzberg: The speeches and who's working on them, what stage they're at. He distributes the paper that comes in when there are things to be edited and so on. He edits a lot of them himself and distributes them. Basically, he's sort of--he's in charge of keeping track of where everything is, making sure we meet our deadlines, and deciding what our deadlines are--working with me to decide what the deadlines are.

And he's kind of like managing editor--if I'm the Editor, he's the Managing Editor of the Speechwriting Office. And that's been a tremendous relief for me. And I have to admit though I intensely dislike Al McDonald personally--and sort of all my colleagues--and so as far as I know does everyone in the White House. I have to admit that he's always basically dealt honestly with me and not--and has--I have to--certainly have to give him that. He has never really been a double dealer at all. So, he's pretty

straightforward. And this system that he insisted on imposing on us and/or sort of forcing us to develop--.

Marie Allen: --The scheduling system?

Rick Hertzberg: The scheduling system has indeed been a tremendous success. And it did result in the President getting the speeches earlier, which was the goal of the whole thing. The President wanted to get his speeches a couple days ahead of time because he was getting them at the last minute. And thanks to Al, that's been done.

Marie Allen: Did you get more access to the President as a result of being part of Hamilton's office?

Rick Hertzberg: Not really. Not very much more. No. In fact, on the contrary. Al used his stewardship of the Speechwriting Office to increase his own access to the President, but my access did not increase. I had to work through others to get access to the President. I had to work through Jody or Jack Watson when I needed to get access to the President.

But after--but I finally toward the--there were times when I had--there were times when I was--I had a lot of access to him when I had to have, when there was some crisis involving a speech. But as a regular thing, I finally gave up hope of having that. Oh, I don't know, it was about six months ago or something.

Marie Allen: So you didn't see the President in order to get instructions on a speech. You would see him when there was a problem, a crisis with a speech.

Rick Hertzberg: Well, if it was a big speech, yes. If there was a big speech, I did see him to get instructions or to discuss a speech.

Marie Allen: Was this generally by yourself or with Mr. McDonald?

Rick Hertzberg: Sometimes by myself, sometimes in a group. I was included in the 10:00 a.m. Frank Moore meetings once a week. That was useful just to see what the President's mood was once a week. It wasn't particularly useful for actually talking about what should be in a speech. But I've kind of gotten used to the idea [inaudible] he was

around.

Marie Allen: Not particularly [inaudible]--.

Rick Hertzberg: --But in fact, I did get more just because I was--because this all--because I became Chief Speechwriter, I got more--I did get more access. I did see a lot more of the President. I mean, I saw him--there was--I saw him a lot working on the [malaise] speech. At the end of that, I was the only one left up there. He kicked everybody else out. I saw him quite a lot working on the Convention Acceptance speech, working on the two State of the Union addresses that I've worked on - the New Foundation one and the Carter doctrine.

Marie Allen: Maybe this is a good time then to get back into those specific speeches, and talk about them.

Rick Hertzberg: Yes. Well, the New Foundation--here was this idea we--I had believed for a long time that the President should have some sort of a--should have something that would describe his program and would enable people to understand his program as a unique thing.

Of course, President Carter has always resisted labels of any kind and he doesn't--you can't get him to admit that he's--certainly not that he's a liberal or that he's a conservative. He might say he was a fiscal conservative, but he certainly wouldn't say that he was a liberal conservative. He might say he was a moderate, but he doesn't even like that label. He doesn't like to be pinned down that way. And he doesn't like slogans because he thinks they're simplistic and misleading. And, of course, he's right.

But a slogan--but the slogan is something to rally around and it's something to take a lot of [indiscernible] and make them--and group them together, so that people think of them as being consistent. And the fact they--because people think of them that way, they kind of become consistent. I mean, New Deal--the New Deal was a wonderful slogan because it suggested that what we needed was some kind of redistribution of power in our society.

We're going to deal--we're going to shuffle the cards up and everybody's going to get a new deal. That was--and a Fair Deal was the same way. And the New Frontier was a

good slogan because it suggested youthful vigor and a kind of adventurous spirit. And that was very true to what John F. Kennedy wanted to do.

The Great Society was a terrific slogan. It was an all right slogan, anyway, because it suggested--it suggested this kind of vast ambition for a neo-Roman magnificence and beneficence. And all of these slogans also--at least the more recent ones--also you could make fun of them, of course. And they showed--they also--because they were so accurate, they also showed the weaknesses of the people. They described the weaknesses--the New Frontier.

It's also that kind of romantic posturing and this view that the new frontiersmen had of themselves as being kind of characters in a movie - a western or a science fiction movie or a James Bond movie. And the Great Society, too, the name also suggests megalomania, which Johnson certainly had.

Now, the New Foundation, I think it was a good slogan because it was accurate. It very much--the idea of rebuilding the foundation is not putting big new wings on the house, but patching up the leaks in the basement and getting a solid foundation. And that was really very much what Carter's approach was about. He was interested in process as the--as his interesting reorganization of civil service reform showed. And he was interested in bedrock basic values.

Marie Allen: And issues, such as energy.

Rick Hertzberg: [Inaudible] matters. And--.

Marie Allen: --They were very fundamental.

Rick Hertzberg: And energy is a good example of something that is a basic fundamental of our economy. It doesn't--if you turn on--it doesn't particularly change people's lives in a direct way--the way, say, Medicare changed people's lives. But it's a fundamental thing that if you don't have it, you don't have anything. And so, it seemed to me that this was a good slogan. It also in a way described the weakness of Carter, which I didn't--just as the New Foundation, the New Frontier, and the Great Society described the weaknesses of their presidents, because it was sort of stodgy sounding, not terribly dynamic and kind

of a long word, sort of an abstract sounding thing.

But after the speech, the speech succeeded in planting the phrase in the mind of the country. And then, there was a wave of ridicule, which I had predicted and said it would be the first sign that it was working. Because that's the way it was--certainly, the New Frontier was ridiculed. The New Deal was ridiculed as The G Deal and the New Dole. The great--all the slogans that are any good get ridiculed.

But the President--again, Jody--Rafshoon and Greg Schneiders sent out a memo just on the day of the speech, saying, for Christ's sake, we've got to hang on to this and ride through the storm of people are going to make fun of it, but as long as they remember it, fine. And what we have to do is stick to it. We don't want in six months people to say, whatever happened to that New Foundation thing.

Well, what happened, in fact, was that nobody--as has happened so often in this Administration, is that nobody really got the President on board. Nobody--he was not really prepared to see this, to embrace this as the label for his Administration and his programs the way the New Frontier and the New Deal were able to present their programs.

Marie Allen: Was that because he didn't like labels or because he didn't like this particular one?

Rick Hertzberg: I don't know. I've never asked him. I don't know. I don't know if--he liked it well enough to mention it 12 times in the State of the Union address in a way that was unmistakably designed to make it--to attach it to his program. But he was asked--in his first press conference after the speech he was asked about it. Was this in fact his slogan? Wait a second. I'm sorry.

He was asked in first press conference after giving that speech, well, is this your slogan or isn't it? And he said--and basically, he disavowed it and said it was a good slogan. It was really just for one speech. It wasn't really--he wasn't ready to say that it described his program. So, he shot it down himself. And that's when I had to [inaudible].

Marie Allen: Pretty much the end of the New Foundation?

Rick Hertzberg: That was pretty much the end of it, though everyone remembers it still. We just didn't--and even when Jerry was putting out his first campaign brochure.

Marie Allen: A New Foundation for America. That's right.

Rick Hertzberg: Yes, it's still there.

Marie Allen: That's the title in the publication.

Rick Hertzberg: Right. And that was the basic campaign piece. But it--that's something that I have to ask him about. One issue [inaudible].

Marie Allen: That was one of the first major speeches that you had worked on for the President, wasn't it--major address?

Rick Hertzberg: The first--no, the first major--the ones that stick out in my mind, I'd have to go through my files to see what they really were. But in terms of the way they stick out in my mind--.

Marie Allen: --Those are the important ones.

Rick Hertzberg: Yes.

Marie Allen: That's fine.

Rick Hertzberg: The first major one, the first really major one I worked on--there were a lot of little ones here and there. And I would even consider, for instance, I suppose in the minds of some [inaudible]. But the first major one I worked on was the--was his first speech to the UAW Convention in 1977, which described his whole domestic program. The reason I don't look at that one as major because it was not really--it wasn't much--there wasn't anything very creative about it. It was basically writing up [inaudible] agenda. It wasn't much of a speech. It was a pretty good program.

If you look at that program today, and look at that speech today and look at that program today, you'd wonder what Teddy Kennedy was talking about. I mean, it certainly has--it was a good strong liberal program. It didn't go anywhere. And that's what was--tended to be ignored by a

lot of the Democrats who gave Carter a hard time. But in any case, the first big speech--the first one that--.

Marie Allen: --Sticks out--.

Rick Hertzberg: --Stands out in my mind as something that I was proud of that I worked on is the--is Carter's address to the Indian--the Parliament of India. And the key to that speech, which was about--in regards to the Third World and [inaudible] India, was the ending of the speech where he talked about Martin Luther King. But he talked about Gandhi and he talked about Martin Luther King being a disciple of Gandhi. And the movements of Martin Luther King led to having [grown] that up--had a revolution in his region of the country, as it did in--just as Gandhi [inaudible] a revolution in India.

And in a sense what it said was that Gandhi had made--without Gandhi there would be no Jimmy Carter. That's what the speech really boiled down to. That if it hadn't been for the movement that Martin Luther King led, inspired by Gandhi, that he would never have been the President--with the Deep South. Jimmy Carter wouldn't be standing there talking to the Parliament. And with Gandhi it's when he talked about--through--when he talked about America's relations with India and America's friendship with India, it was from the heart and you really knew what he was talking about. That's what that speech said.

And I can tell you two stories about it. One is that Brzezinski and I had a tremendous run-in over it because he kind of snatched it after the first draft was done and he had David Aaron rewrite it and then send it in to Carter. And so, we had a big confrontation over that. Now--and after that, we always got along much better.

Marie Allen: So, the only version the President saw was the Aaron version, or there--?

Rick Hertzberg: --No. Then we had--he saw a couple more versions after that. And we had this big fight and we settled our differences. And in fact, the main point that Brzezinski made--the main thing he wanted do in the speech was--he was right about it, as it turned out. I wanted--I had this Martin Luther King/Gandhi stuff at the beginning of the first draft. And so, David put it at the end. And he was absolutely right. That's where it belonged because

the other stuff was kind of dry.

I mean, it was interesting and the Indians were interested in it and so on, but this is the real emotional heart of the speech. And it was better to leave them with that than to start out with it, and then go into the stuff about [Haig] and the multilateral relations and all of that.

So he was absolutely right about the basic point. He was-- we had this big jurisdictional flap and I remember that after that it was as if he kind of respected me more for standing up to him. So--but we always got along quite well after that.

Marie Allen: Did you walk into his--.

Rick Hertzberg: --Although we were politically quite different.

Marie Allen: Did you walk into his office and confront him with this or did you send him a memo, or how did you confront him?

Rick Hertzberg: In--I went into his office and then got mad. And Jim--I had Jim--I guess Jim was around. I had Jim's support. And Jim fought for me, too. He stood up for me and I stood up for myself. And we finally worked it out. And now, he's really nice to me.

Marie Allen: And your particular beef was that he should have given his advice back to you, so you could have--.

Rick Hertzberg: --Right. Or he should have--.

Marie Allen: --Looked at it and commented.

Rick Hertzberg: --Gotten those or at least showed me what he had done before sending it in to the President. So, we certainly agreed--we got that worked out. Are you at the end of a--?

Marie Allen: --Yes.

[Change tapes.]

Rick Hertzberg: Unfortunately, when we moved offices, my whole first year of files was thrown out. And--.

Marie Allen: --Oh, no.

Rick Hertzberg: And I kept very careful files. And so, one of the things that disappeared is all of the drafts of this speech to the Indian Parliament and all of the clippings I had on it and all of the--I had the whole story and it's all gone.

Marie Allen: Well, maybe it isn't--is there any chance it was just misplaced?

Rick Hertzberg: There is some chance. But I'll never see it again.

Marie Allen: Well, we'll be going through all of these papers we collect.

Rick Hertzberg: Oh, yes?

Marie Allen: Yes. We're going to be--.

Rick Hertzberg: --Well, there was a--.

Marie Allen: --Let me turn this up. Let me put that--okay. If we come across a box of speech drafts concerning the Indian speech that Rick Hertzberg wrote--.

Rick Hertzberg: --It's a box of maybe 50 or 60 speech files from 1977 and early 1978. And including the speech to the Indian Parliament - several files on that.

Marie Allen: Okay.

Rick Hertzberg: Yes. Get a hold of me [wherever I am].

Marie Allen: Okay. We'll let you know. We won't give it to you, but we'll probably be able to make you copies because--.

Rick Hertzberg: --Yes. Well, that's--.

Marie Allen: --They're probably official records.

Rick Hertzberg: Yes. But that's what I mean. I'd like to--if I have a right about that, I'd like to have copies of the various [inaudible].

Marie Allen: Sure.

Rick Hertzberg: In any case, that was--what was so--I remember very well. I went to New York that weekend. I was not on the trip. But I was in New York that weekend. And I came back and it was in the newspaper about the speech. Well, first Jim Fallows called me from New Delhi and said it was going very well and congratulations. And then--.

Marie Allen: --He was a very thoughtful person in ways like that.

Rick Hertzberg: Indeed, he was. And when I came back, there was also a telegram from Brzezinski, just saying your speech was the high point of the trip so far, and congratulations. And I was always grateful after--I mean, that Brzezinski--it took him 30 seconds to do that and it sort of--and he won--he's not exactly a friend. He certainly won something from me anyway. I've never forgotten it. And I really scored one. It was big that time.

And then, but this--anyway, this speech was a great success. Hanes Johnson wrote a piece about it for The Post the next day. It was just extraordinary. It was--how Jimmy Carter has found his voice and describing the people in the audience crying, all these Indians being moved to tears. So, that was--that one was very good.

Marie Allen: A very nice piece for your scrapbook.

Rick Hertzberg: Yes. Just--I would've put it in [inaudible] had it not been thrown away.

Marie Allen: What's the next major speech that sticks out in your mind?

Rick Hertzberg: I don't know. I mean, there is the--.

Marie Allen: --The big energy speech, the malaise speech?

Rick Hertzberg: There were a number of big energy speeches. I mean, the ones that stick out--the ones that stick out in my mind have been the--have been from New Foundation, the Kennedy Library, the two State of the Union--or the other

State of the Union address, and the acceptance speech--.

Marie Allen: --At the convention.

Rick Hertzberg: And a number of campaign speeches.

Marie Allen: Okay. Well, maybe this would be appropriate to go back to the other State of the Union addresses. And you talked about the New Foundation. How are the other two State of the Union speeches different, similar?

Rick Hertzberg: The second--the third State of the Union speech--the first one basically we all worked on. Jim--oh, God, there were other--there were some others. There were a couple of human rights speeches that I did. There was one--there were three or four human rights speeches.

Marie Allen: Okay. We'll come back and get those.

Rick Hertzberg: Yes. There were all sorts of things. I mean, the thing--I don't remember a great deal about this third State of the Union address how we--because it was all scrapped for about two weeks or a week before the speech because of the invasion of Afghanistan, which was I guess over the Christmas holidays. And then, there was a whole new--had to have a whole new speech. The old one was out the window. And the old one was pretty good.

Well, in fact, I do remember when it was. It was--because we kind of resurrected it for the announcement of candidacy--the candidacy speech. It was the idea of a secure nation, a just society, and a peaceful world. That was--those were the [inaudible] or the basic organization of the State of the Union that we never gave because of the--Afghanistan.

And it's a little hard for me to talk about that speech. There's a lot involved. I'd have to go--I would like to go back to my diary about it because it was a very upsetting experience for me because I was very worried about war and I was also very worried about what I saw as a kind of emptiness at the heart of the government.

I mean, here was this speech that was so important. It was a message to--it was supposed to be a message to the Russians--a geopolitical message to the Russians. It was also supposed to reassure the American people. All of this

stuff. I found it all shunted onto my shoulders. And I remember the anxiety of it. Because I remember--I just remember--the thing is, it was so upsetting that I've forgotten a lot of it. That's why I'm glad I did have some notes on that.

I remember a meeting in the Cabinet Room, and [inaudible] came in with the President and the Secretary of State and the Secretary of Defense and Brzezinski, and some of the generals, and all of these characters sitting around the table talking in a very desultory way about what ought to be in this speech, basically though, leaving it to me. I mean, they all did this--it was all the end of the world and it was all the possibility of nuclear war.

And everybody kind of said, well, it's finally happened. And they all went home and had a martini. And me and Gordon Stewart were supposed to write this speech for the next [month] [inaudible] office. I mean, it was--this is not at all useful--this information, such as it--if you can call it that.

Marie Allen: No, it's interesting because it gives your feeling and your approach to this particular speech. But at this meeting there was a very gloomy attitude in this meeting that this might be the beginning of a nuclear war. Is that right?

Rick Hertzberg: Well, it's just that that was--it's not so much--it's just that there was--seemed to be a kind of chess game being played with the Russians. We were saying what this speech had to say to the Russians was that if you go to the Persian Gulf we'll stop you by any means necessary. And the only means we had were nuclear war that I know of. And we didn't know--we just didn't know.

It was--the situation was less dangerous I guess than we were afraid it was. We didn't know what the Russians were going to do. Suppose they did go to the Persian Gulf? We didn't know. Suppose they--suppose we were--and then, suppose we weren't bluffing? And suppose we did use nuclear weapons? I mean, that's a very--it's all--it was a very scary time.

Marie Allen: The speech drew a very strong line.

Rick Hertzberg: Yes.

Marie Allen: In the Persian Gulf. Did this come directly from the President or--?

Rick Hertzberg: --Yes, it came right from the President and Brzezinski.

Marie Allen: Told you personally that that had to be there?

Rick Hertzberg: That was sent over, more or less, in a practically--in a sealed envelope to be put in the speech. And it was--that was very carefully--that paragraph was very carefully worded and it came right from Brzezinski. And now, that was a case where I'm trying to remember if this was the speech or if it was a later speech where I had to sneak the speech around to show it to Vance, because there was a period of time where Brzezinski kept trying to prevent Vance from seeing these speeches. And I was [inaudible].

Marie Allen: Was Vance on the regular routing list for foreign policy speeches?

Rick Hertzberg: Brzezinski was supposed to take care of that, but he didn't. And so, I took care of it even though I wasn't supposed to.

Marie Allen: Without Brzezinski knowing about it?

Rick Hertzberg: Yes.

Marie Allen: How did you find out--?

Rick Hertzberg: --I remember this all happened--because I had friends over there. I was good friends of Sandy Berger's, Vance's speechwriter, and I knew Vance a little bit and respected Vance. And just thought it was [important] that Vance should see foreign policy speeches.

Marie Allen: Did you ever get--?

Rick Hertzberg: --I really don't know what happened with--.

Marie Allen: --In any trouble over that? Did you ever--?

Rick Hertzberg: --Not really because it was an indefensible idea that Vance shouldn't see a foreign policy speech. So

there was no way I could really get in trouble for it. What we did was we--what finally happened was that we came up with a new procedure on foreign policies, which is that was negotiated out between--among me, McDonald, the State Department, and Brzezinski, which supposedly guaranteed--and it did--it did work. I mean, I think we only made one other foreign policy speech after this decision was worked out. But it worked. There was--finally there was no way. The idea of sneaking these things by the Secretary of State was--seemed to be dropped is what happened.

Marie Allen: When you were writing this particular speech was there pretty--?

Rick Hertzberg: --But the idea that there was no--but I must say, the idea that there was no split between the Secretary of State and the National Security Advisor is untrue. There was. The idea that--the fact is that Brzezinski tended to be more devious in his dealings with Vance than Vance was with Brzezinski, that he did in fact try to prevent Vance from having his proper input into speeches. And it surprised me not a bit that Vance finally got fed up and quit.

And [indiscernible] never faced reality on this subject. The President did not like the idea that there was--and maybe I'm using in a way this tape recording as a way to talk to the President the only way that--I couldn't talk to him face-to-face. He's not an easy man to talk to other--to converse with [inaudible]. But he never--maybe he knew about this.

One theory I have is that he purposely had--that because of his own relative lack of experience in foreign policy that in fact it was very wise of him to have a foreign--to have two principal foreign policy advisors who disagreed a lot, so that he would never be a prisoner of one of them. And he never was. And certainly, he did not follow--he certainly didn't follow Brzezinski's advice blindly at all.

I think [inaudible] there was lot--I kind of liked Brzezinski as a person. He's sort of a fun loving guy. I do think that he was on [whole] a bad influence. And--but this is--these are just my opinions. It doesn't have anything to do with [this tape].

Marie Allen: You have a--it's interesting though because

your opinions and your feelings are part of your background and speeches.

Rick Hertzberg: Not that Vance was perfect at all. Vance-- it's true, Vance is too much--too reluctant to--Vance is too much the lawyer and the conciliator.

Marie Allen: Perhaps not a person who liked controversy or liked to admit--.

Rick Hertzberg: --Well, he--.

Marie Allen: --Personal differences.

Rick Hertzberg: --Didn't like to get down--he didn't like to fight. And that--and he should have--and so, he didn't like to fight with Brzezinski. And it's just person--in some ways it's just a matter of personality. Brzezinski was a scrapper. He likes to fight and enjoys combat. And if you fight back, he doesn't think there's anything strange about that. He doesn't get offended. He expects you will fight back, as I discovered with the India speech. I think that in a way Vance was too much the aloof gentleman in the situation. And if he'd gotten down in the gutter a little bit with Brzezinski, he would have served the President better.

Marie Allen: Did you--were you involved in the Annapolis speech?

Rick Hertzberg: Not very much. And I know that Jim's--or I was--yes, actually, I was involved some in that. And Jim's version of that--Jim Fallows' version of that [inaudible] was stapled together between Brzezinski's and Vance's drafts. I guess that's--I guess that's essentially true. I guess that's essentially true. But I think it's really been [inaudible]. And I don't mean to [inaudible].

Marie Allen: Okay. On the--.

Rick Hertzberg: --Or whatever [inaudible].

Marie Allen: On the State of the Union address after Afghanistan, you said that you wrote that with quite a heavy burden.

Rick Hertzberg: Yes. Now, I--there were really three

people working on it. There was me, there was Gordon Stewart, and there was--and Robert Hunter. And it was just--it was--it turned out to be one of the better speeches, in fact, that Carter ever gave. He really wrote it himself. [Inaudible.] It was just--it was just close to anything he'd written it as a speech could be.

But here's an example of the--of something that I found unnerving about this experience. There was a paragraph in the speech that was put in the speech--the President put in the speech sort of the day before the speech about draft registration. It was rather unclearly worded when I read it. Well, when--he called me over to the mansion the night before the speech to go over it - just me, alone. I went over there and I'd never even been in the mansion--upstairs in the mansion before. I went up to the Treaty Room. And then, he said he wanted--here it was. It was his latest draft of the--his latest draft of the speech. And he wanted me to just kind of go over it and smooth it. And--.

Marie Allen: --Was his draft a version of yours at that point?

Rick Hertzberg: It was a version--yes. It was sort of--I can't remember exactly. It was a version of what we had--what Hunter, Stewart, and I had sent over. But it was much changed and much simplified and much rewritten. It was much--it was really Carter's product. It was really Carter's own speech and it had his strengths as a writer, which are simplicity and straightforwardness, kind of a Spartan quality, which was actually quite appropriate to this particular grim occasion.

In any case, there was this--but one case--but one paragraph that was not so straightforward was this paragraph about draft registration. Now, it was very unclear from the way it was written. I don't know where the [expletive] this stuff is. I could dig it out. You'll just have to take my word for the fact that the way this thing was written it could be interpreted as meaning that we would set up the--that he was calling for the selective service machinery to be prepared in case it became necessary to have a draft registration, or it could be read as meaning the machinery would be prepared and then there would be draft registration.

Now, this is a very incredibly important distinction. And

I didn't know it--see, he came and he showed me the speech. He didn't stick around to talk about it really. He went--he made me a sandwich and he was incredibly nice. And he said, do you want something to eat? And I hadn't had anything to eat. I was terrified and I'd never been [inaudible] before. And he went off and got me a sandwich. And apparently, he made it himself. He certainly brought it in himself. And then, we had this thing. And I said, I'm not sure what this means.

And I said, if it means--this was when I guess I just kind of looked at it and I saw that part. And I said, if this really is draft registration, then you have to explain this a little more because this involves so many people's lives. And there's just no reason to [alarm] the kids and their parents, to scare them and [inaudible]. You have to tell a little more why this is necessary. And then, I argued against doing it, which was the sort of if there was any resistance to it, or if Congress didn't pass it, it would send exactly the wrong message to the Russians. I don't know whether I was right or wrong.

But I do know this. He then said, well, let me go talk to--let me go talk to John White about it and we'll [get back to work]. Then, he came back later with some language. He gave it to me and left me for the night and said, "Just leave your notes," and "I'd like it done here" and "I'll see you in the morning." So I stayed there all night working on this speech.

Marie Allen: Up in the--up in the residence?

Rick Hertzberg: Yes. And I didn't have anything to work with. I didn't have a typewriter. And he wanted me to stay there. And that was okay with me. I just had paper and pens and stuff. So, I had to kind of do all of this more or less by hand. But I didn't want it that way because--so he could see what changes--what the changes were even though I retyped it. Anyway, so I smoothed the speech and made a lot of language changes. And then, on this--.

Marie Allen: --And you were there all night long?

Rick Hertzberg: Yes.

Marie Allen: Just to know a little--were there a lot of

noises around you or did things get really quiet?

Rick Hertzberg: No, it was real quiet. It got very, very-- it just was very, very quiet. It was right in the middle of the house. It's right smack in the middle of the second floor.

Unidentified Female: I'm sorry to interrupt you, but--.
[End of audio.]