

Exit Interview with Barry Jagoda, Special Assistant to the President for Media and Public Affairs

Interviewer: David Alsobrook, Presidential Papers Staff

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Alsobrook: Mr. Jagoda, I recall reading a press release that mentioned that you regard Houston, Texas as your home. Is this correct?

Jagoda: Yeah, I grew up in Houston and went to high school there. My parents—uh parents, lived there and most of my family still lives in Houston and beyond that I consider it for the purposes of voting and other permanent matters my legal residence.

Alsobrook: You think you may go back there someday and live there?

Jagoda: Well, I don't know. I don't like the climate very much. It is very hot and humid in Houston and so I—since one of the things each of us probably have to do to the extent we can is to find a decent climate, a decent environment to live in—sort of a narcissistic view, a selfish view, but I have that view about locations where you live. If, you can live anywhere, try to live in a nice climate, and so I don't think I will go back there—no.

Alsobrook: While you were attending the University of Texas back in the mid-1960s you worked as a reporter, I think during the summers for the *Houston Post*. Do you recall any particularly memorable experiences during your stint there with the *Houston Post*?

Jagoda: When I was in junior high school and high school because of an interest in sports, um... I got involved in sports writing and then I worked as a sports writer for the local papers. And then when I went to college at the University of Texas I continued that somewhat, working on the college newspaper. And through all of this, I believe there was an underlying interest in politics and public affairs...but stimulated more than anything else by the sense of change in the country in the late fifties and early sixties. Particularly the Kennedy idea of the, uh...elegance and inspirational qualities of President Kennedy. I didn't really get directly involved in politics because it seemed to me that journalism was another way to participate in public affairs without having to be directly involved. It was...working in the press box was often more comfortable than slugging it out on the line of a football field and the same thing applied to politics, so I had an aversion to politics because of all the conflict involved. Journalism seemed to be more interesting. My point of view that politics—the most important thing, critical, central thing that happened to me in that adolescence and early college period was the shooting of President Kennedy on November 22, 1963 when I was a sophomore or junior in college. That night I was scheduled to cover the dinner of—at a John Connally and Lyndon Johnson and Ralph

Yarborough and—who have I left out—and President Kennedy in Austin, Texas. That was a central moment I suppose in my life in that period of time. That was very memorable. It changed my whole life. It moved the western—the White House from Hyannis Port, where the President was vacationing, to Austin. And in 1964 and '65 and into '66 the White House was in Austin when the President was home at the LBJ Ranch. I first met all the major White House correspondents at that point and my interest in journalism was substantially increased as a result of that early contact. I should say as a footnote that one summer I worked in Washington as a summer intern through the good offices of Pierre Salinger, who worked at the Kennedy White House at that point. So I'd been here in Washington; I'd seen something about government, was involved with journalism on a part-time basis at home and at college. And I hope that answers your question.

Alsobrook: It sure does. Before you came to work for the Carter administration, you had about ten years' experience working for NBC News 1967 through '68 and then CBS 1969 through around '75. I understand you won an Emmy for your production of the Watergate hearings for CBS. Would you please describe some of your duties at NBC and CBS and perhaps some of your more memorable assignments, such as perhaps presidential funerals or anything of this nature?

Jagoda: Right after being graduated from college, I matriculated at the graduate school of journalism at Columbia University in New York City and did a year's master's program in journalism with an emphasis on broadcast journalism there. Because I'd gotten a part-time job prior to going to work at—NBC, er, at, uh, prior to going to Columbia Journalism School as a copy boy at NBC, it was relatively easy to participate in the selection process for a job after journalism school at NBC. And I did. There was competition of about a thousand people and they hired a few people to work as trainees at NBC and I did get selected in that process and worked at NBC for two years. A few months as a trainee and then somebody, as the case always is in journalism, somebody went away and didn't come back and they needed somebody to be a writer so I became a writer in the NBC Washington Bureau—a writer and an assignment editor.

And those were two very, very phenomenal years in the life of our country, 1967 and '68: the war, and the domestic riots, and LBJ, and all those things that we all know about. Um... tremendous opportunity for me to break into journalism working in Washington at the network level. Then after a couple years of that, I had been covering space shots and what have you, met some of the people at CBS. They asked me to come up to New York and work as an associate producer. It was a promotion. And I worked as an associate producer for a couple of years and then as a producer for about four years covering major news stories. I was with a unit that did instant specials. We covered presidential elections, and space shots, and major disasters, and unscheduled news events, and funerals, and weddings, and what have you. So one day—and during that period of time I should add I met then Governor of Georgia, Jimmy Carter, and his press secretary, Jody Powell, at a Governors' Conference. And we became acquainted and that

was the initial contact I had with the Carter movement as it were. But my whole career up to the point that I got involved with Carter had been involved with national public affairs and national news. I was probably one of the few people who became involved in the Carter campaign. There were only thirty people working for Carter when I did join, thirty-five maybe full time who had really seen the national life in the sense of national politics and public affairs full-time. Most everybody else, um, with a few exceptions, had come out of Georgia. Obviously Governor Carter had lived a lot of full life at that point and done a lot and some key folks had been around a bit but no one really was familiar with the national institutions of broadcast journalism and so that was why—uh—well, I'm getting ahead of myself.

So I worked on—uh—Watergate, I was one of the producers of the CBS Watergate coverage—did win the Emmy award for that and what have you and in many ways had become a professional in broadcast journalism or was a professional in broadcast journalism at a national level, not unlike the folks who cover the White House today.

Alsobrook: You were getting into something about the campaign of 1976 and that's really the next question I wanted to ask you about so could you continue along that same line?

Jagoda: In the...before the primaries in January of '76, Jody and I talked and it was clear that Powell was concerned about his unfamiliarity with the institutions of national television news. It's to the credit of Governor Carter and his press secretary that they knew they didn't know anything about it or didn't know very much and they wanted us to help to try and to organize a deal to relate with the television networks and that was what I was brought on to do, first somewhat haltingly because I really didn't feel that I knew Carter too well, but I said "Alright, I'll try it for a couple of weeks and see what happens," and so I traveled with him in New Hampshire and was very impressed by the breadth of his mind and his intelligence and all the things we already know about. Uh, it was very exciting that first primary election night in New Hampshire in a private home—as you will remember, Carter stayed in private homes during the campaign and after it became clear that he was going to win the New Hampshire primary that night, Powell and I and two photographers, one from each of the wire services and Jim Wooten of the *New York Times* as a pool reporter, left the big hotel there—I mean the hotel, the Sheraton Hotel in downtown Manchester, New Hampshire, and drove to the home that Carter was staying at that night. I have forgotten the names of the people. But it was one of the most dramatic and unforgettable scenes that will have occurred in my life. We went into this relatively small home, two or three bedrooms in the suburbs there of Manchester, New Hampshire and sitting around a television set was Jimmy Carter, his wife, this uh...now forgotten man and his wife and a couple of their kids and a couple of Carter kids and he was just about to win the first major victory of his race for the White House—second I suppose if you count Iowa. Wooten came up to Powell and I, staying at our hotel as the results were coming in, and said "I think y'all have gotten yourself a nominee"—a very dramatic comment from a distinguished correspondent of the *New York Times*, and he was also Carter's principle biographer at the present time and we went on

into this house, walked into the house and I sort of slipped into the kitchen to get a cup of coffee and I noticed a man standing there in the kitchen—he was obviously a stranger to the house. Everybody else [...inaudible...] belonged there. Carter and his family [...inaudible...] this man, a Secret Service man was somewhat standing at attention and I realized that what went through my head at that moment was this fantastic line from Arthur Schlesinger, who had chronicled the Kennedy presidency. The night of—I was a little premature here in my thoughts, but it was a very confident night—Schlesinger’s beautiful sketching of the night that Kennedy won the presidency and the Secret Service descended upon Hyannis Port through the night, Schlesinger said, “to be with Kennedy forever [sic].” Of course the Secret Service, in the wake of the sixties and seventies, and the assassination threats, were with the candidate, the major candidates, from the beginning, but nonetheless there was that Secret Service agent and it was clear to me then that perhaps for the first time that night of the New Hampshire primary that—what Wooten said: “You have a nominee”—I wasn’t sure of that, but I knew that there were going to be some—uh—some moments that wouldn’t be forgotten and that first moment in that home was not to be forgotten. It began that...it was very frustrating. One, it was just Carter and his wife and family talking to these ordinary folks in New Hampshire—it was as strange as could be. I’m a skeptic and a cynic, but that was a real situation and we ought not to let anyone forget nor should anyone forget that pulling back the question of where the Carter presidency ends and I say this on the day after he seems to have engineered a peace in the Middle East, and holding back the question of whatever happens to the Carter Administration, that it did begin with the people and that night in New Hampshire was something unforgettable but I could go on and on about that. You said “campaign” and I had to get started. Well, it went from there for the next year. That two weeks in New Hampshire... The next week was the Massachusetts primary and I was the principle aide with Carter the night of that primary. ...Just Jack Carter and Jimmy Carter and I in an old abandoned restaurant atop a tall building in Miami, uh, Orlando, Florida waiting for Massachusetts returns and I remember being with him that night that he lost in Massachusetts and that was the second primary night and I was with him every night over the next thirteen weeks on Tuesday nights. It’s interesting to see him lose as well as win. He...almost as though he didn’t believe he had lost in Massachusetts that night. Anyway, the campaign went on and the, uh, convention and the presidential debates... I was the coordinator for the Carter campaign in the debates and met with the Ford people...a long series of meetings...that’s a separate story, but there were the debates and the election and the transition. What’s your next question?

Alsobrook: I was really going to follow up and ask you was your position in the transition really something that grew out of your role during the campaign? Did it just follow naturally after you worked for the campaign, that you’d do the same sort of thing during the transition?

Jagoda: The night of the election in November we took Peanut One, a campaign plane from Atlanta to Plains and I rode from Atlanta to Plains in the seat next to Powell...then he said to me that night, “Well, I imagine the boss is going to want to ask you to come to Washington with us—are you interested?” I said, “Yeah, I am interested—we’ll see what we can work out.” And

Powell said he thought that the first thing I ought to do would be to go to Washington and establish a beachhead there so to run the transition press office and I said, “That would be alright,” even though I had some questions about it because it would be the first time I wouldn’t be with the President-elect. I would be in Washington and Jody and Rex Granum and Carter and a few of those would be at Plains and I really didn’t like that that much but I figured that somebody needed to come up here to see what was going on, so it did flow naturally out of my relationship, primarily with Powell, but obviously in close, uh, in staff posts you need to have a relationship with the principal before you can get anything done and I did have a good relationship with Carter and so yes, it grew naturally out of a campaign role.

Alsobrook: It was really some of the same types of work?

Jagoda: Somewhat, although it shifted into the first beginnings of government...there is a big difference between campaigns and government. Suddenly here we are in Washington: President-elect and documents and papers and charges and questions and you assume you’re responsible—you have to be responsible—and for the several months of transition it was quite fascinating. I mean, suddenly the whole range of government started coming down our way...and like so much in the White House...uh, work...uh, the presidency... It was...things come in a big funnel and they come out a very narrow end and oftentimes, even though I was never a key Carter intimate—I was in that second rung just around there—and I would begin to feel pressure...that government was different than a campaign. The campaign, you know, it’s one primary, one city, one election. Government is, uh...you’ve got to stay awhile and so...basically—the transition was a continuation of the campaign although it was an abrupt change because you realized suddenly that the buck was about to stop there...or “here,” as it were.

Alsobrook: Do you recall the first day you came to work at the White House?

Jagoda: Yes, I do recall it quite vividly. We had done a lot of negotiating about office space and arrangements and what have you and of course, I had been in here many times as a journalist and that was something that others around hadn’t, but it was kind of interesting. I had a, by then had a [...inaudible...] White House pass and the gates open and you come in—I had walked through the gates before as a passholder, as a reporter, so it wasn’t as big a kick. But I wandered over to the West Wing and sat down in Rex Granum’s little office there, next to Powell’s office, and looked out the window and I suddenly looked at Rex and said, “Rex, I can’t believe it, I just realized we’re sitting in your office, looking out this window is the front lawn of the White House.” We both got a big kick out of that, so even though I liked to have thought of myself as having been a bit more experienced and more exposed as it were than some of my other colleagues, I did share the rush of excitement about the White House that is the—I suppose that the principal reason that there’s all this excitement about the White House is not because of power or history, but because of its uniqueness, because it’s a one of a kind institution and that’s an overwhelming thing for me at least. The, uh, rather...“non-duplicability” of the White House... Yeah, we came in and we just got started—we got started right away.

Alsobrook: Could you describe a typical day if there was such a thing? This is pretty difficult because every day is probably different.

Jagoda: Well, in the early period we were continuing part of the themes of the campaign which was Jimmy Carter staying close to the people and I was deeply involved in that, town meetings, which in most cases, the only cases I was, if not the principal coordinator, kind of the person who was heading the style and tone of those town meetings. I began to work very quickly on a number of programs having to do with bringing Carter directly in direct touch with people through the electronic communications and which meant an immediate beginning of the meetings, and conversations, and discussions. Um...

Alsobrook: You're talking about some of these projects such as the call-in program with Walter Cronkite [Jagoda: Yes, yes.] and I guess it's the Massachusetts town meeting [Jagoda: Yes.] and the Mississippi meeting?

Jagoda: Yes. That's right.

Alsobrook: As you think back about some of those projects that you worked on, Mr. Jagoda, are there certain events that really stand out in your mind—you know, things that happened during the course of your planning or maybe as the programs began to develop—maybe as they were taking place?

Jagoda: Well, uh, would be good here I suppose if I were able to, you know, relate four or five or six anecdotes about that, that might be helpful, but the...I suppose that the only way to deal with that question—memorable events and what have you—is just to get into the files and look at the daily read file and the materials that came out each day and—you know, letter X to person Y...a jar of twelve thoughts. It's all a big montage in my mind now. I don't... I can't sum it up, I mean. I initially got involved in the media relationship of Carter—the media as the link between Carter and the people. I was doing that. At the same time there were some two or three substantive areas of policy in which I was interested. And one was the work of the Office of Telecommunications Policy, which along with my deputy, Rick Neustadt, we [...inaudible...] first year of the Carter administration, I was a contact between this Office of Telecommunications Policy and the White House. We, uh, during the reorganization, we, uh, after the first year, we turned that over to Domestic Policy Staff and Rick went on to the Domestic Policy Staff. But there were—every day—there were always five or six things having to do with communications policy that would come up. Also, there was no one around that seemed much interested in the National Endowment for the Humanities and the National Endowment for the Arts, so I became the liaison to those organizations and the president asked me to set up a committee to select a chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities and I did that. That took an enormous amount of time—six months—an enormous amount of work, so. And the media and public affairs stuff: stay close to people and liaison with the TV networks and there was a communications policy and then there was a cultural policy, so I was

doing three things in that first year of the Carter administration and each of them, you know, was probably a full-time job and then each of those areas of, um...there's a story in itself and to some extent, I mean of course, the interesting part of that is the extent the President got involved in those specific matters. I saw a lot of Carter in my role as media advisor, saw less of him in communications policy issues because the only thing that you really brought to his attention that first year was the public broadcasting legislation. He took an interest in that and signed off on our approach to public broadcasting. Uh, in our cultural stuff he was interested, but he didn't have too much time on it so spent... We did have some meetings and talked about it. And that provides an overview of the areas in which I was involved.

Alsobrook: Right. That's exactly what I wanted.

Jagoda: That is the content of what was involved in each of those three main areas. It seems to me that what...one will have to do that in a more systematic way...

Alsobrook: Right. That was exactly what I wanted to get at. Along this same line, did you find that your duties began to alter during the time that you were here or was this the way that you did things all the time you were here? You know you had duties on this side and these other duties or...

Jagoda: My relationship with Carter in the media and public affairs area was primarily through Powell. The way Jody and I, with Carter's concurrence, had set up my relationship up, was that I would work administratively, myself and seven people would work administratively, under Powell's budget and head count and I would report to Jody but I would have a dotted line relationship with Carter as his media advisor. That turned out not to work very well because if I go talk to Carter about something and Jody didn't know about it, Carter would see Jody, you know, that afternoon and say what about this? And then Jody would call up and say, "What is this?" So I began to talk to Powell prior to talking with Carter on a lot of things which is helpful to the President, I think, because that meant there were less people funneling information to him and Jody was then able to prioritize, if you will pardon that horrible word, the matters that he would bring to Carter's attention, including those that I had on my agenda. The inevitable result of that was that the media and public affairs stuff, which I was interested in, got factored in the things that Powell was interested in, based on daily emergencies and questions that would come up to the press secretary, so that the media and public affairs stuff gradually began to get relegated to a back burner situation because Jody was doing the prioritizing, not me, which is alright again from the standpoint of the president, but one of the effects of that was that, gradually after the first six months, there wasn't anybody around here spending any time—quote—"selling the presidency"—unquote—with the exception of Walt Wurfel and the Media Liaison team. That really was an interesting development. I think it really happened because Powell became the gatekeeper of the communications effort of the presidency and he had to deal with the daily emergencies and there wasn't anybody doing long-range planning. A year and a half or so into the administration Carter himself realized the improbabilities and that's when he

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decided to bring Jerry Rafshoon back in and that event, Rafshoon's arrival, was sort of the third major thing that happened. The first thing was six months of very intensive selling the presidency in a new way through the...not by using the media, but with cooperation of the media and that was what I was responsible for and I did that pretty much on my own working with the Scheduling Advance people and the president. Gradually, Carter...when I began to work more through Jody, it was less of that because Jody had to deal more with daily issues and so that was a frustrated, intensive media communications efforts on my part and the next period where I began to move more into policy questions, spend more time on that... it was much more interesting...even though Carter needed the sales help more...but it sort of wasn't working because I was telling through Jody, as I said, so that second period was, in my own work here, was characterized by intensive focusing on cultural affairs and communications policy.

Alsobrook: You mentioned that you worked very closely with Powell and you mentioned Walt Wurfel too. Did you find there were other White House staff units that you coordinated your activities with very closely?

Jagoda: Well, the Press Office in which I was theoretically a part and worked closely with Powell, Granum, and Wurfel, because so much of Carter's work with the American public took place when he was on the road, I had to work very closely with the Presidential Advance Scheduling Office, which initially was Tim Kraft and Tim Smith, who left after about a year. I don't know if you are familiar with him, he is someone you should check in with: Timothy G. Smith, Deputy White House, Deputy Assistant of the President for Appointments and Scheduling, a job that Phil Wise later had when he was deputy to Tim Kraft. Smith is now special assistant to the assistant Attorney General for anti-trust, I think, but Tim Smith is someone you should check in on. He was one of the first people to leave here after a period of time and he was a mentalist[?] in Advance Scheduling, but there was Fran Gordy and Tim Kraft and Tim Smith in that first year and sure I coordinated with him very closely...other White House offices from time to time on substantive matters...with Eizenstat and Watson's staff...with them, with Jack and with Stu when appropriate.

Alsobrook: In other words it just depended on the issue?

Jagoda: Yeah. There was some NSC [National Security Council]...one time...like, first, I remember the day of the inauguration, we, uh, I had the idea and Jody really loved the idea and we took it to Brzezinski for Carter to do a state of the message, uh, state of the world message. I don't know if you are aware of that...uh, the first time a president—well actually Nixon had done it—but we made the [...inaudible...] program available all around the world and worked with Brzezinski and that would be a pattern, if there was a substantive matter of primary concern to a senior staff member, then I'd work drafting the thing.

Alsobrook: I want to ask you something sort of related to that. How would you decide when or how you would present a particular program, like whether it would be through a fireside chat or make a formal speech?

Jagoda: Well, various questions would come up—what was the audience that we were speaking to, what was the interest on the part of the media, what was the interest on the part of the president, and devoting his time and energy to a question. Very quickly it was apparent that congressional interest in these kinds of questions, fireside chat or speech or what have you, was an important factor. One of the ironies of the Carter, early Carter, administration was that while he was being criticized for not having good congressional relations, Frank Moore was very, very influential in communicating congressional views on these subjects, so if a congressman, for example said, “You’ve got to have a fireside chat on the energy bill,” that quickly got communicated to the president and I think the president was initially very subject to congressional opinion, so that would be factored in. Um, you have to take that case by case. We’ve done some work on this already. Bob Shogan’s [Robert Shogan’s] book, *The First Hundred Days* [sic] [Actual title: *Promises to Keep: Carter’s First Hundred Days*], which is not bad, detailed some of the decision-making on the energy bill, the energy program. You have to look at those very specifically and before, I wouldn’t, I mean generally speaking, decisions about a presidential appearance were made in initial ideas that would come up and two or three staff members would discuss these questions and might later be presented to a larger meeting of staff members concerned and then someone in that group would take the recommendation of the president and he’d decide.

Alsobrook: How would you prepare the president himself for a media event like the...like a fireside chat or maybe a town meeting?

Jagoda: Well, that is one of the most important areas of understanding about Jimmy Carter, I think. To gather...to understand the guy, you’ve got to understand his preparation process. If you think about a high school student—you know, among the high school, the kinds of high school students, there are those—or college students—who would do their homework and prepare for an exam. They would do their homework every night and they would be ready for an exam and they would review the material before the exam and there are those who would cram for the exam and just not do their homework. Carter was a boy scout—is a boy scout. He does his homework, always prepares as he goes. He is a sort of “pay-as-you-go,” er, a “*prepare-as-you-go* type.” So there wasn’t really that much need for preparation. He is a very healthy...psychologically...guy. Psychologically, Carter is very, very healthy, so you have a situation where what you want to do is to let him go ahead and be himself as much as possible and not say, “You know, you should wear a three piece suit,” or something like that, because it has a way of changing a man’s personality. He’s healthy and... Good—you don’t want to change his personality—so there was minimal preparation. For news conferences, he would review materials, but it was not an intensive operation.

Alsobrook: You mean as far as makeup and lighting and that sort of thing?

Jagoda: Oh, it was very minimal, very minimal. We have... Early on selecting—I selected a woman to be the makeup artist and she’s been good. All along Carter and she got along—have gotten along—very well. There weren’t any questions, just technical matters and really you worked closely with the network doing the pool origination. One of the things that PR people, public relations people, media relations people have a habit, a tendency to do is to say, “Oh, well, now I think it is a critical matter...” It is important, but everybody wants to overinflate their role. As a matter of fact, there is less than meets the eye on these media preparations and what have you. For example, history will remember last night’s signing ceremony in the East Room on the Middle Eastern peace talks. But those things are—basically, what happened there was a political decision among these [inaudible] leaders. Everything sort of flowed from there...relatively naturally... There would be a signing ceremony... “Where would it be?” I’m sure that Rafshoon or Powell or someone said, “Why don’t we do it in the East Room, being it is a nice room?” The networks were informed, they brought the lighting in, Carter flew down. There’s not a lot of backstage manipulation going on. It is more or less what you might just imagine would happen—it would flow naturally.

Alsobrook: I recall I think the time of the first fireside chat there was a lot of media attention given to the fact of whether or not he wore a sweater and who had input, you know, into this decision about whether he should wear a sweater, a three piece suit, this sort of thing, so I think this is the sort of thing you are getting at.

Jagoda: Well yeah, exactly, and the sweater thing is—let’s put the sweater question on the record here. Jody and Rafshoon and I had had a conversation the day before the speech about that and we all said he had to be real casual and folksy and what have you and which is his want, anyway... Carter’s want, anyway. Then that next day somehow I remember the *Washington Post* asked me what he was going to wear and I said, “Well, probably whatever he had been wearing around the house that night, I mean, you know, he’s sitting in front of the fire, so that was really what we thought he had to do and so the *Washington Post* wrote a piece saying Carter would probably wear a suit, the sort of suit he would be wearing around the house, and the next day, the day of the fireside chat, Carter came down to rehearse it about seven o’clock—I think it was a nine o’clock speech and then right outside his third—the second story of the White House residence, you walked into the press room. I noticed that he was wearing the same suit and the shirt and tie that he had been wearing during the day and I said, “What are you going to wear tonight?” and he said, “Well, I noticed my advisors suggesting in the paper, that my advisors suggest I wear a coat and tie. I said, “No, that is really confused. Jody and Jerry and I talked and we all agree that you ought to wear something casual like a sweater.” And he said, “Well, that was what I wanted to wear in the first place and that is what I will wear.” So it was basically his idea and we just sort of reconfirmed it. He wore a sweater at his own... Oh, we got downstairs and I said, “Yeah, we really need to—for the purpose of lighting to—you actually need to get, to

put on the sweater you are going to wear.” So, Chip had to come along with him and he sent Chip back upstairs to get a couple of sweaters. Chip went upstairs and got a couple of sweaters, one gray and one blue and he brought them down and he put them on and we were looking at them there on the television monitor and it looked like the brown sweater looked more appealing or easier or softer...than the gray sweater or whatever and he decided to wear it. But it wasn’t magic. [Alsobrook chuckles.] It was just a question of, you know, kind of the way...if you decided you were going to put a sweater on, you try a couple of sweaters and happened to like one over the other and that’s it. It wasn’t—there is no mystery in that one. [Alsobrook: Right.] You know, when you’re on the outside, looking through the keyhole, which is not where the public is, the public is not looking through the keyhole. The members of the news organization are looking through the keyhole, they look in and they say that “The guy’s wearing a sweater. That’s a big deal. That’s got to be...” Got to look at that question...how does the... The evolution of the sweater becomes the whole thing because that’s all you can see. Of course, what was really important was the evolution of the energy bill—but that was analyzed and dealt with—but more attention was paid to some of these superficial things because they sort of loom out at us. And, you know, did the fireplace...[inaudible...didn’t it...] [Alsobrook: True statement.] It’s part of the nature of public life that there would be focus on some of these questions which may not seem to be so important, but after all, news is, to some extent, the function of what’s of interest to people and it is more interesting for people to relate to a sweater than it is to relate to the nuances of a natural gas plan.

Alsobrook: Okay, I want to ask a couple more questions. I know you have other things to do today, but could you comment briefly perhaps on how electronic media have changed the institution of the presidency itself, say since the advent of television in the late forties? I know this is a real can of worms and you probably could talk this for a month and a half but... Just, you know...

Jagoda: You know, I was thinking about writing a book on the subject, actually.

Alsobrook: Well, you know, if you feel like this should be reserved for your book?

Jagoda: No, no, no. I mean, I’m just...I’m being a little facetious... It is or you can’t answer. Basically, there is, in my opinion—there has been less change than you might think. When FDR summoned reporters to the Oval Office and to have an informal news conference and there were no—there might have been a still camera—but there weren’t any television cameras recording that to transmit to the world, but everything he said was tremendously important. It was a bulletin news matter—it got into the newspapers. By the next morning everyone knew everything he said. The difference for television is that, by later that afternoon, everyone knows, or in the case of a live news conference, from a number of people ranging from ten million to twenty-five million, know what he says instantly. So there is a wire audience brought in immediately—there is a sense of immediacy and urgency about television, a sense that if you were there, that you were participating in a sense of bringing people more—people have a sense

of being more in the process even though they really aren't. Uh, television just seems to involve us all when it doesn't really. There is no difference in policy, particularly between FDR telling a reporter that "one, two, three, four" was his view and Jimmy Carter telling the television audience "one, two, three, four" is his view except that, uh, except that things move faster. And when things move faster it's just, it's sort of like using a sporting analogy... It's the difference between hardball and softball. The game goes faster. You can get beamed a little more quickly in hardball than you can in softball. But it has something to do with speed and the movement of information, the movement of ideas, the speed at which it moves, not the content. *But* the most important thing—and in the new communication theorists...you know, not name-dropping here, but the leading one, Marshall McLuhan, makes the point that the way information comes to us determines the content of the information. In the case of the American government, and I'm not sure that's of the presidency, I'm not sure how true that is. Clearly, last night's announcement about Begin, Sadat, and Carter was so fundamentally, unbelievably dramatic because we were all, seventy million of us, here in the United States, and millions and millions more around the world, were participating in it at once. The sense of participation is profound. In another age, we would have had to wait for a morning newspaper to find out exactly what the *Washington Post* has told us this morning. You almost don't need to read that *Washington Post* this morning. You almost already know what is in it. Of course it validates what you saw on television. Television makes the presidency an easier place, an easier job in some ways because you can widen the scope of participants or the appearance of who is participating and who is not. On the other hand, because so much information comes in concentrated doses, as it does, approximately seventeen million people, between fifteen and twenty million people watch each of the three commercial television news shows in the United States every night. That is a lot of folks to get information from narrow sources, but... I don't agree with Agnew...uh, has charged that the domination of the news...but see the point is the news wouldn't be any different whether it was coming to the people in the *St. Louis Post Dispatch*, the *LA Times*, and the *New York Times*, than it is now when it comes from the television network news organizations. It is just that the folks who are the key players change a little bit. The wire service is less important. The special reporters from major organizations are less important and television reporters becomes more important and finally, because there is a big difference between a quotation from a public figure and the actual, and the actuality of a public figure, the public figure is in a position to be a more dominant figure. The spokesman...the president comes—leaps out at you from your television set with his own words, of course [inaudible] and what have you, and putting things in perspective, but television does in the words of this very thoughtful and dominant figure in the history of broadcast journalism, Fred Friendly, who was a former head of CBS news and professor at Columbia University... He said, "The great thing about television is it can take you where you could not otherwise go," and that is really what has happened. The American people have come to the White House. They came to the White House during Watergate and looked in the keyhole and they've come to the Carter White House and looked in the keyhole, just the way reporters do. In some ways, we are all reporters now. We are all privileged to be witnessing history

because of television, but all we are seeing is the view through the keyhole and that's the thing that must be kept in mind. The American people aren't seeing any more than reporters can see, which isn't a hell of a lot, maybe ten percent, you know, maybe... I mean, what do you see when you look through the keyhole: a very narrow field of vision so you know... and on and on and on...and those responses obviously could be more well thought out, but there is a greater something there and I haven't really been able to put it in perspective. Sitting here in the White House, or in the EOB, as we are, you know, you—your world view is considerably different. One of my colleagues here in... Greg Schneider...[inaudible]...I have talked to has spent the nights of the presidential debates in a bar near the location of each of the presidential debates...he was traveling as Carter's principal anchor in the campaign and I always thought he had a healthier, more well informed view of how we were doing in the debates than any of the rest of us...out in the real world as opposed to the rest of us who were sort of in the shadow of the candidate and historically things look different in the king's court than they do at the public baths.

Alsobrook: You know I am just going to ask just a couple of questions to wrap it up. You really have suggested one thing to me. Have you found that there—you've touched on this a little bit. Have you found that there were certain pressures on this job as a media expert that you didn't find in the public sector? [Alsobrook and Jagoda speak over one another.] Well, I guess what I mean is did you find that there were certain pressures on this job that you had never felt before you worked in media, you know, before you came to the White House?

Jagoda: Well, the folks who work in journalism have a certain degree of responsibility. I mean James Reston, who's got to get his facts right in an opinion column, and Sam Donaldson more or less needs to know chronology of events before he reports on them, so you have to be responsible in that sense...be sort of procedurally responsible, you have to live up to the craft, the dictates of the craft of journalism, so you have a responsibility, a professional responsibility, but you don't really have any real responsibility. Here in the government you *do* have responsibility. I mean people actually act on the basis of what you say and that is to me a rather phenomenal thing. There is genuine power, there is genuine, I mean, authority, and it is potentially very, very dangerous. Um, how to answer that question. Did I...problems...what's the difference in what you are saying. What you're saying is, you know, how does it look from the inside as opposed to the outside. Well, it's entirely different. It's like—I don't know—I suppose it's just two different points of view. Neither one is necessarily right. Obviously, the participants in an event have their own point of view, their own ideas, their own goals at stake, so they are people whose views need to be, need to be dealt with with a great deal of skepticism. They after all have a kind of what you might term a sales position. I mean, you know, when Jody Powell goes in the briefing room, he's got an argument to make. He's got a point to make. He has a special, a special interest...a special interest is that of the president. Now, hopefully our president's special interests are as broad and encompassing as the American people themselves. But on all these questions [inaudible] come to the president, they are close calls, so you have to

choose. Journalists, theoretically should be able to call it down the middle, but bear in mind that all they're seeing is coming, is viewed through the keyhole, so they don't know everything. There is almost no relationship between the work of a journalist and the work of a public official. They are just doing different things.

Alsobrook: And of the two, which one have you enjoyed the most?

Jagoda: Well, journalist makes a wonderful profession, a great craft. You aren't really owned by it. I mean, you've got your own institutional bureaucratic problems as people do in any institution, but you don't have to tell them [...inaudible...anything] particularly. You don't have an axe to grind. You shouldn't have an axe to grind. You do, but you shouldn't. In politics, you've got to take a position, you've got to take a stand, you've got to be an advocate that believes in some things. Journalists don't have to believe in anything, except the free process of gathering information. You have to take a stand in working in public affairs...unless you are just trying to be an independent bureaucrat and stay out of trouble, you don't have to take a stand on anything. [Chuckle from aside.] So, uh, there's a big difference. I came to my job realizing that I was going to be an advocate for Jimmy Carter. I was going to be working for him and his and my mind needed to come together, but I had been trained as a journalist, so I had all these—all this baggage of journalism: objectivity, balance, people's rights, you know, open government, a responsive presidency, obligation to hold regular news conferences—a lot of the things that Carter talked about and then has fulfilled, but the fact of the matter is that those are the things that are really important to journalists and not things that are really important to politicians. Things that are really important to politicians—and not really getting reelected—but passing a program. Journalists don't care about passing programs—they are interested in the process. So what happens, I guess is that politicians begin to, in an effort to justify the passage of the program to get to an end in particular, through all sorts of means, which might vary, might bend procedure somewhat. All journalists have is procedure and all politicians have is results. Not all politicians...but the difference is what's sacred in journalism is process and what is sacred in politics is results. I myself don't really know on any given question necessarily whether the desired results of Senator X, or Governor Y, or President C, or whatever, is right...program, the right approach...I'm just not sure and for me I guess that is the ultimate lesson here of politics. Somebody's in charge and they're going to go ahead and they try to get done what they think they need to get done. They might be right and they might not be right. It doesn't really make that much difference. They're in charge. Who is, after all, to say who is right and who is wrong on a tough question? That is something that sort of works itself out. That is the nature of politics—the resolution of conflict. Um, and so that is why I suppose I'm not, never was nor will be, an effective advocate of politician X or politician Y's point of view. I'm more interested in the process and I think that is the basis of our governmental systems...is the process not necessarily the results. So, finally if I had to choose, I suppose I would choose to stay skeptical of the views of those whom we like to govern us and try to stay as well informed as possible, but it's a big danger to get too committed to... on a close question... So a lot of room for mistake, a

lot of room for error... a lot of room for whim... Finally, I think on this question, “which way,” “which one,” and “what did I learn,” just to do this headline in terms of as it had been here. Um, I think that the idea, as much as possible, is to find people to work in government who are psychologically healthy and who are not just trying to climb a tree for some purposes of making, of being able to enhance their own point of view and their own interests so much as people who are dedicated to the whole process. In the end, that’s sort of basically why I cannot have any sense of disillusion about Carter. I think he’s a fair-minded guy doing his best and I agree with him about two thirds or two quarters of what he is doing. That is a pretty good average to have to agree with anybody who is dealing with tough questions.

Alsobrook: What do you think the future holds for you?

Jagoda: Well I—there has been a few months—three, four whatever—on this narrow question of international communications policy. I’ve been doing some work on that. I’m interested in the subject and in the substance of the matter and then I’m probably going to return to really something I’ve wanted to for a long time and had begun to work on before I hooked up with Carter, which was the development of a way of distributing quality television programming in our country, um, and that’s a whole separate question. I think that the television programming we have, with the exception of some information programs, is designed not to inform people, but to draw large audiences so that advertisers can get a cheap way to reach millions and millions of people. And I think there are alternatives to that that, television can, in fact, that, based on the kind of programming, one might want to have rather than try to reach all the audience at once...and I’ve been thinking about that a bit. When I do finally leave here I think that’s what I’ll get back involved in. Beginning October 1st, my status as Special Assistant to the President will end and I will begin to work as a consultant to the National Security Council, advising the NSC and the White House on this one area, international communications issues. I won’t be involved in the day to day operations of the presidency and that should allow me to work more on my own agenda and less on Jimmy Carter’s agenda, so, to summarize, I expect to develop my own agenda to work on and probably have a better answer for you on what the future holds in six months.

Alsobrook: Finally, would you give me a permanent address and telephone number for future reference?

Jagoda: Yeah. As current as those things ever are I can be reached at 16—my home address in Washington—at 1650 29th Street NW and the phone number there is 965-4834. Until the end of the year at least I am reachable at the same phone number here at the White House.

Alsobrook: We have your legal address in Houston too and if we ever need to contact you several years from now, will that be the best place?

Jagoda: Sure. Sure.

Alsobrook: Okay. Well thank you very much, Mr. Jagoda, for your time.

Jagoda: Pleasure, pleasure. You're going to give me a transcript?

Alsobrook: Certainly. We'll give you a transcript.

Jagoda: I notice you—excuse me—you work...questions and notes and what have you.

Alsobrook: I'll supply you with a transcript.

Jagoda: If you would, you might just give me a Xerox later on when you send it down.
[Alsobrook: Sure, sure.] It might be helpful. At some point, you know, it is good that you have done this because it causes people to focus. It is a very difficult thing to do. I have taken some extensive notes and what have you and I want to use that.

Alsobrook: Sure, it's really a thing that we use as something to Xerox today and [inaudible...I could...] Xerox on your machine on down here and I didn't ask all those questions...or ask some of them...and of course you got into some areas that were much more interesting than some of the questions that I had. This is really something that we use as a basis to work from and so...but you are welcome to have a Xerox of that today if you like.

Jagoda: Yeah, well actually just register this into the transcript when it comes back. [Inaudible.]

Alsobrook: Okay, sure, thanks a lot.

Jagoda: Alright.