

Exit Interview with Janet Pleasant, February 21, 1980

Janet has been in the Correspondence section for 7 years, most recently with Special Reply. She is marrying Warren Suleske in June and going into a private industry job in the Crystal City area.

I showed Janet my summary of the work of the Special Reply unit and asked for her comments on it. She said it was accurate. She did indicate though that mail was assigned according to subject areas of expertise, rather than totally randomly. Janet specialized in money mail (containing money), casework involving VA, HEW, and some issues.

Janet said that the mail had changed a lot in the last three years. There was much more issue mail now and people were reluctant to accept form responses. Frequently people were asking questions that needed specific tailored answers. People are more upset and often write 5 or 6 times, sometimes saying that they don't want form letters or letters signed by Chew or Kite.

Joyce Cook is working as Asst. Director of Presidential Correspondence doing research on current issues and developing brochures for enclosures.

Anne Thomas is now supervisor of the Special Reply unit.

There are more individualized letters done now (perhaps 75% of those handled by Janet) and the old visible index of paragraphs is not as useful.

Janet started working here September 1976. She had previously been the only writer at the Bicentennial Commission. Often wrote draft White House replies while at the Commission. Clara Hyatt--previous head of Special Reply--offered a job to Janet. She worked initially with Avis Queen.

Some of Janet's most memorable experiences: her first White House Christmas party, 1976--described as lavish, awesome and exciting. Janet worked in the Comments office on the day Carter announced amnesty for draft dodgers, handling five lines. She said 90% of the calls were very negative, and that there was much emotion, anger, and frustration involved. She was told that she could not debate policy.

Janet found it frustrating that she was able to express only limited creativity in the Special Reply job.

Interviewee: Marie Allen