

Exit Interview with Robert Russell

Interviewer: Dr. Thomas Soapes

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Transcriber: Winnie Hoover

Soapes: Alright just by way of background can you tell me where you were born and your formal education?

Russell: I was born in Lansing, Michigan in 1945 and I went back there to school at Michigan State University in Lansing and graduated and was given a social science degree in 1968.

Soapes: And then where did you go after college?

Russell: I spent two years in the army – a year in the United States and a year in Germany. I was in the Signal Corps and I came to Washington the day I got out of the army to visit friends and that was ten years ago this January and I haven't left yet.

Soapes: And what did you get into when you left the army?

Russell: Oh I had a couple of different jobs here. Worked in a clothing store for a while and a night club for a while and then I went down in 1973 to the Democratic National Committee and worked as a volunteer on setting up campaign programs. Later on in that year chairman Robert Strauss of the party put together a national campaign committee for the '74 elections and Governor Carter was named as the chairman of that and he sent Hamilton Jordan to Washington on a three or four day a week basis to staff that operation and work with Bob Kief (?) and the other people who was the Executive Director of the party and the others who were working on programs that would help candidates in '74 elections. And so as that program began to get geared up I was hired as Hamilton Jordan's assistant to help coordinate those programs and that's how I got to know these people here. One of the things that we did was train up about thirty or thirty-five people representing the various members of the campaign committee. We had a school where we trained some people to be campaign consultants in polling and fundraising and organization and targeting and issuing material and so on and we sent teams of two people into about forty-six of the states to work with whatever candidates were running and try to get them to take a couple of days and sit down and think about the organization of their campaign and Frank Moore and Jody Powell along with Hamilton were the people representing the Governor who went out and did that and so I met Frank at that time and some of the other people and I stayed at the Democratic National Committee through the '76 election. Of course after the convention we all went out into the field. I went into California but stayed on the

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Democratic Party payroll and then in February – well in December and January I worked on some transition for the Democratic National Committee for the incoming chairman Ken Curtis and then in February Frank Moore asked me to come over and work with him. When we originally talked about it Frank said that uh – Frank talked about the changing nature of Congress and the changes that had taken place in its structure and how it would function and work as he saw it and he realized, for example, one of the biggest things that we had to deal with was the fact that in the change that had taken place in Watergate and so on there was a lot of the powerful committee chairmen losing some of their power and some getting knocked out. The centralization of power diminished in the Congress and in addition to that you had a lot of – a lot of new members in Congress – seventy-five in 1974 alone that were elected so there were a lot of new people elected in a new post Watergate spirit of independence and party lines were beginning to fudge a little bit and people were beginning to declare themselves as independent so that we right away knew that one of the most difficult tasks was going to be forming coalitions to deal with the legislation that we were going to try and pass. Uh, so Frank knew that he wasn't going to be able to be in a position like some of his predecessors had where they could concentrate on being the President's chief lobbyist. Guys like Larry O'Brien when they were here would go up and he would talk to his Speaker and the Majority Leader and four or five committee chairmen and say "Here's what we want to do this year" and they would say "Well here is what we think we can do" and a lot of machinations would go on about the legislation as it went through the process. Basically there was some agreement of what the consensus was and that simply was not possible with this Congress – uh for any kind of legislation and was going to be much more difficult because the legislation that we were going to pass was going to be controversial. We knew that from the beginning that it was going to, you know, propose some tough solutions to tough problems. So Frank knew that it wouldn't be possible for him to approach the job as others had approached it so he wanted to have a freer reign of what he did with his time and activities and didn't want to be tied down to a lot of day to day responsibilities here at the office. He knew that it would take a lot of his time talking to lots of different members of Congress trying to build a coalition, a sense of coalition, and he knew that it would take a lot of time again in terms of this President for him to understand enough about each piece of legislation to advise the President on it properly in his daily meeting with the President because he had to know not only what the legislation meant to a certain extent but what we were trying to do and the specifics of what we were proposing but he had to know not just what four or five committee chairmen thought about it but what about a hundred or so people in the House and Senate thought about it and how they changed their position each day as well as knowing the general issues that affected those legislations. He had to know about, you know, the problems in the steel industry, he had to know about farm prices, he had to know about what was going on in the oil business, you know, and what the oil companies were up to. So he had to not only get information from members of Congress but from all kinds of sources of other people that were involved in this process. So he suggested that – uh – that I –uh- act in a role as his deputy and

try and run the office on a day to day basis. After I had been here for about a week and had looked at what we were trying to do I told Frank that because I had no work on the Hill directly and because I didn't have any real grasp of the specifics of the issues that we were talking about and because I didn't have a clear understanding of how the legislative process worked that what I thought might be better than me running the office was to get some other people to run the day to day lobbying operation and to monitor that internally as well and for me to try and work on organizing our office as well as serving as an administrative assistant to him and processing paperwork for him, and keeping some track of an overview of his appointments and how he spent his time. So we then hired Bill Cagle to run the House liaison operation and Dan Pate was already here and he was in charge of the Senate liaison operation. Both of those were made to two deputies to Frank and then we hired a guy named Les Francis to become a deputy for – uh- for the internal processing and Les, I assume you will talk to, in his interview, and Les basically kept track of the paperwork and the processing of the evaluation of the legislation and as proposals and counter proposals were made and kept track of both counts and supplied those to our lobbyists and so on. And so I tried to be an assistant to Frank and to assist in the general organization of our office and tried to keep in contact with all the other offices on the senior staff so that I would be aware of what other offices were doing that would impact on our work, what they were doing that would impact on our work and to establish relationships so that I could quickly communicate to other offices or assist in that process for others so that our office could explain to other offices what we were doing so that they could be assisting us. That's generally what I did. I tried to keep myself clear of any specific responsibilities. I had no line responsibility for any function in the office except processing Frank's paperwork and processing the requests from Frank and our other staff for meetings with the President. I worked with Phil Wise and Fran Gordy in coordinating the scheduling of those meetings but I stayed out of the substantive aspect of the legislation and did not spend any time in the meetings talking with the President about the substance of any issues. I tried to keep myself clear of any of the responsibilities so that I could respond to what happened that day and if there were a sudden piece of legislation that we decided needed to be, you know, explained on paper and reproduced and delivered to the Hill by five o'clock that night that I could assist the people in our office that had responsibility for that and make sure that that got done on time. If there was a sudden meeting that was scheduled, then I was able to again do what I could do to assist the people that were doing that to make sure that it came off quickly and properly. So I tried to be a firefighter to some extent for things that came up that needed to move quickly as well as trying to identify things that were likely to become problems before they became difficult problems and so I tried to talk to people on our staff and other staffs and identify things that looked like they were about to become problems and see if we could get them settled at the outset and whatever else came along I tried to keep myself clear for that.

Soapes: Could you give me an example of some of the problems that you would see coming ahead?

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Russell: (The tape sounded like some papers were being moved so it blocked out for a moment.

Also Russell seems to do a lot of coughing) A lot of the problems were individual internal problems in our office. We had - our staff from the time I got here until today grew from about thirteen or fourteen to forty-three people all about raising the White House ceilings so we stole and begged and borrowed a (?) slots and details from other offices from where we could get them because of the, as I was talking about earlier, the amount of people that had to be contacted in the substantive way on the Hill required a lot of people to serve as the substance as well as well as the individual needs of the Congress. So our staff grew steadily the whole time and getting all those people to work together as a unit and getting along well which becomes very important when you are under constant pressure. (Coughs) Every time somebody new would be added onto the staff in any kind of substantive role in our staff it meant that the rest of the staff had to readjust itself and take another look at those set of responsibilities so I would try to anticipate what kind of things would need to happen before someone could move into a particular role and try and work those things out in advance so that when someone came aboard they would fit right into our running machine. I don't want to overstate this or make it sound like I was a counselor to the staff but again with a lot of people working together individuals would have problems with their own concept of lines of responsibility or who they were working for, particular problems that they were having so I would try to have a sense of - on an individual basis - of people that were having specific problems that (coughs again) if they weren't dealt with in an early stage and resolved would have a tendency to build up and then, you know, cause some kind of blowup or confrontation so again which was easy under these kinds of circumstances and in this atmosphere, so I tried to be aware of those and if someone was so concerned then I would try to get Frank Moore to drop over and see them and talk to them about what was going on and if necessary take some corrective action. I also tried to, along with others, again to monitor our interaction with other offices. We worked very closely with Stu Eizenstat's office because their office created all the legislation that we tried to pass. (Coughs again) And Ann Wexler's office in public liaison became very important and incredibly useful and helpful part of our operation because she began plugging the various constituency groups that she was meeting with to help us lobby the Congress and get our legislation passed so we had coordinative things to consider with those offices and so that was another thing that we had to build.

Uh- I also tried to take a look at the general kind of problems and situations at the Congress and see what kind of programs or events that we could do to make them happier and make them feel more part of what we were doing. Having had a lot of campaign experience at the Democratic national committee the Uh - when it came time for the '78 elections I knew that one thing that would make a lot of members happy or that would help us with working with them was if we made an effort to assist them with their campaigns so, I helped to organize a project where we put together a program to send administration officials out to help them raise money or to speak

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at events or to talk with groups of officials for that and we ended up for the 1978 elections having about eleven hundred appearances for members of Congress targeted. Mostly to a group of about 100 House members and thirty or forty Senators which meant that due to the margin of people with difficult races we had five or six different administration figures – maybe the President once and maybe the first lady or the Vice-President, a couple of Cabinet officers and maybe some other assistant secretary that had some narrow – someone had a narrow interest in their district and that's the kind of thing that takes a long time to plan and figure out the legalities of and coordinate with the Cabinet officers and the political staff and so on so that's the kind of thing that began the sense that we started that process early, that by the time the elections rolled around, we would have been doing that for them for a number of months. Those are some of the kinds of things.

Soapes: It's getting up to a quarter till. You want to...

Russell: Keep going until something...

Soapes: Okay. What were – in terms of this office - your lines of communication with the people that you dealt with the most – who are they?

Russell: Well I really dealt with everybody on the staff. I – even though the three deputies in the office were senior in title and in responsibility to me – the way our organizational chart was written I reported directly to Frank and not to any of those three people. From the other end I also had it that no one worked for me. There were two assistants who worked out along with our immediate office to support Frank but they both worked for Frank, they helped answer my phone, they'd type up a couple of memos for me, but basically nobody – I wasn't assigned to anybody except Frank and nobody was working directly for me so that forced me to rely on my own moral "suasion" to try and talk people into doing something by a particular time or helping them get something done by a particular time. I guess essentially the role of a facilitator. So I worked with everybody but I spent most of my time here working with Frank and the other two people that worked and supported him so those were the people I communicated with for the most of it.

Soapes: You said you had to coordinate things with Ann Wexler's office and Stu Eizenstat's office. Who were the people in those offices that were the most helpful to you?

Russell: Well everybody was really helpful and I wasn't really responsible for coordinating that effort. You know our office had a liaison with that. I tried to smooth around the edges and make some of the links between people and make sure that we set up meetings with their staff every now and then so that everybody knew what everybody was doing and things like that but again the process was a natural one, particularly between Stu's office and our office and everybody was helpful. It took us a while to figure out and then put together the process of having the whole staff work together for the common objectives but after the first year or so we pretty well

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figured that out and there wasn't anybody assigned to have liaison with Ann Wexler's office. Ann and Frank would talk and then be at senior staff meetings together and they'd talk about specific things and if there was an issue that Frank wondered about that Ann wasn't working on, somebody else on our staff, Frank would call that person on the staff and individual lobbyists on our staff – we ended up with eight of them – they did it on a fulltime basis. Anyone of those eight people would call either Ann, you know, if that was necessary or one or two of the people on her staff so – and the same would be true of the domestic policy staff. So everybody really related to everybody else.

Soapes: In the early days of the administration the national liaison office was split between the east and the west wings wasn't it? Did that cause problems?

Russell: Yeah it caused the same kind of problems that every other office had. That's how unique it was. Each of the senior staff officers had the rest of their staff over in in the EOB and that didn't cause any more problems than it did for other staffs but yes it was a problem. It's just easier to communicate when you are close together physically. What was a different problem for us though was the separation of our staff in the East Wing from the other staffs in the EOB and it worked out a lot better for our staff when they could be in the EOB and close to the Domestic Policy Staff and the rest of the Domestic Policy staff and the rest of the other staff so there was no real problem other than that. But it was you know a long ways away, it's a long walk from the other end of the building so we had some problem.

Soapes: Did this cause some extra burdens for you and your coordination efforts?

Russell: Yeah. You know I like to do a lot of my own – my work face to face so I like to go over and see the people that I am working with as much as possible so it was physically difficult to get over there and it made it easy to not go over there because it was so far away. That's just the way it's become. It really isn't all that far but it was an intimidation to go over an obstacle.

Soapes: Because the situation was that they didn't want to come over here and sometimes find them going off on their own without checking back, touching base.

Russell: No, not really. Our office was set up where there was a lot of encouragement to go off on your own so we had our office structure a lot the same as the President's structure of the Cabinet and his senior staff. That is he tried to pick good people and give them a general idea of what responsibilities he wanted them to assume then to go ahead and let them assume it and he carried out as long as that was happening and then there wasn't any problem so everybody on our staff was again carefully chosen and given the responsibility for a certain area and it was up to them to get it done so there was a lot of independence on the job for everybody I think you know.

Soapes: Uh, this business of independence raises a question in my mind. This office really gets a lot of criticism - bad press. Was this independence in any way a source of some of those bad reports?

Russell: No I don't think so. I think that the – that the source of the criticism and bad press was more from the things that were generally happening out of this office and out of this administration. Things we talked about before – about you know the President's basic decision that he was going to take on very difficult problems with which means that legislation proposed that was going to be controversial, comprehensive, politically difficult and that caused – that was the direct source of the friction or one of the direct sources and the kind of things that you heard complaints about – that was the range of it and it was no different than any other administration. It's just that the press chose to highlight that as one of Carter's problems again which I don't agree with. It should have been more Congress' responsibility to get along with us more than it was our responsibility to get along with them given the way we were coming in and their current structure and structural problems and special interest problems. So that the general kinds of things that they complained about – about legislation which people somehow failed to remember is part of the process, you know, without trying to do a minor civic lesson here. The idea of government, the way this government is structured is that you have a President, a single person, who has primary responsibility to think what's good for the country and additional responsibility to think of what's good for each local state and each local congressional district. Then you know Congress which in two different ways represents more a local interest than a national interest. Their primary responsibility is that state if you are a Senator or that congressional district if you are a member of Congress. Their additional responsibility is to as best they can think of what's good for the national interest so the process of formulating legislation suggests that if the two branches of Congress merge their views into a single voice that represents the local interest primarily and the President and his advisors merge their views and those two views merge that what you will come out with is the best and the fairest and the most equitable public policy. That's the way it's structured so it is designed to – not to be a confrontation- but that's almost implied in the way that the government is set up. If you're going to have the disagreement, and strong disagreement, particularly when you come down to tough problems that have been ignored for a long time. It was again when Carter was running, before we knew he was going to be President, that you could have predicted that that would happen, so that was the main source of complaint and the other complaints were I think more symptomatic of that basic situation than anything else. The other complaints were you know you didn't – or I wasn't notified when the Secretary of Labor went to my district, there was a grant that affects my state and some Republican mayor announces you know and there was the little kind of stuff you know. I sent a letter, forwarded a letter from a constituent who wanted to know how much it costs to fly Airforce One from Washington to Miami and it's been thirty days and I haven't heard back so it was – I don't want to dismiss any of those – those are all legitimate concerns but –so I wouldn't call them nitpicking – but they were minor complaints of personal, more of a personal situation

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than anything else. So again to answer your question I don't think that the independence of the people on our staff was a problem at all. It was – their complaints were things that were a part of our policy.

Soapes: Were there any people on the Hill that this office seemed to feel didn't go the full measure for the administration as they expected them to?

Russell: There were plenty of them – most of them.

Soapes: Most of them?

Russell: I –you know – that's a personal opinion of mine. I would say that most of the members of Congress, particularly Democratic members of Congress, did not cooperate and go along with the administration's goals and policies as much as they should. On the other hand the record in terms of the amount of legislation passed compared with other recent Presidents - Nixon, Ford and Johnson - and Kennedy as well is comparable. We passed about eighty percent of legislation that was passed. It wasn't always in the same form but again it never is. You know you propose something that you know you are not going to get so that in the process of coming to this merging of views you have stuff that you can let go so it's never the way you propose it but about eighty percent of our legislation passed so even though they weren't as supportive as I think they should have been, they did in fact support us when it came down to the voting a respectable amount of the time, so that's a difficult one to answer. Both things are true.

Soapes: Uh – to phrase the question a little bit differently – was the Democratic leadership in both houses as cooperative as you think they could have been?

Russell: I think you're probably better off getting answers to that question from the people who worked with them and who know what went on behind the rhetoric out front. Those people would be Frank and Bill Cable from the House side and Dan Tate from the Senate side. (?) a much better perspective. My own view is that Speaker O'Neill was tremendously loyal, tremendously helpful, went out of his way to support the President's programs and the President in difficult times – stood by him, gave him good advice, and I think that he did an outstanding job given all the circumstances of supporting the President. He is a great man. Senator Byrd in my own personal opinion was not as supportive of the President. He seemed to feel or express the view that he was the leader of the Senate, that his primary responsibility was to represent the viewpoints and the needs of the Senators which he lead and he was not as helpful as he could have been on a number of occasions and was considerably more critical of the President and his programs at a couple of times. On the other hand there were many, many times when he went to bat for us and helped us and supported us, but that is just my own opinion. I think you would get more substance from Dan.

Soapes: What would you say were the toughest moments of this office during the administration?

Russell: Would you give me a second?

Soapes: Okay.

Russell: I think that the most – what stands out in my mind as the most difficult time is the first year while we were trying to build the staff, while we were trying to organize it, while we were trying to build relationships with the individual members up on the Hill and that was the time when one of the things that I think was a serious error in judgment on our part was the sheer amount of legislation. I don't have - I think we were exactly right in the kind of legislation that we proposed and the toughness of it – it ought to be controversial if you are living in controversial times. It ought to be difficult because the god-damned problems are difficult so I don't have any question that we did the right things in terms of the sheer amount of legislation that we tried to move up to the Hill at the beginning of the administration. That caused real problems because in addition to the controversy and the difficulty we had some committees that we had sent legislation on four different areas that they couldn't possibly consider all at once and in addition to the amount – we mentioned that after we sent it up there but we didn't do a very good job of explaining to them our priorities about what we hoped would come through the pipeline first. So that's what I remember as the most difficult period. We were beginning to get a lot of criticism from the press and a lot of the members were beginning to verbalize their complaints and we had all this legislation up there and it was a mess frankly. So that is what I remember as the most difficult period. Some of that was caused by the energy legislation which the President made a determination that he was going to have a plan by April of '77 whether that's how long it ought take or not. There was going to be an energy proposal by then so again that was another very complicated piece of legislation that wasn't as well thought out as it could have been but on the other hand you could have spent four years thinking out a good energy plan and maybe that would have passed the fence but the President's goal was again proper. There were a couple of individual times that were problems – the counting on the Panama Canal treaty which was very difficult because people had an immediate reaction to it that was very negative and so did most of the Senators. That was of enormous importance to the President and to the country in terms of preserving some kind of stability in South America and that was just a monumental effort. It was the first time I think when we really marshalled all of the resources of the White House and the Cabinet and the government and everyone here and so that was a very difficult and intense effort. That's all I really remember as sort of dark hours. There was of course around the Camp David thing a lot of interest and a lot of soul searching and effort but it wasn't like - gosh everything was terrible and if we don't figure this out it's all, you know, going to fall apart. There was on the other hand a sense of – what I think the Camp David process was a realization that some changes had to be made and some changes needed to be made and it was

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an attempt to find out how changes could be made without compromising the intent of what we were trying to do and it was like having one foot on the dock and one foot on the boat. You know you wanted to be on the dock but the boat was going in a different direction – we got stressful a little bit around that but that was – it was a positive exercise and probably the best single exercise of the examination of the administration that ever took place. I don't think of that as a dark hour. I think that's all I've got on that.

Soapes: The Camp David (?) there was a lot of speculation that your boss was going to be out as a result of that. Was that – I'm sure it must have been a disruptive thought for this office.

Russell: No, because again Frank Moore had been a target of criticism going back to that first day after the convention when he was the only person that anyone in Washington knew when they all tried to call him, so by that time he had gotten very used to people criticizing Frank and also everybody in our office and I think at that point most of the people in the White House and a lot of people in Congress had begun to understand Frank's superior abilities and the kind of job that he was doing yet and again what we were trying to do. He wasn't able to deliver – uh - to the members of Congress a lot of the things that they wanted or to have them – have a relationship with them in the way that they were used to. Times have changed and some of the congressional institutions have not; so we all knew that-uh - that Frank was doing a great job and – uh – he had worked for the President longer than any of the people around here, sixteen years now and it would have been foolish in midstream to –uh- to make a change because again Frank was the President's advisor in legislative matters and nobody else could have done it – could ever have gotten up to speed and so it just wouldn't have made any sense to do and again the problem wasn't Frank Moore. The problem was a whole lot of other circumstances that made the relationships impossible for anybody – just like all the problems in the country made this administration difficult. Not the abilities of Jimmy Carter (?) Not typical of the press to speculate about, you know, about things. I remember when Senator Kennedy announced his candidacy they nominated him two or three days later because it was just certain that that was going to happen. The press did not have the ability to allow something to happen and analyze it. They had gotten into the same syndrome as the publishing of their magazines all the competition of their other people in the media outlet that they have to not just predict what is going to happen but tell you with absolute certainty what will happen and they don't have the you know foggiest notion about what's going to happen so that's never fun to have that kind of speculation but not surprising.

Soapes: Well did the making of Hamilton Jordan as the formal Chief of Staff make much of a difference?

Russell: Yes it did. Again organization of the administration faced the same kind of difficulties at that level as they did in terms of what they were trying to do in terms of policy and that is that you can't.

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Soapes: Alright Frank how are you doing?

(There is talk and other noises in the background)

Russell: Anyway the – it wasn't possible to both have a concept of the spokes of the wheel as the President chose to operate and set it up completely differently. You have to either, you know, you can make adjustments which is what they did but you can't just change the conduct completely but again there is no question that one of the – one of the liabilities of that system is that some things fall between the cracks. There are a lot of advantages in the system that make it better given what they were trying to do and the way they work best so on balance the way things have been running was proper and correct but what happened was that it wasn't just little things that would fall through the cracks, it was that some little things that would fall through the cracks that would affect the quality, not the success or failure, but the quality of the things that got done. Hamilton - everybody has strengths and weaknesses – and one of Hamilton's strengths is not the day to day, minute to minute, piece by piece monitoring of information. He is not, contrary to popular thinking, disorganized whatsoever – he is completely organized in his own head and is very organized in carrying out the primary functions of the office of the President but his own strengths did not lend itself to him becoming the traditional kind of Chief of Staff and so what they did during Camp David was examine the functional - the functions - of the Chief of Staff deciding which of those Hamilton was already doing – doing well enough – which of those were not being done and were not being picked up by anybody else. The problem around the Chief of Staff thing was that it is a function because it has been such a traditional way of operating the White House. If people thought that something was the responsibility of the Chief of Staff, they wouldn't do it, okay, whether Hamilton was doing it or not so and there was no single person other than the President who wasn't you know aware of every single thing around the building everyday although he was aware of most of it more than anybody so that was what they tried to correct, I think, in bringing somebody in that would take on those functions that Hamilton was not doing – nobody else was – and cover those specific functions, designate Hamilton as the Chief of Staff with the responsibility for looking after some other things so that there was no responsibility left uncovered, okay, and that was how things fell through the cracks – was not because people couldn't do it or didn't want to do it but because some things went right down between – two people wanted the responsibility and neither one of them grabbed it on the way down. With Al McDonald there to monitor things on a day to basis and to communicate and so on that got better. The whole process I think added to the general organizational ability of the White House as well. Again it was a merging – we were learning to work together and you build an organization over a period of time and our organization had gotten better but clearly it was a help to have a little bit more consistency, a little more communication, a little more continuity and a little more responsibility floating around so I think it was very good.

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Soapes: Let me ask the opposite side of the question that I asked a while ago. What do you think were the highest moments of the program?

Russell: Well I think the highest moment clearly was the Camp David accords. It was something that I think everybody in this administration personally cares about a great deal and that is an improvement in the prospects for peace. It was typical of the kind of challenge that Jimmy Carter would take on even knowing that you could get these two people to talk to each other let alone come to some kind of common agreement and it was typical of the abilities of Jimmy Carter again not just to get them to come there but to produce a really profound and positive document from which to try and build a peaceful relationship. So everyone was really proud of him personally that he had learned his personal ability after all this yapping about you know what he could or couldn't do. That should have shown everybody once and for all that he was a man of extraordinary courage and extraordinary ability and should have laid to rest the absolutely ludicrous questions of confidence that still continued to persist. And one of the – so you know - there was a real celebration for many good reasons and I think that was clearly the highest point. It was what I heard people talk about for a few days after that. Although we were sure it wasn't really like this we thought back to the day that Kennedy and some other Presidents at least for a while had some popularity and you know working at the White House was a fun and exciting thing and everybody was on your side. We had criticism from all kinds of sides and there wasn't anybody who came here who minded the criticism, you know, other than the fact that almost none of it was deserved, you know, and it got frustrating after a while but that the contrast between sort of being really proud of where you were, having it work, and having everyone, you know, before you - that is - be on your side was a great feeling and of course it didn't last real long, you know, because as soon as they heard, you know, about some other insignificant thing to harp at us about then they were right back all over our throats but that was clearly a joy and then there were some legislative victories that were particularly satisfying – when we passed the Panama Canal treaty that was exciting because it was right after the finish and right within one vote and that was exciting and again that was the first White House wide victory. It didn't mean much to Americans and they still didn't like it after we did it but it was the right thing to do and the White House worked together and did something they said we couldn't do. There was a – there was a victory that you know some of the other guys that worked the Hill could tell you about. Water projects where Carter came on and tried to cut some of the port bill water projects and when we sustained their attempt to override a veto on one of the bills that was a particularly satisfying victory that we worked very hard for so those are the highest moments but almost every day there was something exciting – it was a place which rewards you daily.

Soapes: One phrase you used to talk about the Panama Canal Treaty was the White House working together. Was that – let's read this right - was there a problem with that in this White House of different offices sometimes being off on their own - not always working cohesively?

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Russell: Well it goes back to the question of if you are you going to run it like the spokes of the wheel or are you going to run it all through one centralized source and it is difficult to take the best of those and eliminate the worst of those and make one patchwork system. That's just a very complicated thing that I don't think is possible, so to the extent that staff didn't work together or worked independently or worked, you know, out of the knowledge of each other that would occasionally cause problems but it was a function of the way the place was set up. It wasn't anything to do with offices trying to do things their own way or anything like that. In fact there was a lot of cohesion because most of the team of people around the President had worked together for a long time and again the cohesion was there in a different way. It was circular, it wasn't linear. It was circular but Hamilton, Jody, Stu, Frank, Jack and the others all knew their own responsibilities, all had plenty of access to the President and given the advantages of being close to the wheel you didn't get into the competition between those people for access to the President or for credit for the work done. There was plenty for everybody. Everybody knew that Hamilton had this and Jody had that and Frank had this, Stu had that and so on and they were all satisfied enough within themselves with what they were doing and their role that they had they had no need to compete with each other whatsoever – ever - which is really remarkable when you think about it because they weren't competing against each other their staffs didn't spend any time supporting an effort, you know, to let's get better than Jack Watson or something like that. It just – that kind of thing didn't happen so what you had was again me things falling into cracks but basically it worked pretty well.