

**Exit Interview with Greg Schneiders, Deputy Assistant to the President for Communications**

**Interviewer: David Alsobrook of the Presidential Papers Staff**

**August 6, 1979, Room 175 of the Old Executive Office Building**

**Transcriber: Lyn Kirkland**

**David Alsobrook:** Okay. Greg, I thought, first of all, I would ask you a little bit about your job here as Deputy Assistant to the President for Communications. First of all, could you tell me when this job was first discussed with you? You know, when did it come about?

**Greg Schneiders:** Well, Jerry Rafshoon was brought in June 1 of last year, '78, and he discussed the job with me about a month prior to that when he first was asked to come to work at the White House, and I guess within a day or so after he was first talked to about the position, he came to me and asked if I would serve as his deputy.

**David Alsobrook:** Did you talk to the President about it during this time, too?

**Greg Schneiders:** No, I didn't.

**David Alsobrook:** Could you describe this particular job a little bit?

**Greg Schneiders:** Well, as deputy, I do most of the same things that Jerry Rafshoon is involved in. We have not attempted to divide up the functions; instead, I assist him in all of them across the board. They include development of a communications strategy in a general sense on a regular basis, usually every 90 days or so, the development of a more detailed and specific communications strategy for that period, and then with an even greater degree of specificity, development of a strategy on each particular issue that the President is himself involved in. For example, on SALT or the anti-inflation program or the energy program, we would attempt to develop a way in which the message of the President and the administration and those issues can be communicated effectively to the public and with the end result, hopefully, of developing public support for those programs, whether it be a program that we want to get passed by the Congress or a program that requires public support for its execution, like the anti-inflation program, or the energy conservation program.

**David Alsobrook:** So this is really all types of media coverage?

**Greg Schneiders:** That's right.

**David Alsobrook:** Now, how about your job specifically? Have you found that you've dealt with one type of medium more than another?

**Greg Schneiders:** Not really. We are very much involved with the electronic media. Any time that the President is going to do an interview for television or is going to go on television to do a speech to the nation or that sort of thing, we would be involved in setting that up. But we also deal quite a bit with the print media, also. The distinction between what Jody Powell and the press office do and what we do is -- pretty much comes down to their handling the day-to-day matters that affect media coverage of the President and our doing the long-term planning. But Jerry and I both deal with all kinds of media, so, no, I don't find myself specializing in one area or another.

**David Alsobrook:** Would you tell me what some of the White House units are that you deal with very closely in carrying out your function?

**Greg Schneiders:** Well, the closest one, of course, is the press office because, in fact, the distinction between what they do and what we do is a rather artificial one. In most White House operations in the past, I don't think there have been two separate offices, and there probably will not be, frankly, after Jerry and I leave. So we have to constantly coordinate with Jody Powell and his people so that we are not in conflict on anything or so to avoid overlap.

We deal very closely with the appointments secretary and the scheduling office because the President's public activities are very much a part of our concern. We are trying to see that what he does in public, and as a result of that, the way in which he is perceived by the public, is consistent with the overall strategy to communicate a consistent, coherent message to the people.

We deal, of course, very closely with the Eizenstat operation because we're involved in issues, and once they develop positions based on the President's decisions on issues, then it's our role to find a way to make those positions understandable and compelling to the public.

And, finally, I would say the -- Anne Wexler's office is one that we also deal with quite a bit because, again, what we are attempting to do is very similar to what Wexler is charged with, the difference being that we try to communicate the message directly to the public, whereas Wexler is communicating through interest groups, organized interest groups. I mean her function is more that of wholesale selling of the President's programs, and we retail.

**David Alsobrook:** What have you found to be the most difficult part of this job?

**Greg Schneiders:** I would guess that the attempt to exert some discipline over the various people and operations within the administration is the most difficult part. In order to avoid communications chaos and a cacophony, you have to try to set priorities, to discern certain themes and issues, and to stick carefully to those so that there is a relatively simple and consistent and coherent message going out. And that is not too difficult to do where the President is involved because he is very much committed to trying to do that successfully and so is very cooperative.

But then when you get the 450 people or so in the White House staff and the 1,800 in the Executive Office of the President and then throughout the departments and agencies, it becomes very much analogous to the budget process, where every individual has an issue or a message that they think is very important and may be, in fact, very important and that they are very much involved in, and with the best of intentions, they want that to be a major portion of the message of the administration. And one thing they will do is to continually press it upon the President or those people that are close to the President to try and get him involved in their area, and then they will also be out with the media attempting to get that message out in that way.

And very few people are in a position to look at the overall result of this and to try and set those priorities, to try and limit the amount of material and the amount of messages, the number of messages that are being sent out. So we run into the same kinds of difficulties that OMB does in trying to do that, and on the financial side, we're trying to constantly resist those pressures to expand the message of the administration.

**David Alsobrook:** I think it's an interesting point. Could you tell me who would have input in determining what your top priorities are and how you would go about putting that message across?

**Greg Schneiders:** Well, I've a couple of times used the word *discern* the themes and the issues because it is -- and this is kind of a sore point with us and the media. There has been from the time that Jerry and I first started on this the misimpression, false impression, that there is something kind of arbitrary about the image, so-called image that is being projected. And, in fact, it's not arbitrary. It arises naturally from Carter's own political philosophy, which has been consistent throughout his career.

And so we are not in the business of looking at the polls or trying to get a sense of the public mood and then conjuring up themes or issues that fit that. What we are trying to do is take what Carter wants to do and finding the best way to communicate that.

So in attempting to determine what the message ought to be, it begins with the President himself, and Vice President Mondale has been charged by him with this development of a calendar of issues each year, and so we've gotten very much involved with him in that process. When he's trying to develop particularly Congressional priorities, we'll sit down and talk through the ways in which to prioritize them so that the Congressional initiatives tie in with what are our public communications issues. Eizenstat is very much involved in it. And I would say that those three, the President, Mondale, and Eizenstat, have in the past been the principal people that we have been talking to and attempting to develop the priorities.

**David Alsobrook:** Greg, along this same line, if a staff member were going to make a public announcement, would he clear this through you first, or how would that work?

**Greg Schneiders:** As far as staff announcements go, unless they're put out in the name

of the President, they would generally not clear it through us. They might sometimes come to us for advice or something. But we have -- we determined very early that it would be impossible to try and actually control all of the communications coming out of the administration. I mean there are literally tens of thousands of people involved in the public information process throughout the department and agencies and at the White House.

So we have focused much more narrowly on trying to at least control that which the President is directly involved in, so if he's going to give a speech or if a press release is going to be issued in his name or any kind of -- if they want him to have a public ceremony at the signing of a particular bill or something, all of that is coordinated by us.

But as far as announcements at the staff level around the departments and agencies, what we rely on there is their being responsive to the guidance that we give them, not that we control what they do or tell them what they can and can't put out but that we tell them what it is that we are attempting to do, what priorities the President has set, and then hope that they, to the extent possible, will keep their communications efforts reasonably consistent with that.

**David Alsobrook:** What's the relationship between your office and the speechwriters? Are they within your --

**Greg Schneiders:** They work for us in this office, yes.

**David Alsobrook:** What kind of input would you and Mr. Rafshoon have in presidential speeches?

**Greg Schneiders:** Well, on a major speech, what we have done is to bring in whatever speechwriter is going to be working on it, to sit down well in advance of the day when the speech is going to be given -- usually it's sometimes as much as a month or six weeks for something like a State of the Union address or something of that significance -- and talk through what it is that we think ought to be the core of the speech, how we want to approach it, what the message ought to be, what the tone ought to be, and so on.

Then we will develop -- either that speechwriter or sometimes I've done it myself -- we will develop a rough outline and a proposal for the President to look at. We'll give that to him and then usually meet with him after he's had a chance to look at it and get his reaction to it so that he may say, as he has on several occasions, "No, this is not the direction I want to go in at all. This is what I want to do with this speech." The speechwriter who is going to work on the speech will be in the room with him at that time and get a better sense of his personal interests in the speech.

Then we'll go back and work up another outline, which he will react to, and then based on that, a first draft, then again, Jerry and I will usually review and edit the first draft before it's sent in to him. Sometimes if we have -- if the speechwriter has been able to quickly pick up what it is the President wants to do and to get it right in the first draft, sometimes

he'll work from that, make changes himself, and then it will never go to a second draft. Other times, it's gone through as many as five or six drafts coming back from him with comments and so on, but that's only on the major speeches.

On the minor statements, we usually only have a few day's notice on them, and we try to get something in to him a day or two before he's to give the speech, and he usually doesn't send it back. He'll work from that, make his own changes, and then go ahead and give it.

**David Alsobrook:** How about a major speech like the one he made when he came back from Camp David recently? Would you and Mr. Rafshoon work with him very closely? Would he practice the speech the day before? Exactly what would that scenario be as far as preparing for the speech?

**Greg Schneiders:** Well, that particular speech is not typical of the speechwriting process. That was prepared by two speechwriters from our staff who were up at Camp David but working very closely with Jerry and Pat Caddell and Jody Powell and Hamilton and some of the other people who were up there.

**David Alsobrook:** Is that Rick Hertzberg?

**Greg Schneiders:** Hertzberg and Gordon Stewart. And the President, of course, on that one was very deeply involved personally in the writing of it. He did practice that, and it was recorded on videotape, and he watched the playback of it to get some ideas on how he could improve the delivery of it and so on.

**David Alsobrook:** Were you there on that occasion?

**Greg Schneiders:** No, I wasn't.

**David Alsobrook:** But Mr. Rafshoon was?

**Greg Schneiders:** Yes.

**David Alsobrook:** Is this something, Greg, the use of video; is this something new that he just started doing?

**Greg Schneiders:** We've done it a couple of times before. Jerry and I have always urged it on him for major speeches, and he's been somewhat resistant to it in the past, though he did it for the inflation speech. I do not think he did it for the State of the Union this last time, but he's done it a couple times before, and I suspect because that Sunday night speech turned out as well as it did and was generally thought to be his best delivered speech since his -- since he became President, and I think he's probably inclined to practice a little bit more in the future.

**David Alsobrook:** Were there special projects or assignments that you had during the

time that you were with Mr. Rafshoon that gave you a sense of personal satisfaction or accomplishment?

**Greg Schneiders:** Well, this area we've been talking about, the speechwriting process, is one that I had been particularly interested in and concerned about before getting involved here, and that -- I think that we've improved that operation. I think the speeches have improved, and I feel good about that.

Our dealings with the press, where we attempt, usually on a background basis, to explain what the administration is trying to do and in a long-term sense and also very often explaining the events of any particular day or week around here, the press may be inclined to be critical or negative, and we are often able to at least get the administration side of it represented in a news story or an editorial comment or something like that, and that's been gratifying when it's been successful.

**David Alsobrook:** Could you tell me a little bit about the position you had before you came to this one?

**Greg Schneiders:** It was -- the title was director of special projects, and as is always true with that kind of a title, it was a fairly vague job description. For the last, oh, close to a year in which I was in that position, which all told, I guess, was a year-and-a-half, I was most deeply involved in a reorganization of emergency services in the government, and basically what we did was to take several independent units throughout the government which were involved in one way or another in emergency services, including civil defense and continuity of government and disaster response and that sort of thing, and pulled them all together, consolidated them into a single agency, which is now called the Federal Emergency Management Administration.

I was also during that time representing the President in emergency situations, such as floods and other natural disasters, the forest fires in California. Almost whenever there was a major natural disaster or emergency, I would go to the scene and represent the President and attempt to coordinate the federal effort. It was actually out of those experiences that I realized the need to -- for a more institutional approach to this coordination rather than what we were doing as on an ad hoc basis trying to get all these different agencies working together. So through the reorganization, we've institutionalized that and pulled them all into one agency.

**David Alsobrook:** Did any of these visits to disaster areas make a particular impression upon you? Are there any that would stand out in your mind now?

**Greg Schneiders:** I guess the first one that I went to is probably the one that left the most lasting impression, and that was Johnstown. It was also the worst situation I saw. I think there were -- I don't recall now. I think there were about 65 people killed in that flood, and the town, which had been twice before ravaged by flood, was again virtually wiped out for all commercial purposes for a considerable period of time.

And the major employer in the area, which is the Bethlehem Steel, shut down their plant for, I believe, about six months and had made an initial decision to shut down permanently, and we were able to negotiate with them and get them to reopen after six months, and I think they employed about a third of all the people in the area, so that was a gratifying experience.

**David Alsobrook:** In that case, did you come back and report directly to the President or was there --

**Greg Schneiders:** Yes. I spoke with him before I left to go to Johnstown, and then I talked with him again when I returned. He was very concerned in a personal way.

**David Alsobrook:** Is this normal reporting procedure, or was it just this particular disaster that --

**Greg Schneiders:** It kind of depended upon the nature and size of the disaster. When we had the California forest fires in the summer of '77, I guess, I went out there and reported directly to them and that, though sometimes relatively minor occurrences I would not -- I might give him a written report.

**David Alsobrook:** Greg, in addition to the disaster area, what other things would fall into the realm of special projects?

**Greg Schneiders:** Prior to my getting involved in that, and as I say, that became kind of an all-consuming activity; I had done some minor reorganization studies within the White House itself. When we first came, the President asked me to work on the correspondence unit, the way in which the mail to the President is handled, and I developed a proposal for reorganizing that and discussed it with the President, and we did make extensive changes in the system at that time.

I was responsible for the Medal of Freedom procedures for nominating people and making the awards and so on.

There were a variety of disparate activities that I got involved in. It was sort of a -- became kind of a catch-all department, and as I said, then after about six months on that job, I became increasingly involved in this emergency preparedness field and then the reorganization of it, and that's what I spent all my time on until till I came here.

**David Alsobrook:** Greg, during this period, for this cycle of reporting, were you officially working for Hamilton Jordan? Was this the way it worked, or were you just assigned directly to the President?

**Greg Schneiders:** Directly to the President because at that time, just about everybody was -- all the assistants and the special assistants and then various other people like myself, one level below special assistant, were reporting directly to the President. So for the purposes of coordination, I would always talk with Hamilton before getting involved

in any particular activity, but for reporting purposes, I would go to the President.

**David Alsobrook:** And speaking of the President, when did you first meet Jimmy Carter?

**Greg Schneiders:** In July of 1975. I was in Boston visiting relatives, and my brother, who had become interested in the then-fledgling Carter campaign had agreed to try and sell some tickets to a \$15-per-person fundraiser and was having -- I think he had 10 tickets or so that he was going to try and sell for him and was having trouble getting rid of them and offered two of them to me and my fiancée at the time.

And so we went and heard him speak and met Chip and then after the speech met then-Governor Carter. And I told him that I was from Washington and had been impressed with him and his speech and would be happy to help him in any way I thought I could in Washington on a volunteer basis, and he got me to get in touch with Peter Bourne, who at that time was really the only Carter representative in the area.

Peter and I together established the Washington office, and I did some part-time volunteer work for them up until November of '75, at which time Hamilton -- I guess actually in October, Hamilton came to Washington, and we talked, and he asked me if I would advance a trip that Carter was going to make in Upstate New York, a three-day trip, which I did, and then I traveled with him during those three days. And shortly after that, Hamilton called and said that Governor Carter wanted me to travel with him on a regular basis starting in January, so January 2, he and I went out to Iowa, and from that point on, I stayed with him virtually every day through the transition.

**David Alsobrook:** I was going to -- that really led me right to my next question. I was going to ask you about -- what you recall about certain times when you were with him. For example, after the Iowa primary, I guess, was completed, or after the campaign was over, I think you and the President were in New York. Is that the way it was --

**Greg Schneiders:** That's right.

**David Alsobrook:** -- when you received the word?

**Greg Schneiders:** That's right. We had planned to be in New York City the night that the Iowa caucuses were held because we anticipated that we were going to be successful there. And by being in New York, he was able to do all three network morning shows the next day. We stayed overnight at the home of Howard Samuels, who was a businessman in New York who had been a supporter of Carter's, and received the word on the Iowa caucuses, I guess, at, oh, about one o'clock in the morning. Tim Kraft, who had been the campaign coordinator in Iowa, called to give us the word.

**David Alsobrook:** Do you recall the president's reaction?

**Greg Schneiders:** He was very pleased. He had been asleep, and I woke him up when



Tim called, and he came to the phone and was very happy with the results, although I think he had anticipated that we would do well. We did at least as well as he had anticipated, even a little better.

**David Alsobrook:** Do you remember anything that he said on that occasion? I know it was a long time ago.

**Greg Schneiders:** He joked with Kraft. He said something like -- something about, "Now we won't have to send you to Alaska to coordinate that campaign." And other than that, it was a very brief conversation, and he just thanked Tim and the other people who were there and expressed his pleasure at the results and went back to bed.

**David Alsobrook:** Now, you also were with him when he received bad news, too, though, weren't you? Can you remember any of those occasions?

**Greg Schneiders:** Yeah, about a week later, I guess -- I don't remember the dates now, but the Mississippi caucuses were held, and we were campaigning in Maine, and I went to the phone while he was doing a radio interview and called our people in Mississippi, and they said that things were going very badly; he was going to lose rather seriously to Wallace. And when he finished his interview, we had to -- we walked from the radio station to, I believe, a church, where he was going to speak to some people, and as we were walking along, I gave him the news about Mississippi, and he was very concerned, very upset, and I tried to minimize it and try and put the best light on it, and he just said, "Well, I never hate to" -- he said, "I always hate to lose." And --

**David Alsobrook:** Was that usually the way he handled those bad situations during the campaign? Can you remember any others that stick out in your mind?

**Greg Schneiders:** The night of the Massachusetts primary, we were down in Florida campaigning, and I remember we had kind of set up shop in a restaurant at the top of this hotel we were staying in. The restaurant, I guess, either had not yet been opened or was closed for repairs, but it was -- there was wood and chairs and tables all over the place, and we were up there with the -- with representatives of the three networks who were setting up in order to do interviews with Carter after the results of Massachusetts came in. And, again, we came in fourth, I believe, in Massachusetts in something like 13% of the vote.

And his son Jack was there, and Jack was -- as the bad news kept coming in and we were getting phone calls regularly, and it just was not getting any better, and Jack, again, tried to put it in a good light and said, "Well, you know, we never really concentrated much on Massachusetts, and we never did really expect to do that well there," and the President was not allowing himself to be consoled by any of that. And I said if we got 13%, we must be doing reasonably well in the cities because that's where we expected our strength to be. He said, "When you get 13%, you're not doing well anywhere."

**David Alsobrook:** That was the President's reaction to it?

**Greg Schneiders:** Yes.

**David Alsobrook:** Now, during the '76 campaign, did you do any work in preparing him for debates with Ford?

**Greg Schneiders:** Yes. I worked with Jody and Jerry and Hamilton and Bob Squire, who was an outside consultant that we brought in before the debate, in trying to prepare him. He did not practice before the first debate, and there was some discussion as to whether he should or not.

We got films of the Kennedy/Nixon debates in 1960, and we showed those films at his house one night. I remember it just so happened that Robert Redford was down in Plains to see him and talk about environmental issues, and he happened to be at the house that night, and so we invited -- well, he had myself and Jody and I think Jerry Rafshoon, and then he invited Billy and Miss Lillian and some of the family members, and we all sat around and watched the Kennedy/Nixon debates.

And as I say, there was some discussion as to whether or not he should practice either with videotape or at least go through a session where we would ask him questions and he would respond as he would in a debate situation, and he didn't want to do that. He's always been very resistant to the notion of practicing, and I think, frankly, almost a little embarrassed at the idea of playacting through a situation like that.

He did poorly in the first debate, and he recognized that. Particularly for the first 15 minutes or so, he was very -- he was nervous, and he was quite stiff, and he was not responding well, and I think that though there was some positive feeling among the staff shortly -- immediately after the debate, it became clear that he had lost that debate.

So for the second, we did practice, and I believe the second was in -- was held in San Francisco, and we stayed at -- or we didn't stay -- we spent the afternoon at the home of, I think, Shorenstein, was a supporter and contributor to the campaign, Walter Shorenstein. And he spent most of that -- it was a nice day and his beautiful home, looked right over the Bay and the Golden Gate Bridge, and he spent most of the afternoon out in the backyard. He had a little tape recorder, and he would speak into the tape and imagine questions that would be put to him and speak into it.

**David Alsobrook:** Okay, so he's in the backyard?

**Greg Schneiders:** Yeah, and no one else was there that day except for myself, and he would just sit down in one of the chairs that were out there and speak into the tape recorder for a while, then get up and wander about. And I remember he came back to a bench and lay down for a while and continued speaking. Then he'd listen and play it back and listen to his responses and try and make improvements and so on.

But that night before the debate, he did allow us to fire some questions at him, and we

kind of warmed him up just before he went out so that for about the last 15 or 20 minutes before he went out to debate with President Ford, we were asking him questions.

So he had the feeling that in the first debate because he had really secluded himself -- he went to his room, we talked during the day, and several advisors talked about issues, but then for the last, oh, several hours before the debate, he was off by himself, and he had dinner with Rosalynn, and then he went over to the debate. And he had the feeling afterwards that he had just gone in kind of cold, that after all of that time alone or with just Rosalynn to suddenly be in that highly combative situation that it was hard for him to get warmed up.

So the idea in the second debate and the third was that the last 15 or 20 minutes before he went out, he would be answering questions and kind of hit the ground running when the debate started.

The third debate we handled approximately the same way, although we had discovered a little bit of a backlash after the second debate, though that was -- the second debate centered on foreign policy and defense issues, and it was where Ford made the comment about the Poles being free. And we were generally euphoric afterwards, feeling that Carter had done very, very well. He was the mirror opposite of what he had been in the first debate. He was very kind of feisty and tough and combative, far less deferential to Ford. And, again, it was universally felt, or almost universally felt, among the news media and public that Carter had won that second debate.

And, yet, when we later did polls, we found that he hadn't enhanced his standing in the polls at all. As a matter of fact, we were continuing to slip a little bit in the polls, and particularly, he had a problem among women. We found that throughout the campaign, women were not responding positively to him. And one of the analyses that was made of the second debate and that reaction is that he had perhaps been too hard on Ford, that he was seen as being a little too macho, too tough, too aggressive and feisty, and so on.

And it was decided that in the third debate, he ought to -- you know, without going back to the problems of the first debate and being too deferential, but that you have to tone that down. And in the meantime, there had been the *Playboy* interview, and he was asked about that and kind of looked down and looked very reflective and said -- in one way or another admitted that perhaps it had been an error of judgment and, in general, acted in a more softer, more gentle way than he had in the second debate. And then I think that was an effective strategy. I think the polls afterwards showed that though it was not the kind of clear-cut decisive victory that we felt the second debate had been, in fact, he left a better impression with the audience. Well, that's --

**David Alsobrook:** You answered about two other questions I had with that. Were there other -- you mentioned the *Playboy* interview. Were there other problem areas that arose during the course of the campaign that really kind of bothered all of you as you worked for --?

**Greg Schneiders:** Definitely, purity was our first big crisis. We had -- early on in the campaign -- there were no public crises because nobody was paying any attention to him. So and even when he would say something that would later on have been a major crisis, it didn't much matter because it didn't get covered, and the only people who even knew about it would be a handful of people in the room at the time he said it or did it.

Of course, after Iowa, he got quite a bit of attention, and then after New Hampshire, even more. And we had a minor crisis, I guess, in Iowa on the abortion issue. Evan Sinovak did a column saying that Carter was waffling on that issue and trying to have it both ways and so on, and that, by the way, as you know, was a charge that was to stick with him and become a major problem throughout the campaign and even into the presidency.

But the first crisis of monumental proportions was the ethnic purity statement during the Pennsylvania primary campaign, and it had actually taken place in an interview that he did on an airplane talking to a reporter for the *New York Daily News*, and the reporter had not found the use of the term *ethnic purity* particularly significant. In fact, it was buried in, I think, the 13th paragraph of the story, you know. It was on the jump page and so on.

But Ed Bradley, I believe, noticed it and asked him about it at a press conference. I don't recall right now where the press conference -- oh, it was in South Bend, Indiana -- asked him about it, and the President not only defended his use of the term but elaborated on it and wanted to know the story of that.

We were very disturbed by it. Jody Powell was not on that trip, but Betty Rainwater, who was his assistant at the time, was there, and she and I talked to many of the members of the press corps after the press conference, and that's all they wanted to talk about, and they were convinced that this was going to be a major issue, that this was a hidden racial statement, and so we went and talked to him about it and suggested that he clarify it and kind of back off of our position a little bit, and he felt strongly that he should not because it was correct. He was talking about trying to maintain the integrity of neighborhoods. It was not a racial comment that he was making, and so he stuck with that position, as you know. He stuck with it for several days, and that's all the press would talk about and all they'd write about.

And, finally, in Pittsburgh, he held a press conference and admitted that perhaps he had been misunderstood and that perhaps he had chosen his words poorly and went on to elaborate on what he did mean and to disavow any of the racial connotations that had been suggested because of the ethnic purity thing, and so -- and, of course, then Daddy King embraced him publicly and I heard him several times after that and actually not too long ago -- I forget what the occasion was -- but refer to the fact that Daddy King had saved him -- you know, had come to his aid at a very critical time.

I know very few other people were coming to his aid at that time. One, by the way, was Mayor Coleman Young from New York and Detroit. He -- black leaders throughout the country were attacking him, and even Andy Young wobbled a little bit there. Maynard Jackson, who had been a friend of his, refused to help out, but he called Coleman Young

and Mayor Young said, "I know exactly what you're talking about, and I agree with you. We shouldn't be breaking up these neighborhoods. Don't let these people get you to take back what you said about the neighborhood. Maybe you ought to use different words or something, but you're right." And he supported him publicly.

**David Alsbrook:** Was that one of the toughest times during the campaign for you?

**Greg Schneiders:** Well, it was very tough for me and Jody and Betty Rainwater, and Charlie Kirbo got involved and Rosalynn got involved, and it was tough for anybody who was trying to convince him to change because he's a very strong-willed, strong-minded person, and he was convinced that he was right on that. And we began to sound like a broken record on the subject, and I remember at one point going to Jody and saying, "I don't know if we can go back to him again and bring this issue up. He's going to really explode." But we did, and it was one of the few times when -- during the campaign when I think his own instincts failed him a little bit.

For the most part, he was -- his instincts were usually better than those of all the people around him, and he had a very good sense, political judgment, you know, what to do, what to say, when and where. But on that occasion, it was very difficult, I think, for the people around him because he didn't want to be talked out of it.

*Follow-up Interview with Greg Schneiders, Deputy Assistant to the President for Communications, August 8, 1979 in Room 175 of the Old Executive Office Building, approximately 10 o'clock a.m. The interviewer is David Alsbrook of the Presidential Papers staff.*

**David Alsbrook:** Greg, I know you just returned from Baltimore with the President. There are a couple questions I want to ask you about that trip.

One, first of all, how would you compare traveling with the President now with traveling with him back during the campaign or maybe even back in New York when you traveled with him for the first time?

**Greg Schneiders:** Probably the -- well, first of all, I think there are probably several critical points during the campaign and the administration where big changes have taken place in the nature of his travel. Probably the first one happened before -- after I had met him but before I started traveling with him. That's when he got secret service protection because it went from being Jimmy Carter and Jody Powell on a commercial flight by themselves, getting off and hoping to arrange their own transportation with local people or something or maybe even grabbing a cab to get around to having all of the support that goes with secret service protection.

They still flew commercially much of the time, as did Lee when I began. But you then had at least half a dozen agents on the detail with you and when you arrived in a city, there would be a limousine -- secret service limousine waiting there for you and follow-up car and so on, and you had very often some sort of support from the local police,

arrangement of secret service. So that was the first big increase in the size of the entourage and the kind of support that was available to him.

The next big increase, I would say, came after Iowa, the Iowa caucuses on January 19, I guess, in '76, and because he had done better than expected there, a larger number of press people signed on. I think there were probably 15 or so reporters following him the next day in New Hampshire. After he won the New Hampshire primary, there was another large increase, and then I guess after Florida was when we really first started chartering a plane full-time.

So he had this growing number of people, both press and staff and secret service, traveling with him. By the time of the convention, when it was clear that he was going to be the nominee, things were, of course, radically different than they had been in the very early days.

With the exception of myself and Jody Powell, for the most part, it was difficult for, I think, anybody else, even on the staff, to get close to him on a regular basis because there was so much secret service and press and staff crowded around that he tended to turn to just a couple people for stability, I think. You know, half the time, it would be some new staff person claiming that he didn't know, and they were constantly running up and trying to give suggestions or talk with him. It was very disorienting to him, I think. So there is, I guess, a kind of insulation that does take place, and it's pretty much unavoidable.

**David Alsbrook:** When you first started traveling with him, was it just you and Jody?

**Greg Schneiders:** Yeah, when I first started traveling with him, on the very first trip out to Iowa, it was just Carter and myself, and subsequently, it would sometimes be Jody and me and Carter; other times, just Carter and myself.

And as I say, it gradually increased as the -- you know, most of the staff that is added on as you go through a presidential campaign like that is not to support the president or the candidate but to support the press, you know, and the press often writes about the large entourage of staff following behind the candidate. If you broke that down, probably 80% of those people are there to make sure that the press baggage gets where it's supposed to go and that they have their accommodations, and they're very demanding and can be very difficult to deal with when things don't go right for them.

The only people that are added on really to support a candidate, at least in the case of our campaign besides Jody and myself, were a speechwriter and eventually I think by the end of the campaign, we had two speechwriters on board and an issues person who would prepare material for him on the road and then some secretarial help. And, yet, I would say that in the campaign we probably had 25 to 30 staff people traveling all the time and most of the rest of them involved in supporting the press operation and making arrangements-- logistical arrangements with the airplanes and transportation, and so on.

Of course, after the convention, it was just a completely different ballgame. We had

arranged for a regular charter airplane, as a matter of fact, two, the one that would carry the candidate, and most of the reporters had been specially reconfigured at what turned out to be astronomical costs to provide a separate cabin for him and a couple staff people.

And then the second plane carried all the camera crews and the rest of the reporters and so on. Again, throughout that process, it was just becoming increasingly difficult to have ready access, not so much for me and Jody, just for the nature of our positions, but for anybody else around him and for the people that he was campaigning among, for that matter.

There was a time if he and Jody went out to Iowa, even before I got involved, that they could obviously walk up to anybody in the street and say hello and shake hands and carry on a conversation, and that was no longer possible. If you were walking down a street in New York or something during the general election campaign and ever saw this entourage, this massive people and equipment moving towards you, and there's -- this would be very difficult to even find the candidate among all of that. And if you did, it was impossible to carry on anything like a spontaneous conversation.

I remember when we went to Grand Central Station to take a train ride through New Jersey and Ohio -- or New Jersey and Pennsylvania and Ohio, and they had those long escalators leading down to the platforms, and so many people, the press and others, started to jam onto these escalators that they not only broke the escalator but they started -- they actually were knocking people down who were then tumbling down the other -- it really almost turned into a disaster. And that was the problem you had wherever you went, so it changes the nature of the process itself, in particular, for somebody like Carter who depended very much upon that one-on-one contact with people.

On the other side of it, from the candidate's point of view, is that this -- that you couldn't live without it because it's only by that -- by the magnification of the process that the press allows for that you're ever able to really reach enough people to win an election.

Traveling with him since he's been in the White House is, once again, a completely different experience. It's different for me because I'm in a different role and not functioning as a personal aide, but again, it's perhaps more insulating. They have Air Force One and only a small number of press people way in the back of the plane who never have access to him, or almost never do. You have many, many more staff people. And, again, you have the cabin in which he sits that is generally fairly isolated.

Things are much better planned, as you would expect, with that much support, much less spontaneous in the sense of we had to be spontaneous very often during the campaign. Just because of poor planning, you'd get somewhere and supposed to be greeting people at a factory gate, and it'd turn out that the factory was closed that day. That happened to us in Scranton, Pennsylvania. And so you go off and do a different event. Well, that sort of thing never happens now.

There's the so-called imperial presidency or elements and aspects of it are unavoidable,

and perhaps in many ways they're desirable. I think we may have erred too far early in the campaign in trying to move away from that because the trappings of the presidency do not belong to any incumbent of the office essentially.

They belong, I think, belong to the American people, and it's something that we like. We don't want them abused, and some people feel they were in previous administrations, but we don't want to discard it, either, you know, any more than we would want -- if Jerry Brown were to be elected president, we wouldn't want him to sell off the White House and move into an apartment in Dupont Circle, you know, on the grounds that he doesn't want to live here.

And so I think we've moved back a little bit towards the use of the trappings of the presidency, and I think that that's probably a good thing. Totally apart from whatever political implications it has, I think it's a good thing for the people.

**David Alsobrook:** You know, Greg, you were talking a little bit about how your role has changed obviously in this job from the way it was during the campaign --

**Greg Schneiders:** Yeah.

**David Alsobrook:** -- when you were his personal aide. Could you tell me a little bit about, for example, what was your role yesterday in advance work or whatever?

**Greg Schneiders:** Well, I joked with some of the press people up there about my role yesterday and said I was there in my capacity as a lame duck, and what I did yesterday is the sort of thing that I often did.

First of all, I did not travel with the President up there. I drove up with two reporters, one from the *Boston Globe* and one from *Newsweek*. So in a 45-minute drive up there, there's a lot of opportunity to talk, most of it off the record, but about what's going on and explaining, giving some rationale for some of the things we're doing.

While I was there, I spent a great deal of time with -- most of my time with the reporters there, probably an hour with -- or 45 minutes, I guess, with Rick Smith from *The New York Times* and quite a bit of time with David Broder and some time with Phil Galey from *The Star* talking about a variety of things, everything from that particular trip and why he was doing it, was he going to do a lot more of this type of travel, what did we think that we got out of it, what did we think was the purpose in it. And in the case of Rick Smith, he was doing a long piece for Sunday's paper about what we feel has to be done between now and the early primaries for Jimmy Carter to, as he says, turn it around.

So that has often been one of my functions, particularly if Jerry travels. My role changes depending upon whether or not Jerry goes. When he is on a trip, I will usually travel on the press plane and spend the entire time being available to visit the press, sometimes to talk for a specific story they have in mind, to do an interview, answer questions other times, just to have a normal off-the-record conversation with them that may or may not



pertain to anything that Carter is involved in.

When Jerry does not travel, then I fill in his capacity, which is to travel on Air Force One and make sure that the speeches are in line and ready and make sure that if there's anything that the President feels at the last minute that he needs or would like to see done differently in the way that a regional press conference is set up or what kind of press coverage is allowed and that sort of thing, to work with Jody or whoever is representing the press office on the amount of access the press will have and that sort of thing.

So in other words, it changes from being a support role for the President, which is what Jerry does and what I do when I fill in for Jerry, to being more supportive of the press corps, which is what I do when Jerry is there, and I'm -- I also travel.

**David Alsobrook:** Greg, along the same line, can you tell me anything about your role during the Camp David meetings, the most recent ones?

**Greg Schneiders:** Minimal. You know, the nature of those meetings was such that they were trying to keep everything contained at Camp David, and I think there was a conscious decision made, and frankly, it's about the first time that I've been here that I'm aware of this except to a much lesser extent than during the China normalization decision, to involve the senior staff and stop it at that level and not even let information flow to deputies or that. So, I talked to Jerry every day on the phone, and I had a general sense of what was going on, but -- and I gave him a couple memos that may or may not have gone forward or been included in whatever he -- whatever advice he gave to the President, but my role was much less in that than it is in the normal day-to-day work-related.

**David Alsobrook:** Okay, I want to move back into the past a little bit. You know, in our first interview, you mentioned the famous *Playboy* interview. What are your recollections of that episode and its impact on Jimmy Carter's candidacy in 1976?

**Greg Schneiders:** It first came about -- the first person to suggest, as far as I know, to suggest the President do the *Playboy* interview was Pat Anderson, who was then at the time a speechwriter. And Pat had recently joined the campaign. He had been a freelance writer. He had done a piece on the president in *The New York Times* magazine section which was quite favorable, and shortly after that, he was brought on as the main speechwriter. He knew Scherer.

**David Alsobrook:** Okay.

**Greg Schneiders:** Robert Scheer is the principal author of the interview, and Scheer is kind of a radical journalist, a self-professed socialist from California, but Anderson said he was a good, responsible reporter. He convinced Jody that it would be a good thing to do and that *Playboy* would reach a large number of people who did not know Jimmy Carter, young people and liberal people, and so -- and that it would be a good forum for Carter.

And Carter's main objection to it -- I don't remember, frankly, his ever raising any question about the propriety of doing an interview with *Playboy*, but he resented the amount of time that they were looking for him and for them to do one of these interviews, they take an enormous amount of time. We were parceling out 15 minutes and half-hour interviews to reporters, and they were talking about needing 12 hours spread out over a period of time, and so he was resistant to that. I think we finally cut it down, but he agreed to do it.

And no one that I know of prior to the interview raised a serious objection to it, as often happens in these cases after -- you know, with hindsight, a lot of people remember their role differently and remember being opposed to it, but I don't remember anybody objecting, and so he did the interview, and the last session was done in Plains at his home, and a lot of that is just a matter of record. Carter has talked about it himself.

But, in fact, as best as I can reconstruct, what happened is that Scheer and the other guy who was with him, named something like Goldsmith, shut off the tape recorder and signaled, at least as far as Carter was concerned, that the interview was over, and they continued to chat a little bit and walked to the door, and that's when he said several of the things that were most objectionable. Scheer says he consciously and very obviously turned his recorder back on and that, in fact, nobody had ever said, "That's the end of the interview," or "We're now off the record," or anything like that. So that's the area that I guess is in dispute, and --

**David Alsobrook:** I was going to ask you who was there with --

**Greg Schneiders:** Rex Granum was the only person with him at the time, as far as I know.

**David Alsobrook:** What aspect of the interview seemed to be the most damaging initially as the story --?

**Greg Schneiders:** Well, I mean the first thing, we were on that same train trip that I mentioned before when the story broke, not because the interview was published but by *Playboy*, and in this regard, I think some blame can clearly be placed with *Playboy*. They did this often. They wanted to promote the interview, so they took several of the quotes largely out of context, you know, the most famous one being, "the lust in the heart," and put them out. And as a result, the wires picked it up and newspapers picked them up. And that's what we were saying when we were on the train that that was the most -- the whole notion of "lust in the heart" was what seemed at first to be the most damaging aspect for a general and a specific reason.

The specific reason was that a very important part of Jimmy Carter's political constituency was in the South and was Baptist, and it was predictable that there was going to be some negative reaction there.

The more general reason is just the whole notion of somebody talking about "lust in their heart," they figured was not going to go over very well with anybody," Southern Baptists or libertine, you know. So then that got into the broader problem of the whole idea of a candidate doing a *Playboy* interview, and of course, we pointed to all of the people -- religious figures, politicians, others -- who had done *Playboy* interviews, but that still didn't seem to help much.

**David Alsobrook:** And Jerry Brown had already done an interview at this point?

**Greg Schneiders:** That's right.

**David Alsobrook:** Okay.

**Greg Schneiders:** I think that in the broadest sense, the most significant problem was that Jimmy Carter was having difficulty overcoming a sense that he was different, that people didn't really know who he was or what made him tick. Some of the documents in the Ford campaign that have since become public -- strategy, memos that they developed -- I think very perceptively keyed in on that and say one of Jimmy Carter's biggest weakness is that people think he's strange and let's exploit that, and this interview contributed to it, not only the fact that he was talking about it but the fact that he was doing an interview with *Playboy* in the first place and then talking about those subjects that people generally think of as very private but in a kind of a strange way, you know, lust in the heart, shacking up, and that kind of thing.

So I think that contributed to a concern that people had that they didn't really know who this guy was and did they really want him to be president.

Then there were other things in the interview, such as the references to Lyndon Johnson that caused very serious and very specific political problems in certain areas like Texas.

**David Alsobrook:** Could you tell me what was your -- the thinking of his advisors on how to deal with these specific problems, the comments about Lyndon Johnson?

**Greg Schneiders:** That's one of the most difficult parts of the campaign for me to talk about candidly because it was a point on which he and I disagreed, he and Jody disagreed. I'll describe it in a general way.

When he arrived in, I guess it was Houston, got off the plane, he spoke to a group of people at the airport and made specific reference to the comments that he had made in the *Playboy* interview and attempted to put those comments in perspective, and some would say to put them in the best possible light, and others would say and did say to distort what it was that he actually said. And in the latter or last category, those who believed that it was an attempt to distort unfortunately followed the entire traveling press corps.

And then we got -- we did a couple of events there, we got back on the plane, we headed to San Diego, and Jody and I, as was our habit, went to the back of the plane and spent

some time talking to reporters, and it was the best way to get a sense of what they were thinking and likely to write and so on, and it was overwhelming. I mean everybody there said, "This is a problem with Jimmy Carter," and they went back to the abortion issue in Iowa and they went back to ethnic purity, and they said he tries to have things both ways, he tries to shade issues, he tries to -- the explanations that he gives for things that he has done or said while -- if analyzed in an exact sense word by word may not be, strictly speaking, at variance with the truth. They convey a completely false impression. And that was what they were all thinking, and one way or another, that's what most of them were writing.

So we went forward just near the end of that trip as we were coming into San Diego and talked with Carter about it and told him that we had a serious problem with the comments in Houston. We agreed to kind of leave it and Jody and I would try and work with the reporters on it but not -- we wouldn't do anything more than that.

When we got to San Diego and checked into the hotel and after Jody and I had spent some more time with reporters, we then agreed to go to his room and talk to him about it. It seemed a more serious problem even than we had realized, and we suggested that he get together with a group of them that we would assemble in an off-the-record situation and talk about -- let them tell him directly what they had been telling us. And we told him fairly bluntly without making -- without trying to make a value judgment ourselves simply that this sort of thing that he did in Houston, trying to explain what he had said before, sometimes did a lot more harm than good because of the reaction of the press.

So we had this session. It was one of the stranger things during the campaign. We got a group of people, most of them news magazines and some of the dailies, together in Jody's hotel room, and we had some beer, and Carter came in and sat down. We explained it was off the record, and Carter said by way of introduction something like, "Perhaps you can help me understand what some of these problems are," and so on. Well, that made many of the people in the room very uneasy. They didn't like the idea of being asked to help a candidate with anything, and they didn't like the idea of a selective group and it being off the record.

It is, and I guess always will be, a problem with campaigns that the press corps could perhaps cover a candidate better and do a greater service to their readers and the public, in general, if, in fact, they would allow themselves to have some kind of relationship other than this quasi-adversary relationship with the candidate without forfeiting their objectivity or without being co-opted. But, in fact, they seldom will. I mean it's a very ill defined and difficult relationship that exists between the press corps and the candidate.

On the one hand, all of them kind of want to be his friend. I mean they are voyeurs, in a sense, in the whole process, and they like the idea of rubbing shoulders with people who are really in there involved in the arena, so to speak. But at the same time, they have this professional objectivity that they want to maintain, and so they're constantly ambivalent about it.

But in this particular case, I think they felt that line was being blurred, and it kind of backfired, and it was off the record, but the people went out and talked about it, and then it was written about, not by people who were there but by people who had heard about it from others who were there and then it looked like Carter attempting to manipulate the press.

**David Alsobrook:** Did that particular meeting tend to greatly influence the way the Carter campaign dealt with the press the rest of the time?

**Greg Schneiders:** Oh, I can't think of anything specifically that changed as a result of that. Things were changing very rapidly anyways, and there was an increasing level of tension that existed, which I guess is probably a natural thing.

**David Alsobrook:** You know, a lot of people have described Carter as a man with a great deal of perseverance, tenacity, stamina, whatever you'd like to call it. Could you tell me anything, Greg, that you remember personally from the campaign that would demonstrate that?

**Greg Schneiders:** Offhand, I can't think of any anecdotes or any examples. Well, maybe another -- I could think of thousands of them in a sense. I mean every day. He was very steady. I managed somehow to gain 30 pounds during the campaign, as did many of the people. Maybe not 30 pounds, but a lot of the people tended to put on weight. You'd eat too much. You'd get no exercise. At the end of the day, you'd go to the bar and have a drink with the staff or the reporters or something and, again, a campaign just tends to wreck people's lives for -- and actually broke up a few marriages in the process.

But in that whole process, there was only one person who kept a regimen and a schedule and a discipline that did not allow any of that to happen. He never -- I mean he was 151 pounds when he went into the campaign, 151 pounds when he came out, and he used to kid me about the fact that I was gaining weight and he was not and would be the first one up in the morning and at the end of the day would go right to his hotel room and did not drink at all, with the exception of occasionally when Rosalynn would meet him somewhere and they would have a dinner together and have a bottle of wine or something.

But he was -- he recognized, I guess, the need to do that if he was going to make it through the campaign, but also, he is about the most self-disciplined person I've ever known. And that self-discipline applies not just to his actions and his habits but also to his mentality. He's got this extraordinarily steady equanimity through everything, and I think, in part, because he's been through a lot and he's been up higher than most people ever have, certainly now, and he's been probably down lower than most people ever have, after he lost the governor's race the first time.

And he seems to have trained himself and trained his emotions, and I think a large part of it is probably in one way or another related to his religious beliefs, but he's very steady.

He doesn't allow his mood to fluctuate a great deal.

And he also has been vindicated so often. When he first lost the senate -- state senate seat then came back through a lawsuit to regain it, you know, when he lost the governor's race but then came back and won it even though people were -- had been ridiculing him and saying, "Jimmy who?" and saying he had no chance. When we entered the presidential race and people laughed at him and so on, and then he came back.

So at a time like this when he was very low on the polls and people are saying you've got to count him out, and he can't come back and so on, a large part of the equanimity comes, I think, from all those times in the past when he's been there, and he and maybe a very few people around him have been the only ones who have been right, and everybody else has been wrong, particularly the press corps, has been wrong.

And we once suggested to him in a memo the fact that he had been vindicated so often was potentially a very dangerous thing because it could lead you into persisting in things perhaps you were wrong about in the belief that, "Well, everybody's been against me before, and it turned out that I've been right," and so when you lose that kind of objective test of your behavior, then what do you depend on? I mean if you depend entirely upon your instincts, that may serve you well 98% of the time, but the other 2% of the time could prove very dangerous if you happened to be president.

So it's an interesting problem, but anyway, it's one of the things that enables him at a time like this to feel a calm and a confidence and an equanimity that seemed probably unbelievable to a lot of people watching. They feel that he must be going through hell with all the criticism and the ridicule and the cartoonists and political pundits and so on, and I suspect he's not.

**David Alsobrook:** This is really tied in with another question that I wanted to ask you, and that is much has been written over the past month about the so-called "new Jimmy Carter," you know, what the press says has arisen from Camp David. Could you give me your thoughts about the accuracy of the press coverage of this and your own personal observations of "the new Jimmy Carter" if there is one?

**Greg Schneiders:** It's kind of difficult just because it's hard when the press contrives a label like "the new Jimmy Carter," and I don't mean to say that there's nothing to that, but it's hard to say precisely what it is they're talking about.

Certainly, the speech he gave on television a couple Sundays back was more forcefully delivered than probably any other that he's given certainly during this presidency, and it was more forcefully written. So, literally, people think a lot of it -- think it was all just the stronger voice and the hand gestures and so on, but in fact, the writing of the speech itself was different, you know, "Not one more drop of oil, we'll never exceed the 1977 limits, never," you know. That kind of rhetoric is tougher, stronger rhetoric than he usually uses.

And some of the mannerisms, some of the style that carried over not just in that speech but into the trip the next day in Detroit and Kansas City, these things are differences of style that are at least a part of what the press is referring to as "the new Jimmy Carter."

One way of looking at that is it is a throwback to -- more to the way he was in Georgia, and I think there's some validity to that, the firing of people, cleaning out of the cabinet, a much tougher, more disciplined approach towards his staff are things that he talked about doing during the campaign, and though I didn't know him when he was governor of Georgia, things that I understand that he did when he was governor of Georgia.

And I remember shortly after we got here, six months or so into the administration, when he was being criticized for being too weak a leader, which is something that has stuck with him to this day. Several of the people who had been with him in Georgia said that was the last problem that they ever expected to have with Jimmy Carter, that people disagreed with him in Georgia and some people hated him, but people didn't think he was weak.

So I think, in fact, there is some validity to this idea that the new Jimmy Carter is a bit of a throwback to the old Jimmy Carter, and then the question becomes why the change in between, and I think, in part, it's due to his own conception of the presidency. I think that he believed that when he came, particularly on the heels of Watergate and Vietnam, which he talked a great deal about, and what was sometimes at least considered to be very cynical politics of Lyndon Johnson and Richard Nixon and so on, that as president, one thing that he was going to do was to set an example of behavior for the whole country to -- you know, a standard, an ideal that people could look up to and that this was not going to be -- the hallmark of this idea was not going to be a kind of tough wheeling/dealing acrimonious type of behavior but was going to be an emphasis on working together and compatibility and congruity and harmony and all of the more positive and, I guess you'd have to say, softer virtues.

And I think in his attempt to create that standard and that ideal that he perhaps went too far and, in fact, became during that period a type of person that was relatively new to many of the people who had watched him in Georgia and that was perhaps too nice to be entirely effective as president.

You know, the problem is that you can't -- you know, you can set that kind of ideal as a pastor in a local parish, but to be president, occasionally you have to do things that you would rather not. You wish you didn't have to. You wish nobody would ever have to do them, but you've got to fire some people.

**David Alsobrook:** Greg, back during the campaign, exactly what kind of input did you and others have in setting up a criteria for selecting a vice president? Could you tell me a little background about that?

**Greg Schneiders:** I gave the President a memo in April, I guess. I think it may have been just after the Pennsylvania primary, which I saw as the most critical point in the

campaign.

I thought when he won the Pennsylvania primary against concerted opposition, the "Stop Carter" movement that had kind of rallied around Scoop Jackson and it was a strong labor state and it was supposed to be a strongly organized political state and the state party chairman was working secretly for Jackson, and we had all the forces that had previously been against us but not aligned, suddenly pulled together in Pennsylvania, and when he won there, I thought that that pretty much did it. Things became more difficult afterwards than I had anticipated, but in fact, I think it was pretty much won at that point.

So I suggested to him then that we had to start thinking seriously about the process of selecting a vice president, and though I don't remember the exact points of the memo, one was that this would be the first major presidential-type decision that he would make and that people would be interested not only in who he selected but very much interested in how he went about it as an early indicator of how he would make decisions as president and that it ought to be an extremely orderly, carefully thought-out methodical process.

It shouldn't be one of these deals that's made at the convention when he runs to somebody's room and asks him to be vice president. Because we had the time to plan that we ought to get, I suggested, kind of a blue ribbon commission to make suggestions and to be sure that these people would make broad enough suggestions and enough that it would not inhibit his choice and that he'd have a large number of people and also to make it clear that he wouldn't be bound by their recommendations, but -- and Hamilton also made some suggestions along those lines, and we ended up with essentially that formula - - getting a lot of input, studying very carefully, getting -- talking to a lot of different people about recommendations.

And then, finally, the president said when I gave him my memo that it was -- that he agreed with it but it was too early, and I think that was probably right. It would have looked somewhat presumptuous for a guy who still had a bunch of primaries to go through to be picking his vice president.

But eventually, we -- the staff and friends and outsiders and so on were asked to contribute names and make suggestions and so on. Then he went through this long interviewing process with however many it was, five, I think, people that he narrowed it down to.

At one point, he -- having trouble remembering who the first one was. I was going to say Jackson. I'm not sure that -- I think at one point he first thought that he wanted Jackson and then went to [Glenn] and then -- I believe that's the order -- Muskie and then Mondale. All that, by the way, has been in several of these books about the campaign.

But at any rate, Hamilton was pushing Mondale, and Jerry Rafshoon was pushing Mondale. Jody I don't recall having a strong opinion on it. Pat Caddell wanted Muskie, and I recommended Muskie.



**David Alsobrook:** Did Rosalynn have a recommendation that you knew of?

**Greg Schneiders:** Not that I know of. If she did, it was very well just told to him privately.

**David Alsobrook:** You know, from talking with staff and possibly with Jimmy Carter, did you grasp that he had elaborate plans for his vice president that other presidents before him hadn't?

**Greg Schneiders:** Absolutely. He had from the very beginning, and I think has to this day, believed that a major contribution to his presidency could be a demonstration that vice presidents don't have to be spare tires or window dressing or whatever. He believed very -- he did, in fact, establish very early a good relationship with Mondale, whom he had not known before. He liked him a lot, I think felt compatible with him despite the fact that ideologically, I think they're somewhat apart, Carter who's been somewhat more conservative than Mondale.

And he also -- at the convention when we were going from the Americana Hotel, which was our headquarters, to some event -- I forget where -- we talked in the car about this problem that has occurred in almost every case in the past where the staff of the president or presidential candidate competes with the vice president, and communications tend to get cut off. The vice president's off campaigning or the vice presidential candidate is off campaigning. The presidential candidate is off campaigning, and they kind of read about each other and what they're saying about each other in the newspaper and then pick up things that are said anonymously or off the record or whatever by various staff people, and a certain tension seeps in.

And he said that he wanted me to be the contact between him and Mondale, that they wouldn't always necessarily be able to get each other on the phone, but -- and he told Mondale this in the suite at the Americana that whenever he had a problem or read something that he was unhappy with or had some question about that if he couldn't get him on the phone, Carter on the phone, he should call me and that I would always either be able to arrange for the two of them to talk or be able to deal with the problem.

And that system worked fairly well, but most importantly, I guess that he recognized that -- and made a very strong commitment -- that he and Mondale were not going to be separated by the staffs. They weren't going to allow this tension and competition to enter the relationship and so on. I think as far as I can tell, it's a commitment that he continues to this day. There's an awful lot of material that comes out of his out box as, "See Fritz, talk to Fritz, get Fritz's ideas on this," I'm sure to a degree that is unprecedented in the history of the presidency.

**David Alsobrook:** You know, you mentioned in our first session, Greg, the role that this office has in regard to speechwriters. Could you tell me something about what your connection was with the speechwriting process during the campaign?

**Greg Schneiders:** Well, that process was very different than what it is now. I mean we started off with no speechwriters, and Carter kind of had a thing that he had worked up early on in the campaign, I would guess, although I never asked him about it, that it was primarily with Jody that he developed it. And he had it all memorized, having done it 1,000 times, and that's what we'd, and I'd make suggestions about things that I thought could be added or deleted or --

Okay. So we would -- issues would arise and we'd talk about them and talk about ways in which to deal with them and ways in which the basic speech could be changed within those -- I mean there was no speechwriting process as such and formally. Jody had the same kind of input on the speeches. Then I don't remember when it was that Pat Anderson came along.

Well, I guess, first of all, I guess Shrum was the first one that we hired, and I don't remember exactly when that was except that it was during the Pennsylvania primary. It must have been about two weeks before the primary in Pennsylvania. We were headed -- going down into a coalmine. Shrum showed up. He was -- Pat Caddell had recommended him.

And he showed up the night before we were to go to this coalmine, drafted some material for the event, which he gave to me and I gave to Carter on the ride out to the coalmine, and I guess it was a two-part trip. We went somewhere, stopped, got back in the car and went on to the coalmine, and Carter had had a chance to look at it during the first leg and then Shrum got into the car with us for the second leg, and there was already some tension there because Shrum was a very committed liberal. I mean he's not just a speechwriter. He doesn't just take what people want and put it down on paper. He tends to inject his own ideas into what he's doing, and he had written a speech making all kinds of commitments to coalminers and to the kind of legislation that would be proposed and so on that Carter just was not about to commit to, in some cases, simply because he didn't know about it and hadn't heard about it.

And so Shrum was somewhat disillusioned and felt that Carter's commitment to the causes that he felt committed to was not sufficient, but he stayed on for, I don't know how long, 10 days, two weeks, something like that and continued -- there was just the tension there, and then he went off and wrote the article that he had.

And suddenly we didn't have a speechwriter for a little while. Then we brought Pat Anderson in, and he and Carter got along quite well right from the beginning, and Pat wrote some very good speeches, and he worked well with Carter.

Later on, he brought in Jim Fallows. In that -- during that period when Pat was there and even when Pat and Jim were both working on speeches, they would write the speeches and give them to Jody and myself, and Carter had asked that Jody and I go over the speeches and make our comments before he saw them. So when he got them, they included our comments on them, and that was the major input that we had.

I think Pat, who remains a good friend of mine to this day, would probably say that the major contribution I made was to shorten and worsen the speeches. He hated it. I mean he was -- thought of himself -- does think of himself legitimately as a writer and thought of himself as something of an artist, and he really resented the fact that Jody and I would kind of go through and slash whole paragraphs and pages from his work, which was always longer than Carter wanted it to be.

But anyhow, the process was becoming somewhat more formal. I mean there actually were writers, and we were trying to get -- you know, previously it had only been one speech. He would give the same speech everywhere he went, and I think to this day if I worked at it, I could probably deliver the speech pretty much as he did because it's engrained in my memory. But once we had the speechwriters there, there was a tendency to alter the thing, and there different...there was a basic speech which we would then add and delete from, depending on the occasion, and we started trying to be more topical in responding to issues as they came up, and so --

**David Alsobrook:** What are your major recollections of election night 1976?

**Greg Schneiders:** It was something of a zoo. I'm not sure how much longer that campaign could've held together because it kept growing exponentially as we went along. There was no -- we had started off when I first went to work for him, as I mentioned before; I was often the only person on the road with him. Then you'd go back to the headquarters, and there would be 15 people in the small offices on Peachtree Street, which were Lipshutz's law offices. He had set aside a section for the campaign.

Now, by the end of the campaign, we had moved into new headquarters in three floors of a large office building, and, my God, it was -- we'd go back -- in addition to the large entourage traveling with him, when you'd go back to the campaign headquarters, it would just -- it seemed hundreds, if not thousands, of people milling around. Nobody knew -- as far as I could tell, nobody knew quite what they were all doing, and by election night, it seemed that they were all there at the -- you know, understandably, having been a part of it, they wanted to be there, but they're all there again milling around, coming and going.

Even the candidate's suite, which was supposed to be very limited access, what with family and supporters and staff coming and going, it was just crazy. And he sat in front of a television with Rosalynn by his side and a telephone nearby and just kind of watched the returns come in. He was very confident. He had called me during the day, which he almost never did. I mean he would -- when he called me, it was usually he wanted something very specific done, you know. He didn't -- business of running for president, he didn't have a lot of time to just call up to chat.

But on Election Day, I think he was probably feeling a little nervous, and he called up, and he said he had just heard from Pat Caddell, and this was fairly early in the day, and Caddell thought that the voting was unusually heavy, much heavier than we had expected it to be.

And that was a very good sign for us because we knew, as is almost always the case with Democrats, the heavier the voting, the better you'd do, and it looked like it was -- I mean the race had been closing, particularly in the last days, and looked like it was going to be a very, very tight race, and the difference would probably be the turnout. If it was a low turnout, we expected to lose, and if it was a heavy turnout, we expected to win, and Caddell had these figures that it was very heavy voting. So he was very optimistic, and I was very optimistic.

As it turned out, it was a low turnout, and those early figures were wrong, and the optimism was unjustified. But he told me not to tell anybody that, and so when we got ready to go down from Plains up to Atlanta, we were on the plane, and the press corps, I think, believed that he was going to lose, and I believed and he believed because of the turnout that he was going to win. And I remember that, talking to all of them, and they were all, I think, perhaps somewhat down themselves, having been so closely connected to the campaign for so long. They thought he was going to lose. But anyway, we got there, and he sat in the suite and I think was optimistic throughout the night and didn't -- talked mostly to Rosalynn.-- didn't talk that much to the other people in the room.

From time to time, Frank Moore, Hamilton, or somebody would have a phone call for him to make or incoming call from Mayor Daley or something like that, and he would talk to these people, and Daley kept -- Daley must have called him four times and said don't worry even though the networks were showing us losing Illinois. He said, "Don't worry. It's going to be all right. Going to win Illinois. I'll come through for you." And, of course, we lost Illinois.

And then it got down to -- it got very tight near the end, and it was down to Mississippi and Hawaii. I remember Frank Moore kidding about offering to build a causeway to Hawaii if they could come through for us. And then I guess in the end it was Mississippi that made -- that put him over the top, and it was a very emotional thing.

I remember it coming as kind of a surprise because they were -- all three networks were -- kept saying it was very close and they weren't sure, and then all of a sudden, one of them -- and I don't remember which one it was -- I think it was NBC -- flashed "Carter wins" across the screen. I don't know what had happened. Again, it was something in their computer had gone off and decided that he'd won, and we got all three televisions -- all three networks set up on three different televisions, and so you could see it within a matter of seconds flashing on the other screens. He hugged and kissed Rosalynn and some of the other people there. I don't think he kissed any of the other people there.

And then we went down to talk to the workers who had assembled, and then we went back to Plains that night, and we all got out to the airport, and he wanted to leave, and one of the press busses had gotten lost, and he kept saying, "Well, let's go. Let's leave them." Kept telling me and Jody, "Let's leave them. I want to get home." And Jody and I kept trying to stall and finally said -- because we knew this was no way to start out by leaving half the press corps behind in Atlanta. And, God, he got angry, and we finally --

they finally showed up, and we took off and got home, and he was speaking to the people in Plains as the sun was coming up.

**David Alsobrook:** So after you got him elected, essentially what was your job during the transition?

**Greg Schneiders:** He said on that flight back down to Plains -- and I said, "You know, we've never talked about what role, if any, I would have after you got elected," and he said, "I want you to continue doing what you're doing."

And so my role continued as that of administrative assistant, staying with him and arranging for a lot of these briefings that took place down there. We'd bring in busloads of experts on one thing or another and working a lot with him on the paperwork, and it just began to build up. I would go through the huge stack in his in-box and sort the stuff out, what I thought he needed to see and what could be sent off to other people. So I worked with him a lot on the cabinet selection. He was getting these large books from the transition staff and from Hamilton on personnel and positions and that sort of thing and he asked me to go through them and give him my reactions to them. I was pretty much working with him on the things that he was doing during the transition, which were principally personnel and these briefings.

**David Alsobrook:** *Okay. I want to do a little lead in. August 9, 1979, Room 175 of the Old Executive Office Building, a follow-up interview with Greg Schneiders. The time is approximately 11:40 AM. The interviewer is David Alsobrook, of the Presidential Papers staff.*

Greg, I want to talk some with you about your own ideas about the institution of the presidency. Could you tell me something about how this job has perhaps altered any previous ideas you had about the institution before you arrived here?

**Greg Schneiders:** I think I've developed a greater awareness of and respect for the limitations of the office. I think the post-Vietnam, post-Watergate presidency is certainly very different from what the presidency was before those periods in our history.

The constitutional power of the President, of course, has not changed but has never been particularly broad. The political power of a president, which perhaps peaked during Franklin Roosevelt's time and maybe had another peak during Lyndon Johnson's presidency just because of his adeptness at handling that political power, is greatly diminished now.

It's very hard to lead Congress. It's hard to lead the country. The factionalization within the political parties and within the political world, in general, the power of special interest groups, has made it very difficult for a president to put together a coalition that will hold together over any number of issues. It seems the presidents have to attempt to form ad hoc coalitions for each individual issue that they may get involved in, and that's very difficult and time consuming and not -- just very often, it's not possible.

And the third kind of power that a president has, I think, which is the ability to reach the people directly and use the presidency as the bully pulpit is in some ways greater now than ever before because of mass communication, but it's also diminished because of the diminished respect, perhaps, for the office. The beating that the presidency has taken during Vietnam and Watergate, the skepticism that has been engendered in the press and the public as a result of those events and others have taken from any president holding the office the kind of instant credibility that they used to have.

I think if President Eisenhower, for example, had negotiated a treaty comparable in his own time to our SALT II agreement that the people of the United States would have been much more inclined to say, "He's the president, and he knows this -- these issues in greater detail than anyone, and we will rely on his judgment." No president today has that kind of instant, automatic credibility.

So constitutionally and politically and in terms of shaping public opinion, I think that the presidential power today is very, very limited, and I think that an appreciation of that fact is probably the greatest single change.

Of course, looking at it from the outside, and particularly when you get caught up in a presidential campaign and you're working all day every day seeking the office on behalf of someone you believe in, you tend to see it as a goal larger than life. You expect it to be -- you expect the awesomeness of the office and even the physical surroundings to kind of overwhelm you when you arrive here, and they do very briefly. And then you begin to see the real limitations on what it is you're able to do.

**David Alsobrook:** Could you tell me anything about your future plans?

**Greg Schneiders:** Well, in the immediate future, I expect to be doing four things, basically. I will be teaching a course on the presidency at Georgetown University, a Foreign Service school. I will be working with another individual in the Washington area, a fellow named Bob Squire, who is a political consultant, and he and I will do some consulting work together. And I hope to do some speaking and some writing.

**David Alsobrook:** Greg, what types of records have you created during the time you've been in this particular office?

**Greg Schneiders:** We have not got a -- particularly formal record keeping system other than the normal use of our files and ultimately Central Files [White House Central Files]. I was looking back through the files and the lists of things that had been sent to Central Files the other day just to get a feel for what was there, and if anything, I have a sense that we probably saved too much. I have a habit of writing a file on almost everything except the most inconsequential items, but actually, Gail Doyle would be a better person to tell you how that's -- how those are organized and --

**David Alsobrook:** She would be the best person?

**Greg Schneiders:** Yes.

**David Alsobrook:** Okay, great. For the use of the future library, could you give me a permanent address and telephone number where you think you could always be reached if there's such a thing?

**Greg Schneiders:** Well, the best I could give you is my present home address, and I have no plans to be leaving there soon. It's 311 North Oxford Street in Arlington.

**David Alsobrook:** And telephone number?

**Greg Schneiders:** 522-0729.

**David Alsobrook:** Okay. Is there an alumni association that would probably always know your address?

**Greg Schneiders:** I would imagine that the Georgetown University Alumni Association would always have it.

**David Alsobrook:** Okay. Well, thank you very much for the week with you. I've enjoyed it.

**Greg Schneiders:** Okay. Thank you, David.