

KELLY SCHOON EXIT INTERVIEW

White House Correspondence Referral Unit

Interviewed by David Alsobrook of the Presidential Papers Staff at the Old Executive Office Building, Room 492 on September 13, 1978

Kelly Schoon worked in the Correspondence Referral Unit in the White House from June of 1976 until September 15, 1978. Her husband is in the Navy, and she is leaving her job in order to join him in Orlando, Florida, his next duty station. She said that she had heard a lot of jokes about the fact that her husband is a graduate of the Naval Academy and is training for a career in nuclear physics and submarines, as was Jimmy Carter. Several of Kelly's friends have suggested that she might be coming back to the White House as First Lady some day. In addition to her work in Correspondence Referral, she also helped out in the Central Reference Unit. When she came on board, there were three computers in her office; now there are eleven. She has not been trained on the computer. She said that she could have been trained on computers over a year ago, but they chose not to do so. When Jimmy Carter first came to Washington, the Correspondence Referral Unit handled approximately 20,000 to 30,000 letters each day; now they handle only about 1,000. Kelly said that the mail analysts are now handling about 94 percent of the mail. She also said that much more mail is being answered than during the early days of the Administration. She suggested that the main reason for this is that the system is more efficient than early in the Administration when there was a tremendous backlog of mail.

There are four people in Correspondence Referral, including Kelly. Pat Burns works strictly on VIP mail with the computers. Kelly has done some work with the Stripping Desk (so named because they "strip" carbons from letters and route them to the proper locations) in regard to First Lady's correspondence and Landon Kite's correspondence, but she has not done any work with the Senior Staff correspondence. Kelly said that when she worked on a particular piece of correspondence, she identified it with her number. She said if any mistakes or problems arose, they could thus identify who worked on the letter. When registered mail or letters from people writing a second and third time on the same subject came in, they made copies. At the end of each day, they made a count of all mail handled and routed. She said that Val Giannini rather than Landon Kite is involved in the statistical studies done, such as the number of letters written to or from the President.

Two people (Hauzen and Doris Austin) handle the autopens in the office. No one else is permitted to use them. In addition to autopens for the President, there are also pens for Senior Staff such as Powell, Peterson, Jordan, Rhonda Bush, Hugh Carter, and Landon Kite. She said in some cases they had autopens that signed personal shortened forms of names, such as "Jody."