

Interview with Dorothy Wimberly

Room 492, OEGB 3:00 PM, October 20, 1978 Lee R. Johnson, interviewer

Dorothy served as personal secretary to Sarah Weddington from September 11, 1978 to October 13, 1978. Basically, she was in charge of setting up Sarah's new office. She worked for Sarah when the new Presidential Aide was a Texas State legislator. Sarah asked her to come to Washington to assist her in establishing herself. (In addition to helping her set up her office, Dorothy arranged the purchase of a new home in NW Washington DC for her. Such unofficial duties are not new for Dorothy. She referred to her role in Texas as "driver" and "travel companion" for Sarah.)

They met initially in Austin when Sarah, then serving as City Attorney of Fort Worth, testified at a hearing on family planning and abortion. Dorothy worked on Sarah's first campaign staff when Sarah chose to run for the Texas State Legislature.

Dorothy feels that Sarah's Office is a "completely new" office within the White House, however she felt unqualified to discuss how policy in the office would be coordinated. She related that Abigail Havens and Clarice Taylor, also Texans and both of whom came with Sarah from the Department of Agriculture, would be the people in the new office who could provide information concerning policy.

Dorothy expressed concern over the slowness in setting up an efficient office within the White House, but mentioned, in particular, the help she had received from Val Giannini with organizational matters. She is already worried about Sarah's work load. She feels that a larger staff will be necessary very soon. (She mentioned that there continued to be a large number of letters coming in denouncing Sarah's stand on abortion, but that these were, for the most part, form letters.) She informed me that the filing scheme used by Central Files is very different from that used by Sarah in the past. Dorothy feels that WHCF should be used, but it is unclear whether her attitude is shared by those who will be operating the Office. (I told Dorothy that we would inform permanent personnel in Sarah's Office of our Office Visit Program. I also gave her copies of information sheets on the exit interview program and on our overall program.)

Two things emerged clearly in the course of the interview: 1) She thoroughly enjoyed working in the White House. (One incident is worth recording. She escorted the niece of Susan B. Anthony through the White House enabling her to see the bust of her illustrious aunt in the EW. The two women encountered Rosalynn who was gracious and open to both. 2) She loves Sarah and was proud and happy to help a woman who "has done so much for American women."

Dorothy's permanent address is: 500 E. Anderson Lane
#199T
Austin, Texas 78752