

Exit Interview: Pat Yarham, Confidential Assistant to Jack Watson

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Interviewer: David Alsobrook, Presidential Papers Staff

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Transcriber: Lyn Kirkland

Alsobrook: Pat, could you tell me something about your earlier association with Jack Watson before you came to work in the White House?

Yarham: OK. I started with Jack in September of 1970. I had moved to Atlanta from New York City and had been working with attorneys since I came to this country in '64, so the natural thing when I went to Atlanta from New York was I worked with King and Spalding. I was sort of referred to the firm by the people I worked for in New York. I had a letter of recommendation to them and I started working for King and Spalding in a temporary capacity in May 1970 and then finally got with Jack on a permanent basis about September of that year. He at that time was, as I've obviously said, a young lawyer working towards becoming a partner, working very hard and quite intensely in the litigation department. And that is sort of the way I started with him.

Alsobrook: And so you were with him then when he became involved in the Carter Campaign?

Yarham: Oh, absolutely. Yeh...

Alsobrook: Now he...how about the Carter campaign?

Yarham: He became involved with Jimmy Carter, which is common knowledge, through Charlie Kirbo. He never told me this himself, but obviously I have read it. Back in '66, that was 4 years prior, and then Carter had unsuccessfully run for Governor and then he ran successfully and when he became governor, he reorganized state government and the umbrella agency for social welfare, health, youth, aging programs was the Department of Human Resources and he needed a chairman, well, he needed a chairman of that board. He asked Jack to become a member of the board. Jack was the youngest of the fifteen members and was elected chairman of the Georgia Department, uh, the Georgia...., let me see, what was it called----the Board of Human Resources.... the governing board for the new Department of Human Resources. And he stayed, he was re-elected I guess at least once, maybe twice, before resigning in order to come to the White House in January of '77. So, he was chairman of the board from the very beginning of the new department...and really had to sell the department. There were a lot of people who really didn't want such an enormous agency. They were for decentralizing the power, you know.

Alsobrook: This was in Georgia, now?

Yarham: Yeh, the state of Georgia. ..but something that then Governor Carter promised to do and he did and, of course, he needed someone who could sell the program, and Jack went all over the state of Georgia selling the new department as chairman. He was at the time continuously a very, very busy litigator within the firm of King and Spalding and had always innumerable cases, you know, pending.

Alsobrook: In addition to his other duties there?

Yarham: Yeh, that was all pro bono. He did not get paid for being chairman, of course. One hundred percent pro bono.

Alsobrook: Did you ever have the opportunity to meet then Governor Carter when you were in Jack's office?

Yarham: Only in passing, only in passing. You know, he would come..... I think I saw him a couple of times at King and Spalding. I happened to be in the corridor when he was there. I did not attend meetings or anything. He would come up to see Charles Kirbo or somebody in the firm. I guess we were probably handling somebody's stuff at that time and I saw him come through, but I didn't have a lot of contact with him.

Alsobrook: During the campaign of '76, what were your duties like then?

Yarham: Well, then, you see, not only did Jack work as chairman of the board...he continued that...I mean that was an on-going thing. It was a constant selling process because people were.....it took a long time for the department to become something real in peoples' minds. Why they created the department was so, say if a family had an alcoholic father, a pregnant teenager, a mentally sick grandmother...by creating the new department they could come to one department and get all the services that they needed instead of going into fragmented different sections, you know, totally different departments where they would be dealing with a whole different set of people in each department. Here you could have the main human resources worker work with the whole family for all their problems. It was less fragmented.

Alsobrook: And did you have a lot of....? Excuse me, go ahead.

Yarham: So then, to answer your question, in very early '76 we started getting heavily involved with the campaign, so Jack was doing his law practice, he was doing his Department of Human Resources board chairmanship, and he was also gearing up for the campaign. We were not an integral part of the campaign. We were still housed in the law firm, just Jack and I, but we had constant, you know, access and communication back and forth between them. In fact, we put on, we were primary in putting on, the Georgia opportunity telethon parties, February 14, Valentine's Day of '76.

Alsobrook: Is that right?

Yarham: Yeh, that was really kind of fun. That was when we really started getting geared up and then Jack was chairman of the Georgia Finance Campaign and was also one of the national finance chairmen.

Alsobrook: You know, in working with the Georgia Department of Human Resources, did your office have a lot of contact with federal agencies too during this period?

Yarham: Not a lot.

Alsobrook: OK.

Yarham: I mean, I was trying to keep all the state people straight and going out into the regions and selling the programs and answering problems. I did a lot of case work for people, you know,....which was putting them in touch with the right people and trying to help them understand the way the department worked. I took minutes of the new board. I guess it was close to the first year...and of course, I was not a state employee, so I did this on the side, you know.

Alsobrook: During the campaign did you spend most of your time right there in Atlanta or did you do some traveling?

Yarham: I didn't do any traveling at all. I never have. I've never been on any of Jack's trips just because he always wanted me to just stay in the office and man the fort. He did an awfully lot of traveling all over the state. By mid '76 he started traveling to New York, Washington, whatever...

Alsobrook: Are there certain events that stand out in your mind as you think back about the campaign of '76...about your own experience in working for Jack?

Yarham: Uh, just this tremendous busy-ness, you know, I mean there was so much to do. No. Mid '76 when Jack started making contacts with people like Ted Sorenson, Brookings, Clark Clifford, you know, people who had been very important to prior administrations—Democratic administrations...that really started making us realize just what we were in to. It's just mind boggling.....and when you can pick up the phone and get Ted Sorenson on the phone for Jack Watson. I mean, now it's just sort of second nature and I just say, "Hi, Ted, how are you" when I see him, (Alsobrook laughs) but at that time I remember being very thrilled by putting the politics of the situation together and seeing what we were dealing with and the minds we were dealing with.... because Jack made many contacts in the summer of '76.....people throughout the country who were important and, then, of course, he pulled a team of people together...the young brains of the country. And, of course, he weighted that by just talking to as many people as he could and getting recommendations and he pulled a dozen people together to put together papers

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for a possible Carter administration which had never, ever been done before, you know, for prior administrations. Maybe Kennedy did something similar but he had a much shorter length of time. Well, anyway, Jack pulled these people together by. I don't remember the exact date, because I did take two months off on a leave of absence there for some personal reasons and I had been so terribly busy that I needed a little break. And then we brought on a third person. We had a secretary to replace me at the law firm, but she was not familiar with all the other stuff that I had been doing, so we had another girl brought on as well...called Cynthia Wilkes Smith, who is on my staff now...one of Jack's staffers. She had been working with the Department of Human Resources, so she could pull in that angle. Also she was very interested in the campaign and had a masters in Business administration so she could really help Jack tremendously, so I took two months off and came back, and by then the policy planning group were in full swing, getting on with their briefing teams and doing some superb work under Jack's leadership, and that is when the whole thing just sort of mushroomed on me and I had not really been there when it happened. They were working out of the National Bank of Georgia. They had spaces across the park from us.

Alsobrook: Oh, yeh.

Yarham: Do you know Atlanta at all?

Alsobrook: Oh yeh, fairly well. Probably not as well as you do.

Yarham: Right across from where the park is.... right at Five Points.

Alsobrook: Oh, yeh.

Yarham: We were in the Trust Company of Georgia building on the 25th floor and they were right across the street....NBG.

Alsobrook: Did the future president himself get involved in dealing with Jack in these policy planning books that he put together?

Yarham: I don't know how heavily he was involved with him. Of course, Stu Eisenstat was doing the domestic part and Jack was doing the policy for the campaign, and answering all of those questions, and I guess putting the President's speech together at that time, so Jack was plugged into him. I was so busy taking care of all the detail work all the time that I didn't get into all the heavy stuff. He and Stu would talk and I guess they would both get direction from Carter and then, of course, Jack had lots of ideas and he worked through Charlie Kirbo an awfully lot and we would present papers to the President in Plains....send stuff down either through Charlie Kirbo or have it taken down by a courier....whatever.

Alsobrook: This was throughout the late summer of '76 when it began to look like he would be elected.

Yarham: June, July, August...right on through there.

Alsobrook: When did it dawn on you that you, yourself, might end up working in the White House? Do you recall?

Yarham: Well, you know, even in mid '76 there wasn't ...it was still sort of 50/50. And when you are kind of isolated... working very hard like that, you tend to be optimistic but we were sort of guarded about it, I suppose. It was only when it actually happened that it really hit us, but I mean, I was ready to do whatever Jack wanted to do. And he—we---- were making contingency plans sort of all along in case it happened, but it was by no means a foregone conclusion, as you probably know, and it was only the night that we won—you know---this is it! (laughs) It was quite fantastic. We hoped, but, of course, my main reason to be there in the first place was Jack Watson.

Alsobrook: Pat, what are your clearest recollections of the night that the President won it? Where were you? And what stands out in your mind?

Yarham: We were all down at the ... I guess we were all down at the Omni. It's not the clearest thing...it's all a bit of a blur, really. Just the realization; I guess it was only the next day or so when the tremendous realization hits you I suppose.

Alsobrook: And then, I guess, shortly after that, it was determined that Jack would come...?

Yarham: Well, Jack was pretty much sure that coming out of the policy planning we would put the transition into operation. I don't know exactly how that came about. He had met with Kirbo; he had met with Carter. We then had to somehow forge the two things together.....our operation downtown and the campaign out at Colony Square....Hamilton's operation. And Hamilton and Jack, I guess, were then talking to each other to decide how to do that. It is possible that our anticipation of sort of numbers of people involved in the transition were a lot smaller than they in fact turned out to be once we wound down from the campaign. I mean there were hundreds and hundreds of people working in the campaign and an awfully lot of volunteers who would expect at least to work in the transition and get paid for it probably.....or continue to be volunteers and get jobs in the administration, and that didn't necessarily happen. It was a difficult thing, putting those two things together, I must say. I was so terribly busy—again taking care of packing boxes, coming to the end of all the law firm stuff, all of the Department of Human Resources stuff, working as close as I could with the campaign and continuing to raise money, and then across the street with the National Bank of Georgia.... that whole operation. I'm not sure what contacts were made between us and the campaign to pull it together and determine exactly how the transition was going to run. Jack, I'm sure, had a very clear idea in his head how he would like to see it go, and he knew he was going to send Jules Sugarman, who was his deputy for the policy planning group, and one or two people, and people

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from the campaign, to Washington to check out the space, to check the numbers we could fit into the space, where it was going to be in relation to the Hill, to the White House. Jack had already linked up with Jack Marsh who was Ford's transition manager, and a super guy. I must say that he and President Ford made things go so smooth. And Jack Watson and Jack Marsh worked just hand and glove. Without those two guys leading the way, I don't think it would have happened as smooth as it did. Plus President Ford was just very flexible and very easy going about the whole thing while he must have, of course, been under a fair amount of anguish and pressure and stuff. Everything worked out beautifully. So anyway, Jack knew we would be coming very closely on the heels of November 2, and in fact came up a few days later and he said "I'll just let you know when to come." He didn't want me to come that week-end, but asked me to come the following week-end. I guess the election was Tuesday, November 2, and then I didn't go up that week-end, but the next week-end after. By the Thursday I had everything packed (Alsobrook says "gosh") and NBG had everything packed and I drove up on a Saturday and looked for an apartment on Sunday and I started working on Monday at 9:00, and from then on through January 20th, we worked minimum 12 hours a day, six days a week, at least. I didn't know that I was in Washington instead of Atlanta. (Alsobrook laughs) I mean, we would go to the God-awful cafeteria in the HEW building, you know, the old HEW building. (Alsobrook gasps.) I don't know how we survived it. I do not know how we survived it. I was the worst time in everybody's life. I'm sure Jack's included.

Alsobrook: Well, what kind of work did you do in addition to these long days? What were some of the types of detail work that you.....?

Yarham: Well, notwithstanding the fact that I was not sure exactly how the campaign operation fit in with us, Stu, of course, was there with his Domestic Policy staff. We got our policy planning people who prepared all the books and everything linked up with Stu's operation. I think it worked pretty well. We had the PIP process, a kind of inventory program which Matt Coffee had headed up. He sort of fit in there with Hamilton somehow, you know... and um...so Jack was actually the transition coordinator. OK. I guess Charlie Kirbo and the President told him "you are heading up the transition." And then all those factions of the campaign and stuff, and, as I said, I'm not sure if they had titles. I don't know what they were because I was over on one side of the 5th floor and they were over on the other. And then Hamilton was over on the other and he obviously had his fingers on all the buttons at the same time as we do, so it was sort of a joint operation, and you know, we got a lot of bad press out of that.

Alsobrook: Oh, yeh.

Yarham: You know, it was because of the lack of clarity. Anyway, Jack was the transition coordinator and I was his, whatever I was, his right hand. (Alsobrook laughs heartily)...but no particular title. I just did everything that needed to be done. We had a super typing operation, like a typing pool operation, headed by Anne Amesworth who had previously worked for Allen

Cranston and she's back with him now. We had all those marvelous computerized typewriters and we were batting out all kinds of letters and we had a mail room operation like you wouldn't believe, coming out of the campaign. Most of the campaign people helped with that and we had volunteers galore. At one point we had a truck come up from Plains, Georgia that had 40,000 pieces of mail in it for one day. And later Susan Clough came up and started handling the presidential stuff, but we were all so swamped with so much paper, and so much telephone. I mean, it was really a matter of react, react, react throughout the day. I would try to pull the pieces together at the end of the day, which is what I've been doing at the White House too, but I mean then, it was tremendously high pressure. We lived, breathed, ate, slept, you know, the transition. It was our lives. There was just so much to do, there was just so much to do, and Jack was out of town a lot and so a big burden fell on my shoulders with stuff I was totally unfamiliar with.

Alsobrook: Uh!

Yarham...scheduling him to see all kinds of people, reporters on my back all the time wanting to know this question and that question, and then having this enormous spread of people throughout the fifth floor of HEW. You had to walk miles to find somebody if you couldn't get them on the phone and all the phones are busy all the time and the open administration thing had already started and people demanded information all the time. You had to give it to them or at least you had to know what the hell you were talking about (Alsobrook laughs) to get them to the right person, you know, and Jack was under a lot of pressure, looking towards the administration....everybody seeing the way it was going to go, just kind of feeling their way and seeing what kind of set-up there would be. Everybody, I'm sure, had picked out their office in the White House before Jack and I even thought about it.

Alsobrook: You know, it seems like, Pat, thinking back about this particular period, that the press gave this particular transition more attention than any in recent history that I can recall.

Yarham: Well, it was a longer transition. One we had prepared for carefully ...plus we were coming out of the campaign which made it so interesting for them. And plus, we were elected by just such a small margin that they were very interested in seeing what was going to happen...to see how he was going to put his operation together. We prepared all of the books for the new secretaries coming in and all the issues books for the President. I was not heavily involved in any of those things except peripherally, you know.

Alsobrook: Sure.

Yarham: Because I was doing all the detail work for Jack and sort of planned the agency stuff, keeping everybody sort of glued together.

Alsobrook: Did you have any chance to rest between the transition and your first day on the job after the inaugural?

Yarham: Oh, no.

Alsobrook: Went right into it?

Yarham: Sure did.

Alsobrook: Do you remember the first day you walked through the gates over here?

Yarham: I was the very first one through.

Alsobrook: Is that right?

Yarham: And what happened, one of the nicest things, you know, sometimes one's boss forgets about the little things that might please a personal assistant secretary, whatever....and one of the nice things, just because Jack would be up on the Hill with the President when the President accepted the oath of office and everything and made his acceptance speech, he realized that he couldn't be in Blair House ready to walk into the West Wing and sort of *traditionally claim it for the Democrats* sort of thing and be the President's sort of emissary, and so he said "Jesus, I don't think I'm going to be able to get there. Is there somebody you can think of who can do it?" And he said, "Can you do it?" And I said "I sure will. That will be a lot of fun." Plus the Blair House is beautiful. So, Midge Costanza was there and David Rubenstein, for Stuart, and myself and two or three other people...Joanne Hurley. And so, when the President made his acceptance speech we watched it on TV over at Blair House and we walked across the street with all the gatherings of people, the throngs of people and came to the northwest gate. They didn't have anybody else's name but mine. I don't quite know why, but here I am marching off to the West Wing reception (they both laugh loudly)... feeling highly important. I got in even before Midge Costanza. At any rate, it was... kinda cute... and then we came upstairs and everybody was putting things away in boxes. I felt so bad...some of the staff....and President Ford... was still there and they were kind of scuttling around and putting *everything*, I mean, there was nothing left in the desk or on the desk surfaces almost(laughs)...at all. I mean, they put *everything* in boxes and had kind of long looks on their faces. So I said," hi, we're just here because we have to be here, but please, everything is OK....just relax." So, it was kind of funny.

Alsobrook: Were those first days on the job extremely hectic? Were they almost like the transition all over again? What was it like?

Yarham: Well, I think there was a new sense of calm, I think, once we arrived. So, it was hectic...just clearing people in and out and making sure you had people cleared properly. No, it wasn't too bad. It was kind of nice. It was kind of nice getting set up. Here we are and now we are going to take care of things and it is up to us. What hit me was the amount of paper that started to flow through on issues oftwenty different issues in a day—mind boggling. Some of international importance. Shoe imports, and something about China...it would run the gamut, really, the kind of issues that were thrown at us in those first few weeks...and Jack didn't have a deputy. He only had two or three people on his staff. We were juggling for the people, offices,

and all kinds of things. It was impossible to get the right furniture, you know. You really just had to live from day to day to get things set up.

Alsobrook: At that point, Pat, did Jack have the same title he has now?

Yarham: Yes. He has always had the same title...the exact same title.

Alsobrook: OK, so he had those dual functions. Could you briefly tell me a little bit...take first of all the Secretary to the Cabinet, for example, and tell me a little bit about what his duties would consist of?

Yarham: They're still being evolved, actually. You know, this is the new, the only really new job that was created in the whole White House different from prior administrations. In the President's mind I guess was the effort to bring the Federal government much more closely intertwined and communicating more closely with state and local governments; and therefore the goal, I believe, evolved, and it is still evolving because it is very difficult for us, for one person, to be able to take care of all of the flow of paper from the cabinet and all of the issues and the state and locals at the same time. I mean, there is a tremendous role there to be played, but depending on the issue, it is probably played in a different way. It's a very flexible, open-ended sort of thing. For example, it just depends what the issue is. You see, the domestic policy staff is closely linked with the agencies and the cabinet secretaries, as we are, and they have to be. In fact, maybe more on some things, because they make the policy and as it is being discussed and meetings are had, so Stuart Eizenstat meets with all those cabinet secretaries, and it's maybe not necessary for Jack to be involved in all those things. There could be a break down if we are not linked up continuously with the domestic policy operations. But we are the *implementers*, so in some things it evolves that the actual implementation of policy where it crosscuts state, local, and federal lines, that Jack is the person who makes sure that that goes together. It doesn't mean to say that everything from the cabinet has to flow through Jack. It is kind of a complicated thing. With the enormous bureaucracy that we have in Washington you can see that there is no way that Jack could have his finger on everything that is going on between them and what is happening out there. But one of the things that he has been instrumental for, and this is one of the nuclei of what the federal government can do to link up with the state and locals, is the Federal Regional Councils and there is currently decision making going on as to exactly whether they should continue, how strong they should be, who they should be, how many there should be, whether they should wear a state hat at the same time as being a regional person, whether they should be in an agency or whether they should be separate, what kind of power they should have. All kind of things that are going on to decide what the federal regional presence should be and what it should do. Before I think they have been resented and it hasn't worked very well because people don't want to listen to them. They leave them in a vacuum and they can't get anything done so that is totally useless. So we have revitalized them, I think, so far as I know, and I believe the President hopefully will be on the way to accepting them playing a much more important role and we have, just last week, now. I did not read the briefing paper so I don't know exactly what this is all about, but you may have heard on the news last week that Jack announced some grants being made to the District of Columbia. I saw it listed as the FRC, the Federal Regional Counsel-D.C. grant announcement, so that is something we have pulled

together with the District of Columbia and the federal government for some grants for the District.

Alsobrook: I think it is kind of interesting...so it sounds like even though Jack has been known as a person who wears two hats and has two titles, these roles are all inter-related.

Yarham: They should mesh...I mean, the whole of the United States government, whether it is federal, state, local, county, city, whatever, village, rural, urban, they should all crosscut ...they shouldn't be slashing at each other's throats...but they do...and one thinks they are going to get money from this person, and one from that, and whether there is a 50/50 match or whatever percentage match, they should, one would think, be able to work hand in glove but they don't always do that, but with strong leadership they are sort of forced into it.

Alsobrook: Pat, could you take a specific issue like hospital cost containment or something like that and possibly show how Jack's operation would be interconnected with domestic policy staff and other units of the White House? Or, you can take another issue if you don't like that one.

Yarham: Well, let's take the urban policy.

Alsobrook: OK.

Yarham: I think we have stayed very flexible....so it is hard for me to say. Bruce Kirshenbaum on our staff is the head person for urban policy. He was instrumental in getting the urban policy written and because of all our outreach and our knowledge of all the state and locals, he and his personal knowledge of the UDAG grants and things like that. He had worked with HUD and HEW; he knows all about that stuff so much. He really worked hand in glove with Ralph Schlosstein on Stu Eizenstat's staff in getting the policy written. That was an incidence where, although there were these domestic policy people, I think we played a major role just because we are the state and local folks. So, last year the President announced his urban policy and Jack took the lead on that and now as we implement what we hope will be the President's urban policy, depending on what the Hill does with all the monies and everything we need, Jack is now the chairmen of the interagency coordinating council which will implement the urban policy or any other policy like our rural policy which has taken six months longer than anticipated. It really depends, David, I can't give you a hard and fast rule on it. It depends on what the issue is. We work very closely with them. We are a much smaller staff than the domestic policy staff. You know, they are all OMB. They come under a different payroll, and there are 20 or 30 or so. We only had like four or five professionals, for want of a better word, until recently when we've added on a few more. We're a very small staff you see, to do the whole of the United States with all the mayors and governors, the state and local's affairs, all the public interest groups and everybody they represent, you know...state legislators.

Alsobrook: And speaking of the mayors, could you tell me about any sort of input that your office had in the selection of the recent cabinet heads?

Yarham: Goldsmit and Moon Landrieu? I would say Jack's recommendations were instrumental. I think.....I don't know who originally suggested Moon Landrieu. I don't know whether it was Jack. It could well have been. I really don't know. I know that several members of the senior staff were very, very high on him. Whether they just pooled names or something at nljc.oh.P.Yarham

a senior staff meeting, or whatever, or maybe a meeting with the President, I'm not really sure, but Jack has always been high on Moon Landrieu and he is perfect for that position. Another thing that probably came up---do we want someone from the northeast, do we want somebody from the northwest, or from the south? Moon Landrieu epitomized so many things, you see, because he was a good link for New York. He was head of the mayors' deal, you know, the U.S. Congress of Mayors, well known in the Northeast, well known in the others parts, well respected, good background in the, I guess, hub area. Perfect. So, it was kind of a natural choice. The fact that he is a mayor. Everybody was aware that it would be a very good move to have a mayor. The fact that we got a second mayor in Neal Goldsmit...he's the mayor of Portland, right?

Alsobrook: I think so.

Yarham: He had been. Maybe he was no longer mayor. I'm not sure now.... I'm sure Jack was very, very high on him too and I guess it is a feather in Jack's cap that two mayors were appointed to cabinet positions. I don't know if there was any opposition to either one. I doubt there was any for Moon. There may have been a little for Neal.

Alsobrook: Were there (Alsobrook mumbles).

Yarham: More of an unknown...but with the same constituency that Brock Adams had...sort of from the same area.

Alsobrook: Were there other White House units like Tim Kraft in Presidential Personnel that you worked closely with during this period?

Yarham: People that we always worked closely with, let me see? When Anne Wexler came aboard we worked fairly closely with her because some of our stuff was overlapping, you know. Stuart, of course, has always been overlapping. There were a few little problems along the way at the beginning of the administration because...the paper flow...we wouldn't always get as much of the paper as we needed because, although we don't make the policy, we certainly still like to know what is going on and give our input when policy decisions are being made. Obviously Jack has a say in the human resources area. He has got a lot of knowledge coming out of his work with the councils. We work with all of them. Tim Kraft we worked with increasingly because he used to be the special assistant for scheduling. We worked with him all the time on the cabinet meetings with the President and stuff like that. When Sarah came aboard we worked with her quite a bit. Mitch Shutz a little less because obviously his stuff is a little more of an administrative function. They sort of provide for everybody. You don't sort of work with him on meetings and such. Frank Moore—we worked closely with Frank particularly because we do all the disasters, you know, and when a disaster release is going to be announced we coordinate with him. We stay in pretty close touch with all the offices, I would say.

Alsobrook: In setting up a cabinet meeting what specific role would you play...like on the day the cabinet is going to meet? What would you do before the meeting and what would you do during the meeting?

Yarham: We are responsible for providing the President with an agenda for the meeting. This is not a formal agenda that gets passed around to all the cabinet members. They pretty much
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know what the issues are in their particular agency and when they are called upon by the President to do their thing, they come forward and just bring up a whole bunch of things. We try to cover it in our briefing paper to the President—in our agenda—briefing paper. He also has weekly reports from the cabinet which are supposedly collected by 4:00 on Friday, so they are rarely there until Saturday which gives a summary of significant activities for that particular week. The President likes to keep it to a page or two, so you're just talking about the most significant things that have happened, and coming out of that, of course, that's where our agenda would come from, though we don't usually see them until later. Jack knows what is going on and he would suggest things to the President, suggest things he might say and things he needs to bring up. Of overall interest, even though we're not involved in the international arena, he would probably say, "well, you might want to speak to report on this, Secretary Vance to report on the Rhodesian situation, or Andy Young to report on such and such. So, we're responsible for that and then Jack attends the cabinet meetings with his deputy. His deputy before was Jane Frank and Jane was responsible for doing the minutes and Gene Eidenberg is now his deputy and he's responsible for doing the minutes and they feed them to us, either his secretary or to me.

Alsobrook: Are these taken like notes? Do they come back to you and you type them, is that how it works?

Yarham: Well, actually, they take notes and they actually have to write the minutes...put them on the typewriter, dictate them, or write them out in long hand from all the notes they have.

Alsobrook: And they bring them to you or somebody else in the office and they're kept in a secure location?

Yarham: Oh yeah! They sure are. We get Stu and Zig's sign off on the draft and then they're final.

Alsobrook: OK.

Yarham: I think we may be used to go into a little bit more detail than we do now. They're fairly general. It is just sort of a record, it's not a verbatim report of decisions or anything and decisions are not often made. Really it's an open discussion the President has. It was on a weekly basis. For the first year or so every Monday from 9:00-11:00...without fail. That kept us very, very busy for the first year getting those minutes done. (They laugh.) Fortunately, I guess it was last summer, early last summer, when the President's schedule, out of town schedule and trip schedule, what not, international trips...when it got heavier, then he cut back to every other week. We are trying to keep it on that basis, although we have not done too well in the last few weeks.

Alsobrook: Have you ever been able to sit in on a cabinet session yourself?

Yarham: Well, yeah, because they had extra chairs, you know, and it was really nice. We asked the President if certain staff members could just come in and I did. I went one time, but now they are not allowing it. I think they cut back on the attendance, because there were just too many people sitting around the room, you know, and it's highly confidential...

Alsobrook: Sure!

Yarham: ...sensitive stuff we're dealing with.

Alsobrook: Was that an interesting session you attended?

Yarham: It was interesting to see the players in action...it wasn't---not particularly from the content point of view. I just like to see the personalities working. The President didn't speak very loudly and I was sitting behind him, so consequently I didn't hear a lot that he said and I would like to have been seated where I could see him pointing at different people. (Alsobrook laughs.) You know, it was absolutely fantastic just being there. But I was very glad I was not the one taking the minutes because I would not have known what was going on because I couldn't hear well enough, because it was just like a confidential sort of little discussion group.

Alsobrook: Would each person take his turn and speak? Is that the way it works?

Yarham: Yeah. That is what happens, yeah. It is sort of an open-ended thing. The President says what he has been up to, you know, and then he'll start around the table and then other people will intersperse, you know. I think Jack definitely tries to keep it informal so that it will be a good session so that people will really say what they think instead of just reporting the factual stuff.

Alsobrook: Does Jack have anything to say at the beginning? How does that work?

Yarham: I don't think he usually does. He just leaves it to the President.

Alsobrook: The President will make a few introductory remarks and then it's sort of informal.

Yarham: Once in a while I guess he will call on Jack to say something, but it is not too often. It's not too often just because....I don't know; it's just the way the President does it.

Alsobrook: OK. Is there a record set of these minutes that they will be preserved forever?

Yarham: Oh, yeah. Rick Hutchenson. He is the staff secretary and he gets the original copy of our minutes which are signed and... well, we send the President one and the President just signed off on it.

Alsobrook: OK

Yarham: He almost never has any comment on them and they used to be circulated to he and his staff and cabinet and executive agency heads, but I think it is *eyes only* to the cabinet for about a year. You know, all those leaks and things. It's terrible.

Alsobrook: Oh yeah. Jack Anderson, and so on?

Yarham: Well, he never leaked anything particularly, but somewhere along the way somebody was getting a hold of a copy of them somewhere. I don't know. It was just embarrassing. It wasn't that there was anything sensitive in there. So I guess it was at the President's direction to just give them to the cabinet only. So, Rick gets one for the President's file or he gets the original. We have our copy in our minute's book...and just *eyes only* to the cabinet.

Alsobrook: OK. Let's see. Have your duties, specifically, Pat, changed since the first day you came to work here?

Yarham: Umm...no, I have always kept Jack's daily schedule and also intermittently I have done more or less of his future schedules, depending on how burdened I was and how much work I had to do. I had somebody helping me in the West Wing for a while, and then we cut back... a third of the staff was cut back...I lost that person. So, consequently I became tremendously busy again and not able to do any sort of outreach or work in depth on any future schedule or transcripts. I just simply did not have the time. I mean, I would start doing it but not ever, ever ...I would do a very, very sorry job just because I was too busy. I always do his personal correspondence. Either he dictates it or I write it and he signs it or changes it. I have done whatever comes to Jack that doesn't belong to somebody else. I take up slack from other people. I do a lot of personal things for everybody who knows Jack in Georgia, or anywhere else...any personal friends and I screen his calls....take probably 9 out of 10 of his calls. When disasters first became our baby really nobody on the staff was there to do it., so if I needed to call a Governor and let him know that in half an hour it was going to be announced publicly that the President had signed a disaster relief for his state.....(someone comes in and interrupts and Alsobrook and Yarham say "Hi there.")

Alsobrook: When did Jack's office inherit that little chore.... of dealing with disasters?

Yarham: Oh dear. It was fairly early on and in fact, Walt Kaluha, he was...he sort of headed up the administration angle during the transition coming out of the campaign... a super guy. Now, I don't remember how we got involved in disasters. ...just because, probably with state and locals, and obviously we've got to plug into all those people. But anyway, all of a sudden we had this chore to do and if there's nobody around, because, I mean, if Jack wasn't there and if somebody had to be called, I would make the calls and stuff.

Alsobrook: I want to discuss something that is very fresh in your mind, the most recent disaster, and that is hurricane Frederick on the Gulf Coast. Would you describe the role of your office as briefly as you can, from the time the hurricane first hit and what you have done in the way of follow-up, in the way of relief and coordination?

Yarham: OK. You are asking me a difficult question because I was on vacation and then I had come back for a few days and somebody was about to take over my job and all of that stuff.

Alsobrook: Tell me a little bit about what happened when you were there---you know, those couple of days when you were there...and I guess the relief stuff was going on then.

Yarham: Well, we worked very closely with the FDAA and FEMA both, so they had the lead. They were getting Jack's sign off on certain things and Jack was working very closely with John Macy and they were just trying to schedule the President down there just as quickly as they could possibly do it and were trying to see logistically exactly when that should be. They were also making comparisons with hurricane David and all that. Jack sort of played the role himself. There was no paper work for us to do. We were not getting incident reports. I was not specifically getting incident reports. They were coming in verbally to Jack because everything

was happening so quickly. All we would do was get people on the phone for Jack----like the three governors involved.

Alsobrook: A conference call, you mean?

Yarham: No, not together, separately for Jack, to find out first hand exactly what was going on—exactly what they were doing about it. And then Jack went down with the President and then John Macy ...and Vernon Weaver, the head of the Small Business Administration. The four of them went down together. I think it was on the Friday. They didn't know if they were going on Thursday or Friday. I guess it happened on Wednesday. So, it was a matter of Jack just talking to a lot of people, pulling it all together as quickly as he possibly could. Getting the President down there and, of course, I am not sure if he was going to Mobile when he first left, but they sort of planned it as they went. See, Jack doesn't have to go by any hard and fast rules. He is a very flexible guy and he is very low key....like nobody would know what Jack was doing and he would be solving all kinds of problems. He played it by ear and got the President down there. Of course, they had to cancel the President's schedule for that Friday and I had to cancel all Jack's stuff...but it was a last minute thing and Jack was doing all the communicating in his office and we didn't really know what was going on until Jack said we are going at such and such time.

Alsobrook: So, Jack went with him?

Yarham: Jack went with the President, the head of FEMA, John Macy, and the head of the SBA, Vernon Weaver for....

Alsobrook: I think I read

Yarham: (interrupts) I think it ended up Vernon Weaver did not go. I do not...I don't know.

Alsobrook: Didn't somebody from Jordan's office go...one of his deputies go on that trip too? For some reason that sticks in my head.

Yarham: I have no idea.

Alsobrook: Is this typical of the way your office would deal with a disaster?

Yarham: By the very nature, yeah.

Alsobrook: I think I recall Jack being out in the west and they had some real bad tornadoes there....in Wichita Falls or someplace....

Yarham: Yes, yes. Uh--huh.

Alsobrook: This was the same sort of thing. He would actually visit the site itself then?

Yarham: Not in every instance, but once there...when he is close by and he can just fly over...because Jack does an awfully lot of traveling. He is out an awfully lot....because, you know, he is such a fantastic speaker.

Alsobrook: Have you done any work in editing any of his speeches or anything like that?
nljc.oh.P.Yarham

Yarham: No, he does it himself. Jack is such a perfectionist. I mean, I can get them typed, I can proof read them, and I can mark them up as necessary, but usually he has already done it or we can do it from tapes. If he has not written a speech out before, and he does it verbatim, pulling several pieces of information together without a written text, he will edit it himself. He is English major and he loves English and he loves the language and particularly, if it is going to be published, he wants to do it himself.

Alsobrook: Pat, you were talking about screening his calls. I know you have worked for him a long time, but how can you tell which calls to screen –you know, which ones to take yourself and which ones to give to him? What criteria do you use?

Yarham: Well, I find out who the person is and what they want... (Alsobrook laughs) and then it's pretty easy.

Alsobrook: So, if it is somebody who has known him a long time or has long....

Yarham: Often it is someone who doesn't know me but knows him. They may say, "I'm an old friend of Jack's." I mean, I've worked with him for nine years, and I can say, "Well, Mr. Smith, I've never had the pleasure of talking with you before. (Alsobrook laughs) Were you at Harvard with him or did you know him down in the campaign?" Usually you can tell from the accent where they are from—or I can ask them -where they are calling from. I mean, I can find out who they are. I say to them that I am his personal assistant and I will be very glad to help you if I can because Jack is so busy, and he always is, you know, so I'm not telling any lies. And they will say, "No, no, this is personal." And I'll say "OK, that is fine." And they always call back in five minutes and tell me what they want.

Alsobrook: Is that right? Every time, right? (Alsobrook laughs)

Yarham: Almost, without exception, (Alsobrook continues to laugh) because I have laid it out fair and square. I mean, it is hard for somebody to believe that they have been a close friend of Jack Watson's and he cannot come to the phone. And I really have to very gently tell them, I know it doesn't sound right to you, but there is no way that Jack will have the time to call you today and if there is anything I can help you with, please let me know what it is, period, ...and the rest is up to them. And I find out they want to find out somebody's phone number or they want a VIP tour ticket, or they want to know if Charlie Kirbo is in Washington today. I mean, they want to know all kinds of things that I can help them with, but I am not going to lay it on thick. You know, I mean, it is up to them to want to tell me...and most of the time I can find out.

Alsobrook: And the people who have known Jack for many years know that, then?

Yarham: Oh, yes. All the departments of King and Spalding wouldn't dream of asking to talk to him. They just talk to me. And the greatest compliment, after working with those guys down in King and Spalding, for them to call and say "well, we always feel like, Pat, when we have talked to you, we have talked to Jack." I mean, that makes me feel like a million dollars. (laughs)

Alsobrook: That was really another question I was going to ask you, after you have worked with a man for a certain period of years, do you reach the point where you can almost figure out how he would answer a particular question or deal with a certain problem?

Yarham: Well, if the situation remained the same, of course, you could almost do that, but fortunately, I should say, our situation and roles have changed through the years, but sometimes I could be wrong so I'm not too hard and fast about it. I try to figure out what he would do in a situation, and usually I am right...I'm not 100 percent. Once in awhile, like somebody will extend an invitation to go to somewhere and I had had a very strong impression from him personally that that was something he had never wanted to do, but I found out that he changed his mind. You know you've always gotta give the guy the benefit of the doubt, but you can at least get a pretty good angle, I mean, most of the time I'm pretty cool.

Alsobrook: All right, this is just an opinion question from your vantage point. You know, a great deal has been written about cabinet access to the President. From your vantage point do you think this has varied a great deal since 1977...the whole idea of access to the President by cabinet members?

Yarham: Knowing so little about prior administrations, it is really hard for me to give some kind of comparisons, you know, but I think the cabinet has very, very good access to the President. I don't think they use it as much as they could, and the President being a bit of a loner, they probably don't feel that they should bother him with something or he hasn't maybe shown...he's probably said to them in cabinet 'call me whenever you need me', or that sort of thing, but he's not warm and sort of hearty, say like a Lyndon Johnson or something, and they may not know that he really means it...but I don't think it is used as much as they could, but I do think there's also good access to the President and there's also good access to the senior staff. I think that....the things I've heard in the Republican administration is that the senior staff told the cabinet what to do and stuff like that...and they shut off the access to the President. That does not exist in this administration. Absolutely not, because if there was an issue to be decided between cabinet folks and they would talk to Stu and Jack and there was a problem, I mean, they would talk to the President about it. Absolutely.

Alsobrook: If a cabinet member had a problem?

Yarham: The cabinet member could go directly to the President himself, as he wished.

Alsobrook: That was exactly what I was going to ask you. If a cabinet member had a problem, would they be more likely to deal with it with a memo or face to face with the President, based on what you have seen?

Yarham: Either way. Probably...you see this may be one thing that may have put the cabinet off from knowing how much access they do have to him, is that he likes it on paper first just because he has so little time. Every time someone wants to ask Jack about something, I say, "Please give me the details on a piece of paper." Same sort of thing. Everything's got to be put down in black and white. And sometimes when you do that, as Jack has always told me, if you put it down in black and white and you look at the pros and cons, sometimes the problem doesn't really exist as much as you thought, or maybe you get a different perspective on it. But anyway, I

think that they would feel quite comfortable going often to the President if they have a specific problem.

Alsobrook: As you think back about your time here, are there certain projects or accomplishments that you feel that your office has taken care of since you've been there that gives you a great deal of personal satisfaction, that you look back on with pride?

Yarham: The whole arena of state and local governments I think has been brought into much sharper sort of focus for people in Washington. I think we have opened up a lot of communications with FRCs (federal/regional councils) and all of the state and local folks throughout the country and I think Jack Watson is primarily responsible for that and I have been very happy to be a part of it and to be on the receiving end when Mayor Coleman Young or Tom Bradley of Los Angeles called. They call personally on the phone, I mean, they have wonderful relations with Jack. He's a people person. They're crazy about Jack. They may not be crazy about the whole administration, but relations we've had with a lot of governors, even when they are not necessarily 100% friends, you know, but the relationships that we have been able to have, just through the leadership of Jack within the inter-governmental relations office, is just something that I think has worked extremely well. I doubt whether there is anything to come close to it in prior administrations. It couldn't. We've just had fantastic relations...but now, the only people who are really *gung ho* for the President's re-election are a few mayors and a few governors....and that is just a lot of long, hard work on Jack's part.

Alsobrook: Are there certain things that you have found about working in the White House that are much more difficult than working out in the private sector?

Yarham: More difficult? Just the longer hours, that's all.

Alsobrook: You mean the fatigue factor of longer hours. Is that what you mean?

Yarham: No, just not having a life of my own.

Alsobrook: Uh huh.

Yarham: And I think, well, why do you need one....you're in the White House. It is a wonderful place to be. Well, yes, it is exciting and everything but I have regretted not having more of a life of my own just because of the sheer demand that I am there such long hours.

Alsobrook: You touched on this earlier, Pat. Is there a problem in trying to find out what other White House units are working on...particular issues?

Yarham: Yes, I think there is always going to be a communication problem like that when everything is so overlapping. It is almost something that you can't stamp out. Part of the problem is the people outside; because you'll get people, say like, Jesse Hill from Atlanta. He'll call people like Stu Eizenstat. He can't get a hold of Stu Eizenstat and maybe he talks to one of his deputies and gets the whole set of things in motion, and then he will call me because he still hasn't talked to Stu Eizenstat. He wants to talk to Jack Watson and he'll do the same thing with me, and unless David and I talk or unless me and someone else talk, we don't know. So you can actually walk around the White House, if you knew what person he was going to call, or else he

was going to call...the same person calling ten people.. This is probably coming out of the campaign situation where there are people...he's a fine man, you know, but he knows who is in the White House and he will go from one to the other. I think a lot of people do that....and, of course, the reporters do that too.

Alsobrook: There is no way to prevent that, really.

Yarham: You can't prevent that. No, you can't.

Yarham: Probably, you know, something that would help alleviate that is more meetings. Not just senior staff but all levels. More meetings like we had in room 450, but not to be told things, but to have certain issues where they get people to really respond and work together more tightly.

Alsobrook: So they'd know who was working on a particular issue. Is that what you mean?

Yarham: Yeah, you can't really define it quite like that. Just sessions where you all try to sort of link up what you are working on a disaster. Probably the Chief of Staff thing, the Al McDonald position, is going to help alleviate some of that.

Alsobrook: Can you tell me anything about your future plans?

Yarham: Yes, I going to take the legal assistant program at George Washington University, which is a para-professional thing and I'll go back into working with a law firm.

Alsobrook: King and Spalding?

Yarham: No, no. I'm not doing it specifically to do that. In fact, I'll probably go back to the west coast and I'd like to get more into working in a public interest law firm or a law firm which has a large, you know, amount of work where they deal with the community---obviously programs and things like that.

Alsobrook: That's great. Lastly, could you give me a permanent address if you have one that is permanent....and a telephone number where we could possibly reach you?

Yarham: For a year, I imagine, I will be at 701 Avon Place, Alexandria, Virginia; 32314 – 504-, hum, that's wrong---what's my number? (Pauses)--- 703?

Alsobrook: I think that's right.

Yarham: 703-548-3820.

Alsobrook: I can tell you've spent a lot of time in the White House. (laughs)

Yarham: I never call myself. My dogs are not good at answering the phone. (Alsobrook laughs)

Alsobook: Is there any group that you have membership in that would always know your address, say, in the future, (if) somebody in the library wanted to contact you ten, fifteen, or twenty years from now and talk to you again?

Yarham: No, I'm a bit of a loner myself. You can always get me through Jack Watson and I'm sure you will always know where he is.

Alsobook: Thanks a lot. I appreciate your time.