

John A. Carver, Jr. Oral History Interview – JFK#9, 12/9/1969
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Biographical Note

Carver was Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Public Lands Management from 1961 to 1964, Under Secretary of the Interior from 1965 to 1966, and Commissioner of the Federal Power Commission from 1966 to 1972. In this interview Carver discusses interdepartmental relations and coordination under both John F. Kennedy [JFK] and Lyndon B. Johnson [LBJ], both formal and informal; John M. Kelly as Assistant Secretary of the Interior; lack of understanding of Interior matters in the Department of State; the Federal Power Commission's objections to new regulations in 1963; JFK's staff system; and Interior Secretary Stewart L. Udall's working relationship with both JFK and LBJ, among other issues.

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John A. Carver, Jr. – JFK #9
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Ninth Oral History Interview

With

JOHN A . CARVER, JR.

December 9, 1969
Washington, D.C.

By William W. Moss

For the John F. Kennedy Library

MOSS: Right. I'd like to talk a little this morning, Mr. Carver, about interdepartmental relations. And first of all, I'd like to try and nail down something that's been cropping up in other interviews, and it doesn't seem to be covered very well in the literature on the Kennedy [John F. Kennedy] Administration, and that's the establishment and operations of the Ball Committee, headed by George Ball [George W. Ball], an interdepartmental committee, as I understand it, at the under secretary level, that handled a lot of routine interdepartmental coordination. Are you familiar with it? Do you recall its origins?

CARVER: Well, I hadn't thought about it for a long time. Of course there was nonesuch while I was Under Secretary. I recall now that there was some kind

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of a luncheon schedule of under secretaries right early in the Kennedy Administration, which Jim Carr [James K. Carr] attended, but I don't think it lasted very long, and at least so far as our department was concerned, I don't think it had any function at all. One reason was that Jim's role as Under Secretary wasn't broad enough so that he could in any realistic way

speaking for the Department in dealing with other departments; and I really think it was a cipher so far as the Department of the Interior was concerned, at least that's my recollection now.

MOSS: Okay, so you can't really provide anything more on this.

CARVER: I can't provide anything more on that. I recall Jim saying that he met with them, and I think at one point they were entertained at the Interior Department for a luncheon.

MOSS: There was also a sort of informal, semi-regular meeting of assistants to secretaries, was there not?

CARVER: Yes. I really think that the focal point of that, that lasted on any kind of a basis, however, was not that kind of an organization, but rather that group that met over at the White House on legislative

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and other matters.

MOSS: All right. What was this, and would you describe it?

CARVER: Well, I don't recall exactly how structured it was, but Orren Beaty for the Department of the Interior would, as I recall, be dealing with his counterparts on a fairly regular basis, generally in the morning at the White House. I think that the thing got even more structured after Johnson [Lyndon B. Johnson] came in, but it started under Kennedy. But once again, so far as any kind of an organization among assistants to the secretary, I couldn't shed any light on that.

MOSS: Because this is one of the most difficult things of course to run down, these sort of ad hoc and informal arrangements of getting coordination among the departments.

CARVER: Well, the formal structures for it never seemed to survive. On an informal basis, of course, departments with a kind of common interest in specific problems would rely on personal acquaintanceship. For example, there was always somebody over at Agriculture close to the Secretary of Agriculture [Orville Lothrop Freeman] with whom people close to the Secretary of the Interior [Stewart L. Udall] could work.

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MOSS: Anybody in particular?

CARVER: Well, I don't recall.... A fellow named Tom Hughes [Thomas R. Hughes]

was there for a while. No, I couldn't put names on the people, but that kind of contact was available.

MOSS: All right. Now there was an advisory council on recreational resources at one point, involved in the whole business of getting the Outdoor Recreation Bureau going, and sort of providing a supra-authority for coordination.

CARVER: Yes, yes there was.

MOSS: Okay. Now, how did this outfit operate?

CARVER: Well, there was a formal structure under the statute which created the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation which made a Cabinet-level committee, created one and gave it certain functions of coordination. As a practical state of affairs, there was a kind of a gradual erosion of that in terms of any Cabinet participation, so that....

MOSS: Why?

CARVER: Well, the reason for it is, I think, in its nature. I think coordinating committees made up of Cabinet officers always sound good and very, very seldom work.

MOSS: For what reason?

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CARVER: Secretaries find it very difficult to schedule their work so that they can meet with their counterparts on any kind of regular basis. There's a great difference in the level of interest with reference to a particular function or program from department to department. The interest of the Secretary of Commerce would be very peripheral, and he quite likely wouldn't have much personal knowledge, whereas the Secretary of Interior might find that a very important program. It's really quite embarrassing for the Cabinet officers to admit ignorance to each other, so they just generally don't go. And as soon as one doesn't go, then another won't go because it's embarrassing for a Cabinet officer to show up with a bunch of subordinates, and after a while the thing just kind of sloughs off. And if you don't have good, solid, bureau-type program organizations within the departments working with each other directly, after a while the thing will just kind of fade into nothing. And all the reformers who talk about getting these Cabinet coordinating agencies, mostly it just doesn't work, is my experience with them.

MOSS: Right. Now, could you talk a little bit more

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about informal coordination arrangements? You said there was always somebody at Agriculture close to the Secretary, did this apply to other departments also, and what did you do...

CARVER: Oh, yes, there would come situations.... For example, that great, big rhubarb about the location of a road across the Lincoln Memorial, where we would be head on into the work of the Department of Commerce and the Federal Highway Administration. We had lots of times where we would have direct work with then the Department of Commerce, later the Department of Transportation. And those problems would escalate quite frequently from the Rex Whitton, Connie Wirth [Conrad L. Wirth] level on up to the secretarial level. Another one was, of course, this whole project of sort of a master plan for Pennsylvania Avenue. This involved a whole bunch of departments. When Cabinet members get interested in matters, they can generally get the matter structured enough to get working committees and organizations and so on and keep it fired up long enough to either get the job done or find out they can't.

MOSS: Is it fair to say that it's generally in response to a problem that arises rather than a projection

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of structure over time?

CARVER: No, I certainly would think that would be fair to say. There isn't any genuine instinct to coordinate in a bureaucracy at any level other than those people that just have to bump against each other day by day. Those that are remote from it don't see the necessity for it.

MOSS: Okay. Did you in your area get involved at all in the work of the interdepartmental staff committee on the revision of the water projects standards?

CARVER: No, I didn't.

MOSS: You didn't at all?

CARVER: I did not get into that at all.

MOSS: I noted in some of the papers that information was routed to you, or a copy was sent to your office. This was just for information, was it?

CARVER: Basically we were because we had so many functions in the land management area, including a lot of water functions, we had to be kept

informed. But that particular proposition, we had no direct program interest in.

MOSS: Okay. What about relations with the Justice Department, particularly Ramsey Clark's Land Division?

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CARVER: Well, on a time basis, we got fooling around with Ramsey Clark most during that period when he had a double role, when he was in the White House. As I recall, he was in the White House without giving up his portfolio as Assistant Attorney General, and during that period he was working quite close to President Kennedy and others over there—am I right about that?

MOSS: I believe so. I think it should be checked out, though.

CARVER: I'm not quite sure whether or not that didn't come later. But at any rate, we became much more aware of him as a force after he got the White House hat than we had during the early years. The land resources work of the Justice Department that impinged on my area would involve us with others over there, but I don't recall this policy business of the sort which later became when it came to the question of the plans for disposition of surplus lands and making lands available for parks and getting a national policy on this thing. He had quite a significant role.

MOSS: How about specific claims such as mining claims or something? This would involve Kelly's [John M. Kelly] area, too.

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CARVER: Well, now, that was mostly my area. Kelly wouldn't be involved so much in those disputed title problems; those were all my problems. And basically, the bureaucracy part, the staff, the professionals of the Justice Department, were pretty well tuned into our own solicitor's office. And the real struggle was between me and the Solicitor [Frank J. Barry], rather than.... And in that struggle, generally the Solicitor had the support of the Justice Department in taking positions with reference to some of these policy issues which I sometimes disagreed with. But there was quite a close working relationship between the Solicitor's office and some of the staff people—Dave Warner [David R. Warner] and others—over at Justice. And that was the line of communication; I seldom got into it.

MOSS: Okay. While I mentioned John Kelly, on the business of granting leases and this sort of thing for mining and whatnot, how would this process work? Would he get into the review of the justification and so on?

CARVER: Under the Geological Survey, the conservation division was the key policy

unit to set the terms and conditions on the spacing of wells and how much development work, and that sort of thing;

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the actual execution of the documents and the signing up of the leases and so on would come through the Bureau of Land Management [BLM].

MOSS: So he would set the technical criteria.

CARVER: They'd have the technical function, particularly in the conservation area. As land managers, the BLM people would post the sales and take the bids and keep the land records and all that. But none of these things could go through without going through and getting the technical review of the minerals people, particularly as I say, in the conservation division involving oil and gas. They, of course, also could be called upon for technical consultation on quality of minability or other things.

MOSS: Yes. His whole area was technical rather than policy, wasn't it?

CARVER: Very technical. It was.

MOSS: Does this mean that you, when you became Under Secretary and Carr when he was Under Secretary and Udall sort of left Kelly to run his own shop?

CARVER: Well, Kelly and I were the two of the most jealous bureaucrats in terms of our particular areas. Neither one of us willingly gave up anything, either to the Secretary or anybody else that we could help. We're very much alike in that respect.

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Consequently, occasionally we clashed. But there was a healthy mutual respect there which carried over after I became Under Secretary. I tried to stay out of the technical areas of those assistant secretaries because I had a lot of respect for that particular role. I didn't want to substitute myself for it in the fashion that Carr had intruded himself into the water and power matters. [Interruption]

MOSS: Well, one of the reasons I was asking about Kelly is that I wanted to get onto the relations with the State Department next, and it's my understanding that Kelly did some international work, particularly in oil.

CARVER: He did a great deal of that. The Department's international responsibilities in this area were extensive. He had a very broad charter from the

Secretary. He enjoyed it; he wasn't afraid of those responsibilities and achieved a good deal of seniority in the U.S. delegations for it. But I had nothing to do with it at any time. I did very little. I guess I did almost no overseas traveling except in connection with our own territories in my entire tenure in the Department. I never went to Europe,

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for example, never was in the Far East, never was anywhere but the U.S. territories.

MOSS: What sort of departmental review of his international activities went on?

CARVER: Well, I guess when those matters would come back and go through the White House review, the White House people, then the staff people who would be working with the Secretary, and at that point in time there would have to be the necessary adjustments if any were indicated. As to any kind of a formal Department review or a formal report from John as to what he'd done in terms of his colleagues, I don't even recall that happening. He acted pretty independently.

MOSS: Okay. Did the State Department at any time indicate resentment that essentially a domestic man was meddling in diplomacy?

CARVER: Well, not to me, but I expect they felt that way, did on everything else.

MOSS: Any particular instances that prompted that?

CARVER: Well, when I was Under Secretary, we had a deal with these problems involving fish, as to which, I was...

MOSS: Was this off Alaska?

CARVER: Alaska, the Russians and the Japanese—and mainly the Japanese—fishing. And I thought, still think, that the

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technicians at what you might call the fish level rather than the diplomatic level were in a fair way to solve some of these problems. But it never did work out very well. My respect for the State Department in these matters is continually reduced.

MOSS: What sort of thing caused you to reduce your respect?

CARVER: Well, they seemed to have absolutely no understanding of the role of the Congress in this matter. Men like Warren Magnuson [Warren G. Magnuson], who is Chairman of the Commerce Committee and from a fishing state and so on or Bob Bartlett [Edward Lewis "Bob" Bartlett], they had such control

up in the Senate that we could sense what was practical and what wasn't. With all due respect to my colleagues at the State Department, they just didn't have that feeling for it. It was uncomfortable working with them, really.

MOSS: What sort of things did they do that gave you this feeling that they weren't understanding?

CARVER: Well, I guess maybe I'm recalling impressions more than specifics.

MOSS: But impressions have origins in them in fact.

CARVER: But you have to kind of fish back and reconstruct them. We went up to a conference with some

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senior senators—Bartlett, Magnuson and some others—some State Department and some Interior Department people, I recall at one time. And it was just that kind of a preachy tone to these senior senators, telling them about the broad interests of the United States, and they couldn't be parochial about these little problems. Well, these weren't little parochial problems to Bob Bartlett or Warren Magnuson, and this approach to them was just calculated to be abrasive. After all, they are United States Senators, and if you think that sort of thing, you've got to be a little cagey about how you say it. They seemed to think it and say it all at the same time.

MOSS: They weren't being very diplomatic.

CARVER: They certainly were not. They certainly were not.

MOSS: Did you get involved at all in the Colorado River salinity business?

CARVER: No.

MOSS: Okay. Now an area I'm sure you had some involvement in, and that's the Federal Power Commission's objections to Interior control of transmission line locations.

CARVER: Well, that was a doosie of a rhubarb. I recall it took place in '63.

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MOSS: Right. Swidler [Joseph C. Swidler] sent a letter of protest in March, I think, in which he questioned it.

CARVER: There had been a kind of an article of the liberal faith that the interests of

the public power people could be served without anything more than the stroke-of-the-pen action of the Secretaries of Interior and Agriculture in prescribing terms and conditions under which permits would be granted to private utilities to cross public lands with their lines. There had been some—during the Eisenhower [Dwight D. Eisenhower] years, some regulations had been revoked which had required that the utilities seeking rights of way had to sign up to make their surplus or excess capacity available to the public bodies or the government. And the forces, the so-called Chudoff [Earl D. Chudoff] Investigation—it was mainly John Moss [John E. Moss] of California and others—brought quite strong pressure on the Department to promulgate these new regulations.

But it was by no means strictly a public-private power proposition because in the Northwest and other areas, some of the so-called “public power crowd” had changed sides, so to speak, and this evidenced itself in a strong initial stand taken by Senator

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Jackson [Henry M. Jackson], who wanted to have some hearings on this before the regulations were promulgated.

The thing I remember most clearly about the matter is that I happened to be the first one to talk to Senator Jackson after these regulations were out, and he was of the opinion that he had been promised by the Secretary of the Interior and by Holum [Kenneth Holum] and by others that nothing like this would be done without giving him an opportunity to review them, and he was about as mad as I’ve ever seen anybody; he was really furious because he’d been left in a very difficult position with some very important constituents out in Washington, because he’d assured them that this wasn’t going to happen, then, of course, it did happen.

The thing was basically, fundamentally, a kind of a tempest in a teapot substantively because most of the big lines out in the West were subject to FPC license, and the license terms rather than the permission from the Interior or Agriculture Departments governed their rights. So that as it actually applied, it would just be a source of friction and aggravation between utilities trying to up their service from 33 kv [kilovolt] to 69 kv, and they’d be crossing forty rods here

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of public land, and then they’d have to come in and sign these things. And eventually we worked out a kind of a deal where the utilities could reserve, the utilities could reserve their legal objections by signing something, and the thing kind of simmered down. Never did accomplish anything, haven’t accomplished anything yet.

But Swidler’s objection to that at the time didn’t make much of a ripple as far as I was concerned, although since then, being over here, I am very much aware of what was behind it. And fundamentally, it was a pretty sound objection, and that is, by forcing, as the regulations said, the utilities who wanted a right of way to conform to the national power policy, or whatever that language was, potentially put the Interior Department, at least in the public lands states, in the position of fixing power policies which might be at variance with those adopted by the Federal Power Commission in its licensing authority. So it was a

substantive problem. The real substantive problem, however, has got nothing much to do with either the FPC or the Interior Department, it's the great umbrage which the House Interior Committee takes at a

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scheme which they regard as essentially legislative being levered into effect by reason of control over the land itself.

But just thinking back to what happened in '63, the big problem was a real breakdown of communications in the promulgation of these regulations. Now the question I couldn't answer is whether that was purposeful or whether it was accidental. I just don't know; didn't know then, don't know now. I wasn't consulted about it as it finally went out, and as I recall, I wrote a rather strong memorandum saying I disapproved of the regulations insofar as I was asked to comment on them before they were put out.

MOSS: Now, is there anything else in the interdepartmental area that you'd think is worth covering at this point?

CARVER: Well, we at one time or another—I guess later—had to do continuing work with the HEW [Health, Education, and Welfare] on Indian health and Indian education. I don't think that very often got escalated up to a secretarial level, but as you can see, with the health functions of the reservations being under one department and education and other responsibilities of the reservations being under the Interior Department,

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you had a potentially difficult situation which occasionally led to some problems. We've discussed territories before, and occasionally this would bring us into rather close connections with some departments sometimes we didn't have much to do with otherwise, sort of acting as a representative for the territories and coordinating programs which would be applicable in the territories sort of as a Washington representative for Small Business Administration. Particularly after some of those typhoons, we got into this business pretty significantly. We had our most constant coordinating to do in the area of forest management because, of course, the good Lord above didn't put the trees down exactly where the responsibilities of the Interior and Agriculture were divided.

MOSS: The Forest Service I noted in something was moved from Interior to Agriculture back in what about 1905 or something?

CARVER: Way early. 19.... That's a part of the old Gifford Pinchot business, and of course the scars are still there. It would be fair to say that most of the time our coordination on forestry matters were with the chief of the Forest Service. It was seldom that Freeman got into it except where you had these big land-type problems like some

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of these wilderness and Voyager's National Area and so on and so on that we've discussed pretty much before. They were pretty much ad hoc sort of coordination problems, in which Agriculture protected itself pretty well. As to the other departments, oh, kind of running down the line of them, we had quite a little bit to do with labor when we got into the Job Corps business. That was later. On the housing, under Marie McGuire [Marie C. McGuire] and Bob Weaver [Robert C. Weaver] and so on, we did a lot to bring housing programs to the Indian reservations, so we got some coordination practice there, which I think was by and large successful. But to summarize what I said earlier, I just don't think any structures for it were the key point, they were pretty much ad hoc.

MOSS: Okay, let me move to the White House a bit now, particularly, at the moment, the Bureau of the Budget. In an earlier interview you said that by and large you were able to get your way with the Budget Bureau until the Vietnam crunch came. I have two questions: one is who was your man in the Budget Bureau; in effect, who was the fellow in the Budget Bureau who looked after Interior's interests?

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CARVER: Well, basically we had two groups over there, because the Public Works group under Carl Schwartz [Carl H. Schwartz] had a lot to do with all those water and other developmental projects and then on our human and social programs, we were dealing with Harry McKittrick and naturally, with Sam Hughes [Phillip Samuel Hughes]. Well, there came a time when we were dealing with Henry Rowen [Henry S. Rowen] and some of the others on that PPBS [Programs, Planning Budgeting Service] and that sort of thing when that was getting the big, old drive. That came later.

MOSS: Just as an aside, how did that hit Interior? What consequences did that have for...

CARVER: The PPBS?

MOSS: Yes.

CARVER: Well, we could see what was coming because there'd been quite a few signals about it. I think it hit Interior like it hit everybody else. When President Johnson got sold on this thing, it wasn't really ready to go. He called everybody over there and put the damn thing into effect in that "East Room Manifesto," and of course the reactions all over town were instinctively negative, but politically positive. I mean it was handled in such a way that you just damn well better not say much against it

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or your head would be lopped off. So we undertook—as a matter of fact, I think we did better than any department in town to put on a positive approach to it and to kind of iron out some of the bugs that were presented in the papers and the presentation of it, which we got from the Budget Bureau on a forced draft basis after the thing had been adopted, in effect, a little prematurely.

Of course there was one fundamental fallacy in it. I mean McNamara [Robert S. McNamara] had made his reputation on it in a period of an expanding Defense Department. We were supposed to use the tools in terms of a contracting civilian component business, and what will work well when everybody's growing, there's room for everybody, may work not so well when the fear is that this is being used—when everybody feels his job is at stake. No question in my mind but that the thing was a positive overall because we did get an extremely significant if temporary awareness throughout the Department of what everybody else was doing, a sort of open forum exposure of your program against everybody else's in extensive meetings which I ran. It had a lot of internal advantage, which the PPBS has an excuse for or a self-starter of. I don't think the same thing happened in

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all the other departments.

MOSS: Okay. Let me ask you for an evaluation of the Kennedy staff system as such. What was it able to do for you, and what couldn't it do for you?

CARVER: Well, that staff system was a pretty small group where you knew pretty near everybody and knew in a general way what they were doing. It wasn't a great big organized structured kind of a proposition. It could and did resolve a lot of interdepartmental problems or legislative problems or sometimes intradepartmental problems which could have festered a long time without some people over there that were willing to make some decisions. Ralph Dungan [Ralph A. Dungan] I remember most warmly because he was a man who could make decisions, did make them. And he could handle adverse decisions very well, too. He could tell you no and get away with it, as some people couldn't. Lee White [Lee C. White] could do some of the same thing, although he wasn't as direct as Dungan was.

MOSS: Myer Feldman?

CARVER: Feldman, of course, wielded enormous power, and he also was not afraid to make decisions.

And then the White House staff performed an extremely significant role with respect to the

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really significant constituent groups. They understood the politics of the conservation

movement, or they understood the politics of the resource problems which we had, and they understood, therefore, and could handle and did handle some of these developing problems which involved opinion-molding or opinion-making groups. I've mentioned before the Indian interest groups had an in to the White House. This was a source of big aggravation to us, but frequently it was a source of great help to us because one thing they could let off steam, and the other thing is we could get our way sometimes by having them talk to the groups.

MOSS: What about the other side of the fence; the users, the ranchers, and the miners, and this sort of thing?

CARVER: Well, they didn't fare so well, really, but they did all right. Certain types of these people, the business community, have a pretty good in, generally speaking, with Mike [Myer Feldman], get their point across. That was an open kind of society over there; they didn't have closed minds on these issues, they were pretty pragmatic. The Lord knows, Mike Feldman was pragmatic. You know,

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we didn't have any great majorities on the Hill, we had to kind of cut and paste and fill around here to get a lot of these things done. And of course the third thing is that when the time really came—and this may be at some variance with what I've said earlier about our Hill relationships, but there would come a time when O'Brien [Lawrence F. O'Brien] and others would have to lend a laboring oar to get some of our legislation through, and they did.

In the area of the territorial and international problems, I think that they kind of overdid it. McGeorge Bundy had that National Security whatchamacallit group over there, and they had young Mike Forrestal [Michael V. Forrestal], and he was cutting a pretty wide swath a lot of the time. As a matter of fact, he undertook one time to get all of us badly embarrassed in connection with the handling of High Commissioner Will Goding [M. Wilfred Goding] of the Trust Territory.

MOSS: How did this happen? What occurred?

CARVER: Well, Goding was misplaced out there, and he ought to have been replaced, and I guess maybe I should take some responsibility for convincing Bundy and Forrestal and Charles Johnson—and

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Kaysen was over there, Carl Kaysen, that we had to have a new High Commissioner. But, of course, Will Goding was a brother of Bob Bartlett's secretary and.... Forrestal's mistake was to lead me to believe and certainly others to believe, that he could speak for the President in saying we were going to let Goding go. When the crunch came, the President had never heard of it, which became clear when Bartlett called President Kennedy up about it. The whole damn thing just fell into a great, big embarrassing mess. And I was always a little resentful

because, you know, you do one thing if the President knows what's going on and has made up his mind but if he hasn't heard of it, man, you've got the worst of all worlds then.

MOSS: This sort of thing happen very often, or...

CARVER: Well, I didn't catch it happening very often. I think that most of the guys over there the President would cover for if it had happened.

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That's the only one I know, but that was enough to make you ache for a long time there after.

MOSS: I noticed in our list of White House appointments that you were present at a Cabinet meeting on 18 October 1962. Now this was right smack in the middle of the Cuban Missile Crisis, so this may place it for you. Do you recall the meeting and what transpired, why you went to it?

CARVER: Well, I recall the meeting. And I went to it because I was the ranking officer; the Secretary and the Under Secretary were gone. And I probably got some minutes or notes of it around here because I was pretty meticulous about making a record of that. And if you like I'll ask Vernon to see if we can find it for next time. But I do not recall any discussion of the Cuban missile crisis, although I was present at another time when Adlai Stevenson [Adlai E. Stevenson] briefed the Cabinet on developments.

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That wasn't at that time, was it?

MOSS: What are your recollections of that meeting? It may have been, I don't know.

CARVER: Well, I'll have to refresh my recollection on it. It was basically that those things were interesting, but remote from my day-to-day work.

MOSS: Let me ask you about relationships between the Interior Department as an institution, and Udall as the Secretary and President Kennedy, and how this differed between the Interior-President Johnson relationships? This is a wide-open sort of thing, but what are your impressions?

CARVER: Well, I guess maybe I'd start with that conservation tour that Udall talked President Kennedy into. And I didn't go on the tour, but I've talked to a lot of people, of course, who did. The thing I remember most vividly is the change in the President's attitude about it sort of midway. He wished he hadn't

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made the decision to go as he started, and then they went up here to Pennsylvania, Pinchot's home and dedicated something, and that didn't go too awfully well. But then he began to get the feel of the people on these issues as he got out into the Midwest, and he was just going a mile a minute by the time he got into the Far West. And I think it was on that trip that he made quite impromptu—at least it wasn't in his prepared text—some statements which we really loved in the Interior Department. Because he said, you know, every time you bet on America, you're going to win, or something to that effect. And I think after that...

By that time Udall had completely outgrown the rather unfortunate gaffes which took place early in the Administration, which must have embarrassed Kennedy and caused him to be a little bit wry about it occasionally. I recall at one time where he told some questioner who was complaining about him confusing Pakistan and India or

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something like that, and he said, "Well, that's why he's the Secretary of the Interior!" You probably have heard that story from somebody who can remember it better than I can. And then of course he had that damn problem with the oil people where he sent that unfortunate letter out, and the President handled that pretty well.

MOSS: Was that Udall's letter, or was that Jack Evans' [John K. Evans] letter?

CARVER: It wasn't Udall's letter, but Udall had such a hand in it that the President again pretty wryly had to thank Udall for the publicity. It was a beautiful handling of the thing. And then, we had so many damn things just naturally going wrong at the Interior Department. We were working hard, you know, we weren't too damned efficient. I remember Lee White saying that he finally gave up keeping it when his yellow pad was just completely filled up with the goofs of Udall. They were very

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much aware of this kind of bull in a china shop approach. But once the thing got on a positive turn, which it did—I trace it back to that trip—then it just seemed that things couldn't go wrong any more.

MOSS: Who convinced President Kennedy he should go on the trip? What were their reasons for that?

CARVER: Well, I think Udall made him promise to do it. I don't know, but I think Udall extracted a promise to him at an early stage that he couldn't back out of; I think he tried.

MOSS: And who set the trip up?

CARVER: Well, it was basically done by Interior and Agriculture jointly. I think that was one of the ways of getting it. It certainly wasn't an entirely Interior thing. For example, it was a purely Agriculture deal, the first one up there in Pennsylvania, Gifford Pinchot's home.

But then of course the relationship between Udall and Mrs. Kennedy [Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy Onassis] on the White House and so on was a very, very

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positive kind of a thing in terms of the Secretary's relationship to the President, in my opinion. I think that the President must have been highly pleased that there was something constructive and attractive going on here that his wife was involved in. I don't think Stewart ever got close to the President in any kind of a Cabinet sense of advising or consulting on anything else in the world except the Department's matters. And of course we never went through a reelection: we didn't ever put that crucible to test. But there was a change.

Everybody said Udall couldn't possibly last; of course he lasted the whole time: he and Rusk [Dean Rusk] and who else? Wirtz [W. Willard Wirtz], I guess.

MOSS: Wirtz, of course, was Under Secretary, at first.

CARVER: That's right. Wirtz didn't come in as Secretary. That's right. He and Rusk, I think, were the...

MOSS: I think they're the only ones. McNamara almost made it, not quite.

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CARVER: But he didn't quite. Freeman made it.

MOSS: Freeman, right. How did Udall and President Johnson get along?

CARVER: Well, that was a pretty sound relationship, but like Johnson's relationships with everybody else, it had its ups and downs. Udall of course was expecting, everybody expected him to get the can tied to his tail immediately because he'd done Johnson in at the '60 Convention. And then everybody was making snide remarks about how Udall was coming in on the President's blind side by working with Lady Bird [Claudia Alta "Lady Bird" Johnson]. And there may have been some truth to that, although nothing invidious in it. But it didn't take very long before they were talking the same language.

President Johnson had a great feel for the land. He just automatically thought of this in favorable terms. He had good experience in the campaign on land and conservation matters, so that Udall, having survived that long, was

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set from there on. The campaign went well on all the land matters. That I don't know anything about.

And then, of course, you've got these highway beautification programs, and, of course, Udall's greatest success in this area was getting that water pollution business. That's strictly—as somebody put it, “Johnson transferred that to Interior because when he thought of water he thought of Udall.” Actually, the damn program didn't belong there at all, any more than air did, you know. It was a kind of a separate problem, but he got it.

And of course it's another whole book to deal with the midnight orders of the end of the Administration. You know, when Udall—two or three days before the term ended, Udall was threatening to resign, and a lot of nasty things were said. But I only know that indirectly from guys like Wayne Aspinall [Wayne N. Aspinall] and so on.

But basically throughout most of the time I think that Udall's relationships

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with Johnson were affirmative. Udall could get a lot in to Johnson's prose; he could get messages accepted and given. He understood dealing with Johnson a lot better than anybody I ever know. He'd send things over to the President that I would have been ashamed to write, but it just hit the President just right; you know, a kind of superficial type of memorandum about wouldn't it be a good idea that we do so and so, that sort of thing. He understood the President pretty well.

MOSS: Did he understand Kennedy as well?

CARVER: No. It was a great struggle all the time for Udall to.... Eventually he did, but they never got close because they were just different worlds. Udall and Johnson were from the same world.

MOSS: I think I'm going to break this off here because I have about four general reminiscence-type questions left. I'll break this off and pick them up for next time. And I think that'll be the end of things.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

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