

**John A. Carver, Jr., Oral History Interview – JFK#1, 08/19/68**  
Administrative Information

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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 his work under Senator Frank Church of Idaho; his work for John F. Kennedy's [JFK] 1960 presidential campaign as a coordinator in Michigan; and the transition process from Dwight D. Eisenhower's Administration to JFK's Administration in late 1960 and early 1961, among other issues.

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## John A. Carver, Jr. – JFK #1

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Oral History Interview

With

JOHN A. CARVER, JR.

August 19, 1968  
Washington, D.C.

By John F. Stewart

For the John F. Kennedy Library

STEWART: Let me ask you first if you recall when you first had any associations either with John Kennedy [John F. Kennedy] or members of his staff. This, presumably, would have been during the mid or late fifties.

CARVER: Well., I think I first met him when he came out to Idaho to make a political speech in 1954, I think it was. I had the opportunity at that time to escort him from the hotel to the airport and so on. I recall one question I asked him at that time which I always remembered his answer to.

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I said to him, "Well, what's it like to be a United States Senator?" And he said after a moment, "It's the most corrupting job in the world." And I took it to mean, and, of course, the context in which he said it was, that being a senator offered things available in no other form of life. That is, he felt it was unique.

It was thereafter, of course, that Frank Church was elected to the Senate, and I came to Washington in '57. I don't know when I first met Senator Kennedy at that time, although his office was nearby. We saw him all the time. He parked in the courtyard. I knew his staff pretty well beginning from about early 1957.

STEWART: You hadn't I assume had any contacts at the 1956 Convention or were you there?

CARVER: Yes. The 1956 Convention I had no contact at all. Of course, I followed it. Frank Church was then aspiring to be the keynoter in the 1960 campaign so that our office maintained sort of a neutrality

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on the question of Senator Kennedy's aspirations, particularly in comparison with those of Senator Johnson [Lyndon B. Johnson], because Frank didn't want to offend anybody. I spent quite a bit of that summer out in the state and was there when both groups came into the state. Of course, Frank was selected as the keynoter, and I was in Los Angeles and had quite a bit of activity with the Kennedy organization there. Of course, by that time he had all of the votes, and it was pretty clear that the neutrality would be abandoned.

However, Senator Johnson had a very, very tight hold on a good deal of the Idaho delegation, and some of the bitterness at that time was visited on Frank Church because about half the delegation thought Frank was really for Johnson and the other half thought he was really for Kennedy. Before the vice-presidential selections were made, there as a brief flurry about Senator Church being vice

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president. I guess there was about every other senator there, But we didn't get any contacts that I knew anything about in that office, just correspondence.

STEWART: How exactly, do you recall, were you involved in the discussions regarding the Idaho delegation? They split. I wrote down the figures. Kennedy got six votes, Johnson four and a half, Stevenson [Adlai E. Stevenson] a half, and Symington [Stuart Symington] two.

CARVER: Well, I don't know whether I was directly involved. I was out there and was aware of it. Irv Hoff [Irvin A. Hoff] who was then on Senator Magnuson's [Warren G. Magnuson] staff, was then Senator Johnson's principal representative in the area, and he worked with some political figures in Idaho Falls. The Kennedy people, on the other hand, were people who were pretty close had been more closely connected with Church's campaign. People like John Glasby and so on. Frank was just resolute in not letting anybody know where he stood any minute before

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he had to.

The Johnson people were quite a little bit more active in Idaho than the Kennedy people were in the sense, you know, helping get hotel reservations and that sort of thing and working with Tom Boise, a political figure up in north Idaho. I don't really know exactly

how those. . . . I don't think anybody knows how those votes finally showed up until the night of the voting, although in the caucus just before the voting—I wasn't there—Frank was pretty well smoked out and came out for Kennedy at that time. But there was some bad feeling. Some of it still persists.

STEWART: I assume the Kennedy people were as interested in him staying neutral as he was?

CARVER: Well, they were interested in him staying neutral until they had a majority, so to speak. They didn't want anything to, you know, go sour on it. The Kennedy people were very much aware that the Johnson people ideologically were very much more attractive to certain elements of the Democratic

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party in Idaho, particularly, Tom Boise, whom I've already mentioned, up in Lewiston. Tom was a Johnson man to the end, a matter which he mentioned very strongly after later President Kennedy was killed. He remembered that pretty clearly.

STEWART: Going back, before we go on to the campaign, were there any issues or matters in the Senate that you recall having any contact with Senator Kennedy or his office on?

CARVER: Well, I guess the principal one was in 1957 when Frank made his big speech on the Hells Canyon. And I think Senator Kennedy's.... I don't recall that his position changed, but I think it did. At any rate, he came out and made a very favorable statement concerning the project in connection with Frank's speech. At that time, of course, that was Frank's maiden speech, and he had discussed the

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fact that he was going to give it with numerous senators including Senator Kennedy.

STEWART: There was some story around that whole measure on how it related to the civil rights bill, that came up at that time. There were some switches by some Southerners. And the story was that the civil rights bill was sent back to the Judiciary Committee in exchange for some support on Hells Canyon. Do you recall that at all?

CARVER: Well, if I do, I haven't thought about it very much since. It's been sort of pushed into the background by all the other occurrences. But that bill did pass the Senate that year. And Frank's position on civil rights underwent some sort of a metamorphosis about that time. I hadn't thought about it for a long time. I wouldn't be able to say it had anything to do with Hells Canyon.

STEWART: All right. If there's nothing that sticks out in your mind, then, obviously...

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CARVER: Something sticks in my mind now. There was quite a little bit of maneuvering which involved then Senator Johnson. But I guess that's another story.

STEWART: And none of that, to your recollection, involved then Senator Kennedy?

CARVER: As far as I know, none at all.

STEWART: There was nothing about his acceptance of the Hells Canyon measure that stands out in your mind?

CARVER: No. Only that it did represent rather a nationalizing or a nationwide sort of program for Senator Kennedy and was so taken at the time, as I recall. Sort of a bid for the West. The New England senators never thought a hell of a lot about reclamation and big projects in the West. As it turned out, it could have been a pretty free vote because I think anybody who was really current on it knew that the chances of it passing the House were pretty slight anyway.

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STEWART: Senator Church was on the Foreign Relations Committee wasn't he?

CARVER: He wasn't at that time. He didn't get on the Foreign Relations Committee until '58.

STEWART: At the same time Senator Kennedy did.

CARVER: Well, it came after Senator Kennedy because Senator Kennedy ranked him on the Committee. I'd have to look it up, but I'm sure it was subsequent.

STEWART: Well, what I was leading to, do you remember any associations from the Foreign Relations Committee, or weren't you involved in that?

CARVER: Well, I was involved in everything that went on in the office, of course, but I do not recall about the time Frank got on the Foreign Relations Committee, and I'd have to check what his date was on that. I think he and Senator Kennedy were on the Latin American subcommittee together. Again, I'm not sure about that, but I think so. It's

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quite right. I didn't directly get involved in the foreign affairs, foreign relations part of the office. Mine was more domestic. Idahosy.

STEWART: Yes. Was there anything regarding the labor rackets hearings or the labor reform legislation that you were involved in?

CARVER: Well, Frank was on that committee for a while, on the McClellan [John L. McClellan] Committee. He sat there by Senator Kennedy and worked with then Robert Kennedy as a counsel for it. Frank didn't like that job much. I don't think Senator Kennedy liked it much either, but I don't have any way of knowing that. But Frank, he wasn't happy with that at all.

STEWART: It was too dangerous politically or what?

CARVER: No. No. The whole thing was rather distasteful to him. He didn't like it much. But I do not recall, again, in terms of Senator John Kennedy....

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That's where I first became acquainted with Pierre Salinger and so on but only just generally. He was on the staff then.

STEWART: Was there anything else about those Senate years that stands out in your mind? Do you recall, for example, when it really became apparent that he was going to run for the presidency and any reactions you or Frank Church may have back?

CARVER: Well, in 1959, I guess, Senator Kennedy began to. . . . I can't remember exactly when it was he was out sick for a while.

STEWART: That was in '55.

CARVER: But he was gone again for a short period there, wasn't he?

STEWART: Well, he may have been.

CARVER: Well, at any rate, what I was trying to associate it with is that Senator Kennedy began to have a less and less good attendance record in the Senate, and there was some generalized comment that he was a candidate among some of us who were kind of Senate watchers. It would be a matter of some

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note when he'd come into the floor. And he tended to come in more and just vote and get out than to come in and participate. He never was a part of the group around there among

the senators. Of course, neither was Frank, as far as that was concerned.

STEWART: Senator Church didn't have any aspirations at that time, did he, for the presidency?

CARVER: Oh, I'm sure that whatever aspirations he had then, he still has one way or the other. And they are very generalized, nothing specific. He did see himself in terms of seeking the keynoter job and working with Kennedy for that and see himself as getting a national reputation working toward his own reelection. Then, of course, it paid off in '62, and he's facing it again.

STEWART: How exactly did that come about, his selection as keynoter?

CARVER: Well, he made it pretty clear right early in the

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game that he wanted it. Orville Freeman [Orville Lothrop Freeman] was regarded, at least by us, as the competition. All of the candidates were kind of playing this keynoter business off, one against the other. I recall being a little bit surprised that Frank got it, and I'm quite sure that he got it because he was able in a kind of a gentle way to let each side know, or think, that he was pretty much for them. So that's a poor way to start.

STEWART: But there was no real opposition.

CARVER: Well, Orville Freeman wanted it badly. And he was a governor at that time, and he was regarded as the opposition, I'll tell you. No question about that. I personally thought that he was going to get it because Frank was pretty young, pretty junior, and I thought they needed the states rather than a state like Idaho which had only a minimal, if any, chance of going for the Democratic nominee whoever he was.

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STEWART: But he definitely had support both from Kennedy and Johnson people?

CARVER: Yes. I think that the selection was more from the Kennedy side. But it's all in Frank's bosom. You'd have to ask him about that.

STEWART: Moving on to the Convention, do you recall any specific contacts with either President Kennedy or people on his staff at the Convention?

CARVER: No. No specific contact that would be significant. You know, once the keynote speech was behind us, and that came very early, we were only just

one part of the Idaho delegation. Frank was a member. I wasn't. By this time his position was pretty well known. Already the fat was in the fire within his own delegation, and he never did hold them all together. So he just kind of wrote that off and went on to something else. And you can tell from the way the votes went that right up to the end they didn't break.

STEWART: They split four ways actually.

CARVER: So you see, Frank really didn't deliver anything

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except the keynote speech. So his position, you know, as a key figure in the Convention was largely ended at the time of his speech, which was a lousy speech anyway.

STEWART: Really?

CARVER: Yes.

STEWART: I assume then that you didn't write it.

CARVER: No, I didn't write it. Frank wrote it himself. But that wasn't it. It was an oratorical sort of a thing, and it didn't go over, that's all. I guess most of the critics agree on that. I hope Frank doesn't do too much researching in this. [Laughter]

STEWART: Well, as I say, believe me, this is yours and you can have it used in whatever way you want. What did you do during the campaign? Were you.... Senator Church wasn't running. No.

CARVER: No. Church wasn't running. I took a very active role in the Kennedy campaign. The circumstances of it I recall very well. I got a call from.... I can't remember who it was from, but at any rate

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an appointment was made for me to talk to Bob Kennedy [Robert F. Kennedy]. At that time he was down on Connecticut Avenue. They were setting up this system of coordinators. And I was aware at the time that he talked to me that they were looking for a coordinator for Missouri and one for Michigan and one for somewhere else, I can't remember where. The conversation with Bob Kennedy was very, very brief. I went in, and he said to me, "What do you know about Michigan?" And I said, "Nothing." And he said, "You're our man."

So I went right after Labor Day out to Detroit and was the Kennedy coordinator in that state from then until Friday before election. So I took a very, you know, active role. It

was an unusual state in the sense that it was not only organized, it was over organized, and they had absolutely no interest whatever having any kind of coordinator unless it was a Kennedy coordinator. So my principal job was to sort of

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get accepted out there which I succeeded in doing up to the point where I was glad to see that Michigan, when the next campaign came around, said that the coordinator idea was the best one they'd ever had, and they wanted to continue it.

But basically my job was not an action job in the sense that some of the coordinators, like Joe Tydings [Joseph D. Tydings] or Bill Walton [William Walton] and some of the others, did because it just wasn't appropriate for somebody to go out there and tell Walter Reuther or Millie Jeffrey [Mildred Jeffrey] or Neil Staebler through an intermediary. These people in terms of Democratic hierarchy were plugged in to the top command. So my job was to really kind of keep the intelligence flowing as to who was causing trouble and where you needed this or that or the other kind of oil spread on or this kind of a visitor and so on. And I kept those reports coming in, working on strictly a low key basis

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through Ralph Dungan and Dick Donahue [Richard K. Donahue] and to some lesser extent with Larry O'Brien [Lawrence F. O'Brien].

Joe Dolan [Joseph F. Dolan] came out and visited for a few day, and Whizzer White [Byron R. White] did. And I took several visiting firemen on the tour around and helped arrange some of the events. But I couldn't say and wouldn't claim to say that I directed anything at all. I just was the eyes and ears, and I think a good one, a good intelligence source, so that they felt all the time that they knew what the pull and the haul was within the state. Most every element of the Democratic Party in Michigan was friendly to the kind of job I was doing. Helen Berthelot [Helen W. Berthelot], the state director, and various people in McNamara's [Patrick V. McNamara] office and Hart's [Philip A. Hart] office and the UAW [United Auto Workers] people and so on, they'd all talk to me.

STEWART:       Knowing exactly what you were doing.

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CARVER:        Yes. What I was doing and they also—because I was pretty diffident about it.... After a while it began to work really smoothly. But it didn't leave much of a splash, but I've always been kind of proud of it.

STEWART:       There were no citizens groups, were there?

CARVER:        Oh, yes. Oh, yes. We had citizens groups. And, of course, that was one of my biggest jobs, to keep those crazy people kind of lined up so that they

didn't get in the hair of the old pros in Wayne County and so on, give them some kind of any outlet and give them assignments, and let them blow off steam to me rather than to the somewhat harassed people who were trying to run the campaign. I think it was a very good kind of arrangement to send somebody out to Michigan who had never been there before, who wasn't tied up in any of the local jealousies. My contact with the candidate [John F. Kennedy] during that time was, of course, minimal.

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I saw him, talked to him briefly when he came in on the various trips he made in there. Once I was on the train, the big train tour. I was not there during the very final appearance. As a matter of fact, I can't remember just exactly what his schedule was. He was there two or three times during the campaign.

STEWART: Do you recall any conflicts? Let me put it this way. Do you recall anything that the organization of Michigan did differently during that campaign that they had never done before and they didn't at the suggestion or insistence of people in Washington?

CARVER: Well, yes. I guess that the whole citizens organization was kind of a new one to them, at least in terms of orthodox Michigan Democratic politics. We went out into pretty strong Republican areas like Grand Rapids and so on and set up offices. Of course, the people out there that the Kennedy people were trying to

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have stay aboard were those were about as disenchanted with the labor domination of the Democratic party as they were with anything else, you see. So you had to have an outlet which you might call the less pragmatic, a more personal type of a campaign that Kennedy was running. And you had to have an outlet for those kids, too, those student groups and so on, organization of the Kennedy Girls and so on. This whole hoopla business. You got a lot of mobilization and activity which the regular party hadn't a hell of a lot of stomach for.

STEWART: Who was the main instigator of this citizens' group? Who was in charge of it for the state or was there one person?

CARVER: Well, I think that kind of shifted a little bit. I guess I couldn't remember without checking back into the records. I just don't remember. Whizzer White, of course, had some ties in Michigan.

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He played football there. When he came in, we had quite a show. But I can't recall who

that... We had various groups. We had farm groups and every other kind of a group there. Sam McAnally, the national committeeman from out of Jackson, was kind of coordinating what you might call the conservative wing of the Democratic party, the business groups and so on.

STEWART: Well, did you work both directly with White and with....

CARVER: The citizens group was, generally speaking, self sufficient. It had its own structure, and I just kind of worked as a kind of a coordinator between, keeping each side informed as to what the other was doing and taking, in some cases, assignments from each. Staebler demanded of the Kennedy organization that nominally, at least, the whole campaign should be directed by Helen Berthelot. Well, as a practical

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matter, this was still pretty autonomous, but they went through this process which gave me a kind of a heightened role because I could work pretty well with her.

STEWART: Didn't Staebler have some ambitions as far as the national chairman was concerned?

CARVER: Oh, sure, sure. He did. Sure he did. And I think he'd have been a good one, too. A great organization man. Tremendous.

STEWART: Were there any serious conflicts between Donahue, Dungan, and O'Brien and those people, and Staebler and his people that you recall?

CARVER: Well, each side, you know, talked it up more roughly about the other than they really felt. I don't think anything really serious because when the chips were down, the Kennedy organization had it its way. And that's the way it went. Any real serious argument was resolved. Sometimes they had to put the muscle on through Millie Jeffrey

[-25-]

or the UAW or somebody, but it was a pretty disciplined kind of an outfit, Kennedy had the muscle, and that was the way it went. I was surprised how close the state was when it finally came in. The night of election I thought we had it won by two hundred thousand votes, but we didn't.

STEWART: What was it? I don't remember.

CARVER: I think it was about seventy. But Dungan and Donahue and O'Brien and so on, they recognized that Michigan was kind of a special case because of

the national impact of the UAW and so on, and it was treated pretty well with kid gloves. Nobody allowed anything to get really out of hand. When the arrangements problems came up for the candidate's [John F. Kennedy] visit, why, it worked out pretty much like Kennedy wanted it. Jerry Bruno [Gerald J. Bruno] would ruffle a few feathers when he came in, but he did a good job, too.

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STEWART: Was he always a primary advance man for...

CARVER: Well, he was the only one that had any real visibility whenever I was watching it. There were a number of them in there always, but Jerry who.... I was always surprised at how well he got everything done because it looked to me like he was violating all the rules. But it worked.

STEWART: The rules of protocol and...

CARVER: And everything. He got away with it. A real operator. When you go into a place like Detroit, you know, you have to have everything work for those visits up through Hamtramck and so on, getting those crowds out and so on, getting these policemen to cooperate. They were real pros. They developed a real talent.

STEWART: Yes. I guess some of them had done it before, but I don't think they had had that much experience.

CARVER: No. They just seemed to make it work. Of course, the candidate [John F. Kennedy] had a hell of a thing

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going for him. Boy, did he ever put out that spirit. They really loved it.

STEWART: Were you at all involved in any difficult situations with any of the Negro or civil rights leaders in Detroit?

CARVER: Well, it is some question of mollifying some of the more doctrinaire groups about Johnson being on the ticket was the principal problem, particularly right early. Mennen Williams [G. Mennen Williams] was really quite incautious, right after the nomination, about Johnson's being on the ticket.

I recall going out into the fifteenth district to a political rally where John Dingell [John David Dingell, Jr.] was to be the principal speaker. It was his district. But he was late and I was just kind of keeping the audience happy until he showed up. So I had made a little talk, and then I had questions and answers. One of these big burly Negro union men stood up

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and said, "Why did Kennedy let Johnson get on the ticket?"

I gave an answer which I was inordinately proud of. I talked about Kennedy having a sense of history and unifying the country, and, you know it was a great speech. When I got all through, the man said, well, he thanked me very much with those remarks and he just had one more question. I said, "What's that?" And he said, "Why did Kennedy let Johnson get on the ticket?" But that was the only thing that I remember that was of significance. Looking back on it, considering how explosive things have become since, everything went really very well. I was immensely fond of Michigan and Detroit and the absence of any kind of racist discrimination out there, at least, as far as I could tell.

STEWART: You had never lived in Michigan or had any...

CARVER: I had never even been in the state. I just rode

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through it. You can get well acquainted with a state in the course of a campaign.

STEWART: Yes. Rather quickly, I should think. Was there any attempt in, for example, the literature that was used predominantly to play down or even leave off the presence of Johnson on the ticket?

CARVER: Oh, I suppose I don't know whether there was any conscious attempt or not, but if there was, that's the way they did it in Michigan because they didn't—well, it was Kennedy-Johnson, of course, but they did want to hit that issue very hard because Williams was a pretty popular, powerful man there still. And a lot of people felt like he did. We're getting some more of it now, though.

STEWART: Did you have much contact with Williams during the campaign?

CARVER: Very little. I was over and met with him two or three times over in Lansing. He was not on the stump himself. They were using him in other

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places, and he wasn't running, John Swainson was running. So I'd say that, generally speaking, he didn't take a very active part, at least as far as anything I had to do with was concerned.

STEWART: Was there a senatorial race that year in Michigan?

CARVER: Wasn't Pat McNamara and that rich congressman, weren't they running that year? I think so.



STEWART: Well, my question was...

CARVER: Yes. Yes. Yes. McNamara was elected.

STEWART: My question was to what extent, if at all, were you involved in any of these statewide campaigns?

CARVER: Well, they ran the whole thing on an integrated basis. The governor's campaign, McNamara's campaign, and, to some extent, all of the congressmen were all just thrown in this kind of statewide Helen Berthelot-directed operation. It was a good way to do it. Of course, the various candidates, Swainson and McNamara and so on, each

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had their own emphasis and their own program, their own scheduling, and so on. But when the Kennedy sisters came in, for example, everybody rode that bandwagon. This was well coordinated, Eunice Shriver [Eunice Kennedy Shriver] and Pat Lawford [Patricia Kennedy Lawford] and so on. This was a big deal when they came to town, also Mrs. Kennedy, Rose Kennedy [Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy], was in there.

STEWART: Were you at all involved and, if so, were there any problems regarding fund raising?

CARVER: No sir. I didn't have anything to do with fund raising. They didn't send me out for that. It's a pretty specialized kind of activity.

STEWART: To what extent was religion a problem in Michigan?

CARVER: Oh, it was a Bible Belt business out there, and that's the thing that had us scared the most. And I think that, in a basic way, is what kept the majority down to where it was. We had to deliver in Wayne County because that religion

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business was a significant thing. He would get out there around Battle Creek and Grand Rapids and Owosso and those towns, and you could just feel it. I think that after the Texas meeting with the clergymen down there, things tended to be a little bit better nationwide, and Michigan, too. But it's that kind of a state.

STEWART: Now, you were sending in, as I think you said, weekly or...

CARVER: I sent in weekly or more often. I'd just sit down at my typewriter and write

off a summary of what I thought was going on that they'd be interested in and give them the trouble spots and so on. Some of it I did on the phone. But basically it was just to kind of keep them informed. And they seemed very pleased with the kind of information they were given.

STEWART: Well, these, of course, will be available, at least hopefully, someplace at the Library.

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CARVER: I hope so. I didn't keep any copies of them. But surely somebody did because I had some evidence that some of them occasionally would be copied over.

STEWART: Without going into any more detail, is there anything else major about the campaign as far as problems were concerned or things that, to your knowledge, haven't been that well publicized that occurred?

CARVER: At the time, of course, all the problems looked big as labor leaders wanted to go this way and they kept putting the pressure on the candidate to say this or that and so on. Nixon [Richard M. Nixon] came in there, I think the very last thing he did in the campaign, and made that telethon business. And I've always thought that, for reason I've never been able to identify, that undid a lot of the good we'd done. I thought that was a particularly kind of effective thing and one hard to counter. It was this late stuff, you know. You feel like you've

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got it, and then all of a sudden you have things happen where you don't have time really to counter it. That time it was fully committed.

But beyond that, as I say, some of these people would come in and then you would have to go around and hold people's hands and smooth them down because we always had a succession. Michigan is a great place to visit. Everybody wanted to go there. So you get these people from Harvard who had come down. I recall two or three of the people who later showed up in high posts in the Administration would come down and have these sessions with the intelligentsia. Principally the Jewish community was very well organized in Michigan and prided itself as sort of being the super-establishment there. They handled it very well. Those people were all for Kennedy, or a lot of them were. And they kind of ran their own little setup.

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STEWART: Were there any sizable groups of Stevenson people that weren't too enthused?

CARVER: Well, that's the group I'm just now talking about. I mean, they were "Our hearts are all still with Adlai" till along toward the end when they began to get in the spirit. And, of course, these visiting firemen from the intellectual community helped out on that. Phil Kaiser [Philip M. Kaiser] and people like that.

STEWART: Did you have any contacts with.... Who was running the Republican campaign?

CARVER: Well, that's a pretty good question because the short of it is that you could just hardly see any Republican campaign around Detroit.

STEWART: No. No. Right.

CARVER: You saw a lot of evidence of the Republican campaign when you got over in Gerry Ford's [Gerald R. Ford] area. But I had no contact with them. It wasn't like in Idaho where professional politicians sort of eat and sleep and carry on their professional work sort of at the coffee

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table. I didn't see any of that in Michigan. There might have been some of it, but I didn't see any.

STEWART: Did you see the President or have any chance to talk to him during any of his visits to Michigan?

CARVER: In a word, no. I saw him every time he was there and shook hands, and he asked me how things were going. But I never had the opportunity to brief him or anything like that. He never asked for it. He had too many things on his mind.

STEWART: How about Robert Kennedy. Did you see him at all?

CARVER: I only have the feeling that I was in pretty close touch with him through Dungan and Donahue. They were my contacts, and that's the way we left it. I saw him afterwards in that interim period when they were kind of staffing up the Administration. But at that time no. He was here in Washington running the thing. And I think very well, too. They cussed it.

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STEWART: They what?

CARVER: They cussed the activities of the then vice presidential candidate a time or two, I recall, but I can't remember the details of it. I recall once, oh, some

enormous flap came up about something Johnson had said or done or something like that. Donahue kind of calmed everybody down by saying, “When we make a mistake, we make a big one.”

STEWART: Did he come to Michigan at all during the campaign, the Vice President [Lyndon B. Johnson]?

CARVER: No. I think that was a big argument. And whether he ever got there or not, I don't think he did. I don't recall that he did, I never was involved in any.... Of course, he had his own little setup. He had his own scheduling group—his own campaign, as near as I could tell. But I can't recall he was in Michigan. I don't think he was.

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STEWART: Unless there's anything else about the campaign, why don't we move on to the transition period. You say you were involved in this talent hunt, I think it was called then, a talent search. Exactly how did this come about and what primarily were you concerned with?

CARVER: Well exactly, I don't know how it came about. As soon as the election was over, why, I told Senator Church that I was going to seek a position in the new Administration, and in that process, I told Ted Sorensen [Theodore C. Sorensen] and some of the others that I was available to continue in anything they needed done. Of course, Congress was in recess, and Frank was off on a trip somewhere. I think he was in Africa. So I had time on my hands. And they just gave me a desk down there, and the particular job I had was pretty mundane.

Basically, they had two kinds of lists. They had a list of people that had to be taken

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care of, and then they had a list of talent that they were seeking. And in each case they had to gather up such information as they could get as to qualifications and experience and that sort of thing. Basically, since I'd once been in the personnel business, I was supposed to kind of comb through this and say whether I thought so-and-so or such-and-so would be qualified for such and such a role. I'd worked for the executive branch, and I'd been in the War Department and knew personnel administration to some extent and also knew something about how the government works.

So this matching up process was purely a recommendatory kind of activity, but it involved a lot of sitting there and setting them out. I had one of those green books with all the positions in there, and then I had these stacks of applications, some of which would be pretty detailed, and most of them would be pretty

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rudimentary because most of the people who felt they had a job coming didn't give a damn about saying what their qualifications were. Those who were actually looking for a job probably went to the bottom of the list, you know the ones who really filled out the forms. But this involved my working with Larry O'Brien and, to some extent, with Bob Kennedy and mostly still with Donahue and Dungan and people like that.

STEWART: In terms of the effectiveness of matching up people with jobs, did you think at that time it was a good operation? And looking back on it now, do you think it was?

CARVER: I thought then it was a good operation, and I've thought since. Of course, it had some flaws in it, some of which were recognizable right at the time as being flaws. But then they were recognized as being that. One of these occurrences was perhaps illustrative of several aspects of this

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operation, and it involved me. I had been steered to Stewart Udall [Stewart L. Udall] to talk about taking the position as Assistant Secretary of the Interior in which I was very interested. Ralph Dungan called me in one day and said that they had a little problem, and they wanted to know how I felt about cooperating with them. And I said, "of course I'll cooperate. Whatever you want."

Well, he said they wanted to make Sargent Shriver [R. Sargent Shriver] the under secretary of HEW [Health, Education, and Welfare], but the President-elect had decided that it wouldn't be a good idea to put him in there right away, so they were looking for a man to kind of hold the job for a few months until they could kind of test it out at which time they wanted to make the change. In other words, they were looking for somebody who would take that job without any assurance of holding onto it—as a matter of fact, with no particular

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assurance as to what was going to happen next. I said, "Sure. That's all right. I'll do anything."

So by that time Rubicoff [Abraham A. Rubicoff] had been named as Secretary of HEW, and they dispatched me to Hartford to talk to the Governor about how he felt about my being his under secretary. Well, he was busier than he could be with his legislature and problems he had up there, and I didn't get a very satisfactory conversation with him although it was pleasant enough. But he obviously decided that if he had to have somebody that wasn't a Sargent Shriver, he preferred to have somebody he selected rather than somebody somebody else selected. And so it was clear to me when I left that I'd been vetoed although, as I say, nothing personal about it.

So I watched with considerable interest as to who finally got that job. And this gets back to our original point about the quality of the operation because there

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was one man whose qualifications I had felt, at least on the record, were absolutely not nil but not measurable, and that was Ivan Nestingen, who on his form showed as his total experience "Mayor of Madison." I remember telling Ralph Dungan that I didn't know what this man could or couldn't do, but as far as anything we had, he couldn't do anything. Well, he got it and, of course, I was pretty sure that Abe, who didn't get along with him very well and eventually replaced him, would have been damn sight better off with me although he probably never even remembered it.

STEWART: No, he stayed there, didn't he?

CARVER: He stayed there for a long time, but for an awful long time he didn't have anything to do. It was another one of those Jack Henning [John F. Henning]-Willard Wirtz [W. Willard Wirtz] sort of relationships. I later became under secretary myself

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after which I was a great deal more sympathetic with vice presidents and under secretaries, It's a lousy job and impossible to do. I'd much rather have an operating job. But your question was how well did the operation work. I think it worked remarkably well. Adam Yarmolinsky played a very active role in it, and it was clear that was a talented man right at that time.

STEWART: Did you have many people from Michigan that you were directly involved in...

CARVER: In placing?

STEWART: In locating or placing.

CARVER: No, although I was aware of the efforts in placing a great many of them. People ranging all the way from John Sweeney, who I guess was on McNamara's staff sometime, and a fellow named Ward McCreedy, who was a very difficult placement problem—I guess he's still with the federal government in some operation or another.

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Donald Ferber had been a very good man for the Kennedy campaign and he aspired to be Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Public Lands, the job I aspired for, so I couldn't do much for him although he was asking me to help him. It was always, I felt, a great shame that he didn't get a place in the Administration. Then, of course, Soapy [G. Mennen Williams] was immediately made an assistant secretary of State, but I had nothing to do with

that. And a fellow who had been national committeeman there from Lansing, Tom [Thomas H. E. Quimby] something or other.

STEWART: Oh, yes. Tom....

CARVER: He aspired for some kind of a job, and I can't remember how that came out.

STEWART: Didn't he go to the Peace Corps?

CARVER: Peace Corps, that's what he did, yes.

STEWART: Tom....

CARVER: He went as a deputy or a number two in the Peace

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Corps. But by this time, of course, I was imbued with the idea of finding the best man for the job, not taking care of your buddies from Michigan, so to speak. The whole thing had a pretty national cast up there in that office, and I don't recall having any special responsibility for taking care of people from Michigan.

STEWART: To what extent were people concerned with accepting political people from various states as opposed to absolutely trying to get the best person for the job? That's put in general in a blunt way but...

CARVER: It's a very pragmatic operation. There was a clear recognition that there were certain people who were deserving of consideration whatever might be their qualifications or lack thereof because they were known to be able to do a job. You take a guy like Jerry Bruno, basically unplaceable in anything except the kind of job

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that he had. And I think that later really showed up. I later had some, contact with him when he was on Bob Kennedy's staff as senator, and I had the general impression that he was a great advance man still, but not a great administrative assistant to Bob Kennedy although he might have been great up there in Syracuse, I don't know. But it was pretty pragmatic, and the list of people who had to be taken care of wasn't inordinately large. There was a lot of attention paid, even in that list, to matching up the qualifications.

STEWART: What were the primary criteria that determined how a person got on the "politically must be placed" list?

CARVER: Well, that came out of this Bob Kennedy operation—one hundred per cent out of it. That would mean that people would get on it who hadn't necessarily worked with the organization directly, but if

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people like Charlie Buckley [Charles A. Buckley] or Bill Green [William J. Green] or some other of the big city pols wanted a favor, they were going to get it. It was a political operation, but it had a lot of professionalism to it also.

STEWART: There was an operation set up subsequently that was headed by Dan Fenn [Dan H. Fenn, Jr.], as you may recall, which was strictly searching for people as qualified people.

CARVER: Yes. I'm aware of that.

STEWART: My question is to what extent was the operation during the transition a real forerunner of this or was there much of that?

CARVER: Oh, it was a forerunner, but we were kind of informal in searching out opportunities for new staff for the government. Everybody kind of reached out in terms of his own ambit. They put the feelers out. They wanted names to come in, and before it was over, they were just almost

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buried in names since people would suggest people, and they would suggest people and so on. I guess that was really the forerunner scheme of it, you know, that you don't know anybody, just give us some names of somebody who might, just kind of feeding out the names in widening circles.

We didn't go through this checking procedure which Fenn later worked into a high art. Or if anybody did, it was a good deal more rudimentary. As a matter of fact, it's amazing, when you think back on it, the way I saw the various selections made and how they were made and was pretty proud to be a part of it. I think we were kind of lucky because a whole wealth of talent wanted to be associated with this new Administration. I don't think they've had anything like that since.

STEWART: I think you said that this job in Interior

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was your first choice or...

CARVER: Well, that's an interesting point, too, because I don't know whether it was my first choice or not. The only choice I really made a formal request to



be considered for was to be a member of this very Commission [Federal Power Commission] I'm on now. The suggestion that I be assistant secretary of the Interior was made to me. I don't recall the exact circumstances of it, but I had a couple of conversations with Udall. When I went up on that Rubicoff visit, I made sure that Udall knew that I was being considered for that. Well, if I were being considered for an under secretary, it made me look better as an assistant secretary, and he locked it in. And I was named, oh, ten days before the Inauguration, one of the early announcements.

STEWART: Had you been involved in any of the other appointments to Interior before you yourself were appointed?

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CARVER: No, sir. The Udall selection was, of course, made at a very high level, the President himself. Thereafter, I was aware that.... All of those Cabinet guys were just the same. Once they got to be named or designated, then they wanted to pick everybody else. So a good deal of friction was developing over there on Connecticut Avenue because these guys who were nobodies one day were Cabinet officers the next. And as soon as they got to be a Cabinet officer designee, why, they wouldn't talk to the likes of the staff over there, At least that was the general feeling that developed. So along toward the end of it, words were being bandied back and forth.

I guess the prime example was that involving Bill Brawley [H. W. Brawley], who was over there working at it the whole time. Of course, he went on Ed Day's [Edward J. Day] staff as under secretary, and he for damn sure wasn't Ed Day's choice. And that bad feeling continued for

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a long time. But the selection of Ken Holum [Kenneth Holum] and the selection of John Kelly and the selection of the other assistant secretaries by Udall, I had no part in.

STEWART: Do you remember any other serious problems relating to these conflicts with the secretary-designates that you were involved in?

CARVER: Oh, I don't recall anything other than just kind of a generalized griping about who do these guys think they are sort of thing because they'd just been campaign workers like the rest of us until they became Cabinet members.

STEWART: Then there was no, I assume, opposition to your appointment as assistant secretary from any quarter?

CARVER: Not that I knew of at the time or since. There were others who aspired to the job. I knew a number in that category, particularly on the Hill. Almost all the administrative assistants on the Hill who

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had worked in the campaign really felt that kind of the hierarchical arrangement of the Administration should follow the pecking order on the Hill. So, consequently, if I got to be an assistant secretary, Herb Waters [Herbert J. Waters] deserved something better than what he got over in Agriculture, I recall. That was one problem that developed. Some of the other people who came from the Hill downtown, and quite a remarkable number did...

STEWART: Yes. I think there was some concern at one time that too many of them were.

CARVER: Yes. There was some feeling that they were staffing the whole Administration with guys from particularly the Senate side. There were a lot on the House side, too, but percentage-wise not nearly as much.

STEWART: Look, it's 3 o'clock. Do you want to keep going or...

CARVER: Well, why don't we take a break.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

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