

John A. Carver, Jr., Oral History Interview – JFK#2, 09/20/68
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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 the transition from Dwight D. Eisenhower's Administration to John F. Kennedy's [JFK] Administration in late 1960 through 1961; the process of and issues with staffing the various bureaus in the Department of the Interior; tensions between the Department of the Interior and the Department of Agriculture; and working with other federal agencies and interests, among other issues.

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John A. Carver, Jr. – JFK #2

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Second Oral History Interview

With

JOHN A. CARVER, JR.

September 20, 1968
Washington, D.C.

By John F. Stewart

For the John F. Kennedy Library

STEWART: Let me start today by my asking you, in general, did you have some contact with the outgoing Eisenhower [Dwight D. Eisenhower] people, with Secretary Seaton [Fred A. Seaton] and his staff?

CARVER: My assignment in the Administration was as Assistant Secretary for Public Land Management [BLM], and my predecessor was George Abbott, who was the Assistant Secretary and before that had been Solicitor of the Department. And I spent, in the period between November and January, between the

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date of the announcement of my selection, oh, maybe two or three hours with Mr. Abbott. And I had access to some books which the outgoing Administration had prepared, briefing books for each of the incoming secretariat members, which explained the organization of the Department and the personnel and the salaries and all of that. So they made a genuine effort to make a smooth transition. Of course, the Assistant Secretary for Administration, Mr. Beasley [D. Otis Beasley], stayed on for several years. He was the continuity focus.

STEWART: Were there any particular areas that they were interested in you knowing about or was there anything in particular that they were trying to focus on

that you can recall?

CARVER: Well, as far as I recall, in the area of the public land bureaus, which I was responsible for, the answer probably was no. There were many rather touchy water problems

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which involved some of my colleagues in the secretariat. But so far as Mr. Abbott was concerned, the work of the Bureau of Land Management and the National Park Service and the Office of Territories the Bureau of Indian Affairs—I can't say that they tried to have any input or give us any particular guidance. Mr. Abbott hadn't been there very long.

STEWART: I didn't think so. Roger Ernst.

CARVER: Roger Ernst had been the Assistant Secretary until about midsummer, and then Mr. Abbott was promoted and went on the campaign trail right after he was promoted and, you know, after the election was over and they'd lost, he didn't spend an awful lot of time getting deeply into matters. So there was quite a lot of just plain ordinary routine work backed up there to be signed, a lot of orders and things that the various bureaus....

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STEWART: Were there any major decisions or problems that they either left over for you or took care of just before they left which they should have left for you?

CARVER: Well, I wouldn't, without thinking about it, perhaps be able to give any list. There were some in the mineral area. Again, that was mainly the concern of another colleague of mine, the oil imports and the mineral business where this was a relevant kind of a problem. But, gee, those old bureaus, Parks and the Indians and the Lands and so on, are just not that critical. We inherited some pretty good problems, but I can't remember any midnight action that they took, or any midnight action that they should have taken, that I'd criticize them for in my areas.

STEWART: Right. What exact role and what exactly was your position on the appointment of the various bureau heads under your jurisdiction?

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CARVER: Well, I didn't have any great say in it. Some of the bureau heads were controversial in a very important way. Some had left. I guess the principal one that was under my jurisdiction where you'd have any of these transitional problems was the Bureau of Indian Affairs because Indian matters had been a

considerable part of the President's [John F. Kennedy] interest in the Interior Department, at least, and it had played a role in his campaign, quite a significant one in some areas.

STEWART: Well, how was—what's his name? Crow [John O. Crow], actually. Crow was the first...

CARVER: Well, John Crow was a career man who was about the only man of the top command left. It was pretty clear that nobody was going to tolerate Mr. Emmons [Glenn L. Emmons], who hadn't been, you know, a very—didn't have a reputation, at least, for being a very decisive administrator. He had

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a couple of assistants who were pretty decisive. So the actual, you know, the idea of having a titular head then immediately became a problem, and the determination was made by Secretary Udall [Stewart L. Udall]—and I think discussed with the President, but I'm not sure—to make a little bit of a public relations flurry out of naming this Indian as the acting commissioner.

And then the Secretary had a discussion with the President about creating a task force to discuss Indian policy. And that was a very good idea, and it was very well executed. I think on the whole it was a thing that the President thought had been well handled. The chairman of that was a man who later became president and chairman of the board of Phillips Petroleum, Bill Keeler, [William W. Keeler] W.W. Keeler. Philleo Nash, who was almost immediately selected to be the new commissioner, was a member of that task force,

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so we had a little political flak.

STEWART: Well, he didn't actually...

CARVER: He didn't take the role. He didn't take the job until some months later.

STEWART: Right.

CARVER: So that the actual leadership of the Indian Bureau during this interregnum period was pretty basically in my office. Philleo Nash kept his hands out of it, although, you know, he had more than a casual interest in it. But I established right away a pretty good working relationship with another career man, Rex Lee [Rex Hyrum Lee], the man who later was to go to American Samoa. And kind of working through him, why, I kind of was running that Bureau until we actually got a presidential nomination and confirmation of Mr. Nash.

STEWART: So Crow was pretty much of a figurehead?

CARVER: Crow was definitely a figurehead. You know, he was a good old pro, but he knew what his,

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you know, he knew what the instructions were, and he wasn't given any charter at all. As a matter of fact, there was quite a little bit of bitterness later developed because he kind of wanted to be the commissioner, and wanting to be the commissioner, he wanted not to make any mistakes while he was in this other role, and the thing got a little tense. One day he was told that he wasn't going to get a chance at it, and he kind of reacted pretty negatively. Things eventually got patched up, but like a lot of, I think, a lot of those old bureaucrats, you know, there's a lot of.... There's a kind of a ramrod of steel in them, you know, you cross them and they're pretty.... We're the adversaries.

STEWART: But the plan right along was that Nash was going to eventually...

CARVER: Well, Nash... That wasn't exactly that

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sure. Nash was doing a lot of maneuvering for it before the actual Inauguration. There had been some discussions with him, and I think he'd kind of been promised it, but it sort of was a conditional promise because almost everybody figured that Clinton Anderson [Clinton P. Anderson] was going to have a considerable say, and Anderson was kind of anti-Nash. I don't know how that ever worked out between Udall and Anderson and the President, but eventually it did, and he was nominated and confirmed, because he had been promised it really. But there was a time when it looked pretty shaky for him.

STEWART: What about some of the other bureaus and some of the other appointments? Well, just let me run down them, and you could comment if there were any problems, especially political problems. In the Office of Territories, Richard Taitano [Richard F. Taitano], is that how you pronounce it?

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CARVER: Well, that's a very interesting story, but I don't really think the President had a great deal to do with it.

STEWART: Well, did the White House?

CARVER: The White House was kind of privy to it, but the selection of Dick Taitano to be Director of Territories and Manuel Guerrero [Manuel F. L. Guerrero] to be Governor of Guam was the result of some input into this selective process by a former Governor of Guam named Skinner, Carlton Skinner. And it's kind of a

measure of Udall's kind of style that this idea of bringing a territorial in, you know, it kind of appealed to him. But now that I think about it, however, the White House was involved with that, I take it back, deeply involved with it in a kind of left handed way.

One guy that apparently the President had promised to take care of was Bill Daniel [William P. Daniel], who was the brother of Governor Price Daniel [Marion Price Daniel, Sr.] of Texas. And Bill Daniel was obviously a misfit

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to be Governor of Guam. And it was obvious from everything we knew about him that this was just going to be a lousy selection. And so when Carlton Skinner selected, you know, "Why don't you bring a guy in from Guam to be, in effect, Daniel's boss?" well, that just tickled his sense of the dramatic and he called Taitano on the phone and offered him the job just out of the clear blue sky. And so from being one day kind of a fairly minor clerk in Guam, he became a bureau chief in the Department of the Interior. It never did really work out for a number of other kind of political reasons. One of them was that the number two guy who was kind of tagged for Territories was Congressman Mike Kirwan's [Michael J. Kirwan] son, John [John J. Kirwan].

STEWART: Well, he had been there for some years.

CARVER: He had been there for years and years and years around the building, but Mike just made two requests—

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and I think he made them to the President, but I'm not sure. But at any rate there was an awful lot of horsepower for Mike's son to be Deputy Director of Territories. They weren't really trying to get him the number one spot. And then they wanted Bob Vaughan [Robert E. Vaughan], who is Mike's son-in-law, to be my Deputy.

STEWART: Oh, really.

CARVER: And I didn't have any idea of having somebody I didn't know anything about be my Deputy. And kind of the pressure was on me caused me to get my back up, and I just said I wouldn't do it, and didn't do it. It turns out that Bob was a very able guy and, you know, would have been fine, but I didn't know it. But in terms of that Territorial post, Taitano was selected under those circumstances, in connection with Bill Daniel going out to Guam.

There was another White House interest, this time related to not taking care of anybody

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from the Lyndon Johnson [Lyndon B. Johnson] business but rather out of the President's own kind of personal relationships, and that was finding a spot for Pepe Benitez [Jose A. Benitez]. Benitez had been kind of single-handedly responsible for getting the Puerto Rican votes for Senator Kennedy out in Los Angeles, and he's such a charming delightful fellow, and everybody loved him, and we got the word, you know, that he was to be Governor of American Samoa. And I didn't have any idea that he could handle that job, so we finally settled on the number two job in the Trust Territory for him. But that's a whole fascinating book all by itself, his relationships over there in the White House, because he was—the President liked him, but hardly anybody around the Department of the interior thought much of him. I remember one time I was looking for him. The Secretary was in a real huff, he wanted to see him, wanted me to find him.

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Well, I scouted around and guess where I found him. In a receiving line with the President over at the White House, receiving some foreign dignitary, standing at the President's elbow. [Laughter] A very, very colorful guy, you know.

STEWART: Did he stay the whole...

CARVER: Oh, he stayed maybe, he stayed until that big Bobby Baker [Robert G. Baker] rhubarb occurred. It turns out that he'd been involved before the election in the meat business with Bobby Baker down in the Caribbean area. And after that we kind of put the screws on him to resign, which he did and went into business. I think he's doing very well. But that was one of the positions that we had to manipulate around.

Another one, of course, was the Governorship of American Samoa.

STEWART: That was...

CARVER: Rex Lee, the recently appointed Federal Communications Commissioner, just this week. He's the one I've

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already mentioned, who was kind of the, you know, the real top pro down in the Indian Bureau who was kind of running things for me. The business of being Governor of American Samoa is very attractive to certain kinds of politicians, you know. It just sounds like going down there like Gauguin [Paul Gauguin]. And we had a lot of aspirants for that job.

And finally, the way we resolved it—and this was my idea, and I'm very proud of it, too—I told the Secretary one day, I said, "We just can't handle this thing in political terms. We'll just make a lot of enemies and no friends. And we won't get a good governor. What I want to do is to get three of the ablest executives that the Department has, and, you know,

we'll just forget politics, just find the one that we think is most capable. I'll get you a panel of three, and then we'll see where we go from there." So I got

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Hillary Tolson [Hillary A. Tolson], who was the number two man in the Park Service, and Rex Lee, and a fellow who had been High Commissioner of the Trust Territory, but had been replaced by the incoming Administration. And Nucker [Delma H. Nucker] was vetoed on political grounds, too much Eisenhower, Tolson turned it down, and Rex Lee, after much arm twisting, said that he'd give it a whirl. It turned out, you know, to be the greatest thing that ever happened for that territory and for the country.

STEWART: But you got no repercussions from the White House?

CARVER: Well, the White House.... This wasn't like the governorship of Guam and the Virgin Islands, which are presidential appointments. This was a secretarial appointment. If we got any repercussions, I think it was more of relief than anything else. By this time they were sick of

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it. And, of course, the President was very good about this kind of thing, you know, when it finally came to the point of getting the right man or the politics. It was damn seldom that he'd say that politics prevail. He'd want you to figure out something, you know, so you didn't cause any more trouble than you had to.

STEWART: What about Conrad Wirth [Conrad L. Wirth] and the Park Service?

CARVER: Oh, boy. There's another great story, but here, again, I suppose, I'd have to think a little bit to remember what interest the White House had in it. Wirth enjoyed a fine reputation with the Secretary when the Secretary came in. And the Secretary told him right off that he, the Secretary, was going to take a pretty strong interest in this Bureau. And that's more than anybody could say about Fred Seaton, so everything just seemed to be going off swimmingly.

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But Wirth had his own lines out, you know. He was kind of a J. Edgar Hoover of the Interior building. And you could tell, with this strong bureau chief and this strong department head, eventually you're going to get some real friction, and eventually there was some real friction. And eventually he retired under less than pleasant circumstances.

STEWART: Well, he had been there. That's right.

CARVER: He'd been director for several years by the time we got there. I don't know

how long. But he stayed until the end of '63, I think. And for quite a little while worked very well with the Secretary and, of course, the First Lady's [Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy Onassis] interest in making an historical kind of museum sort of thing about the White House brought the Park Service into close contact with the White House on those businesses, and it was a very, very mutually satisfactory relationship. I think

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Mrs. Kennedy appreciated the way it was being handled. And, lord knows, they were glad enough to work with her. She was so lovely, you know.

STEWART: Yes, I wanted to ask you about that later.

CARVER: And, of course, the Secretary himself played that for all it was worth, both with Mrs. Kennedy and later, even more so, with Mrs. Johnson [Claudia Alta Johnson]. But I think with Mrs. Kennedy it was—this is a terrible thing to say, I guess—but I think it was quite a lot less crass. The Secretary was kind of doing it, you know, to get through to a man with whom he'd never been very close when President Johnson came in. But in connection with working with Mrs. Kennedy, you know, it was good-hearted, there wasn't any question about it of any kind.

STEWART: How about Karl Landstrom [Karl S. Landstrom] from the Bureau of Land Management?

CARVER: Well, that was a selection which the Secretary made based upon his working relationship as a member of the House Interior Committee with

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Landstrom. Landstrom had been a staff member there. That selection was an unmitigated disaster because Landstrom was an absolutely outstanding staff man but totally unqualified to be a bureau head, and the morale of that bureau just went to hell and things went from bad to worse all the way around. But so far as I know, here was one of those little areas in which, oh, guys like Lee White [Lee C. White] and Ralph Dungan [Ralph A. Dungan] and so on might happen sometime to step in and sometimes some of the congressional types, but I can't remember the President ever doing anything. I know he had nothing to do with his selection.

STEWART: That's mainly what I'm interested in now.

CARVER: And nothing to do with the replacement later.

STEWART: The Governor of the Virgin Islands?

CARVER: Oh, well, that was hotter than a firecracker, as I'm sure you'll find out

from a lot of sources, because the President was besieged with pressure, every kind and sort, for a number of competing candidates. And I'll tell you they all play

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so rough down there that, you know, charging a man of beating his wife or being a crook or being on the take or anything is just kind of ordinary, to be just overlooked. So that one of the most, you know, searing experiences I had was that proposition of going through that selection process.

STEWART: The initial one—how do you pronounce his last name?

CARVER: Paiewonsky [Ralph M. Paiewonsky].

STEWART: Paiewonsky.

CARVER: That was just plain old political clout that got Ralph that job, and it just turned out to be the very best appointment that the President could have made.

STEWART: Oh, really?

CARVER: He's been an outstanding Governor, is to this day. He has been a tremendous supporter of the Administration, President Kennedy's Administration and President Johnson's Administration. But, you

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know, the charges were that he was going to open the place up for casino gambling. There's none of that. They said that he was going to, you know, he was going to increase the spread between the welfare of the poor people and the rich people. And he's brought industry down there, and he's got a college, and the island has been cleaned up and it's been a mixed—well, Samoa and the Virgin Islands are great success stories in the Kennedy Administration.

STEWART: Where did he come from? Who was his backer?

CARVER: Well, Paiewonsky, was the.... Well, that's a pretty good question. I don't know who his backer was. The, in terms of the Department of the Interior, the Secretary.... They had kind of an instinct for where the power was and wasn't for this appointment, and they didn't waste a lot of their time with the Secretary of the Interior or the Assistant Secretary. A lot of

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these other guys, these fringe operators, this radio man, Connie B. Gay, wanted to be Governor and some of the others, they spent a lot of time down with us. But Paiewonsky was working at the seats of power. I don't know just where. And I know that the Secretary was just scared to death at that appointment. All of this charge of gangster connections and gambling and all that, this just petrified him, and he made a strong recommendation against it. Somebody overruled him, and it was a great thing they did.

STEWART: Well, I assume that story will pop up someplace from someone in the White House or someone....

CARVER: Oh, you should follow that up. You should probably talk to Paiewonsky, he'll probably give you some insights into that, too.

STEWART: I think all of this is interesting as a reflection of the whole recruitment process by a new administration and....

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CARVER: Oh, yes.

STEWART: Certainly, from what you've said, I think someone would get a very pessimistic impression [laughter] of just how some of....

CARVER: Well, our best ones were just plain, ordinary sort of lucky. And our worst ones were, you know, where we did it by all the rules. Of course, the Macy [John W. Macy] operation and the Dan Fenn [Dan H. Fenn, Jr.] operation and some of those things at this stage of the game had run whatever course they were going to run. We were pretty much on our own in those early months within the Department, and of course, the Secretary was the big man on it. The assistant secretaries were supposed to support the Secretary, not be building empires of their own.

STEWART: Yes. Following all this recruitment up, you mentioned the Fenn operation. Did you have much contact with them later on, or....

CARVER: Almost none. The access for the Interior Department

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is more strongly to the Hill than to the White House. If you have a vacancy or you need to clear somebody or you're looking for somebody, nine times out of ten, if you're in the Interior Department or the Agriculture Department, you're going to first think of Senator Anderson or Senator Jackson [Henry M. Jackson], or Congressman Aspinall [Wayne N. Aspinall] and kind of work back through that channel rather than to say to yourself, "Well, I wonder what the talent searchers would find as our best possible man in the whole United States." We used the operation in reverse, you know,

when Rex Lee came back from being Governor of American Samoa, which is much later and after the Kennedy Administration, why, he spent quite a little bit of time over there, you know, looking for another spot. But basically the answer was: I can't think of any key appointment that we got through that channel.

STEWART: Did you get many regular referrals from either the White House or the Democratic National Committee

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or from Fenn?

CARVER: Oh, we got a lot of them in those early, early times, and we were interviewing quite a few of them for various kinds of posts. I remember talking to Roger Wilkins and others who thought, well, you know, gee, it would be nice to work in the Interior Department, working with resources or something. But the action wasn't with us in terms of the kind of people that were being attracted into this work really. Now if you're looking for a Park Service Director, you're likely to look somewhere in the Park Service for somebody in the Parks business. And we know more about that than anybody else.

STEWART: Let me ask you, as a general thing, what kind of an orientation did you personally go through to get a firm understanding of exactly what the situation was in each of the Bureaus that you were in charge of? Or was this a problem?

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CARVER: Oh, of course it was a problem because I had charge or responsibility for the bureaus that did, by calculation, 55 percent of the work of the Department. I called my inherited immediate staff in the first day I was there and I said, you know, "I have no reason at this time to think that any one of you is anything other than fully committed to looking after the resources of the United States and carrying on whatever policies are laid down by a new Administration to the best of your ability. And until you show me to the contrary, that's the way we're going to do, and I'm going to need a lot of help." So working with the staff man in that office who was kind of responsible on a subject basis, from there I went to meetings with the bureaus' top staffs.

Illogically, perhaps, I had a much better time in the bureaus where we didn't change the top command than where we

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did because if I could go down as the new Assistant Secretary and sort of appeal to their better instincts as career people, I could do it with a fairly free hand to an existing bureau chief. But with a new bureau chief, I'm kind of walking on his toes. He's supposed to

establish those relationships, and he's learning the job same as I am, and it tends to kind of involve a little conflict. That may have been one of the reasons why we had some problems with Landstrom because as the BLM Director he was involved with a bureau in which I was vastly interested myself, you know, I was personally interested in it. And my predecessors had always taken a strong interest in that one.

But basically it was just a matter of working night and day. I can remember going to a luncheon, oh, maybe three or four weeks after the Administration had started. Max Kampelman [Max M. Kampelman] had some people from various departments, assistant secretaries, and the one thing that we all had

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in common was that we all just badly needed a haircut. What it showed was that none of us had been able to take a minute away from his job from January 20th to whatever day it was, you know, that we were working nights and Saturdays and Sundays and so on. It was the hardest working thing that you ever saw. And, of course, the very first few months was just to find out what's going on, then you begin to get the input into it and so on. But this is no different from any other take over operation.

STEWART: Was there any real problems with the permanent staff, any suspicions left over from the eight years of the Republican Administration?

CARVER: Well, I'd say that the most usual reaction that was experienced in the resource agencies—and I would say this applies both in Agriculture and in Interior—is that they had never really been comfortable with our predecessors. Particularly was this true in Agriculture. Seaton was a lot

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better than McKay [Douglas J. McKay] had been, but, you know, when the new Administration came in I'd say that by and large there'd been a tremendous rooting for President Kennedy and the new Administration among the middle bureaucrats and up, and that they were glad to see us and wanted to make us look good and had a big stake in it themselves. And I'd say it was pretty positive. There were some of the presidential selections in Assistant Secretary levels who have had that usual suspicion, but that never paid off. You just can't be suspicious like that of these old hands—they'll beat you every time.

STEWART: Let's talk a little bit about the general organization practices of the Interior leadership as a whole. Namely, from the Secretary and his Assistant Secretaries. What in general, or was there any thought out practice or policy or idea as to the relationship of the assistant secretaries to the Secretary and his office? Or was this

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something that was just worked out on a person to person basis?

CARVER: Well, Stewart Udall didn't have ten cents worth of experience as an administrator. He had been a congressman. And I've always found a very interesting comparison with him and, let's say, Orville Freeman [Orville Lothrop Freeman], who had been a governor. And there are techniques which are applicable. Stewart, you know, he just played it all by ear. Now that left each one of the assistant secretaries to kind of find his own niche and his own role, and because we were all new, you could go about as far as you wanted. I had a great instinct to go as far as I could get away with.

In the water field, my colleague, Mr. Holum [Kenneth Holum], happened to have an undersecretary, Jim Carr [James K. Carr], who's also in the water field. So that was a very uncomfortable relationship, whereas neither one of them cared a hoot about what I was doing. So it was just

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a matter of using your own common sense, because you were speaking for the Secretary, as to what you did. It was about the happiest period of my life being assistant secretary because it's an operating kind of job and, particularly in the early years, the Secretary was giving me, you know, pretty free rein. And I considered it very successful.

But insofar as the Secretary, you know, applying techniques for it to come out this way, the answer was no. He had some techniques which were in the early days, at least, very useful. He'd have these night meetings, kind of town meeting affairs, he'd just get everybody in the Department that he could think of that had something to do with a problem he was interested in, and he'd say, "Be up here in my office at 8 o'clock." And then, hell, we'd go on till 11 or 12 or 1 o'clock in the morning with everybody speaking up and so on. And it was pretty good. Later, when we got more structured, it

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became a waste of time, and we lost some of that spontaneity. But the Secretary had some of these approaches which were quite successful in that early time. But it was pretty unstructured. He tried to have staff meetings with his top Secretarial officers, who went to lunch with him once a week. Sometimes those meetings were great, but they tapered off. He became kind of bored with them. And that kind of a structured organization has to be worked at.

The Secretary had as his administrative assistant on the Hill, the same fellow he took as his special assistant downtown, Orren Beaty, one of the most capable men in government. And his very skill made for some problems because he would tend to kind of reach out into the Department, breaking all the channel rules the same way that a Congressman does. And this sometimes led to a lot of coordination problems, and some pretty significant booboos occasionally, too.

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The Secretary would sign things that hadn't been properly cleared and get in trouble, early. They learned fast, though.

STEWART: Was this also a problem with Carr during the period he was there?

CARVER: Well, Jim was a kind of a—he was misplaced in that job, and everybody regarded him as a cipher. He wasn't. He was a cipher in that job. What he's done since indicated that he's a really strong executive. But Jim was pretty soon relegated to not anything much more important than riding around in the second car taking care of ceremonial operations. The Assistant Secretaries, if they have a notion to be strong, can really make an undersecretary look bad, as I later found out when I was undersecretary.

STEWART: So Beaty and, I assume later on, Walter Pozen [Walter I. Pozen] and who else was in that....

CARVER: Well, Pozen never was really that important, although he tried to make it appear so.

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He had some connections, I guess, or ties with the White House. But Beaty was always the key guy. And I can't say enough about his strengths. They were very helpful to the Secretary. The Secretary just couldn't have done that job without a Beaty.

STEWART: It's been written—I saw an article going through some things a few weeks ago—that the atmosphere in the Department definitely changed after those initial months when Secretary Udall got into a number of unfortunate squabbles, oh, for example, over the Bay of Pigs. He made some comments about the Bay of Pigs, and then he got into some difficulties on some fund raising with some oil men and so forth.

CARVER: Those were just the kind of mistakes that inexperience and lack of good staff work, which was there to be had, lead a man because he was running his office just like a congressman, rather than

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he was to be a kind of senior advisor in many matters. And I don't think any President has ever thought that was a very good idea. But I don't.... He never did really narrow the scope of his interests. And I don't think he really ever tried to run the Department better. He learned how to run his own office better, but I wouldn't go just quite as far as you said that having had his toes stepped on that he then became a good administrator or became interested in a

fewer range of things because.... Oh, we took on some real crazy things in those days. Like, you know, making the Redskins hire Bobby Mitchell [Robert Cornelius Mitchell].

STEWART: You took that on?

CARVER: The Secretary did.

STEWART: Oh, the Secretary did.

CARVER: Oh, yes, not me. Goodness, I was enough of an old bureaucrat to be just kicking and screaming and saying, “Mr. Secretary, you know, suppose

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somebody calls your bluff?” But he got away with it, a real political animal. I never did know what the President might have thought about that. I suppose it must have been plus because, you know, it was a real good thing at that time to break down that color barrier with the Redskins.

STEWART: I can’t recall exactly how that was done, but I suppose.... Were you directly involved in that?

CARVER: No, not directly, at all. I was just on the fringes saying, “Hey, quit that.” You know, “This isn’t the right thing for us to be doing.” But the Secretary had more sense about public relations than I did, by a whole great deal.

STEWART: A lot has been made in a number of.... People have commented on the disinterest that people in the White House generally had about the Department of Interior affairs. Would you generally agree with that?

CARVER: Well, I guess I would generally agree with

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it, but I suppose I’d substitute for disinterest. Their problem was that whenever they heard of Interior, they heard of it under kind of, you know, embarrassing or ticklish or kind of difficult circumstances. So they must have been just kind of perpetually mad at us over there, particularly in those early months because Stewart was, you know, feeling his way and he was making a lot of headlines. And the kinds of forays in the international affairs that you mentioned a moment ago were somewhat embarrassing to the President, and he’d sometimes have to apologize for him.

And then there were these—you know, the Secretary kind of read enough history to know that you can get a lot of headlines with getting a little feud going within the government. So this Agriculture-Interior kind of Ickes [Harold L. Ickes]-Wallace [Henry A.

Wallace] things were kind of incipient in those early months so that guys like Lee White and Ralph Dungan and Ted Sorensen [Theodore C. Sorenson] and Mike Feldman [Myer Feldman] were always having to referee different things.

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The Kinzua dam controversy with the corps of engineers in Agriculture and, oh, a lot of things.

But so far as the White House not being interested in those affairs, I recall when we worked on the first message, I went over with the Secretary and we went over it with the President and he even had some suggestions to make. It was my first, you know, in the Oval Room conference room with him on anything. I had met him, of course, before. But when it was all over, he called somebody in and said, you know, he wanted to get out about five thousand of these to selected people who'd be interested. I thought, oh boy, you know, here we are in the first month of the Administration, and he's already running for reelection. I was impressed.

STEWART: Let me turn this tape over.

[BEGIN SIDE II OF TAPE]

CARVER: Then the Secretary talked the President into making that conservation tour.

STEWART: In 1962.

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CARVER: Two, I guess. And I think the President—it might have been '63, I can't remember when it was. But whenever it was, I don't think it started out very well, but after awhile the President began to get the feel of what Udall had been trying to put across and kind of warmed up to it. By the time he hit the West Coast, he was really going great guns. And I think that ever after he had a strong feeling of the political meaning of what Udall was doing for him. I think, as Lyndon Johnson later came to understand, that there is just an awful lot of political sex appeal in this conservation epic. Now Udall was a particularly able exponent of it, you know, a kind of an evangelist on it. And after—it wasn't very long, in a year or two—I decided that, you know, Udall was there to stay. I didn't care how lousy an administrator he was or how many times he stubbed his toe, but he was doing

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something nationally which was coming across and was a great big plus on the ledger and that the President appreciated it and was going to go with him all the way.

STEWART: But that certainly wasn't apparent the first year.

CARVER: Oh, hell, no. It certainly wasn't. But, well, I think the President had a role in it later. You know, he'd read those speeches in the campaign, like the one out at Billings and one in Poratello and some of the others, without really understanding what it was all about. He was a pretty quick study, and as soon as he did and began to see the feel of the development of the west, the land and so on, and the parks particularly, this strengthened and solidified the Secretary's position.

STEWART: What general ground rules, if any, did Udall have within the Department on contact with

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White House people by either assistant secretaries or bureau chiefs?

CARVER: Well, if we had ground rules, I can't remember what they were. I always had free access, but I was very, very careful never to take up matters with the White House which would impinge on his responsibilities. But if I had to clear something with Ralph Dungan, you know, to do something, I always did it. Some of the bureau chiefs had White House access. Most didn't. But as to whether he ever set any ground rules about who you could talk to or not, I kind of doubt it.

STEWART: Most of your dealings then were with, what, Lee White and Dungan, or Dungan primarily?

CARVER: Dungan primarily, and Mike Feldman and Lee White. There weren't too many, you know. Mostly those guys would be refereeing some squabble with some other Department, that's what most of the arguments were about. Or you'd call

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them up and say, you know, "There's going to be some flak on this. I want you to be aware of it, we're going to do such and so." It wasn't a matter of clearing with them or asking them, it was a matter of saying, you know, there's something going to happen, and I don't want you to be caught surprised. You know, like when we raised the grazing fees. It was a matter of calling them up and saying, "Look, every Western senator is going to raise hell, and you're just going to get a lot of flak; but we've cleared it all; we've done our work; we can back it up." That gave them a feeling of assurance so that when they started getting the heat, they'd say, "Yes, Senator, we're sure going to look into it and so on." But wouldn't make any promises.

STEWART: Do you recall any instances of their intervention, in any decisions you were making? And their

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intervention as the result of pressures from governors or people in the states?

CARVER: Well, if we had any improper interventions, I couldn't think of any. Once in awhile we had some quite strong suggestions, but mostly on what you might call unimportant matters. I recall one time getting—to the great discomfiture of John Macy—getting civil service status for some old buddy of the President who had some menial job in the Park Service somewhere. I got kind of an Executive Order drawn up and got it signed, and I didn't even think about the damn Civil Service commission. Macy was madder than hell because you weren't supposed to do it that way. But, you know, somebody might have said that was improper; I never regarded it as such. It was a Grade 9 or something like that.

I'd be hard pressed, I guess, now to think that anybody was telling us that we had to go over this project

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or that project. I had a strong impression in those days that the dominant feeling, and particularly in the first two or three years over there, was what they were really trying to do was not to make people happy but to find out the right thing, to use the information and the requests and the recommendations they were getting, not in terms of pleasing the guy that was requesting it, but to find out whether or not we'd thought it through. And, of course, that was entirely proper. They had a right to say that such and so, such and such a Senator wants to know so and so. Of course, we'd get these routine requests, mail requests, and some of those would have a kind of a hot foot attached to them. But we didn't pay much attention to those routine referrals. But when you'd get a phone call, you'd kind of snap to, and then

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you knew somebody was concerned.

STEWART: To what extent, in general, did you work with Larry O'Brien's [Lawrence F. O'Brien] office on matters of legislation? Or maybe I should ask how did you generally look on your role in handling legislation of concern to the bureaus in your jurisdiction?

CARVER: I think it would be fair for me to say, at least, the way I looked on it was that the White House looked to us to carry the laboring oar on that part of the Administration's program which was in our area. And we did not ever, that I recall, look to the White House to pull our chestnuts out of the fire except when you'd finally get to some big crunch somewhere. But they did not have a regular role in the kinds of legislation and legislative enactments we were trying to get through. There were some pretty

big ones, some of our Park bills, the Land and Water Conservation Fund Bill, and Wilderness, and a lot of things

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like that.

But I guess when you finally got to the Wilderness, they did, the President did take a hand in that. I guess maybe that was critical. But by and large it was only on that kind of level that you got them in, and even then, you know, we took care of almost all of the early stages of it. We were supposed to maintain good relationships with our chairmen and understand them and work with them. And, of course, the Secretary had come from the Hill and prided himself in being his own congressional relations. As a matter of fact, he became progressively worse at that as he became better as an executive. That's just the way it works, you know. They're two different roles. And he spent a lot of time with congressmen in the early months, and they all loved it, but as he became more and more tied up with running his Department, why, then he'd have to start neglecting some of his old buddies, and then as soon as

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that happens, why, you've got a different ball game. He had to go then back to the congressional relations professionals, you know, your staff people whose job it is to do that work.

STEWART: Did you, yourself, spend much time courting these people, or....

CARVER: Well, we had a special relationship with the House Interior Committee because Wayne Aspinall didn't ever like to work through congressional liaison people or underlings. He wanted an assistant secretary or a policy maker there. So that when, you know, at the beginning of each Congress I would go up with all of my bureau chiefs, we'd spend two or three days going over the whole program. So that the answer would be, yes, I spent a great deal of time on congressional relations.

STEWART: Look it, do you want to go on, it's....

CARVER: I can go on a few more minutes. Then if you find

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a convenient breaking point, well....

STEWART: All right. It's often been said that the Bureau of the Budget played an increasingly important role in the Kennedy Administration, even to the

extent of handling a lot of substantive problems that the previous Administrations had been handled by the White House staff. In your relations with them, did you find this to be true?

CARVER: In my relationships with them I found that they tried to make this true. I think that they succeeded in some areas, and in some areas they didn't. But you're quite right, the dynamics were that under Dave Bell [David E. Bell] and his successors. Kermit Gordon and Charlie Schultze [Charles L. Schultze], they were trying to broaden their role. Of course, this has more to do with the dynamics of the White House than it does the departments. Pretty soon the White House

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figured out that they just couldn't run it like a congressional office. They had to institutionalize some of these things, and particularly in the resource areas, the whole damn business of resource development is your budget. So what you can ask for, what you can get, and how successful you are depends on just how well you get along with what the President will allow you to send up to the Hill. And of course, we went through that whole exercise, that whole budget exercise, right after the President came in. He told us, you know, we had to go through and review them. We didn't have the slightest idea what we were doing in that period.

STEWART: I was going to ask you, did you make many changes, or....

CARVER: No, but it was a very good learning process for

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us, and we later became masters of this money business. I must say this, concerning our predecessors, I don't think they ever did understand it. I think they always left it to the technicians. But it's understood now. But on policy matters the Budget Bureau had some strong feelings in areas where we had some strong feelings going in the other direction. And sometimes these matters had to be refereed by the President. Sometimes the Budget Bureau just won.

I mentioned grazing fees; once in a while they'd come out with a directive that you had to collect the fair value of the forage from the ranchers. Well, there's an argument we knew we couldn't lose because, you know, you just have to tell the President exactly what this means in terms of eleven Western states and the argument's over. But we had to go through this minute every year. And after awhile they knew it, and we knew it.

Harold

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Seidman had some strong ideas about how the President ought to run the territories, which didn't jibe with mine, at least, and that represented a problem from time to time. We had some problems on the operation of the Alaska railroad, but I guess maybe the.... I don't think that the Budget Bureau ever really got the upper hand until you finally got into those Vietnam type budget reductions, then they got the clout. When you're in the expansion type mood, as we were the first two or three years, why, the Departments always win. You lose some, but, you know, overall it's...

STEWART: A little easier.

CARVER: We're dominant as compared to the budget examiners.

STEWART: Moving on, you mentioned your relationships with the Department of Agriculture. What, do you recall, were the initial feelings as to what could be done to probably lessen some of the tensions

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between the Forest Service and the, particularly the Park Service? And the...

CARVER: And the BLM.

STEWART: The BLM.

CARVER: And some of the others. Well, I think both Departments, almost everybody in each Department was aware enough of history to kind of have a strong motivation to not allow this to be an embarrassment to the Administration.

And Udall and Freeman spent a lot of time on matters of joint interest. I guess maybe the principal one had to do with working out the details of the Wilderness Bill and things like that. And they came up with the so-called Treaty of the Potomac. I can't remember exactly when, but it was a landmark kind of an agreement, that they wouldn't wash their dirty linen in public, which has been generally honored, at least until very recently.

Their overlapping is such that there can never be a real easy relationship, but the

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tension generally serves the public interest, I think. There was an awful lot of feeling for a long time that the Park Service ought to have all of the operational recreation responsibility of the Federal government. But it became obvious to me in about two weeks after I got there that if they were given it all, they could never do it. And so I turned that around right away. I said, "You know, we've got enough problems with the park areas without worrying about whether or not they're going to have visitor centers and interpretative arrangers and so on in the National Forest." That's their problem, forget it." We had just the same kind of problems with the Bureau of Reclamation and had to handle them in about the same way, you know.

They'd have these big recreation potentials on their dams so they'd begin to capitalize on the benefit in public relations of having a lot of visitors thinking they were doing lots

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of things for them.

But the other techniques, Udall always was a great one to kind of resolve these problems by hiring somebody away from the other guy to kind of work on his side of the fence. He got Ed Crafts [Edward C. Crafts] over from the Forest Service to be head of the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation and an old buddy of Freeman's named George Selke [George A. Selke], who was Freeman's director of conservation, or something, who was consultant to Udall for a long time and there was a lot of this kind of cross-fertilization, particularly from Agriculture to Interior. There wasn't much going the other way.

STEWART: Well, the Forest Service, at least according to the story, was generally opposed to the way the whole recreation program was going and, I assume, opposed to setting up of the bureau in Interior?

CARVER: Oh, yes, yes. They were dead opposed to that.

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Of course, the Park Service was dead opposed to it, too.

STEWART: Yes, yes, well that...

CARVER: That was one of Udall's, you know, major—within the Department decisions, which I think was very good for the Administration after this Outdoor Recreation Resources Review Commission Report came out. The Secretary decided that he was going to put into effect, you know, kind of dramatize that this wasn't just an empty volume, that we were going to do things. My recommendation to him, that he create this new bureau by secretarial order even though he didn't have a dime's worth of authority or money for it, but to do it. Get a head for it, then go up to Congress, and ask them to ratify it using the Report as the ammunition for it. That's what we did, and of course, once it was done, why, it was done. And then it was successful. But that was the thing that broke Connie Wirth's back in terms

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of his relationships with the Secretary. He never forgave him.

STEWART: But did the Forest Service try to undercut this whole arrangement?

CARVER: Well, the Forest Service is so autonomous over there that I'd say that they always kept undercutting just sort of instinctively. But I wouldn't ascribe

that to Freeman. I think Freeman, within the limits that any Secretary has, was trying to keep this thing on an even keel, trying not to let it get out of hand. You know, once the Forest Service would come up and just make a big issue with it, he'd often have to back them up. But he was, I think, genuinely trying to see that these matters were handled more rationally.

STEWART: You mentioned this "peace treaty." Exactly how did this come about and how intimately were you, or were you involved with the whole thing?

CARVER: Well, I wouldn't say I was intimately involved

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in how the thing actually—I can't even remember how it came about. I remember being there when they jointly announced it, but I think it was an offshoot of their personal relationships and discussions and so on. I don't think it was one of those staffed out things. There were various levels at which a lot of staff work had been done. For example, I worked with my colleague over at Agriculture on coming to common principles in terms of forest management and a lot of technical things. But we're talking not about something a lot more significant than...

STEWART: And certainly there were no...

CARVER: ...appraising timber, or something like that.

STEWART: There were no conflicts between you and the Forest Service that had to be resolved that were serious enough to be resolved by someone at the White House, for example?

CARVER: Not that I recall. I just can't ever recall....

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If I got to the point where there was a big fight with the Forest Service, generally speaking that fight would be transferred by John Baker [John A. Baker] and me each to our bosses; the assistant secretary level would not get involved in that, if that is what your question meant.

STEWART: Right. Right.

CARVER: It would be much more likely that, you know, that Connie Wirth would get involved with Ed Cliff [Edward P. Cliff]. That might get to the White House quicker than one between the Assistant Secretary of Agriculture and the Assistant Secretary of the Interior.

STEWART: What about your relations with the Corps of Engineers? Again, I think Eisenhower made a proposal for transferring all, or most of their resource functions to Interior, which, of course, never came off.

CARVER: Well, we were all realistic enough to know that the rivers and harbors function, as indeed, the whole historical relationship of water....

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I say we were all, realistic enough to think that there wasn't going to be any change in that; I'll change that because I was realistic enough. I think that the Secretary did think at one time, and I think he wrote memoranda to the President which were directed toward the proposition of getting into the Interior Department all of the water business. But I never wasted any of my time on that because, politically speaking, I used to say, as I wrote one time to a Senator who asked me to comment on this idea, I said, "Anybody who suggests that is either naive or they're consciously troublemaking." You know, they're institutionalized too much. It isn't going to be changed, short of a war, or, as I used to put it, you know, the last day of a second term. But even then, you know, as you can see right now, that doesn't mean too much.

STEWART: Yes, yes. But in terms of reservoirs and lakes

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as recreation facilities and so forth, did you have any major problems with the Corps of Engineers?

CARVER: Oh, we had a lot of major problems with them, a great many. Some of them I think may have come later but may have at that time. You know, the whole business of charging fees for their use, requiring people to have these stickers, to get into them and so on, and the Corps of Engineers is not reconciled to that idea yet. It was a major fight. I'm thinking more about the developmental business, you know, about having the Bureau of Reclamation build the dams rather than the Corps, and that sort of thing. On the Recreation business the Corps, you know, somebody like Al Fitt [Alfred B. Fitt] or somebody like that would eventually have to step in and say, you know, "We're going to do it this way." But they never did. It was always just like the Corps wanted it. They worked through their committees which are different.

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Why waste your efforts and energies trying to change that?

STEWART: Do you want to quit now or...

CARVER: Yes, we'd better quit.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

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