

Exit Interview
With
RONALD H. WALKER
On
December 29, 1972



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1	Transc.	p. 32, from last open, "...presidential protection detail." to first open, "one of these people..."	12/29/1972	A
2	Transc.	p. 77, from last open, "...I took" to first open "...who was black."	12/29/1972	A

FILE GROUP TITLE

Exit Interview: Ronald H. Walker, December 29, 1972

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Exit interview with Ronald H. Walker
conducted by Susan Yowell
in Room 348 of the Old Executive Office Building
on December 29, 1972

SY: ...from you is a history of how the advance staff was set up from, right after the election in '68. How you organized the advance staff.

RW: Well, the first six months of the Nixon administration, in 1969, the travel arrangement was handled kind of totally by Dwight Chapin. He was the appointments secretary, the travel coordinator, the individual that made the assignments for the various trips the President made. Then I just happened, by happenstance, to be one of the advance men that had more or less survived and done a fairly good job in 1968 during the campaign. I guess, quickly, to recall what that first six months was about, would be to look at the Inauguration itself, which was handled by a number of advance men, specifically, [J.] Roy Goodearle, John Nidecker, Nick [L. Nicholas] Ruwe, myself, and Bill [William R.] Codus (who handled the Capitol). These were names that had been in and about the Nixon campaign organization for many years. I was relatively a newcomer, but did come back and help on the Inauguration. I ended up advancing members of the First Family, specifically Mrs. Nixon, and then working with the various [Inaugural] balls that evening. Shortly after the Inauguration I went back to Texas, where I was living at that time, temporarily, and was

recalled back to Washington to accept a position, since I had more or less terminated my tenure with the Hudson Company in Los Angeles. They put me on a payroll at Commerce, thereby allowing me to participate, at John Ehrlichman's request, and Ed [Edward L.] Morgan, who was, I think, originally designated to possibly be the President's chief advance man for that first European trip.

On that first European trip, we went out in January [1969], the latter part of January or the first part of February. Just quickly, once again, Dan [Daniel T.] Kingsley did Brussels, I did London, Roy Goodearle did Germany, Nidecker did West Berlin, [Henry C.] Cashen did Rome and the Vatican, and Morgan anchored it in Paris. When we returned, I pursued a follow up conversation and interview that I'd had with Secretary [Walter J.] Hickel. I eventually accepted that position, at the urging of members of the White House, to become a special assistant to Hickel, arranging all his travel, programing him, speechwriting, his everyday appointment schedule, trying to get him organized in a fashion similar to what I was accustomed to with the President. I continued to be available to Dwight, upon call, to do various advances. I didn't do a lot, but those that I did do, in retrospect, I guess I did well. Because I kept moving up it seemed.

That summer, the summer of '69, the President made his first around the world trip, commencing with the Apollo XI splashdown, off of Johnson Island, where he went overnight in the Hornet, and received the Apollo XI astronauts. From then he preceded on to Manila, to Bangkok, from there he jumped over to Saigon, and then into New Delhi, which I handled. And then [I] coordinated and helped Dick [W. Richard] Howard, who was doing Lahore, Pakistan. Dick had not had much experience in advancing, and had none on the international side. After that we proceeded on into Romania, from Romania into Mildenhall, England where he met with Prime Minister [Edward] Heath, no the Prime Minister at that time was Prime Minister [Harold] Wilson, and then into Washington. On that flight Dwight discussed with me the possibility of taking over as the President's chief advance man. At this time they had none.

SY: Hm hmm.

RW: And starting to build a new team of advance men, concentrating specifically on advancing a President, as opposed to advancing a candidate, and there is a great deal of difference. We did not pursue it all that quickly. I went back with Hickel. Sometime within the next couple of months there was an occasion when the President went to the redwoods in California, Eureka, California to dedicate the Lady Bird Johnson Redwood

Grove. The former President [Lyndon B.] and Mrs. Johnson were there, and the President and Mrs. Nixon. I did that advance and it was a good one. It so happened that Hickel was the master of ceremonies, and, because Hickel had been so good to the White House in making me available and was a Cabinet officer, we happened to have been able to have returned from there to San Clemente on board Air Force One. On that flight, Bob [H. R.] Haldeman talked to the Secretary, and Dwight talked to me about assuming this position. The Secretary and I overnighed at the Newporter, in southern California, and had dinner together that night and discussed it. The next morning we flew back commercially, all the time discussing the pros and cons. His attitude was that, if this is what the President needs, by all means, you should go and do it. So, after Dwight returned from San Clemente with the President, Dwight and I got together, and I decided to accept the position. That was in about October, the dates escape me. But I say that because I felt, after numerous conversations with the older advance men that had been around, that one of the first things that I had to do was to get a handle on what so many other people had been attempting to do. Not devoting full time to it. For example, there was Chuck [Charles E.] Stuart, who had been assigned as special projects officer, special projects person, for Bob Haldeman.

And one of his roles [was] to go out and find new advance men. So there were an awful lot of people that were trying to find new advance men. There were also a number of people, in and around the United States of America, that were writing letters, or letters were being written on their behalf, to the White House, saying that this young man, this young woman, would be excellent advance material...

SY: Hm hmm.

RW: ...for the President. So I immediately got in touch with everyone--Morgan, Nidecker, John Whitaker, Ken [Kenneth R.] Cole, Ruwe, Goodearle, Chuck Stuart, Dwight--and took all the mail, the correspondence, the phone calls, and started assimilating it. But I also realized one of the first things that I needed, in order to make the goal as I saw it, in order to start training new men and building a new corps of advance men that would eventually be the nucleus of a presidential campaign in 1972, would be to write a manual. An all-encompassing manual that in no way, the individual that had access to that, which I controlled very, very heavily, quite tightly, that they could become an advance man by virtue of having read it. But that it was a foundation in order to start building the type of men that we needed to move the President. I stayed at the Department of Interior, Secretary Hickel made an office available to me, and a secretary. I

began to take the 1968 campaign manual, using that as a starting point, but by the time it was all completed, very little out of the 1968 campaign was applicable. I spent the next three to five months putting that manual together. The manual will speak for itself, and that'll be part of the Archives.

SY: And you said before that the files do reflect the changes in the manual...

RW: That's correct.

SY: ...that it would show that earlier versions and the changes that have been made.

RW: That's correct. All that material and everything will remain in the advance office, because this will be an ongoing thing for the next four years.

SY: Of course, yes.

RW: And it will be needed for the new people that come...

SY: Hm hmm.

RW: ...to replace me. After I had gotten the manual--and the manual, primarily working on the manual was, well, was me; I wrote it. Then Steve [Stephen B.] Bull and Dwight and I spent many many hours going through, section by section, with them adding various input, changing certain formats as we decided, maybe, that there was a better way to do it. The manual, I envisioned from the very outset, should be a living repository of thoughts and new concepts and new ideas. In no way should it become a stagnant, dead, this is

the only way you can do it.

SY: Hm hmm.

RW: And it did prove to be just that. Because we made any number of changes and there were [appendices] that were made. It's probably the best material on advancing a President, or for that matter, a candidate of any sort, as long as you take and make it applicable. Whether it's a city councilman, or a mayor, or a state congressman, or a state senator, or a governor, or national Senator or Congressman, and then eventually a President. Probably the best documented piece on advance work that's ever been done. O.K., that was done. Still in Interior, but in February of 1971 I moved to the White House. I took up residence with Hugh Sloan, on the first floor of the EOB [Old Executive Office Building].

SY: Hm hmm.

RW: I had a desk, and that was it.

SY: You did not have a secretary?

RW: No.

SY: You didn't bring a secretary from Interior?

RW: Not initially. I started working with Dwight and Steve internally, working at that time with John Davies, who was a special assistant to the President for tours and White House functions. I handled movement into the President's office and out of the President's office. I handled the Rose Garden affairs, the South Lawn, the

North Lawn, north portico, all the things that were internally being done. The Medal of Honor ceremonies. To look at it from the standpoint of an advance, from doing it for the President, making sure that everything was precise, crisp, well organized, well executed, and everybody's in the right place at the right time to make things [unintelligible]. It was being done well, but I think that...

SY: Hm hmm.

RW: ...we got it going better. That was about as much time as I spent messing around in the White House. It was not my forte. I didn't particularly care for it. My forte was building, finding these men, and getting out on the road and making it happen out there, where you had no resources. You had to pull everything together yourself.

SY: Did you work at all with Mr. Sloan, with Hugh Sloan?

RW: Yes, I did. Primarily from the standpoint of scheduling, not internally, but anything that had to do with external events. Whether it be in the city of Washington or outside, in the country. I started interviewing before the first of the year in 1969, on a come-what-may basis. I felt that it was my obligation to any young man, or young woman.

The record will show that we had no women advance types. By virtue of the type of work, it was a fundamental decision that we made very early in the

game. I felt very strongly that a female could not do the things that we were asking to be done for the President of the United States. But I did support, and support very strongly, the concept of having female advance types handle Mrs. Nixon and the girls. That eventually transpired. It eventually proved, through the girls themselves and Mrs. Nixon, that they preferred to have men. That's another whole story. But there was a school that was held for the girls, Connie [Constance C.] Stuart ran it and I helped her, and I spoke at it. But they handled a pretty heavy trip of Mrs. Nixon to about four or five states, and I guess the results were less than perfect.

SY: Hm hmm.

RW: Well, anyway, I started interviewing, and I had the philosophy that it was necessary to--I had the personal obligation to anyone that wanted to be an advance man for the President of the United States, to at least talk to him and give him the courtesy of having had the opportunity to speak with a presidential advance man [banging table for emphasis]. Then I made my evaluations. But I talked to every one of them.

I'll talk about it in my own language and everything. Some of them were, no way were they the caliber of people that I felt could be representing the President of the United States out and about this country, or internationally. Whether it was

appearance, whether it was their attitude, or whether it was what they were hopeful of getting out of it, on their own behalf, as opposed to putting into it on behalf of the President of the United States. One of the strongest feelings that I had was that they had to have an instilled passion for anonymity. Because, only in doing what we have done over the last three and a half years (and done it most effectively) has it been accomplished by virtue of that obscurity, and working behind the scenes, and letting the people that we organize to be front runners get the credit.

My general philosophy was that it would be very simple for a Ron Walker, or a Mike Duval [Michael Raoul-Duvall], or a [W.] Dewey Clower, or a Jon Foust, or a Bill [William] Henkel to go into Chicago, call on Colonel Riley [sp?], which was protocol, who was the chief of staff for Mayor [Richard J.] Daley. Make that courtesy call, and then turn to the Republican organization, say, "O.K., this is what we're going to do." Turn to Governor [Richard B.] Ogilvie's office and say, "O.K., this is what we're going to do. I'm going to have a press conference at four o'clock this afternoon, lay out the schedule and do everything, you know, and I'll be on television tonight and I'll be King Kong." Now this is the way that most of [John F.] Kennedy's advance men and Johnson's advance men worked. They went in with big "hoolihaw" [phonetic] and, you

know, and a lot of clout, and a lot of open coverage. They'd leave; the underlings would do the work. They'd come back a day or so before the event, take all the credit for it, and blow town. Well, you don't make many friends that way. Not me personally, but you don't make many friends for the President of the United States that way.

The way to go about doing it, this is what we ended up doing, was to go in there, make the courtesy calls on a very low key, low fashion basis. Find out who your key contact is going to be, who's going to be the front runner. Determine very quickly--you had to have that quick decisionmaking ability, or [be] a good reader of men and women, to know, initially, whether the guy was a shaker and a mover, whether he was just going to be a grandstander and a lip service type guy that was going to end up taking all the credit. [Who would] want to sit on the platform, or want to introduce the President, and not want to do any work. You had to make these evaluations and do it very quickly because, in many cases, you only had maybe twenty-four hours, seventy-two hours, four or five days, to do that advance. In the period of about a five day advance you can find yourself having anywhere from seven or eight hundred to two thousand volunteers that are participating in that. Whether they're blowing up balloons or cutting confetti, or driving

cars, or handing out handbills, making telephone calls, doing all these things that are so vitally necessary in order to turn out a crowd, in order to have people where you want them at the right, precise time. Then you let the locals.... "Locals" is a bad term, that we never used. "Local" is an applicable word,...

SY: Hmm.

RW: ...but it sort of leaves a bad taste in their mouths.

We would call it, you know, the community, or the people that are living in that location that will be the main host committee, or whatever the case may be. It was a good philosophy because it worked.

Another point that I always made to my advance men was there should never be a town that you go into that you should not be able to return to again. Or, that another advance man cannot return to and not be looked at in a bad light because of the mistakes and the sorriness with which you handled that advance. You know, you should be a diplomat, and you should know how to convince people to do things that they may not necessarily want to do. But in the long run they end up doing it because you made them feel that it was their idea, and they ended up doing it because it was their idea. All the time knowing very well what your game plan was. Well, I'm sidetracking, but I think the point's well made.

But, anyway, I started interviewing men. I talked

to hundreds of guys. I would talk to them on the phone, I exchanged letters, I started setting up a correspondence section of anyone that wanted to write to me and ask, had to send me a resume and a picture. And from that we would start progressing. I initially pulled together, again the number escapes me, but the early part of June in 1970, I had the first advance seminar. Now, "advance seminar" was a term that I categorized because I did not feel it should be an "advance school". That sounds too much like you're training guys to go out and be political hacks, or how to go out and get the political hacks. Or you're teaching them things that really aren't right. There's a bad, bad feeling among many politicians, about an advance man: they're con artists, they're young whipper-snappers, they're "BS" artists, they're probably a product of a political hack environment. Whether they'd been a lobbyist, or an aide to a Congressman or a Senator, or an aide to a mayor or a governor, or whatever the case may be. They know all the political ins and outs, and how to get around something, you know. They slap them on the back, and they talk percentages in the precincts, and what the black vote's going to do vis-a-vis the Jewish vote, and all that kind of stuff. I said, "Forget it!" I didn't want any political hack moving on behalf of the President of the United States. If a guy had never

done anything in politics, he started off better with me than the guy that had [pounds table for emphasis]. Because I didn't come out of a political background, and by virtue of that I think it gave me a great insight as to what advancing was all about. My mission was pure and simple: to go in there and to organize a community like that community had never been organized before in their lives. And realizing that I was probably the first contact that that community had ever had with the office of the presidency. And in a favorable light. I would probably be, for the most part, [for] all those volunteers that would be doing that work, the only contact, or the closest contact, that they would ever have to a President or the office of a President. I had to clean up my language; I happen to be a great, earthy individual. But I had to present the best light that I knew how, and I did it, and I demanded nothing less from the men that worked for me [pounds table]. Now these men did not get paid by me. For the majority of them were volunteers.

SY: Hm hmm.

RW: Which again, is a kind of a different bag. But, in June of that year, I had the first advance seminar. And there were about thirty-some-odd guys in there. In going back through that list, which has been a constant problem that I've experienced over the last three years, is that you go out and you find these good men,

and you train them in the art of being an advance man....

It is an art. There's no doubt about it. It takes a unique type of individual in order to do the things that you ask that man to do. It takes great sacrifice. It takes guts, because you have to talk your boss into being able to take time off and go and do this. You have to learn; you worry. Your stomach knots up. You worry about whether the crowd's going to be at the airport, or whether it's going to be along the motorcade route. You worry about whether your reception committee's going to be there. You worry about getting the schedule done. You worry about all these kinds of things, and it's a very snort period of time. There's one thing you always experience: that's finality. Because, the moment the President arrives back, and he gets on that airplane, on the "Spirit of '76", and those wheels lift off, it's either been a good advance, or it's been a bad advance. There is no middle area in my mind. So, you know when that plane lifts off, if you've had a good stop [pounds table], if it's been a good drill. And, boy, there's nothing, no feeling like that in the world if it's gone well. There's also no feeling in the world if it's gone bad. Because, only you will hate yourself more than anybody else could ever hate [pounds table]. There's always that feeling on the airplane, at least I felt this way,

that it was a great empathy for those guys on the ground. And everyone else on that plane had been around long enough in politics, or with the President, through advancing or movement, that they also snared that same empathy. But not that guy on the ground [pounds table]. He knew he had blown it [pounds table]. We had very few that were ever blown. As a matter of fact, if I had to go back, I would say there were, under my tenure, there were never any blown. We had some mistakes, we had some problems, but we didn't blow it. The President was never embarrassed, with the exception of San Jose.

Out of that school I can take names like Dick Howard, who ended up working for Herb [Herbert G.] Klein, and eventually with Chuck [Charles W.] Colson, who I lost advancing. Gordon Strachan, who ended up working for Bob Haldeman. Dave [David N.] Parker, who ended up working for Dwight. Jack Pettit, who ended up being, becoming the general counsel of the FCC [Federal Communications Commission]. I can go through the list, but it seemed that it was an ongoing practice that we would find these men, they would be good men, they would be recognized on the road or their talents would be recognized. Someone would say, "Gee, that's a sharp guy." The next thing I'd know, he was gone. But, I always felt that that was an obligation that I had, not only to the President, but to the office of the

President. In order to get these good men into various slots...

SY: Hm hmm.

RW: ...and locations, so that the President's machinery runs just as well everyplace else as it does. It gave me a great pride, sense of pride, to have found these men, and have them be called "Walker's Raiders," or "The Roadrunner's Raiders." And then have them move on in. And all through the White House now there are guys that we found, and we trained. They came out of the advance operation, and now they're doing their own thing.

[Recorder turned off]

[Recording resumed]

RW: ...was last time that I did. You shouldn't feel that way.

SY: Well, that's the first time it's happened to me, and I had everyone try to console me. When I went back I found out that Steve [Stephen] Hess, when he and [Earl] Mazo were doing his book [Nixon: A Political Portrait] they did one of these with the President that didn't work.

RW: Oh!

SY: [Laughter]. So, and we have....

RW: And he probably was less concerned about it than they were.

SY: Well, they called him up and told him, and he was great

about it, apparently.

RW: I'm sure he was.

SY: Terry Good talked with Steve Hess when he left, I guess it was the White House Conference on Youth, and he [Hess] told him the story. The other thing that happened with one of the people with the other [presidential] libraries, a man from the [Harry S] Truman Library went up to New York to interview, I think it was Rosenberg [sp?], made the trip to New York just to talk with him. Came back on the metro[liner] and the electrical...

RW: System erased it?

SY: ...system just scrambled it, just completely. Before there had been any transcription made or.... But we have paranoia about those things not working, you know.

RW: You know what might be a suggestion for you, just put this in the back of your, you know, just put it back in there and think about it.

SY: Hm hmm.

RW: The White House Communications Agency...

SY: Hm hmm.

RW: ...has got tremendous recording facilities and the technicians to handle it.

SY: Right.

RW: And if you're going to do anything with somebody that's a real heavy, you might want to call General [Albert] Redman.

SY: Hm hmm.

RW: And just say, "Sir, I'm going to be conducting this interview with Bob [Robert H.] Finch or, you know,....

SY: Hmm.

RW: ...with Bob Haldeman, or whatever the case it's going to be,....

SY: Hmm.

RW: ...and I'd like to have one of your men come in and set this up for me...

SY: Right.

RW: ...and be there to monitor it.

SY: We have used, they, well, it's their tape. And we have used them for minor repairs and things like that. They're very helpful.

[Unknown woman entered]

[Conversation unrelated to interview]

[Unknown woman left]

SY: One thing that you touched on before, which I wanted to have, is something on how you went about recruiting the people you were interviewing, as opposed to their....

RW: Well, I think I was talking about the first seminar, wasn't I?

SY: Right.

RW: That was really kind of a turning point for me. Because it was the culmination of the initial game plan that I had laid out for myself. I think I told you this: I'm a great game planner, in that I don't

consider myself the all time great smart guy. So I give a great deal of time to programing how I want something to go about. It's probably one of the reasons that I was a good advance man. Because I'm a stickler for details; I'm a perfectionist in what I do, and I know what has to be done.

So, I laid this thing out, I talked to all these guys. Then I had this first seminar. Well, I conducted this first seminar here, at the White House, in the Indian Treaty Room. Shortly before that, Rosamond Gitzem, (G-I-T-Z-E-N) who was a bureaucrat in the Department of Interior, had been my secretary with Hickel, was detailed over to me. She and I went upstairs the day before that weekend. It was the first, second weekend in June, and I started a pattern that eventually went through the next two and a half years. I did it on a Saturday and a Sunday, which allowed guys to fly in and spend Saturday with us, and Sunday. And then go home and be back to work on Monday, so they didn't miss any work. We went up with the White House Communications Agency and set up the Indian Treaty Room. I make this point only to show, eventually, how we progressed, really. I set that whole thing up myself. Everything from the water glasses, filling the water pitchers, and putting the glasses out there, to the pads and the paper. Then, the school commenced on Saturday morning.

A little background on what I did. Shortly before that school, and during the process of time that I was screening and interviewing all these men, I made calls on Bob [Robert H.] Taylor, who was the head of the Presidential Protection Detail, the Secret Service; on Al Redman, General Redman, the White House Communications Agency; Don [James D.] Hughes, who was the military aide to the President; Ollie [Oliver R.] Atkins, who was the President's photographer;...

SY: Hm hmm.

RW: ...at that time it was Jim [James] Keogh, who was the President's speechwriter; Pat [Patrick J.] Buchanan, at that time, who had the News Summary; well, I could go on. [I] made calls on these people, saying, "O.K., this is what I'm attempting and going about doing." One of the things that I had had brought to my attention quite early, when I was made to be the President's chief advance man, was that in the past, during the other administrations, specifically going back to Kennedy (because that's when advance men started really coming into their own, was the 1960 campaign).... Nixon, well, Murray Chotiner was the first guy that conceived of a guy going out and making these arrangements. He was the guy that did it. Then, Kennedy did it better than Nixon did it in 1968. Now, Bob Haldeman might take exception to that, but I think the record shows that he ended up having at least more

money, more clout, and better manpower on the road for him [in 1960] than Nixon did [in 1968]. There's an awful lot of background information that can substantiate that statement. Again, I say, Haldeman might take exception to it. Just a side note that the record may not show, is that, and Bob may allude to this later, but Bob only had about fifteen advance men. But of that group of advance men, there was John Ehrlichman; John Warner, who is now Secretary of the Navy; John Whitaker, who has just recently been named Undersecretary of Interior; Sherm [Sherman E.] Unger, who, I believe, is in the administration or has been; and then some other ones.

But the general feeling was that the political, which is what they call [unintelligible], or the pols[?], which were the political advance men...

SY: Hm hmm.

RW: ...would go out and play all kinds of games with the support people. Now this may go back to the individual caliber of the President, Kennedy or Johnson, because they, in their own right, were different types of personalities than is President Nixon. Johnson was very flighty. He, I think, became very, very nervous about his life, after the Kennedy assassination, and then assuming the office of the presidency. He would be going to Denver, he would take off in Air Force One, and in the air he would decide that he didn't want to

go to Denver, he wanted to go to Chicago. Well, that's just ludicrous when it comes to trying to move a man, because you've got helicopters in Denver, you've got the cars in Denver, you've got the security setup, you've got the program going and stuff. And then, all of a sudden, you know, to take a four hour trip and cut it to two, and land.... You know, they don't have cars. Then he'd be all upset and everything because the proper facilities weren't there for him. Well, of course, we've never had that situation with the President, with President Nixon.

Taylor indicated that one of the things that you can do that will assist everybody else, is to keep, to establish the type of office that is a liaison and a coordinator of all the support elements: i.e. the Secret Service; the White House Communications Agency, which provides the podium, the flags, the seals, the sound equipment, the lights, the radios, the base stations, all the things that not only we as a staff need, that the President needs in order to maintain that continuity of the office of the presidency, but the security need. The helicopter needs, all that kind of stuff. If they don't have as much information as you can give them, within reason, and within security purposes, or however tight we wanted to keep it internally, staffwise, they can't perform their mission. If they aren't performing their mission,

stuff is going to go wrong, and, if something goes wrong, there's the high possibility that the President's going to be embarrassed. And that is wrong. The same with the Secret Service. If you change routes, or all of a sudden an advance man says, "No, I don't want to go down that highway; I want to get off on this crossroad over here, because there's some nice farms and stuff." Well, they don't have those crossroads and stuff programmed. Now, granted, you've got the element of surprise, that you can move down, but that element of surprise leaves me awfully cold. Because there's been, indeed, built-in danger in doing anything that you...

SY: Hm hmm.

RW: ...have not programmed and planned.

Well, apparently the Kennedy advance men and the Johnson advance men did just exactly what I just said we didn't want to do. But I initially [unintelligible], that it would be great for me to go down and tell Bob Taylor this, or tell Al Redman this, or tell Don Hughes this, or whoever the case was going to be, but I had to prove it first. I had to prove that we weren't going to screw them. At a given point in time, when the President's airplane lands, and all of a sudden this is all in the plan and everything, I say, "Nope, we're not going to do that. We're going to do something else." Because that's what they had

experienced in the past.

So it took a great deal of time to nurture and to change the attitude. Fine, maybe Bob Taylor was convinced, because he knew me personally, he knew that I wouldn't "BS" him. But the point I'm trying to make is that it was those other agents, those site agents that are down there. You go on a one stop, you've got five or six agents there. You've got the lead agent, you've got the airport agent, you've got the motorcade agent, you've got the hotel site agent, you've got the event site agent. All of those guys had dealt with political type advance men before, and they had this sort of stuffy, bad feeling in their throat, or in their stomach, every time one of us came around. Well, I could sense this immediately. By the same token, the [White House] Communications Agency, the military aides.... Of course, we had all our own new military aides. To develop a rapport, internally, a team type effort.... Look, it's not going to be Ron Walker's advance. It's going to be our advance. You're just as important as I am. Only, I talk to the President's top staff, and I brief them, and I write the schedules, and I am the focal point of all communications. I will tell you, as soon as I can tell you, everything. Don't push me. By the same token, I expect to know everything that you're doing. That's the only way we can operate. By doing that it's an open line of

communications. You got a problem, you tell me. I got a problem, and it's in your area, I'm going to talk to you about it. All areas concern me. I'm the focal point. I am the President's representative. I have to know what's going on. I'm not going to go talk to the police, that's your job. In the past administrations an advance man would go in, he'd call on the chief of police, and do all the kinds of stuff and everything, and the Secret Service agent [would] come in and he had to tear down what that guy had built. Well, that's not right. It's not right for me, or any other advance man, to go to a military installation...

SY: Hm hmm.

RW: ...and go and talk to that Commanding General and say, "Sir, we're going to land Air Force One here. We're going to park all our airplanes out here, and I want you to turn the base personnel out, and I want your band out there to play 'Hail to the Chief'." No, why?! I've got a military aide that can do that. It's his, it builds his position, it builds his stature. I'm not going to make a career out of Secret Service or the Communications Agency, or the military. So, why do I need it? I mean, if that's, and that goes back to that passion for anonymity...

SY: Hm hmm.

RW: ...and that low profile. Give the people that have to do the job the credit and the clout to do that job

with. It's going to make your job easier, because you got somebody else out there doing it for you. This is delegating of authority. Well, that's another sidelight.

But that's the kinds of attitudes that we had to overcome. I can't think of the number of cities or military installations that we went to that somebody had been there before us, and they went, "Yech!!" They just [could] hardly stand it. "Here comes another political hack advance man. He's going to come in here and tear our base apart, or tear our city apart, and then just walk out in a cloak of darkness one night, with this hanging bag over his head, where nobody can see him." So those were the kinds of attitudes we had to overcome. We did it. We had not done it just prior to that school, that first advance seminar, in June of 1970. But that was one of the things that I talked about greatly. I talked for two solid days, and that's got to be a drag, for a guy sitting there and listening to one guy go--well, I don't claim to be the best public speaker in the world but I did know advancing better than anybody else in that room. I also invited the Secret Service to come and speak. I also invited the White House Communications Agency to come and speak. I also invited the military aides office to be represented. They spoke on behalf of all the helicopters: Marine One and Army One. They spoke on

behalf of Air Force One. They spoke on behalf of the doctors. They spoke on behalf of the bomb shelter and the "football", and the things that have to be an ongoing process when the President moves someplace. Well, I wasn't the expert in those areas, so why should I be sitting up there talking about them? Well, that broke the ice.

From that point on, it kind of seemed that it was a team. Those guys that left that school left with that kind of attitude. I may be the President's representative, but I'm not King Kong! Those guys don't work for me, they work for the President of the United States. I just happen to be a coordinator, or his representative, to make sure everything is pulled together and tied in a nice little knot. When he arrives we untie it [clap], and it all falls out just perfectly. And that's eventually how it....

Well, a unique thing happened immediately following that school that really set this thing flying. Or set the complex, or the organization that I was conceiving. Honor America Day, July the fourth 1970. Within the next week of that seminar Dwight called me and wanted me to meet with Bill [J. Willard] Marriott, Sr., who was the chairman of Honor America Day, and Jeb Magruder. Dwight said, "Look, Ron's got these thirty-some-odd guys, they're sensational, they're our advance men, they know how to build crowds

and stuff. The President wants that Honor America Day to be the biggest happening on a Fourth of July ever in Washington, D.C. Let's let them have it." Well, it was just like a gift from heaven. I took all thirty of those guys, and they ranged from all the way up into upper state New York, down into Virginia. We had some in from Chicago and that area, but most of them were in the east coast, the Washington area. I thought I should go after my first element of men, [they] should be in the government and up and down this coast here, where I can get to them quickly, as opposed to going out into the midwest and to the southwest and to the far west. So that's what I had. I turned those guys loose. Crowd raising, handbills, leaflets, telephone, boiler room operations, and they just set up mini presidential advances. But they couldn't use the name of the President.

So, it not only gave them the opportunity to go out and try their wares or what I tried to teach them [pounds table], but they had to be innovative, they had to be imaginative, and they had to have a lot of guts to go about that job [pounds table]. It's great to go out there and say, "The President of the United States and Mrs. Nixon will be arriving at Tupelo, Mississippi airport at four o'clock next week." That's clout! I mean, that's the President of the United States! We didn't have anything going except, at that point in

time, an Honor America Day ceremony. Well, we started programming. We got Bob Hope, we got.... Then, of course, Honor America Day speaks for itself. We had the better part of 400,000 people that were here for that event that night. Those guys did one hell of a job. I mean, it would never have happened, it would never have happened if it hadn't been for those advance men. They set up regional offices. We put up an office in downtown Washington, we put two or three out in Maryland, we put some out in Virginia. We had offices in Philadelphia, we had offices in New York. We had trains that came from New York, down through Philadelphia, huge trains full of people. That's where Peter Brennan, we met Peter Brennan, who's now the Secretary of Labor.

SY: Hm hmm.

RW: We met him the first time. He had a whole train of hardhats and brought them down. We had [H.] Ross Perot from Texas that rented two airplanes and flew them in. It was that kind of, "Give me a job, and by God, I'll get it done! [pounds table]. There's nothing I can't do!" If the guy had that kind of attitude, and had a little more going for him, we'd won. Yes?

[Recorder turned off]

[Recording resumed]

RW: Well, anyway, Honor America Day was a real plus. It not only took what I'd been building for a year, or

working for for a year, but it just highlighted it. The President and his staff were in California, and I'll never forget as long as I live, out from that Ellipse, that night, when at two o'clock in the afternoon, for a program that was going to start at eight, there were hundreds of people arriving with picnic lunches. That were going to sit on that ground there for four and five hours, six and seven hours. We had, it was the damndest happening, probably, this city had ever seen, from a standpoint of [an] outpouring of love of America. Now, they've had outpourings of hate for America, but that was a real happening. Everybody took notice, and everybody gave us credit for it. So, from that point on, it just started to really go.

SY: Hm hmm.

RW: We did some trips in between that time. But then the next thing that happened was the off-year election that Fall. By that time I had managed to get my own office, and Rosamond and I were set up, now, on the first floor, but over on the Seventeenth Street side of the EOB. We were there in a four office complex with Hugh Sloan and his office, and my secretary in my office. Well, we went about.... I was caught, I was caught in 1970, because I had not prepared.... Everybody had said the President was not going to campaign. Well, I hadn't had any more seminars. I had continued to recruit, but I did not have any other trained men,

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other than what came out of that first seminar. Well, all of a sudden, the President decided to start moving. It was a great lesson for me. Thank God it was an off year election, because I didn't have enough advance men that were trained. We did large political rallies. We ended up doing something like twenty-seven stops in two weeks. At one point in time I had everybody committed on the east coast, and I had to fly to the west coast and handle five states, by myself, until the President had finished up some of these stops on the east coast, and I could bring some of those men over to handle those stops.

At that point in time we came up with what we called a pre-advance. It was just prior to that. Where we took a Jetstar, and we took the key people that had to make decisions on the road. Those people were myself, as the head of the pre-advance team, a Secret Service agent, and normally it was a senior representative from the presidential protection detail.

[NAME RESTRICTED] or [NAME RESTRICTED] or [NAME RESTRICTED], one of those people, Dick [Richard E.] Keiser. Oftentimes Bob Taylor went. There was a White House Communications Agency, General Redman, he always went. There was Tim [Timothy G.] Elbourne, who was from the press standpoint. And a military aide. Those were the key people that had to go in, do a site survey, find out what the hell it was

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all about, what was going on. We had a game plan of what we wanted to do, we had to find a place to make it happen. Was the airport conducive to building a crowd? Was the motorcade route conducive to building a crowd? Where was the rally going to be held? Determining whether, what site was the best site to do it. Oftentimes, it wasn't always possible, but I would like to have had what we ended up calling the "lead advance man", which was the guy that had the overall responsibility [pounds table], to be on the site when we arrived [pounding], or go with us. So that he was there [pounding]. That was the guy that was going to have to execute what decisions we were making [pounding]. It's pretty difficult to go and do that and not have a guy with you to know what you're talking about, and the reasons behind it. So, that's when we came up with the concept.

Well, we did the pre-advances on all twenty-seven of those stops. Some of them, we would leave at seven o'clock in the morning, and not get back til two or three o'clock the next morning, and then leave again at seven and go do some more pre-advances. So, I had to run the advance office all by myself, with Rosamond: be on the phone, talk to all these guys, talking through their problems, the questions they had. Answer their questions. We had no tour desk. We had no liaison, internally, to be getting information. So I

worked very closely, by phone, with Dwight. It was less than ideal. Well, we learned a great deal coming out of that. Out of that campaign I hired Mike Duval, Dewey Clower, Bill Henkel and Jon Faust, who eventually became known as the senior advance men.

SY: Up until that time then, the '70 campaign, you were the only...

RW: That's correct.

SY: ...advance man on the White House payroll.

RW: That is correct.

SY: The first one.

RW: Now, initially these guys were not hired on the payroll of the White House. We slotted them into the various Departments and agencies.

SY: Hm hmm.

RW: They were detailed in to us. There were some good advance men out of the '70 campaign, and there were some bad ones. I did a great weeding out process of that. As a result of that, I probably ended up, I probably had, on the record, twenty or twenty-two guys. Many of them couldn't get out, which was a problem I had. But, I probably cut half of them. The reasons were, they weren't buttoned down, they just weren't the caliber of man we were looking for. So then, all of a sudden, it became necessary to start going and finding more again.

Well, going into 1971, we set about interviewing

anybody and everybody that we could get our hands on. Talking to friends, talking to relatives, talking to anybody we could talk to, to try and find the kinds of guys we were looking for. We started putting together a team. We had more weekend seminars, started training guys. I got those four men then, started going through the manual, and revising it. The changes that had transpired since the initial publication that I had. Diagrams--we went into much more detail with diagrams. Sandy [Sanford L.] Fox helped us on getting the diagrams of airports. We had four, five, six different types of airport diagrams that a guy could set up. We had different types of motorcades. We talked about the parade-type motorcade, the confetti-type motorcade, the balloon-type motorcade, a standard motorcade, all that kind of stuff. So we really started to refine the things that we had sort of haphazardly pulled together.

The next seminars and stuff that we had, I let the senior advance men [pounding] start handling certain portions of them. Each, in [his] own right [pounding], [was] good in certain areas. For example, Clower was an excellent hotel man [pounding]. Foust was extremely good at crowd raising, as was Henkel. Duval was an exceptionally fine organizer [pounding]. So I took these innuendos and stuff like that, and.... Of course that year we had, well, we did an awful lot that year. Those guys stayed busy. We trained other guys, got

them out on the trips. At that point in time we started taking three and four trainees on a trip. Those guys were the leads, and eventually, we'd get three for four guys out there. Maybe two of them had the moves that we wanted. Another two didn't. We always told them, "Thanks very much. It gave you a great chance, and you may end up being president of Chase Manhattan Bank, but you're just not.... It may not be your bag, but it's not our bag for you either."

SY: Hm hmm.

RW: Well, that brought us through that year, we got through it. We had another European trip that year. Out of the 1970 campaign I hired Karen Rietz. She had been working for Murray Chotiner; the campaign was over; Murray had left the White House; and I hired Karen. The early part of 1971, for the most part, was a game plan time. We had no office space. These four guys were on my payrolls, and they bounced around from various open office to open office. They had no phones or anything, and, at the end, they ended up in my office. That was a pretty hectic time. There were five guys, five of us sharing my office.

SY: Hmm.

RW: Shortly after the first of the year we staked out this area on the third floor. We put together a game plan as to how we saw the advance office growing. We knew it had to grow in order to get ready for 1972. We also

knew that we had to go about finding a lot of men fast, and training them. Realizing that it's going to take at least a half a dozen stops, or drills, what we call a drill, in order for a guy to be a seasoned advance man.

In order to be a lead advance man, a guy should have experience in an airport rally, building crowds. That's probably the most important thing an advance man has to do, to know how to build crowds, turn out people. You can have the all time great hall, you can have the all time great balloons, all time great signs and everything, but if you've got empty seats, man, it's a disaster! So I'd rather have a hall that's just overflowing into the streets, [people] bumping into one another, and not have any signs or balloons or a great band or anything. Now, if you can pull all that stuff together, then you've got a happening. But go for the crowds, go for the people, get them in there. That's the backbone of a good advance. Those kind of guys you don't make. They're born with it. They just know how to go about doing something like that. Well, those are the kind of guys that we tried to find. We had a European trip. The latter part of that year we continued to have advance seminars. We started game planning. The types of things the President should do in 1971, that he couldn't do in 1972, because [it was] a political year. So we put together what we called a

"blockbuster". We took every conceivable state, every conceivable thing that a President could do that was presidential [pounding], that was not political [pounding]: a park, a prison, anything like that. Believe it or not, by the time 1971 was over, we'd done the better part of ninety-five percent of them [pounding]. The blockbuster is in the file here. But it was to try and hit fifty states, and do it in 1971,...

SY: Hm hmm.

RW: ...counting on the first two years of the administration,...

SY: Hm hmm. [Unintelligible].

RW: ...and we did it. If you'll recall, the latter part of 1971 we hit all fifty states.

But then we started working on China. I'll never forget it, when I was in San Clemente, at the end of the summer of 1971. We'd ended up doing a series of stops on the way out. We were out there for the summer. All of a sudden, it was a Friday afternoon, I got a call from Dwight. I was laying next to the pool at the San Clemente Inn. He said, "Get dressed and get over here." I went over, and all of a sudden I walked into the conference room, and there was the advance team. Which by this time had become happenstance. It was a great love for us. We were doing our jobs and they were doing theirs, 'cause we had problems,

along.... There were some agents that were fired, there were some advance men that were fired. But we had developed what I had initially set out to do, so now it was a team. "Can't tell you what's going to happen, but the President's going to make a move, to Burbank, where he's going to address the nation," that evening. When we went down we had like two hours to do it. Landed a helicopter, drove a motorcade, got down to Burbank, get in and set the whole damned thing up, got staff offices set up, offices, telephones. The White House Communications Agency had to get their phones in there and everything. The President walked out and said he's going to visit China [pounds table]. Said Henry Kissinger's just gotten back. Well, you could have knocked me down with a feather!

SY: That was the first time?

RW: Right, the first I knew about it.

SY: [Laughter].

RW: Well, from that point on, it became very much our business. Because we spent the next three months in the bomb shelter, organizing and pre-planning, and getting ready for the China trip.

SY: Hm hmm.

RW: Then, before the China trip he announced he was going to Russia in the spring, so....

We continued to have the seminars, we continued to build a team. I was shooting for seventy-five men. We

ended up with fifty very solid men. Probably another twenty-five or thirty that we sent to the Committee for the Reelection [Committee to Reelect the President] for their advance operation. We did China. We came back. I had to make a decision, at that point, because, while we'd been in China, the Committee for the Reelection had started and they were having problems. The problems were that they had had a big rally in New Hampshire and a big rally in Florida, and they'd been bust. Just disasters. But we had not been involved. So Haldeman told me to find out what was going on. Dwight asked that I meet with Magruder and those people and find out.... Well, I went over and met with them and knew just exactly what had happened: they didn't know what the hell they were doing. So I came back, and I had to make recommendations. Well, the recommendation was made, among some other ones, but I knew what it was when I said it. I'm going to have to take one of my full time men...

SY: Hm hmm.

RW: ...and send him over there to head their advance operation. I sent Jon Foust. Jon did a hell of a job, but I also sent a lot of men with him. Bill [William E.] Moeller. Now, in January of 1971, I decided what we had to start doing, was approaching various companies that were inclined and favorable toward the President. I took Bill Henkel and Mike Duval, and gave

them a crash course in meeting with the president and chairman of the board of various companies, on how to interview. We went to New York, after making contact with probably a dozen of the President's friends, and went and saw the president of the board, chairman of the board, and told him that what we were doing was starting to build a presidential advance team. We were looking for bright, young men. I did a mailer, and sent them to all kinds of people. I went back and contacted every advance man out of 1968, to find out if they were interested, what they were doing, if they had any thoughts. We've got a file of advance men in there that numbers somewhere in the vicinity of around fourteen hundred men...

SY: Hmm.

RW: ...that we personally talked to. Those guys [the senior advance men] took off, and for the next three or four months they traveled all over this country, interviewing. Meeting with the president of that board, and he, in turn, going back into his organization and finding one, two, three young men. That was the backbone of how we went about building this organization.

Then the European trip came up, and then the presidential travel. Puerto Vallarta, Mexico came up. Other movements came up, and then China. We didn't have the time. I needed these guys. So then I

solicited Fred [Frederic V.] Malek. Then he and John Clarke went about a nationwide search of manpower for us. They did a hell of a job. John Clarke probably talked to five hundred men; of those we probably talked to a hundred; of those we probably picked thirty-five. Some of those were some of our best advance men. The only thing they lacked was experience. It was very difficult, because the President wasn't moving in 1972, except for international. That's how we built it. We've had four seminars this year. The last seminar I programed to end on the first of June. After the first of June we were finished. No more interviews, no more talking to people.

In the meantime I hired Julie Rowe, Marsha Griswold. We hired Julie Rowe out of Rochester, New York. She helped in the advance office, she was a school teacher, she did a hell of a job, came back down here. We had steps, [unintelligible due to table pounding] doing this. I hired Terry [Terrence] O'Donnell, I hired Tom [Thomas] Hart, I hired John Gartland, I hired Jim [James L.] Kolstad, I hired Allen Hall. These are all men that I.... We just all of a sudden we went from a one man operation, to a two man operation, to a five man operation, to a six man operation, and all of a sudden it was up to, at one point in time, counting the First Family operation, toward the latter part of the 1972 campaign, we

probably had twenty-five people up here. We moved into these offices, designed them so they were functional. Mark Goode moved up, Tim Elbourne moved up. Mark Goode came on as a television consultant, which we felt we needed, because we didn't have the expertise in television. We needed a real solid television guy [pounding]. We found Bill [William H.] Carruthers and Mark Goode at the Anaheim rally at the end of the 1970 campaign. It was the last rally that he did for [George L.] Murphy. And....

SY: Was, is that office under this office then?

RW: Well, I have a genuine relationship, in that nobody works for me, we all work together.

SY: Hm hmm.

RW: Actually, Timmy works for Ron [Ronald L.] Ziegler.

SY: Hm hmm.

RW: Mark Goode actually reports to Dwight Chapin. I report to Dwight Chapin.

SY: Hm hmm.

RW: But what Dwight would do is say, "O.K. Ron, here it is, bang, go." Then I would get with Mark and get with Tim and get with the Secret Service and the White House Communications Agency and bang, bang, bang, we were off.

SY: Hm hmm.

RW: Then we started staffing out; we started getting the reports; we started getting it in writing, so that the

decisions were in writing, and they could go through in a very simple format....

SY: Hm hmm.

RW: ...yes/no. Here are the options, approve/disapprove.

So that, contrary to what we had in 1970, which was just a hodgepodge of nothing. We're lucky we didn't screw it up. We were probably so well organized in 1972 that we were too organized. But I vowed to myself that I'd never get caught like I got caught in 1970 [pounding]. So I planned for the maximum! And as it ended up, we ended up doing the minimum, but....

That's where we are now.

SY: Well, if you'd go back just a little bit and talk about, you've mentioned coordinating with Mark Goode's office, and you've mentioned helping out with the First Lady's advance staff and the Committee [to Reelect the President]. Were there other areas that you went into, such as those?

RW: Well, I think it, I think the revealing thing is that the advance office--and I would have to admit that it was probably by design of me, is that I instilled in everyone here, to include Mark and include Timmy, who eventually became a part of our operation--that the advance office is a unique kind of office [pounding].

SY: Hm hmm.

RW: For example, we did restaurant surveys, we did limousine surveys, we did hotel surveys in Washington

[pounding]. We did surveys in probably twenty of the major cities in America. We've got more information [pounding], we've got more contacts around this country [pounding], for a centralized office, than probably anybody else in the White House. We're the liaison for the Department of the Interior for all their guest houses. If anybody in the White House wants to go to the Virgin Islands, or wants to go to Camp Hoover, or go to Cape Cod, or Grand Tetons in the national parks and stuff, they have to come to this office. And then we, in turn, have developed the relationship with the Interior Department that we act as the liaison for it [pounding].

SY: Hm hmm.

RW: If anybody has guests coming into town and they're looking for a hotel, something like that, it came to a point where, Jesus, if you want to ask questions of somebody, call the advance office. Well, that's the way I felt like this office should operate. We should work very closely with the speechwriters to make sure they've got the proper information. We should work very closely with Dick [Richard A.] Moore. So that Dick Moore, who does the color and travels with the President on the airplane, has constant communication with the advance man. If there's a football player that just broke his neck the night before, in a game; or if a football team just won a national championship,

or a state championship, or a city championship, and stuff; or if a policeman just got his back blown off by a bomb that went off, or just got shot, or something happened; or a young man saved some little kid's life; or some little kid's saved an old man's life; those kinds of things that the President, when he steps off of that plane and steps up to a mike, he can say, "Geez, it's great to be in Fargo. And I see that we've got the Fargo High School here. You guys just won your basketball game last night. What was the score? 82 to 72. Sensational! I'm really happy for you, but I feel badly for the other kids 'cause they lost," and that,...

SY: Hm hmm.

RW: ...all of a sudden you see five thousand people go, "Gee, this guy really cares."

The people that we, the press office, we damn near wrote their press schedules for them, for all the press corps. You take Ollie Atkins. We, the advance man got to the point where he could pick where the best shots were going to be for Ollie to get different pictures than the wires were going to get. So Ollie would walk off that plane, and the first thing he would want to know is where the advance man is. "Where do I go, what do I do?" There'd be a ladder for him, where he could step up on the top of that ladder and get a whole different perspective of a picture, for the West Wing

of the White House] basement, or for the President, or whatever the case was. Those were the kinds of things we started doing. We would take it to the point of the traveling staff. What their personal things were when you had an overnight. With Mort [Lyndon K.] Allin, we took the responsibility of getting the News Summary, and getting the News Summary distributed on the road. We worked it out with the White House Communications Agency. We took the dex machines out of the communications department and started having one of those, every advance man had a dex machine in his office. We had a dex machine in this office right here. So there was constant communication between this office and that. Every morning we could see the buildup coming in for the President. Four days before it was an article, two days before it was the headline. The day before it was a whole front page. We got that stuff daxed to us. So we knew what was happening. From the time I walked off that plane as the chief--by that time I was the tour director, running the entire tour--I'd walk off that plane [snaps fingers], I'd know as much about that advance and that city as the advance man, who was on the ground.

SY: Hm hmm.

RW: Except I hadn't been there. So there were very few questions that I couldn't answer.

SY: Hm hmm.

RW: There were very few needs that wouldn't be met. And we just, I just had the attitude that there is nothing that we can't do. If it comes to the point where we say we can't do it, there are going to be damn few other people that can do it.

By the same token, the relationship that we developed in the field, with the Republican National Committee [RNC], with the Committee for the Reelection. We give the Committee for the Reelection a great deal of support, manpower-wise and advice and counsel. 'Cause we're the experts, we're the pros. We've done things that other people have never done in a lifetime. When you take China, you take Russia, we put on a convention. When it was a dull convention, we made it a happening. Fine, Ken [Kenneth S.] Rietz brought three thousand kids down here, but we orchestrated those three thousand kids. If you want to try something sometime, try and orchestrate three thousand kids! Or try and get them into a convention, on the floor, when the RNC didn't want them in there. Well, two sessions during that 1972 convention we made happen that would have been nothing but "blaah" [phonetic] if it hadn't been for those kids. The first night was Mrs. Nixon's night, when they just blew the roof right off of that place, and probably helped us capture the better part of forty-five percent of the youth vote around this country, that [George S.] McGovern was

saying he had.

SY: Hm hmm.

RW: It was that kind of activity. If a guy says we can't get them on the floor, which Ody Fish said, screw Ody Fish! If I have to go pick locks and pull every con trick I know, I'll blow five or six hundred kids into that hall, and watch my smoke! That's what we did. They didn't like it. Dick [R.L.] Herman and Bob [Robert J.] Dole and those guys didn't like it. Well, tough bananas! It was the right thing to have done and we did it [pounding]! If we'd sat back on our haunches and let, listened to those guys, nothing would have happened. It would have been a "thpppt" [phonetic], stinky convention.

SY: Hm hmm.

RW: Now that's the kind of activity, that's the kinds of things that I felt so strongly that we should do. Something needs to be done, and it's the right thing to be done, by God, it's going to happen. I don't care who we step on, who we run through, what corners we have to cut. It's going to happen.

SY: Hm hmm. Something we mentioned last week. You did say that both Jon Foust, over at the Committee and, was it Bill [William R.] Codus, who handled First Family?

RW: Right.

SY: They worked independently?

RW: Right, well, yes. When I sent Jon Foust to the

Committee, I knew it wasn't going to be easy on Jon.

SY: Hm hmm.

RW: He was going in because of some, other people couldn't do the job. It was, that was exactly the case.

SY: Hm hmm.

RW: He had a rough time. Because he was an outsider, and he was one of the President's advance men, that was come over there to do a job that they couldn't get done themselves. So those people that had been hired to do those kind of jobs immediately, probably, had a great deal of animosity,...

SY: Hm hmm.

RW: ...not only toward me, but obviously toward him, because he's the guy on the scene. So I took other advance men and started assigning them to him. Good guys that we found. Like, we took one of our best advance men and made him his chief of staff, as I had done with Mike [Michael R.] Schrauth.

SY: Hm hmm.

RW: Mike Schrauth was the chief of staff of our office. He was the center focal point of everything. Nothing happened in this office that I didn't tell Mike about, or the advance man didn't have to come back in to Mike. The men in the field talked to Mike. When it came down to a day before the trip or the morning of the trip, I got on my conference phone with that advance man, and we went through that thing from nut to bolt. Just so

that I knew what they were doing, and I could sharpshoot and say , "What about this, what about that?", and everything else.

SY: Hm hmm.

RW: Mike had run shotgun on it up to that point. Well, we did the same thing for Foust. We sent him Bill Moeller. From there we gave him Tim Austin, we gave him Ed Caneer [sp?], we gave probably a half a dozen other guys, maybe even a dozen. Then he went about taking some of the names that we had discarded, not because they weren't good, but because we'd found better. We gave him that whole package, and from that he built his own advance men over there, of around fifty-some-odd guys. Those guys were help, were much more busy than we were, but yet I was not about to release any of those guys. If there were occasions that, like that kick-off weekend, that they went out and canvassed all around the country and stuff, where all the Cabinet officers and the girls went out and everything. He used every one of our men for that weekend. So he had something like a hundred and some-odd guys out in the various states.

SY: Hm hmm.

RW: But for the most part, those were my men. And I guarded them and held them very close, because I never knew when something was going to happen.

SY: Hm hmm.

RW: So that was Jon's bag over there. By the same token, I knew a year ago that, at a point in time, the First Family operation, under Connie [Stuart], would be hard pressed to handle the First Family during a campaign. Now, Connie would not like this comment, but this was something that I felt. Dwight and I talked about it long and hard and we knew it was going to be a very touchy situation, obviously, so we went about doing it as quietly and as convincingly as we could. We took Bill Codus; he did a number of things for Mrs. Nixon in and around the city. I had Allen Hall, who I'd designated to handle.... We took on Julie [Nixon Eisenhower] first.

SY: Hm hmm.

RW: Julie said she wanted somebody from my office to handle her trips and stuff. Allen Hall was the one that did that. From that, Tricia [Nixon Cox] moved in. Dave Parker ended up doing their scheduling, Allen Hall executed, using our advance men, again.

SY: Hm hmm.

RW: So we got Bill Codus. Bill Codus did a few things for Mrs. Nixon. Bill Codus went to Hawaii to do the [Kakuei] Tanaka thing. Bill Codus went to Russia and did that. He handled her on the stops. So that was kind of building the rapport for Bill Codus. Came back, Bill Codus went in, talked to Mrs. Nixon, and it was set. So, from that standpoint, we had Bill Codus,

who was handling Mrs. Nixon and, really, the girls. He brought with him Marylou Sheils from State Department, and Steve [Stephen J.] McCarthy. I gave him Dan Searby out of the convention, he worked Mrs. Nixon at the convention also. I also hired Kathy [Kathleen M.] Tindle. Kathy Tindle was going to be on my staff, but I moved her into the operation of the First Family. Allen Hall remained in that operation. Allen Hall eventually became the man that handled Eddie [Edward R. F.] Cox. He did more traveling than all the rest of them put together.

SY: Hm hmm.

RW: So that organization worked very close in hand with ours. All our files and all our information and all our advance men were available to the First Family, lock, stock and barrel. All the surrogates and stuff, Jon Foust handled. There were occasions when we were in slack periods and stuff, that I did make the presidential advance men available to him and, with rare exceptions, they were always ready, willing and able to do so.

SY: Hm hmm.

RW: All total, tripwise, this time those advance men probably averaged six events apiece. All total, this office, during the 1972 campaign, include the things we did for the Committee for the Reelection, plus the President, plus the members of the First Family,

numbered somewhere in the vicinity of around a hundred and twenty-five.

SY: Hm hmm. Do you see the office...

RW: Yes.

SY: ...decreasing greatly in size and...?

RW: Yes. You can go back through all the reports and everything that I wrote gearing up to 1972, the plan for the advance office for 1972. I knew we were going to need a lot. We ended up getting a lot, and it worked. Just little things which I'm sure you would understand, but many people wouldn't, a xerox. Try and do forty schedules, fifteen or twenty page schedules, I mean, from the standpoint of when they eat lunch to when they can go to bed, damn near. We finally got the xerox up here, and that kind of stuff. Well, that stuff will remain, but now it's not necessary, because he's a President again. He's not a lame duck President, but he will never run for office again. So, the tenure of this office is going to have to be retained. The magnitude of what it's going to encompass now will be just as important as it was for when he went to the [Harry S Truman] funeral, day before yesterday. There's already a backbone and a great foundation established here.

Bill Henkel, who I've named as my successor, was one of the senior advance men. The reason I named Bill, because he was the youngest of the group, but

more importantly, I felt that the other ones were older and should be moving on into bigger and better things. Whether they stay in government, or whether they get out of government. Bill is a very organized type of individual, as I am. He's also very personable, which I may or may not be. But that's the kind of person that should be here. It shouldn't be a heavy, hardhanded guy that's going to be demanding and forceful, because it's not that kind of an operation. It's the kind of operation that you tell us what needs to be done and we'll go about doing it, and we'll do it the best that we know how. It's that kind of an operation. Bill can do that. There's going to be some heavy travel, but what you've got now is a hard core of about fifty men that are trained, ready, willing and able to do anything they can...

SY: Hm hmm.

RW: ...for a member of the First Family or the President of the United States. Many of these men will stay in private industry, private enterprise, where they were when they were working for us. Many of them will probably join the government. Many of them may or may not be able to do any more advancing. But the point is, that there will be a nucleus to call upon. You don't have to worry about the Hatch Act now, which we had to concern ourselves about. One point I did not [make] is, by May of 1971, all the men that I named,

that were on my full time staff, were being paid by the White House. They'd gone on the White House rolls. Approaching the last three or four months of the campaign, those, there were certain members that they had to take a leave of absence, or they had to quit their companies, in order to come and do this,...

SY: Hm hmm.

RW: ...that we put on the payroll of the Committee. So, the way I envision the office moving is that you will have a--whether he'll be a commissioned officer as I was, I don't know. I was a special assistant to the President. I don't know whether that's going to happen or not.

SY: Hm hmm.

RW: But, he will be the chief advance man, and most likely the tour director. What he will need then, is a combination senior advance man and desk man. The desk man is very important. A senior advance man is very important. It may be that he hires a combination of two and they rotate between being senior advance man and participating in these.... These will be two new men now, that will not have been here for the last four years. Because what I would like to see Bill be able to do, in a year, is to move out and go and be able to do something on his own. The two men that he hires now, one would take over as the chief advance man and the other one would become the desk man. Then they

might hire another senior advance man that would be able to do the pre-advances, to work here and about the White House...

SY: Hm hmm.

RW: ...or on the road, or whatever the case be. All the time being able to call upon the men that have been proven and experienced. In the meantime, continuing to look, not as heavily as we did, but for new and more types of guys that can be advance men for this next four years.

SY: Hm hmm.

.W: I am convinced that the core of the people that we had in 1972, regardless of who the candidate will be in 1976, can probably, more than likely, well.... Can almost rest assured will be called upon, in some capacity, to perform a mission for the next candidate. Now, that's going to have to be their decision, it's going to be a personal decision for them. By the same token, the 1976 convention, plus, you know, what happens in the meantime. You've got the Bicentennial coming and I can conceive of an awful lot of presidential advance men being involved in the Bicentennial, because that's the kind of things these guys can do, and do well.

SY: Hm hmm.

RW: They're action oriented, they get a job done, you know, "Give it to me." It's like the Inauguration. I've

got, right now, probably fifteen guys that are over at the Inauguration. And what are they handling? They're handling the things nobody else would want to handle: the parade, the seating, the building of those platforms out there, the platform here, the swearing-in ceremony. The things you get your hands dirty with.

SY: Hm hmm.

RW: But the office is going to have to be.... The White House has become, the people in the White House have become accustomed to knowing that if there's anything that needs to be disseminated, in regard to a presidential trip, they call the advance office.

SY: Hm hmm.

RW: And if we don't know, we'll find out. But most of the time we know.

SY: One other thing, to skip around a little bit, but I wanted to ask you about again. You mentioned when you were doing the advance manual, you had the '68 campaign manual and you worked with Steve Bull and Dwight Chapin. Were there other people from previous administrations that you had contacted?

RW: No.

SY: Or, other people, like Murray Chotiner, who...?

RW: I spent a lot of time talking to Murray.

SY: Hm hmm.

RW: But here, you see, here was the thing. Steve Bull had done a little bit of advancing, but not much.

SY: Hmm.

RW: But Steve thinks like an advance man thinks. Dwight thinks like an advance man thinks. Dwight had not done much advancing. Dwight was the aide to the President during the 1968 campaign, had been with him for two years before that. Steve only did one advance for a President, and that was under my tenure, with me, he did it with me. And that was Massena, New York. Well, it was a real education for Steve, because he no longer had to go out and rent his own cars. He no longer had to go out and rent his own sound system, or his own lights, and get volunteers to drive the cars. Make sure gas was in the tanks, which I told you last time, I think.

SY: Right.

RW: It's all done for you now. But there was a much--I'd been through both of those. So, right now I'm the only guy around, that's involved in presidential travel, that has experienced both sides of the fence. When I leave, that [leaves] a big void [in] this office. But I'll always be called upon, I know I'll always be available if there's anything that's needed.

SY: Hmm.

RW: But it's not needed now anymore. When it is going to be needed, if a guy goes out and it's going to be a [Charles R.] Percy, or a George Bush, or a Bill [William E.] Brock, or somebody like that, that has no

relationship with the White House, or the White House facilities, to call upon. If it's [Spiro T.] Agnew, he'll obviously take with him the Vice President's facilities and support and everything. So, that's, that's what it's going to be like.

SY: Hm hmm.

RW: The only thing that Dwight and Steve added to the manual, which was really needed from my standpoint, was what the personal staff thought. The Bob Haldemans, the John Ehrlichmans, and then what the President [unintelligible].

SY: Hm hmm.

RW: Which were things that, when you're out on the road.... I had my own checklist, and that checklist told me about all kinds of things that would necessarily never.... The President, well, he just is way, so far above that he'd never even worry about it. He just considers that stuff's being done. That's the great relationship that we had. The President knew that we were out there. He knew that the job was being done for him, and he knew that it was being done better than it had ever been done for anybody else. He didn't have to worry about that stuff. That's the way he should, when he got off that plane he should have known that the only thing he's going to have to be told is where he goes to speak, where he should work the fence. The car, when he turns around, the car is going to be

there. When he gets out, somebody's going to meet him. Somebody will take him through to where he's going to have to go next. He'll go on to a briefing room. At that point we'll tell him about who he's going to be speaking to, where it is, how he gets there. That kind of activity he didn't have to worry about. He knew it was going to be there. He knew his speech was going to be on the platform, he knew the sound system was going to work, he knew the lights were going to be there, he knew the camera positions were going to be correct. He knew the head-on camera, if it was going to be live, was going to be in the right place. He, just those kinds of things. The flags were in the right place. His chair was there, it was labeled. Mrs. Nixon would be taken care of. If he worked a crowd, he knew that Mrs. Nixon would be taken care of. Those kinds of things are the things that the President didn't have to worry about. That was our job.

SY: Hm hmm. It certainly has worked.

RW: It worked.

SY: Do you have a permanent address? If not a permanent home address, but an address of family or, where you might be reached over the next ten years if an oral history project really is gone into more depth, to talk about things like, oh, the China experience? Hopefully, we will, at some point, get back to staff members. At this point we're so glad to have some

record of what you've just been telling me.

RW: Right, I understand. Well, I really don't [have a permanent address]. But I think you'll always have my address.

SY: All right.

RW: We're not going to....

SY: Well,...

RW: Right now you've got my home address here and,....

SY: ...obviously right now it won't be any problem. You can be reached at Interior, but....

RW: Right. And you have my home address here.

SY: Hm hmm. Hm hmm.

RW: And, Rose Mary [Woods?] will always know where I am. I mean, that's just a relationship that I'll never lose. And the White House Communications Agency, most of the operators will always know where I am.

SY: O.K. Well, that shouldn't be any problem then.

RW: No.

SY: But....

RW: I don't plan on going underground.

SY: [Laughter].

RW: When the New York Times attacked me I....

SY: Yeah, and as I was saying, hopefully, at some point, we can come back to people and talk in more detail on individual events, or specific, more specific areas.

RW: Well, I would be very happy.... I think one of the,

just one final note that I'll make is that,...

SY: All right.

RW: ...I think one of the reasons that the advance office has worked, and worked so well, is that--I have a cliche, I have a lot of them. I've looked at us as being little guys that ran around putting all the fires out. There were other people building them, the President building his, [Henry A.] Kissinger building those, the front runners, the heavy hitters,...

SY: Hm hmm.

RW: ...what I would call them. What our mission was--I had a hard time, on many occasions, biting [my] tongue. For five years of my life, I have worked behind the scenes. I've worked out of the third floor of this office, I've gone into a city and I've worked out of a hotel room. I've moved out under the cloak of darkness, never talking to press, never letting them know what I do. Never having a, granting an interview. Almost to the point of where I hide. As a result of that, that's the way the other advance men work. I set the example, in that I trained them. A guy that didn't want to follow my example, I fired him. Now how do you fire a volunteer? You don't, you just tell him, "Don't come, don't call me, I'll call you."

SY: Hm hmm.

RW: But those are the kind of men that we had. I think the President.... The last rally we did, 1972, was in

Ontario, California. Why did we do Ontario, California? Well, I like to be first to admit that I didn't know why we were doing Ontario, California. I've done twenty-five advances in California, and, if I had to pick a place to do an airport arrival, it sure as hell wouldn't have been Ontario. But, if you go back to Six Crises, on November the sixth, 1960, the President had a rally in Chicago, late evening. Got on his plane and flew to California. He arrived there at something like three a.m. in the morning, and he arrived in Ontario airport. They had a torchlight rally for him. There were something like fifteen thousand people there. The next day the election result, and he lost. Well, it was very obvious why we went back to Ontario. We vowed that was going to be the biggest happening that the President had ever had in his life, because it was going to be his last, his last, in his name, political rally the man would ever go to. Mike Duval was the senior representative and Homer Luther was the lead advance man. We did two other stops that day, Greensboro, North Carolina, and we probaly had twenty-five thousand people in Greensboro, North Carolina. They broke the ropes and completely engulfed Air Force One. Ollie has pictures of that that are the most incredible sight that you have ever laid your eyes on. Because Ollie stood inside the door of Air Force One, had the President and

Mrs. Nixon waving, the back of their heads, and all you can see, for as far as the eyes will go, is heads. It is the most incredible thing, I mean, if I had had to plan that [pounds table], I, excuse me,...

SY: [Laughter] That's all right.

RW: ...I couldn't, I could never have planned it better. It's completely engulfed that plane.

SY: Hm hmm.

RW: Well, that's a happening that you could never plan, for security reasons and all kinds of other reasons. We hadn't been airborne more than an hour, the President, Bob Haldeman came back and got me out of the staff section. I went up, and I had never met with the President in his office on Air Force One. As a matter of fact, I had had very little relationship with the President, because that was not my job. My job was to make sure everything was going right. Steve Bull talked to the President of the United States. Why should the President of the United States have to worry about talking to four or five guys? There's just no reason for it. If I had been an egotistical bastard I could have pushed my way in to talk to the President in order to get in the pictures and stuff like that. You know, at least so my mother and father would see me on the front page. I just, I, it was just not in me to do that.

SY: Hm hmm.

RW: If I had an advance man that did it, I'd fire him faster than greased lightening. I'd say, "Sir, you'll never do another advance for me, period." But he called me up, Dwight and Bob and I went into his office, in this little office on Air Force One, and he started talking about Greensboro and what great people they were. Then he started saying what a fine job that I had done [unintelligible]. Good, bright young men, what a great job had been done and how much he had appreciated it. And he made one comment, he said, "It's too bad that we really didn't have a tough campaign so that your guys could have, that they could have really done their thing." And then Bob said, "Sir," he said, "you're absolutely correct. Ron has put together a hell of a team. I think you'd have been very proud had they had the opportunity to do it for you." He said, "Well, we didn't need it." And I said, "Sir, that's just as important to me as if we had needed it."

SY: Hm hmm.

RW: Well, you know, it's probably one of the greatest thrills of my life. But then we landed in Ontario that night, and I probably had fifteen advance men assigned to that one stop. That's a lot of advance men. What we did, we broke it down into sectors. We assigned, maybe, a five mile radius to one advance man, and he had his own phone bank and his own handbill operation.

We may have had five or six sectors, where one advance man or two advance men were working. And, I'm telling you, we turned out the better part of fifty thousand people.

SY: Hmm.

RW: It was the most incredible sight I have ever laid my eyes on. We had torches.... The back of that plane--I knew it was going to be my last advance, or my last stop, the last stop as a tour director, and after that is was all over. I'd already turned in my resignation, I'd had already said, "After 1972, November the seventh, I'm finished, I've had it."

SY: Hm hmm.

RW: He, they opened the back end of that plane and all I could think was, "God almighty! Three and a half years of my life [snaps fingers] building something like this, and then what a happening to end it on." And I can remember just.... I was always the first one off the back of the plane. All I could do when that plane, that door opened, was to put my head in my hands and just go, "Wow!" The next morning....

[End of reel one]

[Reel two begins]

RW: Well, anyway, the morning, I guess, let's see, this was Sunday morning, so it had to be the fifth we did the Ontario event. We flew from the east coast to Greensboro, Albuquerque. Albuquerque, again, was

another sensational stop. We had about fifteen to twenty thousand people there. And then out of Albuquerque we flew on in, to arrive in Ontario. I think we called the rally for six o'clock. Maybe seven o'clock, I don't know, anyway the files will show what time it was. So that was the fourth. The next morning was the fifth, which was Sunday. I called a meeting at ten o'clock, ended up being ten-thirty, in the conference room in the Western White House, of the advance men that had participated in that evening's event. Those advance men were Duval, who was the senior representative....

Let me just make one other point right quick. All during the time we were building this advance operation, I was the expert. Haldeman felt better, Dwight felt better and, I'm sure, if the President knew about it, he would have felt better, that on every stop I was on the ground. I may not get in there until the night before, but we'd call a countdown meeting. The countdown meeting transpired the evening before the event. It pulled everybody in that had anything to do with anything, as far as that event was concerned. They went through it from the time that airplane was approaching, fifteen minutes out, until it was fifteen minutes gone. It was the movements, the diagrams of the airport, the diagrams of the motorcade route, the cars, the radios in the cars, you know, everything.

Just everything that was going to happen was talked about in that countdown meeting. So if there was any problem, if an agent said, "Now wait a minute, there are ropes and barrels in that area?" "Unh uh, they're not there." Well, Timmy could say, "I want to move my press through that area." It got it right on the table, right now. Well, this was something I did a long time ago, during my first advances, I said, "By God, I'm going to get everybody that has got anything to say about this trip, and I'm going to get them in one room, and we're going to sit down and we're going to talk it over. Because that's how things will go wrong [pounding]." Well, I would always get in there for that countdown meeting. Well, as "The Roadrunner," which was my code name, when I hit the ground, it was immediate fear, because, I had been there probably four or five times before. There wasn't anything that one of these guys was going to experience that I hadn't experienced before, and probably got in trouble for, or at least made a mistake. Or had corrected the mistake before it became a problem.

SY: Hm hmm.

RW: I had a great tendency, and it was part of my style, to instill great fear. When I got into there, that son of a bitch had better be buttoned down. Excuse my language. It'd better be buttoned down to the point where [snaps fingers] it's right, now. Well, it got to

a point where I couldn't physically do it, because I had responsibilities here, I had responsibilities as far as all kinds of.... But I didn't need to do any more, because what I had, was I had three Ron Walkers, or three senior advance men. Duval, Clower and Henkel. And so, during [1972] these men were me. They would go in and be there, sometimes they were there for the entire trip. But they would let the lead advance man run it. They'd be more of a sounding board for advice and counsel and everything else. Well, it worked. Yeah, some people may say, in going back, that we had a hell of a lot of men involved in a presidential stop. Well, it took that. We proved that it was the right way to do it. Now, we may have been able to do it with less men and have the same results. I'll never want to chance it. I'll never chance it, and I wouldn't have chanced it then. But that worked.

Well anyway, Duval was the senior representative on the Ontario stop. Homer Luther was the lead, and with him, he had Peter Jarvis, Peter Murphy, Wayne Whitehill, John Pitchess, Jim Kolstad, Jack [John E.] Packard, Tom Hart, and some others. Sandy [Sanford R.] Abbey was with them. Phil [Philip H.] Martyr was with them. I'm going around the table when we, well those were the guys that came in the next morning. I had picked up "Red" [B. M.] Cavaney and Dewey Clower in Albuquerque and taken them into California. So they

were in the room also. I kind of suspected that Dwight was up to something. About an hour before, Dwight called me and he said, "What time is your meeting?" I said, "Well, it's at ten-thirty." He said, "Oh, I thought it was at ten." And I said, "No, it's at ten-thirty." He said, "Well, the President is probably going to do a drop by." And I thought, "Geez, that's sensational." So we went in, and I started my meeting, and I didn't tell any of these guys. All of a sudden the door opened, Steve Bull stepped in and said, "Gentlemen, the President of the United States."

Well, these guys had worked for the President, Mike, in his case, for three years, some of the other ones for two years, and then some, most recently, this year, had never met the President. Mike had met him, but just a handshake and a thanks after an advance. A good advance, I normally would take them on the plane and the President could at least shake their hand and say thank you. I always felt that I should do it in the plane, as opposed to doing it on the ground, because on the ground everybody was looking. Here's a guy that's been on the ground for four or five days, that's talking for the President of the United States. All of a sudden I walk up and introduce him to the President of the United States, they're going to think, "I thought this guy knew the President all along...."

SY: [Laughter].

RW: ... "I thought he was drinking buddies with him." So, that was kind of an awkward situation, so I always took them on the back of the plane, and then, as he was coming to his quarters, I'd have them there in the aisle.

The President came in very relaxed. The Gallup and Harris polls had come out that morning and, he was something like twenty-seven points ahead; he was just very relaxed and very calm. He talked for about twenty, maybe twenty to twenty-five minutes. And he said, "I know what you men do, what you have to do. I know what sacrifices you've had to make and I know what it must be doing to your families." He said, "I know it's difficult for your wife to think about you out there with all those cute little 'Nixonaires' and 'Nixonettes' and everything." He said, "I know how hard you have to work." He said, "I know the traumatic experience it is to have to stand on an airport and worry about whether the crowd's going to show up, or whether it's going to rain, or whether the sun's going to shine, and everything." Well, it was just--here is the President of the United States standing there talking to a group of little guys, that had done a hell of a job for him, but never asked for anything. Never asked for anything, period. The rewards they got were something that you couldn't buy in a store, or anybody could ever give you. It was something that they

earned, and they.... It was something they'll carry with them the rest of their lives. But, to have the President stand there and talk to them about the things they had been doing, made them realize, "Yes, here's a man that does know what we have to go through. He may not know the minute details and stuff like that, but at least he has an empathy with what our job is." He talked about, well, for a long time. He went into what the last four years has meant, and what the next four years will mean to America. [About] how the opportunity to be a part of this was really the only thing that mattered. That they'd been a part of something that's really bigger than him, or any individual in that room, and for that they should carry away a great sense of accomplishment and a great contribution to something that was far bigger than all of us. So that kind of wrapped up my career right there.

SY: I guess so. Well, just very briefly, but is there anything which stands out at this point? I realize that perspectives will change over the next few years when you have a.... Is there anything which stands out as being of particular interest that you might want to talk about later, in more depth? Any of the trips, which might be outstanding, or any...?

RW: Well, I've done some three hundred, I've done over three hundred advances for the President.

SY: Hm hmm.

RW: Every one of them I learned something. Every one of them was a new experience. And they're--yeah, fine, you go into a rally, and a rally's a rally, and you can't change a rally. But, there were different people. There were different associations, different friendships made. If I had to--and I have thought about this. There are probably three or four things, maybe a half a dozen. You have to take and divide it into two sectors. One of them is the domestic side of advancing.

SY: Hm hmm.

RW: And the other is the international. The international side is something that, really, one can never truly explain. What it's all about. Because you all of a sudden find yourself really an ambassador for the President, and yet still a con artist. Yet you're dealing with some pretty fair con artists themselves. I would say, probably, well, it would, beyond any doubt--the one international advance that I had, out of the ten or so that I did, was China.

SY: Hm hmm.

RW: I could talk, again, the better part of the day about China. It was probably the most unique experience that any person in the last twenty-five years has ever had. I happen to have shared that, I happen to have been at the focal point of that experience. Because I spent

seven weeks in that country as the President's representative, with no ambassador, no embassy, and having to handle the better part of a hundred, [up] to eventually four hundred, people. That would be the internat--, or course Russia, again, you'd have to slash it, but in Russia you had an embassy.

SY: Hm hmm.

RW: Russia had had foreign dignataries, you know heavy dignataries visit their country before. The largest party that China had ever had was thirty-five. To include the head of state, plus press and everything, thirty-five. We came blowing along with four hundred people. So that's the international side. I could talk about China and Russia, China probably more than anything else. I could talk about India. Did England, did Italy, did Ireland, did Mexico, did the Apollo XIII splash down in Hawaii, which was really a domestic, but it was, well, I think as close as you can do a.... Did Canada.

Domestically, I think the two or three, four things that stand out most vivid in my mind, was the Apollo XIII splash down, which we only had twenty-four hours to do it. It's when those astronauts almost died. The President flew out and presented the Medal of Freedom. Incredible experience on my behalf, because I moved mountains to make that thing happen. The Whitney Young funeral in Lexington, Kentucky, as

funny as it might seem. I'll bet I've done at least a half a dozen funerals, include the [Charles] DeGaulle funeral. But Whitney Young was, obviously, black; he had a very unique organization that he was president of. They were hard core blacks, and they were not very inclined to deal with whites at all. Probably one of the toughest advances, on a short period of time, short notice, that I've ever had to do. Because they took the body from New York into Louisville, where it laid in rest for an evening, and then they had a motorcade. And at one point they were talking about somewhere in the vicinity of between five and ten thousand cars being a part of that motorcade in the fifty mile drive from Louisville to Lexington, Kentucky, where the funeral would transpire. The President wanted to be there for the funeral. Well, how do you have the President of the United States come when the motorcade is going to be--I mean, there's no telling when the motorcade's going to arrive. The President sat in his Oval Office and I sat on the phone in Lexington, Kentucky, and never left my hotel room, because I had Vern [Vernon C.] Coffey. I picked my, I got to the point, because I was King Kong, where I could pick my advance team, I could pick my agent.

SY: Hm hmm.

RW: I could pick my military aide. I could pick my communications officer, which is a very agreeable

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position to be in. But I took Vern Coffey, who was black. I took [NAME RESTRICTED], who was black. And probably two or three other black agents. And they became, actually became site advance men for me. We discussed this, and we knew it. And we knew that was the best way to go about doing it. I had to make a call, a judgment call, as to where that cortege was. The President would walk out of his office at my signal. "Mister President, we're ready to leave." Walks out of his office, gets in his airplane, his helicopter, goes to Air Force One, flies to Lexington, Kentucky, Bluegrass Airport. [I had to] make that call, where the President didn't have to sit on that plane for an hour, or two hours.

SY: Hm hmm.

RW: Or three hours. Even a half hour I would have been sweating blood. Well, I called Mike Schrauth in, I had Mike Duval with me. I put Mike Schrauth in a wire service car with a telephone. He was there at four o'clock in the morning in Louisville, watching the procession. I was on the radio with him for something like eight hours. I had a telephone in my ear, or the girl that, the volunteer secretary that I had there was monitoring it for me. He rode in that motorcade. He had driven that thing twice, and he had, we'd had fourteen checkpoints of how much time it took to get from here to there, driving at forty miles an hour,

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bang to bang to bang. I mean, just nothing left to chance, except whatever they did. I called that snot and the President was in within ten minutes. The President landed, the governor met him. He went up and spent a few minutes with the governor [snaps fingers], came off and got into his car, and the motorcade arrived and ours arrived, just like that.

SY: Hmm.

RW: After that advance the President called me. The first phone call I ever got from the President. He told me what a fine job I'd done, and he knew how difficult the situation was and everything. Those blacks just did not like us, uh huh, simple as that. That's one domestic advance. Apollo XIII was another.

SY: Well, I'm sure there're so many individual incidents and things that can be...

RW: Well, I've talked long enough.

SY: ...interesting. Well, thank you so much. We....

[End of interview]

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conducted by Susan Yowell
in Room 348 of the Old Executive Office Building
on December 29, 1972

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