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HST on:

the role of the President:

Well, I think the feeling that I've developed since '72 is that an ideological attachment to the presidency or the president is very dangerous. I think the president should be a businessman; probably he should be hired. It started with Kennedy, where you got sort of a personal attachment to the president, and it was very important that he agree with you and you agree with him and you knew he was on your side. I no longer give a f--k if the president's on my side, as long as he leaves me alone or doesn't send me off to any wars or have me busted. The president should take care of business, mind the f--king store and leave people alone.

on Jimmy Carter:

I think I've lost my sense that it's a life or death matter whether someone is elected to this, that or whatever. Maybe it's losing faith in ideology or politicians - or maybe both. Carter, I think, is an egomaniac, which is good because he has a hideous example of what could happen if he f--ks up. I wouldn't want to follow Nixon's act, and Carter doesn't either. He has a whole chain of ugly precedents to make him careful - Watergate, Vietnam, The Bay of Pigs - and I think he's very aware that even the smallest blunder on his part could mushroom into something that would queer his image forever in the next generation's history texts...if there is a next generation.

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I'm not saying this in defense of the man, but only to emphasize that anybody in Congress or anywhere else who plans to cross Jimmy Carter should take pains to understand the real nature of the beast they intend to cross. He's on a very different wavelength than most people in Washington. That's one of the main reasons he's president, and also one of the first things I noticed when I met him in Georgia in 1974 - a total disdain for political definition or conventional ideologies.

His concept of populist politics is such a strange mix of total pragmatism and almost religious idealism that every once in a while - to me at least, and especially when I listen to some of the tapes of conversations I had with him in 1974 and '75 - that he sounds like a borderline anarchist...which is probably why he interested me from the very beginning; and why he still does, for that matter. Jimmy Carter is a genuine original...He won't keep any enemies list on paper; but only because he doesn't have to; he has a memory like a computerized elephant.

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Compared to most other politicians, I do still like Carter. Whether I agree with him on everything, that's another thing entirely. He'd put me in jail in an instant if he saw me snorting coke in front of him. He would not, however, follow me into the bathroom and try to catch me snorting it. It's little things like that.

on Garry Trudeau:

RR: Did Garry Trudeau consult you before he started including you as the

Uncle Duke character in "Doonesbury"?

HT: No. I never saw him; I never talked to him. It was a hot, nearly blazing day in Washington, and I was coming down the steps of the Supreme Court looking for somebody, Carl Wagner or somebody like that. I'd been inside the press section, and then all of a sudden I saw a crowd of people and I heard them saying, "Uncle Duke," I heard the words Duke, Uncle; it didn't seem to make any sense. I looked around, and I recognized people who were total strangers pointing at me and laughing. I had no idea what the f--k they were talking about. I had gotten out of the habit of reading funnies when I started reading the Times. I had no idea what this outburst meant.. It was a weird experience, and as it happened I was sort of by myself up there on the stairs, and I thought: "What in the f--k madness is going on? Why am I being mocked by a gang of strangers and friends on the steps of the Supreme Court? Then I must have asked someone, and they told me that Uncle Duke had appeared in the Post that morning.

why he didn't cover the 1976 campaign:

I was going to write a book on the '76 campaign, but even at the time I was doing research, I started to get nervous about it. I knew if I did another book on the campaign, I'd somehow be trapped.

I was the most obvious journalist - coming off my book on the 1972 campaign - to inherit Teddy White's role as a big-selling chronicler of presidential campaigns. I would have been locked into national politics as a way of life, not to mention as a primary source of income..And there's no way you can play that kind of Washington Wizard role from a base in Woody Creek, I'd have had to move to Washington, or at least to New York...and, Jesus, life is too short for that kind of volunteer agony. I've put a lot of work into living out here where I do and still making a living, and I don't want to give it up unless I absolutely have to. I moved to Washington for a year in 1972, and it was a nightmare.

Yeah, there was a definite temptation to write another campaign book - especially for a vast amount of money in advance - but even while I was looking at all that money, I knew it would be a terminal mistake. It wasn't until I actually began covering the campaign that I had to confront the reality of what I was getting into. I hadn't been in New Hampshire two days when I knew for certain that I just couldn't make it. I was seeing my footprints everywhere I went. All the things that were of interest last time - even the esoteric little details of a presidential campaign - seemed like gibberish the second time around. Plus, I lost what looks more and more like a tremendous advantage of anonymity. That was annoying, because in '72 I could stand against a wall somewhere - and I'd select some pretty weird walls to stand against - and nobody knew who I was. But in '76, Jesus, at press conferences, I had to sign more autographs than the candidates.

Through some strange process, I came from the '72 campaign an unknown reporter, a vagrant journalist, to a sort of media figure in the '76 campaign. It started getting so uncomfortable and made it so hard to work that even the alleged or apparent access that I had to this weird peanut farmer from Georgia became a disadvantage.

working with the Secret Service:

No, I made my peace with the secret service early in '72 when I went to a party

in the Biltmore Hotel here in New York after McGovern's primary victory, and there were about ten agents in a room. Three of them were obviously passing a joint around. The look on their faces when I walked in there...all of them turning to look on when I walked in...it was a wonderful moment of confrontation. I didn't want to be there, they didn't want me in there. Immediately they just crushed the joint and tried to ignore it. But the room was obviously full of marijuana smoke.

RR: Was there ever any kind of trouble with the secret service after that?

No trouble at all, except when they tried to bar me from the White House during the impeachment thing. I called the guards Nazi cocksuckers or something and in order to get in the White House I had to promise not to call anybody Nazi cocksuckers. I just waved my hand at the White House itself, you know, with Haldeman inside. I kind of got off that hook. And then I promised not to call anyone Nazi cocksuckers, and they let me in.

being pulled over in the sixties:

One of the few times I ever got in trouble. I wasn't drunk or pumped up. I had a loaded .44 magnum in the glove compartment, a bottle of Wild Turkey open on the seat beside me, and I said, well, this is a good time to try that advice a hippie lawyer gave me once - to pull down the window just a crack and stick out my driver's license. So I started to do that. I was just getting it out, when all of a sudden the door on the other side opened. I looked around, and here was a flashlight glaring right in my face, and right beside the flashlight was a big, dirty .57 magnum pointed at me. They didn't give a f--k about my license. They jerked me out of the car and pushed me up against the side. I said something about my constitutional rights, and they said, "Well, sue us," or something and kicked my legs. So I gave it up and eventually I paid a \$35 fine, because it's easier than arguing. I had just bought the car. It was a Saab. The night before I had pushed my English Ford off a cliff in Big Sur, 400 feet down to the ocean, to get even with the bastard for all the trouble it caused me. We filled it with gasoline and set it on fire just before it went over the edge.

Ever since then I have made it a point to be polite to the California Highway Patrol. I have a National Rifle Association sticker on the back window of my car, so that any cop on the driver's side has to pass that and see it. I used to carry a police badge in a wallet, and that helped a lot.

adrenaline highs:

At its best it's one of the most functional of all the speed sort of drugs in that it has almost no rush unless you overdo it., and almost no crash. I never considered speed fun. I use speed as fuel, a necessary evil. Adrenaline is much smoother and much more dangerous if you f--k up. I f--ked up one time in a motel in Austin, Texas. I was very careless, and I just whacked the needle into my leg without thinking. I'd forgotten the vein thing, and after I pulled the little spike out, I noticed something was wrong. In the bathroom the tile was white, the curtain was white - but in the corner of my eye in the mirror I looked down and saw a hell of a lot of red. Here was this little tiny puncture, like a leak in a high-powered hose...You could barely see the stream. It was going straight from my leg and hitting the shower curtain at about thigh level, and the whole bottom of the curtain was turning red.

I thought, oh Jesus Christ, what now? And I just went in and lay down on the bed and told the people in the room to get out without telling them why; then I

waited 20 minutes and all I could think of was these horrible Janis Joplin stories: you know, ODing in a motel...Jim Morrison...Jimi Hendrix...needles. And I thought, oh f--k, what a sloppy way to go - I was embarrassed by it. But after 20 minutes nothing happened. Then I really began to get nervous and I thought, oh God, it's going to come all at once. It's a delayed thing, like those acid flashback they've been promising all these years.

RR: When are we going to have them?

I've been waiting a long time.

his favourite drug experience:

Well, there are very few things that can really beat driving around the Bay Area on a good summer night - big motorcycle, head full of acid - wearing nothing but a t-shirt and a pair of shorts and getting on that Highway 1 going 120 miles an hour. That's a rush of every kind - head, hands - it's everything put in a bundle. Because first of all, it's a rush, and also it's maintaining control and see how far I can go, how weird I can get and still survive, even though I'm seeing rats in front of me instead of cops. Rats with guns on...

how the Kentucky Derby article began:

I guess it's important to take it all the way back to having dinner in Aspen with Jim Salter, a novelist who had sort of a continental style. It was one of those long European dinners with lots of wine, and Salter said something like, "Well, the Derby's coming up. Aren't you going to be there?" And I thought, well, I'll be damned. That's a good idea.

I was working at the time for Warren Hinckle at Scanlon's magazine. So I immediately called Hinckle and said, "I have a wonderful idea, we must do the derby. It's the greatest spectacle the country can produce." It was 3:30 in the morning or something like that, but Hinckle got right into it. By that time I learned to hate photographers. I still do. I can't stand to work with them. So I said we've got to get an illustrator for this, and I had Pat Oliphant in mind. Hinckle said fine, you know, do it.