

Gerald R. Ford Oral History Project
Bob Orben
Interviewed by
Richard Norton Smith
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Smith: Stu [Spencer] – I asked him about this because half the stories appeared in print. Late one Friday, he was exhausted. The campaign wasn't going terribly well. They were in the Oval Office. The only other person there was Dick Cheney. The president, being the president, loved nothing more than campaigning, and Stu had to find all sorts of evasive euphemistic phrases to suggest why that wasn't a great idea – because they had surveys that, when he went out –Stu had some harsh words for the speechwriting outfit...

Orben: Everybody had.

Smith: Well, that's one thing we want to talk about. But Stu said he would go out and deliver these not very good speeches and his numbers would go down. But how do you tell that to the president? So, Ford says, "Yeah, I've got to get out and talk to the people." And, of course, he's got to go out and eat some of that rubber chicken and do what he loved best. Finally, Stu just lost it, and he said, "You know, Mr. President, you're a great president, but you are a fucking lousy candidate."

Now, that's stunning enough, and Ford just sat there and said, "Oh, okay." What other president could you say that to? But the sequel is what makes it great. That story appeared in Jules Witcover's book about the '76 campaign, and Stu went ballistic when he saw it. He was embarrassed and angry at Cheney. He called Dick and read him the riot act and "can't believe you would be so indiscreet," and so on and so on. Dick sort of let him wind down, and then he said, "Stu, there was a third person in that room." Spencer thought, maybe the president told that story, which I find very revealing in a number of ways.

Orben: Well, I'll tell you, I have only once heard the president curse, and he never used that word. The worst I ever heard – are we rolling? – the worst I ever heard, if you call it worst – is we were in the White House Mess, waiting for

the returns of the New Hampshire primary, and we had a wonderful oyster stew. I don't know who provided that, but I still remember it. Finally, we hear the word that Ford had won the primary – New Hampshire – and the door burst open and there's Ford coming in saying, "I hope that's the last God damn time I hear that the only thing I ever won was the [whatever] district in Michigan." And that's the only time I've ever heard that.

Smith: But that's doubly revealing because it suggested, obviously, that is a monkey he carried around on his back – the notion that he had only been elected to a Congressional district.

Orben: Oh, absolutely.

Smith: It legitimized him, in a way.

Orben: What district was it?

Smith: Well, I think it's the Fifth now.

Orben: I think so, too. It has a vaguely familiar ring. But, yeah, he was hugely up as a result of that. We were all up because - I guess you've discussed this with many people in politics - running for office is an inhumane way of spending your time. I still remember on that very first day we were involved in New Hampshire, we went up and I had had a very light breakfast at maybe six o'clock in the morning at home, and hadn't had anything to eat until nine P.M.

I'm going down to the dining room and I'm told that in Keene, New Hampshire things close at nine o'clock. I see Red Cavaney, who was then one of the advance men, walking across the lobby and I grabbed hold of Red by the lapels and I said, "If I don't get something to eat I'm going to kill you." And he managed to get some hamburgers from someplace, and to this day, whenever I see Red, I grab him by the lapels and I say, "If I don't get something to eat I'm going to kill you."

Smith: Let's back up because you had a very distinguished career long before you ever set foot in the Ford White House.

Orben: Extinguished is the more accurate word.

Smith: Including working for my childhood hero, Jack Paar.

Orben: Jack Paar. I wrote for Jack Paar, I wrote for Red Skelton, I wrote for Dick Gregory during the civil rights days, and Red Buttons – a lot of comedians, yeah.

Smith: Who was the funniest?

Orben: Noooo – they’re all funny.

Smith: On their own funny.

Orben: They are all funny. As individually, with the exception of Red who wasn’t a close person, I told each one of them that, “You could write this stuff better than me, because nobody knows you better than you.” But they no longer have the time for it. And that’s true of presidents. Many presidents can write their speeches. Every once in a while, when the speech was not what Ford wanted, he would come in the next day or the next meeting and he’d have two or three yellow legal sheets that he wrote what he wanted. So the same applies.

Smith: It’s interesting because I’ve heard David Gergen tell a variation of that. That he saw something and thought, “Boy, this is really good.” And only after the fact learned that Ford had written it himself.

Orben: Yeah.

Smith: What is the professional and non-professional training/preparation to write for those folks? How did you wind up in the position?

Orben: Oh – at the age of seventeen or eighteen I got a job in a magic shop – a professional magic shop in New York. The Conjurers’ Shop in New York City, and I had been interested in magic as a result of my brother being interested in magic. When I was twelve-thirteen years old, during the end of the Depression, we went up to the Catskill Mountains and I was the Boy with the Radio Mind. We did an incredibly bad mind reading act. I think the audience knew precisely what we were doing, and here’s this fat little kid

trying to be a mind reader and throw them money. At any rate, I finally got as a result of all this, a job as a demonstrator in a magic shop. This may seem off the topic, but it isn't. One of the hot magic books in that time was a book called *Smart Talk for Magicians*. And I looked at it. It was jokes that magicians could tell – I thought oh, I can do that. When you're eighteen years old you think this; nothing alarms you. So, I did. And I put out a grandiose book called *The Encyclopedia of Patter*, and it proved to be a hugely good selling book in magic, and then in show business.

I put out, ultimately, forty more like it, and I became known in show business as a comedy writer. Then I had a humor service that was a topical humor service – came out twice a month – and this was also popular in show business. But then businessmen started to come up, “Well, I could use this stuff,” so they subscribed and finally, politicians, and many politicians – the White House, half of Capitol Hill.

How I got into speechwriting was a little oblique. One of the CEOs that I was doing jokes for on a custom basis, his speechwriter became ill and he asked me could I write the speech. I said, “Sure, I can write the speech. The speech is the easy part. The jokes are the hard part.” And so I did a little speechwriting as well.

Smith: Are politicians, as a class, different from any other group in terms of appreciating humor? They do tend to be a little bit self-absorbed, which I think is the enemy of spontaneous humor.

Orben: What's the difference with that and show business? No, they are very similar. I think people in show business have a little more innate talent. You have natural performers in politics, and you can name them as well as I could, including Reagan. But in show business you have to have a basic ability to stand up in front of an audience and make it; where in politics, you don't necessarily have to. Adlai Stevenson was not a barn burner of a speechmaker, but he was a good man.

Smith: Was Reagan a once in a lifetime talent?

Orben: Oh, no. Good heavens, you had people like Mo Udall. We forget now how much of a reputation for humor Barry Goldwater had. The very first time I was ever involved in directly writing for a national political figure, was in 1964 when I was called down to Washington by the Goldwater people. This was before the nomination. They said we think we're going to make it into the campaign and we'd like you to write special material for Barry. Okay, this was maybe April-May. So we worked out an arrangement where I would send him a page of material a day. Incidentally, all this stuff is at the Ford Library if they ever open the boxes that I sent them. And I did. A page of material a day during the entire campaign.

One thing I still remember about that first meeting is we concluded how this stuff would be sent, where the money, and all that. And then, as the others in the meeting filed out, Senator Goldwater said, "Bob, could you wait a moment, please." They left and he closed the door and said, "Bob, I have a question, I'd like your judgment on something." Okay. And he said, "I'm going to do a speech in another couple of days, and I have this joke and I want you to let me know what you think of it." He told me the most horrendous joke about Bobby Kennedy and three nuns. I don't think you could do it today on cable television. I'm standing there with my mouth dropped open and he said, "Well, what do you think?" I started to yammer, essentially saying, "Oh, well, it's a good joke...I'm sure, I'm sure it's a good joke...but is it really the right joke for this event..." and I just yammered on.

Finally, Senator Goldwater smiled and he said, "Well, thank you, I appreciate your judgment." I'm sitting on the plane, going back to New York, and I'm thinking, "He was putting me on," and he had no intention – I don't even know where he got the joke from – but he had no intention of doing it. He used a lot of humor during the campaign, which now seems to have wafted away.

Smith: He had a natural sense of humor?

Orben: Very good sense of humor, yeah.

Smith: I remember the delightful story, there was some golf club, I guess, in Phoenix, that had blackballed him. Do you know this story where he said, "Well, since I'm only half Jewish, maybe they'll let me play nine holes."

Orben: Or go into the pool halfway. Yeah, he used both. Actually, it was at that time that I was writing for Dick Gregory since 1962. I edited Greg's first two books. One was a bestseller. Parenthetically, nobody ever asked me during my entire life, what party I was with. To this day, people assume I'm a Republican. I'm not. I'm not a Democrat. Nobody ever asks me.

Smith: But it is fascinating that you were simultaneously writing for Dick Gregory and Barry Goldwater.

Orben: Dick Gregory and Barry Goldwater at the same time. One of the jokes that I wrote for Greg was talking about Goldwater, and as you know the campaign slogan was, "In your heart, you know he's right," and Greg used to say, "In your heart, you know he's white." It didn't conflict.

Smith: That was at that height of the Goldwater/Rockefeller fight.

Orben: Oh, yes.

Smith: Did you hear anything about that? Did he talk at all about that?

Orben: No, actually, I only started writing for him when he got the nomination. That was the deal. It was an incredibly rushed time for me because I had already signed with the *Red Skelton Show*, and I was going out to Hollywood with a contract that I thought was only going to last six weeks. It was one of these strange show business contracts where the contract was for six years, but the first option came up in six weeks. I joined the show at a point where six weeks would bring us to the election, and I figured that since my reputation was writing political humor, they were going to get me for six weeks of political jokes, and then I'm history.

Well, it didn't work out that way. But at any rate, for six years I was out there writing the monologue for this Skelton show and on the way out to California, the Goldwater people were in touch with me, "Yeah, we want the material." So at that point I was sending a page of material a day to Goldwater. I was

sending a page of material a day to Dick Gregory, and I was sitting down to write the monologue on the *Red Skelton Show*. People always ask if jokes were interchangeable and I would say no. At the point where I'm writing Heathcliff and Gertrude jokes for Skelton, if one of those pages were sent to Goldwater by mistake, it would not have worked.

Smith: Did you ever run dry?

Orben: Oh, yeah. But you can't run dry, in the sense that, at the point where the inspiration muse leaves, you have craft to fall back on.

Smith: How did you come to be in the Ford White House?

Orben: That's a long story. Do we have four hours?

Well, now I'm in California and I'm writing the monologue on the *Red Skelton Show*, and come the early part of 1968 – well, I'll back up. In 1968 Ford, as Minority Leader of the House, is asked to do the Gridiron Dinner. That's ten minutes of humor. The Democrat was Hubert Humphrey, and the thought was that Hubert Humphrey really knew his way around with words. Ford gave something like 200 speeches a year, but humor wasn't part of them. The brain trust for Ford decided maybe they needed professional help.

They sent somebody out to California – it might have been Bob Hartmann – who talked to Senator George Murphy, for his show business background. Murphy sends him to his friend, Red Skelton. Red Skelton sends him to the director/producer of the show and the producer of the show calls me and says, "We'd like you to do this." I wasn't very happy about this because it smelled of no money. As, indeed, it proved to be. One of the things I used to argue with the other writers on the show, here you people are so darn eager to send free jokes to politicians, and I have on my desk a little sign that says, "Anything worth doing is worth doing for money." And I realized that I'm not going to tell Skelton no...so okay.

Now the interesting thing about that is whoever came out, and I think it was Bob Hartmann, had two names to get in touch with. One was George Murphy and the other was somebody who had written a lot of material for Goldwater

in '64. Me. So, one way or another, I was fated to write for President Ford. I wrote the material and Si [Seymour] Berns, who was the director of the show, who was a good stand-up comic, too, he read the material into a tape recorder and we sent it to Ford. Ford taped it and probably edited it based on what they needed, sent it back. Si and I, again, tweaked it, and back and forth it went a couple of times. It proved to be a hugely successful speech.

At the Gridiron Dinner everybody was expecting Ford not to do well, and for Humphrey to walk away with it. Instead, it was the other way around. I think Humphrey did well, but Ford was the surprise hit. And it had a joke that is frequently quoted. Toward the end of the speech, Ford looked around and Johnson was already out of the race, Humphrey was the presumed nominee, and Ford, looking at, I assume, at Humphrey, said that he has no eyes on running for president. He said he “loves the House of Representatives, in spite of the long, hard, irregular hours. But sometimes when it is late at night, and I’m tired and hungry, on that long drive back to Alexandria, Virginia, where I live, as I go past 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, I do seem to hear a little voice within me saying, ‘If you lived here, you’d be home now.’”

And in fact, in 1973, when he had to do the Gridiron Dinner as vice president, we couldn’t come up with a better line so we just repeated it.

Smith: By that time, though, it was particularly sensitive.

Orben: Ford had come to the conclusion that humor was a good thing. And so, through the years, through Paul Theis, who was then at the Republican Congressional Committee and worked with Ford, I would send material. They would ask me for a specific speech and I would do it. Then when Ford became vice president I was asked to be sort of an occasional consultant, and I was.

When Ford was preparing for the Gridiron Dinner in 1973, there was a lot of speculation about Governor Reagan – does he dye his hair? He had been in town just the week before and people were talking about getting snippets of his hair and testing it to see whether it was dyed. And Ford reprised all of this

interest in Governor Reagan's hair, and he is there to say that "Governor Reagan does not dye his hair. Let's just say he's turning prematurely orange."

Okay, so we're rehearsing the speech and Vice President Ford looks at me and he says, "Do you think the Governor would take offense at that?" Now, I'm seeing this blockbuster joke of the year go up in smoke, but I think I gave him a fair, honest answer. I said, "You know, Mr. Vice President, Reagan has been in show business a good part of his life. He has gone through a thousand roasts and I am sure he has heard dyed hair jokes. So, I don't really think so." Well, jumping far ahead, it obviously was the blockbuster joke of the Gridiron Dinner, and it took on a life of its own, to the point where ten or fifteen years later, Johnny Carson was still referring to Reagan's orange hair. Even though, I don't think by that time, most people knew where it came from. And I've often wondered how much of a grudge does an actor, a vain actor, turned politician hold when he hears that joke – and he certainly knew where it came from.

Smith: Well, it's interesting. I draw the parallel between Ford's sensitivity there, about hurting Reagan's feelings, and Hartmann's famous story about the "long national nightmare." The line that Ford wanted to cut from the speech because, as I understand it, he thought it was piling on Nixon. Kicking him when he was down.

Orben: That's right.

Smith: And it's a parallel.

Orben: And he was a somewhat friend of Nixon's.

Smith: I see a parallel.

Orben: Same thing. But I wasn't in a position to say I was going to quit. If Ford had really insisted, we would have taken the joke out. We took out a few jokes, not all on sensitivity lines, but not many. One of the things that I so admired about Ford, and it's almost unique of all the people I have written humor for... I've gone on to be consultant to CEOs of some of the largest companies in the world. And when you first begin, you were always thought of as being the

expert on humor. And then by the time it was show time, getting lectures on humor by people who had never written or told a joke in their lives.

I once gave up on a very well known political figure because his wife would take the jokes I wrote and try it out on people and come back and say, "Well, so and so didn't like that." I didn't like working like that. So we come back now to what I was about to say, and fortunately I remembered.

Ford, if he trusted you, if you hadn't let him down, would not question things. More often than not, the humor that I wrote for Ford was highly specialized, and in some cases referred to things that he was not conversant with. And if there was time, I would explain.

Smith: Does that include pop culture?

Orben: At that point there wasn't the gap that there is now.

Smith: Why do you think there is now and there wasn't then?

Orben: I don't know why.

Smith: Do you think having teenaged children made a difference?

Orben: There always were teenaged children, they didn't jump from kindergarten. However, when I was brought up, and when I learned my craft, and for years and years after that, the teenaged children, until they started dating, and the younger kids, and the parents would sit and listen to the radio together. They would listen to Edgar Bergen and Jack Benny and all the rest. When it became television, they would watch all the shows together. So there was a common culture. Then it went off on tangents. So no, it wasn't that sort of thing. It was mostly something going on in that group at that moment that Ford wouldn't be aware of. And I would explain the joke, but he would never say, "Do you think that will work?" "Well, okay," and he would do it. So he was wonderful in that sense.

Every other performer, with the exception of Dick Gregory, Dick Gregory was his own editor, so I sent him a batch of material, he would take some of it, but he wouldn't question material. Others were just awful. Particularly

politicians, because in many instances - I realize this is the end of my career but my career is over anyway - politicians are running scared. They're not used to standing up in front of an audience. And so they're running scared and they want to make sure they are not embarrassed.

Smith: In one session Don Penny did with Tom Brokaw - I've seen the transcript - he says to the president, "In this job you have to be Fred Astaire." And the president asked what he meant - "you have to tap dance constantly." And it wasn't something that Ford had done. I'm wondering, did he adapt to the demands of the job in that sense?

Orben: No, I think Ford - I don't know that this has ever been written or talked about - but I think in school, Ford, if he was ever in a music class, he would have been called a listener. The teacher goes in back of each student, listening to what they're singing and if they are nowhere near, at least in the Bronx, you became a listener. I think Ford's monotone was that. I never heard him sing. When he was up in front of an audience and it was the *Star Spangled Banner*, he would move his lips. I remember once, at some event, some nice lady, as part of a women's group, said, "Well, if the president would just stand with us in front of the piano and sing whatever," and I said, "Well, maybe it would be better if you sang."

So, I think it was a mixed blessing that calm monotone of a delivery, which was common from where he came from. He wasn't inventing it, but it was not good for humor. It wasn't good, essentially, for speech making, but in the early months it was good for the country because, boy, did he sound right. Did he sound like he knew what he was doing, and he *did* know what he was doing.

Smith: Did he take lessons? For example, we know that in the '76 acceptance speech there was a huge amount, not only of preparation, but practice that went into that. Was there any of that in the early days of the presidency?

Orben: Oh, somewhere in the archives, because Bob Schlesinger, Jr., who wrote the book *White House Ghosts*, found the pages. The president had asked me, or Hartmann had asked me, for a critique on various speeches. At least three

single spaced pages were written by me, and Hartmann didn't trust anybody. He brought it to the president. The president read it in his presence, and then initialed it and gave it back to Hartmann, who gave it back to me. We rehearsed every speech. But not too much. I never thought that the president would hold still for extensive rehearsals...and indeed, later on, I learned that he didn't. But for instance, on the humor events, we'd run through it maybe twice, and I'd tried to give him readings of a specific joke. But everything was rehearsed, and we did the same thing on the plane. I made most domestic trips and on the plane, except toward the very end when there was really no time, I would run through the speech with him.

Smith: Did he ever use a speech coach?

Orben: No. Not that I'm aware of. I was the speech coach and then Don Penny was doing it.

Smith: At what point do you become actually a member of the White House staff?

Orben: Well, seven, eight, nine days after he became president, I figured I'm going to hear from the White House. I'm living in New York and the phone rings and it's Hartmann, and Hartmann says, "The president wants you down here." I said, "When?" And he said, "Now." I said, "I can't come down now." He said, "Tomorrow." I said, "Okay." I was having dinner with Red Buttons in town and Red wanted to wax nostalgic about the good old days, and so at midnight we're walking down Broadway – Red is reminiscing, "There's the Old Latin Quarter etc." and I'm looking over my shoulder thinking that we're going to be mugged – and there goes my White House visit.

So, at any rate, the next day, I think it might have been nine days later, but the previous week I had been in Washington working with Vice President Ford. I did a lot of humor for speeches and punching up speeches for the vice president. And so, I remember, he was going out on an eight or nine speech engagement that was, I think, going to end up in Hawaii, I'm not sure about that. But now it's the week of the resignation, it's Monday, and I'm down there to work on the speeches. I'm in Hartmann's office for almost two hours, and we start to talk about the speech and Hartmann is called out and he's gone

for ten or fifteen minutes. He's back and forth, and each time he starts to say, "Now, if we're called across the street..." and finally I said, "Bob, which street are you talking about? Executive Avenue or Seventeenth Street?" because I never thought Nixon was going to resign. Never thought.

So, I'm still there Tuesday working on the speeches that never got done, and a reporter came in. I turned over the speech, facedown, and he said, "Bob, what's going on?" And I said, "Look, I'm a writer, who's going to tell me what's going on?" On the network news that night he was reporting that something must be going on because they brought their writer from New York. And I nudged my wife and said, "A lot he knows." Well, a lot I knew.

Smith: Did you find out along with everyone else about Nixon's resignation?

Orben: Oh, yeah. Oh, I had no idea that he was going to do that. And I had no idea that Ford was going to pardon him. I learned about that the morning of the pardon, when I'm still in New York, because I'd been commuting back and forth, when a Broadway actor who I knew called me up and said, "Do you know what that son of a bitch you're working for has just done?" And I'm thinking to myself, now it's early in the morning and I'm thinking, "Does he mean Skelton? He knows I'm not working for Skelton. He couldn't mean Ford." That's how I learned. But at any rate, so maybe eight, nine days after the resignation, they brought me down.

Smith: When you were in there that Tuesday, just a couple days before the Nixon resignation, did you have any way of knowing if Hartmann was writing an inaugural address?

Orben: I don't know. You mean the few words that he was saying?

Smith: The eight minute speech that he actually delivered.

Orben: No, my guess, I doubt it. That's a good question because I had become very close to Hartmann through the years, up until he died. It would have been a good question to ask. But I would guess no, because Hartmann's *modus operandi* was to leave somewhat early, come in the next morning and it was done. He would work overnight.

Smith: What made him a controversial figure within the Ford circle?

Orben: Well, I think Bob was mistreated, I would almost say. Bob had huge faults. I remember when the fellow who did the Ford book asked me to come in for an interview and I said, "Before you get started, you're going to go through all this Hartmann stuff. He's abrasive, and this, that and the other thing." And of course he was. But he also was very astute and a good writer. He knew Ford's style, he knew what Ford would say – and Ford, again, trusted him. He was curt, he was hard to get along with until you fought back.

He used to have, in addition to the eight o'clock senior staff meeting, a seven o'clock meeting in his office, which I always thought was absurd and told him that. But one time he was saying, "Did you see this in the *Washington Post*?" And I said, "No, I haven't." And he said, "Don't you read the *Washington Post* in the morning?" And I told him, I said, "Look, Bob, you give me the limo and the papers in the back, and I'll read them coming in as you do, and I will be able to answer your questions." And that was the end of that. He would accept being argued with and fought back with.

Smith: I'm told he was utterly loyal to the president.

Orben: Oh, boy. Yes. And in my mind, Ford needed a few more of those in the administration.

Break

Smith: We were talking about Bob Hartmann's loyalty and maybe the most historic example of that is his instant, and one might say courageous, response to the Al Haig feeler, for lack of a better word.

Orben: Well, it's beyond courageous, it was astute. Bob had a very good sense of the total scene and wasn't carried away by minutia. But he had a picture of where that might put Ford, and he was right. He was a hero.

Smith: Did he, in that sense, compensate for Ford's credulity? I mean, there was almost an innocence, in some ways, I think, about President Ford. He believed good of people, which is great until they disproved him. It seemed to me, at least, that he wasn't a guileful person himself, and just as he was a truthful

person, he was capable of being shocked when people were not truthful with him.

Orben: Well, that's very true. I think his personality was formed by his childhood and never changed. He was the same person who came out of Grand Rapids into Washington and retained all of what we now call family values. You may be right. I think Hartmann, in that instance, was protecting him from himself.

Smith: I only heard him disparage two people in the time I knew him. And the worst he could say was, "He's a *bad* man." That was the worst epitaph that he could come up with. One was Gordon Liddy, and one was John Dean.

Orben: That's an interesting question – I can't ever recall – coming back for just a moment: this question of, I don't know why it popped into my mind, but Ford would hear you out, regardless of what. If you disagreed with him, you felt free to disagree with him. And put it as strongly as you could. What he wouldn't accept is coming back the next day, or later on, and saying, "Well, let me again say..." That wouldn't fly. I only tried it with him once and I apologized for it. When he asked Chevy Chase to be on that Humor in the Presidency, three-day conference, and I read about it, I called him up and I said, "Mr. President, this is not a good idea. You're taking a potential viper to your bosom ." And, again, this speaks to what we were just talking about then, President Ford as a trusting individual. He said, no, he talked to Chevy Chase and Chevy Chase said that he was contrite and he would not do anything to embarrass the president. And I thought about it, and I called him a second time. And he accepted it, but he said, "No, Chevy Chase would be all right." But he wasn't.

Smith: He was not?

Orben: I don't think so.

Smith: Really?

Orben: Because the whole thing resurrected this terrible time. I had often wanted to talk to President Ford after the fact of what he really thought about it. Because here is this star athlete, one of the most athletic presidents we've ever had, to

be presented as a bumbler. And to this day, there are people who think that he was a bumbler. And, as we know, he was anything but.

I know he had a temper because one time I was standing in back of him at an outdoor rally at an airport, and I was maybe three, four, five feet in back of him, and there was a group chanting something off in the distance. And they got louder and louder, and as he was doing the speech I could see a vein on the back of his neck turn red and stand out. So he had a temper. But I never had the courage to ask, "What do you really think of that?"

Smith: And along with that, sort of first cousin to that, was this portrayal of him - where the word 'decency' was almost used as a term of condescension. "He's decent," which is a euphemism for "he's not that bright."

Orben: Yeah. Well, of course, this all goes back to the LBJ, "He can't walk and chew gum" - that was a cleaned up version of it. But there was always a debate while I was there, which was most of the time, as to "Should we respond to the jokes about the clumsiness and the walking and chew gum?" There was the feeling that this only calls attention to it, which is nonsense because the attention is there. I think Ford overwhelmingly agreed with my viewpoint that we ought to do something about it. But sometimes the other side won, and my favorite response was when he went to a Yale law school event and he opened his speech by saying, "It's a great pleasure to here at the Yale Law School's Sesquicentennial Convocation, and I defy anyone to say that and chew gum at the same time." It made the start of all three networks. It was that sort of thing that I think we should have even done more of, because it indicated that he was aware of it and he could brush it off.

Smith: By the time I was writing for him, much later, maybe it was a little bit more relaxed and maybe I was a little bit more of a smartass, and I didn't have the whole apparatus to say no. And it worked, so he kept on doing it. But the one thing he would never make jokes about was age. It was interesting. Reagan made a career out of it.

Orben: Well, he had to.

Smith: And was very effective at it. But he [Ford] wouldn't do age jokes.

Orben: That's interesting. I don't even think that ever came up. Because, this is besides the point, but two things: one time I'm going through a display at the National Archives and they had pictures from World War II – photos – a picture on the flight deck of a carrier stood out. Sailors playing basketball. I got in touch with the archivist, or the curator, and I said, "Do you know who that is going up for the ball?" "No." The only reason I knew it was Ford – he had sent me to a reunion of the ship, and somebody had that picture. He was really a good looking guy.

But, you know, he was a male model. Candy Jones, was a model at that time, I was friendly with her through another association, and she said that the other models, the girls, loved to be on a shoot with him because while most of the male models would be facing the camera, he would be looking at the girls. And they would be facing the cameras.

Smith: It's a wonderful story. And, it does suggest a lack of vanity.

Orben: Oh, absolutely.

Smith: Which is not something you associate with male models.

Orben: I'm not suggesting that he was lusting after the girls, but maybe he was. He was a great looking guy.

Smith: Tell me about his sense of humor.

Orben: Well, I remember one time – he would see the craziness in things – one time we were doing something for the Alfalfa Club. I'm going through who would be at the head table - there would be president so and so, and vice president...and he said, "What do you mean president? I'm the president. Well, might there be something in that that we could have fun in playing back and forth?" And so I wrote a long development of the president there who was last year's president, and then so and so will be next year's president and all that. And it went on for about a minute and a half. And as we were rehearsing it, I said, "You know, Mr. President, this is called a running joke. I can't tell you, if a running joke doesn't work, how long a minute and a half will seem." And he said, "Well, it's fun. Let's do it." And it was a huge hit. He would

occasionally say things about Kissinger, and I would write them down. Now, always, it was the germ of a joke. You had to make a joke out of it, but he saw the germ of it.

Smith: Now presidents do so many – there was the Gridiron in the old days, and now you’ve got the television, the Correspondents’ Dinner and all of those.

Orben: He did them all. It was the Alfalfa, the Gridiron, the Radio and TV Correspondents’ Dinner, the White House Correspondents’ Dinner, and the Press Photographers’ Dinner. But what was interesting and why there were editorials – I remember there was an editorial in the evening paper, the *Washington* – not the *Times*, but whatever it was – saying that it’s nice to hear laughter in the White House again. Because he started every speech with humor, and not the same humor. It was always custom written. Unless you have the Jay Leno staff, that’s almost impossible to keep up. But he scored very, very big with it.

Smith: Tell me about the speechwriting operation, because it did come in for some criticism. How was it structured and how did it work?

Orben: When I came aboard Paul Theis was the editorial director. He had the speechwriting operation and the research department. One of the problems with the speechwriting was that there were never enough speechwriters, particularly as we went into the campaign. There were three writers: Milt Friedman, Pat Butler, and me, and I’m sure in all this research, you’ve learned about Roman Numeral Two, and the shadow speechwriting group that was operating. No?

Smith: No.

Orben: Well, at any rate, our speechwriting operation was always understaffed – at best, we had maybe five, six writers.

Smith: Did that reflect a decision, I think early in the administration, for symbolic, and substantive reasons, to cut the White House staff? Sort of the anti-imperial presidency. I think Rumsfeld boasted about a 10% cut of the White House staff.

Orben: Well, that might be, and for all I know, that's true. But we just never had enough speechwriters. When I took over in 1976, everybody had been let go except the three that I mentioned: me and Pat and Milt Friedman. We eventually acquired a few more, but we were always understaffed. I remember arguing with Cheney's group about, my God we're doing probably more speeches than any president has ever done, and we can't grind this stuff out with so few writers. And they say, "Well, there aren't enough slots." I said, "For God's sake, let go two of the gardeners."

There was friction, as you know, between Cheney and Hartman. To what extent this punished Hartmann's group, I don't know. But there was a shadow speechwriting operation which we called Roman Numeral Two, because the very first meeting, the first week of 1976, when we were gearing up for the run for the nomination, it was in the Roosevelt Room, and Hartmann had put together a speech, an outline. You don't put together a State of the Union overnight. And there was discussion about it, and on the other end of the table there was a Roman Numeral Two speech that had been prepared.

We then found out that there was a Roman Numeral Two group. Who was in this, beyond Gergen, I don't know. But I remember at the end of the election, when we had lost, somebody came into my office and said he was a speechwriter for the other group. I said, "What speech, we never..." Through the entire time that I ran the speechwriting, as much as you run anything there, during the 1976 campaign, I was only aware twice that there was another speech in play.

But coming back to that meeting, Ford really got mad. He threw his pen down and said, "I don't want this sort of conflict. Hartmann is going to prepare the State of the Union." Of course, that meant us. But that never went away. And I don't know why the president didn't stop it. And I don't know why Hartmann didn't argue for more – to have it stopped. I would have loved to had Gergen working with us. Gergen is a wonderful writer, and who else might have been there that we could have used?

Smith: Where was he nominally slotted? Because he was in the White House.

Orben: He came in right at that first week of 1976...he had been working for Simon, over at Treasury, I think. Because I remember calling him almost the end of the year when this thing had been dumped on me. I never wanted this job. And my wife always said they made a big mistake because I could have been so much more effective doing what I was doing, which was adding the humor and punching up speeches. Now, I became a paper shuffler and that's really what it amounted to.

Smith: What was Hartmann's role?

Orben: Hartmann ran the speechwriters. I was nominally the director of the speechwriters, but I reported to Hartmann, and the president. Hartmann did some of the important speeches.

Smith: I remember hearing there were complaints about speeches not being done on time, that sort of thing. I hasten to add that was a rap on Hartmann, not talking about the rest of the office. But that is something I've heard.

Orben: Well, if Bob was responsible for a speech, it would be the overnight thing. But, I think that was relatively rare. The speeches were always ready on time, and in sufficient time. Actually, the concept was discussed with the president. Now Paul Theis did an interesting thing, which I never had time to do. We would go into the president and there would be such and such a speech. And Paul would come up with three ways to go with it in writing. The president would look it over, and then the president said, "Well, here's what I'd like to do," and sometimes it was picking up on one of the three items.

But the big problem in that whirlwind is that you did a lot of speeches where nobody really knew what to say. This is true time immemorial, and so, I think the press calls them thumb suckers. You come up with something and unfortunately, when you do that, it tends to be oatmeal.

Smith: Remember, there was a very substantive, and in some quarters, controversial speech that he gave at, I believe, Tulane, right at the brink of the fall of Saigon. Do you remember that?

- Orben: Well, I wasn't on the plane. That was Milt Friedman going down with – I don't think Hartmann was aboard, even – usually I was on the plane, but I wasn't that time. And as Milt told me, and again, this is third hand knowledge, he and the president rewrote the speech, and upset other people.
- Smith: Including, I think, Secretary Kissinger.
- Orben: Yes, I remember the name. Yes.
- Smith: To make it more clear that, as far as the United States was concerned, this war was over.
- Orben: That's the story that I got from Milt when he came back. Kissinger did not take it well...it was never easy challenging Kissinger. I'm probably the only person in Washington, if not the world, who has ever been called arrogant by Henry Kissinger. That takes a bit of doing.
- Smith: What occasioned this?
- Orben: Well, we were coming up to the Gridiron Dinner, and of course I was writing the material for the Gridiron Dinner, and Rockefeller was also going to be one of the speakers the Gridiron Dinner. So President Ford asked, "Can you help Rockefeller on that?" And I've got everything else to do as well, and then Kissinger gets in touch with me and says, he's going to be one of the speakers, could I do that? And I said, "I really don't think so, I don't think I have the time." I said, "I'll try. If I can think of anything, okay." Scowcroft used to call me once a week, and then finally Kissinger calls from the plane and in the middle of shuttle diplomacy, and I said, "I don't have the time, I can't do it."
- The next time I'm waiting to go into the Oval Office, he comes out of the Oval Office and says, "You're getting very arrogant." And about a month later we're in Vail and I'm coming in to a meeting with the president. I come in the door and he turns to the president and says, "That boy is sick!" And poor Ford is wondering what that is all about?
- Smith: Was Henry sort of a lightning rod?

Orben: The biggest problem that I had, since I never looked on this as a career, and never wanted to be there except for personal loyalty to the president. I had no awe of Henry Kissinger, or anybody other than the president. And so, I remember one time during the campaign, we had written a pretty good campaign speech and Henry comes in with two pages – he had just been to Africa – and it's an infomercial on what Henry did in Africa. It had no place in the speech at all, so I cut it out. And the next day I go back in with the speech and it's back in because Henry made an end run. And that's again, Ford accommodating people. And of course, to some extent you have to.

Smith: Before I forget, because you were there early on, how much friction was there between the Nixon people and the Ford people?

Orben: Well, there weren't that many – Ford, as I remember it, had said to the Ford group, "They're all going out of the plane, but not without a parachute." And so, we still had all of the Nixon writers down the hall. Ben Stein, I wish we could have retained him, he's a good writer. And poor Ben Stein, he did a few things for us and I had to edit and add some jokes to it. I remember giving it back to him and he gave me such an evil look. Here's this comedy writer telling me...and he was right, in a way. But at any rate, they all went pretty quickly. Gergen went, they all went, all except John McLaughlin, Father McLaughlin.

My favorite memory on that is, come November, Nessen is doing the briefing on the turkey for the White House. And the press asks, how many pounds, it's twenty-two, and how big, where did it come from and all the rest, and there was this modest lull, and then one of the press said, it's in the transcript, "Speaking of turkeys, what does Father McLaughlin do now?" I think a couple of months after that...he was there for a long time what he was doing, I don't know. We had nothing for him.

Smith: The reason I ask, I think it was Stu – they had gotten into the East Room for the swearing in. Sort of last minute with some members of Congress who were seated.

Smith: It was Stu.

Smith: Was it Stu? And when it was over a receiving line formed, and basically – Leon Parma told the story – Leon got in there – as an old friend, and he had a couple members of the hierarchy. They found chairs for them, and when it was over they left the East Room and this receiving line formed and everyone was encouraged to go down to the State Dining Room for refreshments. And he said you could see the Nixon people, en masse, peeled off and went back to wherever they worked, and the few Ford people and friends and family members went down to the State Dining Room. But it was two very distinct contingents.

Orben: You know, I can see that happening. I wasn't here for that. But I can see that happening. There was vast distrust of the Nixon people, and likewise. There is something about that I've mentioned a few times and it's never been reported, and I think it is very significant. When Ford was campaigning for the Republicans in 1974, we were out in California, it was a couple of days before the election, and Nixon was in the hospital. Ford went to visit him. Went in by himself, there was nobody else with him. Came out and we get on the plane to go somewhere else. Dr. Lukash sits down beside me and says, "You know, Bob, you might be thinking of a statement from President Ford if Nixon doesn't make it through the night." I said, "It's that close?" He said "It's that close." Now, somewhere in the archive there is this statement that I wrote.

Smith: There were the political advisors that all told him not to go to the hospital. Not to see Nixon.

Orben: Yeah, well, sure. But if Nixon had not made it, how history would have changed.

Smith: Were there too many Fourth of July speeches?

Orben: Gotta have a Fourth of July speech!

Smith: But, remember the Bicentennial – at the time of the Bicentennial.

Orben: Oh, the Bicentennial.

Smith: When he was going from place to place...

Orben: Oh, I loved those speeches. Ford, in the midst of everything else, came to us and said, “This is an important historical moment,” and, in fact, there is a little booklet, and I think they were pretty good speeches. But, again, talk about the friction – coming back, Ford wanted those speeches and he wanted them to be good speeches. The second speech, I think, was in front of the Air and Space Museum. It was a good speech, and by the time we got back to the White House, the evening paper, the afternoon paper at that point, said that there was general criticism in the White House of the poor quality of this speech. Ford called a meeting in the Roosevelt Room, and he was mad. He said, “I don’t want to hear anything like this again.” It shocked me, actually. In Hollywood there is a lot of back biting, but not within your own group and to the press. I’m sure there is some of it, but I was shocked, always when these things got into the newspaper. To my knowledge, that did stop. They didn’t hear the speech because the paper was there when we got back to the White House.

Smith: The acceptance speech at the convention was generally regarded as one of the best he ever gave. Were you involved in that?

Orben: Oh yeah. Oh, my God, yes.

Smith: And how long did that take to put together, and I assume he practiced a lot.

Orben: He practiced with Don Penny, and I must say, the one big credit I would give to Penny is that he wasn’t afraid to use the president’s time. To the point where, I understand, the president got mad. I was so aware of the president’s time, I would have rehearsed the speech twice, and let a lot go. But that speech was put together in a rather interesting way. And at first I had my doubts about it.

Break

Smith: We were talking about the acceptance speech and how it was put together.

Orben: Well, Shakespeare would never have put a speech together this way. This was Bob Hartmann’s idea and I thought this was incredible, undoable. Every State of the Union, all manner of people send you drafts of what they want to say, the Department of Commerce and whatever. So that we got. But then

Hartmann's idea was to let everybody have a crack at the State of the Union. And so all the writers...

Smith: Now, we're talking about the State of the Union, not the acceptance speech?

Orben: I'm sorry, the acceptance speech. All the writers gave their acceptance speech drafts, and other people gave – anybody who was in hailing distance – gave it. And the idea was to let everybody know: now here was the framework for the whole thing, we're going to do this, that, and the other thing. These are the points we are going to make, so it wasn't totally freeform, but make these points in your own way. And then we got a table or something like this, and we stretched them all out and we x'd out what was no good, we checked off what might be good, and then we got that harrowed and winnowed down. And we eventually got a speech out of it that made the points and got the applause.

Smith: And contained the unexpected challenge to the challenger about debates. Do you know where that idea came from?

Orben: No. But you're talking – I marvel at the people who remember everything. I have no idea. And sometimes you feel a little awkward about not remembering because these are historic things in a way. But, no.

Smith: Were you at the convention?

Orben: Oh, yeah.

Smith: People who were there, you get this sense that the platform, for example – their refusal to let there be a fight over the platform, to concede the foreign policy plank, for example. There is a sense that in many cases, the delegates' hearts were with Reagan, even if they voted for Ford. Did you have that feeling?

Orben: Frankly, you don't have a sense of anything when you're moving paper. The one thing, once we won it, I went over to something at Reagan's hotel and I was there in the lobby when the motorcade came up and Ford came across the lobby and up to see Reagan. I was hoping that he would choose Reagan. That would have been such a shoo-in, and it didn't happen.

Smith: And you've heard over the years varying accounts, conflicting accounts, over whether people were told in advance, "Don't raise this." In fact, there is a condition of the meeting.

Orben: That's what I've read, but how do you make such a condition? That's absurd, these are two adults. I've never thought kindly of Reagan for doing all this. If he hadn't challenged Ford for the nomination – we were all, in the Ford White House exhausted by the time we won the nomination. And the Reagan group, or rather Carter was rested, and tanned and ready to go.

Smith: What about the counter argument that Reagan, unintentionally, did Ford a favor in that he made Ford a much better candidate by that summer than he might have been, had he not been tested and challenged and forced, among other things, to become a better speaker.

Orben: I've heard that. I don't buy that at all. Didn't make any sense to me.

Smith: Did you do any writing for Mrs. Ford?

Orben: Only once, for one of the Easter events, some childhood thing. I don't really remember.

Smith: We've talked to a number of people about this, and she's written about it; was there a sense, within the White House, that she had some problems?

Orben: I wasn't aware of it. I was totally unaware of it. Should I talk fast for these two minutes?

Smith: We've got about ten minutes.

Orben: Okay. I still remember her. When I got down there, this was nine days, maybe, after he became president. They had a gathering party for the vice presidential staff, and I was invited to it. And I still remember, she obviously had a terrible headache, but she smiled through every individual picture with all of us. The only awareness I ever had that she might have been, no – I wasn't even aware then. I did this childhood type speech for the Easter Egg roll, and she spoke it in a dreamy playful manner. I didn't know. Sometimes

people do that when relating to children, so I didn't think much about it, but I really didn't have much to do with Mrs. Ford.

Smith: Speaking about the childish event, there's a wonderful George Reedy story with LBJ – where the word came over, Johnson is doing an event with retarded children and he wants some jokes.

Orben: Oh, boy. For retarded kids?

Smith: And Reedy, without missing a beat, he's at his typewriter, he says, "Fine. Tell him I've always loved retarded children, I used to be one myself."

Orben: Oh, that's very good.

Smith: Are there occasions when you're asked to produce something that makes no sense?

Orben: Well, I would put it a different way – that's a challenge. I remember one time around eleven o'clock in the morning, I get a call from Terry O'Donnell that the president just got a phone call from Bob Hope, who was in town getting an award for comedian of the century and he wants the president to present it to him. And I said, "Okay, when is it, tonight?" And he says, "No, it's two hours from now." I said, "Okay," and he said, "There's a problem. It's Lincoln's birthday and he's doing the Lincoln's birthday speech, so he's going straight to the event and the motorcade is leaving." So I grabbed speech cards, pencils and I run for the motorcade, get in the motorcade, and now here's the problem: I've got to write these jokes and print them in such a way because he's got to read them right off of what I'm writing. So I see him coming down the steps from the Lincoln Memorial, and I'm not finished yet. So I go up to the limo and I tell the Secret Service, "I know this is unusual, but I've got to ride with the president." And fortunately, they used their heads and they let me in and Ford comes down the stairs and I say, "I'll explain, Mr. President." And I'm working away on the thing and he isn't talking to me, thank God, and we get to the event and they are opening the door and I said, "Please one more minute," so they close the door and I finish. And he goes out and does it, seeing it for the first time. Now this, again, comes back to confidence. Fortunately the joke doesn't mean much today, but you rely on

craft again. He said, “There’s really good news and bad news, my being here, today. The good news is I’m here to present my good friend Bob Hope with the award Comedian of the Century. The bad news is, how am I ever going to explain this to Earl Butz.” Now, Earl Butz was big news at that time, so that was wonderful. You try to explain to anybody today, and it’s all over.

Smith: I think the last time we ran into each other on the subway, there had been something in the *Post* that day. There was a story about something – someone wrote, maybe it was Howard Kurtz claimed that Ford had read instructions...

Orben: Oh, this is what I got in touch with you about. Yeah.

Smith: It was something where, supposedly there were instructions for the president within the text, and he read them...

Orben: Yeah, that’s a standard joke about speakers. No, I would never have ‘pause for laughter’ and it was that sort of thing. The only time, and I think this has been written about, when we were preparing for the Philadelphia Bicentennial speech, there was a name in it that human tongues were not meant to utter. And as we rehearsed it, he misspoke each time. You couldn’t change the name, that was part of it. So, what I did, I wrote the joke and pasted into his speech box, and I said, “If you get to this name and you blow it, go to this.” And he blowed it, then he said, “I told my wife, Betty, that I knew the speech backwards and I think that’s the way I’m doing it.” Wonderful. So that’s the only time – but you would never put coaching instructions in a speech text.

I remember one time, somewhere in Minnesota or Wisconsin, he was doing a speech for conservationists, and he was talking about what a wonderful thing the government was doing in different areas. He said, “For instance, in the Hudson River, shad are once more in the river. They cough a lot, but they’re back.” And I said, “Mr. President, you’ve got to clue the audience that a joke might be coming, so it’s a sort of dust kicking tempo. You stop, and you smile, and then they cough a lot.” Well, it was a very hot day and he sails right through it. About a second later, there’s laughter – did you hear what he said?

Smith: At the end of the campaign did you think you might win?

Orben: Oh, yeah. I've got half of the victory speech. I left the plane in Boston, and I came down on the train with Jim Baker, and I'm working on – because Jim or somebody had been tipped by one of the polling organizations that we were going to win it by one percent. And I think that a lot of people felt that if we had a few more days, we would have won it. Yeah, we thought we were going to win it.

Smith: When was the last time you saw him?

Orben: Well, I think it was probably Rancho Mirage, two years ago. Except when we were in Europe a couple of times, we went to all the events. And, again, one of the things I felt bad about was that I still was in awe of the president's time. Even though he now had plenty of time. I'm sorry I didn't keep in touch. I kept in touch somewhat, and I did material for him for the Bohemian Club and things like that. But I only saw him, essentially, on those once a year deals.

Smith: You say you saw him at Rancho Mirage?

Orben: Yeah. Well, Rancho Mirage for the last of the Ford get-togethers.

Smith: Okay.

Orben: When he was no longer able to...you could see the deterioration. Ford worked a room beautifully. The feet never stopped. And the last couple of times here in Washington, he was in one place, and then he was sitting down, and then like a coronation crown emperor's chair. He was sitting in a chair there.

Smith: How should he be remembered?

Orben: I think, at the time, I felt that history was going to award him huge amounts of credit. We forget how tense those times were. The troops were being alerted, did our system of government work? And with the same calm, knowing where he stood manner, he held it all together. The second speech he made as president was at Ohio State in the field house, 15,000 people, he said, "So much has happened since they asked me to speak here today, I was then America's first instant vice president, today I'm America's first instant president. The Marine Corps Band is so confused, they don't know whether to

play *Hail to the Chief* or *You've Come a Long Way, Baby*." It really put the whole thing in context. He would have been a far greater president than the one he lost to. Now if there is tape, you haven't mentioned the assassinations.

Smith: Tell us.

Orben: Unfortunately, I was present at both the assassination attempts. The first time I was still in the hotel working on the speech, and when I came out - the hotel was right across from the Capitol Building where he was giving the speech - everything was quiet. And I came running along and I heard Nessen giving essentially a briefing on the whole thing.

But for Sara Jane Moore, which was just, I think, six weeks later, I was in the motorcade two or three cars back on the left hand side of the street. The motorcade had been split into two columns because it was a small street. We were talking and I suddenly hear the shot. It was like a freeze-frame. You looked out and for a moment it was almost like a painting. Then the next thing I was aware of, people had picked up Sara Jane Moore like a battering ram and were running across the street and into the hotel. Meanwhile Ford is being jumped on and pushed into the limo.

Now we're tearing along the freeway, 70-80 miles an hour, and in front of us is a press van. It was like a station wagon and there was the lighting guy and the cameraman hooked together with an electronic umbilical cord, standing on the back bumper, hanging onto what looks like a luggage rack. As I say, we were doing 70-80 miles an hour. Our driver, a volunteer, is really tense, and we're creeping up on them so the Naval aide to the president - I don't remember his name, good guy - said, "Son, maybe you ought to move over a little bit so that when they fall off, you won't go over them." Well, fortunately, they didn't fall off. But I remember asking Lukash to take a look at the cameraman. He was an older guy and he was ashen white.

But there was sort of a little meeting on the plane after we took off, and I still remember, one of the press asking the president, "Were you shook up?". And Ford said, "No." And the reporter said, "Well, you must have been because you said judgment instead of judg-a-ment," in whatever he said afterwards.

We all had the freedom and the feeling that we could kid him and talk. I don't know that I would have done that to Nixon or George W.

Smith: Is there a final, something surprising about him, something that people don't know that they ought to know?

Orben: Well, it's probably been said in one form or another, but he tackled things that he shouldn't have been good at, and did them well. And I'm thinking in terms of my own specialty, humor. People ask me if you have to have a special bent for humor. I don't know that Ford had a natural bent for humor, but he liked it and he had the courage to get the words out, and then wait for the laughter. That doesn't sound like much, but I tell you from a lifetime of experience, it's a lot.

Smith: Well, I also think he had an incredible work ethic, and I imagine it would almost be a challenge. He knew, to be a successful president, this is part of the job and he would work at it doggedly until he mastered it.

Orben: Well, that's right, but I think we never saw that. I think that was up in the residence.

Smith: Perfect. This is fun.

Orben: Well, perfect, I don't know.

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