

U.S. NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS ADMINISTRATION
Transcript of National Archives History Office Oral History Interview
Subject: Daria Labinsky
Interviewer: Paul Santa Cruz
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Paul Santa Cruz: OK, hello, this is Paul Santa Cruz doing an oral history interview related to COVID-19 for the National Archives Assembly. I'm here today with Daria Labinsky. Daria is an archivist with the Jimmy Carter Presidential Library. Today is April 19, 2021. I'd first like to thank Daria for being here and sharing her insight with us for this. I'd like to start by asking if you could tell us some about yourself, your educational background, and how you started with the National Archives.

Daria Labinsky: OK, well, I originally was a journalist. I got a bachelor's degree and a master's degree from Northwestern. My master's was in journalism. The bachelor's was in communications. I worked as a journalist for about eight years, and then I became a freelancer. I was a freelancer for quite a while. While I was a freelancer, I began researching a book that was a biography of an artist in New Mexico. When I was doing that, I had to travel to special collections all over the country because he had friends who had records at Harvard and Yale and Berkeley and all kinds of places. I was working on a couple of different projects, and that was one of them. It got me really interested in archives.

So I lived in New Mexico and decided I was interested in trying to become an archivist. Just serendipitously, Emporia State University was doing a virtual program where classes were being held at the University of New Mexico. Part of it was online, part of it was instructor-led. So the instructors would come to New Mexico on weekends, and they would teach us classes. This was library science, not archival studies, but they would teach us classes. Then they would go back to Kansas or wherever. Some of them were based in Milwaukee and all kinds of places. We would work on projects and then they would come back and we would meet again and discuss our projects. It was a very cool program they had there. But one of the components was archival studies, so I got to do archival studies training with Randy Silverman, who was a rare book conservator for the University of Utah. I believe he is at the University of Utah still. He is very well renowned, and he had us learn basic archiving. We got to do a practicum at Rocky Mountain National Park and work on their archives and their land records. So it was really cool.

Then I went to work as a public librarian. One of the things that happened when I was there is they said they were going to create a local history room. They had me do it because they knew I

was interested in archiving, and they said, "OK, you're going to be our local history librarian, but you also have to be our webmaster." So I had to learn how to create web pages! So that was great. Then we were building a whole new library, a main campus of the main branch of the library in Rio Rancho, New Mexico. I got to help with the design on that of the local history room and set it up and the whole thing from scratch. That was really a great experience and a lot of fun. I got to work on oral histories when I was there. I got to do everything. So it was really pretty cool.

So then I got to NARA. What ended up happening is I really felt like that wasn't really so much being an archivist as being a librarian. I really was interested in trying to become an archivist because that's what I went to library school for in the first place. I got hired by the National Archives in St. Louis actually for the Preservation Department at the National Personnel Records Center. My husband and I moved to St. Louis, and my daughter. I worked my way up pretty much. I started off as a [GS] 6 and went up. I didn't make that much money as a librarian in New Mexico, so it wasn't like that really was a pay cut.

But there was a year when I was the library supervisor for Albuquerque schools. I was the head of the audiovisual department for all of Albuquerque schools, which is more than 120 school libraries. I worked with them on their AV stuff, which was also good because I got to work on cataloging with that. I got to learn about AV preservation, digitization. So it was a pay cut from that job, but because I'd only been in that job for 10 months I didn't feel like it was that bad because I was so used to working for that other salary before that. I sucked it up, and my husband also had money so it wasn't like I was going to be starving or that badly off. But anyway, I became a lead archives technician and then I became an archivist. I moved to the archives department in 2013. Then I moved to the Carter Library in 2017.

Paul: OK, excellent. So you had very much a background in libraries and archives before you got to NARA and the Carter Library. I'm always interested, but I have never been to the Carter Library—I haven't been there yet—I'm always fascinated by the differences between the different libraries, not just the subject matter, but also because of course, the histories are going to be—

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Paul: Like I was saying, I'm always fascinated by the differences there are between the various Presidential Libraries and certainly the holdings, the differences in holdings. So tell us a little bit about what you do as an archivist at Carter, what kinds of materials you have there. If I were to come to the Carter Library, what can I find there?

Daria: We have the prettiest campus of any Presidential Library. I think they're all probably on really nice campuses, but we're in the middle of a big park called Freedom Park, and it's just gorgeous. When I first started, my co-workers in St. Louis joked that I would be polishing the artifacts. They figured there was no archival work to do in Presidential Libraries. Well, we have collections from the Presidential administration that are still not completely processed. They're unprocessed. We've got new accessions since I've been there, too, but mostly smaller ones. I do a lot of processing. The collection I am just finishing up is the records of the President's Reorganization Project, when President Carter wanted to reorganize the entire government. The main things that came out of that were the creation of the Department of Education and the Civil Service Reform Act, and a lot of things that were the benefit of veterans, Veterans Affairs and those kinds of things. Because he created the Department of Education, that meant the HEW—Health, Education, and Welfare— that got disbanded. It became Housing, Health and Human Services, and the Department of Education. Of course, he also created the Department of Energy. So I've been working on those records.

We also have records that were donated materials from people who were part of his administration. Our biggest collection from the White House that is not done yet is the records of the President's Personnel Office. It's a huge collection, and it is a ton of personal identifying information. So there is a lot of redacting that's going to need to be happening. It's probably going to be the kind of thing where every folder is going to have to be examined before we can give it to researchers or serve it to researchers.

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Paul: So anyway, you were talking about how you've been processing, and you've got a lot of personnel materials that you still have to go through and it's going to be PII [Personally Identifiable Information] redaction nightmares and all that kind of stuff, which I definitely can identify with. And you had said that you still have gotten in a lot of accessions, people who had worked for President Carter. Do you have President Carter's gubernatorial papers there or are those elsewhere?

Daria: Most of those are at the Georgia State Archives, which is actually next door to the National Archives of Atlanta. It's two really nice buildings right there. We have some, though. We have some really nice gubernatorial stuff, some great audiovisual stuff. We have a ton of audiovisual material, most of which hasn't been digitized. It's a big project that more resources need to be devoted to. We get so many requests for AV material. We're actually going to be taking in his post-Presidential material at some point. We've had it in courtesy storage. So we

have a lot of boxes and they're inventoried. Mary Ann McSweeney, who recently retired, that was one of her projects that she was working on. That's the next thing, once processing of the Presidential administration stuff is finished, because we're almost done.

Paul: What is the extent of the material that you have at Carter? Cubic footage or a number of pages, if you prefer it that way?

Daria: Honestly, I don't know off the top of my head. We have basically three and a half bays of shelving, and the fourth bay is also our processing room, so there's not that much on that floor. In the LBJ Library, they have the windows and you can see the files. We have a similar thing in our museum. Those are name files, boxes and name files, from the White House central files. They go all the way up from every floor there's name files on. I don't know how much that is. Sorry. Again, some of that is Carter Center material, which is the nonprofit next door. Not all of it is processed.

Paul: Now, I understand that you've done a lot of work there on digitization. Tell us what all is involved with that, because, as you're aware, everyone now wants everything online. It creates a lot of work for us, but it also, at least the idea is, the objective is, that we're making materials more accessible that way. Talk a little bit about what you do digitization-wise, what you and your library are doing.

Daria: We're actually really getting ready to do more work on that when we open. Right now, we don't have the staff. The Carter Library does not have a foundation. We are funded by the National Archives. So we don't have as many staff as a lot of other Presidential libraries because of that. When we digitize for reference, we save all the scans of stuff we digitize. So that's more on demand, and we have a process for that. We have the equipment, new equipment, to do digitization of videotapes, which is great. We can't do pneumatic tapes. We still have to ship them out to a vendor. We have a lot of stuff on pneumatic tape. We have a lot of film. We can't do film. We can't do audio tapes either in house. So we can do some audios, like cassette tapes we can do, which they're not going to be a very good quality. But reel-to-reel we can't do in house. It's really a full time job for the archivists to do the digitization of audio all the time, because that's, as I said earlier, that's what people want.

We have thousands of images that are digitized high-res TIFFs, for whatever reason, for presentations or projects or reference requests. We get lots of requests from the Carter Center for images. One of the projects I've been working on actually during the pandemic is the White House Descriptive Metadata Project. That's creating spreadsheets to assign the correct metadata to all of those images. I'm working with Sara Mitchell, who's another archivist here. A

lot of the descriptions in the catalog aren't correct. There are descriptions that have been written that are in the catalog for individual images, but there's no image attached to the catalog record, the file unit record. We're just finishing up phase one of that project. It'll come out to maybe 8,000 photos that we have that we don't have descriptions for. Then we'll be able to write or improve catalog descriptions that are in there or create new catalog descriptions and add the images. We have a lot of our contact sheets scanned and in the catalog. We have them all scanned. Probably 99.9% of them have catalog descriptions, but they don't all have the file unit attached. So that's part of that project, too, is to get those contact sheets up there because we have them. They are on a shared drive, just for some reason they weren't uploaded when the descriptions were written.

Paul: It's comforting to know and also intimidating to think that at a Presidential Library, even decades after that administration, there is still that much to be done. And I look at what we've got and I think, "This is going to be conceivably centuries in the making," when you factor in FOIA [Freedom of Information Act] and digitization and moving closed material back into the open file. There's no shortage of work to be done, for sure.

Daria: Right before the pandemic in January of last year, our secure classified records were moved to DC at the National Declassification Center. So that's actually another problem. We still got a lot of reference requests for those, and those projects are on hold right now. I have a woman in Russia who I've been dealing with because she wants to use a memo that got sent to Washington that they want to use for an exhibit at a museum. I forget where in Russia. But I told her, "I'm sorry, you're going to have to wait." At least it's an exhibit. It's not something that she needs immediately.

Paul: Right. Right. Talking about COVID and what we've been dealing with in the last 13 or so months, when did you first hear about COVID-19?

Daria: I was reading about it in the newspaper a lot. I remember when the first cases hit and the first announcements of it came. It's funny because I think ICN [NARA's Internal Communications Network] might have been the first place I ever saw it. Jeffrey Weiss posted something in January, I think. Then I remember when the cases in Kirkland, Washington, happened and then at the nursing home. My mother is in a nursing home. My mother is going to be 96 in July. She's in assisted living in New Jersey, so I was more worried about her. It didn't really start to become a thing to really start worrying about until the end of February, when we were starting to wonder what was going to happen with that.

Paul: Describe what it was like when you heard that we were closing. I don't know if the date for y'all was different, but when we shut down that would have been about, I guess maybe the second week of March of last year.

Daria: I actually looked at this recently and my first day of working at home, of leaving NARA and the library and working at home, was March 20. First of all, they started putting in hand sanitizers, big stands of it. I think we closed the research room about two weeks before and our manager said, "Anybody who's got preexisting health conditions and doesn't feel comfortable coming in, you can start working at home." So a few people, somebody who's of advanced age and somebody else who has a wife who has some health problems, they didn't come in.

I remember the day that we closed. All of a sudden it was like, boom, you're going to close. It was, "Come up with something you can do for the next couple of weeks," of course. So I remember I cleared off a lot of stuff on my desk. I got all my stuff out of the kitchen. I remember one of my coworkers, Youlanda Logan, looking at me, going, "Wow, I'm coming in tomorrow." Then my other coworker, Ceri McCarron, she's like, "Oh, yeah, I'm not going to be able to get any work done. I'm staying here." So I said, "Well, bye. I'll see you guys."

The week before, they asked us to start coming up with some kind of project we could do if we were going to be home for a few weeks. I had that one in mind about the descriptive metadata. So they were like, "Great." So, I had something to work on right away. Plus we have three people that do social media. We have somebody who does Twitter, which is me, somebody who does Instagram, and somebody who does Facebook. I knew I could always just work on social media as well. I knew I was going to have plenty of work to do at home. But I just remember I'm like, "I'll see you guys when I see you." Two days later, it was like, "Everybody has to leave." That was right all around that time. It was like, "Everybody, you have to leave today. That's it." Of course, we didn't realize we were still going to be here.

Paul: Thirteen months later.

Daria: But another thing, though, is everything fell like dominoes. I was supposed to go to New York that weekend to see two plays. The play *Coal Country* and a play I can't remember what it was called. It was a new play. My husband, for Christmas, I gave him a Telecharge gift certificate, a gift card. So he got to pick the play we got to see. It was one written by Tracy Letts, because he really likes Tracy Letts as an actor. That was premiering that weekend, and *Coal Country* had just premiered. That was by Steve Earle and had his music, and he's actually in it as the narrator. All of a sudden, everything got shut down. New York announced they were closing

all the theaters. This was March 12. So that's funny that that email was March 20, because this was March 12 when things shut down.

Actually, right before that, the NCAA tournament got shut down. I remember talking to one of our guards saying, "I can't believe it," because I was in Atlanta and the Final Four was going to be Atlanta. I was like "I can't believe they're going to do this." We were just like, "Oh, darn." I was looking forward to those games. But on the 12th, I was supposed to go to the taping of *Wait Wait, Don't Tell Me* with Maureen Hill from the National Archives of Atlanta, with her husband and a friend of mine. That got canceled. They didn't record it. They didn't have it. So, we went out to dinner, and we all sat around at this restaurant and said, "This is probably the last we are going to be able to go out to dinner for a while. We better have a nice time." So that happened, too. That was Thursday, and then Friday was the 13th. That's when we decided we can't go to New York. Everything is shut down. Of course, you have reservations, and you don't know if you are going to get your money back. We had spent a lot of time on the phone, and everybody was thinking about that. I'm guessing it was the Monday before, probably, when they started to say, "You need to start thinking about what you're going to do when you go home."

Paul: A lot of disruption for a lot of people. You've talked about some of what you've been doing in the last 13 months while we've all been in this holding pattern. You've talked about social media, and you've mentioned the White House Metadata Project. I'm also curious, you serve with the National Archives Assembly and you have done a lot of work, not just now, but prior to all of this happening, on National History Day. Talk a little bit about what you do on National History Day.

Daria: I've actually been involved with National History Day since I was in St. Louis. I used to judge in St. Louis. I was also a board member for about a year in St. Louis on the board. One of the ideas I thought of is, I knew they did the National History Day award in DC, and I thought we should have one for outside of DC. So I created the whole thing on a pilot project for doing this. It was kind of one of those things where it just sounds good, but one of the things you need is you need to have a dedicated number of people who work for NARA or in the Assembly to be judges. I believe we didn't start it until I got to Atlanta because there weren't that many people in St. Louis that worked for NARA that were doing the judging.

In Atlanta, there was a man named Joel Walker, I believe that was his last name, who was an education specialist down at the National Archives of Atlanta, and he retired a few years ago. He was really active with the National Archives with National History Day. So when I came to Georgia, it just seemed like, boy, this is a much better opportunity because we have these

NARA people in Atlanta and we have people on the Jimmy Carter Library staff that wanted to do it.

LaToya Devezin was one of the judges and Joshua, Josh Montanari was one of the judges. Josh and I are still judges. LaToya did it for two years. Last year she volunteered, and they didn't need her. They had too many judges. So she didn't get to do it last year. I don't know if she tried this year because she might have just said, "Well, you know." Because it's virtual, they get judges from all over the country now.

So, we did it as a pilot project, and we had to create the whole procedure. I worked with the Georgia Humanities people, and they were really thrilled that we wanted to give kids some money and award them and give them their certificate. They thought that was really cool. Joel Walker at the National Archives of Atlanta, he thought it was a really good idea too. With them, I worked first with Laura McCarty at Georgia Humanities and now just spoke with Jessica Burke at Georgia Humanities to put together the best way to do this, because it's like, how do we do this?

The first year it was a little rough. I forget how it was, but we had to look at stuff in every category and we had a lot of entries, and Josh and I had to split it up and run all over the place. It got better by the second year. They kind of streamlined it. I think what we ended up doing, one year, was we just did websites. Maybe that was the first year. We just decided to do websites because those could be looked at in advance. I can't remember. I'm sorry, I can't remember why we ended up doing that. But anyway, we came up with a system where the kids self-nominate themselves.

When they apply to be students, and this is the state thing, so they've already won their regionals, and when they apply to submit their entries, there are a variety of awards, and they can kind of check off. There's the "Best Use of Georgia's Resources" and there's "Best Military." There's a special one for military. There's a special one for somebody who deals with economic history. They can check off which ones they are. So they would check off National Archives. That way we'd have a set number. Last year we had 14. Then it went virtual. So last year, it was like, "Oh my God, are they going to have National History Day?" They canceled the in-person, but they came up with a way to do it virtually. Unfortunately, last year they hadn't figured out how to do the performances virtually. We just got the kids' papers. I think this year they managed to figure it out.

So we got to watch the video. So that was really nice. I think it happened so close to when judging was, they just figured they weren't going to be able to get all the kids to figure out how

to do this. This year, they have all this time to do it because they had experience from last year with it. This year we had more than 30, so we split them up and it turned out they weren't all National Archives. They might have checked the box off, but some of them were National Archives in other countries, like the National Archives of the Netherlands. So in my report from the National Archives assembly, I'm going to suggest we change the name to "Best Use of U.S. National Archives."

Also I thought, in the future, we could have somebody check it off because they've got something from the Theodore Roosevelt Library. Well, that's not a National Archives Library, so we have to fix that too. We never had this problem before, but it happened multiple times this time, that some kids think the Library of Congress is part of the National Archives, which is the other thing. But the judging went really well. We really look for people that really place an emphasis on our records in some way. They don't have to be the majority of the records they use, but they have to have some kind of significance in their work. It's always a lot of fun. It's not as fun as being there in person and actually giving the kids the awards.

Paul: Of course. But the whole idea is that you as a contestant are demonstrating that you've used our materials. That really forms the basis of your project.

Daria: Also that you understand what a primary source is, which is really hard for kids. You see that all the time. In their extensive bibliographies, they don't put them in the right category.

Paul: It's been a while since I've been in elementary school or middle school and all that. Every now and then, I hope that they are still teaching, "Here's how you actually do research. Research doesn't mean just go look something up on Wikipedia. Go look at a primary source, go look at secondary sources, have a nice blend of that." If you've written your paper all within an hour, then you probably didn't do any real research.

Daria: Yes, this is actually middle school and high school. They can be pretty impressive. Some of the documentaries are really good. They have to write a process paper and part of that is, "How did you get this idea?" A lot of times the way they come up with these ideas that fit the theme are just really interesting. One I saw this year was about Curtis Mayfield and how he used his music to just inform people about civil rights. His theme was communication and how he communicated, and I was just, "Wow, how did they come up with Curtis Mayfield?" It's really cool.

Paul: Well, what has life been like for you during COVID? We talked a little bit about that, "This is going to be the last time that we're eating at a restaurant, probably for a while." What has

your experience been like this last year or so? Things that you're not able to do that you used to do, that you took for granted, that all of us took for granted, and then this happens. Talk a little bit about that.

Daria: Most of my big things were travel related. I was supposed to go to Ireland. I had a couple other big trips. I had conferences. I'm a planner, so I have already bought plane tickets for conferences. My daughter is in DC, and it was a while before we got to go see her. Since my mother turned 95 in July, we went up to see her for her birthday. I did some flying and I was really nervous about it. That was Delta, which had some empty middle seats. What we did is we picked up my daughter and then drove her up. But my daughter's been working out of her house. It's funny how your adult kids are more nervous about your health than you are sometimes. They're so nervous, and same with my sister and her kids and stuff.

My sister is in Philadelphia, so what we do is we get my daughter in DC and then drive up to my mother's in New Jersey and then drive down to Philadelphia and see my sister and her family. But we had to meet outside. Her nephew wouldn't let us in the house. I mean, it's great. We're all wearing masks too. It's great that they're so conscientious. You kind of get used to working out of the house. I'm fortunate because I had a lot of work to do. I know a lot of people all over NARA where there was nothing they could really do except do training and watch webinars and read books. I interviewed somebody who's read quite a few books about the President, the administration of the President, for her library. That kind of thing. Getting that kind of background material. So, I mean, it's funny.

I work standing up. I had a standup desk at work and so my computer is actually on my high-top breakfast nook table. That was our first day—bring the breakfast table up. My husband always works out of the house and there's no door on his office, so I knew from day one there was no way I could work at the kitchen table or anything because I hear him all the time and he is always on the phone. He's a journalist, so he's always on the phone. So, I'm up on the top floor, and he's down in the basement, so it works out pretty well. We have a weekly staff meeting. I know with some staff it really varies. Some people have daily meetings with their staff. We have a small staff. We have 23 people that come in, total. That's everybody. That's museum staff. That's gift shop. That's archives staff. It's tiny.

Actually our supervisor, the supervisory archivist, left in January of 2020 as well. She got another job. So we didn't have a supervisor. Our deputy director had to become acting supervisor. So he was acting supervisor until the fall and then it was actually almost into the winter and then one of our archivists, Brittany Parris, got promoted to a supervisory archivist.

That was a little bit of a change, probably a bigger change for her. So he would have regular meetings with us to check in on what was going on, and Brittany does that, too.

The one kind of weird thing is when we were in the building and we had staff meetings, we would have round-robins and everybody had to talk a little bit about what they'd been working on because they were monthly meetings. So, "What have you been doing in the past month or stuff that's new and cool." We stopped doing that when the pandemic happened. That really was one of the worst things, because I really want to know what everybody else was working on, and I only found out after the fact.

Our AV staff managed to get our YouTube channel up and running. So we're posting videos up there all the time that we already have digitized. So that's been great. We have great events at the library. That's one of the best perks of working there is working the events. I mean, I got to meet Andrew Young. All kinds of authors, Erik Larson and Steve Inskeep and all fun people and people who worked for Carter. Stuart Eizenstat, who was the head of the domestic policy staff, he was one of the first guys we had.

Of course, President Carter did book signings until he fell and broke his hip. That was in 2019. Until then he was pretty active, and he was putting out two books a year. So we got to work a few book events, which are huge things because people come from all over and wait hours in line to see him. Tony Clark, he is our public affairs guy, he managed to start book events up again. So that worked out really well. There have been a couple books published about President Carter specifically since the pandemic happened, including the first really in-depth biography of him by Jonathan Alter called *His Very Best*. There's been a few films that have come out, too. One about the Peace Corps that featured Miss Lillian Carter. *Jimmy Carter: Rock & Roll President*, which is really good. We got to have meetings with the directors and producers. That's been great.

So to some extent, I know what people have been working on. Our education specialist has been coming up with all kinds of learning stuff. But then I'm not sure what everybody is doing. I feel bad for our gift shop staff. They don't really have a ton of work they can do. We have somebody who had just been hired, too. Think about it. You are starting a new job, and all of a sudden.

Paul: I imagine there were a number of people around the agency who were either just starting at a job or about to leave one and all of this happens. What else do you do other than just the most basic orientation? You're not going to be doing really your regular job for who knows how long, so you make do as best you can. I'm also curious about looking ahead to whenever this

ends and we're all back doing our jobs. What do you see, and this is more like a long-term question, what do you see our challenges are either as an agency or as Presidential Libraries? Where do you see us going? What do you think the challenges are going to be for us in the years to come?

Daria: I think some people are really liking teleworking and are going to be reluctant to go in, and they're not going to go in until they have to. I think NARA has realized how much work could be done by a lot of people teleworking, so I think they're going to give people more leeway in that kind of thing. I know of another agency where, before the pandemic, people were allowed to work 50 percent at home. Maybe NARA will come up with something like that. I don't know. I mean, we have to have the research room open at some point. We have researchers from all over the world that come here. They can't get out of their country anyway because our borders weren't even open.

I remember right before we closed, this guy posting on Twitter how happy he was because he had just got some kind of fellowship that he was going to be able to come down here. I retweeted it and said, "Look forward to seeing you" because I was like, "This is exciting!" We have so many researchers from Asia—China and Korea. I just think there's going to be a big relief when we open, if they are able to travel, which might not be a concurrent thing. It might be a while until they're allowed to come in. I think we'll be swamped with researchers.

Honestly, we should just have days where once a week we just close everything down and all everybody does is scan documents. It would just solve a lot of problems. They should just invest in faster scanners, better scanners, and just get that stuff scanned because we can help people so much. Like I said, we have international researchers. I have another case. I'm dealing with a guy from Italy. I told him, "This is all I can really show you now, and you would have to come in and look at the records." It's one of these not-easy-answer questions where he would really have to dig to find stuff. I think there will be more virtual programming. I don't think Google Meets is the best platform for virtual programming, and I think NARA is looking into changing that and getting something better. I think that probably we will have maybe staggered times in the building as far as not having people together, close together, that often.

Paul: Got just a couple more questions here. You talked about the book signings that you all have done and the programming that's happened. Do you have any great memories, anecdotes, of the time that you've worked at Carter? You've mentioned that President Carter, or at least up until a couple of years ago, does book signings. Did you ever meet President and Mrs. Carter? Any stories like that that you've got?

Daria: I have never met Rosalynn. We had a staff day in 2019 to go down to Plains, Georgia, and get a tour of President Carter's—it is now a National Historical Park, it was a National Historic Site at the time—his boyhood home. But we got to have a personal tour with the ranger, and then President Carter came and met with us personally and talked to us. Mrs. Carter, Rosalynn, was supposed to be there, but she did not come. I was really disappointed because I've still never seen her in person. We were allowed to bring our husbands or your kids and brothers. One of my coworkers brought her brother. So that was really neat. He didn't talk to us for that long, but it was pretty cool to actually be really up close with him. We were all sitting around on tree stumps or something in this little learning area outside at his boyhood home.

The book signings are more like assembly, line where everybody has a part and you have to play your part. So I never really got to talk to him there. I did go down to Plains for one of his sermons. He stopped doing that, too. He stopped teaching Sunday school. But because I was an employee, I was able to call and arrange to get a special seat, basically. My daughter came down from Washington, DC, and the three of us, my husband, my daughter, and I, we didn't get there until 8:30, whereas people had camped out all night. But we got there at 8:30 in the morning, and we got to sit in the second row. And then everybody gets their picture taken. The way it worked was everybody could get their picture taken with President Carter. There's so many people. They have the Plains Baptist Church, where he would preach, then they'd have another room. So the main part of the church, and then they'd have another room where there was an overflow crowd, and then they'd have a tent with the rest of the other people. So big, big event. Busloads of people sometimes. If you didn't get there by 8:30, they would just tell you, "You're not going to be able to get in. So you better know that now." But that was really neat. That was really fun. I got to say, "Hi. I work at the library." He was like, "Thank you for your service," and all that. So that was about the most I got to talk to him.

As in oral history, one of my projects I forgot about was I've been doing the NARA oral histories for Jessie Kratz at the NARA History Office. I interviewed a couple of my staff members, three of them. One who just retired and one who was the deputy director and worked here for 35 years, worked here before the library was an actual library. I got to hear their stories about working with the Carters. They had lots more time that they worked with them. President Carter's grandson, Jason Carter, he's on the Board of the Carter Center and he works with the director, Meredith Evans, a lot. Jason actually did a program with Nelson Mandela's grandson, and they talked about being the grandsons of these amazingly well-known, important people. That was a really interesting one.

Valerie Jarrett, who worked for President Obama, that was a big, big event too. Stacey Abrams, also, when she did her book signing, she was a gubernatorial candidate who lost the governor's

election and founded Fair Fight Action, which is a voting rights group. So that was another really big event. We were supposed to have Jon Meacham this year, but because of the pandemic, that one got canceled, and it has not been rescheduled. And lots of really interesting authors and speakers and, like I mentioned, Andrew Young. He's a very talkative man. Billy Glasco, my coworker, and I were just hanging on every word. It was just so cool. It'll be nice to start having those again.

Paul: Research and special events, I think that's what a lot of us really look forward to, and that's really why we're there. I think a lot of people have felt that loss, that however much of your job you were able to do through teleworking, you really can't replicate the experience of being there and having events and meeting with researchers and really carrying out the mission of the agency that way. You can't do that from home. I think a lot of people will be glad to be back and able to resume that whenever that is.

Daria: There's one other one I forgot to mention. It was a film event that happened virtually. A movie came out about the failed Iran hostage rescue mission, and Walter Mondale, Vice President Mondale, was on the call and that was really exciting. I had never got to meet him, but I got to sit in on a call just like a Zoom meeting with somebody.

Paul: When was that?

Daria: That was last year, probably in the fall. So, fall of 2020. That movie was really good. That's another nice thing. Because we worked on these films, they let us get a pre-screen. So that's why we got to see *Rock & Roll President* for example, because they use so much of our stuff to make those.

Paul: This is a question that I just came up with just on that same topic, contributing to movies. Did the Carter Library have any role in the creation of the film *Argo* several years ago?

Daria: Yes. We have a lot of digitized stuff on that. I wasn't there then. It was very exciting. The actual CIA agent who came out with the book—

Paul: Tony Mendez, yeah.

Daria: —I read that book. It's a really good book. He came down to do research, and he actually spoke at the library. We used to have a thing called “The Carter Chronicles,” a blog about the library. I think that's one of the articles that's still out there in the ether somewhere. It is about *Argo* and how it relates to what really happened. I guess there were some liberties taken.

Actually, I think what I heard is that President Carter thought the man who wrote it kind of gave himself more credit. That was sort of his take on it, that there were other people that were also involved. It wasn't all just him. Which I think in the book that's spelled out more than it might have been in the movie.

Paul: I had heard that, too. I guess that's with a lot of movies that are made that there are certain things that are going to be a little bit more dramatized when in reality, yeah, that was pretty anticlimactic. There wasn't that much to it. Lastly, unfortunately, you're going to be leaving the National Archives before too long. You're going to be taking a position as regional records officer with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Unfortunately, we're going to be sorry to lose you but definitely wish you the best of luck. You're going to be in a related field for sure. Anything else that you would like to tell us?

Daria: There's sort of a funny National Archives Assembly angle to that. The reason I was put on the board of the Assembly, or actually asked to join the Assembly and be on the board, is because Chris McGee, who used to be at the National Archives at Kansas City at the time, recruited me. He and I became friends because I was in the Midwest Archives Conference. I am still in the Midwest Archives Conference. One year I decided I wanted to do a debate because I had been to an American Institute for Conservation conference where they had a debate. It was really fun to hear this debate. I can't recall what the topics were. But I wanted to do one for the Midwest Archives Conference, and he volunteered to be one of the debaters. That's how I met Chris, and we became friends. Anyways, we'd meet up. When SAA was in Atlanta in 2016, I got to go down, a lot of my coworkers got to go down to SAA and Chris was here. He and I went out to lunch, and he just was lobbying me to go into records management. "Go into records management. You're going to love it. Go into records management." So Chris left, and he's a records manager, and he lives outside of Denver. The other thing is Marene Baker, who was in the National Archives Assembly for a long time and was the newsletter editor, she is going to be my boss.

Paul: Oh, excellent.

Daria: So the first time I met her was when SAA was in Atlanta because they had a special happy hour for NARA employees. That's kind of funny, too. So it all ties into the National Archives Assembly.

Paul: Certain people you just can never escape them. You're going to see them again later in your career. But, there is nothing at all wrong with that. We're all in the same business. Why shouldn't we keep running into each other?

Daria: That's right.

Paul: Excellent. Well, thank you very much. It's been about an hour and thank you very much for your time and definitely wish you the best of luck in your new role. Enjoy Colorado. I imagine it is going to have a much different feel from Georgia, but it's also a really, really pretty place to live.

Daria: Yes, I'm looking forward to it. I will miss NARA. I mean, it's been more than 10 years. I just think this is a really good opportunity.

Paul: Excellent. Congratulations.

Daria: Thanks for doing Zoom.

Paul: Best of luck to you.

Daria: Okay, take care.

Paul: All right. Bye bye.

[STOP RECORDING]