

U.S. National Archives and Records Administration  
Transcript of National Archives History Oral History Interview  
Interview with John M. Scroggins  
Interviewer: Jack Kabrel  
Date: June 8, 2016

MR. JACK KABREL: Okay. This is Jack Kabrel. Today is June 8, 2016, at 1:00 p.m. in the afternoon. I'm conducting an oral history interview with Mr. John M. Scroggins, via over the phone audio recording. This interview is part of the National Archives and Records Administration's History Office Oral History Project. Thank you very much, John, for giving us your time today and then becoming part of history. I'll ask you the first question and then we'll work it on from there. Will you please provide a brief overview of your life and education before coming to the National Archives?

MR. JOHN M. SCROGGINS: Well, I was born in Minneapolis, Minnesota in 1942. I lived there until 1948 through Kindergarten. I spent 1948, summer of 1948 through the summer of 1949 in a distant suburb of Minneapolis near Lake Minnetonka and that was where I went to first grade. And then we moved to a suburb, St. Louis Park, just outside Minneapolis. I could see inside Minneapolis from my window and my paper route included both sides of the city line. And I was there until 1961. I spent a year at the University of Minnesota living at home in 1960 to '61 and then I went to Jamestown College in North Dakota which is now the University of Jamestown. From 1961 to '64 I was a major in history and a minor in political science. Your second question was how did your education influence your decision to work at the Archives. When I was at Jamestown I was looking for a summer job that was relevant to my history major and I applied for a thing that I thought was going to consider me for a Park Historian job but I got letters asking if you would be interested in interviewing for a job with the Archives, a summer job with the Archives. So I said, yes. I had taken some kind of Civil Service Exam for some program that's long gone. But anyway I got this letter from GSA offering me a chance to interview for an Archives-related job and I was interviewed by the PBS manager in Minneapolis. What I didn't put in my notes is that there was a second candidate, Robert Nyes, and we were both selected and the deal was going to be that I worked at the Military Record Center in St. Louis the first summer and the Civilian the second summer and he did the opposite. But he worked in the Civilian Center the first summer and then dropped out. But the deal for the program was you worked until you graduate and then you get a permanent appointment which would be like if you took the Federal Service Entry Exam at the time but you didn't have to do it if you graduated and went through this program. And the National Archives Coordinator for it at the time was Bert Rhoads who later became Archivist. I think that's the answer to your first four questions.

MR. KABREL: Yes, it's sort of like an archivist in training almost, right, the program?

MR. SCROGGINS: Right. Well it was a GSA program and I think they were offering similar jobs in the other services for people with appropriate majors in those services. You have to remember that two-thirds of my career I worked for GSA. If you know what I mean.

MR. KABREL: Yes.

MR. SCROGGINS: And as we might get to more later on I was probably more closely associated with GSA on the day to day basis than most Archives employees.

MR. KABREL: Yes, we'll be talking about that and about your contributions to then disassociating from GSA. And question, the next question, describe Day One on the job. What was it like on your first day at the job in both St. Louis and Washington?

MR. SCROGGINS: I went to St. Louis on the train. I had no idea where I was going to live. Stayed in the, in the

Railroad Hotel in the train station, long gone. And went out to the Center and I was sent to the Personnel Office and sworn in and then processed in the St. Louis Personnel Office. Remind me to talk with you when we get to independence time about St. Louis Personnel. Then I was taken and introduced to Joseph Schwartzberg who was the Center Director and the three Branch Chiefs. And I can only remember two names: John Gross was the Reference Branch and I think Paul Boyer was the A&D Branch. There was also a Special Projects Branch. The three Branch Chiefs had been the heads of the three military record centers. And then Mr. Gross took me to the Reference Branch Office and introduced me to his immediate staff. They asked me if I had a place to live, I said no. They took me to lunch. And then Larry Cromshaw who was one of the staff members grabbed a paper and drove me around until I found a place to live. You have to remember that this is roughly 18 months after GSA took over the Record Center from the military and what had been three separate military record centers had been merged into one and were not fully integrated yet.

MR. KABREL: That's interesting—I didn't know that that was the history of the National Archives coming from the military.

MR. SCROGGINS: Okay. Then in Washington, I guess we're going to go back and forth with the time a little. I got to Washington and they sent me to Helen Buselmeier's office. Helen was an assistant to Walter Robertson who was the long-time Administrative Law Office, Executive Director, Assistant Archivist for whatever and whatever. He had that job basically from 1941 until the mid 70's I think. But Helen, Helen was—this was when GSA's administrative work was still very, very centralized. Helen was his liaison with the Personnel Office and with the Budget Office. And rather than make new employees go to the GSA Building, most of them went to Helen and she did all the paperwork and stuff and sent it back and forth to GSA. But... in a real work like classification and stuff GSA sent somebody over. But anyway, I went to Helen for processing. Then she took me to Sherrod East who was the Assistant Archivist for Military Archives. So this was when Military and Civil Archives were separate. Talked to him for a minute or two and then he took me to Mabel Dietrich who was the Director of the Projects Division. She had Gary Ryan with her who was managing the project they assigned me to. And then they took me up to 10 W2 and introduced me to the staff and put me to work on Military Records, Military Command Records, what was then RG 98 but probably got split into four or five separate record groups later.

MR. KABREL: What is 10 W2?

MR. SCROGGINS: The stack area that we worked in.

MR. KABREL: Well that sounds like a busy day. What were your impressions of the agency at the beginning of your career coming out of a history background, learning history in college?

MR. SCROGGINS: I had no idea what I was getting into. Except I had a history professor who had done research at the Archives and he told me I would like it, huh.

MR. KABREL: What kind of training did you initially get within the National Archives? One other individual that I trained with had classes with Schellenberg and I found that to be quite interesting.

MR. SCROGGINS: I met Schellenberg once but I never had classes with him. He was really gone by then. The resume I sent you had a list of all of the significant training classes I could remember. But most significant probably is when I was in St. Louis they sent me to a Civil Service Orientation for Federal Service Entrance Exam employees which is what most people being hired by the government at the 5 or 7 level were sent to by their agencies at the time. And the top managers in St. Louis at the time were very active in Toastmasters and took me along to their meetings. When I got to Washington, they had no internal training programs so they enrolled me in the Modern Archives Institute that NARA and American University did jointly at the

time. And I think I remember John Fawcett went through that at the same time I did. You know John Fawcett?

MR. KABREL: No. No, I don't recall him.

MR. SCROGGINS: He came out of the Hoover Library about the same time I started in Washington. He was Assistant Archivist for Presidential Libraries for quite a while. And his ex-wife, Sharon, was Assistant Archivist for Presidential Libraries later.

MR. KABREL: Interesting.

MR. SCROGGINS: Interesting because John Fawcett and I got letters from our Draft Boards about the same time. And I flunked the physical but he passed. And he had connections so when he finished basic training he ended up in the White House as a military aide to the Johnsons.

But anyway to wrap up the thing, the most important training, when the Archives finally had a training course for new archivists, I took it, but it was, you know, several years later. Three or four years later. When I was a GSA management intern I went to several classes both GSA and the old Civil Service Commission had for management interns because it was a big government-wide push at that time including some computer classes. And then the Archives sent me to the Federal Executive Institute in 1982. I went in a PBS slot and I think the situation at the time is they were trying to get me out of the building or get rid of me or do something with me. And PBS had given up a slot because the administrator had said something at some staff meeting about what a waste of money the Federal Executive Institute was. So PBS elected to give up a slot and the Archives didn't care if the administrator was upset with them so they sent me.

MR. KABREL: Hmm.

MR. SCROGGINS: I didn't think it was a waste of time but...

MR. KABREL: Well it seems like you do have a lot of government sponsored training and education and maybe we can draw on some of that, you have a really a nice list of business classes that you seemed to take so I'm sure that helped you along the way as you got further into your career. Moving onto something else. Your first work experiences in the National Archives, can you just describe some of the people and positions and some of the work that you did?

MR. SCROGGINS: Well the first year I was an Archivist GS-5 working on the Army Command Records which, as I said, was Record Group 98 that got split up later. And Gary Ryan was the project leader and Maisie Johnson who died in a year or two was his assistant pretty much and then Elaine Everly and Aloha South who I think were the last two archivists—new archivists to appear in Washington before I did and Patricia Andrews who later became the Librarian for the Archives and somebody named Harry Schwartz who was a lot older than us and there may be a few other archivists I've forgotten and a string of technicians. And the records, the records we had had essentially come from the Army apparently quite some time ago and were in terrible shape. Disarranged, had been in a garage at some time. So it was a major arrangement and description and try to identify stuff problem. But I spent a year doing that. Part of that year Mabel Dietrich had me supervisor laborers moving records around because they were cleaning out a couple of stack areas to turn them into workspace and research room space. Mabel, by the way, was one of the two best bosses I ever had.

MR. KABREL: So at this point when you talk about what you were doing, you had me read the first eight pages of the Seventh Annual Report of the Archivist of the United States and he described those post World War II records that were kind of in disarray, so is this what you were dealing with at the time?

MR. SCROGGINS: No, well that's sort of it. But the real reason I had you read the report comes up later but... that was somewhat descriptive of the situation with Army Records at the time. I don't know how much you or Jessie or anybody knows about Solon Buck and Military Records and Roosevelt. I don't know if you want to cover this as a separate topic or not but at one point the Archives was trying to get the compiled Military Service Records from the military and the Army didn't want to give them up. And Buck made an appeal, a personal appeal to Roosevelt who wrote a note to the Secretary of the Army telling him basically that he ought to give them to the Archivist.

MR. KABREL: Interesting. No, that's...yeah, that's definitely.

MR. SCROGGINS: But you or Jessie or somebody ought to look at... at the relationship between Connor and Roosevelt and Buck and Roosevelt. It wasn't really close but it was a lot closer than any later Archivist has had with any President. With any sane President.

MR. KABREL: It'd be for interesting history. Take us through each of the timelines that you were giving us for each phase of your career.

MR. SCROGGINS: We'll go back to St. Louis then, first summer in St. Louis. Like I said this is about 18 months after GSA took over. And they had not integrated the operations, really. And it was pretty clear that they were part of the GSA, not part of the National Archives, if you will understand the difference. Joseph Wertzberger who was the Center Director who was brought in from outside and I forget his background but he was brought in from outside to supervise the whole thing because they did not want to favor one of the three military centers. He was in charge in St. Louis and his boss was Joe Bosco who was the NARS Regional Commissioner in Kansas City. And Joe was responsible for the Records Management Division in Kansas City and the small Records Management Office in St. Louis and the two centers which were administered separately in St. Louis as well as the center in Kansas City. Joe in turn worked for Holloway whose nickname was June and I can't remember his full first name who was the GSA Region 6 Administrator and later I think he went to GSA Region 10. But it was expressed to me several times that the Record Center was part of GSA and not part of the National Archives even though people from the Archives gave them technical guidance. And I was assigned to the Reference Branch under John Gross and they had me rotate around various reference tasks and spend about half my time doing a cut and paste comparison of the different policies on release of records that the three services had. They didn't all have the same policies and in some cases they were similar and in other cases there were significant differences. For example the Air Force was much more restrictive in what subpoenas they would respond to than the Army and the Navy were. And I did this cut and paste and that was before computers and there was only one Xerox machine in the whole building. So they gave me copies of the manuals and regulations of the various services and a lot of tape and paste [Laughing].

MR. KABREL: Did you have individuals within each branch that you could ask questions to, like officers or managers so to speak?

MR. SCROGGINS: Some. There were some. But I was mainly supposed to work with the paper records unless I really needed to ask somebody.

MR. KABREL: And at that time and I might as well ask this question right here, when you're dealing with those - - in the military, were they all paper records or were there other types of records?

MR. SCROGGINS: Paper and microfilm.

MR. KABREL: Microfilm, okay.

MR. SCROGGINS: There was a lot of microfilm. And, I spent some time but not very much rotating through microfilm of organizational records that were being used even before the fire to reconstruct service records if something was missing. So if they'd get a request in and they thought they couldn't find the record and they thought there should be something, they'd send me or whoever to microfilm of things like Muster Rolls or Morning Reports to see if we could identify the person. And that's sort of the approach they used for reconstruction after the fire. So there were a lot of microfilm records that weren't purely Personnel Records but used to supplement them.

MR. KABREL: And after that you decided to move in the summer of?

MR. SCROGGINS: Well that was the deal. The deal from the beginning was that I'd do one summer in Military and one in Civil and then I'd go to a library. So the second summer I was at the Civilian Building. And mostly it rotates around different reference tasks. They found out that I'd done some drafting in high school and they had me working on a shelving plan for the Vital Records Depository in Neosho, Missouri. I don't know if you know about that.

MR. KABREL: No, I don't, could you elaborate a little bit on that.

MR. SCROGGINS: They had a Federal Records Depository in a cave in Neosho that they had inherited from somebody. And I don't remember much about it.

MR. KABREL: Did the National Archives at the time identify what a Vital Record was?

MR. SCROGGINS: Yes. But I don't know who, for example, I don't know who specifically Neosho worked for. Probably for Baskell. But anyway they were expanding and I did shelving layouts for a couple of weeks. And then I wasn't involved but they were microfilming the 1880 Soundex cards, you know, which were very important for servicing the 1880 census before computers. But near the entrance to the Old Civilian Records Building there were rows and rows and rows of cabinets of cards that were the Soundex index to the 1880 census and they were being filmed the summer I was there.

Because I went to 1964 expecting to be there permanently to the Truman Library and it didn't work out that way. They had me doing some reference work and reboxing. They sat me down in the Research Room and had me do a bibliography of books about Truman. Apparently they didn't have anything like that. One of the days that I was working in there on that, Ginger Rogers came through on a tour and Truman took her up to the portrait, his portrait in Masonic regalia and talked for a long time about Masons and Masonic Presidents and, you know, I didn't hear the whole pitch but I could tell what he was talking about. He was very proud of that portrait and of his Masonic background. I spent some time in the Photo Collection with, I think it was Willy Hereford was the guy doing it, who later went to one of the Martin Luther King groups. But trying to identify people in photographs and writing captions. One of the things I did most days was read the obituaries from the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, and the *Kansas City Star*. And I was doing that when Ladybird and Lyndon Johnson came through. And Dr. Philip Brooks explained why it was important to do that so that he could go solicit the papers from the widows basically.

MR. KABREL: Hmm. So you named three people there that Truman, Johnson, and even Ginger Rogers. Can you tell us a little bit about meeting them.

MR. SCROGGINS: Well I didn't really, you know, I met Truman. I didn't really meet the others, I was just in the room or sitting there being talked about while they were there. I got an autographed picture on my birthday from Truman. Truman was there, oh, an average of three days a week, mainly. And you know he did not have Secret Service protection or didn't you know that?

MR. KABREL: I didn't know that at the time. I didn't know when that began for ex-Presidents.

MR. SCROGGINS: He did not have Secret Service protection. He had a Kansas City detective who sat in the library most days and my bicycle was stolen out from under the nose of the Kansas City detective. [Chuckling] Which really upset the Independence, err, the Independence detective rather, it really upset the Independence Police Department.

MR. KABREL: If I was Harry Truman I might be a little worried myself.

MR. SCROGGINS: Truman walked some days. And he liked to get there early because he liked to read the hate mail before his secretary censored it.

MR. KABREL: [Laughing] So Truman was everything that you thought he was when you first met him? Like your impressions of him before you even met him?

MR. SCROGGINS: Oh, I didn't have much of an impression before I met him. He used to, once every week or two, he'd have the guards round up everybody in the museum and run them into the auditorium they had and he'd answer questions from school kids. And he'd tell them, he wanted questions from the children, not from the adults. And he was very good at answering the children and if an adult asked him a question he was nasty.

MR. KABREL: Interesting. He's just a character—

MR. SCROGGINS: But this is 52 years ago. Anyway... going into August sometime Dr. Brooks told me that he couldn't keep me. That he was losing a position. And I could make a choice. They were going to take care of me. I could make a choice of whether I wanted to go to Hoover, Eisenhower, or Washington. And I picked Washington.

MR. KABREL: Why?

MR. SCROGGINS: Oh, because I think I wanted to go to graduate school which I had thought about doing at the University of Kansas City which is now the University of Missouri, Kansas City, and it looked more doable in Washington than in either of the other two places.

MR. KABREL: So were you thinking at this time of furthering your education to work within the National Archives or were you thinking of leaving the National Archives?

MR. SCROGGINS: Within. By that time I was happy working for the Archives or GSA or whoever.

MR. KABREL: Right.

MR. SCROGGINS: One thing that sort of sticks with me is that you know I'd ask questions about things, the way things were done... that seemed a little odd to me and the answer from Brooks frequently was, well, he might do it differently but we did things the way that Herman Kahn had done them at the Roosevelt Library because he was, you know, the Truman Library was still relatively new and he was trying to follow the precedents from the Roosevelt Library.

MR. KABREL: And was what Kahn saying, was that counter to what you learned?

MR. SCROGGINS: No, not necessarily, it's just attitude, sort of, and I don't know—it's hard to put a finger on.

It's been too long.

MR. KABREL: Yeah.

MR. SCROGGINS: And I think I mentioned somewhere but we can come back to it later if you want, Brooks's son worked for me for a short time in the 70's and he might be somebody worth interviewing. If he's not on your list already.

MR. KABREL: Yes, you mentioned Brooks as one of the three people that you mentioned as being responsible for a lot of furthering the National Archives cause.

MR. SCROGGINS: Well, Brooks stayed with the Archives during the war. And he was one of the people, that's probably a different conversation or a different part of the conversation, but he was probably one of the people who founded Records Management if you know what I mean.

MR. KABREL: Okay, very interesting. And from there you decided to go, can you talk a little bit about your move to DC?

MR. SCROGGINS: Well I came to DC I moved myself and I came to DC. We talked about what I did the first year in DC and I started at American University when I got here that fall.

MR. KABREL: What type of classes were you taking at American University?

MR. SCROGGINS: I took public administration and political science classes. I applied both to the History Department and the School of Government and the History Department didn't seem to want me and the School of Government and Public Administration did seem to want me.

MR. KABREL: Mm-hmm.

MR. SCROGGINS: And probably the History Chairman was sort of ho-hum and talking to the Dean of the School of Government and Public Administration and he wants me to sign up so I did. Mabel Dietrich I guess influenced me on that. She had gotten her PhD in Public Administration. From American University.

MR. KABREL: And at this time you also continued your day work at the National Archives?

MR. SCROGGINS: Right.

MR. KABREL: What were some of your projects that you did there during this period?

MR. SCROGGINS: Well that was the Military, the first year that we talked about that. Then the second year when I was in Archival Projects Division and Civil Archives, Bert Rhoads was the Assistant Archivist and he had just gotten that job. And Frank Evans was the Division Director and... they had to... the way it was explained to me, they were realigning the staff and they had to move one position from Military to Civil and Evans had specifically asked for me because I had taken a class from Evans at American University. He taught there part time. Phil Ward was the Project Manager and we were preparing records to go to Suitland so that what was going to become the Archives Branch at the Washington National Records Center. Most of the records in question were in steel trays and had to be boxed. They were essentially unlabeled and poorly described. So we were trying to do a combination of boxing the records, preparing box lists, and drafting preliminary inventory entries. And I came up with a scheme. You know I said, I kept saying there's got to be a better way of doing this. Phil Ward who was the Senior Archivist on it said, well, go talk to Records Management. He gave me the name of, I think it was Artel Ricks at the time who was high up in Records

Management. He said, I think it was Artel he told me to go to. He said go talk to them. So I went and did that. And they basically sent me a bunch of literature on things that could be done to at least semi-automate the process. So I came up with a scheme for using a paper tape automated typewriter to prepare box labels and lists at the same time and I think I got a \$50 cash award for the suggestion which wasn't much but it did bring me to the attention of Walt Robertson.

MR. KABREL: So you at this time were thinking it seems like a theme that I've noticed over the last few years or your career here that we've been going over, a theme of trying to look ahead and look at the big picture so to speak.

MR. SCROGGINS: Yeah, I think so. But during that year I also took the Civil Service Commissions Management Intern Exam and passed. And so every agency was selecting people from that exam and GSA had a couple dozen slots so I ended up with one of the GSA slots. Although I think I had an offer from some other agency, too. And that was a 2-year program but the last part of it was back at the Archives. I rotated around GSA. I, oh, I don't remember all the assignments. One that was kind of interesting was in what used to be the Utilization and Disposal Service and then the Property Management and Disposal Service or something, I don't know what they call it now, but they had me track down the ownership of lead and zinc companies because they had a national stockpile of lead and zinc they were trying to sell and they wanted more information about the lead and zinc industry. So basically a research assignment.

MR. KABREL: That was the assignment. What were some of the training programs that you had within those two years?

MR. SCROGGINS: Oh. Oh there was some compute stuff. And I think there was some basic personnel stuff. And I forget what all.

MR. KABREL: So was there any thought among management at this time of thinking about how to bring the National Archives into the present in the sense of possibly, you know, creating more organization and things like that?

MR. SCROGGINS: You're a little too early for that.

MR. KABREL: Okay.

MR. SCROGGINS: I think it was during the AHA meeting in 1965, right after Wayne Grover retired as Archivist that he made a speech about how the Archives should get out of GSA. And that started an independence movement that ran from '65 to '67 or so. I don't remember. I don't know who else you can ask about that but. There was an effort to get the Archives out of GSA during the period right after Grover retired while Bahmer was Archivist. Grover had enlisted Ladybird Johnson's support. Bahmer was all for it to begin with but I think Bahmer cooled on it near the end because it became clear that if the Archives wanted out of GSA it would have to give up the Records Management Program and he thought that would be a fatal mistake.

MR. KABREL: So why would that be so? Why would you have to give up the Records Management?

MR. SCROGGINS: Because that was the way political wins were born. And the Bureau of the Budget finally wrote a recommendation to the White House that said leave them in GSA but give them more money. That Bureau of the Budget report was written by the Deputy Director of the Bureau of the Budget Sam Hughes or Phillip Best Hughes and he becomes important in the later independence movement because later on he said that he was sorry he had done that and he should have gotten us out then. We'll come back to that at independence time.



But anyway. Because of that pretty much, well two things happened. As part of staying in GSA and getting more resources and Bahmer stopping the fight and as part of a separate effort within GSA to somewhat decentralize the very highly centralized administrative processes, two things happened, not exactly at the same time but within a year of each other, I think it was. And as a result some of the centralized stuff got decentralized. For example the person who handled the budget in GSA's Budget Office was sent to the Archives. You know the services, there was a Budget Branch for each service in the Central Budget Office. And they were sent to the services about that time. If you understand what I'm saying.

MR. KABREL: Yes.

MR. SCROGGINS: So the Archives got some budgeting and planning and internal records management and other authorities that had previously been completely centralized in the GSA Building.

MR. KABREL: So this is part of the idea of throwing more money at the National Archives.

MR. SCROGGINS: Well it was at the same time but it wasn't part of the same idea.

MR. KABREL: Okay.

MR. SCROGGINS: Because there were changes going on in the rest of the GSA, too.

MR. KABREL: So that's the origins of us leaving GSA.

MR. SCROGGINS: That was the first effort—the failed effort.

MR. KABREL: And then in 1968 to '74 you became a Senior Program Analyst.

MR. SCROGGINS: Well first I was that and then I was Chief of the Planning and Analysis Branch. When the budget people came they made the Budget Branch and the Planning and Analysis Branch. And the budget guy that came from GSA was the Budget Branch and I was the Planning and Analysis Branch. Then he became the Division Director, the budget guy. John Awkward who had been the Archives budget person at GSA and who had been in government since 1939 or something. He was the other best boss I had of two best bosses. Awkward had been with the government since before World War II. He'd never taken a day of sick leave. He had a heart attack about 1973 and he was out for almost 2 years and did it all on sick leave.

MR. KABREL: Wow. They don't make them like that anymore. [Chuckling]

MR. SCROGGINS: But then he retired and he had a heart attack and died.

MR. KABREL: So during this period of Robertson, Williams and Awkward, you have the—

MR. SCROGGINS: [Interposing] Well you sent me the memo that Robertson wrote in December '67—

MR. KABREL: [Interposing] Yes.

MR. SCROGGINS: —that even though I was reassigned on paper I stayed in the Publication and Sales Branch on a day to day basis until probably March of '68 because that was when they finally found a replacement who was Betty Hill. And I don't know if I mentioned Howard Greenberg or you want to get into that at all but my assistant in the Publication and Sales was Rose Greenberg. And her husband Howard had been Commissioner of the Utilization and Disposal Service in GSA. And LBJ appointed him Administrator of Small Business. And LBJ tended to appoint careerists to agency head positions unlike virtually every other

President. So he took Howard Greenberg out of GSA and he made him Administrator of Small Business. Lawson Knott who was Administrator of GSA had been Commissioner of the Public Building Service and had worked his way up. And I think that LBJ did that in other agencies, too. He basically promoted or reassigned career employees.

Anyway once I got to work for Robertson and Williams was my immediate supervisor, before Awkward, as part of the “give them more money” I did the study that resulted in the Regional Archives and another study that resulted in spending a lot of money on preservation including basically redoing the Paper Preservation Lab and drastically expanding the reproduction of microfilm and motion pictures and some recordings.

MR. KABREL: And we can reference here the material that you had from your file, “Microfilm Publics and Archival Records a Cost Effective Study.”

MR. SCROGGINS: Yes. And there was a similar study on preservation but I don’t remember the title or have a copy of it. The preservation one, the preservation one is interesting because you opened the cover and we had a picture of nitrate film exploding. And that’s what they sent up on the Hill with their budget request is this picture of nitrate film exploding and why we needed money to copy it.

MR. KABREL: So the goal was to get more money from Congress, that's what this report really was aiming at?

MR. SCROGGINS: Yes.

MR. KABREL: And that was to do more microfilm or was it part of the regional push for Regional Archives—

MR. SCROGGINS: [Interposing] Well the whole package was the regions and microfilm and copying movies and sound recordings. And it was not successful.

MR. KABREL: So what was your idea? What was your push for having Regional Archives?

MR. SCROGGINS: Well Bahmer, the Seventh Annual Report basically suggests the idea. And Bahmer wanted it done on his way out the door. And Herb Angel because—when Bahmer retired, Rhoads became Archivist. Herb Angel became Deputy Archivist. And Herb Angel was the one who wrote this other thing, “The Report of the Archivist.” So it was sort of put to me as carrying out this vision that they’d had for decades and never been able to do...

MR. KABREL: Is one of the reasons why to develop a Regional Archives is because there’s permanent records in the field?

MR. SCROGGINS: Yeah. Yes.

MR. KABREL: Is it also because of the availability of microfilm in other regions and not having to go to DC to actually view the—

MR. SCROGGINS: [Interposing] Yes. Yes yes, and yes, and also to build a presence in the rest of the country. Build a constituency. And I think that’s the notion that's sort of gotten lost. We can come to that later if you want. You need to read the Manifesto for that.

MR. KABREL: And, okay. And the Manifesto, I will track it down and it will be part of your folder. But the question I think I’ll just ask right now, do you feel that that was a success in your term up until you left in ‘98? The Regional Archives?

MR. SCROGGINS: [Thoughtful pause] Well let's put it this way as an answer to that question. I don't think I accomplished everything with the Regional Archives that I envisioned them doing. And I don't think some of what I accomplished has endured.

MR. KABREL: Would you like to speak about that now? About what your vision for that or would you like?

MR. SCROGGINS: No, let's go through your questions and come back to that.

MR. KABREL: Okay. Let's proceed through the '68 to '74 Senior Program Analyst.

MR. SCROGGINS: So one of the things I did there was write the...it was only a year and a half or two years after the Freedom of Information Act was originally passed. And so I drafted the regulations. We didn't have any lawyers. You know we weren't allowed to have lawyers. Bert Rhoads had written a memo to GSA about what the Archives thought should be open and not open which was probably more open than the Archives' current philosophy is. I worked with Julius Silverstein who was the GSA lawyer assigned to us on drafting regulations. And I think both Julius and Bert were more open than the current management is but I can't tell you that for sure because I've been gone for too many years.

MR. KABREL: Was this post-Watergate or is this pre-Watergate?

MR. SCROGGINS: Pre-Watergate. 1968.

MR. KABREL: So the Freedom of Information Act was before we realized that there may be an actual real need for it out of Watergate, right? Well what do you think was the impetus for implementing regulations?

MR. SCROGGINS: Well the bill was passed and every agency was required to draft regulations. The bill was passed in '66. The Justice Department required agencies to write implementing regulations. GSA wrote the set of implementing regulations that basically applied to the rest of GSA but they recognized that the Archives was different. It's just like back in... back in the very earliest days of GSA and somewhere around RG 64 you can find this exchange. GSA sent out a directive that all Congressional communications had to be handled through GSA's Office of, whatever, Congressional Affairs or whatever. And nobody was allowed to talk to Congress. And Grover sent the Administrator a letter saying surely these kinds of things can be an exception with a list of, you know, samples of reference letters and stuff to Congress. The Administrator wrote back something like, yes indeed, thank you. But you know we weren't in the GSA Building. We were in a different building. The rest of GSA was centralized in one building. We're in a different building. And GSA would have come up with all these rules and regulations and stuff that didn't work very well either because of the physical separation or because of the nature of what the Archives did which was Grover's idea for independence in the first place and the later argument for the successful independence.

MR. KABREL: Yeah it seems like over the last few years of your career that we're going through here, is simply that is a common theme of GSA being more of a hindrance than an help and it seemed to kind of get the ball rolling into eventual independence.

MR. SCROGGINS: So I did the FOIA and then I'd done the regional study. And then a bunch of organizational decisions were made basically at the beginning of '69 I think. Lawson Knott quit as Administrator after the election I think it was. After the '68 election. Among the last things he did was approve the reorganizations to set up the Regional Archives. And the reorganization to cut the number of NARS Regional Commissioners from 10 to 5. The way it was told to me, I'm not sure it's 100% accurate, but what Robertson told me was that they had a conference call, Knott's last act was a conference call where he told the heads of the various GSA Services that he was leaving and by the way he'd cut the number of NARS regions in half and you can

ask the Archivist which...

MR. KABREL: So can you explain that further? Because I think our audience may not understand the actual setup of the National Archives.

MR. SCROGGINS: There was a National Archives Regional Commissioner in each of the 10 GSA Regions. And the Regional Commissioner worked for the GSA Regional Administrator. And under the Regional Commissioner there was a Records Management Division and one or more Record Centers. But they worked for the GSA Regional Administrator, not for the National Archives.

MR. KABREL: And so what Knott did was he cut it down from 1 in each region to 5 overall.

MR. SCROGGINS: Right. But he also approved setting up an Archives Branch in each Record Center.

MR. KABREL: So his thought process was to cut from 10 to 5 but expand on regions. Is that?

MR. SCROGGINS: Well... [Chuckling]. Bert Rhoads's plan was to cut from 10 to 5 and he got Knott to approve it. Exactly why he wanted to go from 10 to 5, I don't know, but I know... I think that they wanted to be rid of a couple of them for reasons that I don't fully understand. I guess I shouldn't say because I don't really know for a fact.

MR. KABREL: Can you recall where those 10 regions were?

MR. SCROGGINS: Boston was combined with New York. Let's see. Seattle was combined with San Francisco. But Paul Cole in Seattle was supposed to go to San Francisco and elected to retire rather than go. Chicago and Kansas City were combined. Let's see. We had New York, Chicago, Kansas City, Fort Worth remained. I think Denver and Fort Worth were combined. We ended up with San Francisco, Fort Worth, New York, Atlanta, and Kansas City.

MR. KABREL: And in these regions were Federal Record Centers and Record Management personnel?

MR. SCROGGINS: Well what... restate that.

MR. KABREL: I'm trying to get an idea of what, of the National Archives, what presence we actually had in each one of these 5 regions.

MR. SCROGGINS: Okay, so take the Kansas City Region and you end up with Joe Bosco is the NARS Regional Commissioner in Kansas City. And under him was a Records Management Division in Kansas City and a Records Management Division in Chicago, a Records Center in Chicago, and a Records Center in Kansas City. And by that time I think we had taken the St. Louis away from GSA and transferred it to the Central Office so it was about that time. I forget exactly when that happened.

You probably need to find out if you don't know, check on when the National Personnel Records Center was transferred from the Region to the Central Office because I don't remember. You're asking me about stuff that's 50 years ago. [Laughing].

MR. KABREL: Well I think you have a better idea of it than I do [Laughing].

[Laughter]

MR. SCROGGINS: Yeah, but I don't have access to the records or to anybody to go to research on records for

me. And it's been 40-some years since I've been in RG 64, so.

MR. KABREL: Well you're doing pretty good. Thank you. I appreciate it.

MR. SCROGGINS: So it was still continuing during the '68 to '74 time period, that's when *Prologue* began and the National Audiovisual Center began. And I did or supervised most of the work to set up the formal organizations for those and worked with the budget people on the budget requests. And that's when we recombined the Office of the National Archives, then Military and Civil. I don't know if you know about the split of the Office of the National Archives back in the 60's before my time.

MR. KABREL: Well what happened there?

MR. SCROGGINS: Well. There was an Office of the National Archives and Schellenberg was the Assistant Archivist. And I think... this is sort of hearsay now. But I think they wanted to ruin Schellenberg because I think Schellenberg had tried to replace Grover. Now there's some politics there that I was never fully aware of. There's probably something in other oral history, older oral history that might talk about this. But about the time that happened... probably... '61 maybe, somewhere in there, I think the GSA Inspector General did a very critical report on description in the National Archives and said that they were not meeting the goals that they claimed to want for description. And so what was the Office of the National Archives was split into three pieces: an Office of Civil Archives under Herman Kahn to begin with and later Bert Rhoads; an Office of Military Archives under Sherrod East; and then an Office of Records Appraisals under Schellenberg. And Schellenberg got the Appraisal function and Military and Civil ended up with a reference—each with a Reference Division and a Projects Division. A Projects Division to do arrangement and description and the Reference Division to answer the mail and stuff.

MR. KABREL: Thank you very interesting. I didn't know that.

MR. SCROGGINS: Hmm. Well you or Jessie or somebody ought to get into that but that's beyond the scope of this, I think, unless you want to come back to it another—see that split happened before my time.

MR. KABREL: Well it gives a good context of what we're facing with now, here in '68 to '74—still trying to deal with this.

MR. SCROGGINS: Well, well yeah, we're—see I never really liked it but I don't like a lot of stuff so. [Chuckling]. I was never really happy with the Reference Projects Division either but... And I was never happy with the machine-readable records the way it was set up. Anyway, during this whole time period I probably went through most of 1964. Looking at the history of records management and the history of the Trust Fund and related legislation. And that's either a later call or something. Because I probably can give you some kind of an overview of how the Records Management Program came to be.

MR. KABREL: I would like to do that. Would that be something you'd want to do now or you would want to possibly revisit at another time?

MR. SCROGGINS: No, let's continue the main line of your questions and you can write that down as something else to get into.

MR. KABREL: Okay. And you also mentioned it on the last part of your questions, in question number 20 as something you wanted to revisit.

MR. SCROGGINS: Okay. During this time period the Privacy Act was passed. And the original bill for the Privacy Act would have killed us. And so Claudine Weiher who was my assistant at the time and who was the

second person to replace me in the Publication Sales Branch, Claudine ran a sort of sub-rosa lobbying effort to get out from under the Privacy Act. Because, for example, the Privacy Act as originally drafted required separate notices to the subject of every record about being in that record without any conditions or restrictions. And we concluded that to comply with that bill, we would have to send out I don't know how many thousand letters to George Washington in Mount Vernon, Virginia. Separate letters. Do you like that?

MR. KABREL: Yes. I do, that's quite interesting.

MR. SCROGGINS: And remember this is before computers and before reasonable computers, before GSA allowed anybody other than GSA's Centralized Services to have computers. So we figured that as a minimum if we could just send a postcard to people saying we had a record about them, we'd have to hire 200 and some typists to work for two years to do it, just to type addresses on form postcards.

So Claudine got on the phone and lobbied a lot of people and we had a lot of support from the genealogical community and the AHA was probably more harmful than helpful on that. AHA wrote a letter to Congress that went on for pages and pages and pages of oh, hemming and hawing and, well maybe this is a good thing. But nothing to help us. It's one of the things that turned me against the AHA. Then Nancy Allard who was also on my staff then wrote the implementing regulations after the Privacy Act was passed with the exceptions we had. Then Claudine did the study that led to the NARS A-1 system which she was working for me. Or the proposal for the NARS A-1 system. And during that time I was probably the main liaison with GSA on legal issues and internal records management activities and planning activities. So I had more contact with GSA than almost anybody except the very top management and the budget people. Remember we didn't have a lawyer. We weren't allowed to have a lawyer. So I was the one who dealt with the lawyers on a routine basis. If it was a high policy matter than Robertson or Rhoads or Angel did it but on the routine day to day stuff I did it.

Do you want to get into exactly what NARS A-1 system is or would you rather do that in '74 to '79?

MR. SCROGGINS: Let's do that more later in the next section.

MR. KABREL: Okay. So did you want to mention anything about the record management activities here?

MR. SCROGGINS: We'd never done a real schedule of NARS records. You know? And we had a bunch of stuff at RG 64 but there was no real schedule. There was no handbook or anything for records. In theory under the very highly centralized GSA scheme that should have been done by somebody over in the GSA office. That's something I inherited when GSA decentralized some of the administrative stuff. So... I ended up with somebody who was supposed to do that and under my supervision and he, that didn't work out very well. I finally, you know, we got started but getting the routine day to day stuff written and stuff wasn't working very well and so I worked out a deal with, I think it was Jack L. Martin, who was the GSA Records Officer to send a guy over to GSA to do it under their supervision. And he ended up staying there.

MR. KABREL: So at this point the National Archives didn't want a records schedule.

MR. SCROGGINS: No.

MR. KABREL: Were GSA requiring all agencies at this time to have a records schedule?

MR. SCROGGINS: Yeah.

MR. KABREL: Yet it failed to have one for the National Archives.

MR. SCROGGINS: Well most of the rest of GSA didn't have one either. And I gather, I'm not sure, but I rather gathered that the Records Management Office, you know, which was Ed Aldridge at the time I guess, was critical of the main part of the agency for not having a schedule.

What Robertson had, a 3-drawer file cabinet next to his desk or on the wall by his desk. And on it he had a stack, probably 3 feet high, of file folders with projects that he wanted done some day. That was one of them but once I started in that '68 to '74 period, every time I asked for more work or somebody was free, he'd pull another folder off the pile and say, well, here's another project for you. Records management was one of them or record schedule was one. Improving the Forms Program was one.

MR. KABREL: So slowly but surely Record Management was getting or closing into the National Archives at some point.

MR. SCROGGINS: You know and in some ways the Archives never really had a good Records Management Program until Ren Cahoon who put Richard Marcus on it which was much later.

MR. KABREL: I'll mention that when I do my interview with Richard Marcus who is still around.

MR. SCROGGINS: He was one of the good guys.

MR. KABREL: Yeah, he is. He's a really good man. So this, well, yeah, in 1974 to 1979, just for pacing's sake, John, how about if it's okay with you, we're going to be coming up at 2:30 to an hour here. I mean do you want to continue on to the end or would you rather break it up at some point and maybe schedule another time to finish the second half of this?

MR. SCROGGINS: Well let's just go through '74 to '79 and then see where we stand.

MR. KABREL: Okay. We can do that. Let's talk about the coordination of the Staff Office of the National Archives.

MR. SCROGGINS: New staff and... oh, there were a couple of reasons. One, they were getting flack again over not having records described and NARS A-1 was seen as a way of getting it done. Partly because I think I wanted out of the Office of what was the new Office of the Executive Director because that's about the time Walt Robertson was going to retire and it was clear that Jack Landers was going to replace him and I didn't want to work for Jack. Now I'm not sure I want that on the record. Is anybody interviewing Jack?

MR. KABREL: No, I don't know. I haven't actually heard the name until you just mentioned it.

MR. SCROGGINS: John J. Landers, he was a GSA Management intern two years before I was. He ended up in the Archives. He became the Assistant Archivist before he became the Executive Director or Assistant Archivist head or whatever. When he was in that job Claudine Weiher was his assistant. When the Records Management was taken away from the Archives he went with the Records Management Program. That's in the next '80-'81 period.

MR. KABREL: Okay. And at this time between '74 and '79 he was going to be your supervisor and you decided against having him as a supervisor.

MR. SCROGGINS: Yeah. I told the Archivist that I would rather work in the Office of the National Archives than work for Jack.

MR. KABREL: Okay. We don't have to get into personalities on that one. Could you briefly just describe what

NARS A-1 is?

MR. SCROGGINS: Well, what it ended up being was a way to automate the description of records and to draft descriptions of the records and put them into an online database, or, no, an electronic database. We weren't allowed to have computers. Only GSA could have computers. But Claudine's study came up with a proposal and GSA sort of approved it but it was pretty clear they weren't going to implement it in any way that was going to work out for us. You know we were going to have to do punch cards or something and send them to the regional office building for somebody else to code and Alan Kownees who worked for me went and looked at equipment we could use for data input other than keypunch machines. If you understand what I'm saying. You know we had these automated paper tape typewriters that I had started with on the Suitland move. And there was clearly better technology by then. So Alan went and started, who was working for me, started investigating better technology for data input that we could send to GSA, in theory. He came up with a recommendation of equipment and I can't think of the name of it now but maybe it'll come back to me. But it was equipment with terminals that saved information to large disks. And did no processing. But the only difference between this company's data input machine that we bought and a small limited but useful minicomputer was one \$2,500 circuit board or \$2,400 circuit board. And so we weren't allowed to buy the circuit board.

MR. KABREL: So they didn't want to spend the money to buy a circuit board so therefore you had to send everything into—

MR. SCROGGINS: [Interposing] No, it wasn't that they didn't want us to spend the money, we weren't allowed to have computers. Only GSA, GSA Centralized Computer Services. They happened to be in the region at that time but GSA had centralized computer services, individual services were not allowed to have computers. You see why we didn't like being in GSA.

What would you think if they told you that you can save something to a disk but you can save the data on a spreadsheet to a disk but you can't sort it except by sending it to Washington and having somebody sort it for you and send you a printout back?

MR. KABREL: Yeah, same thing.

MR. SCROGGINS: That's sort of like copying, you know where we had centralize copying services at first and you had to fill out a chit and send stuff to the regional office building if you wanted it copied. And we got around that by having the trust fund by copying machines for reference.

MR. KABREL: Yeah, these examples are good for when we talk about the moving away, independence from GSA.

MR. SCROGGINS: But anyway. Alan figured out that this and nobody paid much attention to the equipment that the Silent Studio bought for processing silent records and stuff so we had them buy the circuit card and put it in. So we were able to do description and do some processing of it that way. And started working on a lot of things including RG 21 and it was RG 21 I think that set off the blast between Trudy and me.

MR. KABREL: Okay. And you're referencing at correspondent email that would be in your folder.

MR. SCROGGINS: Yes.

MR. KABREL: Do you want to get into the pushing out by O'Neill, Reed, and Peterson of you after Rhoads and Dietrich retired?



MR. SCROGGINS: Well, let me talk a little more about leading up to that because during this time and probably I think it was '73 when the government changed fiscal years, they changed the beginning of the fiscal year there was what they called an interim quarter. And the way the budget worked out we had a lot of money, the agency had a lot of money for a quarter that it didn't know how to spend. And so Claudine and I came up with a plan for buying shelving to put in areas that had never had shelving and there were like 43 stack areas that were never shelved originally. That either had prison industry shelving in them or steel trays piled up on the floor or, you know, stuff every which way. So we bought that shelving, I think it was '73, it might have been '72. After Mabel Dietrich became the Assistant Archivist, in effect, became in effect, her Number Two. Al Eisinger was reassigned. He'd been the Deputy Assistant Archivist under Ned Campbell. When Mabel retired, Mabel had retired about the same time Bert Rhoads retired. And O'Neill I took over as Acting Archivist and Dan Reed came out of retirement, he was a pre-employed annuitant, to replace Mabel. And Trudy, he wanted Trudy as his right hand. So I was invited to leave.

MR. KABREL: Do you want to get into...I'll just say that you say whatever you feel comfortable saying about this incident if there's anything more you'd like to tell me.

MR. SCROGGINS: I don't think O'Neill or Reed had the confidence in me that Rhoads and Dietrich had. And it was clear that they did not want me to stay in that position.

MR. KABREL: Was it personal or professional? The things that you think it was based on.

MR. SCROGGINS: You'd have to ask them. I don't know if anybody's interviewed Trudy.

MR. KABREL: No, she's on my list though.

MR. SCROGGINS: O'Neill's dead, I don't know what the status of Reed is. He's probably dead 'cause he was a lot older. I don't think Trudy and I were ever really friends. So you'd have to ask Trudy why she thinks I left.

But the way it played out is Forrest Williams who had been my boss part of the time in the Office of the Executive Director, and who was one of the worst bosses I ever had, came in and suggested to me that I might be happier in the Office of Records Management. And I went and told Reed that and he and Trudy sat down with me and said if, if Williams made you an offer you'd better take it.

MR. KABREL: How did you feel about the move personally?

MR. SCROGGINS: I was very unhappy. But I didn't see that I could object or fight it.

MR. KABREL: Did you at that time have a feeling that maybe Record Management would be a strength of yours which eventually it became?

MR. SCROGGINS: I was under the impression at the time that Frosty was just—Frosty wasn't—everybody called him Frosty was destroying the Office of Records Management. Like I said, I didn't want to go, I didn't see as I had much choice. I... seriously looked at other employment at the time. But it didn't work out.

MR. KABREL: And you felt that that was kind of like an exile for you into Record Management?

MR. SCROGGINS: Yes. And I don't think the position and division they put me in were even necessary.

MR. KABREL: Is there anything else you'd like to say about this moment of you being pushed out of that position?

MR. SCROGGINS: [Thoughtful pause]. No, but backing up a little to that time from '74 to '79 I supervised Charles Halt who was then the Regional Archives Coordinator. And one of the things we did during that period was dramatically increase the size of the Regional Archives staff. I sort of skipped over that. *Roots* came out during that time and the workload increased several fold. You know the reference workload.

MR. KABREL: Yes.

MR. SCROGGINS: And we dramatically increased the Regional Archive staff and if you'd asked me 15 years ago I probably could have given you numbers but I don't remember now. But when I left the Office of the National Archives, the staff in the Regional Archives Program was probably close to twice the size it was when I went back into the Regional Archives Program five years later. So during the time I was not involved in the Regional Archives Program, it got cut dramatically.

MR. KABREL: And do you think that *Roots* in some ways helped to fortify the Regional Archives?

MR. SCROGGINS: Yes.

MR. KABREL: In an interview from somebody that had given an interview in the past two years, his name is David Kepley, he had mentioned that *Roots* had helped to increase the amount of traffic through the National Archives by at least tenfold.

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MR. SCROGGINS: That's probably about right. I could have given you numbers, like I said, if I remembered them years ago but... it was almost overnight. And it was both in Washington and in all the regions. You interviewed David's wife?

MR. KABREL: No, I haven't. And you recommend she be interviewed?

MR. SCROGGINS: Well I... yeah.

MR. KABREL: I know she's on my list but I'll make sure I get in contact with her. Do you think at this point revisiting some of the Regional Archives work that you did during this period, do you think that there were forces within the National Archives that were working against the Regional Archives?

MR. SCROGGINS: Yes.

MR. KABREL: Why would you think that that would be the case?

MR. SCROGGINS: Well there were some people who didn't believe in the Regional Archives at all. And some people who thought we shouldn't be sending records to the regions but we ought to be keeping them all in Washington. And people that were of the opinion that the only thing they have worthwhile is microfilm and that's not professional so you don't, you know, you're just a reading room. I was getting a lot of description work out of the regions in terms of NARS A-1. You know input for NARS A-1 inventories, but they were routine stuff, repetitive stuff. Like in RG 21 where everybody has the same kind of records but they were turning out a lot of stuff. Most of which got trashed eventually. When NARS A-1 got trashed.

MR. KABREL: So you think that the regions were actually collecting lots of regional permanent records?

MR. SCROGGINS: Well they weren't getting as many permanent records, the big fight was over sending records from Washington to the regions. And there were space problems. You know this is before Archives II, this is before Archives II was really even much of a dream. And it was clear that if we didn't get another building in Washington more things had to go to the regions because there just wasn't room in Washington

in the National Archives Building. At one point we moved records to the Lansburgh Department Store but that didn't work out very well.

MR. KABREL: That was in downtown DC?

MR. SCROGGINS: Yes.

MR. KABREL: Was a part of it, I gather, a big part of it was financial.

MR. SCROGGINS: Yes. And there was talk even in the 70's about another building and where to put another building and the dream at one time was to build across Pennsylvania Avenue from the Archives. Basically in the block where the Navy Memorial and stuff is between 7<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> and between D Street and say F Street. Apparently there had been talk back in the 50's or 60's about building on the other side of Independence Avenue where the skating rink is. That was not doable from an engineering standpoint. So there was talk about building across Pennsylvania Avenue which would have been next door or across the street from the FBI Building. And from what the GSA people who worked on the FBI Building said that probably would have been an engineering nightmare also. It was a water problem. The Archives Building is built on a creek. Did you know that?

MR. KABREL: No, I didn't.

MR. SCROGGINS: It's built on Tiber Creek. And in some ways it floats on a huge saucer. And one of the GSA people told me when they build the FBI Building, they had to get 5 floors built before they stopped pumping water out of the basement. You know there are sub basements and apparently it kept popping up or wanting to pop up because of the water table. And almost to the top floor before they had enough weight to hold it in without pumping water out. The Federal Triangle is basically a swamp.

MR. KABREL: [Chuckling]. Nice to know.

MR. SCROGGINS: Well it's been flooded, too. The fancy theater they built after I retired where the moat was and stuff that flooded after—you know I haven't been in the building since it flooded but it flooded at some point.

MR. KABREL: We can talk about the Regional Archives a little bit more here if you like before we either move onto the next one or maybe break for the day?

MR. SCROGGINS: Let's continue up until the time I came back from the Federal Executive Institute and then go onto the Regional Archives. So this at the end of the '79-'80 period.

At that point the GSA decided that they took the Office of Records Management away from the Archives. So the Office of Records Management that had been part of what came out of the Federal Records Act, that's another discussion I guess, but the Records Management Program was transferred out of the Archives to somewhere else in GSA. And Jack Landers became the Office head 'cause Forrest Williams retired. At that time there was also a major RIF and I think 17% of the Archives staff got cut. And they tried to get rid of me.

MR. KABREL: May I ask who they are?

MR. SCROGGINS: Maybe in another interview.

MR. KABREL: All right. Don't say anything that you don't—

MR. SCROGGINS: [Interposing] Well I still have Claudine Weiher's knives in my back.

MR. KABREL: [Chuckling]

MR. SCROGGINS: You know I... I don't want to talk about that now, maybe in a later call.

MR. KABREL: Okay.

MR. SCROGGINS: But anyway I got a RIF letter and they concluded that I was not qualified to bump anybody in the program analysis, management analyst, or archivist series. So they were going to send me either out on the street or somewhere else in GSA. Because they had reassigned me to be the Deputy Assistant Archivist for Records Management without telling me. I only found that out when somebody in Personnel snuck me the paperwork. And then they abolished that job after they put me in it.

MR. KABREL: So that was done, in your opinion, purposely.

MR. SCROGGINS: Yes. And it turns out or it turned out that I had more friends in the Administrator's Office than the Archivist or Claudine.

MR. KABREL: So can you say who saved your job?

MR. SCROGGINS: Jerry Fox. Jerry Fox was an Assistant to the Administrator or Assistant to the Deputy Administrator. And two people on his immediate staff at the time where John Hawsell who had worked for me in the '74 to '79 period and later became the Chief of the Archives Budget Branch but he was in GSA by then. And Peggy Neustadt or Margaret Neustadt. I guess she's been a GSA Management Intern but she spent half a year working for me. They took my case to Jerry Fox who was on the Administrator's staff and I'm not sure what happened but Claudine called me and said, okay, they were going to take care of me and don't think Jerry Fox told her what to do. [Laughing]. And I said oh?

[Laughter]

So they assigned me to Special Assistant or Executive Assistant to the Assistant Archivist for the National Archives and gave me a desk and a secretary without a telephone. 15W1 I think it was. And I sat there probably for a year and a half until they sent me to the Federal Executive Institute. When I came back from the Federal Executive Institute I guess the view of my value had changed. I ended up in Room 100 where the Assistant Archivist for the National Archives had the 100 Suite, and 100 and I think the Assistant Archivist was in the other room. But then when I came back from Charlottesville on the 9<sup>th</sup> Street side, there was a partition. I don't know if there still is. Dick Jacobs was on one side of it and they put me on the other side of it. Dick was starting to work on independence stuff. And so Dick kept giving me stuff to do and then we can quit there and I'll talk about independence later.

MR. KABREL: Okay. And that takes us up to 1980.

MR. SCROGGINS: That takes us up to about 1982, spring of 1982.

MR. KABREL: Okay. So would you like to begin there?

MR. SCROGGINS: Probably mid April or a little later. I think my son's birthday was when I was in Charlottesville. So probably late April, early May 1982. Now you want to talk more about the regions before we quit and come back to independence next time?

MR. KABREL: Sure. We'll begin in spring of 1982 the next time and we'll talk about the regions at this point.

MR. SCROGGINS: Okay. What do you want to know about the regions? [Laughing].

MR. KABREL: What I want to know is it began in 1969, and that was born out of exactly what documents? Did you help to create? And what were the reasons for the Regional Archives in '69? Can you take us up to maybe the funding in the regions and its importance?

MR. SCROGGINS: Like I said I think you can find the idea for the Regional Archives Program on page 6 of the Seventh Annual Report of the Archivist.

MR. KABREL: Okay. And that is in the records as John's told me.

MR. SCROGGINS: Yeah. Well that's one of the things I told you to get.

MR. KABREL: Yes.

MR. SCROGGINS: And I don't have a copy of that on my screen in front of me so.

MR. KABREL: Well, what they said in that document just for the record was that records in the regions were worth as much as the records in DC so it gave an importance to the regions as having records, as many records as in the DC area.

MR. SCROGGINS: The one thing that I didn't talk about and I don't know a whole lot about, the WPA Historical Records Survey had its offices in the National Archives Building during the Depression. And so the people that were running the Archives in 1939 to the beginning of the war period were probably pretty familiar with what records were scattered around the country that ought to be kept permanently either in the National Archives or somewhere else.

MR. KABREL: So I'm assuming that those WPA Records stayed in that building when they left.

MR. SCROGGINS: I don't know. I never got into the WPA Records really. But you know when I was in RG64 I kept finding references to it. But you know it's probably been 43 years since I went through RG 64, so. Maybe you should have done this 25 years ago [Laughing].

Anyway, the issue came up from time to time in the records after that. And I think the original setup of the Records Centers long before my time in the 50's, I think the original people in the Records Centers were archive oriented in some ways than the later ones. For example the first Records Center head in San Francisco was Philip Brooks who had been in the Archives from the beginning and then after he left San Francisco he went to Independence to be the Truman Library head. And his father got a Congressman, he'd been his father's secretary when his father was a Congressman.

MR. KABREL: So what you're saying is the Federal Records Centers had a basis in archival studies.

MR. SCROGGINS: Some of them at least. Well but the whole Records Management Program was that way because the Records Management Program as it really got started was Herb Angel in charge and Ed Aldridge was his Deputy. Both of them had worked for the Archives before World War II and both of them were involved in the Navy Records Program during the war. And Grover and Bahmer were involved in the Army Records Program during the war. Sherrod East, who was my Assistant Archivist when I was in Military Archives, had been one of the equivalents of the Museum on the records side. You know, I went around trying to find the records at the end of the war.

MR. KABREL: So they're all based in archival—

MR. SCROGGINS: [Interposing] Yeah, and he had worked at the Archives before the war. So the Military Records Management Programs during the war were pretty much founded and run by people from the National Archives many of whom came back to the National Archives after the war. But there was Brooks or somebody drafted a bill in the mid 40's that was very similar to what became the Federal Records Act of 1950. That's a different conversation though I guess. Getting back to the regions. The kinds of people that were running the Records Management Program at the beginning had a foundation in the Archives and an understanding of you know that they're permanent records in the Archives. You know? Now that never got translated into an organization or any formal accessioning or anything until I did the study in '68 and '69. There was an understanding that there were probably what should be archives in the Records Centers all along.

MR. KABREL: And that was a basic understanding. You know I'm sure that there were those that disagreed with that.

MR. SCROGGINS: Yeah, but that's pretty much during the time period before my time so, you know... I don't know.

MR. KABREL: When the regions were created and '69 was upon us and what was the decision of each of the regional facilities. Why in Boston or why in Fort Worth or why in Atlanta?

MR. SCROGGINS: Well, the plan was to put one in each Records Center. Or each of the regular Regional Federal Records Centers. Not St. Louis but not Suitland but Suitland already had an Archives Branch. But one in each Regional Records Center and Dan Goggin was going to be the Coordinator in the Central Office and these people were going to be Branch Chiefs within the Records Centers so there would be an Accession and Disposal Branch Chief in the Records Center and a Reference Branch Chief and an Archives Branch Chief in each Records Center. And at the time they worked for the Center Director who worked for the Regional Commissioner who worked for the Regional Administrator. They were supposed to get technical advice or supervision from Dan Goggin who was the first Regional Archives Coordinator who went onto something else and was replaced by Charles South but the time I became responsible for it again in 1974.

MR. KABREL: But was there a Record Management present in all of these regional facilities?

MR. SCROGGINS: Each region had a Records Management Division. Only in a couple of cases were they located in the same building as the Records Center. In San Francisco, for example, there was a Regional Commissioner, downtown San Francisco; and a Records Management Division that sat in the same suite of offices; but the Records Center in San Rio was physically separate. And that was the same situation in almost all the regions. I think Seattle may have had the Records Management Division in the Records Center at one time.

MR. KABREL: And did Records Management work with Archives? And vice versa?

MR. SCROGGINS: Generally no.

MR. KABREL: Okay. Because it would seem a natural fit to work with one another to secure records into the Archives.

MR. SCROGGINS: The Records Management Divisions basically were going and encouraging... well that's hard to say. The only direct contact I had with Regional Records Management people was the 1979-80

period when all they were doing was management consulting work in effect. And not much of the kind of training they had done previously.

MR. KABREL: Do you think that there was any animosity between the Archives moving in in '69 and the Federal Records Centers?

MR. SCROGGINS: [Thoughtful pause]. I need to think about that. Yeah, that was during a period when I had contact with the Regional Commissioners more than the Center Directors. Because one of the things I did in that time period from '68 to '74 was whenever they'd have a meeting of the Regional Commissioners, you know when the Archives would get the Regional Commissioners together for a meeting, I would be the sort of the staff secretary. And so I dealt with the Regional Commissioners but I didn't really deal with the Center Directors.

MR. KABREL: Okay. Where were the differences between a Center Director, that would be the Federal Records Center Director, and what would be considered a Regional Administrator types for the regions?

MR. SCROGGINS: There was a NARS Regional Commissioner. And then there was a Records Management Division and a Federal Records Center. And in most cases there wasn't a whole lot of contact, I don't think, between the Records Management Divisions and the Records Centers but I couldn't swear to that.

MR. KABREL: I know in one of the interviews I had done in the interview I had done with Jim Owens he said that he didn't have contact with the Record Management staff and there were three individuals, and they were located within Boston per se so kind of—

MR. SCROGGINS: [Interposing] Well Jim would know better how that worked on a day to day basis than I would. And you ought to find, if you can track down some of his colleagues, it would be interesting to see what they told you. Have you talked to any of the other former Regional Archives people?

MR. KABREL: No, they were recently identified with the photographs that Jim had given me and your input and some other individuals in the National Archives. I've identified some of them. Some of them I know I'm going—

MR. SCROGGINS: [Interposing] Well let me go down some of them real quick.

MR. KABREL: Sure.

MR. SCROGGINS: Starting in Boston there was Jim Owens. New York was Joel Buchwald who was an absolute loser followed by Bob Morris and they're both dead and I don't know who came after Morris. Philadelphia was Bob Plowman and he may still be around and he might be a good person to talk to but Philadelphia was not typical. Atlanta there was Ed Weldon was the first Regional Archive head, he later became the Deputy Archivist. He was followed by Gail Peters and they both would be good people for you to interview if they're still available. Chicago was Peter Bunce and he'd be another good one to talk to. Kansas City was Reed Whitaker and that's another knife sticking out of my back but I don't know if you want to put that in the record. But Reed was pretty savvy. Reed, I thought Reed was my friend but he wasn't. He would be a good person to talk to. He might have a better view of the whole picture than Jim would have. Fort Worth, Kent Carter and Meg probably could tell you how to get a hold of him. In Denver, Bob Svenningsen was the first Regional Archives guy and he later became the Center Director. And... San Francisco, Joann Williamson who later came to Washington. You know I'm trying to think of people who were there during the GSA years as opposed to the more recent period. Seattle, Phil Lothyan. I mean if she's still available Sue Karren, if she's still there, could probably tell you how to find Phil.

MR. KABREL: Sue Karren is still here, yep.

MR. SCROGGINS: So Sue Karren I think is the last Regional Archives person I had physical contact with and that was probably a dozen years ago. I was in Seattle visiting a cousin who was doing genealogical research and was afraid to go to the Archives''cause she didn't know what to do so I called up Sue and took her over and introduced her and gave her a tour.

MR. KABREL: [Chuckling].

MR. SCROGGINS: But that's the last Regional Archive facility I was in and like I said it's probably been a dozen years. Except I was in St. Louis last year but...

MR. KABREL: [Interposing] And Alaska wasn't in Archives back then?

MR. SCROGGINS: No. Alaska 1990.

MR. KABREL: 1990. Okay. Okay. Is there anything you'd like to mention, John, before about the Regional Archives, I can't think of anything else.

MR. SCROGGINS: Well I've got a lot more to say about it but let's do that when we get to the second round in the Regional Archive before the '92 period.

MR. KABREL: Okay. We'll pick that up in the spring of 1982.

MR. SCROGGINS: Now let me look at a couple of things and see if there's... there were a couple of things I thought of but I didn't write down.

MR. KABREL: Well we can revisit that too with our next interview.

MR. SCROGGINS: Hmm. I'm trying to think of-do you have a quick list of who you're talking to or shouldn't I ask you that or?

MR. KABREL: I can send that to you.

MR. SCROGGINS: See if anybody occurs to me that you don't have.

MR. KABREL: Okay. I'll get that list out to you, a list of both the people that we do have and the ones that I have on my wish list.

MR. SCROGGINS: Okay, I was surprised to see the thing you sent me from Judy Koucky. I never had a whole lot of contact with her.

MR. KABREL: There's a lot of people actually in the National Archives that speak very highly of you. My colleague Marvin Kabakoff retired recently and I had done an oral history for him and he'd been around since I think somewhere in the 1970's and Marvin said that he had limited dealings with you and knew a lot about you and it was all very positive.

MR. SCROGGINS: Well... I wish the management thought as kindly of me as some of the people did. Well I had a good relationship with limited time but good relationship with Bahmer when he was Archivist and with Bert Rhoads when he was Archivist. I don't think O'Neill wanted to get rid of me. Bob Warner was very cool to me but warmed up at the end. Frank Burke—he was Acting for a while and then on opposite sides of



numerous issues over the years but he treated me very well when he was Acting Archivist. Even though we'd been opposed to each other on a lot of things. Trudy and I were never friends.

MR. KABREL: Right. It seems like she had a different idea of the Regional Archives than you did.

MR. SCROGGINS: Ah. I think Trudy and the Carlins and other people had a different idea. Right. If you can't find the Manifesto then I'll go into my philosophy on the Regional Archives at length but not until we do the second round.

MR. KABREL: Okay. I know Meg was on vacation and she said she's still looking for it but she didn't know if she could find it.

MR. SCROGGINS: Well, if she doesn't have it, Sue might. I don't know.

MR. KABREL: Okay. I'll reach out to Sue again and see. By the way, I won't be because I won't be in DC but John Carlin and his wife will be coming in for an interview on July 13 at Archives I and I believe Jessie is going to be interviewing.

MR. SCROGGINS: Did you see the citation I sent you for the *Washington Post* on December 19, 1997?

MR. KABREL: Yes. [Chuckling] Yeah.

MR. SCROGGINS: Maybe we can cover this more, off the record. We had a big meeting on December 17, 1997.

MR. KABREL: Right.

MR. SCROGGINS: That was the Archivist and all the office heads and the budget people and Steve Hannestad and I facilitated it about what to do about reimbursable services for Records Centers especially with regard to the courts. And a lot of decisions got made in that meeting. But in the middle of that meeting Carlin got called out by his secretary and he came back and Lew went out, Lew Bellardo.

MR. KABREL: Right.

MR. SCROGGINS: And when they came back, the whole tone of the meeting just froze. And we later found out that what happened when they were called out was for the *Post* reporter to tell them what she was going to write.

MR. KABREL: Interesting.

MR. SCROGGINS: But there had been a lot of gossip about the triangle for a long time. And all the people currently employed in the Archives, if you want somebody to tell you about that, Debra Wall is the person who knows 'cause she was, I think, she was to some extent Lynn's confidant.

MR. KABREL: I don't know how much of that wants to be on the record.

MR. SCROGGINS: [Laughing] Well I don't think you want that one on the record.

MR. KABREL: Deb is a very much more effervescent and I think she has a much more positive outlook. I don't know if she wants to get into that. [Laughing].

[Laughter]

MR. KABREL: That's very funny. Yeah. Carlin gave me a list of people, Lew Bellardo was on there. Ren Cahoon. Tom Mayer and a few others that I should interview. Lew Bellardo hasn't responded to three emails that I sent so I don't know.

MR. SCROGGINS: Is Michael Kurtz on your list?

MR. KABREL: He had an interview, I believe, I didn't do it but he was interviewed.

MR. SCROGGINS: Well, I told you Frosty Williams was probably my worst boss. I think probably like Kurtz is next to the worst.

MR. KABREL: Oh, really? Yeah. I hear good and bad things about Kurtz.

MR. SCROGGINS: I think I also have a Kurtz knife in my back.

MR. KABREL: You've got a lot of knives in your back.

MR. SCROGGINS: [Laughing].

MR. KABREL: But I don't view that and this is just my opinion, I don't view that as a bad thing. I mean it may have ended up being a bad thing that happened to you but I think it's kind of a badge of honor to be able to not be beloved by your superiors and be well liked by your peers. And I think that that's pretty important.

MR. SCROGGINS: Well I think I had a management vision that differs from many of the people who've been my bosses over the years. And we can talk about that more when we talk about the second Archives period but I haven't really paid any attention to the Archives or how it's managed for the last decade because I don't think it's going in the direction I think it should have.

MR. KABREL: Well there's a big concern that the Regional Archives are being eliminated eventually. And it's unfortunate but that seems to be how they're viewing it and the people in the regions are worried about that. And why do I say that? Well it seems like outreach has dissipated at some of the regions to a point where they're told not to perform any more outreach programs and things like that seem to be a big issue.

MR. SCROGGINS: Well, we need to talk about outreach on my watch then. And we also need to talk about genealogists.

MR. KABREL: Okay.

MR. SCROGGINS: Genealogists vote, historians don't.

MR. KABREL: Very true.

[Laughter]

MR. SCROGGINS: If it weren't for genealogists we'd still be in GSA.

MR. KABREL: Yeah.

MR. SCROGGINS: Historians were little help. Genealogists were great help and the Archives has turned its

back on the genealogical community. That's the next conversation though probably.

MR. KABREL: Okay.

MR. SCROGGINS: Well, send me a list of names and chew over what I sent you a little bit and then let's not set another time yet but wait a day or two.

MR. KABREL: Okay. And I'll correspond and get that information to you. All right, thank you John.

MR. SCROGGINS: Okay, thank you.

MR. KABREL: All right.

MR. SCROGGINS: Bye-bye.

MR. KABREL: Bye-bye.

[PART 1 END RECORDING]

[PART 2 START RECORDING]

MR. KABREL: This is Jack Kabrel, K-A-B-R-E-L. Today is June 22, 2016, at 1 p.m. I am conducting an oral history interview with Mr. John M. Scroggins via over the phone audio recording. This is Part Two of a two-part interview for the National Archives and Records Administration History Office, Oral History Project. Thank you Mr. Scroggins for agreeing to a second part of this interview. The first one was extremely engaging and we only got about halfway through your career up until this moment here.

Just to briefly go over what we had we started out from you being born in Minneapolis in 1942, working for the National Archives in the summer of '62, and working your way up through various positions of archivist, archives for the archival projects division, management intern for the GSA, Senior Program Analyst, now we are here in 1980, if you can follow along on our resume, as we've been doing very well following along on our timeline that you were so kind to give us. We're looking at the 1980 to 1984 tumultuous era and we're about at the spring of 1982 or so.

My first question would be do you want to start us in from 1980 in that era that you felt was a tumultuous era for you?

MR. SCROGGINS: Basically I'd been in exile for a couple of years, and then because they tried to riff me and failed and didn't have anything they wanted me to do. Then they sent me off to the Federal Executive Institute in, I think it was the spring of 1982. It was a PBS slot, but the administrator had made nasty comments about the Federal Executive Institute, from what I hear, and PBS had decided not to send anybody and it offered other services the slot and the Warner or Deputy Ed Weldon decided that was a good place to put me and get me out of the building for a few weeks. I was gone to Charlottesville for the Federal Executive Institute for seven weeks.

MR. KABREL: Can you tell me what PBS is and what the Federal Executive Institute is?

MR. SCROGGINS: PBS is the Public Building Service in GSA. The Federal Executive Institute is a training center for federal executives run by what was then the Civil Service Commission and is now the Office of Personnel Management. It's in Charlottesville, Virginia, and their programs have changed over the years, but at the time I was there they had a seven week residential program for 15s and SES people; in theory for SES people

and 15s who were being considered for SES positions. I was a 15 and at that point I don't think the archives was considering me for an SES position but they sent me.

MR. KABREL: Did you get anything out of your seven weeks there?

MR. SCROGGINS: Yes, it was very interesting and it was helpful to me in a number of ways. One thing that was interesting is they put you in, at least at that time, they put you in seven student groups they called Executive Learning Teams and each group had an advisor. It turns out that my advisor was a very good friend and former classmate, I guess, of Bob Warner, who was then the archivist.

One of my classmates who had the room next to me in the dormitory was the Town Clerk of Belfast, meaning city manager but his title was Town Clerk of Belfast, Northern Ireland because they took a foreign student or two for each class and I've stayed in touch with him ever since. A guy by the name of Cecil Ward who apparently was the Town Clerk for over 20 years and the Belfast City Administration Building is now named after him.

Anyway, when I came back from Charlottesville, which probably would have been late April, early May 1982, they were just starting to work more on trying to get out of GSA. I wasn't really given any assignment formally as such. I was still sitting there but I was sitting on the other side of a partition from Dick Jacobs who was very active on that so Dick started giving me stuff to do.

MR. KABREL: When you came back from Charlotte you didn't have any assignments whatsoever? Who was your supervisor?

MR. SCROGGINS: I was still on paper an Executive Assistant to the Assistant Archivist for the National Archives which is what I'd been since they found out they couldn't get rid of me. But before I went to Charlottesville I had been sitting in a stack area without a phone. You hear about people being put in closets 'cause they can't be fired or something. That was me.

Anyway, I ended up in Room 100 on the other side of the partition from Dick and he started giving me things to do and I started doing stuff, and one thing led to another and I started getting assigned just odd jobs related to it. I spent a lot of time on the phone with John Parisi who was on the House Oversight Committee staff talking about language or bills or arguments for bills and the archivist set up a committee. I forget what it was called, but it was Trudy Peterson, Adrienne Thomas, Maygene Daniels, and me, to go around, and I think our charter was to explore alternative arrangements if we couldn't get onto GSA, like what other agencies might have more independence from their mother agency than we had and to sell the idea that we wanted out.

We asked who was in charge and we were told nobody was in charge, so it was the four of us as a committee to pretty much work out our own charter and do what we wanted to do. One of the places we went was to the Energy Information Administration and I don't know what the story is with that now, but the Energy Information Administration was within the Department of Energy but had statutory independence in many ways that we did not have independence from GSA if you know what I mean or not, maybe you don't.

MR. KABREL: Yes, I do.

MR. SCROGGINS: GSA had all the authority legally with a couple exceptions but the Energy Information Administration or the administrator had substantial statutory authority independent of the Secretary of Energy. Another place we went was to the Smithsonian where we had a long discussion with Phillip S. Hughes, Sam Hughes, who was then the Undersecretary of the Smithsonian. Hughes had been the official

Deputy Director of the Bureau of the Budget who had written the Bureau of the Budget position paper about 1968 saying leave them in GSA, but give them more money, or something like that. Hughes admitted to us, and was willing to do so on the record, that he was probably wrong when he did that, and he supported independence now in the eighties. That was fairly significant because Hughes had all the contacts in the Public Administration community and I think he talked up the idea within the Public Administration community.

I can't remember all the things that happened at that time but one of the things I went to was a hearing that Glen English had. I'm going to go back to the group, that committee. You had Trudy and she doesn't want to talk to you, you said. Adrienne Thomas, who later became Deputy Archivist—is Adrienne on your list?

MR. KABREL: Yes.

MR. SCROGGINS: And Maygene Daniels?

MR. KABREL: No.

MR. SCROGGINS: Maygene left the Archives after that and went to the National Gallery of Art as an Archivist but at independence time her husband was the Staff Director for House Oversight Committee and officially recused himself from the thing, but anyway Maygene lived close to Trudy; I don't know if it was next door or in the same block, but she was Trudy's neighbor. Maygene also graduated from college with one of my sisters.

MR. KABREL: Did this group that was formulated come out with a report?

MR. SCROGGINS: Yes, there was a report and I don't remember what it was called. It was probably in '83 but I don't remember for sure.

MR. KABREL: This report suggested up backing it up with information from Hughes from—

MR. SCROGGINS: [Interposing] It had backup information and it talked about some possible alternatives I think. It's been over 30 years.

MR. KABREL: That's my job to pull the information from you.

MR. SCROGGINS: You need to find somebody to go find the report.

MR. KABREL: John, what was significant and how did the whole politics of independence work on Capitol Hill and who and what was significant and who are significant as far as getting that independence?

MR. SCROGGINS: I don't know how it all worked on Capitol Hill. Like I said, I talked a lot to John Parisi who is on the house staff who worked for Maygene Daniels' husband. I know Dick Jacobs did a lot of talking on the phone and doing the same kind of thing with senate staff but there are a lot of other people in the Archives talking to a lot of other politicians.

I went to a hearing that was held by Glen English, who was Chairman of the Oversight Committee, and his wife was a personal friend of the librarian at the time. I don't remember; the archives librarian at the time and I don't remember her name but I believe English's wife was a personal friend of the librarian. But we had this hearing and English asked a lot of questions with some interesting answers like 'you didn't get this budget request' or 'Mr. Archivist, you didn't ask for more money. Well why didn't you ask for more money.' Because the administrator—first he asked the Administrator why didn't you give the Archivist more money.

This is sort of a paraphrase; and the Administrator said because the Archivist didn't ask me for more money. Then he asked the archivist why didn't you ask him for more money; because he told me not to.

MR. KABREL: Circles.

MR. SCROGGINS: Glen English called as a witness Jess Larson who had been English's father's or grandfather's law partner. Jess Larson was the first Administrator of GSA. He said something to the effect that if he'd known how the GSA-Archives relationship was going to turn out he wouldn't have accepted it.

MR. KABREL: That testimony right there I guess helped push towards independence?

MR. SCROGGINS: Yes, but you should be able to find that testimony somewhere in the Congressional Records. I couldn't give you a citation. Probably '83.

MR. KABREL: Okay.

MR. SCROGGINS: Then I guess it was the summer of '84 there was a lot of back and forth and maybe a couple of false starts and some fear that it wasn't going to pass. First we would be confident and then we weren't so confident but it did pass, I think in what, October of '84.

MR. KABREL: What did it mean when it passed?

MR. SCROGGINS: Congress passed a bill to establish the National Archives and Records Administration to be effective, I guess, April 1, 1985. I couldn't give you the bill number anymore or the title. We had a law that was passed, so what do we do now?

About that time then probably at the beginning of November, but maybe not, I wrote a long memo to the Archivist that basically said do it now, and spelled out what I believed were the Administrator's authorities that could be delegated to the Archivist to effectively make the Archives independent. It could have been done all along but Administrators wouldn't do it. My argument was that now that it's passed and going to be effective April 1 why don't you go ask them to do it now.

I think the way that played out is Ray Kline who had been the Deputy Administrator was Acting Administrator and I think Ray Kline was sympathetic and when I went to Kline and came back with a delegation of authority to, in effect, operate independently as soon as he could work out the details.

MR. KABREL: How did you come about this idea?

MR. SCROGGINS: I'd been arguing that since early in the game. I said if we get it passed then we ought to just do it. I argued even back in the seventies that the Administrator could delegate more authority to the archivist; he just wouldn't do it. If the Administrator did not delegate a lot of authority to any part of GSA from the beginning.

MR. KABREL: Just so you can help our audience out, what's the hierarchy of Administrator and Archivist? Who is the Administrator compared to the Archivist and how come he is able to put duties onto the Archivist?

MR. SCROGGINS: Under the Federal Property and Administrative Services Act of 1949 that set up GSA, the Administrator got all the authority of his agency with a couple of exceptions that related to the Archives. He was authorized to delegate almost all of the authority he got under that law and administrators chose not to do so. The Archivist retained the authority to be Chairman of the Trust Fund Board, Chairman of the NHPRC,

and part of the disposal authority. Other than that all the authority within GSA rested in the Administrator. The Administrator was authorized to delegate to people and chose not to do so, so therefore all of the central services were centralized.

I talked before about how we didn't have a lawyer because GSA insisted on retaining all the legal services. GSA had a centralized personnel department. One of the first things that happened after they reached agreement on the do it now memo was that we took over personnel from GSA because the Administrator delegated the personnel authority for NARS to the Archivist. Am I clear?

MR. KABREL: No, that's a great explanation. Thank you, John. Do it now had a lot of legs and you were able to get the Administrator to give more power to the Archivist.

MR. SCROGGINS: Right. We got a lot of authority and more than we could use at the moment but we got the delegation, so we had a transition team that was set up to figure out how we're going to manage the transition and I think maybe Claudine was the head of that, I forget for sure, but I was on it and I forget who all the members were. I was responsible for figuring out how to handle the field transition and part of personnel.

In personnel GSA had had a fairly large personnel office in St. Louis since the GSA took over the record center in 1961 so there was a GSA personnel office in the St. Louis Record Center building that worked for the GSA Region Six personnel officer. It's that St. Louis personnel office where I was sworn in in 1962. The people in St. Louis were very happy with that personnel office, NARA was probably 90% of their workload. They did some work for PBS or federal supply things in St. Louis but the record center in St. Louis accounted for 90% or more of their workload. Part of my argument was let's just ask for the whole St. Louis personnel office, which we got. That's why we have a personnel office in St. Louis now.

MR. KABREL: Would you say that the transition was a rather smooth transition?

MR. SCROGGINS: I think it went more smoothly than a lot of people expected. One of my responsibilities on the transition too was property inventory. We had to do an inventory of all of the property that we were transferring from whoever was the GSA property officer to whoever was going to be the NARA property officer. I came up with a scheme for bar coding all of the property and then scanning it to do the inventory.

MR. KABREL: It seems like every time we speak that your knowledge of technology always seems to help whatever situation you're in.

MR. SCROGGINS: That probably was true up until a few years ago. Anyway, we did the transition and it worked—I guess from my perspective it worked better than I would have thought but some people didn't think it worked quite as well but I think it worked out pretty well. Then at independence time before he retired, Warner handed out a bunch of awards to people that worked on independence. I guess that was the act that officially rehabilitated me. I got a \$7,500 cash award for working on independence, which I believe was the smallest award of any of the people that worked on it. But it was a demonstration that I was back in management's good graces and not banished to a closet.

MR. KABREL: Is that due to your work or is that also due to the fact that people change and administrations change and sometimes that also plays a role in somebody's life?

MR. SCROGGINS: I think probably more my work than administration's changing. I think my going into the closet in the first place was more due to administrations changing and then Warner just accepting the status quo. I was in effect banished after Rhoads left while O'Neill was Acting Archivist. I was in the doghouse when Warner came in and I think he just maintained the status quo until the end of independence time and I think

he had Ed Weldon or—is Ed Weldon on your list?

MR. KABREL: No.

MR. SCROGGINS: Ed Weldon was the first head of the archives branch in Atlanta. He was later the Georgia State Archivist and the New York State Archivist and he was Deputy Archivist of the U.S. He might be a worthwhile person.

MR. KABREL: At this time John, independence has now officially taken place, we are an independent organization. How did you get to your next duty of Director of the Field Archives that you had for eight years, from '84 to '92.

MR. SCROGGINS: In the last few days of the transition when it became clear that I was probably going to be rehabilitated the question was what do we do with him. I think it was Frank Burke who decided that if we were going to run the regions ourselves rather than through the GSA apparatus, and if they were going to take my suggestion that the regional archives be organizationally separate from the record centers and the regional archives work for the Assistant Archivist for the National Archives rather than work for the Record Center Director who worked for the Assistant Archivist for Federal Record Centers. If that's how we were going to organize then Burke thought I was the best candidate to do it, to run the region or field archives program or whatever we called it at the time. They assigned me to do that. I think it was a combination of what are we going to do with him and he's probably the person that knows the most about this.

MR. KABREL: This is also based upon your reports that you said I believe was '68 microfilm?

MR. SCROGGINS: Yeah, but the Regional Archives Coordinator had worked for me during the seventies too when I was in the Office of the National Archives.

When I was in the Office of the Executive Director I also did staff work when that had a meeting of the NARA Regional Directors. The regional directors worked for the GSA regional administrators but the archivist would meet with them every year or two and for four or five years there I was the person who did the staff work, the arrangements for the meetings and stuff or my staff did. I did it a couple times and people working for me did it a couple times.

We're going to independence and we have a field archives division which I have taken over and inherited Roseanne Butler who was the Regional Archives Coordinator which they didn't even consider a management job I don't think.

MR. KABREL: Roseanne Butler would be considered your assistant?

MR. SCROGGINS: Yes, and we made her Deputy Director. She was better at some things than I was by far. She's a better communicator. More sympathetic. I had a vision for the regions that I'd had all along and Frank pretty much was willing to go along with that, Frank Burke, because now was Acting Archivist then after Warner left for a while.

MR. KABREL: I'd like to get clear on who was who. Frank Burke at this point was the Acting Archivist?

MR. SCROGGINS: He was Acting Assistant Archivist for the National Archives for a while and then the Acting Archivist for a while. I'm not sure how official all that was because the White House didn't do anything when Warner left.

MR. KABREL: Could you describe your vision for the regions and if that is also part of the manifesto maybe



you can go into that a little bit?

MR. SCROGGINS: I saw the regional archives as being depositories for the vast quantity of records that were probably somewhere outside Washington, and I think there were a lot more records outside Washington that should have been in the archives than were. I saw it, as with the microfilm, as a way to make the records in Washington more available by putting more of the microfilm there. I saw the regional archives as a way to build a national constituency for the National Archives. It was genealogists outside Washington who supported us strongly when it looked like the Privacy Act was going to be a problem and it was genealogists outside Washington who supported us strongly in the independence fight, made calls to congressman and did things, and I saw the regional archives as an opportunity to build a national constituency among the genealogists and other people and state archivists and historians and I think Burke went along with that and I think Trudy did not, but Burke was the boss at the time.

MR. KABREL: What was the argument against it?

MR. SCROGGINS: I don't think there was an argument against it. What's the argument against it now? That discussion is probably not part of the interview but if you want to discuss the current role of the regional archives we can do it after the interview.

MR. KABREL: Okay.

MR. SCROGGINS: I thought we could build a national constituency, I think we needed a stronger presence and I'm an anomaly in my family. I grew up in a family of entrepreneurs in many ways and I more or less thought we ought to try to build an entrepreneurial spirit among the regional archives people and tell them generally what we wanted but let them run things without asking every day what I have to do today. We had some pretty strict guidelines on some things and some pretty strict work plans but I didn't care in many ways exactly how things got done if you know what I mean.

There were goals for arrangement, description, and for re-boxing. I wanted to see the results but we didn't tell which employees were going to work on which things on which days. We required some kind of outreach. You need to talk to all your state archives people and let us know you need to keep in touch with state historical people. We wanted them to keep in touch with the district offices of their congress people which gave some people in Washington the willies I think, but it paid off in some ways.

I put in a weekly reporting requirement; I want a weekly narrative report. It was not a new idea but I want a weekly narrative report and in turn Roseanne wrote a weekly newspaper that was pretty much based on the weekly reports plus what was happening in Washington and we sent a weekly newsletter out to them. What we did was not a whole lot different from what Herb Angel and Ed Aldridge did when they first set up the Office of Records Management in 1950. They had reports coming in from the Field Record Management divisions and they sent out a Friday memo to them every week. Then we set up a daily telephone message; everybody called it 'dial-a-prayer.' Remember, this was before email and computers and stuff.

Roseanne would record a daily telephone message with anything they should know. At Trudy's staff meeting today we did this or this or don't forget this report is due or whatever and we told them to call the dial-a-prayer every day in the afternoon. Roseanne pretty much handled all those communications. We did some nationwide outreach things. Roseanne worked with the History Committee of the Federal Judiciary and we did a big thing on the bicentennial of the Judiciary Act where we had an exhibit—each regional archive had a copy of an exhibit to rotate around courthouses in their region.

Working with the Federal Office Exhibits and Publications people we did a series of short radio scripts about the history of the Judiciary Act and the regional archives people were given copies of this and told to sell it

to as many radio stations as they could. You heard any of this before?

MR. KABREL: I have never heard any of this, no. I'm very excited and happy that we're getting this on the record because I don't think a lot of people who are in our audience may have heard of this before. I think it's very interesting and each of the things you're mentioning seems to be that the main ideas seem to be outreach and genealogy.

MR. SCROGGINS: It wasn't just genealogy. Bicentennial and the court system is not genealogy. We did a slideshow on the field archive branches. Nancy Malon did a slide show that we sent all over the place and that ought to be somewhere in audio/visual. Nancy did a number of traveling exhibits. We worked with other people on exhibits. Carroll O'Connor's wife, you know Carroll O'Connor, Archie Bunker?

MR. KABREL: Yes.

MR. SCROGGINS: His wife was something like the granddaughter of an Indian agent who had a large collection of photographs, so we arranged with her to have an exhibit of these photographs of Indian reservations in Montana on exhibit in the Seattle branch for an extended period. Got a lot of publicity in Seattle over that.

One of the congressmen, I can't remember his name, Tom [Lantos] somebody-or-other, was a congressman in the San Bruno area. San Bruno people worked with his district staff to do a number of things that were jointly sponsored by the San Bruno branch and the congressman's staff. We did that in some other places. We pushed them to do naturalization ceremonies in the regional archives. Interesting because Kent Carter in Fort Worth did one, it was a big one and he managed to get Jim Wright, who was then the Speaker of the House, to come because it was in Wright's district. The way Kent reported on it Wright sat in the back of the room bored. He made a brief speech but sat in the back of the room looking like he was bored silly, and then at the end of the ceremony whoever was the master of ceremonies or mistress of ceremonies got up and said there were tables for voter registration in the back of the room now that you were citizens and Wright broke into a big smile and got up and started pressing the flesh.

MR. KABREL: At this time John, what I find to be really interesting is that you felt that the regions should have an entrepreneurial spirit, an independence of sorts, and I find that to be very interesting considering I think the climate that I have known over the last decade or so seems to be a bit of a maybe misconception that DC has of what the regions do, what their functions are, and how much work they actually do. I think their view is more of trying to get everybody on the same page instead of having independents within each of these regions. What do you say about that?

MR. SCROGGINS: I think that's true but it's not just the last few years. I think that's why I ceased to be head of the regions in 1992 because that was not viewed as favorably as it had been.

MR. KABREL: There was a distrust from DC about exactly what the regional archives do.

MR. SCROGGINS: I don't know; I wish you could talk to Trudy because if Trudy were honest with you she would probably tell you more. You might see what you can get out of Michael Kurtz on that. He was Trudy's Deputy at the time.

MR. KABREL: A question I wanted to ask you before we move on from this area to the next section—

MR. SCROGGINS: [Interposing] Let me talk a little more about the regions because we wanted a strong volunteer program and I think that the high point we probably had over 400 volunteers. We wanted extended hours and we required at least one evening and a Saturday a month but we allowed them to do

more if they wanted to do more. We encouraged them to do training mainly genealogical training, but training in how to do research in the records. A lot of them would have a Saturday morning session where they would get people in and show them how to search the microfilm. We weren't too specific about some of that but you had to do something. But you know what I mean.

MR. KABREL: Also outreach to schools too as well?

MR. SCROGGINS: Yeah, we had a lot of schools to work. We encouraged some... You ought to interview Roseanne. I have not talked to Roseanne for more than 15 years.

MR. KABREL: The outreach really in many ways, that outreach was a key component of the regions.

MR. SCROGGINS: Yes, it was a key component. That's a fair way to put it. I have not seen Roseanne probably since 1999. I think I saw her husband once after that. I understand that she was a uniformed tour guide in Williamsburg but I simply haven't heard from them.

MR. KABREL: I'll definitely reach out to Roseanne. You had said earlier on in the last interview that we had done you said that outreach in genealogy without it we'd still be in GSA. What did you mean by that?

MR. SCROGGINS: I think that the biggest push for independence came from genealogists. The historians were not particularly helpful. The AHA was in favor but you didn't have history professors calling their congressman and saying do it, if you know what I mean.

MR. KABREL: Yes.

MR. SCROGGINS: I think the current Archivist has probably turned his back on the genealogical community but maybe that's not part of this interview.

MR. KABREL: We can talk more about that at the end when we talk about the current state of archive—

MR. SCROGGINS: [Interposing] I guess I'm willing to talk about some things at the end that I don't want in the oral history interview because they aren't history, if you know what I mean.

MR. KABREL: We can always talk off the record. I can stop and we can speak about that. One question I wanted to ask you before we leave here is what missed opportunities do you think we had then or what opportunities do you think we missed during this time of independence and us moving forward. Did we have a chance to do things differently? Did we have a chance to gain something that maybe we never have within the National Archives?

MR. SCROGGINS: I'm not sure how to describe it but many of the locations were terrible. For example we moved out of Bayonne [New Jersey] to downtown New York and Philadelphia moved downtown. Not all the downtown moves were good, not all were bad. I think we missed opportunities to move to better facilities in some places or to build joint ventures with other facilities in some places. I think we missed the opportunity to really look closely at where there were significant federal records being created that we weren't getting. Maybe there should have been more regional or maybe there should be more regional archives; maybe not. I don't know.

I was very much involved in the Alaska project. The archivist basically said that he promised Senator Stevens this would be done and it was up to me to get it done and he wrote a letter to GSA saying that I had full authority to speak for him in dealing with the GSA people in San Francisco and Anchorage. I did what needed to be done and I concluded early on that the building they had planned was too small for the records that

were likely to come out of the woodwork if we had a facility there and had some bitter arguments with Claudine about size but ended up building a bigger building than was originally conceived, but for no additional money and we got the project done on time and on budget, and made Senator Stevens very happy and got the records moved without a problem. Do you know Sue Karran?

MR. KABREL: Yes, I know her through the internal collaboration network (ICN) that we have. She's been giving me a lot of information regarding you and comments that you had made.

MR. SCROGGINS: Sue was the assistant head of the Archives branch in Seattle under Phil Lothyan. I told Sue that it was her project to get the records that were going from Seattle to Anchorage and she was going with them and she couldn't go home until they were all shelved properly. She exceeded my expectations.

MR. KABREL: I hope she got an Archive Achievement Award for it.

MR. SCROGGINS: Yes. She did an excellent job. But anyway what happened in Anchorage recently is beyond the scope of this conversation I guess.

MR. KABREL: Yeah, well different era, different time.

MR. SCROGGINS: We can talk about that off the record when we talk about non-historical things.

MR. KABREL: I don't know if this question applies; I'm going to mention it here because I just wanted to mention because a lot of the things that a lot of my colleagues talk about is that the National Archives, and I want to see your take on this, doesn't seem to have authority or power to secure permanent records from regional facilities. Meaning that we're out here in the regions and such-and-such agency has historical records and if they don't want to give it to us we can't get them to give it to us. Was there ever an opportunity during the course of your career that you saw where we could have actually had enforcement powers to secure permanent records into our facility?

MR. SCROGGINS: In my opinion, and I'm not a lawyer, but in my opinion, which I stated many, many, many, many, many times over the years the Administrator and then the Archivist had the legal authority to require any agency to send to him any record more than 30 years old. Originally it was 50 years but the Archives went and got the law changed to 30 years and if you go look in Title 40, Chapter 21 to Title 44, read it for yourself and see if you think the archivist can ask for records. Every archivist has chosen not to enforce that to any great extent. Originally it said 50 years and when they pushed to make it 30 years I pooh-poohed it because I said you're not willing to ask them after 50 years so why are you asking for a law so you can do it after 30 if you're not willing to follow up.

I haven't looked at that law for 15 years or more but maybe I'll look at it tonight. I think the Archivist of the United States has far more authority than he is willing to exercise or attempt to exercise. It may be that he'll exercise it and get slapped down but one of the reasons we wanted the regions to build better ties to the agencies that was part of the outreach was get involved in the local federal executive groups. There used to be, I don't know if there still is, but there were Federal Executive Boards or something owned by Civil Service Commissions and we told them if you're not a member of the Federal Executive Board at least get on the Records Committee or whatever but ingratiate yourself with the agencies and when we set up Anchorage one of the things that I did as we were building the building was took Tom Wiltsey who was going to be the head and we went around and visited agency people telling them that we were coming to Anchorage and we'd have a place where they could retire their records that did not involve sending it to someplace thousands of miles away.

I expected the regional archive people to be in touch with agencies which probably would have made it

easier to get records, but in my opinion the archivist has authority he's never exercised. You need to see if you can have somebody find a record of Buck's conversation with Roosevelt. Buck wanted the military service records and the military wouldn't give them to them. I think the Civil War era stuff. I don't remember the details because it's been 40 years probably since I read the correspondence in the file. Buck had a meeting with Roosevelt and asked for it and as a result Roosevelt sent a note to the Secretary of War saying Buck makes a good case; send him the records.

MR. KABREL: I'm going to look that up. Interesting.

MR. SCROGGINS: I think Buck is the last Archivist who had a personal relationship with a sitting President and it wasn't a close one but Buck did see Roosevelt. Of course, that was the time the Roosevelt Library was being set up.

MR. KABREL: Let's move on to 1992 to 1995. Tell us about how you transitioned from the Director of Field Archives Division, Regional Archives to the Director of the Non-textual Archive Division. How did that work out?

MR. SCROGGINS: I was called into the Archivist's office and I was told I was being reassigned. I objected. In the meeting I considered it a demotion and that there wasn't much I can do about it but I was not happy.

MR. KABREL: What were the politics behind it? If you don't mind telling us.

MR. SCROGGINS: In ways that's a Trudy Peterson or Michael Kurtz question and to some extent Claudine Wieher was probably involved but Claudine's deceased. There are two women that at one time or other looked at me as their mentor in management matters. Claudine Wieher and Debra Wall. They both became Deputy Archivists. Claudine, as far as I'm concerned, turned to her dark side and Claudine was instrumental in my removal from the Office of the National Archives the first time and my removal from the Regional Archives Program.

MR. KABREL: Why do you think that was the case, if you don't mind speculating? If this is an area that you don't want on the record I understand.

MR. SCROGGINS: I have never understood. I have really never understood. At the time Claudine retired and sort of at the urging of Debra Wall, believe it or not, I called Claudine to say goodbye, to wish her well, and to tell her maybe we should try to remember the good times rather than the bad times and she did not take that call very kindly and I gather she made fun of it to other people.

MR. KABREL: Do you think it was something that you had done?

MR. SCROGGINS: I'm sure I must have done something that turned her but I don't know. I don't want to get into that more. I think she had some character flaws. I was assigned to the Non-textual Archives Division, a job I hated. I had less authority there than I had running the Regional Archives Program. I turned 50 very shortly after they did that and could have retired if they'd been willing to make it an adverse action like riff me or something, but Don Wilson and Claudine Wieher were not willing to make it an adverse action that would allow me to retire at that time, so I ran the division for about three years and did not like it. During that time though, Debra Wall and Jennifer Nelson, worked for me and both expressed an interest in learning more about management so I spent some time with them.

MR. KABREL: Can you describe some of what you did? What was your job at that time from '92 to '95?

MR. SCROGGINS: I was over the Still Picture, Motion Picture, and Cartographic branches. I put some stuff in

the 1998 resume I sent you that I don't remember anymore. It was not a good time and I was not a happy camper.

MR. KABREL: Okay. Is there anything else you'd like to talk about during that period?

MR. SCROGGINS: Let me think for a minute or two.

MR. KABREL: Non-textual Archives Division this was a period in '92 to '95 where computers were becoming more prevalent and technology was changing. What technical advances were happening or what opportunities did you see for the National Archives to advance during this period?

MR. SCROGGINS: We had a card catalogue and we talked about digitizing it. I don't think we got very far on that. Actually Debra would be a better person to talk about that project. I spent some time trying to improve the services by looking at how we did things. I oversaw moving cartographic records from the National Archives, the Pickett Street buildings, to Archives II. Then I did some stuff that was not related to that job because we had another taskforce.

I was on taskforces all the time on reinventing government, responding to Gore's performance review. That was a strategic planning team, and I don't remember all that stuff. That wasn't just them. All through my career, when I was in favor, if there was a committee on this management thing or that, I tended to be on it. Like independence.

MR. KABREL: Right.

MR. SCROGGINS: Maybe a third of my time while I was in that job was doing stuff that was not directly related to that job.

MR. KABREL: Was this also when the Bledsoe Group report came about and can you describe that a little bit.

MR. SCROGGINS: I think that's about the time the Bledsoe Group came about. I don't remember exactly. Ralph Bledsoe, do you know about Ralph Bledsoe?

MR. KABREL: No, no. What was the Bledsoe Report and Group?

MR. SCROGGINS: First of all do you know about Ralph Bledsoe?

MR. KABREL: No.

MR. SCROGGINS: Okay. At that time Ralph was the Director of the Reagan Library, the first Director of the Reagan Library, and they set up a group under him to look at how we were doing things and I forget what the official title was and I forget who all was on it. Lori Lisowski was on it among other things. Barbara Berger who was in the Still Picture Branch. I don't remember all the people. I remember some things 40 or 50 years ago better than I remember things 20 years ago.

Before Ralph was director of the Reagan Library he'd had a number of jobs. He had been head of the Graduate Public Administration Program at the Sacramento Branch of USC, I think it was, when Reagan was the governor. He had been on the faculty of the Federal Executive Institute in Charlottesville, not when I went there though. He had been head of the USC Doctor of Public Administration Program at Washington, and he had been Assistant Domestic Policy Advisor in the White House during the Reagan years. He was the White House staff member who wrote the report in the White House agreeing with the NARS independence bill. When he was the White House Assistant Domestic Policy Advisor he basically wrote the White House

decision paper favoring independence, and he was very close to Philip S. Hughes. I told you when we went to see Hughes he talked to other people. Ralph was very active in the Public Administration community. Anyway, when we had this committee he was Director of the Reagan Library.

MR. KABREL: What did this committee do?

MR. SCROGGINS: We wrote a report. I don't remember what was in the report. We had a meeting out at the Reagan Library along the way. Maybe this was one of the strategic planning things or Gore things.

MR. KABREL: Like a reinventing initiative of the nineties?

MR. SCROGGINS: Yeah, that kind of thing. We had a meeting at the library and Reagan and Colin Powell were there one of the days at the library and it was interesting because Tom Selleck was there and Barbara Berger who worked for me in Still Pictures at the time chatted up Tom Selleck for a long time because he was interested in Still Pictures research.

Shortly after that Ralph was removed from the library and sent to Washington apparently at the request of Mrs. Reagan, and he became an Assistant Archivist and then an Acting Deputy Archivist and I don't know if he's still alive or not. He'd be pretty old if he is.

MR. KABREL: Some of the questions that I might have about this era, and tell me if this is the '92-'95 era, about your work on automation and cataloguing, being responsible for getting public access PCs in all research rooms nationwide, and also your views on your time of troubles and a senate report that was critical of NARA in the 1990s. Did that all happen during this period?

MR. SCROGGINS: Yeah, I don't know if it was exactly this period or not. I know I was blamed in part for the Senate report which I was not involved in, but some people seemed to think that I was feeding them information, which I did not do. We worked on public terminals, I don't know if that was at the end of the non-textual period or beginning of the next period.

During the non-textual period we started trying to automate the Motion Picture card catalog and what we did there, and Debra got involved in that and Jennifer Nelson more or less became the first step of what became the NAIL Program or whatever it was called.

MR. KABREL: Okay.

MR. SCROGGINS: You're talking about a time period I prefer to forget.

MR. KABREL: What did NAIL stand for?

MR. SCROGGINS: National Archives Information Locator or something like that. NARA Archival Information Locator, or something like that.

MR. KABREL: It's just another form of HMS or something like that.

MR. SCROGGINS: Right. When Debra got moved out of the non-textual division into whatever it was called at the time, into that kind of planning and automation programs. That's what she was working on. You need to interview Debra, you know what? It won't hurt to interview her on her years.

MR. KABREL: I could definitely do that. You're right. What do you mean by time of trouble?

MR. SCROGGINS: Time of troubles was your term, not mine.

MR. KABREL: It was a term that was given to me to ask regarding questions about this era.

MR. SCROGGINS: I never heard it referred to that before you asked me.

MR. KABREL: What do you think it does refer to?

MR. SCROGGINS: I don't know for sure. Which period are you talking about?

MR. KABREL: Early nineties.

MR. SCROGGINS: Don Wilson got a lot of flak over—there was a Senate report, there were some scandals in the personnel office, I think. I was out of the loop again. I was blamed for some things I didn't do. I think that's about the time that he approved the Constitutional Amendment that was questionable. What is it, the 27<sup>th</sup> Amendment, or something? Do you know about that?

MR. KABREL: Oh, yeah.

MR. SCROGGINS: Oh, let me think about that a minute. You should know about that. [Pause] The 27<sup>th</sup> Amendment as I recall prohibited the changes to the salary of Congress until the next term. They couldn't raise or lower their pay during the current term and it is an amendment that started many, many, many, many years ago and was considered a dead letter I think because it had not been ratified by all the states and a couple states finally ratified it years, maybe 200 years, after it was first proposed and Don Wilson declared it in effect because that's his job. One of the Archivists' jobs is to publish the laws.

MR. KABREL: Right.

MR. SCROGGINS: In some ways the Archivist decides what the law is, if you know what I mean, and Don Wilson decided to publish the 27<sup>th</sup> Amendment as having been ratified and took some flak over it I believe. But I don't remember the whole story. You ought to be able to track that down.

MR. KABREL: That would be considered what it means by time of troubles in '92.

MR. SCROGGINS: That was one of the things in that time but there was some bad press. Okay, I just called up the last page in the 27<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the Constitution of the United States signed by Don W. Wilson. The 18<sup>th</sup> day of May, 1992, and certified by Martha Girard who was then Director of the Federal Register or Acting Director of the Federal Register.

MR. KABREL: Okay, I can see where there was a lot of contentious issues around this period.

MR. SCROGGINS: There was some kind of personnel scandal at the time and I was... Oh, I don't remember. I just don't remember.

MR. KABREL: Let's get back on track with your life at this point. Do you want to move on to the next section of '95 to '98 when you were Special Assistant to the Archivist for Human Resources and Information Services?

MR. SCROGGINS: That was a lot of our job. I was off in a closet again but I was given things to do, if you know what I mean. I was doing odd staff jobs. I was not in charge of anything or supervising anybody. One of the things I worked on was the reimbursable funding for record centers. Steve Hannestad and I worked on



that a lot. Steve worked for Claudine when she did the original NARS A-1 history. Steve was in charge of security for the archives for a while. He was around for a long time and worked for Claudine Weiher and for Adrienne Thomas. Worked for me for a short time.

I guess there was something from the Bledsoe report that had to be implemented and I did something on that. I worked on the taskforce that was working on how to do the reimbursable funding for the record centers, and I was on a committee related to space planning for consolidating facilities. At that time I think Carlin was expecting me to recommend closing some of the regional archives. I was on a lot of the teams that reviewed IT contracts and other contracts related to information technology just reviewing the contracts. You had to have teams review the technical aspects of the contracts and stuff.

MR. KABREL: Did you recommend any regional archives to be closed?

MR. SCROGGINS: I retired.

MR. KABREL: Okay.

MR. SCROGGINS: I was starting to get asked about that when I retired and then I did not and I did some things immediately postretirement to make that more difficult for the Archivist to do.

MR. KABREL: Going back to FRC and reimbursable funding, how did that come about the idea of reimbursable funding moving in that direction?

MR. SCROGGINS: It had been talked about off and on for years and I'm not sure exactly how it came about because I don't think I was privy to the decision to go ahead and do something about it but I was assigned to work on how to do it and whether we want the courts to pay as well as the agencies and stuff and we had more than one group working on it. Steve Hannestad and I were working with all of them and we ended up with a report that had recommendations and choices to be made and we had a big powwow on. I think it was December 17, 1997, and that was the day that Carlin and Bellardo were called out to be told about the coming *Post* story about Mrs. Carlin. At that point, by Christmas of 1997 I was spending most of my time trying to find a job.

MR. KABREL: Was it because you were tired of the National Archives or was it because you saw the writing on the wall that would—that you were no longer—

MR. SCROGGINS: [Interposing] I saw the writing on the wall. I became eligible to retire on August 14, 1998. On August 13, 1998, I went and had lunch with Ren Cahoon and I said I am not happy. I want a real job. Here are three possible alternatives that I would be happy with. You are the Archivist, can you recommend something else but I will not stay with the status quo and as soon as I find a job I'm leaving and this is your notice. It took me 'til March to find a job.

MR. KABREL: Ren Cahoon was not amenable to you having one of the three options that you—

MR. SCROGGINS: [Interposing] Ren Cahoon was not amenable to the options that was within his power to grant and the Archivist was not amenable to either of the other options.

MR. KABREL: Do you want to talk about those options at all?

MR. SCROGGINS: No.

MR. KABREL: Okay.

MR. SCROGGINS: I'll mention one. That was to return to the job I had in 1970-74 in planning which they ended up giving to Jerry George and then Lori Lisowski which were reasonable candidates for the job, but that was one of the ones that I said I would be happy with. But I didn't think they would do it anyway.

MR. KABREL: Okay. Anything else you want to say at this period before we move on to some general questions that will stand during the course of everything we've talked about and then we'll get into what you did right after and at the very end of our interview.

MR. SCROGGINS: Let me talk about March of 1998 because I kept trying more and I sent out resumes and wrote to people. In March of 1998 Loretta Zooks who had worked for me in the regional archives in Chicago, and had left to go to Ancestry and had earlier co-authored Ancestry's book about the regional archives program, asked if I was interested in working for Ancestry and I said I could be. She set me up an appointment with the then owners of Ancestry and I flew out to Orem, Utah, and had an interview with the two people that owned Ancestry at that time.

That was like the 21, 22 or something of March and they said they' get back to me by the end of the following week and they called me on the last Friday in March and made an offer, and I said how about I come talk to you about it again and so they set up an appointment to see me first thing Tuesday morning March 31.

This is Friday afternoon. I called Steve Hannestad, who was then in charge of security, among other things and said can I clean out my office on Saturday. He said yes and he wrote out a pass for me for the guards to let me take stuff out of the building on Saturday and I went into Ren and said I'm probably leaving. I came in Saturday with my son and we took some of my personal stuff and I boxed up all the stuff that I left for Steve Heeps and I went down to Adrienne Thomas' office and tried to say goodbye to her but her secretary said she was in a meeting. So I wrote basically a two-line note and gave it to the secretary and said well I'm leaving and I won't be back. The secretary apparently gave it to her because as I approached the exit to Archives II Adrienne came running down the hall after me.

I left a little after 10 in the morning on Monday. I went to BWI and I got a Southwest flight and I had to change planes in St. Louis. Between flights in St. Louis I called personnel in St. Louis and I said I'm probably going to retire tomorrow, can I do it by mail or FedEx, and they told me what to do. I flew out the rest of the way to Utah and I had my second interview and came to terms with Ancestry on Tuesday morning the 31 and I spent Tuesday afternoon filling out the paperwork and faxed a copy to St. Louis and gave FedEx a copy to take and called Ren the next morning and said I don't work for you anymore. I started working for Ancestry.

MR. KABREL: How did you feel? I mean it must have in some ways been—was there a bittersweet feeling as well since you did have so much time in with the National Archives?

MR. SCROGGINS: Ralph Bledsoe told me when he retired, and he was not treated well the last year or two he was at the Archives, he told me that I would find it a great relief and I found that to be true. I was back in the building maybe a month or so later and Dick Higgins, who you probably don't know, but Dick worked for Debra Wall at the time, Dick looked at me and said you know you've de-aged 20 years. I worked for Ancestry for almost two years. We're done with my career at the Archives I guess.

One thing I did in the immediate month after I retired is I went to meetings in New York and in Philadelphia of people trying to keep the archives from closing those regional archives branches and attended those meetings and said a few words.

MR. KABREL: When was this? What period was this?

MR. SCROGGINS: It would have been the spring of '98.

MR. KABREL: In some ways your connection with the regional archives was strong throughout your career. Do you think that if you were to have been kept in that position do you think things in the regions may have been different?

MR. SCROGGINS: Yes, I think the regional archives program would be very different.

MR. KABREL: In what ways? Or what ways would you like to have seen them be different than they are today?

MR. SCROGGINS: I think you would have more records and you would be outreach engines that would have built a greater national constituency for the archives that would make it more well-known and probably have enhanced the archivist's authority to go get more records which would have made it more well-known that would have—you know what I mean? It would have gone into a feedback loop that probably would have helped the agency considerably but that's just my opinion, which is not the opinion of then or current management.

MR. KABREL: Why do you think it wasn't their opinion?

MR. SCROGGINS: I don't know because people are controlling.

MR. KABREL: Do you think that there's a disconnect between College Park or Archives I and the regions that there's a basic misunderstanding or lack of understanding of what the regions do?

MR. SCROGGINS: I can't speak to the status quo because I have not—are we off the record or are we still on the record?

MR. KABREL: We're still on the record but we can talk about that when I finish up if you like. I'll move on to something else and—

MR. SCROGGINS: [Interposing] Let me address that a little bit. I cannot speak to anything after April 1, 1998, other than what I personally did which wasn't much. The last time I was in a regional archives facility was probably late summer of 2004 when I was in Seattle. I visited a cousin who wanted to do research at the Seattle archives but seemed afraid to go there so I took her and we spent an afternoon with Sue Karran, and the last NARA employee other than you that I spoke to was probably Connie Potter before she retired. That was at the archives exhibit, they had a genealogical meeting, which the archives doesn't do anymore, and the last contact I had with the archives before that was probably when I had lunch with Debra Wall seven or eight years ago maybe, I forget the date, but I had lunch with Debra.

The last time I was in the National Archives Building—well there were three times when I was in the National Archives Building post-retirement. Once was for a memorial service for Mable Dietrichs. They had a memorial service for her in the auditorium in the archives building and I went to that. I spent one day doing research in the 1930 census on contract—I spent one day doing research in the 1930 census selecting some images for a book illustration on contracts for Jake Gearing who then worked for Heritage Quest and had worked with me at Ancestry. Those are the last two times I was in the building to really do anything and then the third time I was in the building was before the whole new exhibit opened. They invited retired employees to come look at it.

MR. KABREL: I think a lot of the questions that I had for you have already been answered during the course of you going through your history so I don't really have too much more to follow up on.

MR. SCROGGINS: Let me continue on your last question a little bit because I think the management interest in the regions and their existence or their opportunities has changed as Archivists have changed. I think Bahmer and Rhoads had one attitude and O'Neill and Warner probably either had a different attitude or didn't care and Frank Burke was probably more Bahmer and Rhoads and Don Wilson. I'm not sure about Don Wilson because he listened to Reed Whitaker, they were fraternity brothers, and Reed is one of those people like Claudine that was once a friend and ceased to be.

I think Wilson probably had some ideas similar to what I did about end results but different ideas about how to accomplish it and I think Carlin, probably more Mrs. Carlin's influence than his influence, was the other. I don't know what to say about the current Archivist or the current Deputy. I heard at one point that the current Deputy archivist had written a paper on the regional archives but I never saw it or have any idea what it said. If she ever discussed the regional archives with me it has not been since the early nineties when she was a trainee. I guess part of the answer to your last question was that the opinion of or the view or opportunity for the regional archives has waxed and waned over the years depending on who's in charge of the agency.

MR. KABREL: Yes. Do you think that the change of Archivists has affected your career?

MR. SCROGGINS: Yes. I think I was highly regarded by Bahmer and Bert Rhoads and I was not highly regarded by Jim O'Neill when he became the Acting Archivist.

MR. KABREL: Do you have any regrets within your career? I know it's a big question considering that it's a long career.

MR. SCROGGINS: I thought about that question. I may have some regrets but if you ask me if I would do anything differently the answer is probably not. I have some regrets that Claudine and Reed Whitaker turned on me, but I can't think of anything I could have done that would make that different. After reading your question I thought a lot about whether I would have done anything different and I don't think so except maybe get out earlier.

MR. KABREL: I know that you had said when I asked the question about what you're most proud of, what contributions you're most proud of you said to tell the truth most of the things at which I was most proud of at the time had not endured. One of your contributions was the regions and the regions have endured.

MR. SCROGGINS: But they have not endured in the way that I envisioned them or in the way that—the regions are less important in the agency today than they were when I left or when I left the program.

MR. KABREL: That may be true but I think due to your commitment to the regions they have at least endured to this moment in 2016.

MR. SCROGGINS: I think the relations with the genealogical community are important and have been important and I think they have been diminished in recent years. I think that NARS A-1 could have been the foundation for a lot of automated advances that probably were delayed by five to ten years because NARS A-1 effectively got killed.

MR. KABREL: Can you further explain NARS A-1?

MR. SCROGGINS: It started out basically as a way of automating the production of finding aids and if the

program had evolved and the data had been migrated we would have been way ahead compared to what happened when they effectively killed the program and tossed the data and started over.

MR. KABREL: What was the reason why the project was killed?

MR. SCROGGINS: You have to ask Trudy Peterson or Virginia Purdy. I got removed. I got sent off to the Office of Records Management and then put on the shelf or put in the closet and a lot of changes were made and nobody asked me my opinion or asked me to explain why things were done the way they were done or told me what they were doing so I don't know for sure. I could say that part of it was people didn't understand. I could say part of it was people didn't like me but I don't know for sure. There may have been valid criticisms of which I am unaware.

MR. KABREL: Then I will ask those questions of the people that I interview in the future.

MR. SCROGGINS: I can't believe that Trudy wouldn't talk to you.

MR. KABREL: I think she's been very busy. I didn't get an indication of a refusal to answer my questions as much as she seems to be extremely busy, but she did give me contact information for two individuals that I hope to get to.

MR. SCROGGINS: Dick Jacobs and Jack Landers would probably be very good people to talk to, Dick especially.

MR. KABREL: I do have numbers for them so I will be reaching out to them. One final question I want to ask you which might be on the mind of a lot of people who are listening here. You left the archives for Ancestry.com. Do you think that Ancestry had a hand in possibly diminishing the importance of the regions?

MR. SCROGGINS: I think that digitizing records and in effect making microfilm obsolete might have accomplished that but I wouldn't blame Ancestry for that. I'd blame the changing technology if anything. The fact that Ancestry did it doesn't mean it's Ancestry's fault, if you know what I mean. If the church had been ahead of the game or if MyHeritage or FindMyPast or one of Ancestry's competitors had been first to it it would have been them. It's the changing technology and partly the inability or unwillingness or whatever of the National Archives and Records Administration to keep up or to I don't know...

MR. KABREL: Private enterprise fills in where government maybe doesn't have the financial resources to do what Ancestry eventually did.

MR. SCROGGINS: That might be part of it but I wouldn't blame it all on the financial resources. I blame it partly on the motivation or the spirit of innovation or whatever because I think that if—the archives was involved in large-scale microfilming before most anybody else. The National Archives was innovators in distributing records on microfilm but was not an innovator in distributing records in digital form. It was not a private enterprise that innovated distributing records to the public in microform, it was the National Archives followed by the Mormon Church.

MR. KABREL: Very good point.

MR. SCROGGINS: I think that the National Archives could have chosen to be the innovator in digitizing records or getting them digitized or finding someone to digitize or finding the resources to digitize them or using the genealogical community to drive demand in such a way that they would get the resources to do it and management basically chose not to do so. Whether that was an active choice or a passive choice I couldn't say. The National Archives in its basically 80-year history has been an innovator during some

periods of time and a follower in others and I don't think it's been an innovator in the last couple decades.

MR. KABREL: Can you venture a reason why?

MR. SCROGGINS: The basic thing is who's in charge and who they listen to I think. Read the Herb Angel thing. Records Management, that was an innovation that was prompted in part by the war but some of the thinking about it happened in the thirties before the war and you'll see that more as you read the Angel thing.

MR. KABREL: The Herb Angel transcript?

MR. SCROGGINS: Right. You had a management with a lot of bright people and let the bright people go do their thing. The microfilm publication program is from the same era and some of the same people. Then both the microfilm program and the records management program got pushed later on that caused more innovation and sometimes it was external things that prompted the pushes but the archives were ahead of the games in a lot of ways. I can't think of ways that it's been ahead of the game for a long time.

MR. KABREL: In conclusion is there anything that you'd like to add before we stop the interview?

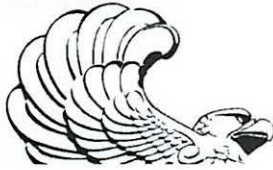
MR. SCROGGINS: No but there are a couple of things I'll add after we stop the interview.

MR. KABREL: Thank you very much Mr. Scroggins. It's been wonderful for you to take us back and to add to the history of the National Archives. It's very important and I think your honesty will be appreciated by generations to come.

MR. SCROGGINS: I guess I should say you're welcome.

MR. KABREL: Thank you.

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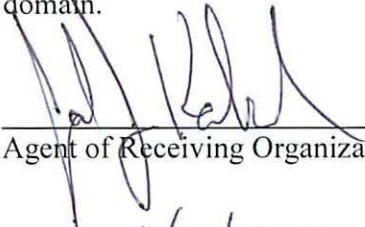
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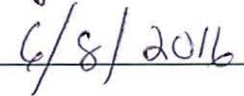
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