U.S. NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS ADMINISTRATION
TRANSCRIPT OF ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW
Subject: Harold Pinkett
Interviewer: Rod Ross
June 10, 1985

[Tape 1, Side 1]

Rod Ross: This is Rod Ross. This afternoon, June 10, 1985, I shall be speaking with Harold T. Pinkett, P-I-N-K-E-T-T at his home in Washington, DC. Dr. Pinkett, can we begin by your telling a bit of background about yourself prior to the time you joined the staff of the National Archives in terms of your date and place of birth and education and location of upbringing?

Harold Pinkett: Yes, I was born in Salisbury, Maryland, April the 7, 1914. I attended the public schools of Salisbury, Maryland. I went to Morgan College upon graduation from high school in Salisbury, where I graduated in 1935. I had a very pleasant experience, Morgan College. It was a very profitable program. I graduated summa cum laude as I had graduated from high school. Upon graduation from Morgan College in 1935, I taught in the public schools of Baltimore, Maryland for a period of a year and a half, approximately. I taught Latin in the high schools. This was a minor subject that I had taken in my program at Morgan College. My major had been history. However, jobs were easier to get, it seemed at the time, in something other than the social sciences. So it happened that I was appointed as an instructor in Latin. I guess it's of some interest to note that Latin was still one of the required subjects in the secondary program in Baltimore, Maryland, at this time, for students who were headed for a college program.

I did not like public school teaching to any great extent. The discipline, I found to be a problem. I suppose I was also at some disadvantage because I had such a youthful appearance and the students were less inclined to take me seriously because I didn't look much older than they did. I had graduated from college at the age of 20, So, I decided that I really wanted to concentrate on teaching history. So I decided to go to graduate school to get a graduate degree in history.

At the time, I probably would have gone to the University of Maryland, had not the laws of segregation being had they not been what they were at that time. Blacks were not being admitted to either undergraduate or graduate programs at the University of Maryland in 1935. There existed a very, I suppose you might call it unusual arrangement, although it was not unusual since many other Southern states were following the same procedure. Blacks were offered an opportunity to go to out of state schools for graduate training if that training was not available to them in their home state. The condition being that the state would provide the difference in the expense of what it would cost to go out of state from what the cost would be in state.

And a scholarship program existed for this program to which one could apply for an out of state scholarship. So I was awarded a scholarship to go to the University of Pennsylvania, which was my choice at the time. I had relatives living in Philadelphia and it would be less expensive for me to go there and live with them. So I enrolled in the University of Pennsylvania and I

graduated from Pennsylvania with a Master of Arts degree in 1938. I don't know how much more you want me to bring it up to the Archives, to the time I was appointed at the Archives.

Rod: Yes, please.

Harold: Following graduation from University of Pennsylvania 1938 with a Master's degree in history, I sought employment in college teaching and I was successful in the fall of 1938, getting an appointment at Livingston College in Salisbury, North Carolina. This was a Methodist church college that had been established during the last quarter of the nineteenth century. And I had been reasonably familiar with it from my contact with Black colleges at the time. I suppose I was aided in getting the position by the fact that the professor of history at that college was on leave at the time, working on a Ph.D. at the University of Chicago. So what I got, in effect, was a substitute appointment for him during his period of leave.

Rod: Did Livingston have a one person history department at the time?

Harold: It was a one person department. Incidentally, it was history and political science. One person taught in both of those fields. I finished the year 38-39 at Livingston College. And since I had been hired only for the year, I decided to seek further employment, but that was not forthcoming during 1939. But in the meantime I had applied for admission to graduate school at Columbia University and here again the out of state scholarship arrangement in Maryland came into play. As a resident of Maryland, I was entitled to apply for assistance to get a Ph.D. at Columbia University or elsewhere.

So I enrolled in Columbia in the fall of 1939. And while I was pursuing graduate work at Columbia University, I noticed the federal civil service examination for a position of archivist. I didn't know it at the time anything about the archival profession. But I read the requirements for the examination and found that I fully qualified since the emphasis was in history related social sciences. I took the examination in New York and passed it with a pretty good grade. I believe it was about 87. And I heard nothing from the examination other than getting the grade for some time, for more than a year, as a matter of fact.

So, after one year at Columbia University, I was unable to continue in the second year, my funds had pretty well been exhausted for the time being. I sought employment again as a teacher, and I received an appointment at a junior college in St. Augustine, Florida. I accepted that appointment. This would have been the fall of 1940. And I went to St. Augustine, Florida, where I was employed for a period of about six months at what was then called Florida Normal College. Since that time that college has moved to Miami, Florida, and I believe has a four year program at the present time.

After six months at that Florida Normal College in St. Augustine, Florida, I receive word from Livingston College that a vacancy existed in the history department because the professor for whom I had substituted had died and the college wished me to return and offered me a full permanent position at the college. I had enjoyed my work at Livingston, so I decided to accept

that position. The salary was somewhat higher than I was getting in Florida. So in January of 1941, I believe it was, I returned to Livingston College as head of the History and Political Science Department.

I continued my teaching career at Livingston from January '41 to April 1942. During the early part of 1942, I received word from the Civil Service Commission offering me a position in the National Archives. So I was then faced with a decision of whether I wanted to continue teaching at Livingston College or to accept the appointment at the National Archives. The salary offered at the National Archives was somewhat greater than I had been getting at Livingston, and it seemed to me it offered more economic security because this was a private college with the funding somewhat uncertain from year to year. I decided therefore to resign at Livingston Coalition to come to Washington in April of 1942. I did resign and accepted an appointment at the National Archives.

Rod: If you could backtrack just a moment to when you received the appointment from the Civil Service Commission—was that for an entry level archivist position?

Harold: No it was not. It was for a sub-professional position. I believe the classification at that time was SP4, I think it was then known as archives assistant.

Rod: as that the position that you came in under?

Harold: I was appointed, now let me see. I was offered the appointment at the SP4 level. It was indicated, I believe, that this was an entry level from which I had a potential or a possibility for promotion to a professional level. And I think it was largely on that basis that I accepted it. Actually, at the time, I wasn't too familiar with the level structure. So although it actually paid more than I was getting at Livingston College, it was not the professional level, which was then the P1 level. But I accepted it because it looked better.

Rod: In retrospect, what do you think was the impact of the Fair Employment Practices Commission in having the Civil Service Commission offer you the appointment?

Harold: Well, in retrospect, I can say that I think the offer of the appointment was very much due to the interest the Fair Employment Practices Committee had in seeing that federal agencies gave fair treatment to Blacks in employment, particularly at the professional level. I say this because in later years I saw documentation to the effect that the commission had written to the then Archivist of the United States, Solon J. Buck, inquiring when the Archives expected to appoint a Negro in a professional position, and the reply from Dr. Buck was that we have been considering this for a long time and we have found a person who we expect to appoint in April 1942. So it was undoubtedly high that the reference was to and it would seem from this that my appointment was certainly hastened at the Archives by the interest which the Fair Employment Practices Committee had in that agency, appointing Blacks at the time.

Rod: In a previous conversation, we had you mentioned Theodore Schellenberg as being either an early employer or particularly influential in your being hired. Could you speak on that point?

Harold: Well, after my appointment to the Archives in April 1942, and I might say it's my recollection that all new appointees to the Archives at that time from civil service list were being appointed at the SP4 level, which was the sub-professional level. After I had been at the in the Archives about two months, vacancies apparently were occurring for professional employees in several units of the Archives at the time. So in the course of events, I was interviewed by the head of one of the units in the Archives who was Theodore Schellenberg. He was then chief of what was known as the Agriculture Department Archives. He was looking for an employee at the P1 level, that was the entering professional level. So I was interviewed with the three or four other SP4s who had been appointed almost during the same time I had and I was notified in a few days after the interview that he had chosen me for appointment in his division.

I think I was not harmed in his consideration of me by the fact that we were both graduates of the University of Pennsylvania and that his assistant chief, Lewis J. Darter, was also a graduate of the University of Pennsylvania. So I suppose one might say that this is where associated backgrounds from a university come into play in promoting the interest of another alumnus from that university. I wouldn't like to say it was purely favoritism, although I think, you know, he had the choice of selecting some other persons. I think it probably was something of a tribute to me, the fact that I was selected because I was the first Black to be chosen for a professional position. And I think, knowing what employment practices tended to be like at the time, but Blacks were not routinely appointed, more often than not, they were thought to be better qualified than their peers when they were being considered in a similar situation.

Rod: In looking at the history of employment of early archivists, the University of Minnesota and the University of Pennsylvania standout in having large numbers of large numbers of persons becoming archivists—who would be some of the other University of Pennsylvania persons besides yourself, Schellenberg, and Darter?

Harold: Well, Hamer. His first name is Philip Hamer. Philip Hamer was an outstanding graduate from Pennsylvania and Dallas Irvine had also taken his doctorate at Pennsylvania. Those two were heads of units in the Archives when I entered.

Rod: Would you like to say your impressions of Theodore Schellenberg? Partly, why I ask, was he apparently has a reputation of having been anti-Black, whereas now he gave a professional due to you. He also had a reputation of being anti-Semitic. And yet Meyer Fishbein apparently owed his upward mobility in the Archives also to Schellenberg.

Harold: I have heard of these things from various people. Personally, I did not discern any bias in his relations with me. I think if he did have a bias in either of these directions, he was inclined to perhaps put it aside when he evaluated individuals that he may have had a group bias. But I think he was pretty objective in evaluating and dealing with individuals in a professional

situation. I don't think he would let that bias, if he had it, blind to the abilities of persons, regardless of what their background was. So, I can say really that I don't think at all that he showed any bias toward me

Rod: During the 1930s and the term of Connor as Archivist, the Archives had a reputation of being a very southern institution. Socially, how well did you find acceptance at the Archives and professionally once you became a professional there?

Harold: Well, there was no problem, professionally. The social situation tended to be somewhat awkward, mainly because of the situation that existed in Washington at the time. I would be invited to lunch from time to time and there was always a problem of where we might go to lunch because most of the lunch facilities in downtown Washington at the time were segregated. And I had the choice of simply saying no, making up an excuse possibly, or pointing this out to the individual who might have forgotten the racial situation temporarily. And then with the two of us deciding to go to one of the few places, for example, the Recorder of Deeds office at 6th and D Street, NW had a cafeteria that was desegregated. In fact, most of the employees of that agency, a District of Columbia agency, were Black. So they had a fairly good cafeteria. I had the choice of going there, or if we didn't do that, actually the only other nearby facility would be going to a five and dime store or to one of the lunch counters in one of the department stores and standing up because Blacks were not permitted to sit at the counter. So I say all of that to indicate that the mores in Washington tended to complicate my social relations with my peers and associates in the Archives, but within the Archives and in professional contacts and meetings and so forth, I didn't discern any attempt on the part of any person to discriminate.

Rod: What were your responsibilities at the Archives initially during that first two month period and then I believe you left for war service?

Harold: Yes, in 1943, the latter part of '43,

Rod: So, during that first year or so?

Harold: Most of my time during that period was spent in arrangement and description work. One of the early assignments that I received was to arrange certain series of records of the U.S. Forest Service in the Archives. These records had been there for several years and they were in some state of disorder. And I was asked to study the arrangement that seem to exist and if possible, to restore it to the original order. So I did that and then I prepared what was then called a preliminary checklist of these records. So most of my first months at the Archives were devoted to arrangement and description.

I did also handle some routine requests in reference service. Most of these would be requests from the Department of Agriculture since I was working with the records of that department and these would be given priority over the arrangement and description work that I was doing.

So would it was the three functions of arrangement, description, and reference service, pretty much in that order, that occupied most of my early months.

Rod: Which was that when you were an SP4?

Harold: This would be after I became a P1. I might say the two months or so that I was an SP4 were spent almost entirely in packing and shelving in a unit that was then known as the Division of the Independent Agencies Archives. And this was a unit that had responsibility for the non-cabinet level agencies. As I recall, I spent quite a bit of time packing and shelving and labeling case files of the agency that enforced the prohibition laws. I don't even remember the agency's name, but it was the enforcement of the Volstead Act, and there were hundreds of feet of records of this agency in the Archives that had been transferred. And it consisted primarily of simply taking them out of file cabinets, putting them in steel trays, which were being used at that time primarily for packing, making a list, and then putting the labels on the tray years after the list had been made.

I might say, I was getting somewhat unhappy with that activity. And I think had I continued in it for several more months, I might not have remained in the Archives. But after I got the appointment with Schellenberg in his division, the challenge of the work was much different. And I began to take much more kindly to archival duties.

Rod: Skipping ahead but your dissertation dealt with Gifford Pinchot. Was it your work with the Forest Service records that led you to choose such a topic?

Harold: Very much so. I had decided that I wanted to continue on my doctorate that I had begun at Columbia University. So I began to give some thought to a topic and I decided that while I was very much impressed with Pinchot as I worked with the Forest Service records, I had read about him in general courses in American history, the Ballenger-Pinchot controversy, is dealt with in nearly all history textbooks. However, I was impressed by the fact that not much attention seemingly had been given to him purely as a professional forester. As he appeared in the in the textbook, he was more or less cast in a political light in his contest with the President Taft.

So the more I looked into the Forest Service records, the more I discovered that there were neglected facets of his life, particularly his professional training and background that had almost been neglected in accounts of him. I did learn after I had been at the Archives for some time, that a biography of Pinchot was underway by Professor McGeary, a Political Scientist at Pennsylvania State University. However, I discovered that this was going to be a biography which would deal with his entire career, and it too was going to deal very largely with his political impact.

So I decided that I would continue to look at Pinchot more from the angle of his impact on forestry and conservation because I had learned very early in studying the Forest Service records that he was the first American-born person to undertake forestry as a career. And I

learned that there was no forestry training available in the United States at the time, and he had been forced to go to Europe to get his formal training and that he had returned for some time and practiced forestry, first as a consulting forester, and later had gotten into, well, it was mainly a consulting forester during those early years. That period of his life had been almost entirely neglected in accounts of Pinchot. You only heard of him when he became chief of the Forest Service in 1889 in most accounts. So in answer to your question, I can say definitely that my interest in Pinchot did stem very much directly from this early experience of working with the Forest Service.

Rod: So you were a professional level archivist in '42-43. Did you voluntarily decide to leave the Archives for World War II?

Harold: I was drafted, so that was not voluntary. [Laughter]

Rod: When was it that you left the Archives?

Harold: I left the Archives in December 1943 and I was in the military service from 1943 to April 1946. My military experience in the United States consisted largely of work in a special training unit at Camp Holabird just outside of Baltimore, Maryland. This unit was engaged in giving training to semi-literate Black soldiers, trying to teach them the fundamentals of reading, writing, and arithmetic in a six week training program so that they would be able to be used more profitably as soldiers. So I was a teacher in this elementary training program in Baltimore during most of 1944. The latter part of the year that program was closed and it was decided that most of the instructors would be reassigned and it was my fate to be reassigned to overseas duty. So in the early part of 1945 I was prepared for service in Europe and departed for Europe just a day after Franklin Roosevelt died.

I went to France in April 1945. About three or four days after I landed at Le Havre in France, the Germans surrendered. So I did not see any actual military engagements in Europe. I was reassigned in Europe, therefore, for duty in the Asiatic Pacific Theater, which of course that was where the operations were still going on. So it was the latter part of May I believe, of 1945, I was put on a troop ship in southern France, Marseilles. And then I was headed for the Asiatic Pacific Theater. We crossed the Atlantic and came through the Panama Canal. And about five days after we passed through the Panama Canal, the Japanese surrendered. This would have been August, I suppose.

And we continued, however, toward the Asiatic Pacific Theater because it had been decided that a sizable American force would be needed in Asia after the war anyway. So my ship continued to the Philippine Islands and we arrived there in September of that year. We stayed in the Philippines a couple of months for a routine. Well, nothing actually was done. We were in camp there. I was in a Signal Corps Battalion, I should say, and in the headquarters company of the Signal Corps Battalion in the supply office I became in the course of sometime the Assistant Battalion Supply Sergeant.

After being in the Philippines, I was then assigned to a unit that went to Japan and the unit was stationed in the Yokohama area in Japan, not too far from Tokyo. And I remained with that unit, became Supply Sergeant of the battalion while in Japan, and this elevated me to the top rank for a noncommissioned officer Technical Sergeant. I worked in that capacity until I qualified for reassignment back to the United States and discharged, and this took place in April of 1946. So I returned from Japan, was discharged in Maryland, and in June, after a period of leave I was given, I returned to duty in the National Archives in June 1946.

Rod: During that one year plus period in the early 40s, and then when you returned in 1946, what training did you have to increase your skills or learn how to be an archivist? Did you take Ernest Posner or Solon Buck's courses?

Harold: Oh, yes. Soon after returning after the war, I don't recall whether it was '46 or '47, I enrolled in the course which Ernest Posner was then teaching in the Archives called *The History and Administration of Archives.* As I recall, it was a two semester program at the time and but I enrolled in it without credit because I had not fully decided at that time that I was going to pursue a doctoral program. This would probably be in the fall of 1946. So I took the Posner course without credit actually, but I found it to be very useful for giving me a background for the work of an archivist.

At the same time, the Archives had some internal training activities. As I recall, there were seminars from time to time which the junior archivists were given an opportunity to hear discussions of archival practices and techniques by some of the more experienced members of the staff. But the Posner course I would say was perhaps the thing that gave me the greatest assistance in learning more about the profession of archivist.

Rod: Let me turn the tape over to the other side.

[Tape 1, Side 2]

Rod: This is side 2 a taped conversation. Dr. Pinkett, when you returned to the Archives in 1946, what type of reception did you get in terms of being a serviceman returning? Apparently this was a very difficult readjustment period for the Archives with people who had been there not at all pleased to see servicemen come back and they perhaps lose their jobs. I imagine it was somewhat difficult that servicemen also coming back, having seniority and yet finding themselves perhaps not doing the same work that they've been doing when they left. Did you go back to the very same position that you had?

Harold: I returned to the same position and to the same unit. I believe, however, Dr. Schellenberg had gone to the OPA, Office of Price Administration, at the time. However, and his successor was then Herman Kahn. However, I did return to the unit where the agriculture records were being administered. I didn't have any problem of returning to the work or any conflict with the people who had been appointed during the war years. A few of them in the unit, as I recall, had come in during the war period and they remained for some time after I

returned. I might say one of the reasons for my accepting employment in the Archives was the knowledge that I would have reemployment rights if I went into military service. And when I was teaching at Livingston College, it was apparent that I was likely to be drafted and such rights were not guaranteed in private employment at the time. So I don't recall that there was any question of my reappointment and or that I actually displaced anyone in my particular unit within a disagreeable effects. So that was no problem.

Rod: Do the names, Dan Lacy, Stuart Portner, and Herbert Rifkin bring forth any particular associations?

Harold: I knew of those persons, but the level that I was operating at the time didn't occasion any contact that I would have with them. I did learn from other people in the agency that their employment had created a problem. They were at fairly high levels and I was not fully certain just why they were disliked by certain congressmen. I think it was something other than the fact that they had come into the agency during the war period and they were presumably in positions which other persons might have had had they not left to go into the Army. But I knew of those men and I heard that there was some problem about their future employment. But being still only, I think a P2 archivist at this time, I wouldn't have any occasion to have had much contact with them.

Rod: What was morale like in the Archives during the last year of Solon Buck's term?

Harold: Well, I think there was some uncertainty as to what might happen in the Archives when it was thought that he would be leaving. The Archives, of course, were still at this time subject to the head of the Archives, was, of course, subject to Presidential appointment and there was no indication who his successor might be or whether someone from within the Archives or someone without. As I recall, there was a change of political parties about this time. And I think there was some fear. I suppose this would have been the Eisenhower, the first Eisenhower administration.

[Cross-talk]

Rod: So this would be after Wayne Grover?

Harold: Yes, there was some fear that there might be some political person appointed as the as the successor. I guess maybe I'm ahead of my story. This might be the fear that existed with the departure if Grover rather than the departure of Buck. And I think your interest is in Buck. I don't think there was any great worry among the rank and file of the people, except when there was the prospect that a Republican administration might appoint a conservative person. And there was such a professor at one of the local universities who I understood was very much interested in the position and I think the Archives employees probably tended to be of more of a liberal bent than employees in most federal agencies at that time. And they would view with some concern as a conservative at the head of the agency. But frankly, I can't say that there was any strong feeling of anxiety among the lower level people.

Rod: If I could move ahead and have you trace out your career from the time you returned after World War II to the time of your retirement.

Harold: Well, after returning in ’46 I was promoted, as I recall, within a couple of years after returning back. I think it was less than a year I was promoted to P2, as it was then called. I served in that capacity for a period of two or three years, and then I was promoted to P3.

Rod: This is still within the Agriculture records?

Harold: I’m still within the same unit dealing with records of the Agriculture Department. When I became a P3, I was then an assistant chief of what was then called, I believe, the Agriculture Section. The old divisions with the titles of the cabinet level department had been abolished. There was no longer a division of Agriculture Department archives. The Agriculture Department records and the Interior Department records during this time had been merged into a Natural Resources Division.

So where I was working was really now a, while they called it a section, I believe. But forget about that. It was a subordinate unit to the Natural Resources unit. When I became the P3, I was assistant chief of the unit that had the Agriculture Department records. My chief at the time was a man named Carl Kulsrud, K-U-L-S-R-U-D. Dr. Kulsrud had worked with records of the Soil Conservation Service in the Department of Agriculture and he entered the Archives during my absence in the Army. He was now chief of the unit. In effect, he was Schellenberg’s successor, although he was operating at a lower administrative level.

Dr. Kulsrud retired in 1959. So, then the position of the chief of that unit was open and there was a chance for me to apply for that position and I did apply it. Several other P3s in the organization applied at the same time. There was some doubt in the minds of many people whether I being a Black would be appointed, because this would be the first time a Black employee had been appointed to head an administrative unit at a professional level in the Archives.

I thought that my promotion to that position came somewhat more slowly than it normally would have come. The choice of making the decision was in the hands of all of Oliver Holmes who had then become the head of this Natural Resource unit that had Agriculture and Interior records. I’m inclined to think that Dr. Holmes was just naturally very deliberate about most things, and probably there was no bias that he had toward promoting me. But he usually insisted on evaluating everything very carefully and wanted to look at the merits, the pluses and minuses of everything. So, I did, in the meantime, however, have a chance to talk to Dr. Schellenberg, who had returned to the Archives in a front office position, and he was now in effect Holmes’ superior, I think, I forget what he was called, but he was the equivalent of what in later years was the Assistant Archivist for the National Archives. So Dr. Schellenberg assured me he thought there was no question about my getting the position. And I suspect he nudged

Dr. Holmes in making the appointment. So that came in 1959 and I served as chief of what was then the Agriculture section from 1959 to 1962.

In 1962 a major reorganization in the Archives occurred. In this changed several units, particularly sections, were abolished and merged with other sections to form larger units of operation. In that situation my branch was abolished and the functions of my branch were assigned to another unit, which I think was called something like Social and Economic Records Division, headed by Jane Smith. Jane Smith had been my peer since she was in charge of the Interior Department records at the time I was in charge of the Agriculture Department.

At the same time, this reorganization resulted in the creation of a new super office known as the Office of Records Appraisal. Schellenberg was made the head of this office and in a sense, he somewhat fell from the former status that he had because while he kept the same grade, his influence administratively was now limited to one function in the Archives organization. Whereas as Assistant Archivist or Director of Archival Management, I think was the title he had, he was, more or less, supervisor of all of the archival functions. Now, he was to devote his attention to appraisal.

The heads of sections like mine that were abolished were, for the most part, transferred to this Office of Records Appraisal. We were all called in by the Archivist at the time, and it was explained to us, the Deputy Archivist, actually, I believe it was Robert Bahmer. It was explained to us that we shouldn't feel too badly about our units being abolished, our services were going to be equally used by the Archives in this new capacity. And he said that appraisal was the big job that remained to be done. The Archives was on top of the other functions pretty well, and this new office needed bright people. Such is that we were those whose jobs that, in effect, had been abolished.

Anyway, we did not lose our grades, our section, positions. We went to the Office of Records Appraisal, Meyer Fishbein from the abolished section. Morris Rieger came, Lyle Holverstott came, you Mark Eckhoff came. These persons that all headed sections comparable to mine. In the Office of Record Appraisal there developed a program known as Retention Planning and a division of labor was arranged whereby where the planning for the retention of records would be done by people who had specialized in certain areas of the government as heads of administrative units.

So this meant that as far as planning the retention of records of the Agriculture Department was concerned, I was the expert in that field. So I was charged with responsibility to prepare plans for all the agencies of the Agriculture Department with a view to designating records of those agencies that had permanent value. And this program was somewhat the reverse of the records disposition, because the emphasis here was not on determining records to be disposed of, but rather determining those to be saved. But of course, it was just one side of the same coin.

Rod: This would be the inverse of what the special examiners had been doing in the 1930s.

Harold: Yes. Or more accurately, the reverse of what the records management division was doing in working out schedules with the agencies. The operations then were headed largely by Herbert Angel and Ev Alldridge.

Anyway, I was in Records Retention Planning from 1968 to 1971. At the same time, however, I had another important responsibility as editor of the *American Archivist.* After I had been in the Office of Records appraisal for well, I guess it would have been about six years, in 1968, the position of the editor of the *American Archivist* became available. And I had not sought to be made editor, however, for the outgoing editor, Kenneth Munden, had recommended me to Robert Bahmer, the Deputy Archivist. The office of the editor was headquartered at this time in the National Archives, as it had been for several years previously.

Rod: Bahmer would have been Archivist by this time, this is 1968.

Harold: 1968 Bahmer was now Archivist. Right. So when the Society of American Archivists asked for his advice as to, well actually asked him to make available another staff person for that assignment, I was selected for that assignment. It was not, however, quite as simple as that. Before this position became available, the position of head of the Office of Records Appraisal had become open. Schellenberg had left by the middle of the 60s. He had been succeeded by Lewis Darter and Darter was head of the office for two or three years, and then he retired.

So the position of the head of the Records Appraisal Division. By this time it had been downgraded from an office to a division, was open, and I and other members in this unit were the logical contenders to head it. I felt that my credentials were probably stronger than anyone in that division at the time. Certainly from an academic point of view. I believe I was the only one that had a Ph.D. and I had written more professionally than anyone in the division.

However, some interest at this time had begun to develop in computers and such. And Meyer Fishbein, who was my chief competitor for the position, emphasized his interest and his experience in dealing in this field, although I don't think it was all that great. However, Meyer got the nod to head the Records Appraisal Division and there was a recognition by Bahmer that it was a disappointment to me. So when the position of editor of the *American Archivist* became available, I am sure that feeling which he had in which he knew that I had, played in his decision to give this to me. So, you might say it was something of a consolation prize.

I accepted it for what it was worth. And I will say that I found it very professionally rewarding. It gave me contacts in the archival profession, which I'm sure I would not have had otherwise. As editor of the journal, I became active in affairs of the Society of American Archivists, went to all of the meetings, council meetings. I was an ex officio member of the council.

Rod: First time joining SAA?

Harold: I first joined the SAA, I would say, shortly after I returned from the Army. I am sure I was not in before I went in. So this would have been in '46 or '47 I became a member.

Rod: So that was during the period when the SAA invited individual members as opposed to in the '60s when they opened the membership up to anyone who wanted to join. Or am I characterizing that incorrectly?

Harold: I think you're not. It's all to my recollection, membership was always open to people who wanted to apply for membership. There wasn't any pressure by the Archives for employees to join it. And the Society, I think, simply made the effort to encourage people to join. And many of the administrative people in the Archives encouraged their subordinates to join it. But I don't believe that there was any change in the way they approached staff members to join.

Rod: Let me backtrack just a couple of months before we move on. H.G. Jones. As you know, he was very proud of the fact that the SAA integrated the leading hotel in Raleigh during one of their annual meetings and apparently had you and your wife in mind as well.

Harold: I'll be glad to elaborate a bit on my experience. The annual meeting of the Society of American Archivists in 1963 was in Raleigh, North Carolina, and I had been encouraged to go. For one thing, it was suggested by someone I was being considered for appointment to the council of the SAA at this time. This was before there was a mail ballot and officers were elected at the annual meetings. I was rather cool toward the idea of going to Raleigh because segregation still was the law in the state at that time, and I knew that it might be a problem of my getting accommodation at the hotel where the meeting was taking place. I learned from H.G. Jones that this probably would not be a problem. That the arrangement committee would make sure that this would not take place. And I was therefore encouraged to attend this meeting.

I accepted that and I prepared to go. When I arrived at the hotel, when the head bellman came to the taxicab and asked me, was I checking in at the hotel. And I said, yes, I have a reservation. So he said to one of his subordinates, "take this gentleman's bag to the desk and see what happens." So the bellman took my luggage there and I presented my written reservation and the desk clerk said, "oh, yes, Dr. Pinkett, we were expecting you." And he proceeded to assign me to a room, which was a very good room in the front of the building. And that's all there was to it. Except, of course, it was clear that the arrangement committee had asked the hotel to give a special dispensation to me to accommodate me as a member of the meeting that was taking place in the hotel. And I had later learned that H.G. Jones, as chairman of the arrangement committee, had probably spearheaded this effort.

I was further made aware of the fact that this was breaking a barrier of some kind by several of the employees at the hotel because they were overly solicitous toward me while I was there. And the assistant manager came to me one time when I was attending one of the receptions and asked me, was everybody treating me all right? So in effect, I suppose it could be said that I

desegregated the Sir Walter Hotel in Raleigh in 1963. This was one year, of course, before the Civil Rights Act was passed, which more or less opened all of the Southern public accommodations to Blacks. But this was, I think, due very largely to H.G. Jones and the arrangements committee.

But this, of course, is just a commentary on the status of Blacks generally at this time. There was always an uncertainty as to whether they could get public accommodations in situations where other persons were getting it. And if they did get the accommodation, it was by a special arrangement. It reminded me of Booker T. Washington's experience. Booker T. Washington rode in Pullman cars long before other Blacks were doing it in the South. But special arrangements were made for Mr. Washington.

Rod: Donald McCoy's history of the National Archives says that until the 1960s, there were rarely more than two or three other Black professionals besides yourself at any one time on the Archives staff. Who were some of the other Black professionals?

Harold: Roland McConnell, who left the Archives shortly after the war to accept a professorship at what is now Morgan State University in Baltimore, was one. He came to the Archives, I think, during the latter part of 1943, some months after my appointment. To my recollection, he was the second Black to receive a professional appointment and he was in the Archives, I would say roughly from the latter part of '43 to sometime in '46. After I returned he left, I think it was the fall of '46, he took a professorship at Morgan College.

Dwight Wilson was another Black who was appointed during the war and he had temporary status and was bumped by one of the returning employees at the end of the war, He left the Archives to become archivist at Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee. There were two other Blacks who were appointed during the war, but I believe neither of them had permanent status and they were bumped by other employees when the war was over. So McCoy's statement is basically true.

Rod: What about into the 1950s?

Harold: In the 1950s, it remained, I guess, pretty much true also. I think actually, at no time during my entire carFeer in the National Archives were there more than five or six, but it would certainly not be more than two or three in the in the 1950s, the early 1950s.

Rod: Let's continue with your career both with the editorship of the *American Archivist*, as well as were you still in Records Appraisal?

Harold: Yes. In 1968, I had the dual position of Assistant Director of the Records Appraisal Division and editor of the *American Archivist.* As a matter of fact, most of my time went into the *American Archivist* after 1968. From 1968 to 1971, while I was in the appraisal division wearing two hats, as a matter of fact. The work of the editor was such that it took, I would say easily, 65 to 70 percent of my time rather than the appraisal work. In 1971, there was another

reorganization in the Archives which resulted in some of the large administrative units being subdivided again into smaller units such. Not as small, however, as they had been prior to 1962, but there was another subdivision of them into smaller ones than had existed from '62 to '71.

And in that arrangement, I was invited to head what was now being called the Natural Resources Branch of the Social and Economic Records Division. And in effect, this was an opportunity to me to return to the area that I had actually begun work in the Archives because the Natural Resources Branch had the Agriculture Department records, plus the Interior Department records. And I was interested in accepting that offer, mainly because all during the years I had retained an interest in the history of federal agricultural programs and agricultural policy and conservation policy.

I was, however, somewhat disappointed at the time because I had applied for the position of Division Chief for the Social and Economic Records Division, which would have been a larger one. That was the parent organization for the branch that I took the position in. So the transfer from the appraisal division and editor of the *American Archivist* to this branch position was a transfer in grade. I was told by the Archivist and by the head of the office of the National Archives that I could not continue as editor of the *American Archivist* because I was getting a job that had too many responsibilities. And but frankly, there was the fear that I wouldn't give proper administrative attention to the branch position if I continued as editor. I told them I thought I can do both jobs very well. I did not succeed in convincing them that. In any event, I was told I would have to give up the job of editing the *American Archivist* if I took this position as the branch chief. And with that choice, I preferred to take the branch chief position.

I suspect, however, that also there was some interest in giving the editorship to another employee in the National Archives establishment at that time and to bring that employee to Washington. This was Ed Weldon, who was chief of a branch in the Records Center in Atlanta, Georgia, at the time, and apparently had impressed top level people at the Archives that he would be a good person to bring in to Washington. So I think to make his coming to Washington more attractive to him, this was perhaps held out to him as something that would make it more attractive. But in any event, became my successor in 1961, 1971, I should say.

Rod: I'm going to have to turn over the tape.

Harold: All right.

[Tape 2, Side 1]

Rod: This is Rod Ross, we are on side one take two of the June 10, 1985, conversation with Dr. Harold T. Pinkett. From our last tape, you had just surrendered in 1971, the editorship of the *American Archivist*, and you were taking over the Natural Resources branch in the Social and Economic Division. Is that correct?

Harold: Right now, my experience in this capacity was highlighted, I would say to a great extent by contacts that I developed with historical organizations during the 1970s. By 1970, my Doctoral dissertation titled *Gifford Pinchot: Private in Public Forester,* had been published by the University of Illinois Press. It had won a book award from the Agricultural History Society in 1968, and the Society then had an arrangement with the University of Illinois Press for publication of the prize-winning manuscripts. And thus it was my manuscript selected in 1960, was published in 1970. This event was an important thing in my career as an archivist and as a historian. It gave me much more publicity.

As a person interested in the history of federal policy, particularly conservation policy, in 1971, I was elected a member of the Board of Directors of the Forest History Society. And I'm sure I came to the attention of this society largely through the Pinchot book. I have remained a member of the Board of Directors of this Society since 1971 and I have been nominated for another three year period as of this year. So a very long term association with the Forest History Society began during this new period in my career.

At the same time, having had a prize-winning manuscript selected by the Agricultural History Society, I more or less came to the attention of that group. And I was elected during the 1970s to the executive committee of the Agricultural History Society, which was and is the chief governing body of that organization. These two contacts or associations that grew during the 1970s brought me to meetings of the associations, their annual meetings, I presented papers at several of their meetings. By the end of the 1970s, therefore, I had established some considerable reputation in the fields of agricultural history, in the history of federal conservation policy, and forestry.

By the time of my retirement, it was widely thought that I would to be elected to the presidency of the Agricultural History Society, and this actually took place in 1982. And I served as president of the Agricultural History Society from '82 to '83. And I became president of the Forest History Society in 1976 and served as president of that group for two years. These were very rewarding experiences for me.

I thought it was somewhat unusual that an archivist would be chosen to head a historical organization, because I think archivist still lack a certain professional standing in the eyes of a lot of historians, because archivists have tended over the years for some reason to be looked upon as largely the servants of scholarship rather than scholars themselves. I might say that one of the things I've always striven for, both in this latter phase of my career at the Archives and earlier, was to combine archival interest with scholarship because I came to the conclusion early in my career that I could become a better archivist if I knew how to use materials, and if I practiced the use of materials, I would be able to enlighten other persons with that interest in the use of materials entrusted to my custody with which I had some association. Many of my colleagues in the National Archives did not have this view, and many in the archival profession, I think, still don't accept the view that archivists should strive to have serious pretensions in historical scholarship and such.

But the fact that I had that view influenced me to maintain relations with historical organizations and I think with some success to gain some recognition in the eyes of members of these groups. That I have looked upon with some considerable pride over the years that I did have some standing both in the archival profession as well within the historical profession. In fact, from time to time, sometimes I felt like I had a greater say in the historical profession than in the archives.

Rod: We'll look at your retirement period then come back for a couple topical questions.

Harold: Well, during the 1970s, in addition to interest that I had developed in the two societies, this was a period of considerable expansion of the holdings of the National Archives. As chief of the Natural Resources Branch, I came to have responsibility for one of the largest accumulations of records in the National Archives. I believe at one time my holdings were something like two hundred thousand cubic feet. These were records of the Agriculture Department, the Interior Department, various conservation agencies, records of the New Deal, agencies such as the Civilian Conservation Corps and the WPA. It was, I believe, one of the largest units in terms of the holdings in the Archives. And it was one of the largest in terms of reference service. The Interior Department records were quite active, particularly records with the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

I had a branch during these years ranging from twenty to twenty five persons, employees. Not entirely equally divided between agriculture and interior because of the Interior activity in reference was greater. I continued to have a very keen interest in the reference service in matters relating to the history of federal agricultural policy and federal conservation policy. I pushed as much as I could description work in the branch. Description work had been something that I had been very much interested in over the years. I wrote during my earlier years some eight preliminary inventories. I think a larger number than most of my peers had written by the time they had become heads of administrative units.

I had combined that kind of activity with writing a number of articles for historical journals, attempting to describe records of the National Archives that were useful for historical research. One of the things I take pride in is having an article in the *American Historical Review* in 1964, I think one of the few articles ever written for the Journal by a staff member of the Archives. This was a description of federal agricultural records over a period of a century. This was written in connection with the centennial of the Department in 1962.

A few years later, I had an article in the *Journal of American History,* which was somewhat exceptional. Not many staff members had contributed to that journal. Looking back over the years I can count some 30 articles that I've written for historical and archival journals on either records or the use of records. Some 20 articles I can recall I've written purely on historical topics—mainly in agricultural history or forest history. I refer, of course, to the Pinchot book, which was reviewed very favorably in most of the journals and I take special pride that it was reviewed in the *Saturday Review of Literature*, not quite in the glowing terms that I would have

liked to have had it reviewed, but the fact that it was reviewed at all in the *Saturday Review of Literature*, I think was something of an honor.

Those were, I think, some of the highlights of those years of the 1970s, as well as some continuing interests that had developed earlier and came, I think, to fruition during the 1970s.

Rod: When did you retire?

Harold: I retired in December 1979. The effective date of my retirement was the anniversary of Pearl Harbor. I don't make any particular association with the two events.

Rod: Were you expected to retire when you reach a certain age? Was this a voluntary decision?

Harold: This was a voluntary decision on my part. By this time, mandatory retirement had ceased to exist in the federal establishment. I was in 1979, 65 years of age, and I my health was I felt quite good. I could have continued much longer had I preferred to do that. I had some feelings, however, that I had accomplished perhaps as much professionally as could be expected at that time. There was some malaise in the Archives because of the practices which the General Services Administration seemed to be about to institute. And there was a feeling that the Archives had little choice except to capitulate to some of these practices. That's the only thing that seemed about to take place.

All in all, I felt that I was not likely to proceed upward administratively any further in the Archives. Emphasis began to be placed increasingly on management concerns, as distinct from professional concerns in the Archives. I was told at one time by one of my superiors that I should have more interest in management matters in spite of my scholarly attainments and whatnot, that something was left to be desired in my concern about management.

Personally, I felt that professional interest should be considered more important than managerial matters. I didn't really ever feel that the units that the Archives tended to be divided in presented a formidable management task. I never felt that I ever had any management problems with employees or with other people. I felt that management is very largely common sense in dealing with both your peers and with your associates. However, there was very evident a desire by top level people in the Archives that heads of units should be concerned more and more with management matters—writing reports, manipulating employees—rather than conceiving of programs that might tended to make records more readily available for research. There was a decline in accessioning, allegedly, because there was a lack of space, however, I could always see empty stack areas and compartment in various parts of the Archives, and I felt that if space was a problem, perhaps an answer to it was a reappraisal of many records in the Archives that I knew were a very marginal value and were not being used. But there was no tendency on the part of a lot of people to consider the disposal of them, because it would seem in the minds of some of them that they had made wrong decisions in accessioning in these materials. So I would say that my desire to retire in

1979 was hastened by what I feel was a decline of a certain amount of professionalism and scholarly interest, particularly at the higher management level in the Archives.

And I knew that some things I was interested in doing professionally, I could probably pursue them with greater freedom in retirement than I would be able to do as a manager in the Archives, because that's what branch chiefs had become to be considered by the middle of the 1970s and later.

Rod: In the late 70s, Robert Clarke came on board of the Archives staff to do a guide to resources in the Archives for the study of Negro Americans. The project Debra Newman completed. Were you ever approached about that project or did you ever have any interest in it?

Harold: I was never approached about that. I, however, tended to offer advice to both Clarke and to Miss Newman in their conduct of the guide relating to records in the Archives relating to Blacks. One thing I suppose that, made, well, there were probably several things, but one thing perhaps that did not lead my career in that direction was the fact that I was looked upon as a specialist in an area or in areas that really had nothing to do with Black history. And the fact that the grade level that this work was to be done was a lower grade level than I then had.

There was also, I believe, a desire to make it appear that the Archives was doing something spectacular by recruiting a person, bringing on board someone for this task, and thereby being able to say to the public we are making a special effort to get on top of our records relating to Blacks. And this is a part of our contribution to the civil rights movement, in a sense, a greater recognition of the desirability of making the Black experience in America more widely available.

I do not know how I would have responded to a request for my service to do this work. I suspect I would have been very favorably inclined to undertake it at the grade level that I was working and with the understanding, probably, that this would be a temporary assignment, that I would prepare the guide or direct others in the preparation of it, and I would return to the subject matter areas that I had been working with over the years.

Frankly, I have never professed any special expertise in Black history, except I have a certain natural knowledge of Black history having been born Black [laughter]. But my research and writings have been largely in other areas and not that it has avoided, certainly the Black experience. I have served, for example, as a member of the editorial board of the *Journal of Negro History* for a period of about 10 years, up until about 1971, when I became chief of the branch of Natural Resources. During the period '69 to '76, I was an adjunct professor of history at Howard University during which I taught a course on the Black experience in urban areas. So I certainly developed a familiarity and some grasp of that subject matter.

But returning to the guide matter, I would say that I certainly favored it being done, and when I was asked for advice, I did whatever I could to steer both Clarke and Newman in the direction of producing the guide. Actually, I think I worked more with Miss Newman than Mr. Clarke

because Mr. Clarke very early became assigned, I think, entirely to military records that he was to pursue the guide in military records where I never had any special expertise.

Debra, on the other hand, worked with civil records, records of civilian agencies with which I had much greater familiarity. And I think, therefore, my contact with her was greater than what would have normally been the case. But in this same vein, I suppose many people thought I would have been a natural to have taken that work, but that's only because I'm Black [laugher]. In a sense, I consider that kind of a reverse discrimination when it is assumed that only a Black knows Black history. And I've always resented the idea that only Blacks should do Black history, because it always seemed to me to suggest that a Black has no business trying to do business in the mainstream of American history, where I think much of my energy has been directed.

Rod: One topic that we, with only passing, has been GSA's influence at the National Archives. If we go back perhaps as a final major point and discuss both, you know, you were not in the records management area, which I gather, which was one of the key expansions that came about after the Archives came under the General Services Administration. What were your feelings initially in 1949?

Harold: Well, when the General Services Administration was given responsibility for the administration of the Archives, many of us, I think, had the feeling that there was going to be less concern at that level in the historical, cultural, and professional mission of the National Archives, because it was clear, of course, that GSA was to be a housekeeping agency and it was to perform, as its name suggests, general services for government agencies—procurement, construction, stockpiling, and whatnot. I think, however, after GSA began to operate and it became evident, or it seemed evident to many of us at the middle levels of the administration in the Archives, that there really wasn't that much interference with what the National Archives had been doing and wanted to do. There wasn't really that much interference by the first Administrators of GSA. In fact, one of the early Administrators, Floete, it seemed to many of us, took pride in having the National Archives and its operations as a part of his overall program.

Floete was very much interested in presidential libraries because that gave GSA some sort of a general public appeal. The fact that it was in charge of these presidential libraries, memorials to the great men, in effect. And it seemed to many of us that the first two or three administrators of GSA really didn't interfere in any vital way in the internal operations of the Archives and rather took a certain amount of pride in having us as a part of the establishment. As time went on, however, by the time of the 60s, I think this disenchantment began to set in. With the fourth or fifth administrator, the names of many of these men have escaped me over the years.

Rod: Would this be Arthur Sampson?

Harold: Prior, this would be Sampson's predecessor, who became a judge on the court of claims.

Rod: Kunzig?

Harold: Kunzig, yes. Kunzig began to push the Archives is seemed in directions more attuned to the general mission of GSA. There began to be the suggestion that the Archives was not concerned with efficiency. It wasn't measuring units of service, the budget as it was devised, it seemed to many of these administrators we didn't focus on units of work and therefore that we didn't have concrete products to show from the amount of money that went into operations. And this feeling, it seemed, that the Archives needed to measure its work more, led to devising of reporting techniques in the Archives which tended to emphasize measurement of units of service rather than an evaluation of the quality of service.

In fact, one person who shall remain nameless in the Archives but was at a fairly high level administrator, said at one time that all the services are the same, whether they are positive or negative. That a negative service or a negative response to a request counts as fully as a positive response. A negative and a positive response each constitute two units of service and therefore it seemed to many of us we got into a numbers game of merely counting things rather than giving due consideration to the quality of work that went into the rendering of the service.

This noticeably, I think, began to take hold with Kunzig and increased under Arthur Sampson, I guess his name was, and I guess it reached a peak under Freeman. Admiral Freeman. These things, I think, were demoralizing to many people who had come into the Archives during my time.

By the 1970s, I was in the group of the of the persons who, well, I had more service than most of the people, except for a half a dozen other people like Meyer Fishbein, and Albert Leisinger. I had been around by this time thirty-five years. And I think we were in a position, people of my generation, and I guess I would consider myself having come in in the second generation of employees in the Archives. Schellenberg and Herman Kahn, having been in the in the first generation. I was now with that generation that had seen the emphasis given to scholarly and archival concerns more before 1949 then it seemed to be the case by certainly by the middle of the 1970s. I would say while the Archives may have benefited by the association with GSA in a financial way in some of its programs, the general emphasis that tended to be placed on management concerns and being able to measure performance in units that could be counted tended to place more stress on numbers rather than on quality. And to many of us who had come in during the early years of the Archives, this was a very demoralizing kind of thing.

Rod: Is there anything that you'd like to speak on that you haven't covered this afternoon?

Harold: Well, I would say perhaps that in spite of some disappointments, I think that I had a very rewarding experience as a member of the staff of the National Archives. I think I was able to do some things largely because of a certain initiative that I took in pursuing things, I suppose this is true in any kind of a position. I would never have been content, I think, to have simply been a servant of scholars in the Archives, simply bringing records to them for their use without

having had an opportunity to use records for things that I was interested in doing and learning about.

I think that perhaps I was satisfied working as an archivist as I might have been in an academic position. Many people thought that after I had gotten a Ph.D. in the 1950s, I would naturally gravitate to the academic community because I suppose in the minds of many people, federal employment was still less prestigious than employment in the academic community. But I can say I feel that generally I have no regrets for the time that I spent in the National Archives.

And while I did not attain heights administratively perhaps that I would have desired and I think I might have attained had I not been Black. I am not bitter about that fact because I think it's simply another indication of the status of Blacks in American society that while they have progressed considerably, there are still frontiers for them to enter and they still simply have to work harder perhaps to attain the same levels that others might attain with less effort. But all in all, I have no regrets for the time that I spent in the Archives that I felt that I've had a very rewarding career professionally.

Rod: You know, on the latter point, I had done an oral history interview with Leroy Harvey, he had a long career with the record setter. And when I asked him the question about when did he think that discrimination against Blacks had ended in the Archives, he it hadn't. Do you feel that same way? Or when would you say the open period began for Blacks at the Archives?

Harold: I would say that if there is an open period and I would agree generally with the assumption that it hasn't disappeared, it hasn't disappeared from American society. And I think it's not going to disappear from any major organization in American life until it tends to disappear generally in the society in which the organization operates. But I would say in the National Archives, the civil rights movement had an influence, and I can recall distinctly when special recruiting efforts were made…

Rod: I need to just turn over this tape. I think our time has about ended.

[Tape 2, Side 2]

Rod: This is side two take two of the interview with Dr. Harold Pickett.

Harold: I would say quickly that after the civil rights revolution and the government started in the direction of affirmative action programs from which it seems to be now retreating, that the Archives fell in step with the general mood in the country and it began to seek Blacks who were interested in becoming archivists. But ironically, at this time, as opportunities were opening generally throughout the society for Blacks, there weren't that many Blacks interested in becoming archivists because they were now more interested in entering positions that they felt had more prestige than the archival profession offered. More particularly positions as teachers in Ivy League colleges and universities, which of course had been closed to them prior to that time.

So as the Archives became more interested in hiring and using Blacks, Blacks in a sense were perhaps less interested in accepting those offers. Although, of course, the offers were necessarily always have been limited because some of the smaller number of opportunities available. But with James Moore having been appointed to head the office of the National Archives recently, this is something most of us would never have dreamed of happening within our lifetime for whatever reasons he was named to that position.

I think that's a clear indication that a barrier had been breached in whatever racial pattern that had existed. But I recognize there was also a time during the 1970s and the early 1980s when agencies were expected to upgrade a few Blacks to high level positions, in effect to get some brownie points for doing it. And I think a lot of Blacks benefited from what many people, of course, call tokenism. But whatever its goal, it wasn't evidence of progress. No, I don't think it has disappeared from the agency. But I'm sure it's much less a matter of concern in the minds of the people who make appointment decisions now than it was when I entered.

Rod: We've been speaking for quite a time period. If you have nothing further to add, appropriate time to close

Harold: I don't believe I have anything further.

Rod: Thank you very much.

[END RECORDING]

NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS ADMINISTRATION

Legal Agreement Pertaining to the Oral History Interview of

Harold T. Pinkett.

In accordance with the provisions of Chapter 21 of Title 44, United States Code, and subject to the terms and conditions hereinafter set forth, I,

Harold T. Pinkett (name) of Washington, D.C. (city and state)

do hereby give, donate and convey to the United States of America all my rights, title and interest in the tape recording and transcript of a personal interview conducted on June 10, 1985 at 5741 27th St., NW in Washington, D.C. and prepared for deposit in the National Archives. This assignment is subject to the following terms and conditions:

(1) The tape recording shall be available to all researchers upon ~~its being~~ my review ~~accessioned by the National Archives.~~ and acceptance of the transcript or upon my death, whichever comes first.

(2) The transcript shall be available to those researchers who have access to the tape recording, as soon as the National Archives' processing schedule allows sufficient time for transcript preparation.

(3) I hereby assign to the United States Government all copyright I may have in the interview transcript and tape.

(4) Copies of the transcript and the tape recording may be provided by the National Archives to researchers upon request.

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Harold T. Pinkett
Donor

June 10, 1985
Date

Frank G. Burke
ACTING Archivist of the United States

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Date