NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS SERVICE

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Interviews with

COLLAS G. HARRIS

Former Executive Officer

Major Biographical Information:

Born, Staunton, Virginia	1906
Washington and Lee University	1928-1931
Georgetown University Law School	1934
Personnel Director, Federal Emergency Relief Administration, Federal Surplus Relief Administration, and Civil Works Administration	1933-1934
Administrative Officer, National Archives	1934-1935
Executive Officer	1935-1942
Military Service	1942-1948
Senior Administrative Officer, National Archives	1948-1952
Central Intelligence Agency	1952-1969

Interviews at Great Falls, and Alexandria, Virginia

January 13 and July 28, 1972

Interviewer - Philip C. Brooks

AGREEMENT WITH THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS SERVICE

AS TO ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

I, Collas G. Harris, of Great Falls, Virginia, in accordance with the Federal Property and Administrative Services Act of 1949, as amended (44 U.S.C. 397) and regulations issued thereunder (41 CFR 101-110), hereby assign to the United States for administration by the National Archives and Records Service all my rights, title, and interest, including any literary property rights that I may have in them, in the tape recording and transcripts of the interviews with me conducted by Philip C. Brooks on behalf of the National Archives and Records Service at Great Falls and Alexandria, Virginia, on January 13 and July 28, 1972.

It is agreed that the tape and transcript will be available (if the tape is preserved) under the regulations prescribed by the Archivist of the United States as soon as the final form of the transcript has been deposited in the National Archives. It is also agreed that only the National Archives and Records Service shall have the right to publish or authorize the publication of the interviews in whole or in part, aside from quotation in the normal concept of "fair use," providing that I or my heirs, legal representatives or assigns retain the right to publish in other form the statements or facts set forth in the interviews.

Signed Collas G. Harris

Date 2 Aug 1973

Accepted:

Signed James B. Rhoads
Archivist of the United States

Date Aug. 8, 1973

National Archives and Records Service

Oral History Project

Transcript of Interview with Collas G. Harris
Former Executive Officer, National Archives

First Interview - at Harris' home, Great Falls, Virginia
January 13, 1972

Interviewer - Philip C. Brooks

BROOKS: Let me ask you first, Collas, just to summarize, how long were you with the National Archives?

HARRIS: From December 3, 1934, until September 1942.

BROOKS: Then you went to active duty in military service.

HARRIS: I returned to the National Archives on April 14, 1948.

BROOKS: And stayed how long then?

HARRIS: Until 1952, with the title Senior Administrative Officer.

BROOKS: How did you happen to become interested in the Archives and to become associated with it? You were working for FERA and CWA before that, right?

HARRIS: Yes. I was with Harry Hopkins in the Federal Emergency Relief Administration in charge of the personnel activities when I saw in the paper the announcement of the legislation establishing the National Archives. Having majored in American history at Washington and Lee University, and that being my first love, I became interested in the National Archives thinking that I could combine my love and interest in American history with the administrative experience that I'd had in the Federal Government. In following up this interest I went to many friends and associates that I knew on Capitol Hill to find out about the National Archives and the appointment of an Archivist and sought ways of meeting the Archivist and presenting to him personally my qualifications and interest in becoming associated with the National Archives. It finally culminated in meeting Dr. Connor in Senator Bailey's office on Capitol Hill. Thad Page introduced me to Dr. Connor, and we had our first oral conference, and I presented what I thought were my qualifications to be associated with the National Archives.

BROOKS: That was just after Dr. Connor had come to Washington in the fall of '34.

HARRIS: That's right.

BROOKS: And were you the first employee that he hired?

HARRIS: The first employee was Miss Marjory Terrell, who had been his secretary at Chapel Hill. His next appointment was Dorsey Hyde who was the first professional employee. If I recall correctly, his date of appointment was the same as mine, December 3, 1934.

BROOKS: I'm curious to know if you could say anything about how some of the other key people came to the Archives. People particularly that I can't interview. One of them is Dorsey Hyde.

HARRIS: Dorsey Hyde, as I recall at that time, was associated with the National Chamber of Commerce. He'd had some experience in history and records and he presented his qualifications and competence to Connor, but the details of the actual decision, I don't recall. I wasn't privy to them.

BROOKS: And Senator Bailey, I take it, was a friend of Dr. Connor's and Thad Page probably knew Dr. Connor before anyway. Did you know any of the other founding fathers, Dr. Jameson, Dr. Leland, and so forth, before?

HARRIS: I did not know them before. I met them after I became associated with the National Archives, by introduction from Dr. Connor to them as they came to the National Archives. I got to know Dr. Leland extremely well after the establishment of the Committee on the Conservation of Cultural Resources in, I believe, March 1941.

BROOKS: There is one thing I wanted to ask about them, Collas. It's fairly easy to learn that Senator Sol Bloom introduced a bill in the spring of 1934, and that it was replaced in effect by the content of a bill introduced by Senator McKellar. One of the things I'm curious about is that during the long movement for the National Archives (which I've been reading about recently in Victor Gondos' doctoral dissertation), spearheaded by Dr. Jameson, the emphasis was always on the building. It was obvious that they'd have to have a building. Along about 1928, Louis Simon, who was Supervising Architect of the Treasury Department, asked, well who was going to run this thing after the building was built? But even so, until 1934 so far as I know, no attempt was made to draft a bill that would draw up the organization of the National Archives. Now, in 1934 were Sol Bloom and Senator McKellar conversant enough with archival needs to write that bill or who told them, suggested to them what to put in it in the way of content--on things of vital importance like the relationship with the agency in establishing restrictions on records, the transfer of records, or the authority of the Archivist to inspect records? There are a number of other key things that were in that bill that must have been put in there by somebody that knew the problems. Were you in a position to know?

HARRIS: Not in a first hand position. It's covered quite a bit in Dr. Connor's journal and I think that Dr. Jameson, Dr. Leland, and others that I'd have to refresh my memory on, were instrumental in getting to Congressman Bloom and Senator McKellar to assist them in the proper wording of the National Archives Act.

BROOKS: There was an Advisory Commission set up in 1930 appointed by President Hoover to review the data obtained by the Treasury primarily to cooperate in planning for the building itself. And I wondered how much they would have had to do with the planned organization of the content of the Act. Tyler Dennett of the State Department; Louis Simon, who was Supervising Architect of the Treasury Department; Brigadier General J. F. McKinley, assistant to The Adjutant General; E. K. Burlew, Administrative Assistant to the Secretary of Interior; J. F. Jameson; and J. L. Baity, the Executive Officer of the GAO. Now do you remember enough about this to know if any of them were particularly active in directing the planning of the organization?

HARRIS: Jameson I expect would be the key one, and E. K. Burlew who, as I recall, I believe was chairman of that Committee that made a survey of the records of the Federal Government, and then recommendations as to what should be done with the problem.

BROOKS: Now the actual content of those recommendations illustrates a point that I think we ought to bear in mind. That is dealt within Gondos' dissertation and there are other published sources. That is not so much the kind of thing that we ought to talk about on tape as your personal remembrances or ideas or interpretations. We know that there was that Commission, that it drew up a report. We know that the bill for the organization of the Archives was passed actually very shortly before the Archivist was appointed. And most of what you find in Jameson's correspondence and other places has to do with the appointment of the first Archivist, rather than with the details of the organization.

HARRIS: That was covered and documented in Dr. Connor's journal in depth.

BROOKS: Yes, but Dr. Connor's journal will not be available before 1975, for publication or citation. What do you know about the original organization pattern of the National Archives? For instance, people are now curious about why did we start out with a sort of a library type organization with a catalog division, a classification division, and so forth? Who was mostly responsible for that?

HARRIS: It was in the latter part of December 1934 when we'd hardly gotten underway. At that time the Archivist had temporary offices in the Department of Justice. We got a call from the Bureau of the Budget saying that if we wanted any money to operate for the fiscal year 1935 and 1936, which was then being considered by the Bureau of the Budget, we'd have to submit a plan and budget. Congress had appropriated $75,000 for the beginning of the operation of the National Archives. Well as a result to the call from the Bureau of the Budget, Dr. Connor asked me to go up and talk to the appropriate official, who turned out to be Dr. John Keddy. At that time he was in charge of the Independent Offices appropriation.

BROOKS: I remember Keddy well, but I didn't realize he was in the picture that early. Dr. Keddy?

HARRIS: Dr. Keddy, he's a Ph.D.

BROOKS: In public administration or something of the sort?

HARRIS: Yes. He's still living in Alexandria.* My first talk with Keddy was very interesting. He looked me square in the eye and he said, "We don't need all those papers and all that building, and to spend any money. They ought to take all that stuff and take it out and dump it in the Potomac River; you'd be better off." I said, "Well Mr. Keddy," I said, "That's here nor there." I said, "I disagree with you. I think that the archives of permanent and historical records of the Government should be preserved and made available for use." He quieted down and then we got into discussion of how the estimate should be prepared, the physical presentation, the oral presentation. I came back and reported to the Archivist the interview and that it was necessary that we begin immediately to prepare a budget. But obviously as we talked in our discussions at that time, you couldn't prepare a budget until you first had an organization chart. You knew somewhere where you were going. The first major decision that was made, and I played some part in it, was that considering the Archives Act as a whole and the job ahead of the Archivist, there were two major phases. One would be what you would call the professional side and the other the administrative or the housekeeping side. And I recommended that all of the activities in any way concerned with administration, fiscal, personnel, housing, space, and everything be put on the administrative side; and everything pertaining to the professional, the archival side of working with the archives, be included in the professional side. That was the first decision made. Another one which was easy to make was a Director of Publications because the Act provided for the establishment of a National Historical Publications Commission, so it was easy then to make that decision that we needed a Director of Publications. The next decisions were fairly long and involved in discussions. As you would

* Dr. Keddy died in 1972

in a library, and we used that as a comparison, you first have to classify the material, you have to know something about it, and then you have to decide as to how you would find your way into it with a catalog, so at that time we decided on a Catalog Division and a Classification Division, and an Accession Division.

The Office of the Administrative Secretary was established because basically we knew that we would have to have a relationship with all of the Government agencies, with the Congress, and the judicial branch; and also a public relationship with the public. And that was the reason that the Administrative Secretary's Office was established, to handle our, sort of you might say, public and official image in the Government.

BROOKS: I've always thought--this may be a digression--that our image in the Government was of particular interest because here we were a small agency starting out in the middle of the New Deal when there were all sorts of exciting things going on. I well remember going to do a survey in the Department of Interior one time, going to the office of a bureau chief who started the conversation by saying, "What in the hell is the National Archives anyway?" And I think this is the position that the agency was in. So "the image in the Government," that is a good phrase.

HARRIS: And that's carried on in the discussions that are still today of what are archives and what are records? And the National Archives Act referred to the records and archives of the Government. All three branches. Now in order to bring material in you would have to accession it. Dr. Connor had the authority under the National Archives Act to make a survey of all the records of the Government. But he had no authority to accession without the agreement of the agency concerned. He just couldn't go out with a truck and back up to a loading platform and go up in the central files and load material that they thought they would like to have in the Archives. So there had to be a Division of Accessions that would do the negotiating with the proper officials in the various departments as to what records be transferred to the National Archives, and then making arrangements for their orderly transfer. And along with that, because we were dealing with records that go way back to the beginning of the Government that had not been properly housed or peroperly cared for, and many of them were in a damaged condition, that we would have to establish a division called Repair and Preservation that would undertake the job of fumigating the material and cleaning it, and doing repair of those documents that needed repair before they went into the stacks where would be their lodging place in the National Archives Building.

BROOKS: Somebody at that point must have gone to the National Bureau of Standards very early in the game and established a close relationship, because that Division of Repair and Preservation was almost a branch office of the Bureau of Standards.

HARRIS: Kimberley, who was the first Chief of the Repair and Preservation Division, had been conducting research on the preservation of paper at the Bureau of Standards so he was a logical person with his professional background to be the first chief of the Division.

BROOKS: Well, he didn't come until '36 or '37.

HARRIS: That's right.

BROOKS: But he evidently had been working with the Archives before that.

HARRIS: Working with preservation of papers.

Another interesting thing in the establishment of the organization was our idea in the beginning--because it would be appealing, we thought, to the various departments and agencies to know that the identity of their records would not be lost once they were transferred to the National Archives--that we establish and create divisions of archives known as Department of State Archives, Treasury, Commerce, and so forth.

And then there's another category of records that hasn't been mentioned that would fall into all of the major departments, technical records, such as maps and charts. It also became obvious that we needed to establish a division to take care of the motion pictures and sound recordings because the Government, all of the agencies, in one way or the other had been involved in motion pictures or pictures pertaining to World War I and other activities. Along with this there was a great collection of photographs that had been accumulated by all of the agencies going back to the Civil War, Brady and his photographs that he took during the Civil War, and there was established the Motion Pictures and Sound Recording Division. At that time it was also decided to establish a division of photographic reproduction and research. The photographic reproduction had to do with making copies of documents either for preservation or to supply the need of a scholar. Dr. Vernon Tate, who had been a pioneer in photographic reproduction and in the early stages of microfilming, was appointed as the first Chief of the Division of Photographic Reproduction and Research.

BROOKS: Tate was in the graduate school at California at just the same time or a little bit after I was, and I don't think that he had a close relationship with the Archives long before he was appointed. But Bradley was a protégé of Congressman Keller of Illinois and I think he did have something to do with the provision of the National Archives Act applying to motion pictures, right?

HARRIS: Capt. Bradley, John G. Bradley, was the clerk of the Library Committee of which Congressman Kent E. Keller of the southern district in Illinois was chairman. And Bradley had had an interest in motion pictures.

BROOKS: Is it fair to ask what, in looking back, what do you think of that original organization? Obviously some of those divisions weren't continued as such. Some of them were. Later the whole pattern was changed with more emphasis on what we then called the records divisions.

HARRIS: For what it is worth, I think that we did well in eventually combining the general functions of cataloging and classification into what you might call, finding media. I today rather like our original organization ofhaving separate divisions and segregating the records of a major department such as State, and War, and Navy. To me it gave, and still does, a little better advertising, you might say, of the records. A description in a broad category.

BROOKS: Well, I think it's obviously important that the same people that develop an expertise in military records deal with all phases of the work on military records, for example. Collas, we didn't go under Civil Service for 2 or 3 years after the National Archives was set up, but from the beginning we used Civil Service grade titles and Civil Service classification. Now how was that brought about?

HARRIS: Well based on my experience in the Government up until joining the Archives . . .

BROOKS: That had been primarily in personnel, had it not?

HARRIS: In personnel, having to do with grade, structure, and classification. And there was a little thought in the back of my head that--even though the National Archives Act exempted the National Archives from being under Civil Service, and that the Archivist could make appointments of members of the staff based on their qualifications and experience; by law though we had to follow the classification and grade structures of the Government. And I then went to talk to Mr. Spilman who was Chief of the Classification Division, discussed the problems with him, he gave me as much guidelines and grade structure as he could. Also, we talked about the grade structure and somewhat similar positions in the Library of Congress, keeping in mind though that the job of a librarian is not the same as an archivist. We were introducing into the Government for the first time a whole new classification structure based on archives or archivists. But again following the general outline and having in mind the difference between a library where there is a book with a title, with an author, and with an index and there are schools for the teaching of library science. There were none for the archives or any archival science places. And when you deal with archives you're dealing with individual papers and each one has to be judged on its own merit in its relationship to other documents. So as close as possible we followed the grade system. But recognizing that we did need scholars, we needed to keep them and have them over a long period of time, we were as generous as we could be in establishing the grades because within

the Government once you establish a grade if you establish it too low you have a very difficult time in ever getting it higher. So we put it as high as we could in the very beginning, consistent with other positions in the Government.

The position that the Archives took at this time was borne out in later years when we came under the Civil Service Act. The examiner who had been assigned to the National Archives also had the Library of Congress, so no matter how much we said about the professional knowledge that had to go into the work of the National Archives the examiner could never get it out of his head that he was comparing us with the Library of Congress, so we had to fight hard to justify and to obtain the grade structure that we thought was right.

BROOKS: How free were the heads of the various units in choosing the people? The choice of the division heads, and so forth was very important.

HARRIS: The general pattern that was followed was that people who were interested filed their applications. They were classified as to the positions that they'd be qualified for in the National Archives. Then as openings occurred in the various divisions, the personnel office would send to the division chief the papers of the individuals that they thought were qualified. The first decision really to appoint a given person to a given job rested with the division chief who made his recommendation to the Director of Archival Service and he to the Archivist who made the final decision.

BROOKS: In the significant appointments in the first year or two especially, would you say that there was much political patronage involved?

HARRIS: Not political patronage as such. No matter where the pressure came from, either from Mr. Farley or from Mr. Hurja at the National Democratic Committee or from Members of Congress and Members of the Senate, they naturally recommended people and brought pressure to have them interviewed to get a job and every consideration was given to them. But in the final analysis it has been borne out they received their jobs because in the end the Archivist felt that they were qualified for the jobs; and I can say, as was borne out by the record, that nobody was appointed solely because of a pressure of patronage.

BROOKS: I've always thought there was a certain amount of academic, not what you'd call academic patronage, nothing formal; but it's easy to see that a number of people who were appointed in the professional divisions were at least introduced and recommended by certain prominent people in the academic field.

HARRIS: There was one thing that has to be borne in mind here, in discussing the politics or patronage, that the Archives Act said that anybody who was appointed with a salary of $5,000 or more had to be appointed and confirmed by the Senate. So with anybody that was to be appointed in this category we had to tell them they have to get, not a clearance, but they had to clear it with their, at least their Senator because if they went up for confirmation they would have to have the support of their respective State Senator.

BROOKS: Well there was some sort of requirement like that for people who were not in that salary level either, because I well remember that when I was appointed--I was recommended by friends in the academic profession, particularly Dr. Bemis who was a friend and protege of Dr. Jameson--but I had to go to the Senator from Illinois, my legal residence was in Illinois, and I had to go to a Senator from Illinois or to his staff and get a clearance. This was highly pro forma, because he didn't know a thing about me and I didn't know much about him, but I had to convince him that I was a registered voter in Illinois. I've forgotten whether they asked me whether I was a democrat or not, but it wouldn't have hurt if I had told them that. We have now in the Civil Service system standards for jobs in various series. Were there qualifications standards as such at that time?

HARRIS: Well, there were for the positions on the administrative side.

BROOKS: Because everybody was familiar with what a stenographer did, and so forth?

HARRIS: Stenographers, clerk typists, file clerks, accountants, people who worked in the stock room, and those were fairly standard throughout the Government. And we followed those grades pretty much.

BROOKS: As time went on, were you involved in or concerned about training activities, training of the staff, particularly the professional staff? Perhaps that would have fallen more to professional chiefs. The reason I ask is that for a long time we didn't do much about anything except on-the-job training.

HARRIS: That's right.

BROOKS: For years there was no effective training system. Then Dr. Buck was interested in it, and the first training courses were theoretical archives courses, one that he gave at Columbia in '38 and the one that he and Dr. Posner started in '39. But even then there was no direct relationship of those academic courses to anything like what they have now, in-service training and promotion that is related to it.

HARRIS: But you have to remember that we were plowing a field for the first time and you couldn't start a school for the training of archivists until you had had several harvests of successful grain and knew more how to go about it. It wasn't that there wasn't an interest in training people, but we realized in the early days that they would have to get their training by experience on the job, and then out of these experiences and some experimentation you begin to develop the kind of information that you would need in order to do in-service training, or to train archivists into the techniques that had been developed in the past years in the beginning of the National Archives.

BROOKS: Okay. Before we get away from the congressional activities in the early days of the Archives, it seems to me that Congress was much more concerned with the Archives than--a whole lot of congressmen--than it is now. Of course now the various committees hear the testimony on the bills and so forth. Would you say that congressmen were much concerned with the organization and function of the Archives then? Which congressmen or senators were particularly interested or particularly active?

HARRIS: There were a few that were interested in the early stages of it. I named before Congressman Bloom of New York, Senator McKellar, and Congressman Keller of Illinois; and later Congressman Woodrum of Virginia was one of the congressmen who took a great deal of interest in the establishment, growth, and development of the National Archives. Congressman Dirksen also played a part. Now there were some other interests shown in the National Archives, especially because the positions in the early days were outside the Civil Service, and they'd hoped to get some appointments. But there were not too many in those days that really comprehended and understood what went into the National Archives. A lot of them called them musty old records, records that serve no purpose; they might as well be destroyed. A lot of them thought they'd had a little indoctrination prior to the establishment of the Archives, and really all you needed was a large building or a records or large file place to store the records until they lived out their life. And it was also a thing that was hard to knock down with the politicians just what are archives and how valuable they are, and what made these historical records of value that would cause them to be preserved and made available for use.

BROOKS: I ask that question partly because I looked the other day at part of a daily journal that Miss Terrell kept and she wrote at one time in October I think of 1934 that officials of the Archives, Dr. Connor and I suppose you and Hyde, went to appear before a congressional committee. Her comment was that Dr. Connor didn't get to say very much. I think that's characteristic of most congressional hearings.

HARRIS: This should be said, that Dr. Connor and Mr. Page and myself and others we sought every opportunity to encourage interest in the National Archives in any relationships that we had with any congressmen and senators. We always wounded up by inviting them to come to visit the National Archives. Senator McKellar came, through my invitation to his brother who was his administrative assistant; he brought the Senator down and I introduced him to Dr. Connor and we took him all around the National Archives Building and showed him what we were doing, and how, and why, and he was very pleased.

But as a politician in a grandiose manner he'd say, this is fine, this is great, this is wonderful, I'm glad you're doing this, that, and the other. Whereas when the then Senator Truman visited the National Archives at my invitation to his secretary, whom I'd gotten to know, he came down and spent quite a bit of time. I introduced him to Dr. Connor and we went all over the National Archives, and I don't guess we were ever asked as many technical and intelligent questions as we were asked by the then Senator Truman.

BROOKS: Very interesting. When was that? Also very early?

HARRIS: Quite early, quite early.

BROOKS: He came to the Senate in January of '35, so it could have been any time after that.

HARRIS: But he was the most interested and asked the most intelligent questions of any, outside of Congressman Woodrum, of any of the people from Capitol Hill.

BROOKS: I am much interested to know that. It's consistent with a lot of other things we know about Mr. Truman. Collas, the National Archives Act says that the Archivist has the power to deal with the records of the judicial branch of the Government as well as the executive and legislative, but it's my feeling that in the early days we didn't have very much to do, comparatively, with the judicial branch. Would you comment on that, and was there much interest shown on the part of the judicial branch?

HARRIS: There was not much interest shown and it might be injected here that for some unknown reason the judicial branch was not included in the membership of the National Archives Council as provided for by law. The interest from the judicial side started coming about when the Congress established an Administrative Office of the United States Courts.

BROOKS: You mentioned the National Archives Council. I remember when they first met in the Archives Building. It was a fairly impressive occasion in the conference room of the National Archives. I suppose they met every year or so from then on, I don't remember exactly. But it is my memory that the National Archives Council was not really very active or did not affect very much the development of the institution. Is that a fair statement?

HARRIS: Not on a day-to-day basis of operations, but in the broader picture of determining the class of materials that should be transferred to the National Archives. It was obvious, I think from the beginning, that it wasn't something that would be consulted and conferred with on a day-to-day basis about appointments or budgets or personnel, but it was to play the role of a broader picture of advising the Archivist on the type and class of records in general that should go into the National Archives.

BROOKS: Now another relationship that's extremely interesting was that with the President of the United States. And I think most people today do not realize how actively interested Mr. Roosevelt was in the National Archives, and the number of things he was concerned with and the interest that he took in the appointment of the Archivist and in the transfer of records from certain agencies. Would you comment on Mr. Roosevelt?

HARRIS: I'll only comment beginning with 1937, but I'd like to inject that prior to his visit to the National Archives in June 1937 at that time in the Government any structural changes in any Government building had to be approved by the Bureau of the Budget and by the President. Well we had a lot of structural changes that had to take place, changing locker rooms and char rooms into office space. All the changes were drawn up by Mr. Simon's staff, the supervising Architect of the Treasury Department. He took it to the Bureau of the Budget and it was approved, and then Mr. Simon took it to the President. Believe it or not, the President examined all the structural changes, he agreed to them. But he did not think that we need to spend money to put channels in the Spanish tile floors for telephone and electrical conduits; he thought that we could run those around the wall. He didn't think that we needed to put cork tile flooring in the offices. He said that all you needed to do was to use the old battleship gray linoleum. All of these are marginal notes on the plans made by Roosevelt himself in his own handwriting.

BROOKS: Where are they now, in the Archives or at the Roosevelt Library?

HARRIS: They should be at the Archives. And what was interesting to me at that time, was that here was the President in the middle of national and international affairs that could stop in the middle of it and project himself into a building which he had not been in and make constructive suggestions.

BROOKS: Incidentally, one of the major changes was the filling of the center court. The building was built originally with the center court unfilled. As I remember, it was very soon after the building was built that PWA money was obtained to fill in that center court. How was that initiated?

HARRIS: Well, there was a movement on Capitol Hill and the pressure was being brought to bear, a lot of it by the War Department, to establish a records center where the various departments could transfer their semi-active records, where they could be stored and used by the personnel of the department concerned. Because of the interest on Capitol Hill and some of the other departments and the President, Mr. Ickes under the PWA money had made a plea for a grant to build a records center or building at Suitland, Maryland. Dr. Connor, the Archivist, on October 4, 1934, in consultation with Mr. Burlew and with Mr. Ickes and others persuaded them that the money could be better used to complete the National Archives Building. That is the extension which would fill in the inner court of the building which had been left open in the very beginning realizing that in time, you would have to increase the space available to the National Archives. And the building being structured like it was from the exterior side surrounded by 72 Corinthian columns, that you couldn't put an extension on the outside, so John Russell Pope in his wisdom allowed the inner shell to be vacant. I would like to say that Mr. Ickes agreed and others agreed on October 4, 1934, and the grant was then made to build the extension, or to complete the National Archives Building, in lieu of building a records center at that time at Suitland or some other available place. The contract was signed December 11, 1935, and finished February 19, 1937.

BROOKS: Let's get back to Mr. Roosevelt. Do you remember anything particular about his visit in June of '37?

HARRIS: June 1937, I thik it was June 16. Dr. Connor in his relationship with the President from his first interview, they were very close and they talked about records and they talked about archives, and I would get this second handed from Dr. Connor about his interest. One day Dr. Connor announced that he'd just come from the President and that he'd promised to make a visit to the National Archives. The date and time was established. The Secret Service came down, they examined everything, I took them all over the building, showed them where we would go and where he would come in. And then on the given date at about 5 o'clock he came, and Dr. Connor and Mr. Thad Page and myself conducted him on a tour of the building. He showed great interest in every aspect of it. We had a hard time getting him out of the Repair and Preservation Division, he was fascinated by the techniques that had been developed by Kimberley in laminating documents for preservation. He was fascinated in Dr. Tate's division, Photographic Reproduction, especially in the field of microfilming and what he saw, and he kept up that interest. When he went through the various stack areas, the Department of State archives, Department of Navy, and then we got to the area where Dr. Connor said, this is the Division of War Department archives and the President looked around and he didn't see any, and he said well where are the old records of the War Department? And Dr. Connor, in his diplomatic way, remarked they seemed to be somewhat reluctant to transfer their old records to us. Roosevelt was extremely interested in everything that he saw. The Search Room, which would be the central reference room, and then up on the 5th floor in the motion picture and sound recording area and what was being done there to store and

preserve the motion pictures and sound recordings. He was somewhat apprehensive about storing nitrate film in the National Archives Building along with paper records, and Capt. Bradley and Dr. Connor explained that we'd been doing a lot of research and study of the proper type of equipment; and that Capt Bradley had recently finished a rather detailed report with recommendations. The President said that he would like to have a copy of the report, which was later sent to him. He was so interested in what he saw at the National Archives and his various questions that the time went by until finally his son James had to say to him that you have a dinner at the White House at 7 o'clock and it is now 20 minutes of 7. With that he reluctantly left; but he was deeply interested in the Archives, in the preservation, and other work that had been done.

BROOKS: As I remember we all had to evacuate the building, but the division chiefs in the divisions that he was going to visit were there, and Betty Hamer has told me a bit about that visit. I think she was on part of the tour. Well, one other question occurred to me about the building. I'm sure that relations with John Russell Pope and Barry Faulkner, who did the murals, and all were primarily in the hands of Louis Simon, right? Do you know who wrote the inscriptions that are on the outside of the building?

HARRIS: No, I don't recall. Somewhere I do remember, or its recorded, but I don't remember.

BROOKS: What kind of staff relationships were there so far as you were affected in the early days. In other words, presumably you saw a good deal of people like Mr. Hyde, Mr. Buck, and so forth, in dealing with personnel appointments, with the budget, with allocations of space. Do you remember that there were stormy sessions or was it generally amicable or were there particular people that were more difficult to work with than others?

HARRIS: I don't recall any difficulties. I think our relationship was very harmonious. Naturally in the position that I held, especially from a budget and personnel and space standpoint, I had to be involved in all of their activities which I sought to listen to with an open mind and an interest. In the preservation of motion pictures, I spent hours with Capt. Bradley on the equipment; with Kimberley, and in the every facet of the work I sought to take an interest, to represent them, and to give them the necessary tools to go on with their work, whether it was Buck in publications or Kimberley with some new storage containers.

BROOKS: How about the relations with specific other agencies? Generally speaking, did the Budget Bureau relationships go well? We had different examiners assigned from time to time. A little later some of us felt that the Budget Bureau was interested in doing a lot of records management work rather than having the National Archives pick it up. That's a highly

specialized phase. Particularly I remember Mr. Keddy in the appraisal and accessioning and disposal functions, that sometimes we rather had some rather hot sessions. Do you have any general comments on specific ones on the Budget Bureau relations?

HARRIS: Well, I have one that you won't find anywhere recorded and that was our first year. We had Dr. Keddy, even though he was sort of rought on us in the beginning, in the end he did come around and recommended a fairly good size budget for the fiscal year 1936 which enabled us to get off the ground without crawling. The next year they had changed and a man by the name of Major Jones was in charge of the Independent Offices appropriation. I went up, met him, had a preliminary discussion, told him about the National Archives, gave him the background, and in due time we submitted our estimates and our written justifications, and we had a hearing and everything was just rosy. "That's fine. That's very interesting. Your're doing a splendid job and you must be admired for it." And, Lord, I thought that he would not only give us what we asked for but would increase it. But when the appropriate time came we got a letter from Danny Bell, who was then the Director of the Budget, reducing our request for 1937 to considerably less than what Keddy had recommended for us, and which we got in 1936. Well, this naturally got my dander up and my adrenalin working. I discussed it with Dr. Connor and other members of the staff. Dr. Connor said, well what can we do? And I said, well sir, with your permission I would like to discuss it with Congressman Woodrum. I said I happen to know Danny Bell. I've met him personally and I've sat in some poker games with him and I think he's a reasonable person. Dr. Connor agreed. I tried to get in touch with Woodrum. I finally reached him in Roanoke, Virginia. I told him what the problem was. He said, if you will set up an appointment for 11 o'clock on Saturday morning with Bell, I will be there and we will have a conference with him. The appointment was made. Dr. Connor and I went to Mr. Bell's office. Major Jones came in. Congressman Woodrum arrived. We then went in to Mr. Bell's office and Dr. Connor presented the problem and our needs, and Congressman Woodrum supported Dr. Connor as to what he had to say and as to the amount. Then Mr. Bell beckoned for Woodrum to come over to his desk and look over his shoulder, and you could see that they were writing figures and nodding this that and the other and finally Bell said to Dr. Connor, I forget the exact amount, "Dr. could you live with this amount?" Dr. Connor said, "Yes I think we can. It's not quite what we would like, but I think that's fair." Bell said to Woodrum, "Do you think you can get this through your committee?" Woodrum said, "Yes I think I can." Mr. Bell then said to Dr. Connor, "I will write you a letter to this effect on the amount that we've agreed upon." I might add footnote there that Jones sat there with his tail between his legs and we never had him again in the Independent Offices appropriation. They moved him to some other place. Where I don't know.

BROOKS: What you said about Keddy interested me particularly because he came back as examiner. Perhaps when other people had gone to war he was examiner, for part of the war, and I didn't realize that he had been so involved at the planning stages of the National Archives. But he was intensely interested in great detail. He did such things as being responsible for the requirement that we all report out time down to a quarter hour, as to what we did, and he also was much interested in the organization and functions. I remember, probably in the early 40's, when I was Assistant Director of Records Accessioning and Preservation, his asking me if I didn't think I could do a better job if I had the accessioning and appraisal for all agencies right in my office. I told him, no, I didn't think so. He and Dr. Buck had some pretty heated sessions, I'm sure. But the one thing that I think I learned at that time is how important the Budget examiner can be. The agency can make recommendations to the Budget Bureau and if it doesn't sell them to the examiner at the Budget Bureau the whole policy of the agency can be changed, and all its program before it goes to Congress, I guess you learn in a short time to bear this in mind.

Do you want to say anything about special aspects of problems with other agencies?

HARRIS: Well, I'd like to just finish one general comment on the Bureau of the Budget. As I said, Major Jones was changed so we never had him anymore after that. The other Budget officers, one was Mr. Ahern, were very sympathetic, very understanding, and took a great interest. For those years until I left to go on active duty in September '42 we didn't have any major problem with the Bureau of the Budget. Even when I went to our Budget examiner to explain the program that the Archivist thought well to get established; not exactly a records administration program, but to work with the departments in doing something with their records, their handling and storage, and making some order out of the chaos. And he understood it, he could see where the dollars and cents would be saved in filing cabinets and in office space; and as I recall he gave us in our estimate the amount that we had asked for to start this program.

BROOKS: How about the Civil Service Commission? What led to the staff going under Civil Service, and what kind of relations did we have with the Commission after that?

HARRIS: In appropriation hearings the question was always asked of Dr. Connor as to whether he was under Civil Service and he said no, that the National Archives Act authorized the Archivist to make appointments depending on their qualifications and abilities. At later hearings he was asked as to whether he thought that now was the time, or whether it would be well now that the staff was set up and was a going concern, the major appointments had been made and staff selected, as to whether they should go under Civil Service. And Dr. Connor said, "yes, I think it would be now a very good idea." I didn't think so in the beginning because there were no

rosters which we could have consulted to have drawn archivists. After the last Budget hearing, I forget the exact year, it may have been '38, Congressman Woodrum called me and asked me to come and see him. And I went and he said, "If you all are really interested in going under Civil Service, if you would prepare the appropriate language I think I could get it attached to the Independent Office appropriation bill as a rider." He said, "You draw it up," and he suggested I go and talk with the General Counsel at Civil Service who was a Mr. Vipond, I believe. I drew up what I thought was appropriate language, struggling how to get around the requirement that everybody of $5,000 and above had to be appointed by the President and confirmed by the Senate, and out of an inspiration came that the language that they could have a non-competitive examination and be brought under Civil Service, regardless of the method by which appointed. The language was very short. I took it to Mr. Vipond, he studied it. We talked about it and he said it was perfectly all right and would accomplish our objectives. The Archivist then authorized me to give it to Congressman Woodrum. I did and it was attached as a rider to the Independent Offices appropriation bill and became effective November 23, 1938.

BROOKS: Then the regular pattern was set up of Civil Service examiners coming over, reviewing, reclassification, and so forth.

HARRIS: Well, then on the non-competitive side it required each member of the staff to fill out a detailed questionnaire or personal history statement with the Archivist. This was transmitted to the Civil Service Commission and they sent it through all their machinery and examined it and then they would send back the certificate of the position and grade in the National Archives. They were then under Civil Service and subject to the Civil Service Retirement Act, which we had not been previously.

BROOKS: Collas, I think I said before we started this that I was not primarily interested in anecdotes and reminiscences other than those that with substance that would affect the development of the National Archives. But sometimes the anecdotes illustrate how people thought or acted, and I think you said something a while ago about how some of the Congressmen took this proposal to put us under Civil Service.

HARRIS: It is interesting in the wheels of political machinery to mention an instance that happened in the consideration of the rider to bring the National Archives under Civil Service. The rider went through the Independent Offices appropriations subcommittee and the whole appropriations committee and was coming up in the House for a vote. Congressman Woodrum called me one day and was very agitated, and said that he had heard that Congressman McFarland of Texas had said that when it came up on the floor that he was going to object to it. And all it took was just one objection to have knocked out, this provision to bring the National Archives under Civil Service. He asked me whether I knew McFarland. I said no, I didn't know him personally,

but I did know his secretary whom I had talked to several times on the phone. And he said, "Well if you can get to him you'd better, and you'd better hurry because, as I say, I understand he's going to block it." I of course reported this to Dr. Connor and with his permission asked to go and see McFarland. He agreed and I called a secretary to the Congressman, made the appointment, and went into his office and I found a very hostile Congressman. He said that he was going to oppose the rider, and he didn't like the National Archives; he went on and on, and then finally he said, "And I haven't got a single person appointed to that staff down there." I said, "I don't recall having any recommendation from your office." That stopped him for a moment;" and further I said, "The Archivist will appoint people only if they're qualified for a particular job. If you have any constituents that you would like to recommend who have qualifications and can meet the standards for a job, I'm sure that they will receive serious consideration." At that we parted. I felt that I had made my point and that his animosity had been greatly reduced. Soon after that his secretary sent me the names of five people and something about their qualifications. I went over them. I interviewed the five and out of them one I think a clerk typist, who was tested, was qualified, and was subsequently given a job. I will footnote that to say that McFarland, when the Independent Office appropriation bill was on the floor for a vote, did not oppose the rider, so I guess a little bit of something came for good in the long run.

BROOKS: I want to ask you about other agencies of the Government. Some of the key developments in the history of the Archives were the accessioning of the records of major agencies that had had some archival consciousness of their own. Particularly State, War, and Navy. Do you have anything to say about the efforts to get the records of those agencies accessioned or what was necessary to bring it about? I had heard before that Mr. Roosevelt was involved at least in the War Department situation. What do you remember about State?

HARRIS: Only second-hand from Dr. Connor, but it was said that Hunter Miller, who was the Chief Historian at the State Department and who was editing some diplomatic papers, when they were asked about transferring any of the old records to the National Archives, said it would never be done except over my dead body. Soon after that, maybe a year, I recall he was retired. Cyril Wynne, I think, took his place.

BROOKS: That's right.

HARRIS: And a Mr. Messersmith had come in, and the question had been raised with him, or he had raised it, about the old records and about the National Archives, its setup, and so forth, and it was suggested that he, before going and making any decisions, visit the National Archives. An appointment was made, Cyril Wynne brought Mr. Messersmith in, met Dr. Connor, I was there, we then went on a tour of the building and all the facilities, and the various activities; and where the State Department records would be stored, and discussed their availability, and their protection. Messersmith

in leaving said, "Dr. Connor, that answers all of my questions. I will recommend to the Secretary when I return that all the records up to, I believe 1910, 1908 (and it was later changed to I believe 1914 or 18) be transferred to the National Archives." Some time after this decision had been made and the records were transferred, the question was raised by the State Department with Dr. Connor of the records then in the various consulates and embassies throughout the World, that they felt because of the dark clouds and the threat of war should be brought home. They did not know what to do with them, and there was some discussion of building a records building. Well in discussing it with Dr. Connor he explained to them that the records could be transferred, the bulk shipped directly to the National Archives. That they would be put in a special area, segregated, and nobody would have access, except a member of the staff of the State Department until as such time as it was mutually agreed that they could be made available for use. The State Department requested the funds from the Congress to ship the records. They were shipped directly to the Archives, and after being fumigated transferred into the stacks.

BROOKS: Was the transfer of the State Department personnel caring for the records a condition of the transfer?

HARRIS: It was part of the condition.

BROOKS: When Mrs. Summers and Miss Judy Bland came over.

HARRIS: That's right.

BROOKS: And I suppose the Deputy Examiners were involved in these negotiations pretty much too. I hope to talk to some of them. How about the War Department? What happened after FDR raised the question with Mr. Connor? Do you remember much, anything special about that?

HARRIS: It was quite an exchange of correspondence, through the President, to the then Secretary of War.

BROOKS: Dern, I think.

HARRIS: Dern. There's a very interesting anecdote about Connor's conference with Dern about transferring the records. Correspondence went on back and forth and finally Dr. Connor was able to knock down their major objections, and with the interest of the President, they started transferring the Civil War records. Then as the question of maybe involvement in a war, or clouds of war, the War Department expanded. They needed space, they didn't have it, and they approached the Archivist about transferring all of the old records, especially those from the Haley Garage, to the National Archives. And this was done over a 3 or 4 months period. But once the ice was broken things went along fairly smoothly, although they were the reluctant dragon to begin with.

BROOKS: And was there somewhat less controversy about the transfer of the Navy records?

HARRIS: I don't recall that there was any controversy. I think they came forward in the very beginning with an interest in the preservation of their records.

BROOKS: Some of the working staffs of the other agencies were worried about whether they were going to lose their jobs or not. I was, as you know, a Special Examiner assigned to survey records that had been proposed for disposal. In the first year I was assigned to the Veterans Administration, and Fred Shipman, after he did the State Department, was also assigned to the Veterans Administration. We decided it was silly for each of us to do separate surveys of the agencies, so we went together as a team. I well remember going into the Munitions Building at 17th and Constitution Avenue, where the Veterans Administration had their records of the Revolution and the War of 1812. Mr. Carlton, who was the building manager of the Veterans Administration, introduced us to the ladies who were in charge of these records, working, of course, mostly on pensions. The lade in charge drew herself up and said, "May I ask where these gentlemen are from?" Mr. Carlton said, "They're from the National Archives." She said, "So, it's come at last." That was Mrs. Finch, who later was transferred to the Archives staff and worked on the servicing of military service records. I'm sure that anecdote represents a general attitude that existed on a lot of agencies.

HARRIS: Yes, especially War Department. One of their conditions was they would transfer the records to the Archives Building, but only for the physical preservation. Their staff would have to consult, work with them, and service them.

BROOKS: We had a whole staff from the War Department, the Old Records Branch for years and years. That originated then?

HARRIS: That's right.

BROOKS: Connected with the Navy Department too, there is I suppose an anecdote. In 1938, I think, I was in the Navy archives with Nelson Blake, and he and I went to Alexandria and supervised the transfer from the torpedo station which had been used as a depository for Navy records, transferring the things out of the archives so they could start making torpedos again. It had been built for that purpose in World War I. Well, later a lot of those records were disposed of because they were moved in a great hurry and we simply couldn't do an adequate survey and appraisal of them. Then of course after the war they quit making torpedos and the building became a records depository again, part of it under the National Archives and Records Service, and eventually all of it.

Well, do you have any other special comments about relations with agencies?

HARRIS: No, except I think by and large considering the normal jealousy that agencies have, I think that the Archivist, Dr. Connor, and his staff had through his, let's call it diplomatic way of doing things gradually, without bringing any pressure to bear or any force of pressure, gradually broken down the barriers to where there was a more or less harmonious relationship with all the departments.

BROOKS: Yeah, I think the payoff on this came in two ways. One, that it saved them space, as there was an economy in that; two, that the Archives was able to produce their records in reference service and then they were sold.

HARRIS: And at that point we set up a service whereby they could phone over and request certain records and that they would be sent by messenger, by truck, to the agency.

BROOKS: Any of the agencies, yes.

HARRIS: And I go back again to what I said earlier about the establishment of the Archives. I think one of the things that did help us in the early days, maybe not be valid today, was that we did establish the divisions of department archives. In other words, Division of Navy Department, Division of War Department, Division of State Department, Division of Veterans Administration, so that the agencies could feel that their records did not lose their identity.

BROOKS: Yes, I can't imagine that the State or War Departments would have transferred their records just to go into a general collection of stuff.

HARRIS: Yeah, I don't think so.

BROOKS: In the movement for the National Archives the historians have been given credit for it mainly and they certainly deserved a great deal of credit, particularly Dr. Jameson and Dr. Leland. But I remember reading some of the records of those committees years ago, that indicated that people like Mr. Baity of GAO were actively interested because of the economy, the space and equipment. This really is the background of our current interest in records management. And a footnote--in reading Gondos' dissertation the other day, I was reminded that Dr. Jameson in the 20's had enlisted the support of veterans organizations, particularly the American Legion, in pushing the movement for a National Archives. The head of the historical department of the American Legion was Thomas McAdory Owen, and I suppose that his coming to the Archives staff was a pretty natural derivative from that development.

Second Interview, Alexandria, Virginia - July 28, 1972

BROOKS: Now, in our first interview, Collas, we talked quite a bit about the transfer of records from some of the major agencies of the Government. You said that you had more to say about the transfer of the War Department records, which is extremely important because obviously we had to knock off these major agencies to set the pattern.

HARRIS: When the President visited the National Archives Building in 1937, after we'd taken him on a tour of the Division of Navy Department Archives, he was quite impressed to see how well they were being taken care of and remarked to the Archivist that many of these he had salvaged from possible damage and destruction when he was Assistant Secretary of the Navy. We then went to the Division of War Department Archives and there were blank shelves and blank drawers and the President said to Dr. Connor, "Where are the old records of the War Department?" And Dr. Connor said, "They seem somewhat reluctant to transfer their records," and the President said, "Well." Soon after that, within a very short length of time, Dr. Connor received by messenger from the White House a copy of the note that the President had sent to the Secretary of War, within 24 hours after his visit to the Archives, substance to show cause as to why the old records of the War Department had not been transferred to the National Archives. Dr. Connor called a meeting, read the letter, and all of us had a part in drafting a reply to the Secretary of War letter for the President to sign. That's all I have to add on that.

BROOKS: One thing I wanted to ask you I didn't find quite clear in reading the Annual Reports as to the timing of certain decisions--was the decision to have flat steel archives equipment in the building. Was that made before Dr. Connor became Archivist, or how much choice did he have in selecting equipment for the stacks?

HARRIS: As I recall, the "flat concept" was in existence at the time the Archivist was appointed. Sketches and drawings had been prepared. The concept that was presented, and which existed in the Archives for several years, was that by filing the records flat, the edges would not be damaged as if they were filed upright in a loose container. But the big problem that existed and came to the front was that many varied and odd sizes of the paper just wouldn't even fit into flat containers. A survey was made of the sizes of paper and the type of container and we went ahead with. The first stack equipment was finished and was occupied in May 1936. This went on for several years of expanding, again trying to make some improvements in the flat containers, but in time it seemed to be of more importance to get more flexibility. First we had a steel upright box and then later we got into cardboard boxes.

BROOKS: Yes, we found that with the papers in the flat drawers the corners were damaged by lifting them up.

HARRIS: That's right.

BROOKS: A general point about the earlier and continuing policies of the Archives: I'm sure in discussing problems with the Archivist and other officials you must have had some thoughts about the comparative priorities in service to the Government agencies themselves, to individuals for their own concern such as veterans claims, to professional researchers such as genealogists, and or to the academic scholars. To which of these do you think was the first responsibility of the Archives?

HARRIS: Well, like all priorities, it's hard to pick them. If you didn't give immediate and rapid service to the departments whose records had been transferred to you they would be reluctant to transfer any records, so you have to at times lean over a little backwards in order to speed up service back to the department. If a legitimate scholar came into the search room and wanted to pursue a certain subject and if he wasn't given the proper attention and some priority, why then you would be blasted in the professional world. So in all things you were damned if you do and damned if you don't. I think we tried to meet each of the situations as they arose without offending anybody's feelings or position.

BROOKS: But you would agree, I think, that during the war we had to emphasize service to the Government agencies and the service to the academic scholars was somewhat minimized. As was the demand, because so many of them were off in the service too.

HARRIS: That's correct, and we also have to bear in mind that we had been put in the category of a defense agency and we received priorities, so if we had not given service to the defense establishment or defense agencies we might have lost our status.

BROOKS: One of the things that I think you were particularly interested in was our service to the agencies at the beginning of the World War II to give them information about World War I agencies. It used to be said that we had to tell them about World War I so they could repeat the same mistakes. You did have some role in that emphasis, I believe.

HARRIS: Yes, and on May 5, 1939, I addressed a short memorandum to the Archivist of the United States, subject, "The expedition of arrangement of certain records created during World War I." I wanted to point out that in the critical conditions of World affairs that

I felt very certain that we would be called on to render service on those records to the agencies to aid the World War II effort. Therefore, I thought that emphasis should be placed on arranging the records and making them available for use as quickly as possible.

BROOKS: You were interested also, as we all were, in the effort to promote the economy and effectiveness of the agencies preparing for war by emphasizing records administration activity. Right?

HARRIS: Right. Having this thought in mind, I'm not sure of the exact date, Dr. Connor had lunch with me at the University Club. After lunch I approached him on the subject of the National Archives taking a primary interest in records administration because of the rapidly expanding agencies of the Government, and the need for office space--taking records out and putting them in temporary storage, and moving them out of Washington. I said that since the Archives Act gave the Archivist authority over the archives and records of the United States Government I felt that he had enough authority to enter into a records administration program working with the departments and agencies as to what to do with their records. I also felt that if the National Archives didn't take the leadership at this time that some other agency or body would be created to take care of this problem that was stifling the departments. I felt, repeating, that if the National Archives did not take the leadership in this that somebody else would and I would rather see the National Archives do it since I felt that it had the authority for it and have the dog wag the tail rather than the tail, in the end, wag the dog.

BROOKS: Yes, I remember talking to you at that time, in the fall of '41, about records administration and the problems of field records and the problems of the agencies that were threatened with being decentralized out of Washington.

HARRIS: Well, Dr. Connor in general agreed with my concept and said that he would call a meeting of the staff, which was done that afternoon at around 4 o'clock. He did suggest, and I have no qualms about it, that it might be better if he presented the idea of the Archives entering actively into a records administration program, rather than me since I was strictly on the administrative side. All of which I agreed to because I didn't care for any credit. I wanted the National Archives to receive the credit for launching the first real records administration program in the Government.

BROOKS: Well, Dr. Connor left in September of 1941, and shortly after Dr. Buck became Archivist he named me as a special assistant to the Archivist with the job of preparing a plan for a records

administration program, which I took charge of January 1, 1942.

HARRIS: At the meeting that afternoon the concept was agreed upon. There was a little question as to whether we could get the money to support it, and my answer to the staff meeting was that I felt that by presenting it to the Bureau of the Budget as a time saving and a money saving and a space saving for the United States Government that the Bureau of the Budget would buy it and then submit it to the Congress. And I was authorized by the Archivist to go and explore it with the Bureau of the Budget, which I did. They were sympathetic and we submitted a supplemental budget, which went to Congress and was approved to launch the program.

BROOKS: Right about this time was when Dr. Connor left. Do you remember anything particular about his retirement or the reasons for it that was not generally known? Were there any particular angles to it?

HARRIS: Nothing in particular. I do know that Mrs. Connor had been having trouble with her eyes. She was not in the best of health. Neither was Dr. Connor. The pressure of the activities in Washington, both business and social, was tiring them both and you could feel that they were anxious to get back to a quieter atmosphere. So it really didn't surprise me when he announced that he was going to resign and go back to Chapel Hill.

BROOKS: Yes, I think those reasons were stated at the time, and it was pretty straightforward. There was no hidden motive back of it. Well, now he recommended Dr. Buck to be his successor and I guess there wasn't any particular question about that appointment, or any particular rival claimants. Do you know?

HARRIS: No I don't think there were. I think it was a pretty straightforward recommendation based on logic. Dr. Buck was a well-known historian, prominent in the American Historical Association, had been very active in the Minnesota Historical Society, and had been with the National Archives almost from the date of its inception. He'd grown up with it. He was familiar with all of the problems and I think he was a logical person to have the job. I guess Dr. Connor recommended him and the President felt the same way.

BROOKS: Well, it was quite evident that Dr. Buck's influence had been steadily growing, and of course after he became Archivist the war came on us immediately and many activities had to be expanded in which he was interested in. Do you have any particular comments on his role or how his administration of the Archives differed from Dr. Connor's? Did your relations with him differ much?

HARRIS: No, my relations with Dr. Buck, although they were a little bit different from Dr. Connor, but my relations with him administratively and professionally I would say you couldn't ask for anything better. I respected his judgment, he respected mine, and there was no diminution in authority or responsibilities or action as far as I was concerned. I felt I had his confidence and he had mine.

BROOKS: One of the things in which I remember your being very active at the time, because I was associated through the Society of American Archivists, was the Committee on the Conservation of Cultural Resources. How did that all come about, and what of your relations with Dr. Leland who was, I believe, Chairman?

HARRIS: Yes.

BROOKS: And Dan Lacy whom you took over from the Historical Records Survey, right?

HARRIS: It came about I think sort of gradually. There were two committees that were set up under the Society of American Archivists. One was the Committee on the Protection of Archives Against the Hazards of War, of which Dr. Connor was the Chairman. Then there was a Committee on the Emergency Storage of Archives, of which I was Chairman. And I think because of my role in the National Archives and my interest in the protection I was asked to assist Richard Heindel, who was then Executive Secretary of the Committee on Conservation of Cultural Resources, in preparing a paper on the protection of cultural resources. I spent a great deal of time with Heindel and out of that I was later then appointed a member of the Committee on the Conservation of Cultural Resources.

BROOKS: Heindel was then on the staff of Leland's American Council of Learned Societies, or the Social Science Research Council.

HARRIS: I'm not sure. He had an office, a small office up in the Library of Congress where he conducted his research and his work. The Committee on the Conservation of Cultural Resources was established under the National Resources Planning Board. Soon after I was appointed to the Cultural Resources Committee we began having some problems about administration and I recommended to Dr. Leland, and he subsequently recommended it to the Committee and they approved it, that there be a small executive committee composed of Dr. Leland, the Archivist, the Librarian of Congress, a representative from the Smithsonian, a representative from the Public Buildings Administration, and one from the Office of the Secretary of War. The Executive Committee was established and

Dr. Leland appointed me as the Chairman of the Executive Committee. This was a small group that could meet in a hurry in an emergency and take a course of action that would not be, you might say, inconsistent with the overall thoughts or jurisdiction of the Committee as a whole. Also, soon after the Executive Committee got underway Dan Lacy, who had been active in the WPA Historical Records Survey, was put on the National Archives staff and was assigned as Secretary to the Executive Committee. Well, as we got underway the question arose as to what our relationship would be with the states. We couldn't just confine everything to Washington and try to run the whole national program with the small Executive Committee in Washington. You had to branch out and get support and action and activities from all of the cultural organizations in all the states. And I proposed this to Dr. Leland and he said, "Well do we have the authority?" And so I reread to him the authorization establishing the committee and I couldn't see where we were prohibited from doing it so I said, "Since we aren't prohibited, let's try it." He said, "If you think so, go ahead." So we started and were very successful in getting, I would say, all or most of the associations in the states to establish conservation committees composed of librarians, museum directors, and other people in charge of cultural resources. It was then through them that we worked and had communications for a national program.

Now there is one little interesting anecdote here about the Executive Committee. It did meet, it did function, it took some action, not inconsistent, until Pearl Harbor. Pearl Harbor arrived and I called an emergency meeting of the Executive Committee the next day (Monday) to make plans and make recommendations for action that should be taken and that we should seize the day. Mr. MacLeish, the Librarian of Congress, who had been a hawk earlier, said that we should not do anything immediately on our own responsibility. He was reluctant to take any action until we had the go sign from the President and from the Secretary of War. Especially as to any danger that might happen to Washington--a possible air raid or ships close by firing onto Washington. And what he wanted in particular was, as we speak of it today, was an estimate of the situation. Well, I said to Colonel O'Brien, who was the Secretary of War representative on the CCCR, "Do you think you could get such an opinion?" He said, "I think so, write a letter." So we wrote a letter to the Secretary of War and in due time Colonel O'Brien brought back a reply. It answered the questions of MacLeish and David Finley, and action was then taken for immediate removal of the most priceless cultural material from its present location into other locations of greater safety.

BROOKS: Where was Colonel O'Brien from--The War Department?

HARRIS: Yeah.

BROOKS: And in the meantime the Archives had its own committee, as I remember it, that was responsible among other things for the plan to put the most valuable records in the interior stack area.

HARRIS: And then also there was a Committee on the Protection of Federal Buildings and its Contents that was established mainly by the Public Buildings Administration and the National Park Service, and I was the National Archives representative on that Committee.

BROOKS: You went into the Army-Air Forces in September of 1942, right?

HARRIS: That's right.

BROOKS: It used to be a standard joke that people who were highly trained would get into the Army, or some of the military services, and be assigned to something wholely unrelated to what they were qualified for. What kind of experience did you have in that respect?

HARRIS: Well, I jumped the gun on that a little bit when I got my commission as a first lieutenant, I went and talked to General Fechet, who was a former Chief of the Army-Air Corps, as to what I should do. I was too old to be a pilot. I didn't want to go into the administrative side as an adjutant and he said, "Hold out to get in the Air Force Intelligence or as a combat observer." So with that in the back of my mind I was ordered to the Officers Training School, Miami Beach, from there to Bowman Field in Kentucky and there, going through the interviewing stage, they wanted to send me out as an adjutant, which I declined and held out to go to the Air Force Intelligence School at Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. After finishing that I joined an outfit and went overseas to New Guinea in August of 1943 as an intelligence officer. Now, in that capacity you are privy to everything that's really going on. Even your commanding officer at times cannot know. I know and remember in particular when we were getting ready to go overseas the intelligence officers were briefed as to where we were going. We collected maps and documentations on the area. We were specifically instructed not to tell our commanding officer, which we didn't do. And when mine in particular found out in California--San Francisco--where we were going he turned to me and said, "Did you know where we were going?" I said, "Yes," and he said, "Why in the hell didn't you tell me?"

Well, having a background in history and in the Archives throughout my whole career I thought about collecting material, not classified, but material relating to World War II in all the areas and all of the activities that I was engaged in. In '45 I was ordered back from the Philippines and went to the Military Government School at Charlottesville, and then the Civil Affairs Training School, Ann Arbor, Michigan, then to California, and then to Japan. In Japan I had a lead into the civil information and education section, General Headquarters, Supreme Commander Allied Powers (General McArthur). My first job was to draw up plans for an analysis and research division. I drew up the chart and all of the documents that were needed to activate it, then I was appointed deputy director of this division. We were responsible for establishing freedom of the press, freedom of education, freedom of speech, the whole field of cultural resources, and sociological activities. And my interest in the cultural resources caused me to have a research staff that did quite a bit of research into the cultural resources of Japan. Reports were prepared. Copies were sent back to Washington. I saw to it that copies were sent to the Library of Congress. I kept the Archivist advised of my activities and I subsequently collected all of the copies of the reports that were not highly classified and brought them back with me to the United States. They're now housed in the George Marshall Research Library at Lexington, VMI. Also, in 1944 I had published in Australia a book, a history of our organization called, "Sky Train." The publisher of the book in Sidney, Australia, was also the publisher of the official publications of the Australian effort in World War I and in World War II, and he gave me copies of all of these publications that they had put out, which I packaged up and sent back to the Library of Congress.

BROOKS: Well, you came back to the Archives in April 1948. Did it seem quite different? Did there seem to be any change of course that impressed you?

HARRIS: Well, it didn't quite seem to be the same place but I think the thing that hit me the most, that disappointed me, was that the emphasis on records administration seemed to have lapsed or lagged behind. When I left it seemed to be the great thing that was going to go and make the National Archives more than what it was. But somehow it did seem not to have the force that it had when I left in '42. And in that respect I was somewhat disappointed.

BROOKS: I see what you mean. Of course I think there could be some difference of opinion, or difference of emphasis about that. When you left we were building up this records administration staff that I had charge of. I think we had 6, 8, or 10 people at one time. Before you came back, many of the agencies had done much more themselves

with records administration. Particularly the Army and the Navy. Ed Leahy had a lot to do with that in the Navy, and Wayne Grover in the Army. And I think the Archives was as much interested in records administration as a part of the total picture, but after the war it had an opportunity to give more emphasis to the strictly archival services of description reference service, and so forth. But I know there was some difference of opinion about this at the time that led up to Leahy's activity in connection with the Hoover Commission Report.

HARRIS: I just didn't feel that we were taking as positive and as strong a leadership in this as we should have, but that's only my personal opinion.

BROOKS: Before we get to the Hoover Commission, within 2 or 3 months after you came back Dr. Buck resigned and went to the Library of Congress. Dr. Grover was immediately appointed as his successor and confirmed by the Senate 3 or 4 days after. And several other changes in the staff took place right about that time. Do you have any particular light to shed on Buck's resignation or Grover's appointment?

HARRIS: No, it came as a complete surprise to me. I was not privy to any inside information on it before it was announced. There was speculation as to why Grover received it, and some said well, I guess because of his relationship to Senator Thomas of Utah. He'd be sure of confirmation. But I have no light to shed on it.

BROOKS: I think Wayne has to sort of live down the fact that he was Senator Thomas' son-in-law. He was as well qualified professionally as anybody in the place, but it didn't hurt him to be Senator Thomas' son-in-law. When you came back you were Administrative Officer and you were again in charge of the administrative activities. Pretty much the same pattern as what you had when you left, right?

HARRIS: Not quite the same pattern. The title of the job had been changed. It wasn't Executive Officer anymore, but that's purely a title. I think the relationship with Dr. Buck during that limited period of time was the same. But there was a change in relationship after Grover took over as Archivist.

BROOKS: Collas, somewhat related to your feeling when you came back to the Archives that there wasn't then, in 1948, sufficient emphasis on records administration, you made some recommendations about this, I believe, that were related to the activity of the Hoover Commission.

HARRIS: Now the question of whether records administration, or records management, in the Government was to be a separate agency was under discussion and had been explored by the Hoover Commission. This I felt was going in the wrong direction, and on May 3, 1949, I wrote a memorandum to the Archivist of the United States urging him to take positive and aggressive leadership in the field of records administration, and what I might say is to seize the day and not let somebody else run away with the ball. As later it turned out, with the then Archivist somewhat reluctant to take the leadership in records administration, seemingly to want the National Archives to rest only in its responsibility pertaining to Archives and not take a positive leadership in the records administration, and when he did not take this positive stand, Leahy in his final recommendation to the Hoover Commission recommended that the National Archives be placed under the General Services Administration in which it would lose its independent status. This was done and the Archives did lose its independent status.

BROOKS: But the Archives immediately had as a part of it an Office of Records Management, or whatever the name was, which set forth on an aggressive program in the records management field.

HARRIS: But we were not an independent agency. We were a Service or an agency or whatever you want to call it of the General Services Administration which was a housekeeping agency and not a professional organization. And I felt it lowered the professional prestige and world standing of the National Archives, and I personally resented it.

BROOKS: You weren't the only one that thought so. As I understand it, Collas, after the passage of the GSA Act in 1949, the Federal Property and Administrative Services Act, I mean, you were on one of the several committees that were set up among the Services of GSA to coordinate and bring things together. And am I right saying the intent then was to centralize all the administrative services considerably, so that the personnel people that had been assigned to the Archives were moved to the GSA?

HARRIS: That's right.

BROOKS: I think they pulled back a bit on that later.

HARRIS: By and large our relationship 'til I left in October 1952 with General Services was amicable. We got sympathetic hearing and understanding of our problems. But to me having started out with the Archives when it was an independent agency, having responsibility over records and archives of all of the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of the Government, in going under GSA which was

a general housekeeping service agency of the Government, I thought some of the professional prestige was lost and some of the incentive for action was bound down. Because everything had to be cleared, you had to work through GSA even though they, I think, treated us very good and very understandingly. Some of the spirit had gone out of it and I could feel it, and I know it was reflected in the attitude and feelings of some of the other people and officials in the Archives.

BROOKS: Well, don't you think there are two different things involved here? One, the absorption into GSA itself was something that they couldn't very well prevent, I think. That was recommended by the overall Hoover Commission which had a general policy of reducing the number of agencies reporting directly to the President. Now, within that the Leahy task force recommended that there be a records management bureau that would have been over the Archives, and if that had gone into effect then I think the people that were active in the more professional archival activities of the Archives would have had far lower spirits still. I believe Grover and Bahmer went to a good deal of effort to have the Archives, the Service of GSA with the records management office under it, rather than vice versa.

HARRIS: Well, that's true. There were unfortunate developments, and I think the reason the Hoover Commission made those recommendations about a separate agency was the feeling that I had when I came back after the war, that the National Archives had lost the leadership in the field of records administration. And because we had lost it and weren't taking it somebody else was going to take it over. Now probably in the end, since we had lost the major fight, we were well off by going under GSA and being established then as the National Archives and Records Service unit of GSA. I'm sorry that ever had to come to pass.

BROOKS: You know in 1946, I think it was, there was an Executive Order, while you were away, 9784, which for the first time stipulated that the head of each agency should create and preserve records that would document its major policies and developments, and I think it called for the appointment of a records officer in each agency. That tended to throw the responsibility on the agencies and I think had something to do with the appearance (which I'm not all that ready to concede, although I'm really trying to get your opinion in this interview) the appearance that the Archives didn't put as much emphasis on records administration as before. Of course I didn't personally see so much right then because in '49 I wasn't in the Archives anyway. I was in the National Security Resources Board and much interested in records administration, but just as much in the professional archival activity.

Well, you stayed in the Archives until October, you said, of 1952 . . .

HARRIS: That's right.

BROOKS: When you were transferred to another Government agency?

HARRIS: Transferred to the Central Intelligence Agency.

BROOKS: And what governed that particular timing, Collas?

HARRIS: I had a friend who was then assigned to the CIA whom I'd worked with very closely in Japan, and he talked me into coming over. He said they need people like you with your broad experience in many fields, your particular knowledge of the Far East and intelligence activities. They need people like you in the Central Intelligence Agency and he urged me to transfer over, which I did because at that time it was a sort of emergency situation regarding Korea so I transferred under one of these emergency transferrs which meant that I could have come back to the National Archives.

BROOKS: Well, was there anything particularly governing the time of October '52?

HARRIS: They wanted me to come in the summer, but at that time it was my responsibility to make plans through the Public Buildings Administration and the Bureau of Standards to prepare safe and adequate storage and display of the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution when they were transferred from the Library of Congress. The Archivist asked, and I believe he wrote a letter to CIA requesting that I have an extension of time of reporting until the job had come to a near completion stage. And I was glad to do it because I had started out on it, and being interested that the Declaration and Constitution finally got to the Archives I wanted to see them properly protected and displayed.

BROOKS: So all in all at one time or another you were for about 10 years with the National Archives. Six years before the war and 4 years afterward. It was a pretty interesting time.

HARRIS: Yes, it was.

BROOKS: There is one other subject that I should have brought up earlier, Collas. The first important legislative act affecting the authority of the Archivist after the National Archives Act of June 1934, was the Federal Register Act of July 1935. That came so soon after the appointment of the Archivist that I wondered if there must not have been something afoot in respect to the Federal Register before the Archivist came along.

HARRIS: Well, I don't know what had happened prior, except there obviously had been discussions in the Treasury Department and with State and the Department of Justice regarding the need for a Federal Register. In this period, December '34, we were visited, Dr. Connor was, and I was in on the meeting with representatives from Justice, Treasury, and State asking the Archivist would he undertake the publication of the Federal Register. The Act had been drafted but its final location had been left out. They pointed out that the Executive Orders and proclamations, the originals, were at State. Eventually they would be at the Archives, so why not have them at the Archives in the very beginning for protection and storage and utilization? And also, the other argument they put forth was that the Federal Register would be publishing rules and regulations, Executive Orders and proclamations not only from the White House but all Federal agencies, so that it was logical to ask the National Archives to do it since it was an independent agency and would not be having any axe to grind. And the Archivist after discussing it with his immediate staff, which then only consisted of Mr. Hyde and myself, agreed and it then was subsequently put in legislation and was passed.

BROOKS: Was Congressman Woodrum particularly interested in that Act, do you know?

HARRIS: Woodrum was interested in it and helped get the legislation through Congress.

BROOKS: This, of course, was long before any records had come over from the State Department. Was there any objection on the part of the State Department to giving up this function? In 1939 there was an Executive Order transferring the backlog of Executive Orders and proclamations to the Archives. Did State go along with all of this?

HARRIS: I don't recall any major objections or if any were put up by State. As I recall, I think they were a little bit relieved to get rid of this responsibility.

BROOKS: This is interesting because State Department did to a certain extent oppose the transfer of its historical records.

HARRIS: That's right. Gaillard Hunt said it wouldn't be done except over his dead body, you recall.

BROOKS: Hunter Miller, yes.

HARRIS: Hunter Miller.

BROOKS: There is one other subject you mentioned of interest that you had some connection with, and that is the Freedom Train.

HARRIS: My connection with it was after the Freedom Train had ceased to exist as such and the cars were sitting up in the yard, Pennsylvania yards, in Wilmington, Delaware, the Pennsylvania Railroad wanted to dismantle it and put the cars back in use. Naturally the Archives, the Archivist and the staff, thought it would be well worthwhile to continue the operation of this Freedom Train, and Thad Page was authorized to see if he couldn't get appropriate legislation through Congress for its continued operation by the National Archives with appropriated monies. At times it seemed to get off the ground and then it collapsed, and finally we had to give up on it. But the Pennsylvania Railroad wanted to dismantle it. There were beautiful cases. They were all steel with shatter-proof and bullet-proof protection glasses. And I asked permission to go up to Wilmington to see it and see what use we might make of the display cases, and I was authorized to do it. "Pop" Stiles, who was our architect, was authorized to accompany me. We went to Wilmington, we looked at the train, we measured the cases, examined them very carefully, and thought that we could make use of them, especially in the circular corridor around the exhibition hall. At first we had some doubting Thomases but Stiles worked up the drawings for a very simple construction. The Public Buildings Administration gave us an estimate of what it would cost then the next question was, which I had negotiated with the Pennsylvania Railroad, that according to our measurements and our wishes the cases, steel, by a cutting torch would be cut according to our specifications. The Pennsylvania Railroad agreed to it. They did cut them, they delivered them to Washington, and we brought them to the Archives Building and the Public Buildings Administration installed them. That's why you have all of the display cases around the exhibition hall in the circular corridor, at a very small cost to the Government.

BROOKS: Well, yes. Now that was the Freedom Train that went around the country from '47 to '49.

HARRIS: That's right.

BROOKS: I remember going out to Cameron, Virginia, when it was being assembled. A lot of the documents came from the Foreign Affairs Records Section of the Archives, which was in the division that I had charge of. Well, they've used those cases in the circular corridor ever since, until the spring of 1972. They now have a contract and they are taking them out. You know, new people have

to change every so often, and they want a different kind of cases; and they had eventually developed some problems of heat behind those cases. But they've been there for more than 20 years now. So they've served well.