



AGREEMENT WITH THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS SERVICE
AS TO ORAL HISTORY TRANSCRIPT

I, Thad S. Page, of Alexandria, 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 606 Crestwood Drive, Alexandria, Virginia, on February 2, and July 28, 1972.

It is agreed that the tape and transcript will be available for research 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 interview 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 to statements and facts set forth in the interview.

Signed:

Thad S. Page

Date:

4/26/73

Accepted:

Signed:

James B. Rhoads
Archivist of the United States

Date:

12-10-73

NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS SERVICE

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Interviews with

THAD S. PAGE

Former Administrative Secretary

Major Biographical Information:

Born, Aberdeen, North Carolina	1890
Automobile dealer	1916-1931
Secretary to U.S. Senator	1931-1935
Administrative Secretary, National Archives	1935-1947
Also Acting Chief, Divisions of Legislative and Justice Archives	1942-1943
Chief, Legislative Reference and Records Division	1947-1949
Director, Legislative and Veterans Branch	1949-1955
Chief Archivist, Legislative, Fiscal, and Diplomatic Records Branch	1955-1960
Retired	1960
Died	1973

Interviews at Alexandria, Virginia

February 2 and July 28, 1972

Interviewer - Philip C. Brooks

NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS SERVICE

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Interviews with Thad S. Page
Former Administrative Secretary

Interviewer-Philip C. Brooks

National Archives and Records Service

Oral History Project

Interview with Thad S. Page
Former Administrative Secretary

Interviewed at his home, 606 Crestwood Drive, Alexandria, Virginia

First interview - February 2, 1972

Philip C. Brooks, Interviewer

BROOKS: Now, Thad, would you tell me something about when you first became interested in the Archives--how much you knew about it? You were then working in the office of Senator Bailey?

PAGE: Yeah, I was Senator Bailey's secretary at that time and the first I heard about the Archives, before Dr. Connor was appointed, was from Collas Harris, who then was working for one of the New Deal agencies and had something to do with personnel.

BROOKS: He was personnel officer of FERA.

PAGE: Alright, then, he came up to the office to talk to me one day. He said he understood that Dr. R.D.W. Connor was going to be appointed Archivist and he wanted Senator Bailey to endorse him for a position with Dr. Connor in the Archives. And before that time, he had let us know that he had a few jobs and that he would be glad to entertain some recommendations from us for people to fill those jobs.

BROOKS: How long had you been in Washington then, Thad?

PAGE: Well, I came to Washington in March of 1931 and this was in--the first I heard of Harris--was in the fall I think or maybe summer of '34. Soon after the National Archives Act was approved, and I don't remember when that was except it was summertime.

BROOKS: June 1934.

PAGE: Sometime in '34. And this business of having some jobs and letting us recommend some people to him, and he gave some of them appointments, and then just before Dr. Connor was appointed he came up to see me and wanted Senator Bailey's endorsement for a job with Dr. Connor. Well, I think Senator Bailey finally did give him a recommendation of a kind, of a sort; it wasn't too strong a recommendation but he felt that in view of the fact that Harris had placed some of his people that he owed him a little something so he did give him a sort of a recommendation, as good a one as he could under the circumstances, but it wasn't too strong. And then after Dr. Connor was

appointed by Mr. Roosevelt, Senator Bailey was very much pleased and he wrote to Dr. Connor and told him that if there was anything he could do to help him he'd be delighted to do it.

BROOKS: I saw a copy of that letter at Chapel Hill last week.

PAGE: Oh, you did?

BROOKS: I went through the Connor papers, yeah.

PAGE: Well anyway, on a number of occasions, two or three times, Dr. Connor came over to see Senator Bailey and what they talked about I don't know.

BROOKS: Had they known each other a long time?

PAGE: Oh yeah. My father and Dr. Connor's father were good friends and in 1900 they were in the legislature together. Dr. Connor's father, Mr. Henry Groves Connor, was Speaker of the House of Representatives in the 1900 General Assembly.

BROOKS: And he's the one that was later Justice of the Court?

PAGE: No, he was a district judge, a Federal district judge in eastern North Carolina. Now he had a son by the name of George Connor, Dr. Connor's brother, who was on the North Carolina Supreme Court.

BROOKS: What part of North Carolina do you come from originally?

PAGE: Dr. Connor?

BROOKS: You.

PAGE: Oh, I came from down in the sand hills around Pinehurst and Southern Pines, a little town called Aberdeen, which is about 4 miles from Southern Pines. My father represented that county in the legislature back in 1900, and Dr. Connor's father represented Wilson County. Well, Senator Bailey, of course, had been in his early days editor of the Biblical Recorder in Raleigh and Dr. Connor had been in Raleigh on two or three assignments, I can't tell you now what they were.

BROOKS: He became secretary of the North Carolina Historical Commission in 1903.

PAGE: All right.

BROOKS: And that was one of the first state organizations in the country, archives organizations. He was a real pioneer.

PAGE: It was within that organization that the State archives existed. Well, anyway, Dr. Connor and Senator Bailey knew each other back in those days. And I wonder what I started--oh, about how long Dr. Connor and Mr. Bailey had been acquainted. Certainly from 1903 anyway. And then North Carolina is a rather unusual State. Most everybody knows everybody else, or if they don't know them they know who they are and they know their families. It's not unusual that they did know each other. Anyway, now when Dr. Connor was appointed as Archivist, he came to visit Senator Bailey on two or three occasions. I don't know what they talked about, but the first time I entered into the picture--one day after they had been visiting for some time--they came into my office and Senator Bailey told me that Dr. Connor wanted me to go to the Archives with him. I was rather surprised, and I said to Senator Bailey, "Do you want to get rid of me?" And he said, no, he didn't want to get rid of me, but he thought that I might welcome an opportunity to get away from him--or words to that effect. So, the long and short of it was that after thinking about it for some time, talking to Patsy and some other friends, I decided that I would go down there with him. I had no idea what he wanted me to do except that he did say that he felt it was very important to have somebody associated with him who knew the ins and outs on Capitol Hill and around official Washington. And so I figured that maybe he wanted me for that sort of job, but I didn't know. And of course certainly I knew nothing about archives, about the kind of work that an institution like the National Archives would be called on to do. I remember that when I went to work they had a few offices over in the Justice Department--the Archives building hadn't been finished--and I had an office over there with somebody else, I've forgotten who right now. We sort of had to double up and I don't remember exactly who it was. But anyway, I do remember the first assignment I got from Dr. Connor, and that rather amazed me. Well, it seemed that some of the staff that Dr. Connor had assembled had been engaged in making surveys of records in various Government agencies, and they had developed a form on which they were to report certain information regarding the records covered by those surveys. And Dr. Connor felt that the forms were too long and too cumbersome.

BROOKS: They always were.

PAGE: That's right.

BROOKS: And a special examiner surveyed records that had been reported for authority to dispose of.

PAGE: No, these were records that were presumably to come to the Archives one of these days, and I started work on that form not knowing what I was doing very much. I ended up with something that I thought was as good as I could come up with, and I took that to Dr. Connor and he seemed very well pleased with it; and he had that form that I had

devised substituted for the long form. The next assignment that I got from him was, of course I had a job description of the job that he had given me which was called Administrative Secretary of the National Archives, but I wasn't doing what I thought the Administrative Secretary of the National Archives would do with respect to this form. This next assignment that I'm about to tell you about was to take that short form and meet with the examiners, I believe they were called examiners.

BROOKS: Deputy examiners.

PAGE: Deputy examiners, who were assigned to making these surveys and explain why the form had been shortened and why certain questions on the long form had been eliminated and why the questions on the short form were retained or changed in some instances. And that was my second job and that really terrorized me thinking about going in and telling these professional archivists, presumably. I don't know that they were or that there was a body of professional archivists at that time. But anyway, that's what these people were hired to do and I knew nothing at all about it, and I felt like a fool talking to them. But I did it and I got by with it some way or other without too much criticism being offered. There were some objections raised but not too many. And that was my baptism of fire at the National Archives. I didn't have anything like that assigned to me after that until I had done some of the work that fell within the job description of the Office of the Administrative Secretary.

BROOKS: We'll get back to that. Let me ask you two or three questions. Do you know who devised those forms originally?

PAGE: No.

BROOKS: Do you know who wrote the job descriptions?

PAGE: No.

BROOKS: Everything since then has been somewhat affected by the way those forms were written up and the information that went onto them. The one the special examiners did was far more complex. And everything since has been affected to some extent by those job descriptions which were done before we were under the Civil Service.

PAGE: Oh, yeah.

BROOKS: I gather that Harris had a good deal to do with them working with the Civil Service.

PAGE: I think so.

BROOKS: Harris, and I suppose Hyde.

PAGE: I think Harris did, and I don't think Hyde had too much to do with it and I don't think Dr. Buck had too much to do with it except maybe with the descriptions of their own jobs, I don't know. Certainly I had nothing to do with writing the job description for my job.

BROOKS: Did you know Mr. Hyde before? Do you know anything about how he got into the picture?

PAGE: No, I don't. I don't know a thing about his background, anything about him. Nor did I know Dr. Buck, I didn't know anything about Dr. Buck.

BROOKS: He came about the same time you did, didn't he?

PAGE: Yeah.

BROOKS: That, one question I wanted to ask you awhile ago is: did you know any of the other people who were in back of the Archives movement before? Dr. Jameson and --

PAGE: No, not at that time, no.

BROOKS: Or did you know anything about, currently about, the drafting of the National Archives Act?

PAGE: The original Act?

BROOKS: Yeah.

PAGE: No, not a thing.

BROOKS: Dr. Jameson was then at the Library of Congress but he had been at the Carnegie Institution and he was the main one that was responsible, of course, for this movement.

PAGE: I knew him later, something about that, and not too long ago Vic Gondos was out here with something he'd written covering that and Dr. Connor's appointment and all the vicissitudes that they went through in getting him appointed.

BROOKS: Well, in 1934 when the Archives Act was finally introduced. Long before that there had been agitation for the building, but there wasn't an Act drawn up for the organization, I mean for the staff and the operation of the place, until 1934.

PAGE: I know Bradley had something to do with that.

BROOKS: Right. Then Jameson apparently drafted a bill that was introduced by Congressman Sol Bloom. And somebody drafted a bill that was introduced by Senator McKellar. They were both considered by Congressman Kent Keller's committee on libraries.

PAGE: Chairman of the Library Committee on the House side.

BROOKS: And that's how Bradley got into the picture. He was something or other to Kent Keller. They put these two bills together, and the final bill was mostly the McKellar bill. I would like to find out who wrote it. Maybe I can sometime.

PAGE: Well, I don't know.

BROOKS: You weren't involved before that?

PAGE: No, except that Bradley did come to me before I left Senator Bailey and told me a good bit about his part in that legislation and the bodies interested in the National Archives, and wanting to get a job down there. Somebody in the North Carolina delegation on the House side was on the Library Committee, I believe it was Hap Barden, (I'm not certain, I think so because he later became chairman of the Library Committee and we had to deal with him), who knew Bradley, and on Hap Barden's recommendation Senator Bailey gave Bradley a letter of endorsement to Dr. Connor.

BROOKS: Okay.

PAGE: But who wrote the job description, I don't know, unless they got somebody from the Civil Service Commission. Harris and a fellow named Jones. Do you remember Jones?

BROOKS: Allen Jones.

PAGE: Yeah, Allen Jones, I think he had something to do with it.

BROOKS: He was first -

PAGE: Called him Comptroller.

BROOKS: He may have been; he had charge of the accounts.

PAGE: Yeah.

BROOKS: And I don't know where he came from.

PAGE: He was a friend of Harris'.

BROOKS: He was a likeable guy. Well, the reason I asked about the Act, and I won't pursue it, is that there are several things in it-- for instance, the provisions for the Archivist's authority to inspect records and to transfer records, and the provisions for the head of agency for final restrictions--the very sort of things that have always been extremely important. And I don't believe that Congressman Bloom and Senator McKellar themselves would have known a great deal about those

things; somebody must have drafted for them.

PAGE: Well, probably the people they got to draft those bills conferred with people like Dr. Jameson. Presumably I would think so, because I don't know anybody over on the Hill who knew anything about records or archival business practices or what there should be in such a bill. I think they had to go somewhere to get some instructions or information. There was a fellow, another fellow over at the Library of Congress who was active back in those days. He was a candidate for appointment as Archivist, I've forgotten his name. I think he was from Texas.

BROOKS: Was that Martin?

PAGE: Huh, Martin, yeah.

BROOKS: T. P. Martin?

PAGE: Yeah. Now some of those folks over there might have called in Martin in connection with drafting this legislation.

BROOKS: He was assistant to the chief of the manuscript division under Jameson. When your position was designed in the job description, was it not primarily to handle relations with the Congress in relation to the public?

PAGE: That's right. And I remember one thing that was in my job description that rather surprised me was to write whatever arguments had to be written in justification of the budget. That seemed to me a part of Harris' job, or should have been, but it was in my job description, as was--which was more understandable--the responsibility for drafting the annual report of the Archivist. But the budget business liked to have worked me to death for those first 3 or 4 years. Writing a justification for the budget, having had very little say so in determining what was in the budget in the first place; it was sort of hard sometimes for me to justify some of the items.

BROOKS: Were you directly involved in the consultation with the Budget Bureau?

PAGE: Yes I was.

BROOKS: Did that go pretty well generally? Did the Budget Bureau people dictate or advise or guide or --

PAGE: Yes, generally speaking it went pretty well. We never got the money that we thought we ought to get, but looking back on it now it's amazing that we got as much as we did get.

BROOKS: I think the first appropriation was in the neighborhood of a half million dollars, wasn't it?

PAGE: Well that I would be unable to say with any positiveness. I thought it was more than that.

BROOKS: Well I remember some years after that when it first got to be a million dollars and everybody thought that was very significant. Last year the budget for the National Archives and Records Service, the current one, was about \$31 million.

PAGE: Well, I tell you my job liaison with the Congress and with the agencies was very much simpler and easier during Dr. Connor's regime than it was when Dr. Buck came in. I had a good bit of difficulty with his relationship with Members of Congress. He was anything but a diplomat when it came to dealing with politicians. Now I don't want to say I was not fond of Dr. Buck. Personally, I liked him very much, but he was not the smooth administrator that Dr. Connor was.

BROOKS: Well Connor undoubtedly understood the politicians better.

PAGE: Yeah, he'd had some experience in North Carolina with his agency, the state agency.

BROOKS: One time he wrote something in which he said that some of the scholars thought that the activities, congressional activities, in relation to the Archives ought to be wholly nonpolitical, and so forth; and he said that it just isn't realistic to expect the congressmen to act that way, that politics is their business.

PAGE: That's right. He knew that. Dr. Buck didn't.

BROOKS: Well now in the beginning you must have had dealings with a great many congressmen. Do you remember which were the most helpful?

PAGE: Oh, not too many. Our dealings primarily in the beginning were with Members of the House who, were members of the Independent Offices appropriations subcommittee, and I can't remember off hand who was chairman of that. He was a Democrat; but wait, I had a lot of help and support from a Republican member of that subcommittee. One Mr. Everett Dirksen.

BROOKS: Oh, is that right?

PAGE: He became very much interested in the National Archives and we became very good friends and our friendship lasted until his death, and he was a very able man. I became very fond of him. Well, now our relationship with the House was limited primarily to the members of the Independent Offices subcommittee on appropriations, and to members of the Library committee, of which Mr. Keller then was chairman. He was later succeeded by Congressman Barden from New Bern, North Carolina, whom I knew well, and after Barden got in we had very easy sailing. They handled all legislation other than that pertaining to

appropriation.

BROOKS: Did you know Congressman Cochran?

PAGE: Oh yes. Yeah, he was a pain in the neck so far as the Archives was concerned.

BROOKS: Well there's evidence in the file that he was a pain in the neck.

PAGE: Yeah, he was for awhile. But he came around. He was not too unreasonable. It was all new to him and he just had to be educated some, and he was. But I remember he kept insisting on the Hall of Records and I think that he's responsible for what later developed as these regional --

BROOKS: Records centers?

PAGE: Records centers, yeah.

BROOKS: Well, there was a good deal of vagueness on the part of many people, including some of their staff, all the way up to Mr. Roosevelt, as to the difference between archives and records; as a difference between the cream of the crop that would be kept for permanent preservation and the big mass of records that should be kept temporarily and then disposed of. I think it was really a good many years after the Archives was established till we got really on top of that, if we ever did.

PAGE: Well, I think we did, Phil.

BROOKS: Oh, I guess so. I was always interested in it, you know. I was interested in what happened to the records in the agencies before they came to the Archives. Now, Senator McKellar had been much interested at the time of the drafting of the bill; it was primarily the McKellar bill.

PAGE: Yeah, he had a draft of a bill.

BROOKS: Did he continue to be interested and concerned?

PAGE: Yeah, he was interested and it appeared to us often his interest was to keep us from getting what we needed and what we wanted, but he was interested and he got terribly concerned--this was a long time later--about this German archivist, Dr. Posner.

BROOKS: Oh yeah.

PAGE: He learned some way or other, well I don't know that it's fair to say that Dr. Posner was responsible for this, but somebody decided that we should keep records in cardboard boxes. Senator McKellar ascribed the responsibility for that to Dr. Posner and

BROOKS: I'm sure Posner was not primarily responsible for that.

PAGE: I don't think he was. But anyway, that started him inquiring into Dr. Posner and he found out that he was a German archivist and sought refuge here after he escaped from Germany. He didn't, however, know that he'd been in a --

BROOKS: Concentration camp.

PAGE: Concentration camp. And, well we're getting way off on what you're talking about now--

BROOKS: Might as well go ahead while you're on it.

PAGE: Well, we had appropriations hearings schedules not too long after Senator McKellar found out about Dr. Posner's connection with the National Archives, which always made him see red, and we had warning that we were going to have a rough time when we got up there. And he asked--that was after Dr. Connor had gone and Dr. Buck became Archivist.

BROOKS: Several years after.

PAGE: Yeah. And he would ask a question and I would start to answer it, and I couldn't get a word in before he'd ask another question; and then Dr. Buck would start to answer that one and he couldn't get a word in before he'd ask another question. And he kept on that sort of tactic for 5 or 10 minutes and finally he said, "I can't get an answer from any of you." Senator Green, who was then about 90 years old, a real old man, he was sitting down there looking like he was half asleep and paying no attention, but he rose up and he said, "Mr. Chairman, if you would quit asking questions and give them a chance to answer maybe you could get some answers." I'll never forget that.

BROOKS: I think that's true of a great many congressional hearings--that the congressmen don't give the witnesses from agencies time to answer.

PAGE: In this case Mr. McKellar had his objective well in mind and he was determined to get to it. And that was to get rid of Dr. Posner. He didn't want him to have any part of the Archives.

BROOKS: Marjory Terrell kept a daily journal of which I've looked at part; it's in the Archives. But in the winter of '34 or '35 sometime, it says that Mr. Connor went to the Hill for his first hearing with the congressional committee. She said he didn't get to say much. And I think it was pretty much the same thing.

PAGE: I was trying to think who was chairman of that Independent Offices subcommittee.

BROOKS: Was Congressman Woodrum active then?

PAGE: Oh yes. That's who it was, Cliff Woodrum. And he was of course very friendly to the National Archives. His son was appointed to a job down there, wasn't he?

BROOKS: Well I thought so--in the Federal Register?

PAGE: That's right. Under Bernard Kennedy.

BROOKS: Do you know the background--any special reason for Woodrum's interest in the Archives?

PAGE: No, not unless it was on account of Collas Harris.

BROOKS: Well, Woodrum was one of the people we always heard of. You know down the line on the staff, we didn't know much about all these things, but we were conscious of Woodrum.

PAGE: I expect being from Virginia and being Chairman of the Independent Offices Appropriation Subcommittee, that Collas Harris had been in contact with him for an endorsement too, and I'm sure that they knew each other before the Archives was established. But what their relationship was I don't know. But I do know that Mr. Woodrum was very favorably disposed to the National Archives.

BROOKS: Would you say that any of the congressmen were much interested in the internal organization of the Archives and the way it operated?

PAGE: No I don't think so. With a few exceptions, I think that Mr. Woodrum was. I know that Senator Dirksen was, he was Congressman Dirksen at that time, and I think probably Kent Keller was.

BROOKS: You know the original organization called for a Division of Classification, Division of Cataloging, and a Division of Research, all of which were later abolished. And this is one of the things that some of the current members of the staff have asked me about. Why did they start out that way? They originally had an organization that was pretty much on the pattern of a library.

PAGE: Yeah. Don't you think Jameson had something, that his connection with the Library had some ---

BROOKS: I just don't know whether he did or whether Mr. Hyde did. Mr. Hyde had been active in the special libraries and in the research libraries and was once in the Municipal Reference Library of New York.

PAGE: I didn't know a thing about his background.

BROOKS: But I gather the congressmen were interested in recruitment, in

jobs, right?

PAGE: Oh yeah. Back in those days, depression days, a lot of people were out of work, even in 1935, and that was one problem that they had, one I didn't have to bother with too much. I know Dr. Connor had to.

BROOKS: Yeah, it must've been difficult. You didn't have to talk with the congressmen too much about that sort of thing.

PAGE: No. I didn't.

BROOKS: Dr. Connor wrote a letter to somebody in March of 1935, (he'd been there since October of '34), and he said there were already 30,000 applications for jobs on file. And most of those must have been from people that weren't especially interested in archives, they were just people that applied for a job anywhere.

PAGE: That's true.

BROOKS: And I suppose now that the people that were hired were pulled out of the 30,000 because some particular person recommended them. I know that Jameson and some other people in the academic field recommended certain of the early appointees, certain of the examiners, and so on. Did you have much to do with the democratic party in patronage?

PAGE: No.

BROOKS: Dr. Connor got a letter from Emil Hurja, assistant to Jim Farley. Did you know Emil Hurja?

PAGE: Oh, I knew him, yeah.

BROOKS: Dr. Connor got a letter from him soon after he was appointed saying that he would be glad to assist, and so forth. In other words, he would be glad to push a lot of people. Dr. Connor wrote back that he would be glad to furnish to Hurja a list of the jobs that were probably going to be filled. But he said that in his appointments he was going to follow the language of the Act, which said that he was going to appoint them independently on the basis of qualification. And I don't think he let Hurja and the Democratic Party lecture to him very much.

PAGE: If he did I didn't know it. I don't think he did, either. Now there were some Members of Congress he paid some attention to. As you pointed out he was down to earth in his relationship with certain people on the Hill. He realized the facts of life and I think he was wise to do that.

BROOKS: Well, I suppose such a thing as Bradley's appointment followed

very naturally from his activity in relation to the bill.

PAGE: And from the fact that his boss over on the Capitol who was backing him was Chairman of the Library Committee, with whom we had to deal.

BROOKS: Mr. Conor must have had great problems in respect to organization and other things, getting the place started? Would you say that the lines of authority in the different positions were clearly drawn, that everybody knew pretty well what he was supposed to do?

PAGE: Yes I think so. I think they were. Well, as I recall there were four of us who had to be confirmed by the Senate. Now my reference was to those four jobs. I don't know that I could qualify to say about other jobs in the Archives, but with respect to those four jobs, I think it was pretty well delineated as to what, who was to do and there was not much overlapping except maybe a little bit with respect to liaison with the Government agencies concerning the transfer of records to the Archives and I had a lot of that to do. I don't believe (I'm not quite too clear about my job description; I don't know that if I read it I'd recognize it) there was a thing in there about that activity and I always felt that these examiners resented that and I think with good reason. I didn't blame them very much.

BROOKS: Each of them was assigned to an agency, and probably regarded that agency as his province.

PAGE: That's right. I remember very distinctly that Schellenberg was assigned to make a survey of the records of the House of Representatives.

BROOKS: Oh? After he finished Agriculture.

PAGE: Yeah, and he got in difficulty over there. I can't think just now why. I think it was because he took some pictures. He came to me and said he wanted to get authority to take some pictures of the condition of the House records as they were stored up there and I went to the Clerk, the old man; he was a pain in the neck too.

BROOKS: He'd been there forever.

PAGE: Yeah, South Trimble, from Kentucky. He had a son who lived in Washington and whom I knew and liked. Mr. Trimble was in Congress with my father, and so forth. I went to see him to get permission for Schellenberg to take these pictures, and I explained to him as best I could why he wanted to take the pictures and why it would be desirable. Well, he granted permission for him to take the pictures. Schellenberg took the pictures, and somehow or other some of those pictures got back into the hands of the Clerk. He was enraged because he thought Schellenberg was taking those pictures to disparage the recordkeeping

methods of the House of Representatives--which was actually what he was doing.

It took a little doing to get Schellenberg back in good graces so he could finish his survey of the House records. We did, however, get it smoothed over. It wasn't Schellenberg's fault at all. The old man had forgotten that he'd ever given authority for those photographs to be taken and it took a good bit of persuasion to finally make him realize that he had. If his own assistant hadn't confirmed my version of our conversation, I don't think he would have ever admitted that he'd given authority.

BROOKS: Well, do you remember about when the first House records were transferred? You were involved in that, were you not?

PAGE: Yeah, because by that time Dr. Buck had taken me out from the front. He'd done away with the Administrative Secretary's job and then put me in charge of the records of the legislative branch of the Government. And there weren't any records at that time from the House. We did have the Senate records. We got the Senate records fairly early, during Dr. Connor's term. But I don't remember just the date, however.

BROOKS: Well, I can look up the date, but I'm more interested in what problems were involved. How much opposition you ran into, if any.

PAGE: Oh, it took years to get that, Phil. Well as I say, the Senate records were moved fairly early, and as soon as the Senate records were over there we started working on getting the House records. It took years. Might have been on account of the Clerk, South Trimble.

BROOKS: Well then after they were transferred they had a 50-year restriction on them for a long time.

PAGE: Oh yeah. They were very strict about the use to which they could be put. I remember after we went under the General Services Administration the General Counsel of that Administration wanted to use some of the House records, and we would have to get permission each time for him to use those records. The restrictions on their use were very strict. And they may still be, I don't know.

BROOKS: Well, for a long time they had a 50-year restriction, I know. Because I wanted to see some of whatever there might be in there about my father, and it wasn't 50 years yet since he was in Congress. Well, the Senate always was much more easy to work with, I think.

PAGE: Oh yeah. Very much easier.

BROOKS: Any particular reason?

PAGE: Well, the person with whom you had to deal over at the House was Trimble who was very selfish as to the House records. He didn't want

anybody to have charge of them except himself. And the difference in getting the Senate records is the fact that the Secretary of the Senate was not that type of man. He was anxious to really have his records preserved as they should be preserved.

BROOKS: As I remember, the Secretary of the Senate changed with the administration. With the parties.

PAGE: That's right.

BROOKS: Was that true of the House too?

PAGE: Yeah. But during those days they were all democratic.

BROOKS: Now you had a man in your office who had been in the Senate Library. Jim Preston.

PAGE: Yeah, Jim Preston, that's right. I don't know whether the Library was under the Secretary's office or not. I think it was. Anyway, Jim had also had a good bit of dealing with newspaper people and the Senate press gallery. I think Jim started out in life as a Page in the Senate. Anyway, he spent all of his life over there until the time he came to the Archives. And at the time Jim came over Colonel Halsey, the Secretary of the Senate first approached me about a job for Jim Preston and I talked to Dr. Connor about it, and it seemed to appeal to him. And then I asked Jim Preston down there and took him in to talk to Dr. Connor. His interview with Dr. Connor left me under the impression that there wasn't a newspaperman in Washington that Jim Preston didn't know personally very well, and I'm sure he left that same impression with Dr. Connor--and it was almost the truth. He knew practically all of them and was on good terms with them.

BROOKS: Did you know Preston before?

PAGE: Oh I'd known him since '31 when I first came up here. So Dr. Connor did ask me if I would be willing to take him in my office as an assistant and I said, yes I'd be delighted to have him. So that's the way that came about.

BROOKS: In a sense I suppose relations with the press would be under your jurisdiction as a matter of external relations. We had a pretty good press, didn't we, generally?

PAGE: We did. And due primarily to Jim Preston, I might say.

BROOKS: But was he involved, do you remember, in the transfer of the Senate records? Preston.

PAGE: No, he didn't have anything much to do with that. Harold Hufford did. That's another former employee of the Office of the Secretary of the

Senate who came to the Archives. Do you remember Harold Hufford?

BROOKS: Very well. When he came down, was he in your office as Administrative Secretary?

PAGE: Yes he was.

BROOKS: I remember him in Legislative Archives. Now, were you also involved, Thad--I take it you were--in the transfers of records from other agencies of the Government?

PAGE: Yeah. I, in cooperation with the Chief of the Accessions Division, had to make the initial contacts with the head of the agency or with whoever was appointed by the head of the agency to deal with the National Archives with respect to transferring records.

BROOKS: Was that after the examiner; was he involved at that time?

PAGE: Yeah.

BROOKS: Well for instance, the State Department was obviously one of the big problems.

PAGE: Yes, the State Department was a big problem.

BROOKS: There is in the files of Dr. Connor in Chapel Hill correspondence with Cordell Hull. The first transfer took place while Hull was Secretary of State; and there is correspondence with Mr. Messersmith, who was Assistant Secretary of State. Do you remember him?

PAGE: Yes. I remember him.

BROOKS: I believe he was assigned to negotiate with the Archives.

PAGE: When did Miss Judy come over?

BROOKS: Judy Bland. She was later married and became Mrs. Carroll. And over her was Mrs. Summers. They came in 1938, with the first transfer, the historical records.

PAGE: I do remember Messersmith, and talking to him. But I have a more vivid recollection of my dealings with Mr. Donald Russell and Walter Brown, under Mr. Byrnes' administration. Byrnes was appointed Secretary of State after Mr. Truman became President, and of course I knew Byrnes when he was Senator, and the people he had over there with him.

BROOKS: The other big problem, respecting transfer, and I think it was very important in sort of setting the precedent, was the War Department. Were you involved in that one much?

PAGE: No I don't think I was. Who was Secretary of War?

BROOKS: George Dern was Secretary when the National Archives was set up.

PAGE: That fellow from Kansas --

BROOKS: Woodring. I think he was Secretary when the first records were transferred.

PAGE: I do remember talking to him one time about those records, but I don't believe that I talked to anybody over there at the time the transfer took place.

BROOKS: Any other agencies you particularly remember?

PAGE: Yes. I remember the General Accounting Office. That was much later. And I remember talking to Mr. Roper at Commerce.

BROOKS: He was a friend of Connor's from North Carolina. Right?

PAGE: Yeah. Dr. Connor knew him. There's something in that stuff Victor Gondos brought out here for me to read, about during the time Dr. Connor's name was up for consideration by the President, that involved Mr. Roper. I've forgotten, maybe Mr. Roper wrote a --

BROOKS: I think he wrote a letter for Dr. Connor.

PAGE: Well offhand I know I did deal with a good many of them, but offhand I don't recall who. You know Lindsay Warren was made Comptroller General.

BROOKS: Right. He'd been in Congress, had he not?

PAGE: Yeah, he was from North Carolina.

BROOKS: I'll tell you who was interested in the War Department transfer,--Mr. Roosevelt. And it appeared to me from the correspondence in Mr. Connor's file that the President was much more interested in the Archives than any of us on the staff realized at the time.

PAGE: Yeah, I think he was.

BROOKS: Did you know him and deal with him? Dr. Connor evidently got to know him pretty well.

PAGE: No I can't say I knew him. I knew him, I'd met him, I rode on his campaign train from Raleigh up here one time. No, I was not too intimate with him because Senator Bailey was a little bit reluctant to support him. He finally did, but he was a little bit reluctant about it.

They were never too close, Senator Bailey and President Roosevelt, although they did have dealings with each other and met together on occasions, but I know Senator Bailey and President Roosevelt, although they did have dealings with each other and met together on occasions, but I know Senator Bailey just didn't go along. I think the proposal to pack the Supreme Court is the straw that broke the camel's back with Senator Bailey. Up until that time they'd gotten along pretty well, it was true.

BROOKS: Roosevelt was interested in the Archives Bill, the Archives Building, and during the late '30's he sent some of his personal papers and some of the stuff he'd collected down to be repaired; and I think he was interested in the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence. Do you remember anything about that?

PAGE: Yeah. He was. I don't remember any of the details but I do remember that he favored transferring them from the Library of Congress.

BROOKS: Quite early.

PAGE: Yeah. I remember he came down there once or twice.

BROOKS: His first, visit, at least, was in July of '37. And you and Dr. Connor and Collas Harris, and Betty Hamer took him around.

PAGE: Yep, that's right. And then you asked me one time about something that Jim Preston had made. I've forgotten what you call that thing now.

BROOKS: They called it the sphinx.

PAGE: A papier-mache thing. Sphinx, yeah.

BROOKS: Yeah, the head of Roosevelt with a cigarette holder. That's up at the Roosevelt Library. It's one of their prize exhibits.

PAGE: The one thing I think I should mention was the fact that they had a time getting us confirmed up in the Senate. That thing hung up there for, oh, weeks and weeks and weeks and nobody could find out what the trouble was. And finally Senator Bailey did find out that it was on account of Collas Harris. Somebody up there had had something against Harris and they were holding the whole thing up on account of Harris, but it finally got straightened out and we finally got confirmed.

BROOKS: Yes, Hyde and Harris came to work in December of 1934, but they weren't confirmed until July of '35.

PAGE: That's right.

BROOKS: But you and Dr. Buck came after you were confirmed.

PAGE: Yes--I didn't go until I was confirmed. I didn't want to go down there and find myself without a job.

BROOKS: Did you know about the plan for the Roosevelt Library before Mr. Roosevelt announced it?

PAGE: Yeah.

BROOKS: He evidently talked to Dr. Connor quite a bit about this.

PAGE: Oh yes he did. I had something to do with the historical commission and there was some other sort of outfit connected with the National Archives. What was that?

BROOKS: National Archives Council?

PAGE: National Archives Council. I was secretary of that.

BROOKS: Right.

PAGE: Yeah. That's right. I don't remember exactly who was on it. One Member of Congress and one Senator and two or three cabinet officers.

BROOKS: I think there were more like six cabinet officers.

PAGE: Maybe. More like six.

BROOKS: That was set up by the law, and they had a preliminary meeting in Roosevelt's office, in the winter of '35. Then they had a meeting down in the Conference Room at the Archives.

PAGE: Yeah. I was at that meeting.

BROOKS: You probably ran it.

PAGE: I didn't run it but I took notes. I remember I was there.

BROOKS: I remember when they met. Mr. Hull was chairman, and I remember seeing pictures. George Dern was then Secretary of War. But in the years after that, Thad, it didn't seem to me that the National Archives Council was very active.

PAGE: No. No they didn't meet very often. And I've forgotten, really I couldn't tell you what their duties were.

BROOKS: Well they did approve a plan that I suppose was drawn up in the Archives for the procedure for the transfer of records from the agencies. You may have been involved in that.

PAGE: Well, they may have had something to do with defining the type

of records, although that was in the law I believe, wasn't it?

BROOKS: Yeah. Well as much as they were defined it was in the law.

What was your first impression, Thad, of the building? Now the building was built without any chance for the Archivist or the people who were going to work in it to guide the character of the building.

PAGE: Yeah. The first time I went over to the building, I don't know when that was, sometime after I went down to the Archives, when they were housed over at Justice, Dr. Connor took some of us over there through the building. It wasn't completed then. My impression of the thing was that they had spent an ungodly amount of unnecessary money in building the thing. It reminded me of a battleship, all that steel business. I thought, well my God, nothing can do any harm to anything they put in this building. I got the impression that (sort of the same impression I get from the Defense Department) that they just don't know what a dollar means, and they squander a lot of dollars. That's frankly my impression of the Archives Building when I first saw it.

BROOKS: And yet within the first year plans were drawn up for the completion of what they called the extension. The filling in of the center court. I wonder who made that decision, or how that came about.

PAGE: Well it was over the vehement protests of Mr. Cochran, I remember that. He liked to have flung a fit. Now what did he have to do with it? Was he on the National Archives Council or anything?

BROOKS: No, but I think he was on the committee on Government expenditures, maybe. Something like that.

PAGE: I don't know. Well anyway, he liked to have flung a fit over that, and he did everything in his power to stop it. It would have been stopped if he could have had his way. I remember that.

BROOKS: Part of it was done under PWA money, which I think came under the jurisdiction of Mr. Ickes, and it cost something like \$3 million. But obviously the space in the Archives, original Archives Building, was by no means full. It hadn't begun to be full.

PAGE: Oh no.

BROOKS: Somebody decided that they eventually would need all that space, as of course they have, and I wondered if that was under Dr. Connor's initiative, or how that was done.

PAGE: Well, I don't know but it was in direct conflict with Mr. Cochran's proposal for the hall of records building which he made long before that center thing was filled in, and it made him see red when he found they were going to fill in this thing instead of building a hall of records somewhere.

BROOKS: Did you know Louis Simon?

PAGE: Oh yeah.

BROOKS: Did you have much to do with him?

PAGE: Not too much. He was on something to do with the National Archives Building.

BROOKS: He was head of a survey commission appointed in 1930 and he had always worked with Dr. Jameson on plans for the building. He was supervising Architect of the Treasury. That amounts to the same thing now as Commissioner of Public Buildings.

PAGE: Yeah. Well then he had a lot to do with determining what the National Archives Building would be like.

BROOKS: Was John Russell Pope around then, the architect of the building?

PAGE: Yeah, I met him sometime. I don't remember ever seeing him but one time.

BROOKS: One incidental thing that's always aroused my curiosity is who wrote the inscriptions on the outside of the building? Presumably they were done before the staff came along, too.

PAGE: I thought the Public Buildings outfit at the Treasury Department was responsible for them.

BROOKS: Yeah, they were. Maybe Simon, he worked with Dr. Jameson, maybe it got back to the same thing, but I was a bit curious about that.

PAGE: Well, I've always thought that that's the way it came about. I don't believe that I ever heard of any individual who was credited with any of the inscriptions.

BROOKS: And that flat steel filing equipment must also have, I assume, been planned and ordered by the supervising Architect before Dr. Connor came along, because it was all in there when the building was built.

PAGE: Oh yeah. I thought the Public Buildings Commission was responsible for that.

BROOKS: Yeah, I think that's right.

PAGE: That's what impressed me as being so damned expensive, you know.

BROOKS: Well, it took a long time to get rid of them. Eventually, I think it was after Dr. Buck became Archivist, that we changed to cardboard boxes.

PAGE: Yes, it was.

BROOKS: Because those flat steel drawers were always a headache.

PAGE: Yeah.

BROOKS: They were hard to use, and they were dangerous. I remember that one of them fell out and hurt somebody's foot one time.

PAGE: When they made the change to cardboard boxes, it set Senator McKellar on fire. He thought poor Dr. Posner was responsible for that.

BROOKS: Any other principal points about the development of the Archives that you think ought to be mentioned in a historical account?

PAGE: Now I'm sure there are many--

BROOKS: Back to the transfer of the House records. I found in Dr. Connor's file a letter from Roy Nichols, University of Pennsylvania, to Dr. Connor in February of '41 saying that he had written a letter on behalf of the Social Science Research Council. He had written a letter to Speaker Rayburn urging that the House records be transferred to the Archives. So I take it there was some effort to drum up---

PAGE: Yeah, Dr. Connor got any number of people in the scholarly world to write about the transfer of the House records. Yeah, he did.

Second interview, July 28, 1972

BROOKS: That, since our interview in January I have looked at all the Annual Reports and a small amount of the very large accumulation of records of the National Archives, in the Archives, and a few bodies of papers outside. This gives me a little better understanding of memory of what went on. One of the things I noticed in the Annual Reports that we talked about at the end of our last interview was the fact that the House of Representatives records were transferred immediately after the passage of the Legislative Reorganization Act of 1946. You said, I believe, that you'd had some dealings about that Reorganization Act, as you naturally would.

PAGE: Yes, I had some dealings with Judge Cliff Woodrum prior to his resignation from the House of Representatives in December 1945; and also I recall, with Everett Dirksen who at that time was a member of the House of Representatives, and who was a friend of the National Archives. Their influence and efforts contributed to the inclusion of provisions in the Reorganization Act to have the Clerk of the House and the Secretary of the Senate transfer records of the House and Senate, respectively, to the National Archives at the end of each session. My recollection is that Congressman Dirksen was extremely helpful in getting those provisions

included in the bill passed by the Congress.

BROOKS: One general question, Thad, before we get into more specific ones. What did you conceive of as the major objectives of the National Archives and do you think they were well carried out in the 20 some years you were on the staff?

PAGE: Well, I felt that the objectives were to preserve and administer the records of the Federal Government that had permanent value and to dispose of those that did not have such value, and I think that the National Archives did a good job in both respects.

BROOKS: In respect to servicing of the records--what I like to call the end result of our work--what would you think was the most important responsibility? Service to the Government, agencies, or to the public for individual claims and so forth, or to the scholars?

PAGE: Well, it would be hard to determine as to which of those was the most important. I think they're all important and I would hesitate to say one was more important than the other. I suppose that the existence of the records for the use by the Government would probably be as important as anything else.

BROOKS: We had to concentrate on that during the war more than the reference to scholars.

PAGE: Yes we did, and we were handicapped always. What happened at the Archives is exactly what happens in every church organization that I've known anything about. When there's a shortage of funds and money has to be cut somewhere, at the Archives it was always the preparation of records for service that suffered, and in the church it's always the benevolence fund--money designated to be given to others and to be spent by them--that is the first to be cut. Consequently it did take a long time to prepare finding aids that we felt were necessary in order to properly use the records. If there wasn't enough money to go around, the money for the finding aids always found its way somewhere else.

BROOKS: I think this was one of the subjects that was always debated-- it seems to me there was always a certain amount of controversy between the records divisions on one side and the front offices on the other side. In the beginning there was a plan to set up a division of classification, cataloging, research, and so forth. Gradually the various responsibilities were more and more shifted to the records division. But it was never a smooth or easy process.

PAGE: Well, what responsibilities are you referring to?

BROOKS: Well, the first was in 1938. The Special Examiners' Office was abolished, and the Accession Division, and their responsibilities for accessioning records and for passing on disposal lists was assigned to

the records divisions. And then later the division of classification, research, cataloging were all abolished and those responsibilities distributed.

PAGE: Well, that resulted from the original form of the organization, about which I don't know too much. I assumed it had been established by what was known as the Advisory Council, which consisted of the Archivist and the Director of Publications and Dorsey Hyde and Collas Harris and myself. I do know that subsequently that body did make changes in the organization so I presume that prior to my going to the Archives that body also was responsibility for the original organization, although I don't know that.

BROOKS: Well, I think so. In broad outline, when they had to prepare their first budget, and about the only people there were Connor, Hyde, and Harris.

PAGE: Yeah, that's true.

BROOKS: You said the last time I talked to you that the relations among the principal officers were pretty smooth. There must have been some rough spots.

PAGE: Oh well, by and large they were very smooth, I thought. Collas Harris was one of these fellows, you know and I know, who liked authority, and, he didn't fail to undertake to get all the authority he could and that's about the only rough going that I remember. Mr. Hyde was inclined to be a little stubborn on occasions, but Dr. Connor was always able to get him on the right track again. But it ran pretty smoothly until after Dr. Connor left and Dan Lacy came. There was some resentment as I recall about Dan Lacy.

BROOKS: He was a very young guy who was very rapidly moved to the position of Director of Operations, and Dr. Buck delegated to him much of the responsibility for the professional functions.

PAGE: Yeah, there was some resentment felt, I think, although I got along with him pretty well.

BROOKS: So did I. He came over from the Historical Records Survey, and Dr. Connor once wrote that Lacy had been one of his prize students at North Carolina.

Well, one of the functions, Thad, that you were responsible for from the very beginning, I think until 1947, was the exhibits function. I wondered how much you remembered about how that was developed. You know my wife was on the staff from 1935 to '37 and her picture appeared in National Geographic one time among a group of staff members looking at documents in the exhibit cases in the Exhibition Hall. That must have been in 1937.

PAGE: Well, I presume I was responsible for it but I don't have much recollection about exhibits. I remember when President Roosevelt came down there, and I don't know whether that was before or after Mrs. Hamer came to the Archives.

BROOKS: That was before. That was '37. She didn't come over from the Survey of Federal Archives until the early 40's.

PAGE: Well, I remember that President Roosevelt was down there, and on exhibit was a sword that had been given to him by the ruler of Ethiopia, I believe. Anyways, it was a very expensive sword. The hilt and the handle were all filled with diamonds and other precious jewels and the President stopped before the case in which this sword was exhibited and talked about it at some length, but he wasn't too much impressed with the diamonds and the other gems. What he talked about was the blade. It was made of Damascus steel, and he was hipped on the subject of Damascus steel. He talked about that for several minutes.

BROOKS: I think that sword came from Saudi Arabia, partly because General Eisenhower and President Truman also have similar ones that are in their libraries.

PAGE: That may be. I'm not certain about that. There must have been somebody in my office who knew a little something about exhibits or who was charged with the responsibility. I don't remember who it was.

BROOKS: Would it be Jim Preston?

PAGE: No. Jim's responsibilities were largely with the press.

BROOKS: Do you remember the Freedom Train?

PAGE: Oh yes.

BROOKS: I think you were still in charge of exhibits, or at least Betty Hamer in your office was, when that was developed.

PAGE: The Freedom Train?

BROOKS: Yes, 1947.

PAGE: I went on a train in 1945. It had the surrender documents on it. Right after they got the surrender documents from Japan, just less than a month after those documents reached Washington that that train went out. It was late in the fall of 1945. * This train went out in the fall of '45 and started at Fort Bragg. I remember I went down home and spent the night with my mother at Aberdeen, N.C., then put the documents I had in a bank vault overnight, and drove to Fort Bragg the next day. I spent that day getting the documents assembled in the cases that the War Department, as I *This was the Victory Loan Tour, which took some of the Surrender documents, from Nov. 1 to Dec. 15, 1945.

recall, had constructed. We went from there to New York City where the train was first opened to the public, then we went up all through New England and then back into New York State and up to Buffalo, and down to Erie, to Ohio, and to Detroit and all through Michigan. In addition to these documents, it had a lot of armament used by Army in the war.

BROOKS: I wonder if this wasn't an earlier train than the one they called the Freedom Train. I was particularly interested in that one because about a third of the items on it were documents having to do with foreign relations that came from the State Department section that I then had charge of. The Department of Justice was involved and the train was assembled down here at Cameron, Virginia, in 1947. And the cases that were on the Freedom Train, the later one, were put in the National Archives, in the "Circular Gallery." They're just now taking them out. They've used them all this time.

PAGE: Well, now that was quite different than the cases that were on that surrender documents train, which were built by the War Department. They were stand up cases like the cases in the Exhibition Hall except they were built on legs. And after the train got back those cases were brought down to the National Archives and the surrender documents were exhibited in those cases in the Exhibition Hall for, oh, 2 or 3 months.

BROOKS: Certainly one of the most dramatic things I remember about the Archives was something like 12 days after the Japanese surrender, Thad, we had a ceremony in the Archives where that surrender document was unveiled by General Wainwright.

PAGE: That's right, I was there.

BROOKS: Well, let's get on to congressional liaison, which I'm sure was your most important responsibility from the very beginning until 1949 when we went to GSA.

PAGE: Yeah, when we went into the GSA organization the duties that I had with respect to the Congress were taken over by the Chief Counsel of GSA.

BROOKS: Well, back at the beginning, were you involved in the passage of the Federal Register Act of 1935? That was the first act, after the National Archives Act, that affected the authority of the Archivist.

PAGE: No, I think that was before I went to the National Archives. Because I remember that shortly after I went with the National Archives Judge Woodrum's son, Clifton Woodrum, Jr., came down to work in the Federal Register Division.

BROOKS: But you told me you thought that the Federal Register Act developed out of concern of the Supreme Court for the publication and the filing of record documents.

PAGE: Oh yes, was while I was with Senator Bailey, I remember there was something pending before the Supreme Court, a suit brought by the Department of Justice against somebody or something. I don't remember whether it was an individual or state or what, but this suit was brought and the defendant's attorney claimed for him, that he was charged with violating an order that so far as he knew had never been published and that he had never seen and knew nothing about. And the Supreme Court held in his favor and against the Department of Justice; and from that action by the Supreme Court came a movement to establish some central place in which orders issued by heads of Government agencies should be filed and published.

BROOKS: Well, that was passed in 1935. Then in 1939 by Executive Order there was transferred to the Archives the function of filing and publishing and keeping the Executive Orders and proclamations that had been in the State Department. I wonder if that involved any difficulty or controversy with the State Department, moving that function over.

PAGE: Well, so far as I know it didn't. I don't recall anything about that.

BROOKS: Maybe the State Department was glad to get rid of it.

PAGE: Maybe.

BROOKS: I do remember your being much involved in an important series of acts that I was most concerned with which were the Disposal Acts of '39, '40's, '43, and '45. The most important one was the Act of 1943 that included a much revised and clarified definition of ^{the records} covered by the Act.

PAGE: Yeah.

BROOKS: You and Mr. Price and I were on a committee that drew up that definition.

PAGE: Yeah.

BROOKS: And it has since been picked up by State archives and other organizations all over the country as a legal definition of records today. And I know you were much interested both in the drafting of that thing and certainly in the legislative part of it.

PAGE: Yeah, I was interested in both instances, I recall. Is that the Act that provided for the first time for schedules?

BROOKS: Yes, 1943.

PAGE: '43. Yeah, well, I did have a good bit to do with that, both as you say in the drafting of it and also in our relations with respect

to it up on the Hill.

BROOKS: Well now you were made Acting Chief of the Justice Archives one time during the war, and also Legislative Archives.

PAGE: Yes.

BROOKS: These didn't affect your job as congressional liaison?

PAGE: No, no it didn't. They were in addition to that.

BROOKS: The Administrative Secretary's office was abolished and you were made Chief of Legislative Reference, I think they called it, in 1947 and you continued to carry the congressional liaison up until '49. Right?

PAGE: That's right.

BROOKS: As to the absorption of the Archives into GSA, were you much involved in that?

PAGE: Yes. Bob Bahmer and myself, as I recall, attended meetings together. It seems to me that Grover designated Bahmer and myself. He designated some other people too, but at a different level. Anyway, Bahmer and myself represented the Archives at the higher level with the Chief Counsel or his assistants and I know that I was more disturbed about some things than Bahmer seemed to be, or even that Wayne Grover seemed to be. I think that they had the ability to foresee in the future much better than I did because I think it worked out to the advantage of the National Archives in the long run, and I thought it would not do that. I thought it would hamper the National Archives and its activities.

BROOKS: Well, there's always been some debate about that and still is. I think generally, and I think most people will agree with this, the Archives got more support financially and otherwise.

PAGE: No question about that. They got more support from the Congress than they'd ever gotten before. I think Wayne Grover was a farsighted individual and I think he did an excellent job as Archivist of the United States. He went further in some respects than Dr. Connor or Dr. Buck had any idea of going.

BROOKS: Most of the dissatisfaction with the absorption of the Archives into GSA has always come from the people who were primarily interested in the scholarly activities of the Archives. It seemed to be somewhat remote from space and buildings and the kinds of things that GSA was concerned with.

PAGE: Well, it was hard for me to figure out any relationship between

the National Archives and the furnishing of buildings for Government agencies and the purchase of supplies for Government agencies. It just seemed to be out of its field.

BROOKS: Well, there's always been a relationship to the records management activities where the production of records in the Federal agencies is closely related to space and buildings. But the scholarly activities, the service to scholars, the publications, and so forth, are pretty remote from GSA.

Well, a little before that, do you remember anything else about the relations with President Roosevelt? It seems to me that he showed an exceptional interest in the National Archives. I gather from various things I've seen or heard that he was interested in the transfer of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence from the very first time he met Mr. Connor in 1934.

PAGE: Well, I don't know about what went on between the President and Connor during the first meeting he had with him, but I got the impression from Dr. Connor from the time I first went to the National Archives that the President was interested in the transfer of the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution from the Library of Congress to the National Archives. I think Dr. Connor counted on the President's support in all of his negotiations with the Library of Congress.

BROOKS: But he continued to be interested in the building and every other aspect?

PAGE: Oh yes. Yes, always.

BROOKS: Well, by the time we were absorbed into GSA, of course, Mr. Truman had become the President, and he was quite interested. You've said that he was interested in learning about the records quite early.

PAGE: Well, I know that one of the members of his investigative committee staff over in the Senate, Mr. Rogers, was very much interested in proper records management as a result of the committee's work.

BROOKS: That was the man that's now Secretary of State.

PAGE: Yes. He was later Attorney General under Eisenhower.

BROOKS: At the time you're talking about he was the next door neighbor of Karl Trever, so he must have known something about the Archives.

PAGE: Well, he impressed me as being a very fine gentleman. I have no recollections at all so far as the Archives are concerned with respect to Mr. Truman. I have some recollections of the relationship between Senator Bailey and Senator Truman, but that had nothing to do with the National Archives.

BROOKS: Well, Harris told me that Mr. Truman visited the Archives one time while Mr. Truman was Senator. Do you remember that?

PAGE: No.

BROOKS: He said that Truman asked some of the most intelligent questions asked by any visitor. But he didn't remember just when that was.

PAGE: I don't recall it, but that's by no means to say that he didn't visit the Archives because there are so many things I don't recall. It seems like another world in some respects.

BROOKS: But he must have had some dealings with Dr. Buck. Do you remember anything about that?

PAGE: No I do not. No.

BROOKS: Whether he was concerned in the change of the Archivist from Dr. Buck to Dr. Grover?

PAGE: Oh. I remember that one day I had an appointment with some member of the Senate and I had reserved a car for 10 o'clock to go to fill this appointment; and I remember that Grover was desperately trying to get the car to go up on the Hill. He finally talked to me on the phone and I told him that I was going up there at 10 o'clock and would be glad for him to go along with me. Well, he said he would be glad to go, so he went with me up there; and on the way up there I found out from him that he was going to see his father-in-law, Senator Thomas. But he didn't tell me that Dr. Buck had nominated him to the President to succeed Dr. Buck, and I didn't find that out until later in the day. He was going to see his father-in-law to get support up there to confirm his nomination.

BROOKS: And he was confirmed within about a week.

PAGE: Very shortly.

BROOKS: Did you know before Dr. Buck resigned that he was going to, or what led up to that?

PAGE: No. I know what led up to it, I think, from a conversation I had with Mrs. Buck and also from observations I had made with respect to Dr. Buck, and that was that he was more or less fed up with administrative responsibility and he wanted to return to scholarly activities where he wouldn't be pressured with these administrative matters. Apparently he was delighted at the opportunity to go to the Library of Congress. I remember that Dr. Buck talked to me about administrative matters, particularly about his dislike of them and that he needed to get somebody to assist him as Assistant Archivist who could relieve him in large degree of some of those administrative activities. He told

me that he had resolved his selection down to two people. Those two people were Bob Bahmer and Wayne Grover, and he asked me which one of those I thought would make the best assistant for his purpose. Not knowing Grover very well, and knowing Bahmer pretty well, I thought Bahmer had a more attractive personality and I told him that I thought Bahmer would be a better man. But he didn't agree with my judgement because he gave the job to Grover.

BROOKS: And almost immediately, as soon as Grover was picked as Archivist, he brought Bahmer over as Assistant Archivist.

PAGE: That's right he did.

BROOKS: How much difference was there in your activity when Grover became Archivist? Any? By that time you were Director of Legislative Research.

PAGE: I was also in charge of relationships with the Congress and that continued for about a year. And after a year when we were absorbed by the General Services Administration my work then was primarily back in the Records Division. By that time I had the Treasury archives, diplomatic, judicial, and then Justice; and it was known then as the General Records Division.

BROOKS: Well, now after Grover became Archivist and after we got into GSA, you were involved in at least one important operation connected with legislation, in that you had a good deal to do, I think, with the development of the Federal Records Act of 1950. Right?

PAGE: Yes, I had worked on that prior to entering the GSA--General Services Administration--and Grover knew that, and I presume that when the time came to draw up a new act he did ask me to participate in it and . . .

BROOKS: You worked with the GSA representatives on it.

PAGE: Yes, with Julius Silverstein primarily.

BROOKS: From the General Counsel's office.

PAGE: Yes. He and I largely drew that up, as I recall.

BROOKS: And then when did you retire from the National Archives?

PAGE: In November 1960.