

National Archives Assembly Legacy Project

Mike McReynolds

Interviewed by Sharon Thibodeau

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Thibodeau: State your name and length of service at the National Archives.

McReynolds: I'm Mike McReynolds and I worked for 32 years at the National Archives.

Thibodeau: Wow! Good to be reminded. I guess my first question for you is how you decided to apply for a job at the National Archives

McReynolds: I was an instructor at the SUNY College at Fredonia, New York and teaching Western Civ and U.S. History. I had an MA from the University of Chicago and knew that I wouldn't be able to stay at Fredonia.

Thibodeau: It was a temporary...

McReynolds: Yes, I had a two year contract. I could have had a second two year contract, but I knew that I had to do something else. The National Archives was recruiting at the Organization of American Historians in Philadelphia. So I talked with them about a career at the National Archives, and that's how I got to the National Archives.

Thibodeau: So you didn't really prepare for an archival career; you were preparing to be an historian.

McReynolds: Yes, though I had thought about being a librarian or archivist throughout my... that was always in the background of my thoughts.

Thibodeau: Did you take any library science classes?

McReynolds: No, but I had applied to the University of Toronto and Columbia University Library Schools, before I got the job at the National Archives.

Thibodeau: So you weren't a complete stranger to it?

McReynolds: That's right.

Thibodeau: When you got the job, did it meet your expectations? Did you have a vision of what it would be like working at the National Archives?

McReynolds: I was very fortunate in that my first position was in the judicial records section which had been my interest while I was in graduate school. I was primarily a reference archivist the first five years, and that is what I thought I would be doing.

Thibodeau: Working with researchers?

McReynolds: Right, working with researchers and with records.

Thibodeau: Did you get training on the job when you first arrived? How did that work?

McReynolds: There were two other people that worked in the judicial section at that time. One was Don Mosholder who was an archives technician and Marion Johnson was the archivist. Marion spent almost all

of his time with the Warren Commission Records. Most of the on job tutoring that I got came from Don Mosholder.

Thibodeau: They didn't have formal training?

McReynolds: Oh yes, they did have a very extensive training course.

Thibodeau: Which you participated in?

McReynolds: Yes, Mabel Deutrich and Frank Evans were the instructors.

Thibodeau: How did the class operate when you were there? Once a week or...

McReynolds: It was twice a week. It went on for two years. We had exams. Mabel taught for the second and third semester's administrative history of the United States. That was considered by the trainees to be horribly boring, but it turned out to be very useful for our careers.

Thibodeau: You didn't appreciate it at the time?

McReynolds: We did not.

Thibodeau: Who else was involved in the training, was it really primarily Mabel and Frank? No others?

McReynolds: We had a two person Office of Personnel at the time. Most of the personnel work was being done at GSA, and so the director of that office actually directed the assignments. What we now call CIDS assignments.

Thibodeau: So you did go on rotations?

McReynolds: Very thorough.

Thibodeau: Sounds that way, much more so than happened in the interim. Well actually I would like to hear a little bit more generally about your career. You started out in the judicial unit.

McReynolds: Yes

Thibodeau: Then where did you go from there?

McReynolds: I was working as a reference archivist in judicial and didn't have any thoughts of moving around at the time. That looked like what I wanted to do. The National Archives of the United States was hosting the 1976 ICA (International Congress Archives) and they needed someone to prepare for it. This was 1974. Al Leisinger, who had been a mentor of Bert Rhoads (who was the Archivist at the time) suggested me to Bert Rhodes and Jim O'Neill who was Deputy Archivist, and I interviewed with them. I had no idea that I would be moving to their front office so quickly as a grade eleven archivist.

Thibodeau: It must have been stunning.

McReynolds: I didn't know what ICA meant, so after the interview was over with, I went up to the library and asked the librarian if she knew what ICA was. I spent five years there, primarily preparing for the Congress. I also did quite a bit of speech writing. At times that was about half my work. Then the National Archives got involved in a joint publication with the Soviet Union archives on the documents for the relations between the two countries from 1765 to 1815. I was the administrative officer for that publication. So that was the big change in my career. It was just a real shift in everything that I was doing. It also gave me an idea of what the National Archives was; much broader. Being a reference archivist in those days, in Archives I, your desk was in the stacks, your reference letters were signed by the division director. Congressional letters were signed by the Archivist. It was very bureaucratic and much closed in,

physically as well as bureaucratically. So the move to the front office really opened my eyes to a lot of things going on at the National Archives that I had no idea had happened.

Thibodeau: Why do you think Al picked you?

McReynolds: I was young and he thought I could do the job

Thibodeau: Really? Your phone just rang one day?

McReynolds: He and I knew each other. I don't know how that happened. He was the special assistant to the Archivist at the time. There were several older gentlemen who had kind of out lived their careers at the Archives. I met him and talked with him, and we kind of just knew each other.

Thibodeau: I guess it paid off?

McReynolds: Yes.

Thibodeau: So you moved from there to other jobs?

McReynolds: Yes, after five years, there was very little work, because of GSA and what was going on in the Soviet Union. There was little international activity within the front office, and that whole program of died down. Clarence Lyons needed an assistant branch chief and asked if I would be willing to join his branch. Which is what I did, and that was my first real supervisory effort. Then five years after that the National Archives was forced to reestablish a Legislative Division. I was selected for that new division and spent five years there. Then there was the reorganization that took place with the preparation for the move to Archives II. The project and reference divisions were established, and I was made director of the Reference Division. I was doing for more than nine years at Archives I, Archives II, and Suitland.

Thibodeau: Some interesting aspects of that job I know.

McReynolds: Then I ended my career as Deputy Director of the Legislative Center.

Thibodeau: I would you like to really follow up on a couple of things that you have mentioned. One is the International aspect of; you were involved in these international activities earlier on in your career. But I think you also got involved toward the end of your career with international activities once again. Were you involved with international activities throughout or were there...?

McReynolds: There were times that I was not involved, but I did become known as the person who could deal with Russian Archivists. So through the eighties I would be asked to sit in on meetings with a group of Russian archivists or archivists from Eastern Europe. In 1992, I was asked to join with the Library of Congress and the DIA to go over to Russia and try to establish microfilm programs in the various archives in the new Russia. In '95 I became the archives representative on the US-Russia POW-MIA Commission. All of that was very interesting; I also was chair of the International Committee for the Society of American Archivists off and on throughout my career. I kept involved in that way too.

Thibodeau: Did you notice a difference in the Russian archival world between your time when you were involved in the joint project early on and the time you were doing POW-MIA work?

McReynolds: Well certainly between the late 70's and early 80's and then 1992 was very different. In '92 they were talking about opening up the archives. They were trying to come to the level of freedom of information that the United States had. But that turned very quickly, so by the time I was on the U.S.-Russia POW-MIA Commission it was very difficult to get into the Russian military archives and the archives that would have been useful for the US side.

Thibodeau: It was a changeable situation. Did we have any way of influencing that at all?

McReynolds: We tried very hard and it was almost a total failure. Nationalism took over in the middle and late 90's in Russia, and nothing was going to stop that as far as access to Russian archives.

Thibodeau: That whole archival road has been such a mystery to me. It was good that you were able to experience it. I would like to hear you talk a little bit about challenges that you faced in your career. Some things that were really difficult.

McReynolds: Certainly the getting into the front office and dealing with things that I had never done before. I had never drawn up a budget. I ended up getting grants of about two hundred and fifty thousand dollars for the ICA Congress. I had never written a grant proposal before. I had never dealt with caterers. I had never dealt with translators, never dealt with bus companies.

Thibodeau: Did you have any help? Or was it really you and the ICA?

McReynolds: It was primarily me. In those five years, I had five different special assistants to the archivist as my supervisors. In half that time I had no direct supervisor at all. They just kept coming in and out. Morris Rieger and Al Leisinger had both been involved with the ICA quite a bit and so I used them a lot as sources of information. We went to lunch every week for three years.

Thibodeau: So they were mentors?

McReynolds: Yes.

Thibodeau: I would have no idea. I can appreciate that we have different agencies.

McReynolds: The next big challenge was learning to be a supervisor.

Thibodeau: Well, that's what I wanted to hear you talk about a little bit. You didn't really apply for this. I mean Clarence sort of selected you. Did you have some difficulty making the decision?

McReynolds: No, I knew that was exactly what I wanted to do, because the work load in the front office just died. I didn't know this, but I went to talk to Bert Rhoads about my possible assignments. But I went in there at the time, and he thought that was a good idea. Three days later he resigned, and just stunned everybody at the National Archives.

Thibodeau: Did you have any insight into that decision?

McReynolds: None at all. When Jim O' Neill heard that I was leaving, he was very upset and tried to talk me into staying. He was going to be Acting Archivist.

Thibodeau: A challenge all on its own, but you decided it was time?

McReynolds: It was time that I get back to the records and the people. I had supervised a staff, a volunteer staff and three people in the front office to work as translators. We translated all of the papers of the Congress into five languages. I had some experience with those people. My first division director, Mark Eikhoff, then Clarence Lyons as branch chief. They were mentors for me also as I became a supervisor.

Thibodeau: Was there formal training, did you take any classroom training.

McReynolds: I probably did take a class, some kind of classroom training, but it was worthless. It was awful.

Thibodeau: Well, if it was the same one I took, it was a GSA, about a week and it wasn't memorable.

McReynolds: Clarence was very good about teaching me how to get the paper work done. How to protect the staff, so they could get their work done.

Thibodeau: He saw his role as mentor?

McReynolds: Right. We had a great staff and it was fun.

Thibodeau: Once you had some experience and some advice, you felt more comfortable.

McReynolds: Starting up the legislative division was also a new experience for me. I never dealt with anyone on the Hill. Two historians there in the House and Senate informally supervised the Legislative Archives Division also. Dick Baker, Ray Smock and I talked on a weekly basis. It was helpful, yes, but we could also come back to the National Archives and say the Senate wants this or the House wants that.

Thibodeau: I am sure it's still happening.

McReynolds: I am sure it is. The National Archives for the most part was looked upon as a very friendly agency on the hill. We weren't asking for billions of dollars. We weren't doing bad things with what we spent. We were looked upon as a good agency, so it was fairly easy to get involved in the politics of it all.

Thibodeau: How did the guide project originate?

McReynolds: It started before I took over.

Thibodeau: Oh it did?

McReynolds: Yes. There had been a planning between Smock, Baker and the National Archives for the Bi-Centennial of Congress. There were three projects that were going to be done. One was the guides, one was a preservation projects of Senate and House documents, and then a microfilming project of the early Congresses. All of those projects had come along when legislative records were part of the Diplomatic, Legislative and Fiscal Division. So when I took over those projects for the division many people did deadlines and all of this business. It was a major undertaking. Trudy Peterson, who was head of the Office in the National Archives was very supportive. We had a lot of trainees come through and spend two or months working on various chapters. Virginia Purdy and Bob Kvasnicka were editors for us. Bob figured out a way of dealing with the changes of committee names and functions, which is just constant. Trying to write a descriptive guide on those committees was impossible. So finally he came up with line charts which illustrated the changes of committees, years and names of committees. He saved hundreds of paragraphs.

Thibodeau: I am not sure if Bob has got sufficient credit.

McReynolds: He saved us.

Thibodeau: That worked, got over that hurdle.

McReynolds: We met our publication date. We worked with GPO. They got three hand made copies done by the date.

Thibodeau: Well, what about the microfilming and preservation, did they also go forward?

McReynolds: They went forward, yes. My deputy was David Kepley and we did have three people who were doing preservation work, reboxing, refolding records. No one had kept track of their work. We had been given two hundred and fifty thousand dollars by Congress to do this. We had no idea if we had spent the money or not. So David dove into the records and straightened that problem out. Then the microfilming went forward too.

Thibodeau: That was Legislative. Any other challenges?

McReynolds: Well umm the next big challenge I think was when I was head of the Reference Division and made the spokesman for the National Archives after the film "JFK" was released.

Thibodeau: Tell us about that.

McReynolds: In my career in Judicial and elsewhere I had avoided the Warren Commission records and the Kennedy assassination. Marion Johnson took care of that, and I was happy to have him do it. The Archivist Don Wilson and Trudy Peterson decided that I would be the front person for responding for the National Archives. The film ends with a statement that hundreds of cubic feet of JFK assassination records were still closed. In fact almost all the records were open, so we had to respond to that. I worked with Jill Brett who was the press officer at the time. She was very good. I had worked with the press during the International Congress and with the Russian business a number of times. Never like this kind of avalanche of people that came in. I remember being interviewed by... she was the first woman on channel 5 news. At my desk, trying to answer the questions and doing as well as I could. It went on for a number of weeks and I was interviewed by the Post, Newsweek. In many newspapers and then the Today Show wanted me on television. Jill called me and said what was going on and I said, "Well I don't want to do that." She said "I will get you out of it over lunch." I was walking back into the building from lunch and I ran into her and she said, "You're on tomorrow morning." So I was interviewed by Bryant Gumbel in the research room before the research room was open that morning. It was about five minutes. Again it was primarily about access to the records and I said 99% of the records are open. Autopsy photos and CIA documents were still closed. He asked at the end of the whole thing if I had seen the movie and I said, "no." He said are you planning to see the movie and I said, "no." And he laughed and I laughed and that was the end of the interview. That seemed to quiet the press down I think. After that things calmed down.

Thibodeau: It's a good thing; you just never know how the press interactions will turnout.

McReynolds: I remember getting up one morning and getting the Washington Post and turning to the federal page, and there was my picture. And I thought my God, now what have I got myself into.

Thibodeau: That was in the midst of this.

McReynolds: Yes, my fifteen minutes of fame.

Thibodeau: So it was hard to top that experience

McReynolds: Well our FBI experience comes close to that. I had actually worked with the GSA lawyer, Steve Garfinkel. I had worked with him on Watergate records before Judge Green actually forced the National Archives and the FBI to do a full appraisal of FBI records (1980-81).

McReynolds: So I knew what the whole background of the appraisal problem was, but it was a fascinating experience. I don't know if you agree with me or not but one of the things I thought about the schedule we came out with. Fifteen people trying to get a job done. Having very good ideas of what they thought should be done. The schedule was much too complicated. We tried to cut the cheese so thinly, so that it made it difficult for the FBI to implement. I have heard that the FBI has been sending more records here in recent years, which were certainly not the case for many years after that, 1982.

Thibodeau: What has precipitated the avalanche of FBI materials is they have to relocate from a building in Virginia to West Virginia, and they don't want to move the files. It's the same old story.

McReynolds: It was an interesting clash of archival thoughts and ideas as to what should be kept and what shouldn't. What was the role of the FBI in the history of the United States? The fact that Charles Dollar, deputy project director, came in after our first or second day of voting on appraisal decisions saying "this would be not only an archival document but also a court document and a political document. Folks we have got to think about that."

Thibodeau: Some interesting conversations.

McReynolds: So I have been fortunate to have these kinds of activities like that throughout my career.

Thibodeau: I would be interested to know what you would describe as your best experience of all the things you have done and been involved with, really the best thing.

McReynolds: Well I always loved reference. So being head of the Reference Division gave me an opportunity to let the reference staff do their work. I was always involved with the Freedom of Information Act. So that was a pivotal part of my work in reference. The work that we did on Watergate, especially with the Watergate Special Prosecution Force. I worked with Steve Tilley. We had fascinating researchers and that was fun. The FBI task force was fun too. I was fortunate, I really was.

Thibodeau: It sounds like that was the case. Would you say anything about your worse experience? Was there a worst experience?

McReynolds: The last few years were my worst experience. I had seen so many people leave the Archives very bitter. I was put in the situation where I could have been very bitter, and I determined that I wasn't going to be. So I got involved with the POW- MIA commission. Then I was also made the point person for Legislative electronic records. I geared up to keep in touch with all the stuff that was going on with the Hill with electronic records, so that made the experience easier and better. But it wasn't easy the last three years.

Thibodeau: I can appreciate that. It's a major change. Well you made some clear moves as time went by and what precipitated those moves? Was it because an opportunity came up, and you decided to do something different or someone invited you to do something different?

McReynolds: It was different through different changes. The movement up to the front office in international archival activities was just out of the blue. The move into Clarence Lyons Branch was something that I wanted and would have campaigned for. Same way with Legislative, I was interested in doing something like that and same with Reference. They were things that I wanted to do.

Thibodeau: I can't remember... were those jobs posted?

McReynolds: Yes.

Thibodeau: Yes, so it's good you had the opportunity to make the decision yourself.

McReynolds: I did talk to Trudy Peterson over the Legislative job and the Reference job before they were posted. I just indicated my interest in them.

Thibodeau: Did you work with other federal agencies to any great extent while you were here?

McReynolds: Not very much. I knew the records manager at the Department of Justice and then during the FBI task force, of course we got to know the FBI very well. I knew the Clerk's staff at the Supreme Court and I worked with them. I worked with various staffs on the Hill when I was in Legislative. I didn't have a wide contact of records officers or anything like that.

Thibodeau: We would like to talk a little bit more about researchers. Were there any that stick in your mind as being particular fascinating?

McReynolds: Yes of course a lot of them were fascinating and I got to know many of them as friends. I worked with Allen Weinstein on his Alger Hiss book. I got to work with two of my favorite professors, Sidney Fine and John Hope Franklin. I worked with Stan Kutler on Watergate and Randy Roberts on "Bad Blood" and Jack Johnson. Kermit Hall and Mary K. Bonsteal Tachau were legal historians who became good friends. And others in the Washington area such as Pete Daniel, Sam Walker, Anna Nelson, and Maeda Marcus. I was a member of the American Society for Legal History and a number of those

people were researchers. It was same with the Society of for History of the Federal Government and the Organization of American Historians.

Thibodeau: So you were active in those professional organizations?

McReynolds: It was always easier if you knew these people through the professional organizations when things went wrong at the National Archives. You could try to straighten it out. That happened a lot. I became the spokesman for the FBI task force at the American Legal History Society and OAH.

Thibodeau: How was that experience?

McReynolds: Fairly hostile. They wanted the red meat of J. Edgar Hoover documents and that sort of thing for whatever reason. We never really found any smoking guns in the records when we went through them.

Thibodeau: It may or may not have been saved for whatever reason. You just don't know.

McReynolds: Right, when I said that, they were not happy with me. It was dealing with researchers and something I dealt with all my life.

Thibodeau: Was there ever one that was really a problem?

McReynolds: We had several real problems.

Thibodeau: What was the nature of the problem?

McReynolds: Who was the researcher? He was German? He dealt with getting stolen art cases.

Thibodeau: I know who you are taking about but I can't think of his name [Willi Korte].

McReynolds: He caused enough problems in the research room that we had to take his card away from him. That meant his livelihood was gone. We had a whole list of things that he had done. We had warned him that he would get his researcher privileges revoked. And eventually we took his research card away from him for six months.

Thibodeau: Did that make a different in his behavior?

McReynolds: Yes it did. When he came back, he was a lot more pleasant. He was still a difficult researcher, but he was better. We took research cards from... I guess six people during the nine years that I was in Reference.

Thibodeau: It's still happening

McReynolds: I was involved with one theft incident.

Thibodeau: That would be something to talk a little about.

McReynolds: The point person in that case was Mike Musick. It was Civil War stuff.

Thibodeau: It was discovered somehow . . .

McReynolds: Yes, it was discovered, I think Mike is the one who discovered it. Documents were put on the market. The man went to jail eventually.

Thibodeau: Something that is happening again fairly recently.

McReynolds: Something you always have to worry about as an archivist.

Thibodeau: And it's very hard to detect. It's interesting how it was detected. Can you talk about your relationship with the archival profession in general? You talked a little about the international archivists but were you involved in the Society of American Archivists?

McReynolds: Yes, I was involved from the beginning. I was one of those people who thought belonging to a national organization was a part of your job or your life as an archivist. I had gone to the AHA and the OAH as an historian/teacher. I hired on in September 1969 and the SAA was in October. It was in Washington so I went up. I always found it very beneficial to get to know other archivists and get outside the National Archives. Get some perspective on what the profession was like. Later I got involved in giving papers up in Canada. The Association of Canadian Archivists is really a great organization. It's much smaller than the SAA. A lot more fun.

Thibodeau: They really talk to one another.

McReynolds: I was involved in the founding of the Mid-Atlantic Regional Archives Conference. I stopped going to that after a number of years but I was still asked to give papers and I did. It was the same kind of thing as going to the historical associations; getting to know people.

Thibodeau: Right, that's really what it's all about. I guess maybe I have another question; maybe you want to think about it a little bit. If you were providing advice to a newly hired archivist today, one of the one's we hired a year ago, what would that advice be?

McReynolds: Learn as much about electronic records as you can.

Thibodeau: That was certainly a plus.

McReynolds: I mean when I was being hired there were people who came to the National Archives with PhDs in history. I only had a MA. I didn't think that was a problem, but certainly the leadership in the National Archives was looking for people who had a very solid background in American history. Over the years, I don't know when it changed, maybe 1990. We desperately needed people who could handle electronic records. I remember we hired a trainee, Kate Snodgrass, in 1997. She had some background in electronic records. The Legislative Center had all kinds of, not junk but electronic records that had no provenance or much documentation. We didn't know what to do with them. I asked her in her CIDS paper to put that stuff together and she did a wonderful job. She did it without even doubting that she could do it.

Thibodeau: That seems like good advice. I think I have asked most of the questions that are on the Assembly's list. Is there a topic that we haven't discussed that you would like to talk more about?

McReynolds: This is kind of outside the National Archives, but I had a group of friends here who played basketball together. Later we played softball together that started exactly thirty years ago.

Thibodeau: Just identify the people who were part of that group.

McReynolds: There was Gerry Haines, Doug Helms, John Butler, Tim Nenninger, John Vernon, Bill Grover, Clarence Lyons, Roger Bruns, George Briscoe, and others.

Thibodeau: How did the group get started?

McReynolds: It was just conversation at the snack bar I think. "Well why don't we get together and play." That was in 1976. We got a gym where we could play basketball, and then we decided we would play softball also. We got into the DC federal league, and the Arlington league. This group was all archivists, and we had all been jocks at one time or another. It was one great evening for us. Eventually we started going to a bar after the games.

Thibodeau: What bar.

McReynolds: Key Hole Inn in Arlington. It no longer exists but there is still a group that meets on Wednesday evenings. The athletic activity and all the banter and laughter made the next day at the Archives a lot easier.

Thibodeau: I know I can imagine. Did you talk about business?

McReynolds: Oh yes, much too much.

Thibodeau: I think it does help to have a different perspective on your colleagues. I don't know if that is happening today; that people are socializing outside the office.

McReynolds: I have had similar conversations about our generation of archivists. We were organizers and we just organized a softball and basketball teams. We organized the Assembly.

Thibodeau: Weren't you involved with...?

McReynolds: Yes, yes

Thibodeau: Do you want to talk a little about the Assembly?

McReynolds: Yes, in 1979 the Administrator of General Services wanted to send records on various subjects to various cities and set up regional archives. It got to that far. There had been a long effort to get the National Archives independent of GSA. It got such that there was a committee of employees in 1980. January 1980 to oppose the regionalization of records. In January 1980 John Rumbarger, Virginia Purdy, Gerry Haines, myself, and others decided to put a staff organization together that would pursue independence for the National Archives. And fight off this idea sending records all over the country. That is how we got started.

Thibodeau: How did it actually happen?

McReynolds: The founding committee issued a statement and asked staff members to meet for an organizational meeting. We met in the old auditorium of Archives I on a Saturday morning. There were about 85 people and television cameras. It was agreed to establish the Assembly. Virginia Purdy was elected President, and quarterly meetings and a newsletter were started. Two years later I was president.

Thibodeau: You testified before Congress as President?

McReynolds: Yes, I testified before the House Subcommittee of Government Operations. It was looking at the National Archives and GSA. That was a part of the general movement that led to the independence in 1985.

Thibodeau: Did you have to have your remarks approved by someone before you could present.

McReynolds: I don't know if you knew this, but you were on the Executive Board at the time. I did a draft and then the Board did a great review. I thought we really had a very good statement. Clarence Lyons was my supervisor at the time and I told him I was going to do this. I was going to take time off. The Archivist at the time was Bob Warner and I thought he would ask to read through my remarks, or ask to say something to me or have some representative say something to me, but I never talked to them at all. I was not on the panel that he was on. There were two other organizations that were testifying at the time. I didn't get any reaction from the front office before or afterwards.

Thibodeau: That's wonderful really; it really could have been otherwise.

McReynolds: They had their own agenda and the Assembly was not part of that agenda. The Society of American Archivists got very much involved in that whole period also, and we were very happy to see the Assembly being represented.

Thibodeau: It was a good moment. It was a good experience. I remember being worried at the time. I was in the same position being in line for the presidency and wondering if I would have to testify at some point and being relieved it never happened. I'm impressed.

McReynolds: We had a good statement and the two Congressmen were happy to hear from us.

Thibodeau: Well the Assembly is thriving. It was definitely one of the things that started.

McReynolds: Well good.

Thibodeau: Well how many survivors of the Key Hole Inn are there now? I guess some folks have moved away?

McReynolds: John Butler is in California and Clarence Lyons is in Georgia. Doug Helms and I are still going on Wednesday night. We have added some younger people. It will go on.

Thibodeau: Well anything else you would like to....

McReynolds: I can't think of anything else.

Thibodeau: I am trying to think if there is something that we haven't talked about or any comments in particular about the records you worked with.

McReynolds: I loved them; I was absolutely fascinated by the Supreme Court and the Department of Justice records. When I took over Legislative, I had never worked in legislative archives. That was really fun to deal with. I enjoyed the arguments over freedom of information and those questions and issues. I did several papers on those questions, so that was always a fun part of my work that was right along with the records.

Thibodeau: Were you making appraisal decisions at points in your career?

McReynolds: As division director in Reference and Legislative, I got to see appraisal decisions. I didn't object to very many of them. Trudy Peterson thought that I should get more involved, but I didn't. Appraisal was always very important. Given the FBI experience you always had that mind set in your head about what had to be done.

Thibodeau: Any memories of the FBI project that is particularly memorable? Let me ask first, were you the one who drew up the list of phrases, my treasured possession? [Yes] I have to say that's wonderful.

McReynolds: I think the camaraderie and the fun that we had, was just wonderful. We were dealing with very important questions under court order knowing that things were not going well for the Archives and the FBI. We were fortunate to have the records manager at the FBI. His name was Bob Scherrer. If he hadn't been there, I don't think that project would have succeeded. He did a wonderful job. Jim O'Neill did a wonderful job of supervising fifteen very independent archivists.

Thibodeau: I remember our trip to Puerto Rico, and our trip going the wrong way down the one way street. We weren't arrested and that was good.

McReynolds: Yes, we had a good time.

Thibodeau: Well any last thoughts? I think we maybe ready to close.

Gift of Historical Materials of **Michael McReynolds** to
The National Archives and Records Administration (NARA)

1. In accordance with the provisions of Chapter 21 of Title 44, United States Code, and subject to the terms and conditions hereinafter set forth, I, **Michael McReynolds** (hereinafter referred to as the Donor), hereby give, donate, and convey to the United States of America, for eventual deposit in the National Archives of the United States (hereinafter referred to as the National Archives), the following historical materials (hereinafter referred to as the Materials):

1. Recording (media) of an oral history interview with the donor conducted on April 7, 2007 by Sharon Thibodeau on behalf of the National Archives Assembly Legacy Project.
2. Transcript of an oral history interview with the donor.
3. Letter from National Archives Assembly Legacy Project Coordinator Patrice Brown to the donor, inviting the Donor to participate in an oral history interview for the Assembly's Legacy Project.

2. Because the Materials were generated in connection with the National Archives Assembly Legacy Project-an oral history project designed to capture the institutional memory of retiring NARA staff-the Donor stipulates that the Materials be accessioned into the National Archives and allocated to the donated historical materials collection of the National Archives Assembly. This collection is designated as NAA and is entitled, Records of the National Archives Assembly.

3. The Donor warrants that, immediately prior to the execution of the deed of gift, he possessed title to, and all rights and interests in, the Materials free and clear of all liens, claims, charges, and encumbrances.

4. The Donor hereby gives and assigns to the United States of America all copyright which s/he has in the Materials.

5. Title to the Materials shall pass to the United States of America upon their delivery to the Archivist of the United States or the Archivist's delegate (hereinafter referred to as the Archivist).

6. Following delivery, the Materials shall be maintained by NARA at a location to be determined by the Archivist in accordance with the provisions of Chapter 21 of Title 44, United States Code, and provided that at any time after delivery, the Donor shall be permitted freely to examine any of the Materials during the regular working hours of the depository in which they are preserved.

7. It is the Donor's wish that the Materials in their entirety be made available for research as soon as possible following their deposit in the National Archives.

8. The Archivist may, subject only to restrictions placed upon him by law or regulation, provide for the preservation, arrangement, repair and rehabilitation, duplication and reproduction, description, exhibition, display, and servicing of the Materials as may be needed or appropriate.

9. The Archivist may enter into agreements for the temporary deposit of the Materials in any depository administered by NARA.

10. In the event that the Donor may from time to time hereafter give, donate, and convey to the United States of America additional historical materials, title to such additional historical materials shall pass to the United States of America upon their delivery to the Archivist, and all of the foregoing provisions of this instrument of gift shall be applicable to such additional historical materials. An appendix shall be prepared and attached hereto that references this deed of gift and that describes the additional historical materials being donated and delivered. Each such appendix shall be properly executed by being signed and dated by the Donor and the Archivist.

Signed: Andru McReynolds
Donor

Date: May 13, 2009

Pursuant to the authority of Chapter 21 of Title 44, United States Code, the foregoing gift of historical materials is determined to be in the public interest and is accepted on behalf of the United States of America, subject to the terms and conditions set forth herein.

Signed: Adrienne C. Thomas
Archivist of the United States

Date: June 9, 2009