

U.S. NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS ADMINISTRATION
Transcript of National Archives History Office Oral History Interview
Subject: Philip Coolidge Brooks, Jr.
Interviewer: Jessie Kratz
Date: January 24, 2017

[START RECORDING]

MS. KRATZ: Today is January 24, 2017. I am Jessie Kratz, Historian of the National Archives. I'm interviewing Philip Brooks, Jr. in the Adams Room of the National Archives Building in Washington, DC. I think what we'll do is start from the very beginning. Your father worked at the National Archives, so what are your earliest impressions and memories of the Archives?

MR. BROOKS: Well, both my father and my mother worked for the Archives for a while. They were two of the first 60 or so employees.

MS. KRATZ: What was your mother's name?

MR. BROOKS: Dorothy Hamilton Holland Brooks, and she was a secretary to an office full of special examiners. One of which was my father. The first day she showed up to work, at the end of the day, father and Neil Franklin, his great buddy who later became our neighbor, walked out of the door, and Uncle Neil said, what do you think of the new secretary? And my father said, I don't like redheads. Well, that changed.

MS. KRATZ: There's a lot of office marriages that came out of National Archives over the years.

MR. BROOKS: Yeah.

MS. KRATZ: I wasn't aware of that one.

MR. BROOKS: Yeah, well, back then there was a lot of scandal about bosses marrying their secretaries, so when my parents got interested in each other, she went over to the Justice Department so they could get a little distance.

MS. KRATZ: Okay.

MR. BROOKS: Which was a good idea. Yeah, since then, there've been a lot of marriages over the years. There really have. My earliest memories I guess were probably coming down here during the war to see some of the exhibits in the Rotunda, particularly the Mulberry harbor, which was the model of the Mulberry harbor that they did for the D-Day landing, and they exhibited it here in the Rotunda and then they sent it up to Hyde Park. It's still there. I think it probably needs extensive restoration now. Things like that and coming down to see parades at the end of the war. I could even take you to the exact column on the Constitution Avenue porch at which I stood. And coming down to pick up my father at the end of the day, or mother and I would come in for shopping or doctor's appointments or something like that and then come down and hitch a ride home with the car pool. We were living in Alexandria then, and, so those were my earliest memories. And just almost endless discussion at dinnertime about who was doing what at the Archives.

We had a second, spare bedroom in our house that was supposedly my father's office, but during the war housing was at such a premium that we had a constant stream of people coming to stay with us who had been assigned to Washington or were briefly here before going overseas or something, and we just had this constant flow. One of the people we had twice was Herman Friis, who was in cartography and a very close friend. Herman and Ilda and their two daughters Cynthia and Patsy, who were my age. At the beginning of the war Herman said to his wife we've got to get you and the kids out of Washington because it's going to be bombed. So, he sent them back to Oakland, California, where her home was, and off he went to the Army and got his orders, and guess where he was posted? Washington. So, he came back and he stayed with us in this spare bedroom. Uncle Herman was an important formative person in my very young years. I learned a lot about geography and about the war because father was also interested in cartography. We had a big globe, and so they used to show me at the age of like, three, the earth really is round and this is where we are, and this is what's going on there. There's North Africa, there's Italy and then later on, there's Normandy and this is the way we're going to go in, and I got all these fascinating lessons from these two guys from this bloody great globe. So, these are early memories. Then, later on after the war, we used to come down a lot, again for exhibit openings or other special events or for my allergy shots or to see parades, or just to come down and shop, then stop by and bum a ride home. Later, when we had moved to Chevy Chase and I was like 10, 11, and 12, I was old enough to come down on my own, and I'd come down on the bus and the streetcar and usually go to the Smithsonian and come over and go home with them. So, those are early memories.

Then at the end of 1952 Wayne Grover appointed my father to be the Director of the Federal Records Center in San Francisco, so out we went. We lived in Palo Alto, which was a smallish town of 40,000 and the home of Stanford University. Silicon Valley didn't exist then—it was all orchards and cattle grazing land.

MS. KRATZ: And then when your dad became the Director of the Truman Library, did you go with him?

MR. BROOKS: Yeah.

MS. KRATZ: What were your experiences with the Truman Library when you were there?

MR. BROOKS: Lots of experiences. We moved there after he came out, I guess it was February of '57 after Wayne Grover had appointed him, and he consulted with all kinds of people here and some of Mr. Truman's associates who were still in town. He went up to New York to visit his sister in law. She gave him a crash course in what museums were all about, and he went to all of the museums in New York. Then he went out to Independence to work with the first guys that were handling the records there, J.R. Fuchs and Phil Lagerquist, who had been on that project for a couple of years already, and so they got things started, and then, as soon as school was out in Palo Alto where we lived, he came out and we drove back east. We arrived on probably about the fifth or sixth of June, somewhere in there, and it was absolutely frenetic work getting that building ready to open. Not the papers, the papers came later, but getting the exhibits ready and getting the building finished. Mr. Truman was doing a lot of work with the staff on planning the exhibits, figuring out what would go where, which was pretty neat. I wound up going up there a lot. I had been doing stage crew and sound crew work in high school, and so I went up and helped Cecil Schrepfer, who was the photographer who'd been appointed, and we sort of plugged together all the sound system, and then I was up there quite a lot. The first year was my senior year in high school. Then the next year was my freshman year in college, and I went out to Claremont Mens' College in California, and then transferred back for my sophomore year to the University of Kansas. I was

over at the Library a lot, and whenever somebody interesting was coming through father would usually call home and call me over at college to say come on over, and off I'd go. I got to meet a fascinating variety of people, many of whom became wonderful friends and mentor. Mr. Truman became a mentor of mine, and so, I practically lived up there.

MS. KRATZ: Can you talk about your time in school leading up to your time here? I guess you were at the Smithsonian for a bit leading up to the Archives. Can you talk about your education for a little bit?

MR. BROOKS: Okay. I was obviously imbued with history from the time I was born, so much so that I said, A. I don't want to be an archivist, and B. I don't want to be a historian. I know about this. I have been to OAH meetings. I have been to SAA meetings. So, I, majored in political science, took a lot of political science and international relations courses, and many other courses, too. I got my bachelor's in political science at KU. Then I received a University of Kansas-University of Reading direct exchange graduate fellowship and went off to the University of Reading in England for a year, had a marvelous year, and came back. I had delayed entry into Stanford Law when I got the fellowship to Reading. Stanford Law School was very good about it. I went off to Stanford because I had always said I'm going to be a lawyer, you know, like my grandfather, like my uncle, like all these other people. After about four months of that, I figured, you know, this is not what I want to do at all, so I withdrew from Stanford and transferred back to KU and into a master's in international relations, and cunningly contrived a thesis topic that would require me to go back to England to do thesis research.

It was on British defense policy, so back I went to Reading to do research, and that's when I met my wife Sue. She was a student there. Then I came back and finished up at KU. I was very much imbued with Jack Kennedy's call to ask what you could do for your country, and I looked into all kind of possibilities, decided that the Peace Corps was not something that a political scientist could be very effective at, but there were undoubtedly very good jobs in Washington where I could do something.

So, I filled out the forms and all that and came back to Washington as a program analyst with the embryonic food stamp program at USDA. This was the pilot project. We had eight and then 12 sites around the country, and I was in the retailer, wholesaler division looking over reports of violations, figuring out where they had broken the law and assessing penalties, and I got a very interesting look at nature in that. It was nothing that I hadn't seen before in my summers as a park policeman while in graduate school out in Kansas City, but it was sort of eye opening sometimes. That was a way to get back to Washington, and this was a traditional route that a lot of people took, starting back, probably in the 20s, certainly in the 30s: come to Washington, get a job so you can look around for a better job, so I did.

Within eight months, a job at the Smithsonian had opened up and Bert Rhoads, who was the Deputy Archivist at that point, was assembling the first classes of Presidential Libraries interns or National Archives interns or what have you. Bert tried like mad to recruit me to that program, and we had become great friends, actually, through my father. Father would come back and he would stay with us at our apartment in Riverdale, and Bert would bring us into town; I'd walk from here down to MHT, now the Museum of American History, where I was working at that point.

But anyway, Bert tried to get me into the program, and I kept saying, no, that's very kind, sir. I really appreciate it, but you see I've got this thing going over at the Smithsonian that looks really good. And I took the Smithsonian job which was in the Division of Political History at the new Museum of History

and Technology, now the Museum of American History, and it was absolutely fascinating. I was a museum technician, then a museum specialist, which sort of got me up into the equivalent ranks of a lot of archive specialists here.

After four and a half years, though, promotion opportunities sort of ceased, because the next step was to be a curator and you needed to have a vacancy for a curator, and they didn't have any vacancies; ~~and~~ in fact, all the curators in political history were from 35 to 50. They weren't going to go anywhere anytime soon, so I started looking around, and I had met and gotten to know Frank Burke fairly well. He was running the Educational Programs Division then, and I kept saying, got any jobs? Got any jobs? No, no, we don't, I don't have any vacancies, there's no money. But we became good buddies in any case, and eventually it was suggested to me, and I don't remember whether it was Frank or whether it was Bert or whether it was my father, to call up Walt Robertson. He's the Executive Director. Does he have anything going? So, I called and got his secretary, Betty Seemuller, who was a very interesting, very pleasant person, who ruled that office with an iron fist—a big, chain mail iron fist. There was no nonsense with Betty! I never could get through to Walt. I'd leave messages, you know, but I didn't know what my inability to reach him was all about, but eventually he called and said, I haven't wanted to call you until we had a vacancy, but now we have a vacancy. Come over and talk, so I came over to talk, and I thought I was coming over to do museum work, and I thought, well, you know, career game plan, I'll be here five years doing museum work and then I'll go somewhere else, and 25 years later, I retired from the National Archives.

MS. KRATZ: Well, so you started in the internship program, or?

MR. BROOKS: No.

MS. KRATZ: Or you never were part of the internship program at all?

MR. BROOKS: No, never was part of the internship program. Most people think I was, and all of the gang that were in it became very close associates, including Adrienne Thomas, with whom I shared an office for about three years, either in what is now this room or right over on the other side of that wall so that we looked out through those columns there.

MS. KRATZ: So, what exactly was the internship program?

MR. BROOKS: The internship program? Well, there were two of them. One was for archivists and one was for Presidential library archivists. There are still archivist training programs. The idea was that you would do sort of a two or three-year program or rotating assignments around, doing papers and learning all about archiving.

MS. KRATZ: Okay, are you familiar with the CIDS program? Was it similar to that?

MR. BROOKS: Early form of it.

MS. KRATZ: Okay.

MR. BROOKS: Yeah, early form of it, very much so, and then later on, they had internship programs for embryonic Records Center people. Same program, but they were slated to work in the Records Center system and move all around the country, unlike everybody else who would find a berth and stay put. These were good programs, and Bert was the one who really got them going. They lasted for a long

time. Now, they're gone into CIDS and all this kind of thing. I think they've produced an amazing crop of people. They really have awfully, awfully good folks. And no, I wasn't part of it. I was doing my own internship program but in museology over at MHT, and I did some fascinating things there and had some wonderful assignments and got to meet an amazing number of fascinating people. (I shouldn't say amazing. It sounds too much like that new guy down the street.)

MS. KRATZ: So then what year was it, your first year here was '71?

MR. BROOKS: '71.

MS. KRATZ: And can you describe your work when you first started? Your first job?

MR. BROOKS: My first job was in the program review group under John Scroggins up on the fourth floor. We reported to Walt, and it was, as I said in my interview, my other interview, it was boring, because John, who's a very talented guy, had the uncanniest ability to make anything boring, and he did. And I thought I was going to go out of my tree because I had been doing much more interesting and exciting stuff over at the Smithsonian, you know, traveling all over Britain and looking for objects for revolutionary exhibits, all kinds of neat stuff like that, in and out of the White House all the time with Presidential materials, and now I'm up in the fourth floor reviewing program manuals.

Well, it gave me a good look at how things happen and it gave me a very good look at how not to run an office. Finally, I went down to Walt one day and said, help. I need out of this. This is not working, and I was annoyed at John, and he was annoyed at me, and so it seemed like a good idea to move me down to work directly for Walt as an assistant, not be deputy executive director, not even be assistant director but the assistant to the director, and I worked up through that for some time, and that was really fun.

That was fascinating because I wound up having an overview of what the institution is, how it operates, what the value systems are and who does what. I was looking at it from the highest level. One of the early things I did was to be the secretary of the program review group that Bert set up to go around and review the programs of every office in the place, and I went around with that group. I didn't say much, I just took notes. You know, you learn a lot that way in about a year. You learn an awful lot, including where all the bodies are buried and who buried them and why. So, I did that. I was also the labor relations officer, did all kinds of things for Walt.

MS. KRATZ: Do you remember what the big programs were at that time?

MR. BROOKS: One of the biggest programs was records declassification. We were just getting into that whole idea because Bert and Jim O'Neill and several others were simply appalled at how much was still classified. There were records from World War I that were classified. We even ran across, as I remember, one record from the Civil War that was still classified. There was lots of stuff from World War II, and nobody could see the sense of it, but the agencies had done it, and we were determined to overcome that, so we set up the whole records declassification program under Al Thompson, who had been under one of the interns, and it worked beautifully.

Al and his staff were able to co-opt records officers from the different agencies to come over and work with the stuff and open it up as quickly as possible and as thoroughly as possible. One of the interesting results of all of that was we opened up this vast trove of World War II records and the Public Records Office in London got slightly embarrassed because they were still operating under the 50-year rule and

here we were opening up all of their stuff, too. So, they had to change their rule and open it up, which is when the story of Bletchley Park came out, and all of that. And had we not had this program going and sort of forcing them to open it up, none of that would have come out for another 25 years. We might only now be hearing about Bletchley Park. So that was good. We also had a lot of other things going on because Bert was very, very interested in opening up the Archives, letting the public know more of what we were doing, being more of a public oriented institution, and this would increase in all forms of public outreach and public programs.

MS. KRATZ: Was this the same time that the regional archives started to come into existence.

MR. BROOKS: Yeah.

MS. KRATZ: Did you have a lot to do with any of that? Did you oversee programs?

MR. BROOKS: I did not. The only thing I was doing was working for Walt in providing support for the Executive Director and the Office of the National Archives in setting up and staffing the regional archives program, so it was just support, and I really had nothing directly to do with it that you could put your finger on. It was just general levels of support, letting people know what was going on. I did a certain amount of speech writing for Walt and for Bert, particularly Bert's testimonies on the Hill, or White House letter writing, this kind of thing.

So, occasionally I would be doing something where we would be mentioning the regional archives program getting going in a big way, and of course that almost backfired on us because, at the end of the Carter administration when President Carter put in Admiral Freeman, Dr. Rowland G. Freeman, as Administrator of General Services. Admiral Freeman decided that the best thing to do, because we were having such space problems and we couldn't get a building across the street, was to move everything out of the Archives and into the regional archives branches all over the country, which would have made research almost impossible. And I can tell you there was almost a guerilla action launched there—that was pretty spectacular.

MS. KRATZ: I want to talk about that a little more. I have a question. You did mention the building across the street?

MR. BROOKS: Yeah.

MS. KRATZ: Do you, do you have more information about the potential for the Archives to have a building across the street?

MR. BROOKS: Oh, yeah.

MS. KRATZ: Could you tell me a little about that?

MR. BROOKS: Yes. FDR in 1942 had said when the war is over, that vast Pentagon building we'll use for records for the Archives because they'll need the space; and people were going, "oh really?" Including my father, who was sort of the liaison officer between the Archives and the military. He worked his tail off during the war and worked very closely with a lot of people who would become really important in Archives history, like his buddy Wayne Grover who was helping run the Navy program during the war and had been one of the young archivists before the war. Wayne came back and was Archivist for 17 years. But you know, everybody'd thought, oh, gee, all that lovely space, and of course that didn't

happen really quick, so we started to make do and build Records Centers and adopted the idea of Records Centers and started building them around the country. That took quite some time.

That's why we went to California, so father could run the Federal Records Center in San Francisco. Wayne said to him one day, "Well, you're the one who wrote the article about records to be preserved and you thought up the idea of the records centers, you and your buddies. You want to put your money where your mouth is?" Father, who was a graduate of Berkeley, said, "Oh, yes, please!" and off we went, but this still left the problem of this building exploding with records and where do you put them? Oh, well, we'll make the records centers really big and we'll put a lot out there in the records centers. Well, they filled up quickly. Every time you turned around, something filled up, so people started to cast covetous eyes on the blocks across the street, Seventh to Eighth to Ninth: "Oh, maybe we could get an appropriation and put an annex there."

And there was lots of talk, lots of speculation. There were some embryonic plans drawn up in maybe the early sixties, and it didn't happen. There was then a really interesting plan drawn up in the seventies and going up to about '74, '75, for a building between Seventh St. and Eighth St. that would have been a pretty modernistic building and would have worked beautifully. Frank Burke had quite a hand in that one, and I remember seeing the plans. They drew up plans and they were good. I remember seeing the plans, and the concept was an interesting idea. We were going to have a tunnel under Pennsylvania Avenue, of course, and move records and people back and forth all the time. It was a good idea, but it didn't happen. It certainly didn't happen, because the FBI building was put there, but the idea of a second building never went away.

In the eighties, after Frank had done NE and then was with the National Historical Publications and Records Commission doing various other things like that, he was one of the ones pushing the idea that maybe what we needed to do was to affiliate with one of the universities in the area, and when he became Acting Archivist, and I was working as an assistant for him, which was great fun, he went over and talked with Jim Moran about putting the branch in Alexandria, roughly where the Patent and Trademark Office is.

Being a good little Alexandrian I thought this was a splendid idea, but maybe because Frank was an adjunct professor and teacher at Maryland, I'm not sure, but Frank got very imbued with latching on to the University of Maryland in order to have an affiliation with a university. They were very receptive to it, whereas there wasn't any university affiliation in northern Virginia that was lapping up this idea because there weren't that many universities there, and George Mason University was just an embryonic thing.

So, Maryland said come hither and a very nice piece of space became available, and suddenly we got on this bandwagon building Archives II, and it worked. It worked beautifully. It's out in the middle of bloody nowhere, as far as I'm concerned. You know you haven't lived until you've commuted to Archives II from Alexandria for several years, in the snow and all that. That's a long drive. But it's a tremendous building, and I was really glad to be there for three years. So that's how all that happened. It was a long and tortuous story, and I only hit a few of the highlights here, but somebody could write a hell of a good book about it and hopefully make it interesting. Maybe Adrienne Thomas, because she was the person in charge of getting Archives II built.

MS. KRATZ: Well, I want to come back to your time in Archives II, but I want to stay with the chronology—so we had last you were working for Walt and doing program review.

MR. BROOKS: Yeah.

MS. KRATZ: And then what was the next step in your Archives career?

MR. BROOKS: The next step was being spun off by Walt to do the Archivists Reception Room project.

MS. KRATZ: The Americana project.

MR. BROOKS: The Americana project. Fred Greenhut had started it and had got Joe Hennage to support it. Freddie was using, as his model, the State Department Diplomatic Reception Rooms program. Fred and Bart Cox and I were all great friends, about the same age, had much the same outlooks, and we were also car buddies, very, very close car buddies: old cars. Fred started off with this program and got Joe starting to work on it, working with NE and Frank Burke. Frank and Joe fell out: it was a couple of egos at work. Joe had the biggest ego of anybody that ever came to town until Donald Trump. But Joe was good. You just had to know how to work with him, how to use him. So this fallout then resulted in Fred getting highly annoyed with everything that was going on. He was going to let his uncle, who was a Congressman from Florida, know all about it, and Fred got caught Xeroxing some memos one day probably for his uncle, some internal staff memos that he shouldn't have been Xeroxing, so Fred got moved out of the Americana Project, over to Diplomatic Records, which was his real home anyway. And Walt said to me, "Okay, you wanted museum experience, and you've been saying that ever since you got here, and you say you have things to offer, and you've talked to Bert Rhoads about it and all that, now buddy boy, we have this opening and we want you to take over the Americana project." And I say, "Yeah!" So I did, and working with Joe we managed to do quite a lot and really make that room look good and build up a tremendous collection.

MS. KRATZ: Can you explain, just because everyone is not going to be aware what the Americana Project is, exactly what that was and how it came into existence?

MR. BROOKS: Okay, what it was, was an idea that we should have a room, a reception room that was a reflection in its furnishings of the culture of the Federal period that produced the founding documents. The model, as I said, was the Diplomatic Reception Rooms at State. The Archivist's Reception Room has always been the Archivist's Reception Room. When John Russell Pope designed it, it had a very strange marble mantelpiece that was neo-Egyptian. We never really were quite sure what it was. And it had three, I think it was, chandeliers hanging from the ceiling that were brass, and they were inverted bowls with candlesticks coming off of them. They looked like turtle shells, giant turtle shells. They were pretty hideous.

To that was added good, government-issued furniture. Some conference tables, rather "eh" sofas, some equally "eh" chairs, all good government-issue stuff. They were really fairly uncomfortable and you know, there were classes and meetings and receptions and all kinds of things, retirement ceremonies, held in there and the room just never looked that good. Well, before I got involved in the project, they had set their eyes on redoing the room and Fred and Joe just really went to town on that. The mantelpiece that is in there now was designed and crafted by Samuel McIntire of Salem, Massachusetts. I hope the records about that are still around.

MS. KRATZ: We have all the records.

MR. BROOKS: Good, good, good. That's a very important, significant mantelpiece. The chandeliers are Waterford or Waterford-esque. They're Irish from about 1810. And we were able to line up that big bookcase, which was a New York piece by Michael Allison, made somewhere between 1810 and 1820, as I recall, and we got various chairs, various tables, some really, really nice things. We borrowed --- oriental rugs from the Johnson Library, because they had and probably still have the biggest collection within the Archives family, and Harry Middleton—the Johnson Library director and a good friend of both my father and mine—was very good about it. (I was distressed to see that Harry died. It was in the paper just the other day.) We were good friends, and he thought my father walked on water, which was very nice of him, but Harry was a really good guy, and he did a tremendous job running the Johnson Library for what? 30 years, I think it was. Outstanding. Anyway, we mentioned the idea of rugs. He said, "Oh, can we help you?" And here they came. The idea at one point was that we would rotate them every so often. I don't know whether that's going on now or not. I have no idea, probably not, but anyway, there they were.

We needed to have a conference table and banquet table, and so, I started looking around, found a very, very nice Maryland Hepplewhite table, about 1825, was up at an antique shop near Frederick, and like other Hepplewhite pieces, there were legs that were very elegant, dainty tapering legs. When you have a table that's 22 feet long and comes apart in sections, you've got legs all over the place. Bert Rhoads said, "I'm never going to be able to get my feet under all of that. Can you think of something else?" So, we wound up having Suter's Furniture do a couple of tables for us that could be put together in combinations. I think they're still in there. Suter's is located down in the Valley of Virginia. It's been going since about 1827, so it was, you know, a good organization with which to work in doing something like this.

We were able to take one of their catalog item tables and say, "Well, let's do this, let's do this, let's do this," and they said "Fine," and they were honored to do it, and similarly with the chairs that we got. They had some Hepplewhite chairs that were very nice and they were remarkably similar to the dining chairs at Mount Vernon, and we said, "Well now, can we take your catalog of chairs and do this and do this and do this and come out with something like Mount Vernon, just like the ones you did in Gadsby's Tavern?" "Oh, yes, we can do that." They're in there, too. We had a sideboard on loan that was just a spectacularly beautiful piece. We hoped we were going to be able to get it. We were able to get the thing very gently conserved and restored, but the old boy who was going to leave it to us in his will died before he changed the will, so it went back up to Dartmouth where it is today in the Dartmouth Art Museum, so we are without a sideboard.

And about the time I left was about where that stood, and I'm delighted to see that the room is still being used and it still looks so good. We were in there a couple of months ago for the Truman Library Institute reception and dinner and it was really fun being in the old stomping ground once again and not actually have to stand there as the curator and make sure nobody did anything too horrible to the furnishings.

That's the story with the Americana Project. It was a very good idea. It was one of the many build-ups to the Revolution Bicentennial, and when I moved on to other things, then, you know, it was maintained by NE [the Office of Public Programs, before that the Office of Educational Programs] for a long time. I don't know who's maintaining it now, but somebody obviously is doing a very nice job. And, I think a

number of the things that were on loan went back and I had the impression that they wanted to make sure the furnishings that were in there not only worked but were rugged enough to last for another two or three generations, and I guess they are. Seems to work. Looks good. It was a good idea.

It got very interesting from time to time because we were dealing with some interesting donors and some really significant dealers in New York and in Washington. I got to meet some very, very fun people doing all this and just loved it. I got to be a little bit of an expert on federal period furniture, which was an interesting change from what I was doing with you guys. And that got sandwiched in with my other duties in NE, because by this time I'd been moved down to NE permanently and was the Assistant to the Assistant Archivist. The new Assistant Archivist replacing Frank Burke was Albert Meisel, a fascinating man, absolutely fascinating. The most brilliant mind I've run across in years, and he was the kind of guy you loved working for him and with him when you didn't want to break his damn neck, because he could really be a handful and he was, he was ephemeral. You always wonder, you know, where do we stand right at this moment with him, and then in an hour or two it may be different, so life was very interesting.

Anyway, I was the administrative officer and did all the budgeting and oversaw the procurement and the personnel and provided all the administrative backup for every one of the rapidly expanding programs within what we got changed into the Office of Public Programs. In '77 I became the Acting Director of the Education Division, and Albert kept saying, "Oh, I want to find somebody who would be really good in that job and I need you doing what you do so well and no, I'm not going to make you the permanent head. I'm going to leave you as acting until I find somebody;" and he never found anybody. But then he finally left. Jim O'Neill, who at that point was Acting Archivist, very promptly made me the permanent director, which lasted about a year, until 1984. A little later, Frank Burke said to me that the great contribution I had made to Public Programs and the Education Division was to professionalize it with museum people. I felt that was a great compliment.

MS. KRATZ: What were the kinds of programs that the Education Division was doing?

MR. BROOKS: The Education Division at that time was in charge of all the exhibits. We did some outstanding exhibits in those years. That was our major function. We were also developing educational teaching materials. We had a very active group of people developing teaching units, and we did traveling teaching units. We did packaged teaching units that we could send out. And we did traveling exhibits. We developed an active program of speakers who would come and speak on what they had found in their researches on their newest book, and that got to be great fun.

MS. KRATZ: Where would they speak normally? In the building?

MR. BROOKS: In the auditorium.

MS. KRATZ: Okay, up there.

MR. BROOKS: Yeah, up there.

MS. KRATZ: Okay, the old one.

MR. BROOKS: The old one, yes. Sometimes they would speak in the Reception Room, but not too often. Usually it was in the auditorium, and that was a big success. Once we had Nikolai Tolstoy come over. He had just done his book on the secret war and at that time the British government restricted you as to

how much money you could bring out, so he really was more than willing to come over, but he didn't have a place to stay and couldn't afford a place to stay. So, he stayed with us for a week. And then he stayed with Jill Merrill, who was our PR officer for another week. He stayed with her and her family and we all had a great old time. He gave a superb lecture. He caused a fair amount of controversy because he maintained, publicly and in his book that Sir Patrick Dean was one of the principal Brits who had betrayed all of the Russians that fought on our side, but were fighting really against communism, too. Dean was the former British Ambassador to the U.S. when Nicolai spoke.

But anyway, he stayed with us, and our family and Nikolai had a great time. His visit was an enormous success, and we kept up with him for a long time. We had a lot of other speakers. It was a good program.

Another thing that we did, we decided we needed a "friends" organization for the Archives. Any major cultural institution ought to have a friends organization, so we started the Associates of the National Archives, and they provided docents. They provided a lot of support services for lectures and public events. It was a membership organization. We had an enormous amount of fun devising the different levels of membership and the different benefits you could get. One day Al Meisel and I were in Bert Rhoads' office outlining all the different levels, and Albert said with a perfectly straight face that at the top level, if you gave so much money a year, among many other special benefits you would get to take a shower with the Archivist, and Bert got this ashen look on his face and Meisel and I just started rolling on the floor laughing. I don't think Bert ever quite forgave him for that one. We pointed to the shower, you know, right off his office to the bathroom. Right in there, Bert, in there. It was beautiful. I guess I'm the only one left who would remember that incident. God! We offered trips for the Associates, field trips, charter trips. We even had a charter trip to Bermuda for a bunch of them in the winter one year, and it was really very good. It was instantly sold out.

The problem with the program was that it wasn't making a lot of money really quickly right from the beginning. It takes times to build these up, takes a long time, and as money got a little bit tighter under President Reagan, the program got axed. I was really sorry about that. The program came back. It certainly did come back later on. Bob Warner thought it was a good idea and he kept pushing it, and then others came along and pushed it even more and got Karl Rove involved, of all people. Karl seemed to know how to do it, because it's a tremendous success now. It really is a good, good program. I'm delighted about that.

MS. KRATZ: I came across some of the early Karl Rove letters from that.

MR. BROOKS: Did you? Oh, that must have been great fun. Of all people to ask, Karl Rove? But he did it. He rallied around. Looking back, I am delighted with everything we were able to get started. Frank Burke was the one who really got it started, and then Albert developed it and made it possible for us to bring on some very good people to do all kinds of things. One of them was Elsie Freeman, who is now Elsie Finch, who headed up the educational outreach and the teaching programs and all that, and she had several good people with her, really good people; they did a wonderful job. They really did. One of the hardest things I ever had to do was, when we had a RIF [Reduction in Force] going on in the early Reagan days and everybody was assigned a quota and I had to let go one of the ladies in Elsie's office. She was the last in. She was the first out. She knew it was coming even before I did. It was so hard.

MS. KRATZ: I was going to say, it seems that there's parallel to what's going on now back to early Reagan years with RIFs. Can you explain a little bit of what it was like to work in the early days, Reagan and the cutback and...?

MR. BROOKS: I'd like to go back a little farther.

MS. KRATZ: Okay.

MR. BROOKS: And talk about what it was like working under the Nixon administration because the Nixonites wanted to populate the government with their people, at all levels. One of the things that Walt Robertson had me do was to review the applications that were sent over by the White House for jobs for young archivists, young historians, young whatever, and all we had then were vacancies in records declassification. We had, oh, you've got 100-some odd staff slots there? Oh, we can send over a lot of people. Okay, send over the applications. We'll look at them. And I got extremely good about writing back the loveliest letters to the White House about what superb people these were and unfortunately they just didn't have the qualifications that were absolutely vital to declassify these records. It worked every time, but I felt that we were doing almost an underground effort to stop these kinds of incursions.

Well, the same sort of thing came along in the early Reagan years. We had the inaugural watch party, the parade watching party in Room 105, in the Reception Room, and I used to be in charge of those parties, too. And as Reagan was giving his inaugural address, he got to that very famous portion about "The government is your enemy," and the deputy administrator of GSA (Ray Kline) and I looked at each other and said, "Oh, my God." That guy's face just fell, and he had been 30 years in the government already and was probably the best guy over at the main GSA building. He was a really good man. We all felt that way. All we could do was do the best we could in carrying on and try every way we could to make what we were doing look really good. It helped that, by this time, we had a really strong, active Office of Presidential Libraries and we had a very good presence at the White House in our archives unit over there that Marie Allen was running, Marie who lives about three miles from us in Williamsburg now.

So, we were able to establish a little bit of a beachhead and avoid some things, but the grimness didn't come from the White House as much as it came from GSA; and you know, we had a war with GSA from the moment in 1949 when we were dumped into GSA. I vividly remember as a kid having those discussions about the Archives' placement in GSA, and feeling appalled that this was happening to the National Archives. I have to say that I was raised with this concern, so that when I had the opportunity to help Walt Robertson with his famous SAA speech, I could take what Dick Jacobs had done with the first draft that was very, very good, and then alter it enough to make it sing. That was one of my prouder achievements—to help Walt stand up and tell the truth about what it was like with GSA and why we had to get out. It took another nine years to get loose after that speech, but we did it.

Anyway, we were fighting rear guard actions with GSA. We'd already had an experience with Admiral Freeman, who wanted to move all the records out, and so we knew how the game was played. We didn't have that much of a threat, but we had all of these little picky administrative grabs all the time, including a RIF. I guess it was the, probably the second RIF we'd ever had. There was one right after the war when the returning servicemen were coming home and people who'd occupied the jobs they left behind had to be let go. That was rough, but this one was a little rougher. Luckily in NE, we only had to

lose one person, and Archives didn't have it that rough, but we always felt under attack. And then, as time went on, Bob Warner came in and Ed Weldon came in as his Deputy. Warner and Weldon turned out to be pretty good at managing relations with the White House, better than some people thought they would have been, and they were able to stave off a lot.

Bob Warner, to his everlasting credit, realized long before he became Archivist (which was sort of a surprise to everybody) that the Archives had to be free again, and he mounted this effort with the help of people like Dick Jacobs and Claudine Weiher and to some extent Dave Peterson, who came over from GSA and who had been a Nixon Republican appointee. They understood, even David, who had to be indoctrinated, as to why this was a good idea. He caught on very quickly, and they led this really fascinating effort to free the Archives, which Bob detailed in his very interesting book. And it worked. And then we had to reinvent the Archives, but it was a very tricky time in the early Reagan years because we kept being sniped at, just a little bit, here and there, here and there, here and there, but we all lived in a certain amount of fear because we knew we were the enemy. We were govvnies. We were the enemy, and it was directly opposite the feeling we'd had in the Carter administration when not only were government employees looked upon fairly favorably, but thanks to Joan Mondale, the Archives was looked upon very favorably. I mean, we really blossomed under the Mondale's pushing the Carters. This was good, and then to have that turn around instantly overnight, was a very big shock, not unlike what we've just been going through. What can I say? The wheels of government turn.

MS. KRATZ: So, in the years leading up to, I guess not the early years of the Reagan administration but the years leading up to the independence of the Archives, what was your role here?

MR. BROOKS: Personally, I felt under threat. Not from the Reaganites, but within, because Dave Peterson came in to head up NE for a little while. Then he got moved to NL. He didn't like me from the beginning and I wound up not liking him, and it became a personal sort of thing. Bob came in. Bob Warner and Jane were good friends of my parents, and my father had always hoped that we would become equally good friends with the Warners because we were closer in age to them than my parents were, and I was really looking forward to that; but it turned out that Bob Warner had this idea that I was only here for a sinecure, trading on my father's reputation. He made it very publicly clear to a number of people, including Dick Jacobs, that he did not want sons following in their father's footsteps.

Well, I hadn't been there to follow in my father's footsteps. I was recruited by Bert and Walt to do something very different and bring a whole different set of talents here, which I did. But Bob didn't like what I was doing and saw me as only occupying a sinecure, and eventually I got reassigned away from the Education Division directorship to be a senior archives specialist at NC. It was not a happy time. It was not a happy time at all. Peterson and I never did really see eye to eye. We tended to keep our distance, but he kept disliking me all the time and isolating me where and when he could. In '88, Dick Jacobs was still Executive Director, and he sent me over to the 1989 Presidential Inaugural Committee for my second go-around. My first time was with the Nixon Inaugural Committee, the '69 Committee, so he sent me over to be the historian archivist for the '89 Committee. That was great fun because I was privileged to come back to run a program I had started 20 years earlier and see how it evolved and what needed to be improved, and I was happy to find that it was ticking along pretty well. That was great and one of the side benefits was Dick realized this when he reassigned me was that it got Peterson and myself apart.

Well, all good things come to an end, and the Inaugural Committee came to an end. In fact, I came back to NC to do what I was supposed to be doing. One of the things that I was supposed to be doing was going out on the program reviews and writing them all up, as Evans Walker had done with that job for quite some years before I came. Peterson would never let me go out. Never. So, I did a lot of other things, particularly improving publications and communications within the records center system. But when I came back from the '89 Inaugural Committee, Peterson told Larry Hines, who by this time had my old slot and was my boss, he said, I want him out of here. I want to fire him. And Larry said, oh, better yet, let me send him out to Suitland because we need a review of some of the program activities out there to see how we can straighten some problems out, and Peterson grudgingly said fine, but get him out of my sight. And so off I went to Suitland for two years to do all of this and we made a few changes. I got a really good look at a records center, got pneumonia from all the dust, too, walking pneumonia. Not nice.

Anyway, eventually David let up a little bit and I came back to the office and started to do even more with publications outreach, developing other things, including writing up the story of the lifecycle of records concept. That was to be an article that was to be in Prologue, and for some reason the guy who was in charge of Prologue, who was a friend of mine, didn't want it. He wanted more public outreach things, rather than inward looking things, and so it was published in the internal newsletter in two parts. I presume there are copies of that still around because, if I dare say so, it was a pretty damn good analysis and write-up of how the whole theory came to be of lifecycle of records, and how the records center system evolved from that.

MS. KRATZ: Do you know what year this was? Ish?

MR. BROOKS: Ish. '92 and '93, maybe into early '94. In the meantime, we moved out to Archives II.

MS. KRATZ: Oh, your office?

MR. BROOKS: Yes, the office moved out to Archives II, and I guess things with Peterson had gotten a little bit better because our wing had a whole bunch of nice offices with windows and sort of a bullpen; and there were two corner offices, and I got one of them while Peterson had the other. We were a long way apart from each other, but each one of us had an office. I never figured out just exactly what turned him around, but whatever.

I took it and ran with it, and we did some really good things with NC, and they are a great bunch of people. NC is a really splendid organization that does work that nobody ever thinks about very much, unless they're part of it, but they're the ones that keep the system going until we're ready to talk about permanently valuable records, and it's amazing the things that they can accomplish. It really is. I wound up being fond of a lot of my experiences there, and all of the people there, or almost all of the people, and really being proud of all of the people, having been a part of it off and on 12 years, I guess.

MS. KRATZ: And then, you left the agency finally in 1996? Is that correct?

MR. BROOKS: Yeah.

MS. KRATZ: Were you still in NC when you left the agency?

MR. BROOKS: I was. I was. There had been a lot of talk up on the Hill and other places about me maybe being the next Archivist of the United States, which came as a great shock to me. That was something I

had never thought of, but there were people actively promoting this idea, and my name was submitted to President Clinton, along with about 36 others. I think there were 37 of us on the short list, Trudy Peterson being one, and Congressman Jim Moran wrote a personal note to Bill Clinton supporting my candidacy and sent me a copy of it, which I have. So, the idea of me becoming the Archivist was somewhat far-fetched, perhaps, but I thought it was pretty good; and I had all kinds of things I wanted to do to make it even more of a publicly-oriented agency, reaching out more and more with more public programs, just exactly the sort of things that the Archives is doing today. Just exactly these things, including getting involved more and more with electronic records and reaching out through the media and all that. We didn't have Wikipedia in 1994, but we were sowing the groundwork for this kind of thing, and I'm blown away with what's happening the Archives now. It is so good.

Anyway. No, I didn't get that job, and, I talked with John Carlin about maybe, what would I like to do. Run the Office of Presidential Libraries (NL) for instance. I thought running NL would be a very appropriate thing to do at this point. I certainly knew a lot about the libraries, although I had never worked in one of the libraries officially, but I'd been around the whole idea since 1957 and had provided a lot of support and a lot of interaction for exhibits and public programs and knew most of the people in the system very well. And John finally decided he didn't want me in that job, or, he said, well, we've got to get the strategic plan done before I can figure out any assignments for anybody, which was not entirely true, but it was close enough. "Close enough for government work, anyway," as the saying used to go.

And, so, by mid-'96 I realized that there probably really wasn't anything more I had to offer without moving into a slot like NL and that was not going to happen, and I had a lot of other things I wanted to do with my life. If I retired at that point, you know, I was 55, had a lot of years left, and so I retired, very happily. So we had a lovely and very well-attended retirement ceremony, which Sue helped organize and at which Dave Peterson presided, very graciously, and I think we were both sort of dumb-founded at all of that. It was fine. I never saw him again. I've often wondered what happened to Dave Peterson. Interesting guy. Again, one of these people with a lot to offer. It's a shame we never got on so well.

MS. KRATZ: Well I just want to go back to a couple other things.

MR. BROOKS: Yes, ma'am.

MS. KRATZ: Sort of back in time, you mentioned it, but I'm not that familiar with the inaugural committee and the relationship with the Archives.

MR. BROOKS: Okay.

MS. KRATZ: Can you talk about how you got involved with that and what kind of things you were doing?

MR. BROOKS: Yeah. I got involved with it in a very strange way. There was an act of Congress passed about 1948 to establish the role of inaugural committees and how they were to be run and how the whole inauguration was to be done. This was an act passed right after the war, and the Truman inaugural was the first on after the war. Saw the establishment of a Presidential Inaugural Committee and the Joint Committee on swearing-in and ceremonies, which had been called something slightly different in previous years, who were to handle everything up on the Hill. The Inaugural Committee was to handle most of everything else on the civilian side, and then there was to be an Armed Forces support

effort, which later grew into the Armed Forces Inaugural Committee, that is now a committee with even more people involved in it than the Presidential Inaugural Committee.

The Presidential Inaugural Committee was created to be a non-partisan and bi-partisan organization, starting with '49, and sure enough, for 20 years and longer a lot of people in Washington would rally around and come down and volunteer to do an inaugural committee, and whether they were Democrats or Republicans didn't make any difference. They just showed up and did it, and they frequently picked up right off where they left four years before doing the same thing and loving every second of it, and they became very, very professional at it. All these wonderful old society dames in Cathedral Heights were good. They were really good.

In the summer of '68 when I was at the Smithsonian, I used to handle a lot of visitors coming in to see the collections, particularly the research collections in the Division of Political History where I worked. As an example, in the spring of '68 I had this young kid come in who was from Georgetown University, and he was one of the groups from Georgetown who was carrying food over to the Poor People's Campaign. He was a graduating senior and he stopped by to talk with the people in Political History to see if we would like it if he were to grab some specimens, some exhibit-worthy material from the Poor People's Campaign, badges, batons and flags, fence making, whatever, and he was shunted to me to start with because I was the low man on the totem pole in the office. I talked with him a good bit before I sent him off to the head curator, who was the one that was dealing with social movements, and they spent about a half hour talking. Then the kid came back and talked to me some more. He said he was very excited because he had recently heard he was going to be a Rhodes Scholar going to Oxford from Georgetown, and I said, "Well, that's funny because my wife and I had been 35 miles down the road at the University of Reading a few years earlier. We used to go partying up in Oxford quite a lot." And so we talked a lot about all that, and he said, "Can you recommend any good pubs?" And I did, several pubs in Oxford and one down in Wallingford that was sort of a favorite of ours that the Oxford rowers used to stop at, and he went on his merry way.

I didn't think anything more about that for 20 years, you know, whatever happened to that tall kid with the wavy dark hair and oozing charm and charisma and all that, never thought about him again until I watched the Democratic National Convention in 1988, and the keynote speaker, the Governor of Arkansas stood up to give the keynote address. That's him! This was Bill Clinton, the young Bill Clinton. That was the sort of weird, wonderful thing that would happen with visitors coming in.

Well, one day in the summer of '68 these two people came in. One was the Republican co-chair of the pre-inaugural committee, which was an informal group set up to help get things started, get the ball rolling. There was a Republican co-chair and a Democratic co-chair and the Republican came over with his assistant to see inaugural items, so I was pulling items out and all. We had a very interesting hour, maybe an hour and a half, and they called up with some other questions and all that. Well, that was fine, and I went off and did my merry thing.

I was still busily working away on planning bicentennial exhibits and we actually went off to England that summer to look for specimens. Sue and I came back, and these people called up and said, "We want you to be the historian-archivist for the Inaugural Committee." And I said, "Well, that's great, but you're supposed to get somebody from the Archives to do that. The Archives always sends somebody over, and they have since '49. They have all the records. They do this, not me." And they said, "Well, yes, but the guy that they want to send over from the Archives, we can't understand what he's talking about and we

can't ever get a succinct answer out of him. In fact, when you ask him a question, he says, well, come back in a couple of days and I'll have the answer for you. And we'll go back and sit at his desk in the stacks and he will read out his answers, and this is fine, but you can't run an inaugural committee that way. We want you." And I said, "I'm a Democrat, non-partisan, of course, but I'm a Democrat." "Well, that's all right. It is a non-partisan organization." "Eh?" say I.

The next thing I know, I get a call from the office of the Secretary of the Smithsonian, S. Dillon Ripley, saying, "We're going to send you over to the Inaugural Committee." Oh. And right after that I got a call from my father out at the Truman Library and it seems that Charlie Murphy (Charles S. Murphy), one of President Johnson's assistants, had been one of Truman's assistants, was a close friend of my father's, a big supporter of the Truman Library. He called up my father and said, "Phil, guess what I just did? I just signed some papers assigning your son to the Nixon Inaugural Committee, ha, ha, ha!" And father calls up and says, "What's this?" I said, "Eh?" And off I went.

And it was pretty bi-partisan, and it did have a lot of people who'd been doing it for years before. It was chaired by J. Willard Marriott, who said, "Come work on my staff. We want to do this right," and I came over here to the Archives to see Bert and say, "What do I do with all this?" He said, well we need to give you a crash course in archiving, so I went and talked with Ev Alldrich, talked to Bob Bahmer, and talked to various others who got me some readings. I started remembering everything I'd heard all my life and was able to put together an archives and records management program pretty quickly. What I did was to make the records of the previous inaugural committees available to these people to help plan, and then to advise on what had worked in past inaugurations and what had not. You know, try not to have it in the middle of a snowstorm, for instance. I would develop a lot of historical information on request from various members of the committee, very frequently the press people, and I would sometimes give press briefings and do various things like that.

Then, at the end, I would be in charge of getting all the Inaugural Committee records and getting them transferred to the Archives to be kept for four years so the Archives staff could start doing arranging, and then they could make them available to the next committee. Then the Archives staff could make sure the records went off to the Presidential library, which by that time, there should be a Presidential library in good enough shape to receive records. So that's what I did, and it was really, really interesting. I had a very rewarding time. We got to go to all the events, including the Inaugural Ball. I did a lecture the other night down in Williamsburg about inaugural history, and one of the things I mentioned was that at the '69 Inauguration, we were in the reviewing stand up behind the new President. We were up there with a lot of the other people on the committee. We looked across the street over toward Lafayette Park and all of a sudden there was smoke starting to rise, and we realized it was demonstrators over there raising absolute hell's delight about the inauguration of Dick Nixon. They were so completely out of hand that the DC Police were firing tear gas at them, and the cloud of smoke we saw was the tear gas coming up toward the reviewing stands. It started to drift over toward the reviewing stands and we're going, "Oh, this isn't good," but then luckily, the wind came along and blew the tear gas up Pennsylvania Avenue so we didn't have any problems. It was a very interesting experience, and then lo and behold, Dick Jacobs sent me back 20 years later to do it all again, and then in '92, they sent me back a third time to do the Clinton Inauguration.

MS. KRATZ: Was it pretty similar work every time?

MR. BROOKS: Yes, it was, except that in '92-'93, I quickly realized, by this time, the committees had lost a lot of their non-partisan atmosphere and had become much more creatures of campaign workers coming in off the trail, or in the case of the '89 Committee, coming off the trail or people who'd worked for the Bushes in the White House and under Reagan, and the Bushies had no time for the Reaganites. It was very interesting. Fascinating. But the Clinton people came in and they quickly realized that I'd done this before and that I knew who Harry Truman was, all this kind of thing, and suddenly I found myself elevated to being one of the directors of the Inauguration, and a very frequent spokesman to the press, so much so that Mandy Grunwald christened me "our historical spin doctor." I did a lot of press work, both in '89 and '93, but I'd done some press interviews before in previous inaugurations.

The Press would come around and somehow find my name and come over to the office off Lafayette Square or come down here and suddenly I'm talking with German Radio, you know, weird stuff, but fun. And in '93, it just blossomed and on inauguration day I did the Today Show. NBC picked us up at the house at somewhere well before dawn. We went over to NBC's offices, so I did the Today Show, and then we got transported down here to the Labor Department building where CBS was set up, and I spent the day with Dan Rather broadcasting the parade and the speech and this kind of thing. This was a level that historian archivists haven't reached before, and it was a delight.

And then, when it was all over, I started to gather up the records again. This time something odd happened, and it was that the legal counsel for the inauguration went over to become the chief legal counsel at the White House starting on January 21, so one of her little assistants came in, and this woman decreed that all of the records of the inaugural committee were the committee's to review and process and see what they wanted to turn over because they were a private organization and they didn't have any responsibility to answer to the Archives.

And I mentioned the Federal Records Act of 1950 and the Presidential Inaugurations Act, Nah, made no difference to them. So the records from the Clinton inauguration eventually came here and are now down in Little Rock, and that worked. I never did know how much the lawyers took out. They were very, very close to the chest in playing all that, and so we wrapped up my side of the work fairly early on and I came back to NC. That's what the inaugural committees are like and that's the sort of thing I did. I hope somebody's still doing that. I don't know if they even have that function now, and I don't know how the records finally wind up here or whether an inaugural committee finally comes over here to look at previous committee's records. I have no idea how it's working today. I'd love to know, just for interest's sake. I'm well out of it—I don't want to be back in it, but I'd love to know how it works today. That would be very interesting.

MS. KRATZ: Well, I just have a couple more questions.

MR. BROOKS: Yes, ma'am?

MS. KRATZ: To go back the Archivists, because you knew a lot of Archivists, and I have two specific questions. One is related to the appointment process for the Archivists, who used to be appointed by the President and then under GSA it was the GSA administrator who got to pick and now the President gets to pick. Did the type of person who became Archivist change during those years? I know you weren't really at the Archives, but you had some knowledge.

MR. BROOKS: I might as well have been.

MS. KRATZ: Yeah.

MR. BROOKS: I might as well have been. Well, the first Archivist, Dr. Connor, was picked by the President, and a brilliant choice. The second Archivist, Dr. Buck, had been the Deputy and the President picked him, and Dr. Buck was you know, a good friend to everybody. He was also a very stuffy, conservative, penny-pinching, weird guy, so besides being a nice guy, he was odd. Very odd. He once got the professional staff into the Reception Room and lectured them for an hour on the necessity to conserve paper clips. Far different from the earlier days, and then, Dr. Buck, bless him, went off to become head of the Manuscripts Division at LC, which was a much better job for him.

And Wayne Grover was picked to come in as the third Archivist, picked by Harry Truman to come in. Wayne had been one of the early archivists. He had run a lot of the Navy records management and archives program during World War II. He had come back to the Archives. He'd moved up on the ranks very, very quickly. He was, you know, the next logical person and Mr. Truman picked him, and that worked. Then GSA was formed in '49, and with that the GSA Administrator got to select the Archivist candidate of his choice and recommend that choice to the President. And Wayne stayed on and lasted until, you know 19, what was it? '65, I guess. Then Bob Bahmer came in, who had also been one of the first generation. It was all these first generation people, and Bob was again, a logical choice. At that time, the Administrator of GSA was Lawson Knott who had been a career man as well and thought very highly of career staffers, especially for the Archives, which a lot of GSA always regarded as quote, "the crown jewel" end quote of the General Service Administration. The GSA people were very serious about that, and they may have been right. We'll say they were right.

Lawson picked Bob Bahmer, again as the logical choice, imminently qualified. He'd provide good leadership, and he did for a couple of years. And then he retired, but actually he was brought in as a place holder, in some ways for Bert Rhoads, who was the up and coming young star, and Lawson was able to influence Johnson to pick Bert Rhoads. That was a fun little process, too. Nothing surreptitious about it. It was just sort of pushing the cause along a little bit, and I got a good look at it a little bit because my father was staying with us for about a month when he was brought back to set up NL as an office rather than just a little division and to write the first manual for how to run a Presidential library. He stayed with us out in Riverdale, and Bert would pick him up every morning, and pick me up too. Then I would walk from here over to the Smithsonian, and in the car I got a good look at how that whole game was played.

[Short break]

MS. KRATZ: All right. So, you were talking about Bert Rhoads.

MR. BROOKS: Yeah. What a great guy. He really was. He worked his way up through the system. He became manpower officer and did all kinds of things to help recruit new staff and develop programs, and then he became Deputy Archivist, and then he became Archivist and did an outstanding job. He pushed the libraries to develop more and more. He pushed what programs to develop more and more, the Public Papers of the Presidents series of publications, the National Historic Public Records Commission activities, the Educational Programs activities, and the Federal Records Center system; he recruited a lot of people for that system.

Bert had his hand in everything. He had his finger on everything. He provided leadership that was somewhat laid back, and he'd give you enough room to do what you needed to do and enough support to do it. He'd want to know what you were doing and he would review things with you, and once in a while, he could crack a whip, but he didn't often have to because he was one of those people that inspired other people to do it right. He was an inspired leader.

And, finally, with the appointment of Doc Freeman as Administrator, Bert "I've broken in so many administrators of General Services and now here's this one. There's an opportunity for me to retire right now. I can't break in another one. I just can't do it." And he filled out his papers and sent them in very quietly. The word came out that he decided to retire, and I went streaking into his office right at lunchtime. Here's Bert, all six feet six of him, like this, feet up on his desk, peeling back a banana, and he said, "I'm going to be just fine, chomp."

And he went on to have a very good second career teaching archives. Jim O'Neill, who was his deputy, then became the Acting Archivist and I know that Jim wanted the Archivist's job very, very much, and Jim would have been good. There was talk early on about Bob Warner because I think he was president of SAA at that point, and I think he knew a lot of people. There were those who thought, oh, maybe he'll work. There were those who thought emphatically that he would not. Bert was one of them, interestingly enough.

Bert and I used to have off the record candid conversations, always very polite, but nonetheless, and he expressed to me in no uncertain terms one day his belief the Bob was absolutely not up to the job, but Bob got the job. Republican connections with Reagan helped a lot for Bob. Bob appointed Ed Weldon to come in with him; Ed was very good, and they made it work. They had the professional staff at the top-level rallying around and helping and also looking for whatever opportunities they could to advance themselves, Claudine Weiher being one of those. But they made Bob's appointment work. Dick Jacobs became the Executive Director and Dick I thought did an excellent job. Not like Walt, who you know ran the joint for 20 years, but Dick did a good job. Bob led this fairly quiet effort to free us, and it worked, amazingly enough, and he retired shortly after that.

Jim O'Neill was made Acting Archivist, and at that time he made me the full Director of the Education Division, with no more of Al Meisel's "acting director" nonsense after six long years! Frank Burke then came in as Acting Archivist, and Jim O'Neill went back to being head of Presidential Libraries. Jim had had heart problems, and one day he died at his desk right after lunch, and Frank and I watched him being carted off. That was really rough. Oof.

Anyway, Frank became Acting Archivist. He wanted the job, needless to say, and John Fawcett was a guy we brought back to be head of NL. Frank and I had talked about who was good because I was working as his assistant and sort of little person in the background doing all kinds of strange and wonderful things, especially the Constitution Bicentennial and planning a little more decoration in the Archives and working with the public and being Development Director and this, that and the other. One of the things Frank and I worked on was when Dan Reed retired, Dan the "Silver Fox," retired as head of NL. Dan was another one of those inspired people that Bert brought in, but when he retired, then, who do we get? Frank looked around at who all was available and he talked to various people about it. He talked to me one day and said what do you know about John Fawcett and I said, this, this and this and this, he's a good man. John was running the Hoover Library and he'd worked his way up through the system, with a charming life. He was really talented, and Frank said, "Well, maybe I think I want him to come back."

And I said, "Well, okay, he's got a big family to move back." Why not? If they'd like it, he'd probably do the job well, and they came back and he did it very well. He really did. And then he and his wife Sharon split. He teamed up with Claudine Weiher, who had split from her husband, and then John left the Archives and eventually Sharon came into the job of NL and did a superb job. I don't know where either one of them are now. I've lost track with so many people, and I think it's a shame that the Archives has never had any good way to keep the retired staff members connected or involved or knowing what's going on or caring a damn thing about them, and so, for instance, I have no idea where John or Sharon are now. It was 14 months before Sue and I found out that Bert had died. We found out about 11 months after Frank Burke died and only by happenstance in both cases, and we'd been awfully close to both men, but the Archives has never had this sort of mechanism that's been worth a damn that's involved the alums. I wish that could be done.

MS. KRATZ: Good idea.

MR. BROOKS: I really wish that could be done, because it would be important for a lot of people and it could be important for the agency (I always like to think of us as an institution, not an agency. There's a subtle but important difference). Anyway, Frank really wanted the job of Archivist, and John Fawcett told me one day that Frank had been talked to over at the White House and he thought he was over there talking about something else. He was really being interviewed and the interview didn't work. I don't know that Frank ever knew that or heard the story, but it didn't make a lot of difference and, so that was that. Then somehow or another they got a real dark horse in as Archivist of the United States. I said dark horse. It was somebody that I had known ever since his early days in Abilene, when he was at the Eisenhower Library: Don Wilson. He came in, and he too, was very strongly supported by Claudine, and that little group became quite close, and he did a pretty good job, I guess. I had been the development officer under Frank and Don decided he didn't need a development officer, so back I went to NC at the great displeasure of David Peterson! But in later years, Don became director of the Wilson Presidential Library and Museum in Staunton, Virginia, and we've become quite close friends.

MS. KRATZ: Oh.

MR. BROOKS: We've seen a lot of each other over the past six or seven years. Very funny twist of fate.

MS. KRATZ: I went down there a year and a half ago to interview.

MR. BROOKS: Did he talk to you?

MS. KRATZ: Oh yeah...

MR. BROOKS: He's a nice guy, Don is, and he did a hell of a job down there, and he's just retired from the Wilson Presidential Library and Museum. All in all, I think Don did a good job as Archivist. I wouldn't say an outstanding job, but I think a good job. [Sirens] Oh, we have somebody going down the street yet again. That's always the nice things about these windows inside. You can go down there and see what's happening.

MS. KRATZ: Yes, a lot of activity lately.

MR. BROOKS: Somebody from the White House has gone down there. Okay. Maybe the President.

MS. KRATZ: Well, is there anything that we haven't covered that you wanted to share?

MR. BROOKS: I could talk a little bit about John Carlin, and I'm going to.

MS. KRATZ: That would be great. I did interview John.

MR. BROOKS: Did you?

MS. KRATZ: In the fall, yes, and his wife, Lynn.

MR. BROOKS: Lynn, yeah. His former wife Diana has become a close friend of ours because she was at the University of Kansas for a long time and she headed up the graduate school and the international programs. She got me involved in international programs because I'd been one of the international graduate exchange students, at the University of Reading in England. I'm still on that advisory council. Sue and I saw a lot of Diana and her current husband, Judge Joe Pierron, and we'd stay with them sometimes when I went out to meetings out there. Diana started coming back to Washington to promote contacts with University of Kansas graduates in the area, and she built up quite a network and she always stayed with one of her friends who had been in the NL staff, even after she and John split, so she was always getting all the good information so many of the rest of us had, too, including stories of John and Lynn, his own deputy. Oh God, the way John and Lynn got together was like a soap opera. It really was. It was so bad.

There were at least 37 names submitted to Clinton for consideration as Archivist of the United States. I don't know who they all were. I know really well who two were, but there were others who were probably far more qualified. Trudy Peterson was one of them, of course, and at that point we had almost a civil war going on in the Archives, between the pure archiving people who were very inward looking and the more outward looking people who might have been in public programs or were certainly in Records Centers and Presidential libraries, and that took a much more expansive view of the role of the National Archives. And this became a really nasty bloody personal battle, for several years, and it just tore this place apart. I became involved with the outward looking people, and Trudy was very firmly in the camp of the inward-looking people. Trudy's name was submitted for consideration, and so was my name along with at least 35 others. My name was evidently submitted by some pretty high-powered people with whom I had worked on the Clinton Inaugural Committee.

And Bill Clinton very wisely chose neither side and put somebody else in there. John Carlin had delivered Kansas for Bill; and when he stepped down as governor, he turned his papers over to the Kansas Historical Society and worked with them for about 18 months working on those records, so he knew a little bit about what was going on in the world of archivy, and he was a pretty good guy. I was told by Joe, Diana's husband, that he always thought Bill had picked John because John was his drinking and wenching buddy. I have no idea whether any of that is true. I report that as a totally unverified rumor. I want you to note that for the record!

MS. KRATZ: Okay.

MR. BROOKS: Was I supposed to keep a straight face? Oh, no. But anyway, John got the job and John's great virtue of the job was that John was a Kansas Democratic politician and very well connected in politics with people who were very, very, very powerful on the Hill, like Bob Dole. John could go up and schmooze those people like nobody you ever saw, and he got everything he wanted, or damn near everything he wanted, even when he asked for the moon. He'd get at least a good slice of it, and we benefitted. We benefitted very well. He conducted a strategic review program that involved the whole

staff, and everybody got a say. Whether everybody was happy with the results, I never was too sure. There were a lot of people who thought that the slogan he came up with was silly. But, you know, he set the course for things and he was here for what? 10 years?

MS. KRATZ: Yeah, 10 years, it was exactly 10 years.

MR. BROOKS: Yeah, 10 years. He did a lot of things right. And now, David Ferriero is really doing it right. He is just excellent, and I am so impressed with where the Archives is now. It warms my soul to see how the Archives is doing now. Just where you guys are now is what so many of us were talking about for years. You're there. Keep it up.

MS. KRATZ: Well thank you so much.

MR. BROOKS: Thank you.

[End Recording]



NATIONAL
ARCHIVES

National Archives History Office
700 Pennsylvania Ave. NW
Washington DC 20408
Tel: (202) 357-5243
Email: archives.historian@nara.gov

DEED OF GIFT TO THE PUBLIC DOMAIN

I, Philip Brooks, Jr. do hereby give to the National Archives History Office the recordings and transcripts of my interviews conducted on January 24, 2017.

I authorize the National Archives History Office to use the recordings, transcripts, and associated materials in such a manner as may best serve the historical objectives of their oral history program.

In making this gift I voluntarily convey ownership of the recording and transcripts to the public domain.

Jessie Kratz, Historian

Agent of Receiving Organization



Donor

January 24, 2017

Date