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Transcript of National Archives History
Office Oral History Interview
Subject: Richard McCulley
Interviewer: Jonathan Dickey
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MR. JONATHAN DICKEY: My name is Jonathan Dickey. I'm an intern with the National Archives and Records Administration History Office. It is 9 a.m. on the 25 of March, 2016. This interview is being conducted for a National Archives History Office Oral History Project at Archives I. Will you please state your name for the record?

MR. RICHARD *McCULLEY*: I'm Richard McCulley.

MR. DICKEY: And what is your affiliation to the Archives?

MR. McCULLEY: I am the Historian at the Center for Legislative Archives.

MR. DICKEY: Okay. Before you came to the Archives, what sort of background did you have that led you to being here?

MR. McCULLEY: Well, in 1979, I became the research associate for an administrative history of the Johnson Presidency. That was a National Endowment for the Humanities funded project based at the LBJ School of Public Affairs at the University of Texas and directed by Emmette Redford. He was a professor at the LBJ School of Public Affairs, and had been the president of the American Political Science Association. And I had studied under Lou Gould, who was a preeminent historian of the Progressive Era, and still is, and I had planned to be a Progressive Era historian.

But by the time I finished my dissertation in 1980, I was already hip deep in researching the Johnson Presidential Library records, and Emmette Redford became kind of my postdoc mentor. And ironically enough, 15 years prior to that, he was the person that when I enrolled as a freshman at the University of Texas, I had my first official conversation with. I enrolled at a government major. He was assigned as my advisor. It was really quite perfunctory, but somebody had to approve the course line up you chose before you could get registered, and Emmette Redford was the first person I talked to.

MR. DICKEY: So he was pretty much there your whole entire college career then.

MR. McCULLEY: Actually, it's funny. He had written a textbook that was used by the government department for the main required course, and that was intimidating to me, since I had graduated from high school of 44 and was enrolling in a University of 35,000, and I heard he was a very hard grader, so I avoided him when I was an undergraduate. So that's an interesting story. So this was at the time when a lot of material had been reviewed and released at the Presidential Library, so Johnson records were ripe for researchers, and one of the purposes of the administrative history project was to bring together top scholars in the field of public administration from around the country, and put these records to good use, and develop a 12-volume series that was about how policies—how the economic diplomatic foreign policies, civil rights, federalism—were organized and administered by the Johnson Administration.

My job as the research associate was to know the records, to help coordinate the research among the various authors, and to work with them to make sure that all the relevant material of the Johnson Library had been brought to bear for their books. That was the core responsibility. I also wrote drafts for several of these books. I helped recruit some of the authors in the series, most notably George Herring, who was at the University of Kentucky at the time, and the highest authority on the history of the Vietnam War. Herring wrote the book on the administration of the Vietnam War, and I was co-author with my freshman advisor, Emmette Redford, on one of the books in the series, *Whitehouse Operations: The Johnson Presidency*, which was about how Johnson organized and used this White House staff. That book is, 30 years later, still a standard reference for anyone trying to figure out how the White House under Johnson operated, how it was organized, and how he used his staff.

I'll say a little bit about what I did at the library and how important it was to be there, especially as it bears on the work I now do. I spent a lot of time there, day in and day out. I was probably spending the better part of the decade three or four hours in the research room at the LBJ Library. Nancy Smith, who had been one of the initial hires there at the Library, was on daily duty in that research room, and she taught me an awful lot about the LBJ records.

By the time I arrived in Washington, she was at the National Archives as the head of the Nixon Presidential Materials Project, and over the course of my research at the Library, it was really a wonderful experience. All I had to do was show up for work and that's where I met Bob Caro, Bob Dallek, Hugh Graham, Larry Berman, who were this first wave or first generation of Johnson scholars that used archival sources from the Library.

So as I said, all I had to do was show up for work, and I knew this network of national scholars, plus the ones that I worked with very closely in the 12-volume Johnson Administrative History Project. So I was really at the LBJ School of Public Affairs, I was always at the Library. People to this day and even back then were a little confused about whether I worked for the Presidential Library or is it the LBJ School, and at that time there was available very close relation between the Library and the School of Public Affairs—Walt Rostow, who was one of Johnson's national security advisors, had a position joint appointment as in the history department and economics department, and I was his teaching assistant when I was a graduate student, and so he had an office right next to the research room at the Johnson Library, and I was up there an awful lot before I did any research in those records, and his wife was named Elspeth Davies Rostow.

She was a very formidable force herself. She was the dean of the LBJ School of Public Affairs at the time I got there. And there were all of the old LBJ administration people that were there, two of which I got to know quite well—John Gronouski, who was the Postmaster General under Johnson, later ambassador to Poland, my office was next to his. I got to know Wilbur Cohen. Johnson appointed him Secretary of Education and Welfare. I had looked at all of their records at the Library, so I knew their careers quite well, and I tended to gravitate toward those members of the faculty.

Wilbur, also known as Mr. Social Security, because he was involved in the drafting of the 1935 Social Security Act, was eager to get on with public policy after the end of the Reagan Administration, and he foresaw the need for a revamping of welfare policy and the social safety net, and it contemplated this really huge project to review welfare policy from the New Deal to the Reagan Presidency. Unfortunately, Wilbur died suddenly. The school wanted to carry forward that project. They appointed me as a lecturer.

I actually moved into Wilbur's office so I could have access to all of his papers going back decades, and began directing the project on a topic I quite frankly knew very little about, but this was a project that the students in the seminars knew much more about than me. They were specializing in these areas...So we developed a history of welfare policy from FDR to Reagan that was published as the *Social Safety Net: Reexamined FDR to Reagan*, and I was the editor of that publication. So that pretty well hits the high points of my years prior to coming to the National Archives in Washington.

MR. DICKEY: So you spent the majority of your young life in Texas. Did you move to DC just to come to the National Archives, or was it you came here for something else and then ended up at the archives?

MR. McCULLEY: No. I was in a really, you know, certainly in retrospect, that was a very enviable position. I was half-research/half-teaching for most of the 1980s, but I didn't ever have a tenured position, so I was looking for some way to get to Washington. I didn't know for sure what I would do, or how I would get here. I had heard that Mike Gillette was up here. I had been in graduate school in the history department with Mike, and in the 1980s, he was in charge of developing the Johnson Oral History Project, so we had a visit over the phone, and he told me about something called the Center for Legislative Archives, and even better, Congress had created a position for a Historian at the Center, and he encouraged me to apply, which I did.

MR. DICKEY: So that's how you ended up here at the Archives.

MR. McCULLEY: Yes.

MR. DICKEY: Okay. So when the office first opened up, how was it—how did it operate then? Because it's gone through several changes in how it's titled and where it's been under since then to now, correct?

MR. McCULLEY: Yes. That was a question on my mind before I got here and I learned a little bit about it when I did get here, and during the course of being Historian, mainly for Congress, but also looking into our own records, I learned an awful lot, so how did the Center come about, and why on earth did they want an Historian? That really happened in 1989 when Don Wilson, who was the Archivist at the time, administratively upgraded the division of Archives holding Congress's records and named it the Center for Legislative Archives, and Wilson's action, I later learned in great detail, was to correct a problem, and from the very beginning in the 1930s, the National Archives had always had this intention—they stated to Congress—of having legislative records as a total separate division within the Archives. That did not happen.

Between 1950, when the Archives lost its independence, it became part of GSA and 1985, I count thirteen different reorganizations. Legislative records were kind of folded in with executive records, and things reached kind of a nadir in the 1970s when, for most of that decade, there was one archivist, the full time responsibility for legislative records. That's pretty low.

So the ultimate solution for this really came with a 1990 law creating the Advisory Committee on the Records of Congress that assured that the National Archives remain continuously accountable to the House and the Senate concerning the records, and that Advisory Committee is ultimately chaired by the Clerk of the House, and the Secretary of the Senate, who are respectively responsible for the records of the House and the Senate. The Senate report accompanying that legislation directed the National Archives to make the Center for Legislative Archives comparable to Presidential libraries and its staffing

levels and pay grades, so the model for the Center was the crown jewel of the system, the Presidential Libraries.

That report also gave a mission to the Center of promoting the records, scholars' use of the records of the Senate and the House, and for furthering the study of the history of Congress. And then finally, the report specified that the Center was to have a Historian to work with the Director to make these things happen. So that was a lot more than I knew at the time, but that, in retrospect, is what was going on at the time I learned about this position.

MR. DICKEY: So when you started in the position, how many archivists did the Center have at that time?

MR. McCULLEY: Same number we have now.

MR. DICKEY: And how many is that?

MR. McCULLEY: Archivists—let me count. About five or six.

MR. DICKEY: Five or six? Okay.

MR. McCULLEY: We have a staff of about 20 when I arrived 1993. We have a staff of 20, 24 years later, so the staff has remained remarkably stable. So I applied for this position—it's a pretty interesting story—in early 1992 along with about 160 other PhD historians. In October of 1992, I learned from Mike Gillette that a professor at the University of Massachusetts Amherst history department had been selected. After accepting that position about a month later, that professor changed his mind, and decided to stay at UMass of Amherst, so I obviously reapplied.

I had learned a little bit about the fine art of submitting an application, which really increased my chances the second time around—just little tweaks in the wording. Also by that time, my dissertation had been published, *Origins of the Federal Reserve Act: Banks and Politics During the Progressive Era*, and so that was a real live publication, not just simply an under contract or forthcoming sort of thing that must've strengthened my application. I recently learned from one of our researchers, actually, that after Ben Bernanke stepped down as the chair of the Federal Reserve Board, he included *Banks and Politics* as one of six recommended books to read for his George Washington University course on the 2008 financial crisis, so after thinking for several decades that book had fallen off the radar screen, I was glad to hear that.

So Mike Gillette interviewed me in January of 1993, and I was contacted by the personnel division of St. Louis shortly thereafter and told that I'd been selected. So I showed up on the appointed second week of February, and my culture shock of going from academia to a Federal government agency began, [laughter] which is a pretty hilarious story. Again, in retrospect, at the LBJ School, I had a huge window that opened up to a view overlooking the University with the LBJ Library off to the side—[Laughter]and beyond that, the hill country with breathtaking sunsets. Those days of sunny panoramic views were gone.

Archives II, had not opened by then. It would open shortly thereafter, but at that time, there were, I was told, over 600 employees crammed into this building. I was given a very small, poorly lighted desk back in the stacks. This was February. And you know, we sometimes go through these days and days of cold weather and cold rain and darkness. I would get to work. It was dark. I would go back in the stacks, very seldom got out for lunch. When I left, it was cold and dark. So I was very excited about the position, but I

became a little depressed, and I think it was because of light deprivation, so that was, you know, one of the kind of physical adjustments.

The other thing was I was asked to do something that I regarded as very strange. I was told I needed to sign in when I arrived at work, and sign out of the office when I left. I had never done that, and in academia, you are not on the clock—you are never off the clock. You know, you worked any hours and any days of the week until the book is completed or the article is completed, and so this was a completely different mindset, kind of an adjustment at first, but after a few years, I kind of warmed to that routine, and became a creature of bureaucratic habit like everybody else, and I'm perfectly content with it. I'd be very upset if I didn't sign-in in the morning when I got here at 6:00.

MR. DICKEY: So besides being back in the stacks in the dark all day when you first started, what was your typical day like? Were you reading the materials? Were you making papers? Were you organizing things?

MR. McCULLEY: I was trying to learn the holdings, and of course, that's quite an undertaking. You know, we have as many textual records as all the presidential libraries combined, so where to begin, and as I'll discuss, one way to get in the records in depth, was to just bear down on a single committee. That committee turned out to be the Armed Services Committee, so I learned a lot about the records that way.

Within my job description, there was enough work to keep several historians busy, and initially there were a lot of expectations, certainly not all of which could be met, but a real fundamental expectation was really quite similar to what I did on the Johnson administrative history project. It was to learn the holdings well enough to inform scholars what materials might be of interest to them, and what research opportunities might be available in the records of the Senate and the House, and to serve as the liaison with the scholarly community.

That was really kind of the heart of what I tried to do, and learn the records well enough to do that, and to reach out to scholars, which was really quite a challenge at this time. The 1980s and 1990s were probably the low ebb for historian's interest in political and policy history. Since the beginning, since really the 1960s, historians had become more and more oriented toward the subfields of social, cultural, and intellectual history, and that's where all the energy was. That's where all the publications were, that's where the sessions of the annual professional conferences were. They were all skewed to certainly what I regarded as very narrowly-defined, almost arcane investigations of race, class, and gender history.

Even among U.S. political and policy historians, the major framework was the Presidency, not Congress. You know, Congress was more or less, at best, an afterthought, and more usually regarded as just kind of a nuisance in the way of enacting Presidential programs, so this was a tough environment. In fact, I was a pretty good example, having come from the LBJ Library and LBJ School of just what that problem was. There was no funding for investigating Congress by comparison. There was not yet a center to study Congress comparable to a presidential library, so that was the ultimate purpose, and the whole situation was really very distressing to some people here in Washington.

In 1989, there was a conference organized largely by Richard Baker, who was the Senate Historian and Ray Smock, who was the House Historian. This conference celebrated the bicentennial of the meeting of

the First Congress, and members of Congress, journalists, and a handful of historians spent an entire day deploring historians' neglect of Congress, and trying to think of how do we go about doing something about this. So this provided a lot of the empathy for the Advisory Committee and the raising of the status of the Center in trying to put more behind the records of the Senate and the House.

So where to begin? You have to start with what is there, and those were the national professional associations. And so one of my responsibilities was to represent the Center to those organizations. You know, that in and of itself, was an outreach activity—just to try to get us on the radar screen, and so that's what I did. I started working with the most significant organizations, the most significant of those being the Organization of American Historians, OAH. That was the premier organization of U.S. historians. The American Historical Association, AHA, a much larger organization based here in Washington.

Other important organizations included the National Council on Public History, which was mainly an organization of non-academic historians, historians from the National Park Service, other Federal history offices, state government history offices, private non-profit history organizations. There was the Social Science History Association, SSHA, which were made up of sociologists, and economists, and political scientists who had adopted a historical approach to their topics. There was an important journal, *The Journal of Policy History*, they sponsored every other year a very prestigious—prestigious in terms of who participated in these conferences—sessions on various aspects of public history and politics.

So, throughout the 90s, I put a lot of effort into making presentations, organizing panels, speaking about the holdings of Congress, and to discuss research potential, so I referred to this as missionary work, and thankfully, I was joined in some of these efforts by Betty Koed. She had been hired as the Assistant Historian of the Senate in the late 90s. She is now the Senate Historian. So we teamed up from time to time at these conferences to kind of educate the profession about the need for more attention to Congress, and how to go about using Senate and House sources. Every four years, the OAH and AHA and the American Political Science Association held conferences here in Washington, and those were opportunities to really get involved in their conferences and programs. That afforded us the opportunity to organize offsite panels here at the National Archives and introduce them to the Center, and to hold work sessions as well on how to use Senate and House records.

Historians had largely ceded to Political Scientists any serious attention to Congress, at least Congress as an institution. APSA had a legislative section. The Political Scientists were mainly—even the ones that study Congress—were mainly interested in quantitative techniques and theoretical questions. Political Scientists generally are not attuned to archival research, and I attended as many APSA conferences as possible, and even the regional—northeast region, APSA conference I made some presentations, but it was really an uphill struggle, and really a quite frustrating situation, because the scholars, Political Scientists, who were really most interested in Congress didn't do archival research. It didn't take long to kind of identify who those were, the ones who would do archival research.

Historians who were attuned to archival research were not at all interested in Congress, so the was this disconnect here. Thankfully, the Center had hired Kenneth Kato, who was a Political Scientist, who would later get his PhD in political science at Johns Hopkins University, and is currently the associate Historian of the House, so Ken was much better than me at communicating to this group, and he thankfully took over spearheading the effort to reach them.

There were a couple of local organizations that were very important to helping me kind of get my feet on the ground here, and the most important of those was the Society for History and the Federal Government. This is an organization of government historians. I became an officer in the late 90s and early 2000s. So this is a wonderful networking organization where members meet, they share information about their offices, they address the challenges in writing Federal history. Another organization was DC Historians which brought together government and university professors here locally in Washington. It was an informal organization dating back to the 1950s. We met at George Washington University for lunch, heard speakers to share information about what was going on in participants' departments and in government history offices, so in the late 1990s and early 2000s, I was co-chair with that organization with Charlene Bickford, with the first Federal Congress project in George Washington University. So that's what I tried to do to start getting the word out about the Center so that historians would know we were here, and how we could help them.

MR. DICKEY: You said the Center was set up using the presidential library as the model. Presidential libraries are normally based off of, you know, their time as president, four years, eight years. Congress obviously has a much broader history than that, so do you feel that it's setting up based off the presidential library's limits how you can help historians research?

MR. McCULLEY: Presidential libraries have a huge advantage. They've got an essentially static collection. Our holdings double, we calculated, roughly every 13 to 15 years, so we've got an expanding collection here. Now, the main thing that makes that attempt to model us after the presidential libraries really work, and what is quite different about presidential libraries and the Center is the unique kind of political context of the records. Presidential libraries, certainly when they're first getting started and even much later—go ask the people at the Nixon Presidential Library—have people around who want to protect that administration, so you have to do your professional responsibilities within that context, and push things as far as you can.

We also deal in the political context in which there are many former members here in Washington, which opens really great opportunities for what we can do, and there are members on the Hill. We're a custodian of the records. As I said earlier, Congress owns those records, and they frequently recall the records. That makes us different from the rest of the archives. For example, when the Senate Judiciary Committee holds a hearing on a nomination for a judge, chances are very good that they have gone through this before for that judge's appointment to another position, so they will recall those records, and so we are a service organization for Congress active using the records. We encourage them to archive those records, but we're going to get them right back to you as soon as you need them, so you don't need to keep everything up there, just the things you're working on right now.

So we work in that political context, and so that's different from the executive branch records—when they're archived here, the archives owns those records. They can do anything they want to do to promote their use, and those records are on a completely different archival and political standing than ours, so that really is the justification. And you know like presidential libraries, we want to promote our holdings in a way that is not done for the various record groups in the executive branch, so it makes sense.

MR. DICKEY: With the executive branch records, typically after a set amount of years, they're open to the public to look at. Is there that same thing with Congress, or since they own it, is it a person puts in a request, and you know, Congress may say yes, you can have it today, but a week from now, no.

MR. McCULLEY: Well, Congress sets the access rules of the Senate and the House, and they, unfortunately, have different access rules. Generally, the Senate records are available 20 years after their creation. On the House side, it's 30. It sure would be nice if they were both 20. That makes a lot of sense from a research point of view.

MR. DICKEY: Yes.

MR. McCULLEY: So Don Ritchie, past Senate Historian, once asked about that, why is the House's at 30? And his answer was, because the Senate's at 20. That's the Senate version of why there's a disparity, but yes, they do, and investigative records are usually not made publicly available until 50 years, so there's a longer time period for investigative records. Now in a case of overriding public concern or interest, that can go outside those access rules, and that has frequently been done with investigations, especially of high interest, such as the JFK/MLK Assassinations Committee Investigation of the 1970s. You know, those were matters of overriding interest, so committees can decide that this material, with the approval of the proper offices in each, in the House and the Senate, that these records need to be made available, because there's an overriding, urgent public need to do so.

And in the 1980s, there was a liberalization, and those access rules I just outlined came into effect. Prior to that on the House was particularly guarded concerning access to their records. Any researcher that looked at any House archived records had to write the Clerk of the House and secure permission. This is not exactly promoting research in the holdings, and furthering the study of the history of Congress, so there was a lot of lagging on the Archives' part, but from that point of view Congress didn't really do itself any favors in terms of promoting scholarly interest in what they did, and the level that met what scholars were interested in on the presidential level.

So, that was another way in which we were going to be brought up to a Presidential level in terms of access and openness. And for this bicentennial celebration also, the staff back in the 1980s published a volume describing the Senate records and the House records, guides to the records of the Senate and guides to the records of the House. That really helped scholars kind of get their bearings before they even got here in terms of what our committee records consisted of, so that helped a lot.

And the other part of my outreach effort really consisted of making the most of scholars who visited the Center, so I not only went out to the associations, but really paid attention to what was going on here at that time. Now, we didn't have nearly scholars come in back in the 1990s that we have today, but there were some really outstanding scholars that, you know, what I regard as kind of the first generation of scholars that took advantage of the opening of the Senate and the House records, and what the Legislative Archives had to offer them in the way of support.

And they were very important in developing an awareness of congressional history, and I'll just give you three examples. One was Richard John. In the early to mid-90s, he was at the University of Illinois Chicago circle, he's now at Columbia University. He wrote an award-winning book that was published in 1998, *Spreading the News: the American Postal System from Franklin to Morse*. He traced the development of the U.S. Post Office and the communications revolution that occurred before the telegraph by conducting an enormous amount of research in petitions that were sent to Congress, and petitions calling for the establishment of post offices and post roads.

Probably more than any other historian, Richard put petitions to Congress kind of on the map with scholars, and 19th century historians have really taken note of that, and now recognize their value and importance. They're the single most important set of records for 19th century records. Congress from the 19th century did not have the committee structure they have now. There were not three big Senate and House office buildings. They did their work at their desk. It was not a lot of paper. The committees had no staff such as we have today, so very little paper was really generated by those committees in the 19th century, but what we do have is their connection with the public, and you know, tens of thousands of petitions, which really show communication between people and their representatives, and how people organize politically, and how the public framed issues themselves.

Petitions are taken very seriously. It was a very formal way of communicating to Congress, and members of Congress believed that it was absolutely essential that they take note of it, introduce legislation and a response, so it's really regarding as a way of connecting Congress with people in ways we do in different ways today, or don't do at all in some cases. So Richard was really a key figure in that first generation of scholars at the Center that came up in the 90s.

Another one that did a great deal of work in our holding was when I first got here was Charles Stewart of MIT. He collaborated with Garrison Nelson at the University of Vermont to publish an absolutely essential reference, the two-volume committees in the United States Congress. It's a compilation of the committees, their members, and their jurisdictions. There was a great deal of attention on the part of the Advisory Committee to create a physical presence for the Center, and so the east research room was dedicated as the congressional research room. That's where all of the publications we had, the Congressional Records and their predecessors, complete run of the Senate Journals and the House Journals, which are kind of a starting point in terms of getting information you need to get into the records.

There was an organization called the Congressional Research Service who published an index to the Congressional Serial Set, all the reports and documents of the Senate and House. We had a complete run of those. We had descriptions of our own findings aids for certain investigations and committees. At this time, it was a notion of a place where research was really coordinated, and everything brought to bear. The World Wide Web was quite in a primitive stage at this point. We weren't quite there. So you'd go to the east research room, and all of this stuff, which is now online, you couldn't do, so Charles Stewart was just in heaven when he was here. He said it was his favorite place in the whole world. He loved the congressional research room, so that was the technology then, so we did it differently than today. Everything is available, a lot of things are available—except archive material—online today, so what was a state-of-the-art facility, as the advisory committee called in the 1990s, is not state-of-the-art today, but we thought it was magnificent.

Another scholar who really did incredible groundbreaking work at the Center in the 1990s was Julian Zelizer. I got to know him quite well when he arrived in the mid-90s as a dissertation student at Johns Hopkins University. He conducted a lot of work in the House Ways and Means Committee records, and wrote an award-winning book, *Taxing America: Wilbur Mills, Congress, and the State, 1945 to 1975*. It was published in 2000, and based on his dissertation work. No historian has really done more than Julian to shine a spotlight on Congress, and move political and policy history away from the preoccupation with the presidency, so he's a real hero to us, and kind of cut his teeth in terms of his archival research here at the Center. So he's recognized as a real pioneer in the rejuvenation of 20th century political

history, preeminent in the academy, but also he's become this kind of go-to authority in the media when they want somebody who can speak authoritatively about the history of Congress.

So I could mention a lot—some more. Certainly Bob Caro, who I met way back at the LBJ Library, shows up, because he was working on his book that eventually became *Masters of the Senate*. It's about Johnson's Senate years. And so I was working in the Armed Services Committee, and Johnson's rise had a lot to do with his work in the Armed Services Committee and the fact that Senator Russell appointed him to head a special investigation committee, and so I worked with Bob when he was working on that book.

But you know, these are scholars that have appeared at Center events, on panels that I've organized, on various professional conferences, and they've really helped us build the Center into this research hub by sending the graduate students, and to this day we stay in close contact with him, and you know, this initial core of 1990s scholars kind of multiplied and helped us spread the word in terms of what can be accomplished here. In fact, Charles Stewart is going to be here next month to give a talk on his book on the history of the Speaker of the House, so we're very much in contact with these folks, and I mean, these were the first big scholars we had that came here when I did the Center. But you know, it was mostly going out to other places. We didn't really have any way to kind of showcase what was going on here.

The Public Affairs staff was, you know, nothing like it is today. It's much more organized and larger, but at that time, Sam Anthony, who's now an assistant to the archivist, occasionally scheduled noontime presentations where authors who had worked in the archives records could talk about their books, so I kind of piggy backed off of Sam's effort and would make suggestions about who had been here, who had come out with a book—something significant on Congress—and he took me up on that, but we didn't have any program like that at that time—it was too soon, and we didn't have the resources.

One of the speakers that Sam scheduled and I recommended was Joseph Herson, who in 1997, published a wonderful book, *Profiles in Character: Hubris and Heroism in the U.S. Senate, 1789-1990*. The title is obviously a play on the words on John Kennedy's book, *Profiles in Courage*. I had met Joe at an AHA conference here in Washington when I had organized a panel on the history of Congress. He had been in the audience. We visited after the session. There was this immediate connection. You know, it was clear we were on the same intellectual wavelength. Joe explained to me that he had grown up in Washington, he had retired here, and that he had been a professor at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. So a light bulb went off. This is the guy who turned down the position that reopened it, and is the reason I'm here, so we were intellectual soul mates and became good friends. He's a great guy, so that's an interesting story. I had no idea who this person was until that time. This was I think in 1999, and obviously, he had applied and been offered this position in 1992, so I had been wondering who is this UMass Amherst professor. That's how I met him.

MR. DICKEY: Has your relationship with him, or his relationship having applied for this position helped the Center, like in the academic world, bring more people in?

MR. McCULLEY: With who now?

MR. DICKEY: With the person from Amherst.

MR. McCULLEY: Joe Herson.

MR. DICKEY: Yes.

MR. McCULLEY: Well, Joe Herson was retired at that point, and he didn't, no, he didn't really work with this.

MR. DICKEY: Okay.

MR. McCULLEY: Unfortunately, Joe got cancer and died of cancer in 2007. And before that, because of his partner's career needs, they moved to Massachusetts. Joe was a great guy and a wonderful historian. You could've heard a pin drop in the archivist conference room when he gave his talk. Then he'd quit. Then there was this silence. Somebody finally raise their hand and the question was, how do we get in your class? It was a spellbinding lecture. So you know, we had no way to showcase what was going on here.

I worked with Sam a little later to highlight some of the important research that had been going on in the 1990s. I worked with Sam and Julian. We organized a symposium on a really very significant anthology that Julian edited, titled "The American Congress: The Building of American Democracy." So this symposium was in 2004. About six of the authors who were part of that who wrote chapters in that book participated. It was a milestone, and kind of pulling together some of the best scholarship going on. A number of them had done research here at the Center, so this was really presenting congressional history I think and the first time is kind a coherent subfield of U.S. history, so I was a part of putting that together. And by then, we did benefit from the McGowan Auditorium. But most of the work that went into that had been done in the 90s, so that was kind of the first group of researchers who came here.

MR. DICKEY: When Archives II opened in the mid-90s, did that change how the Center was working? Do any of the records go up there at all, or is everything still here just as it was when it—

MR. McCULLEY: [interposing] It didn't change how the Center's working. The records stayed here. All of the Senate and House records stayed here, where they're going to stay for reasons I've already alluded to. Congress does not want their records out at College Park. They want to stay there, so they can have them when they want them.

Now what it did do is free up a lot of space. You know, we finally got some elbow room around here. We all got offices of our own. We all got out of the stacks. Richard Hunt, who is now the Director of the Center, also had a table back in the stacks. It was just a pretty dreadful situation, and so you know, we got in the space.

One of the things that was not good from my point of view is I was just learning the staff and getting my bearings here when Archives II opened. Well, everybody left, so I don't really know any of the archivists, or never got a chance to meet the archivist or specialist with certain groups of records. I know names, but I never got to work with them, so there's been a real disadvantage, I think in opening up a two-way out there.

I'm one of these people that doesn't like putting Federal facilities outside of the District. I like to keep things centralized, and I think we had space to do that, but we didn't. And so we also had people dread going out there, because it's a huge waste. You spend at least half a day for a meeting by the time you get on the shuttle to come back. So it wasn't all advantage, but it certainly had the advantage of giving us the space we needed here in the National Archives building.

MR. DICKEY: So is that the biggest disadvantage really was just the time and effort it takes to go out there if you have to do something there?

MR. McCULLEY: Yes, and you know different archivists do it differently. The Archivist has an office here, you know, as contemplated when the building was designed and built. He also has an office out at All. David Ferriero, the current Archivist, this really is his office. He doesn't go out to All that much. John Carlin, who became the Archivist in '95 I believe it was, spent all his time at Archives II. We never saw the man here, very seldom, whereas we see David all the time, so you know, somebody's going to lose out to enter into an arrangement like that, and I think the Archives just does not really encourage a lot of specialization and visibility of specialists, so it's sometimes hard to note who to refer researchers to when they've been to our records, and they need to work in a different group of records, so that all began for me on the day that they all moved out. And I mean, it was sudden. It was just a huge change in work conditions and atmosphere, obviously.

MR. DICKEY: So with the desire of the Archives to not want people to specialize in certain areas, from what I've seen from previous interviews, at one point in time they did want that and more specialized. How is it that you decided to focus on like the Arm Services Committee when you first started here? Was it a certain project or...?

MR. McCULLEY: Well, that's my impression, and that's an impression I got in the 90s. That may not have always been true at the Archives. It is not true with respect to Congress's records. Our records are so different from other records, that there's just not much turnover. You can't bring somebody in from executive branch records and set them in the middle of this, and expect them to make any sense out of it for many years, so yes, our staff is dedicated to these records in ways I don't think you find throughout the Archives. Rod Ross—did you interview Ross by any chance?

MR. DICKEY: I've read the interview that was done by somebody else with him...

MR. McCauley: [interposing] Okay, okay. Well, Rod has a career stretching over 40 years. He's been here, I don't know how long. Bill Davis, same thing. So there's a huge amount of experience and talent we're losing. But we're all more or less congressional specialists. We've been immune from that to some extent.

MR. DICKEY: Okay. In your list of things that you've done in the recent past, this year as being a National Archives Legislative Archives fellowship, what exactly is that?

MR. McCULLEY: That came about rather suddenly and rather abruptly, actually. We got word Archivist, David Ferriero, had got the National Archives Foundation to fund a fellowship for scholars who wanted to do research in House or Senate records, so he had been aware that there'd been a lot of neglect of Congress's records and that there was a need to do something for Congress, as the Archives had done for their scholars, especially in presidential libraries. They had funding for their researchers, and we really didn't have any, so he established a fellowship. Richard Hunt and I worked with the Archivist on the eligibility requirements and the initial announcement for the fellowship was made in March of 2011. The amount was rather eye catching, \$10,000 fellowship. That's pretty good for a PhD candidate or a postdoc, who were required to spend a minimum of a month in residency on either Senate or House or both records.

They were required to make an initial presentation, and another presentation concerning their findings at the end of the fellowship. So, after spending really the better part of two decades trying to promote the use of Center archived records, none of that was going to compare with waving \$10,000 in front of a bunch of hungry PhD candidates, or postdoc historians watching the clock tick as they tried to get their book manuscripts published and get tenure, so immediately, you know, you quit trying to go the route of one by one in the research room, then spreading the word through panels, and at the associations, and that immediately raises you to the level of top PhD students in the country and their prominent supervisors, so that puts you on the map immediately, so that was very good.

I was responsible for administering that fellowship, you know, developing a selection process, writing drafts of publicity pieces, seeing too that the recipients had a rewarding experience at the Archives, and that he or she fulfilled terms of the fellowship. The Archivist wanted a recipient named by the end of June, so that did not leave a lot of time to put together a review committee of outside scholars, or do the consulting with the applicants on trying to help them put their best foot forward, or tell that the material was or was not here to support it, organize a staff review of the purely research merits of the proposals, and develop a rating system that would enable the selection committee to make a decision, but we got all that done by June.

And on June the 15, the Archivist issued a press release announcing that Peter Shulman, who was an assistant professor at Case Western Reserve University, was the recipient and Peter had prevailed over—I think there were a total of 26 really highly-qualified applicants, or just a very narrow window open for them to apply.

Also, not the best time. By late spring, people had their grants and research plans well in place, so the timing of this was not the best, but we still got a very good group of applicants, including Peter. He was expanding his 2007 dissertation, *Engines and Empire: America, Energy and the World, 1840-1940*. He had made a research trip here, so we knew a little bit about what he was getting into, and so he put forth a very, very strong proposal.

In October of that year, the Archivists hosted a colloquium on Peter's work that I had organized. I thought that, you know, whoever gets this fellowship really needs to take advantage of being here in Washington and kind of the unique resources and perspectives, especially of historians who conducted work related to theirs, you know, would be helpful. So I invited policy experts and historians from the Library of Congress, from the Smithsonian Museum of American History, the State Department, Department of the Navy, a professor from Georgetown University, the Senate and the House Historians, so we had this very lively discussion here at the Archives concerning Peter's work. It was a great colloquium.

When his book was published last year by Johns Hopkins University Press with a slightly altered title of *Coal & Empire*, he remarked in his acknowledgements that that colloquium was the most intellectually-stimulating thing he'd experienced since his dissertation defense, and that it had greatly helped him focus his attention and sharpen his analysis for the book, so we felt like the fellowship really was a great experience for him and for us. So these are the sort of things that were embedded in that original job description, but things take a while around here to unfold, but the National Archives Legislative Archives Fellowship—it's a rather awkward title—actually did that.

For 2012-2013, we had a process in place. We followed essentially the same process in equally tight timeline. The recipient was Pascal Massinon. He was a Canadian who had just been admitted to PhD candidacy in the history department at the University of Michigan, a very creative and innovative department. And he was in the very early stages of his research for his dissertation. *Home Taping: Participant Listeners, and the Political Culture of Home Recording in the United States*—a very quirky title, but he was looking at how changes in home recording technologies really shaped the debate over copyright law. It was a really fascinating topic, and you know, how this all had an impact on the evolution of the entertainment industry from the 1950s to the 1990s. He had a lot of material bearing on that topic. He was in an entirely different place from Peter in his work, so instead of a colloquium, I had arranged for the archivists to host a presentation by Pascal of what his major ideas were for his dissertations, and what his initial findings here had been. Again, I invited experts from the manuscript division of the Library of Congress, the copyright office of the Library of Congress, Senate, House historical offices to participate and comment and make suggestions to Pascal about where they thought his work could go, and to give him some contacts that would help move his work forward after the forward. So to fulfill the fellowship requirement for a final presentation, I had Peter and Pascal return to the Archives and make a presentation on the program for a conference that we were hosting in 2013.

MR. DICKEY: How did you come to choose a Canadian for the fellowship?

MR. McCULLEY: It had nothing to do with the fact that he was a Canadian.

MR. DICKEY: Just he was a U.S. —

MR. McCULLEY: [interposing] Actually, there were no restrictions at all of that sort in the announcement. You had to have been admitted to candidacy. It wasn't necessarily, it turns out, although there were historians, but you know, political scientists and communications specialists—all kinds of people applied for this fellowship, so anyone who had been admitted to candidacy or had received their PhD less than five years ago. So historians trying to work on their book manuscripts for tenure were included in this, so they wanted to use Senate or House holdings to kind of beef up their studies.

MR. DICKEY: Is the fellowship still going on now, or has funding—

MR. McCULLEY: [interposing] Well, you know, I thought the legislative fellowship really went about as well as it possibly could, given the fact that we had no experience whatsoever with awarding fellowships, but the Archivist apparently decided to provide research support to a broader range of scholars, so what was adopted the following year was awarding—they're not really fellowships. They're \$2500—I call that a research grant to conduct research at one of the National Archives Regional Records Centers, so that obviously spreads the wealth a little more. There's always a political advantage in that. And also consistent I think with what he had in mind starting with us is that those tend to be neglected records more than a lot of the, you know, here in the Washington Records Center and at the Center for Legislative Archives, but it's not a fellowship.

MR. DICKEY: Okay. You also had something called a Brown Bag Series.

MR. McCULLEY: Brown Bags, yes. The Brown Bags really grew out of the fellowship, and it was really one of the completely unanticipated developments from this fellowship. Applicants for the fellowship had to submit a detailed four-page, single space statement of their topic and their research plans here at the

Center. They were encouraged to consult with me in putting that together, so I had spoken over the phone or e-mail exchange with a large number of the applicants, and so when they came here, as I like to do with our researchers on site, you know, visit with them, go to lunch. Then it occurred to me, now wait a minute, why am I doing this? The whole staff could be part of this. You know, they need to know what's going on in the research room, so we just found any space we could, and started kind of, without much notice, really, holding discussions of what these fellowship applicants were doing, and then I said, well, you know, just any researcher doing interesting research who wants to talk about it, they can give us some information about what they're finding, we can give them suggestions concerning their work here and other places in the Archives, so they were quite useful exchanges.

The Archivist attended a couple of them. Everyone really had a good time, and that kind of led to the Researcher Talks, which is a public program. Andrea Matney, who's on Public Affairs staff and Diane Dimkoff, who actually was at the Center, I think she was the Assistant Director to Mike Gillette at the Center, they had heard about these Brown Bags, and asked me if I wanted to move to a permanent room that was accessible to the public and had them video recorded, and have the benefit of publicity of a full public program, and I said that's a great idea, you know? I never thought of it. So we selected a room in the research center. G-25 is the training room. And we couldn't call these Brown Bags anymore, because that room prohibited any eating or drinking, so I renamed it the Researcher Talks, so that's how it got its name.

So this was 2013, and I'm so glad they did that. Now, in retrospect, it seems very strange that the Archives didn't have, or certainly not that I was aware of, ever had a forum to really showcase serious research that's ongoing, and so I think that was a need that we really did, that was out there. So in addition to works in progress, we also include historians who have recently published books based in part on our holdings, so some of them are book talks, some are reports on works in progress and ongoing research, and we try to schedule about one each month.

And you know, we found that researchers really like to have their work acknowledged and recognized, and they really appreciate this, and they like to come to the Archives and talk about their work. It gives our staff a depth of understanding of what's going on. I think it's very good at connecting the reference staff with larger intellectual enterprises. It makes them seem like they're part of something bigger than just finding the records, putting them on cards, and pushing them into the research room, so I think it's really important in terms of staff morale, and in these presentations, they show documents. We love to see what documents they found that are of interest to them, and are helpful to them—it helps us identify documents. We use them in social media, we use them on our website, we can use them for educational projects we're putting together, so it's been very helpful to us, but I think the most important thing it's done is, you know, as I told you, we have this mission to promote the use of the holdings and further the study of the history of Congress, and so it gives us a way to gauge how well we're doing this. You know, what better way to do that than to talk to prominent scholars who are using our records, and telling us why our records are important to them.

So that is how this has just kind of unfolded, and it's a good program that helps integrate outreach efforts with the reference component of the Center, so it pulls a lot of things together. And I'm in a somewhat unique situation certainly as a Historian at the National Archives. That's very unusual. Agencies have their own historians. Jessie is the Agency Historian. It's unusual to have a Historian here at the Archives that's attached to a component. I'm the only one, as far as I know, but also a little bit

unusual in the Center in that my work really straddles the reference staff and the outreach staff, so I work closely with both.

The first thing I do every morning when I get here is I look through the reference slips and see who's been here. Very frequently the reference staff will alert me to somebody I really need to know about. I research the researchers to find out who are these people, where have they come from, what are their topics, and that sort of thing. So again, that was nothing like it was in the 1990s. I've become more focused on that, activities, so that's due to a lot of some staff changes and other things. Charlie Flannigan coming on as supervisor of outreach was a huge improvement. My position is explicitly non-supervisory, and so that the Historian could be the historian and work with outside scholars and outside organizations.

So Charlie's focused on educational projects, and has really helped me do my work a lot more. And the same is true, he's really helped Richard Hunt as Director, because Richard had done a lot of these outreach programs, educational programs directed toward teachers and secondary school students. He was doing those when I got here, so he kind of kept involved in that, became Director, and then had to supervise the outreach staff, who were doing a lot of different things, and so Charlie just kind of took that load off of him, so he could do the big picture staff Director thing, so Charlie coming here in the 2000s really let me concentrate on the things I really needed to be concentrating on.

MR. DICKEY: Okay. You said that the number of employees in the Center is the same as what it was when you first started working, but it's obviously for when you just said not the same composition. You have talked about different supervisors now than you had then. What is the balance now compared to then? Do you think the set ups are better now, or do you think there's still more room to improve to make it more usable for the researchers and the public that want to come in?

MR. McCULLEY: Well, we're doing many more things than we did way back then. I really get to focus exclusively and very systematically on scholarly outreach in ways that I wasn't able to do certainly in the 2000s. The reference staff, you know, we have a staff member who is nothing but an access specialist, and we're getting more and more records that are legislative commission records—the 9/11 Commission, the Financial Crisis Inquiry Commission. Those are big collections with many, many thorny access issues, and so she is devoted to that.

We have two people, Rod and Bill, who are essentially the front line reference people. The other archivists have special projects they need to work on. Description, we have a digital archivist who is in charge of the initiative to describe our records online. It's part of a larger Archives initiative. We have two IT specialists. All we knew to do back in the 90s was to be very, very afraid about what we were going to do with electronic records, so now we have them.

We have Charlie, who spent decades as a teacher, so he knows how to put together educational products that teachers can actually use. He's got the experience to do that. I had no ability to do that. I was pulled into those projects to some extent, but you know, that was not a good thing for me to do. And most of the educational projects relate to, you know, really impressive 19th century documents. These are showy documents. They're engaging documents. Henry Clay, the big things, and you have to be a real pro to know how to put those products together in ways that teachers can use and that'll be effective in the classroom. I knew nothing about that.

And the other thing was, I'm a 20th century historian. I had not looked at that period since graduate school, and also our researchers are overwhelmingly 20th century. That's where the research future of the Center is. It's the modern records, so those records do not always lend themselves quite as easily to educational products, so we get to do that. Another educational specialist is Christine Blackerby, and you know, Christine is a huge resource. She works very closely with Charlie on those things.

We have a social media person, and now does more and more social media stuff, so we're just spread out all over the place, but we're actually working together as a unit better than we ever did back then. When I first came here, I think one of the big differences is that the outreach staff and the reference staff had almost nothing to do with each other, and that is not the case anymore, so Richard Hunt has really I think pulled us together, and you know, we get a huge amount done, considering that's the entire staff.

That's the administrative staff and the technical staff, and the people that load up the documents and put them in a special vehicle and take them back to the Hill, you know, there's a lot of stuff going on here, and there are not many people doing it, and the big thing facing us right now is the fact that the assistant director resigned in November. I'm not sure that position has even been posted, so the lag time here is enormous. Rod Ross is leaving, Bill Davis is retiring, I'm retiring this summer, and Janet Davis, who's the office manager and been here longer than any of us, is retiring this summer. That's a quarter of your staff gone. We are not going to be in the hiatus and hiring is going to be very great, so I think what Richard Hunt is probably trying to do is make sure this ship keeps sailing as well as he can, but that's a big challenge for him.

MR. DICKEY: Before we started the interview, you talked about you were working on digital projects now.

MR. McCULLEY: Oh, yeah. That's something that has come about I think by accident. Around the corner, there's an office, and a woman by the name of Mary Rephlo, now retired, she was responsible for negotiating terms concerning agreements with the organizations that wanted to digitize records, and she had the technical knowledge to do that and to put these things together, and actually, Mary was in legislative back in the 1980s. She was one of the authors of one of the Guides to the Records that I mentioned that was published in 1989.

So about three years ago, a fellow by the name of Tom Ferguson, who is the research director at a New York think tank that seems to have quite a bit of money, called the Institute for New Economic Thinking, he visited the Center to look at the House Political Campaign Committee reports. Those reports date from 1912 to 1971, when the Federal Elections Committee was established, so this was due to a requirement to report contribution expenditures, all political parties and organizations established by a law passed in 1910, I believe, and so this is a huge collection, and Tom had done some research in this collection, and thought it was of real value for them, and he and I worked together for quite a while about four years ago and helped him put together a proposal that he could submit to his organization, and to get those records digitized so they could offer them to finance fellows and hire researchers, and so I'd been working on that project quite a bit.

I'm in contact with their imager, and I kind of clear any roadblocks that might come up in the research room with the conservation people and trying to resolve things to keep that project moving forward. I've also interested Tom, after he gets this done, in digitizing the Senate Banking Committee records

from the early 30s. This would've been the core investigation of banking after the financial crash, and they're very rich records. They're some of my favorite records, and so we're looking at that. That's obviously not going to go forward until after I retire. The other group in terms of digital projects I have worked with is Ancestry.com. Now they're, of course, geared for this. They've got the labor force volunteered to spring into action.

I had worked with their Director of New Projects and the Director of Research to show them the potential of petitions sent to Congress as a genealogy source. Petitions have a place, they have a date, they have names. Some of them even have addresses, although that's a little unusual. So they're what Ancestry calls name-rich sources. So I spent quite a bit of time over the last couple of years, a couple of years ago, a lot of time trying to identify a complete run of petitions that didn't have many conservation concerns that would slow it down and make it, you know, they're about the bottom line—you know, how can we get these materials digitized in a reasonable time and present them in a way that will be useful to their customers, so I have tried to think in terms of those parameters, and come up with a series of petitions that might interest them, so they're still mulling it over. It's not come to a resolution. I hope that someday in the future, we'll get an agreement with Ancestry to do petitions we obviously have no money to digitize around here, so we have to rely on the kindness of strangers. I've spent quite a bit of time working with them, and trying to interest Ancestry in doing that, but those are great documents to get out there to the public and I hope they do it.

MR. DICKEY: Okay. Earlier, you discussed the beginning of your career here. You did a lot of outreach with professional organizations, and I'm going to assume you are still doing that. Is there any that has been more helpful than others with getting to the scholarly community?

MR. McCULLEY: Well, that's—yes. I still do that. I think I mentioned the Journal of Policy History. In fact, this year, I put together a special panel, actually, a roundtable discussion, that's almost like a plenary session for that organization. The long shadow of the Great Society Congress, a roundtable discussion. It's going to be a retrospective look at the 89th Congress and some of the major legislation that came out of it, so something very concrete and recently I've done, you know, in that kind work, putting together panels in professional associations that will spotlight Congress and our records. That's something coming up, and I worked very hard putting this panel together. Betty Koed, the Senate Historian and Matt Wasniewski, the House Historian, are kind of co-facilitating this panel. A professor emeritus at Yale University, Theodore Marmor, is the authority on the Medicare Act of 1965. Paul Milazzo, Ohio University, is speaking on Water Quality Act and environmental legislation, and a fellow at the Center for American Progress, Philip Wolgin, is discussing the Immigration Act. They're not going to just talk about the Act. They're going to talk about what the current policy implications are, and you know, how there have been unexpected consequences from a lot of this legislation that have required adjustments in policy. Then a political commentator is going to be Nancy Young. She is one of our key researchers. She came here first in the 1990s. I could have mentioned her. She published a biography of Wright Patman. She's at the Wilson Center, and was here for an entire year, and she wrote a book on Congress and World War II, and she thoroughly researched those two World War II Congresses, and she's kind our expert on Congress and those records, so she's going to be on the panel.

So that's a good example of the kind of work that I've continued to do with those organizations I started out with. Now, what happened in the 2000s is the Center itself became much more connected with some organizations we hadn't collaborated with. This is Center collaboration with organizations, and not

just me doing what I refer to as missionary work. And one of those organizations is the Association of Centers for the Study of Congress, and this is an association of repositories that hold members' papers. We have the official records of Congress here, but the Senators and Representatives have to make their own arrangements for where they're going to deposit them, and so this is an organization of the main repositories and of other centers that promote the study of the history of Congress, so this is one of the things Mike Gillette did I think back in 2003.

He was a main instigator of organizing this group, and you know, thank goodness he did that, helped get that off the ground before he resigned, and now he's the director of Humanities Texas. He went back to Texas. So this very much came out of the Advisory Committee I mentioned. The Advisory Committee was very focused on getting us off the ground and archiving of committee records that came to us. That began to shift in the late 1990s/early 2000s to really a much more serious problem of what can they do to get a full documentation of the history of the Senate and the House, and that is to pay more attention to the archiving of the members' papers, and so there was a shift to focus of the Advisory Committee, and this association kind of came out of that, and you know, so it was obviously in our interest to collaborate closely with them, certainly from a research point of view, because you can't just come here and get the full story.

You've got to get other members' papers as well, so you have to work together, and so this was an organization to help us do that. They held an annual conference where we come together and discuss common problems. I've become very involved in that organization. I started serving on their Program Committee. More often than not, I've a couple of times served as the head of that Program Committee to put the program together. We host that conference every other year, so those years are really kind of full court presses in terms of our engagement. You know, these are people who have a need and like to come to Washington, so we do that.

On alternate years, we meet in one of the other places. Those would be places like the Byrd Center, the Robert Byrd Center in Shepherdstown, West Virginia. This year we're meeting at the Edward Kennedy Institute in Boston, so alternate years we meet at the Centers, and then at the Center for Legislative Archives other years, so I've become very active in that organization. I am typically involved in putting a scholars panel at that conference every year, and I've been very active in identifying scholars who have recently conducted work, and our records are the records of members and putting them together.

That's another thing I've done to get a little more down to the concrete level. I put that panel together for this conference. Actually, two panels concerning scholars, which three historians are going to discuss their research and congressional holdings, and how members' papers supported their recent publications. We have a scholar discussing JFK's senate career. We have another scholar who has just published a book, a really good book, also on JFK, and then a professor at the Miller Institute of the University of Virginia, who has submitted a manuscript on Edward M. Kennedy. She's been involved with putting together his massive oral history project based at the University of Virginia, so that's a good group of people.

Now we left Robert out, but I found another fellow who is coming out very soon, sometime this summer, with a book on RFK, so we have all the Kennedy brothers covered here in terms of scholars who are doing serious work on them—it's hard work, but a lot of fun to put these panels together and sometimes to find these people that are doing the kind of work we're interested in hearing about, that

are the kind of people who are good at telling about it, so you kind of have to know your speakers before you commit to them. So this is going to be a very good people, though.

And another thing I've worked on a lot concerning this organization, we have a members panel which former members come and discuss the highlights of their political careers, and we usually get three on a panel, and this is where the most fun—everyone loves this panel, and they talk about the main thing in their political careers, the things that would be in their papers of interest to scholars, how they made decisions about where to find a repository and archive their materials. It sounds kind of boring, but you know, these politicians make it a lot of fun, and they love to goad each other, and tell stories on each other, so it's a really fun panel. We've had wonderful presenters. This year at the Kennedy Institute Conference, we're going to have Barney Frank, so that's going to be quite a program. So a lot of my organizational focus has shifted to the Association of Centers for the Study of Congress, so that's a group I've spent a lot of time with, and have a big commitment to. And it's been a busy year.

I was treasurer, vice president, and president of the Society for History in the Federal Government in the late 90s/early 2000s, so after that, I just kind of, okay, I'm done with it, I'm kind of an elder statesman, I'll show up, but I got feeling guilty about this. Before I was treasurer, I was on a Book Award Committee. The Society offers a book prize, a national book prize—it's very prestigious—called The Henry Adams Prize for the best book on the history of the Federal government. And then there's a George Pendleton Prize, the principal author of the Civil Service Act of 1883, we have that award for the best and outstanding book on the history of the Federal government written for or by a history office, a Federal government history office, so there are two awards and I was on that awards committee way back, shortly after I got here, actually, so I hadn't been doing anything with the Society, but last year, I was asked to go back on this committee.

Dick Baker, the former Senate Historian, chaired it, but then he stepped down, and so I chaired it this past year, and that's a pretty good undertaking. 64 books were sitting in it. You have to do a lot to find out what's out there. You have to identify the presses, the awards coordinator. You have to find out who these people are. I went through over 800 entries in the OAH series of recent publications and identified titles of interest, and you have to research the websites of the presses to see if this is really an eligible book. 64 entries. Deadline is November 30. We need to make our decision by January 15.

Last week, I just presented those two awards at the conference. It's virtually a half-time job for six months of the year. So I continue to put a lot of work in the Society, although I regard it as something kind of behind me, so there's no shortage of work organizations to work through, and I learn about what's out there in terms of the literature. Several, in fact, I'm in the process of scheduling the winner of the Pendleton Award to give a researcher talk this next fall. One of the authors is going to be on this other panel at the Association of Centers, the scholars panel, is the one who wrote the book on JFK and his Senate career. That's how I found out about his work, so it kind of feeds into the other work I do, as it turns out.

MR. DICKEY: Okay. So we discussed a lot of different things. Is there anything that we've missed that you would like to discuss?

MR. McCULLEY: Well, let's see. Where are we? I should probably say a little something about—how much time do we have left, anyway?

MR. DICKEY: Okay. I don't have a set amount of time.

MR. McCULLEY: Oh, okay. You said two hours.

MR. DICKEY: It's all up to you.

MR. McCULLEY: You said two hours. I need to say something about the Senate Armed Services Committee, because that was a curious experience. Shortly after I arrived, actually, it was 1994, the Center was contacted about writing a history of the Senate Armed Services Committee, and this project, I was told, had the strong backing of Senator Sam Nunn of Georgia, so most of our House records are committee records, you know, archived materials from the committees, and so writing a history seemed like a good way for me to really dig very deeply into the records, and see how committee records are put together, so this was a good thing for me to do at the time I was just getting here.

And also, I thought, well, you know, these are neglected sources. Historians kind of skim the surface of Congress, talk about things going on up here, and what happened on the floor, and they don't really get down to the committee level enough, and so we needed much more work in terms of what the committees had done in the history of the committees to really understand the Senate and the House histories, and so I wanted to share what could be done with that material. I was quite green at the time, so I put together a really ambitious proposal to do a whole series of committee histories, beginning with the Senate Armed Services Committee, which I presented to the Advisory Committee.

The House historian, Ray Smock, was still a member of that committee, and he countered that my proposal would never fly. He was absolutely right. I now recognize it would take an entire team of historians working years to do that sort of thing, but you know, the Senate Armed Services Committee became my major research and writing project from about 1995 to 2000, and it did have Nunn's strong backing. He sponsored a luncheon in the committee library in the summer of 1995, and introduced me to all of the past chiefs of staff of the committee.

Some of these people had come on back in the late 40s, and these were real old timers, and very knowledgeable people about the history of that committee and the Senate. I interviewed all of them, plus other staff members. Office space—extremely valuable real estate on the Hill—was dedicated to me at the Armed Services Committee. Then in the Russell Office building, so I again got to work on a topic I knew absolutely nothing about, but that had never stopped me in the past, so I spent many, many weekends in my Archives office as well as in the cubicle at the Senate Armed Services Committee that I had. I later learned from the chief clerk of the committee, Christine Cowart, who was a bedrock supporter of this project, that the Senator had had in mind a history that would be available for the 50th anniversary of the committee.

That would've been 1997. She told me that she told the Senator that this is not going to happen. There are over 3,000 boxes of material for the committee dating from 1947 when it was established, and she was very aware that the Senate Armed Services Committee was very proudly one of the most documented committees on the Hill, and so they had many records. So I researched and researched, and I interviewed and I interviewed, and I wrote and I wrote until I had more than 500 pages of a completed manuscript done by 2000, and so I accomplished what I wanted to accomplish. I showed that you could do a committee history without using any secondary—I deliberately did not use secondary sources. What can you get out of a committee whose records and their publications and other Senate

publications, so the draft was thoroughly vetted, it was reviewed by key members of the committee, every "I" was dotted, every "T" was crossed, I made every change they suggested by then.

Guess what? Senator Nunn had resigned, and the committee was being chaired by the much less vigorous 95-year-old Senator Strom Thurmond, and then by the time I finished, Senator Warner had taken over the chairmanship. His chief clerk asked if I would write yet another chapter on Senator Warner. I told Mike Gillette about this request, and he said, no, we can't give in the position of writing histories of sitting chairs to committees, and those are recent records. We couldn't cite them, anyway, so there was no legitimate documentary basis from our point of view for doing that, so I completely agreed.

So I don't know why the committee has never moved forward on this. Staff members kept promising a publication. There must've been some kind of push back. This continued throughout 2000s, as late as 2015. I was emailed by a former staff member who had written his own book on the Goldwater-Nichols Act, wanting to see this history published, you know, but at this late date, my draft is 15 years old, would need to be updated, and that train has left the station as far as I am being the person to do that, so maybe someday somebody will take it up. It's one of the loose ends, you know, that I hate to leave behind, but I wish that had been brought to a conclusion.

MR. DICKEY: It happens.

MR. McCULLEY: It happens.

MR. DICKEY: Okay. Well, thank you for your time. That concludes our interview.

MR. McCULLEY: Well, thank you.

[END RECORDING]



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