

NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS SERVICE

Fred W. Shipman - Interview II

May 23, 1973

BROOKS: Fred, you should include whatever you want to say about your appointment as Director or in any involvements before. You said you had a folder of correspondence relating to that appointment. *

SHIPMAN: Yes. To me, it is still somewhat a mystery. And yet, I can reconstruct many things. Who would become the first in charge of the Franklin D. Roosevelt Library was a mystery to me, and as far as I was concerned, the farthest thing from my thoughts. I made no effort in any direction to get such an appointment. I didn't even give it second thoughts. I felt I was assigned to do a particular task in relation to the planning, and I might like to be considered a consultant because of that part in getting it started, but that was the extent in which I expected to be involved. Moreover, I, for family reasons--my wife particularly never did want to leave Washington, and any suggestion that we would move out of Washington, I know, was going to cause a great deal of unhappiness. So I had never talked to anyone about it, although the fact that I had been asked to do the survey of the papers of FDR had caused a certain amount of talk among my colleagues. And it was not at all unusual for them to come and ask me on the elevator and so forth when I was going to Hyde Park, and all the rest. And I just put it out of my mind because I really wasn't thinking about it that way.

I was quite happy in my position as Chief of the State Department Archives, but as time went on--I think I've already indicated the work that was done in the surveying of the White House archives, and I was meeting with FDR. The question arose as to whether or not the resolution in Congress would be finally passed which would establish the arrangement by which the Government would take over the new Library and administer it. It was pending for some time, so the subject would be dormant and come up again, and finally, I got word that the Library resolution had been passed and that the Library would be accepted by the Government and be administered by the Archivist of the United States. I haven't discussed any of the other--Mr. Joerg, I said earlier, surveyed the flat materials--particularly prints and the maps. I've forgotten the name of the man from the Smithsonian who did the museum survey. But going back to the matter of my appointment, I was not even thinking about it, when one day I was

*The folder containing correspondence of Dr. Connor regarding the appointment was later delivered to the Archivist, Dr. James. B. Rhoads, by Mr. Shipman.

called down to the Office of the Archivist, and he told me about the resolution having passed, and there had to be some plans for operating and directing the Library. He wanted to know what I thought about the whole matter, and what I would suggest regarding how it should be run.

The first thing he said, I think, was "we ought to have a title." He said, "would you call him an archivist or a librarian?" And I said, "well, Mr. Connor, since this is a collection of historical materials in the form of family records and archives, and the Presidential records, and governor's papers, not the official records of the Government, but the campaigns, and a great collection of books of naval history, the prints, and the great museum collection and the oddities, either title would hardly be adequate--librarian or archivist." It took in a museum; it took in a library; and it took in an archives. So I felt that whoever was in charge of all, should perhaps be given the title of director. And he thought that was a very good suggestion, so I thought I had really earned my pay that day. We had a very pleasant time.

BROOKS: I think you earned your pay, too, because as in many cases, the precedent set at Hyde Park has been followed ever since.

SHIPMAN: That's right.

BROOKS: There used to be confusion between me and the Museum Curator. People would call me the Curator of the Truman Library. And I told them Director. That sort of covered a multitude of sins--a Director could do anything.

SHIPMAN: The proper title. Well, we had a very nice time, and so we talked some, and I don't think it was at that particular meeting, but it was shortly after, I believe. Now I didn't keep a record of it, though I may have it in my journal somewhere; I don't know. I didn't think of it that much; I was just pleased that he and I had come to some appreciation of that particular responsibility being given a full title. But sometime later--I would say in May before the fall of France in 1940, Mr. Connor called me down to his office and again told me that they were making progress, and now they had come to a point where they had to find somebody to take this position as Director because the Library was going to be turned over to the Archivist the following July, and the Government had to have somebody operating it. And he wanted to know if I had some names I could suggest. Well, I immediately--I can't remember the names I suggested, but I know there were people like Julian Boyd and many others who were well known among the Archives people, and librarians of the day, and to Dr. Connor as well as myself and people in the profession who'd know. And

we talked about many different ones. I don't recall whether we ever mentioned anybody who was on the staff of the National Archives. I don't recall that we ever did. It occurred to me that he wasn't thinking in terms of the National Archives, and I wasn't either. I thought the President had somebody with a name that he wanted to have.

So finally, as we seemed to exhaust these varied names, Mr. Connor sat back. I think he was smoking a cigar as he usually did, and he looked at me quizzically, and he said, "Well Fred, have you ever thought about your being the Director of the Library?" And that was, as frankly and as honestly as I can say, the first time I ever had had any idea or even a thought that this was--I was being considered in any way. And I was taken back, I was flattered, I was excited, and I was worried because it was a great honor to be considered to work for the President of the United States, and of course particularly President Roosevelt, and work directly with him. And Mr. Connor said the President liked me and would be glad to have me as Director. Well then I also knew, what I said earlier, that Ruth--to her, Washington was the only place she could live, and I didn't think we'd ever get her out of Washington under any circumstances. So Dr. Connor said, "Well, I'll tell you what, you think it over. Suppose we get together in two weeks because I don't have to have an answer at the present, but give yourself two weeks, and talk it over with Ruth, and give me your answer, and let me know what you'd like to do. This is something that you can make your own decision." Well of course as I said earlier, it was an honor, and also it was a promotion--a career promotion--and one who wants to advance can't look lightly on opportunity, but it was also something which was very much a challenge because it would mean I'd be in charge, and here was a collection of material that was as important in world history as any that had come to light in centuries. I was in material in American history and particularly in our own present.

So the whole thing fascinated me, and I must say, even getting out to a small place without having full appreciation of what it was like to live up there, the idea of getting out of Washington was quite all right. Without going back any further on the family problem, we talked it over, and Ruth said if you turn down an opportunity of this kind, you can't expect that you'd be considered for other opportunities. You better think in terms of yourself, and you do want it, you do think it is something that will give you satisfaction in your work, so go ahead. Two weeks later, I went to the Archivist, and I told him that we'd talked it over, and I'd be glad to talk to the President if it were agreeable, and I'd accept the offer. It was arranged that we could go up to the White House and have a conference with FDR. I don't know exactly how many days after--it wasn't many days after--but we went up. It was just at the time of the fall of France, just about the time when the "stab in the back" speech had been given.

But we--Dr. Connor and I--had this meeting with the President in the Oval Room, and the first thing he said was, "Why I hear you and I are going to go to Hyde Park and work together." And I said, "Well, if you wish me to, Mr. President, I'll be happy to." And he said, "Great, that would be just grand." He had these expressions of his, you know, about how things would be, so he was looking forward, and we were going to work together and have a very interesting time, and he was delighted that I was going to take this over. And so in the course of the conversation, Dr. Connor said, "Well of course, Mr. President, that's if you don't stay here for a third term." FDR hadn't made any announcement about a third term, and Dr. Connor said, "You're going to go for a third term." And FDR said, "Like hell I am. I'm gettin' out of here, and Shipman and I are going up to Hyde Park and work on those papers. How about it, Fred? And I said, "That's fine with me, Mr. President." And so we left it that way, and on the way back in the limousine, Connor said to me, "You know, Fred, he's not going to stay a third term." I said, "Well frankly," and I hated to be this way, already seeming to feel my oats, I said, "Mr. Connor, I don't think he could have said anything else. He wasn't going to tell you or me if he was going for a third term. I don't think that's necessarily so, but we can wait and see." And of course it was because of what happened, we all know.

Well, I'd like to make a comment at this particular point because it has something to do with my later reaction to the Archivist, Dr. Buck. When Dr. Connor decided to retire from the Archives, he came up to see me, and told me about his plans. And I came down to Washington, and he wanted to see me, and he gave me a file which had correspondence he'd had with leading historians in the country who were seeking a candidate for the position of Director of the Library. I have the file, and it includes men like Blegen and Julian Boyd, and people of distinction, and some of the lesser likes who were considered to be on their way. And I don't know what caused him to pass over different ones, but I do know Samuel Eliot Morison told him in one of letters that he would be better advised to reconsider what he was doing, and, number one, that Hyde Park, despite all this being said, there being a highway between the two great cities of Albany and New York, is a pretty dull place. And whoever's up there would have to be someone who would find the President's company and the President's environment something that he could accept and live with. That it ought to be someone who would enjoy being with the President and that would enjoy that particular work, and perhaps it should be a young person; and Connor would be well advised to think of someone on his own staff who he thought had promise and had interest in this area, he had trained, because he was going to work as an archivist, and you wanted him to do the kind of work in the fashion of the archives training. And Morison thought that this would be the best thing to do. Well, Connor took this apparently to heart because he said he would think about it. I noticed a postcard that's in this file from Samuel Eliot Morison, just one line, I haven't got it with me, but I've got it at home, to Mr. Connor saying, "Congratulations on Shipman's appointment as Director of the Library. I think you did the right thing." Now whether that had weight or not, I don't know.

SHIPMAN: Well, I was appointed. I was up there. My appointment started July 1. And I was up there; yes, I was part of it.

BROOKS: Was there a ceremony?

SHIPMAN: Oh yes. We had speeches, a regular brochure out on that. The Archives has copies, and I have a special copy. There were pictures taken, and the Archivist took over the building.

BROOKS: This again is a precedent that was a perfectly natural thing to do. But it's been done in every case. The dedication of the Library has always been a big event involving . . .

SHIPMAN: Which is quite different than the opening of it.

BROOKS: Oh yes . . . from when you opened the building.

SHIPMAN: That was another ceremony.

BROOKS: Well, what were your first big problems after you got there?

SHIPMAN: When I got to the Library, the building wasn't complete. It was perhaps about three-quarters complete. A lot of the rooms weren't finished. A great deal had to be done to the building itself, and so people were still working--construction work was being done. An alarm system had to be put in; all of this construction work had to go forward. The offices were being properly taken care of. Well, the first thing I had to do was make a complete survey of what I found up there, and then I had a whole series of things, looking to the problems of the building and the grounds immediately around it. And I dealt with the construction people and with the Public Buildings people. Meanwhile, we were also planning such things as a photostat room, and research rooms had to be finished; the museum, of course, became one of the big problems because here was the open space, and we hadn't any plans other than what we'd been generally talking about; we had no equipment. So I got in touch with--now I don't have the name with me--with the museum man who sold museum equipment, and who was very expert in this, and it was with him that I went over the various types of equipment, and we got some idea from the survey that was made what we would need and consulted with the people in the Smithsonian. And then it was up to me to make my own selection, even though all of these things were put before me by everybody.

It was up to me as Director, frankly (I was already named Director) that all these people who worked on the Library had to defer to me, and the President turned to me to give him what I thought was right. So I had to sift out all these proposals and suggestions and look into things myself, and then pass them on if they were important enough for the President's approval, which included for instance, some very beautiful display cases. There were all types of suggestions for cases. There were all types of ways of putting things up. Well, the President had some ideas, but on most of the equipment ideas, he indicated considerable appreciation of what we had come up with.

On the matter of, particularly the matter of his Naval prints and pictures, he was very much involved himself. So that even to the hanging of those, he directed that with me as to exactly what pictures he had, where he wanted them placed. And I believe today in the Naval History Room that the material is left precisely the way he set it up. And what he did was he had us take all the pictures he wanted or had of the Naval History prints, and that room, you must remember, was empty, and we laid them out flat on the floor, and he, of course, went around in his wheelchair, and he would say, "Fred, this one." And he cast his eyes on the wall, and this one go here, and here. And we had a man come over to temporarily mark the places, and he could try it out, and they were put up finally, exactly the way he wanted them arranged. In the matter of the cases, his ship models, he wanted those in a particular room. So I would say that the Naval History Room, I haven't seen it for years, if it hasn't been changed, is the closest to anything FDR did which is almost completely his own stance. I don't think anything in there was arranged that he didn't say even to the height of it, the place on the wall, or the model that would go in there, or that he didn't say this is where I want it. And we put it there, and it's been there, and I hope it's been left there because it's a good document of his own view on that kind.

But for the rest, he came around, and he made criticisms, made suggestions, and we worked out the arrangement, and he was quite complimentary--if he thought something might be moved from here to there, he would say so, but generally speaking with the rest, he was quite pleased. Now he had in mind also that so many things he received, and I'm sure this is true with all the presents that were not particularly valuable or even attractive, but people had given them to him for some reason or other because of devotion, but to them, it was a gift of appreciation for him. Such things as making a cathedral out of matchsticks, and some grotesque drawings, and so forth. He told me he thought we ought to call it the "chamber of horrors," but he was told that that would perhaps offend the people who did these things, so they called it the "Oddities Room," and he thought that was much better.

BROOKS: Who thought up that word?

SHIPMAN: He did. Well we had a talk--I don't know whether it was Sam Rosenman or it was my word--it was Sam's, I think. I think Sam Rosenman told him it would be better not to use that horror term. But he said to me, "Fred, I don't want to offend the people, I'll talk to the President about that." So the "Oddities Room." Anyone who sees them today would see them as oddities. There are all kinds of gimmicks made up. Even the famous sphinx made out of papier mache that was used at the Press Club when he wasn't saying whether he'd run for a third term. That's put down there. That's still an attraction.

BROOKS: That's a prize exhibit. Made by Jim Preston.

SHIPMAN: Jim Preston of the Archives, yes. And when Jim Preston found out that that was going up there, well nobody was more honored, and FDR--we had a lot of fun with him. Jim came up. This was another thing I know bothered Dr. Buck because he considered this thing unrefined, and everytime Buck saw anything like this, this was the kind of thing he would eliminate, you see. Anyway, the President was a person of good humor, and he saw these things in a humorous fashion in a human way. He didn't look upon his Library as a weighty something in which everybody was going to be given the wisdom of the world. They're going to learn, yes, but they're going to learn to live and to be happy and healthy people with healthy minds, which was certainly far from the approach of Dr. Buck.

BROOKS: As you suggest, all the Libraries have this same kind of thing. We had thousands up at the Truman Library. And we were even scared that the word "oddities" would offend people. But two or three days before the dedication, when Grover had been out there working with his shirt sleeves rolled up for two or three weeks, he said, "you just don't have enough of this kind of stuff on exhibit." And we've always called it the Grover case. He invented the title. "Gifts from the American People." And they are the same sort of miscellaneous things.

SHIPMAN: That's what FDR appreciated about it. Now this carried over also, Phil, in much of the ordinary correspondence that the President gets. The letters that came in from people--some who were illiterate--giving advice, speaking their piece.

BROOKS: I've seen quotations from FDR discussing that kind of stuff, too.

SHIPMAN: So the whole concept was this is the common people expressing themselves to their President, and it was appreciated. But this was beyond the capacity of a man of the mentality of Solon J. Buck to understand. He didn't have the intellectual capacity.

BROOKS: Tell me--well, you've pretty well answered one question I was going to ask, which was how much in detail President Roosevelt was interested in the way things were set up. There's been a great variance among the Presidents on this particular point. And it's very greatly affected the character of the lives of the Directors, as to whether the President was looking over their shoulder in detail or not. How about organization and appointments. Was Roosevelt. . .

SHIPMAN: Yes, he didn't bother too much about that. He left the professional selection very much to the Archivist and to me. There were a few people in the clerical jobs who were natives of Dutchess County that he knew. For instance, the young Polish fellow named Bielsky, who was a messenger and laborer. FDR was very interested in him, and he got a laborer's classification. Steve Bielsky. He's dead now. And he'd been one of the workers in Poughkeepsie on behalf of the President. He drove the truck, and he was a marvelous, a wonderful fellow. He worked hard, and he was one of the men I came to be devoted to, and let me mention this in passing--he died suddenly --he was a slave to both FDR and to me in terms of his loyalty and dealings. And when I retired from the Roosevelt Library, there was a certain amount of indication of sadness on the part of some of the staff. Of course FDR was dead, and here they were not knowing who was going to come over, and they also had seen enough of the Archivist to know that there was a question in their minds whether they could stomach it. But Bielsky, of all of them, had to leave the room, and I found him downstairs; he had broken down crying because I was leaving. And that was the hardest thing--now this sounds strange, being a laborer it may sound strange--but it was one of the hardest things for me to leave the place. I almost felt like saying I'll stick it out, but I couldn't. I had taken too much, and my wife was unhappy, and I couldn't stand anymore of what I was getting in relations with the Archivist.

BROOKS: Let me get back to 1940 again, to keep more or less in order. Did you draw up the original organization chart of the staff, or was there something like that.

SHIPMAN: Well, no. We went over it. I was given some idea of how much money we would have and about how many positions. That was originally started, but then it was for me to play with. It wasn't strictly held up. I had to talk it over with Collas Harris and with the Archivist just what would be allowed, and then I had to see by my own experience what I could do, or what I thought ought to be done with it, what positions should be, and I negotiated and changed within the bounds of the funds I had and what was wanted to meet our requirements. But we had a skeleton at the start, say about three people at the start, but then the rest was worked out. No, it was not arbitrarily done at all. It was done

primarily within the bounds of the money we had, and what we worked out with the Archivist as to what requirements and how far we could go.

BROOKS: Did you work closely with Collas?

SHIPMAN: Yes, in the early days of this, of course. He was responsible for the Administration, and he was very helpful. I must say that in my relations with Collas directly--just personally--I always had good relations with him. And anything that the President wanted, and we thought was within reason--you must remember, this was the President of the United States--and what he was asking for was perfectly legitimate. So not only that, he was giving--not only what he was giving, but he was getting a gift at that time which was supposed to be almost unheard of--\$450,000 was given to buy that property to give it to the Government to build that building. \$450,000. Look at what San Clemente's going to cost, to say nothing of what Texas is costing.

BROOKS: Even ours in 1957 cost a million 600 thousand.

SHIPMAN: Well the one thing FDR wanted more than anything else was not to let it get grandiose. He wanted it to remain something that reflected the simple life of the country squire, as he liked to call himself. Something that kept in tune with the environment of home, and not only inside the Library, but outside. You know one of the things people always had planned to do with the area around the Library was to put gardens--formal gardens, and big parking lots and everything else. And he had a term, he said, "There's one thing that would spoil this place, and that is if you manicure it." He didn't want to manicure the estate. He felt that it would lose its charm. So everything was done accordingly and in the building itself. No air-conditioning--he didn't want to have air-conditioning because he felt--in the first place, he didn't like it, and in those days it wasn't as far advanced as it is today. And more than that, when talking about preservation of material, he said well what he did was that periodically, he opened windows to get fresh air in and kept the sunlight out, and these methods were quite adequate. And in the wet weather keep the place dry. So as the years went on toward the end of his life, we were getting into the probability of finding out what it would cost to get air-conditioning because air-conditioning was improving. But we knew it would be something much longer than after the war because the war prevented anything more being done. But he did go so far as to say, well, sometime after the war, ten or twenty years later--this may be the thing to do, and you ought to have some plans of how it would be done, and I think we even started some preliminary plans on air-conditioning. I don't know what's been done on the air-conditioning since. I left, and I imagine that especially the new wing has been air-conditioned.

BROOKS: The whole thing was air-conditioned while Elizabeth Drewry was there. It was a terrific process, and it took a long time and upset everything.

SHIPMAN: Well you know I can say this, that my office was right there in the field, and it was a beautiful office, and in the wintertime you could look out, and it was lovely. In the spring and fall, and there was nothing unusual in having a deer come to the window. But in the summer, the sun came in and the humidity from the river--it was breathless; it was absolutely breathless. And I remember one day going over to the big house, and Harry Hopkins was sitting on the porch, and he was just holding his breath and fanning himself, and he said, "Fred, I don't know how you stand it, but I could never stay up here. I've got to get out of this damn place." And the humidity of the Hudson is as bad as the Potomac. But when it's hot on the Hudson, it's just as bad as it is hot in Washington. And it's a long period. And then that manicured field where he had been raising grain. I gather that it was a combination of Washington and the fields of Kansas. But it was still quite pleasant.

BROOKS: I get the impression that the way the Roosevelt Library was set up, it was pretty independent of the National Archives. It was like almost a separate organization, but both under the Archivist, rather than the Roosevelt Library being a branch of the Archives.

SHIPMAN: Well, it was done in a manner to be sure that it was not hampered by some of the general regulations that were necessary for such an institution as the Archives itself. It was recognized that many of the things that were suggested--maybe personnel programs of moving people about and all that--you couldn't do that with a staff of about eight or ten people. And the same would be true of many of the reports that had to be made for the great number of surveys of large agencies and the like. There were many requirements on the staff of the National Archives, which the Archivist put out, that would make no sense at all as far as this goes. But that didn't mean that within the bounds of administration that we weren't a part of the Archives, now came a special kind of problem. And they had to be looked upon and not to be just worked in one mold. It would have been a disaster to do it. We use the personnel services of the National Archives--well we used all the administrative services of the National Archives.

BROOKS: Well you had some administrative services up there.

SHIPMAN: Well we had certain authorities passed on to us. For instance, such things as a petty cash fund . . . And I had authority to issue travel orders and all that kind of thing. But even that had to be passed on to the Archives for processing and payment. But it was the approval. I issued my own travel orders,

and we kept a petty cash fund, and we had it audited regularly and reported to the Archives. And this kind of thing. And in personnel, they went through the Archives personnel office, for usually, they were part of the Archives personnel people. These had to be. But as I say when you're off the operation of the Roosevelt Library . . . For instance, the whole question of the disposition of papers. All these rules of how many you got rid of and so forth last week, and how many surveys you made, these were coming out in reams from the administrative offices and the Archivist to the staff of the National Archives, but they dealt with the whole Federal Government.

BROOKS: They just didn't fit with your place.

SHIPMAN: And they didn't try to have us comply at all. It wasn't applicable. But to the extent that we had administration and administrative support, and professional direction above, it was from the Archives.

BROOKS: Was the Archivist continuing to be active in guiding things up there?

SHIPMAN: Oh, yes.

BROOKS: You had necessarily more interest than you would have had if you were a division chief in the Archives.

SHIPMAN: Oh, yes. I had a lot more responsibility for the whole building, the grounds, the museum. I also had the responsibility of accepting material that was offered, buying material, and rejecting material. Rejecting material-- I'm sure you had this experience.

BROOKS: I had to learn to say "no" politely--one of the very first things I learned.

SHIPMAN: You had to learn often times how not to say "no," even when you wanted to.

BROOKS: Yes, that's right.

SHIPMAN: These are matters which are left to you, and if it got to a point where-- and it did--they felt they wanted to go beyond me, they would try the Archivist. Well the Archivist--he'd write me about it, and I'd write back and explain.

Well, as the files of the Roosevelt Library will show, of course, the President was in office, and people wanted in so many ways either to get to him or to--the fact that they just gave something to him became itself--they would get credit for it one way or another, and one thing I had to watch out for related to books, related to particularly anything that could be merchandised. If they got a letter from me thanking them for a book, there was no hesitancy in putting on the fly

leaf of the book that it was in the Roosevelt Library, and had been declared to be an excellent book, and so forth. And I realized that. Giving it to the President, they would turn it around and use it to their own advantage, and really could make this a means of advertising themselves as being in the favor of the President of the United States.

Might I say again, and I'm saying this strongly because I think the Archivist could listen to this, it might be helpful that this was a thing that Dr. Connor understood, and I understood, this is why I say he was a good man in the position he was in. This is a thing that Dr. Buck could not understand and could cause more trouble because to him, black was black, and white was white, and he knew everything, and there was no telling where he would come out in anything. So you got to the point with him where you didn't tell him anything because if you did, you knew very well he was going to come out with some perverse notion, and it would be wrong for the Library and wrong for everyone else. Such was this matter of understanding what it meant to have someone offer something to the Library and then finding a way to get out of it without just flatly telling them that their stuff is junk, and we didn't want it. It was something that had to be taken care of. One of the big problems we had was a man named Brodman. I don't know if you heard about it. He had a whole warehouse full of newspapers he had collected from World War I. And he made all kinds of overtures to have them taken up because he had a certain process he wanted to have applied, which he called the Brodman process. And if we would take all these over, it would require about \$100,000 to use his process, and have all these papers given to the Roosevelt Library.

BROOKS: It would be advertising for him.

SHIPMAN: Oh golly. Not only that, it would take a building. But I worked and wrestled with that and so did the White House, and I took care of that. But certainly sure enough, in due time it came to the attention of the great man, Buck. Why he hadn't known about this great collection, and all of it. Well, he found out, and after he got himself into it, he found he was back where we were, telling Brodman the whole thing was impossible. But he couldn't leave well enough alone. He had to get himself into it because he couldn't leave well enough alone. He had to get himself into it. But there were also questions--not mine--but on which I had to present a position. For instance, the sculptor, Russell. He did the four freedoms sculpture and FDR. Russell had done a bust of FDR. And then he came to the idea of making a statue of the four freedoms, and he wanted to sell it to the Roosevelt Library. And it was a monumental, it was a heroic statue in the sizes of these four figures, and the quotes from the four freedoms speech, and he had all kinds of fine plans for arranging them. The figures were

in the hundreds of thousands of dollars. He had an idea that it was going to be made, and what it would replace, and so forth. Well, he badgered me, and the President didn't want it, and no one at the White House, and these things were turned over to me to say "no." So finally, he was sure that I was the whole reason for blocking it.

They had a bust also of FDR that he wanted to make a big presentation of. And he wanted to put it in the front of the museum. And FDR wouldn't have anything to do with it. Russell got the AHEPA Society, and the only thing I could do was suggested that maybe we could put it in the little garden on the side. Well, the AHEPA Society is a strong Greek Society. And it's a political society as you know. Well, FDR did not want that bust, and the White House did not want that bust, and I couldn't say to the Archivist, you got to tell him because the President tells me, you can't quote the President. And I had to deal with the AHEPA Society, and they wanted it right out in front. And I said, "Well, we can't have a statue out in front." So as a result I said, "Well how about down there in the garden?" FDR said, "Well they won't see it down there, it's all right." So they had a big ceremony, buses and all came up, and it was put down there in the little garden. And they were obviously disappointed--they came to me--and they didn't think much of my suggestion. But I said, "Well I don't want it somewhere else." I couldn't quote anybody. I couldn't quote anyone but myself, and they said I was the dictator around there, and people couldn't do anything without my say-so, because I was to that extent, I guess. So anyway, later on, the Garment Workers' Union had a very fine bust which FDR did like, and he also, of course, was friendly with Dubinsky, and so the bust he selected was to be put just where the AHEPA wanted their bust.

BROOKS: Right out in the center of the court?

SHIPMAN: Right in the center of the court, and it was one the President liked. And that was put there, and then of course in that, we had a grand time. But you can see the organization, but the director of the Library was the one who had to make all the decisions, theoretically. And these were roles that were not understood by Buck--a man like Connor would understand it--he'd worked with FDR; he knew this is part of it. This is why I told you earlier, I think a person like Waldo Leland, and of course like Buck, didn't belong in that kind of operation. Because they couldn't--maybe Leland could--but Buck couldn't leave it alone. He would want to get in there, and he would have everybody at everybody's throat. And this is a thing I worked with all the time.

Now there was a very lovely statue of a woman kneeling that FDR saw one time when he was out traveling, and he admired it, and the sculptor knew he admired it, and FDR said, "will you give it to me?" Well the statue came, but it wasn't the one FDR saw. The man had made a heroic size statue of it, which was about half the size of this room. And so when they saw it, they were horrified. What did we do? We put it behind a clump of trees. But the original was apparently just an average-size woman kneeling and thinking, and here came this big statue of a big buxom woman in heroic size. Well FDR nearly blew his top, and so did everybody else. So I had to find a place, and we found a place there, and of course everybody thought this was going to be a big ceremony. But the thing must weigh about ten tons. And what he wanted was a small statue of a woman kneeling which he had seen and thought was nice. We had all these things to take care of which are not an Archivist's job.

BROOKS: That's right. I learned very quickly some of the things you had to deal with. Many of the same kinds of things. And Grover understood the problems, and he backed me a hundred percent. You get somebody on the telephone and have to talk to them, you have to make up your mind and talk.

SHIPMAN: If it hadn't been that Ruth hated that place, and if I'd known Grover was going to take over, I wouldn't have come away. But I wouldn't take anymore from Buck. Wayne was a human being. Well, these are just some of the other things that happened up there. But then we had the people who sent something in as a gift, and then a year later wanted money for it. Thousands of dollars for it. Or if they didn't want thousands of dollars for it, they wanted it back. And some of the things they wanted back, you're lucky you didn't destroy because they would be something like a house made out of matchsticks, or they crocheted something that a ten year old child could do. Then they would make a claim of it being the work of a year.

BROOKS: And they would want the President to accept it personally in a ceremony.

SHIPMAN: Yes. So you had to keep a record of all that, and I'm sure you did too, Phil, at your place.

BROOKS: Oh, yes, very definitely. Everybody's had a little different relationship with the President. Mr. Truman didn't take quite as detailed activity in the interior of the Library as Roosevelt. I came across just the other night a letter I had written in which I said I had talked to the President that day, and this was three months before the Library was dedicated. And he said, "when the Library is dedicated, I'm going to turn it over to you, and it is up to you to run it."

And he did pretty much, but he was always interested, and he always backed us, and he met researchers and all. It was far from some cases where the President in that kind of relationship like that has seemed not to be much interested.

SHIPMAN: Well now you got two different types of people here, and I do think FDR was quite distinctive in this. And I don't think this would follow for Eisenhower or for any of the others. FDR already had collections--ancestral collections. His whole life he had been a collector and a lover of historical materials. And to him this was just a fruition of one of his dreams. To have and get these things the way he wanted them. This was not something the Presidential part of it came because of its volume and all. I don't know who generated that. But the Library was a natural outgrowth of his own career. Because this is an area in which he was always interested, even before he became President, he was very active, of course, in the Navy Archives. He had Captain Knox put out, as you know, the volumes on the Quasi War with France. He was the one that found all those naval records up in the attic of the old State and War Navy building. He used to tell me how he went up there because I'd been up in the same room, and we could talk about the same dusty attics. He would almost liked to have been an archivist, you know. And that's something that wasn't part of the other people. And in addition to that, he was restricted more. People, unless they were with him and saw him because he got so much accomplished, didn't understand that this man was physically restricted. Now President Truman was a healthy individual--he could walk around and do things. FDR had to be wheeled around in a wheelchair. I've wheeled him around, and he's been helpless in a room with me many times. He's sat on the floor with me many times so he could get to books and talk. He's been literally a helpless figure I've had in my care. And books and papers and archives and history, he loved them. I think if he were not President, he would have been a good man to be head of a place like the American Antiquarian Library, something of that kind. So he was a different character.

BROOKS: Yeah, I think that's a valid distinction between him and all the succeeding Presidents.

SHIPMAN: And anybody. He was that kind of person. I don't think there's been anybody quite that intensely interested. He saved everything. And he knew about material you know, looking for it. So this business of the Library, well, it was just natural for him to want to know how it was going to be placed. And the fact that he took as many of my recommendations as he did, to me, to this day is flattering. And much of what is in that Library is my own imprint. This to me is exceedingly flattering, and he took an attitude that I had a certain expertise. He knew I had had my years at the American Antiquarian Society Library, and

he was a member of the American Antiquarian Society himself. And he had spoken at their centennial, and he knew what it was. So he knew that I had some of the same appreciation for historical material, and books and their care and their use, and so forth. And he knew also that my associations with leading historians and research people were such that we were talking in the same general area. It was unnatural for him not to know whether or not he'd gotten some new books in, or some new records, or if somebody had been looking at something, or somebody had found something. And people who knew this used the Library or means to get to the Library, as a means to get to him. And that's why as Director, I was put in an unusual situation, because they knew if you want to get to FDR, talk about the Library or go up and see it. And you get all kinds--you knew very well many times people were coming up and doing all sorts of talking about the Library, but that was not their objective. This was the way that they could say that they were involved in something or gave something or did something, that they'd get some kind of an "in" with FDR. Either chance to talk to him, or see him, or meet him, or get him to do something.

BROOKS: They used the Truman Library that way even years after Mr. Truman was out of the White House. But it wouldn't be so great a factor as with the President still in office as President.

SHIPMAN: No. And it was very obvious that after he died, many people who were so solicitous were certainly turned off quick, and I could name some names. I've learned one thing--I can understand why some people, when they have it going for them, they just don't give the other fellow any room. That's what happened. As soon as they got something going for them, they will play it to the hilt, and they can be supplicant, they can be anything. And as soon as they think the power is gone, you find out that they drop off.

Then on the other hand, I saw lots and lots of people who were not that way. I don't mean to imply everybody's that way. I had people come after FDR died and bring their children and ask to see me, and ask if I would shake their child's hand, just so they could say, "someone who shook FDR's hand, the child has shaken." Also, this was true--I had people like Schenley's daughter. Sam Rosenmann brought her up after FDR died. She was an attractive, young woman; it was a Sunday. There was Sam and his wife and this young woman. And he said, "Fred, I wanted you to meet her." So we had a picnic. He called me and said, "She's broken up. She's broken hearted. To her, FDR was practically God, so she wants to be with you; she wants you to talk about him, talk about things that would give her a feeling of--you know." She wanted to talk about him.

BROOKS: Yes. How many times was Roosevelt up there? Not a numerical count, but was it frequent, was it every weekend?

SHIPMAN: Well it depended upon the period. In the winter, he didn't get up there as often as in good weather. Two times you could be sure he would be up there--one was when the Dogwood came out; he always had to be there for Christmas.

He owned the Tuxedo Apartments in New York City. You know what he wanted to do? He had a furnished apartment. He wanted to give it to me so I could be down there and have money to buy anything I wanted. I wouldn't do it in the first place, but the temptation was there.

BROOKS: Did you see much of Hopkins?

SHIPMAN: Well you say "much." I saw him quite a little, but not every day.

BROOKS: Up there or more when you were down here?

SHIPMAN: More up there. Of course, I saw Sam a lot. And knew a lot of political people.

BROOKS: Rosenman was in New York City, right?

SHIPMAN: At first he was down in Washington; then Sam bought himself a home up in Hyde Park. He thought that FDR was going to do some work up in Hyde Park, and he bought himself a place up there, upon the hill opposite the cottage. And then FDR didn't spend any time up there, and Sam was rather put out. He thought they were going to do some work together. But Sam would be around. It would depend upon how things were going; there was no pattern that you could say that this is what FDR would do. Except to say those two times, he would be there. You knew when the Dogwood's coming out, and you knew Christmas. Now Thanksgiving, he generally went down to Warm Springs. He would come up there as often as he could. Sometimes he'd come up every other week, and sometimes he wouldn't come up--especially in the winter time--he didn't come up quite so fast. The winter was pretty rough up there.

BROOKS: I believe you told me that he always had the staff for an evening at Christmastime?

SHIPMAN: Oh, yes.

BROOKS: Rosenman is an interesting guy to me, especially, because in a way, he was a carryover from Roosevelt to Truman. I don't know when or how he became close to Mr. Truman. But he did become close enough so that his was the last hand in the wording of Truman's letter to the Government February 12, 1957, giving his materials to the Government. He was the first of about two or three lawyers to work on Mr. Truman's will. As I say, I don't know whether that just developed because he was on the White House staff at the time Truman took over and he got to know him then, or what.

SHIPMAN: Well Sam actually didn't work--I don't believe you'd call him on the White House staff--he had certain assignments. But you see, Sam at one time was Supreme Court Justice in New York State.

BROOKS: Yes.

SHIPMAN: And he was counsellor when FDR was Governor, then was called down as a speech writer, and he was in and out.

BROOKS: He once had the title of Special Counsel at the White House.

SHIPMAN: Special Counsel. But he didn't keep that. He did other things. Sam was back and forth in the Government. But on most of FDR's speeches, Sam was involved. And I think, if for any reason, Sam was known for being a pretty solid, loyal, and dependable person, and he was not the person to be panicked. On the other hand, to me, he was a very honest person. He was nobody who was taken by ambition. I think he was pleased with what he was doing. I think his work was recognized. He was a hard worker, and he had a very pleasing personality. He was not a sycophant. He was not a person, when you knew him, that would make you feel that he's trying to please you. But if you talked to him, you talked to him directly, and he talked to you directly. And if you talked to him about any problem you had, he was not gushy or anything; he would listen, and he would give you very good advice. I mean he was not a person to take you lightly. At the same time, you always felt--well, these are the things; this is the situation, and I think this is the way to handle it, and you felt rather secure. I'm a great admirer of Sam.

BROOKS: Oh, I am too.

SHIPMAN: I think that President Truman was fortunate in having him stay over from the Roosevelt Administration.

BROOKS: He stayed in the White House for about a year, and got to be a close friend of Truman. So he and Mrs. Rosenman went to Europe with him after the Trumans got out of the White House. In 1970, the Hallmark Gallery in New York had a Truman exhibit, and I went to New York a couple of times in that connection. I was there for the opening of this rather extensive exhibit and went around with Mr. and Mrs. Rosenman. At one point, we got to a draft of a speech that was on exhibit, and he was just tickled to death. He said that was his handwriting and interlineations. He had drafted and revised the speech. He's a delightful person.

SHIPMAN: Well, he's a very able person.

BROOKS: Yes.

SHIPMAN: And as I say, I know he was the attorney for Schenley. That's why he had Schenley's daughter sent to me. I always remember an incident--these are things I've often thought I'd put in a book--you ask me about Harry Hopkins, and we're talking about Sam Rosenman. It was about the time--it was before FDR went for the fourth term. It was somewhere I would say perhaps in about '41 or 2, before James Curley of Boston was convicted on that last conviction he had, you know, before he went to jail because I'm talking now about something I didn't plan to talk about. But anyway, Curley had been making some remarks that were critical about what FDR was doing, and it irritated Sam, and it irritated Sam, and it irritated Harry Hopkins, particularly. And Harry and Sam used to come into my office and shut the door, and the three of us would talk.

BROOKS: In Hyde Park or down here?

SHIPMAN: Hyde Park. And so they'd feel very free, and they'd come into my office and use my phone, and we'd sit down and talk. They'd fill me in, and they were looking out for FDR's interests. If I had anything to tell them about the Library, I'd tell them so that they would feel that they also knew. In the first place, it was nothing conspiratorial; it was nothing wrong; it was just how things were going, or something like that. And it was not political because I never got involved in politics, and I thought that would be the undoing of the office. I've always felt this, and I'm sure you do too, that if we wanted to keep this professional, there was a pretty thin line here. And while we had to work with politicians to keep ourselves as professionals, and to defend the profession. If I wanted in politics, then I'd better not be under the Archivist of the United States, and I never did; I never did use it politically. But I got in and heard a lot, and I had my feelings about a lot of things, but I never took part in any political activity and never wrote anything.

I don't know what Curley had done, but it was making Harry so mad. Finally, Harry said, "I want to get Curley in Boston." And I said, "Well, do you have his number?" He said, "I'll give you his number, get your secretary." And then I got my secretary, gave her his number, and I said, "Put this on for him." And he said, "After she's got him, tell her to hang up." She got Jim Curley on the phone in Boston. He was not Mayor then, he'd been out. He'd been Governor. And I don't know to this day; I wish I could remember at the moment. But Harry Hopkins said, "You God damn lousy son of a bitch of a bastard. You saying these things. Who the Hell . . . I'm gonna cut your throat, we're gonna do this, we're gonna do . . . and poor Sam Rosenman was there, "Harry, don't talk that way, Harry, don't do that to him." And Harry was saying, "Shut up, Sam, I'm trying to hear the bastard." This went on--a tirade--for about ten minutes, and I thought Sam--you see it was two different men. Sam felt as strongly as

Harry did about Curley, but "Don't do it, that's the worst thing you can do." But not Harry; Harry said, "I got a kick out of it; I feel better; I told the bastard off." But I thought Miss Van Kieran would leave the Library because I know her. Unfortunately, the director's door, it was much like this, and that was not well insulated, and you could hear everything in our office, and Harry was hollering over the phone. And oh, what he called Curley, and poor Sam went walking around the room to me, "Fred, let's make him . . . we've got to make him stop. Harry, don't do it." And Sam's hands were going; his head was shaking. This is true, I'm not exaggerating. It was really something out of the front page.

But I want this thing to be very definitely clear. Obviously, I saw a lot of political things, and obviously, I had a lot of political sympathies, but I always maintained a professional position in everything I did. I never, even to this day, have used that position in a political manner--of course I'm not politically active anyway. And that became a problem, more perhaps than you had. While he was in office, I had pressure from politicians to do all kinds of things, which was another reason which made it difficult to work with Buck. Connor knew this. You see, my position was different than anyone of you people; I was still with the President of the United States, and people assumed that I was going to do political things. And I could have done one political thing, which I did finally, after FDR died. I went to President Truman and told him to get rid of Buck. That's it.

BROOKS: Fred, was the museum opened a year or so after the building was turned over to the Government?

SHIPMAN: Yes, after the dedication, after it was taken over by the Archivist. We opened the museum to the public; we did not open any of the papers.

BROOKS: And you didn't until after Roosevelt died, right?

SHIPMAN: No. No papers were opened until after FDR died.

BROOKS: Although you did get some papers up there in that time.

SHIPMAN: Well, yes. What we had up there were, first we had, of course, his private papers as Governor. The Governor's papers were officially retained by the State of New York, but the papers relating to his private activities as Governor were in the Library. His papers relating to the campaigns for Governor, and the papers relating to the campaigns for Presidency, and many other related papers from smaller . . . His private papers and collections--relating to historical events and his papers on naval history, and that sort of

thing. But perhaps the most significant thing that we were to contend with were the White House papers. That was the reason why the Roosevelt Library was established and accepted by the Federal Government, and that was where we kept most of our attention. And what was given over from that was the papers that were considered unnecessary--really overflow files from the White House. They would be in the nature of papers related to gifts, special events, papers on his trips abroad, and speeches, and miscellaneous types of material. The lengthy files and the more important files were retained, were not released until after FDR's death.

BROOKS: They were not transferred to the Library.

SHIPMAN: Before I left the Library, I saw to it that all of FDR's papers were placed by and legally deposited there. No, not transferred to the Library. That became another matter at the time of his death because they kept all but the most active papers in the White House. There were from time to time overflow papers that were considered no longer necessary, and they were sent up.

BROOKS: Well, would the papers that were sent up, these that you've enumerated, were they open to scholars?

SHIPMAN: No, they weren't. Nothing was open to scholars at that time.

BROOKS: I didn't think so. But work was done on arranging them, and anything like work with descriptions.

SHIPMAN: Work was done on arranging them, that's right. These were papers which the President himself would send up, or have sent up. Sometimes, for instance, when there was a major problem relating to a public issue, there were many times that people would write in, and the items were kept together, perhaps relating to the Neutrality Act or things of that kind. But after the time they had been there, their continuing reference was unnecessary, but they were still something worth keeping. These were papers that could be taken out of the White House files and be brought up to Hyde Park. But papers that had to be actively used were never purposely sent to the Library during his Presidency. Papers relating to his speeches, for instance, he would send--he sent us many of those speech files so that we could have those, and the drafts, and so forth. But the body of the papers didn't come until after his death. Most of them were kept in the White House. I haven't got the reports that tell each year what we brought in. But meanwhile, we also made effort to get papers from other sources, and there were some coming in, and there were other sources I asked, such as members of the Cabinet and the like, but they came in in dribs and drabs, not too many. And a few papers from Louis Howe came in, that sort of thing.

But the major collection of the White House papers were still in the White House at the time of FDR's death.

BROOKS: Before we get to that, can I ask you a couple of questions about activities during the war? You were down here at the White House; you were stationed here first.

SHIPMAN: That's right.

BROOKS: 1943. Was that when?

SHIPMAN: '43.

BROOKS: What were your activities then? I remember visiting the White House then, and you took me into the White House files; we talked to Captain Ingling and so forth. What were you doing primarily?

SHIPMAN: Well, there I was making a survey of the general business administration of the White House. I made a study of the White House organization and all its operations. And then I also made a select catalog of materials relating to some of the war agencies, with the intention of making some kind of a record of the establishment of war administration. But I found one thing that was discouraging, and that was that they didn't want the classified material to be cataloged, and as a result of that, I felt that I was just touching the periphery. I worked then with Herring.

BROOKS: Pendleton Herring at the Budget Bureau, yes.

SHIPMAN: The Committee on Records of War Administration. And when questions came up regarding what might have been taking place in relation to the problems that different members of that group were looking into, I would try to get answers from the White House files, and I would also get some answers to the questions I had. Some of these people were writing papers on the operations of the different war agencies. I never wrote a paper because it would require a White House paper, and the Pendleton Herring committee was getting into more and more difficulty. So people like V. O. Key did write some things. And I found also that every time that you went to write something, you got deeply involved into the political aspects of what was going on, and there was a limit to which I could go into the White House and ask questions regarding what FDR was doing. For instance, there was obviously a group who were quite favorable to Cordell Hull and were quite inimical to FDR, and thought that FDR was unfair to him, and could I get to the background of all this? Well, there is a point

beyond which I could not go in to the President and ask him why he didn't treat Cordell Hull as a man in a way to which they thought he was entitled to because of his political position as Secretary of State. These were interesting questions, but I learned something from FDR. I'll tell you an example that put me onto my dealing with him in these regards, because I, at the outset, had tried to get a great deal more of this free information from FDR about what he thought and did in his political life, and I found him to be very, very cagey, we'll call it. The example I want to give is when I had a study made of my staff of the Seabury investigation of Jimmy Walker.

The thing is I had members of the staff each take a portion of FDR's activity in the Government, and then we'd have weekly meetings, and they would--not each one each week, but we'd schedule them a month ahead or two, and they'd prepare something so they could give a little paper to the staff, and then we had a bibliography, and then we'd discuss. So we'd get acquainted with FDR, the political life, the Government, and all that. And one of the men had this question of the Walker investigation. And he gave his paper, and then he said the thing which baffled him was what would FDR have done if Jimmy Walker hadn't just resigned and gone to Europe, when he did, because he was confronted with this Seabury investigation which exposed Walker, and it was up to FDR to remove Walker, or if he didn't, it would perhaps have spoiled his chances of becoming President of the United States--FDR was then Governor of New York. So I said I think that's a very fine thing; I'll tell you what, when FDR comes up next time, I'll ask him. The next time I saw the President, we were talking, as we would do very often in his office, and I told him just what I said, and he was delighted that I was making this study. He thought this was great because it would put the staff--you know--he felt the knowledge of these things important. And I said that at the last meeting we had, there was a question that we all wanted to know about. "What would you have done, Mr. President, if Jimmy Walker had not resigned and left the country?" Because you were in a dilemma, if you went against him, you had Tammany to deal with, and of course, you were Governor, you were anticipating your campaign for Presidency. And if you didn't go against him, the people would say it was corruption, and you didn't fight it, and you would perhaps lose out on the national scene. What were you going to do?" You know what he said? "Gosh, I don't know."

So you can imagine me asking him why he was doing what he was doing with Cordell Hull knowing the place of Pendleton Herring's group. Not because I didn't think that it was a valid question, but I thought it would be a foolish error on my part. So many things that people said, "find out," you just don't. There were certainly a lot of things I would have liked to have known. One of the things that made it possible for me to work with FDR was there were certain things I didn't know. But I was urged to go into it. Even my own natural instincts were such that I would like to know, but I didn't ask him. And the reason I didn't ask him was obvious, and if I had, I would have become persona non grata without any further ado. Because FDR could turn you off as fast, and he was a charming person.

And I recall that when Sam Morison had a young man whom they wanted to put on the staff of the Library, a Harvard man, and this fellow had been out at Chicago, and he had been in the play "Waiting for Lefty." The author of the play, "Waiting for Lefty," was Clifford Odets. I remember the name now. And Clifford Odets was persona non grata because he was considered a Communist. Well, FDR was of course pretty liberal, but I was surprised. Anyway, when Dr. Connor got the whole thing, he talked about it to Frank Walker, and they had an investigation, and they found out from Morgenthau and from the Secret Service that the reason that FDR took the position was this boy had been in this play of Clifford Odets', and that group had been marked as for Communism. That was it. So Connor then reported this to Sam Morison, and Morison was outraged. So Morison came down, and I believe it was to the White House; he went to see the President. It might have been at Hyde Park, but I don't recall. And apparently he brought this subject up again about this boy and said it was terrible; this fellow was fine and all--Morison made a very strong pitch. And FDR said that it was decided, that he didn't want to have anymore to say about it.

Well, after this was all over, Dr. Connor came up to Hyde Park and had a visit. He'd been alone with the President. When he came out to me, he said, "You want to be careful now and understand this man." He told me how Sam Morison, who was one of FDR's best friends, had dared to go in there and try to persuade him to change his mind about this appointment. And he said FDR reminded Dr. Connor about this. He said, "You know, sometimes Sam Morison goes too far," and he said, "you know, there's a point." His Dutch was up, as we called it, "and you just don't go too far with President Roosevelt." And these people who said "why don't you do that, and why don't you do this," would have had me go too far, and I know when far was far enough. This was what I was trying to give as an example. As a matter of fact, I recall that later on, Sam Morison was extremely interested in writing the naval history of the war, and finally, FDR gave Sam an appointment as Commander in the Navy. One day I came up, and we were talking, and he sat there and he laughed, and I think it almost connected up with this story. He said, "You know, Fred, you know where I got Sam Morison at now? Boy, he's out in the middle of the Pacific, out there writing history." And he laughed his head off as if to say, "that'll teach him a lesson."

But you had to gauge your relationship with FDR. You couldn't let other people tell you what to do. Again I'll go back on this question. This is perhaps a matter of administration. But these things are why I appreciated Dr. Connor. He was a scholar, a historian, and archivist, but he was a wise man. He was a very human man, and he understood, and he understood my problems. And if he thought I was wrong, I never felt that he would hesitate to say so. There was never a time--I don't mean to say that to everything I did, Dr. Connor said "great"--oh no, he would sit down and talk to me and say well this is the thing . . . this ought to be. And he would straighten me out. But I always had confidence in that kind of understanding, and he understood this thing. And

he would also alert me to how these things happen, and I'm sure of this, if I'm never sure of anything else, there are two people that FDR really liked. One was Robert Connor and the other was myself. Now this may sound egotistical, but I know that FDR liked Bob Connor, and he liked me.

BROOKS: Well, I saw that from a number of files that there was a good relationship.

SHIPMAN: Oh yes.

BROOKS: Let's get back, briefly if we may, to the time you were in Washington during the war. You had an office in the White House.

SHIPMAN: That's right.

BROOKS: West wing.

SHIPMAN: That's right.

BROOKS: For how long a time?

SHIPMAN: Well actually I had that office, I could use it until FDR died. But then I made these trips, and was in and out of there. I worked back and forth, and I had an office in the National Archives . . . I was floating for a while then, which was a very difficult thing. I was floating--I was taking my responsibilities for the Roosevelt Library by going back and forth and staying with the White House, and also on this Committee on Records of the War Administration, and then getting concerned about the preservation of records and archives in war areas. So I was doing many things, and I had an office in the White House; I had a place to work in the National Archives Building, and I had an office up in Hyde Park. And if that sounds important, I'll tell you it was very disturbing. I didn't feel sometimes I knew where I was supposed to be. And I was breathless sometimes just trying to get around to the things that I wanted to do, and I felt that I was not accomplishing much because the actual job that I was assigned to originally was to be Director of the Roosevelt Library, and FDR was going to come up there, and we were going to work together--organize his papers and get things done. I was thrown into a completely unexpected situation. Although I must say, it was fascinating because out of it, I came in contact--and I had in my office--privately, people like Martha of Norway, Juliana of the Netherlands, King Peter of Yugoslavia, King George of Greece, Zita of Austria; all of these people came in and one of the things they would do was come and visit the Director of the Library. And I would have them there as people to talk to and about . . . and then they would get a kind of . . . And of course Winston Churchill, the Duke of Kent, and all of these people. Plus the fact that I was down in Washington, and I was up on the Hill. I was on the floor

of the Congress when Madame Chiang Kai-Shek addressed the Congress. I was on the floor of the Congress when FDR gave his Yalta report, and of course I was at affairs where there were group meetings and social affairs with the people of the Cabinet. And also there was a polite treatment of me, a deference on the part of most people because I was with the President. It was a heady sort of thing. But at the same time, there were times when you felt like . . . you know I always imagined what the parson feels when he has to go around and visit his parishioners--his rich parishioners. And because I wasn't a politician. I had an honored position as a gift, but I wasn't a politician. And I had nothing to give. It was a strange but exciting situation, and I learned a great deal, and there were many things I did. As a matter of fact, of course, . . . this would be naturally understood by anybody who knew how it went.

BROOKS: You were away from the Library for fairly long stretches?

SHIPMAN: Oh yes. From '43 til the end of about '45, I was away from the Library for perhaps three-quarters or seven-eighths of the time.

BROOKS: Was Ed Nixon there to take over?

SHIPMAN: Ed Nixon was in charge, and he was the number two man there. And during that time I was away, I was at the White House or I was on these missions in North Africa, Southern Europe, and the Mediterranean theater, and then in the European theater, and in work relating to the preparation of those, and the reporting on those, and had a continued active interest in those.

BROOKS: When did you first become active in the protection of archives in Europe? How did that develop?

SHIPMAN: Well, I'll give you the beginning of it, and then you can pick up. Because actually the person to blame is Ernst Posner. You remember, we had luncheons every so often--and we were having a luncheon at which Ernst Posner read a paper. I've forgotten where it was. It might have been the Harrington Hotel or one of those places. It was a weekday, but it was a luncheon, and the idea was that Ernst would read a paper. And he read this paper about the experience in the handling and protection of records in Europe--historically. And what was happening to the archives. (May 5, 1943, published as "Public Records under Military Occupation.") And he gave an example from the past. And also in it he spoke of what was being considered today--in that day about what was happening in Europe. Well this stimulated me to have an interest in this, and I saw the implications of it. And obviously I felt there would need to be something done at a high level. And that was what Ernst was talking about. So when I came back to the White House--at that time I was in the White House during the war years--I wrote a memorandum to FDR. And in it I told him that I had had this experience, and I felt that it was a subject

that really should be given priority and consideration. That there were people engaged in it, and I particularly mentioned Dr. Posner as a person whose information and abilities should not go unnoticed, and that this subject should be pursued. I got a note back from FDR--his personal note--and he said, "I've got this in train." He didn't say what he was going to do about it. I didn't talk to him about it because the war was on, and you don't bother the President that much. And he was glad; he said, "Thanks, I've got this subject in train." That was his way of saying "I've got it under control." So I came back and I told Ernst and Ernst was flabbergasted and flattered to think that his name had been brought up to the President of the United States. I did it. Oh, I liked Ernst. I'd do it in terms of Ernst anyway, as a person. But I didn't do it in that sense. I did it because here's a good man, and here's a problem, and here's an area. I did it--impersonally I would have done it, whether I liked Ernst or not--I liked him, but that wasn't why I did it; it was because of what he was. And he was flattered. Well then this drew more attention, and the President was interested, and it began to indicate his interest in the protection of records. So with that, Holmes got into the act. And I don't know who appointed Holmes. I guess the Archivist. And as Holmes got into it, they got the Monuments and Fine Arts Commission which had already been established to add Archives to it. And when they got into that area . . . President's interest in it. And it was looked upon as being a good way to stir up an interest. In other words, my position, let's put it that way, with the President, gave me influence to start something which was on dead center. FDR was enthusiastic because he talked about it, and I think Buck had talked to him about it--wrote him a letter or something. So this was interesting, and he became interested. So that there was a great deal more to it, but this is the beginning of it. But it did do this--it broke the ice for this particular activity, and I was -- before I left for Africa, the Army, they took my picture, and I never saw it. I was down in Norfolk. And they wanted a picture of the first American Archivist to go abroad for the preservation of records in a war zone, and I never got it. Considine took my picture. And I always have meant to get it. I think I looked so scared at the time, I didn't know if I wanted the picture. But that, you must remember, was war-time in the raw, and when I went down in Norfolk waiting for my ship to come out, a troop ship, I had to wait until they took off troops of German prisoners, and they were very grave. It was really serious by the time I got to Norfolk. How I came to Norfolk is another story, but by the time I got to Norfolk, it was grim. And there were times when I wondered if it was a foolish thing to do or not. But like anything else, you get to the point of no return, and just keep on going, and it's stimulating, and you get into it. And I've had lots of experience. I have extensive daily journals of my wartime missions.