

Current work reflects legacy of hard-won independence

Exciting and invaluable work is being done every day in this great agency; I can think of no better time to be a part of this vital organization.

As I am sure you know, April 1, 2005, marked NARA's 20th anniversary as an independent Government agency. Led by former Archivist Robert Warner, a dedicated band of NARA staff members; historians, archivists, genealogists, and NARA users; the media; and, finally, key players in Congress restored NARA's independence in 1985.

While the general public may not recognize this as a major milestone, there is no doubt that without NARA's independence, this country and its citizens would be hard-pressed to have an archival program able to operate professionally, non-politically, and in the national interest.

Although the National Archives had been created as an independent agency in 1934, it was transferred to the newly created General Services Administration (GSA) in 1949. It soon became evident, however, that the basic missions of the Archives and GSA were not compatible.

Today NARA has a state-of-the-art building in College Park, MD, as well as new and improved facilities across the country. The majestic National Archives Building in downtown Washington, DC, has been renovated, and the National Archives Experience provides an increase in public awareness and offers visitors a truly unique glimpse into the records of our nation. The Electronic Records Archives is addressing previously intractable electronic records issues and has created for NARA a pioneering role in this far-from-resolved realm. None of this would have been possible without Bob Warner's crusade for independence and all those who supported it.

This spring we are commemorating the 20th anniversary of NARA independence with special programs for both the NARA family and our supporters. During the first week of April, staff at each of our facilities gathered for group photos, just as was done 20 years ago. These photos will be posted to the *NARA@work* web site.

On May 19, an evening reception will be held in the Rotunda galleries and portico of Archives I, as the Research Center is formally dedicated to Robert Warner. On the afternoon of May 20, two wide-ranging panel discussions will cover NARA's campaign for



independence, its past achievements, and its future challenges. The panel discussions will be webcast to all NARA facilities nationwide. (Details to come.) A special anniversary booklet chronicling NARA's 20 years as an independent agency will be distributed to all employees.

I also want to bring you up to date in this *Staff Bulletin* on recent negotiations regarding the Presidential records of Richard M. Nixon, which resulted in an agreement and timetable for making the Nixon Library a part of our Presidential library system.

According to the Presidential Recordings and Materials Preservation Act of 1974 (PRMPA), records of the Nixon White House relating to Presidential duties, as opposed to political and personal activities, were to be kept in the Washington area. They are currently housed at Archives II. In our FY 2004 appropriations bill, Congress permitted the transfer of these records outside the Washington area when a suitable archival facility meeting the required standards for Presidential libraries became available.

Under the agreement with the Nixon Foundation, NARA will formally accept the Nixon Library in February 2006, following notice to Congress and subject to completion of the necessary retrofitting of the facility to bring it into compliance with NARA's building requirements, the existence of adequate additional funding in the FY 2006 budget, and the terms laid out in the agreement. The Nixon Foundation will be responsible for securing funds to build the additional space necessary to store the Nixon archival materials now held by NARA in College Park and at the Pacific Region archives in Laguna Niguel, CA.

Once NARA assumes control of the library, the Nixon Presidential materials will be transferred to the Yorba Linda, CA, facility. The complete transfer will require four to five years, and the review of the White House tapes by NARA staff will continue to its completion, some time in 2008 or 2009.

The Nixon Foundation has agreed to

donate to the NARA-operated library the personal/political material from the tapes and papers controlled by the PRMPA, along with Nixon's pre-Presidential and post-Presidential records, other than personal/family-related materials, thus providing at one location all the records of Richard M. Nixon's career, including his Presidency (1969-74).

Once it is part of the NARA system, the Nixon Library will operate in accordance with National Archives statutes, regulations, and practices governing the Nixon materials and Presidential libraries in general. It will be staffed by NARA personnel employed by the Federal Government in accordance with Federal personnel recruitment and hiring procedures. At some point, I will appoint a new director for the library.

In consultation with NARA staff, the Nixon Library has also agreed to revise the exhibit dealing with Watergate and the events that led to Nixon's resignation in 1974. The library will also co-sponsor a wide-ranging and multi-perspective conference on the Vietnam War and other programs reflecting diverse opinions.

As a strong supporter of NARA's Presidential library system, I look forward to the Nixon Library joining the system and adding to the rich resources already available at NARA for the study of an important period in 20th-century American history.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Allen Weinstein". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

ALLEN WEINSTEIN
Archivist of the United States

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