



AGREEMENT WITH THE
NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS SERVICE
AS TO ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

I, Herbert E. Angel, of Potomac, Maryland, in accordance with the Federal Property and Administrative Services Act of 1949, as amended (44 U.S.C. 397) and regulations issued thereunder (41 CFR 101-110), hereby assign to the United States for administration by the National Archives and Records Service all my rights, title, and interest, including any literary property rights that I may have in them, in the tape recording and transcript of the interview with me conducted by Philip C. Brooks on behalf of the National Archives and Records Service at Washington, DC, on January 24, February 13, and April 5, 1973.

It is agreed that the tape (or sample portion thereof), and transcript will be available under the regulations prescribed by the Archivist of the United States as soon as the final form of the transcript has been deposited in the National Archives. It is also agreed that only the National Archives and Records Service shall have the right to publish or authorize the publication of the interview in whole or in part, aside from quotation in the normal concept of "fair use," providing that I or my heirs, legal representatives or assigns retain the right to publish in other form the statements or facts set forth in the interviews.

Signed Herbert E. Angel
Date June 6, 1975

Accepted:

Signed James B. Rhoads
Archivist of the United States
Date June 23, 1975

NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS SERVICE

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Interviews with

HERBERT E. ANGEL

Former Deputy Archivist of the
United States

Major Biographical Information:

Born, Roanoke, Virginia	1907
A.B. George Washington University	1930
M.A. George Washington University	1932
Graduate student, Johns Hopkins University	1932-1933
Graduate student, American University	1938-1943
Publicity Director, Strayer College	1926-1930, 1934-1936
Instructor in Journalism, Strayer College	1934-1935
Editorial Assistant, Department of State	1932-1936
Private Stenographer to Secretary of State at International Conference of American States, Montevideo	1933-1934
Assistant to Director of Publications, National Archives	1936-1941
Assistant to the Archivist of the United States also Acting Director of Information and Publications	1941-1943 1941-1942
Lieutenant to Commander, U.S.N.R., Office of Records Management, Navy Department	1943-1946
Director (civilian), Office of Records Management, Navy Department	1946-1950
Member, Consulting team on budget and Staffing, U.S. Economic Cooperation Administration, Korea	1948

Member, Task Force on Records Management, Hoover Commission	1948-1949
Member, Task Force on Paperwork Management, Hoover Commission	1954-1955
Director, Records Management Division, National Archives and Records Service, General Services Administration	1950-1956
U.S. Specialist, State Department Educational Program, Iran; Teaching archives and records management in University of Iran; making recommendations to Iranian government	1954
Assistant Archivist for Records Management, NARS, GSA	1956-1959
Lecturer, American University, 1938-1942, 1952; Director, Records Management Institute, 1956-1958; Adjunct Professor 1960-1968	
Director of Administration, GSA	1959-1962
Assistant Archivist for Records Management, NARS	1962-1964
Assistant Archivist for Federal Records Centers, NARS	1964-1968
Deputy Archivist of the United States, NARS, GSA	1968-1972
Retired	1972

Interviewed at the National Archives
January 24, February 13, and April 5, 1973

Interviewer - Philip C. Brooks

NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS SERVICE

Oral History Project

Interview with Herbert E. Angel
Former Deputy Archivist of the United States
Washington, DC - January 24, 1973

Interviewer - Philip C. Brooks

BROOKS: Herbert, as I have indicated to you I think it is important to record how the initial staff of the National Archives was selected and what special experiences, interests, and talents they brought to the staff. Certainly the development of the institution has been very much affected by the character and the ability of the people who started out here. Tell me a little about what you did before you came to the Archives. What did you regard as your special interests or accomplishments. In what, for example, did you take your M.A. at George Washington?

ANGEL: Well, suppose I answer that a little bit later on. Let me start this way--I came to Washington in 1918, when I was a kid of 11. I was born in Roanoke, but I came here from Petersburg and went to grade school and high school in Washington, Eastern High. Incidentally one of my classmates over there was General Wheeler, the former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Then out of Eastern High I went not directly to college, that is not academic college, but to Strayer College, a commercial college because I had won a scholarship there. I spent a year in taking a secretarial course. This proved to be quite useful later on, because as a result of my contact there I worked every summer during college for Strayer College, and I worked nights all the time I was in college. I worked in various capacities during the summer--as publicity and advertising manager, sometimes as the head of their employment service, and then all the time at night as an evening school registrar.

After I finished college, which was George Washington, I had been majoring in history and with minors in political science, English, and French. And at that time a magazine had moved its headquarters to Washington, a magazine called Pan American Magazine, which was sponsored by an organization called the Geographical and Historical Society of the Americas. This magazine was in the general format of the National Geographic, and it ran while I was there for 11 months, at which time it folded during the depression as so many other magazines did. I was--I guess my title was Assistant Editorial Director and I was on the editorial staff. The Editorial Director of the magazine was Dean Henry Grattan Doyle of George Washington University,

who was the one who asked me to take that particular position.

Then in order to get a better handle on Latin American activities, which I had not previously studied, I started concurrently with my work on the Pan American Magazine on my master's degree in Latin American history. So I continued all that year and all the following year on Latin American history and finally took my master's in it at George Washington under Curtis Wilgus. My masters thesis had to do with a Venezuela propaganda man in London, Luís López Méndez, who spent a good part of his time in jail because he couldn't pay his debts in London.

Then, with the folding of the magazine I had odd jobs of one kind or another I guess, and then I was offered a job by the Department of State as an editorial clerk. I previously, oh, back when I was in college, had taken examinations on two different occasions for Editorial Clerk, and so I was glad I was able to get the job in the State Department as Editorial Clerk, equivalent to grade four \$1800 bucks. For that the State Department expected you to have at least one college degree and the knowledge of at least one foreign language. I was in the editorial section under the head of the Division of Research and Publication. The Historical Adviser at that time was Hunter Miller, and his assistant, who later became head of the Division of Research and Publication, was Cyril Wynne; and Cyril Wynne's assistant was Wilder Spaulding.

In the State Department I did a fair number of different kinds of editorial jobs--the two principal ones, I guess, were (1) indexing seven of the volumes of the Foreign Relations of the United States and, in the case of a couple of the volumes, checking or preparing abstracts, or as they call them, "Lists of Papers" of the documents printed in the Foreign Relations, (2) also I edited and supervised the publication of the Register of the Department of State for three of the years. While I was in the Department of State, my first year there as a matter of fact, I took a year of work in modern European history in what they called a "seminary" over at John Hopkins University under Kent Roberts Greenfield.

Then in 1933, following the London Economic Conference, the State Department agreed to participate in the seventh International Conference of American States at Montevideo. I applied for a chance to go on the Conference, since I had been involved so recently in Latin American history, and also since I had the knowledge of shorthand and typing which I picked up earlier at Strayer College. After a bit I was told that the Secretary of State wanted to take a male stenographer along with him on the Conference because the international conferences are fairly rugged, they require a 7-day week and a daily stint from eight in the morning til midnight. And Hull's regular secretary, a woman who had been with him on Capitol Hill, had had enough by the time the London

conference was over. So I applied for that, and I was given a try out by Hull. I took summaries of his diplomatic interviews with various ambassadors for a couple weeks and was able to demonstrate that I could handle his dictation, shorthand, and typewriting generally. So I went with him on the Montevideo Conference, and that was a 3-month assignment, at the tail-end of 33 and on into 34. Following the conference I designed and edited the conference publications and an ornamental volume of the addresses and statements issued by the Secretary of State during the course of the conference.

Meanwhile, one of my fellow editors at the State Department was a girl by the name of Virginia Burbank. We became interested in each other and we wanted to be married, but it was not possible to do that and still both work in the State Department under the Government rules prevailing there. So I began looking around for other possibilities. I had been offered a position in the non-career consular service by the Secretary's office, and my assignment would have been Istanbul. But because of illnesses in my own family, I did not want to get overseas assignment, neither did I want to go into the non-career service, and foreign service examinations were not being given at that time.

So, in looking around I read of the establishment of the National Archives, and filed an application there. I also got Cyril Wynne to prepare a letter of endorsement. I think the Secretary of State sent one as well. And because, although I had career status, the Archives was outside Civil Service, I got the necessary endorsements from a Congressman in Virginia, Woodrum, who was, it turned out, quite active in Archives affairs, and the two Virginia Senators.

BROOKS: May I interrupt to ask a question? You said the "necessary" endorsement. This sounds perhaps like a naïve question, but why was it necessary?

ANGEL: Well, since the Archives was not under Civil Service, it was considered desirable by the powers that be to have a political sponsor, so to speak, for each of the employees. And so far as I know 'most everybody did have them. And I think any examination in the personnel folders would probably turn those up.

BROOKS: Harris told me it was desirable or wise or something to have it. And I had to go to a Senator from Illinois who didn't know me from Adam and get a routine endorsement. I think I had to show that I was registered as a Democrat in Illinois. But it didn't mean much. And as with most people that came in here, the professional endorsement meant much more.

ANGEL: I think it is sort of like having a degree, if you have it, it doesn't amount to anything, but if you don't have it, it can be used against you. So that is essentially it.

BROOKS: The question has some pertinence beyond my curiosity. There has been a good deal said about political appointments down here. And there undoubtedly were appointments as a result of political influence, mostly in the administrative side, I think.

ANGEL: In my own case, I, like you, did not know the congressman nor either of the senators. In fact, one old friend of my parents, who was head of the school board in Roanoke, Virginia, wrote a letter, I think it was, to Woodrum, and that was sufficient for Woodrum to give me the endorsement. So you see this a very deeply involved political situation. But in any event, I guess maybe sometime between September and November in '35 I was asked to come down to the present new Justice Department building and have an interview with the head of the publications organization, whom I had never heard of before. And so that is how it was that Solon Buck and I sat on the bench out in the courtyard in the Justice Department, and I had my first interview with him.

BROOKS: You did not know him before?

ANGEL: I had not known him before. And after that interview I heard nothing until I guess December or even early January, at which time I received a formal offer of a job at the Archives at a grade P-2. I was then a grade six in the CAF series in the State Department. And so then I reported for duty in the Archives as, I guess the title was editor-writer, on February 1, 1936.

BROOKS: Well, then what was your impression of the Archives, and were you pleased with your assignments? Or did you think they were a let-down? Frankly, what did you do most of the time after you got here?

ANGEL: Well, when I arrived Buck and his secretary constituted the Office of Publications, and I became the third member of it. And so I was for quite a while the entire editorial staff. The first assignment I received was to edit and design the format for the first Annual Report of the Archivist for the year which ended in June of 1935. My impression is that the report itself had been drafted by Buck, drawing on a number of different documents and sources. I did the editing, proofreading, and all the rest for that first volume. And about the same time I was involved in the editing of a couple of Bulletins of the National Archives. The first one had to do with a rather detailed description of the National Archives, the establishment of it, and the building. That was Bulletin No. one. And also Bulletin No. two on the Conference of Archivists at Chattanooga. This was a document that sort of set the stage for the founding of the Society of American Archivists.

BROOKS: It had Ted Blegen's paper in it.

ANGEL: Had the paper by Blegen. About the same time, I prepared, got the illustrations for, and actually wrote Circular no. one on the National Archives in the United States, a leaflet to be handed out to sightseers. And I edited Circular no. two on the rules and regulations for the use of records. Those were all in the first year.

BROOKS: Actually, except for Blegen's paper, you had a good deal to say about the content of these things, not just the technical editing, right?

ANGEL: Well certainly that was true of the Circulars. In the case of the Annual Report, the first several annual reports--actually the numbers were one, two, and three--Buck did a good deal of the compilation and I did the copy-editing and all the other activities. I did not get involved in any detailed writing of the reports until the fourth report. That would have been the report for the year ending 1938--June 1938. I wrote the draft of that report and also for the next four, the fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh, and eighth annual reports. And as time went on, of course Buck found it necessary to make fewer and fewer changes in the report because I knew pretty well the kind of things he wanted in them.

BROOKS: I have a special fondness for the Fourth Annual Report, for my copy of it says the first drafts of chapters such and such were by me. You remember I was borrowed to work with you, that was the first time you and I worked closely together, in the fall of '38.

ANGEL: Yes, I guess that was about right. The Third Annual Report, of course, was particularly noteworthy because it contained the ancestor of the National Archives Guide. I, of course, edited that part of it, generally directed the compilation once the format had been agreed to. And I wrote a number of the parts in it. There were only three of us who were basically involved in the writing in Buck's office by that time. There was Preston Edsall, who had come here from the Department of Justice, and later went on to the state University of North Carolina. He did the sections on the Justice Department and the courts. I did the one on the State Department, which of course I knew pretty thoroughly, and a good many others. And then Marion Rice did the work on some of the smaller agencies.

BROOKS: Herbert, at that time--that was a very important step, that "little guide"--at that time we didn't have much in the way of finding aids, and at that time I think the records divisions were still called "custodial divisions." And in the initial concept--the initial memo was written by Hyde in 1934--the custodial divisions didn't have much function besides that, but they gradually gained more and more. In connection with the preparation of that guide, how much of the information actually came from the stacks, from the divisions?

ANGEL: A lot of the basic information came from the divisions, but it was spotty because there were no general guidelines that had been issued as to what should be included. And even when we did get some suggestions out, they weren't necessarily followed. So to edit it and give the thing a degree of uniformity, it was necessary for those of us who worked on it to go back into the stacks to work with the people and actually to find out ourselves what was going on. I know I spent a great deal of time in the State Department area doing just that. Edsall, I know, spent a lot of time with the Justice archives, doing the same thing.

In addition to the Annual Reports, and Bulletins, and Circulars, part of the chores in the office were to prepare articles about the National Archives for various annuals and encyclopedias and the like. We also were set up to review papers prepared by members of the staff for outside publication, particularly when they had to do with the Archives in general, rather than any scholarly subject, so that we would have a basic uniformity in the approach there. I was also involved in some of the basic work for the National Historical Publications Commission. Buck was serving as Secretary of that, and I spent three months or more over at the Superintendent of Documents going through the card catalogs over there to determine what historical publications had been issued by the Federal Government. This involved going through the cards for all the departments and agencies all the way back. Most of the information obviously came from old standby agencies like State, War, and Navy, which had done a fair amount of historical publication. And beginning at that time I agitated for our taking over in the Archives the master file of publications that the Superintendent of Documents had. I felt that they belonged in the National Archives. And I am delighted that within the last year or so, after a lapse of some 35 years, we have them, but better late than not getting them at all.

I continued in these editorial assignments up until September of '41, when Buck succeeded Connor as Archivist of the United States. When Buck moved into that position, I took over as Acting Director of Research and Publications, but was also detailed to him as Assistant to the Archivist. And not long after that I was also designated as Acting Chief of the Division of Information and Publications. So for a while I was wearing three hats. I was able to get out from under the acting directorship of Research and Publications in December of '41, and by March of '42 I was able to get away from the Division of Information and Publications, and from that time on until April of '43 I continued as Assistant to the Archivist.

I had a good many of the usual jobs that someone has as assistant to an official, and some other formal assignments. We had, for example, a Budget Policies committee and I served on that and several other committees. And I was chairman of a committee that existed for a while called the Forms

Committee, whose purpose it was to get on top of the forms and to simplify and reduce the number of forms that we had in the Archives. In March of '43 I was commissioned in the Naval Reserve and the next month, early in April, I reported for duty over in the Navy Department in the Office of Records Administration, which was headed by Lieutenant Commander Emmett J. Leahy, who had previously also been a member of the staff of the National Archives.

BROOKS: Herbert, a question about those appointments. You were succeeded as head of Information and Publications by Ernest Bryan, right?

ANGEL: Yes.

BROOKS: Who was he? Where did he come from?

ANGEL: He had been around Washington for quite a while. He had been active in information and publications work, particularly in documentary movies. When he ultimately left the Archives, he too was commissioned in the Navy, in their documentary motion picture set-up. He had also been an official in the national organization for Christian Endeavor, and was a lay minister. Curiously enough my wife had met him years earlier in Europe when he was tour director for one of these religious groups, and they had met each other, and their paths had paralleled in going from Italy over into Germany and to the passion play at Oberammergau.

BROOKS: Bryan wasn't here very long, and I did never get to know him well. He was technically with Thad Page, wasn't he.

ANGEL: This is right, he was under Thad Page. And Bryan was succeeded by Betty Hamer.

BROOKS: Did you have a successor as Director of Research and Publications? I have forgotten exactly what happened.

ANGEL: I think Holmes moved in there--Oliver Holmes. He handled that, and I guess the residue of the NHPC work was there too.

BROOKS: Now I would like if I may to talk about some of these matters that are more or less topical, that go on for several years.

ANGEL: Well, I am sure you have enough biography to last you for quite a while now.

BROOKS: I think it is important. Since you have mentioned NHPC twice now for several years there were no publications resulting from the NHPC. What do you think is the reason for that?

ANGEL: Well, it was simply a factor of time. The staff in publications wasn't large. I was the staff for quite a while, and then Marion Rice was added and later Preston Edsall. When Edsall left, why, let's see, Martin Claussen came in there for a brief spell. But that was all we had to take care of all the things going on. We just happened to have a dull period, and that is how I could spend three months back in '36 or '37, somewhere in there, at the Superintendent of Documents going through those cards over there.

BROOKS: What do you remember of the long and difficult process of changing around the initial organization of the Archives? In the last week of November 1934 Dorsey Hyde was appointed as the first staff member under Mr. Connor, and Collas Harris came the next week. Well, in that intervening week I had been up to the Library of Congress, to see his papers, which are not in very good order and found a long memorandum he wrote to Mr. Connor about November 28, 1934, which describes the initial organization of the staff, derived to a large extent from his consultations with various officials at the Library of Congress. So it was essentially a library organization. Now it took four or five years to get it changed around to give the records divisions a great deal more responsibility. A good many things were assigned to them. And eventually we came around to staff officers for various functions. In that process I was in the first office to be abolished. Ed Leahy and I and Neil Franklin were in the Special Examiners' office, abolished early in 1938. Much more important, however, in 1940 the Archivist appointed a Committee on Finding Mediums of which Price was the chairman. Buck, and I think Hamer, were members. (I have gone through the files up in the stacks of that committee). And they recommended in essence what still is the basic pattern of finding aids--record group concept, the preliminary inventory and so on. At the same time there was a memorandum to the Archivist jointly signed by Price and Mr. Buck in January 1941, which said in essence in order to carry out what we are going to recommend in the way of finding mediums, we have to have a different organization. And it was at that time that there was a proposal to abolish the Classification and Cataloging Divisions--the Research Division I think had already been abolished--disperse the personnel largely among the records divisions. How close were you to all of that? Dr. Buck really was the prime mover.

ANGEL: I think it would be fair to say that he was almost solely responsible for that. He tried his ideas out on various ones of us when we would go out to lunch. He did a prodigious amount of reading, and these things sort of crystallized in his own mind.

BROOKS: Do you think they developed mostly from his reading, or his experience, or his association with Dr. Posner? Or where did they come from?

ANGEL: Well, in the later period I think they certainly came from his contacts with Dr. Posner. Earlier I think they resulted from his own experience in archives work and from his reading. I think we need to remember that the Classification Division was staffed essentially with the same type of person that was in the stacks, that is, people with good academic backgrounds, graduate degrees in history, and people who were interested in research, whether they had done documentary research or not. The Cataloging Division, on the other hand, was staffed primarily by persons trained as librarians, I think darn good librarians, but still with basically a library outlook.

BROOKS: Yes. John Russell was a Librarian, and I think he had 22 girls up there at one time. Some of them were extremely capable.

ANGEL: That's right. And of course Russell was very capable, and he moved on to, let's see, it was the University of Rochester, wasn't it, to become their head librarian. But I think by and large the people in those two divisions were somewhat dissatisfied. The classification people spent days and weeks and even months on the records of the Food Administration, for example. And they got down to the individual documents and, well milked the papers dry. And then, I'm sure they would be disconsolate to know about it if they were around now, later on it became evident that the papers they were working with were what we would now consider useless, and practically all of them have been thrown away. And only the quintessence of them saved.

BROOKS: The cream of the crop were out in the Hoover Library in Palo Alto.

ANGEL: Well yes, that had already been taken care of. At least the classifiers had been able to cut their teeth on methods of describing and even arranging some of the materials, but this type of function was also being done in the stack divisions on other groups that the classifiers had not reached.

BROOKS: Part of this was the policy of the original organizational pattern, that they had to do it in the divisions. They had this tremendous amount of material that had to be arranged and organized and you couldn't get to classification and cataloging for a long time.

ANGEL: I think it took a while for people to learn this, that you didn't classify the documents. Any classification that was worth anything had to be done at the time the documents were created and filed, not in an ex post facto situation. The men and women who were in the Classification Division were smart enough to discover this. They were also smart enough to discover that the men back in the stacks were doing parallel work, and eventually the front offices became aware of it also, and things went in that direction. As for cataloging, cataloging becomes very difficult unless things are classified, and then if they are properly classified, cataloging, unless you are getting down to a document by document thing, is superfluous. And so the cataloging setup withered on the vine. So it was a natural outgrowth, it seems to me, that the two divisions should vanish. The vanishing of the Classification Division was logical and I think relatively painless, except for probably Roscoe Hill, who thought very little of it.

BROOKS: I don't think he ever did come around.

ANGEL: No, I don't think he was ever reconstructed. As for the catalogers, many of them were sufficiently knowledgeable and had good enough background so they could fit readily into the stacks or into specialized areas. I think offhand of Jo Cobb, who went ultimately into Still Pictures, and there was a clear case where cataloging could be used to advantage because you didn't have the classification and arrangement and description problems for the most part that you had in traditional kinds of records.

BROOKS: Eventually she became a preeminent iconographer.

ANGEL: That is right.

BROOKS: At this same time the name of that Committee was the Committee on Finding Mediums. Sometime later it was changed to Finding Aids. That Committee filed its report early in '41 and there was a continuing committee set up--a Committee on Finding Aids and there was a Coordinating Unit made up of people from the Classification Catalog Divisions and their drafts went to Dr. Buck and you, and Miss Rice and Carl Lokke, who must have been with you for a while, drafted a number of comments on these initial drafts of finding aids. There are a lot of memos up in the stacks that you wrote.

ANGEL: Well if you say I did, I am not going to call you a liar, but to be perfectly honest I haven't the slightest recollection of it.

BROOKS: They are up in the stacks.

ANGEL: I must go find out sometime what it was that I was doing.

BROOKS: What was your role in the development of the early training program? Dr. Buck was more concerned with that than anybody else on the staff too. He taught a course at Columbia early in '39 I think.

ANGEL: I think it was the academic year '38-'39.

BROOKS: In that same year he and I jointly taught a course in historiography at American University, which involved much of the same thing. Then in September of '39 started what was known as the Buck-Posner course in the History and Administration of Archives. Were you close to that development?

ANGEL: I was involved in it to this extent--of course I knew about Buck's activities in Columbia. He was up there, I forget whether it was every week or every other week, to meet with his seminar and this permitted him to organize his thoughts. He had already done a prodigious amount of bibliographical work, which he himself maintained in his own office. As a result of his work in Columbia, he thought we should have a training course here in the National Archives, and my recollection now is that Dr. Posner was associated with him either at the outset or soon thereafter. And then the seminars were repeated in succeeding years and in the course of time became the archives course at American University.

BROOKS: I remember especially a session of the class in October '39, which was shortly after Dr. Posner came to this country to stay. I was a member of that first class too. And after the first evening, along about three o'clock in the morning I was taken to the hospital and didn't come back to work for about three months. Ernst has always had fun discussing whether or not there was a cause and effect relationship between the course and my illness. That whole business has been extremely important in the history of the Archives, as you know better than most people. I think there is a distinction between the kind of background training in the theory and history of archives and the character of archives in various states and countries, and general nature of the archival function--a distinction between that, which I sometimes call education, and training which is more directly related to the job to be done by individuals. Through the years Dr. Posner carried that course through and was succeeded by Frank Evans. I think that has been carried on pretty well. But the matter of training, adapting the knowledge of archival activity actually to the work to be done, it seems to me has always been a problem and has had some relationship to the whole question of the competence and the development of the staff. Do you think that is a sound analysis?

ANGEL: Yes. Well, Buck of course brought the knowledge of archival theory to the class and so did Posner. Buck also brought a good deal of knowledge of archival practice. The lectures Posner gave later on archives in the various

states were drawn largely from material Buck assembled and used in the sessions he himself had given. Buck could supply information on what had happened in the United States. Posner was invaluable in giving the European side of the experience. Neither one of them, however, had very much background, in fact there wasn't very much background to be had, on the development of preliminary inventories and finding aids of the kinds that evolved here in the United States.

BROOKS: Handling the mass of records?

ANGEL: Yes. I think it fair to say Buck in his work here in the states had not dealt with modern records particularly. And with Posner this was even less the case. He was much more oriented to the medieval and later records in Europe. So what happened was an evolution that these classes provided information for, which helped Buck to formulate his own philosophy. He tried this out on people in the stack divisions and the thing was just hammered out literally here in the building. At least this is my impression.

BROOKS: The problem that I was referring to has been more in utilizing the formal education and relating that to the Civil Service job standards, and the selection and promotion of personnel and appointments to important offices. How do you bring those two together, or do you?

ANGEL: Well, certainly in the earlier period the jobs to be done were not jobs that called for advance degrees, it seemed to me. The records that we received were in horrible condition for the most part. They had been kicked from pillar to post. They had to be put into order, the men had to wear smocks or utterly ruin their clothing in dealing with the grimy things. And only after some degree of order had been brought out of the chaos could they bring their academic background to bear in research in the administrative history of the agencies, so this in turn could be collated with the records. Only a long time after that was it possible to give any attention at all to the content of the records and the exploiting of them and making their content and utility known to the searcher. So the academic training came to the fore much much later.

BROOKS: I wonder if this was reason there was some dissatisfaction among older staff members in the early days. I think there were at one time 35 Ph.D.'s on the staff. Because of the depression period, the Archives was able to employ people at pretty good salaries. I think some had academic training that was at a higher level than the work they were asked to do when they got here, as you implied a while ago. And I think some of the staff was pretty unhappy about that.

ANGEL: I think we should keep in mind, Phil, and I am sure you will remember this, that to use the modern phrase, the staff that we had was pretty generally over-qualified. I think for example of the stenographers and secretaries. Practically every one we had here was not only physically attractive, but each one of them had a college degree. When you think now of the background we are able to get for beginning stenographers and secretaries, you can see that there is a distinct difference. This was true of the professional jobs, as well. And it was quite logical to expect that the staff would go out as the economy improved, and a number of them did move on. For an example, Bill McCain in the Classification Division moved out to become Archivist of Mississippi, and after a stint in the Army became President of Mississippi Southern. Others, East (not Sherrod East but Bob East) moved on to Brooklyn College, and he is still there as a very senior professor. And so it went with others that I am sure you remember.

BROOKS: Most of the people were P-2's in the Classification Division, or perhaps P-3's, and they did not get appointments to principal jobs here as heads of divisions or something like that.

ANGEL: Well, some of the discontent went this way--I have the impression, in fact I've heard people say, that Hyde as head of Archival Service, had promised everybody, sort of like Napoleon, that he had a field marshall's baton in his knap sack, that each one was ultimately going to become chief of a division. Well there just weren't that many divisions, and as time went on the number of divisions shrank. The men were smart enough to see what was going to happen, so when they had good contacts outside they made good use of them. Now, another factor that you should keep in mind too, that in the beginning of 1939, just three years after this place really got in motion (because the staff was quite small in 1935--I think there were only about 100 on the staff when I came on in February 1936) by the time it was really functioning fairly well across the board we began to feel the effects of the emergency legislation and emergency activity in and outside the Government here. People began peeling off there to go first into defense activities and then ultimately into uniforms. This had a tremendous effect on the professional quality of the staff, and the dispersal of the staff.

BROOKS: Herbert, when I was at the Truman Library I used to emphasize that the result of our work was in service to scholars and publications to scholars. That wasn't the only function of the National Archives, but it certainly was a principal one. I wonder how clearly that was realized in this early period that we are discussing, the late 1930's? Did the scholars understand the Archivist's job? To what extent did publications play an important role in explaining the Archivist's responsibility to the scholars, in developing our early relationship with the scholarly world?

ANGEL: Well, let's look at it this way. As part of the functional set-up of the staff, we had Classification and the Cataloging Divisions, which we have already spoke of, and we had a Reference Division as well as our own Library Division. The Reference Division was headed by Nelson Vance Russell, who later went out to the midwest and to Carleton College..... as head of the Department of History I believe. At any rate the Reference Division was set up and ready for business, but we didn't have any business for them to handle. I remember some of the people in reference--they had a very good staff in reference. One of the principal assistants then you will remember very well, was Elizabeth Drewry, who had been a class-mate of mine at George Washington, and who had come to the Archives after getting her doctorate at Cornell. But they just didn't have any records to speak of, except some rather moth eaten Food Administration records and things of that kind, at the outset. One of the staff in Reference told me one time that Russell was vastly pleased because in the very handsome search room with leather upholstered chairs and polished tables and the like, that he had suddenly found that he was getting three or four people in there a day. But a little later on he had discovered to his consternation that fall that the three or four people a day that he was getting in were the wine-o's from the park right across the street. They would come over where they had comfortable chairs and warmth. And nobody had really discovered what they were doing and didn't bother to exclude them.

Well anyway, in anticipation of the reference service that later grew into some volume, we did bring out the second of our circulars on the rules and regulations for the use of the records, even though not many people did use them. You will notice, Phil, if you review the annual reports, and here I'm speaking from memory because its been a long time since I was involved in them, that in the very early period we had very very few searchers in here of any kind and a break down of those would indicate that we had a fair number who were seeking genealogical information, others were government officials, and precious few were from the academic community. I believe for the first two or three annual reports you will find these user statistics very low. They mounted certainly from the view point of academic users when we got the massive collection of archives from the State Department. Here you had an archives that was a going concern. It already had a clientele, so when the records moved here and the archivists came over from the State Department with the records, the clientele obviously came along too. So the build-up of academic use began then. Likewise as we began to get in a lot of the records, as agencies expanded and records got pushed out and our accessions increased, then we began getting more government users. And you will find I think in the earlier period that government users highly exceeded the academic users. But I am now speaking from memory and a little examination of the actual figures would be revealing.

BROOKS: You're right, and of course that relationship was critically accentuated by the national emergency and the war.

ANGEL: Then the private researchers and academic researchers were busy doing other things and didn't come here.

BROOKS: Right, and service to Government far outrated service to anybody outside.

ANGEL: Now nobody really knew, Phil, what we really had, either. I remember compiling in 1941 I guess, a publication--let me see what in the dickens was that one called. It was a manual of information about the National Archives. We prepared that for the use of Government agencies so that those emergency agencies in particular would know what we had and how to make use of it. They ultimately got too busy to use the records and any exploitation of them was largely done by our own staff. But at least we made that effort. Parenthetically, Phil, there is another publication that we mustn't overlook. That was the Register of the National Archives, which was published in 1937 patterned on the State Department Register, which I had edited, and we used the same format. It created quite a stir particularly because in some cases it gave the ages of the women on the staff and this was not appreciated.

BROOKS: It was very popular then, and it's very helpful to me now. I have it.

ANGEL: It is a collector's item.

BROOKS: I have these annual reports, the first fifteen. One thing that impressed me was in the third annual report, for 36-37. There is in the report of the Reference Division a section on private research projects which is less than a page long. I'll bet every private research project is mentioned and described. In all those annual reports I think it is pretty obviously an effort to emphasize what private research there was.

ANGEL: I think this is a good place to mention it--in preparing the reports (I didn't do the third one, although I may have done parts of it--I don't recall now), from the fourth one on what I did was to take the monthly reports of the different divisions, and you will recall each division had to prepare those, and each had to submit them in duplicate. I got the duplicates, and in preparation for the annual report I went through with scissors and cut up all these reports and dropped them in the folders corresponding to the headings in the report--accessions, disposal, records administration, and so on. Then I would sit down with all these and shuffle them around and dictate a draft, or write directly on the typewriter the first draft, of what was to be the report. And in many sections we just didn't have a whole lot to say. I took for the report the juiciest items in the division reports.

BROOKS: Well in relation to the question as to whether the scholar understood the problems of the Archives, I think a number of them understood that there were problems even if they didn't know how to solve them. I always think in connection of the paper by Roy Nichols called "Alice in Wonderland, or the Historian in the Archives" that he gave at the annual meeting of the Society of American Archivists in 1937. It's expressed pretty well, I think, the relationship of the Archivist and the historians at that time.

ANGEL: I don't doubt that. I think it's fair to say, though, that for the most part the scholars didn't come here. I doubt if Nichols did very much. The first scholar of any standing that I remember seeing, and most of them would stop by to see Buck when they did come in, was Ted Blegen. I remember he was overjoyed one time because he had that day found in the diplomatic and consular post records of the State Department--the records for one of the posts in Norway--copies of half a dozen editions of a pamphlet which had been issued by a consular official over there pointing out to the Norwegians what a wonderful place America was and why they should come over here. Blegen had suspected that there had been some concerted effort to promote Norwegian migration, but this was the first evidence that he had found, and he had found it in the post records which had then been used very little. He had come in the office to pick up Buck for lunch, and he was beaming because of this very important finding from his point of view.

BROOKS: Would it be fair to ask you what sort of person Buck was to work for, and could you make an appraisal of him as Archivist? Of course you were only here a year and a half after he became Archivist.

ANGEL: That's right. But I worked with him directly all seven years I was here before I went into uniform and I would say that he was a very exacting individual to work for. He was a bear on detail and minutia. He didn't ask anything of his staff, however, that he wasn't prepared to do himself. He would turn an assignment over to his staff only when he was convinced that they could do it as well or better than he.

He had a number of idiosyncrasies. I am sure you remember the "that" and "which" controversy, where restrictive clauses had to have "that," and non-restrictive had to have "which." I knew this restriction but got fed up with it, and then in one instance I used "which" and got scolded for it, told that it wasn't proper. I knew it was proper, and I went out to lunch that day and bought three grammars including Kittredge and Farley from Harvard, which I knew he would have high respect for. All three of them said "that" and "which" could be used interchangeably on restrictive clauses. When Buck went to lunch I opened all the books at the appropriate place and

put the books on his desk. He came back, went into his room and found the books open. After awhile he came out and dumped the books on my desk, and puffing on the pipe he said "I have read these, but I still want to use "that." So this gives you some indication of his work.

He was very fair, and as I say meticulous. He was no candidate for the diplomatic corps, but this sort of thing didn't bother me and I don't think it bothered a lot of people. People had respect for him, they had--I don't know whether there was what you might call deep affection, but certainly there was a deep appreciation of his ability, his earnestness, and his interest in furthering the National Archives. He was far more interested in that than in any personal self-aggrandizement.

BROOKS: I think that is certainly true. Some of the people I have talked to in this project and other wise seem to remember particularly about him his cantankerousness, the fact that he was not a candidate for the diplomatic corps. I think that some people because of that fail to give sufficient recognition to his very real professional accomplishments and ability. And I think he had as much effect on the development of this institution as any other one person, perhaps, except maybe his successor.

ANGEL: Yes. Well, Buck didn't have any patience with people who weren't prepared to work as hard as he was working, or dig as deeply as he would dig.

BROOKS: Or be as careful or as meticulous about details, and he could scold with real vehemence.

ANGEL: In the years that I worked immediately with him, maybe I was as good as a nit-picker as he, but at any rate we had no real problems apart from an occasional episode of the kind that I mentioned about the "that" and the "which."

BROOKS: I had some graduate training in meticulous detail and I was inclined to argue about terminology. I got into some arguments about terminology at various times that probably weren't worth the heat that was generated. I think Buck encouraged that a bit. You remember he used to be vehement about the fact that you shouldn't use the word "archives" in singular. I guess I picked that up from him. Anyway I've been equally vehement all these years.

ANGEL: He had many fights on that point with Hill, who insisted that "Archive" should be used in the singular. He was also in another semantic business--the difference between "disposal" and "disposition," "Disposal" meaning throwing the darn things out, and "disposition" meaning not only disposal but also transfer to other institutions and so on.

BROOKS: I was right about that and was right about many of the subject

BROOKS: I was involved in that and I wrote a long memo on the subject, which I think he approved of. It was along that line.

ANGEL: You'll find in the drafts that I prepared on Annual Reports four through eight those distinctions are observed--I bet you won't find a one of them that isn't properly drawn as he construed it. In fact I am sure that if I had slipped he would have taken care of it.

BROOKS: He was a considerable contrast to Connor. But I think they were both very good in their ways. Connor stressed very much good relations with the Hill and with other agencies and the position of the National Archives in the Government. After all it was a brand new agency trying to take over in the midst of the depression when most of the attention of the Government was on other things. I think it kind of got us off to a good start.

ANGEL: Well, Connor was essentially what we would now call a "front man." He looked the part and acted the part of the head of a scholarly institution. He was not a detail man and didn't want to be. On the professional side Buck was the ideal counterpart for detail, and the combination of the two was very good. When Buck was forced into administration, which I think he disliked as much as Connor did, he wasn't really any more unsuccessful at it than Connor was.

Second Interview - February 13, 1973

BROOKS: Herbert, we had covered last time the various positions you occupied and something of the duties that you had in the Office of Publications before Dr. Buck was appointed Archivist. In the period after September of 1941 when he was appointed Archivist you immediately became Assistant to the Archivist, and from then I think your duties were pretty much across the board. We had almost got down to the point where you left for the Navy and became mostly involved in records administration. But I think there's a transition period that we ought to talk about. What was your main concern as Assistant to the Archivist?

ANGEL: Well, Phil, I guess I was actually serving as Assistant to the Archivist just as I would have served as Assistant to the Director of Publications, from the time that Buck left the fourth floor and came on down to the main floor. And at the same time I was attempting to carry on the work of the Director of Research and Publications. Actually, I suppose, I got the title of Assistant to the Archivist along about December of '41 and held that, of course, until I went into the Navy in early 1943. Most of my attention was given to trouble shooting jobs with the Archivist, and bit by bit I relinquished the work in research and publications, certainly by March of 1942. I was completely out of it so far as any command responsibility was concerned. I did continue the work of preparing the drafts of the Annual Reports of the Archivist. I did that for fiscal '41 and for fiscal '42. That was the last year that I had any responsibility at all for the Annual Report. I kept in pretty much constant contact with the people formerly on the staff of the Archives who had gone into other agencies. As I remember now from the reports, and I think you'll find this in some of the reports, we lost tremendous numbers of people, first to the emergency agencies and then to the military agencies.

BROOKS: Yes, they are enumerated in the Annual Reports and where they went.

ANGEL: My recollection now is that one year we had a 60 percent turnover in staff and another, the next year I guess it was, we had about a 40 percent turnover in staff, so theoretically at the end of that second year nobody was here who was here before. It didn't work out quite that way, of course. But there was a great exodus, and after Pearl Harbor particularly, although this had been true before, a great deal of the exodus was of people going into the military organizations. Again this is just a figure that sticks somewhere in my mind. I believe, out of a staff at the Archives which was perhaps 400 or thereabouts at the time of the war, some 275 were actually in uniform. This came about, of course, because so many of the members of the staff who came into the Archives in the early days were of the same

age, and that turned out to be military age. And so the greater part of them, certainly the younger ones, wound up in either khaki or blue uniforms before the war was over. And in the process I think something like this happened, a great many of the people on the Archives staff were asked to go out and talk with the officials of emergency agencies, first of all to tell them what we had in the way of records of the emergency agencies of World War I in case they were to be of any value.

BROOKS: There was a stock joke going around the Archives then, that our job was to dig up the records of World War I emergency agencies so that World War II agencies could make the same mistakes over again.

ANGEL: Yes, that's right. Well it would be simpler that way, of course. But I think that something else happened as they went around and said, "Look here's what we have over at the Archives in the way of records of your counterparts in World War I, and we'd like to have you not make the same mistakes, and we'd like to have a good collection of records at the end of this war to come to the Archives." The conversations then went something like this. The officials in the new agencies said, "Records, records. Do you know something about records?" And when it became apparent that their visitor did have at least some knowledge of records, the official would say, "Fine, you're hired." And that accounted for a good part of the exodus.

I think a great many of the people became overnight experts in records, if not indeed in records administration, simply because they had once been attached to the Archives. I'm certain that when I went out into the agencies I had no vast knowledge of records management. It was a question of our feeling our way along. We were confronted with masses of material, and something had to be done about them. Either they were going to survive or we were. And a great many of us were just tossed in the middle and had to swim or else, and to one degree or another I suppose we did swim.

Meanwhile, back at the ranch so to speak, at the Archives Buck had the feeling that if we were going to go out and preach records management or advocate it in the agencies, we ought to do a certain amount of it ourselves. We got involved, I recall, in one very modest way in setting up a forms management committee. Mike Simmons and I were, I think, the principal ones involved in it. And this was a matter of collecting all the forms that we ourselves were using at the Archives, and we had a prodigious quantity of them. I'm sure we had at least one form, possibly two, for every member on the staff at that time.

BROOKS: At least. Was this when Simmons was in the statistical unit down in Thad Page's office?

ANGEL: Yes. That's right. This was sort of an outgrowth you see of my connection with the Annual Report and things administrative generally, because I was also on the Budget Policy Committee that Buck had. So we attempted to straighten out the forms business here. I was fairly well current with what was going on with Ed Leahy and his cohorts in the Navy, and with first Jesse Douglas and then Wayne Grover and Bob Bahmer in what was going on at the War Department. And that was about the extent of my connection with records administration. I summarized about the extent of my knowledge of it in what appeared in the Annual Reports for 1941 and 1942.

BROOKS: There was some consciousness of this before, and I wondered if the principal officers of the Archives when it was started in 1934 and '35 really understood what they were getting into, in the problem of mass. Their attention was, I think quite naturally, devoted primarily to setting up an information center. I'm not sure--even thought the report of the Louis Simon committee of 1930 had given some warning on the quantity of records--I'm not sure that the principal officials were really aware of what we were going to get into. Well, the Deputy Examiners and the Special Examiners got into it the hard way. We went into the agencies and here were these great piles of records that we had to handle, not only as evidence of what went on but as physical pieces of paper that something had to be done with. And it was because of that, I think that the National Archives interest in what we then called records administration developed--from the experience of the examiners out in the agencies in doing the preliminary survey and the special examiners' surveys of so-called useless papers. So Leahy was interested. He and I had been interested in bridging the gap between the archivist and the creator of records at least as early as '37 or maybe '36, and so were Schellenberg and Bahmer. I think that probably those were two of the most active places in the Archives in developing this, and Dr. Buck was conscious of it certainly before he became Archivist, and of the problem of selection. I noticed the other day in going through the Annual Reports that there was a paragraph that you probably wrote in the Annual Report for fiscal 1937 labeled "What Records Should Be Preserved." And this was pretty much the title I took for a talk I gave in 1940 that I remember Dr. Buck was interested in. You and I worked closely together on a good many of these things. This was primarily in the publication of records administration circulars and other issuances that the Archives put out in the very early days in this field.

ANGEL: Well, some of the things that I was involved in certainly were aimed at advertising what the Archives was doing. The Civil Service Commission, for example, was sort of a focal point for bringing out a book on what service agencies there were in the Federal Government and what they did. I brought together the material for the Archives or I saw

that it was brought together, and that it was fed into the hopper. It brought us, of course, more trade down here. One thing I don't believe we realized, I'm sure I didn't and I don't remember any evidence that anybody else did, nobody knew quite what records were outside Washington. There was sort of a naïve assumption that all the records of the Government, or certainly all of them that were worth anything, were here in Washington. We know now, of course, that probably 10 percent of all Government records are in Washington, and I'm sure they were then. You may recall that we did send out two doves, so to speak, into the hinterland to see what was out there. We sent Forrest Holdcamper to San Francisco I believe, and it seems to me we sent Gaston Litton to the Panama Canal Zone to see what records were there. I'm not sure they knew what they were looking for. I don't think I would have if I had gone out then, but they came back and said, "Yes there are records out there, and probably something ought to be done about them."

BROOKS: We used some people that were already in the field. Ed Nixon at Hyde Park did some surveys in New England. All these people worked out of my office after January 1942, so I did know a good deal about them. And just after Pearl Harbor Dr. Buck had a meeting in which he issued a statement on the responsibilities and functions of the National Archives. A pretty good over-all statement. You probably wrote it. And in that he quoted from a letter I had written Nixon about the field problem.

Well, wouldn't you agree that even though 90 percent of the records by volume were outside of Washington--and a lot of them were valuable, for instance the Customs records--wouldn't you agree that the majority by value were in Washington even so?

ANGEL: Oh, I think that's true. Of course we weren't completely ignorant about what was going on outside Washington. Hamer in his Survey of Federal Archives had been out there. But I don't believe that a whole lot of information about what his people found had really been brought in, and certainly it had not been digested generally by the Archives staff at that time.

BROOKS: The Survey of Federal Archives issued some very good instructions for the survey, modelled after the Historical Records Survey, that anybody, including a lot of untrained people, could use. This was mostly a physical survey of the volumes on a shelf, a room, not of the content and the value.

ANGEL: That's right.

BROOKS: In 1936 I went to San Francisco and spent several weeks on the records of the sub-Treasury and also on records of some other agencies,

a part of which had already been surveyed by Survey of Federal Archives people. And I found some of the reports were inaccurate--incidentally another part of the problem was that their reports didn't get disseminated, as you suggested.

ANGEL: Well, a lot of them weren't actually processed and generally available.

BROOKS: I had the survey forms that these people made out in San Francisco. And they had done a physical survey that was pretty good, but it said very little about the content or the possible value of those records.

ANGEL: Yes. You will recall that emphasis on records transfers began certainly by mid-1941, when agencies here in Washington began to be increasingly cramped for space. There was a great push to get the materials out of the buildings here, and the Archives at that time was probably nine-tenths empty. Here was the answer to the agencies' needs. And the records were shoved over here. The accessioning figures by comparison with the earlier years were simply horrendous.

BROOKS: Some of those records weren't valuable. They were later disposed of.

ANGEL: That's right. I know when I went over to Navy I was put in charge of the noncurrent records part of the Navy program, the part that Bob Bahmer essentially had before he left the Navy and went over to join Grover at the War Department. Our job was to find the things that were in the way of office use and get them out. I think I'm still unpopular in certain quarters here in the Archives for the amount of material we sent over without doing any processing. But what has to be remembered is that the space had to be cleared. Here was an empty building, and, to use more recent nomenclature, the Archives was really serving as a records center for a considerable time until the records were shaken down. I guess some of them probably still haven't been completely shaken down.

BROOKS: I remember one entertaining aspect of that, perhaps somewhat earlier, when I was still in the Navy division here in 1938. We took records out of the torpedo station in Alexandria so the Navy could start making torpedos there again as they had in World War I. A number of those records, probably most of them, were later disposed of as not of very great value content. Subsequently after the war that building, the torpedo station in Alexandria, of course was made a records center, and records were moved back into it.

ANGEL: Well, you do get this recycling type of thing. I recall Paul Bishop, who was on the staff of the Archives and was quite early commissioned as a lieutenant in Ed Leahy's shop, went around and made any number of records schedules. These were coming into vogue at that time you will recall. Eventually Bishop became head of the Washington records center, which was the largest one the Navy had for a while, and as records were shipped to him from Navy bases all over the place he would come to records that he himself had scheduled. Some of these would arrive even with the printed schedule on them, but nobody out in the field had bothered to apply the schedule, so Paul had the pleasure, or sometimes it wasn't a pleasure, of trying to apply a schedule that he had developed, sometimes without too great knowledge of the records themselves. This is just part of the growing pains that I think most of us experienced.

But one thing might be said here about the growth of the concept of records management. Nearly everybody who went out initially, certainly those who went to the Navy and to the Army, were concerned with two things. The Army and Navy were both concerned with records scheduling. And you had people in those places, people like Bahmer and Leahy, who were acquainted in this field, and their job was to try to schedule or make disposal lists to get rid of the things that were excess in both places. In the Army there was still another facet to it. As they were set up in the Office of the Adjutant General, which traditionally had administered Army records, Grover and Bahmer, following on the heels of Douglas and Spaulding, were faced with doing a certain amount of administration of files that the Army already had. Leahy was able to avoid that and to keep his responsibility on a staff level. I think that happened because he was in what became the Executive Office of the Secretary, which was basically an administrative services and staff office, not connected with any of the bureaus. In the Navy the bureaus were the operating area, and so the actual administration of the records never left the bureaus. And it was so all along.

Well, when Leahy, and shortly afterwards Bahmer, who was borrowed from the Archives, began operations, they found that they had to have a purgatory or a staging area which they called a records center. Two of them were set up, one here in Washington and one in an old warehouse in Baltimore. The one in Baltimore was soon abandoned, and its contents were rolled back into Washington. A lot of us thought it was very appropriate that the first center here in Washington was set up in the old Heurich brewery building in Rosslyn. Knowing the Navy's affinity for beer it seemed quite a logical selection of site. Still later the Navy set up its Washington center down on South Fairfax Street in Alexandria in a warehouse building which we were told at the time had served as a hospital during the Civil War.

It was a two-story structure with an uncertain elevator pulled by ropes, and it certainly looked to be of the vintage of the Civil War. Thus you had two elements of what I think of as records management surfacing quite soon. You had a records center, the first one I think in the world, and you had a disposal process. Then the Navy got involved in micro-filming, in the traditional sense of filming the records with the idea of throwing away the originals. Joe Brennan was brought in from Recordak to run that shop for Leahy, and soon microfilm was actually used in current administration.

BROOKS: Didn't they develop the V-mail program?

ANGEL: Well no, it was developed concurrently with it, but separately from it. The Recordak people were involved in that too. But so far as Leahy's shop was concerned it was involved in putting engineering drawings onto microfilm.

BROOKS: I remember going over there and his showing me examples.

ANGEL: The program started out by putting engineering drawings of submarines on microfilm, so that they could be carried along to advance bases for repair purposes. Then drawings of smaller ships, destroyers, destroyer escorts, and the like, were filmed. It spread on to battleships, and other primary ships of the line. Then another bureau picked it up, the Bureau of Aeronautics. Soon Dan Edwards was brought in, again from Recordak out in Michigan, and he and one or two others headed a very large contingent, not a part of Leahy's shop, but operating parallel to it, putting aircraft drawings on film. So there you had a third element.

Meanwhile, the question arose about what to do with the current files of the Navy Department. Some of the old bureau central files were being bogged down. The Navy was still using what they called history cards, which were summaries made of the incoming and outgoing correspondence. The idea was that you'd look at those and see whether you had what was wanted, and then you'd go find the documents. That seemed to be a very cumbersome method of operation. These traditional central files in the bureaus operated under chief clerks who were also traditional. Both of them tended to disappear in the first couple of years of the war. Leahy was called in to advise on bureau files. I think he found himself out of his depth, so he brought in Bill Muller from the Department of Agriculture, which for a long while had done a very good job of handling its current records. Muller was a part of a crew that included Lin Donaldson . . .

BROOKS: John Lucas was in charge for a long time. Probably the best records show in the Government.

ANGEL: That's right. John Lucas and, well let's see, Jack Britt was still another one. So Muller, with Leahy fronting for him, began to advocate decentralized files, centralized control but decentralized files. And the Navy was exploding in size and in geography in such a way that decentralized files caught on pretty well. So you had then still another area of records management. In addition to noncurrent records, you found yourselves in current records, which translated out in workaday language means mail and files. Microfilm also began to appear as part of the mail recording process in some of the bureaus.

By the end of '42, the Civil Service Commission had a young fellow who had the idea of using form letters to answer a lot of repetitive correspondence, and he also had the idea of using what we later called pattern letters or guide letters. These consisted of standard paragraphs or sometimes whole letters, which would be used as needed although the letters would be individually typed rather than reproduced. This fellow was Charlie Nieman. He was from Texas originally. He had done some of this kind of work too for some Congressmen up on the Hill to help them with replying to their constituents' mail. He was commissioned and began promoting, again with Leahy's assistance, the use of these practices, packaged under the name of 'Correspondex,' to the different bureaus. Correspondex was used extensively in places where correspondence was enormous, particularly the Bureau of Naval Personnel, although it was used in many other parts of the Navy as well. So now records management was pushed back not only from noncurrent records to current records, mail and files, but on back to what was the beginning of an interest in records creation.

Down the hall from Leahy was a man who had been active in forms management, forms design, and forms control, Frank M. Knox (he had the same name as the Secretary of Navy but in courtesy to the Secretary always used the middle initial "M" in his own name). Knox was a very knowledgeable person who had been set up to run the Navy printing plant, but since his background had been in forms management, he set up a forms control shop also. Leahy began collaborating with Knox, but he had no real responsibility for forms management. Actually forms management didn't become a part of records management in Navy until 1946, by which time I was in charge of the operation.

But before I go any further maybe I had better give you a little background on the Navy setup. Leahy went over to the Navy about September of 1941.

BROOKS: What got him associated with the Navy? He had been in the Special Examiners office and in Treasury Department Archives here.

ANGEL: Well, I think the connection came about this way. One of the principal civilians in the Administrative Office of the Navy Department, Office of the Secretary of the Navy, was Ben Abbott, who had been moved over there from the Bureau of Supplies and Accounts. And soon he found himself reporting to Vice Admiral Henry Butler (retired), who had been called back to active duty. The records problem was an enormous one at Navy. Abbott didn't know what to do about it. His experience had been mostly in the chief clerk's office, I believe, in Supplies and Accounts. But Abbott knew Collas Harris over here at the Archives. I think when the two got together Harris said, "Well sure, we can do something about it." Harris put Leahy in touch with Abbott, and it was through that contact, as best I can piece it together, that Leahy went over there.

BROOKS: That jibes with what little I remember about it and with what little Harris said about it in an interview. At about that time I was asked to submit an application for the job in the Navy, but I was given to understand very shortly that they just had to have three people apply and Leahy was going to get the job, though they had to go through the motions of getting three people to apply.

ANGEL: Well, so Ed went over there. Leahy hadn't been there very long before he got Bob Bahmer, a cohort from Archives, to come over and give him a hand, especially with noncurrent records and with what became the records center. Leahy concentrated more on the promotional side, on current records, and then on microfilming, which became a fairly substantial operation, with an annual budget of about a million dollars. As the draft boards got closer to people at the Archives, Leahy began getting them, or at least some of them, commissioned. I think Paul Bishop was one of the first ones commissioned. Then Herb Randall, who had been one of the younger members of the Archives staff, was not commissioned--his educational background didn't permit that--but he was made a petty officer and actually headed the records center physically under Leahy. I mentioned that Brennan was brought in from outside to handle microfilming; he was commissioned sometime in '42, I believe.

I'd been here in the Archives wondering what to do myself. Buck had asked me not to go into uniform. He felt that my duties as his immediate assistant were such that I shouldn't leave, and so I made no attempt to get commissioned. But pretty soon it became evident that I would be drawn into the military, so I approached Leahy to see about a commission. Bob Hubbard, who had been here as Director of Personnel, was also interested. So both of us went over into Leahy's office at about the same time and stayed there for quite a while. I was commissioned in March of '43 and went on duty in the early days of April '43. Hubbard went over there about at the same time. He was there perhaps a year with Leahy and then moved on into personnel work.

Leahy also had commissioned a Grant Boyer who had been in the files operations at TVA. Ed had been drawn to him because TVA was the first agency that, so far as I know, had made any attempt to separate permanent and temporary records in its files at the time of filing. Boyer was commissioned and brought in, but he soon got bored with the mass of material that he found, and anyway he was more interested in what was going on in the South Pacific. And so he asked for a transfer and later went out into the South Pacific area.

BROOKS: What was Ed's rank?

ANGEL: Ed was commissioned as a lieutenant, junior grade, primarily because of his age, and then he was immediately, as the Navy put it, spotted to lieutenant commander. The importance of the office required that temporary rank, which he kept throughout the war. Ultimately, as the automatic promotion system worked in the Navy, his rank became more and more "honest." His permanent rank became lieutenant, full lieutenant, and later lieutenant commander. Let's see, Brennan was also commissioned as a lieutenant, junior grade. So was Boyer from TVA.

When it came time for me to go over there I was commissioned as a lieutenant. I was a little older than the others, not quite 35 at the time, and so I was commissioned a full lieutenant at the outset. As time went on I was promoted and my rank when I left over there was full commander.

When I reported for duty, the elements of the Navy records management program consisted of noncurrent records, current records, correspondence management, and microfilming, with some forms control work going on in another division. Right next door to us, about late '43 or early '44, we began feeling the effect of some of the "capture and record" theory of history that Pendleton Herring had been promoting around the Government--getting agencies to have somebody record what actually was going on, someone at a high level. In the Navy, the collection of historical material on naval operations had been going on in the Office of Naval Records and Library, which was a parallel organization to Leahy's but in the Office of Chief of Naval Operations. Commodore Dudley Knox headed that program. Some people from the Archives joined his group, or did similar work in the Navy bureaus. Nelson Blake, who had been in Navy archives here, was commissioned in that group. Buford Roland was commissioned in the Bureau of Ordnance, but with responsibilities for historical work. Chet Guthrie was commissioned in the Bureau of Medicine and Surgery, with some responsibility for historical work but also with administrative and records management responsibilities. The Office of Naval Records and Library had some other people of interest in it. Walter Muir Whitehill, who was later head of the Boston Athenaeum, and Dick Leopold, now professor at Northwestern,

were officers there. Samuel Morison was there, but he wasn't. He was just attached there for rations and quarters so to speak. He didn't function as a part of the office, and because of his contact with President Roosevelt did a fair amount of free wheeling out where naval action was.

Next door to Leahy, however, Robert Albion had been brought in to do an administrative history of the civilian side of the Navy. He spent a lot of his time visiting with or having lunch with bureau chiefs and other senior officials and then would come back and write up what actually had gone on in the upper echelons of the Department. His office and Leahy's functioned together administratively, that is in quarters, supplies, and that sort of thing, but Albion handled his operation alone. He also had a young lieutenant with him, Bob Connery, who later became a professor at Duke, I believe. So we were surrounded you see by all sorts of information and documentation functions.

To serve the Navy our records centers had to function in other places besides Washington. The Navy was quite aware of the fact that there were a lot of records outside Washington that needed attention. As a result Ev Alldredge was commissioned out of Navy boot camp and brought in to work in the records center program. He became head of the Philadelphia records center. Right on his heels were Lewie Darter, who was also commissioned and sent there. Eventually Alldredge moved on to Los Angeles and Darter continued at Philadelphia. Another Archives type who was brought in was Iz Perlman. He was not commissioned, but he came in as a petty officer. And Forrest Shonkwiler was still another. He was a hospital corpsman but also served at the Philadelphia records center.

BROOKS: Neil Franklin and I went up to Philadelphia and visited the center there pretty early in its time with Everett, and Gordon Williams was up there with Ev.

ANGEL: That's right. He was another one who had come in from the Archives, and I'm sure I've overlooked a great many others whose names would come back to me if I concentrated on it. Well, then we were brought in on still another problem, the Navy directives problem. The Navy had a habit of sending out what was called Anavs, which were telegraphic communications sent to all Navy ships and stations giving them instructions on various things. They also sent out letters to all ships and stations where telegraphic communication or radio communication was not required. These letters went out in great profusion and were not under very much control. Nobody when he got the mail knew whether he had all of the things that he was supposed to have. So the idea was conceived of pulling all these directives together--this started out in Frank M. Knox's area--printing them all together, stapling them together, and sending them around so that you'd

know whether you had them all. It was only a step from that to printing them in a pamphlet form. They could be printed just as fast and with a table of contents. And ultimately, I believe, an index was supplied.

Somewhere in, I guess it might have been as late as '44, the question came as to whether this method of issuing instruction was really workable. The story came back from the fleet that they didn't like the pamphlets and that this method was much too complicated. They couldn't tear up these pamphlets and file items pertaining to ships in one place and aircraft in another and so on. So Admiral Butler issued orders for me to go to the Charleston Shipyard and the Norfolk Naval Base and to go aboard as many ships as I could in a matter of a week or 10 days, to talk to as many captains or executive officers as I could to find out what they really did think about this method of handling directives.

So I went and I never drank so much coffee in all my born days. You'd go down a dock with three or four destroyers tied up along side. You'd go aboard, and one of the side boys would take you down to the ward room and get you a cup of coffee while he went after the executive officer or the skipper. You'd just start your coffee by the time the officer had come in. He looked at your cup and it wasn't full. He felt that hospitality was not being attended to so he'd fill your cup. Then you'd finish off that cup and your interview in 10, maybe 15 minutes, go ashore and walk another two or three hundred feet and go aboard another ship. And this went on for some days at the two places. Well, anyway I came back and made a report that indicated that these ships, many of which had actually been in combat, had found the new technique quite desirable and so that publication continued and was supplemented by semiannual consolidations of all the directives still in force.

BROOKS: Did it have a name?

ANGEL: It ultimately became known as the Navy Department Bulletin. So again we were brought in on the periphery of another form of what we would now call directives management. I did a similar job in connection with letters having to do with personnel management, and a Navy Department personnel handbook eventually grew out of that, partly at least as a result of the staff work. So we had records centers then proliferating first in Philadelphia, then in Los Angeles, and eventually after the war in New York, Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania, and New Orleans.

By November of '45, with the end of the war, Leahy was ready to leave the Navy. He had been in negotiation for a long while with Herb Goodman in Remington Rand. Leahy had been in Navy longer than the rest of us. We were allowed to go out of uniform on the basis of the number of points

that we had, based on length of service. So by November of 1945 Ed had enough points and was allowed to go on inactive duty. He joined Remington Rand in charge of a microfilm division. He held that position probably a year or more, at which time he moved on and established his own records management consulting operation, the National Records Management Council.

With the departure of Leahy, I became head of the office. I'd been assistant head during the previous year, and I'd long since been moved out of the noncurrent records job into general administration. I was given a spot promotion from lieutenant commander to commander in January of '46. I stayed in uniform for nearly another year, and then continued as civilian head of the office, which had been renamed the Office Methods Division, until January of 1950 when I came back to the Archives. But I probably ought to fill in a little bit about what happened during that intervening period.

BROOKS: Herbert, sometime ago you mentioned the fact that the people in Navy were working on schedules. The legal provision for the use of schedules came in the 1943 Disposal Act, in which I was very much involved. There is a big case file on it in the National Archives. It took about two years altogether to get that going. This included the circulation of drafts from my desk among the divisions here and among other agencies. There was always a good deal of pressure being applied by Ed Leahy on the Archives and on the Budget Bureau to get this thing moving, and to be sure to get the scheduling provisions in there. Some of us were heartily in favor of all this and worked pretty closely with you guys in the Navy on it. So that to my mind what went on in the Navy had currently much greater importance than just the Navy. The Navy and the War Department were pathfinders in the Government as a whole. Do you remember anything particularly about that? Either the Disposal Act or the Executive Order the Budget Bureau issued in 1946 that required the various agencies to create records in the first place? It forecast some of the provisions of the Federal Records Act.

ANGEL: Well, let's forget about the Executive Order of '46 for the minute and concentrate on the Disposal Act. I knew about the movement towards records scheduling, of course, from working closely with Buck all that time. That again wasn't my pigeon particularly, but like everything else there I had to know about it and was in on the conferences. And I also knew of the various devices that had been used in anticipation of scheduling. You remember there were disposal lists, and then some agencies, I guess Agriculture did it first maybe, began submitting the same disposal lists year after year.

BROOKS: Oh yes, I do remember.

ANGEL: So that you had in effect a schedule, you just had the same paperwork going round and round. Leahy did some of that I am sure in Navy. Also we had something called tables which, again I'm sure you remember, where if records of a given type had been authorized for disposal by Congress, the Archivist could himself issue a document saying anybody else who had records of this type could also dispose of them. Again this was simply a stop gap against the time when you'd get honest to goodness schedules. But I didn't get any closer involved in that until I went over to Navy, which as I mentioned a while ago was early in April of '43.

BROOKS: The law was enacted June 30, 1943.

ANGEL: Well, it was so close to enactment that we operated in preparing our schedules in Navy on the assumption that it was going to be enacted.

BROOKS: There were fairly complete drafts several months before that.

ANGEL: So I was put in charge of a whole team of people who would go out and develop schedules in the different bureaus, and we had schedules being developed in probably three or four bureaus simultaneously. The Bureau of Ships was one, I remember. People like Bob Shiff, who later joined Leahy in the National Records Management Council, was out working on schedules in the Bureau of Supplies and Accounts.

BROOKS: That's right. He first sought employment in the Government in my office of records administration, and I referred him to Ed.

ANGEL: Yes. And so since I hadn't done any disposal work at the Archives, I hadn't had the pleasure, Phil, of doing any reviewing of lists or schedules and hadn't had the responsibility for developing any.

BROOKS: The kind of pleasure that Neil Franklin and I recalled the other day, when in 1935 to 1937 we wrote a report on a detailed form on each item on a list, and then we'd sit around the table and vote on them. And we can both well remember Mr. Hyde saying, "Well now if we vote three times in a row on one certain kind of record the fourth time we ought to vote the other way so as to avoid setting a precedent"; and we were just trying as hard as we could to set precedents because that's what we needed.

ANGEL: Well, at any rate I think I've successfully established that I didn't know very much about scheduling. Leahy was wise about such things, and moreover didn't want to get involved in scheduling anymore either. He gave me the administrative responsibility for operating all these teams, making sure that the job had been done, and then reviewing

the work that the fellows and girls had compiled. So all of these then were reviewed by me and packaged, and I was the contact with the Archives on schedules. At that time I dealt with Blake for a while before he went into the Navy, then with Jesse Boell, who was over here--now I guess out in Wisconsin. Next was Adeline Barry, who was first on the Archives staff, and later we hired her away over to Navy. Those I guess were the principal ones that we functioned with.

So we knew about schedules. We designed a mass production approach to it. For example, we found that the Navy had about 5,000 different schools, and it became apparent that it was not going to be necessary to work up a schedule for each of the 5,000 schools. We found that there were six different types of schools, technical schools of this kind, indoctrination schools and so on, so we worked up schedules for six types of schools and got those approved. Navy had about 10 shipyards, and here we had one schedule worked up for the Philadelphia shipyard. Alldredge and Darter and others worked on that. Another one was worked up for a shipyard on the West Coast. And then the schedules were brought into Washington and were combined, and then were sent out to still a third shipyard for checking to be sure that it would hold up. Then we brought out one schedule for all navy shipyards. This was repeated for air stations and for other recurring types of navy installations. Well I had responsibility, on through '44 probably, for seeing that this did actually get done, and that the records centers did actually get operated. I had more general responsibilities beginning in '45 as assistant head of the Office of Records Administration. Concurrently with the scheduling we developed a practice of having a bureau records officer appointed in each bureau. Sometimes he was the head of the current files, but we tried to avoid that; and he was given bureau responsibility not only in Washington but also for the field activities that the bureaus had cognizance over, and so these bureau officers became our points of contact. Later on we were to set up in each naval district a district records management officer under Leahy's responsibility, later mine, to give guidance to all naval activities in those districts. So you began having the start there of agency records officers and bureau records officers, which is quite a common practice now.

Leahy went out of uniform in November of '45, and about the same time our office was reorganized and was given the responsibility for still another records management function, that of office equipment standards--standards for filing equipment, for filing supplies, and so on. This was quite easy to bring off, since the administrative office of the Navy Department had general responsibility for this. By June of '46 Frank Knox had gone out of uniform, and the forms management responsibility was shifted from the Publications Division of the Administrative Office to the Office

Methods Division, and so I had responsibility for that.

Three months later we were brought in on the problem of the desperate need that the Navy had to control the proliferation of reports, and so we set up a reports management function in the Office Methods Division. And then finally, about 3 years later in, 1949, just before I left the Office Methods Division, we were also given responsibility to develop a directives system for the Navy Department. So you see we had quite a wide gamut of responsibility that developed in that period from when Leahy came over in '41 until the time I left there in January of 1950.

But to get back to your earlier question on the Executive Order, the Budget Bureau had had a very feeble records management function. It had Ed Wilbur who was head of that little part of the organization, a very competent person who later served as one of the task force members on the first Hoover Commission task force on records management. And then he had a man who specialized on forms, George Vandewende, and another man who specialized on microfilm and all other records functions, Henry Lilienfield.

BROOKS: Oh yes.

ANGEL: You remember him. But that was essentially the staff. There were no more. And they, particularly Lilienfield, although there were others, had a feeling that they could direct all records management activities in the Government, but no one of them was very knowledgeable about records management per se. Eventually they developed a records management Executive Order which was quite similar to a later one which said that all Government agencies should have directors of personnel. This one said that all Government agencies should have records management responsibilities, and should do something about records management, and that the Budget Bureau should generally give it direction.

BROOKS: As I remember at that time there was some feeling, here anyway, of a difference of opinion as to where the responsibility should be. Should it be in the Archives, or the Budget Bureau, or where? And this was a problem that never was solved, that eventually came into the consideration of the Hoover Commission.

ANGEL: Well, that was a fight that began then, and we were involved in it years after I came back here to the Archives for that matter. But that Executive Order was issued, I think along about September or early October of '46. I remember it rather vividly because there was a panel set up to discuss the matter. The Budget Bureau was represented by Henry Lilienfield. I was brought in as an agency patron, and I forget who else was on the panel.

BROOKS: This was in the Interagency Records Administration Conference.

ANGEL: In IRAC, yes. And this was in October of '46. And I remember I took the position that this Executive Order was fine, it was nice that all God's children were to have shoes, but the question I asked was, now that they have this function, what in the devil was the Budget Bureau going to do with it? They would need to have more staff, and they would need to give it real firm direction or the whole thing would be simply an empty gesture. After I had finished my talk I left on my terminal military leave with our daughter, who was then about 3 1/2, for Florida.

While I was in Florida for a week or so I got an agitated letter from Alldredge, who was holding the shop for me at Navy while I was gone. Apparently my remarks had been a little too accurate to suit at least Lilienfield over at the Budget Bureau and they were demanding that another meeting of IRAC be called to have further discussion on the thing. But by the time I got back things had quieted down, and so we had on the books a gesture saying something ought to be done about records management but nothing really was implemented and never was really effective. None of us really expected it to be, but all of us in the agencies were pleased to have records management at least recognized as being a legal type of operation.

BROOKS: We were happy about it here too. Herb, you mentioned that meeting of IRAC. I think it would be worthwhile saying something about IRAC and asking how early you were associated with it. It was first set up as an interagency committee on filing by the Civil Service Commission, I think, in 1941 and I guess Leahy represented the Archives at the very first meeting. And largely under the aegis of Helen Chatfield it was turned into the Interagency Records Administration Conference, and I represented the Archives for quite some years, and was later Chairman. I think that IRAC has had a pretty important role. When did you first become conscious of it?

ANGEL: Well I was aware, of course, of the organization of it and I attended some of the earlier sessions as an observer for Buck. I was reasonably dutiful in attending the meetings and reporting back to him the things that were going on there. I don't think I ever was an officer of IRAC per se. I was on the platform a fair number of times over the years but was never connected with it officially, at least not until I came back to the Archives, when the sponsorship of IRAC was made a responsibility of the Office of Records Management here.

BROOKS: When did "records administration" become "records management," and why? That's perhaps a futile question, but I think it's of some interest.

ANGEL: Well, it was a semantic thing. I don't know exactly when it did change. I think it came around '46. The reason here was that "administration" implies that you have something to administer, and this was contrary to the staff concept, you see, that we had at the Navy because we didn't have anything to administer. Later we had records centers and that sort of thing, but we weren't running mail and files. We didn't have the administrative responsibility that, let's say, the Office of the Adjutant General had. And management was becoming a more respectable word, then too, although you had the Society of Public Administration.

BROOKS: It still is that, and the Public Administration Service in Chicago is still Public Administration Service.

ANGEL: That's right. But management began creeping into the name of other societies.

BROOKS: It used to amuse me because, of course, I was brought up on "records administration" and I liked that, but the word "management" to me became sort of a fetish. I still think it is.

ANGEL: Well, the "management" got into the title. I think our title in Navy was Office of Records Management, quite early. And then we lost that title to become Office Methods Division from 1946 onward. But we used the "Navy Records Center" for awhile and then we changed that to "Naval Records Management Center."

BROOKS: Something that is perhaps more fundamental or closer related to our story. Was the handling of these disposal schedules that you spoke about--was that your primary relation with the Archives during the period you were in the Navy?

ANGEL: Basically.

BROOKS: Did you have any dealings with Lacy?

ANGEL: Very few. There wasn't any real need for that. Anytime I had dealings with the Archives it was with Buck, you see, when it had to go to that level. I had access to him and when I needed it. Then we had our own contacts, Jesse Boell and Adeline Barry, who came over on our day-to-day operation.

BROOKS: She was in my office first, too. The Lacy period, from '44 to '46 was a very active period around here, but I'm not sure it had very much lasting effect.

ANGEL: Well, the people who had filtered to the top by then were people who had come on during the war . . .

BROOKS: A lot of them.

ANGEL: Many of them had. They didn't have the background and then, I know that many of us in the agencies had very little patience with some of the backing and filling, and we did a fair amount of throwing our weight around in demanding this, that, or the other.

BROOKS: I was sort of caught in the middle because, of course, I'd been close to Buck and I was put in charge of this records administration program, which was a great bone of contention. Some of the people in the records divisions, I think, honestly felt that all this business of what happened to the records before they got to the Archives was none of the Archives' business. Some of them, I think, opposed the records administration program, and other things, just because they were generally anti-establishment in the Archives. I think you were pretty well removed from all that, weren't you?

ANGEL: Well I knew it was going on, obviously.

BROOKS: I was caught right in the middle.

ANGEL: After all it isn't so far from the Navy Department to the Archives, and there were a lot of meetings and lunches. I was carpooling during the war for a fair amount of time with the Hamers, who lived out our way, and so I got quite a bit of background on that.

BROOKS: One other point about IRAC. You were close to the management of it in 1949 and I was the chairman of IRAC from '48 to '50. I remember your calling me on the telephone one time and saying you were involved in setting up a program to discuss the task force report of the Hoover Commission and they wanted somebody on this panel that would be an opponent. I said okay, but I would not be an opponent of records administration because I believed in it. I would be an opponent of anything that would separate the people that did the work in the Archives, on reference service especially, from the creation of the records in the agency. And I was afraid this new proposed setup would do that, as I think it has, and maybe that was inevitable. Anyway, you were closely involved with IRAC at that time. Maybe it's a good time to ask you to talk about the Hoover Commission report.

ANGEL: Well, on the first Hoover Commission, Leahy, of course, was able to promote a task force on records management. I think in doing that he had the support of Grover.

BROOKS: I'm sure he did.

ANGEL: The members, let's see there were: Grover, of course, was a member along with Leahy. I was a member. Ed Wilbur of the Budget Bureau, because Ed wanted that representation. And there was one chap from a private business that I think probably was a company that Ed's own company had had some dealing with--Frank M. Root from Westinghouse, I think it was, who was the fifth member. Leahy used a good many of my people over at Navy to work on the different sections of the report. Grover became Archivist in June '48 and stepped off the task force and Bahmer stepped on. Leahy spent a great deal of time down in Washington during that period. He used a lot of our people.

BROOKS: He had an office up here on the sixth floor, didn't he?

ANGEL: He probably did. I don't think he had any office with us over at Navy. But he spent a lot of time with us over there and had a lot of our people who actually did much of the work. You'll notice a credit line for a good many of our staff there. And we had periodic meetings of the task force. We also had a number of bull sessions where two or three of us would get together and kick things around. People like Ed Wilbur and the chap from Westinghouse were rarely involved, but there were a fair number of meetings which would be with Leahy, or Leahy would be here with Grover and Bahmer, and then he'd come over and spend a fair amount of time with us over in the Navy Department. And so the basic work was done in that way. I was active on the task force up until late November of '48 when I left for an assignment. I was borrowed from Navy for a month by the Economic Cooperation Administration to go with another analyst over to Seoul in Korea to attempt to see what the staffing pattern and budget should be for ECA in Korea. The Army was withdrawing and they were going to put in a Point Four program over there. I was gone during December and during that time the report was pretty well jelled. It was, I guess issued as of January of '49.

Third Interview - April 5, 1973

BROOKS: Herbert, at the last interview we ended during the period of consideration of the Hoover Commission Report and the Act that set up the GSA in 1949, you may want to continue with some account of your interest in or your role in that enterprise.

ANGEL: After the law was passed in 1949 I had very little to do with it. I was not involved in the maneuverings that had anything to do with the legislative progress of the Act. I was then in Navy, and I did not follow the organizational developments in General Services Administration as the Archives was absorbed into it as one of the services. In fact, I was going along peacefully minding my own business late in the fall of 1949 when Grover and Bahmer came over to Navy one day to have luncheon with me. And at that time they asked me to come on back to the Archives to take over the records management function called for under the Hoover Commission recommendations. They put it that since I had been involved with the task force and had made or had a part in making some of the recommendations it seemed only fair that I should come back to the Archives and help them out.

After some thought and consultation with my boss in the Navy, I decided to return to the Archives. I made only two requests: One that my grade be retained at the same level that I had in Navy, which was then a GS-15, and second that I be allowed to bring back to the Archives two people. One, Everett Alldredge, who had been in the Archives previously and with whom I had worked very closely in the records center part of the Navy program. And second, Diana Erceg, who had been my secretary for a long time and subsequently had worked closely with Alldredge in the records center function.

I felt that those two people would be essential not only because they knew the program completely, but also because I could rely on them in a situation where I thought I might run into some difficulties personnel-wise with other people on the Archives staff. The Grade 15 stipulation was significant not only because I wanted to hold on to it, but also because at that time Bob Bahmer, the Deputy Archivist, or Assistant Archivist as his title was then, was still only a grade 14. His grade had not been adjusted upward in GSA, and I, of course, would be unwilling to make a shift and go to a 14 or even lower in coming back. Also, I felt that bringing a higher grade over myself would result in moving some of the other grades higher in the Archives.

I anticipated in setting up a new office within the National Archives that there would be three, or actually four, groups of people that I would have to deal with that would present, or could present some problems of relationships. The first of these was other elements in the National Archives itself. The second was relationships elsewhere in the General Services Administration. The third was the Bureau of the Budget. And fourth was all the other agencies of the Government, which would constitute our clientele.

So far as the National Archives itself was concerned, I knew, of course, most of the senior people on the staff and felt that I had good relationships with them. I knew, however, that there was a certain amount of jealousy likely to occur particularly because of the higher grade that I would be bringing in and the higher grades of the people that I would have to have as members of my own staff. I wanted to avoid factionalism between my staff on the one hand and traditional parts of the Archives on the other, especially since I knew from personal conversations and from presentations at IRAC and elsewhere that some feeling ran high against records management.

BROOKS: This was in 1950 you came back?

ANGEL: This was in 1950. I returned to the Archives on February 1, 1950. And with my coming, Diana Erceg arriving at the same time, we constituted the Office of Records Management. Alldredge came along two weeks later after he had finished up some of his loose ends at the Navy Department. After I got back to the Archives I soon found that there was an unexpected source of difficulty in the Office of Management in the headquarters of the General Services Administration. This Office was headed by Bill Cleary and Jim Garvey, who had been senior officials in the War Assets Administration in management work. As a matter of fact, most of the topside of GSA, certainly on the staff level, consisted of former War Assets officials.

BROOKS: Including the Administrator, Jess Larson.

ANGEL: Including the Administrator and also including the Comptroller, Max Medley, and the General Counsel, Max Elliott. And most of these tended to look down on the services, such as the Archives, which they had inherited from other agencies or services that had previously been independent. The problem with the GSA Management Office was that they did not understand what we were trying to do in records management, particularly in the areas of records creation and records maintenance, and so any move in that direction on our part was a potential hazard to themselves, since they were the management arm of the General Services

Administration. They could never seem to sort out the difference between the Records Management Division in the Archives, which would have the entire Government as its parish, and the Office of Management in GSA, which would be concerned only with things internal in GSA. If anyone was going to have Government-wide responsibilities it seemed they felt that they should have it and not us. So this was a long running feud that wasn't really quelled for three or four years.

The third element that I mentioned was the Bureau of the Budget, which still had some pretensions to Government-wide responsibility in records management and was loath to give up the activity that it had previously had, even though that activity, as I mentioned earlier, was quite minimal. Later the same type of conflict grew up between BOB and Records Management Division over the question of records creation. The Budget Bureau eventually got reconciled to our handling the non-current records function, including records centers, and later agreed that maybe we could handle records maintenance, including mail and files. These areas were areas that the Budget Bureau had no particular interest in, but when it came to other functions such as forms management, reports management, issuances management, correspondence management, there we were treading on the toes of the Budget Bureau, which had general responsibility for reports management at one time and which still had responsibilities for reporting under the Public Reporting Act. They regarded us as a potential rival there. Opposition from the Budget Bureau came from the Office of Management and Organization, particularly from Hirst Sutton and from some of his cohorts including Bill Rapp. That conflict continued for a long time and eventually again was resolved by the Budget Bureau fading from the picture. But this took a much longer time. I would say that that dragon was not disposed of until, oh, perhaps 1965 or thereabouts.

As for the fourth element, the other agencies of the Government, I had thought that we might have difficulty there but not much. The largest agencies, namely the military, the Army, the Navy, and the Air Force, we had good pipelines into. Grover and Bahmer had excellent contacts with the Army. I had good contacts with the Navy because I had been succeeded at the Navy Department by my assistant, Ed Dwyer, and our relationship continued good. And the Air Force records program was headed by Bill Muller, who had been a part of our Navy show, and although he was something of a maverick, he understood what we were trying to do and was not completely antagonistic. I had told the Budget Bureau and the GSA Office of Management, too, when they demurred about our ability to bring the agencies of the Government along in things like records centers and records scheduling (they said that we would never be able to get the agencies to go along with us; there was too much independence there). I reminded them that we had been able to carry out the program in the Navy

Department where we had to establish it and operate it in the different bureaus of the Navy Department. I pointed out that there wasn't any organization more independent than a Navy bureau, and if the function would work in the Navy bureaus I felt that it would be strictly a downhill job to get it to work in other independent Government agencies.

BROOKS: During this period that you were in charge of the records management program in the Archives, from 1950 on for several years, I found it necessary to move out of this climate for reasons of family health and had always been enthusiastic about records administration, or records management, as you know. It was really a pleasant solution for me to be able to become a part of what was your team in records management when I went in January of 1953 to take charge of the San Francisco center, with annexes in Los Angeles and Hawaii. By that time the records center program was well established and that accomplishment was carried out under your administration in charge of records administration program here.

ANGEL: Yes. When, as I mentioned a bit ago, when Diana Erceg and I reported for duty over here we were the Records Management Division and the division grew from that. We had the problem of financing records centers. We asked the Budget Bureau to provide us some funds from the President's emergency funds for this purpose. They demurred and said that they weren't willing to finance our program for a full year because it had not been demonstrated that records centers could actually achieve the things that the Hoover Commission had said they could. I pointed out that we had at that time five records centers in Navy with over a million cubic feet of records in them, and I didn't feel that a further demonstration was required. Nevertheless they insisted on a pilot project, and to make the pill more palatable they agreed to give us funds from the President's emergency funds to set up a center. So we did this in New York, and our very first center was set up there.

Meanwhile, we began looking around for a place in Washington. We had asked the Public Buildings Service to find us places, but they weren't sure what records centers were and they weren't very good at finding us places. To take care of that situation here in Washington we looked around and found that the old Torpedo Plant down in Alexandria was empty. We also knew the chap in the Navy Bureau of Yards and Docks who had responsibility for real estate, a former schoolmate of mine named Willis Dudley, who had been with me at George Washington. So we went to Willis, explained our problem, got his concurrence, and then went to Public Buildings and said: "Here, we have a building for you and the arrangements have all been made with Navy." That was not popular with Public Buildings, but we got the building and a headquarters for the center in Washington.

We had a somewhat similar situation in New York. We looked all around for suitable space, and PBS could find none. Then I remembered that in Brooklyn the Navy had a big clothing depot. Also after a little checking we found that the commanding officer had been the commanding officer at the Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania, supply depot, where we had a Navy records center. Alldredge and I went to see Admiral Edsall in Brooklyn and explained the GSA program of records centers and asked if we might not have some space in his mammoth clothing center there. He invited us into his office to have coffee and talk the matter over. After a little while he called his aide in and said that we should be allowed to have whatever space we needed, about 50,000 feet as I recall now, 50,000 square feet. Then as we were leaving the Admiral said "I have just one question for you fellows: I know how you expanded things in Mechanicsburg in the space that we gave you, and the additional space that you took there. What I want to know is, when are you going to take over this entire depot?" We promised that we would not take his entire depot, which ran into something over a million square feet, but would move out as soon as we could find other suitable space.

BROOKS: Herbert, the centers I knew best were the one in San Francisco, which I think was one of the first established in 1950, and later the one in Kansas City, which was set up either in 1950 or early '51. For those did you have to find your own space or did GSA help on that? I think San Francisco was downtown at first and then moved out to Butler Road.

ANGEL: We had a variety of locations in San Francisco. All of them bad.

BROOKS: Right.

ANGEL: Nevertheless, those were dug up for us by GSA. At least they gave us buildings to choose among. Similarly the building we had in Kansas City was in an old War Assets Administration warehouse.

BROOKS: In the west bottoms, in the flats.

ANGEL: That's right.

BROOKS: It was flooded the first year they were there.

ANGEL: That's right. And there was an interesting footnote. After the flood we asked for money to get ourselves another center, another location, and to fit it out. In the course of the hearings one of the senators asked us whether we had lost any records as a result of the flood, and I told him very proudly that out of 10,000 feet or more of records on the premises we had lost only 675 cubic feet. He shook his head sadly and said: "Too bad, too bad."

I'd like to go back a minute to the relationships with the Archives staff before I forget it. While we were concentrating obviously on records centers, so far as other agencies were concerned, we knew that we had to get involved with records scheduling and tone up that operation in other agencies. Here we felt that members of the Archives own staff would be the best ones to do the job. For this purpose Wayne Grover made it possible for us to get Ned Campbell, whom I had known previously and had great respect for, and Elizabeth Drewry as his assistant. Elizabeth I had also known in the earlier days when she was in the Reference Division, and even before that back in 1929 I had known her as a classmate at George Washington University. I tried to get several other Archives staff members also, but several of them were not interested in being adventuresome enough to go into the new office.

BROOKS: That's the same thing that happened at the beginning of the war when agencies tried to get members of the Archives staff. I didn't go then, I didn't go until much after the war to the National Security Resources Board, but I remember being impatient with some of the people on the Archives staff that wouldn't accept what seemed to me to be good opportunities out in the agencies. In 1950 when you came back and were setting up the records management program, did you find such people as Ted Schellenberg, who was in charge of the main office of the Archives then and the branches, did you find them cooperative?

ANGEL: Yes, I would say that they were cooperative. I think it would be an exaggeration to say that they were enthusiastic about the operation of the records centers. To ease that situation, a little later on Bob Bahmer was designated as Deputy Archivist of the United States and in that respect his position corresponded to the number two jobs in the other GSA services. And Ted and I were made Assistant Archivists, Ted for the National Archives and I for Records Management, so that the two positions there were made compatible and the grades were ultimately made parallel too.

BROOKS: I had a connection with all that too, because when Campbell went with you people I took over as Chief Archivist of War Records Branch. Yes, and Elizabeth Drewry stayed there for a while and continued to be in charge of reference service in the War Records Branch before she went up with Campbell in Records Management.

ANGEL: After the first few years, expansion, we found, was proceeding quite as we had expected. The centers were growing by leaps and bounds, largely aided, I think, by the war in Korea. Just as in the case of World War II, the Korean War had the effect of causing space squeezes in the agencies. Agencies were willing to give up records that they might otherwise have clung to. So our real problem was trying to find enough space to house them.

The records scheduling function under Ned Campbell moved along quite well, and in the third area, records creation, we had Terry Beach. Terry had been records officer in the Coast Guard during World War II and subsequently had headed the records management program for Atomic Energy Commission. Terry headed the survey work and the technical assistance work in other agencies in current records management, particularly in the mail and files area, which he was especially knowledgeable of. His assistants we recruited from a variety of other agencies, so that we had people on the staff who had some contact and some knowledge of work in a variety of agencies. This, too, worked out quite well.

After about four years, in 1954, the second Hoover Commission was established. Leahy got in touch with the officials there and again with some assistance, I'm sure, from Grover was able to establish a task force on paperwork management.

BROOKS: Leahy was still in New York with his own firm, right?

ANGEL: That's correct. His own firm took over the task of, or rather he was borrowed from his own firm to be, chairman of the task force on paperwork management. He recruited a number of people for the task force. They were B. H. Harper, Thomas F. Conroy, and Edmund D. Dwyer, and of course I was also one of the members. As in the case of the first Hoover Commission report, Leahy got a great deal of assistance from the Navy records management staff headed by his old friend Ed Dwyer and from the staff here in the Archives, headed by Alldredge and myself. It seemed to be my fate whenever there was a Hoover Commission operating to draw an overseas assignment. I had been sent off to Korea for a 1-month assignment toward the very end of the first Hoover Commission task force on records management, and in October of 1954 I was sent off again on a 3-month assignment, this time to Iran, where I was asked to lecture at the university on archives and records management and to advise government officials on archival work.

BROOKS: Did you lecture in English?

ANGEL: Yes. I would prepare my lectures in English and type them up. Then my interpreter, who had been trained at Oxford, would translate them into Persian. When we went to class I would read a paragraph or two in English and my interpreter would follow by reading the same paragraphs in Persian.

BROOKS: How many lectures?

ANGEL: Let me see. I met the class three times a week, I believe, and I was there for about 8 or 9 weeks. The class ran about 8 or 9 weeks. I believe there were about 26 lectures.

BROOKS: Were they then published?

ANGEL: Well, they were duplicated--mimeographed--and copies were delivered to the class, and copies in English were left in typescript form over there. There's a copy of the lectures in the Archives library. You asked whether they were published. The answer is yes, but not by me. After I had returned to the United States, I was told that a professor over there was in the process of taking my lectures and putting them in a book and publishing them under his own name. That didn't bother me particularly, but I was amused when a few weeks later I got a request from the professor asking whether I could supply the photographs that I had used during my lectures because he was preparing a book on records management and he would like to have them as illustrations. I felt that since he had the text, and was using my text, that it was only logical that he should use my photographs, so I sent them along. But I've never seen the published work, and it's not been published certainly over my name.

BROOKS: I had a special interest because about the same time you were partly to blame, I think, for my being sent to Panama for a project where I lectured at the university in Spanish, and they did publish that volume down there. I was always sorry that it never existed in English. I lost some mileage out of that.

ANGEL: Well at any rate, that was the story about the Iranian assignment. So the Hoover Commission came out with its task force report on paperwork management. The task force said in effect GSA is doing quite a satisfactory job in records disposal and records centers and even in records maintenance, but it still has a great distance to go in records creation. The report pointed out that the real financial benefits, or greater financial benefits, were to be derived from the areas of records creation--correspondence, reports, forms, and issuances--than from the other, and that gave us a charter to go forward, to ask for additional funds and expansion of our staff and program at a more rapid pace in the years that followed. Following the Hoover Commission recommendations on paperwork management our program expanded, and it grew in size. The records centers continued to grow and all was going well, I thought, until one day in mid-November 1959. Then Wayne Grover came down to my office and told me that the Administrator wanted to see me over in the other building.

BROOKS: Was that Mr. Floete?

ANGEL: Yes. The Administrator at that time was Franklin Floete, with whom I had had some dealings, but most of the relationships, of course, had been carried on by Wayne or in his absence by Bob Bahmer. I went over to see the Administrator and found to my consternation that the Administrator wanted me to come over to his office and become one of his staff officers, the Director of Administration. This was essentially the same job that Bill Cleary had had some years earlier as Director of Management. And the Director of Administration was in 1959 responsible for personnel, for office services, for management engineering assistance within the agency, and for the compliance or investigatory work.

BROOKS: There had been a succession of people in the job, had there not? We all thought, "Well Herbert's going into a headache job."

ANGEL: A great many people had occupied the job since 1950. About five or six I believe at the time I took over. I knew that it was sort of a volatile job, and when I did accept the job I made a tabulation of the previous incumbents and the length of time they had occupied the job. And as my tenure passed each one of my predecessor's, I checked them off on the list. The only one I didn't succeed in checking off was Bill Cleary, the initial occupant of the position.

I didn't want to go over to the other building. I didn't want to get involved in administration, but Mr. Floete made it very plain that I had no choice in the matter; that it was not a fate worse than death, and that the records management would be still in good hands if I left it and that I should report as quickly as possible. I came back and talked to Wayne about it. He agreed that I didn't seem to have any choice, so I reported to the other building at the end of November in '59. I stayed there through the change in administration in 1961, and then in June of '62 a reorganization which consolidated the Director of Administration's responsibility with that of the Comptroller's gave me an opportunity to request a return to the Archives, and this request was granted.

BROOKS: By that time Mr. Boutin was the Administrator?

ANGEL: That's right. Mr. Boutin had followed Mr. Moore. Mr. Moore had been the first Administrator appointed by President Kennedy, with Mr. Boutin as his deputy. And then with the resignation of Mr. Moore after a few months, Mr. Boutin had taken over.

BROOKS: Moore, as I remember, never was in good health and never really took on the job.

ANGEL: No, he was not very active in it, and in my opinion he was never very happy with the job and was pleased enough to be able to return to a university atmosphere.

BROOKS: But Bernie Boutin went into it with hammer and tongs.

ANGEL: That's right. But that's another story.

BROOKS: Herbert, there's one aspect of the Archives relations with the professionals that has always particularly interested me. And I admit I'm guilty sometimes of expressing my own special interest in these interviews. As you well remember, because you were in Dr. Buck's office at the time, he and Dr. Connor were heavily responsible for the formation of the Society of American Archivists in 1936, and to my great surprise I was made the first secretary. I think you knew what went on because you worked in Dr. Buck's office and you knew pretty much what went on and he was close to it. Later, I think I'm correct in saying you kept in touch with the Society for all intervening years and in 1965 you became Vice President, and in the ensuing year President. Is there anything you'd like to say about the SAA and particularly the Archives relation to it?

ANGEL: Well, I was one of the charter members, the founding members of the Society. I was at the meeting in Providence when it was established, and I have retained my membership in the Society since that time. I did serve as Vice President in '66 and President in '67 as you point out, but I had also served 10 years earlier as Vice President in 1956 at a time when the Vice President did not automatically succeed to the presidency and when Presidents had normally served a couple of years.

Throughout the time that I have been involved with the Society I've been well aware of the pulling and tugging that has existed between the state archives, for the most part, and the National Archives. The state archives group, or many of them in it, have been from my point of view jealous of the size and strength of the National Archives and have felt that the Archives has tended to throw a bit of weight around.

On the other hand, I and a good many others have felt that the Archives has made heavy contributions to the Society. A lot of members of its staff have taken very time-consuming jobs. Your own, for example, as secretary is a good example of that. We also have provided on several occasions the editor of the American Archivist and supporting clerical and editorial staff. In many other ways, too, the Archives has subsidized the Society of American Archivists. Some of us have felt that some of the archivists in the states and in smaller organizations have tended to

play what Senator Carter Glass used to call "peanut politics" in an attempt to be very big frogs in what has been a relatively small pond. I believe that this pulling and tugging, however, has not been really general. From time to time a leader on one side or the other will surge to the top, will flail about and then will disappear. So there have been peaks and valleys in conflict and in tranquility within the Society. All in all I regard it as pretty much of a tempest in a teapot.

BROOKS: Well, I think that's true and I think the Archives is bound to play a dominant role, an important role because as you say it simply has the facilities to do so, but it's always been a constructive interest.