

U.S. NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS ADMINISTRATION  
Transcript of National Archives History Office Oral History Interview  
Subject: Rick Blondo  
Interviewer: Daria Labinsky  
April 26 & 29, 2021

[BEGIN RECORDING PART ONE - April 26, 2021]

**Daria Labinsky:** This is Daria Labinsky, and I am doing an oral history for the NARA [National Archives and Records Administration] oral history project with Rick Blondo. Today is April 26, 2021. Good afternoon, Rick. How are you today?

**Rick Blondo:** Good afternoon. I'm well. Thank you for the opportunity.

**Daria:** Oh, sure. My pleasure. Let's start at the beginning. And could you please just talk a little bit about your background before you got to the National Archives?

**Rick:** Part of this will segue into how I was exposed to archives, too. Do you want to emphasize that or just general stuff?

**Daria:** Either.

**Rick:** Okay. In the 4th grade, I wrote a poem as a class assignment. This is in Brooklyn, New York. And the teacher liked it so much that she told me she was going to place it in the school archives. I had no idea what that was. We hadn't learned about that. She took me up to her room, had a special place for it, and she said, "This is where things are kept forever." And I was really impressed by that, so much so that once I was at the National Archives for 15+ years, I tried to reach out to her. And fortunately she was still alive and in a nursing home. And needless to say, she was thrilled. This was a Catholic school, and that turns out to be the only year she was a nun and teaching. So, I think it's providence that that happened.

So then, my background was, I went to college near Chattanooga, Tennessee, and got a degree in religion, with a minor in behavioral science and a minor in history. It was almost a second major in history. But I needed to graduate. I was married by then, and we needed to move on. So, I got a job in Maryland to teach at a local church school, grades 7 through 10. That lasted two years, and they had a severe student drop off, and they didn't have enough money to pay all the teachers, so I was let go. And I was always interested in libraries. In high school in North Bergen, New Jersey, I volunteered to be a student librarian. When I moved to West Palm Beach,

Florida, in the junior year of high school, I did the same thing there. They had just moved to a brand new building, so I was involved with the movement from the original building to the new, and setting it all up. Park that for a moment, and you'll see how things just came together.

So, now I'm in college and now, as a student there, I got a job at the library. Surprise. And it was a great, great experience. Upon graduation, I was a school teacher. And then after I lost my job, I said, "You know, I think I'm going to get a master's degree in library science and become a librarian, because there's libraries in every county in the country, and if I ever lose a job again, it's going to be easy." University of Maryland, College Park. So I enrolled in the program and learned about a joint master's program in history and in library science, which I wasn't aware of. And so I said, "Why, that sounds perfect." So I enrolled in that. My history mentor was Dr. Walter Rundell, who was a former president at the Society of American Archivists. And he was my mentor. And the whole concept of mentorship is huge to me: that 4th-grade teacher; Mrs. Kominek, the librarian in the first high school library I worked in. I tried to reach her, too, but she had passed away at that time.

So, I enrolled. And he said, "You know, you should consider applying for a paid internship this summer at the Maryland State Archives in Annapolis." "Sounds great," because we have a lot of money [JOKING]. And so I did that, and was accepted for an interview. And they distributed a Xerox copy of an archival record that they had. And that was the first time I had ever seen an archival record, except for my 4th-grade poem, of course. It was handwritten. It was old. I didn't understand some things. So I went to Dr. Rundell for advice, and I said, "Here's two dates that are mentioned. And it was like the "10th inst." and the "5th ult." I said, "What does that mean?" He said, "That's 'instant' and 'ultimo.'" It means the date in this month and the next month. I may have that backwards now, but that's what it meant. And I said, "Well, what about the signatures here at the bottom?," because they had shortened forms of first names. One was "Chas." He said, "That's Charles." One was "Jere." He said, "That's Jeremiah." "Okay, great."

So, I arrived for my interview. I was the first one to be interviewed that morning, and I had a nightmare about it the night before and worried. And so in preparation to be interviewed, they actually gave me and the others, eventually—interviewees—the original of that record. And my mouth fell open. That's the first time I held a real archival record. And when I read the Xerox, I was trying to make sense out of it. This is weeks before. It's talking about surveying; putting up markers; what the Indians were like in the area, friendly or not; and it was signed "Jere." Dixon and Chas. Mason. And I looked at that, and I said, "Dixon. Mason. Mason. Dixon." And then the light bulb went off, and I said, "Holy cow." And so it was time for me to go in for the interview. I'm holding the original record. The first questioner was Dr. Rundell. And I was still very nervous. He said, "Mr. Blondo, I wonder if you can tell us what that 'ult' and 'inst' stand for."

And I went blank. I thought, "Oh, my gosh. He's on my side. He knows I know the answer to that question. This isn't an adversarial situation." And it seemed like a minute of speechlessness; it was probably two or three seconds. And I exclaimed, "Thank you very much!" And then it went on, and I got the job. So I was an intern there as of 1982. I became a full-time archivist until 1990.

By then, we began having children, so I needed more income. I worked at the State Law Library two nights a week, across the street from the Maryland State Archives. During that time, I was at the original building. It was called the "Hall of Records," H-A-L-L. We moved to a brand-new building—and I kind of like having fun with words—and so I created a—I was a publications director—and I went to my designer, and I said, "Look, can you make something up, 'Haul of Records'." And here it is. [HOLDS UP "HAUL OF RECORDS" T-SHIRT] So that got put on the side of the truck going up and down Annapolis. The move took place. We physically moved the records, because the archivist didn't want to risk it to contractors. And that high school experience came in handy, because I was prepped for it.

But then, I needed to get a higher-paying job. So I applied at the Library of Congress and the National Archives. I got an interview at the Library of Congress and was probably going to get hired in their manuscript division, but they worked seven days a week, and by that time, I was—and am—a Seventh-day Adventist, and Saturday is the Sabbath; you don't work. And I said, "Well, I'm not going to be able to work on Saturdays." And they said, "Well, you'll just have to get staff members to volunteer to shift with you. So you'll work Sundays," which I was fine with. But he said, "You'd be working 14 out of every 16 Sundays," so that was a burden.

So, the National Archives wound up with a job Monday through Friday. And I started as an appraisal archivist. I then became an education specialist. From there—I am looking at my notes here, hang on a second—I became a consultant archivist when the National Archives in College Park first opened. Another example of dealing with a brand-new facility that was ramping up. It took several years for all the records to transfer, and I was the face that researchers met to register and to get an orientation. The first records that were there were the Nixon Presidential materials. I registered the very first researcher who came to that building, who was doing Nixon research. That was very cool. It was in 1994 when that happened.

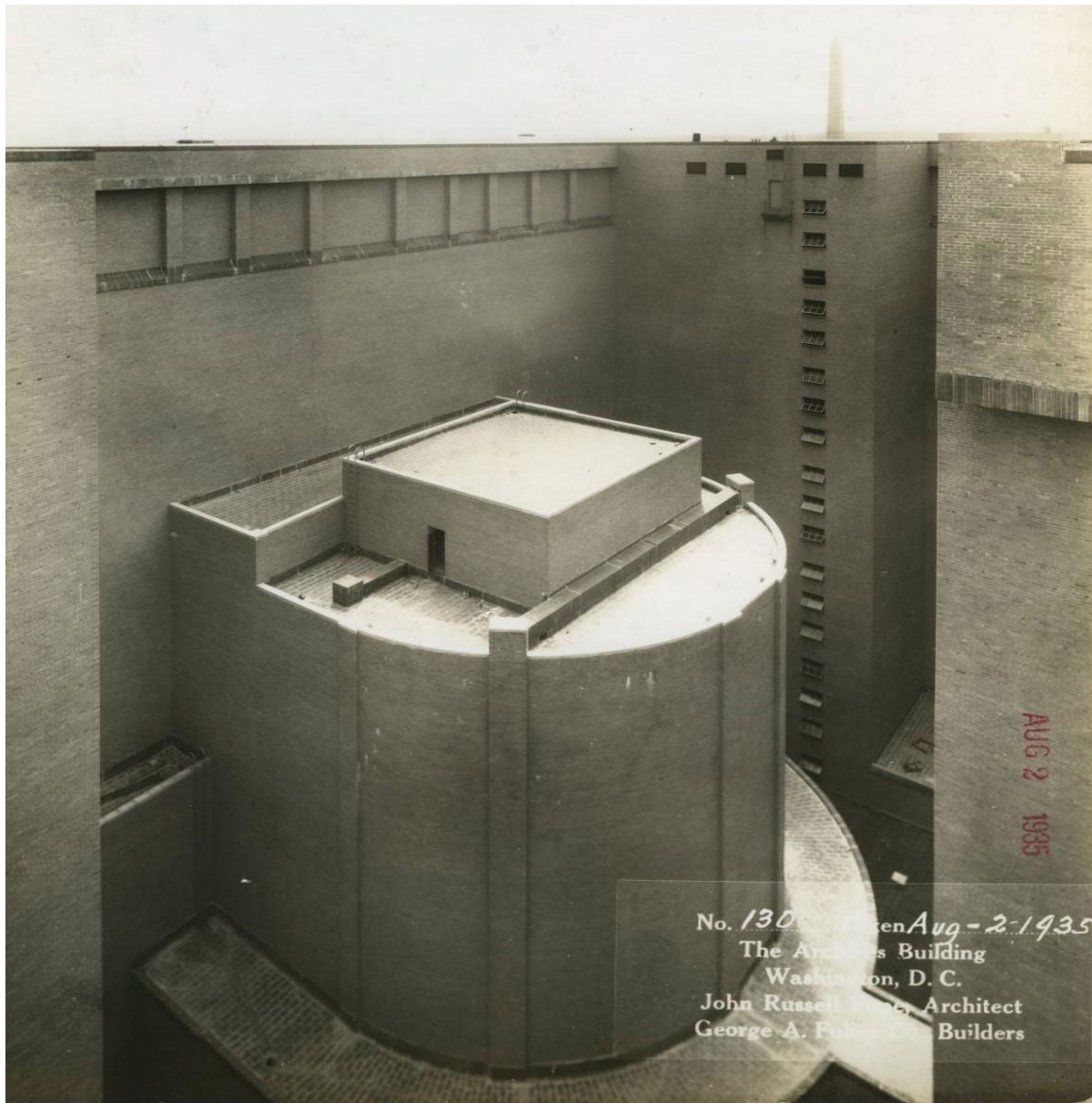


*Rick Blondo in a still from an audiovisual production created by NARA not long after the National Archives at College Park, MD, opened in 1994.*

I then was tapped to be working with the renovation of the National Archives Building in Washington, DC. And there's that theme again. I'm not a construction person. I'm not an engineer. I thought, "This isn't for me." So I didn't apply. The day before the application period ended, Michelle Pacifico, who played that same role when the College Park building opened, asked if I was going to apply. She came into the office and asked cold-turkey. I said, "No," and I explained just like I did to you. She said simply, one word, "Apply." And that was a message received. [LAUGHS] So I was on the radar screen of Adrienne Thomas, who recently passed away last month. She was a bigwig then and eventually became the Acting Archivist of the United States. And she wanted me for that job. I didn't need to be an engineer. I didn't need to be an architect. My job was to interface with the staff, because the building stayed open throughout the entire renovation. And I had to move them. I had to re-furnish and work on the layouts for their new spaces, get the furnishings in, all that. And that was fabulous.

During that time, the movie *National Treasure* was being prepared, and the Rotunda was going to close in July 2001 for renovation. And that's where the Declaration of Independence is on permanent display. So I remember hearing that Nicolas Cage was going to be coming in to look at the actual Declaration before it went off exhibit. I have my little camera. He appeared with a photographer from Walt Disney Pictures. The photographer looked at me and did one of these [HANDS WAVING "NO" SIGN]—no pictures. Okay, so we're in the Rotunda, and I'll never forget this: He was staring for a long time at the Declaration, just absorbing. And there's a scene in the movie where he's at Independence Hall holding a copy of the stolen Declaration, and he paused that same way he did in the Rotunda. He says, "This is the first time this has been here since it was signed in this building." And that taught me about acting, you know, what it takes to draw

on. So, I also met Jon Turteltaub, who was the director. And I was asked to do this role, and tour him through the building, and be his initial interface by the public affairs director, Susan Cooper. And she said, "Just be forewarned: They want to steal the Declaration." And she actually told him, "Are you sure you want to do that? Because for the next 30 years, the guards are going to be asked, 'Are you really that stupid, where you allowed it to be stolen?'" Well, I came prepared, and I had a photograph of the interior courtyard of the Archives building that had the outside wall of the Rotunda.



*The Rotunda enclosure at the National Archives Building in Washington, DC, during construction, August 2, 1935. (NAID 79443979 <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/79443979>)*

And eventually, soon after the building was completed, it was then filled with more stack space. At the top of that was a room with an air-handling duct one could crawl into and look down at the Rotunda. And you can go up there and literally look down into the Rotunda. And I said, "You know, why don't you consider this: You know that *Mission Impossible* thing where the guy drops down from the ceiling on cables and sees that? We can have an exhibit of the Declaration, first time out from the display case where you see the back." And he thought for about five seconds. He said, "No, we're going to carry it from place to place." So that was that.

So a few weeks later, he came back with about 15 people to tour the whole building, because we would not let them film in the Rotunda. It was going to reopen in September of '03, and they were filming in August of '03. So we didn't want scratches on the marble and all that. So they built a soundstage and a mockup in California. So that was an educational experience.

So after the renovation, which was a six- or seven-year process for me, it was over. But I had all this training for furniture buying, and outfitting spaces, and that kind of brass tacks stuff. So I was asked to train other staff members on how to do that, because any time one of our buildings needed some new office space or—not a full renovation, but a tweak—they would learn how to do that. So I did that. And then during that time, I was detailed to serve as a member of the staff of the Archivist of the United States. That lasted three months.

Ultimately, I wound up my final years of the career, from, oh, roughly 2009 or 2010 through 2019, working with record storage standards and how records are stored—another brass tacks archival thing. So, although I wasn't working with the public anymore, I was working with federal records officers across the country. I have people skills. My mom used to say I have the gift of gab. You've probably seen that already. So that helped. And that led to a very fulfilling career. I was able to travel three or four times a year with Ron Noll, who's the technical architect person, and we would inspect facilities, both NARA's and federal agencies'. And it was fantastic being in the places I thought I'd never get the chance to visit, obviously, with that. And so, I got my degrees in history and library science and went to NARA.

**Daria:** So when did you leave?

**Rick:** When did I leave? Yeah, I ended in March 2019, because of a medical condition. To get into the weeds, I was diagnosed in 2013 with NASH—nonalcoholic and, in Latin words, liver cirrhosis. I've never done drugs. I don't drink. It just happened. So, that requires, eventually, a liver transplant. So, I've been on the transplant list since 2013 and taking a bunch of meds. It affects your cognitive ability. So as I was still working toward the end, I noticed my personality changed. I was kind of curt, short with people, and that's not me. So the medicine has helped,

and things are pretty much holding steady. But I had planned to work another three or four years at least.

**Daria:** So I'm going to talk you through sort of the different jobs you have had at the National Archives. What kind of things did you do when you were an education specialist? I think you mentioned one time about doing tours.

**Rick:** Yeah, well, the tours were when I was an archivist at College Park. I was the main tour guide. And then that segued into Archives I, as well, the National Archives Building. But, as an education specialist, because of my teaching credentials and background, I—we have an annual summer institute called Primarily Teaching. And the boss of the program, Elsie Freeman, pioneered the concept of teaching with documents. It was 1977 when that started. So, there I was, in 1992, and I was preparing document presentation packages. I wrote a regular column for *Social Education*, which is the Journal of the National Council of the Social Studies. It was a regularly featured NARA column: document and then a write-up—a facsimile of it, and then a write up about the background, etc. I wrote about eight or nine of those. I remember the date of the presentation of the Statue of Liberty. That was my New York coming out—which was from France—it was in French. I did one on D-Day. And the document—this I'll never forget: I've been to West Point leading tour groups—non-NARA—and I always used it there that Eisenhower gave a report about D-Day to his higher officials, and it had just begun. Things were looking good, but he didn't have details.

And there were others. I did one on Yosemite National Park, which John Muir was involved with. And I thought it was the first national park but it may have been Yellowstone. I can't remember. So that was a lot of fun to write. But most importantly, we had a one-week institute called Primarily Teaching, and I was one of the two leaders in that; the other was Wynell Schamel, a long-time teacher from Alabama. And her Alabama accent, and my, then still very noticeable, Northeastern accent was a nice counterplay. She taught me tons. I talk about mentorship again. No matter what job I've had, I've connected with a mentor, and it uplifts, it builds confidence, and helps you become the same type of person to mentor others. So I did that.

**Daria:** Really interesting. So who are some of the other mentors you've had at the National Archives?

**Rick:** Adrienne Thomas. When I started giving tours of the College Park building—some of these were international tours, you know—other national archives, et cetera, and school groups, and everything. And after about a half a year, everybody is just gushing about what that building

looks like. It was so advanced, and I thought, "You know, she's responsible for the building." So I thought, "I need to make an appointment and talk with her to share this with her." So I cold-called. She saw me the next day, I think. And I now realize—I still see the look on her face. She was so pleased to hear this from the front lines that I think that left a really big impression on her. So this sharing accolades with others is a positive, positive thing. Pat Alexander, during the renovation—he was a Naval Academy grad, served in the Navy, eventually became an engineer who worked for a federal agency. I think it may be GSA [General Services Administration]. I can't remember now.

And here I am in a work zone renovating a historic building, and I had no idea what to do in that circumstance. I had to buy work boots. I never had that before. And I'll never forget: there's a groundbreaking photograph of the National Archives building from 1932 or so, and it's a shot of somebody putting a ceremonial shovel in the ground. And I've given a talk, which is on the NARA YouTube page called [\*If These Walls Could Talk\*](#). It's about the history of the Archives building, and we got a letter from a genealogist based on that photograph wanting to know about us. "I thought the Library of Congress had all that stuff. What do you have?" And that was just fabulous. So you never know the impact of a photograph or outreach.

So, here I was during the renovation, and it was the equivalent of groundbreaking. They had a front end—something that pounds concrete and breaks it up—and it was 4:30 a.m. And this was the moat surrounding the building part of the footprint. And we had to break that up to begin putting in a cavity for an electrical closet, which will be underground. The guy at my side was a contractor; his name is John Weiler, another mentor, who worked for Heery International and long retired. And I said, "John, I've never been on a worksite. You know that. Don't leave me alone, okay?" And he stayed nearby. So I raised my camera up to take a picture of, in effect, the groundbreaking. It was still dark. The flash went off. The guy stopped his pounding for a few moments. John comes up to me, says, "You know, you just made that man crap his pants." I said, "Excuse me?" He said, "Although we have drawings, we have no idea for sure what's underneath that. And if he hits an electrical wire, that's the last thing he'll see in this life." I was mortified. About four hours later, I'm walking through the building, and I pass the guy, and he sees me and he points [POINTS FINGER] and he says, "You're the guy!" I'm noticeable because I'm like 5 feet 3-1/2 inches and easy to, kind of, stand out in a crowd. So John Weiler's another.

And then another huge one is Marv Shenkler, Marvin Shenkler. He worked for GSA. He was like the coordinator, the onsite guy, for the building of the College Park building. He was the onsite guy with Pat for the renovation. He's from Brooklyn. He grew up about five blocks north of where I did, but one generation earlier than me. So that's another one. And I can go on and on



with—professionally—oh, heck, Ed Papenfuse, the Maryland State Archivist—huge mentor. So those were the main ones.

**Daria:** Do you remember the name of the first researcher you gave that first card to?

**Rick:** I have it. They put a time capsule in, in 1994, to commemorate the official dedication of the building, and they had a contest, and I entered the contest, and I sent a copy of the registration card of that researcher, and it won. It was one of the things they put in there. So I used to have it in mind. He was just a regular—he was in California, and he was a scholar. And I don't remember his name, but it's known to the National Archives. Well, I can text you later with the name if you want that. [Note: The name is not available for this transcript due to the Privacy Act.]

**Daria:** Sure, if you find it. And how did the research room change, like the research room protocols and stuff change while you were working as the research orientation specialist?

**Rick:** Well. It's a great question. The exposure I had to this whole orientation/introduction world was from the Maryland State Archives, and it's all about personableness, listening, zeroing in on what they need, not necessarily exactly what they're saying. So it was one-on-one, very personal. So, then, I never did research at the National Archives Building, because my jobs didn't involve the public. But the guy whose radar screen I wound up on—another name, mentor Bob Coren, Robert Coren, C-O-R-E-N—he heard about me, and he said, "I want you to be the guy when College Park [Archives II] opens."

So over time, we had a staff of three consultant archivists. But initially, it was just one. So we just learned by doing it, because it was a whole different environment. The office was in the main lobby. So you didn't have to traverse an 1100 foot-long building, which is as long as an aircraft carrier, by the way, and it was well-marked. And people would come in, and the thing that struck me the most was foreign visitors. They were amazed by the physical structure, just by walking in the building, and the fact that they had access to these records concerning their own homelands that were not available in their own homelands. And that's America right there, you know.

So you do a reference interview. And I believe I sent you a *Washington Post* article, and that's a nice summary that was done in 1994 about life there, where people come in, they present a need. There was a student from the University of Maryland, College Park, who said the teacher assigned her to listen to Watergate tapes. And so I inquired, you know, I can just say, "Well, register, and you go up to the fourth floor. Have a good day." So I inquired, I said, "What's the

purpose of your research?" She said, "Well," she said, "to find out if he's guilty." And I said, "Guilty of..." And she had no idea. And so it's like, okay, "It sounds like you need exposure to primary sources, and go ahead and have at it." And, of course, there's experts up there that guide you through.

The huge sadness in all of that is that, as time has gone on, that's all gone—in that research orientation room in the lobby. It's solely a perfunctory registration. And to get the in-depth help and TLC [tender loving care], you have to go to a research room and talk to an archivist. And there was a computerized registration system from day one. But over time, beginning about 2010, security became the coin of the realm. And they revamped the registration process, so it's about three or four times as long as it used to be. And most of it deals with security of the records. And it's like, if you're that lady in awe looking around, and she just wants to—and you have to go through that first, that just sucks the air out of you. And I have longed—and when you walk up to the front doors of the Archives in College Park, you see a security notice, which is from GSA, I think, small print, and on and on. Then you walk into the lobby, which is where they x-ray things and all. And the first thing you see is there's no— spray aerosol...I forget now what it is—but it says you can't carry this into the building. It's like, "What the heck. Who's going to carry that anyhow." And you're just treated like a criminal from the first moment you walk in. And then when you get to that new registration scenario, it's like you're another passing through and "go away, you bother me," that kind of thing. We need to get back to that caring of and listening right from the beginning, not later on.

So what originally happened, the Archives does publications, handouts, including how to do research in an archive. Well, the building was brand new. I belong to the Mid-Atlantic Regional Archives Conference. And when we opened the new "Hall of Records" building, which is now named after Ed Papenfuse, by the way, we needed a flier on how to do research there and what's available. And as more records came that changed. So I was able to develop a [Microsoft] Word document, a trifold thing. And when College Park happened, I said, "Well, let's do this again." And I did about, I don't know, 10 of them over a period of years to keep it current until, eventually, it settled. And now it's a printed—what do you call them?—"GILs," Government Information Leaflets or something. So that was considerate of meeting people's needs.

We also had a fax machine in 1994, which was brand new back then, and people can fax their requests to us or fax things back out. It's like, "Wow, this is the future." And then the internet happened, and another gobsmacked moment that I thought, "Oh, what's this all about?" And they asked me to work with the design of, like the research portal portion of the thing, and

particularly the Archives I building, regarding its renovation and, you know, play that all up. We did a lengthy design, but it didn't fly. They did something else. I think I answered the question.

**Daria:** Yeah, I think so. Tell me some more about the renovation. I think you said somewhere that the building didn't close. So how does that work?

**Rick:** The only part that closed was the Rotunda to the public from July 5, 2001, until Constitution Day [September 17], 2003. The building renovation, which was all formulated by Pat Alexander—it was just magic—was in quadrants. And so we had to demolish parts of the stacks to make space for new areas that were going to be public outreach space, and so staff members who were in a given quadrant had to relocate so work could happen there. And then the other three quadrants were still occupied per normal. So that just rotated through all the time. And many of them got reassigned to temporary space in the building. Some went to College Park temporarily. It was disruptive with a capital "D." And my job was—I think there's probably about a dozen people that were really ticked by the whole thing. "You know, you've ruined my life," basically, and I was point for that.

But most of the people couldn't wait to see what it was going to look like because College Park, I mean, we did that wonderfully. You know, we had to keep the historic look of the building, which we did, but it was an experience to go through. There was smoke, there were smells, there was sound. The very first person I had to relocate was an elderly archivist—his name escapes me at the moment. I'm going to make myself a note so I can tell you that later. Hang on a second. I want to say John Taylor; it may have been him. It wasn't him. His specialty was Nazi records, and his office "de facto" [MAKES AIR QUOTES] was actually a part of the stack, because records were all around him, and that's all he did. And I'll never forget the day I walked in and I said, "You know, I'm sorry, Bob Matchette." That's his name! "You're the first to be relocated." He knew it was going to happen, but it was like crestfallen.

Okay, so needless to say, when it was all said and done, that worked great. I remember talking with other staff members. Part of their office space was also in the stacks, and they had a coat rack, a wooden coat rack, there with hooks on it. And there was a sweater hanging on it. And I said, "No, all this is going to have to go. That's your personal stuff, that coat rack, for instance. Okay, so whose sweater is that?" They said they didn't remember the name. The guy left the Archives about 11 years before. They just kept it there as a memento or if anybody was particularly cold, put that on. So there was a culture, a definite culture in the National Archives Building that was changed for the good. I would say that it came from that whole experience.

**Daria:** Cindy Fox, when I did an interview with her, she mentioned that she thought it didn't change for the better when Archives II opened. She thought that she preferred the culture in Archives I. There was a lot more, well, for one thing, you're a lot more likely to run into somebody and just be able to talk, because of the size. And then the other thing was because the commute was so bad to College Park, a lot of people came in really early and just left early. So there wasn't much time to sit around and talk in the break rooms or whatever.

**Rick:** That's true of College Park, because it's an enormous building. But at Archives I, I don't think that changed at all. Was she saying that the culture at Archives I changed?

**Daria:** She was comparing Archives I camaraderie to Archives II.

**Rick:** Cindy Fox is an unforgettable person. I'd like to see her oral history sometime or read it. I think the world of her, but she has a very unique personality and you understand her view of things very clearly. And I admire her for that. Did that answer your question?

**Daria:** Do you agree though, the camaraderie—[CROSS TALKING].

**Rick:** We had to close—we were going to seal all the windows of the Archives building in Washington for energy savings, which we did. But she wanted her window to still be openable, because she enjoyed the breeze. Still in that building were artifacts from the original building from 1935, when it opened, including paperweights, which were government-issued because that's what you did. The Archives building was the first of 12 buildings in DC to actually have air-conditioning, but the air-conditioning was only for the stacks. So in the staff offices, it was not uncommon to be 85 degrees. So you needed windows open. Not that Cindy was there in 1935, but it still gets hot in Washington. And even though the air conditioning improved over the years, it's still nice to have the breeze. And I said, "We're not going to be able to do that." And I'm sorry about that. Did that answer your question? I've lost track.

**Daria:** Yeah, that's interesting. No, my question was still, did you think that the camaraderie, the feeling of community was different from College Park [AII] to AI? And I think you basically said yes.

**Rick:** Yes, I think without qualification, it's a different thing. I do remember that staff members started coming out to populate Archives II. I'm in the lobby. That's where my office is. I rarely walked into the main staff part of the building, because my office was in the lobby. The cafeteria was right down the hall. Downstairs off the lobby were the theater and locker rooms. I had to show researchers where the locker rooms were. I remember there was a guy from New

York City, which I can relate to. He didn't want to put anything in the locker, because he assumed it would be stolen. And I said, "No, no." I walked him down there and I said, "See, there's two cameras here, and it's, you know..." That's what he needed to hear. You know, it's College Park, Maryland. It's not Brooklyn.

So on the other side of the window wall, off the lobby, was the building and where the culture is. And it's so huge that it tended to be within a given office where that camaraderie was. But outside of that office was a different universe. And so it didn't have that interplay. And same with the research rooms, because at Archives I, it was the central research room, and everything happened through there. And in Archives II, we had six different research rooms by format, and so you had specialists in each and never the twain shall meet. So your point is valid.

**Daria:** So, why do you think they wanted you to be on the building renovation? It just doesn't sound like you thought it was something you wanted to do.

**Rick:** I'm convinced it's my people skills—they knew going in that I was able to mollify people. I mentioned about a dozen people, ultimately, who were not happy. I don't want to say cajole, convince people that this was all for the good, and show them what it was going to look like afterwards. The huge majority saw that once it was done. But again, granted, it was a change. And so in the new public spaces, we put in accessible entrances on Constitution Avenue, because of ADA [Americans with Disabilities Act] requirements, and that included elevators. So you walk in from street level, and you can take an elevator up to the Rotunda. That part was a whole different culture, too, because it used to be you'd walk up the steps to enter the Rotunda.

One thing I didn't mention in my background was when John Carlin became Archivist he established a program to set a new vision for the Archives. It was like an eight-year thing, two different cycles. And we went to every NARA facility and interviewed staff. And I'm trying to remember the years for that—it was pre-renovation, if I remember correctly—and again, I was hand-selected to be part of that because of people skills and, you know, non-threatening to walk into a room when you're 5 feet 3 inches and 115 pounds. So that got on Adrienne's radar screen as well. And I think that's what led to that. So I was selected because I had experience in hearing people's needs, addressing them. I will never forget, we were part of a group of three, each team. Mary Evans, who was an education specialist at Hoover Library, and Jerry George, who was the head of the NHPRC [National Historical Publications and Records Commission], a former journalist, somebody like in that world. I'm misremembering that a little bit. So Mary came once to DC. We were walking up the steps together, and I was just booking it, going up to where the top was. And she was slowing down, slowing down, stopped. I turned around, and I

said, "Mary, are you okay?" And she was awed. She said, "I can't believe I'm at the National Archives Building." Well, that's the awesomeness of that physical structure. The College Park building is wonderful, but it's because of its size, and it's mired in modern look, not John Russell Pope's desire to make it a temple to history, which he was greatly successful at. [See <https://www.c-span.org/video/?292357-1/national-archives-building>]

So going to the staff and doing these interviews, I'll never forget, we were in California at a records center, and there was a mother and daughter who were employees. The mother had been there a long, long time. Her daughter was relatively new. And she broke down and started crying, the mother, because they were contract workers, and the way NARA did it back then, they were called "intermittents" back then, and you didn't work a full year, because you can't work a full year—you had to get benefits. So they work 51 weeks a year. It was use and abuse. I'm going to say it bluntly. And she said she doesn't want her daughter to follow the same track in life that she has, because they didn't have much education, but their jobs there were perfectly suited to their skills. And when we reported that back to John Carlin, I believe the very first thing he did was get rid of intermittents, that whole program, and hired them as staff.

Carlin used to be the Governor of Kansas before he came. He's still alive. I was concerned, because he wasn't an archivist. We had a history of archivists there, historians. And what I learned from that was he was a manager. He was an administrator. And he largely left it to Adrienne Thomas to be the "Archivist" [USING AIR QUOTES] at the helm. It was a dual thing. And it worked spectacularly well.

**Daria:** So, when you did the detail, I think you said it was a detail, right, as the assistant to the Archivist. Was that to Adrienne?

**Rick:** No, that was—let me think of the name—the last name began with a "W."

**Daria:** Weinstein?

**Rick:** Allen Weinstein. Yeah, thank you.

**Daria:** So, what kind of things did you do with that?

**Rick:** Some of it was public interface. When people were needing the attention of the Archivist, they would channel through either his secretary or people who understood the Archives better. I got to know Sam Anthony very well. Sam was responsible for identifying documents that can

be copied and then used as giveaways, the copies, as needs arose. Sam headed the author lecture series.

I'm glad we brought this up, because in my job as an education specialist, we had a colleague there, Cynthia Hightower, whose interest was theater, and the Archives building stage used to have dramatic performances and musicals and things like that. She was responsible for that. When we designed the new theater at College Park, we purposely designed it so it can be both a movie theater and a stage. The screen retracts to clear the entire stage. The lighting has special stage lighting. You can dim the lighting. She retired. Things change. We got Marvin Pinkert, who came in to run the education public interface, I should say, the visitor experience program. And he had no interest in live theater.

And so, that's some of the most memorable things I remember seeing, because they're all historically based presentations. So the lighting changed, and it all became fluorescent, full on/full off. It didn't dim. And the architect responsible for that theater, Scott Teixeira—Heery International, another contractor involved with the renovation, interviewed him and us and others as well, about the whole project. And he was explaining the color scheme of the theater at Archives I, which is subtle reds and golden hues and yellows. And this floored me, because it's what an architect is. He said he wanted to replicate a sunset. I said, "Excuse me?" He said, "If you look at the color palette, it's sunset colors in sequence." And it was. And so the idea of dimming the lights [LAUGHS] went out the window, because you either have an appreciation for that or you don't. Did I answer your question? Tell me if I did or didn't.

**Daria:** I think. I just asked what your duties were as assistant to the Archivist, you know.

**Rick:** So, I was involved with giving tours sometimes. I now realize in hindsight that it may well have been a trial to field test me in that environment. Deb Wall was the one who put me up for it. We go way back from when I was an education specialist. She was a CIDS person. What does that stand for? Do you remember?

**Daria:** I believe it's Career Intern Development System, but I've seen another one, too.

**Rick:** That's it, because she was like an intern, and she rotated through the education unit. So I've known her since 1992. And so I think she put me forth to be in that position. But, for whatever reason, it didn't germinate, but it did germinate into the final career I had, which was very rewarding.

**Daria:** Now, I really want to know more about that, you called it standards, records standards, records storage standards...?

**Rick:** Federal records facility storage standards. There's a part of the Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] that details to the nth degree all of that: temperature, humidity, on and on and on. This part of my liver thing, it affects my memory, and so things come and go. I used to be able to cite that without blinking an eye, and now sometimes they are, sometimes not. Oh, 36 CFR 1234. That's it. Jennifer Noell and I developed a toolkit to explain the whole process to these people who are out there just trying to do the best they could as records officers. And that helped enormously. And then eventually, we put it online, and you can do a checklist, make sure that everything is kosher. And periodically they'd have to recertify that their storage facility is complying with the standards. And then we would spot check, do these visits three or four times a year at our discretion, who we wanted to go visit. So I interfaced with, really, all the federal records officers.

They developed a blog through the appraisal archivist program. I'm forgetting the name of that office now. Do you happen to remember what it is? But, it's the first office I worked in for the Archives, and Laurence Brewer is the head of it. And so, they still do that. Those colleagues still do that job. And it's not uncommon for them to eventually leave and become records officers for federal agencies, often paying better than being an appraisal archivist. So it's highly specific skills. And you're dealing with esoteric details. But if you're into archives, you need to follow those things so that the records live, at least live in the best conditions they can. And so it's a back-of-house effort. The public is little aware or not aware of it at all, but it's part of the panoply of the glory of what the National Archives is.

**Daria:** Is that the Records Management Oversight and Reporting Division?

**Rick:** That term doesn't resonate with me. They could have renamed it. You never know. But I know that there's another part of the building at Archives II, where people are involved with records outreach. But that's not the appraisal archivists. It's something else. And that might be what you're talking about.

**Daria:** So when you were an appraisal archivist, did that mean that you were getting in collections that were already determined to be archival, or did you work with records that you needed to decide whether they were permanent?

**Rick:** That's a good question. The whole reason to have appraisal archivists is to render a professional judgment whether a series of records is permanently valuable or not. It's not



document by document. It's series by series, like the Correspondence Files of the Director of the Peace Corps—highest level, permanent records. They don't care what's in it. Another example is the Correspondence Files of the President of the United States. It's a separate entity. It's the Presidential Records Act. But there's records managers at the White House complex whose job it is to make sure that's all being followed. So, if you're ripping up a document and throwing it on the floor, that's not kosher. And those folks actually Scotch-taped some of those things back together. It's like, okay, so that the sanctity of records is why the Archives is there. So you're involved with safeguarding the records for posterity. I need you to pose your question again.

**Daria:** I think you answered it. I asked whether you were looking at records that were coming in to see [CROSS-TALKING].

**Rick:** What crossed my mind was two things. I had about a dozen agencies. The Peace Corps was one of them I worked with. That was my first NARA job, my first federal job. It was a whole different culture than being a teacher or working for the state government. And I will never forget, the records officer bucked me up to his supervisor to explain why I was there and what I was doing. And he needed to loop in his boss. So I'm sitting in this guy's very nice office, and he's on the phone with his boss, and he's beginning to do the introductions and why they're calling him. And he puts his hand over the mouthpiece, and he says, "Rick, he wants to know what grade you are." And I was incredulous, and from that I learned, if you're not a certain grade, you don't get to talk to some people in some agencies, which I thought was beyond ludicrous. Well, the appraisal archivists were GS-11s back then, eventually the starting became GS-12. As far as I know, it's still that.

So, for records that haven't been appraised already—and the Peace Corps didn't have any appraised yet—I was going through their files with their records officer. And it turns out that they have a series of records for their Peace Corps advisory board. The Peace Corps started in 1966, I believe it was, through Sergeant Shriver, a President John F. Kennedy colleague. And I'm going through these documents, and it was the oath that they swear to take to serve the federal government. It's pro forma. Every federal employee reads the same oath. And it was 1967, I think. I forget the year, '66 or '67. And one of the people on the board was Muhammad Ali. Muhammad Ali was risking going to jail for not taking that oath, because his religious beliefs forbade him from serving in the military. Yet, he took that oath for the Peace Corps. It's a very powerful thing, when you think about that.

And so I showed it to the records officer. He had no idea. I said you need to Xerox this, because the signatures are on it, so you need to Xerox it and put that into the file. Keep this in a secure

place, which he did immediately. And I tried to find out, before this interview, if all of that did come to College Park. But because of COVID-19, it's just hard to get through and get people. As a kid, I was born in 1956, and I was a kid when the Peace Corps began. And I remember their ad campaign: "The toughest job you'll ever love." That's memorable.

I showed you "Haul of Records." I like to play with words, and had I stayed in New York, I probably would have been in the advertising business. When I worked at the Maryland State Archives—can you see this mug? [HOLDS UP MUG] I came up with a phrase, "Maryland State Archives—Where the past is present for the future." And "present" has two meanings: physically present [through the records], but also the past becomes real because you're exposed to it. So to have that awareness is almost sacred to pass that on.

Bill Moyers has a quote which resonated with me about history, and let me read it to you. It's brief. This is Bill Moyers, PBS [Public Broadcasting Service], long-retired—he's 83-years old now—but he did documentaries. He was a journalist. He worked for public broadcasting television. So he says this: "The past is no row of bare facts waiting to be memorized by schoolchildren. Nor does it stand in our backyard like an old picket fence, slowly and silently rotting. The past is a real world inhabited by villains and heroes and regular folk passing this way on swift journeys. Their story is our story, the tie that binds each generation to all the others." And that is a motto that hit me squarely in the heart, because my religious side of being a servant to God and to mankind segued into civil service for the state government and then the federal government. And to me, it's all outreach and service. And if you lose track about why you're even there, if you're drawing a paycheck and you're not there to serve records officers or the public or whatever, students, you're in the wrong job. And there are staff members who don't necessarily abide by that credo. And I think it's telling.

**Daria:** You talked about Native Americans who came to visit. Can you tell that story?

**Rick:** Yeah. One of the people, a teacher who came from Primarily Teaching, his name is John Lawler, L-A-W-L-E-R. He worked at Reading Area Community College in Reading, Pennsylvania, and he was very interested in Native Americans. And after he retired from teaching—I can't figure it out, but all these people I know have retired. Something's going on. [LAUGHS] So, he would regularly visit a Navajo tribe in Arizona. And he also volunteered, I believe, still does, pre-COVID, on Saturdays to be a volunteer tour person and outreach person to the public on the public side of Archives I. And he travels from Reading, Pennsylvania, area. It's in his blood. He loves it. He had an amazing experience from that Primarily Teaching thing. It changed how he approached teaching. There's power in the records.

So, he was interfacing with these Navajo [tribal members] and, by and by, some years later, they toured Washington [DC] with him, and he asked if they could come and look at some treaties. So I arranged with Trevor Howard [determined later to be Trevor Plante] to go into the vault where all the treaties were. And this was another "I'll never forget moment." They listened attentively. And Trevor had some things laid out in advance of their visit so they could see, including Navajo treaties, which they were intimately aware of but had never seen the originals. And what caught me was the Indian signatures for—petroglyphs? They were symbols. I forget the word. Petroglyphs? Because they didn't write English. Running Bear was a running bear or something like that. So, this particular individual was amazed. It's the impact of the original record. It goes back to Lewis and Clark. I mean, Mason and Dixon. So, he looked at Trevor and said, "You have *all* the treaties here?" Trevor said, "Yes, we do." To which he replied, "Even the ones that were broken?" My mouth dropped open. My eyes popped. Trevor didn't miss a beat. He said simply, "We have all the treaties here." So, I'm glad you went that way, because it shows the value of touring with people, because some people, that's the interface they have with the Archives is to see these records. And the way it is now, you can't bring people into the stacks. I think that's heinous, and I hope, in time, that will change, because the power is the record.

I remember at the Maryland Archives, I would give tours there, and we had a document written by George Washington. It was, you know, a George Washington–signed letter. It was a letter from Washington to the Maryland Senate President and the House Speaker thanking them for the vote of praise he received from the Maryland General Assembly for his Revolutionary War services, November 1781. And I was cautioned, and I would use that regularly on tours, hold it up, but I wouldn't pass the record out for people to look at, because on the back, 100+ years later, somebody had written in a cartoon-like thing—not suitable for families—depiction of something going on. I'm thinking, my gosh, again, the sacredness of the record. I said, "Dude, you did this to George Washington's letter? Come on!" But it just shows, you either get it or you don't. So the fact that you can't—and so that's the power of doing in-person research as opposed to online research. You get information, but you're also seeing the record.

When I was working on my thesis in Annapolis, the State Archivist allowed me to stay after hours to conduct my research. Only me and the guard were in the building. So talk about "security" [USING AIR QUOTES] protocols in an archives building. The agency head trusted me. It was a different era. And there were thousands of pages of unprocessed records sent to the Governor of Maryland over the years, and I was looking for records from a time period that pertained to the subject of my thesis. I found two or three that were germane, which was helpful. You know, sure, I went through 4,000 pages, but I found two or three, so it was great. And so, going through that, one night, I'm turning the pages. They are unorganized, just by year,

they're roughly organized by year, and I see this document, and it took me a moment to realize it was a transmittal letter for the 13th Amendment. And by the way, I just saw the movie *Lincoln* for the first time a few weeks ago. Daniel Day-Lewis walks on water, and I had no idea that the thrust of that whole movie was the 13th Amendment. It floored me. So I'm looking at this—and I've had the DVD for several years. I just never viewed it till last week. So I'm looking at this transmittal document, and it's transmitting the amendment to the Governor of Maryland. The proposed amendment, I should say, because I learned from the movie, it wasn't passed until half a year or more later, and at the bottom is Abraham Lincoln's signature. Again, my mouth dropped. I put my hand where he would have had his hand, when he signed that letter. Seeing a digital copy, great. Handling the original? It's a privilege of being an archivist, and in most cases, researchers are handling original records. Well, this was intrinsically valuable, to say the least. So the next morning, I brought it up to the State Archivist, who was overwhelmed, and he had, like, a vault area adjacent to his office, and that's where it went, and then a Xerox copy got put in its place.

So, I just saw a video on the NARA YouTube page, which was done about eight or nine years ago, and I saw part of it and it was talking about the new online catalog. And Deb Wall was involved with that originally...NAIL—National Archives Information Locator—and then another iteration, ARC, I think it was called—Archival Research Catalog. And now it's whatever it goes by. And this young person, I don't know what her job is or was, but she was involved with creating the new catalog. And she said, "The old way of doing this was you had to go through three steps to access the record." And they showed the stacks, and, you know, it's like identify it, retrieve it, bring it to a researcher... And my eyes roll, because the old way is still done, thank you very much. Not everything is online. And she was gushing, saying the new ways and to just be able to sit at a computer and punch keys and "Voilà," there it is. Well, last I saw, we have less than one percent of our records digitized.

Most of it was involved through volunteers, not systematic, and is no longer employed by NARA archivists at the New York City National Archives facility, whose name escapes me. It was a female. And she wrote an ICN, the internal Facebook page kind-of-like thing for the Archives Internal Collaboration Network. She wrote a thing about *Titanic* records in the National Archives regional facility in New York, because that National Archives facility has *Titanic* records from a court case. And she said, you know, "A few things are online," but her task, her job, and I think it was self-motivated, was to try to create or recreate the original order, systematically scan everything, put everything out there, and then you're conducting research, thank you very much. And that got pooh-poohed to a fare-thee-well on the ICN, and she didn't stay there much longer.

And I find that heinous, because that's what an archives is at its heart. It's not "Oh, gee, look at this." Poof, now move on and buy a pizza. I mean, it's not research. It's exposure to records, but it's not research. And I came to realize that conducting research is in my DNA, and helping people to conduct research is in my DNA. Now I'm not dismissing the value of having things online. It's just that, in my humble opinion, as was hers, you need to systematically copy records series, and then have at it. And I'd say, even worse, it's volunteer transcription with very little oversight.

This is a story from the Maryland State Archives. Like I had trouble reading the original document I was looking at, the Xerox of the Mason-Dixon letter, one day, I was in the research room with my colleague, and somebody was having trouble reading handwriting from the 1600s. Maryland was founded in 1634. It's hard; it's different words, different handwriting. And their family name was Moron [pronounced Ma-rone], with an "M." Moron. And they asked what they were looking for. They were doing genealogy. So they were reading this document. They weren't sure if it's the name. And my colleague went over there, and I can hear them right out in front of the control desk. And they said, "We can't quite read that name." And he looked, and then he looked at them and said, it's "Moron" [pronounced More-on], because it's "M-O-R-O-N." And they took great offense. And this person said, "It's Moron" [pronounced Ma-rone]. And my colleague looked again and says, "It looks like "Moron" [pronounced More-on] to me!" [LAUGHS] But that was the truth! It's true. So even if you put things online, it's going to be hard to read sometimes. And if you're leaving it to unsupervised transcribers, it's a free-for-all. That is not useful. But again, I'm not throwing the baby out with the bathwater. I understand digitization, but it needs to be done systematically.

**Daria:** I think there are series that are being scanned systematically, but there's just a limited number.

**Rick:** Yeah, because the volume is enormous. I think the VA [Department of Veterans Affairs] is involved with the project right now with doing that for access to veterans records. Heck, my uncle served on a PT [Patrol, Torpedo] boat in World War II, in the Radio Corps, and I found his deck logs from his ship. Have you ever looked at a deck log before? So you open up, the inside front cover has names and addresses of the mothers, and there's my grandmother's name, Martina Jorge, J-O-R-G-E, from Puerto Rico, Jorge. "Jorge" [SAYS IN SPANISH], I'm sure, but we pronounced it "George" in Brooklyn. And I thought, "What the heck?" And then it dawned on me. Oh man, if one of these people gets killed, that's who they notify. Wow. And he was involved with the Philippine action in 1944, I think it was World War II. So seeing that was fabulous.

And an uncle on my father's side served in the OSS [Office of Strategic Services], the precursor to the CIA [Central Intelligence Agency]. His parents, my grandparents, were born in Italy. My mom's side was born in Puerto Rico, and they all spoke Italian, and he was tapped to be involved with the war effort in Italy. And part of what his record showed was that he guarded Italian prisoners. But somehow he wound up—that's what the words [USING AIR QUOTES] were, that he was OSS. So I think it must have been more than guarding. I think there must have been some mining of information going on as well. They never talked about that when I was a kid. I guess I was too little. My father was one of 12. So most of them are deceased now, including my parents. But, what a time that must have been to live.

Heck, I was in Paris for three weeks visiting a friend of mine I went to college with. He was working at the American Embassy in Paris. And we made three day trips. One of them was the cemetery at Normandy. Life-changing experience. The archives part of this...I walked into the visitor's center, and they had a brand new one built around 2008—not brand new anymore—but dedicated space. This was more just like a lobby. And framed on the wall was a letter from President Dwight Eisenhower with his signature on it. It was the original letter they received. And it opened—and this is on the occasion of dedicating the cemetery in 1956, and it opened up with: "Twelve years ago on D-Day..." Another mouth drop. I was born in 1956, just 12 years before the world was saved. And my relatives played a role in that. Talk about the past is present. Wow! And so I contacted them after I retired. I said, "I'd like to get a copy of that," and I couldn't easily communicate with them. And they didn't have it online, which they should have. So I contacted the Eisenhower Library, and they sent me the archival record of that, which doesn't have his signature. It's got his stamp. But I do have it. And it's like, again, the power of the record, and how it can affect people differently. Myriad examples of that.

Alex Haley, when he did his *Roots* research at the Maryland State Archives, he only knew that Kunta Kinte had arrived at a port called "Napolis," which he correctly assumed was Annapolis. There's now a plaque at the waterfront there to commemorate that. And we had an event some years after the book and miniseries. I was in college when that happened. I haven't seen it to this day. I can't wait to see the miniseries. I guess you have time when you're retired, but it's technology; I don't know how to access it. [LAUGHS]

So, I met him and another mentor, my gosh, Phebe Jacobsen, Maryland State Archives archivist, who was responsible for Quaker records and all church records coming to the Maryland Archives, because those were sources of information before government records became coherent. So they have this voluntary program of churches, having us microfilm the records and giving them the microfilm, and we keep the original for posterity. And she was an expert in African American history. She's the one who told me about Samuel Green, who was the topic of

my thesis. And I had hoped one day to write a book and maybe a screenplay. But this mental thing [POINTS TO HEAD] has its moments. I can do research, but because of COVID-19, it's all been shut down. So we'll see what happens. But Phebe, without her, I wouldn't have had that passion enhanced for doing historical research. And by the way, in the joint master's program, you had an option whether to do a thesis or not. And I decided I wanted to, because I have a knack for writing, and I thought I wanted to learn how to do that. And it went very well with the three advisers I had, one of whom, I think, was Dr. Rundell. I'm going on memory there.

**Daria:** So who was Samuel Green?

**Rick:** Samuel Green was a free Black man from Dorchester County, Maryland, near Cambridge, Maryland, who was born on the Eastern Shore around 1802, and he purchased his freedom from his master, and then he purchased his two children and his wife shortly thereafter. And he opened up a business in East New Market, which is a suburb of Cambridge. And when I hear suburb, I think Brooklyn and, no, this is Eastern Shore, Maryland. It's nothing. And not to be indelicate, but I went out there once for a luncheon with a local and other friends, and he asked me about the thesis. These were all White people, and as soon as I explained briefly who he was, conversation changed. They had no interest at all. Wow. I'm sorry, but wow. Growing up in East New York, Brooklyn, it was a mixed-race, integrated community. And I think that helped me. He was a free Black man, and he established a blacksmith shop. And Phebe heard about this guy from a guy named John Creighton, who was in the East New Market area. So she advised me to go tour with him, and he'll show me the sights, which was beyond helpful. It's all recorded on a cassette tape. I'm pretty sure I can't play that anymore. No cassette audio recorder. We spent a couple of hours driving around, and so I saw, likely, the location of his house, the location of his blacksmith shop because of the road structure. It was where two roads split right there. And he told me the story of Green as far as he was able to take it.

So, I took it much further than he did. Apparently, his children became slaves again in Cambridge, for a doctor. His name was "Muse," M-U-S-E. And his daughter was sold into slavery to Missouri, and they never heard from her again. And the son didn't want that experience for himself, so he fled, and Harriet Tubman was involved with that. I've yet to see the movie, *Harriet*, but Samuel Green has a role in it. I've actually Googled it, and saw the cast, because we've had the movie cast about my book for decades, from the Maryland Archives. It's a fascinating story.

So he was suspected of aiding and abetting runaway slaves, and I didn't believe that to be the case, based on my research. But over the years, I've come to realize, "Oh, yeah." And what happened was, his son fled to Canada. And so at one point, Green and his wife went to Canada

to see his son, and then they came back. And he had in his home railroad schedules from Maryland to Canada, and *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, the book, which when it was first published, was two volumes and somehow, the locals heard about it. One of the locals eventually became the Governor of Maryland, Thomas Holliday Hicks. And Green was arrested, charged with abetting slaves, and also having in his possession incendiary literature, which would foment discontent in the African American community. Do you know what that literature was? *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, the book. So, the courthouse in Cambridge was built just like a year or two before he was tried. The courthouse is there. A great setting for the movie, and now unoccupied. It's a historic site. So he decided he needed to flee. And so he left, went to Philadelphia, connected with William Still, who wrote a famous book called *The Underground Railroad*, which was his accounts of slaves he had helped escape. Well, Green's son was one of those. And in talking to William Still, he was there long enough where somebody did a sketch of Samuel Green. So there's actually an image of him in that book, and good for the makeup artist for the movie. And so he decided that, you know, I jumped ahead here.

He was arrested and sentenced to 10 years in the Maryland State Penitentiary. The first charge was dropped. The second charge was having the book. The penitentiary in Baltimore is still there [NOTE: It was demolished shortly after this interview], including the original portion of it—movie set [USES AIR QUOTES]. So he served 5 years of a 10-year sentence. Hicks became Governor. That's what I was looking for in the Maryland State papers to the Governor. Did anybody communicate with him about a pardon? And two or three letters did just that. And his response was, "I can't." He knows Green personally, and he can't commute the sentence because he, Governor Hicks, would basically be killed if he did that. And so he left office. The new Governor, Augustus, I can't remember if that was his first or last name—Augustus Bradford, or I may have that backwards. One of the very first things he did was pardon Samuel Green on the condition that he leave Maryland and not return. This was 1863 or so. So he and his wife traveled north to go to Canada, to join up with his son. And I was able to track his progress through research at Peabody Library and other places (including Canada). And at one point, I'm going through Harriet Beecher Stowe's information about her, and there was a newspaper column that she regularly wrote for a New York newspaper. And buried in the article was a paragraph, and I can't quote it exactly, but it was: "There came a man one day named Samuel Green, from Maryland." He explained his story, and she summarized it, and then he said, "He had but one request to make. Since he wasn't able to finish reading the book, could he have a copy?" And her answer was, "This, we were glad to do." And so my hope is that there's an autographed copy to Samuel Green from Harriet Tubman of that book.

I gave a talk once in the downtown Archives building about this. And there were people in the audience who were Green descendants. They didn't let on to me if they had such a book or not,



but they stayed close to the vest. For one thing, it's a Black-culture story. And who am I, I mean, to say it bluntly. But so he moved to Canada, and I lost track of them. So Phebe Jacobsen said, "You know, he probably came back to Maryland." I said, "What? Why?" She said, "Well, there's a love for the land." And that's why she encouraged me to go to Dorchester County and experience it, which I did with John Creighton. You grow up in Brooklyn...it's nice, but, you know, it ain't home; it's transient. If you're embedded in a rural area, it's the love of the land. So, I never checked. The Civil War ended. She said, "Go check the 1870 census." There he was. He and his wife. Dorchester County. They came back. And then he helped start Morgan State University. It went by a different name at the beginning. He and his wife moved to Baltimore.

In his obituary, which is 1878, if I remember correctly, there's a write-up about the address he lived at. And I actually traveled that street, which is still there, but different. And it said that it was the African Methodist Episcopal Church in Baltimore. He was buried at Mount Zion Cemetery, which was the African American cemetery south of Baltimore City, in South Baltimore City. And that's where he was. And my thesis ended, you know. I lost track of him. He's known but to God, you know, that kind of thing. But now I know where he's buried. So I went out there looking for the grave site, and it was explained to me that prisoners from the Maryland State Penitentiary in Baltimore regularly went out there and weeded, because it became severely overgrown over the decades. But they didn't fully do the entire thing. So I didn't find it in the prim and proper part. But there's still that overgrown thing, and I haven't been there in about, oh, 15 years. So I'd like to go back and see if that's now trimmed, and maybe I can find his grave marker, and that would be a closure to me. And there was a parade. That's not the word for a funeral but there was a procession from that church, the Sharp Street AME Church, to that cemetery. And it made the news, and his story was well known. So now I know where he's buried. And as it turns out, that cemetery is about 15 minutes from where I used to live. And it's like, wow. Just wow. So that's an unspoken and unmet need to locate where he's at, because it's just proper to do that. So that's Samuel Green.

People only know about the story from my thesis, because I developed it. I had a college professor who contacted me years later when I was at the National Archives who had read it, and wanted to pursue it further, and, ideally, wanted to find a court transcript, which of course, I was looking for myself, but they didn't have it. I suspect they purposely didn't keep that one in Cambridge, Maryland. And I said, "You know, I've looked, and you're not likely to find it." And I never heard back from her. But I remember I have her name written, and she has written about the time, the place, the topic. But she didn't do a Green story. And then I heard about the movie, *Harriet*, and I can't remember now, but she may have been an adviser to that movie, so it's not like I'm in contention with this college professor to find the pot of gold at the end of the

rainbow, because that's history. You know, more power to you if you get resolution. More power to you.

**Daria:** That's a great story. That's a fascinating guy. It's pretty amazing. Okay, I'm going to stop right now.

[END RECORDING PART ONE]

[BEGIN RECORDING PART TWO - April 29, 2021]

**Daria:** We are recording. My name is Daria Labinsky, and I am doing a NARA oral history with Rick Blondo, and the date is April 29, 2021. And this is part two of an interview. Okay. Hi, Rick.

**Rick:** Hi. I'm glad for the opportunity to continue. What I wanted to do, at least initially here, is to speak to some of the points that I raised in the video interview. First off, I had mentioned recalling the first person that I had to relocate during the renovation of the National Archives building and, to the best of my knowledge, that gentleman's name is...Bob Matchette. That's M-A-T-C-H-E-T-T-E. Bob was a very long-time member of the staff and retired some years ago. And I'm seeking ultimate confirmation from somebody, from him personally, or who can communicate. And if I get that, I will coordinate with whomever is shepherding the interview in the near future, you know, this oral history in the near future, and augment that as well. But I'm 95-percent sure it was Bob Matchette.

Secondly, the question had come up about who was the first member of the public to register as a researcher at the National Archives at College Park. I haven't been able to quickly find what I had seen a month or so ago here at home, mementos from my work. So I don't have that name handy. Two suggestions would be: it may not be available because of privacy concerning researcher identity. But, if the person was amenable to being interviewed about it, that would have come out during the 1994 planning for the time capsule that got put in when the formal dedication took place in May 1994 of the building in College Park. And I would think [NARA Historian] Jessie Kratz may have access to information as far as you know, copies of what's in the time capsule, so the person's name can be seen there. My recollection was he was a historian from California. I think, maybe a college professor.

And Daria, you have to remind me, the first thing we were talking about before we went live with the recording. It was the third point. Oh, documents that I had made reference to regarding Eisenhower during World War II. In my brain, I had merged two documents, both inadvertently. Both of these are available on the National Archives web page. I don't know if

there's a way to include a link to that in the transcript of this, but that might be helpful. The documents in play were his first report regarding the progress of D-Day. It was very early in the invasion, and it was his view to share as much as what was known to the powers that be above him. And in my brain, I had recalled incorrectly, as it happens. In that same document, he made reference to taking full responsibility, if the invasion failed. So, in reality, that "I take full responsibility"-type-document was a [handwritten note](#), which was apparently done the day before D-Day. Again, it's also on our web page. It's dated July 5, 1944. And I suspect he purposely put July instead of June 5th when he wrote it, so if the note fell into enemy hands, you know, it would not give away the plan. And the powerful, poignant thing at the end of that was if any blame attends to the attempt, this is in the context of if it failed, he's personally responsible. "If any blame attends, it's mine alone for accepting the responsibility," which I thought was jaw-dropping. But it speaks to the character of the man. So that's the point I wanted to relay just to kind of tie up the earlier interview.

So my next question would be, do you have anything that you want to further discuss while we're still connected?

**Daria:** I don't remember. Did we talk about the records management oversight?

**Rick:** You mean my work with that? Yeah, we did.

**Daria:** We did, okay. And I had one question: You mentioned when you were talking about [some]one being in AI, you mentioned—did you mean to say Trevor Plante?

**Rick:** I did say Trevor Plante, didn't I?

**Daria:** You said Trevor Howard, I think.

**Rick:** Oh my gosh. You know, I didn't get into the weeds, but my medical condition involves a liver issue, and that can affect your memory. And that clearly was going on. I think Trevor Howard is an actor. [LAUGHS]

**Daria:** No, that's why I was like, "I don't think that was the guy's name." I didn't have any more questions, but yeah. Go on. If you have other stories, that's good.

**Rick:** Okay. Thank you for calling that to mind. By all means, Trevor Plante is fantastic. Let me think if there's anything else.

Oh, you know, in the interim, since we last talked, I went through a really fat file I have at home of "thank-you" letters and cards and notes that I had received throughout my entire NARA career. But many of them had to do with the opening of College Park. And we had, I think, this may have been at the end of it all, Daria. I can't remember if the recording was on then or not. But it had to do with the difference between when the building first opened and the connection to researchers that took place in Room 1000, the consultant Archivist's office, and how, over these decades now, things have changed. And I would clearly say for the far worse, because those letters that I got were from regular people who were overwhelmed to walk into that palatial building and assume, correctly, that it was filled to the gills with records or would be in the near future. And they had no idea. They just had a research need, and they were hoping to find something useful. And what happens in Room 1000 is attentive listening, the idea of valuing their research topic, no matter how mundane or really, to use the word neutrally, silly it may be, compared to, you know, an esoteric treatise on something deep and profound. If it's their research need, it's something that they're trying to connect with. And that rapport that was established really was valued by people. In effect, they felt intimidated. And in short order, they realized they had a friend. They had an ally. They had somebody who was listening. Many of those letters that I got were just on that point, that the federal government has this rap where you can't get information, and people are disinterested, and blah, blah, blah. And that was the exact opposite that they found there. And that goes back to what I was saying, that the whole concept of service is in my DNA. You value people, and you connect with them in a way that shows that you care. And if you have the information, you provide it right away. If you don't, you find it, and you share it in short order.

I did not mention that when the building first opened, the whole idea of the internet was brand new. And Bob Coren, C-O-R-E-N, who was my supervisor above me. He wasn't physically in the office, but he oversaw the program. He's the guy that personally had me in mind to be the first person that would come over to that building and then augmented, over the years, with two others. And Bob created this thing where if you got an email, and the question was on Point A, he has written, like, several sentences or a short paragraph that speaks to Point A and, you know, replicate that 30 times. So if you're calling about World War II service records, or emailing about World War II service records, or any other specific thing, you can literally, in your response, press a code number and then that paragraph appears in your response. And I was flabbergasted to be able to see that. And that resulted in some truly pro forma language on our end. But the recipient didn't know that, and it spoke to their specific need, and they were deeply impressed by that. Literally, you know, if the timing worked out, the same day that their message came in, we'd be able to respond, if not in very short order, thereafter. And that generated so much comment about how thrilling it was and reassuring to have civil servants working for the federal government truly connecting with their needs and them personally.

The equivalent to that is the State of Maryland. I had mentioned I was a state archivist, not *the* State Archivist. I worked for the State Archives a total of about eight years. That included an initial internship. And a lot of people, their only connection to the state government was the Department of Motor Vehicles. And, invariably, that was a horrible experience. You know, a huge waiting room, "Next," go up, and you get this kind of bored response. The person has been on their feet for hours behind the desk, and it's like, you know, it's a hassle. And when people came to the Maryland State Archives, same thing. They were amazed at the TLC, and the personal care and attention that they got.

So what's currently in play in the initial connection to researchers at Archives II in College Park is not that any longer. Those specialists are up in the research rooms, and their job in Room 1000 is just get them registered, show them where the lockers are, and send them on their way. And I think that first opportunity to connect and reassure is lost. And it shouldn't be. I have no idea what it's like in our facilities across the country, but it's obviously on a much smaller scale. And I've always assumed that one-on-one connection was always what was done at the various facilities.

**Daria:** How do you think it compares to AI?

**Rick:** Well, Archives I...let me think about that for a second. The difficulty is I had never done research myself at the Archives I building, and so I didn't wear the shoes of the brand-new researcher. And the first things that are coming to my mind are the whole new scenario of what the renovation put in, which is the research center is right behind the front desk in the lobby, when you went there. So first off, when the building opened, what was called the central research room was several floors up from the lobby. You had to take an elevator to get up there. So you connected directly with archival staff members who were up there.

But there is an information desk in the main lobby, and there's always been a concern about bringing things in that could pose a threat to the records. So, I don't recall, or I should say, I don't know how they handled that, things like coats and what have you. I know during the renovation, NARA put in a locker room at the building in Washington, just like Archives II was designed with one. So that post-renovation of Archives I took care of all that. So speaking to that point, you walked through the security area and, in your line of sight, right behind the guard's desk, is where you want to go, and the door is open, so you can see right into it. So you can easily walk in. You're greeted by people right there at an information desk, which is like the equivalent of Room 1000 in the College Park building. That was, I think, the concept that came into play. And then from that point, you're directed to the lockers, which are all part of the

suite there, and then you're directed to where you want to go. There's a microfilm research room. There was a research room for other certain types of records. It's escaping me right now what that specialty room was for. But still, you had to go up to the central research room on the second floor to access the lion's share of the holdings of that building. And that was what's called a "clean environment." By then, you've dropped off your attaché case and coat and umbrella. It's all in the locker. So when you walked into that room, same scenario. You walk right in. There's a central information desk there, and you're connected with people who know what they're doing and connect with the researchers. I don't know. It's a people skill as far as putting people at ease. So, I think it depends on the person who's there on any given day.

But I know by matter of—and I would hope and assume that it's all, you know, a positive experience for everybody involved. But I know when Archives II was conceptualized, the people who were selected to staff Room 1000, the initial people who were selected, had people skills and had deep knowledge. And, you know, it's just like you can hit the ground running with whatever question comes up. And if you didn't know, if you needed to get some more information right then, you knew who to call. And it worked very, very well about who to call within the building, you know, a staff member.

You know, actually, every once in a while I'd get a telephone call or somebody comes in and they don't need the National Archives at all. They need something else entirely. And that calls to mind something that just came to my memory. Once it became known by word of mouth that there were informed, knowledgeable people, that this magic phone number that you can call and talk to a human, which is the main line of Room 1000, there were regulars who called. And one of them was CBS News. And I grew up in New York. And, you know, I'm well acquainted with the national news media. And, you know, at least a dozen times over several years, they called and they needed a reference. They were looking for blah, who should they contact? On and on and on.

And throughout those conversations—most federal agencies had a history office. It's not just public affairs, the office that they want to talk to is very often the history office. And so that was great. And then I remembered when things started getting in the hot water for Dan Rather, who was their lead anchor in the evening news after Walter Cronkite passed away. And he did a story on the CBS Evening News pooh-poohing the concept of federal history programs. And I saw that, and my mouth dropped. I said, "Wow." They use that stuff, so why in the world would you throw it under the rug, and sweep it away? And then it dawned on me, or maybe they were trying to fact-find and, you know, all those calls about who to refer to and blah, blah, blah, many of them were history related, again over several years, and not every experience goes

well. So I silently wondered whether that was not what it appeared to be, but possibly a setup to get fodder to feed a storyline that they had in mind.

**Daria:** Yeah, that's not uncommon.

**Rick:** Yeah, yeah. It's a tool that's used. And so I was not pleased when I saw that. So again, I ultimately came to the conclusion that maybe all those calls were not what they appeared to be. Even though if you were looking for the kind of answers they were trying to get, that's what you would have done, you know.

**Daria:** Right. Yeah, I have a feeling the pandemic is going to make things even harder for researchers. There's going to be more regulations and things, because even if people are vaccinated, you don't know if people are really vaccinated. And, you know, there's still, I don't know, I just think they might have more rules that might make it even harder, especially for, like, walk-ins and stuff off of Pennsylvania Avenue. Well, the other avenue, not Pennsylvania. The one behind it. Constitution Avenue. Yeah. Walking in.

**Rick:** Well, the thing that comes to my mind on that is there are these, you know, I got my second Moderna vaccine last week, and you get a card. But now I've learned that there's phony cards out there that you can get. And so maybe that isn't the answer. At the very least, they can do a forehead temperature scan. But that's not foolproof either. I see your point. And the first thing I thought of was spacing for researchers. And at College Park, there's plenty of space to do that, assuming the research numbers are controlled. At the building in Washington, the central research room, those researcher desks are relatively close together, but you can always skip every other one, that kind of thing. So I think there is a way to address that to a degree. But you raise a very valid point. Now, you got me wondering if there's any concerted effort going on within the government as a whole, because I would hope for any federal building that people want to come into, especially buildings that the public comes in for, looking at exhibits like the Smithsonian buildings, et cetera—.

**Daria:** Yes, I agree. I actually went to the Smithsonian in November right before they shut down again. It was timed tickets, very few people inside. But the other day, I went to a museum in Georgia that had timed tickets, and it was, you know—and I've been vaccinated, but it was really crowded. It was uncomfortably crowded. So, you know, they have to do a better job of crowd control, I think.

**Rick:** Well, in the Archives's favor, we have an ample guard force to help control that. But as you've seen from the media, if you start, in effect, countering people, in other words, getting in

their face with details, that can explode. And so you raise a very intriguing question I have to think about.

**Daria:** Okay, is there anything else you'd like to talk about?

**Rick:** Give me a moment to think. Just a moment.

**Daria:** Is there anyone in particular you want to talk about, like coworkers that you enjoyed working with or, you know, that kind of thing?

**Rick:** Well, I mentioned many of them in the earlier interview. There are so many archivists who specialize in different areas that I admire. If I name two or three, I don't, inadvertently, want to dis the 10 or 12 that are in the same league. You know, to say the Archives has a history of hiring intelligent, informed, friendly people, not everybody by any means, but, you know, a good number, and what strikes me right now is how that could be mitigated by a system change, and let me know if I've alluded to this in the earlier one, where a researcher came into the Still Picture Research Room and started complaining to the person at the control desk. And it turns out the person at the control desk was not an archivist. They were there simply to monitor how the records are being handled to prevent theft. Do you recall if I had mentioned that last time?

**Daria:** No, that doesn't sound familiar.

**Rick:** Yeah. So this is told to me by a retired staff member who was there seeing or participating in it happening. I take it back. I was actually in the room doing some research on a personal thing. So I saw this happen. And the public researcher, the first time going to the person at the desk, was referred to this staff member who was an expert in still pictures, and she helped him nicely. And, you know, a half hour later, he had another question, and he went back to the control desk, and they told him the same thing, or you need to go see so-and-so in... The same person was on duty there, and he got ticked. It's like, you know, why are you here? You're sitting behind this desk and, you know, people would assume you're there to help, or they ask questions. And my colleague, now retired, went up to him and said, "Sir, they're there to make sure you don't steal our records," which was true. It was part of a new motif of that, and it's painful to even think about it now. This happened many years ago, but that's the coin of the realm right now. And somehow there needs to be a return or a better balance between connection and safeguarding.



So let's see. As far as other people that were, oh heck, I don't think I mentioned Wynell Schamel who was an education specialist at my second Archives job. My first Archives job was at the Patrick Henry Building, 601 D Street NW. My second was in leased space on Indiana Avenue, a block from the Archives building. And then I took the job in College Park. So I never actually worked in the National Archives Building until the renovation, which was, you know, fascinating to me. So, but I've always had an appreciation for the building, obviously.

So, in the leased space was the Education Branch. And I took a job with an experienced classroom teacher/archives expert on education. Her name was Wynell Schamel, and she mentored me and was very friendly, from Alabama, and, you know, just wonderful. And the big boss, the head of the unit of the Education Branch, I think I did mention this, was Elsie Freeman, who started the whole idea of primary source research, primary source documents in the classroom. That was in 1977. And the job I took was in 1992, I think. And Elsie had her office, a very small office suite. She'd always keep her door open—there were only four or so other staff members—and partly that was just to hear what was going on, just to kind of stay connected. And then every once in a while, Elsie would come out and sit down with us to, basically, participate in the conversation. And how often do supervisors do that? You know what I mean? And so that spoiled me, because when I saw that connection, I assumed, incorrectly, that that was true everywhere else. And it's not, unfortunately. So Wynell Schamel. Elsie Freeman.

There were other people who came after me, most notably Lee Ann Potter. Lee Ann worked with Wynell. Lee Ann's from Texas. So another Southern, how to phrase it, friendly person and very knowledgeable. And she wound up the acting head of the education unit, when the person who had that job had retired. But she was not offered the permanent job. They brought somebody in from outside. And now Lee Ann works at the Library of Congress, and she does beyond-superb work. She's in charge of their education outreach and related things. I think it's like two or three entities, not just the education thing. And she's simply fabulous.

When she still worked at NARA—and you can find some of her things, her presentations on C-SPAN. [One includes Jim Percoco](#), who's a classroom teacher from Fairfax County, Virginia. And Jim went to Primarily Teaching, the annual summer, week-long workshop. It changed his life, just like I had mentioned John Lawler from Pennsylvania. And Percoco wound up becoming a Walt Disney Teacher of the Year thing. They did that for several years. So he got national recognition. And then, behold, it turns out that there is a National Teacher Hall of Fame in Kansas. I had no idea. And Jim is a Hall of Fame teacher. And what clicked was not just his knowledge, but his connection to primary sources. And that was fed further through his presence in our teaching institute. He also does a thing with teaching with sites, going to the actual historic sites with his classroom. He doesn't use a textbook. He uses primary source

copies, visiting sites, and analyzing sculptures that are done to commemorate historical events. He's a history teacher, but he's unlike anybody else on the planet. He's still teaching and no longer for Fairfax County, but a private school in Virginia. And it's another name worth putting out there. [NOTE: Jim retired in 2023.]

And then the current body of NARA people: a young lady named Dawn Powers, joined NARA in, I think, 2009, and our paths crossed. And over the years, that developed into, like a mutual appreciation society and informal mentorship. And then she wound up coming to the organizational entity that I worked with. So we got to know each other more. And there was a lot of learning going on, on her end, from the type of thing I've been sharing today and last time, and on my end. She's a younger person, and she exposed me to all the tech stuff.

For instance, just the other day, my wife came across a list, a statement from the Maryland State Attorney General's office, where they were looking for a librarian, like an announcement. So Janet sent it to me and said, "Do you know anyone who has a master's degree in library science and history that I can mention, you know, anybody you may want to share this with." So I shared it with Dawn, who is actually a teacher at Catholic University in Library Science in Library School, in addition to her NARA work. And within an hour, she texted me back. She said, "Thanks. I put it on the listserv." It's like, okay, that was a foreign concept to me, how you can spread something immediately, far and wide, to all her students, you know? And so I replicated that times 100. There are so many things that I learned from her about new technology and, you know, everything else. So that's a current person. And pretty much everybody else that I knew well, have retired. And so my hope is that the torch has been carried by a new generation to connect with people and their research needs. I think I alluded to something last time about—maybe not with you. This was an item on our YouTube page, where it talked about the origin of our catalog, and this was done in 2009. Do you recall if I mentioned that to you, Daria?

**Daria:** No, I don't think so.

**Rick:** Okay, so I only saw the beginning of it. By 2009, I was no longer working directly with records, you know, historical records in use by the public. And so it caught my eye, and I started to watch it. And, you know, I'm familiar with all the efforts over the decades now to make digitally available records. And the person was saying, "The old way of finding your record was three steps." And they started going through them. It was, like, finding aid, talk to an archivist, they have to go to the stack, retrieve it, bring it to your desk, and blah blah blah. She categorized it as a three-step process. The new way is...and you start clicking away and voilà, there's the record in front of you. And it's like, well, no. [LAUGHS] It's not everything we have and not quite that easy. It's a start to put that out there. But I've looked at the NARA catalog

repeatedly and compared it to the Library of Congress's online catalog and similar entities, and the Archives catalog is in need of help. Let's just put it that way. It's not intuitive, and if people go in with an expectation you're going to be able to find the record you're looking for, that's far from the case. So it's kind of sad when you think about that.

**Daria:** Yeah, I know. Well, it's been great talking to you, and I'm going to stop recording, okay? Thank you for talking.

**Rick:** You're welcome. I'm happy to.

[END RECORDING PART TWO]

[BEGIN RECORDING PART THREE - April 29, 2021]

**Daria:** Okay, we're back with Rick Blondo. It's still April 29, 2021. Go ahead, Rick.

**Rick:** Thanks. Another memory came to mind that I thought is worth sharing. During the renovation, I was involved, but not from the technical side as far as construction and architecture and all that. My job was to be an interface with regular people and the staff members, as well. And that latter point, I had communicated to us when we did the video. So, what I recall now is that NBC Television came out one day during the renovation as part of the *Today Show* to do a story on what was going on. And it wasn't designed to air live. They were just putting together footage. And at that time, in the Rotunda, the murals were undergoing conservation work. There were a lot of workers present up on scaffolding, because the murals are highly elevated above floor level.



*Rick Blondo in the National Archives Rotunda during renovations, circa 2002.*

And a photograph was taken by our NARA staff photographer of that event. So what you see is me also standing up above. If I remember correctly, I may have been on ground level with the regular people, but I'm wearing my red construction helmet, because that's required in a work zone like that. And TV lights are on, and it's very bright. And I'm surrounded by people taller than me. I may have mentioned that I'm about 5 feet 4 inches, a little less than that.



*Rick Blondo (wearing a red construction helmet) discussing the National Archives renovation project to the press, circa 2002.*

I assume it aired on the *Today Show*, because they were asking questions, et cetera. I've never had the impetus to try to find out if you can even see that stuff years later, you know, access it. But that photograph of me, in that environment, with that helmet, and at that time and place, is an indelible image now, because every time I saw it—and that's why I framed it and put it in my office—it reminded me of those years involved with that renovation. It was a remarkable time to be there. So my hope is I can take a photograph of that picture and share it and maybe somehow get it connected to this oral history interview.

[END RECORDING PART THREE]





*Rick Blondo holding an award received from Archivist Allen Weinstein for work conducted during the renovation of the National Archives Building in Washington, DC. (L to R: Archivist Allen Weinstein, Gary Simmons, "Chip" Sandage, John Bartell, Tim Edwards, Rick Blondo, and Pat Alexander)*



*Rick Blondo at a staff preview for an exhibit marking the 75th anniversary of the National Archives, March 12, 2009. (NAID 210371647 <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/210371647>)*