INTERVIEW I

DATE: April 21, 1981

INTERVIEWEE: LAWSON B. KNOTT, JR.

INTERVIEWER: Michael L. Gillette

PLACE: Mr. Knott's home, Arlington, Virginia

Tape 1 of 2

G: Let's start just briefly by asking you to trace your background to a certain extent and explain how you evolved in to the General Services Administration.

K: Well, I came to Washington in late 1934 with an A.B. degree from Duke University, a year of law school, and no money to complete it. My objective in coming to Washington was to try to find ways of going to law school on a part-time basis, which I eventually did. It took me some time to locate a job in the newly-burgeoning agencies of the Roosevelt Administration, but I managed to find a mail clerk's job and then got an endorsement from my congressman, Harold Cooley, and proceeded to work in April, 1935. I went back to law school at George Washington University in the summer, 1935 and was in and out of law school over a period of several years, because at one point [I traveled extensively] for the government.

In 1939 I was granted a leave of absence and went to Wake Forest College in North Carolina for a year in law and really got a very good year, the first time in all of my college career that I went to school without working. I had worked my way through Duke and had worked here while going to law school. But I saved enough money to go to school

for a year, in the mid-year of the normal three-year law school, without working.

When I returned to my job in Agriculture in the summer of 1940, I met my future wife and we were married in 1941, the year that I finished my law school work. In August of 1942, on the day that I got word that I had passed the Virginia bar, I also passed my army physical exam. I was stationed in Baltimore during World War II, doing staff duty with the division engineer, Corps of Engineers.

I was involved primarily in the management and disposal of army property. After the war, I transferred to the Chief of Engineers' office as a civilian employee and became involved in a massive real-property disposal program.

G: Was this land that had been acquired during the war?

K: Yes. In fact, we had the disposal of a large installation as early as 1943. The war wasn't nearly over, but the shifting needs of the army and the whole defense effort would make it possible to release some installations. This was a Kelly-Springfield plant up at Cumberland, Maryland which was no longer needed, and that was returned to Kelly-Springfield. We began to develop some disposal procedures early. In this way I came to the attention of the disposal people in the Office of the Chief of Engineers, and with the early experience I had I was helpful to them in developing procedures for the disposal of large properties.

Then I moved into the legislative field in 1951--that's when I came to know Mr. [Carl] Vinson--because in 1951 legislation was

enacted requiring the army to reach agreement with the Armed Services Committees of the House and Senate on any acquisition or disposal of real property of a certain dollar value. This meant submitting a proposal to the committees, outlining the proposed action and getting clearance from the committee. It was my job to do this for the secretary of the army, who had that obligation under the law. Collaterally with that, I got involved in analyzing and writing reports on bills, and drafting legislation that the army needed, or counter-proposals to legislation that was being introduced, helping congressmen with legislation pertaining to army property they wanted to introduce.

G: Let me just ask you to characterize Carl Vinson for the years that you knew him.

K: Well, he was a very charming and engaging personality, a very dominant person who, like Lyndon Johnson, had that great capacity for demanding a high standard of performance by everybody with whom he dealt, his peers as well as subordinates. People responded to him. He was a natural leader. He could disagree with them, he could cut them off short, but then put his arm around them. This was typical of Lyndon Johnson; he had a way of sort of coming back and giving every man his day in court. He [Vinson] handled his committee masterfully.

G: How so?

K: Well, just what I said. He gave every man his opportunity, Republicans and Democrats alike. He had strong support on the Republican side, which made it possible, you see, for him to be effective. Because in

those days, we had a Republican Congress about 1952 or so. So he was out of the chair, and his ranking Republican friend from Missouri, Mr. [Dewey] Short, was chairman for a while. And you never really saw much difference, because they respected each other and worked together.

G: When Vinson was chairman, did he rule the committee with an iron hand?

K: Oh, yes.

G: What evidence did you see of that?

K: Well, if a witness was straying in his testimony, for example, or if he was going into matters that the committee--he, being the committee--didn't want to hear, he just said, "Well, thank you very much. That's all we need. Thank you for your testimony," and just cut him off. And he'd do that with committee members. If he'd heard enough, why, he'd just say, "The committee will be in recess now." "The committee will be in order," or whatever, just various tactics for changing the subject or shutting it off. You'd see some of the younger ones, who generally sat down below the main bench, just shake their heads. But they liked him, and they liked being on his committee enough that rarely did they leave his committee voluntarily. They waited their turn and waited to get his approval.

G: So when did you go to GSA?

K: 1956.

G: 1956.

K: It was during that period of time, 1951 to 1956, when I was doing quite a bit of legislative work on the Hill, some of which had to be cleared through the secretary of defense's office, that I met Franklin

Floete, who was an assistant secretary of defense for installations and logistics. He had been brought to the job--he was over sixty at that time--by Secretary of Defense Charlie Wilson who had a deputy with whom Floete had worked in the tractor business. Floete had been, among other things, a statewide distributor for tractors in the state of Iowa. He had had extensive land holdings in North and South Dakota, had been in the construction business in Omaha, and had salvaged a large construction company that went into bankruptcy out there. He had a splendid background for the kind of thing they needed to have done and had the time, interest, and public spirit to respond to the call for public service in his latter years. So he became the first assistant secretary for installations in the new Defense structure.

Floete went to the Hill to testify from time to time on Defense Property matters. I was a back-up, supporting witness. So when he later--about 1954, I believe, or 1955--went to GSA as administrator, the Public Buildings Service had just been the subject of a Cresap, McCormick, Paget organizational study, and they wanted to strengthen their real-property staff. I accepted a new job as assistant commissioner. In 1958 I was appointed the deputy commissioner of public buildings and served in that capacity from 1959 until 1961.

We had an administrator of GSA appointed in January, [1961] by President Kennedy, John Moore of Philadelphia. He was a vice president of the University of Pennsylvania and a friend of Billy [Congressman William] Green's. He was not well and simply couldn't

adjust to the Washington situation. In November of 1961 he resigned, and [Kennedy appointed] Bernie Boutin, who had been close to Kennedy, had been twice an unsuccessful candidate for governor in New Hampshire, and the second time lost only by about five thousand votes. He was not yet forty years old, had a very fine career and a good background in real estate. He and I had a good working relationship because of mutual respect we had in each other's capabilities in the real estate field. So he asked me to become his deputy.

Now sometime during the summer of 1961, before Boutin had asked me to take the job, some question had come up on surplus property that involved Defense. As I recall it was Mitchell Field in New York. This was before the [House] Armed Services Committee for its approval, and GSA was to be involved from a disposal standpoint. Mr. Vinson got involved. There were a couple of members on his committee from New York, and a couple of members of Congress who were not on his committee who were in opposite positions with his New York members. So he was holding a session in his office and wanted me to come up and talk with them and explain what the surplus property disposal procedures would be, how we would proceed if the committee agreed to allow Defense to turn it over to GSA for disposal.

So I went up. He had wanted the administrator, and then Boutin who was acting [administrator]. Boutin couldn't be there, and I went up. Boutin came in later and I think was impressed with the way the conference went. As a result when he wanted to appoint me as the deputy administrator, he asked me if maybe I could get Mr. Vinson to

call the President in my behalf. I said, "Well, I'm not sure whether I could or couldn't. I'll think about it." I went back to him the next day, and I said, "I've thought about it. I don't know Mr. Vinson all that well. We have mutual respect, I think, for each other, but he doesn't owe me anything, and I don't want to be in a position of owing him. I think if we have to put it on that basis, why, you'd better just count me out and I'll stay where I am." I said, "And furthermore, as an aside, I think you ought to want to appoint your own deputy. You and John Moore met when you got here. You didn't know each other. And this is one of the ills of separate appointments, dictated appointments. You ought to be able to appoint the deputy. So I think you ought to try and see what kind of reaction you get at the White House." Well, he wasn't very happy about it, but he said, "Well, we'll see." He proceeded to go to the White House then and talk to various people over there, and he got their approval. So the announcement was made from Hyannis Port on Thanksgiving Day in 1961 that Boutin and I were being appointed to the two jobs.

Our working relationship of course was very good for that reason. He could send me anywhere, the White House or anywhere else, and I had the full stamp of approval because I was his man. So we worked together until after the assassination and after the election in 1964. After that was over--he had a family of ten, eleven children at that time--he had an opportunity to go with the National Association of Home Builders for twice as much money as he was making as administrator. He was making $21,000; I was making $20,000. So he took the job.

G: It was purely for personal reasons?

K: Yes, purely for personal reasons.

G: So you became acting [administrator] then, December 1, 1964, and then appointed permanent, May 12 is the date I have, I guess when it was announced.

K: Yes. Yes. Of course, that was simply by operation of law. The law provides that unless the president designates someone else as acting administrator, the deputy administrator becomes the acting administrator pending the nomination and confirmation of a successor administrator.

G: When did you first have a close working contact with Lyndon Johnson? When was he first really aware of you?

K: I don't think he was. I had no contact with him in a work relationship until the appointment. My working relationships with the President were through others, and it was through others that I think he was ultimately persuaded to appoint me. I'd read in the paper that he was talking to a vice president of Ford Motor Company or some other large corporation. I think he sincerely felt, and as I recall it, I was told this by some of his staff people, that this was a businessman's job. He believed it was a big business operation--and it was--and that what it needed was somebody from business to handle this large amount of property, and supply operation, and so on. That's the kind of man he was looking for. But it simply was not attractive enough in the federal hierarchy to attract anybody of the business stature he had in mind.

G: Was there someone in the White House staff who championed your appointment?

K: I think Marvin Watson probably more than anybody. Marvin and. . . . I'd have to say Marvin more than anybody.

G: Anything else on your appointment you may have learned, why you were appointed, other than the fact that you were the deputy and then the acting administrator?

K: Not specifically. I know that several members of Congress with whom I had worked over the years either wrote or talked with the President or his staff about me and the appointment. In addition, there was a rather interesting coincidence that may have helped at the right moment. The day that I went to see him for the interview that Marvin had set up, he was busy talking to Clinton Anderson, the senator from New Mexico at the time. So Marvin had me talk with Jack Valenti and Jake Jacobsen. I knew both of them. Then finally the President--this is around four-thirty or so on a Friday afternoon--he was finally about ready to see me. I had gone back into Marvin's office.

About that time, the door opened and the President came out of the little office next to the Oval Office. Here was Clinton Anderson with him. And he introduced me, he or Marvin. Marvin I guess introduced me to Clinton Anderson. I don't think the President was even sure that I was Lawson Knott. Anderson said, "Oh, yes, Lawson Knott at GSA. You know, Mr. President, you've got a great man here. I called him about ten days ago. I had a problem down in Roswell, New Mexico on a federal building down there, and I thought I'd never get

that straightened out. I called him, and in forty-eight hours everything was straightened out. Never had any problem since." That's roughly the way it ran. I don't even remember the details of the situation. But it was strictly a coincidence that I had just recently talked with him, and he was complaining like the devil and he wanted some action. He wanted something done, and I did it. He was very pleased, and he just took this opportunity to say so.

The President called Marvin in, and they chatted for a little bit. Then he came out and said, "He's not going to have time to see you today. You're going to be around tomorrow, aren't you?" I said, "Yes."

So Saturday morning Marvin called and said, "He can see you." I went over and here was--I went right in then, in the same little room--the President and John Macy and Jerry Kluttz. You know who Jerry Kluttz was?

G: No.

K: Jerry Kluttz was the federal columnist for the Washington Post for many years, one of the most well-liked and highly regarded of all of them. He knew the ins and outs of the federal government pretty well, what was going on, and championed the cause of the career employee.

So that was the group. The President said, "Marvin and the others have been telling me what a good job you've been doing for GSA." And he said, "You have been holding down the job and I think you should have it. You've earned it, and I'm going to give it to you. I want you to be mindful of the fact that the most important thing

in government is excellence in office. You can look at"--and he pointed to pictures on the wall--"Truman, he was noted for being very forthright, very direct, and Lincoln for his honesty, and Roosevelt for his compassion. Of all of these attributes the most important thing in government is excellence in office. If you and I can be known for excellence in office, we will have served our country well. Now you can go home and tell you wife and kiddies that you've got the job. You've earned it." That was about it. He'd made his mind up.

G: Did he have any other concerns? For example, in terms of--?

K: I guess he asked me, "Tell me a little about yourself." I guess that was the way we first started. I told him a lot briefer than I've told you that I had come to Washington to finish my law school education, had intended to go back to practice law in Raleigh with Willis Smith, who later died while serving in the U.S. Senate. I said, "I never got back. I spent my years in government service. I've enjoyed it. This is the way I intend to finish out my career." That was about it, and then he expressed his feeling about excellence in office.

G: Did he have anything to say about public trust and the possibility of scandal or anything like that? He seems to have been very mindful of what would happen if a government agency abused its power.

K: I don't know whether it was at that particular time, or it may have been a little later, but not much later, when we were talking about an architectural panel. He said that this matter of architects and other consultants for government jobs is a very sensitive matter. He said, "We want the best. Now, you may get calls from members of my staff

from time to time about various people. If you can accommodate them, why, fine. But if not, it's your responsibility. I'm looking to you." I felt he was saying to me--and there had been some publicity about political involvement in the selection of architects--I want the best regardless of pressures.

G: Was this with regard to Gordon Bunshaft or any particular architect?

K: No. This was earlier than the selection of Bunshaft for the Johnson Library design. I didn't even know Bunshaft at that time. This was early 1965, you see. I recall that I had some discussions about selections of architects generally while I was acting administrator. That's what prompted this cabinet paper that I spoke of. Bill Moyers called me about some publicity. A columnist for the [Washington] Star, Charles Bartlett, was writing a series of articles about political influence in the selection of architects for public buildings. He called me about it. I provided Moyers with our procedures for the selection of architects, and gave him some background on the number of architects we were using, the variety of projects and other information. Then we came up with this idea of the advisory panel on the selection of architects.

While I didn't have extensive dealings with Moyers, I think Moyers felt, from his short-term involvement of checking into the matter of selection of architects that it was absolutely clean, and that he saw no reason from his viewpoint why I shouldn't be appointed. And he may have supported it, I don't know.

G: Did the President make it clear that you were working for him, that you were accountable to him or anything of this nature? Or that he expected a certain amount of loyalty or anything in that respect?

K: Yes, I think he talked about loyalty at the time. But as far as accountability to him, I think that was wrapped up in the [President's] statement that, "While others may have some recommendations to make with respect to architects and other matters, you're responsible and you're accountable to me." As a practical matter, of course, the President never had that much time to deal personally with GSA matters.

G: Let me ask you about his interest in beautifying federal buildings.

K: Well, that developed particularly I think along in 1966. Mrs. Johnson was very much interested in it, and it was all a part of her interest in park lands and the lands around public buildings. We did an extensive amount of work in cleaning out some of the overgrown shrubbery, replacing it, which would be normal anyway, which should have been done. But we simply put greater emphasis on it all over the Washington area, and then extended our efforts into our regions.

G: Was LBJ concerned about costs in this connection?

K: I don't know that costs entered into the picture. At least I don't recall any figures being used. It was largely a matter of trade-offs in other aspects of ongoing maintenance programs.

G: Do you recall how Mrs. Johnson participated in this program?

K: Well, she worked more closely I think with the Park Service than she did with GSA, but there was a committee on beautification, headed

originally I think by Jack Connor, the secretary of commerce. But all federal agencies were represented on it as well as some private citizens. Laurance Rockefeller was on it, and the manager of Sea Pines Plantation in South Carolina. There were a number of people with interests in the environment who were appointed. There were conferences held, meetings of the committee, and then a White House conference on beautification. This, like the fingers of a hand, could spread way out and [it] reached a lot of people, people who had wealth and means who contributed to this effort. Mrs. Johnson had a friend in New York, I can't think of her name now, who was very active.

G: Mary Lasker?

K: I think that's right, yes. Our principal representative was later the commissioner of public buildings, Bill Schmidt, and he spent quite a bit of time in working with Mrs. Johnson on it.

G: Let me ask you about the plan to use surplus government property to meet the critical housing shortage in urban areas. You chaired the task force, I think, on that.

K: Yes.

G: Can you recount the origin of the task force and the program that developed or evolved here?

K: If I remember correctly, the date was about August 25, 1967. I was having a staff meeting, and my secretary came in the conference room and said, "The President is on the phone and wants to talk to you." It developed that he had Joe Califano with him, and he said, "You know, we've got a lot of problems in the cities these days, a lot of

unrest, and a lot of it stems from the lack of adequate housing. We need to do something about it. It occurred to me that there's a lot of surplus land around we ought to be able to use. Now, all I get from anybody is a lot of reasons why I can't do it. I want you to tell me how we can do something about it. Don't you think we could do this?" I said, "Well, I don't see any reason why we couldn't, Mr. President. As a matter of fact, I have in mind right now a site right here in Washington that is surplus and on which we've just had a plan made primarily looking towards disposal. It's the very attractive site of the National Training School for Boys. They have moved to West Virginia. The site is a beautiful hill in Northeast Washington. The buildings are no longer useful for institutional purposes. We've had a plan made for disposal as surplus property that cost about twenty-five thousand dollars that seems to me to be the framework from which a development plan could be prepared. This disposal plan envisions its use for housing, office space, and commercial facilities."

He said, "Well, that sounds just like what we're talking about. Can you get something to me by Monday on this?" This is Friday. Of course we could. And we did. We spent the weekend putting together a plan, and we got the Commissioner of the District of Columbia, [Walter] Tobriner, who was the chairman of the Board of Commissioners at that time, HUD and others working with us. By Tuesday we were ready to have a press conference on it at the White House.

G: And the other elements were--you mentioned Tobriner from D.C.

K: Yes.

G: Was HUD involved in this?

K: It was when they had the press conference and we answered questions about this particular property that the announcement was made of a committee for a nationwide effort. In other words, the National Training School for Boys site in Northeast Washington was just the centerpiece from which this was set up, this committee on urban lands.

G: Now, who else was on the task force?

K: You mean the committee?

G: Yes.

K: Bob Weaver and [Robert] McNamara and I, we were the three. That operated that way for about a year. We made periodic reports to the President on the progress we were making on identifying sites. Of course, that's when San Antonio got into the picture. There was a site in Atlanta. I went out on a couple of them. But after a year, the problem seemed to be more related to HUD's responsibilities than GSA. I recommended to the President, and he agreed, that it be turned over to HUD.

G: So the task force was dissolved?

K: Right. Bob Weaver took it up from there.

G: Was HUD sufficiently motivated to pursue this?

K: They had some interest in it. But on the other hand, they had difficulties, in the first place, in getting the cooperation from Defense, and Defense of course had its problems with committees on the Hill and so on. But they also had some conflicts with their own programs. The Model Cities Program of course was--

G: Competition, I guess.

K: --was competition. So that this was an overlay on other programs and in a sense had to be fitted into the other things they were doing. So I would say that it never really got top priority.

G: Did these sites that were explored generally meet HUD's criteria for residential suitability, such as the location and whether or not--?

K: Not always.

G: Really?

K: Not always. That was one of the problems with the San Antonio site. It was sandwiched in between a railroad and--

G: An interstate highway.

K: Yes. Yes. So these were not ideal. And of course that's often the case, when you're trying to reuse what you have. It's not exactly what you'd like to have.

G: Was there also a question of private developers wanting to buy the land for their own uses?

K: Oh, yes.

G: Can you recall any specific examples here where they frustrated the efforts, either working through the congressman or local--?

K: No. I don't recall any specific examples, but I do know that within the framework of the surplus property laws, that even before you got to the point of its being available to a private developer, there was competition with local governments for other programs for which they could get the property without compensation. You see, there was no way we could make this property available under existing laws for

private development without compensation for it. But there were provisions of law where it could be used for educational purposes, for example, at a substantial discount, up to a hundred per cent discount. So there were these competing provisions of the law, competing needs and uses, that communities were sometimes just waiting until the property was excess. This sometimes made Defense reluctant to let it go, because they were being prodded to release property in order to support the new-town-in-town concept. But if it was going to be intercepted in the disposal process by priority claimants and used for something else, Defense would rather not let it go. So there was a tug of war all the way around, and competing interests.

G: You mentioned before we turned on the tape that Mendel Rivers had opposed the Bolling Field disposal.

K: Yes. That, of course, was an earlier occurrence and had no direct relationship to this program. But it was part of the background and a part of the philosophy, I think, that prevailed with the Armed Services Committee as it approached the business of approving the disposal of a number of these properties that were being released by Defense with the view that these properties would be used for this new-town-in-town project. I think that the Chairman saw in this, and perhaps other members of the committee saw in this, the same kind of thing that had disturbed them about the Bolling project. That one, of course, was close to them; they could see it. It was within earshot of the Capitol, and its long history as a military base prompted the committee to conclude that there were needs for the military that

ought to be thoroughly examined before Bolling was ever turned over to the local government, the District of Columbia, for development for housing.

G: Was there also the racial aspect, the fact that it would be occupied by--?

K: That was inferred in the Bolling case in local comments and commentary in the press and elsewhere.

G: But on military lands, the Armed Services Committee would have to approve?

K: Approve, right. That's the law that I referred to earlier when I said that I was involved in liaison between army and the committees in the period 1951 to 1956. That law is still on the books today.

G: Now, the Fort Sam Houston project was opposed initially by Congressman Henry Gonzalez.

K: Right, yes.

G: Did you attempt to dissuade him from opposing the project?

K: Yes, we talked to him about it.

G: Of course, he was a friend of the President's and had his own avenues to the White House.

K: Exactly, right.

G: Do you recall what happened, how this sort of legislative influence worked?

K: No. In fact, I don't recall whatever finally happened on that. I know that the site was not enthusiastically endorsed by HUD in the first place. They weren't that happy about it. There were the

competing interests for use of the property for various public purposes, educational, and park and recreation. There was the reluctance, at least on the surface, on Gonzalez' part to see it released when we were still heavily engaged in military operations in Vietnam and there was the possibility that it might be needed again. Whether that was his real reason or not, I'm not sure.

G: Was there a question of whether or not you could have a combination of low income and middle income housing? Would the middle income housing be marketable in a predominantly low income area?

K: I don't recall.

G: What about the HUD compliance requirement? Evidently there was a long delay of maybe seventeen months getting HUD to approve these sorts of projects. Was this a problem?

K: Well, in connection with the National Training School site, I don't know so much about compliance, but their planning requirements were so extensive, I didn't really feel--I felt they had an adequate basis for planning in the surplus property disposal plan that we had already developed. But they insisted on hiring Ed Logue of Boston, who is of course an eminently qualified urban planner, to come in and develop a detailed plan for it. While this was all well and good, it consumed a great deal of time and I don't think really improved the basic disposal concept. What may have been gained in refinement of the plan, was, in my opinion, lost in the sense of timing and urgency. I think that was the great failure of certainly the National Training School site. The timing was right. Had we been able to show some immediate

progress right away, I think it might have been the stimulus for better action and more favorable action elsewhere in the country. We had the opportunity for a good demonstration project.

G: Well, the practicality of the design had been done by GSA or HUD people or who? How did you know that--?

K: We had Gladstone Associates develop this plan for disposal purposes. While it was not a housing plan as such, it had all the ingredients for a plan that could be developed if you were to deal with private developers and let them proceed. I think there may have been too much government involvement when we might have been better off to have simply gone out in the marketplace with developers and find out what trade-offs could work out. Our own preliminary explorations indicated to me that if we would deal with one or more of the prominent office developers in town, who wanted to build a major office building on part of the site, that he could be required to assure the production of low income housing, which we wanted to supplement that development, and to be the major part of that development.

G: In one of your task force reports you mentioned the results of this overall program as being disappointing, and attributed one of the problems as being just the giveaway provisions of federal law, the fact that it really wasn't that easy to [dispose of property], you had all of these conditions and things. Should there have been a more liberal or a less involved mechanism for disposing of this sort of federal property?

K: Well, you see what the President was seeking to do was to operate within the framework of existing law, and in doing that we had to face the fact that existing law did provide these priorities in the use of surplus property for certain public purposes at reduced cost or donation. This is what I referred to earlier when I talked about the priorities for public health and education, public parks and so on. These priorities are there, they're there still. To circumvent those priorities absolutely would require congressional action. The President didn't want to do that. This is what he meant when he said to me, "I'm being told that I can't do these things. What I want to know is what can I do? I want to hear that I can do it."

G: In retrospect, would it have been better to try to modify the law?

K: No, I don't think so. I think timing was the important thing, and I think the Washington project here could have been a showcase which would have stimulated and provided the interest necessary to move some of these others. It was surplus property and ready for disposal for its highest and best use--housing and commercial development. Now, some of them simply weren't practical. After all, we surveyed over five hundred sites in a year's time, and many of these sites did not warrant serious consideration for the program and the timing the President had in mind. They were just among those that were <u>possible</u> to be released, possible.

G: In addition to the Washington site, were there any others that were ultimately developed that you're aware of? To what extent were they successful?

K: My recollection is that we developed a prison site in Atlanta. I know that was one that seemed to offer a potential without the problems that we ran into elsewhere. But I'm not certain of that.

G: Let me ask you about disposal of the Brooklyn Navy Yard.

K: Yes.

G: Here you had a political issue in that Mayor [John] Lindsay was blasting the White House and saying that they weren't. . . .

K: Well, of course one of the big problems there was that this property [was] located adjacent to an area of high unemployment, aggravated by the fact that it had been closed for about five years. In the minds of the public, the government was simply doing nothing with the property all this time. It was taking all this time to dispose of it to the city. As a practical matter, it was not until about 1967, about four years or so after it had been closed as an operating facility, that it was actually reported to GSA as excess property.

G: Why was this?

K: It had to clear the Armed Services Committee, and the Armed Services Committee was reluctant to clear it, thinking that we should find further use for it for military purposes.

G: Reactivate it, I see, at some [point].

K: Yes, reactivate it.

G: This was Congressman [John J.] Rooney's district, I guess.

K: I'm not sure whose district, but in any event it was not until 1967 that GSA got into the picture at all. It was a massive property. After we went through the circularization that is required to offer it

to other federal agencies, then it became surplus. We had it appraised. We had an appraised value of twenty-three and a half million dollars, as I recall. We began negotiating with the city, which had in mind operating it through a non-profit organization, a developer, that was coming into the picture. CLICK [Commerce, Labor, and Industry in the County of Kings] I think it was. Those were the initials of an organization, I think, that was being set up and sponsored by the city to run it. It had no financial resources, but the city was going to underwrite the cost of buying and start-up of the facility, which presumably would be a profit-making operation.

G: It would be a navy yard or shipbuilding or something like that?

K: I don't recall the type of uses, but I think they were varied with some commercial uses.

So we moved along with the negotiations. For a long time we were hung up on an offer of eighteen million, which we couldn't accept. We finally got twenty-three and a half million dollars, which was our figure. Since we were not advertising this for public bid or competitive bids, we were under constraints to submit it to the Government Operations Committees of the House and Senate for approval, on a negotiated sale basis. That committee, in the House particularly, had a long-standing history of rejecting anything that was less than the appraised value or less than full fair market value for the property. The twenty-three and a half million offer that we finally got had a condition that they wanted a moratorium on the interest for three years, which amounted to a depreciation of the fair market value

offer. So we had discussions with Jack Brooks, chairman of that subcommittee in the House, and were pretty well advised that there was no need to submit it under those conditions. And we didn't.

It was at this point that Mayor Lindsay became very unhappy with it and blasted the government. He felt that we were stalling and that we should be able to make some concessions.

G: Did you receive instructions from the White House to stall for a period of time?

K: We had some interest on the part of the White House, because they I think had calls from Congressman [Emanuel] Celler. I don't recall Rooney being in this picture at all. It may have been in Celler's district. I'll have to check that.

G: Maybe it was Celler, yes.

K: But I know that Celler was interested in it, and Celler and Lindsay each had discussions at the White House. We were asked for reports at various times simply to keep them posted, because these inquiries were being channeled, for reasons best known to those who were making them, to the White House, with the hope I'm sure that there'd be some pressure to be more lenient in the terms. Because we were in no position to be more lenient in the terms since it would gain nothing for anyone for us to say, "Yes, we'll do this," and then submit it to the Government Operations Committee and have them turn it down. So we simply waited for some more favorable attitude on the part of the city toward the arbitrary position, if you will, that we had laid down. Arbitrary because we had no choice but to say that this is the only

condition under which we can sell it to you without competitive bidding. So that dragged on for about a year--this was by that time late 1968--and I don't recall whatever happened to it. I don't know whether it was ever sold or not.

G: Was Senator [Robert] Kennedy involved in this at all, also?

K: I don't recall that he was. He may have been, but I don't recall.

G: Another matter was the aluminum stockpile and the conferences that you, Califano, McNamara and others had with representatives of the industry, [Leon] Hickman of Alcoa and others, with regard to selling off--what was it, 1.4 million tons of aluminum and trying to prevent a price increase.

K: Yes. See, there had been a price increase in aluminum by the principal producers and then they pulled it back after discussions with the White House and Secretary of Defense. But then we entered into these discussions on the disposal of the stockpile. The industry really wasn't anxious to have this stockpile in effect dumped on the market, because it would depress the market. The President, on the other hand, was interested in two things, at least. One was liquidating the stockpile, which had--the surplus part of it--been created by change in 1962 in the strategic materials requirements. So there were excesses in a number of materials, including aluminum. There were two different kinds of stockpiles created under different laws, and approximately seven hundred thousand tons of the total million four accumulated under the two stockpile programs could be disposed of without getting additional congressional authorization. But in any case it had to be

disposed of under conditions that would not disrupt the commercial markets. You couldn't dump it. But on the other hand, we were trying to work out something that would keep the inflationary pressures down and get the price that we should get for it.

Now, for the remainder of the aluminum stockpile we had to get congressional authorization, which we later did after these agreements were reached. I guess the big point of difference that caused these conferences was that the President wanted to move with two hundred thousand tons right away in fiscal 1966, and they simply didn't feel they could absorb that much, didn't want to absorb that much. They talked in terms of a hundred thousand tons or less.

G: Did the President meet with them himself?

K: Not that I'm aware of. But this was a fairly broad-based approach under his direction by the Council of Economic Advisers, the Secretary of Defense, the Secretary of the Treasury, GSA, and the Office of Emergency Planning. This was as fine an example of coordinated effort by government as you could ever imagine, and I think an excellent example of the expertise that was peculiarly Lyndon Johnson's in knowing government and knowing how to use the forces of government to get something accomplished.

G: One of the columnists characterized this as the aluminum industry being beaten over the head with a 1.4 million ton club. Was it primarily a matter of using this stockpile to get them to roll back their prices?

K: Oh, I don't think so. It wasn't primarily that. But when they moved ahead with their prices--and prices were moving ahead on all fronts; the President had this problem in various industries. But here was one that was moving ahead in a field where he had a million, four hundred thousand tons of aluminum in the stockpile to dispose of, and it certainly behooved him to confront the industry with this and to say, "This is something we both have to deal with. You have to reckon with this, and we have to reckon with it. We have to dispose of it and we're going to dispose of it. We'd like your cooperation. If we can get it, why, it will make it easy on all of us."

G: I gather the White House did dispose of some of it simply through public sales.

K: I wonder if you're thinking about platinum, which was another complicated [issue].

G: Perhaps that is. I thought it was aluminum but--no, it is aluminum. It says, November 9, 1965, "Government announces sale offer of a hundred thousand tons."

K: Well, I think that was the beginning of these discussions, because as I recall, I was in Europe at the time and was called by Joe Califano to come back for a conference at the White House with McNamara and Treasury and OEP and the Council of Economic Advisers, the whole group, on the strategy for dealing with both the price rise and the stockpile levels--I think at that time, or about that time, the industry did agree with McNamara to roll back the prices. But this advertisement, this notice of intent to sell, was simply a matter of letting

them know we intended to proceed to sell. But the industry preferred that we deal with the major companies, because they were the principals anyway from whom we had bought the stockpile aluminum, and they wanted to control its absorption back into the industry. But they wanted to do it at a rate that was more satisfying to them. Final agreement called for I think a hundred and fifty thousand tons each year for a period of about seven years.

G: In the case of copper you had a strike and a program to expand the production of copper due to the increased usage during the war, I gather.

K: Right.

G: Can you recall the issues here?

K: Well, there was a real shortage, and I recall that the President at that time directed that all government agencies find substitutes for the use of copper wherever possible. We developed an aggressive campaign to try to find other things that could be used rather than copper, so that the government would become less of a factor in the consumption of copper. And I think this was fairly effective. But we were trying to feed this surplus that we had into the marketplace in a way that didn't disrupt the market, and at the same time work out agreements for the increased production of copper to replace that that we sold out of the stockpile. In a sense it really was not surplus, if you looked at the broader picture. We didn't require it for the stockpile at the time, but on the other hand, if we'd had all-out war

we would have needed production that we didn't have. But we were trying to work the two at the same time.

G: An arrangement was made with the Duvall Company that was entered into.

K: Yes.

G: Did that proceed, do you recall? Do you recall the details?

K: I don't know how productive it was. I don't recall.

G: It was to expand production?

K: Exactly, right.

G: Anything on the strike here? There was some consideration of how long the strike would last and whether the Taft-Hartley power should be invoked.

K: I don't recall.

G: Okay. Nickel, lead and zinc, rubber, take these all together. Do you recall anything here that bears on the President or any issues here of significance?

K: No, not particularly.

G: I noticed that Ernest Goldstein was in opposition to the GSA position on a lot of this. Do you recall that?

K: No. He, as I recall, came into the disposal picture rather late, about 1968, late 1967, 1968. By that time, the GSA operation in the disposal of the stockpile, most of the authorizing legislation was enacted; we had gotten through over sixty pieces of legislation authorizing disposal of stockpile. Most of that was being handled by Jack Harlan and Joe Moody on a direct basis. I really rarely became involved in some of those disposals. Those were later disposals, both

nickel and. . . . Rubber was a rather continuous thing; the problem with rubber was its potential loss through deterioration. There wasn't all that much interest in getting rid of it but we couldn't afford to keep it.

G: Now on platinum disposal in 1968, you had opposition from Senator [John J.] Williams, who maintained that you were selling it to friends of the President at below market values. Do you recall this controversy here?

K: Yes, somewhat. Because of this, Williams reached a point where he was insisting on every piece of legislation that went through on the Hill authorizing disposal of stockpile that it be by competitive bids. Well, in most cases this is the way we proceeded, and we preferred that far more than any other procedure, but we had to recognize industry practice and the impact of our disposal procedures on the commercial markets. In the case of this industrial platinum, 80 per cent of the market was as a petroleum catalyst. We sold it to them at a price which provided no profit for them. All they got was a refiner's cost. But that was below the price that a commercial user other than petroleum would get for it or that we could have gotten from others. And we did sell to others in that 20 per cent range at around two hundred twenty-five dollars a troy ounce, as opposed to about half that price for the--and this is where Williams got his twelve million dollar contribution, because the purchases from us were bound by the terms of the sale to turn it over to the petroleum users for only the processing costs. That's all they got out of it.

G: I see. Was LBJ involved in this at all?

K: Not that I know of. The press merely picked up the fact that he was a friend of Charles Engelhard. Engelhard was the largest dealer in diamonds, platinums, and other industrial stones in the country. It is still one of the largest. Engelhard is dead, but it's still one of the largest in the country. But I never had any indication that the President was involved in any way.

G: Okay.

Shall we move to presidential libraries now?

K: Sure.

G: Do you recall your first incidence of learning that Lyndon Johnson wanted to have a library and how it proceeded from there?

K: Well, this occurred shortly after I was appointed. Jack Brooks was involved because we had to have legislation. The committee from the University of Texas, Bill Heath, and Frank Erwin, and the Chancellor of the University were the three representing the trustees of the University.

G: That would be Harry Ransom, I guess.

K: Ransom, yes. Clark Clifford was asked by the President to advise on the proposal by the University and help them develop a proposal. So I met with Clark Clifford and this committee from the University in my office. I think this goes back certainly in late 1965 or early 1966. We began shaping up a proposal by the University which Clifford reviewed and I reviewed and we found acceptable. We worked out that agreement, and then it was a matter of getting legislation through

that would recognize this unique status of the Johnson Library. That is, heretofore presidential libraries had been on land conveyed in fee simple to the government, land and building, without cost.

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G: --the uniqueness of the presidential library proposal, and the fact that normally the land and building is deeded [to the federal government].

K: Yes. Right. I recall we had some discussions about the desire to have admission to the Library waived, no admission charge for the Library and Museum area, because of being located there on the University where students would normally come in if there were no charges.

G: I see. I've never connected the two, but that was the basis for the free admission, the fact that it would be located on the campus. I see.

K: Right. Right. There was some discussion back and forth between the White House--and when I say the White House, it was presented to the White House in memorandum form, and the White House, of course, took it up with the President. I never had a discussion with the President directly on this point. But we pointed out that the libraries were receiving an income totalling something like three hundred thousand [dollars] a year from admission fees, and while this was not enough to make or break the program of operating the presidential libraries, nevertheless, to waive admission charges in this instance would be a precedent that would have to be recognized in the legislation. But it

was decided we would face up to that, and we did it. Jack Brooks took care of it very nicely and it was covered in the legislation. But it was different. The University had provided the land and the building.

G: Was any other side considered, do you recall?

K: I don't recall that any other site was considered. There was perhaps some early talk about one at Stonewall, but I don't think that was ever seriously in competition or seriously considered after the University made its proposal.

G: What was Lyndon Johnson's perception of what a presidential library should be? Did he talk with you about that in these meetings?

K: Not to me individually. I was in group discussions with him in which I can recall he expressed his belief that they had great educational value. With his early background as a teacher, I think this was still a part of his motivation in taking advantage of the University's offer to construct the Library on its property adjacent to the campus. I think he wanted it to be a facility where people could come and learn and do research. I think the extent of the Library coverage of social and economic legislation enacted during the Johnson presidency was one of the things that interested him a great deal. Some of the exhibits depicting these accomplishments were discussed in the early planning stages.

Wayne Grover was a consultant for a time, and I remember when we were developing some of the interior components of the building I sat in a discussion with [Gordon] Bunshaft and Grover, Mrs. Johnson and the President in the upstairs living room, the library. I think it's

the same room President Reagan has been using as his office in the last convalescent period; it overlooks the Washington Monument out front and the Truman Balcony. It's a lovely, quiet place, and this was a cold Sunday afternoon, and they had a nice fire in the fireplace. We sat around and talked in a very informal way about the Library. Mrs. Johnson, who of course is a very keen and perceptive person and whose interest in this was just boundless all the way through, had some very searching questions about it. Horace Busby was there, too, for that session.

G: Do you recall any of Mrs. Johnson's questions here?

K: Well, she got into questions of the exposed files from the balcony, whether these should be exposed or not. They are exposed, aren't they? I've only seen pictures of it; I've never been in the Library. But then we discussed the exhibits, the poverty program, for example. As I recall there was considerable discussion about those legislative actions that were related to the poverty programs and civil rights matters.

G: He wanted to have these programs elaborated on in the Library?

K: Yes.

G: He seems to have been in favor of expanding the museum exhibit areas in other presidential libraries, Eisenhower, Truman.

K: Right. And we had some discussions on that in November and December of 1968. In fact, the last time I was in the Cabinet Room was in a meeting with him about December 10 or 12, 1968, with the heads of the libraries: Bert Rhoads and Joe Moody and John Wickman and Elizabeth

Drewry and Herman--I'm not sure whether Herman Kahn was there. Anyway, the heads of the libraries were there. Dick Jacobs was there; he was at that time acting director at Hoover. We had a good discussion about the needs and what could be done. I recall that it was during that time that we pushed ahead and amended the budget for fiscal 1969 that was going to Congress in January to provide for the matching money that was needed for the additional space at the Roosevelt Library. That was in the budget--

G: Was LBJ really interested in this himself or was this something that was done at a lower level?

K: He was interested in it himself.

G: Do you recall what he said about the significance of presidential museums and libraries?

K: I recall that he felt that the Libraries were an integral part of the educational system of the United States, and he felt that they provided in a very special way, insights into events of the times and a backdrop for future generations to study issues and actions of national significance as they occur. He was always very favorably disposed toward opportunities for their improvement and the public service they could render. It was during his administration that we got the presidential documents under way, the weekly publication.

G: Sure. The [Weekly] Compilation of Presidential Documents.

K: Yes. Right.

G: Well, how about the selection of architects? Do you recall how Gordon Bunshaft was selected for this?

K: He was selected primarily on recommendation of--you see, Mrs. Johnson, and one of her daughters I think, did some traveling around and looked at other libraries. They went to the other presidential libraries, and they looked at libraries in New York, and museums. They were impressed with some work they had seen, I think it was at Yale.

G: The Beinecke Library?

K: Yes, that Bunshaft did. She was also impressed with the work of Philip Johnson, and I thought at one time Philip Johnson would be in the picture.

G: Why wasn't he named, do you know?

K: I don't know. When we got in the picture it was a matter of working out the details with Bunshaft and with the local architect.

G: Oh, Max Brooks.

K: Max Brooks, yes. And, of course, GSA had worked with Max Brooks. Max Brooks, by the way, was at that session, along with Bunshaft, on the Sunday afternoon in the White House. Brooks had been one of the architects on the Department of Labor building here in town. The last time I was down at the Ranch it was to meet with Max and Mrs. Johnson to go out on the site. This was in January of 1968, to go out and look at the site that was being cleared then for the building.

But the President never let up on moving ahead with this building. He kept the architects under a strict accountability for the time and their schedule in getting the work done.

G: Why did he want it finished so early, do you know?

K: Well, of course, he knew that it would take time. He wanted it finished I guess by the time he left the presidency.

G: Did he ever indicate to you either by implication or actually stating it that he was planning to retire?

K: No. Never. The announcement that came in March was a complete surprise to me as it was to anybody who was listening to television that night.

G: Did GSA have a considerable say in how these buildings were to be designed to accommodate the archival functions as well as the museum functions and all of this?

K: Well, yes, particularly from the standpoint of the archival function. The Archives were definitely involved in it, our Public Buildings people to a lesser extent. Public Building's interest was to see that it met federal standards and would be acceptable from the standpoints of a building to operate. Public Buildings would comment on whether toilet fixtures should be floor mounted or wall mounted, things of that kind, access, fire control and fire prevention, heating systems, so on.

G: Do you think there was too much emphasis on designing the building itself as a monument rather than accommodating exhibits within the building?

K: I wouldn't think so. As I say, I have not seen the building, but it seemed to me in this case perhaps more than any other--now, you work in the building, you have a feel for it. But it seemed to me that in the process of its being developed, that great emphasis was being

placed on its utility. The exposed file areas and the museum areas all seemed to me to be quite functional. To me it's not an imposing building; it's striking and unusual, but from perspectives and pictures I have seen it's not particularly pleasing to me. But that's a matter of taste, that's all.

G: But at the same time you have these exposed stacks, you have this enormous cavity in the building, the Great Hall.

K: Yes.

G: It would seem to me from a museum standpoint, the space is not being used.

K: Yes. That's what you referred to as the monumental aspect. Well, that's true, but the high ceilings enhance its character as a public building, which it is. I don't think you get that feeling about twelve-foot high ceilings. I think an important ingredient of the awe and respect that we feel for the court system is the dignity and ambiance of the courtroom itself. Indeed, it's true of churches, art galleries, and many commercial structures.

G: What about the Oval Office, the inclusion of that in there? Do you recall President Johnson's desire to have a reproduction of the Oval Office?

K: I do recall that that was his desire. See, they had one in the Truman Library and I think he had seen that and liked it. He thought it was a good idea.

G: Did he plan to use that office for himself initially, do you think?

K: I don't think so. As I recall the layouts--it was never his office. His was on the end of the building on the top floor as I recall, and where he could get to it privately by elevator and need not come in contact with the Library staff or visitors. That's my recollection of it.

G: Anything else on his role in the development of the Library?

K: No. I recall that he was anxious to have it under contract, to have it finished, and that he continued to push that objective. I know that he was interested in its being pursued aggressively and I believe one of the main reasons he wanted me to continue on after his departure was that he didn't want to have to change in his dealings with anybody in government on that library. He wanted to look to the same person as the one in government accountable for the quality and promptness with which that building was completed and occupied.

G: Can you recall what he did to promote this, having you continue?

K: Oh, yes. He told me that he talked to President-elect Nixon. He called me at home a couple of times in November and December of 1968 and urged me the last time to get some of my Republican friends such as Congressman Bill Cramer and John Rhodes to get in touch with Nixon about it. I recall saying to him the last time we talked about it: "Well, I don't know whether I could or not." But I said, "One of the nicest things you said to me at the time that you appointed me, Mr. President, was that you appreciated the fact that I didn't try to tell the President whom he should appoint as the administrator of GSA, and I don't think we should try to tell Mr. Nixon whom he should appoint,

and I'm not inclined to do it." With that he said, "Well, we'll have to think of something. God bless you. Good night," and hung up. This was about nine o'clock one night in December of 1968.

I think he sincerely wanted to see me stay on and see this thing through, and I was willing. I was enough persuaded by what he said that I didn't do what I probably should have done, and that was to walk out on January 20. My resignation was in. I should have walked out, and my future might have been different, because it's one thing to form associations before you leave office, and it's quite a different thing afterwards. But I wasn't ready to leave government. My hands and mind were bound up in what I was doing, and I liked what I was doing. I guess I hoped against all practicality that it might work out. Indeed, I stayed on, and about a week after President Nixon's inauguration I was called by young Harry Fleming at the White House and was told that they'd like for me to stay on and they would talk to me when things were less busy. I said fine, I would be interested in staying on, but I would want to talk with the President. I'd like to talk to him directly about the job and my staff. But that never happened. In fact, the next meeting was with John Ehrlichman about an architectural selection with which we had a disagreement. That was about mid-February, and I learned a week later that my successor had already been selected. So I took advantage of a cost of living increase for retirees that was coming up the first of March, asked for and received President Nixon's acceptance of my resignation, and I retired by the last day of February.

I wrote to President Johnson at the time and told him that I felt I should retire and I had a very nice letter from him.

G: Did he have a good rapport with Wayne Grover?

K: I think so, as far as I knew. Certainly Mrs. Johnson seemed to, and I think Mrs. Johnson was the catalyst for moving ahead with a lot of these things.

G: Did she sell him, Lyndon Johnson, on ideas that he may have been cool toward at first?

K: I would think so but I don't know that.

G: He also seems to have been very enthusiastic about the program of microfilming government records in the departments.

K: Yes. As far as I know, that was his idea and there was a tremendous amount of that done, I think probably more than has ever been done before. And it was very systematically done, with periodic reports being made, oh, every two or three weeks about how much was being microfilmed that week and where, and who was lagging and who was not. That kind of follow-up was being made.

G: Did he say anything about this program or anything that would characterize his interest in it, can you recall?

K: I don't recall. I know the written word was there, and we compiled. But I don't recall any conversations about it.

G: He also was interested in the compiling of an administrative history of his presidency.

K: Yes.

G: Did you play a role in this, or was GSA at all involved?

K: Oh, yes. GSA was involved. I think each agency had a designated person who was doing it for that agency, and Charlie Murphy at the White House was his man pulling it together. Joe Moody, my deputy, represented GSA.

G: Where did the idea for this administrative history come from, do you recall?

K: I don't know.

G: Okay. Anything else on the Library and Lyndon Johnson's interest in the Library that we haven't talked about?

K: No. I don't know. As I say, the last time I was down at the Ranch, he had arranged for me to come down but it was Mrs. Johnson who met me at the airport. Ramsey Clark and Bill Gaud were on the plane with me, and she spoke to all of us, but she told them, "I'm going to steal Lawson Knott from you. We're going on a little tour." That's the first I knew of the purpose of my trip. We got in a Lincoln and then we picked up Max Brooks, went out on the site, walked around in that caliche. After a rain it was kind of muddy. She was equipped for it; I wasn't.

G: Probably ruined a pair of shoes.

K: Yes. I was having lunch with the President and some of his friends up in the Federal Office Building afterwards.

G: Was it unusual to have a helicopter pad on the top of the Library?

K: On the Library?

G: Yes.

K: I know there's one on the Federal Building.

G: There is, yes, and on the Library as well.

K: As a matter of fact, if I had known that I had forgotten about it.

G: Let me ask you about the Federal Building. This must have been another area of LBJ interest.

K: Yes. Oh, yes.

G: Did he oversee this project?

K: Yes. Yes, indeed, yes.

G: Can you elaborate on his role there?

K: He had a real interest in the way it was developed and furnished. Now, much of that was done while Bernie Boutin was administrator. The original planning for that occurred while President Johnson was vice president, and of course his own space needs expanded somewhat when he became president.

G: Let me ask you about the political aspect of federal buildings. Was this something that he recognized and appreciated in terms of his dealings with Congress? Who would get a federal building and who wouldn't?

K: Oh, I think every president recognizes that.

G: Well, let me ask you to elaborate on the politics, how it works and what a president considers in this sort of thing, and how much latitude he has in seeing that a project is pushed forward or not with regard to a federal building.

K: Well, I think there's always plenty of latitude. There was a building designed for Dallas, for example, simply based on need. Dallas is a growing urban center, federal center, and the building was needed and

it was designed. But it had a Republican congressman [Bruce Alger] for several terms, and the Dallas building, designed during the late fifties, was not accorded sufficiently high priority for construction to compete with others that were designed also and needed. Now, finally in the mid-sixties, the former mayor of Dallas [Earle Cabell], a Democrat, was elected congressman, and the construction of the federal building was one of his priorities. Well, we pulled the plans out then to get ready to go to the Hill to get money to build it, and we found that some of the materials and equipment specified in the plans were not even being made anymore. We went back to the same architect to get him to update his plan, and he not only told us that, but he said, "More than that, I can design a new building that will cost you less than the building that I designed five years ago," because of the changes in technology and so on.

So that's what happened. When his design was completed, we sought and secured funding for that building--I think it was about twenty-five million dollars--and it was built. In the meantime, of course, the GSA office in Dallas, in order to make room where other federal agencies were expanding, moved over to Fort Worth, consolidating with our supply and records operations, and making available for other agencies the space that we had occupied in Dallas.

G: In addition to holding up a hostile congressman or a congressman from the opposite party, would the President use a public building as a carrot if he had a piece of legislation that a congressman or senator was holding hostage?

K: It's quite possible.

G: Can you recall any examples of how LBJ would do this?

K: No, I really don't. I can't recall a single example where LBJ did that.

G: Well, for example, the White House would know what projects were pending or when a request was made.

K: Oh, yes. See, the Bureau of the Budget has a complete listing of projects GSA believes should be presented. Of course, authorization is one thing, and an appropriation is another. In the authorization process there is a little more selectivity, even on GSA's part. But when you come along later to appropriations it's largely a question of whether the design is complete and so on. You can't push ahead with one where the design isn't complete. So it becomes a matter of scheduling after authorization. But at each stage the Bureau of the Budget is involved, and the Bureau of the Budget isn't going anywhere on any public works project that it doesn't cross the Executive Avenue over to the West Wing and sit down and talk.

G: Who did this go through, from Bureau of the Budget to the White House? Was this Larry O'Brien's office? What was the clearinghouse for all this?

K: I really don't know. I'd get it back from the Bureau of the Budget. Charlie Schultze, when he was there, or Sam Hughes. Somebody in a responsible position in the bureau would do the talking. If we had any counter-arguments, we'd go back through the same channels. I don't recall any specific instance of talking with the White House

about a particular project. Now, that isn't to say that it didn't happen, I just don't recall any. They were never that controversial. It was always easy enough to substitute this one for that one, or delay this one, move this one forward. The budget allotment for construction was never sufficient to construct all authorized buildings ready for contracting.

G: Now, what about in the building of these buildings themselves and the land and the contractors and architects? Was there politics involved here?

K: No way in the contractor, simply a bidding proposition. So far as the architects are concerned, certainly you took into account the desires of a congressman, if they were on the qualified list. But you never had less than three to five architects recommended by the architectural advisory panel, so there was always room for selection. They were not recommended in a priority basis, you know, one-two-three-four.

G: How was the selection ultimately made then?

K: Made by the administrator, on a recommendation of his staff, including the commissioner of public buildings.

G: Would this turn on, say, the suitability of design or did you even have a submitted design at the time, or what he had done in the past?

K: No. Sometimes on what he had done in the past. Sometimes that worked for him and sometimes it worked against him. If an architect had done one project already in that area within the last year, your inclination would be to select somebody else. [There were] generally enough

qualified architects not to go to the same one every time. Now, there was some repetitiveness, but often that was because not all architects are interested in doing government work and some of them that cannot demonstrate competent experience in designing buildings for public use. I recall in Atlanta there was one firm that seemed to specialize in and did very good government work. But you never found John Portman, for example, who did a lot of commercial work, he wasn't interested in government work.

G: Anything else on federal buildings that we haven't talked about?

K: No. We made a lot of progress in building public buildings during the Johnson Administration.

G: How so?

K: And we made a lot of progress in demolishing temporary buildings in Washington. We demolished and got ready to demolish--the Nixon Administration got credit for some that were started while Johnson was still there, along Constitution Avenue. But we demolished something like three million square feet of temporary buildings in Washington during that time, a record. We cleared out more in the sixties than had been cleared out any time from World War II up until then.

G: Was this in connection with planning the Mall or was this--?

K: It was just simply getting rid of obsolete buildings that were more expensive to maintain for office use than the annual square foot cost of leasing newly constructed privately owned space. For the most part we had no specific site plan for the vacated sites, most of which belonged to the National Park Service. President Nixon completed the

demolition of navy and munitions buildings and built Constitution Gardens.

G: Let me ask you about the movement during the Johnson presidency to remove National Archives and Records Service from GSA. This had several high level supporters. I'm wondering how you regarded it and why it was not done in view of the fact that it did have a number of supporters in the White House.

K: Well, of course, we had a study conducted at the direction of the White House during the Johnson presidency, but I was never conscious of any White House support for the proposition one way or the other. As far as I knew, the attitude was simply one of "let's explore it." Now I have recently become aware of correspondence between Douglass Cater and Dick Neustadt about it, but even Neustadt finally came down in the final analysis and said, "Well, this is something that would be nice to think about doing later, but not something for the Johnson Administration to get exercised about."

I guess my main involvement at the time was in the Bureau of the Budget study. I gather it was done under some considerable pressure as to time and maybe a narrow scope of interviews, but I get the impression--certainly my reaction was that some of the statements that they made were unsupported, and we challenged some of those statements and they were modified, for the most part. There were compromises made on the language of the study. Of course, that doesn't alter people's minds a great deal one way or the other, but the record was clarified.

My own feeling at the time was that I couldn't see any clear-cut way that you could logically separate the tremendous function of federal records management from GSA or some other agency with logistical competence. You couldn't separate that from the archival function without increasing the cost. And the logistical support needed by the Federal Records Center was such that--and I thought GSA's record was good enough--there was really no reason to change it. GSA had done, I thought, a splendid job in supporting them in getting new facilities for their record centers all around the country. Many new ones had been completed and many new ones were in process at the time. I felt they couldn't do any better anywhere else and they really needed the kind of help GSA was providing. And I think Bert Rhoads shared that view, that this was not the time, certainly not--I think he believed that under my leadership the professionalism of the archives and records service would be preserved and that nothing would be done that would hurt its cultural image or operations.

G: There's an assumption there that the GSA administrator is sympathetic to the purposes of the National Archives.

K: Exactly. Right. As a matter of fact, I think for the most part that has been true. I have heard that that has not been true recently, but I know that Franklin Floete was very much interested in Archives, very devoted to Wayne Grover, a Democrat, and very supportive. They were clearly of different political philosophies, but Floete was very supportive.

G: To what extent do you think it was simply a budgetary consideration in the fact that to pull National Archives out would require additional funding and things creating a new administrative structure, institutional structure?

K: I think that's the classic argument against moving it out and the one that I think will continue to haunt any effort to move it out, unless you can bring it together with something else. Now, Neustadt vetoed the idea of [combining Archives with the] Smithsonian. But I think there is in government a scattering of cultural agencies that could be brought together to make a workable family of compatible agencies. There's now talk, as you know, about independent agency status for the National Endowment for the Arts. What shape it will take I don't know. But I have felt for some time that you could put Endowment for the Arts, and Archives, and some of the State Department activities, there are a number of things that you could put together in a commission, if you please, of cultural affairs that would be certainly equal to the size of any of these regulatory agencies and with just about as much justification for being separate.

Now, under that sort of an umbrella, I don't see any reason why it should be not done. In fact, I think I've indicated to you before, as time has gone on and as I've looked back on the picture, I have felt that maybe the case for separation is really stronger than anybody has made for it, including its most ardent advocates. I think the case is there, but I don't think it's been made very well. It's been made with a certain amount of emotionalism that hasn't been

helpful. Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes, a long time member of the Archives top staff, was a very fine scholar, but he was not the most persuasive advocate for this position, nor was he very forthright about it in my view. A lot of his work, and [Robert] Bahmer's, too, was pretty much on the side and not direct. I was never aware that Bahmer was as committed to this principle as I later found that he was when he was the archivist. I never really thought about it. I guess I made an assumption that they were pleased with the support they were getting.

G: Perhaps they were. Maybe the movement would have been more emphatic if there had been less cooperation between GSA and National Archives.

K: Could be.

G: I think the documents seem to indicate that there was no crying, urgent need to secede from GSA.

K: Yes. I think there had been some indication of late that there might be some basis for doing it, but I don't know that.

G: Is there any other area that we haven't covered in this session?

K: Well, let's see. We hit the highlights on stockpile. You mean now, or put it in when I get the [transcript]?

G: No, now. I was going to ask you about the meeting with President Johnson when you had lunch with him in that visit to the Ranch.

K: Oh, yes. I was told that he wanted to see me after lunch. At one point I got a signal from somebody outside of his office, he's ready for you. I went in and found myself right in the midst of a discussion

between he and Ramsey Clark and I had difficulty in finding a way to back out.

G: Was this in Texas?

K: This is in the Federal Office Building, yes, in Texas, in Austin.

G: Was it a heated discussion?

K: Well, they were having a lively discussion between them, and I knew I wasn't supposed to be there, that somebody had given me the wrong signal. So I just backed out. When he went out, then I was told to come on in.

He said, "I didn't have anything particularly really I wanted to talk to you about. I wanted you to come down. Mrs. Johnson wanted you to go out on the Library site with Max Brooks. We want to be sure to keep that moving. But while you're here, one thing I wanted to tell you, this is a good time to do it. I just want you to know that I've been as pleased with your appointment and that of Bill Driver's as any that I've made since I've been in office. I give the two of you a job to do, and you get it done, and I appreciate it. Now, I could write you a letter, or I could tell your wife after you're gone, but I want you to know now. I had Bill Driver down recently and told him. I want you to know, too." I thanked him and that was it. It was short, but very satisfying. I was so pleased with it that I made a note of it so that I wouldn't forget his words. I was headed for a federal building dedication in St. Petersburg, Florida from there.

G: Was that in January, 1968?

K: January 11, when I saw him. January 11, I believe, 1968.

G: Anything else that you want to add?

K: No.

G: Well, if you think of anything, we can either do another session--

[End of Tape 2 of 2 and Interview I]

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Donor

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Date

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